



## Stakeholder Engagement

### Highlights

- Stakeholder engagement is a vital process for making Duke Energy a strong and responsive community partner. The Companies recognize the diverse views of stakeholders on how Duke Energy should meet future customer demand for affordable, reliable and increasingly clean energy.
- Over the course of four months, the Companies held five engagement meetings on technical, complex issues involving resource planning. More than 100 individuals, representing numerous organizations, attended these virtual meetings.
- Participants from varying backgrounds were able to serve as Technical Representatives in the engagement sessions, where they presented their perspectives to a diverse group of attendees that included customers, environmental advocates, community leaders and other industry representatives. Participants not designated as Technical Representatives were also engaged in the process and were able to submit questions to presenters.
- Stakeholder feedback has been incorporated throughout the development of the Carolinas Resource Plan, from the way the Companies have engaged third parties to various assumptions and scenarios modeled in the Plan.

Stakeholder engagement is a vital process in making Duke Energy Carolinas, LLC (“DEC”) and Duke Energy Progress, LLC (“DEP” and together with DEC, “Duke Energy” or the “Companies”) strong and responsive community partners in North Carolina and South Carolina. The Companies recognize the diverse views of stakeholders on how Duke Energy should meet future customer demand for affordable, reliable, and increasingly clean energy. Accordingly, the Companies believe that a broad range of perspectives is critical for resource planning at Duke Energy and the Carolinas Resource

Plan (or “Plan”) was developed with the diverse input shared during the robust engagement sessions that took place between February and June 2023.<sup>1</sup>

The Companies engaged Great Plains Institute<sup>2</sup> (“GPI”) to advise the Companies in creating a process through which extensive and meaningful collaboration with interested parties could occur. The Companies hosted five engagement sessions facilitated by GPI that focused on the technical aspects of the Carolinas Resource Plan’s modeling assumptions and inputs. Figure A-1 below shows the topics addressed at each meeting.

**Figure A-1: Stakeholder Engagement Timeline and Topics**



In response to feedback from previous stakeholder sessions, to enhance the focus on these more technical aspects of the Plan and to better facilitate constructive discussion, participants from varying backgrounds were given the opportunity to identify themselves as Technical Representatives in the engagement sessions. In each of these sessions, the Technical Representatives presented their perspectives to a diverse group of attendees that included customers, environmental advocates, community leaders and other industry representatives. Participants not designated as Technical Representatives engaged in the process by submitting questions which were addressed in real time by the Companies’ presenters and the Technical Representatives. Additionally, to ensure opportunities for engagement from stakeholders across the Companies’ dual-state system, during each engagement session participants had an opportunity to ask South Carolina-specific questions regarding the meeting topics and presentation materials. Figure A-1 above shows the topics covered

<sup>1</sup> While stakeholder engagement is mandated in both North Carolina and South Carolina, such engagement has historically been a central component of the development of the Companies’ Integrated Resource Plans. Specific stakeholder engagement mandates pertaining to developing additional energy efficiency and demand-side management (“EE/DSM”) programs, modeling of EE/DSM sensitivities, further investigating solar capacity values and solar paired with battery energy storage capacity values are addressed in Appendix H (Grid Edge and Customer Programs) and Appendix I (Renewables and Energy Storage).

<sup>2</sup> Great Plains Institute is a not-for-profit consulting company with over 20 years of experience advising and facilitating stakeholder processes comprised of a wide range of stakeholders, such as utilities, environmental groups, regulators, community leaders and government officials, to create strategic resource plans and address the impacts of the clean energy transition.

by each of the engagement sessions and Figure A-3 below shows the number of attendees and Technical Representatives in attendance.

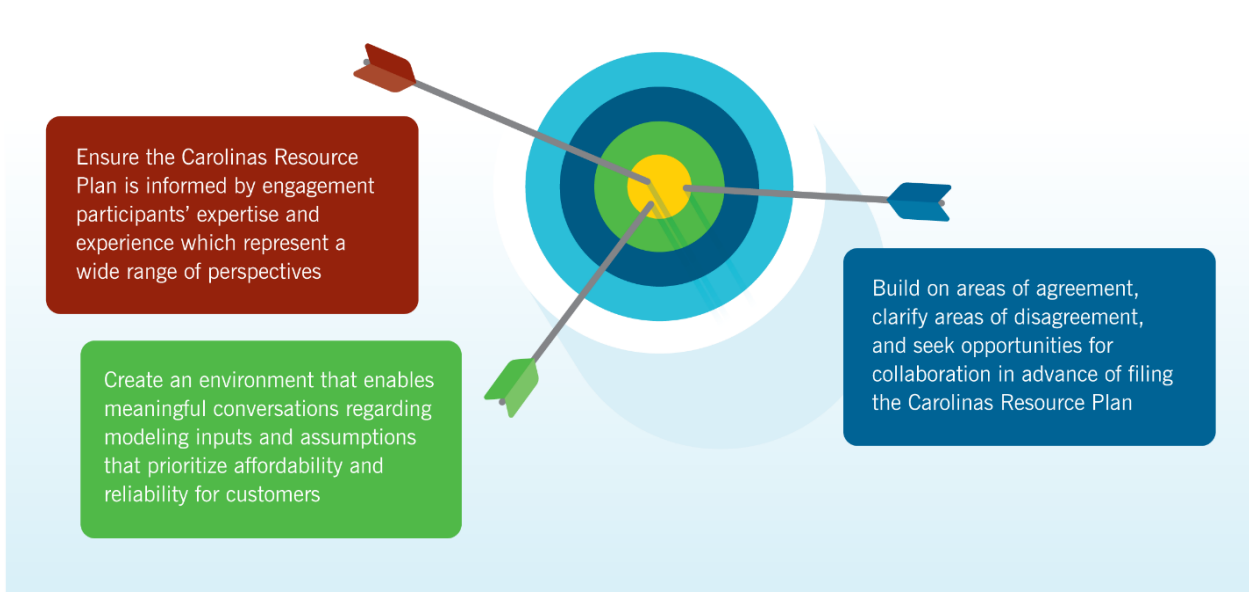
It is worth noting that the sessions described above represent only a portion of the Companies' holistic stakeholder engagement activities. As detailed below, the Companies actively engage stakeholders across a broad range of other initiatives and subjects, and the Carolinas Resource Plan was informed not only by specific resource planning engagement, but also by other subject matter-specific related engagement efforts.

