# Building Equitable Community Partnerships

## ES4SE Technical Assistance Program Evaluation

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The U.S. Department of Energy's **Energy Storage for Social Equity** (ES4SE) Initiative is designed to help urban, rural, indigenous, and tribal disadvantaged communities address their energy system challenges by considering energy storage technologies and applications as a viable path forward. The two-pronged effort features a Technical Assistance (TA) Program and Project Development and Deployment Assistance (PDDA) Program.

## Community-Based TA

- Community needs inform the type of support and solutions
- Program elements designed or iterated collaboratively
- Implementation requires trusting relationships, flexibility, transparency, and responsiveness
- Challenges related to timelines, cultural competency, capacity declines, staff turnover, and changing priorities
- **Program evaluation** is critical to assess goal attainment, provide accountability, and refine the engagement approach

## Evaluation Method

- Survey development
- Statement ranking (54 statements)
- Debriefing interviews (24 people)
- Factor analysis (3 factors)
- Interview analysis
- Narrative explanation

**Q method**

**Table 1.** Participant factor loadings based on statement rankings.

| | Community Consultants | Project Specialists | System Navigators |
|---|---|---|---|
| P11 | **0.786** | -0.013 | 0.009 |
| P04 | **0.772** | 0.188 | 0.029 |
| P22 | **0.693** | -0.137 | 0.313 |
| P08 | **0.653** | 0.345 | 0.047 |
| P18 | **0.585** | 0.330 | 0.207 |
| P05 | **0.514** | 0.193 | 0.307 |
| P16 | **0.423** | 0.264 | 0.272 |
| P14 | -0.198 | **0.789** | 0.207 |
| P09 | 0.221 | **0.585** | 0.273 |
| P10 | 0.195 | **0.528** | 0.161 |
| P17 | 0.170 | **0.511** | -0.150 |
| P21 | -0.321 | **0.370** | 0.069 |
| P19 | 0.141 | **0.361** | -0.009 |
| P02 | 0.177 | -0.131 | **0.696** |
| P15 | 0.114 | 0.126 | **0.621** |
| P12 | 0.191 | 0.164 | **0.445** |
| P24 | 0.133 | 0.183 | **0.406** |
| P13 | 0.624 | 0.330 | 0.435 |
| P20 | 0.422 | 0.489 | -0.034 |
| P06 | 0.385 | 0.513 | 0.196 |
| P03 | 0.346 | 0.656 | 0.174 |
| P07 | 0.151 | 0.394 | -0.472 |
| P23 | 0.066 | 0.403 | 0.393 |
| P01 | -0.063 | 0.470 | 0.427 |

**Note.** Bold indicates significant loading at .01 with no cross-loading.

## Characterizing Community Assumptions, Experiences, and Needs

### Community Consultants

- Relationship and process oriented
- Valued flexibility and holistic support to understand community and needs
- Perceived lack of organizational resources or expertise and requested baseline education
- Desired collaborative project design, without a specific pathway being imposed

"The program was designed to be flexible and responsive" (Statement 06)

### Project Specialists

- Efficiency and outcome oriented
- Valued streamlined structure to focus on technical discussions and pathways
- Predefined set of goals and expectations for matching provider and community expertise
- Desired information and resources to meet immediate and specific needs

"I have a concrete vision for what to work on after this program" (S42)

### System Navigators

- Authority and outcome oriented
- Valued opportunity to leverage institutional knowledge and authority to direct change
- Perceived challenges and needs as hyper specific to community context
- Desired clarity on local political and economic systems impacting future pathways

"I learned how to better navigate the complexities of my local political and economic landscape" (S49)

## Learning From Experience and Planning for the Future

### Development

- Introduce provider capabilities and roles
- Communicate data needed from community
- Assign one non-technical point of contact
- Understand existing community partnerships
- Include site visits during project scoping and feasibility assessment

### Implementation

- Offer distinct project phases and tracks
- Provide baseline information and education upfront
- Adjust meeting platform, content, and cadence to meet individual community needs
- Identify compensation mechanisms for mutually beneficial work (e.g., travel, speaking, and internships)

### Outcomes

- Identify mechanisms to continue engagement beyond TA, such as community-to-community consulting
- Collaborate on and co-author program deliverables
- Provide user guides and resource documentation to ensure knowledge maintenance and transfer
- Outline roadmap of next steps beyond TA