



Building strong communities through a well-trained workforce

A publication of the Municipal Electric Systems of Oklahoma

December 2021

MESO revamping Lineworker Apprentice / Onsite JT&S Training Program

Beginning in 2022, MESO will operate under a new, revamped Apprentice Lineworker Program and resulting changes to the Onsite JT&S program.

“The biggest change our members will see is more emphasis on hands-on training especially for our apprentice lineworkers,” said Tom Dougherty, MESO Director of Job Training & Safety. “The added benefit is that during our training sessions, journeymen will receive refreshers and may, in part, help with the training we facilitate.”

Member utilities participating in the JT&S program will have fewer longer training sessions. The result is a total of six additional training hours or 16 annually.

In addition to the changes in the number and length of in-person training session visits, Apprentices will be required to complete a “skills assessment” with a group of journeymen lineworkers. These sessions will be held regionally, and dates will be announced as soon as they become available.

“By spending more time per visit, using hands-on instruction, and adding skills assessments, we

know apprentices are receiving improved training,” Dougherty added.

The 2022 Schedule will be separated into Program areas as follows:

January to mid-February – Program 1: This program is a two-hour classroom session. It provides a detailed overview of the APPA Manual along with a worksheet for the attendees to complete. It also includes hands training to cover Tool & Material Identification and Truck Inventory.

Mid-February to end of March – Program 2: This two-hour session class covers Basic Electric Theory in a classroom setting including how electricity works and how a system is designed. The second part of the session covers Personal Protection Equipment used in an electric utility, how to inspect and care for the equipment. This will be completed hands-on.

April to May – Program 3: This program includes four-hour sessions, hands-on in the field. Participants

(see MESO REVAMPING, page 8)



Best Wishes
for a safe and happy
Christmas Holiday Season
From the Team at MESO

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2022 Public Power Conference

Sponsorship Registration is open for the Public Power Conference

All MESO Associate Members are invited to sponsor and exhibit at the 2022 MESO Public Power Conference being held April 24-26, 2022, in Norman, OK.

Detailed sponsorship information is available in the [2022 Public Power Conference Sponsor Packet](#). The packet outlines all sponsorship levels and additional opportunities to interact with customers or potential customers.

The deadline to register as a sponsor or exhibitor is Friday, April 1, 2022.

The annual Public Power Conference brings together leaders of municipal electric systems across the State of Oklahoma and neighboring states. By participating in the 2022 conference, you will have the opportunity to connect with key decision-makers. This is a great marketing opportunity for any company that wants to partner with and serve municipalities.

More than 200 participants attend the Public Power Conference representing municipally owned electric systems in Oklahoma, Kansas, and Arkansas. This annual event draws city managers, supervisors, lineworkers, and customer service professionals, so regardless of who you are looking to partner with, they may be at this conference.

Sponsors can [register online](#) or visit www.meso.org.

Registration questions may be directed to Deborah Gonzales, Director of Administration and Finance, at deborah@meso.org.

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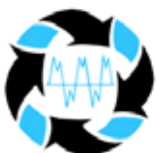
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MESO at 50

Looking forward to MESO's tomorrow

Building on 50 years of quality service and programming can be a challenge. But it's one that MESO's Board of Directors and staff are excited to accept.

There are three key focus areas members will see changes to in the coming months.

- The establishment of a government relations program
- Changes to the Apprentice training & development program
- Revisions to the on-site Job Training & Safety program

Government Relations is critical for the success of MESO's members. Ensuring our members, legislative leaders, and regulatory officials know and understand the value of public power will be the foundation of this program. To lead the program, the Board of Directors selected Cheryl Adams as the association's Assistant General Manager beginning in January. January's newsletter will have a feature article on Cheryl.

Answering the call from members, MESO's Apprentice program is going to offer more comprehensive hands-on training opportunities throughout the year. These training events will be hosted by members who will also aid in providing assistant instructors. Through this process, more apprentices can attend the training and still receive one-on-one attention from an experienced

journeyman. Through the small group, hands-on process, apprentices will learn how different departments approach tasks while ensuring each task is performed safely and correctly.

