



Electricity is the most amazing form of energy we have. Even our bodies work because of electricity. When you're talking about electricity, you're talking about everything. Everything.

## **Dissolving Complex Problems in Energy Regulation A Two-Day Workshop for Public Utility Commissions**

### **Why Learn This?**

We use the electric energy system in achieving many of the outcomes necessary to our personal and economic lives. This system of interactions between people, tangible (e.g. buildings, equipment) and intangible (e.g. statutes, rules, practices) elements, and geography has become increasingly complex during the over 100 years of its development, particularly in the last 30-40 years. Very often, we have chosen to “solve” problems in this system by simply adding more elements, people and interactions. Each addition has decreased shared understanding of the system’s behavior and, unfortunately, either the problem has simply returned in the same or a slightly different form or the unintended consequences of “solving” it have spawned new problems. ***To dissolve a problem is to design a system that does not have the problem.*** This workshop offers participants a basic understanding of how this is done.

### **What You Will Learn**

This highly interactive 16-hour workshop provides participants with the basic understandings, tools and practices needed to begin dissolving problems using inter-organizational, transformative, learning processes.

You will learn to:

- Perceive patterns in the electric energy system that demonstrate unsolved problems;
- Begin to visualize the system structure generating those trends;
- Formulate questions that enable authentic and deep inquiry into the assumptions and issues sustaining the system structure;
- Collaboratively create powerful shared visions that escape “either-or” dilemmas and provide the basis for ongoing system design work; and
- Identify strategies for systemic changes that have a greater likelihood of producing the desired outcomes over time.

### **Workshop History**

Ms. Morgan and Ms. Benne have presented the content in this workshop to regulatory commission staff and other stakeholders in both Wisconsin and Idaho. Here is what some of the participants had to say:

*“I think this is a very powerful method for dealing with complex systems and problems.”*

*“The course made one question assumptions and perceptions for all issues and situations, both professionally and personally.”*

*“Addressing contentious energy related issues in this process would be great.”*

*“Eye-opening experience and enjoyed the exposure to new ideas.”*

*“Systems thinking is an uncommon skill but is extremely valuable.”*

## Course Details

The course combines lecture and experience-based learning through 12 small group exercises and several whole group exercises.

### Session 1: Systems Thinking – An Approach to Complexity in Operating and Thinking

- Introduction to the systems approach
- Understanding patterns of behavior and system structure
- The language of systems
- Exploring system structure

### Session 2: The Power of Intangible Structures

- Discerning, assessing and conversing about assumptions, beliefs, and mental models

### Session 3: Drawing Our Way to Clarity with Systems Modeling

- Visualizing systems
- Leverage points and system interventions
- Learning about system archetypes

### Session 4: The Adaptive Work of System Re-Design

- Structural conflict, creative tension and adaptive change
- Guiding principles and approaches for system re-design

## Presented by:

**Pamela Morgan** is a 25-year plus veteran of the electric energy system. Her over 20-year at Portland General Electric Company (PGE) included management and executive leadership of the regulatory function, strategic planning, public affairs and communications, and distribution operations. She formed Graceful Systems LLC ([www.gracefulsystems.com](http://www.gracefulsystems.com)) in 2009. The purpose of Graceful Systems is helping organizations within the energy system thrive through the creation and realization of a better energy future. Graceful Systems clients include NRDC, Element Power, the National Association of Regulatory Commissioners (NARUC) and Ceres. She has delivered a number of programs bringing systems thinking and system dynamics to organizations in the electric energy system and has also written extensively.

**Beatrice Benne, Ph.D.** recently launched Soma Integral Consulting (<http://soma-integral.com>), whose mission is to facilitate the resolution of adaptive challenges by transforming and designing purposeful and conscious organizations, while focusing on the well-being of social and environmental ecosystems. She brings to her clients a broad range of skills and expertise including systems thinking, a holistic approach to organizational management and change, strategic thinking, leadership capacity development, and work process performance assessment and improvement. She has taught extensively on systems thinking and strategy, served as a Six Sigma Black Belt and was a co-founder of ProjectDX, an innovative web-based service enabling governments and NGOs to meet their environmental and sustainability goals through a community-wide engagement approach.