



Maine Department of Energy Resources (DOER) Front of the Meter Distributed Energy Resources Program Design Public Webinar Summary

September 2, 2026, 11:00am – 12:00pm

Overview

The Maine Department of Energy Resources (DOER) held a public webinar on September 2, 2026, from 11:00am – 12:00pm to provide project context and detail a straw proposal design of a front of the meter (FTM) distributed energy resources (DER) program. DOER has retained DNV and Current Energy Group (CEG), the “Consultant Team,” to support the development of this program.

This meeting was held virtually via Zoom and brought together DOER, the Consultant Team, and more than 90 members of the public. The objectives of this initial webinar were to:

1. Share FTM DER program design process with interested stakeholders.
2. Discuss program straw proposal with stakeholders, elicit feedback that can inform final draft.
3. Provide update on next steps, including further opportunities for straw proposal feedback and Benefit-Cost Analysis.

The agenda items included:

- DOER introduction and background
- Project overview, objectives, and context
- Framework and program design process
- Straw proposal review
- Participant input and discussion of straw proposal via a general question and answer (Q&A) opportunity
- Upcoming activities and next steps for PUC submission

Additional information about DOER and this initiative, including meeting slides and other materials, is available on the [DOER website](#). Below is a high-level summary of the meeting discussion.

Welcome and introductions

DOER Acting Commissioner Celina Cunningham welcomed attendees, reviewed the agenda for the webinar, and provided an overview of DOER, Maine’s cabinet-level state energy department tasked with activities relating to state energy policies, planning, and

development. Acting Commissioner Cunningham outlined how to participate throughout the webinar using the Zoom Q&A button to ask questions throughout the presentation and during the allotted participant discussion time.

Webinar objectives and project context

Ari Michelson from the Consultant Team introduced himself and co-presenters, summarized the objectives of the webinar, and provided an overview of the project and legislative context.

Public Law 2025 Chapter 430 (L.D. 1777) requires DOER to design a program or programs to encourage the development of FTM DER in the state. If the Public Utilities Commission (PUC) finds that the proposal provides benefits to ratepayers in the State in excess of the costs to ratepayers, the commission shall by rule implement the program or programs. This program would succeed the net energy billing program.

Mr. Michelson reviewed the considerations included in the legislation, guiding objectives for the program framework and program design process, and reviewed the project timeline, noting that the draft program proposal was released on August 27, 2026, with written comments accepted through Friday, September 11, 2026. The final proposal to the PUC is due September 30, 2026.

Framework and program design process

Dan Cross-Call from the Consultant Team reviewed the approach to framework development. The framework development is informed by two guiding questions:

1. What grid services and value streams should be recognized?
2. How will the services be compensated, and how will costs be recovered?

Mr. Cross-Call shared additional references used in developing the framework, including the U.S. Department of Energy's Grid Modernization Laboratory Consortium (GMLC), a framework developed by the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory (LBNL). This discussion included a review of Maine's needs and goals, including meeting increasing load growth, advancing clean energy goals, investment deferral, and providing reliability and resilience.

This section then examined three program approaches that were considered to develop a straw proposal for FTM DER development in Maine:

1. Avoided cost approach with administratively determined compensation in which each participating resource receives equivalent incentives.
2. Distribution First approach where projects are constructed and operated primarily to serve distribution-level, zonal needs as informed by resource planning and network requirements.
3. Wholesale First approach where projects are built and operated to participate in wholesale markets through FERC 2222 pathways; distribution-level services are possible but are not the siting or operational focus of DER resource.

Mr. Cross-Call noted that within these approaches, the Consultant Team considered additional variants and methods for compensating DERs, such as the Value of DER, Non-Wires Alternatives, and Load Reduction Programs.

Finally, Mr. Cross-Call reviewed the benefits and drawbacks of the individual approaches considered, highlighting the conclusion that a hybrid approach can maximize program benefits and minimize drawbacks.

Straw Proposal Review

Ms. Christina Thayer from the Consultant Team presented an overview of the Straw Proposal, which was designed to deliver a stack of values tied to grid services through two compatible, stackable parts:

1. **Part 1: Standard Offer Block**, which encourages development of local clean energy projects that serve customers utility-territory wide, integrating with the existing Standard Offer processes. In the proposed Standard Offer Block, projects would enter long-term contracts for delivered energy and renewable energy certificates (RECs). Value would be delivered through predetermined requirements such as performance obligations, dispatch instructions, and environmental attributes. Output from projects would be bundled and integrated into Standard Offer Service supply obligations. Maine Class 1/Class 1A RECs would be applied to satisfy compliance with state Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS) obligations.
2. **Part 2: Distribution System Service (DSS)**, which encourages developers to build local clean energy projects to support distribution level needs, informed by planning processes and system analyses. The DSS procurements could provide several potential compensation values, a selection of which includes:
 - a. Grid stability services such as voltage management and substation load relief,

- b. Avoided or deferred distribution infrastructure investments, identified and priced using utility Integrated Grid Planning (IGP) results, and
- c. Distribution network peak and load management, with compensation reflecting the impact on net load at specific locations and during specific times.

