

# 2023 NRECA and Partner Resources

# NRECA Communications Managers

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# cooperative.com

Cooperative.com is an industry portal for electric co-ops that includes access to:

- Your benefits
- News (no login required)
- Communications Interest Area is a central information hub for Communicators and Statewide Editors and contains:
  - Co-op communication best practices and samples
  - Straight Talk articles and images for use in co-op publications
  - Information about communicator groups and the CCC certification program
  - Spotlight on Excellence Awards program information
  - Lexicon Project information
- Also of interest to communicators on cooperative.com:
  - Industry tools and information organized by topic (*Topics*)
  - Touchstone Energy® resources (*Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives*)
  - Business & Technology Strategies (*Programs & Services > Business & Technology Strategies*)
  - Young Adult Member Engagement (YAME) Initiative (*Engagement Resources*)
  - Co-op job opportunities (*Co-op Jobs*)
  - Directory of co-op staff (*People & Networking > People Finder*)
  - Co-op data and maps (*Maps, Facts & Figures*)
  - Professional communities (*People & Networking > Professional Communities*)



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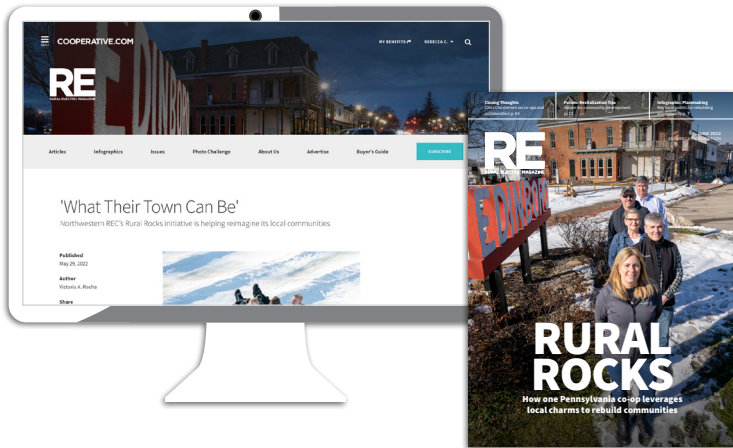


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# RE Magazine



*RE Magazine*, NRECA's flagship monthly publication, features co-op-focused human-interest stories, thought pieces and technology articles.

## KEY CONTACTS



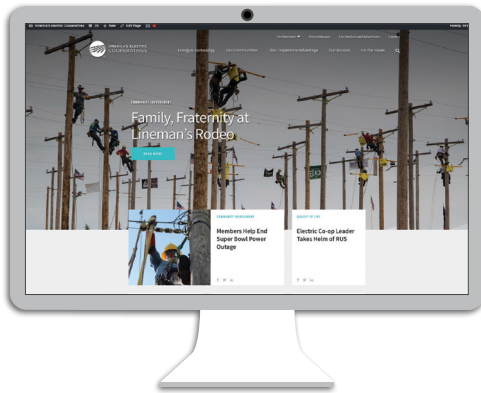
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Electric.coop is NRECA's home for showing all the ways America's electric cooperatives are making life better for the people and places we serve. The main content pillars highlight:

- Our communities that rely on us to deliver safe, reliable and affordable energy;
- The energy and technology we use to accomplish our mission; and
- The shared cooperative advantage that guides us along the way.

For lawmakers, regulators, journalists, researchers and energy wonks, this site brings depth and humanity to topics that can be technical and dry. For members, this site offers compelling stories from your friends and colleagues across the cooperative network and easy-to-navigate resources to help you share the co-op story with your consumer-members at the end of the line.

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# Media And Public Relations

The media and public relations team is responsible for external communications, including aggressive media outreach, crisis communications support and driving message development and strategy for NRECA and our member co-ops.

- Collaborates with our member co-ops and other NRECA departments to tell the modern electric co-op story in support of public policy objectives.
- Provides op-eds, talking points, media pitches and other messaging to assist our member co-ops.
- Develops specialty communication toolkits and resources on timely issues like governance communications, reputation management and the Lexicon Project.



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# NRECA Social Media

Connect with NRECA on social media for news, events, legislative updates, international developments and other content to share with co-op staff, elected officials and member-consumers. Have something to share with #CoopNation? Be sure to tag us in your social posts using the handles below. Our social media managers are also available to help brainstorm and strategize when it comes to your co-op's social efforts.






## NRECA

-  facebook.com/NRECA.coop
-  @nrecanews
-  @electriccoops
-  linkedin.com/company/nreca
-  youtube.com/electriccoops
-  @electriccoops





## Co-ops Vote

-  facebook.com/coopsvote
-  @coopsvote
-  @coopsvote



## NRECA Youth Tour

-  facebook.com/NRECAYouthTour
-  @NRECAYouthTourDC

## KEY CONTACTS



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# Leadership Communication

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NRECA provides communication support to NRECA's Board of Directors, the CEO's office and various special projects.

In addition to the leadership communication team's day-to-day responsibilities, they are available to consult with NRECA member cooperatives on:

- Executive speeches
- Manager's columns
- Annual reports
- Other communications from senior co-op leaders



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## KEY CONTACTS



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# Multimedia

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The multimedia team supports projects that incorporate visual, graphic and audio elements and crafts them into finished presentations and podcasts. The team shoots and edits a combination of video and still photos as well as gathers audio and creates animations to tell co-op stories.