The hands-on approach will also be the guiding feature of our on-site JT&S program. We learn best by doing. A typical JT&S session may include a short classroom review of a task or OSHA training requirement, discussion, and then opportunities to practice the skill correctly under the purview of a MESO instructor.

The other big change to the JT&S program centers on our members having the opportunity to select training options. Rather than offering a set number of training classes for each member, a member will have 16 training hours available, either in 2-hour or 4-hour blocks based on the available topic. This provides members the ability to choose training topics that meet specific needs or goals for their crew members.

As we did for the first 50 years, MESO continues to evolve. The needs of our members will always take center stage as we continue to offer safety and operational training, professional development training, and conferences.

The critical key, though, remains the same. **LET US HEAR FROM YOU.** What can MESO do for you? Our staff is an email or phone call away.

From the American Public Power Association

Residential Utility Customer Assistance Funded with Coronavirus Relief Funds Not Taxable: IRS

The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) has released guidance indicating that residential utility assistance funded through the Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Fund (CSLFRF) will not need to be reported as income.

Likewise, utility companies providing residential utility assistance funded through CSLFRF do not need to file a Form 1099 or other information to report such assistance, the IRS announced on Nov. 17.

Issued in the form of a "Frequently Asked Questions" (FAQ) list, the guidance will allow state, local, and utility programs funded with CSLFRF without fear of facing taxes on the value of that assistance later.

It also means that granting agencies and utilities do not need to prepare to issue information returns to the IRS detailing relief provided to residential customers. The guidance does not cover assistance provided to commercial customers.

For additional details, click [here](#).

In October 2021, 21 U.S. House members from California and both of California's senators sent a letter to the agency asking the IRS to clarify the issue.

In September, a similar letter was sent to by the American Public Power Association, the California Municipal Utilities Association and 15 national organizations representing water, gas, and electric utilities; consumer groups; energy assistance groups; cities; counties; and state and local financial officers.

MESO partnering with Okie 811 for One-Call Law Changes Webinar

During the 2021 session of the Oklahoma Legislature, HB 2028 was passed and enacted into law effective November 1, 2021.

MESO is partnering with Okie 811 to present an update webinar titled "Understanding Recent One-Call Law Changes." The session is free of charge and is scheduled for 8:30 a.m. Tuesday, February 8, 2022.

Susan Bohl, Okie 811 Executive Director, will present the session and will discuss updates resulting from HB 2028 to the Oklahoma Underground Facilities Damage Prevention Act.

Highlights of the changes include:

- The Life of a Ticket will be 14 Calendar Days
- Mandatory Positive Response for Members, Excavators & OKIE811
- Provisions for State of Emergency Declaration
- Required Damage Reporting to OKIE811 in addition to the Operator
- Better Defined Excavator Responsibilities around Hazardous Pipelines HB-2028
- Excavator may be liable to Operator for misuse of Emergency Tickets
- Excavator may be liable to Operator for Excessive & Unreasonable Updates on a Ticket

Register at www.meso.org or by clicking here: [Understanding Recent One-Call Law Changes Registration](#).

About Registration:

- Registration is free of charge.
- Anyone who wants to attend must register individually or one registration may be used if planning to gather a group at one location.
- To register a valid email must be provided.
- After registration is complete, a confirmation email with login information will be sent.

Questions may be directed to Jeff Kaufmann, Director of Communications and Professional Development, at jeffk@meso.org.



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Please update your contact information to reflect our team's updated email addresses:

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The Electric Supervisor Development Course Returns in March 2022

The Electric Supervisor Development (ESD) Course provides Journeyman Lineworkers with the skills necessary to lead high-performing teams while enhancing critical on-the-job skills. The program kicks off with its first classroom training session March 24, 2022, and the final session will be in November 2023.