This Appendix describes the engagement that supported the development of the Carolinas Resource Plan. It provides an overview of the process Duke Energy followed to engage stakeholders as well as how the feedback and input received influenced the Carolinas Resource Plan. This Appendix also references other external engagement efforts that relate to the Carolinas Resource Plan.

### Stakeholder Engagement Process and Objectives

The Carolinas Resource Plan stakeholder engagement process began in early 2023 and consisted of five sessions held over the course of four months from February through June. Invitations were sent by GPI to individuals representing organizations across the Carolinas known to Duke Energy as being historically interested in resource planning issues. Those invited included the participants in the initial 2022 proposed Carbon Plan proceedings in North Carolina Utilities Commission (“NCUC”) Docket No. E-100, Sub 179 and the 2020 South Carolina integrated resource plan proceedings in Public Service Commission of South Carolina (“PSCSC”) Docket Nos. 2019-224-E and 2019-225-E and other new participants requesting inclusion this year. Additionally, notice of the engagement sessions that included GPI’s contact information for additional information was filed with both the NCUC and the PSCSC.

**Figure A-2: Stakeholder Engagement Objectives**



As shown above in Figure A-2, the Companies had three primary objectives for their 2023 stakeholder engagement on the Carolinas Resource Plan. First, the Companies sought to hone their stakeholder process from the previous years by engaging with participants' particular expertise and experiences on the technical topics of each meeting. To that end, the Companies prioritized broad, transparent and inclusive participation but also recognized that participants had varying levels of background in key resource planning concepts. Therefore, in this most recent engagement process, stakeholders had the opportunity to participate either as a "Technical Representative" or as an "Observer." Technical Representatives are self-identified experts who are well-versed in the complex, technical issues presented by the Carolinas Resource Plan; some Technical Representatives frequently appear before commissions as expert witnesses on these issues. The Technical Representatives had the ability to participate orally during the engagement sessions where they took an active role interacting with the presenting panelists. Observers represented a wide range of stakeholders and, while they did not participate orally, they were able to ask questions through a question and answer ("Q&A") feature and, for the second and subsequent sessions, the chat feature.

Next, the Companies aimed to enable meaningful conversations on modeling inputs and assumptions that prioritized reliability and affordability for customers. To achieve this objective, the Companies incorporated feedback received from stakeholders who participated in previous resource planning engagement sessions. The Companies heard that participants wanted to receive advance notice of meeting agenda topics and presentation materials. In response, the meeting invitations for the Carolinas Resource Plan engagement sessions, sent weeks in advance of each session, included the details of the topics to be discussed as well as information and deadlines on how to register as a Technical Representative. Technical Representatives were provided draft presentation materials in advance of the sessions and offered the opportunity to meet with representatives from the Companies to review the material. These opportunities to discuss technical topics in a smaller setting were also informed by feedback from previous engagement sessions. Meeting agenda topics were informed largely by feedback received in previous engagements and throughout the earlier meetings in this engagement effort. The Companies developed meeting agendas to meet the overall objectives of the engagement and structured each session to ensure a robust discussion of the key issues around model assumptions and inputs, considering the varying levels of understanding among the diverse group of attendees. To ensure that relevant information was available to participants and interested parties after each meeting, copies of the presentation materials, recordings of the meetings (with the Q&A sessions removed) and summaries of each meeting prepared by GPI were posted on Duke Energy's Integrated Resource Planning website.<sup>3</sup> The Companies reserved time at the conclusion of each stakeholder engagement session to hear from South Carolina stakeholders regarding matters specific to their interest.

Throughout the engagement process, the Companies and GPI provided a variety of mechanisms through which stakeholders could communicate with GPI and the Companies to provide feedback on both the stakeholder process and the development of the Plan. During the meetings, stakeholders utilized the Zoom "Q&A" feature to post questions to Technical Representatives and the Zoom "Chat"

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<sup>3</sup> Duke Energy, Integrated Resource Planning in the Carolinas, available at <https://www.duke-energy.com/our-company/about-us/irp-carolinas>.

feature to post comments to all stakeholders.<sup>4</sup> Over the course of the stakeholder process, 128 questions were received through the Q&A feature. Through facilitation by GPI, the Companies answered as many questions as possible during each stakeholder meeting and also addressed questions in future stakeholder meetings that were raised previously. Conscious and thoughtful best efforts were made to ensure sufficient time was dedicated to such Q&A opportunities.

