



The Climate Imperative and Innovative Behavior: Encouraging Greater Advances in the Production of Energy-Efficient Technologies and Services¹

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This white paper examines why a larger array of innovative institutions, behaviors, technologies, and services is needed – specifically in the context of what we call “the climate imperative.” We explore possible mechanisms that can encourage the more robust development of innovative programs and policies within the State of California, with special attention to the activities of the California Public Utilities Commission. The potential for future innovation is described in the context of California’s impressive past technological and institutional achievements, especially as they impact energy efficiency improvements and energy policy more broadly. Notwithstanding its past achievements, we contend that if the Golden State is to meet the climate imperative head-on it will need to promote significantly greater levels of innovation in the development of new ideas, new services, and new technologies – and to do so at a scale that has not been previously imagined or managed. This will demand innovation in all of the four stages of the technology development pipeline. This paper is divided into four sections. The first two are the introduction and history of energy efficiency-related innovation in California. The main body of the paper identifies five large themes: (i) advancing ideas throughout the entire four-stage development pipeline, (ii) providing a compelling narrative, (iii) encouraging collaboration and interaction, (iv) exercising “solution swarming” techniques, and (v) directing what we might call “purposeful innovation.” All are relevant to addressing the climate imperative. We further contend that a full exploration of these five themes can yield valuable additional insights for the state of California. We conclude with five specific “next-step” recommendations derived from this larger review.

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