Ms. Thayer shared several illustrative examples, highlighting where and how each Part of the proposed structure could provide opportunities for development. This review first looked at an illustrative map of Maine to show geographically how this proposal could identify grid locations (“zones”) for hypothetical development. An additional example explored the proposal in practice for a theoretical 3-megawatt (MW) Solar-Plus-Storage project, highlighting both Standard Offer and Distribution System Service performance and compensation throughout an initial contract term.

Ms. Thayer then reviewed anticipated key roles and responsibilities for utilities, project developers, the PUC, and DOER. The straw proposal presentation concluded by highlighting implementation considerations both at program launch and as capabilities mature, identifying potential parameters for dispatch priority, settlement, project interconnection, and DER aggregation.

Public input and discussion

Webinar attendees were able to post questions in the Q&A box in Zoom throughout the presentation. A dedicated period at the end of the webinar addressed several of these questions and solicited public input into the straw proposal.

Webinar presenters answered some of the questions that participants posed via the Zoom Q&A chat in writing throughout the presentation, and during this time, Mr. Cross-Call, Ms. Thayer, and Ethan Tremblay from DOER answered many of the remaining questions verbally during this section of the webinar. The questions and discussion included the following themes:

- **Questions about extending the program to behind-the-meter (BTM) systems.** Presenters clarified that the legislation directs DOER to only consider FTM applications.
- **Questions and clarifications on how this new program will impact existing participants in the prior net metering and net energy billing programs, and whether the new program will include a community solar aspect.** DOER clarified that this program is primarily focused on FTM projects that would be developed in the future; participation from projects and customers already participating in NEB

would be subject to existing contractual obligations. Presenters noted that the current design does not include a community solar subscriber aspect.

- **Questions about what states have adopted a similar program to the straw proposal.** Presenters guided interested parties to the written draft proposal open for comment, noting that the Consultant Team highlighted similar programs throughout the discussion of individual program approaches considered in development of the straw proposal.
- **Questions about where to find the straw proposal and key inputs such as the utility IGPs.** Presenters reiterated that the draft proposal can be found on the DOER website: <https://www.maine.gov/energy/divisions/planning-and-policy/ftm-der>. The utility IGPs can be found at the following links:
 - [CMP IGP](#)
 - [Versant IGP](#)
- **Questions about how this work will impact end-users in Maine, including commercial, industrial, and residential electricity bill impacts.** Presenters noted that this program design is focused on Front-of-the-meter (FTM) projects, so the program is intended to benefit all ratepayer classes. The benefits of the program would primarily flow through overall bill savings.
- **Questions about timeline of program rollout, how the program design would interact with other ongoing activities in the State, as well as specific features being considered in the straw proposal.** Presenters noted the filing deadline of 9/30/26, after which the PUC will conduct its review of the proposal on ratepayer impacts. Presenters encouraged stakeholders to share further comments on timing, obstacles, and other features of the straw proposal in their written feedback, due 9/11/26.
- **Question about the exclusion of nuclear power in the list of acceptable clean sources.** DOER noted that by law this program is intended for renewable resources as defined in 35-A MRS section 3210 (2) (B-3), which includes (paraphrasing a bit) Fuel cells; Tidal power; Geothermal installations; Hydroelectric generators that meet all state and federal fish passage requirements applicable to the generator; Biomass generators that are fueled by wood, wood waste or landfill gas; Anaerobic digestion of by-products of waste from animals or agricultural crops, food or vegetative material, algae or organic refuse; Wind power; or Solar power. The statute also requires the eligible resources be connected to the distribution system.

Mr. Cross-Call previewed a sample of questions included in the Straw Proposal where the Consultant Team is seeking stakeholder feedback. These included:

1. **Price Setting.** Options for the Part 1 Standard Offer Block include an avoided cost analysis, an informational solicitation, a competitive solicitation, a modified Standard Offer retail rate, and a hybrid. Which of these options would be best?
2. **Capacity.** How should capacity be treated and valued in the proposal?
3. **Utility Planning.** What limitations exist that could hinder the implementation of DSS and how might they be mitigated or alleviated?
4. **Cost allocation.** What additional cost allocation options or considerations should be accounted for?
5. **What additional aspects** of an FTM DER program should be considered?

Next steps and closeout

Mr. Tremblay summarized subsequent steps underway. These next steps include:

- Benefit Costs Analysis (BCA) to determine whether the straw proposal is ratepayer beneficial using the Utility Cost Test (UCT)
- Feasibility assessment to identify potential barriers, implementation requirements, and trade-offs that may not be captured during the BCA modeling.

Mr. Tremblay noted that DOER is accepting written comments on the draft proposal through September 11, 2026, highlighting Section 6 in the draft proposal that identifies specific topics where stakeholder feedback is particularly requested. Perspectives on questions posed in the webinar were also invited for submission during the comment period. Written comments should be submitted via email to DOER@maine.gov, and Mr. Tremblay directed stakeholders to www.maine.gov/energy for the full draft proposal and comment instructions.

Mr. Tremblay thanked attendees for their participation and adjourned the webinar.