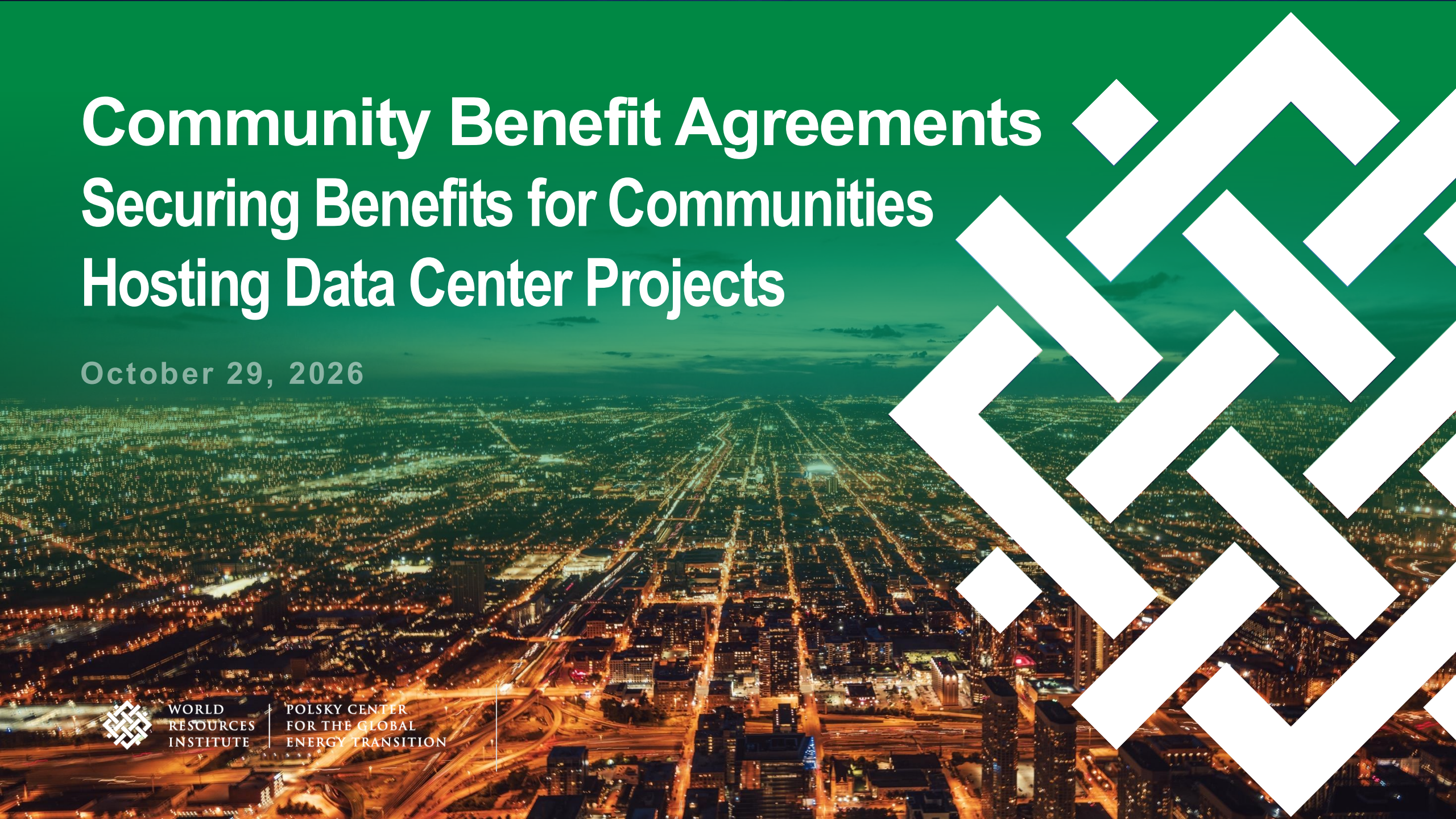
Community Benefit Agreements
Securing Benefits for Communities Hosting Data Center Projects

