

**Rhode Island Energy Efficiency Equity Working Group (RI EWG) – Year 4 Kickoff Meeting**  
**January 30<sup>th</sup>, 2024, 10:30 AM – 12:00 PM**

**Agenda**

1. Welcome Back & Introductions
2. Level Setting: Role of the RI EWG & Process
3. Prioritization of 2023 Strategies: Status & Member Feedback
  - Overview of Recommendations & Progress to Date
4. Partner & Member Updates:
  - GHHI:
    - We're Hiring
    - RFP/NOFO Opportunities
  - Rhode Island Energy:
  - Member Updates
5. Next Steps

**Meeting Attendees:**

- Bryan Evans, GHHI RI
- Bert Cooper, GHHI RI
- Brendan Dagher, RIE
- Angela Li, RIE
- Brett Feldman, RIE
- Spencer Lawrence, RIE
- Mark Siegal, RIE
- Carinel LeGrand, RIE
- Owen
- Greg Ohadoma, RI OER
- Karen Bradbury, RI OER
- Steve Chybowski, RI OER
- Brian Kearney, RISE
- Rachel Calabro, RI DEM
- Brenda Clement, HousingWorks RI
- Craig Johnson, Optimal Energy
- Priscilla Da La Cruz, City of Providence
- Emily Koo, Acadia Center
- Joe Garlick, NeighborWorks
- Karen Verrengia, CLEAResult
- Margarita Robledo, RIBA
- Margie Lynch, EERMC C-Team
- Rele Abiade, Consultant to Compete RI
- Eloi Rodas, ONE Neighborhood Builders

**Meeting Notes:**

- Level Setting: Role of the RI EWG & Process
  - Purpose of RI EWG: To give impacted communities and the organizations who serve them an ongoing, structured opportunity to collaborate and provide input and feedback for Rhode Island Energy's energy efficiency program portfolio. At the end of the process. The RI EWG will have developed an updated set of recommendations, strategies, and metrics for inclusion in the 2025 Annual Energy Efficiency Plan.
  - 2024 Timeline: To effectively host meetings and develop a report of recommendations in a timely manner, GHHI RI and Rhode Island Energy have committed to 11 meetings over the next 15 months (Jan 2024-March 2025). In prior years, the RI EWG typically ran through the Spring/Summer months, resulting in a tighter deadline for recommendations to get included in the Annual Energy Efficiency Plan. In addition, it allows for more effective planning and transition into the following year's group activities.
    - Member Feedback & Comments: Emily K: Feels as if the various iterations of the RI EWG have done a lot of continued work on the strategies and barriers to address in the last three annual plans and suggested moving ahead and diving deeper into the metrics and reporting.

Month	Activities
January	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>GHHI conducts additional recruitment for 2024 (Year 4) Equity Working Group</li> <li><b>Year 4 Meeting #1</b> – EWG strategies / metrics</li> </ul>
February	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Year 4 Meeting #2</b> – EWG strategies / metrics</li> </ul>
March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Year 4 Meeting #3</b> – EWG strategies / metrics</li> </ul>
May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Year 4 Meeting #4</b> – Discuss progress and challenges with implementing equity recommendations/workshop ideas and solicit feedback; intake new ideas and recommendations; feature guest presenters</li> </ul>
July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Year 4 Meeting #5</b> – Discuss progress and challenges with implementing equity recommendations/workshop ideas and solicit feedback; intake new ideas and recommendations; feature guest presenters</li> </ul>
August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Year 4 Meeting #6</b> – Review the first 2024 equity metrics report; review and compile EWG refreshed recommendations for 2025</li> <li>First draft of Year 4 EWG Report issued</li> </ul>
September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Final draft of Year 4 EWG Report issued in early September</li> <li>RIE decides which equity strategies and metrics to adopt in 2025 plan</li> </ul>
Nov. & Dec.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The RI EWG will convene twice between October and December to hear from RIE on relevant progress to date and prepare to develop plans for 2025</li> </ul>
Jan, Feb, Mar 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>During the first quarter of 2025, GHHI RI will convene the RI EWG monthly between Jan-Mar to begin work to inform Rhode Island Energy's 2026 Annual EE Plan</li> </ul>

- **Recruitment Strategies:** GHHI RI and RI Energy continue to aim to grow the RI EWG to have more unique voices and perspectives on the meetings. Resident members that represent underserved and underrepresented communities (e.g. low income renter or advocates) can bring in a fresh lens to the group and offer innovative strategies and recommendations. Feel free to share any potential contacts with Bryan Evans ([bevans@ghhi.org](mailto:bevans@ghhi.org)) – resident members who are not affiliated with an organization are eligible for stipends
  - Avenues to Recruit: Health Equity Zones (HEZ) Meetings, RIE Customer Expos, RIE Consumer Advocates, [RI Hispanic Chamber of Commerce](#), other focus groups, etc.
  - Member Feedback & Comments: Emily K: Would love to see the Consumer Advocates take on more of a leadership role in contributions to the RI EWG meetings and helping loop in residents for increased participation. Angela from RIE did respond that the Consumer Advocates are typically in the community during meeting hours but can look to invite them to future meetings.
- **Prioritization of 2023 Recommendations: Status & Member Feedback:** Please refer to the slide deck or the 2023 RI EWG Final Report for the 2023 Recommendations. Below is any feedback, questions, and concerns that members brought up throughout this portion of the meeting and their appropriate responses or next steps.

