

## NRECA Business and Technology Strategies Staffing and Resource Alignment and Planning (September 2020)



**Jan Ahlen**  
**Director of Energy Solutions**

Jan Ahlen leads NRECA Business and Technology Strategies initiatives on distributed generation and energy storage. In this position, he manages a portfolio of research projects, delivers strategic advice to co-ops, and serves as liaison to outside stakeholder groups. Previously, Jan served as Senior Regulatory Affairs Manager for NRECA, responsible for representing rural electric cooperatives before various federal agencies. In this position, Jan was NRECA’s Subject Matter Expert in retail rate design, utility business models, grid modernization, and retail market design. Prior to joining NRECA, Jan served as the energy lobbyist for the National Farmers Union. He holds a Bachelor of Arts and Master of Arts in public policy from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and a MBA in Information Systems from Johns Hopkins University.



**Venkat Banunaryanan**  
**Vice President, Integrated Grid**

Venkat Banunaryanan has more than eighteen years’ experience in leading and executing energy-related projects involving power system analysis, renewables, techno-economic feasibility and benefit-cost studies. At NRECA, his role is to lead the development, implementation, and integration of business plans, product strategies, establishment of broad-based and varied stakeholder coalitions, and related activities for technological innovations that help electric cooperatives meet their members’ expectations for affordable, reliable electric power. Venkat holds a Ph.D. in Electrical Engineering and an M.B.A in Finance, and has worked previously at the U.S. Department of Energy, ICF International, and General Electric.



**Ginny Beauchemin**  
**Managing Director, Consulting Services**

Ginny Beauchemin has been working for NRECA and its members since 2004. She manages business consulting services and has a wide range of experience primarily in the areas of human resources, organizational culture, engagement, workforce planning, marketing, communications, safety programs, strategic planning, governance and project management. Prior to joining NRECA, Ginny worked in marketing and communications capacities for a variety of organizations from start-ups to Fortune 500 corporations. She is a member of the Society of Human Resource Managers, World at Work, Women’s Council on Energy and the Environment, and the American Society of Association Executives. Ginny is a certified Project Management Professional and earned a Professional Certificate in Energy Innovation and Emerging Technologies from Stanford University. She earned her MBA at George Washington University and holds a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Tulsa.



**Bud Branham**  
**Director, Safety Programs**

Bud Branham is the Director of Safety Programs for NRECA and has been with NRECA going on 12 years. During this time, Bud has worked with many cooperatives across the country on a wide range of operational improvement projects. Prior to joining NRECA, Bud worked for Utility Lines Construction Services providing contract services for utilities. He also spent over 24 years with Florida Power & Light Company (FPL) in various management roles. His safety management experience bridges both corporate staff and direct line responsibility for safety. Bud has an MBA from Florida International University and a BS from Stetson University.



**Paul Breakman**  
**Vice President,  
Cooperative Business  
Solutions**

Paul Breakman leads the Cooperative Organizational Development unit within the Business and Technology Strategies Division of NRECA. He works across NRECA and within the cooperative membership, focusing on the cooperative business structure and on cooperative resource adequacy concerns. He is committed to effectuating the success of the co-op model through business tactics and business opportunities for NRECA members. Paul engages with industry stakeholders and collaborates with many NRECA departments for successful development, execution, and communication of NRECA's work. His primary role is to provide key information and execute on a strategic framework to support electric cooperatives on current and future trends affecting operations, technology planning, cooperative business structures, and consumer expectations.



**Henry Cano**  
**Senior Principal  
Consultant**

Henry Cano provides management consulting services as part of NRECA's Business & Technology Strategies team. He works with electric cooperatives across the country helping them improve organization performance. Areas of services he leads include organization assessments and analysis; business process improvements; strategic planning, merger business case analysis and technology planning. Henry has over 28 years of direct experience working with the electric utility industry in the fields of distribution operations, technology, metering, billing, and customer services. Henry has successfully worked with utilities and cooperatives to analyze operations and improve business processes through team-based facilitated guided methods. Prior to NRECA, Henry served as Customer Program manager for SRP, the nation's third largest public power utility serving the Phoenix metropolitan area. He holds a Bachelor of Science in Industrial Engineering and MBA studies from Arizona State University.