October 29, 2026



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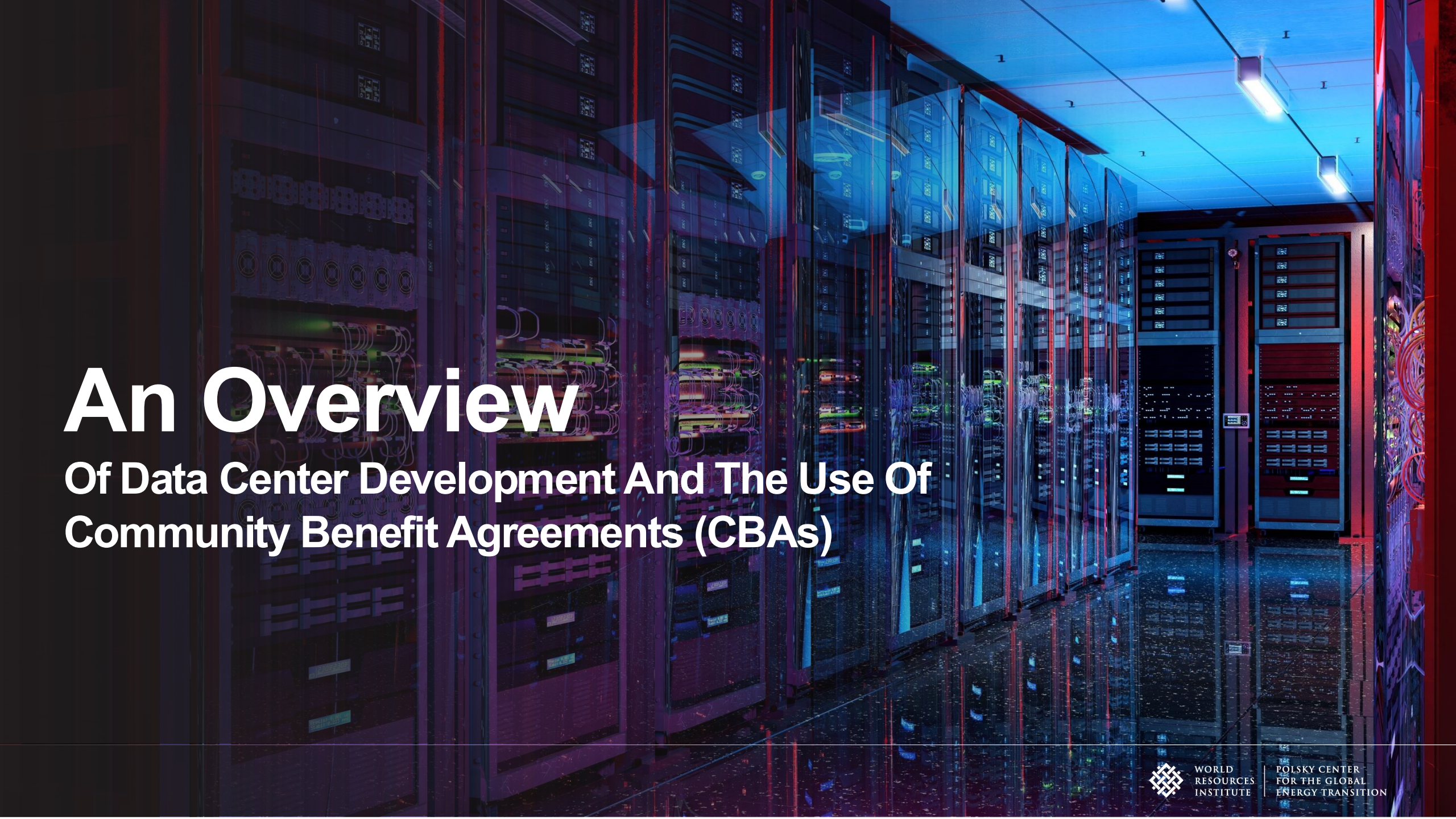


WRI is a global research organization working to improve people's lives, protect nature and halt climate change.



