

VALLEY CLEAN ENERGY ALLIANCE

Staff Report – Item 9

TO: Community Advisory Committee

FROM: Mitch Sears, Interim General Manager
George Vaughn, Director of Finance & Internal Operations

SUBJECT: Final VCE Strategic Plan

DATE: October 22, 2020

PURPOSE

This Staff Report and attached final Three-Year Strategic Plan (Plan) will be shared at the October 22nd Community Advisory Committee (CAC) meeting. The purpose is to share the final Plan with the CAC, highlight any changes resulting from the October 8th Board Meeting, review the “Timing, Measurement and Updates” section, and share next steps in the process.

BACKGROUND

At the October 8th, 2020 Board Meeting, the Board reviewed the draft Plan and approved it to be finalized with several edits. The edits, which are included in the final attached Plan, are:

- Adding Objective 3.7 about emerging and historically marginalized communities
- Adding Objective 6.1 about developing a roadmap towards formation of a local Publicly Owned Utility (POU)
- Two grammatical corrections

After the September CAC meeting, staff added a section to the Plan titled “Timing, Measurement and Updates.” The primary components of this section are:

- Cadence for staff review and updating of the Plan (at least annually)
- Directions for staff to implement a timeline and reporting format
- Reporting cadence (quarterly to VCE management, annually to the Board and CAC)

The next step in the planning process is for VCE staff to develop and share a detailed timeline and action plan before the end of December.

ATTACHMENTS

1. VCE Three-Year Strategic Plan



**Valley Clean Energy
Strategic Plan
Approved by VCE Board October 8, 2020
January 2021 - December 2023**

VCE MISSION

Deliver cost-competitive clean electricity, product choice, price stability, energy efficiency, and greenhouse gas emission reductions.

VCE VISION

Valley Clean Energy Alliance (VCEA) is a joint-powers authority working to implement a state-authorized Community Choice Energy (CCE) program. Participating VCEA governments include the City of Davis, the City of Woodland and County of Yolo. The purpose of the VCEA is to enable the participating jurisdictions to determine the sources, modes of production and costs of the electricity they procure for the residential, commercial, agricultural and industrial users in their areas. PG&E would continue to deliver the electricity procured by VCEA and perform billing, metering, and other electric distribution utility functions and services. Customers within the participating jurisdictions would have the choice not to participate in the VCEA program.

Near-Term¹ Vision

The near-term vision for VCEA is to provide electricity users with greater choice over the sources and prices of the electricity they use, by:

- Offering basic electricity service with higher renewable electricity content, at a rate competitive with PG&E;
- Developing and offering additional low-carbon or local generation options at modest price premiums;
- Establishing an energy planning framework for developing local energy efficiency programs and local energy resources and infrastructure; and
- Accomplishing the goals enumerated above while accumulating reserve funds for future VCEA energy programs and mitigation of future energy costs and risks.

Long -Term Vision

The future vision for VCEA is to continuously improve the electricity choices available to VCEA customers, while expanding local energy-related economic opportunities, by:

- Causing the deployment of new renewable and low carbon energy sources;
- Evaluating and adopting best practices of the electricity service industry for planning and operational management;
- Substantially increasing the renewable electricity content of basic electricity service, with the ultimate goal of achieving zero carbon emissions electricity;
- Developing and managing customized programs for energy efficiency, on-site electricity production and storage;
- Accelerating deployment of local energy resources to increase localized investment, employment, innovation and resilience;
- Working to achieve the climate action goals of participating jurisdictions to shape a sustainable energy future;
- Saving money for ratepayers on their energy bills; and
- Remaining open to the participation of additional jurisdictions.

¹ Launch Phase and First Year

STRATEGIC PLAN

This Strategic Plan focuses VCE on achieving better energy outcomes for its customers and communities by guiding the organization’s actions over the next three years. The Plan maps a route to VCE’s goals and allows for course correction as new information and learning occurs. The energy sector in California is in a transformational period and VCE allows local energy priorities and needs to be heard and ultimately acted upon. This plan helps VCE build a strong foundation from which to identify and guide strategic action over the next three years, being mindful of the longer-term aspirations of the Agency. It is anticipated that this Plan will be ready for implementation in 2021 and reviewed annually to ensure that the Agency remains on track and course corrects if necessary.

METHODOLOGY AND ORGANIZATION

VCE’s strategic plan is based on the experience of the Agency’s first two years in operation as well as current energy market conditions, a strengths/weaknesses/opportunities/threats (SWOT) analysis which was completed in 2019, and detailed feedback from the Board of Directors, Community Advisory Committee (CAC) members and VCE staff. The Plan covers six topical categories which are most relevant to VCE’s operations. Within each category, the Plan specifies a set of aspirational goals and follows with strategies to achieve or make progress toward those goals over the next three years.

