

EC4 UPDATE

EC4's Science and Technical as well as general advisory boards met twice each since last issue. Read more on page 1.

EQUITY WORKING GROUP

The Equity Working Group met to discuss marketing strategies and outreach programs. Read more on page 3.

CLIMATE ACTION STRATEGY

The EC4 conducted numerous focus area meetings for RI's Climate Action Strategy. Read more on page 4.

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UPCOMING EVENTS

URI Efficient Housing for All Community of Practice - Apr 24, May 8, May 21

EBC Climate Congressional Briefing w/ Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse - Apr 25

EC4 RI CAS General Focus Meetings - Apr 29 & May 5

NEEP Ready, Set, Scale, NEEP Webinar Series - May 13

MEETINGS COVERED

EC4 Advisory Board - 2/26 & 3/26

EC4 STAB - 2/19 & 3/19

EC4 CAS Focus Meetings:
Transportation - 3/13
Environ. Justice - 3/19
Buildings - 3/27
Municipalities - 4/4

EE EWG - 3/24

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CAN RI FORCE FOSSIL FUEL COMPANIES TO PAY FOR CLIMATE CHANGE? HERE'S HOW.

Rhode Island lawmakers are currently debating a bill that proposes the establishment of a "Climate Superfund." This fund would mandate fossil fuel companies to reimburse the state for expenses related to climate change impacts dating back to 2009. The primary goal of the bill is to shift the financial burden of climate-related damages, such as infrastructure repairs and disaster response, from taxpayers to the companies responsible for pollution. Supporters of the bill argue that it is a fair and necessary measure to hold polluters accountable and alleviate the financial strain on the state. However, opponents express concerns about potential legal challenges and the possibility of increased costs for consumers. They fear that the bill could lead to lengthy court battles and higher prices for fossil fuel products. Similar initiatives have been implemented in other states, but they continue to face ongoing legal disputes. The outcome of Rhode Island's bill remains uncertain as lawmakers weigh the benefits and drawbacks of this approach to addressing climate change costs.

EC4 UPDATE

STAB: The Executive Climate Change Coordinating Council (EC4) Science and Technical Advisory Board (STAB) met on February 19 to discuss the preliminary modeling inputs and assumptions for the 2025 Climate Action Strategy (CAS). Energy and Environmental Economics Inc. (E3) presented the CAS goals, timeline, stakeholder engagement plan, and the proprietary models that would be used in their analysis. The STAB requested as much access as possible to the models, inputs, assumptions, and sources in order to fully evaluate their efficacy. E3 replied that they can provide written documentation of the modelling methodology, but they cannot provide the models themselves. The STAB also commented that they are mandated to evaluate the modelling, so they will require sufficient time to review any materials and provide comments. E3 stated that modelling will not begin until May, so there is plenty of time to work on the inputs and methodology together until the STAB is satisfied.

E3 then presented a detailed walkthrough of their preliminary inputs and assumptions workbook for the 2025 CAS. The STAB asked if there was an estimate of uncertainty or error analysis in the model outputs. E3 replied that the bounds of uncertainty are covered in scenario design and sensitivity analyses. A STAB member commented that the CAS modelling is derived from the modelling conducted during the Future of Gas proceedings, so roughly 90% of the data has already been

heavily scrutinized. The Office of Air Resources (OAR) announced that they are proposing updates to their methodology for estimating fugitive greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in RI.

Advisory Board: The EC4 Advisory Board convened on February 26. The Advisory Board briefly discussed the impacts of federal executive orders on state climate initiatives, including the EC4's vote to reallocate \$225,000 from the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM) to fund the CAS if the federal Climate Pollution Reduction Grant (CPRG) funding becomes unavailable. The discussion also emphasized the importance of identifying and supporting state non-profits and programs affected by funding and job losses, with suggestions for increased community engagement and support for community-based climate work.

The City of Providence presented its [2024 Building Energy Report](#), detailing efforts to measure, track, and publicly disclose building energy data. The report is part of the city's carbon neutrality goals, with city-owned buildings set to phase out fossil fuels by 2040. The program received initial grant funding from the Department of Energy (DOE) and aims to provide building owners with actionable insights and cost-saving opportunities. The city is working to ensure compliance and engagement from private building owners, with plans to expand reporting requirements to more buildings by 2026. The presentation also discussed the stakeholder engagement that facilitated the program's implementation. The Advisory Board discussed the barrier in other municipalities of having less staff than Providence.

