

NW Utility Integrated Resource Planning Department Survey Results

July 2020

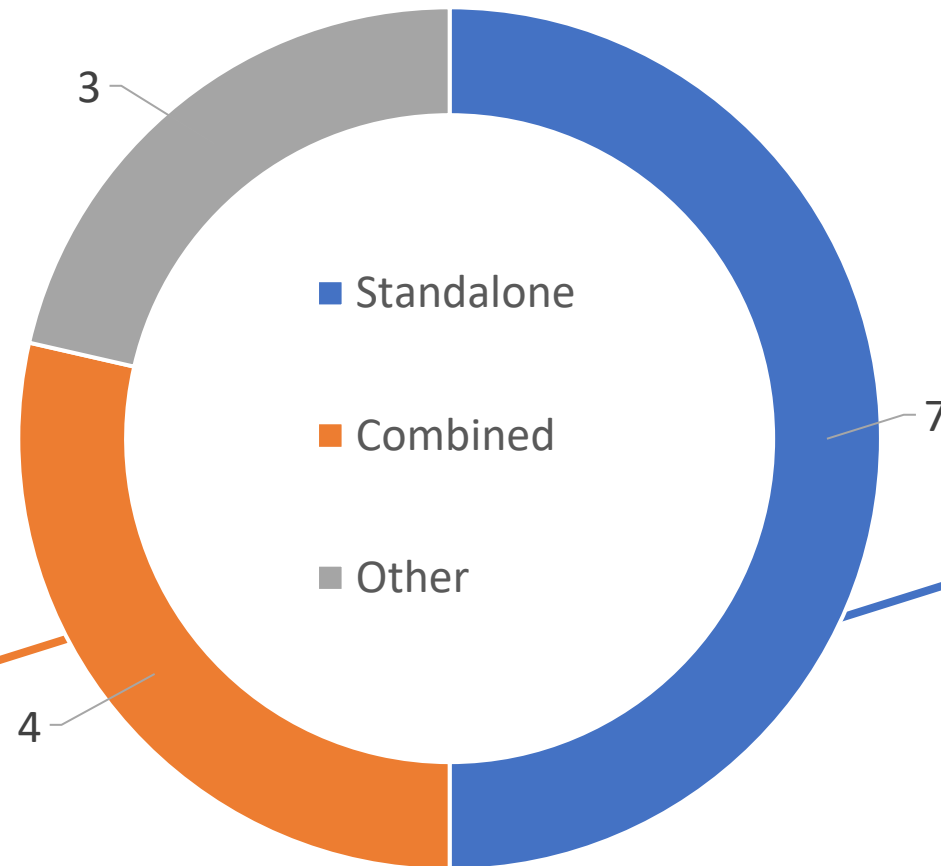
IRP department survey background

- Goal:
 - Learn how utilities structure their integrated resource planning departments
 - Gain insights into optimizing within those structures
 - Document the types of software being used for planning
- Survey sent to 20 Northwest utilities (US & Canada) – 14 responses
 - 6 investor owned utilities (including Fortis BC)
 - 1 Federal/Provincial entity
 - 7 public utilities (both large and mid-sized)

IRP department structure type

Many utilities indicated they are somewhere between standalone and combined

IRP department structure type



“Our structure is a mix, but closer to the combined structure with regular collaboration across teams.”

“Even though not combined, we work collaboratively with EE team for supply curves and DR, acquisitions, and energy delivery”

Standalone strengths and weaknesses

Responses (n = 11)*

“Allows for each department to be experts”

“Easier to get stuff done”

“Risk doing planning in a void, without making sure it’s meeting the needs/realities of your organization”

“If it’s siloed, you lose insight and visibility across departments, which could lead to the organization pulling in multiple directions.”

Strengths

Specialization	6
Coordination within team	2
Departmental autonomy	1

Weakness

Too many folks to report to	1
Issues coordinating with other departments	6
Out-of-touch/Echo chamber	6

** Some responses only listed strengths or weakness (not both)*

Combined strengths and weaknesses

“More of a big picture view of the utility”

“greater collaboration more likely leads to a better integrated plan”

“collaboration can mean more meetings and taking longer to get buy in”

“wide focus”

Count (n = 8)