VCE’s STRATEGIC GOALS

A) FINANCIAL STRENGTH

A successful CCA program requires disciplined fiscal strategies and financially sound policies. VCE is committed to managing its financial resources responsibly and setting a standard of transparency and accountability, ensuring efficiency and strong stewardship of the agency’s financial resources. At VCE, our commitment to fiscal and operational excellence will ensure that all processes and operations are clearly defined and efficiently designed to align people, systems, and policies to maximize productivity and improve efficiency. Adhering to these policies and actively examining and assessing risk will help earn a high credit rating and a healthy position from which to deliver customer and community value.

Goal 1: Maintain and grow a strong financial foundation and manage costs to achieve long-term organizational health.

- 1.1. Objective: Maintain consistently healthy cash reserves to fund VCE’s mission, vision, and goals.
- 1.2. Objective: Achieve an investment grade credit rating by end of 2024.
- 1.3. Objective: Commit to fiscal efficiencies to build a program foundation from which to deliver customer and community value.
- 1.4. Objective: Manage customer rates to optimize VCE’s financial health while maintaining rate competitiveness with PG&E.

B) PROCUREMENT AND POWER SUPPLY

Navigating the world of wholesale power markets and state-mandated power mix and reliability requirements while fulfilling our commitment to sourcing low/no-carbon electricity requires a constant search for the right resources to meet sustainability and value proposition goals. The threat of losing load to Direct Access presents new challenges and opportunities to enhance product offerings to meet VCE’s decarbonization goals and our customers’ own environmental goals while considering financial and risk impacts. VCE is committed to providing carbon free electricity through a balanced approach that considers cost, risk, long-term value and best fit in meeting community goals while exceeding California’s RPS mandates.

Goal 2: Manage power supply resources to consistently exceed California’s Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS) while working toward a resource portfolio that is 100% carbon neutral by 2030.

- 2.1 Objective: Continue to identify and pursue cost effective local renewable energy resources.
- 2.2 Objective: Acquire sufficient bundled energy and renewable resources to achieve VCE’s greenhouse gas reduction targets.
- 2.3 Objective: Deploy storage and other strategies to achieve renewable, carbon neutral, resource adequacy, and resiliency objectives.
- 2.4 Objective: Identify and pursue cost effective, local distributed energy (e.g., behind the meter rooftop solar+storage) resources to help meet reliability needs.
- 2.2 Objective: Study and present options for achieving a 100% carbon neutral resource portfolio as well as 100% carbon free resource portfolio (carbon free hour by hour) by 2030.²
- 2.6 Objective: Optimize the hedging strategy to mitigate risk in accordance with the energy risk guidelines and procurement plan.

C) CUSTOMERS AND COMMUNITY

VCE is a customer and community focused organization. We will use all available channels and platforms to cultivate relationships with and bring customer value to all segments of the communities we serve – including those that have been historically underserved/under resourced. These channels include leveraging existing outlets established by our member agencies, partnering with commercial customers to enhance their community presence, and re-engaging with those who have opted out. Partnerships with commercial and agricultural customers are particularly important to building VCE’s brand in a region rooted in food production and innovation. Communicating our competitive rates and product and service benefits in clear and accessible ways will strengthen customer loyalty and enhance our financial standing, enabling us to better serve our communities.

Goal 3: Prioritize VCE’s community benefits and increase customer satisfaction and retention.

² Carbon neutral electricity is net zero carbon electricity that may include the use of carbon credits and/or higher production of carbon free electricity that averages out to provide a carbon free portfolio over a period of time whereas carbon free hour-by-hour means all electricity consumed by VCE customers will be from carbon free and/or renewable resources.

- 3.1 Objective: Develop engagement strategies to increase awareness of, and participation in, local control of VCE's energy supply and programs with a particular focus on engaging disadvantaged and historically marginalized communities.
- 3.2 Objective: Develop programs and initiatives to better support community goals, including supporting member agency achievement of energy-sector emissions reduction targets.
- 3.3 Objective: Design and implement a strategy to more effectively engage local business and agricultural customers.
- 3.4 Objective: Build awareness and trust of the VCE brand through direct engagement with customers, communities and organizations in VCE's service territory.
- 3.5 Objective: Develop customer programs and initiatives that prioritize decarbonization, community resiliency and customer savings.
- 3.6 Objective: Measure and increase customer satisfaction, using tools such as surveys and focus groups, while maintaining an overall participation rate of no less than 90%.
- 3.7 Objective: Integrate and address the concerns and priorities of emerging and historically marginalized communities in the design and implementation of VCE's services and programs.

D) DECARBONIZATION AND GRID INNOVATION

One of the key factors driving the formation of VCE was to address climate change and improve local resiliency. We will play a vital role in this decades-long endeavor, with the ongoing support of our community and our Board. In addition to providing carbon-free electricity, we are reinvesting in our region and expanding our toolset for furthering emissions reductions and energy resiliency by launching decarbonization and grid innovation programs. These programs represent the next stage in VCE's maturity and are the mechanism by which VCE will further engage our communities to achieve our mission. We will leverage partnerships, prioritize innovation and use data science to manage and influence carbon-free energy use. We will embody the entrepreneurial and innovative spirit of the community in which we live and work, the spirit of Yolo County, to bend the carbon curve downwards and improve the lives of our community members.