Outside of the stakeholder meeting environment, stakeholders could provide feedback by sending emails to the dedicated GPI email address, DukeCarbonPlan@gpisd.net. GPI responded to each of these emails to acknowledge the input and passed each to the Companies for review and additional responses, as appropriate. The Companies utilized the feedback from these emails to inform the stakeholder process and future meeting agendas, and tried to respond to questions as well.

Finally, the Companies wanted to build on areas of agreement, clarify areas of disagreement and seek opportunities for collaboration in advance of filing the Carolinas Resource Plan. The discussion below, detailing the discussions in each stakeholder meeting, demonstrates how the Companies met this third objective.

## Stakeholder Meetings

Over the course of four months, hundreds of individuals actively participated in the stakeholder process on novel, complex issues. Figure A-3 below illustrates the number of attendees — both Technical Representatives and Observers — as well as the number of organizations represented at each meeting.

**Figure A-3: Stakeholder Engagement Meeting Attendance**



Given such strong participation, establishing ground rules early in the engagement process was critical. Of utmost importance was ensuring a respectful environment where ideas could be shared.

<sup>4</sup> Based on feedback from previous resource planning engagement that a “chat” feature was often distracting from meeting content, there was no such feature available during this meeting, and all inquiries were submitted through a Q&A feature. However, participants indicated that they would prefer to have a chat option enabled, and this adjustment was made for the subsequent engagement sessions.

To that end, stakeholders agreed to uphold the Chatham House Rule, which prevents stakeholders from publicly attributing any particular statement or comment to a specific individual.

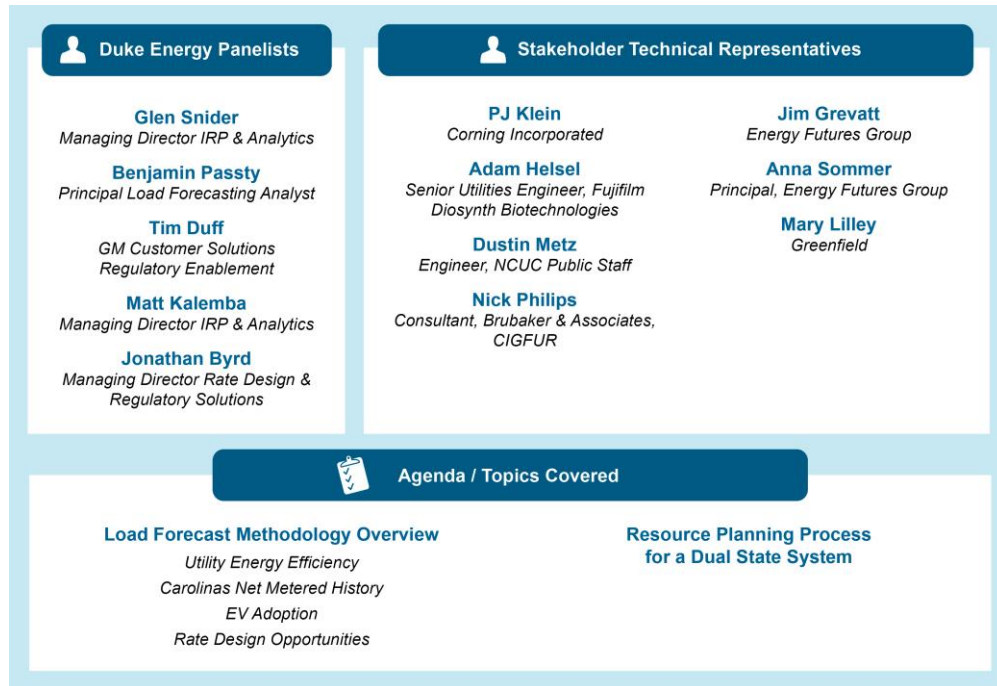
The Companies commend stakeholders for their demonstrated respect for the different ideas and perspectives shared throughout the stakeholder process. Participants ensured that differences of opinion were focused on concepts and ideas and not on individuals. The tone and the candor of the stakeholder discussion fostered a supportive environment in which ideas could be shared in a productive manner.

### Engagement Meeting 1: February 22, 2023

The first meeting introduced the Companies’ approach to integrated resource planning and modeling. The second half of the meeting included a technical session on the Companies’ load forecast, energy efficiency (“EE”) programs, net metering forecast, electric vehicle (“EV”) adoption forecast and rate design. The meeting closed with a dedicated opportunity for participants to ask South Carolina-specific questions regarding the meeting topics and presentation materials.

Figure A-4 below lists the Duke Energy panelists and external Technical Representatives who participated in the first meeting, as well as topics discussed.

**Figure A-4: Engagement Meeting 1 Participants<sup>5</sup> and Topics**



<sup>5</sup> Greenfield is a North Carolina-based economic development company.

