

Load Forecasting Workshop Series: What the Room Said, and What It Named as Missing

Series summary, January to June 2026. Five convenings, more than 100 practitioners, 38 utilities.

Load forecasting stopped being a settled discipline somewhere in the last few years, and the people who build the forecast had nowhere to compare notes about it. That is the whole reason this cohort exists. What follows is what the room actually said across five sessions, and what it could not yet answer.

Attendance, verified.

Session	Attendance	Utilities
January 28, virtual kickoff	76 of 104 registered	31
February 11-12, Austin, in person	13	10
March 27, three virtual pod sessions	32 across 66 seats	20
April 14-15, Pittsburgh, in person	9	6
June 25, virtual, three blocks	41	24

The two in-person rooms were small on purpose. Sixteen volunteers came out of the pod sessions, and practitioners moved between the three pods rather than settling into one.

What the discussions kept returning to

Load forecasting is a team sport and nobody owns all the inputs. Not one artifact produced in Pittsburgh came from a single role. Every data flow crossed at least two teams, often five. The forecast touches generation, transmission, distribution, rates and regulatory, and no one owns the hand-off.

The problem with new load drivers is data absence, not data quality. This is the cohort's sharpest distinction. You cannot run quality assurance on data that was never collected. Historical profiles for data centers, storage, electric vehicles and virtual power plants simply do not exist at most utilities, and no method fixes that.

The same data serves four masters. AMI appears in the weather-normalized peak, the data lake, the modeling flow and the electrification flow. Govern it for one use case and three go underserved.

Everyone is solving large load alone. Local planning teams submit applications that overestimate both size and timing. Forecasters cut them and carry the risk in both directions. Every utility in the room had this tension. None had a clean process for it.

The gaps, stated so they can be argued with

The materialization number does not exist. How much announced large load actually shows up is the cohort's top request. It requires utilities to contribute their own actual-against-forecast history, and several have no variance tracking to contribute. Building the tracking comes first.

Ramp discounting has no defensible common practice. The spread runs from a fixed contractual ramp with no alternatives studied, to no discount at all. This is the most concrete methods gap in the series.

The large-load threshold is undefined and may stay that way. Whether the cohort adopts a common definition or simply always states its own was left open. The room leaned toward requiring the definition to travel with the number rather than standardizing it.

Storage, electric vehicle and virtual power plant forecasting is earlier than large load. Three members have named pieces. Nobody has claimed a full approach. The specific unsolved piece is discharge behaviour: utilities can meter installed capacity but not customer intent.

There is no shared glossary. "Load modifier" meant at least three different things in one room. That is tolerable until it is not.

Forecast accuracy against settlement is measured by almost nobody. Where the loop exists, forecasts improve year over year. Where it does not, error repeats.

What is not this cohort's problem to solve

Three of the four governance threads out of Pittsburgh belong to the AEIC Data Framework Working Group, which has been on the same ground since February with a different room. It has five quality dimensions, a position on ownership, and work underway on shared vocabulary. The two groups are describing one dependency from opposite ends, and the four foundational datasets at the centre of both are the same: the GIS network and connectivity model, AMI interval data, SCADA and real-time telemetry, and DER and smart-inverter telemetry.

Forecast accuracy against settlement stays here. The other three go into that room rather than get solved twice.

This reports practice, not best practice. Where the cohort has not converged, it says so rather than picking a winner. Survey responses are held in confidence, aggregated and anonymized.

Knowledge of one is the knowledge of all.

Association of Edison Illuminating Companies · Center for Operational Excellence

607 14th Street NW, Washington, DC · aeic.org · aeicopscenter.org