

## NVDA - PSD RES Engagement Events

October 2023

### Overview / Key Takeaways:

In partnership with PSD, Northeastern Vermont Development Association ([NVDA](#)) hosted two “Say WATT” events in September 2023 (one online, one in-person) engaging close to 100 participants in the NEK region and soliciting input on the future of electricity in Vermont. The **top three priorities for Vermont’s electricity future** were identified as follows 1) whether the resource is **renewable**, 2) **affordability**, and 3) whether the resource **reduces carbon emissions**. Both events highlighted a collective desire for more community solar and storage, to address reliability, resilience, and equity goals. There was also wide support for a variety of renewable resources, provided they were mindful of cost, location and natural resources impacts. Expansion of the RES Tier II (local generation) and Tier III (energy transformation) policies, as well as more distributed energy resources (DERs) that contribute to multi-solving across environmental, social and economic needs, produce direct community-benefits, and reduce energy burdens as well as carbon emissions, will most benefit the NEK, as well as Vermont.

Additional details provided below and within NVDA’s shared [folder](#).

PRIORITY	<i>Assumes 91 participants</i>	
Renewable	57	63%
Affordability	50	55%
Reducing Carbon Emissions	48	53%
Reliability	34	37%
Natural Resources Impacts	23	25%
Location	22	24%
Local Jobs/Econ Development	21	23%
Generate Your Own	19	21%

*The table above is a compilation of total voting results from both NEK events where participants were asked what their biggest priorities were regarding electricity in Vermont.*

### Events Overview:

#### Event #1 - September 20, 12-1:30pm (online) - NEK Energy Network Meeting

- NVDA hosts a quarterly online convening for energy committees and energy partners, open to the public. The 9/20 event featured in-depth coverage of the PSD-NVDA slide deck adapted with NEK regional context and interactive polling via Slido, as well as Q&A.
- **Materials:** PSD background handouts were shared with the NEK Energy Network prior to

the event and during the (recorded) meeting; all supporting materials were made available [here](#).

- **Incentives:** Participants who stayed until the end had a chance to win a raffle prize of electric lawn equipment.
- **9/20 Online Event Metrics:** Twenty-one (21) attendees participated, representing 10 NEK Communities (Sheffield, Wheelock, Craftsbury, Danville, Glover, Newark, Ryegate, Brighton, St. Johnsbury, Peacham) and six (6) organizations (VCRD, USDA, VEC, VNRC/VECAN, Efficiency Vermont, HEAT Squad).

### **Event #2 - September 24, 12-4pm (in-person, Peacham) - NEK Solarbration**

- In partnership with the Town of Peacham Energy Committee, NVDA co-hosted a regional Energy Fair and celebration at the Town's new 150kW community solar system. The event offered free family-friendly fun, live music and energy education.
- **9/24 In-person Event Metrics:** An estimated 150 people attended and approximately 70 participants interacted with the PSD-NVDA tabling efforts, which included a sticker voting exercise to identify electricity priorities for Vermonters. Participants also had a chance to converse and Q&A with PSD's Anne Margolis and NVDA's Allie Webster, as well as review/take home background information and supporting materials.
- **Incentives:** Anyone who participated in the sticker voting exercise had the opportunity to enter into a raffle to win an electric lawnmower (purchased by NVDA), home energy audit (donated by HEAT Squad), or smart thermostat (donated by Efficiency Vermont).
- **Photos** of NEK Solarbration and the PSD/NVDA engagement efforts are available [here](#).

**Outreach and marketing efforts** for both events were extensive and included online, print, radio, and word of mouth. Posters were distributed NEK-wide. Radio ads across multiple stations directed folks to NVDA's website to learn more, as well as pushed traffic to the PSD's dedicated webpages. NVDA's regional and energy-specific newsletters, as well as many other partner organizations' (at the state and local level) online outreach, cross-promoted the September NEK "Say WATT" events. Personalized outreach to NEK Energy Committees and energy partners helped spread the word. Print ads in local newspapers and online ads on Front Porch Forum were also utilized, as well as NVDA's [press release](#).

