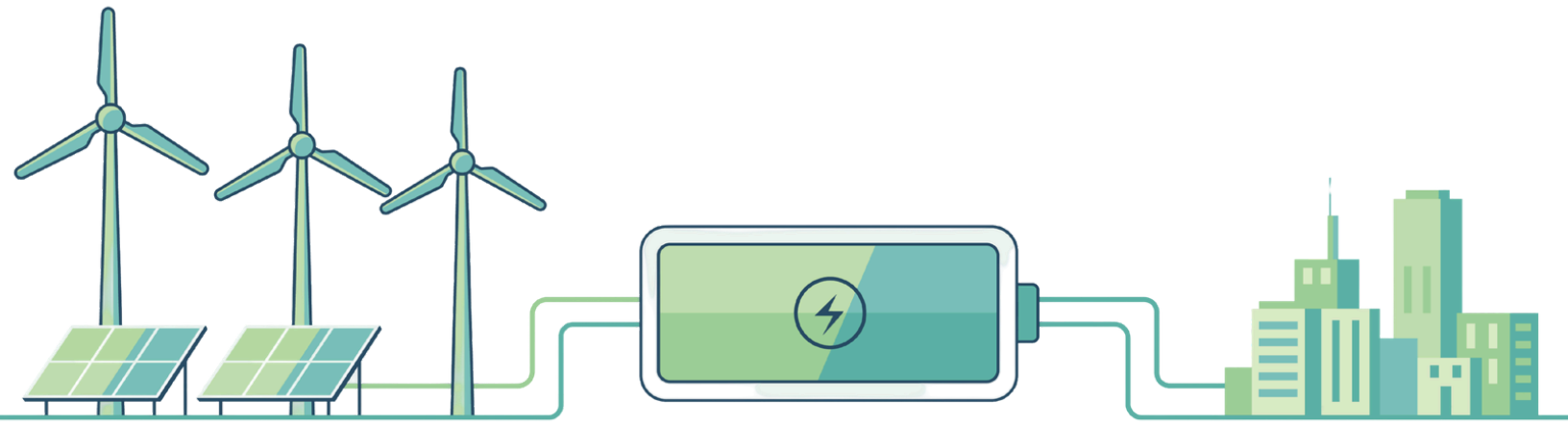
RENEWABLE NORTHWEST

BESS Toolkit: A Local Leader's Guide

How to navigate the toolkit, ask the right questions, and evaluate projects with confidence.

Battery energy storage systems, often referred to as BESS, are becoming a more common part of electric system planning across Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and Montana. As electricity demand grows and the region plans for aging infrastructure, changing weather patterns, and the need to keep power reliable and affordable, local governments will be asked to evaluate more BESS projects.

This toolkit is designed to help local elected officials, planning commissioners, staff, emergency responders, and community leaders understand what BESS is, what questions to ask, and how to evaluate projects using clear information, applicable standards, and local priorities.





What this toolkit is for:

Use this toolkit to understand how BESS works, why it is becoming more common, what opportunities and challenges it presents, and how safety standards, siting, emergency response, local review, and community priorities fit together.

The materials are designed to help local leaders ask informed questions without needing to become technical experts. Each section can stand on its own, so readers can start with the topic most relevant to their role, question, or stage of review.

This toolkit is not a model ordinance, legal guide, technical manual, or substitute for local review. Communities should rely on their own planning staff, legal counsel, fire and emergency response partners, utilities, and qualified technical reviewers when evaluating a specific project.

How to use the toolkit:

The goal is not to answer every question. The goal is to help communities know where to look, who to involve, and what to ask as they evaluate whether a proposed BESS project is thoughtfully sited, safely designed, and aligned with local and regional energy needs.

Where to start:

New to BESS?

Start with **What Is BESS and How Does It Work?** for the basics, then read **BESS Opportunities and Challenges** for a balanced overview of why projects are being proposed and what questions commonly arise.

Trying to understand why BESS matters?

Read **What BESS Enables** to understand how BESS can support reliability, manage peak demand, help integrate energy resources, and make better use of existing infrastructure. Read **BESS Technology and Evolution** for background on how the technology, safety practices, and deployment have changed over time.

Reviewing a proposed project?

Start with the **Decision-Maker Guide** for a short checklist and key questions focused on need, site fit, design, safety, emergency response, community value, operations, and decommissioning. Then read **BESS Siting and Design Considerations** for more detail on how local impacts can be reviewed.

Focused on safety?

Start with **BESS Safety Standards** to understand how safety is managed through national standards, tested equipment, site-specific design, monitoring, emergency planning, and coordination with local responders. The **Frequently Asked Questions** section provides short answers to common safety, property value, siting, regulation, and community impact questions.

Trying to understand roles and responsibilities?

Read **Who's Involved and What's Your Role?** for a visual guide to who typically participates in BESS review, including local governments, emergency responders, utilities, developers, technical experts, and community members.

Looking for local context or deeper sources?

Use the state fact sheets for **Oregon**, **Washington**, **Idaho**, and **Montana**, along with **Planning With Confidence: Additional Resources for Local Leaders.**