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## KEY CONTACT



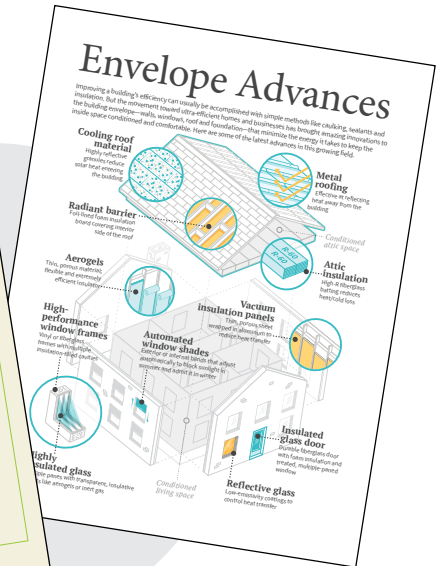
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# Creative Services

The NRECA Creative Services team is a group of creative problem-solvers who serve an integral role in sharing the co-op story with both external and co-op audiences.

**We provide expertise and creative solutions in the following areas:**

- Infographic planning and design
- Print and digital storytelling
  - *RE Magazine*
  - cooperative.com
  - electric.coop
  - Social media channels
- Brand cohesiveness and promotion



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# Touchstone Energy<sup>®</sup> Cooperative



Touchstone Energy helps its member cooperatives strengthen their relationships with their members. It is a national network of electric co-ops across 45 states, providing research, communications resources, and employee training programs to help member systems better engage and serve their members. As a result, Touchstone Energy co-ops are positioned to achieve superior member satisfaction and engagement to strengthen the co-op, the community it serves, and the electric co-op network at large.

## Some of the Member Benefits:

- Video, radio, print and social ad campaign assets that can be branded with co-op logo.
- Web and Creative Services, including a Co-op Web Builder-developed and hosted website with 24/7/365 support and access to energy efficiency, safety and technology articles, infographics and videos.
- Social media content support to supplement local content and an enhanced custom social media management service.
- Co-op Connections discount program to support local businesses and provide co-op members access to national and local deals.
- Access to and participation in research projects to provide cooperatives with data on consumer trends, including American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI<sup>®</sup>) scores for your co-op, The National Survey on the Cooperative Difference, online member focus group surveys and more.
- Employee development resources, including LinkedIn Learning licenses and Service Excellence training.
- Community and economic development resources, including those designed to strengthen key account relations and improve the quality of life for co-op communities.
- Touchstone Energy's Hot Air balloon and mascot program for co-op and community events.

Visit the Co-op Quick Links menu on [www.TouchstoneEnergy.com](http://www.TouchstoneEnergy.com) to learn more.

[www.TouchstoneEnergy.com](http://www.TouchstoneEnergy.com)

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# NRECA Employee Benefits

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Does your cooperative offer health insurance or retirement benefits from NRECA? If so, our Employee Benefits Communications team can offer you a multitude of communications to engage and educate your co-op's employees to maximize the use of their benefit plans.

Through our secure, easy-to-use website, we provide engaging content through infographics, videos and direct mail campaigns that help take the complexity and confusion out of benefit plans. We also work closely with benefits administrators to guide them through the complexities of benefits administration and compliance requirements.

We are committed to providing co-op employees and staff with the information they need through multiple communication channels so they can make the most of these valuable benefit programs.

## We can help you:

- **Build** a multichannel communication outreach with materials designed to best fit the needs of your co-op.
- **Collaborate** with your human resources or benefit administrator to engage plan participants with relevant, action-oriented information about their benefit plan.
- **Provide content** for various communication platforms on a wide variety of retirement planning, well-being and health insurance topics. Our material uses content validated by NRECA language research with benefit plan participants to ensure co-op employees understand, value and maximize the use of their benefit programs.

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# Workforce Solutions Initiatives

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The Workforce Solutions team is focused on enabling cooperatives to attract and retain the best, brightest and best-matched talent. The programs below help members attract and engage their next generation workforce:

- **Vets Power Us** is a national initiative to recruit, hire and honor veterans, active military and their spouses. We provide resources and information to help co-ops attract, hire, on-board and retain this critical talent. Learn more at [cooperative.com/vetspowerus](https://cooperative.com/vetspowerus).
- **The National Electric Cooperative Mentoring Program** is designed to help co-ops retain their top talent and prepare new HR and benefits professionals for current or future responsibilities. Visit [cooperative.com/mentoringprogram](https://cooperative.com/mentoringprogram).
- **Cooperative Career Center** is a job board that provides cooperatives with targeted access to a diverse set of qualified candidates and helps job seekers quickly and easily find job listings that match their skillset.

Additional programs and resources such as talent management practices for DEI can be found on the Workforce Solutions page on [cooperative.com](https://cooperative.com).

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# Grassroots Advocacy

## VOICES FOR COOPERATIVE POWER

Voices for Cooperative Power (VCP) is our grassroots advocacy platform that allows America's electric cooperatives to harness the voices of our 42



**Voices for  
Cooperative  
Power**

million consumer-members. It gives them an opportunity to take an active role in ensuring that co-op goals are in legislation and regulation at the federal, state and local levels. Through VCP, we champion the electric co-op business model and the good it does in our communities.

