

The 2018 Honor Roll

Seventy-one Qualifying Individuals or Teams Nominated

PUF Salutes All of You

Nominee's Company	Nominees	Innovation
Ameren	Steve Kidwell	Idea hub, accelerator
	George Mues	Accelerator
	Cole Crews	Private LTE
	Mike Abba	Smart grid
	Mark Nealon	3D substation design
	Lorne Poindexter	Powerplant sensors
	James Pierce	Drone operation
American Water	Ben Stanford	Water quality intelligence
Anza Electric Cooperative	Kevin Short	Solar plus storage
Arizona Public Service	Marc Romito, Kent Walter, Erika Larsen, Dawn Tomkins	Solar for lower incomes
Baltimore Gas & Electric	Trey Greiser	Bad debt optimization
	Kyle Harrer	Gas meter accuracy
	Pat Carberry	Storage virtual tour
CenterPoint Energy	Roderick Batteaux, David Blankenship, Brittany Boone, Glenn Callaghan, Geoff Castro, Stacey Cox, Michelle Doan, Rachel Freeman, Kara Gostenhofer, JD Haack, Stephany Lin-Abney, Danielle Malinowski, Corrie Morales, Don Morris, Bo Murphy, Laura Neel, Martin Norval, Andre Parrett, Cory Pechacek, Pierce Prater, John Price, Olivia Ross, Jessica Sanford, Bran Sasic, Anthony Schmeck, Zack Shaaban, Fabian Tarango, Errefat Thabet	Incubator
Central Electric Cooperative	David Swank	Idea hub
City Utilities of Springfield	Brent McKinney	Energized surfaces safety
Commonwealth Edison	Shay Bahramirad, Sandor Williams	Community microgrid
	Shay Bahramirad, Esa Paaso	Smart grid
Consolidated Edison	Eric Mastroianni, Edwin Perez, Jennifer Moy, Mike Salerno	Digital customer interface
	John Shipman, Sherry Login	EV charging
CPS Energy	Paula Gold-Williams, Jason Scarlett, Arun Schipsee	Idea hub
Dentons	Clint Vince, Jennifer Morrissey, Emma Hand	Smart cities
East Kentucky Power Cooperative	Tony Campbell	Workforce safety
Edison International	Bryan Pham, Hamilton Pham, Michael Kohler	Volt/VAR control
Edison Electric Institute	Brian Wolff	Connecting with customers
Energy Impact Partners	Evan Pittman	Innovation equity

Nominee's Company	Nominees	Innovation
Electric Power Research Institute	Ram Narayanamurthy, Peng Zhao, Herb Yaptinchay	Public housing efficiency
	Keith Waldrop	Nuclear fuel storage
	Rick Wachowiak, Rosa Yang, Kelli Voelsing, Tom Kindred, Alessandra Ozorio	Nuclear plant safety
	Eladio Knipping, Naresh Kumar	Air quality modeling
	Jeff Greene, Rick Way	Nuclear plant maintenance
	Sean McGuinness	Grid protection systems
	Andrew Phillips, Fabio Bologna, Jay Canale, Greg Coffey, Charity Mangan	Mobile field guides
	John Scheibel	Gas turbine maintenance
	Jamie Duncley	EV customer behavior
	John Halliwell, Tom Reddoch	Smart circuit breaker
Ericsson	Magnus Tränk	LTE operation
Eversource	Aaron Hanenkratt	System operation centers
First Solar	Kevin Collins, RJ Jardin, Venkat Reddy, Vladimir Chadliev, Howard Gugel (NERC) and others	Solar when grid faults
	Mahesh Morjaria, John Smolenski and Jose Aponte (Tampa Electric) and others including E3	Solar dispatchability
Georgia Power	Pete Nettles	Solar for C&I customers
Hawaiian Electric	Richard Barone and others	Demand response contracting
	Marc Asano, Earle Ifuku	Private solar integration
	Rebecca Dayhuff Matsushima and others	Distributed gen. contracting
	Jack Shriver, Robert Isler	Military base microgrid
	Jim Kelly	Military base black start
Itron	Roberto Aiello, Kevin Kho, Robert Sonderegger, James Gill	Grid connectivity monitoring
LG&E and KU	Nick Jewell	Storage technology testing
	Aron Patrick	Solar data analytics
Navigant	Dan Bradley	Innovation sprints
	Jan Vrins, Mackinnon Lawrence	Energy Cloud
	Lon Huber	RPS modernization
North Carolina Electric Cooperatives	Jim Musilek	Customized microgrids
	Chris Spears, Catherine O'Dell, Tom Butler	Agricultural microgrids
NRECA	Keith Dennis	Electric water heating
New York Power Authority	Saul Rojas	Puerto Rico restoration
	Guy Sliker	College microgrids
PECO	Bruce Williams, Rasheen Williams, James Holloway	Advanced meter maintenance
	Dan Butcher	Integrated outage response
Pepco Holdings	Kristina White, Lisa Clark, Juneann Baker, Tracy Orledge, Kimberly Reeves, Julie Nelson, Garry Stockbridge, Mike Poncia	Employing those with autism
PPL Electric Utilities	Yi Li, Kimberly Gautner, Mychal Kistler, Tina Rauch, Patrick Barnett	Downed wire safety
San Diego Gas & Electric	Brian D'Agostino, Steve Vanderburg, Katie Giannecchini	Wildfire protection
Smart Electric Power Alliance	Erika Myers	EV grid integration
	Tom Fanning	Cybersecurity
	Kim Greene	Smart neighborhoods
	Mark Lantrip	Microgrids for C&I customers
	Stan Vangilder, Julie Pigott, Lillania Shah, Michael Britt	Indoor agriculture
	Michael Britt, Jim Trupiano, Darren Epps, Andy Phillips	Partnering with Lyft
Western Area Power Administration	Tim Langer, Mike Prowatzke, Tish Saare, Andrea Severson	Grid protection from birds
Wisconsin Energy	Chad Koch	Powerplant fleet diversity
Xcel Energy	Ben Fowke, Kent Larson, Michael Lamb, Brian Long, Eileen Lockhart	Drone operation