**Kim Christiansen**  
**Managing Director**

Kim Christiansen works with Business and Technology Strategies Management Services, focusing on assisting NRECA's membership with governance and related issues. Kim is a staunch supporter of the cooperative model and firmly believes that continual and on-going governance conversations can support, improve and make the cooperative model stronger. Kim collaborates with several NRECA partners and external partners. Her focus is to make high performing governance second nature. Kim holds a J.D. from the University of Kansas School of Law, a M.Ed. in Administration and Supervision from Wichita State University, and a B.A. from Fort Hays State University.



**Robbin Christianson**  
**Senior Product  
Strategy Manager**

Robbin Christianson develops strategies that illustrate potential next steps for utility leaders. She raises research funds and attracts partners. She is a specialist in content to advance strategic objectives. Robbin brought together the winning proposal team for NRECA's Smart Grid Demonstration and led the recruitment of cooperatives, raising \$34 million in research funds in order to bid and win the \$68M demonstration. She worked as an independent consultant for many years and produced extensive work for NRECA. She joined NRECA staff in 2008 and rose to the position of Senior Director of Operations before taking her current position.



**Keith Dennis**  
**Vice President,  
Consumer-Member  
Engagement**

Keith Dennis is Vice President of Consumer-Member Engagement in the Business and Technologies Strategies Division of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA). Keith has an interdisciplinary background in engineering, business, and law and works with NRECA's Legislative, Regulatory Policy, and Technical teams on issues related to energy end use, including energy efficiency and demand response. Keith has published numerous papers on beneficial electrification and leads this initiative on behalf of NRECA. He also serves as the Co-Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Beneficial Electrification League. Prior to joining NRECA, Keith worked at the Department of Energy's Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy (EERE) where he led a Policy and Guidance Team for a \$3.2 billion energy efficiency and conservation grant program. He also served at The White House Council on Environmental Quality where he supported several large energy efficiency and renewable energy programs. He has also held numerous positions in the private sector. Keith holds an A.B. in Engineering and Environmental Sciences from Dartmouth College, a Bachelor of Engineering (B.E.) and Master of Engineering Management (M.E.M.) from the Thayer School of Engineering at Dartmouth College, and a Master of Studies in Environmental Law (M.S.E.L), summa cum laude, from Vermont Law School. He is also licensed Professional Engineer (P.E.).



**Fathalla Eldali**  
**Distribution  
Optimization Engineer**

Fathalla Eldali is a distribution optimization engineer with the integrated grid team. He works with matters related to electric power systems in both transmission and distribution (T&D). Since he joined NRECA, he has been working with the T&D Engineering Committee and supporting the system planning subcommittee. Fathalla received his master's and PhD degrees from Colorado State University. His academic background is in power systems, power electronic converters, and rotating machines design and drives. His main areas of focus are electric power systems analysis, integration of renewable energy resources, and demand side management.



**Joseph Goodenbery**  
**Lead Economist**

Joseph Goodenbery is the Lead Economist at NRECA. He performs data analysis, research, and economic modeling of issues affecting electric cooperatives and the broader energy industry, including policy impacts, access to rural broadband, local economic development, affordable electricity, renewable energy, and levelized costs. Joe specializes in economic impact analysis and market dispatch modeling. Prior to joining NRECA in 2015, he previously worked at FTI Consulting and Compass Lexecon, providing legal and economic consulting, primarily on matters involving wholesale electricity markets. Joe holds an M.S. in Environmental Economics from the University of Georgia and a B.A. in Mathematics from Ithaca College.



**Aleeta Harrington**  
**Senior Administrator**

Aleeta Harrington is a Senior Administrator at the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) and has been with the organization since 2006. In Business and Technology Strategies, she leads the NRECA Reliability Benchmarking Group (RBG) and works alongside the Distribution Optimization team. Aleeta has a MS in Non-profit Association Management from the University of Maryland University College.



**Robert Harris**  
**Senior Principal,  
Transmission &  
Distribution**

Robert Harris has 30 years of electric utility experience, 27 of them with cooperatives. All his time with cooperatives has been in engineering, operations and management of distribution, substations, and transmission. Robert has managed a department of 13 employees and all construction contractors for a system serving 32,500 members. He managed the complete rebuild of the distribution system and substation for a 25 MW industrial load while keeping them in service. He also managed voltage conversion of approximately 400 miles of distribution from 12 to 25 kV in less than two years while rebuilding two related substations. Robert's primary activities since coming to NRECA are with NESC Committees; NRECA T&D Engineering Committees (Overhead and Underground); working with RUS Electric Staff; and IEEE 1547 (Interconnection Standards) revisions. Robert holds a BS in Engineering from North Carolina State University and is a Professional Engineer in NC.



