

Next Gen Data Center and Infrastructure Discussion

2026 MWRCDC Annual Meeting

Facilitators: Brock Palmen (University of Michigan) and Todd Shechter (University of Wisconsin, Madison).

0. Introduction and goals to set up front (2–3 minutes)

Discussion comparing realities across institutions, staying high-level where plans are not public, and surfacing shared constraints and unknowns.

1. Setting our realities: What has changed? (10 minutes)

- Short remarks and fast sharing of participants.
- Focus on procurement timelines, hardware lead times, power/cooling constraints, and growth mismatches.
- Prompt for discussion: What is the biggest constraint that has changed how your institution thinks about data centers or infrastructure?

2. Supply-chain realities (15 minutes)

- Discuss where supply-chain pain is most acute (compute, storage, power, facilities, people), lingering workarounds, and broken assumptions around refresh cycles.
- Are any of our members able to share tactics that are working?

3. Institutional strategy responses (15 minutes)

- Contrast centralized vs distributed capacity, on-prem vs colo vs cloud choices, and shifts in institutional risk tolerance.
- Prompt for discussion: What decision would have been unacceptable five years ago but is now inevitable? (ex: going back to cloud, investing in tape again).

4. Community, politics, and perception (10 minutes)

- Discuss community response to data center expansion, ownership of the external narrative, and messaging that works or backfires.
- What is happening in your region or state?

5. Shared questions and open issues (5–7 minutes)

- Capture open questions the community could address together and identify what information would materially change planning.