



NATIONAL ENERGY & UTILITY AFFORDABILITY COALITION

### Summary

The National Energy Utility and Affordability Coalition held its 2022 Annual conference in New Orleans, LA after two years of virtual meetings due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The conference theme was Rising with Resiliency. The conference this year addressed challenges brought on by the pandemic and how agencies and utilities managed through this crisis. The city was welcoming and busy pre and post conference with events all over the city. A record-breaking number of 750+ conference attendees, exhibitors, speakers, and guests were onsite at the Marriott New Orleans Hotel on Canal Street in the heart of the city.

This year's conference highlights:

- 4 pre-conference sessions in the afternoon, 258 attendees
- 1 offsite pre con at the Sankofa Wetlands Park with 87 attendees
- 5 Plenary Sessions focused on Energy Equity and Honoring Energy Heroes
- 50+ breakout sessions, 8 rooms with 7 concurrent sessions and the last sessions was more than 1 hour. We adjusted the timing of sessions to end early to allow free time to explore NOLA
  - LIHEAP 101
  - Energy equity and reaching marginalized and vulnerable populations
  - Water affordability, LIHWAP, and the future of water assistance
  - Energy efficiency, weatherization, and renewables
  - Compelling change through advocacy, policy, and education
- Recording breaking registration and attendance
- Offsite dinner cruise
- Theme of New Orleans spread throughout the conference
- Silent Auction raised a record number

The following listing of best practices offers highlights of the preparation and the conference activities.

### **Best Practices and Recommendations**

#### **Hotel: Meeting Space**

The meeting space was excellent. There was ample room to do everything we wanted to do.

We expanded one breakout session to be two rooms and the hotel was accommodating.

- The general session room was exceptionally large, and we needed to set landscape and at time the room did look a bit empty on the far side. We set the general session in rounds of 7.
  - AV set was with (4) 8x14 screens
  - Stage was a 16'x24'x24" riser in the front of the room
- We had 7 concurrent breakouts, and breakouts were all on one floor and just one level below the general session.
  - Set was max in theatre
  - Riser in front of room with a head table

#### **Recommendations:**

- ***If budget allows, add stage greenery***
- ***Consider reducing stage depth size if not using evening function***



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**Hotel: AV Company (Encore)**

The hotel AV team Encore was a good partner onsite and offering was more expensive than past years due to the larger size of the rooms and pre cons. We negotiate pricing and rates. We rented laptops from Smart Source and in a pinch, we needed a couple LCD projectors since the NEUAC projectors were either broken or of a lower lens quality than needed for the larger rooms we used.

**Recommendation:**

- *Budget for the general session room to have an IMAG option since it is a large room with key speakers.*
- *LCD projectors for the breakout rooms need larger lumens*
- *Laptops need current Windows software or have NEUAC purchase for future usage.*

**Hotel: Food & Beverage**

The food in NOLA at the hotel was delicious. We planned for a plated Chicken entrée one day for lunch and Short Rib for the other. Thursday’s breakfast was themed as a New Orleans style breakfast buffet. Attendees dined from the buffet only and did not stay for the general session. We did not order for the full number of attendees but will consider reducing the numbers in 2023 even more. The board members love dessert and want to have this at lunch and not as a break.

**Recommendations:**

- *Review and consider reducing guarantees for FB even more for breakfast*
- *This year we did 15% - can consider being a bit more aggressive with this number for breakfast*
  - *NOTE: hotel may push back and not set general session for more if guarantee is less.*

**Hotel: Room Block**

The hotel was a fantastic partner for our conference, especially since we were unsure how many attendees would join us in NOLA, and it was 2 years since our last in person event. Our room block was reduced less than a year prior to protect any attrition issues per our clause in the agreement by 10%. We did end up adding rooms back into the block to accommodate our room pick up numbers. We had to increase guest rooms for earlier in the week for the pre con session and we are thankful the hotel was a great partner with adding rooms multiple times. As of May 31, the New Orleans Marriott was sold out for housing which was prior to our cutoff date. The final room pick up noted below shows 103% and no attrition.

