

**From:** [Wufoo](#)  
**To:** [Staff, CAO \(PUC\)](#)  
**Subject:** Submitted Public Comment Form  
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Provide the docket's number.	25-378M

Leave a comment on the docket. \*

To the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission,

I am writing to express my strong support for Xcel Energy's Capacity\*Connect proposal for a first-of-its-kind distributed capacity procurement in Minnesota. I believe this initiative, which involves installing up to 200 megawatts of distributed battery storage across the state by 2028, is a vital step toward modernizing the energy grid and meeting the growing electricity needs of our communities. However, as this project moves forward, I urge the Commission to emphasize and require the prioritization of local, diverse suppliers and contractors in the construction and deployment of these systems.

The Importance of Local and Diverse Partnerships

Focusing on local and diverse businesses and contractors is crucial for several reasons:

- **Economic Growth and Local Jobs:** The proposal already notes that the distributed energy resources will support local jobs. By intentionally partnering with local, diverse contractors and suppliers, the economic benefits of this massive infrastructure project can be maximized within the communities Xcel Energy serves, fostering broader economic growth in Minnesota.
- **Community Investment:** Locating the batteries at local businesses, commercial or industrial sites, or nonprofit organizations is intended to allow these hosts to "benefit financially from hosting clean energy technologies". Extending this principle to the construction phase ensures that the financial benefits of the entire project lifecycle are circulated back into the community, particularly in environmental justice communities.
- **Alignment with Labor Standards:** Xcel Energy has committed to prioritizing local workers and complying with the company's labor standards. Ensuring that diverse, local businesses are included in the bidding and contracting process is a necessary component of upholding these commitments.
- **Resiliency and Local Expertise:** Local contractors possess invaluable knowledge of the regional grid, permitting, and specific community needs, which can contribute to a more efficient, resilient, and safer deployment of the battery storage assets.

### Recommendations for the Bidding Process

To successfully achieve these outcomes, I recommend the Commission ensure Xcel Energy adopts specific measures in its procurement and bidding process:

- Diverse Supplier Goals: Require specific, measurable goals for the inclusion of Minority-Owned, Women-Owned, Veteran-Owned, and Small Business Enterprises in all tiers of the supply chain and contracting for this project.
- Targeted Outreach and Bidding Support: Mandate proactive, targeted outreach to local, diverse firms and provide resources or mechanisms to support their participation in the bidding process, which can often be challenging for smaller entities.
- Unbundling Contracts: Encourage the unbundling of larger contracts into smaller, more accessible packages that local and diverse firms are better equipped to handle, increasing their opportunities for participation.
- Transparency and Reporting: Require transparent reporting on contractor and supplier diversity metrics throughout the project's duration to ensure accountability and track the success of these inclusive efforts.

The Capacity\*Connect proposal represents a significant, forward-thinking investment in Minnesota's energy future. By making the inclusion of local, diverse suppliers and contractors a core requirement of this procurement, the Commission can ensure that this first-in-the-nation effort delivers not only a reliable and clean grid, but also transformative economic benefits to all Minnesotans.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Zahra Hargens Iliff

Interim President, American Association of Blacks in Energy (AABE)

Attach a File



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