



How One In-House Counsel Manages Multilayered Compliance and High-Stakes Decisions With CEB



Marina Pantchenko

Central Coast Community Energy's
(3CE) Deputy General Counsel

Faced with a constant stream of complex legal issues, this public agency attorney leverages CEB to move faster, work smarter, and remain confidently California-compliant.

When Central Coast Community Energy's (3CE) deputy general counsel Marina Pantchenko begins her day, she rarely knows what kind of novel legal issue will land on her desk.



*"Everything from A to Z comes across my plate," she said.
"And while many attorneys are experts in particular niches,
no one can possibly be an expert in every area of law."*

On a given day, Pantchenko might handle real property transactions, HR questions, Brown Act compliance, and energy procurement contracts, all while providing litigation advice or reviewing legislation that could impact the agency.

This kind of variability is typical for in-house counsel at a Community Choice Aggregator. As a joint powers authority that provides clean, renewable energy to communities along California's Central Coast, 3CE also operates at the intersection of local, state, and federal legal frameworks, each with its own demands, obligations and moving parts.

"3CE has a service territory of 8,000 square miles, and we're constantly adapting to changes in energy law and policy at every level of government," Pantchenko said.



"On top of that, we're also negotiating complex power purchase agreements and managing compliance across multiple jurisdictions."



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The challenge: A public-facing legal role with evolving priorities

As an in-house attorney at 3CE, Pantchenko wears many hats. One day, she's reviewing lease agreements and crafting NDAs; the next, she's navigating updates to California's public meeting laws or crafting the agency's AI policy.



"I find it really rewarding and fulfilling to consult on such a variety of practice areas, but the legal stakes for in-house counsel are palpable," she said.

Take the Brown Act, for example. Its stringent open meeting requirements mean that all 3CE board meetings must be held in public and conducted in the spirit of transparency. That includes posting agendas in advance, ensuring meaningful opportunities for public participation, and complying with intricate notice and access provisions. But the law isn't static amendments, court decisions, and agency guidance continually reshape how the Brown Act is interpreted and applied.

"Brown Act compliance is critical to any public agency's core operations," Pantchenko said. "I rely on CEB's handbook to stay on top of the latest developments and ensure we're following all Brown Act requirements. It's ideal for navigating any potential gray areas and keeping our processes legally sound."

With two governing boards and 38 board members spread across a vast geographic area, hosting in-person meetings isn't always practical, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic reshaped expectations around virtual attendance.

"Post-COVID updates to California's public meeting laws brought increased access but also new rules and legal challenges: Can a remote location qualify as a 'teleconference site'? How many sites must be publicly noticed?" Pantchenko said. "I've relied on CEB to double-check all the rules when new scenarios pop up that aren't black and white."

The solution: Practical tools for in-house attorneys who handle everything

Pantchenko has leveraged CEB since law school, when she first discovered its [Secondary Sources](#). Back then, she would select a topic such as civil procedure and find clear, concise, organized explanations of the law. She still turns to those resources today and calls them indispensable.

"There's no parallel or equivalent anywhere else," Pantchenko said.

As her role has expanded, so has her use of CEB's [Practitioner](#). Its checklists, sample documents, and workflow tools allow her to pivot quickly between unfamiliar legal issues without losing time starting from scratch.

For example, when the agency needed to negotiate and prepare a nondisclosure agreement, she opened Practitioner, [downloaded a template](#), tailored it to 3CE's needs and finalized it for use agencywide.

"What otherwise would have taken me many days of work was boiled down to a few hours' process of essentially just making sure that I review the template, customize it, revise it, and that I don't have to reinvent the wheel," Pantchenko said.

The same process has helped Pantchenko revise policies, commercial leases, and various other core contracts and agency documents.

"When I suddenly have a lease on my desk, I go straight to Practitioner for the [commercial lease checklist](#)," she said. "I'll often find an issue I wouldn't have necessarily spotted on my own. It makes sure I'm capturing everything the agency might need."

Pantchenko also uses [CEB's white papers](#) to stay ahead of emerging risks. [One recent favorite](#) covered how in-house legal departments can set guardrails for generative AI without stifling innovation. That guidance arrived just as she was developing a formal AI policy for the agency.

[DailyNews](#) briefings, including a [climate-focused digest](#), keep Pantchenko up to speed on legislative and regulatory changes. And for municipal law, she always keeps the [California Municipal Law Handbook](#) close by.

"Nearly all of our legal work is governed by California statutes, regulations, and policies, so having state-specific publications like the municipal handbook is critical," Pantchenko said. "It's the bread and butter for every public agency lawyer."



The result: Faster, better decisions across multiple legal domains

Pantchenko works with outside counsel on power purchase agreements and other complex matters, but CEB fills a different and equally crucial role: helping her issue-spot quickly, provide internal guidance, and know when to escalate.



“You've got to adapt, be resilient, and be able to admit when you don't know something and you need somebody else's expertise,” Pantchenko said. “You have to have the resources to look at a variety of questions. There might be an issue involving commercial energy, or it might be a commercial lease question. Those are completely different areas of the law.”



For newer in-house attorneys, Pantchenko compares Practitioner's workflows and checklists to a pilot's preflight checklist.

“It's easy to miss something when you're juggling multiple priorities,” she said. “CEB gives me the tools to be thorough, make confident decisions and keep the agency moving.”

Want to see how CEB can help your legal department work smarter?

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