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**Citizens Utility Board of Minnesota**  
**Strategic Plan – 2024-2027**  
*Approved February 1, 2024*

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**I. MISSION**

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CUB champions affordable, reliable, safe, and clean home energy for all Minnesotans.

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**II. VISION**

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Clean energy systems support a comfortable quality of life for all Minnesotans.

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**III. VALUES**

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These core principles guide CUB’s approach, both internally and externally. The organization strives to carry out these values in all aspects of our work, and employees and representatives of the organization are expected to uphold these values in all decision making and activities. CUB is:

**Effective**  
**Ethical**  
**Trustworthy**  
**Equitable**  
**Empathetic**

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**IV. COMMITMENT TO EQUITY**

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The Citizens Utility Board’s role as a consumer advocate drives us to address historic and persistent inequities related to Minnesota’s energy systems. CUB seeks to align power and resources equitably both within our organization and externally in the systems in which we advocate.

**Externally:** CUB seeks to address systemic injustices within energy systems, particularly with respect to:

- Income, energy burden, and affordability.
- Race, ethnicity, and immigration status.
- Homeownership status.

- Geography.

To do so, CUB seeks policy changes, programs, and partnerships that equalize the opportunities for all Minnesotans to:

- Afford energy.
- Participate in energy efficiency, renewable energy, and other opportunities to reduce the costs and environmental impacts of energy use.
- Live free from the impacts of pollution, climate change, and other negative effects of energy infrastructure.
- Gain fair-paying jobs and the financial benefits of energy industries.
- Influence decision making, including by increasing representation of historically disenfranchised groups.

**Internally:** CUB works to make sure the organization is an equitable employer by ensuring:

- CUB's policies, practices, and the way that we use resources within our workplace, with consultants, and in our partnerships and purchases in the community promote justice.
- Equitable pay for all individuals commensurate with their job duties, experience, and performance regardless of race; gender, gender identity, sexual orientation; age; religion; disability; or other immutable characteristics.
- All employees and board members are provided with resources to succeed in their positions.

## **V. PRIORITIES AND INITIATIVES**

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**Priority 1: Promote affordability, equitable treatment, and access to energy services for all Minnesotans.**

**Initiative A: Provide direct resources, counseling, and advocacy for individuals dealing with shutoffs, past-due bills, and other affordability concerns.**

Field calls from individuals. Share resources remotely and in person to assist Minnesotans who have affordability concerns.

**Initiative B: Expand the reach of CUB's direct consumer advising through partnerships.**

Build and maintain relationships with organizations representing diverse communities. Provide training and resources to personnel from organizations serving and embedded in communities across the state.

**Initiative C: Fight unreasonable rate hikes.**

Intervene at the Public Utilities Commission and the Minnesota legislature to advocate for fairness and affordability in utility rate cases, rate rider requests, and other dockets and venues that affect Minnesotans' energy costs.

**Initiative D: Advocate for effective energy affordability programs for income-qualified households.**

Help individuals be aware of, sign up for, and stay enrolled in affordability programs. Advocate for effective program design and implementation.

**Initiative E: Champion access to the utility data necessary to examine disparate impacts of utility rates and programs on Minnesotans and Minnesota communities.**

Secure access to anonymized customer energy use data, and put this data to work through detailed analyses of customer usage patterns, rate design impacts, and/or similar topics.

**Initiative F: Pilot and evaluate energy navigator programs.**

Support pilot programs led by community, government, and utility partners to help Minnesotans access energy-related incentives from the federal government, state government, utilities, and other sources. Plan for the continuation of successful approaches after the pilot stage.

**Priority 2: Promote a rapid, cost-effective, and equitable transition to clean home energy.**

**Initiative A: Provide direct resources, counseling, and advocacy to help individuals reduce the emissions and health impacts of their home energy use.**

In collaboration with organizations grounded in communities across the state, assist individual Minnesotans to make home energy improvements, including conservation and electrification measures. Advocate for equitable and effective programs to improve these opportunities in Minnesota homes.

**Initiative B: Pursue the adoption and implementation of a robust gas utility long-term planning process for equitable decarbonization by 2050.**

Ensure that Minnesota requires large gas utilities to conduct transparent planning that will bring utility investments into alignment with a target of net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 and protect ratepayers – especially low-income households and renters – from ballooning costs through that transition.

**Initiative C: Co-convene the Clean Heat Minnesota coalition to organize a broad and diverse call for the equitable decarbonization of natural gas utilities.**

Establish Clean Heat Minnesota as a broad, diverse, and effective coalition of stakeholders working to decarbonize the natural gas sector. Through the coalition, share resources for decarbonization with a broad range of organizations, bring the voices of underrepresented and affected communities into decision making, and elevate the issue of – and support for – gas decarbonization in the public conversation.

