

EQUITY WORKING GROUP

The Energy Efficiency Equity Working Group (EWG) convened on October 16th.
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EC4 UPDATE

The EC4 met on October, and held an EC4 Advisory Board meeting on October 30th.
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URI ENERGY LECTURES

On October 29th the University of Rhode Island began their 2024 Plugged into Energy Research (PIER) Lecture series
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UPCOMING EVENTS

RI Energy Efficiency Equity Working Group - November 25

ACEEE Energy Efficiency Policy Forum - December 3

GECA RI Demand Response Program Webinar - December 13

DEM Climate Justice Hour - December TBD

MEETINGS COVERED

EC4 Full Council - October 7

RI Energy Efficiency Equity Working Group - October 16

EC4 Advisory Board - October 30

ACEEE RECOGNIZES LEADING ENERGY EFFICIENCY PROGRAMS

The American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy (ACEEE) released their fifth Leaders of the Pack awards, recognizing Rhode Island Energy (RIE) for two of their outstanding energy efficiency (EE) programs.

The Leaders of the Pack awards showcase utility-funded EE programs across the nation and highlights their successful design and delivery. ACEEE received nearly 100 program nominations. ACEEE staff assessed programs based on various factors including customer-friendly services, effective program design, cost-effectiveness, ambitious long-term goals, interim metrics to measure progress, effective marketing reaching target audiences, performance evaluation for ensuring effectiveness, and community engagement. Each nominated program was reviewed and scored. A consensus of which few programs to recognize was reached through committee discussion.

RIE received a Leader of the Pack award for their Strategic Energy Management Partnership (SEMP) Initiative in the Large Commercial category. Programs selected in this category are praised for their comprehensive upgrades to various building technologies and systems, including lighting and HVAC, for large commercial customers. The SEMP Initiative started in 2013. In 2023, the Initiative's net annual energy savings were 8,900 MWh; 0.2 million therms and had 12 partners: two public entities, six colleges and universities, an industrial park, a healthcare provider, and two large retail businesses.

The ACEEE highlights the SEMP Initiative for the following accomplishments and program features; The program design provides customers with a framework for ongoing collaboration rather than project-by-project transactions. Participants can receive enhanced incentives for exceeding established annual savings targets. Participants can fund their portion of project costs using RIE's on-bill repayment program. The initiative has a designated program manager who facilitates implementation and tracks progress of goals and delivery of program resources to reduces participants' transaction time. To learn more about the ACEEE's recognition of RIE's SEMP Initiative, [click here](#).

RIE received an Exemplary Program award for their Residential New Construction Program (RNC) in the Zero-Energy-Ready New Construction category. This award honors programs that build new homes to nearly net-zero energy or zero carbon standards, either with onsite energy generation or designed to easily add solar in the future.

The ACEEE commends the RNC Program for the following accomplishments and program features: 121 zero-energy homes were completed between 2021 and 2023 with another 354 underway; The Program has a high penetration rate as they serve roughly 500-650 of the approximately 1,300 new residential unit permits each year in Rhode Island; The Program provides Home Energy Rating System (HERS) training and certification to develop a network of HERS raters to perform diligent quality control of each project; There is an increasing number of homes achieving the Department of Energy's (DOE) Zero Energy Ready Home certification thanks to training, technical support, financial incentives, and partnerships with affordable housing entities. To learn more about the ACEEE's recognition of RIE's RNC Program, [click here](#).

RHODE ISLAND ENERGY EFFICIENCY EQUITY WORKING GROUP

The Energy Efficiency Equity Working Group (EWG) convened on October 16th. Mark Siegal and Leigh Edie provided an update on behalf of Rhode Island Energy (RIE) on Women & Minority Owned Business in RI. Bryan Evans and Anthony Fonseca presented an overview of the Green and Healthy Homes Initiative, they highlighted the Healthy Providence Healthy Homes Program.

RI EWG Final Report overview addressed issues and key themes. Topics mentioned were participation barriers, pre-weatherization barriers, metrics tracking and reporting, workforce and resource development, as well as community engagement and outreach.

The Rhode Island Energy Efficiency Council (EEC) is a group of stakeholders that serves all customers to ensure the utility is investing in the least expensive resource - energy efficiency. Learn more at <https://eec.ri.gov/>

RHODE ISLAND ENERGY: SAVINGS FOR WOMEN & MINORITY OWNED BUSINESSES WEBINAR



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**RHODE
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NOVEMBER 2024

On Tuesday, October 29th Rhode Island Energy (RIE) hosted a webinar alongside RISE Engineering to discuss the topic: Savings for Women & Minority Owned Businesses (W/MBE). The meeting began with the President of RISE Engineering, Vin Graziano, presenting an overview of RIE's Business Energy Efficiency (EE) Program. Vin shared the valuable tools RIE has to provide their customers: on-site, no-cost assessments to identify specific ways each business can save energy and decarbonize, provide the services to implement necessary improvements, and make the process affordable. Vin continued to highlight key details of what RIE has to offer through their EE Business Program: up to 70% of total project costs covered with an additional 15% off if business's share of the cost is paid in lump sum.