“Efficient and effective organizations and teams develop their people,” said Jeff Kaufmann, Director of Communications and Professional Development who leads the ESD Course. “Preparing skilled professionals to become effective leaders who train and develop others requires enhanced people skills and a continuing development of their soft skills.”

The course combines 16 Development (PD) topics (1/2 day per topic for a total of eight days) focusing on Leadership, Teambuilding, Customer Service, and Communications. It also includes and three Electric

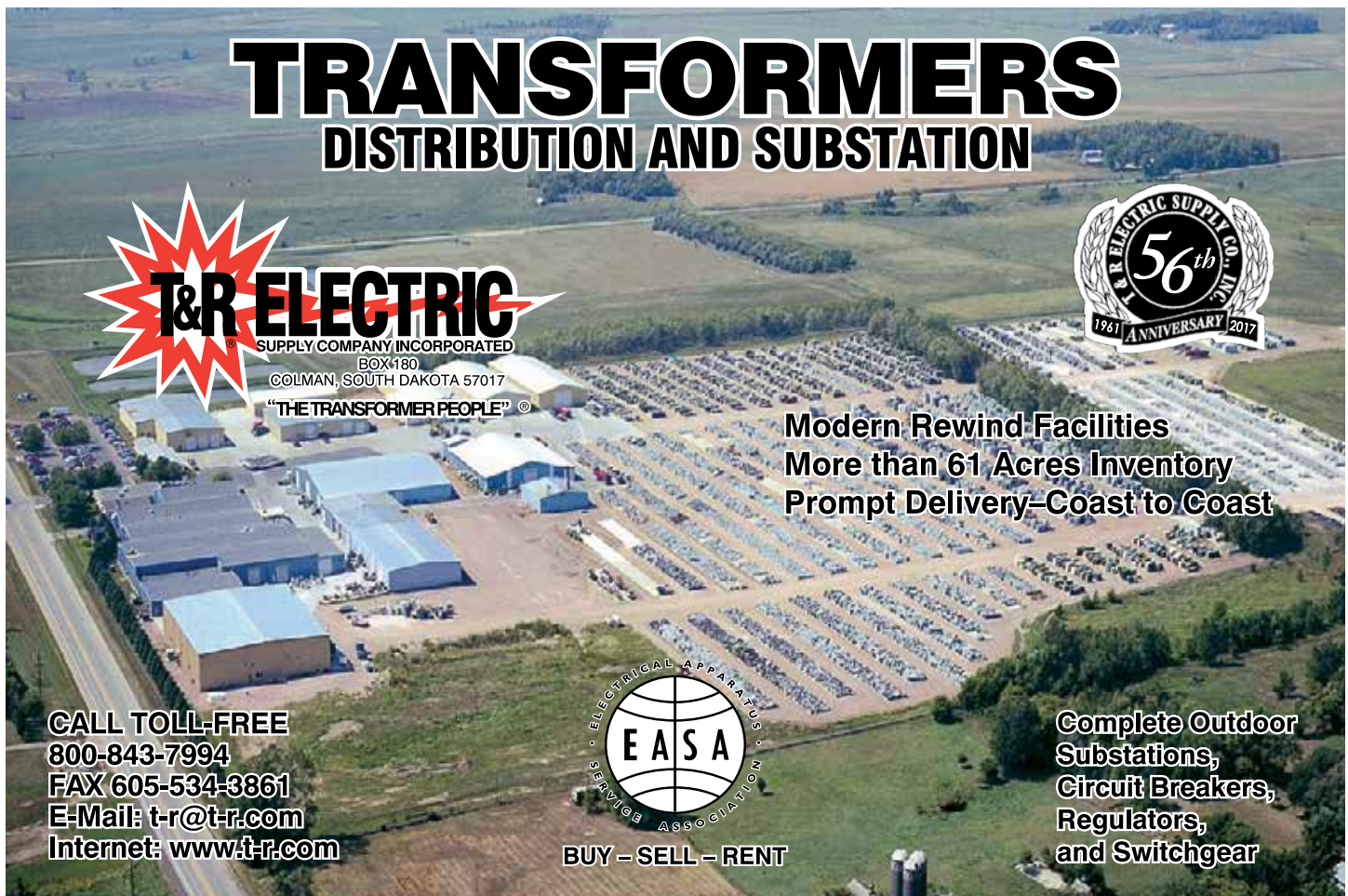
Utility (EU) Classroom sessions over two classroom days.

