

SCOPE OF WORK

Task 1: Curate the 2025 Plugged into Energy Research (PIER) lecture series

Timeframe: Q3

Amount Requested: \$21,000.00

Since 2015, the University of Rhode Island Cooperative Extension has curated the *Plugged Into Energy Research (PIER) lecture series* as an educational tool for increasing literacy around timely, relevant clean energy-related topics in Rhode Island. The series provides a venue for information sharing on the part of the academic community, industry professionals, consumers and the general public to learn about and discuss the implications of the topics covered on consumers. In 2025, URI proposes to host a series of **three** lectures, which will focus on a theme relevant to the work described herein and consisting of a keynote speaker from the public policy, academic research or business community, and another speaker representing community members and/or the advocacy community.

To determine the primary objectives for each lecture, URI will consider the information gathered through the work described in Tasks 2-4 as it relates to energy efficiency promotion in Rhode Island, vis a vis review recent publications of the American Council for an Energy Efficient Economy (ACEEE), US Department of Energy, the Buildings Performance Institute and Northeast Energy Efficiency Partnerships (NEEP). The team will work through these organizational networks and others at the regional and local level to identify a shortlist of topic experts and community leaders to interview for context and/or as participants for speaking programs. Regional and local networks will be accessed through New England Women in Energy and Environment, LinkedIn, New England state energy offices, academic institutions, and local energy organizations. Throughout the process, we will solicit guidance from the EEC Education Team, as appropriate, and provide regular monthly and milestone updates.

In an effort to track and measure the effectiveness of our goal to empower individuals with juried, science-based information to help them make more informed decisions, URI will tally program engagement by recording the number of live attendees and YouTube views. URI will also design and administer pre- and post-tests to program attendees to determine their levels of awareness and knowledge around the topics discussed, their willingness to change their behavior related to the topics discussed, and calls to action we propose. Additionally, URI will collect demographic data at the time of registration from program participants. All the above mentioned information will be compiled into a report for the EEC prior to the end of project period.

Task 2: Develop an Energy Efficiency for All Roadmap Tool and Establish, Facilitate and Evaluate an *Efficient Housing for All* Community of Practice

Timeframe: Q1, Q2

Amount Requested: \$30,000.00

Experts at the intersection of public health, community engagement and energy efficiency are called to address opportunities to increase participation in income eligible home energy efficiency programs in Rhode Island. In 2022, funding from the U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) and Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), and some funding from RI Energy was braided to fund the weatherization of 1,269 homes in RI¹. In 2023, 1,298 homes were weatherized with the same funding sources.² An increase in savings on heating and cooling costs through the completion of weatherization projects leads to lower energy burdens and healthier indoor air quality for families. In under-resourced communities, this effort also leads to a more equitable distribution of resources to ratepayers.

Despite the marginal increase in completed weatherization projects from 2022 to 2023 in RI, income eligible energy efficiency programs continue to suffer from nonparticipation and pre-weatherization deferral issues. These are complex problems that are well defined through nonparticipant studies

¹ Rhode Island Department of Human Services (RI DHS). *2022 Job List Report*, last accessed June 24, 2024 (unpublished)

² RI DHS. *2023 Job List Report*, last accessed June 24, 2024 (unpublished)

conducted by consulting firms in RI and other states, but the needle hasn't moved despite the work that has been done thus far to raise awareness around barriers to participation.³

There are scores of organizations working to improve quality of life for Rhode Island residents through education and engagement around public and environmental health. The University of Rhode Island Cooperative Extension Energy Literacy Initiative (URI) works with strategic partners to improve access to information for consumers, professionals and policymakers, most recently around energy efficiency for the home, for all. A recent focus of this work has been to strengthen the relationship between the University and organizations working with communities to improve quality of life; this effort has led to collaboration with the RI Association of Community Action Agencies (CAA) and the RI Health Equity Zone Initiative (HEZ). In a short period of time, with support from HEZ leadership, URI has built relationships a new community of partners, including public health experts, community-based CAA and HEZ workers who interact directly with our most vulnerable Rhode Islanders regularly, and most importantly, with those who live in the communities that are traditionally underserved. Through this ongoing funded partnership with the RI Energy Efficiency Council (EEC), awareness of the inextricable links between public health and home energy efficiency are increasing.