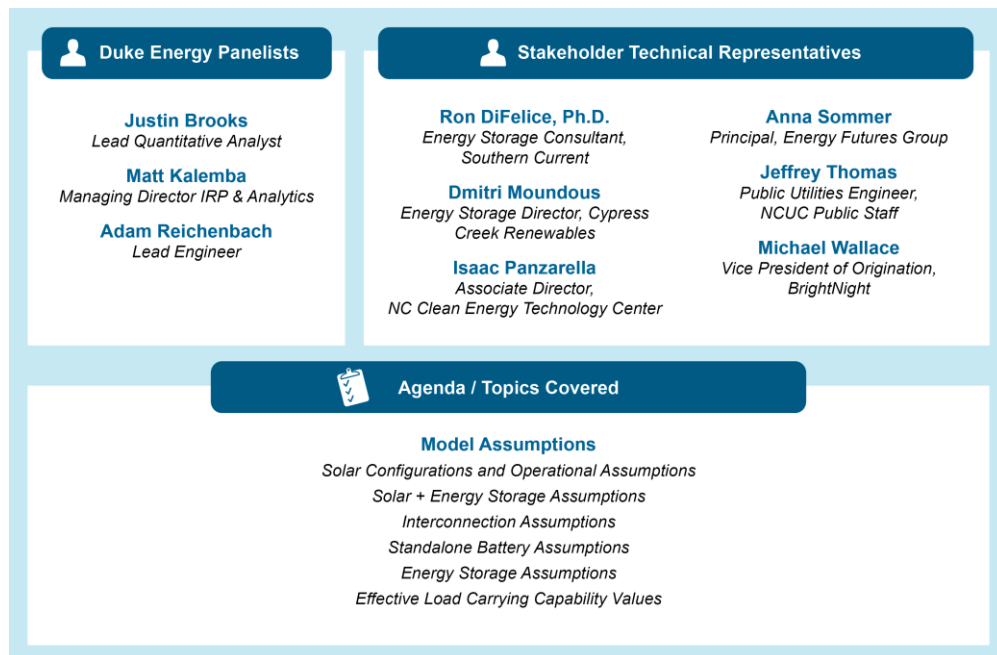
During the session, the Companies also received feedback around environmental justice (“EJ”) engagement. This feedback, in part, led to an engagement session held after the May 31 resource planning session that provided stakeholders an overview of Duke Energy’s EJ work and approach to impacted communities stakeholder engagement. The Companies’ approach to EJ and impacted community engagement is discussed in more detail in the North Carolina specific Chapter.

### Engagement Meeting 2: March 16, 2023

The next meeting, held March 16, 2023, focused predominately on the cost and operational assumptions of the solar, solar paired with storage and stand-alone storage resources selected in the resource plan model. Duke Energy panelists described the Companies’ approach to developing costs and operational assumptions for the generic solar, solar paired with storage and standalone storage resources in the resource planning model. The panelists and technical representatives also discussed interconnection limits in modeling before shifting to the South Carolina-specific portion of the meeting where participants asked a handful of questions regarding coal retirement and renewable customer programs.

Figure A-5 below lists the Duke Energy panelists and external Technical Representatives who participated in the second meeting, as well as topics discussed.

**Figure A-5: Engagement Meeting 2 Participants and Topics**



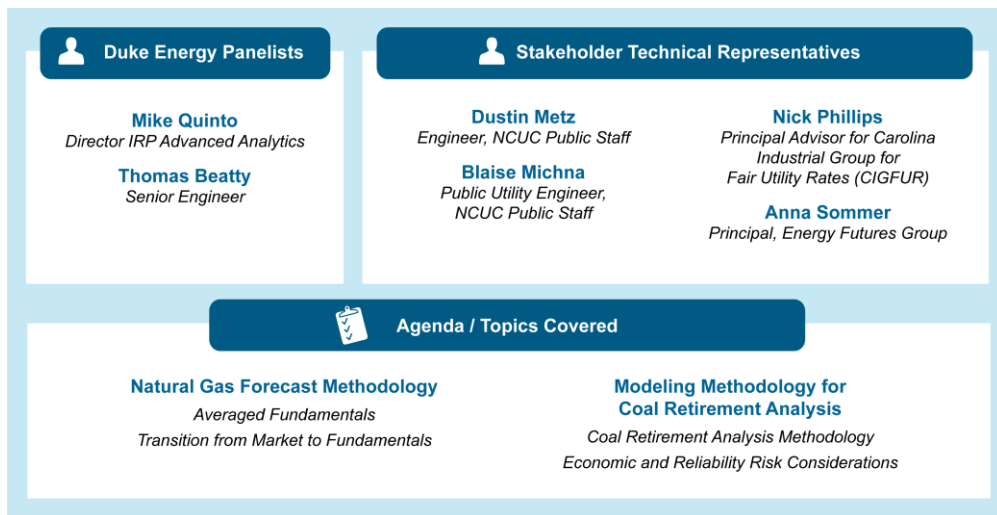
Several participants commented on the unit cost assumptions the Companies provided and, in response to this feedback, the Companies have made an effort to increase transparency by making more generic cost information public.

### Engagement Meeting 3: March 22, 2023

The third meeting, held on March 22, 2023, addressed the methodology for creating the Companies’ natural gas price forecast and the methodology for the coal retirement analysis. The PSCSC specifically directed the Companies to engage with stakeholders on these topics in Order No. 2021-447.<sup>6</sup>

Figure A-6 below lists the Duke Energy panelists and external Technical Representatives who participated in the third meeting, as well as topics discussed.

**Figure A-6: Engagement Meeting 3 Participants and Topics**



Participants asked several clarifying questions regarding cost assumptions for both natural gas price modeling and coal retirement analysis. Questions around the Companies’ natural gas price forecasting focused on considerations of Henry Hub prices and Zone 5 prices and potential fluctuations in pricing. Additionally, participants wanted to learn more about how Duke Energy was assessing operating costs of retiring coal plants.