STAB: The EC4 STAB met on March 19 to discuss the RIDEM OAR draft memo on “Fugitive Greenhouse Gas Emissions from Natural Gas Systems.” The goal of the memo is to improve the scope of measured emissions in compliance with the Act on Climate. A representative from the OAR explained that historically, the full scope of fugitive methane and carbon dioxide emissions have not been captured in emissions accounting. He also noted that the emissions factors used to calculate gas emissions have not been updated since the late 1990s. With more recent research, more reliable data, and better technology, the OAR was able to update the emissions factors and improve measurement accuracy. The OAR representative noted that methane emissions in the 2022 Greenhouse Gas Inventory were 44% higher than what was calculated in their current study, indicating that updated emissions factors lower measured emissions. Additionally, the OAR expanded fugitive emissions accounting to capture the full scope of materials that are used in the gas distribution system. The memo discusses the sources, methodology, and results of this effort.

Advisory Board: The EC4 Advisory Board met again on March 26 to discuss the Draft RI Climate Dashboard. A representative from the Rhode Island Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner (RIOPC) presented a walkthrough of the Draft Climate Dashboard, which comprises five sections: clean energy, energy efficiency, green jobs, clean transportation, and reduced emissions. During the discussion, it was noted that the DOE's Low-income Energy Affordability Data (LEAD) tool has been taken down, and an alternative data source is being sought for the Energy Burden page. For energy efficiency, questions arose about the source of data on avoided GHG emissions and energy savings, which are derived from RIE's energy efficiency program and the EEC's Annual Reports. In the green jobs section, concerns were raised about graduates with green degrees not entering the green workforce, and the need to track growth in clean energy jobs and their contribution to Act on Climate goals. The clean transportation section highlighted the goal of EVs making up 10% of registered vehicles by 2030 and the importance of aligning with Advanced Clean Car II standards. The Advisory Board suggested including data on the percentage of vehicles registered in each municipality and per capita breakdowns. The reduced emissions section received positive feedback for its graphics and a suggestion to include a section on buildings due to their significant GHG emissions. The general discussion covered the timeline for the dashboard, the need to incorporate language about buildings, and the potential renaming of the dashboard to reflect broader climate issues beyond GHG reductions such as resilience, environmental justice, and public health. There was also a proposal to add a social equity section immediately, given the available data, and to consider including pollution and tree equity maps in the climate justice sections. During public comment, Timmons Roberts of the STAB suggested that all metrics be shown against their respective Act on Climate targets.



RHODE ISLAND ENERGY EFFICIENCY EQUITY WORKING GROUP

The RI Energy Efficiency Equity Working Group (EWG) met on February 24 to discuss equitable marketing strategies. Rhode Island Energy kicked off the meeting with a presentation on energy efficiency marketing progress in 2024, marketing programs in the 2025 Plan, social media campaigns, and other outreach tools. The discussion covered various aspects of outreach and marketing for energy programs, including the potential for additional language support beyond Spanish and Portuguese, and the challenges of convincing families to participate in marketing campaigns. Strategies to increase customer participation were explored, such as offering incentives and professional photos for landlords. The importance of equity metrics in tracking the effectiveness of outreach efforts was emphasized. RIE reported that there is ongoing work to establish comprehensive tracking systems. Additionally, the role of minority contractors as ambassadors for these programs was discussed, along with successful marketing efforts using Spanish language radio. The conversation also highlighted the need for increased certification and participation of minority and women-owned business enterprises (MWBs) in energy programs.

Mass Home Electrification Pioneering Pilot Program

The Cape and Vineyard Electrification Offering (CVEO) is nearing completion on Cape Cod and Martha's Vineyard, aiming to electrify homes by integrating solar panels, heat pumps, and battery storage systems. This initiative targets low- and moderate-income households, offering a comprehensive package of clean energy technologies. The program seeks to reduce reliance on fossil fuels and enhance grid resilience. The CVEO's holistic approach is a model for nationwide home electrification efforts.

The offering's design addresses several critical aspects of the energy transition. By focusing on low- and moderate-income households, it ensures that the benefits of clean energy technologies are accessible to a broader segment of the population. As installations wrap up, stakeholders are observing the outcomes closely, considering the program's potential scalability and applicability in other regions aiming to advance their clean energy goals.