To build on this momentum, URI proposes to establish an "*Efficient Housing for All*" *Community of Practice (EHACoP)* to function as a venue for issue identification and analysis, idea exchange, and solutions related to nonparticipation in income eligible services offered through the federal and state government, and the utility. Communities of practice equip passionate individuals with collective goals in order to effectively bring changes and solutions to common and/or intersecting issues. Through a supportive network, communities of practice enable groups of people to adapt, utilize relationships, and expand their fields of knowledge on related issues. Tools and shared information generated through communities of practice can provide members with the essential elements they need for collective growth and problem solving.⁴ A community of practice focused on residential energy efficiency and validated by multiple governmental organizations will elevate solutions to prevalent energy equity-related issues in RI.

The EHACoP would engage those with expertise in energy efficiency policy and planning and public health, income eligible ratepayers, community-based health workers, students and advocates as members. Critical to the success of the EHACoP is participation from those with lived experience, who URI will identify with support from CCAP, who has administered a successful weatherization program for many years. A number of individuals working in professional capacities for ClearResult, the RI Department of Human Services, The Acadia Center and RI Energy have already indicated an interest in participating as EHACoP members. The italicized text below is a draft "advertisement" that URI will utilize during an upcoming RI Health Equity Zone Learning Community Event to solicit EHACoP members from the 200+ attendees expected.

Title: *Efficient Housing for All - A Shiny, New Community of Practice "Advertisement"*

Description: *Did you know that we all pay an energy efficiency surcharge on our energy bills every month? And did you know that money is used to subsidize the cost of energy efficiency in homes and businesses to conserve energy, which costs less for the user? There are always new things to learn, and ways to bring that learning to have a positive impact. When people with different lived experiences, diverse perspectives, and expertise come together to establish goals and a path to achieving them, everyone benefits. An **Efficient Housing for All Community of Practice** is forming to ensure that all Rhode Island residents are able to take advantage of programs and incentives that improve home air quality, consume less energy for heating and cooling and reduce utility bills, whether they own their home or not. If you pay utility bills, use energy in your daily life at home, have experienced financial hardship or have an interest or knowledge of energy efficiency, we need you! Through collective engagement, the EHACoP will create a roadmap to equitable energy efficiency for those who seek to join the energy conservation movement and move the needle toward efficient housing for all. Interested in*

³ Nonparticipant Market Barriers Study (RI-21-RXNPStudy), Illume Advising, 2022.

https://rieermc.ri.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/ng-ri-nonparticipation-study-report_final_16june2022.pdf, last accessed June 25, 2024.

⁴ Lupton, Webne, and Hunt, n.d. Community of Practice Guide

learning more, or better yet, participating? Stipends are available for community-based workers and community members. Please contact Kate Hardesty at kate@uri.edu for more information!

URI will provide management and facilitation services for the EHACoP, with support and guidance from the RI Energy Efficiency Council (RIEEC) Education Team. URI proposes to utilize the SOAR (Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, Results) framework to identify actionable goals and a timeline for achieving them. This exercise will inform not only short-term goals, but also a longer term strategy for increasing income eligible participation in energy efficiency programs in the communities served by the CAA and HEZ.

Based on information gathered through literature review and key informant interviews, URI proposes to utilize the EHACoP to develop and deploy a web-based, interactive *Energy Efficiency Program (EEP) Roadmap* for any ratepayer in RI, in the format of a story map. The EEP Roadmap will clarify, pinpoint, and guide ratepayers through the different energy efficiency programs available to them, either on their own or with the assistance of a community-based CAA or HEZ worker they are already interacting with, or with a RI Energy Customer Advocate. A core function of the EHACoP will be to verify the contents and flow of the Road Map prior to publishing, which would be slated for Summer 2025.