**Initiative D: Respond to proposed utility resource acquisitions, contracts, programs, and plans to advocate for rapid decarbonization in an equitable and cost-effective manner.**

Engage in proposals such as Natural Gas Innovation Act plans, conservation programs, transmission expansion, and other initiatives.

**Initiative E: Support policy for rapid decarbonization in an equitable and cost-effective manner.**

Advocate for policies that will rapidly decarbonize energy systems in a manner that protects and benefits Minnesotans.

**Priority 3: Advocate for utility transparency and accountability, and fairness between utilities and Minnesotans.**

**Initiative A: Fight the use of ratepayer funds for excessive corporate profits.**

Fight excessive utility return on equity requests: reframe the Public Utilities Commission's consideration of ROE, counter utility requests for unreasonably high rates of return, and bring rates of return closer to costs of equity over time. Fight against excessive compensation of utility personnel and unreasonable spending on political and lobbying initiatives, and for the public disclosure of utility spending.

**Initiative B: Bring public attention to unfair costs, profits, and business practices.**

Demystify complex topics and promote better understanding of complex issues by the public and policy leaders. Bring attention to important but difficult-to-understand utility issues that affect Minnesotans.

**Initiative C: Share CUB's expertise to support more representative participation in utility decision making.**

Share time and knowledge, especially with people and organizations from underrepresented communities, to help people understand technical issues, regulatory procedures, and how to take advantage of intervenor compensation.

**Priority 4: Ensure CUB is a sustainable and resilient organization that lives out its values.**

**Initiative A: Ensure the annual budget reflects CUB's priorities for the coming year.**

Sustain funding at the level needed to support CUB's expanded scope of work while planning for continued gradual growth. Ensure the budget provides sufficient resources for all programs.

**Initiative B: Ensure that CUB is an equitable employer and a good place to work, in accordance with the organization's commitment to equity.**

Ensure that CUB's policies, practices, and the way the organization uses resources in the workplace, with consultants, and in our partnerships and purchases promote equity; that employees are compensated fairly; and that all employees and board members are provided with the resources they need to succeed in their positions.

**Initiative C: Ensure that CUB's finance, accounting, human resources, and governance practices are in line with nonprofit best practices.**

Seek support from third-party experts to ensure that internal practices meet the highest standards.

## **VI. PROGRAMS**

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### **Outreach**

CUB's outreach program provides a variety of resources for Minnesotans. Our expert staff advises hundreds of Minnesotans each year on their rights, resources, and responsibilities to avoid utility shutoffs or get service reconnected. CUB consultations help people reduce home energy expenses, figure out the best options for reducing home emissions, and answer whatever home energy-related questions they may have. We provide information and resources in partnership with communities across the state, and we work together with local organizations to help develop approaches tailored to specific communities. These efforts also provide CUB with a greater understanding of the experiences of Minnesotans in a variety of circumstances and served by a variety of utilities. CUB's outreach program is vital in informing the organization's policy advocacy.

### **Policy**

CUB aims to be a voice for Minnesotans in important policy and regulatory decisions regarding energy service, primarily at the state Public Utilities Commission and the legislature. CUB's team of advocates works for a rapid, cost-effective transition to clean energy that benefits the public – including communities that have long borne the negative impacts of our energy systems. We fight for affordable rates and stand up to utility companies and their shareholders.

### **Communication**

CUB aims to be the leading voice for Minnesota energy consumers in the media and public conversation. CUB employs its own communications channels and earned media coverage to provide timely and useful resources to the public, inform public opinion, and share information about important energy policy topics. CUB's communication program supports all aspects of our work.

## **VII. DECISION-MAKING CRITERIA**

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In seeking and allocating resources, CUB strives to strike a balance between individual services and policy advocacy, with the aim of maximizing our impact in support of Minnesotans in all communities in the state.

1. How might this opportunity challenge CUB's integrity and/or independence? (Deal breaker)
2. How high of a priority is this opportunity?
  - a. How important is the issue?
  - b. How much of an impact will CUB's participation likely have?
  - c. How well does the opportunity help CUB advance our mission and vision?
  - d. What are the economic impacts of the issue to consumers?
  - e. Will this opportunity promote greater equity?
  - f. Will this opportunity promote improvement of the environment?

3. What is CUB's capacity to take on this opportunity?
  - a. Expertise
  - b. Staff time
  - c. Funding
  - d. Opportunity cost, impact compared with cost