Strengths

Easier coordination/management	5
Lower cost	1
Increased perspectives	3

Weakness

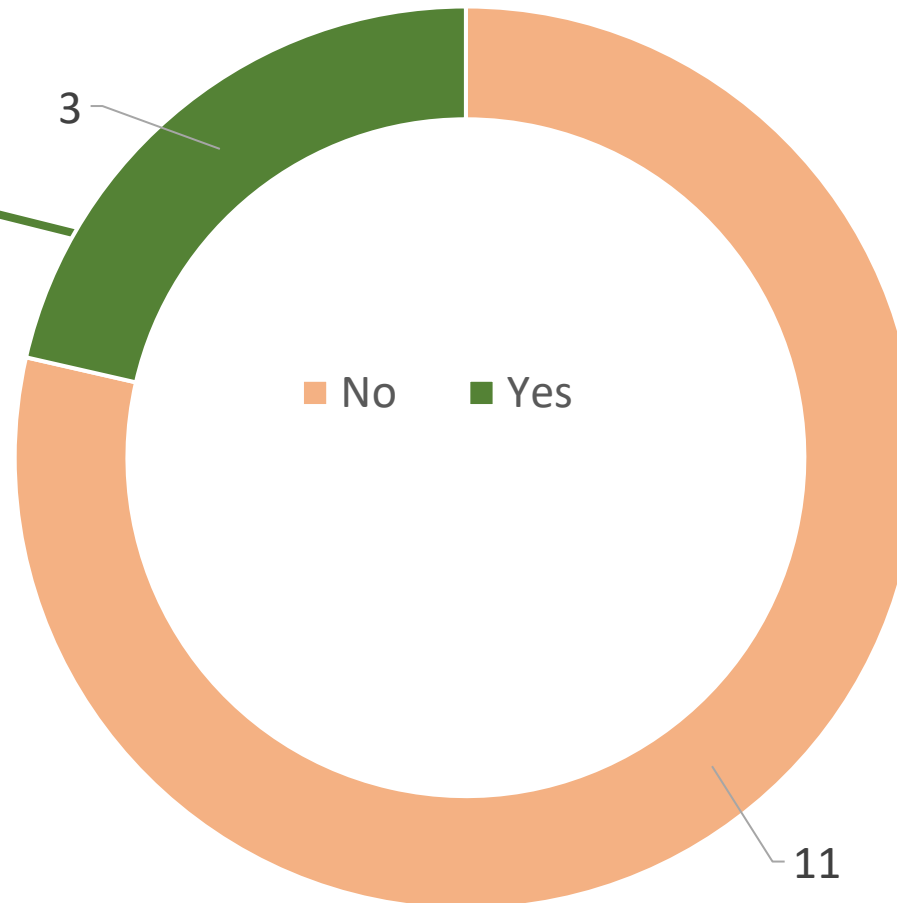
Overly wide focus, lack of accountability	5
Too much overlap with other groups	3
Slower process	3

Is there pressure to change structures?

Is there pressure to change structures from regulators/boards?

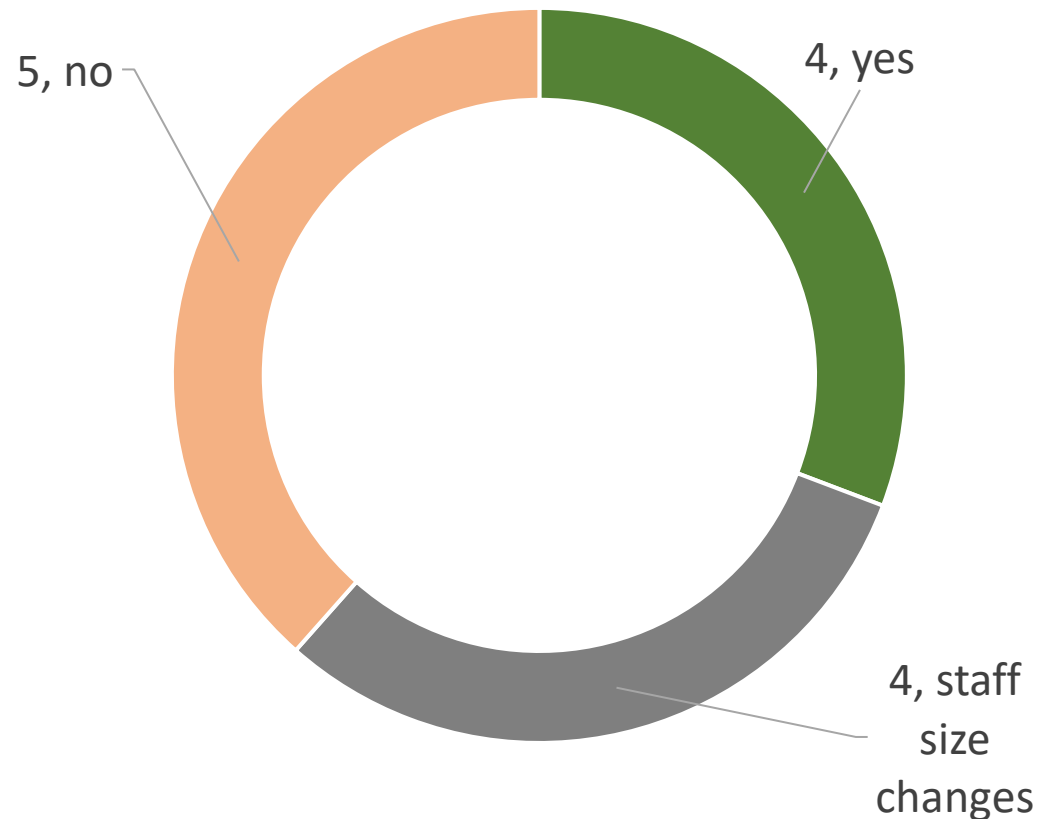
“Regulators are interested in integrated distribution planning, mostly related to topics like T&D deferral and other locational benefits”

A common theme among utilities that said yes was pressure to integrate more planning functions under the IRP umbrella



“No. They have, however, expressed more interest in following the process more closely than they have in the past.”