**Cynthia Hsu**  
**Principal,  
Cybersecurity  
Solutions**

Cynthia Hsu is the Principal for Cybersecurity Solutions for NRECA, responsible for developing and implementing cybersecurity research programs that address issues relevant to NRECA's members. Cynthia is the Principal Investigator leading NRECA's Rural Cooperative Cybersecurity Capabilities (RC3) Program, which has provided resources and training to more than 480 cooperatives. Prior to joining NRECA, she worked in energy policy for Congress and for the U.S. Department of Energy, covering electricity sector research in industrial control system cybersecurity, grid analytics, grid modernization, marine and hydrokinetic energy technologies, energy storage, transmission planning, and power system resilience. Cynthia holds a M.S. from Cornell University and Ph.D. from the University of Minnesota and has more than 20 years of experience managing technical research programs.



**Adaora Ifebigh**  
**Senior Manager,  
Research &  
Development (R&D)  
Engagements**

Adaora Ifebigh is the Senior Manager for Research and Development (R&D) Engagements for Business and Technology Strategies. She is a Project Management Professional (PMP) with over a decade of project management experience. Adaora leads projects in cybersecurity, analytics, low/moderate income and energy access for all programs. Prior to joining NRECA, she spent 8 years as a consultant at the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) supporting the Buildings Technologies Office (BTO). In her time at DOE, she also managed a program portfolio of more than 23 R&D projects worth \$77M for DOE's Advanced Research Projects Agency-Energy (ARPA-e). Adaora holds an MBA from Florida International University and a Master's in Public Policy from George Mason University.



**[Maria Kanevsky](#)**  
**Energy Consumers  
Analyst**

Maria Kanevsky is an Energy Consumers Analyst within the Business and Technology Strategies division at NRECA. She supports multiple efforts in the division such as consumer member engagement, beneficial electrification, and consumer segmentation. Maria holds a B.A. in Economics and Environmental Science from the College of William & Mary.



**[Lauren Khair](#)**  
**Senior Analyst  
Economics & Industry**

Lauren Khair is a Senior Analyst in the Cooperative Systems division of NRECA's Business and Technology Strategies (BTS) department. Before NRECA, she worked for the U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) Energy Information Administration (EIA), where she developed and led the quality assurance process for the three major electricity surveys. At NRECA, Lauren is the liaison to EIA, performs economic and data analyses for cooperatives, and works on cybersecurity projects through NRECA's Rural Cooperative Cybersecurity Capabilities (RC3) Program. She currently leads the Department of Defense engagement initiative at NRECA. A native of Northern Virginia, Lauren earned her B.A. from James Madison University and a Master's in Public Policy from George Mason University's Scher School of Policy and Government.



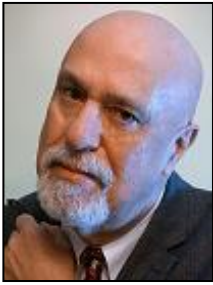
**[Michael Leitman](#)**  
**Senior Analyst**

Michael Leitman is Senior Analyst, Economics & Business with NRECA's Business & Technology Strategies (BTS) department. Michael joined NRECA in 2007. He performs economic, policy, and data research and analysis for internal NRECA and members, with particular focus on co-op power supply, renewable energy, and co-op community demographics. Michael leads BTS's Resource Adequacy & Markets work group. Michael holds BAs in Political Science and History from the College of Charleston, and a MSc in Public Policy and Administration from The London School of Economics and Political Science.



**[Paul McCurley](#)**  
**Chief Engineer**

Paul McCurley has over 35 years of electric industry experience working for cooperatives and investor-owned utilities in engineering and energy policy areas related to system planning, operations, reliability and markets. At NRECA, he is responsible for market, technical and regulatory issues related to RTOs/ISOs and wholesale energy markets in general, as well as related issues on resource adequacy, transmission and reliability. Paul holds a BSEE in Power Systems Engineering from Auburn University in Alabama, and a MBA from LSU in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.