Agenda

1. Contextualizing Data Centers and Community Benefit Agreements (CBAs)
2. **Panel 1:** Maximizing Data Center CBA Effectiveness
3. **Panel 2:** Legal and Technical Assistance for Host Communities
4. Audience Q&A



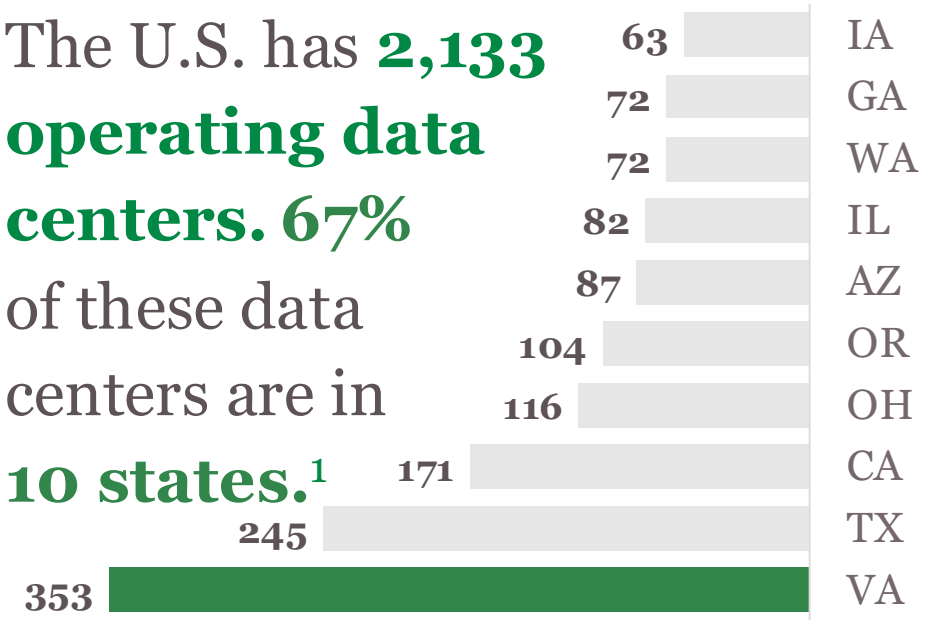
An Overview

Of Data Center Development And The Use Of Community Benefit Agreements (CBAs)