**Recommendations:**

- *Continue to monitor the hotel room block and review right after the annual conference to make any adjustments for the future conference*
- *Move any special concession rooms from the main block quickly to the special room block to allow the main block to stay available.*

New Orleans, LA 2022	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon- PRECON	Tues	Wed	Thur	TOTAL
	6/24	6/25	6/26	6/27	6/28	6/29	6/30	
Contracted	15	70	165	550	538	520	85	1943
<i>10% reduction</i>	10	59	104	481	465	447	98	1674
Final Pick up	11	41	253	513	524	505	147	2003
<i>Percent</i>	<i>2%</i>	<i>8%</i>	<i>48%</i>	<i>98%</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>96%</i>	<i>28%</i>	<i>103%</i>



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### **Exhibitors**

We had 17 exhibitors. Barb assisted with the sales outreach and MSI managed logistics. The exhibitors set up on Monday as we had a reception in their area. Some exhibitors were not able to set up due to flights.

#### **Recommendation:**

- *Revise recommendations on pricing and offerings*
- *Contract exhibitors early to sign up for next year*

### **Sponsorship**

We were fortunate with many sponsors again this year and had six levels. The charging station was a success, and the sponsor will want to consider this again in 2023. We did branded lanyards this year but missed adding NEUAC, some attendees were confused if it was our conference seeing these lanyards. Sponsors recognized on the website, conference digital book and onsite.

#### **Recommendation:**

- *Charge more for Lanyard sponsorship since it is front-and-center option and be co-branded with NEUAC*

### **Printed Materials: Save-the-Date, Marketing Brochure, Conference Program**

Reduced the number of items to print and we did digital options for the Save the Date and the conference program.

### **Speaker & Moderator Management**

This year the conference hosted 123 speakers who registered and received complimentary registration. We had pre con sessions this year as well as 2.5 days of conference. We collected a bio and photo from each speaker for the website and APP. We asked each speaker to use a depository for their items to include the PPT. We used a tracking system for this process and when we had track prep call, we explained to the speakers this process again to either register and/or send in their items. Moderator training was provided twice, recorded, and shared a PPT with the speakers.

#### **Recommendations:**

- *Consider another tool for speaker items - Cvent has a tool to research*
- *The upload form was a bit buggy.*
- *Consider reducing speaker emails and streamline comms and "chunk" information together.*
- *Add a slide to the event template explaining step by step how to convert deck from Google slides to PowerPoint, inform speakers that certain fonts and transitions will not be the same.*
- *Consider adding a meeting invite for speaker room awareness with hours*
- *Speakers need more training on Whova app - set up an additional session for speakers and moderators*
  - *Note: WHOA app was not ready when we had our session meetings*
- *Add a slide to the event template explaining copyright / what you can do versus what you cannot do - adding video clips from Netflix / YouTube*
- *Remind moderators prior to the event where to drop off evaluations*



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#### Pre-Cons:

- 4 pre-conference sessions in the afternoon, 258 attendees
- 1 offsite pre con at the Sankofa Wetlands Park with 87 attendees

We had a colored dot on the attendee badges to separate the different sessions

#### **Recommendations:**

- ***Consider adding directions in the KBYG about what this means and clearly discuss with registration staff.***

#### Conference Agenda

- 5 Plenary Sessions focused on Energy Equity and Honoring Energy Heroes
- 50+ breakout sessions, 8 rooms with 7 concurrent sessions and the last sessions was more than 1 hour.
- Member meeting held during lunch
- Final day – Thursday was table groupings by regions
- Welcome Reception – hosted on day one in the hotel and a first line band delighted the crowd. TCA handed out handkerchiefs for attendees to waive.
- A dinner cruise was on Wednesday night with over seven hundred attendees. Buses took the attendees from the hotel to the dock area, and we also hired ten pedicabs to assist with taking to the boat. These were a huge hit!

#### **Recommendations:**

- ***Consider not having a business meeting during lunch, it is too hard to hear information and people want to network***
- ***Explain what regions are in KBYG and consider adding to the name badge to encourage interactions***
- ***Member tables again and consider a national region table***

#### Attendee Registration & Payment Management

Cvent was the online registration tool used for the conference. We opened registration on March 25 and continued to take registration the week going to conference. We accepted checks and credit card options and used C-vent payment portal.

Registration opened 13 weeks out on Tuesday, March 29 and 107 registered that week.

