

SCOPE OF WORK

Task 1: Form, Facilitate and Evaluate an
“Efficient Housing for All” Community of Practice

Timeframe: Q1-4

Amount Requested: \$70,250.00

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 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

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)

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.

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. A number of individuals working in professional capacities for ClearResult, the RI Department of Human Services, The Acadia Center, RI Energy and the Green and Healthy Homes Initiative have indicated interest in participating as EHACoP 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. The italicized text below is a draft “advertisement” that URI utilized during the RI Health Equity Zone Learning Community event in July 2024 to solicit EHACoP members from the 200+ people in attendance. To date, 25 people have indicated interest in participating in the EHACoP via an online form, direct emails to the project team and completion of a paper survey during the event described above.

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 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, and will create marketing materials to recruit participants from the network described below (see Appendix A for examples), 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 a literature review, key informant interviews and conversations amongst Community of Practice participants, URI proposes to utilize the EHACoP for the development, deployment and evaluation of an educational training tool to support community-based workers’ efforts to connect income-eligible services to those qualified for them. The tool could take the form of an interactive, digital *Energy Efficiency Program (EEP) Roadmap* that guides the user to the appropriate energy efficiency program or service based on income level, housing type and location; or a training module or resource guide. A core function of the EHACoP will be to verify the contents and flow of the tool prior to implementation.

Once a tool like those outlined above is developed, in cooperation with the EHACoP participants, URI will utilize it to support the development of a pilot *Energy Coach Program* at a select community-based organization with strong existing capacity for LIHEAP and weatherization program assistance. The program will serve as a technical support service for ratepayers in Rhode Island, modeled after Vermont’s Energy Coach Program and other to-be-discovered relevant programs, and complement and

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

enhance RI Energy's existing Customer Advocate Support structure. The 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.

Throughout the duration of the project period, the project team will coordinate with the RI Energy Efficiency Council's Education Committee and PivotPath, the EEC's public awareness campaign vendor to develop an action plan to guide how URI's education and engagement work will utilize the tools developed by PivotPath, and vice versa. The project team will also serve as liaison to RI Energy's Equity Working Group to ensure that the goals of the EEC are in line and coordinated to amplify impacts on underserved communities. 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. Strengthening these synergistic relationships and building a statewide network are crucial to the long term success of this work.

Task 2: Curate the 2025 Plugged into Energy Research (PIER) Lecture Series

Timeframe: Q3, Q4

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 Task 1 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.

BUDGET JUSTIFICATION

Personnel (Salary and Fringe)

Principal Investigator (Kate Hardesty), Research Associate III, 35 hrs/wk **\$10,000.00**
Kate will devote 0.5 calendar months to the project to provide strategic oversight for the proposed work (Tasks 1 and 2), and serve as facilitator of the Community of Practice (Task 1).

Project Manager (Dr. Jesse Duroha), Research Associate II, 21 hrs/wk **\$43,000.00**
Jesse will devote 5 calendar months to the formation, facilitation and evaluation of the Community of Practice (Task 1); and planning and implementation of the Plugged into Energy Research lecture series (Task 2).

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](#).

TOTAL PERSONNEL: \$53,000.00

Services and Supplies

Participant Stipends and Honorariums **\$7,500.00**

- \$100/person stipend for each of up to five CoP members not participating in their capacity as an energy professional to attend twelve working sessions. (Task 1; \$6,000.00)
- \$500 honorarium/speaker or organization in exchange for three keynote lectures. (Task 2; \$1,500.00)

Translation Services **\$5,050.00**

- \$50.00/hour for 101 hours of translation work to ensure usability of tools developed through this project by non-English speakers. (Task 1)

Catering **\$4,950.00**

- Six working dinner sessions for 15 CoP members at ~\$35.00/person (Task 1; \$3,150.00).
- Refreshments for three Plugged into Energy Research lectures at \$8.00/person for 75 attendees/event (Task 2; \$1,800.00).

Printed Materials **\$2,500.00**

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

TOTAL SERVICES & SUPPLIES: \$20,000.00

TOTAL DIRECT COSTS: \$73,000.00

Indirect Costs

F&A (State agency rate of 25% of direct costs) **\$18,250.00**

TOTAL INDIRECT COSTS: \$18,250.00

TOTAL BUDGET: \$91,250.00

APPENDIX A: Marketing Materials, Event Images

THE UNIVERSITY OF RHODE ISLAND
COLLEGE OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND LIFE SCIENCES
COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

Join the new
**Efficient Housing
for All**
Community of Practice!

Are you concerned about *energy costs* or *climate change*? Are you curious about *energy efficiency and conservation*? Do you want to be part of an effort that helps your neighbors and the environment?



JOIN US!
NO EXPERIENCE
NECESSARY!

**STIPENDS AVAILABLE
FOR PARTICIPANTS!**



Follow the QR Code to sign up for EHACoP updates or to contact us with questions!

Figure 1: Community of Practice Promotional Flyer (English)

THE UNIVERSITY OF RHODE ISLAND
COLLEGE OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND LIFE SCIENCES
COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

Unete a la nueva
**Eficiente de Vivienda
para Todos**
Comunidad de Practica!

¿Te preocupan los costos de energía o el cambio climático? ¿Tienes uriosidad sobre la eficiencia energética y la conservación? ¿Quieres ser parte de un esfuerzo que ayuda a tus vecinos y al medio ambiente?



¡ÚNETE A NOSOTROS!
No se necesita experiencia!

¡STIPENDIOS DISPONIBLES PARA LOS PARTICIPANTES!



¡Sigue el código QR para inscribirte en las actualizaciones o para contactarnos con preguntas!

Figure 2: Community of Practice Promotional Flyer (Español)



Figure 3: RI Department of Health Health Equity Zone Learning Community Event, July 29, 2024