### Voices for Cooperative Power engages in two ways:

- 1. Communication** – Our members can be our most influential advocates if we inform them of the challenges and opportunities we face and empower them to speak out on our behalf. Through social media and email messaging, we strive to engage with our member-consumers on a variety of issues. Join us at [voicesforcooperativepower.com](https://voicesforcooperativepower.com) or follow us on your favorite social channel.
- 2. Education** – A summary of the current issues we are following on behalf of America's electric cooperatives can be found at [voicesforcooperativepower.com/issues](https://voicesforcooperativepower.com/issues)



facebook.com/voices4coops



@voices4coops



@voices4coops



linkedin.com/company/voices-for-cooperative-power

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# America's Electric Cooperatives PAC

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America's Electric Cooperatives PAC (formerly ACRE®) is the federal political action committee (PAC) of the nation's electric cooperatives. Backed by over 35,000 individuals making an average contribution of \$65, the PAC is truly grassroots.

Check out the America's Electric Cooperatives PAC page on [cooperative.com](http://cooperative.com) for resources and materials from NRECA and other co-ops across the country that you can use internally and externally to promote America's Electric Cooperatives PAC, including legal guidelines, sample videos and newsletters.

Please consider joining the America's Electric Cooperatives PAC professional community at [cooperative.com/my-account/Pages/ Professional-Communities.aspx](http://cooperative.com/my-account/Pages/Professional-Communities.aspx) for more frequent updates about upcoming events and new available resources.



## America's Electric Cooperatives | PAC

Contributions to the NRECA America's Electric Cooperatives PAC are not tax deductible for federal income tax purposes. Contributions to America's Electric Cooperatives PAC are voluntary and will be used for political purposes. You have the right to refuse to contribute without reprisal. Federal law prohibits contributions from foreign nationals who lack permanent resident status. Any contribution guidelines presented are merely suggestions. You are free to contribute more or less than the suggested amounts, or not at all. NRECA will not favor or disadvantage anyone by reason of the amount contributed or a decision not to contribute.

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### KEY CONTACTS

For more information on who is eligible to join America's Electric Cooperatives PAC and how to build a strong program at your cooperative, please email the PAC staff at [pacteam@nreca.coop](mailto:pacteam@nreca.coop).



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**AMY LEWIS**  
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# Co-ops Vote

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The continued growth and success of electric cooperatives relies on strong political relationships on the local, state and federal level. Co-ops Vote is a non-partisan program focused on bringing co-op members, candidates and elected officials together to solidify those relationships through voter education and civic engagement. The key to the program is boosting voter turnout in cooperative communities, making sure that our members exercise one of their most basic rights—the right to vote.

Working in collaboration with state associations and local co-ops, this effort will educate and engage elected officials, candidates and co-op voters on important issues like:

- Promoting the work of co-ops within the communities they serve.
- Ensuring continued access to reliable electricity.
- Expanding broadband coverage throughout rural America.



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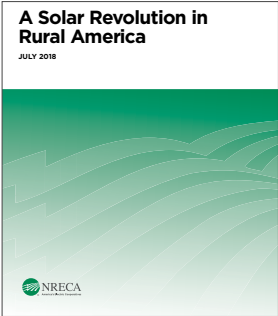


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# Business & Technology Strategies (BTS)

Electric cooperatives rely on NRECA's Business & Technology Strategies Department for insights and recommendations on current and future trends affecting operations, technology planning, consumer expectations and policy. We engage directly with internal and external stakeholders and represent cooperative needs in key forums to help ensure the longevity and success of America's electric cooperatives.



## BTS has six work groups involving key issues:

- 1 Analytics, Resiliency and Reliability
- 2 Cybersecurity
- 3 Distributed Energy
- 4 Generation, Environment and Carbon
- 5 Resource Adequacy and Markets
- 6 Transmission and Distribution

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# Consulting Services

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## SERVICE AREAS

We partner with CEOs, boards, communicators and other senior leaders to deliver custom, scalable solutions in a wide variety of service areas, including:

### Business Optimization

- Organizational Assessments
- Merger and Consolidation Analysis
- Business Process Improvement
- Strategic Planning
- Electric Vehicle Strategy

### Workforce & Talent Strategies

- Executive Search (Senior Staff)
- Compensation Analysis
- Succession Planning
- Organizational Culture

### Market Research

- Consumer-member Segmentation
- Member Satisfaction

### Technology Management

- Technology Planning
- Data Strategy Planning
- Technology Evaluation and Deployment
- Operations Analysis and Effectiveness
- Grid Data Analytics

### Governance & Leadership Strategies

- Executive Search (CEO/General Manager)
- Board Assessments
- Board Compensation Assessments

### Safety Consulting

- Safety Improvement Planning
- Safety Culture Assessment

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# Homestead Funds

We are a mutual fund manager with roots in rural America, originally formed over 30 years ago to invest on behalf of community electric cooperatives and their members.



**Homestead**  
Funds

At Homestead, our values are aligned with the cooperative community and our objectives are clear. We strive to give investors the resources, education and support needed to build the bright financial futures they deserve.



### Access

Utilize our in-house financial tool set and work directly with investment professionals.



### Support

Take advantage of comprehensive investment resources and get help from our representatives along the way.



### Customization

Pull from a wide range of in-house solutions to create highly personalized portfolio strategies.

Do you have a specific goal in mind? Or are you looking for suggestions that make sense given where you are in life? Our team of financial professionals can provide you with investment guidance at no additional cost. Go to [homesteadfunds.com/appointments](https://homesteadfunds.com/appointments) to schedule an appointment for a phone or video call today!

