EEC NEWSLETTER

RHODE ISLAND

JUNE 2025

TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP

The Energy Efficiency Technical Working Group met to discuss the 2025 EEC Priorities as well as the 2026 Energy Efficiency plan
Read more on page 2.

CLIMATE ACTION STRATEGY

The EC4 completed its series of stakeholder engagement meetings for its Climate Action Strategy Plan development
Read more on page 3

EC4 UPDATE

The EC4 and their Advisory Board met multiple times to review Climate Action Strategy progress and discuss funding strategies
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For the third consecutive month, clean energy production in the U.S. has surpassed that from fossil fuels, a trend that is expected to continue 2

Policy and regulatory updates
Nine states, including Rhode Island, have unveiled a Strategic Action Plan on Inter-regional Transmission with the goal of advancing public interest and increasing inter-state coordination 3

Technology and Innovation
Workforce development efforts in Maine have contributed to the state's position as a national leader in heat pump adoption. 4

UPCOMING EVENTS

EBC Energy Resources Committee Planning Meeting - July 7

CRMC Coastal Resources Management Council Leadership Lunch - July 11

City of Newport Newport Energy and Environment Commission - July 16

URI Efficient Housing for All Community of Practice - July 17

MEETINGS COVERED

EC4 CAS Focus Meetings:
Workforce - 4/8
General - 4/29
Energy - 5/9

EC4 Advisory Board - 4/30, 5/28

EC4 Full Council - 5/12

EE TWG - 4/24

EE EWG - 4/28

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ENERGY EFFICIENCY COUNCIL

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SPOTLIGHT

RECORD US CLEAN POWER LEVELS CONTINUE THROUGH MAY

Clean energy sources provided more than 50% of nationwide power supplies for the first time in March of this year, and continued into April and May. Solar energy specifically is expected to reach new highs this summer, potentially accounting for up to 14% of electricity generation as solar radiation peaks. However, increased demand from air conditioning will require utilities to supplement with fossil fuels, possibly reducing clean energy's share temporarily below 50%. Despite this, ongoing expansions in renewables and battery storage capacity mean clean energy is likely to remain near half of the energy mix and could regain dominance as temperatures cool.

50.8% OF US ELECTRICITY SUPPLY FROM CLEAN SOURCES

YR/YR OUTPUT OF SOLAR INCREASED BY MORE THAN **33.0%**

ENERGY EFFICIENCY
Technical Working Group

The Energy Efficiency Technical Working Group (TWG) met on April 24 to discuss the 2025 EEC Priorities and the 2026 Energy Efficiency Plan. A TWG member emphasized expanding energy efficiency (EE) programs beyond maintenance and suggested adding language to quantify the expansion of both existing and new programs. Another member highlighted the shift to incremental energy savings for cost-effectiveness. Concerns were raised about balancing goals like weatherization and system benefits, the prioritization of recommendations, and gaps in underserved communities.

Next, Rhode Island Energy (RIE) provided an update on the 2026 Plan Development process so far. A TWG member suggested an advanced metering functionality pilot program for certain C&I customers to collect data for future program development. Another TWG member supported the idea if it demonstrates value and savings since the program would be funded by ratepayer dollars. A participant said that codes and standards training received positive feedback, with architects, engineers, and HVAC contractors attending. They are also planning Building Performance Institute training for the CAP agencies.

An OER representative emphasized bill impacts, customer affordability, and highlighted the Capital Good Fund's low-interest loan program. A TWG member suggested seeking opportunities to strengthen the relationships between program implementation and midstream market agents. Another TWG member stressed the need to quantify customer cost savings and communicate the returns on investment incurred by energy efficiency programs.

Pictured above, the 2025 URI Cooperative Extension Energy Fellows recently attended Summer Industry Training at the Rhode Island Energy North Smithfield Electrical Substation. The fellows will continue to attend site visits and educational events throughout the summer to learn more about clean energy and the broader energy sector.

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The EC4 Climate Action Strategy Stakeholder engagement recently concluded with the workforce, general, and energy focus sessions.

Workforce: The fifth stakeholder engagement session for the RI Climate Action Strategy (CAS) took place on April 8, focusing on workforce impacts and opportunities**.** Energy and Environmental Economics Inc. (E3) presented the policy background and progress of the CAS so far, and BW Consulting presented on the workforce research process. Participants divided into three groups to discuss workforce development gaps, statewide climate workforce strategy coordination, and impacts on workers. **Identified gaps included transitioning from training to employment, apprenticeship and certification support, offshore fisheries impacts, and limited reach of surcharge-funded energy efficiency programs** in urban, low-income, and environmental justice communities. They also noted shortages in professional development and customer service training.

