

# ALLYSHIP 2023

# WOMEN'S SUMMIT

## OF THE ROCKIES

*A highly anticipated annual event created to empower, educate and uplift women (and allies) in our community.*

**Friday, February 17, 2023**

9:00 AM - 4:00 PM

Colorado School of Mines | Ben H. Parker Student Center, Golden Colorado

### **Xcel Energy Colorado's Power Pathway Session Summary**

Join this panel of eight from Xcel Energy for a discussion about their leadership roles in a \$2 billion investment in Colorado's electric infrastructure. Hear how these women chose their profession, their experiences working in an industry where women are underrepresented, and how each has contributed to a large project like Colorado's Power Pathway.

Our panelists will share a few stories, lessons learned and anecdotes while leaving time for discussion and questions during the session.

### **Xcel Energy Bios**



#### ***Sandra Johnson***

Sandra Johnson is the RVP for Transmission Operations in Colorado. In this role she is responsible of all project management and execution, including capital spend management, siting and land rights, field work including construction of high voltage transmission lines and substations as well as maintenance of these facilities. Sandra is also responsible for the 24/7 control center operations of the high voltage transmission system in Colorado. Prior to taking on this role last fall, Sandra was the Director of Transmission Strategic Initiatives providing oversight into major Colorado transmission expansion plans. Sandra also led Xcel Energy's wildfire mitigation efforts for nearly three years as a project director which included planning and executing multiple projects to minimize wildfire-related risks. Previous roles included various engineering and leadership positions covering transmission planning, transmission operations, asset management and project execution. In her free time, Sandra has been volunteering for

ChickTech since 2017 and has served as co-director for the local Denver Chapter. ChickTech is a 501c3 dedicated to providing STEAM opportunities to high school aged young women in our disadvantaged communities. Sandra holds bachelor's and master's degrees in electrical engineering from New Mexico State University.



***Julie Stencel***

Julie Stencel is Assistant General Counsel for Xcel Energy where she has served as a strategic business partner and legal advisor to all levels of the company, from individual contributors to executives for over the last thirteen years on matters of legal, business, and asset development involving real estate issues including land use, sales and acquisitions and related commercial transactions. Julie serves as the Manager of the Denver Law Clerk program which partners with the 1L Pledge to Diversity Program which helps diverse law students develop professional skills confidence and resume credentials, and to make professional contacts to aid in their future profession.

Julie has been a member of the Colorado Supreme Court –Disciplinary Hearing Board since 2016. In 2022, the Governor appointed her to the Colorado Forrest Health Council. Prior to these appointments Julie engaged in Board Service to Butterfly Pavillion, Work Options for Women, and the YMCA of Metropolitan Denver.

Julie received her Bachelor of Science degree, cum laude from Missouri State University – Springfield (SMSU) and her Juris Doctor from Saint Louis University School of Law. Julie balances her career and community service with an exceptionally busy home life as a wife and mother of twin teenage sons who are active in several sports.



***Kelly Flenniken***

Kelly Flenniken serves as the Director of Community Relations for Xcel Energy. In this capacity Kelly leads a team of area managers who are responsible for managing the city and county political, business and community relationships on behalf of the company. Additionally, Kelly leads the social investments team in Colorado. This team is responsible for corporate philanthropy and assists in the management of a positive brand relationship throughout Colorado. Prior to joining Xcel Energy, Kelly was the Executive Director for the Grand Junction Economic Partnership where she worked collaboratively to diversify the local economy through business attraction, expansion and retention. Kelly serves on a variety of community organizations and boards of directors, including among others, the Clear Creek School District Board of Education, Colorado Succeeds, Metro Denver Economic Development Corporation and the Clear Creek Economic Development Corporation.

Kelly has received several community recognitions for her leadership in the community. They include, the Development Counsellors International 40 under 40 Rising Stars in Economic Development, and the Raul Ramos Philanthropic Champion.