Goal 4. Promote and deploy local decarbonization and grid innovation programs to improve grid stability, reliability, community energy resilience, and safety.

- 4.1 Objective: Working with a variety of local, regional and state partners, develop a grid innovation roadmap for VCE's service territory that supports community energy resilience and reliability.
- 4.2 Objective: Develop a VCE decarbonization roadmap to guide near and long-term program decisions and offerings.
- 4.3 Objective: Increase participation in VCE's UltraGreen 100% renewable product.
- 4.4. Objective: Identify external funding sources to support decarbonization and grid-related programs and initiatives.

E) STATEWIDE ISSUES: REGULATORY AND LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS

The regulatory and legislative processes wield critical influence over VCE's ability to serve our customers and fulfill our core goals and mission. Working with CalCCA and other operating CCAs, VCE will actively engage with the regulatory and legislative communities in order to advance a positive narrative on the value of CCA, manage operational risk, protect the interests of our customers, enhance our ability to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions, and help build a regulatory framework that supports innovation and customer choice in an equitable and cost-effective manner while preserving reliability and universal access.

Goal 5. Strongly advocate for public policies that support VCE's Vision/Mission.

- 5.1 Objective: Work with CalCCA and other partners to proactively engage State regulators, legislators, and other State authorities in developing policy that furthers VCE’s mission and facilitates our contributions to decarbonization, grid reliability, energy resiliency, affordability, local programs and social equity.
- 5.2 Objective: Develop relationships with community stakeholder organizations that foster support for VCE’s mission and vision.
- 5.3 Objective: Optimize regulatory compliance activities.

F) ORGANIZATION, WORKPLACE, AND TECHNOLOGY

Human capital is a successful organization’s greatest asset, and at VCE we’ve built a highly talented and dedicated team that will ensure the success and prosperity of our organization. Contracting with Sacramento Municipal Utility District (SMUD) to deliver high quality services and personnel support during launch and early operations has allowed VCE to realize these objectives from the outset. Over the period of this strategic plan, VCE will explore transition from a contract dependent organization to one that balances the values and efficiencies of development and retention of high-quality in-house staff supported by high-quality outside services. Building, valuing, and nurturing this team’s talent will require a start-up culture that supports creativity, open communication, and the free flow of ideas to spur innovation. We will provide an infrastructure within VCE that supports and cultivates our employees through professional and personal development, recognizes and rewards their contributions to achieving our mission, and offers opportunities that position our people, as well as VCE, for success. In attracting and maintaining skilled employees, VCE will continue to provide a rewarding workplace experience.

VCE will develop a decision support system that will enable it to nimbly assess and react to expansion opportunities as they arise. In addition, VCE will assess opportunities for shared services with other CCAs to optimize function and efficiency of service.

We also take customer information, privacy, and security seriously. Our systems and processes follow best practices and industry standards. Performance metrics are in place to ensure resiliency and high system availability on standard and mobile platforms. Periodic upgrades to IT resources will ensure continued adherence to these high standards. This strategic plan provides the approach that VCE is taking to address the challenges of delivering IT services in a dynamic environment with new regulations and continuous advancements in science and technology.

Goal 6: Analyze and implement optimal long-term organizational, management, and information technology structure at VCE.

- 6.1 Objective: Develop a roadmap to evaluate and guide future steps toward formation of a local Publicly Owned Utility (POU).
- 6.2 Objective: Evaluate and pursue opportunities for shared services with other CCAs for certain functions.
- 6.3 Objective: Develop an evaluation framework to guide future expansion opportunities beyond the existing service territory.
- 6.4 Objective: Identify optimal management, staffing and contracting structure of VCE in the near and long term; factors include balance of internal staff vs. consultant support services, transition of leadership positions to permanent internal employees.
- 6.5 Objective: Promote diversity, equity and inclusion in leadership, hiring, promotion, and contracting policies.
- 6.6 Objective: Support health, wellness and a productive workplace.
- 6.7 Objective: Create an innovation-focused culture that rewards proactive participation, problem solving, new ideas, and creative use of partnerships.
- 6.8 Objective: Deploy a modernized IT infrastructure that enables knowledge management, analytics and collaboration through robust use of data and information resources.

TIMING, MEASUREMENT AND UPDATES

VCE's Strategic Plan is a living document that will be revisited and updated regularly. At a minimum, staff will review and update the Plan on an annual basis, including goals, objectives and metrics. In addition, staff will establish an implementation timeline and appropriate reporting format to use in reporting performance against the Plan's goals and objectives to VCE leadership and Board. The reports, commencing in 2021, will show metrics, status and mitigations where appropriate. Consolidated summary reporting on the status of all high-priority enterprise goals and objectives will be reported out as follows:

- **Quarterly Report to VCE Management**

Staff will report quarterly to the Interim General Manager on the status of goals, objectives and metrics for which they are responsible.

- **Annual Report to Board and CAC**

Staff will report annually to the Board and CAC on the status of goals, objectives and metrics, and will recommend any mitigations or amendments as may be necessary for Board approval.

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