Several clarifying questions were asked about the scope of sensitivities the Companies intended to include in their modeling; potential sensitivities suggested included gas infrastructure development, permitting requirements and Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 (“IRA”) impacts to costs and modeling. Some participants noted reliability challenges that Duke Energy has faced, especially around the December 24 outages. Participants asked clarifying questions regarding firm load and how reliability concerns will be considered in decision making and future planning. It was requested that the Companies include the updated Resource Adequacy Study as a future topic and, in response, the Companies addressed this topic in the fourth engagement session.

<sup>6</sup> Order Requiring Modification to Integrated Resource Plans, Order No. 2021-447 at 17, 98, PSCSC Docket Nos. 2019-224-E & 2019-225-E (June 28, 2021).

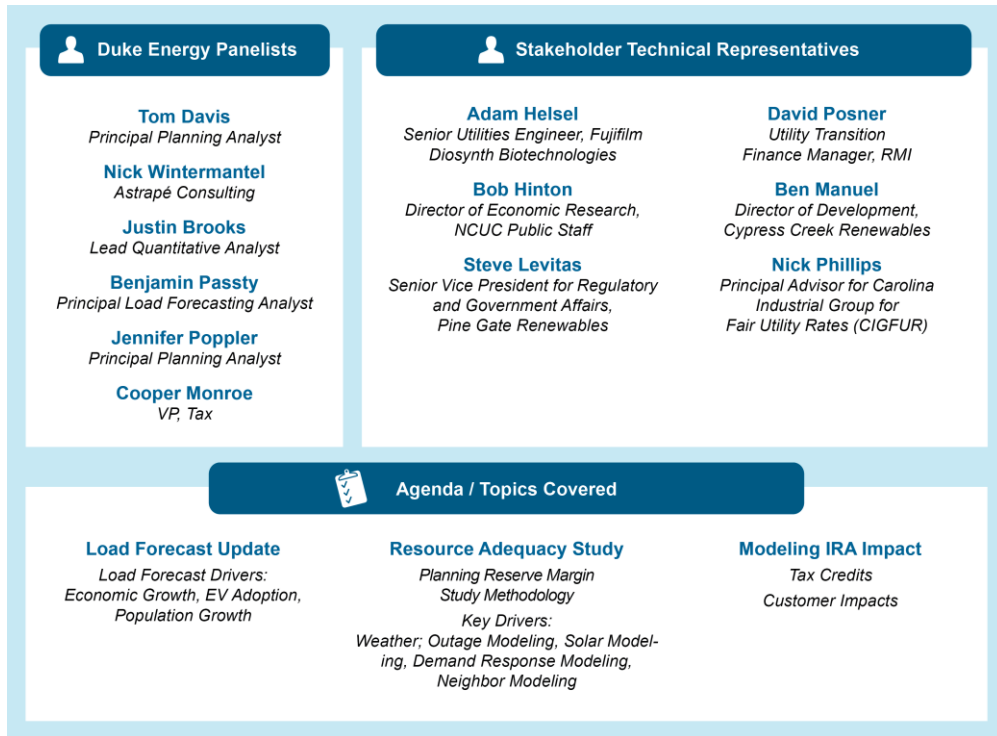


### Engagement Meeting 4: May 31, 2023

The fourth meeting, held May 31, 2023, addressed the updated load forecast, the Resource Adequacy Study and modeling assumptions related to tax incentives in the IRA.

Figure A-7 below lists the Duke Energy panelists and external Technical Representatives who participated in the fourth meeting, as well as topics discussed.

**Figure A-7: Engagement Meeting 4 Participants and Topics**



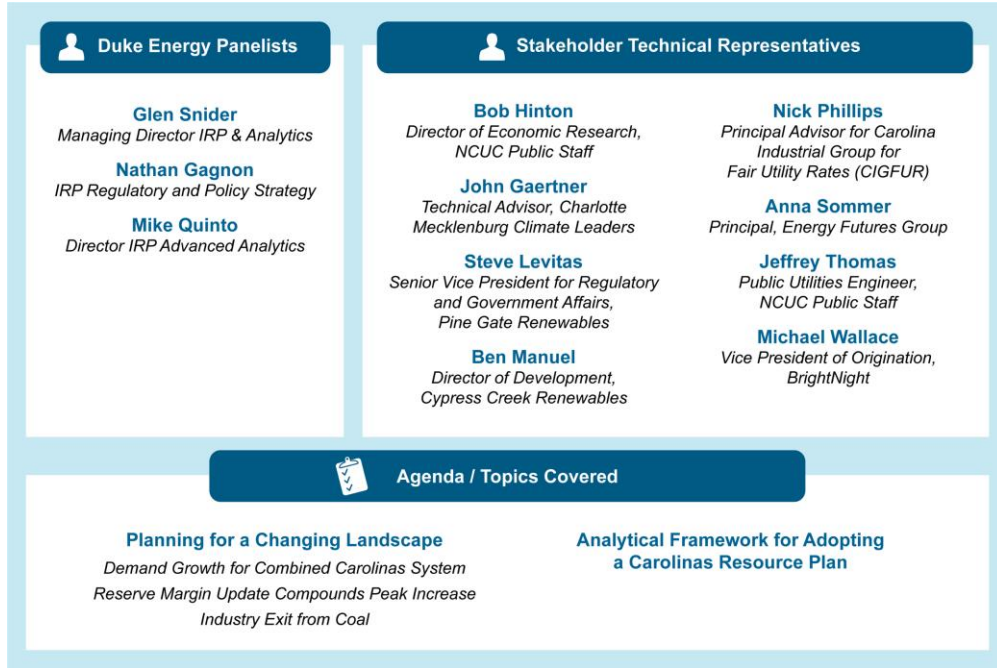
During the meeting, participants asked several questions about the impact of EVs in the load forecast update. Stakeholders also asked several clarifying questions around questions related to neighbor assistance and increased outage risk during cold weather and their impact on the resource adequacy study which resulted in the reserve margin increasing from 17% to 22%. Participants also asked clarifying questions around the IRA assumptions the Companies are including in the modeling.