*Investing in mutual funds involves risk, including the possible loss of principal. Investors should carefully consider fund objectives, risks, charges and expenses before investing. The prospectus contains this and other information about the funds and should be read carefully before investing. To obtain a prospectus, call 800.258.3030 or visit [homesteadfunds.com](https://homesteadfunds.com).*

*Homestead Funds investment advisor and/or administrator, RE Advisers Corporation, and distributor, RE Investment Corporation, are indirect, wholly owned subsidiaries of NRECA. 02/22*

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# NRECA International

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## HISTORY

NRECA International was established in 1962, launching NRECA's overseas involvement to share lessons learned in the electrification of the rural United States with developing countries around the world.

## COMMITMENT

NRECA International is committed to provide access to reliable and affordable electricity, and for more than 60 years, 160 million people in 48 countries have benefitted from our work. This has resulted in improved healthcare, economic growth, clean water and better education for many rural communities.

## EXPERIENCE

NRECA International's team designs and builds generation-distribution systems, designs and installs renewable energy systems and creates community-owned-and-operated sustainable utilities. These electrification programs receive funding support from the U.S. Agency for International Development, the Millennium Challenge Corporation, the World Bank and other donors.

## CHARITABLE WORK

NRECA International is also supported by more than 300 electric cooperatives in the United States, and private organizations contributing time, money and materials to dozens of NRECA International projects.

Hundreds of co-op directors, lineworkers, engineers, managers and other employees have served as volunteers in Latin America, Southeast Asia and sub-Saharan Africa to bring first-time access to electricity and train local partners to help utilities be sustainable in their own communities.

 [facebook.com/NRECAInternational](https://www.facebook.com/NRECAInternational)

 [@NRECAIntl](https://twitter.com/NRECAIntl)

 <https://www.linkedin.com/company/nreca-international/>



**NRECA International**



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# Federated Rural Electric Insurance Exchange

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Federated is different from other insurance carriers. We're an insurance exchange, with a structure that is similar to a co-op.

We don't work through agents or brokers. Our field staff is composed of Federated employees. All claims and administration are handled at our office by Federated personnel.

We focus on providing services at an affordable cost to our members. We operate on a break-even basis from our underwriting operation, allowing investment income to take care of unforeseen circumstances.

We understand the unique challenges you face. Since 1959, Federated has insured electric and telephone cooperatives exclusively and continuously.

You can count on us for strategies to help you control risk and reduce accidents. Federated is the only insurance carrier serving this market with a fully staffed Safety & Loss Prevention Department experienced in utility operations.

You can take care of business conveniently at [federatedrural.com](https://federatedrural.com). File a claim, check claim status, search your own loss history and compare system losses by lines of business. Just log in to find the information you need.



## FEDERATED RURAL ELECTRIC INSURANCE EXCHANGE

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# National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Corporation (CFC)

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As the only lender created and owned by the electric cooperative network, the National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Corporation (CFC) based in Dulles, Virginia, provides capital and industry-leading financial products to America's 900-plus not-for-profit, consumer-controlled electric cooperatives and rural utility systems.

In the late 1960s, when federal funds for rural electrification were no longer sufficient to meet demand, electric cooperatives took charge of their destiny through a self-help approach—forming an independent nonprofit financial cooperative that would make loans only to member systems. On April 10, 1969, CFC was incorporated.

Governed by a 23-member board made up exclusively of electric cooperative directors and executives, CFC helps our member-owners attain their business, financial and strategic objectives through flexible, customized loan products, investment options, services, tools and training. We accomplish this through a dedicated staff and a stable, diverse base of funds built by decades of leveraging relationships in the financial community.



By holding true to our enduring values of service, integrity and excellence, CFC ensures that electric cooperatives can access the capital needed to power and grow the areas they serve regardless of economic conditions.

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# NRTC

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We are member-driven and technology-focused. NRTC provides solutions that help our 1,500 electric and telephone members bring all the advantages of today’s evolving technology to rural America.

NRTC’s solutions are developed specifically to meet the needs of rural utilities and their customers and include integrated smart grid solutions, advanced energy, broadband infrastructure and managed network services, wireless technologies and programming distribution capabilities for video and broadband providers.

NRTC helps ensure our members’ success by aggregating their individual buying power, negotiating national contracts, helping members integrate technology solutions with their existing infrastructure and supporting members following implementation.

NRTC members also earn capital credits from their patronage. NRTC has paid or retired more than \$100 million to NRTC members in the past decade.



Member driven. Technology focused.

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## KEY CONTACT



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703-787-7288

# 2023 Highlighted NRECA Resources

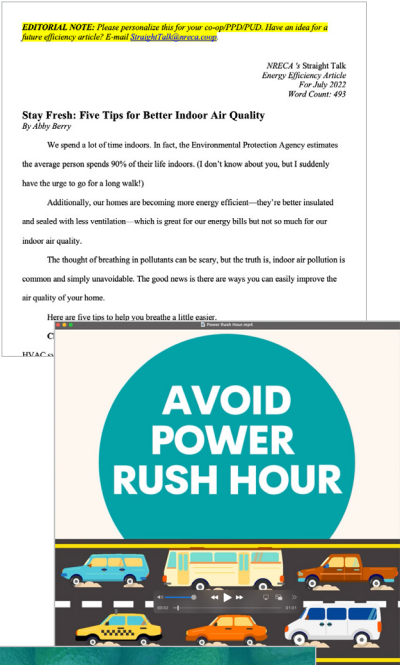


# Straight Talk: Your Go-to Resource

Every month, Straight Talk provides new customizable content that spans a variety of topics relevant to electric co-ops, including energy efficiency, electrical safety, the co-op difference and more. Use the content as-is or tailor it specifically for your co-op. No need to credit NRECA. We want this content to look like it came *straight* from you!