Recommendations emphasized community-based hiring, partnerships, and diversifying funding beyond federal sources. Participants emphasized that a statewide climate workforce strategy requires clear career pathways, open communication among educators, employers, and policymakers, and incentives like competitive wages and benefits. Higher education institutions and employers should lead, actively involving workers through community and workplace programs. Supporting transitioning workers involves addressing tradeoffs, providing attractive compensation, and understanding their motivations. At-risk occupations include fisheries, traditional energy roles, and jobs affected by AI. Participants mentioned that lessons from Rhode Island's past industrial transitions could inform current strategies.

General: The RI CAS administrative team held a general stakeholder engagement meeting on April 29. E3 presented a project overview, a status update, and the key pillars of climate action in RI. A participant inquired about the status of the EPA grant, and DEM confirmed that the EPA Climate Pollution Reduction Planning Grant is open with full access to funds. When asked about the difference between the CCAP and the 2025 CAS, a participant explained that the CCAP is a climate plan due to the EPA by December 1, while the Climate Action Strategy is required by the Act on Climate and due at the end of 2025. Both are being developed together due to their overlap and similar deadlines. A participant emphasized the need to deprioritize private vehicle transit in favor of public transit. Another participant asked how the CAS will address strategies to meet Act on Climate mandates, and it was explained that a list of actions will be compiled to prioritize GHG reduction targets, with policy, regulatory, and legislative recommendations based on modeling outcomes.

POLICY & REGULATORY UPDATE
North Eastern States Unveil New Grid Planning Strategy

Northeastern states have launched a groundbreaking strategy to take charge of the clean-energy grid expansion after growing frustrated with regional operators delaying key projects and burdening consumers with higher costs. On April 28, the newly formed Northeast States Collaborative on Interregional Transmission comprising Rhode Island, Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York and Vermont, released a Strategic Action Plan to create a state-led governance model for planning, approving, financing, and building inter-regional transmission lines.

This strategy tackles the "missing middle" in current processes: a lack of coordination across different grid regions (PJM, ISO-New England, NYISO) that creates what the plan terms a "triple hurdle"—requiring separate approvals from each region and then a joint evaluation, which typically stalls projects. To overcome these barriers, the plan commits the states to: standardize transmission hardware and pool multi-state procurement, coordinate a Request for Information to identify "low-regrets" transmission upgrades that enhance reliability and deliver clean-energy benefits, and build new cost-allocation rules that center on emissions reductions and consumer savings.

EC4 CLIMATE ACTION STRATEGY (cont.)

The importance of collaborating with other states in the region to meet goals was highlighted, along with the need to create firm targets and responsibilities for each economic sector and state government agency. It was confirmed that the CAS will show emissions reductions associated with different recommended policies. A participant asked about assessing the potential of rate design reform to improve heat pump adoption economics, and E3 explained that bill impacts from technology adoption will be explored, but not a detailed rate design analysis.

The customer affordability study will include rate forecasts based on electric sector modeling. Finally, a participant asked about job opportunities in renewable energy, and it was confirmed that the final report will include a detailed workforce needs assessment. A participant emphasized that renewable energy offers an opportunity for fossil fuel industry workers to utilize their valuable skills and experience in the transition to cleaner energy sources.

Energy: The sixth and final stakeholder engagement session for the RI CAS took place on May 9, focusing on the effect of decarbonization on the electric sector and the roles of electric and gas utilities in emissions reductions. E3 presented on RI's role in the New England power grid, greenhouse gas emissions from electricity in the state, key considerations for decarbonization the electric sector, and more.

The session featured two breakout groups: one focusing on the opportunities and barriers to decarbonization and energy cost reductions in RI, and the second focusing on key considerations for the energy sector. Stakeholders listed energy efficiency, expanding renewable energy, and the virtual powerplant movement as opportunities for decarbonization and lowering energy costs in the state. Participants also identified barriers such as the large population of rental units, lack of political will, and the high upfront costs of home energy upgrades. The key considerations for the energy sector included the cost of service, alternative rate designs, the prioritization of energy efficiency, distributed resources, a managed transition away from natural gas, and more. At the close of the meeting, stakeholders selected energy affordability, electrification, energy efficiency, offshore wind, and energy storage as the most important strategies to them.