To successfully complete the program, participants will be required to complete additional EU work including serving as a judge at the MESO Lineworkers Rodeo and coaching at MESO JT&S Specialty events such as Climbing School – Level 1; Lineman school; or Underground 101.


Class size is limited. Registration and complete course information will be available in January 2022.

The cost of the program is \$899 per attendee per year and \$799 for each additional attendee per year. GRDA & OMPA have slots as part of their respective MESO membership agreements. Before registering,


Questions about the Electric Supervisor Development Training Program can be directed to Jeff Kaufmann at jeffk@meso.org.




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From the American Public Power Association

Understanding and Accessing Federal Funds Available to Public Power Utilities

By Mike Julian, Chief Revenue Officer, Tantalus

Public power utilities face pressures that require wholesale transformation. Extreme weather events occur with increasing frequency, stressing grids and causing destructive power outages. Consumers are transitioning to low-carbon, disruptive technologies such as renewables and electric vehicles. New regulatory requirements are charging utilities with reducing their environmental footprints, forcing the transition to smart grid solutions and fiber-to-the-home (FTTH) communications programs.

It's an expansive—and expensive—transformation. But budgets are tight throughout the U.S. - where will the money for these long-term investments come from?

Federal Programs – New and Old

The recently passed Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act is top of mind for many people in the utility industry, and it will invest billions in the sector. But even in a typical year, 1,000 federal grant programs, working through 26 federal agencies, provide a total of more than \$400 billion to public agencies for investment in a wide variety of initiatives. Much of this annual funding can support smart grid solution projects, through programs such as:

- [Federal Emergency Management Agency's Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities \(BRIC\) Grants \(\\$1 billion\)](#)
- [USDA Rural Utility Services Electric Program \(\\$5.5 billion\)](#)
- [HUD Community Development Block Grant Mitigation Program \(variable\)](#)

[Learn more about these programs](#)

And in the past 18 months alone, three major pieces of legislation passed, providing \$4.8 trillion in extraordinary funding for COVID response and economic stimulus, including:

- \$288 million in Broadband Infrastructure Deployment grants through last December's COVID Relief and Omnibus Spending bill
- \$350 billion in American Rescue Plan Act direct allocations to states, cities, and counties for flexible infrastructure investments, including sustainable technology and smart grid solutions; \$10 billion of this was for states, territories, and Tribes to cover the costs of capital projects like broadband infrastructure

(see FEDERAL FUNDS AVAILABLE, page 10)

City of Stillwater Pursues Energy Saving Initiatives with Renewable Energy Task Force

In 2020, The City of Stillwater created the Renewable Energy Task Force to research and advise City Council on initiatives to establish clean energy goals and benchmarks.

City Council revised and adopted the “Distributed Generation” policy in early 2021. The policy reduces costs that were previously associated when switching to renewable energy options, such as solar panels and wind turbines.

While the initial installation expense of solar panels may be considered costly, the monthly utility cost are less. Some residents also believe the change is helpful to the environment.

“The cost of installing residential solar panels has dropped 27% in the last 7 years. Additionally, there is a 26% Federal solar tax credit currently available. “The payoff period will be rapid, thanks to these changes,” said Henri Uehara, Renewable Energy Task Force member.

Before the policy changes, Stillwater used a pricing system often referred to as, “Buy All Sell All.” Which means, when solar panels are installed on the residence and hooked up to the grid, the customer may sell 100% of the solar output to the grid and buy 100% of the energy usage from Stillwater Electric Utility. The “grid” is the infrastructure that delivers

electricity to the home, which includes all hardware, software, maintenance, and customer support with the electricity service. For example, residential customers currently pay a \$9.80 per month charge plus a cost for each kWh of electricity used.