Kelly completed her bachelor's degree in Political Science from Knox College, and Paralegal certification from Loyola University. When not hard at work helping communities achieve their goals, Kelly enjoys spending time outside with her husband and their two young daughters.



***Amber Dedus***

Amber Dedus is a Manager in Xcel Energy's Siting & Land Rights ("S&LR") group in Denver, Colorado. In this role she oversees land planning and acquisition, permitting and public outreach efforts for energy infrastructure projects in Colorado.

Mrs. Dedus has 14 years of experience conducting siting/routing, permitting, public outreach, and land rights acquisition efforts in support of complex electric transmission development. Mrs. Dedus joined Public Service Company of Colorado in 2016 as a Senior Agent on the S&LR team and prior to working at Public Service, she worked in consulting and renewable energy development. In her consulting and renewable energy development roles she provided environmental planning, public outreach, permitting, project management, and land rights acquisition services to public utilities and wind and solar developers throughout the United States. Mrs. Dedus graduated from the University of Colorado, Boulder in 2006 where she earned a B.S. in Physical Geography and graduated from the University of Denver in 2011 where she earned a M.S. in Environmental Policy and Management.



***Jennifer Chester***

Jennifer Chester recently joined Xcel Energy as a Siting & Land Rights Manager overseeing electric facility routing/siting, permitting and public outreach work for Xcel Energy's electric transmission portfolio in Colorado.

She has over 20 years of experience in the energy industry applying technical and leadership skills to traditional generation, solar, wind and offshore wind and transmission infrastructure projects. With a career focus in electric transmission, she has guided staff and project teams through the successful execution of thousands of miles of electric transmission line routing, public outreach, and permitting work in Colorado and across the United States.

Most recently, prior to joining Xcel Energy, Jennifer has been focused on Colorado's Power Pathway and directed a large consultant team, supporting filings with the Colorado Public Utilities Commission, transmission line routing, public outreach, and permitting activities.

Jennifer holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Environmental Science from Bowling Green State University in Ohio.



***Heather Brickey***

Heather is the Project Director for Colorado's Power Pathway Project for Xcel Energy. The Pathway approximately 550 miles of new double circuit 345kV transmission and includes up to eight new and expanded substations. This project will improve transmission reliability and enable the transition to renewable energy in Colorado. She is responsible for leading all aspects of the project from early development through construction.

Heather has over 15 years of project management experience leading teams through complex projects in the transmission industry. She started at Xcel Energy in 2016 and her most recent project before starting the Pathway included the 150 miles Rush Creek Generation Tie, which interconnected the Rush Creek and Cheyenne Ridge Windfarms.

Heather holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science from Colorado Mesa University in Grand Junction, Colorado. She also has had her PMP (Project Management Professional) since 2012.



***Ashley Valdez***

Ashley Valdez is the Area Manager of Community & Local Government Affairs for Xcel Energy in Southern Colorado. She possesses over 25 years of experience in the utility industry, having worked in both the investor-owned and electric cooperative business arena.

Since joining Xcel Energy, Valdez has managed stakeholder engagement across a wide array of projects including the Colorado Power Pathway Project, the Rush Creek and Cheyenne Ridge Wind projects, 2017 Electric Resource Plan/Pueblo Community Advisory Council, and local engagement.

Valdez serves on the Pueblo Economic Development Corporation Board of Directors and was voted Chairwoman of the Board of Directors for the 2021 and 2023 term. She is on the executive boards for the Action 22 organization and the San Luis Valley Development Resource Group. She is the 2023 Pueblo County United Way Campaign Chair.

Valdez has twice received the Xcel Energy Innovator award, was named the 2018 Distinguished Alumni Award for Mass Communication by Colorado State University – Pueblo and in 2012 was named National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) Touchstone Energy National Brand Champion. Valdez received a Bachelor of Science in Mass Communications from Colorado State University-Pueblo in 1991 and the NRECA Certified Cooperative Communicator designation in 2008.