- Early bird rates ended April 30 and we had 408 registered
- 59% nonprofit/government/tribe; 11% utility/corporate.
- 27% were complimentary registrations - scholarships, sponsorships, exhibitors, and speakers.
- Dinner Cruise: 726 RSVP'd 'yes' to the reception on Wednesday
- Registration numbers by week



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13 weeks out	29-Mar-22	107	107
12 weeks out	05-Apr-22	77	184
11 weeks out	12-Apr-22	58	242
10 weeks out	19-Apr-22	58	300
9 weeks out	26-Apr-22	108	408
8 weeks out	03-May-22	61	479
7 weeks out	10-May-22	42	521
6 weeks out	17-May-22	43	564
5 weeks out	24-May-22	62	611
4 weeks out	31-May-22	46	657
3 weeks out	06-Jun-22	37	694
2 weeks out	13-Jun-22	58	752
1 week out	20-Jun-22	6	758

**Recommendations:**

- Continue using Cvent as the registration tool
- Registration paths need to be defined differently; we need to know what category is
  - IE: Sponsor, Exhibitor
  - Consider a way to capture service territory states in the application process or cross-reference with a utilities list maintained outside the reg system
- Find ways to improve the C-vent designs to keep it fresh for attendees
- Consider charging a reduced fee for speakers
- Use a different check in process than Whova
- Determine if complimentary passes are needed prior to launching registration and provide code
- Post the registration fees and meals costs a month or more before registration opens.
- Refund policy needs to be consistent, and refunds will be approved on a case-by-case basis; COVID might want to charge \$100 administrative fee instead of \$50 and make it explicit - use a check box in registration
- Checks for the conference fees need to be sent to NEUAC not MSI.
- Set registration fees to break even or make money, either raise fees or find ways to decrease other costs.

**Onsite Registration**

Opening registration earlier in the day allowed guests to register and not have a large crowd at once. TCA onsite was a wonderful resource and helped direct attendees into the breakout rooms. Name badges were double sided and had a QR code for attendees to network and gather contact information.

**Recommendations:**

- Make the font on the badges larger for all names
- Use double clips to avoid flipping
- Consider adding dietary restriction on the back of badge
- Pair Guest Registration badges with attendee badges
- Exhibitor opt-in and NEUAC email comms added to the registration site late, add a checkbox to the reg form - default to checked.



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#### **Communications:**

We sent emails our weekly to the main list announcing different topics and promoting the conference.

#### **Recommendations**

- *Spread out these comms and add more information to each instead of just one main topic.*

#### **Conference Mobil App**

Whova was the conference APP selected since Attendify was no longer available.

#### **Recommendations:**

- *Staff trained sooner on the APP, so we were prepared to help with any questions and find ways to utilize the additional APP features.*

#### **On-Site Management**

- TCA was a huge asset this year with volunteers and assisting with registration, directional staffing, and the Wednesday offsite dinner cruise.
- Marc Dunning was onsite loading the final presentations for each computer and worked with the local AV crew and managed any pop-up items regarding AV.
- MSI had 5 onsite staff, Michelle was local who supported the conference and the team was divided in key groupings – registration, exhibits/auction, speaker management and General session/food and beverage.

#### **Recommendations:**

- *Shipping for all packages needs to go to one person to ensure we have all packages for the event*
- *Silent Auction items need to be items that are new and not used.*



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## Conference by the numbers:

Registration Stats	
Total	752
First timers	415 (55%)
Highest three states	Illinois (59)
	California (49)
	Washington (43)
Furthest traveled	Northern Mariana Islands (1)
Corp/Utility vs Non-Profit	84 vs 447 (Excludes sponsors, exhibitors...)
Member vs Nonmember	365 members vs 166 nonmember
Number of States Represented	47 states plus DC (48), Northern Mariana Islands (1) and British Columbia (2)
Not represented	Nebraska, North Dakota, and West Virginia

Registration Type	TOTAL
Corporate/Utility NEUAC Members	59
Corporate/Utility Non-Members	25
Exhibitors	14
Non-Profit Government/Tribe NEUAC Members	306
Non-Profit Government/Tribe Non-Members	141
Scholarships	6
Speakers	130
Sponsors	44
Guests	33
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>758</b>