**RI EWG Member Feedback, Comments, & Questions**

<b>Equity Issue &amp; Challenge</b>	<b>Working Group Member Comment/Questions</b>	<b>Rhode Island Energy/RI EWG Response</b>
<p>1) Participation Barriers</p>	<p>Margie L.: As a refresher, how much does RIE budget for community outreach, developing, and supporting community partners? As discussed in Year 3, the budget didn't seem to be sufficient.</p> <p>Karen V: What are the five equity communities?</p> <p>Karen V: For the assessment being planned with a non-profit, is that non-profit already selected?</p>	<p>Brendan D: The RIE Equity Outreach Assessment has a \$ 40,000 budget to fund non-profit organizations in Central Falls to provide direct energy efficiency outreach to landlords and renters. However, this does not account for the full budget for community outreach and engagement.</p> <p>Bryan E: Pawtucket, Central Falls, Providence, Woonsocket, and East Providence</p> <p>Carinel L: We have a preference but have not begun discussions yet.</p> <p>Angela L: We are planning to meet with the Central Falls Mayor and her team and flesh out ideas and get her feedback and recommendations.</p>
<p>2) Multifamily Barriers</p>	<p>None</p>	<p>None</p>
<p>3) Pre-Weatherization Barriers</p>	<p>Brett F: There may be potential funding for the pre-weatherization barriers at RI OER.</p> <p>Rachel C: RI DEM is preparing for a large grant to the EPA as part of their Climate Pollution Reduction Program and has been discussing putting pre-weatherization barriers into our climate plan and potentially into our implementation grant. 2 strategies are being worked through: 1) Clean Heat RI – incentive heat pumps with additional pre-weatherization funding for low-income families); 2) Rhode Island Energy</p> <p>In addition, another application might be going in with multiple states. The State of Delaware has offered to write a large grant part of the Climate Pollution Reduction grants and RI DEM is looking to potentially join that.</p>	<p>Bert C: GHHI is considering putting together an application for the Community Change Grant from the EPA in Rhode Island and potentially collaborating with the Health Equity Zones to do whole-home type interventions to address pre-weatherization barriers. GHHI is doing similar work in other states. Applications are due in November and are another resource for this type of work to pursue.</p> <p>Bert also suggested checking out the <a href="#">NJ RGGI Funding Plan</a>. They have made electrification/electrification readiness a key part of its 3-Year RGGI Funding Plan.</p>
<p>4) Workforce Development &amp; Training</p>	<p>Margarita R: Commerce has provided some grant money to different organizations to support minority business owners to become certified MWBEs. She will share the contact information with Bryan E to connect.</p>	

5) Microbusinesses & Small Businesses	Margie L: Great set of recommendations. Suggesting a fourth recommendation. Translated materials are a great start, but to support these businesses, language support will need to be end-to-end.	
6) Metrics Tracking & Reporting	None	None

- Overview of Recommendations & Progress to Date: Brendan Dagher from Rhode Island Energy walked through each of the recommendations and strategies, providing updates to date and any progress Rhode Island Energy has made. The table below highlights the updates and progress to date from Rhode Island Energy. Brendan highlighted that they have been reviewing the number of metrics tied to each of the recommendations and strategies. Future meetings will focus on metrics, however, for this meeting, they want to focus on the recommendations.

Rhode Island Energy Updates + Progress to Date & Member Feedback		
Equity Issue & Challenge	Rhode Island Energy Updates & Progress on Recommendations + Supporting Strategies	Working Group Member Comment/Questions
1) Participation Barriers	<p>1. To define the 5 equity communities they want to track, they will need to establish baseline data to base performance. A lot of this information is done manually, but if there is a strong opinion to track this data, RIE can look to focus on investing in automated data collection efforts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To focus on outreach, RIE is hiring another EE Consumer Advocate. In addition, RIE would be open to hearing any suggestions for community-based organizations to partner with.</li> </ul> <p>2. With offering HEAs in at least 4 languages with resulting reports being translated into the household's primary spoken language, RIE currently has a Spanish assessment and uses a translator service for non-English/Spanish assessments. They currently do not track how often these services are used but can look to potentially track in 2024 to determine the cost vs. benefit of adding an additional HEA language vs. translator service</p>	<p>Emily K: Requested to hear more on Rhode Island Energy's intentions for geographic delineation and demographic data collection.</p> <p>Emily K: Less concerned about inputs (marketing, \$), and more concerned about outputs (HEAs, Weatherization)</p> <p>Various ways to track: first time participation, overall # of activities, year-over-year spending</p>
2) Multifamily Barriers	<p>1. RIE will be taking the learnings from the Central Falls MF Equity Outreach Assessment to improve outreach and education to better impact MF properties. RIE is also looking to scale the assessment and leverage outside funding to do more and expand.</p> <p>2. With increasing renter-specific resources, RIE wants to better understand the cost-benefit of doing this. The measures list that renters can access without landlord involvement is not extensive and will need to consider if it makes sense or update the website with more information. Again, utilizing strategies and best practices learned from the MF</p>	<p>Bert C: The rental registry will be housed at RIDOH. This could be another tie to the HEZ.</p> <p>With the Central Falls MF Equity Outreach Assessment, RIE aims to partner with non-profit organizations in Central Falls to conduct outreach to MF landlords to better engage renters and landlords. With Central Falls already interested in advancing healthy housing throughout their</p>