Task 3: Conceptualize and Design an Efficiency for All Energy Coaching Program in Partnership with Community-Based Organizations

Timeframe: Q3, Q4

Amount Requested: \$20,000.00

URI will hire a graduate (Masters or PhD) Energy Literacy Fellow to conceptualize and design an *Efficiency for All Energy Coaching Program* framework to serve as technical support service for ratepayers in Rhode Island. The program will utilize the EEC's Energy Efficiency Roadmap developed in Task 2 as a training tool and resource; we envision that the technical support concept will be modeled after Vermont's Energy Coach Program and other to-be-discovered relevant programs, and complement and enhance RI Energy's existing Customer Advocate Support structure.

The program will be piloted at one RI Comprehensive Action Program (CAP) agency currently promoting RI's Weatherization Assistance Program (or other community-based, community-serving organization identified during the project period). This service would seek to provide assistance from CAP agency (or other organization) staff with energy efficiency-related income eligible service applications, and would be designed to scale up so that each of the six CAP agencies (or other to be identified community-based organizations) have the ability to implement the service in a way that is appropriate for their structure.

Task 4: Strengthen Synergistic Relationships and Build a Statewide Energy Efficiency for All Network

Timeframe: Q1-4

Amount Requested: \$9,000.00

The URI Energy Literacy Team will coordinate with the RIEEC Education Committee and the EEC's public awareness campaign firm to develop an action plan to guide how URI's education and engagement work should utilize the tools developed through the 2024 public awareness campaign, and vice versa.

The ELI team will also serve as liaison to the Equity Working Group to ensure that the goals of the EEC are in line and coordinated to amplify impacts on underserved communities.

Through this work, URI Cooperative Extension will continue to build its energy-related partnerships by identifying and engaging synergistic organizations working in or interested in supporting energy efficiency for all. This will be accomplished through the development and delivery of an educational workshop for (but not limited to) members of the Community Health Worker Association, RI Association of Comprehensive Community Action Agencies and RI League of Cities and Towns.

BUDGET JUSTIFICATION

Personnel (Salary and Fringe)

Principal Investigator (Kate Hardesty), Research Associate III, 35 hours/wk **\$7,500.00**
Kate will devote 0.5 calendar months to the project, providing strategic guidance and project management support to all personnel (Tasks 1-4).

Project Manager (TBD), Research Associate II, 21 hours/wk **\$30,000.00**
TBD will devote 4.5 calendar months to the planning of the Plugged into Energy Research lecture series (Task 1), planning for and facilitation of the Community of Practice (Task 2), and oversight of a graduate Energy Literacy Fellow (Tasks 3-4).

URI's fringe benefits are calculated according to standard benefit rates. URI estimates fringe benefits based on projected actual rates and, for budgeting purposes, uses a 4% inflation rate annually to account for increase in health benefits. URI charges fringe benefits based on actual cost. URI's negotiated facilities and administrative agreement addresses charging fringe benefits in Section II, Special Remarks. The link to URI benefits can be found [here](#).

URI Energy Literacy Fellow (TBD), Hourly graduate student **\$24,750.00**
The fellow will devote 680 hours to planning and executing Tasks 3 and 4, and oversight of an undergraduate Energy Literacy Fellow (self-funded), at a rate of \$33.75/hour (plus summer FICA calculated at 0.765% of summer wages).

TOTAL PERSONNEL: \$62,250.00

Services and Supplies

Programming Consultant **\$6,000.00**

- \$75.00/hour for 80 hours of work to develop a digital *RI Efficient Housing for All* road map tool and resource clearinghouse. (Task 2)

Translation Services **\$4,000.00**

- \$50.00/hour for 40 hours of translation work to ensure usability of tools developed through this project by non-English speakers. (Task 2)

Catering **\$2,750.00**

- Three working dinner sessions for 10-15 CoP members at ~\$31.33/person (Task 2; \$1,400.00).
- Refreshments for three Plugged into Energy Research lectures at \$6.00/person for 75 attendees/event (Task 1; \$1,350.00).

Participant Stipends and Honorariums **\$2,500.00**

- \$100/person stipend for each of up to five CoP members not participating in their capacity as an energy professional to attend six working sessions. (Task 2)
- \$500 honorarium/speaker or organization in exchange for three keynote lectures. (Task 1)

Printed Materials **\$2,500.00**

- Printed collateral (e.g. posters for CAP agencies, handouts) for use in promoting all events.