The meeting also covered information of what example projects might look like. Tristan Jimerson, Business Development & Opportunity Coordinator for the city of East Providence, RI, shared that there are two resources available for heat pump conversion assistance. The Office of Energy Resources (OER) offers Clean Heat RI, which helps customers switch from delivered fuels to heat pumps. Additionally, RIE has program offerings for existing electric resistance customers.

Keith Stokes, Associate Director at the RI Department of Administration, shared that over the years, his analysis has showed an increasing trend of microenterprises (5 employees or less) and sole proprietors for minority and urban based business in RI, many of which are not working from their homes. It was then explained that individuals in this circumstance would fall into the residential rate category, so the residential programs would be able to provide the most suitable opportunities for them. Graziano encouraged customers to call RISE regardless of what program they think they might qualify for, stating that RISE will help connect all inquiries with the program best suited to their needs.

Tania Quezada, RI Small Business Hub, asked if RISE has translators accessible to respond to emails and answer non-English phone calls. RISE does have a translation service available but is striving to increase translation services. Quezada asked about the on-site assessment accessibility for childcare providers. Due to state regulations, adults without a Bureau of Criminal Identification (BCI) background check are strictly

prohibited from childcare facilities while children are present. Graziano responded that all RISE Engineering employees, subcontractors, and trades people are required to be submitted to a background check, which is cleared by RIE. RISE complies in any instances where a customer requests additional background checks. Quezada asked if on-site assessments are available on weekends or after 6:00 PM. Appointment availability is limited on weekends, but possible, but evening appointments are not offered.

The meeting concluded with a call to action from RIE. Kater Felder encouraged attendees to raise awareness about W/MBE program offerings by emailing their members and consultants, sharing the energy efficiency program brochure, sharing social media posts, and more.

STUDENTS HARNESS POWER OF NEW KESTREL SUPERCOMPUTER FOR CUTTING-EDGE ENERGY RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Kestrel- the U.S. Department of Energy Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy's (EERE's) third-generation supercomputer is being utilized by students across the nation. Hosted by the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL), undergraduate and graduate students pursuing a career in energy research have the unique opportunity to utilize the 44 petaflops of computing power to advance renewable energy and energy efficiency research.

Student's research was diverse; Iowa State University student, Yifan Hu, studied the effects of solar wind and other space weather phenomena on solar energy infrastructure. University of California student, Rajat Goel, utilized Kestrel to simulate uranium and its defects with the goal of preventing future uranium hydride formation to reduce toxicity and flammability.

Kestrel has the capability to address large-scale energy challenges, improve power grid reliability, and contribute to the development of clean energy technologies. Access to Kestrel advances current energy research while providing driven students with the technology and leadership from the User Operations staff in the Computational Science Center at NREL. United States students are eligible to apply for future use of Kestrel until November 30th, 2024.



The Rhode Island Executive Climate Change Coordinating Council (EC4) held a public meeting on October 7th located at the Rhode Island Foundation.

EC4 Chair, Terry Gray, provided updates on grant application statuses. Unfortunately, neither state nor federal applications were accepted, but the foundation of each application will be improved upon in hopes of being selected to receive funding next year. Rhode Island Infrastructure Bank received a large, multibillion dollar coalition grant. The Narragansett Tribe received a tribal grant for over \$6.6 million. Gray made note that the impacts of climate change are not only a concern for southern regions of the United States, but he also identified Rhode Island's Charlestown Breachway, Newport Cliff Walk, and Block Island Bluffs, are at risk of climate change.

Chris Kearns from OER shared that RI will be receiving approximately \$35 to \$40 million from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to be put toward heat pump efforts. The Rhode Island Department of Transportation's (DOT) National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (NEVI) Formula Program is preparing for phase two of the program for November 2024.

The EC4's 2025 Budget was approved. The 2025 budget will be allocated statewide, examples of budget items include \$175,000 to the Rhode Island Department of Education (DOE) for solar in schools, \$150,000 to the University of Rhode Island (URI) for beach profile data, and \$145,000 to RI Public Transit Authority for growing transit ridership.

Theo Smith of Rhode Island Public Utilities Commission (PUC) presented on the Future of Gas Docket. Theo shared that the Docket was established in 2022 with the goal of assessing the regulatory technical approaches that the State can take to meeting the emissions reductions targets set by the 2021 Act on Climate. A stakeholder process was started, and a committee was created to develop policy recommendations. The purpose of the committee is to explore future scenarios with input from the public to incorporate into a technical report. Apex Analytics was hired as a consultant to guide process. Energy and Environmental Economics (E3) was hired to develop a technical analysis report which provided six economy-wide decarbonization scenarios. A report outline was released with major topics, key takeaways from the technical report, and possible policy avenues for recommendations. It is recommended that the Commission open a proceeding to formally adopt emissions targets specific to the gas distribution system.