Ben Fowke, CEO of Xcel Energy



Paula Gold-Williams, CEO of CPS Energy



Steve Kidwell, Ameren strategist

Celebrating a Half Dozen Innovative Leaders

Ben Fowke, Paula Gold-Williams, Steve Kidwell,
Saul Rojas, David Swank, Brian Wolff

BY PUF'S STEVE MITNICK

Among the nominations of seventy-one individuals or teams of individuals for Fortnightly Top Innovator 2018 were a half dozen executives who seem to fit into another category. These half dozen execs are not just innovative, but they have inspired whole organizations to embrace an innovative culture. So we thought to celebrate them, and that's what my purpose is here, in this column.

The half dozen are – demographically – three utility CEOs, two utility VPs, and an association EVP. The five utilities represented include two investor-owned utilities, two public power utilities and one cooperative utility. Two of the utilities are based in the southwest, two in the midwest and one in the northeast.

Ben Fowke is CEO of Xcel Energy and though his company name would place him last alphabetically, his own name places him first. The pages of *Public Utilities Fortnightly* have often highlighted Fowke, particularly for leading the industry's charge in renewable generation, wind power especially.

Fowke wasn't nominated for this however. I suppose his push in wind power is now baked into how we view his company. No, he was nominated – along with his team – for pioneering the application of drones for maintaining power lines and wind turbines beyond where drone operators can see. This is so important to the industry's future because, with this advance, drones can patrol power infrastructure wherever it is, across hundreds and thousands of miles and in all kinds of terrain. Inexpensively. Safely. Frequently. The Federal Aviation Administration was wary at first – about this beyond the line-of-sight business – but is now working with Xcel Energy and more and more utilities to revolutionize how we maintain the grid.

Paula Gold-Williams is CEO of CPS Energy. She has often appeared in *PUF* as well, for transforming the utility serving San Antonio and environs, and for her perspectives on industry transformation.



Saul Rojas, New York Power Authority



David Swank, CEO of Central Electric Co-op



Brian Wolff, Edison Electric Institute

First, Gold-Williams held a Customer Centric Competition, dubbed C3, for innovations within and outside the company, including customers, tech firms and students. Anna Morton's Talking Walls online platform took the prize, for accurately modeling building energy demand during peak hours. C3 spurred CPS Energy employees Jason Scarlett and Arun Schipise to hold EC3, for more innovations among employees on cybersecurity, enhanced drones, home energy automation, etc. And then, Gold-Williams enlisted EPICenter, based in San Antonio's Geekdom, as a hub for still more innovation.

Steve Kidwell, an Ameren strategist would give all the credit to his inspiring CEO, Warner Baxter, but he and his team developed Ameren IdeaHub, to support and drive through to implementation the most impactful innovations. Then, they launched Ameren Accelerator last year, partnering with the University of Missouri System, the U. of Missouri St. Louis Accelerate program and Capital Innovators, a leading business accelerator nationally.

In his spare time? Kidwell chairs the research advisory committee of EPRI.

Did you hear about the ginormous

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industry effort to restore Puerto Rico's grid after last year's terrible hurricanes? Yes, probably. But did you know that Saul Rojas, a VP at the New York Power Authority, was on the ground in Puerto Rico with ten NYPA engineers, planners and tech supervisors – and New York's Governor – to kickstart the restoration? On September 22, two days after Hurricane Maria hit. Rojas has been camped out in Puerto Rico most of the time since, helping to lead a large team from the New York utilities – Con Ed, National Grid, PSEG, Avangrid and NYPA – that grew to nearly five hundred people and over two hundred bucket trucks.

I first met David Swank – CEO of Central Electric Cooperative – in the vast exhibition hall at the NRECA's annual conference earlier this year. He sure does have a passion for innovation and is committed to making his utility's base in Stillwater, Oklahoma a top tech center notwithstanding Stillwater's distance from

other tech centers on the coasts. Swank's vision and drive made Innovation Pointe a reality, an impressive hub that is focused on smart infrastructure and economic development for rural America.

Though he's been a senior exec at the Edison Electric Institute for a decade, Brian Wolff came to the industry from the world of public policy and politics. He recognized early-on that the language of utilities and utility regulation is remarkably technical and unclear to anyone not an industry insider, let alone the general public. So Wolff pushed for a new language for expressing what utility and regulatory people do, and then pushed the EEI member utilities to more rigorously and yes – clearly – engage the public in open dialogues about the industry's direction. Under the Lexicon Project and the ENGAGE program, Wolff, his team and utilities nationally are reaching out far more and speaking (and listening) plainly as never before. **PUF**