	<p>Equity Assessment to better engage landlords might be a better path.</p> <p>In addition, RIE is looking to potentially partner with a Health Equity Zone rather than tenant-rights organizations.</p>	<p>city (e.g., lead), RIE wanted to complement that effort with energy efficiency. The goal is to provide a \$40,000 grant to non-profit organizations to provide direct energy efficiency education and outreach to landlords and renters, highlighting strengths and barriers for both groups for lessons learned.</p> <p>- Carinel Legrand from RIE will be leading this initiative.</p>
<p>3) Pre-Weatherization Barriers</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. RIE needs to collect more research on ways to address pre-weatherization barriers (for example – very costly to address as related to IES) and looking at bringing in outside partners to help support that work (e.g. leveraging additional programs to address housing conditions). Data collection will be key, whether it is tracking types of barriers, frequency, locations, remediation \$ spent, etc.</li> <li>2. RIE continues to work with RI OER to leverage and provide additional funding for pre-weatherization barrier remediation – including from the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA)</li> <li>3. RIE can plan to engage with the new State Department of Housing to better coordinate between agencies that can potentially address the pre-weatherization issue.</li> </ol>	<p>Emily K: Interested in knowing the baseline data (e.g. % of customers based on income level and geography that are not getting weatherization because of barriers). This can help target funding for those areas. Also understanding the average costs and type of pre-weatherization barriers will be helpful when going after funding to address those barriers.</p>
<p>4) Workforce Development</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. RIE needs to establish a baseline to determine the % of BIPOC workforce training participants. RIE is working with RISE on new hiring initiatives as well.</li> <li>2. Like the above, RIE needs to establish a baseline for minority contractors and can work with RISE.</li> <li>3. RIE is looking into the feasibility of how PPL awards contracts and ways to market opportunities to MWBEs. More to come as those discussions evolve.</li> </ol> <p>In addition, RIE is committed to continuing to fund the Residential Construction Workforce Partnership and take best practices and lessons learned with vendors to ensure program effectiveness and address any barriers</p>	<p>Brian K: RISE has 3 Spanish-speaking Energy Specialists in the field. They currently have 23 staff, with two other bilingual Spanish speakers in training.</p> <p>Angela L: 20% of subcontractors in EnergyWise are WMBEs, accounting for 30% of the funding.</p> <p>Margarita R: Requested to see a list of the vendors, including contractors, working with RIE</p> <p>Angela L: RIE has gone through the self-attestation with its contractors on the Market Rate Program. Over 20% are minority- or women-owned.</p> <p>Margarita R: Commerce RI is also working on supporting MWBE</p>

		efforts and should connect with them.
5) Microbusiness & Small Businesses	<p>RIE has implemented all of the recommendations not its 2024 Plan, including:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Leveraging fundings from the 2023 Small Business Program Process Evaluation to improve program strategy</li> <li>2. Conducting Main Street outreach efforts in all 5 equity communities. RIE currently has 10 CBOs connected to the 5 equity communities and planned outreach in the Spring and Fall to reach small and microbusinesses.</li> <li>3. Developing translated program materials and seeking multilingual staff. RIE also updated its website to include up-to-date information.</li> </ol>	
6) Metrics Tracking & Reporting	This is currently being worked on. Last year, RIE conducted a feasibility assessment to see which metrics they can track, cannot track, or need to be worked through. By Q2 2024, RIE is committed to having a handful of adopted metrics that RIE can begin to track - based on member feedback and priorities.	
Other Final Comments & Feedback		Emily K: Encourages work between meetings to have RI EWG members provide more insightful feedback and priorities on their end, and then have the back-and-forth discussion on these future meetings.

- Partner & Member Updates
  - GHHI: We're Hiring!
    - We are still looking for an [Environmental Assessor](#). In this role, the Environmental Assessor will be working out of our Providence office to perform housing assessments and interventions in the homes of asthmatic children, as part of our Healthy Providence Healthy Homes Program. The Assessor will go out to each property to assess and develop Scopes of Work for each participating household; as well as provide contractor oversight and quality control inspections for each unit completed. If you know of anyone who would be a great fit for this role - please send them our way.
  - Rhode Island Energy: RIE would love to hear member feedback and comments on what was presented today and will look to focus a portion of the next meeting on hearing member feedback to have a meaningful discussion.