

WI CAN CASE STUDY: PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION ENGAGEMENT PROJECT

JUNE 2026

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

350 Wisconsin is a statewide climate advocacy nonprofit working to address climate change through public engagement, policy advocacy, grassroots organizing, and coalition building. The organization developed the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin (PSC) Engagement Project to reduce barriers to public participation in PSC decision-making, especially among underrepresented communities. The project analyzes public comment and energy burden data, partners with local organizations in three Wisconsin regions, and collaborates with PSC staff to improve engagement processes. Early findings highlight language, awareness, and accessibility as key barriers. Challenges for the project included limited accessibility of participation data, coordination across regions, and public understanding of utility regulation. To replicate the effort, organizations need strong partnerships, regulatory collaboration, and data-informed engagement strategies.



[350 Wisconsin](#) is a statewide climate advocacy and organizing nonprofit working to address climate change through public engagement, advocacy, organizing, and coalition building. The organization mobilizes volunteers across Wisconsin to advance environmental justice and climate solutions through education, advocacy, and collective action. Its work focuses on changing policies, systems, and public understanding to support a more sustainable and equitable future.¹

The Public Service Commission of Wisconsin (PSC) Engagement Project was developed to address gaps in public participation in PSC processes. Project leads wanted to understand whether underrepresented and high-energy-burden communities were participating in utility and energy-related dockets, and what barriers were preventing engagement. After discussing the options for obtaining participation data, the team used public comment records, energy burden data, and environmental justice screening tools to identify patterns. Language, awareness, and accessibility were identified as key barriers to engagement and informed a focus on communities where the metrics and data had identified challenges.

¹<https://350wisconsin.org/about-350-wisconsin/>

The project combines data analysis, community engagement, and collaboration with PSC staff. The team analyzed 15,000 public comments from PSC dockets related to gas, electric, and utility rate increases, alongside demographic and energy burden data. Based on this, they selected Brown County, Marathon County, and Rock County as focus areas. In each region, 350 Wisconsin is partnering with local organizations to host community meetings, focus groups, and surveys to understand residents' experiences and barriers to participation. These sessions include educational components while ensuring that facilitation is designed to avoid biasing feedback. PSC staff are involved as collaborators, providing input and support with the goal of translating community input into actionable recommendations for improving public engagement.

Outcomes are in the early stages. To date, the team has analyzed thousands of PSC public comments and related demographic and energy burden data, identifying language and accessibility as barriers to participation. They have established partnerships with community organizations across three regions of Wisconsin and built a collaborative relationship with PSC staff, who are actively supporting the project. The project has also generated strong interest from local organizations that view the effort as needed and valuable.

The project has also come with challenges. PSC summary data required new extractions from agency databases and the team worked with PSC staff and their IT department to develop a new dataset. Coordinating with organizations across multiple regions has also been challenging and the team has

relied on local partners for outreach and relationship-building. Many residents are unfamiliar with the PSC and utility regulation, so the team is designing educational materials and discussions to help participants. The Wisconsin Office of Sustainability and Clean Energy's statewide climate action network WI CAN supported the project both by supplying initial funding and by providing a space where 350 WI could meet groups they weren't connecting with in other coalitions.

The team has learned valuable lessons from the effort. Summary data on public participation was not immediately accessible and working with PSC staff to extract the data has increased trust and developed data sources that can help inform ongoing work. Partnerships with local organizations are also vital, helping to reach more diverse communities and better understand local needs. The project's foundation has been that community engagement with the PSC should be accessible and inclusive: language, awareness, and familiarity with government processes all affect participation. To replicate the effort, interested organizations need strong partnerships, regulatory collaboration, and adaptable, data-informed engagement strategies.



“It is really important to have more PSC engagement on a statewide basis, and it is also important as a longer-term goal to have communities be able to build power together.”

Stephanie Robinson

Executive Director
350 Wisconsin



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