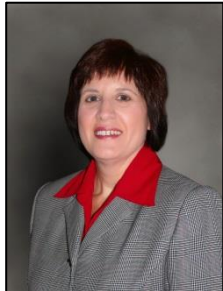
**Craig Miller**  
**Chief Scientist**

Craig Miller is the Chief Scientist of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association. In his role with NRECA, he oversees a broad research portfolio and personally leads projects in a number of areas, including cybersecurity and advanced utility architecture. Craig’s current focus is reactive approaches to cybersecurity as an effective complement to traditional preventive methods, such as firewalls, and advanced grid control architecture for agile operations. He holds a Ph.D. in Systems Engineering from the University of Virginia and has worked in the industry since 1976. He is a serial entrepreneur and inventor, and has a gold medal from the Smithsonian Institution for “Heroic Achievement in the Advancement of Information Technology.”



**Meredith Miller**  
**Data Scientist**

Meredith Miller is a Data Scientist at NRECA, working on cybersecurity threat detection, predictive maintenance analytics, and data management. Prior to joining NRECA, Meredith worked for over 10 years in the transportation industry on projects including road profile signal processing, train delay root cause analysis, vehicle arrival predictions, and passenger movement inference. She has experience in analyzing rare events through her previous work on predictive maintenance for ticket vending machines, and is dedicated to the development of industry data standards to overcome data silos. Meredith has a M.S. in Applied Mathematics and Statistics from Georgetown University and a B.S. in Mechanical Engineering from the University of Michigan.



**Patti Metro**  
**Senior Grid  
Operations &  
Reliability Director**

Patti Metro is the Senior Grid Operations and Reliability Director at the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA). She graduated from Clemson University with a Bachelor of Science degree in Electrical Engineering. Patti has over 30 years of extensive electric utility experience in grid reliability compliance, energy policy, regulatory issues, customer service, engineering, operations, project management and training. In addition, she is a Certified NERC Reliability Operator and Dale Carnegie Graduate.



**Anantha Narayanan**  
**Data Scientist**

Anantha Narayanan joined NRECA in February 2020 as a Data Scientist, and is working on various technologies for modeling and analysis of power grids. He was previously working with the National Institute of Standards and Technology on applying data analysis and machine learning to improve manufacturing operations. Anantha has over 14 years of experience working on topics including machine learning, data analysis, information modeling, and standards development. Anantha has a masters and PhD in Computer Science from Vanderbilt University in Nashville, TN, and a B. Tech in Mechanical Engineering from the Indian Institute of Technology, Madras, India.



**Delaine Orendorff**  
**Senior Principal,  
Management Services**

Delaine Orendorff joined NRECA as the Director of Human Capital Planning and is part of the Business and Technology Strategies group. Delaine has 20+ years of experience in leadership roles in Human Resources at mid- and large- size organizations, including a distribution cooperative and high tech and research and development companies. Delaine earned her MBA at Northeastern University and holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from York University, Toronto, Canada. She is a certified Senior Human Resources Professional (SPHR), Certified Compensation Professional (CCP), and is also certified in Organizational Development, Change Leadership, Executive & Team Coaching, Employee Relations Law, Mediation, Motivational Value Systems, 360 degree and ProfileXT Assessments. Delaine is Past President Emeritus of the Rocky Mountain Total Rewards Association in Denver, CO.



**David Pinney**  
**Principal, Analytics  
Tools & Software**

David Pinney is NRECA's Principal of Analytical Tools & Software in the Business and Technology Strategies group. David designs and builds mathematical models of grid technology with an emphasis on cost-effectiveness of smart grid investments. Prior to joining NRECA, David led consulting engagements for a software and data mining company, MicroStrategy, and built biological models at the UCLA Institute for Pure and Applied Mathematics. David has a degree in mathematics from Cornell University.



**Madelyn Roche**  
**Strategic Analysis  
Information  
Representative**

Madelyn Roche, Strategic Analysis Information Representative, has been with NRECA for nine years, the last three of which have been in the Business and Technology Strategies division. She leads the management and reporting of multiple streams of data that are critical to NRECA and its members. Madelyn maintains a database of cooperative and electric utility industry data that is essential to the reporting operations of NRECA staff and members. She also keeps abreast of current data processing and research techniques. Additionally, Madelyn provides regular updates on industry and cooperative trends.



**Mike Sassman**  
**Manager,  
Market Research**

Mike Sassman joined NRECA in March 2014 and has led the team through numerous projects and process improvements. As an experienced marketing and business analytics manager, he understands the importance of turning data into actionable insights, focusing the team's efforts on providing more than just topline results. Prior to joining NRECA, he held positions with Wells Enterprises and Gateway Computers. Mike holds a BS of Statistics with a Minor in Sociology from Iowa State University.