- Consumer-friendly content
- Sample manager columns
- Infographics
- Social media graphics/posts
- Videos
- Photos
- Internal communications resources

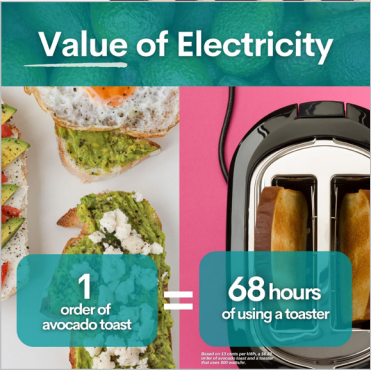
Check out the 2023 editorial calendar for a preview of upcoming resources!



## KEY CONTACT



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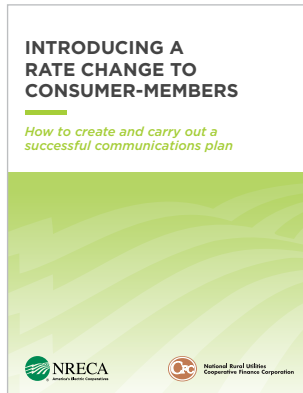


[cooperative.com/straighttalk](https://cooperative.com/straighttalk)

# Toolkits

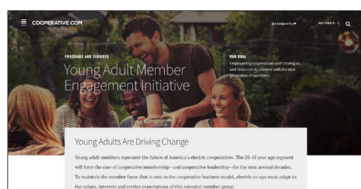
Use these sample toolkits to jumpstart or supplement your co-op's planning efforts.

- Strategic communications plan
- Crisis communications
- Social media
- Social media crisis communications
- Reputation management
- Internal communications
- Rate change
- And more!



# Young Adult Member Engagement (YAME) Initiative

NRECA and Touchstone Energy® have created a suite of resources to help co-ops meet changing member expectations and consumer preferences. Resources can help co-ops meet their members where they are. Content also includes tools for recruiting new talent, engaging employees and culture development.



**YAME Phase 1:**  
Segmented communications strategy  
for telling the modern co-op story



**YAME Phase 2:**  
Onboarding & Ongoing  
Education Program

## KEY CONTACTS



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[cooperative.com/yame](https://cooperative.com/yame)

# Spotlight on Excellence Leading Practices Library

Looking for ideas to rejuvenate an existing program or jump start fresh thinking on a new project? Tap into a sortable database of 18 categories of leading practices. The library showcases award-winning content across the co-op network.

## Categories include:

- Writing
- Social media
- Ads
- Publications
- Events
- Graphic design
- Photography
- And more!



## KEY CONTACT



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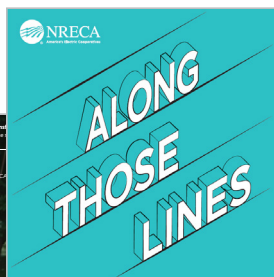
**SPOTLIGHT**  
on Excellence  
Awards

[cooperative.com/spotlight](https://cooperative.com/spotlight)

# Keeping Up with Industry Info & News Trends

These news sources cover the issues that matter most to your co-op, the impact they have on your communities, and offer insight from experts to help you stay one step ahead.

- Cooperative.com homepage news feed – Your Briefing
- Electric.coop
- Electric Co-op News – Wednesday e-newsletter
  - *Sign up via homepage of electric.coop*
- RE Magazine
  - *cooperative.com/REmagazine*
- Along Those Lines podcast
  - *cooperative.com/podcast*
- Washington Daily News Briefing
  - *Sign up via Key Resources section in cooperative.com Communications program area*



# Communications Data & Info Resources

There are a variety of supplemental data and info resources to bolster your co-op's internal and external communication efforts. Here is just a sampling:

- Maps, Facts and Figures
  - [cooperative.com/maps-facts-figures](https://cooperative.com/maps-facts-figures)
- Green Ball Brand Guidelines
  - [cooperative.com/communications](https://cooperative.com/communications)
- Use or Usage Guide
  - [cooperative.com/communications](https://cooperative.com/communications)
- Beneficial electrification resources
  - [cooperative.com/beneficialelectrification](https://cooperative.com/beneficialelectrification)
- NRECA Market Research
  - [cooperative.com/marketresearch](https://cooperative.com/marketresearch)



**WHO WE ARE**

Market Research Services, part of NRECA Consulting Services, is a full-service market research provider conducting custom studies for NRECA members. Serving America's Electric Cooperatives for over 50 years, our team consists of experienced and responsive professionals who have an extensive background in market research. We understand the cooperative business model and truly care about the success of co-ops.

**WHAT WE DO**

Your co-op is unique and faces diverse service challenges. That is why we strive to design a research specific needs. We offer several types of market research studies including:

- |                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| ation             | • G&T Member Satisfaction Studies       |
| on and ACSI       | • Statewide Member Satisfaction Studies |
| erent and Loyalty | • Organizational Culture Assessments    |
| ferences          | • Collection of Member Emails           |
| y Assessments     |   |

**THUS**

We have taught you how to develop questionnaires that meet your objectives. We sample of your members, analyze the data, and provide a report that clearly what they mean. You receive actionable insights that can be used to develop grow your co-op and to best serve the needs of your consumer-members.

