

Brent spot
\$71.16
▼ -0.03%

Brent futures (1 mo)
\$71.37
▲ +0.11%

WTI spot
\$68.69
▼ -0.58%

WTI futures (1 mo)
\$69.01
▼ -0.12%

UK Nat Gas (1 mo)
108.27p
▼ -0.27%

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Collaboration sought: Industry groups, technology providers and producers need to work together to de-risk and scale up geothermal projects in the energy transition, experts say Photo: AFP/SCANPIX

'It's time to change': Powering up geothermal will require more collaboration, data sharing

Geothermal groups seek to unlock potential in the oil and gas workforce and from data silos to kick-start more projects

22 July 2021 22:42 GMT *UPDATED* 26 July 2021 16:28 GMT

By [Naomi Kluge](#)  in [Houston](#)

While renewable energy from wind and solar is gaining ground in the energy market, stakeholders also see potential for geothermal growth through increased collaboration, harnessing oil and gas companies' ability to scale up projects and sharing more data.

Although new skills need to be developed to expand geothermal efforts, experts see benefits from the current oil and gas workforce that can be applied to geothermal. Data in silos also must be unlocked as geothermal proponents seek to build trust and increase collaboration.

Geothermal energy makes up less than 1% of global power generation and is often used in places with high volcanic activity and hot springs, but it relies on heat from the earth to generate energy, something that can be found anywhere in the world.

Involvement from oil and gas



Many skills and assets are transferable from the oil and gas sector to geothermal, given the overlap in technologies. With their often-larger capacity for expertise and collaboration in the energy industry, oil and gas players can bring valuable knowledge and understanding as geothermal proponents attempt to make a play for more power.

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Stakeholders are optimistic that federal policies will incentivise bringing the oil and gas workforce to the geothermal field in the US.

"There's a huge push from the government — and I think it's bipartisan — to see all jobs convert," said David Reid, chief technology officer and chief marketing officer at energy services company NOV, in remarks during the Pivot2021: Geothermal Reimagined conference.

"So it works in our favour very well, and I think the policies are going to continue to come out and reward the using of our existing skills or distinct labour force."

Improving assessment of geothermal resources can also give projects a boost.

"One of the challenges we see is that funding, while it's there, tends to only be available once the opportunity is a sure thing," said Ajit Menon, vice president of geothermal at Baker Hughes.

"That's why I really think the focus on better resource assessment earlier in the game can help free up that funding for the initial phases of the project, which we feel is really critical."

Sharing data and expertise

A commonly shared sentiment at the conference, sponsored by the US Department of Energy and the University of Texas at Austin, is the need for collaboration among geothermal producers and with oil and gas companies.

Producers tend to shy away from such collaboration because of concerns over their intellectual property.

"When you have an invention and you think it's a great invention, we tend to buy and hide until we're ready, but I think it's time to change," Reid said.

But sharing information — specifically standardising and integrating data sets around the world — is necessary to facilitate machine learning applications that will build geothermal models and other resources to help de-risk projects.



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Ken Wisian, associate director of the environmental division of the University of Texas at Austin's Bureau of Economic Geology, said building trust in the sector will be key to integrating the data.

"There is a lot of data sitting in industrial libraries, and that takes relationships to get access to," Wisian said. "I think both professional societies and the industry associations can be a good conduit there." ([Copyright](#))

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