### Engagement Meeting 5: June 13, 2023

The final session, held June 13, 2023, closed out the comprehensive stakeholder engagement series and included a discussion of the changing energy landscape shaping the Companies’ planning environment. The Companies provided an overview of the resources available for model selection and the initial analytical framework for developing the Carolinas Resource Plans.

Figure A-8 below lists the Duke Energy panelists and external Technical Representatives who participated in the fifth meeting, as well as topics discussed.

**Figure A-8: Engagement Meeting 5 Participants and Topics**



Participants asked clarifying questions about the resources available for model selection, recognizing that the Companies’ base case constraints on new resource additions may need to be relaxed to achieve 70% carbon dioxide (“CO<sub>2</sub>”) reduction by 2030. Several participants provided feedback and suggestions for Duke Energy’s analytical/modeling assumptions. Feedback covered topics such as the impacts of coal facility closures, modeling distributed energy resources and new technologies, analytical details pertaining to longer-term (post-2035) forecasting, model selections and a more robust reserve margin. Participants showed particular interest in the Portfolio framework and factors to be addressed in scenario and sensitivity analysis and asked questions around the assumptions behind the South Carolina-required<sup>7</sup> analysis that does not include any CO<sub>2</sub> reduction constraints.

Participants had clarifying questions regarding cost assumptions to ensure transparency. Participants inquired about cost modeling tools and cost assumptions of all resources represented in the modeling, including more recent, evolving technology resources. Furthermore, participants wanted to learn more about Duke Energy’s anticipated infrastructure and IRA cost assumptions and how they are representing those assumptions in their models.

Participants raised several questions regarding the ability of Duke Energy to meet projected load growth with the resources it is including in the model. Questions included basic clarifications on the

<sup>7</sup> Order Accepting 2022 Integrated Resource Plan Updates, Order No. 2023-189 at 9, PSCSC Docket Nos. 2019-224-E & 2019-225-E (March 22, 2023).

magnitude of load growth compared to Duke Energy’s most recent plan filings, as well as resource-specific questions pertaining to the timeline by which Duke Energy anticipates that certain new resources included in the model will be available (e.g., offshore wind, small modular reactors (“SMRs”)) as well as resources that Duke Energy is not including in the model (e.g., iron-air batteries).

## **Incorporation of Stakeholder Feedback into Developing Portfolios**

As discussed in the meeting summaries, attendees were active participants in this comprehensive engagement effort. The Companies considered the recommendations of all stakeholder participants — including feedback received from Technical Representatives and observers at live meetings, as discussed above, and feedback submitted through email — and incorporated much of it in shaping each of the Pathways proposed in this Carolinas Resource Plan. The wide and diverse array of participating individuals and organizations resulted in the exchange of informative ideas and opinions throughout the stakeholder process to the present. With this broad spectrum of stakeholders, however, comes an equally wide array of interests and desired outcomes from invested participants that sometimes conflict with each other.

The Companies note that in response to stakeholder questions and feedback, they advised stakeholders that EnCompass model 7.05 would be used in the analysis and that they anticipated conducting a modeling workshop after filing of the Carolinas Resource Plan to provide an overview of the model files and address questions about model setup.

## **Modeling Assumptions**

After the conclusion of the five stakeholder meetings, stakeholders requested that the Companies evaluate a number of Portfolios beyond those presented at the stakeholder meetings. In response, the Companies developed an analytical framework of 33 Portfolios that explore a wide range of potential approaches to continuing the energy transition, as discussed in Chapter 2 (Methodology and Key Assumptions). Stakeholders specifically recommended that the Companies consider a scenario with the potential for SMRs coming online at a later time.

Stakeholders also suggested that the Companies model scenarios accounting for the Environmental Protection Agency (“EPA”) Clean Air Act (“CAA”) Section 111 Proposed Rule. These regulations address greenhouse gas (“GHG”) emissions from existing coal plants and from new and existing natural gas plants. As discussed in Chapter 3 (Portfolios), the Companies recognize the significance and potential impacts of these proposed rules as well as the complex and lengthy period ahead as they are carefully reviewed. Thus, the EPA CAA Section 111 Proposed Rule was not included in base assumptions, however, Supplemental Portfolios were developed for informational purposes to explore the potential impact of proposed rules.