Have you recently changed structures?



If yes, scale of change n = 4

Shifted/grew department to encompass broader planning	2
Shifted more in-house rather than consultants	1
Group has become smaller, load forecasting moved out	1

If staff changes... n = 4

Added more staff	3
Added and then lost staff (new staff became new group)	1

Has the goal of the IRP changed?

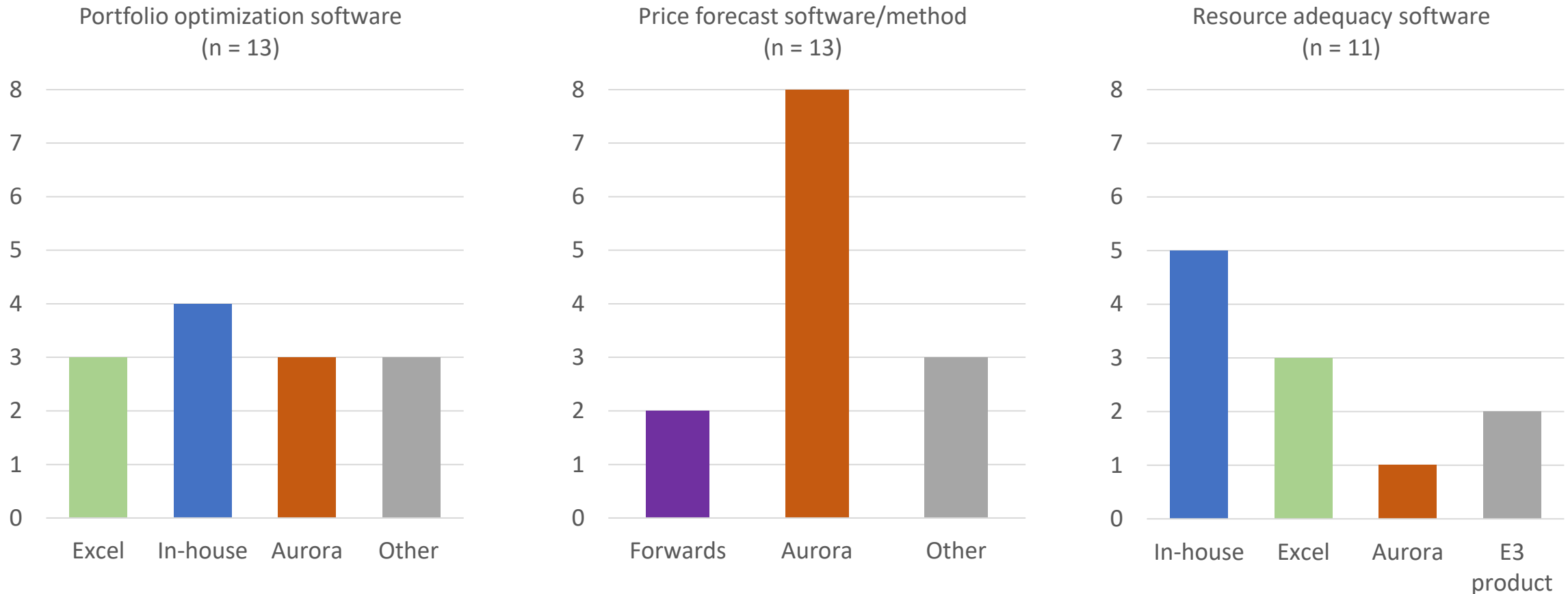
“No. The ultimate goal of identifying the lowest cost-lowest risk portfolio subject to some constraints is the same as it has always been... There are new policy constraints, but the purpose of the IRP has not changed.”

“Yes, its broadened, more T&D planning, and social economic factors due to new requirements for fundamental change in utility planning”

“...we have been increasing emphasis on decarbonization”

Has the IRP goal changed?	Responses (n = 14)
No	4
Yes	10
If yes,	
Focus on transmission and distribution	3
Focus on carbon / renewables / CETA	7
Focus on electrification	2
Focus on education	2
Focus on customer choice	2

Software used for planning



Other software mentioned includes R, Plexos, various Excel solvers, Resolve, ArcGIS, various ABB products, PowerSimm, Stata, Access, Python, and Gurobi

Contact info

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