

2019 Vision Summit Roundup

Looking into the future: highlights from the 2019 IREC Vision Summit

Reading Time: 3 minutes

On March 6, 2019, the Interstate Renewable Energy Council (IREC) hosted their inaugural Vision Summit, a conference designed to bring industry thought leaders and policy analysts together to discuss what a clean energy future might look like and what it would take to achieve that vision. EnergySage joined these industry leaders down in Washington, DC to participate in the Summit and to engage with the question of how solar will contribute to the renewable energy transition. Here are our key takeaways from the event.

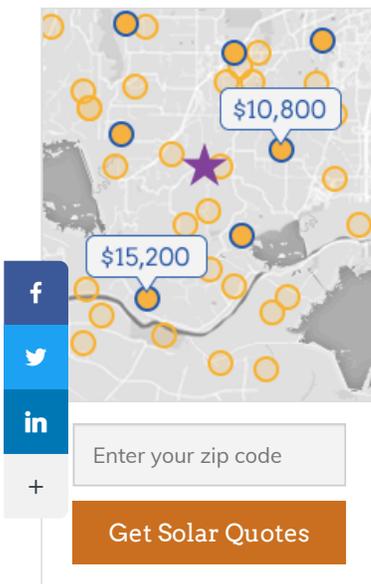
The ultimate vision for a clean energy future

At a high level, the vision for what a clean energy future requires is simple. As Kelly Speakes-Backman, CEO of the [Energy Storage Association](#), described, there are three things we need to do: use less energy, produce more of our own energy, and share more of our energy within our neighborhoods and communities. Sounds easy, right? But getting to that point will require collaboration as there won't be a single solution that works for everyone in every part of the country.

This is true today too. The existing electrical grid is powered by a suite of resources, from fossil fuels such as coal and gas to large-scale and small-scale renewable resources such as solar and wind. Similarly, in a clean energy future, there will be no single, silver-bullet resource. Rather, as explained by Steven Nadel of the [American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy \(ACEEE\)](#), we should be thinking of the solution as a series of "silver BBs".

An exciting aspect of the Vision Summit was the chance to rethink what we value from electricity production and consider how we would redesign markets and other structures to appropriately compensate resources for providing those services. To date, renewable energy has tried to find a way to fit within existing markets, but the thought experiment of how we would design the grid and markets for a clean energy future is a useful way to reframe the discussion around renewable energy. Abigail Ross Hopper, President and CEO of the [Solar Energy Industries Association \(SEIA\)](#), explains this opportunity as "radical market transformation" through "aggressive collaboration."

Find out what solar costs in your area in 2019



Opportunities for cross-technology collaboration

One particular highlight from the Summit was the notion that many renewable resources should be thought of like peanut butter and jelly: it would be crazy to have one without the other. This is particularly true for energy efficiency plus solar, since it's easier to size a solar panel system to meet your electricity demand if you've already reduced your consumption through [energy efficiency measures](#), as well as for [solar plus storage](#), which allows solar generation to be stored to be used when the sun isn't shining but homeowners are using electricity.

It was exciting to hear at the Vision Summit that so many organizations are already collaborating to create cross-technology products that provide greater benefits than any one product can provide on its own. Moving forward, it's important to keep in mind the advice from Sky Stanfield, Partner at Shute, Mihaly & Weinberger, who called upon the audience to resist the urge to enter policy arguments where we try to select the best or cheapest solution and rather encourage more situations where multiple options can each form a piece of the solution.

No community left behind

The clean energy transition has the opportunity to provide major benefits – financial, environmental or otherwise – to all cities and communities throughout the country. However, in the past, low- and moderate-income (LMI) households have largely missed out on the clean energy policies.

To ensure that the Green Wave lifts all boats, as Van Jones wrote in *Green Collar Economy*, we will need to act with deliberate intentionality. From building and retrofitting green buildings, to designing community solar programs specifically for LMI customers, it could be possible to “use energy as a driver” to address broader community building issues, as explained by Denise Fairchild, President and CEO of the [Emerald Cities Collaborative](#).

Workforce development is essential

The job growth from a clean energy transition will be nothing short of astounding. In fact, this tide has already begun. Yahoo! Finance found that “Solar Installer” is the fastest growing profession in eight states; the Solar Foundation's recent Solar Jobs Census found over 240,000 solar jobs in the US in 2018, nearly doubling the country's solar jobs in five short years; and EnergySage's own [2018 Solar Installer Survey](#) found that 60 percent of the nearly 900 installers surveyed think there will be more solar installers in 2019 than there were in 2018.

But where will this job growth come from? Many solar jobs are local, and residential storage jobs will likely be largely local as well. This is a great opportunity to expand the reach of the jobs created from the clean energy transition beyond just urban areas.

Consumers will lead the clean energy transition

Throughout all of these visions of a clean energy future, one thing becomes readily apparent: consumer demand will drive the transition. From buying power to our voting power, consumers have the opportunity to influence where the energy industry goes over the next five to fifty years.

If you're excited about participating in the clean energy transition, solar is a great place to start! Check out EnergySage's free [Solar Calculator](#) to see how much putting panels on your property could save you on your monthly electric bill, while also helping to reduce your environmental impact.

Find out what solar costs in your area in 2019



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Posted on **MARCH 7, 2019** [[HTTPS://NEWS.ENERGYSAGE.COM/LOOKING-INTO-THE-FUTURE-HIGHLIGHTS-FROM-THE-2019-IREC-VISION-SUMMIT/](https://news.energysage.com/looking-into-the-future-highlights-from-the-2019-irec-vision-summit/)] by **SPENCER FIELDS**.

Categories: **NEWS**

Tags: **ENERGY POLICY / INDEPENDENCE, SOLAR ENERGY INDUSTRIES ASSOCIATION (SEIA), WASHINGTON DC**

[About Spencer Fields](#)

Spencer is the Content & Research Manager at EnergySage, where he writes about all things energy. Prior to joining EnergySage, he spent five years at Synapse Energy Economics, providing environmental, economic and policy analysis for public interest groups. Spencer has degrees in Environmental Studies and Hispanic Studies from Brown University, meaning when he's not in the office you can find him outside or traveling somewhere to work on his Spanish.

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One thought on “Looking into the future: highlights from the 2019 IREC Vision Summit”



John Stavros

April 8, 2019 at 4:25 pm

Dear Spencer,

How do I learn more about the cost of building a solar garden in Pa?

I am next to a large, at least 10 acre corn field, with southern exposure, for sale as an industrial park. However, because of Township requirements for installing two new major intersections at several locations as the property is semi rural and accessed by two lane roads with stop signs and already steady traffic.

The additional cost makes it economically infeasible and not a marketable property as an industrial park. Within a half mile radius are to several condominium developments, a new single home building project and more single homes. I would estimate 400 units at a minimum.

I would like to learn more about costs and payback, creating a not for profit orgnaization to lead the project.

There are several well endowed foundations in the region that may have an interest in funding the project.

Thanks in advance for your time.

Sincerely,

John Stavros