### *Solar, Solar Paired with Storage and Stand-alone Solar Recommendations*

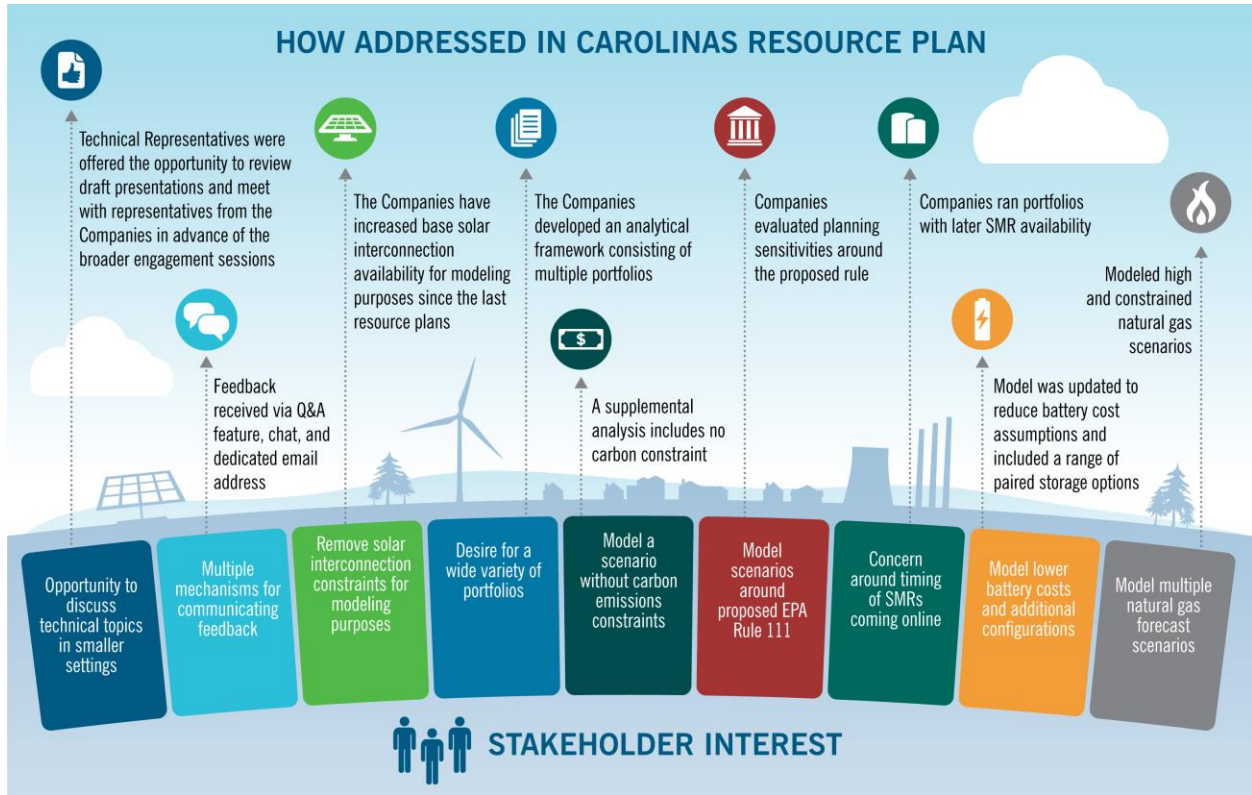
With respect to modeling assumptions about the role of solar, solar paired with storage and stand-alone storage, stakeholders provided helpful feedback. For example, stakeholders requested that the Companies remove solar interconnection constraints for modeling purposes. The Companies have increased base solar interconnection availability for modeling purposes since the last resource plans, and they are modeling a high resource availability, which will allow the model to select even higher levels of solar resources. Certain stakeholders also suggested that the capital cost assumptions for lithium-ion battery storage that the Companies shared were higher than they were observing in the marketplace. Informed by this stakeholder feedback, the Companies lowered the lithium-ion capital cost assumptions, as described in more detail in Appendix E (Screening of Generation Alternatives). Additionally, the Companies received feedback from stakeholders that the solar paired with storage model assumptions should be adjusted to allow additional configurations and larger batteries paired with the solar. The Companies incorporated this feedback by modeling paired storage ranges from approximately 25% of the maximum generic solar unit output (20 megawatts (“MW”)) to approximately 75% of the maximum generic solar unit output (60 MW) with the higher storage MW pairings, as further discussed in Appendix E. Stakeholders also suggested that the Companies should consider incorporating both DC-coupled and AC-coupled configurations into the model. The Companies note that although DC- and AC-coupled sites each have unique characteristics from both an operational and cost perspective, they have not seen enough differentiation to warrant separate model options. The Companies hope to gain further market intelligence and experience through the 2023 procurement to inform this approach going forward.

### *Natural Gas Price Forecast and Coal Retirement Methodologies*

The Companies also directly incorporated recommendations on natural gas forecast price and coal retirement methodologies. Stakeholder feedback recommended that the Companies should model both a high natural gas scenario and a constrained natural gas scenario, and the Companies did so. Finally, the Companies continued to include transmission upgrade costs that are incremental to system transmission needs in their modeling consistent with stakeholder feedback.

Figure A-9 below summarizes many of the areas of stakeholder input that the Companies considered in developing the Carolinas Resource Plan.

Figure A-9: Incorporation of Stakeholder Feedback



### Additional Stakeholder Activities

Stakeholder engagement is foundational to the Companies’ business, and the sessions discussing the Carolinas Resource Plan represent only a portion of the Companies’ holistic collaboration with customers, communities and other stakeholders. The Companies actively seek perspectives from third parties across a broad range of other initiatives and subjects, and the Carolinas Resource Plan was informed not only by specific resource planning engagement that has been the focus of this Appendix, but also by other subject matter-specific related engagement efforts. Table A-1 below summarizes many of the ongoing engagement efforts by the Companies across the Carolinas.

