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Northwest team bids on \$178 million regional smart grid demonstration project

08/27/2009

Richland, Wash. – A team of Northwest energy providers, utilities, vendors and research organizations has submitted a proposal to conduct a regional smart grid demonstration project.

The project is designed to ultimately lower energy costs, reduce emissions, increase power grid reliability and give consumers greater flexibility.

The proposal responds to a June call from the U.S. Department of Energy to create regional smart grid demonstration projects that can show how smart grid technology can enhance the safety, reliability and efficiency of energy delivery on a regional and national level. DOE is providing stimulus funding via the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act for the regional demonstrations. Proposals were due by August 26, and funding will be announced by DOE later this year.

The Pacific Northwest Smart Grid Demonstration Project partnership will be led by Battelle and includes a dozen utilities in five Northwest states and the Bonneville Power Administration. The participating utilities run the gamut from investor-owned, municipal, and cooperative rural electrical utilities to public utility districts.

The project will involve more than 60,000 metered customers in Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Washington and Wyoming. Using smart grid technologies, the project will engage system assets exceeding 112 MW, the equivalent of power to serve 86,000 households.

Following installation of equipment and technology, participants will gather energy use information over a two-year period from 15 test sites that represent the region's diverse terrain, weather and demographics. Test sites range from Fox Island in Puget Sound to the Teton Mountains in western Wyoming, and include the University of Washington and Washington State University campuses.

During the study, researchers will gain insight into energy consumers' behavior while testing new technologies designed to bring the electric transmission system into the information age. A new combination of devices, software and advanced analytical tools will give homeowners more information about their energy use and cost, and researchers want to know if this will modify their behavior.

The project – if selected – will last five years and cost about \$178 million, half of which will be provided by the project's participants. At its peak, it will create about 1,500 jobs in manufacturing, installation, and operating smart grid equipment, telecommunications networks, software, and controls.

In addition to leading the project, Battelle will analyze field data collected during the project.

In 2006, the region participated in the DOE-funded Pacific Northwest GridWise Demonstration Project on the Olympic Peninsula. That project was designed to test and speed adoption of new smart grid technologies that can make the power grid more resilient and efficient. The study showed that advanced technologies enabled consumers to be active participants in improving power grid efficiency and reliability, while saving about 10 percent on their electricity bills in the process.

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