

2019 POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

R.I.G.L. § 42-140.1-5 requires that the EERMC “Submit to the joint committee on energy an annual report... regarding the activities of the Council, its assessment of energy issues, the status of system reliability, energy efficiency and conservation procurement, and its recommendations regarding any improvements which might be necessary or desirable.” The EERMC submits the following recommendations that will support Rhode Island’s position as a national leader in energy efficiency and resource conservation.

As in previous years, we present both *Policy Recommendations* for 2019 and a *Progress Report* on previous recommendations.

2019 Policy Recommendations

1. The EERMC strongly recommends that the executive branch and legislature continue to support Rhode Island’s Least Cost Procurement law (§ 39-1-27.7) for both electric and gas service by passing legislation that facilitates and enhances its implementation.

As written, Rhode Island’s Least Cost Procurement law guarantees that energy efficiency is only procured when the benefits are greater than the costs. Therefore, the law actively supports Rhode Island’s economic and environmental health and should be actively protected and perpetuated.

2. In 2019, it is of particular importance that any barriers currently preventing Rhode Island schools from leveraging all available building financing programs be removed. Program combinations such as low-cost financing through the RI Infrastructure Bank’s Efficient Buildings Fund (EBF) and project reimbursement dollars through the RI Department of Education’s Housing Aid program should be supported by legislation and streamlined where possible.
3. Current efforts supported by the RI Department of Labor & Training as well as the Governor’s Workforce Board to grow the energy efficiency and renewable energy workforce in Rhode Island should be expanded and coordinated with existing energy programs wherever possible. As the energy market continues to grow and transform within the state, training for the future and current workforce is essential.
4. Aggregated or asset-based building energy information should be shared with prospective buyers/renters when a building is put up for sale or lease. This would allow greater transparency in Rhode Island building transactions, would spur the market for more energy efficient homes, and would provide a level of customer protection not currently available to home buyers and renters.
5. Rhode Island should adopt comprehensive appliance efficiency standards that also backstop existing federal appliance standards that may languish. Such action would achieve large energy and cost savings for Rhode Islanders.

6. Rhode Island energy efficiency programs should constantly work to ensure that all customers and segments of the market have access to the benefits of energy efficiency savings. There should be a concerted effort to reach those who are economically vulnerable, and those who are currently above poverty guidelines, but need significant assistance to make efficiency investments. Coordination among all utility, state and federal income-eligible offerings/programs should be optimized to enhance the customer experience, increase program efficiency, and to strive for widespread program participation.
7. A concerted effort should be made to coordinate energy efficiency programs with renewable energy deployment, state health initiatives, resiliency efforts, and any other relevant state and federal programs that promote well-being and energy security and affordability for all Rhode Islanders.

Progress Report: Previous Policy Recommendations

Strong progress has been made on the following, previous EERMC policy recommendations:

1. Expanding access to well-designed financing options that supplement and tie-in to successful rebate and incentive programs to allow more energy efficiency to be captured. The establishment of the Rhode Island Infrastructure Bank through the leadership of the Office of the Governor and the Office of the General Treasurer as well as the General Assembly's passage of supporting legislation successfully delivers an effective means to this end to benefit all Rhode Islanders. Financing options such as the Efficient Buildings Fund and Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy (C-PACE) are now available for many Rhode Island municipal and commercial facilities.
2. Supporting the continuation of Rhode Island's landmark Comprehensive Energy Conservation, Efficiency, and Affordability Act of 2006 that established Least Cost Procurement as the state's overarching resource acquisition strategy for electricity and natural gas. This act was set to expire in 2018, but due to commendable action taken by the General Assembly, Least Cost Procurement has been extended through 2024. This ensures that all Rhode Islanders can continue benefitting from investments in all cost-effective energy efficiency. It is important that this law continue to be protected and perpetuated for the benefit of all Rhode Islanders.
3. Supporting the use of energy efficiency funds collected from electricity sales for both electric and delivered fuels – such as oil and propane – efficiency improvements. By encouraging energy efficiency programs to equally support the reduction of natural gas and delivered fuels use, the State has allowed the energy efficiency programs to better support Rhode Island's greenhouse gas emission reduction goals. Moreover, these programs are helping homes and businesses that rely on oil and propane to save money.