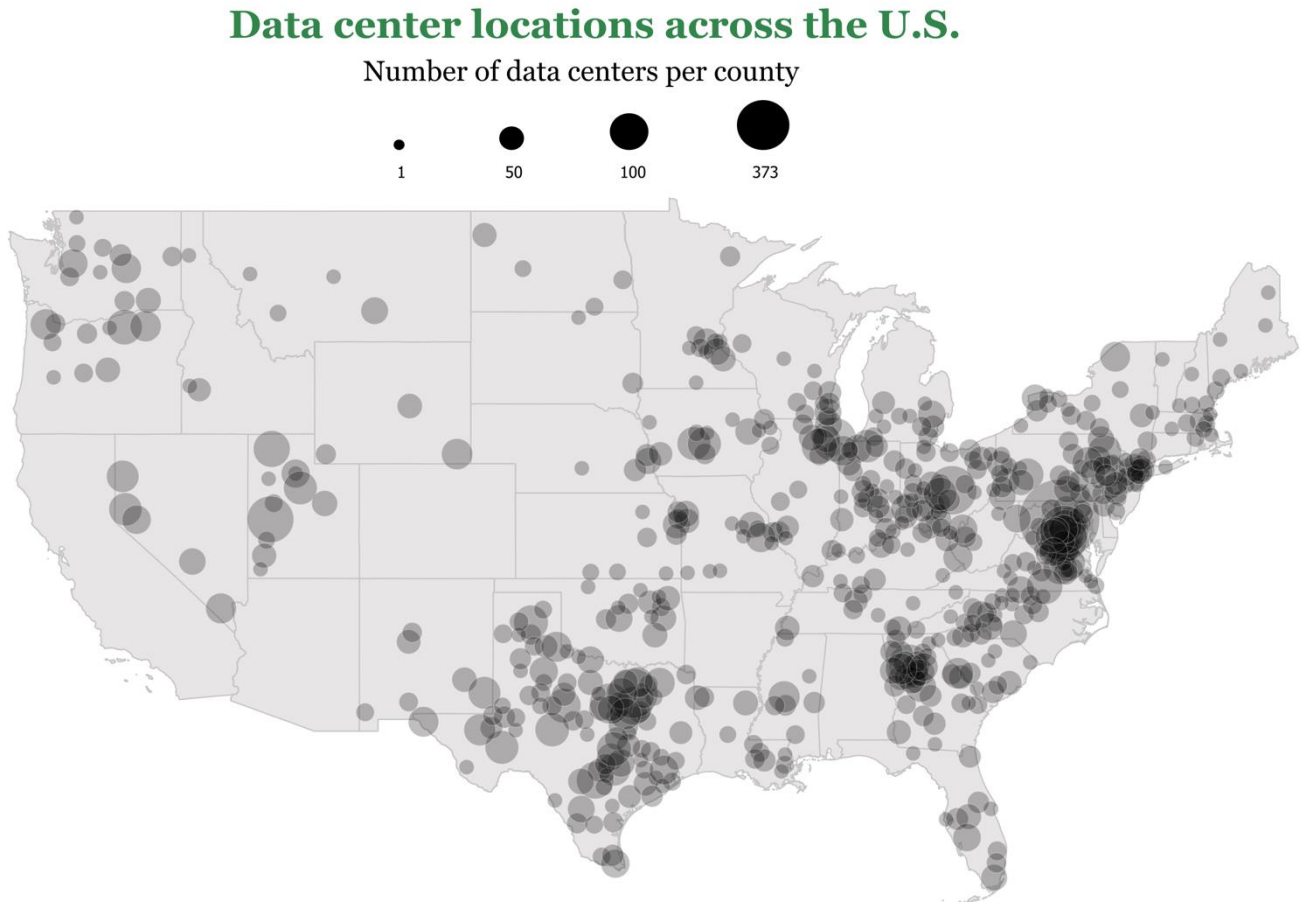
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Data center growth is concentrated and happening fast

The U.S. has **2,133 operating data centers. 67%** of these data centers are in **10 states.**[1]



42% of Americans live within a **5-mile radius** of an operational or planned data center facility.[2]