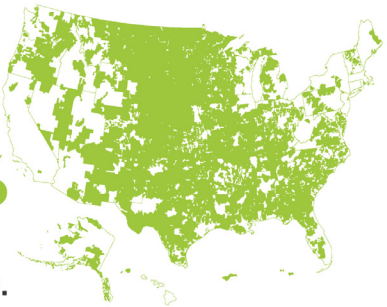
Learn more at [cooperative.com/marketresearch](https://cooperative.com/marketresearch)



## The Greening of Electricity

Name of Co-op | Month 2021

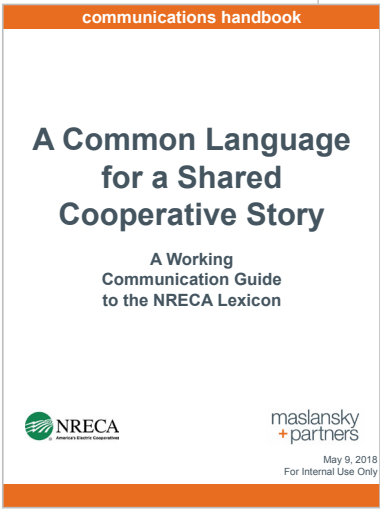
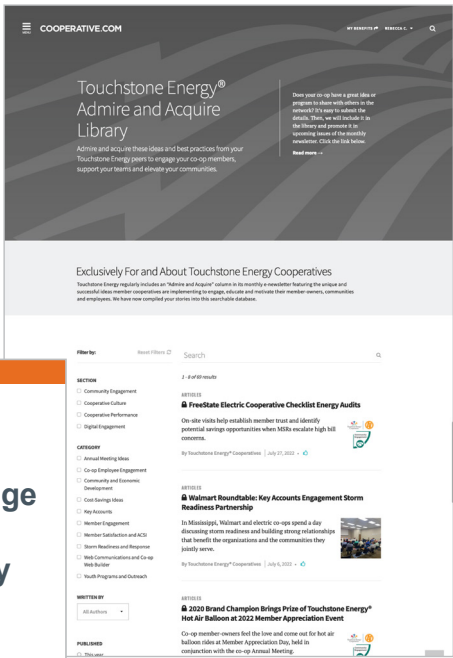
Cooperatives  
**Power**  
**56%**  
of the  
nation's  
landmass.



# Useful Communication Resources

Use your “easy button” – [cooperative.com](http://cooperative.com) to access these valuable resources for communications and member services professionals.

- Certified Cooperative Communicator Program
- Lexicon Project
- Connect Conference
- Touchstone Energy® “Admire & Acquire” Library
- Touchstone Energy® North Star News
- Touchstone Energy® image portfolio
- Touchstone Energy®’s Co-op Web Builder



2023

# Professional Development & Training Resources



# Learning Opportunities for Communicators

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Continuing education—a critical part of your career as a cooperative communications professional—allows you to keep up with the latest industry trends, technologies and best practices. By attending NCCO, both you and your manager demonstrate a strong commitment to your success.

NRECA's Education, Training & Events (ET&E) department offers more than 70 programs and courses that provide hands-on, practical tools and methods that can be applied to the job immediately.

NRECA's competency-based training programs and events are designed to target content and skills relevant to your role. Based on your learning needs and schedule, several learning options are available: in-person conferences, courses, web-based learning and certification programs.

These educational offerings, which were created specifically for electric co-ops and are offered solely to co-ops, are available in these forms:

- Live online programs
- Self-paced, online programs
- In-person programs

There are three main professional development opportunities of special interest to co-op communications professionals:

1. New Co-op Communicators Orientation (NCCO)
2. Connect Conference
3. Certified Cooperative Communicator (CCC) Program

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## KEY CONTACTS



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# Continuing Education

**As you progress in your co-op career, NRECA offers additional programs of interest:**

**1. Supervisory, Management & Leadership Program**

The Supervisor and Manager Development Program (SMDP) is a flexible, electric cooperative-specific education program focused on strengthening the skills, knowledge and abilities needed to hire, develop and lead others, manage performance, communicate effectively and make decisions. Many topics are applicable to co-op communicators: building a strong team, change management, time management, communication styles and deliberate decision making.

**2. Certified Key Account Executive (CKAE) Program**

The Certified Key Account Executive Program (CKAE) helps key account executives construct and implement a winning key accounts management program and further strengthen a program already in place. Certification candidates have six months from the date that they pass the exam to complete all requirements.

**3. MIP Select**

This intensive two-week learning experience is focused on select cooperative utility management issues. This program is ideal for cooperative staff interested in broadening their knowledge and skills in a condensed, immersive learning environment developed in the tradition of the original Management Internship Program.

**4. Management Internship Program (MIP)**

The Robert I. Kabat Management Internship Program is a comprehensive, six-week blended course (online and in-person) broken into three, two-week units. The MIP provides in-depth analyses of the functions and processes of co-op management. More importantly, it emphasizes practical applications of these competencies. MIP is held at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. The MIP certificate is earned by completing all three units and completing and presenting the results of a personal project that applies the MIP classroom experience to issues at your cooperative.

**5. Cooperative Career Essentials Program**

Within the next five years, 50% of electric cooperative CEOs and 25% of employees will be eligible to retire. The Cooperative Career Essentials Program (CCEP) meets the needs of a changing workforce by providing the knowledge, skills and abilities every co-op employee, regardless of role or tenure, needs to best serve their co-op and members.

**For more information on all these programs, visit the Conferences and Education section on [cooperative.com](https://www.cooperative.com).**

# Certified Cooperative Communicator (CCC) Program

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## **The Certified Cooperative Communicator (CCC) Program has been updated!**

Building off a rich, 30+ year history of elevating the performance of electric cooperative communicators, the Certified Cooperative Communicator (CCC) program supports the strategic role communicators play at their co-ops. The program is a cohort-based learning program (a mixture of online and in-person instruction). This cohort-based learning model mirrors other NRECA professional development certifications.

