

Essential People's Panel

Charter

This Charter reflects the established role of the Essential People's Panel (EPP) as a group of informed residential and small-business customers who provide insight on Essential Energy projects, initiatives and regulatory proposals.



1. Purpose

The EPP brings customers and Essential Energy together to deliberately explore issues, consider different options and trade-offs, and help influence ideas and proposals that affect customers and communities.

Operating at the Collaborate level of the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation and in accordance with Essential's Stakeholder Engagement Framework, the EPP provides informed customer insights that support Essential Energy's decision-making. Members bring a range of backgrounds and experiences from across the network footprint, with the focus on deep, informed exploration rather than seeking a statistically representative view of all customers.

2. Objectives

The objectives of the EPP are to:

1. **Bring customer perspectives into decision-making** on issues affecting customers, communities and the future electricity network.
2. **Explore complex issues and trade-offs** through informed and deliberative discussion.
3. **Refine and test ideas and proposals** as they develop, including general business decisions and regulatory proposals.
4. **Strengthen accountability** by creating a clear link between what customers tell us and the decisions Essential Energy makes.

3. Panel values

EPP members are expected to:

- **Be respectful** – value different experiences and perspectives and allow others to be heard.
- **Be open and curious** – listen, ask questions and be willing to consider new information and different viewpoints.
- **Be Informed** – take the time to read all materials and ensure you are informed on topics for discussion.
- **Be constructive** – challenge ideas and test assumptions.
- **Participate in good faith** – contribute honestly and actively throughout the engagement process.
- **Respect privacy and confidentiality** – protect personal, sensitive and confidential information shared.

4. Status and authority

The EPP is an advisory and engagement forum. It is not a governing body and does not have authority to make decisions on behalf of Essential Energy.

Essential Energy remains responsible for final decisions and will consider EPP advice alongside other stakeholder feedback, legislation, safety obligations, regulatory requirements, and technical evidence.

5. Eligibility and recruitment

To be eligible, members must:

- be at least 18 years old;
- live in and/or operate a small business within Essential Energy's network area;
- be able to meet the expected participation commitment; and
- disclose actual, potential or perceived conflicts of interest.

Members may be recruited through expressions of interest, random or stratified selection, targeted recruitment, customer research activities or other transparent methods designed to achieve a credible and diverse panel.



6. Appointment and tenure

Members will generally be appointed for a **two-year term**. Essential Energy may extend, refresh or change membership over time to maintain a diverse range of customer experiences and perspectives while providing continuity within the Panel.

Members may resign by providing reasonable notice. Essential Energy may end a member's appointment where they breach this Charter.

Where practicable, Essential Energy will discuss concerns with the member before ending their appointment.

7. Participation expectations

Membership of the EPP requires an ongoing commitment to the Panel's work program, in addition to attendance at in-person and online sessions. Members are expected to actively participate in all scheduled panel sessions and associated activities.

These may include:

- attending in-person, or online sessions;
- reading briefing papers, information packs or other pre-reading prior to attendance at an online or in person meeting;
- being proactive and reaching out to Essential Energy [or the external facilitator] with any questions or to clarify information in any materials provided;
- reviewing presentations, options or draft materials;
- watching briefing videos or demonstrations;
- completing post-session surveys or questionnaires;
- participating in online or digital activities;
- reviewing workshop outputs or recommendations; and
- providing requested follow-up feedback.

Members should also promptly advise Essential Energy [or the external facilitator] of any accessibility or other support needed to participate.

Members are expected to advise Essential Energy as early as possible if they cannot participate in a required activity.

8. Meetings and engagement arrangements

Essential Energy [or the external facilitator] will ordinarily:

- provide an annual indicative schedule where reasonably possible, including key dates of in-person or online sessions;
- issue pre-reading in advance where possible;
- allow adequate time for questions and consideration;
- provide appropriate breaks during sessions; and
- accommodate dietary and accessibility requirements.

9. Participation stipend

Members will receive a participation stipend in recognition of the time and effort required to take part in the engagement program. This includes participating in formal panel sessions, as well as any required activities identified by Essential Energy before or after a session as outlined in section 7.

A participation stipend of \$700 will be paid after each full-day, in-person panel session. For shorter online sessions, members will receive a proportionate payment based on the length of the session.

Where Essential Energy identifies an activity in the lead up to, or following, an in-person or online session as required, members are expected to complete that activity to remain eligible for the applicable stipend payment.



10. Travel, meals and accommodation

Essential Energy will ensure members are not unreasonably out of pocket for participation.

In addition to the participation stipend, members will receive reimbursement for reasonable and necessary travel expenses that have been approved in advance including:

- private vehicle kilometre costs;
- public transport, taxis, rideshare, parking and road tolls;
- other travel costs approved in advance.

Where air travel is required, Essential Energy [or the external facilitator] will ordinarily arrange and pay for economy air travel. Alternative arrangements may be approved where accessibility, health, safety, timetable or regional travel considerations justify them.

Essential Energy [or the external facilitator] will arrange and pay for accommodation and breakfast where an overnight stay is required.

Meals will be provided during the hours of in-person sessions. All other meal expenses are covered by the participation stipend and will not be reimbursed.

Receipts or travel evidence such as kilometre readings will be required for any reimbursement of an expense.

11. Privacy, recordings and use of information

By agreeing to this Charter, members consent to being photographed, filmed or audio recorded during EPP activities. Essential Energy may use these materials for engagement, reporting, internal communications, marketing and external communications purposes.

AI-enabled tools may also be used to record, transcribe, summarise and analyse discussions to support insight capture and reporting. EPP reports will generally present findings by theme or use de-identified comments.

Essential Energy will handle members' personal information in accordance with legislated privacy requirements and our Privacy Management Policy.

12. Conflicts of interest

Members must disclose any actual, potential or perceived conflict of interest that could affect, or appear to affect, their participation.

Essential Energy will work with the member to appropriately manage the conflict. Declaring a conflict does not automatically prevent a member from participating.

13. Acceptance

Participation in the EPP requires members to acknowledge that they have read, understood and agree to operate consistently with this Charter and any related confidentiality, privacy, conduct, payment and travel requirements.