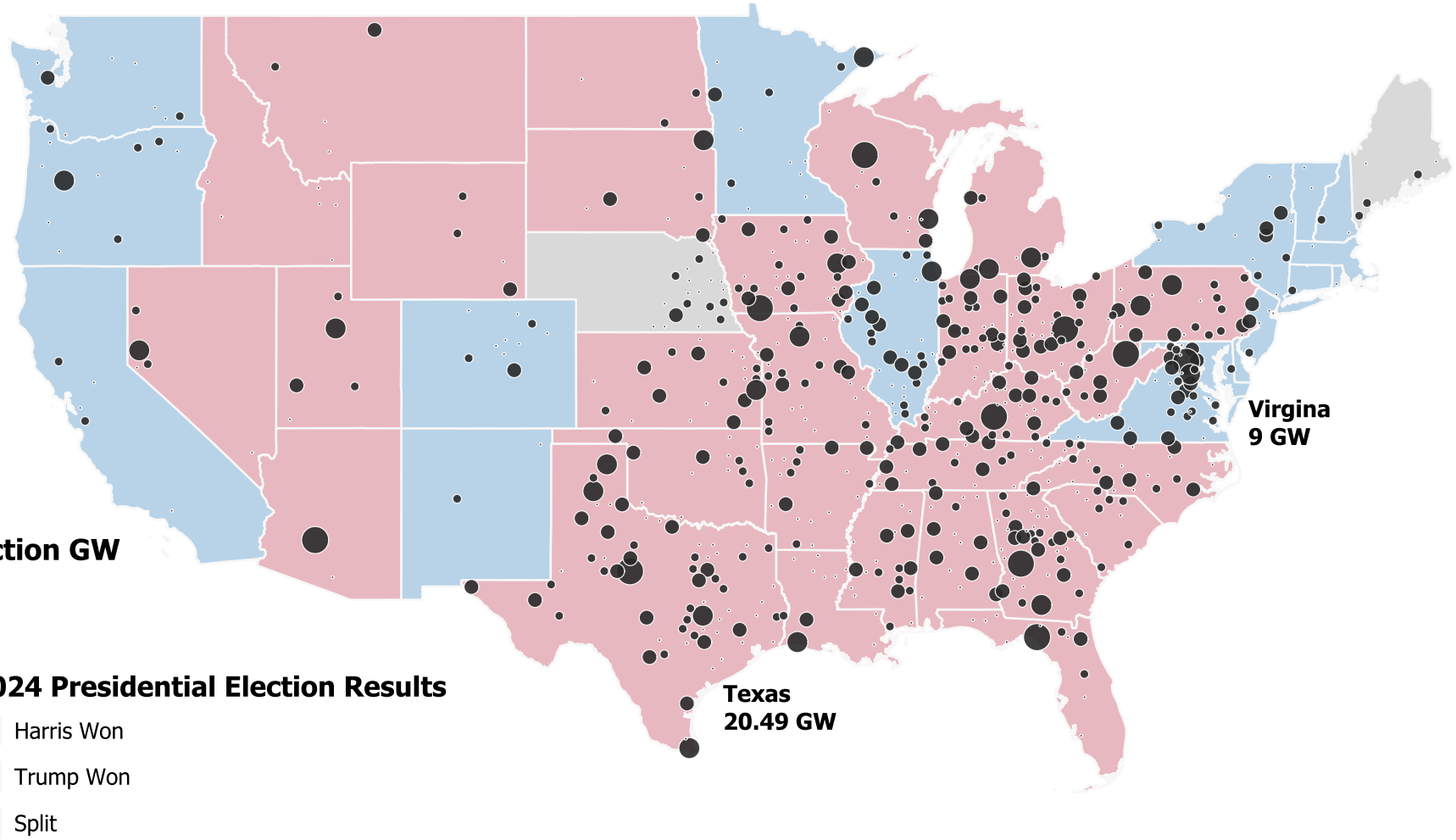


Note: Includes data centers that are operational, planned, land-banked, or under construction. Data as of 1/22/2026. [3]

1) Alterio Dataset: Data Centers, Data current as of October 26, 2026; 2) Most new data centers in the U.S. are coming to rural areas | Pew Research Center; 3) Alterio Dataset: Data Centers, Data current as of October 26, 2026

Where is planned data center growth occurring?

Outside VA, **92%** of data center capacity **under construction** is in states that Trump won in 2024