In addition to receiving over 93-hours of instruction based on the CCC Book of Knowledge, CCC cohorts will build strong, long-lasting relationships that will carry with them throughout their careers. Upon graduation, participants will have developed valuable work products such as a strategic co-op communication plan, a crisis communication plan or a co-op marketing and branding guide they can implement immediately at their co-op.

## **LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

- Move from a task-oriented practitioner to a strategic thinking, planner and contributor.
- Learn strategic communication skills to advocate for the co-op form of business and the advancement of the co-op network.
- Develop a professional network of strategic communicators for the purpose of knowledge sharing, collaboration and crisis alliance.
- Build a strategic plan that will be implementation ready for your organization on completion of your course.

## **KEY CONTACT**

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# Council of Rural Electric Communicators (CREC)

The Council of Rural Electric Communicators (CREC) is composed of electric co-op communicators, including representatives from distribution, generation and transmission co-ops, statewide associations, NRECA, the National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Corp. (CFC), NRTC and Federated Rural Electric Insurance Exchange (Federated). NRECA provides administrative support for the CREC.



- CREC emphasizes the importance of strategic communication
- CREC programs and services include:
  - Spotlight on Excellence Awards Program
  - New Co-op Communicators Orientation (NCCO)
  - Always On initiative
  - Autry Award for Always On Communication
  - Special Projects

The "Always On" logo consists of the words "Always On" in white, stacked vertically on a green rectangular background.

**Always On: Engineering Strategic Communication to Strengthen Member Relationships**

**Executive Summary**

The "Always On" initiative will help electric co-ops stay connected to their members in the era of rapid change. Inspired by the success of NRECA's 2014-2015 Strategic Communication Plan, the National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Corp. (CFC) and the Council of Rural Electric Communicators (CREC) have joined forces to create a new strategic communication plan for the industry. This report to electric co-ops is to better engage members and shape their expectations through strategic communication. "Always On" offers communication ideas and recommendations for our members. It's a guide. The report offers ideas to help co-ops and communicators evaluate their organization's current communication readiness and provide recommendations for aligning strategic communication with operational business.

For years, co-ops have worked to increase system reliability and enhance power quality to meet members' demand for always-on electricity. Now, co-ops must meet the communication demands to tell the true consumer tale: the demand for always-on communication.

**Executive Summary**

**Introduction**

**It's Time for "Always On" Communication**

**Highlighted Goals, Highlighted Opportunities**

**Building a Different Kind of Network**

**A Basic Roadmap Approach to Communication**

**Recommendations and Tools for Evaluation and Improvement**

**Communication Readiness Tool**

**A Bright Future**

**Appendix 1: Strategic Recommendations**

**Appendix 2: Six Key Roles for Communicators**

**Other Additional Resources**

**Acknowledgments**



## KEY CONTACTS



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# Communications Awards within the NRECA Network

## **Autry Leadership Award For Always On Communication**

The Autry Leadership Award for Always On Communication is a lifetime achievement award that honors an electric cooperative employee with a substantial body of work that demonstrates leadership and innovation within the areas of communication, member service and community relations. In 2017 the first Autry Award was given to Jimmy Autry, the namesake of the award.

## **Haggard Award**

The Haggard Award is one of the highest honors conferred by the NRECA Board of Directors. This national award recognizes the statewide publication that best demonstrates forthrightness and courage in support of the national objectives of electric cooperatives. The award was originally proposed by statewide editors to the NRECA board in the late 1950s, and was renamed in 1960 to honor the late George W. Haggard, a former statewide editor, manager and REA official who championed the creation of statewide publications.

## **J.C. Brown CEO Communication Leadership Award**

The J.C. Brown CEO Communication Leadership Award recognizes an electric cooperative or public power district chief executive officer/general manager who is committed to advancing communication at the cooperative and in the electric cooperative industry.

This award was established in 2003 by the Council of Rural Electric Communicators (CREC) and the Certified Cooperative Communicator (CCC) Program Board. It memorializes the late J.C. Brown and his unwavering dedication to the importance of communication as a vital link connecting electric cooperatives with each other and with their consumer-members, and to advancing the cooperative business model.

## **LaBerge Award**

Established in 2018 in memory of Justin Erick LaBerge, the LaBerge Award for Excellence in Strategic Communication is an annual award that recognizes an electric cooperative communicator with demonstrated influence and impact in co-op communications, both as a practitioner and contributor across the co-op network. A recipient of this award embodies the principles of the Always On Communications model. This program is an initiative of the CREC and NRECA.



**LaBerge Award**  
for Strategic  
Communication

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## Spotlight on Excellence Awards Program

For more than 30 years, the Spotlight on Excellence Awards program has recognized a body of outstanding communication and marketing work produced by electric co-op communication and marketing professionals across the country. The 18 categories reflect the wide scope and valuable contributions of co-op communicators today. This program is an initiative of the CREC and NRECA.



## SEA Willies Awards

The Statewide Editors Association (SEA) Willies Awards program supports the SEA's mission to continually improve the professional skills and techniques of those associated with rural electrification consumer-member publications which circulate on a statewide or multi-statewide basis. The "annual SEA Willies" recognize excellence in a variety of editorial and design categories including news features, cooperative principles, columns, historical features, as well as design and magazine layout.