Under the new policy, if you have solar panels on your home, you will pay approximately \$0.030-\$0.040 per kWh used instead of the higher retail price of \$0.107 that would be charged for a non-energy producing home.

In addition to the \$9.80 customer charge that every residential customer pays, an energy-producing residential customer will also pay a monthly service availability fee of \$42 that covers the costs of service.

“This is great news,” said Uehara. “When it’s all calculated, if your monthly bill is over \$51.80 per month, or about 400 kWh, then having solar panels makes sense.”

The average energy use in Stillwater for a residential customer is 960 kWh. If the customer does not have solar panels, the cost of this electricity would be approximately \$115 per month. If the customer does have solar panels, the cost would be approximately \$65 per month.

(see STILLWATER PURSUES, page 10)

[From the American Public Power Association](#)

New Report Sees Record Levels Of Wind and Solar Energy Additions In 2022

Record levels of wind and solar generation additions are expected to come online in 2022, according to a new report from S&P Global Market Intelligence.

“It’s going to be a record year for renewable energy development in the U.S. in 2022,” with 44 gigawatts (GW) of solar and 27 GW of wind power set to be installed alongside more than 8 GW of battery storage, said Richard Sansom, Head of Commodities Research at S&P Global Market Intelligence.

The report said that the growth in wind, solar and storage will be facilitated by the creation of dedicated programs such as virtual power purchase agreements and green tariffs.

At the same time, early plant retirement costs due to the energy transition will present challenges for utilities and state regulators with 29 GW of coal retirements planned for 2020 through 2025.

The report also said that U.S. utility capital expenditures are expected to remain on the upswing, with investments in upgrading and modernizing the country’s aging energy and water infrastructure reaching \$63 billion and utility renewables spending surpassing \$14 billion in 2022.

The S&P Global Market Intelligence 2022 Electric, Natural Gas and Water Utilities Outlook Report is part of a “Big Picture Outlook” series published by the division’s research group that provides a look ahead of key strategic trends and opportunities.

OMPA's Palma Lough named Vice Chair of Customer Connections Group Planning Committee

New officers for the Customer Connections section and planning committees – including OMPA's Palma Lough - were named at the closing session of the American Public Power Association's (APPA) 2021 Customer Connections Conference in Scottsdale, Ariz.

Nicki Parks, Customer Care Manager, Farmington Electric Utility System, New Mexico, will chair APPA's Customer Connections Section in 2022. Lough, Member Relations & Training Manager, Oklahoma Municipal Power Authority, is vice chair.

Alice Tucker, Customer Service Manager, Easley Combined Utilities, South Carolina, will chair the Customer Service Planning Committee; Lily Burgess, Office Manager, Stowe Electric Department, Vermont, will serve as vice chair. Caitlin Aburrow, Senior Director, Global Product Marketing, Oracle Utilities will serve as an advisory officer.

Koral Miller, Energy Services Manager, Mason County PUD 3, Shelton, Washington, will chair the Energy Innovation Planning Committee; Kristofor

Sellstrom, Energy and Gas Resources Manager, Jamestown Board of Public Utilities, New York will serve as vice chair. Samantha Hart, Director of Development and Innovation, Milepost Consulting will serve as an advisory officer.

Dale Odom, Supervisor, Business Development Services, Electricities of North Carolina will chair the Key Accounts Planning Committee; Andy Pollard, Electric Superintendent, Harrisonville Municipal Utilities, Missouri will serve as vice chair. Mary Malone, Director, Account Development, Questline Services will serve as an advisory officer.

Heather Contant, Director of Government & Community Relations, Delaware Municipal Electric Corporation will chair the Public Communications Planning Committee; Valerie Larson-Holmes, Director of Communications, Missouri River Energy Services, Sioux Falls, South Dakota will serve as vice chair.

For more information on APPA's Customer Connections sections and committees, contact CustomerConnections@PublicPower.org.