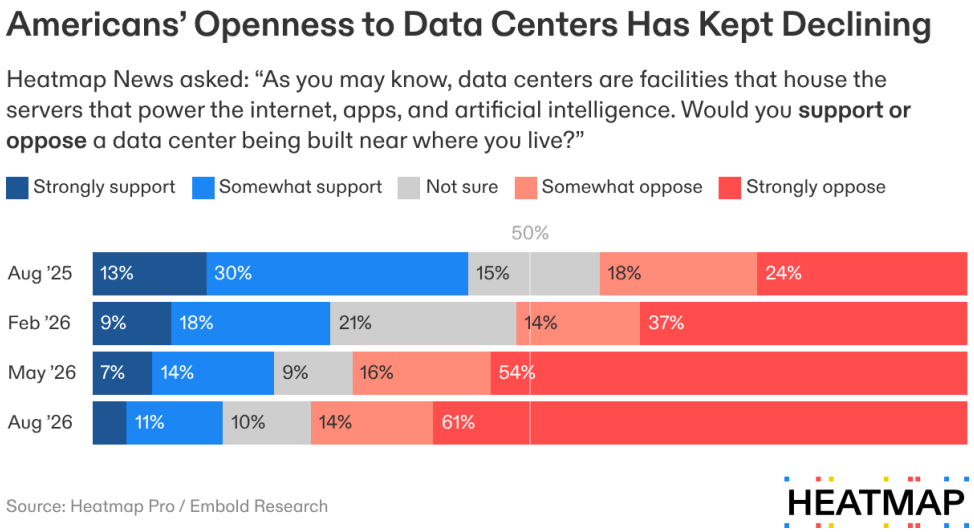
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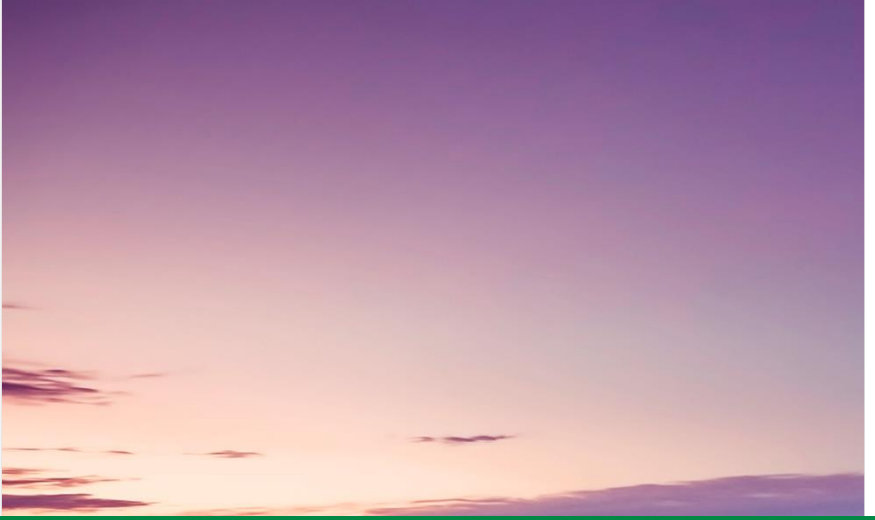
Some local governments and communities see opportunity, but most are concerned

Data centers can provide some opportunities to communities..

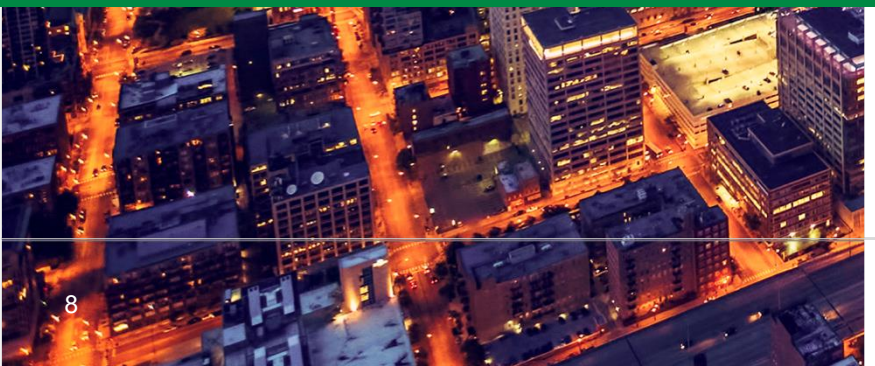
- Temporary Construction Jobs
- Limited Full-Time Operational Positions
- Government Revenue
- Grid Reliability & Clean Energy Catalysts

... but local concerns are increasing: Opposition to local data centers has gone from **42% to 75%** in just one year





