



New England States Committee on Electricity

To: ISO New England (ISO-NE) Board of Directors
From: New England States Committee on Electricity (NESCOE)
Date: November 22, 2023
Subject: 2023 ISO-NE Open Board Meeting

NESCOE wishes to thank the ISO-NE Board of Directors (“Board of Directors”) for holding its second annual Open Board Meeting at the Seaport Hotel in Boston on November 1, 2023. An annual Open Board Meeting has been an important and appreciated step in educating the public on the important functions that ISO-NE executes on behalf of New England electricity consumers. As a public utility with federal filing rights on matters that directly affect electric consumer costs, offering the public an opportunity to become familiar with the ISO-NE Board of Directors through open meetings is a helpful way to increase visibility into your processes and actions.¹

NESCOE further appreciates that at both the 2022 and 2023 Open Board Meetings, the ISO-NE Board of Directors offered the opportunity for members of the public to offer oral comments.² The public commenters at each of the two Open Board Meetings made clear that they want to better understand how the Board of Directors makes decisions and are eager to participate in the region’s decision-making processes. Some members of the public noted in their comments at the Open Board Meeting that the Board of Directors could consider taking additional steps to increase its public visibility, increase public participation, and ensure that the opportunities to interact with the Board of Directors and ISO-NE management are readily accessible.

NESCOE supports the suggestions members of the public offered to the Board of Directors about future engagement opportunities and offers several more for consideration.

Many of the attendees present at the Open Board Meetings were, understandably, stakeholders who work in the energy space and who attend meetings such as the Open Board Meeting in their professional capacities. NESCOE commends the Board of Directors for offering options to make attendance easier for members of the public (*e.g.*, the opportunity for members of the public to attend the meeting virtually, validated parking for meeting attendees) and observes there are still a number of barriers that members of the public face if they wish to participate in an Open Board Meeting.

¹ See NESCOE Memo re: November 1, 2021 State Official/ISO-NE Board Meeting on ISO-NE Response to *Advancing the Vision* (October 29, 2021) (“NESCOE Advancing the Vision Memo”), at 4, available at https://nescoe.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/ISO-NE_Board_Response_Adv_Vision_10-29-21.pdf.

² NESCOE acknowledges that the Board of Directors also invited members of the public to submit written comments. See Initial Notice, 2023 Regional System Plan Public Meeting and Open Meeting of the ISO Board of Directors, available at https://www.iso-ne.com/static-assets/documents/100003/iso_ne_nov_1_2023_open_board_meeting_rsp_public_meeting_initial_notice.pdf.

For example, it can be very difficult for members of the public to attend meetings, even virtually, during the workday due to limited (or a lack of) paid time off, childcare challenges, lack of internet access, etc. NESCOE suggests that ISO-NE consider offering additional public educational sessions and/or comment opportunities both virtually and outside of the traditional 9-5 workday hours. To maximize accessibility, ISO-NE might also consider accessible locations such as those the Consumer Liaison Group has selected as meeting venues. NESCOE also suggests that ISO-NE consider posting recordings of its open meetings and any other public comment session on its publicly available YouTube channel.³ As we have previously suggested, NESCOE encourages the Board of Directors to respond favorably to the request made by a number of commenters at the Open Board Meeting that one or more members of the Board of Directors have a regular presence at other regional meetings where members of the public have an opportunity to participate and speak, and in particular, the Consumer Liaison Group meetings.⁴

Such additional public meetings would provide the opportunity for ISO-NE to hold its Open Board Meeting as a more traditional meeting of the Board of Directors. While NESCOE appreciated the presentations and dialogue offered at the Open Board Meeting and found them informative, the structure of the meeting seemed to replace typical Board of Director meeting discussion and agenda items. Because the purpose of the open board meetings is to increase transparency and offer members of the public a glimpse into the Board of Directors' decision-making processes, the Board of Directors could consider a more traditional agenda for its next Open Board Meeting. Recognizing that there is value to electric consumers in the types of presentations made at the most recent Open Board Meeting, the Board of Directors could consider offering such presentations in a customer-facing forum separate from the annual Open Board Meeting, such as those suggested above.

Finally, NESCOE thanks the Board of Directors and ISO-NE management for hearing previous calls to, where possible, provide materials and presentations that are more easily understood by electricity consumers. The subject matter at hand is technical and can be confusing even for those well-versed in energy parlance. Electricity consumers need information to be plainly stated to enable understanding and participation.

NESCOE commends ISO-NE's initial efforts to present some of its complex material into understandable prose, including for example, the Future Grid Reliability Study (Phase 1) report, and to host associated lunchtime webinars. NESCOE encourages ISO-NE to continue and grow that practice. Given the volume and quality of material available on ISO-NE's website and the ISO to Go app, a tutorial on ISO-NE's YouTube channel on how to find this available information could be helpful, as would asking the Consumer Liaison Group for its feedback on those materials.⁵

Once again, NESCOE thanks the Board of Directors for the steps that it has taken to date to increase transparency in its decision-making processes and to encourage public participation

³ NESCOE notes that other ISOs, such as the California ISO, post their Board of Governors' meetings on YouTube. See, e.g., <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b481AZ8V6Hk>.

⁴ NESCOE Advancing the Vision Memo, at 4.

⁵ For example, the lunchtime webinar on the Future Grid Reliability Study can be accessed through a link embedded in a PDF, which may be difficult for some to find. It may be helpful to post recordings of such webinars directly to ISO-NE's YouTube channel.

in its Open Board Meetings. This is a transformative time for the electric sector and it is important that the region's electric consumers feel well-informed and involved in decisions that will ultimately impact their everyday lives. NESCOE looks forward to continuing to work with ISO-NE management and the Board of Directors on these important issues.