### **Event Demographics**

Voluntary demographic data was collected during both events (online and in-person). The majority of participants identified as follows:

- White (62)
- Age 60+ (38), then 45-59 (14)
- Female (40), then male (23)

- Advanced degree (32), then Bachelor's degree (13)
- Total family income (before tax): >\$75K (23), then <\$75K (16)
- Own Home (48), then Rent (10)
- From the NEK (15), then Outside NEK (9) - see further breakdown below:

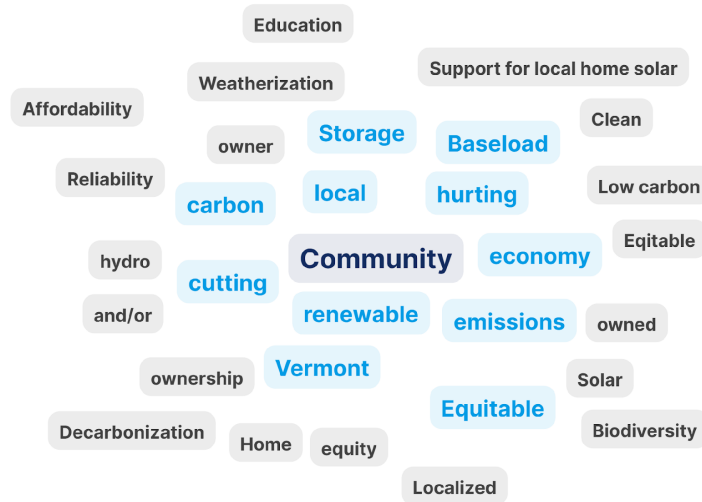
#	NEK	Outside NEK	Organizations
1	Barnet	Barre City	Efficiency Vermont
2	Brighton	Burlington	Heat Squad
3	Brownington	Jericho	USDA
4	Craftsbury	Montpelier	VCRD
5	Danville	Newbury	VEC
6	Glover	Northfield	VNRC/VECAN
7	Greensboro	Plainfield	
8	Newark	Shelburne	
9	Peacham	Winooski	
10	Ryegate		
11	Sheffield		
12	St Johnsbury		
13	Stannard		
14	Westmore		
15	Wheelock		

After discussing VT's current sources of electricity and associated trade-offs, participants at the NEK online event weighed in anonymously on the Renewable Energy Standard (RES) & where they would like to see more electricity coming from. **Solar**, followed by geothermal, was the most common response. **Storage** came up six times. **Community** was also emphasized. All responses from the interactive online polling exercise can be seen in the images below and in the 9/20 event slidedeck available [here](#).



## When it comes to the VT Renewable Energy Standard (RES)...what matters to you?

Wordcloud Poll ☒ 33 responses 15 participants



## Where would you like to see more electricity coming from? What source(s) of electricity do you want? What trade-offs/co-benefits are top of mind? What are the challenges?

Open text poll ☒ 38 responses 16 participants



- Anonymous  
Community solar and storage
- Anonymous  
Non combustion sources
- Anonymous  
Efficiency is still very important
- Anonymous  
Intermittent sources require hot backup: fossil fuel
- Anonymous  
Be resilient meaning redundancy
- Anonymous  
Interregional transmission
- Anonymous  
we need to remember that a mixture is needed, its not always sunny, its not always windy
- Anonymous  
Increase capacity of local munis to offer more



- Anonymous  
Community solar and storage



Anonymous  
Non: intermittent



Anonymous  
We need to protect intact ecosystems NO to industrial wind



- Anonymous  
Solar plus storage



Anonymous  
Need carbon free power that is available all year- not just solar



Anonymous  
Storage



- Anonymous  
Community solar



Anonymous  
More high efficiency biofuels



Anonymous  
Definitely no wind!



