

WICE Spring 2018 Conference Summary

WICE has concluded another successful conference in the Capital region on the cool spring day of June 5, 2018. WICE had an overwhelming response this year with a total of 180 attendees and a sold-out conference more than a month in advance. WICE thanks the planning committee for their hard work, and the Spring Conference Chair, Poornima Eber, for organizing the event.

The conference was kicked off by outgoing WICE President Tabitha Robinson (New York Power Authority), who shared many updates on WICE activities and announced that she would be passing the baton to incoming WICE President Jalila Aissi (NYS Department of Public Service). Jalila presented Tabitha with a leadership award on behalf of the WICE Board and thanked Tabitha for leading WICE through several successful years. Tabitha expressed appreciation and excitement to welcome Jalila into her new role.



The first speaker for the day was Lisa Primeggia (Consolidated Edison). She gave a compelling and inspiring personal narrative about her journey from one of few female engineers in the energy field to a senior leadership position at Con Edison. She shared the many twists and turns she took in her career path, which spanned many roles, including those in operations, the law department, and back again.

The technical portion of the agenda started with a panel on “Blockchain Technology”, moderated by Klaar De Schepper (Flux Tailor). Klaar began the panel with a brief overview of blockchain and its use within the utility sector in technological, business and legal contexts. The panel participants, Rachel Flynn-Kasuba (National Grid), Doug McMahon (New York Power Authority) and Drury Mackenzie (AVANGRID) discussed the many potential applications of this emerging technology in the energy field.



The panel concluded with the participants providing examples of their favorite applications of blockchain outside the utility space. Rachel talked about Ben & Jerry’s use of blockchain-based technology enabling individuals to buy carbon credits to offset environmental impacts of each ice cream cone.

Doug discussed how blockchain technology was recently used in the Sierra Leone election. Drury mentioned a project that tracks cobalt usage from a mining site in the Democratic Republic of Congo to products such as lithium-ion batteries for smartphones and electric cars.

Next, the conference moved into the professional development portion of the agenda, which was led by Robyn Hatcher of SpeakEtc. In her session, “The Art of Self-Promotion,” Robyn gave a presentation and facilitated hands-on-exercises for the audience to experiment with different communication and networking styles, based on individual personality types. Before lunch, she warmed up the audience with some practical tips about effective networking for participants to put into action over lunch. In the afternoon, she led an interactive session that encouraged the audience to seek other’s feedback on their own personal styles to even further their self-evaluation.



The final session of the day was a panel on “Building an Inclusive Workplace Culture,” moderated by Yrthya Dinzey-Flores (Time Warner). The panelists represented a variety of fields: Nancy Harvey is a Civil Rights and Inclusion Officer (New York Power Authority), Melanie Littlejohn is a Vice President of Community and Customer Engagement (National Grid), and Michelle Word is Manager of Business Diversity & Development (Burns & McDonnell). The conversation addressed a range of topics from unconscious biases to harassment, from diversity in recruitment and the supply chain to inclusion and ways that men can help to promote women within their organizations. The discussion ended with each panelist sharing their perspective on how we could each help to move toward safer, more diverse and inclusive workplaces.

The conference ended with a lively raffle of baskets that members of the WICE community contributed for the benefit of Interfaith Partnership for the Homeless. The raffle raised over \$1,000 in addition to the clothes and toiletries that attendees brought for the local charity. Slides from the conference can be viewed [here](#).



Our pre-conference events were also well-attended. WICE organized a tour of the netZero Village in Rotterdam, NY on the day before the conference. The apartment complex utilizes the latest renewable and energy efficient technologies to meet or exceed the energy needs of the community. David Bruns of Bruns Realty Group, which owns the complex, provided a [presentation](#) before the tour to introduce the Net Zero concept and goals, design process, overview of energy efficient and mechanical systems, challenges faced, results and a preview of another Net Zero development that is underway nearby.

After learning about the key features of the village, David provided a tour of the complex and a resident from the WICE community was kind enough to give us an inside tour of her unit. We were able to see the energy management system in action through the displays showing real-time and 30-day energy usage for each unit in the lobby with tree names used in place of resident names for privacy purposes. More than 40 attended the event, braving the rainy weather to witness firsthand how Net Zero Energy is being achieved in the real-world today.



The pre-conference happy hour at Mexican Radio in Schenectady provided another fun opportunity to engage with the WICE community before the main event. There was a facilitated networking session in which people shared their experiences and reflected on times that women colleagues had built each other up and how to pay it forward. The informal gathering gave conference attendees an opportunity to socialize and begin discussing some of the issues planned in the program for the next day.

WICE would like to thank everyone who attended the 2018 Spring Conference. Please stay engaged via WICE's new [membership portal](#) and on [LinkedIn](#) and [Twitter](#). If you have any comments or questions, please reach us at info@wicenyc.com.

See you next time!

Submitted by Dr. Chhandita Das, WICE Social Media Manager and Economist at NYISO