Data center siting has a wide range of local impacts, including:



CO_2 Emissions and Air Pollution

- Marginal data center-driven emissions projected to **increase by ~100-350 Mt CO2/yr by 2030**
- Diesel-fueled backup generators release **harmful pollutants (PM2.5 and NOx)** linked to health hazards

Noise Impacts

- Construction, cooling systems and generators are noisy
- Industrial generators can approach **100 decibels**

Pressure on Marginalized Communities

- Many data centers are in census tracts with above-median environmental burdens and in areas with social vulnerability indicators, including poverty

Water Supply

- By 2028, AI data centers could use enough water for **360,000 households**
- **2/3** of all data centers built in 2022 were in water-stressed areas

Carbon Brief; 7 Ways Data Centers Affect US Communities | World Resources Institute

Examples of governance tools to address data center developments

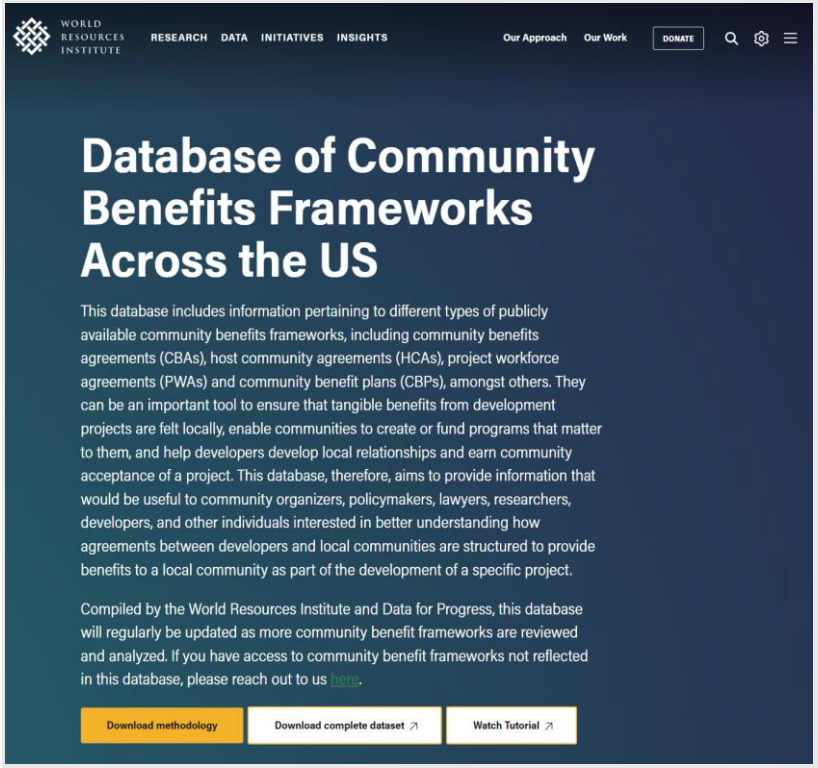
- Land use and zoning policies
- Utility regulation
- Environmental protections
- Safeguards and clear criteria around water, energy, noise and land-use
- Transparency requirements
- Monitoring and accountability mechanisms
- **Community benefit agreements**