MESO Revamping

(continued from page 1)

will practice Bucket and Pole Top Rescues. This training is required annually per APPA guidelines. To go along with rescue training, member utilities will have a choice between Aerial and Digger Derrick Operation; Backhoe & Trencher Operation; or, Inspection and use of Equipment to complete this training session.

June to Mid-August – Program 4: Participating utilities can select between sessions covering the design, installation, and troubleshooting for Underground Electric System or Overhead Electric System. Sessions are four hours and hands-on.

August to September – Program 5: Participating utilities may choose from the list below for either a two- or four-hour class. Pole Installation and Inspection: the best practice of installing and inspection of utility poles; On-site Field Work Substation Inspection and Maintenance: held at your substation to learn what to look for and complete a detailed report; or, Lineman's Rodeo Practice: on-site utility practice on all events for Rodeo.

October to December – Program 6: Participating utilities have the option to select a two-hour class from the following: Overhead and Underground Transformer Connections: single phase to 3-phase

bank building, using best practice methods; Service Installation and Inspection: installing and inspection of customer underground or overhead service; or, Outage Troubleshooting: best practices, line patrol storm damage and maintenance guidelines.

In addition to on-site training, the MESO will be presenting a series of specialized training opportunities across the state. The training classes and dates are (all dates are subject to change):

- **Climbing School – Level 1, Cushing** – March 15-16
- **Lineman school – Fairview** – June 14-15-16
- **Underground 101 – Kingfisher** – July 26-27
- **MESO Lineworker's Rodeo & Safety Training (Metering Issues) – Edmond** – September 21-22
- **Why we ground/Hotline school – TBD** – November 15-16

"We appreciate our board and members who asked us to look at our Apprentice Program," said Tom Rider, General Manager. "I believe this is a very good framework, and we will always be looking for ways to improve and best serve our members."

For more information, contact Tom Dougherty, Director of Job Training & Safety, at tomd@meso.org.

GRDA holds Municipal Customer Group Meeting

A crowd of approximately 80 attended the Grand River Dam Authority's Municipal Customer Group meeting at the Buffalo Rock event center in Cushing Wednesday, November 17.

The meeting was the opportunity for GRDA management to provide updates on several issues to customers, while also receiving important feedback. The day's agenda included a presentation from GRDA Finance on the power cost adjustment (PCA), as well as a discussion of the special PCAx, associated with the costs of February's Winter Storm Uri. GRDA also provided information on its operations through the storm and the role it played in the overall Southwest Power Pool (SPP) effort during Uri.

That was followed by a discussion on automated metering infrastructure (AMI) and a general presentation on the electric systems infrastructure program. GRDA closed the meeting with a Q&A session to answer any other questions from the large customer group.

"I wanted to express our sincere thanks for welcoming the GRDA staff and our GRDA Municipal Customer Group to Buffalo Rock and to the City of Cushing," said GRDA Customer Relations Manager Jerry Cook, as he thanked Cushing City Manager Terry Brannon and his team for helping to host the event. "This was a very successful meeting as a result of the dedication from Team Cushing who welcomed us and provided such professional support."



GRDA Chairman/Wagoner City Administrator Dwayne Elam addresses participants at the GRDA Municipal Customer Group meeting

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Stillwater Pursues

(continued from page 7)

“If a person creates too much electricity with their solar panels, they automatically sell it back to grid,” said Uehara. “But it’s more likely that a solar system will only supply part of the electricity needed, so the grid is how the rest of the electricity gets to your home.”

Solar panels may benefit those who own an electric vehicle because they can charge their vehicles using

renewable power and pay approximately \$1/100 miles instead of \$3/100 miles.

The task force believes the policy is a step in the right direction. The group continues to explore other options for establishing clean and renewable energy by 2050 and will present their plan to City Council in January 2022.

