

# STAKEHOLDER & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

2021 Annual Survey

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Final Report

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# Executive Summary (1/3)

**Overall impressions of the IESO continue to be largely positive, though stakeholders express more neutral impressions of the organization than last year. Operational reliability and IESO staff continue to represent core strengths while areas of improvement include competitive procurement, exploring and enabling new approaches, acting on input from stakeholders and demonstrating transparency in decision-making.**

- Four in ten stakeholders (39%; -9 pts) are satisfied with the organization's performance, while more than half (55%, +11 pts) have more neutral satisfaction and only 5% are not satisfied (-3 pts). Satisfaction has declined year over year while more hold a more neutral impression of the IESO.
- Similarly, four in ten (36%) would speak positively on behalf of the IESO, while just over four in ten (43%) hold a neutral opinion of the organizations while few would speak negatively (14%). Year over year, stakeholders are less likely to say they would speak positively on behalf of the IESO (-8 pts), while a greater proportion are neutral or don't know enough to have a strong opinion.
- Trust remains very high in the IESO to operate the electricity system in real time (79%) and impressions are consistent with last year. Nearly half trust the IESO to engage with stakeholders, communities, and customers in a transparent manner (49%), while fewer trust the IESO to plan for Ontario's future energy needs in a cost-effective manner (35%) or to oversee an open and competitive electricity market (31%, -8 pts). Notably, performance on the latter has declined year over year.
- The IESO continues to perform the strongest in terms of operating a reliable system (75%), the expertise (60%) and responsiveness of staff (53%) and the enforcement of market rules (53%). Satisfaction is lowest for competitively procuring the resources to meet Ontario's electricity needs (28%), exploring and enabling new approaches to meeting system needs (29%), acting on input from stakeholders (29%) and demonstrating transparency in decision-making (33%) Year over year, performance ratings have declined for planning for resources to meet Ontario's electricity needs (39%; -7 pts).
- The most important priorities for stakeholders remain consistent and are to ensure cost effective system reliability and to prepare for the future of the sector. Fewer think it is important for the IESO to enable competition than last year. Cost/price continues to be the most pressing issue for the electricity system but less so than last year, while sustainability/ green energy and generation capacity have taken on increased importance.

**Energy services providers have consistently among the most positive impressions of the IESO, while environmental advocacy groups and to a lesser extent emerging tech and municipal governments have consistently poorer impressions.**

- Environmental advocacy groups tend to be more pessimistic about the future of the sector, express the desire for greater focus on sustainability and are more critical of the IESO for acting on input and preparing for the future. Emerging tech are also more pessimistic about the sector, feel more focus should be placed on innovation and are more critical of the IESO for enabling competition and exploring new approaches. Municipal governments think there should be more focus on sustainability and rate the IESO lower for competitive procurement, cost effectiveness and planning for the future.
- Notably, all three stakeholder groups also had less recent contact with the IESO, while energy services providers had more recent contact and higher participation and use of IESO activities and channels.

# Executive Summary (2/3)

**The factors that influence trust in the IESO remain consistent year over year and primarily relate to impressions of operational performance in ensuring a reliable electricity system and to a lesser extent impressions of the market rules established and enforced by the IESO.**

- The greatest opportunities to maintain/improve trust in the IESO are to protect impressions of operational reliability including the enforcement of market rules and proficiency of IESO staff. In order to build greater trust, focus should be placed on improving perceptions of competitive procurement and exploring and enabling new approaches. These measures represent lower performing areas and feed into impressions of the establishment of market rules and planning for the future which directly influence overall opinions of reliability and trust.

**The engagement process continues to meet the needs of the vast majority of stakeholders and to be seen as highly relevant, however similar to overall impressions ratings have become neutral over the last year. Strengths of the process are timely communication, effective facilitation of sessions, on topics of interest and for the use of various channels to solicit input. However, more can be done to improve perceptions of how the IESO balances the various sector interests in decision-making, in providing rationale for decisions and working to more closely align the process with community needs.**

- Overall satisfaction with the IESO engagement process remains consistent (44%) year over year and the vast majority of stakeholders continue to feel the IESO's engagement process met or exceeded their expectations (79%), though fewer say it exceeded them (9%, -7 pts) . Engagement activities continue to be highly relevant to the majority of stakeholders (55%), however positive ratings are lower than in 2020 (-10 pts), while a greater proportion express more neutral impressions (41%, +9 pts).
- The engagement process performs the best for timely communication (52%), effective facilitation of engagement sessions (50%), engagement on topics that are important (48%), and effective use of various channels to solicit input (48%). Satisfaction is lowest for balancing the various sector interests in decision making (30%), providing rationale for decisions (32%) and aligning the process with community needs (34%) and fewer rate the IESO as doing well when it comes to balancing various sector interests in decision-making than last year (30%; -7 pts vs. 2020).
- The vast majority of stakeholders continue to feel that the IESO engagement process has led to effective change for IESO stakeholders (78%), for the electricity sector overall (74%), and to a lesser extent for their community or organization (68%).
- Most stakeholders continue to engage with the IESO to both advance their own needs and learn about the needs of others (59%), though there has been a notable increase in those who engage to learn about the needs of other communities (13%, +8 pts).

# Executive Summary (3/3)

- Stakeholders are by far the most likely to have participated in webinars (83%, +11 pts) and more likely to have done so than in 2020. Other common engagement activities include Stakeholder Engagement Days (48%), IESO Regional Electricity Networks (36%) and the IESO summit (32%).
- Those who participated in engagement activities found them highly effective, of which the First Nations Energy Symposium, the technical panel (34%) and webinars (33%) were the most effective- though participation in the technical panel (18%; -11 pts) and First Nations Energy Symposium (9%; -5 pts) have declined. Notably, IESO Regional Electricity Networks were seen as more effective than in 2020 (87%; +12 pts vs. 2020).
- The IESO website (85%) continues to be by far the most common channel used by stakeholders, followed by direct emails (75%), the weekly IESO bulletin (47%) and the Save on Energy website (45%). Usage has declined for the IESO website (-5 pts), the weekly IESO bulletin (-11 pts) and the IESO customer relations team (-17 pts), while a higher proportion report using business advisors (23%; +6 pts). The vast majority who have used the IESO channels feel they are useful, of which business advisors (54%), direct emails (53%), or the IESO Customer Relations Team are the most useful.

**Satisfaction with the engagement process is higher among energy service providers and also tends to be more positive among Indigenous communities. Environmental advocacy groups and to a lesser extent municipal governments are more critical.**

- Environmental advocacy engage primarily to learn about others needs, feel the process is less relevant to them and are more critical of the IESO for balancing sector interests, aligning the process with community needs and providing rationale decisions.
- Municipal government stakeholders hold a more neutral impression of the engagement process and tend to provide lower ratings across several areas and in particular aligning the process with community needs.

**The factors that influence satisfaction with stakeholder engagement the most relate to the effective facilitation of engagement sessions and the extent to which it's relevant and aligned with community needs.**

- The greatest opportunities to improve satisfaction with stakeholder engagement are to focus on better aligning the engagement process to community needs and to a lesser extent balancing the various sector interests in decision-making which represent lower performing areas.