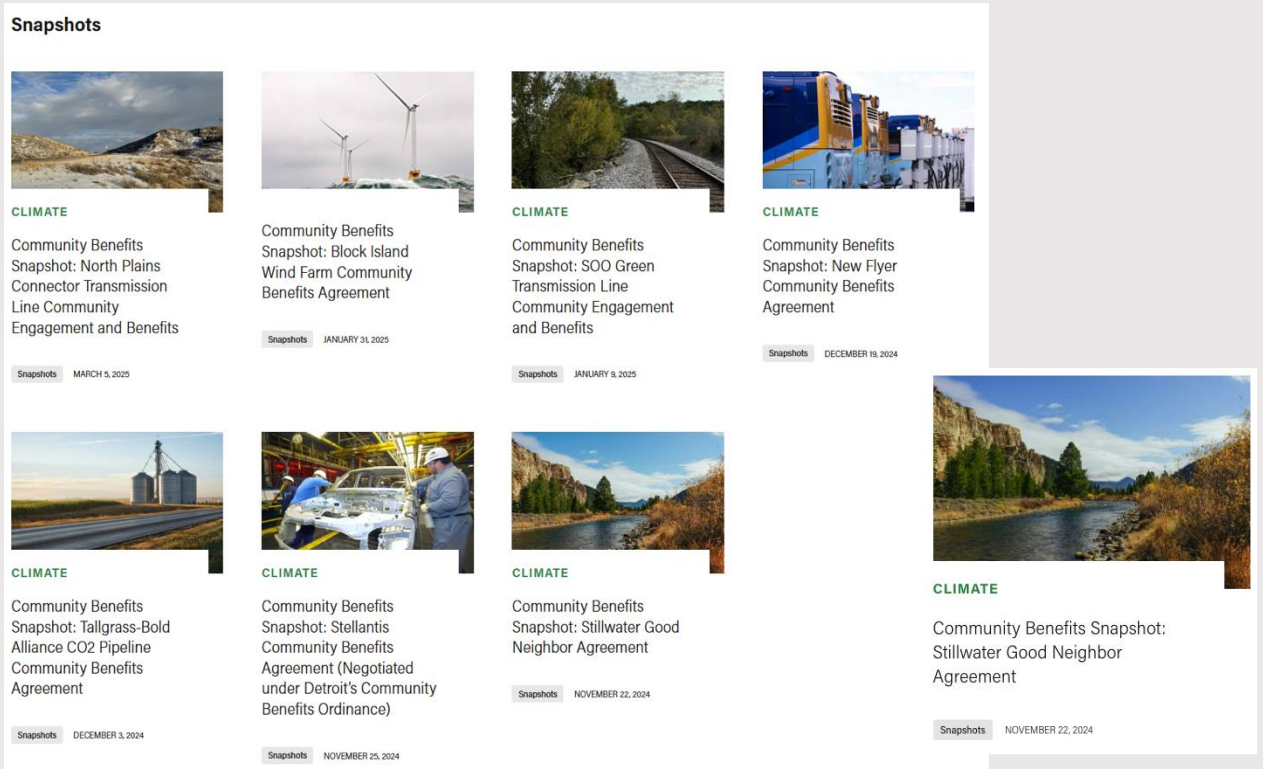
Community benefits agreements: Moving toward proactive governance

- **Can be negotiated as**:
  - Public CBAs: Integrated into municipal ordinances and development approvals
  - Private CBAs: Signed directly between tech developers and coalition groups

- **A CBA should:**
  - Provide a structured framework to address negative project impacts and deliver **tangible community-wide benefits**
  - Strengthen **community inclusion** in project planning and outcomes
  - Incorporate robust **monitoring and accountability** mechanisms to hold developers accountable to their commitments
  - Function as a critical **co-governance tool alongside** modern utility regulations and zoning codes

Leveraging WRI's initiative on Community Benefits Frameworks for responsible data center development





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Today's Panelists



Devashree Saha

Director, U.S. Clean Energy Economy Program, WRI U.S. Polsky Energy Center
(Moderator)

Panel 1: Maximizing Data Center CBA Effectiveness



Edwina King

Associate Director of Legislative Affairs and Equitable Development, City of Detroit



Jerry Iverson

Committee Member and Sheep Shearer, Stillwater Good Neighbor Agreement Oversight Committee



Julia Thayne

Founding Partner, Two⁰ & Rising; Research Fellow at Harvard University

Panel 2: Legal and Technical Assistance for Host Communities



Liz Jacob

Lead Staff Attorney, Sugar Law Center for Economic & Social Justice



Larissa Koehler

Supervising Attorney, Climate and Environmental Justice Lawyers for Good Government (L4GG)

Thank you

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