**Moin Shaikh**  
**Principal,  
Cybersecurity**

Moin Shaikh is a Principal of Cybersecurity for NRECA. In this position, he provides strategic advice to cybersecurity projects and shares his expertise on matters related to protecting our critical infrastructure, such as power systems, from cyber threats. He has been at the forefront of helping critical infrastructure sectors, such as manufacturing and energy, in developing cybersecurity strategies and leading programs to assess and improve their cybersecurity posture. As a project engineer with Siemens, he has traveled globally to design and commission Industrial Control Systems. Moin has provided cybersecurity expertise to the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) on both technical and policy issues. He has led the implementation of cybersecurity regulatory program and risk assessments in critical nuclear power generation operations for Exelon, an investor-owned electric utility. Moin holds an Executive Master's degree in Technology and Business Management (EMTM) from the University of Pennsylvania and a Bachelor of Science degree in Computer Systems Engineering degree from N.E.D. University of Engineering and Technology.



**Brian Sloboda**  
**Director of Consumer  
Solutions**

Brian Sloboda is the Director of Consumer Solutions at the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's Business and Technology Strategies Department. Brian is responsible managing the Association's research efforts in the area of distributed energy resources. He specializes in electric vehicles, smart home and consumer programs. Brian has degrees in political science and speech communication from Fairmont State College.



**Leigh Taylor**  
**Director,  
Executive Search**

Leigh Taylor joined NRECA in early 2019 as the Director of Executive Search within the Business and Technology Strategies Group. In this capacity, Leigh leads a team of 7 consultants. Together, they facilitate executive and senior staff searches for generation and transmission companies (G&Ts), distribution electric cooperatives, Statewides, as well as PPDs and PUDs. She also consults with cooperatives on leadership transition and executive performance appraisal, in addition to executive and talent coaching. She has over 18 years of experience working with cooperative Boards of Directors, CEOs and employees across the country, as both a lender and as an HR consultant. Leigh holds a MBA from Thunderbird, the American Graduate School of International Business, and a BS in Business from Wake Forest University.



**Tony Thomas**  
**Senior Principal  
Engineer**

Tony Thomas is the Senior Principal Engineer with NRECA's Business and Technology Strategies division. Tony comes to NRECA with nearly four decades of experience in energy automation and control systems and serves as NRECA's Smart Grid and ICS Cybersecurity subject matter expert. He has a BS in Electrical Engineering and also holds "Certified Energy Manager" credentials. Most recently, Tony earned the "Global Industrial Control Systems Cybersecurity Professional" certification and is one of less than 2,000 Engineering and IT Professionals in the world to have earned that certification.





**Russell Tucker**  
**Chief Economist**

Russell Tucker is the Chief Economist at the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA), where he provides economic analysis of electric cooperative issues. Significant projects include Unlocking the Value of Broadband for Co-op Consumer-Members, The Economic Impact of Electric Co-ops, and simulation modeling of the impacts of proposed EPA carbon regulation. Prior to joining NRECA in 2008, Russell held several economic and public policy analysis positions at the Edison Electric Institute, addressing industry restructuring, wholesale markets development, electric transmission pricing, and climate change. He has a Ph.D. in Economics from The George Washington University, an M.A. from the American University, and a B.S. from Virginia Commonwealth University.



**Dan Walsh**  
**Senior Director,  
Generation,  
Environment &  
Carbon**

Dan Walsh is Senior Director of Power Supply and Generation at the National Rural Electric Cooperative, with current responsibilities for generation, environmental and carbon research and development. Prior to joining NRECA, Dan held several positions including Asset Manager at GE Capital, and while at GE Power Systems, held roles in the gas, steam turbine and generator engineering groups and later as manager of several combined cycle and coal fired sites. Earlier in his career, Dan was an Officer in the U.S. Navy onboard a ballistic missile submarine in New London, CT.



**Beth Wray**  
**Analyst, Consulting  
Services**

Beth Wray is an Analyst for NRECA. She has been the coordinator for the Executive Search Department since 2005 and began assisting NRECA's Human Capital practice area in 2017, with a specialty in compensation analysis. Beth earned her BS in Math/Computer Science from Pepperdine University and worked in the aerospace industry for eight years. From there, she became interested in designing and developing databases and compensation models. In addition to her focus on compensation, Beth continues to develop and maintain the Executive Search database, and handles advertising, resumes, communication and consultant support for the department.