TOTAL SERVICES & SUPPLIES: \$17,750.00

TOTAL DIRECT COSTS: \$80,000.00

Indirect Costs

F&A (State agency rate of 25% of direct costs) **\$20,000.00**

TOTAL INDIRECT COSTS: \$20,000.00

TOTAL BUDGET: \$100,000.00

Situation

Inputs

Activities

Outputs

Short-term Outcomes

Now | Raise awareness and increase understanding

Lower income ratepayers eligible for lower- to no-cost income eligible services have the highest energy burden and the unhealthiest homes

URI Cooperative Extension Energy Literacy team

RI Energy Efficiency Council (RI EEC) Education team

Lack of awareness of energy efficiency programs by income eligible ratepayers

RI Department of Health Health Equity Zone Initiative Learning Community

Lack of trust amongst community members concerning utility services

RI Energy Equity Working Group (EWG)

Applications, timelines and stigmatizing language limit ratepayer participation in energy efficiency programs

Interview with key interviews working in energy efficiency and public health

Renters and landlords aren't incentivized to participate in energy efficiency programs in the same way.

GIS, web and virtual meeting technology

Audience

Pre-weatherization barriers and deferrals are common with housing stock occupied by ratepayers who qualify for income eligible services.

Primary:
Community-based public health workers, energy efficiency policymakers, income eligible ratepayers

Secondary:
RI EEC, RI Energy EWG

Conduct research on energy efficiency and weatherization programs in Rhode Island.

Conduct key informant interviews in the EE community with interest in equity, housing, social determinants of health, and how they all relate.

Attend community-based events to share information, network with community-based workers and identify synergistic organizations.

Collect and package income eligible services and market rate program information for ratepayers living in rental property, multifamily and single family units.

Identify and empower community members to share experiences with weatherization services, deferrals remediation.

Build an interactive website to serve as an information clearinghouse and program navigation tool for weatherization and energy efficiency programs in Rhode Island.

Form a Community of Practice composed of those with professional and lived experience to a) survey; b) create tools; and c) measure effectiveness of outputs on outcomes herein.

Create a digital decision tree (EE Roadmap) to guide ratepayers and community-based workers through the weatherization application process

Empower community-based workers to assist ratepayers with weatherization programs using the EE Roadmap through a Energy Coach pilot program.

Curate the Plugged into Energy Research lecture series to build awareness among general public and professional community of the Community of Practice plan, outputs and outcomes.

Evaluate the effectiveness of the above on completion of projects addressing pre-weatherization barriers and home energy efficiency during the project period.

Primary audience will understand:

1. Why energy efficiency is important vis a vis reducing energy burden, home air quality and how both relate to social determinants of health;
2. The difference between market rate and income eligible EE services, the commonly used terminology for each, and the most common weatherization deferrals in RI; and
3. The Weatherization Assistance Program application process and income-eligible programs and funding to address weatherization deferrals.

Secondary audience will understand:

1. The importance of working with community-based organizations (CAP agencies, HEZ) in under resourced communities to effect nonparticipation in energy efficiency programs.

Mid-term Outcomes

1-2 years | Change behavior

Primary audience will:

1. Direct and guide clients to/through appropriate EE program applications;
2. Share EE program information with landlords to increase participation; and
3. Increases number of participants applying for IES (e.g. LIHEAP > WAP).

Secondary audience will:

1. Continue to invest in community-level efforts to educate and empower ratepayers in under resourced communities and community-based workers that serve them
2. Continue to invest in systems-level coordination amongst existing equity in energy efficiency efforts and intersecting public health initiatives.

Long-term Outcomes

3-5 years | Change in condition

1. Increase in completed weatherization deferral projects for ratepayers with high energy burdens in under resourced communities
2. Increase in completed weatherization projects for ratepayers with high energy burdens in under resourced communities
3. Community-based public health workers adopt an energy efficiency coach role through their regular outreach and engagement practice.