Federal Funds Available

(continued from page 6)

- \$175 billion in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act to implement smart grid solutions that improve grid resiliency and expand broadband access, as well as an additional \$7.5 billion towards EV infrastructure

To give you a sense of scale, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 was a \$787 billion package that provided \$7 billion for broadband deployment and \$4.5 billion in smart grid investments. This new legislation surpasses the 2009 Act by an exponential factor.

How the Funds Are Distributed

For those utilities that want to access the federal resources available to them, it’s important to understand how these funds flow.

- Formula funds are distributed by the federal government to state and local governments based on population and other statistics. One example you may be familiar with is the Community Development Block Grant
- Competitive funds require the completion of an application in order to receive them, for example FEMA’s BRIC grant.

Many of these programs address a broad scope of grid infrastructure projects, but there are some that focus on increasing the availability of broadband services. Many utilities are developing broadband fiber networks to offer internet, phone and video directly to homes and businesses. They can then also leverage the network to improve their grid operations. These efforts often qualify for federal funding—utilities just need to know how to access it!

In order to access federal funding for a project, a utility must apply through the proper channels for the respective fund. Although the process for each available fund and their managing departments can

be different, successful applicants for federal funding have some common characteristics:

- A use case that aligns with federal funding streams
- A local commitment to this effort
- The support of local government and non-government partners
- Data to support the request
- A history of solid stewardship of grant funding
- Engage the support of federal elected officials to advance the funding application

An understanding of the steps and requirements needed to secure funds is critical to a successful application.

The Bottom Line

There are federal funds available for many of the projects and investments that utilities are evaluating today. Many of these funds have deadlines for applications—now is the time to begin the process!

There are several organizations to help you identify and access federal funds:

- APPA has two related virtual courses:
 - [Making Today’s Billions of Dollars of Broadband Funding Opportunities Work for You](#)
 - [Broadband Partnerships Meet Federal and State Funding Opportunities: The Time is Right](#)
- Tantalus’ [Funding Solutions Page](#) provides information on various opportunities and reviews utilities’ most frequently asked questions

We encourage everyone in the public power and electric cooperative utility space to explore the many ways federal funding can enable a transition towards a smarter, more resilient energy sector.



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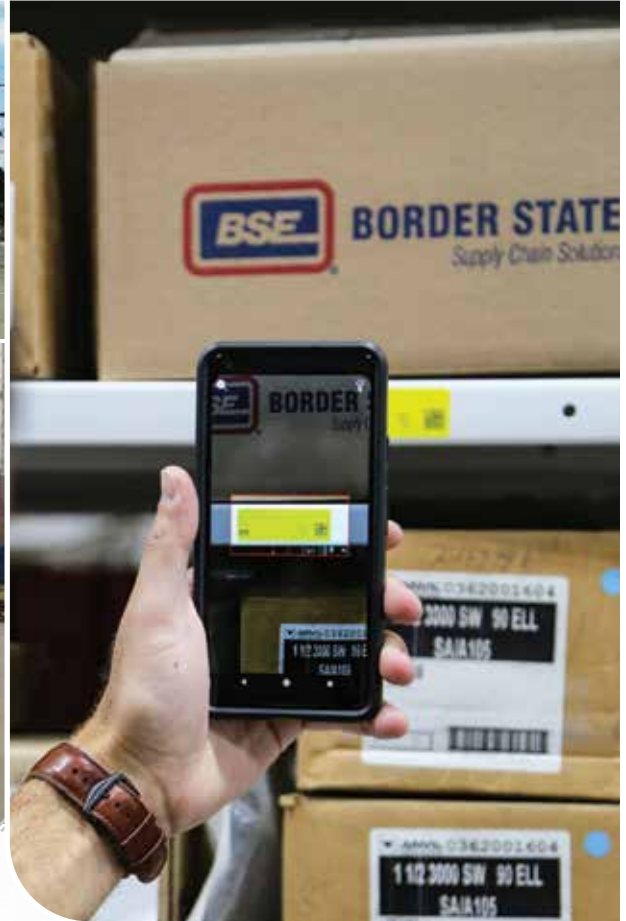
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