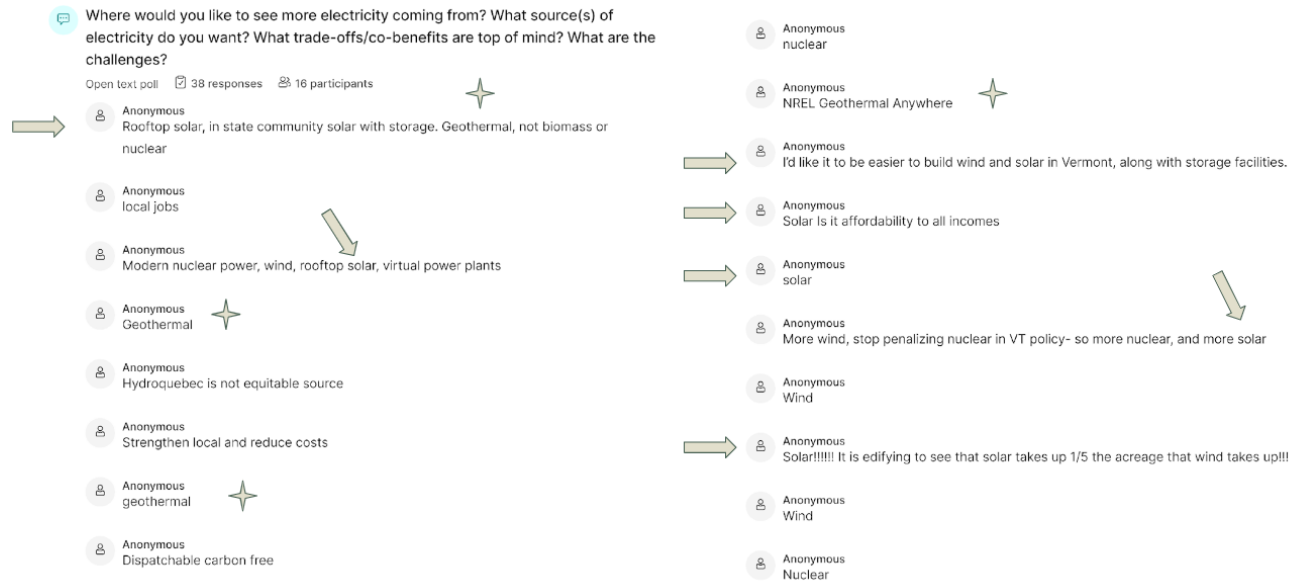
Anonymous  
NO-WIND



Anonymous  
Geothermal for businesses



Anonymous  
Solar challenge is money



The 9/24 in-person NEK event captured participants' electricity priorities via sticker voting, with instructions to vote three times, as well as via open comments with post-it notes (below).



### Post-it Notes under each Priority Category:

#### Renewable:

- "Please use solar + wind + geothermal - not wood"
- "Use storage/grid to make this work - affordable / long term"

**Affordability:**

- “Please offer long term and low rate financing”
- “How awesome to be able to spend my \$\$ to on-site generate”

**Reduce Emissions:**

- *no extra (post-it note) comments*

**Reliability:**

- “Choice of electric co. (it’s monopolized here) :( “
- “Need reliable grids powered by solar, wind, geothermal”
- “Long duration storage”
- “Solve IBR\* problems (\*IBR = inverter based resource)”

**Local Jobs:**

- *no extra (post-it note) comments*

**Natural Resources:**

- *no extra (post-it note) comments*

**Make Your Own**

- “we need flexibility for DERs to provide local reliability! political and technical flexibility
- combo of self + community solar”
- “make your own: I would love to have a wind turbine”

**Location**

- “Not taking up farm land”
- “generated in-state”
- “Town grid supply oriented”
- “portable renewables”
- “in-state”
- “Keep all towers off of mountain ridges”
- “Locale: very \$\$ (expensive) bringing electricity”

**What Else?**

- “VT is a leader? How?”
- “Keep working toward using less - conserving - initiatives for reducing consumption”
- “More training of energy efficiency contractors - not enough now”
- “sustainable consumption”
- “Pumped storage”
- “connectivity to the power grid”

- “more HYDRO”
- “No to nuclear!”
- “YES to nuclear”
- “Hydrogen power”

### **NVDA Reflections on the PSD-RPC RES Engagement Process:**

Overall, these engagement exercises seemed to be a worthwhile opportunity to initiate a dialogue with members of the public regarding electricity in Vermont. NVDA greatly appreciated the ability to collaborate and co-produce the engagement materials with PSD. For example, the resulting handouts were an excellent attempt at distilling complex, nuanced information on electricity sources, trade offs, and existing policies/programs in Vermont. Collective awareness was likely raised overall by such a concerted effort and partnership across all the Regional Planning Commissions (RPCs) and the PSD. Future efforts might benefit from a deeper dive into existing or potential RES policies specifically, rather than speaking to the topic on a more general level. For example, deeper exploration of electricity policies and programs that are most likely to reduce energy burden would be meaningful for the NEK.

While our in-person event tried to appeal to socioeconomically-diverse NEK families (by being free, on a weekend, live music, food, kids activities, etc.) attendance was predominantly white (mostly) females over the age of sixty. Additionally, the majority of participants (across both events) had advanced degrees or higher and made more than the average NEK salary. This could indicate that the focus area of renewable energy (policy) is largely out of reach for (or out of touch with) everyday people. This also points to an opportunity to make clean energy policies and programs more accessible and less abstract, by offering more tangible community-centered (and community-driven) benefits.

We hope that continuing efforts at the state and legislative level will prioritize and deliver electricity programs and policies that will offer the greatest benefits and work best for Vermonters who have been historically, and disproportionately, left behind in the clean energy transition.