Transportation: The first stakeholder engagement meeting for the RI CAS took place on March 13, focusing on transportation. E3 provided a project update, highlighting key changes based on feedback, including providing save the dates for all stakeholder engagement meetings, integrating education into the RI CAS, building a framework for equity, and leading conversations about RI worker impacts with relevant parties. Discussions emphasized the role of an equitable transition, prioritizing greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction strategies that advance environmental justice and equity, and collaboration with impacted communities. The transportation sector deep dive covered modeling inputs and assumptions, focusing on electrifying vehicles, increasing vehicle efficiency, increasing the use of low-carbon fuels, and reducing vehicle miles traveled (VMT). Breakout groups discussed opportunities and barriers to transportation decarbonization, emphasizing the importance of public transit, land use planning, and incentivizing electric vehicles, while addressing challenges such as funding, habits, and zoning issues.

Environmental Justice: The second CAS engagement meeting was on March 19. The meeting focused on the role of environmental justice and equity in CAS, highlighting key opportunities for achieving environmental justice through decarbonization. E3 presented an overview of their project, modeling approach, and defining environmental justice in RI. Roots2Empower discussed community climate conversations and advancing environmental justice in Rhode Island's climate planning. Participants identified opportunities to advance environmental justice through decarbonization such as improving public transportation, improving bike lanes, increasing solar accessibility for low-income residences, partnering with community organizations, prioritizing service to environmental justice communities, and educating the public on the links between energy efficiency, decarbonization, and public health. Barriers to the advancement of equity included the older housing stock, pre-weatherization barriers, lack of education on climate change, energy efficiency, and decarbonization, and insufficient political will at the federal level.

Buildings: The third CAS engagement meeting occurred on March 27, with a focus on the buildings sector. E3 presented a project update, feedback so far, and the equity framework. E3 also presented an overview of the modeling approach and the major modeling inputs and assumptions for the building sector, including housing units in RI, the growth of the housing stock, device costs and efficiencies, annual energy use per household, and commercial square footage. E3 described the buildings sector as having five pillars: electrify buildings, energy efficiency, renewable energy in buildings, increase the use of low carbon fuels, and increase the use of low carbon materials. Participants agreed that building electrification and energy efficiency were generally the best paths for decarbonization, but they were concerned

about the prohibitive costs of building retrofits, electrification, and the mitigation of pre-weatherization barriers. At the close of the meeting, the participants identified funding, pre-weatherization, capacity, equity, and electrification as the five most important strategies for the decarbonization of the buildings sector.

Municipalities: The fourth CAS engagement meeting took place on April 4, focusing on municipalities. E3 presented a project overview, continued feedback, and the role of municipalities in RI climate action. E3 also discussed the existing municipality focused decarbonization strategies from the RI Priority Climate Action Plan, which fall under the categories of transportation, buildings, energy, and waste and working lands. The participants felt that municipalities have an opportunity to lead by example in decarbonizing buildings, managing vehicles, and supporting energy efficiency. However, they face barriers such as understaffing, lack of funding, and the limited ability to proactively address climate impacts. The participants felt that municipalities could advance equity through job creation, improved climate impacts, and affordable efficient housing, which are also key aspects of their decarbonization efforts. The participants recognized equity, land use, and public transportation as their priorities for the role of municipalities in the CAS.

Ayotte signs bill to speed up financing for energy- efficient developments

New Hampshire Governor Kelly Ayotte signed Senate Bill 4 to revamp the Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy and Resiliency (C-PACER) program, facilitating financing for energy-efficient housing developments. The original program, passed in 2010, faced logistical challenges that prevented adoption. The new bill, signed this February, transfers implementation responsibility to the New Hampshire Business Finance Authority (BFA), reducing the administrative burden on municipalities. The program allows property owners to obtain funding from private lenders for energy efficiency improvements, with a special assessment lien applied to the property, payable by subsequent owners. This mechanism enables lower initial costs and longer repayment periods. The revamped program aims to address the housing shortage by making financing easier for developers. Towns must opt into the program by passing a resolution, with the BFA handling administrative tasks. The bill received support from various organizations, including the Business and Industry Association, the New Hampshire Municipal Association, and the New Hampshire Bankers Association. The program will be available in January 2026.