It’s time to roll up our sleeves: A closer look at this year’s inspiring Forum keynote sessions

By Sara Patnaude
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The E Source Forum 2023 is less than a month away, and we’re thrilled to bring you the best Forum yet—has your countdown started?

We work hard to curate an agenda that revolves around topics that matter to you, and this includes keynote speakers who inspire. Led by thought leaders who thrive on provoking new ideas, our keynote sessions are sure to leave you ready to roll up your sleeves and get to work. This year’s speakers won’t be shy about addressing the challenges the industry is facing now and will continue facing in 2024 and beyond. Let’s take a closer look at what you can expect this year.

Equity, affordability, accessibility: Exploring the utility’s role in providing clean, safe energy for all

Wednesday, September 20, 2023 | 9:00–10:30 a.m.

The opening keynote at the Forum will put energy equity and affordability in the spotlight. Utilities are making strides in ensuring equitable access to energy, but there’s still a lot of work to do. The industry continues to grapple with how to serve historically marginalized customers while developing their own workforces.

You’ll want a pen and paper handy for this one as you hear from leaders at the forefront of the equity movement explain how utilities can:

- Develop a diverse internal talent pool
- Build robust customer programs
- Engage the communities they serve

Naomi Davis, Founder and CEO, Blacks in Green



Naomi Davis is dedicated to self-sustaining Black communities everywhere. Her strategy begins with her aim to reinvent her childhood "sustainable-square-mile" here in the Age of Climate Crisis. She is the founder and CEO of Blacks in Green (BIG™) as well as an urban theorist, attorney, activist, and proud granddaughter of Mississippi sharecroppers. Her heritage forms the foundation for BIG's course in Grannynomics™, The 8 Principles of Green-Village-Building™ and The Sustainable Square Mile™ which Naomi authored and teaches nationally in community lectures and workshops and at universities. Naomi serves as a bridge and catalyst among communities and their stakeholders in the design and development of green, self-sustaining, mixed-income, walkable villages within Black neighborhoods—so that every household can ultimately walk-to-work, walk-to-shop, walk-to-learn, walk-to-play—and neighbor dollars can circulate locally to help limit greenhouse gasses associated with transportation and manufacturing pollution. She conveys the risks of global warming, the health/wealth opportunities of the new green economy, the power of neighbors to lead in their city's enviro-economic policy and practice, and the primacy of land ownership.

Mitch Mitchell, Senior Vice President and Chief Legislative Officer, SoCalGas and SDG&E



Eugene "Mitch" Mitchell oversees state legislative activities and advances the California utilities' strategic policy objectives. He's held various senior executive roles at Sempra, SoCalGas, and SDG&E. Mitch was Sempra's SVP of diversity and community partnerships. In this role, he advanced the company's high-performance culture by leading a collective effort to enhance diversity and inclusion within Sempra, its operating companies, and the communities it serves. Mitch also previously served as VP of state governmental and external affairs for SoCalGas and SDG&E. Prior to his work with Sempra's California utilities, Mitch served in a variety of roles in governmental affairs and community relations for the City of San Diego and labor and business entities. He has a bachelor's degree in political science from the University of Redlands.

Pushing beyond our comfort zone: Keeping up in an era of rapid transformation

Thursday, September 21, 2023 | 4:00–5:00 p.m.

Wrapping up the Forum will be an incredibly insightful session about how, in many ways, more has changed in the past decade in the utility industry than in the preceding 100 years. Mind blown! And this industry-wide evolution—occurring on many different fronts—is only speeding up.

Brace yourselves—you'll be learning from industry leaders who aren't afraid to tackle today's tough challenges, moderated by Katherine Blunt of the *Wall Street Journal*. Our speakers are pushing the envelope for utilities, while keeping the focus on the customer.

Jody Allison, Vice President of Transformation, Algonquin Power, and President, Liberty Services Corp.



Jody Allison currently serves as vice president of transformation at Algonquin Power and Utilities Corp. and president of Liberty Service Corp. (US).

She has overseen large-scale operations, driving financial and performance management, talent development, change leadership, and strategic planning. She has guided organizations operating in various sectors through enterprise-wide transformational programs.

Katherine Blunt, Reporter, *The Wall Street Journal*



Katherine Blunt is a reporter for the Wall Street Journal and author of *California Burning: The Fall of Pacific Gas and Electric and What it Means for America's Power Grid*.

The book, a national bestseller, won the 2022 Golden Poppy award for nonfiction. Her coverage of

PG&E, a collaboration with two colleagues, was a finalist for the 2020 Pulitzer Prize for National Reporting and earned a Gerald Loeb award, the highest honor in business journalism.

Nadia El Mallakh, Vice President of Strategic Partnerships and Clean Transportation, Xcel Energy



Nadia El Mallakh designs and leads efforts at Xcel Energy to identify and create partnerships focused on innovative solutions for customers and achieving other Xcel Energy strategic priorities. Nadia also oversees the utility's clean transportation team. Prior to this role, Nadia led the development and implementation of Energy Future Collaborations at Xcel Energy that allow communities and the utility to partner on community priorities including economic development, sustainability, environmental objectives, and smart city technology deployments. She first joined Xcel Energy in 2007 to practice real estate law, leading the real estate legal team. Nadia holds a master's degree in city planning, a law degree, and a BS in conservation and resource studies, all from the University of California at Berkley. The *Denver Business Journal* has named Nadia a "Top Woman in Business" and included her in its "Who's Who in Energy" list since 2017.

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