Steven Chybowski from the Rhode Island Office of Energy Resources (OER) conducted a presentation on a Home Electrification & Appliance Rebate (HEAR) program. HEAR

is a rebate program created by the Inflation Reduction Act in 2022 and is ready to be implemented in RI. This program will provide low-and-moderate-income households with rebates for electrical and appliance upgrades that are not already available via other programs. This program uniquely offers contractor incentives, providing contractors with an additional \$150 for installment of electric panels and \$250 for wiring. Low-income households could receive up to \$8,340 in potential upgrades, and medium-income households could receive up to \$3,670 in potential upgrades. The HEAR program will be launched in phases, beginning in September the low-income program will be implemented, and the moderate-income program will be available in 2025. OER is partnering with the Rhode Island Department of Human Services and the CAPs to implement and deliver program benefits

The EC4 Advisory Board met on October 30th. Elizabeth Stone began by discussing the funding received by the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) which is allocated throughout the EC4's 2025 Budget. Members have considered joint meetings between the Advisory Board and Universities such as URI, to collaborate with development of decarbonization plans.

The Board's [2025 Climate Action Youth Art Challenge](#) is now live until April 2025. The challenge targets K-12th grade students, selected artwork will be utilized in the 2025 RI climate action strategy, on the state climate change website, and social media channels. The 29th Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP29) from the 11th to the 22nd of November, someone from EC4 will be following the convention.

Jenny F. with IMPACT RI is contracted with the Nature Conservancy to work on an Environmental Justice Government-to-Government (EJ2G) Grant over the next three years, received from the EPA. The grants ensure that EJ communities are receiving the support and resources that they need, specifically in resiliency.

E3 has been received the Award of Contract for the 2025 Climate Action Strategy. E3 is well-established within RI and with a lot of RI data, they will actively jump into engagement with organizations who will be the focus of the Advisory Board's outreach.

The EC4 approved \$80,000 for the EC4 Advisory Board. Members discussed working to approve vendor contact lists for marketing and communications and brainstormed collaboration with the EEC as they have an active public awareness campaign. Concerns with partnership with the EEC is that they are energy focused, the Department of Environmental Management (DEM) could source a more generalized climate message.

UNIVERSITY OF RHODE ISLAND'S PLUGGED INTO ENERGY RESEARCH LECTURE



EEC
NEWSLETTER

RHODE ISLAND
NOVEMBER 2024

PLUGGED INTO ENERGY RESEARCH LECTURE SERIES



On October 29th the University of Rhode Island began their 2024 Plugged into Energy Research (PIER) Lecture series. The evening's topic was "Comfortable, Healthy and Cost Effective: The Power of Home Energy Upgrades". Moderated by EEC member, Priscilla De La Cruz, the panelist included John Erickson of CLEARResult, Brian Ceballos of the Comprehensive Community Action Program (CCAP), and Carinel LeGrand of Rhode Island Energy (RIE).

John Erickson presented on the benefits of energy efficient (EE) construction. He stated that the four pillars of EE homes include insulation, envelope U-value, reduced thermal bridging, and balanced ventilation. John's presentation highlighted the importance of weatherization and provided listeners with sufficient context to understand the content of the following panelists.

Brian Ceballos, an Energy Auditor for CCAP, presented on how he became an energy auditor, the expectations and tasks

of an energy auditor, and how the public perceives energy audits. Brian provided a simple overview of the key steps of an everyday energy audit: assessing the exterior and interior of the building, evaluating heating and ventilation systems, inspecting insulation, searching for harmful gas leaks and presence of substances such as asbestos, and documenting findings with photographs.

Lastly, Carinel LeGrand, RIE's Residential Income Eligible Energy Efficiency Program Manager, discussed details of available income eligible programs that offer weatherization, heating systems, and utility bill assistance. Carinel emphasized how there is a correlation among EE efforts to improved long-term health. Carinel discussed how a lack of EE in a community can have a negative impact on said community's economy. Benefits of implementing EE efforts include decreased energy bills, increased property value, improved health, and more.

2024 INTERNATIONAL ENERGY CONSERVATION CODE: DISCUSSION WITH RHODE ISLAND'S STATE BUILDING CODE COMMISSIONER, JIM CAMBIO

The International Code Council (ICC) published the 2024 International Energy Conservation Code (IECC) on August 14th, and the code goes into effect on November 14th, 2024. The IECC sets a minimum requirement for energy efficiency for residential and commercial buildings. The IECC was last updated in 2018.

Any builder, remodeler, architect, building official, or trade professional is impacted by this updated code. The Rhode Island Builders Association (RIBA) provided five in-person classes, from October 21st to November 15th, to educate Rhode Island workers on the updated code to promote statewide understanding and compliance.

John Marcantonio, with the RIBA, prepared a brief interview with Rhode Island's State Building Code Commissioner, Jim Cambio. During the interview Cambio highlights key information regarding the 2024 IECC. He shares that the State Building Code was amended in 2023 to require the adoption of the 2024 IECC within three months of its release- since the code was published in August, it must go into effect in November. Exemptions are granted to projects who notify the building official within three months after the new code adoption that the project plans were previously prepared based on the 2018 code provisions. To access the interview document, click [here](#). To access the interview podcast, click [here](#).