## Touchstone Energy® Cooperative Distinguished Service Award

This is the national brand of electric cooperatives' highest honor and is presented annually to a cooperative leader who has made outstanding contributions to building the brand on the national stage. The call for nominees is made in December, and the winners are announced at the NRECA Annual Meeting during the Touchstone Energy® Annual Meeting session.



Touchstone Energy®  
Cooperatives

## Touchstone Energy® Cooperative Brand Champion Award

Our Brand Champions may hold different roles at their cooperatives, but they have all demonstrated regional and local engagement with the Touchstone Energy® brand. They also have contributed in helping showcase the cooperative difference with their members and ensuring their cooperative is best-in-class. The call for nominees is made in February, and the winners accept their award on the national stage at the Connect Conference. Contact [tseinfo@nreca.coop](mailto:tseinfo@nreca.coop) for details.

# Professional Organizations Outside the NRECA Network



## Cooperative Communicators Association

Cooperative Communicators Association (CCA) is an organization of 350 professionals who communicate for cooperatives. CCA works toward helping members excel in communications—from writing, photography, and editing to video, layout and design. Additionally, CCA emphasizes ideas and strategies for cooperatives.



## Public Relations Society of America

The Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) is the nation's largest professional organization serving the communications community with a mission to “make communications professionals smarter, better prepared and more connected through all stages of their career.” PRSA's membership collectively represents more than 30,000 members comprised of communications professionals spanning every industry sector nationwide.



## Association of National Advertisers

The Association of National Advertisers (ANA) is the advertising industry's oldest trade association and continues to advance the interests of advertisers and consumers by providing its members insights, collaboration and advocacy. Members of Touchstone Energy® and NRECA employees are able to take advantage of ANA materials for no additional cost.



## LinkedIn Learning Licenses

Touchstone Energy® members receive free LinkedIn Learning licenses (worth \$360 each). This online resource offers more than 13,000 educational courses from Excel to customer service to communication to leadership, so co-op employees can learn just about anything without leaving their desks. To get your license, contact the coworker responsible for training at your cooperative or visit the Employee Education & Engagement interest area in the Touchstone Energy® section of [cooperative.com](https://www.cooperative.com).

# Recommended Reading/ Listening List

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## Books/Magazines

- “Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us” by Daniel H. Pink
- “Eats, Shoots & Leaves: The Zero Tolerance Approach to Punctuation” by Lynn Truss
- “Extraordinary PR, Ordinary Budget: A Strategy Guide” by Jennifer R. Farmer
- “From Corporate Globalization to Global Co-operation” by J. Tom Webb
- “Hacking Innovation” by Josh Linkner
- “How to Be the Person Companies Fight to Keep” by Connie Podesta
- “How to Win Friends and Influence People” by Dale Carnegie
- “Just Listen: Discover the Secret to Getting Through to Absolutely Anyone” by Mark Goulston
- “Made to Stick” by Chip Heath and Dan Heath
- “Power Plays” by Ted Case (Exec. Dir., OR Rural Elec. Cooperative Assn.)
- *RE Magazine*—NRECA
- “Start With Why” by Simon Sinek
- “The Grid: The Fraying Wires Between Americans and Our Energy Future” by Gretchen Bakke
- “The Meaning of Everything: The Story of the Oxford English Dictionary” by Simon Winchester
- “The Power of Habit” by Charles Duhigg
- “The Speed of Trust” by Stephen Covey
- “Verbal Judo: The Gentle Art of Persuasion” by George J. Thompson and Jerry B. Jenkins
- “What Got You Here Won’t Get You There” by Marshall Goldsmith

## E-Newsletters

- NRECA Executive News Brief
- Shelly Palmer, daily blog on technology, media, marketing and data science

## Podcasts

- “Along Those Lines”—NRECA
- “Coaching for Leaders”—Dave Stachowiak
- “Confident Communications”—Molly McPherson
- “Revisionist History”—Malcolm Gladwell
- “The Red Thread”—Tamsen Webster



# Seven Cooperative Principles



Membership in a cooperative is open to all persons who can reasonably use its services and stand willing to accept the responsibilities of membership, regardless of race, religion, gender or economic circumstances.



Cooperatives are democratic organizations controlled by their members, who actively participate in setting policies and making decisions. Elected representatives (directors/trustees) are elected from among the membership and are accountable to the membership. In primary cooperatives, members have equal voting rights (one member, one vote); cooperatives at other levels are organized in a democratic manner.



Members contribute equitably to, and democratically control, the capital of their cooperative. At least part of that capital remains the common property of the cooperative. Members allocate surpluses for any or all of the following purposes: developing the cooperative; setting up reserves; benefiting members in proportion to their transactions with the cooperative; and supporting other activities approved by the membership.



Cooperatives are autonomous, self-help organizations controlled by their members. If they enter into agreements with other organizations, including governments, or raise capital from external sources, they do so on terms that ensure democratic control as well as their unique identity.



Education and training for members, elected representatives (directors/trustees), CEOs and employees help them effectively contribute to the development of their cooperatives. Communications about the nature and benefits of cooperatives, particularly with the general public and opinion leaders, helps boost cooperative understanding.



By working together through local, national, regional and international structures, cooperatives improve services, bolster local economies and deal more effectively with social and community needs.



Cooperatives work for the sustainable development of their communities through policies supported by the membership.

# Your Secret Weapon: Cooperative Principle #6



## Work Smarter

Leverage the experience and expertise of communicators across the network.

- National partners, NRECA/Touchstone Energy team members
- Professional communities
- Spotlight on Excellence Library of Leading Practices
- Cooperative.com tools and resources



[cooperative.com](https://cooperative.com)