AEIC Load Forecasting Workshop Series

Session 2: Austin, February 11-12, 2026

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One of seven documents in the 2026 series package. Session 0 is the series guide, not a meeting: it carries the outline, the background and how to read these reports.

The Finding

Asked what they needed, practitioners sorted themselves into six categories. Nobody handed them the categories.

That matters more than it reads. When the people doing a job independently arrive at the same six gaps, the gap is structural, and no amount of individual effort closes it. Those six categories were written by the room in a single afternoon in February. They became the spine of the series.

What This Session Was

The first time the cohort met face to face. Thirteen practitioners spent two days on utility presentations, a tools landscape keynote, and the exercise that produced the cohort's own statement of what it needs.

Who Was Represented

Thirteen practitioners from ten utilities, with AEIC and three researchers from the National Laboratory of the Rockies in the room alongside them.

Utility	In the Room
Alabama Power	Distribution planning
Ameren	Distribution planning
Arkansas Electric Cooperative	Load forecasting
ComEd	Distribution planning
Con Edison	Commodity forecasting
Eversource	Integrated energy planning
JEA	Electric systems planning
Oncor	Distribution planning, data science, capacity planning
Salt River Project	Forecasting and load research
Tampa Electric	Load research and forecasting

The room ran from analyst to director, which is part of why two days were enough to produce a work plan. Decisions did not have to be taken away and checked.

Utility presentations came from Oncor, Tampa Electric, Ameren, Salt River Project, Con Edison and Eversource. The National Laboratory of the Rockies keynoted the tools landscape.

What Was Discussed

The six categories, in the room's own terms:

Data and pipelines. Identify the drivers that actually move a forecast: data centers, commercial fleet and EV charging, distributed energy resources, extreme weather, policy. Then build pipelines that reliably collect them. The room asked for a load forecast driver catalog carrying sources, refresh cadence and confidence level, and for data pipeline reference patterns with a minimum viable architecture by utility type.

Methods and best practices. A method for building a typical load year curve by customer class, and clear definitions for distinctions people use loosely: bottom-up against top-down, demand against energy, peak against 8760, and the horizon split across operations, planning and revenue.

Tools, vendors, and build versus buy. One central list of what exists, a comparison matrix mapping capabilities to use cases, and convergence toward shared language. The room asked for the matrix "within weeks" as a quick win.

Benchmarking, maturity, and peer learning. Pairing utilities working the same problem, maturity benchmarks with entry criteria, and detailed examples of what a working utility actually runs: tools, databases, workflows, staffing, training.

Business case and benefits. The path from distribution meters to a benefit-cost analysis, and a business case for distribution-level forecasting covering resource needs, cost, training and data.

Future state, automation and AI. Where the practice goes next.

What Came out of It

Three working pods formed in the room and began work immediately:

- **Pod A, Methods and Curves**
- **Pod B, Tools and Benchmarking**
- **Pod C, Data Pipelines and Business Case**

Volunteers stepped forward on the day, and the six categories were assigned across the three pods as named artifacts.

Discussion and Gaps

What Austin proved. Practitioners two states apart were wrestling with the same class definitions, the same tool limitations, and the same upstream data gaps. Hearing that out loud, from a peer rather than from a vendor, is what turned a mailing list into a cohort.

The gaps the room named and could not close in two days:

- No shared vocabulary. The same words carried different meanings around the table, and the room noticed without resolving it.
- No visibility into what peers actually run. Everyone could describe their own stack. Nobody could compare it against anyone else's, which is what drove the tool matrix request.
- No path from a forecasting improvement to a funding decision. The business case was named as a need, not as something anyone had solved.

- Organizational silos between finance and engineering, raised repeatedly and owned by nobody in the room, because the people who could close them were not in it.

What Austin set up rather than settled. The six categories are demand statements, not answers. March took them into pod work, and Pittsburgh reported back on how far that got.

Actions and Where They Went

Action from This Session	Status
Stand up three working pods with named artifacts	Done. Pods A, B and C formed in the room
Build the tool and vendor landscape matrix as a quick win	Done. Pod B built it in March, covering more than thirty tools

Where This Feeds the Guide and the Workbook

Austin is the source of the section **What the Cohort Asked For** in the AEIC Load Forecasting Reference Guide, reproduced there as the six categories. Those same six categories are the spine of the **Practitioner Workbook**. Every artifact in the series artifact set traces its scope to this room.

Knowledge of one is the knowledge of all.

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