**Table A-1: Additional Stakeholder Engagement Efforts**

Engagement Effort	Additional Information
<b>Distributed Energy Resources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Appendix I (Renewables and Energy Storage)</li> <li>2022 Procurement<sup>8</sup></li> <li>2023 Procurement<sup>9</sup></li> <li>Interconnection Technical Standards Review Group<sup>10</sup></li> </ul>
<b>Climate Risk and Resilience Study Technical Working Group</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Duke Energy Climate Resilience &amp; Adaptation<sup>11</sup></li> <li>Appendix G (Integrated System and Operations Planning)</li> </ul>
<b>Electric Transportation (“ET”) Collaborative</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NCUC Docket No.: E-2, Sub 1197</li> <li>NCUC Docket No.: E-7, Sub 1195</li> <li>SC ET Pilot Stakeholder Meetings (PSCSC Docket Nos. 2018-321-E &amp; 2018-322-E)</li> </ul>
<b>Energy Efficiency/Demand-Side Management</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Carolinas DSM/EE Collaborative<sup>12</sup></li> </ul>
<b>Grid Improvement Plan</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PSCSC ND-2020-28-E<sup>13</sup></li> </ul>
<b>Integrated System and Operations Planning (“ISOP”)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Appendix G (Integrated System and Operations Planning)</li> <li>Duke Energy ISOP Reference Information Portal<sup>14</sup></li> </ul>
<b>Carolinas Transmission Planning Collaborative<sup>15</sup></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Appendix G (Integrated System and Operations Planning)</li> <li>Appendix L (Transmission System Planning and Grid Transformation)</li> </ul>
<b>Offshore Wind</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Appendix I (Renewables and Energy Storage)</li> </ul>
<b>Onshore Wind</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Appendix I (Renewables and Energy Storage)</li> </ul>
<b>NC Electric Membership Corporation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Appendix G (Integrated System and Operations Planning)</li> </ul>

<sup>8</sup> Duke Energy, 2022 RFP Website, available at <https://www.duke2022solarrfpcarolinas.com>.

<sup>9</sup> Duke Energy, 2023 RFP Website, available at <https://www.dukeenergyrfpcarolinas.com>.

<sup>10</sup> Duke Energy, Carolinas TSRG Website, available at <https://www.duke-energy.com/business/products/renewables/generate-your-own/tsrg>

<sup>11</sup> Duke Energy, Climate Resilience and Adaptation, available at <https://www.duke-energy.com/our-company/environment/climate-resilience-and-adaptation>.

<sup>12</sup> Duke Energy, Carolinas DSM/EE Collaborative, available at <https://www.duke-energy.com/our-company/environment/carolinas-collaborative/>.

<sup>13</sup> Public Service Commission of South Carolina, Detail for ND-2020-28-E, available at <https://dms.psc.sc.gov/Web/Ndi/Detail/413>.

<sup>14</sup> Duke Energy, ISOP Reference Information Portal, available at <https://www.duke-energy.com/our-company/isop>.

<sup>15</sup> As explained during the stakeholder process and further addressed in Appendix L, the Companies have proposed to change the name of the North Carolina Transmission Planning Collaborative to the Carolinas Transmission Planning Collaborative or CTPC to more accurately reflect the scope of transmission planning conducted by that organization.

## Engagement with Environmental Justice Stakeholders and Impacted Communities

Duke Energy has deep roots and a long history of community engagement and partnerships in the Carolinas. Forming, maintaining and nurturing positive relationships within communities is a core value, and the Companies embrace EJ principles that advance fair treatment and ensure meaningful involvement of the communities Duke Energy serves, regardless of race, color, national origin or income. Duke Energy believes that EJ is a business imperative, fundamental to operations and a pillar of meaningful stakeholder engagement. By seeking diverse perspectives and integrating the voice of customers into both daily work and long-term strategic infrastructure plans, Duke Energy provides an essential service that powers the social, environmental and economic vitality of the region. The Companies' work impacts customers, and Duke Energy recognizes the importance of engaging with them to understand and address their specific concerns. Given the magnitude of the clean energy transition, the way in which the Companies engage with their customers has never been more important. The Companies are looking holistically at regional project plans, conducting assessments and seeking community input to better understand the potential impacts across infrastructure projects. The customers served by Duke Energy across the Carolinas are incredibly diverse, having many different needs and objectives, so the Companies employ various community outreach efforts and partnership opportunities. With respect to the diverse workforce needed to construct and operate the Companies' infrastructure, Duke Energy has awarded a grant to E4 Carolinas, which is partnering with Benedict College, Johnson C. Smith University, North Carolina A&T and South Carolina State University to create the Historically Black Colleges and Universities Energy Leadership Pathways program, which aims to increase the number of students at the participating schools who train for and seek careers in the energy industry. More information about Duke Energy's commitment to EJ principles and customers can be found on the Companies' Environmental Social & Governance website.<sup>16</sup> For additional information on the Companies' stakeholder engagement with respect to EJ issues, please see the Chapter specific to North Carolina.

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<sup>16</sup> Duke Energy, Environmental Justice, available at <https://p-micro.duke-energy.com/esg/vibrant-communities/environmental-justice>.