RHODE ISLAND ENERGY EFFICIENCY **EQUITY WORKING GROUP**

The Energy Efficiency Equity Working Group (EWG) met on April 28 to discuss equitable workforce development. RIE reported out on their diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives including partnerships with local educational institutions. The EWG featured three member spotlights: Margarita Robledo of the Rhode Island Builders Association (RIBA), Steve Chybowski from the Office of Energy Resources, and Karen Verrengia from CLEAResult.

The EWG explored equitable opportunities in the energy efficiency workforce through training and inclusion initiatives targeting historically underrepresented communities. Discussions centered around registering personnel for federal rebates, with RIBA scheduling a presentation alongside Rhode Island Energy in May 2025 to foster connections. Members emphasized the potential of guaranteed paid internships for families during career transitions and highlighted free evening classes and support services provided by the Residential Construction Workforce Partnership.

Tracking MWBE contracting participation was suggested as a benchmark statistic, citing Massachusetts' model as an example. Concerns arose about Rhode Island's ability to adopt training models from Philadelphia, highlighting the need to better link students to job opportunities and improve coordination among training providers, contractors, rebate programs, and stakeholders

TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION
Maine is training an army of HVAC pros to meet its heat pump goals

Maine is now a national leader in heat pump adoption, thanks in part to robust workforce development efforts like those at Kennebec Valley Community College (KVCC). The college's state-of-the-art heat pump lab, housed in a former milking barn, is training the next generation of HVAC technicians, with over 300 students completing the program since its launch in 2021. This training is essential as Maine aims to install an additional 175,000 heat pumps by 2027, after surpassing its initial goal of 100,000 units two years ahead of schedule.

Rural areas, like Somerset County where KVCC is located, have seen rapid clean energy workforce growth—up 44% since 2020. The state supports these efforts through Efficiency Maine and the Governor's Energy Office's Clean Energy Partnership, which together have invested millions in training and apprenticeships. However, meeting the state's goal of 30,000 clean energy jobs by 2030 requires adding more than 14,000 workers, a challenging task given recent growth trends. As electricity costs climb and rural residents face barriers to energy savings, building a skilled and inclusive clean energy workforce remains a cornerstone of Maine's strategy to reduce emissions, lower bills, and deliver economic opportunity across the state.

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EC4 UPDATE

The full EC4 met on May 12. RIDEM opened the meeting with a review of substantial progress on the Climate Action Strategy (CAS), which has moved through 11 major engagement sessions involving over 100 participants and is now entering the scenario development phase. **Key updates included the successful execution of EC4 MOUs, completion of the "Lead by Example" compliance report—highlighting benchmarking of 16 state buildings with 30 more planned—and the upcoming launch of a public dashboard.** The E3 and BW Research Team, presented a CAS technical update reporting that the "engagement" phase, which reached over 600 participants, has concluded. Feedback from this phase is now being integrated into modeling efforts for Summer 2025. Some of the most recent feedback led to the incorporation of new datasets including utilization of the Clean Heat RI program for heat pump cost data and the EnergyWise program for building shell costs.

E3 went on to give a high-level overview of the specifics of the stakeholder engagement plan, noting synthesis points such as EV infrastructure, building decarbonization barriers and workforce training, upskilling and job quality as areas with the greatest amount of discussion and interest across all meetings. They continued with an overview of E3's workforce-focused research, which remains a priority. **This includes a survey which will be received by businesses and now, individual workers which comes after incorporating feedback from case interviews.**

Chair Gray asked how E3 will ensure the survey is received by unorganized occupations, citing examples such as the automotive and natural gas industry. The team remarked that there would be a general population-wide survey followed by targeted outreach to address this.

Representatives of the present agencies also shared updates on federal funding developments, including grant changes and new program launches. Most notably, **DEM is looking into alternative strategies to track RI's greenhouse gas after the EPA began pulling back support for GHG inventories, and the Office of Energy Resources $30 Million home electrification rebate program is back open.**

There were two additional project updates to round out the meeting, which were the Route 114 Resilience Plan and the 2025 Statewide Coastal Resilience Plan (CRP). The CRP officially launched on April 25, with stakeholder engagement scheduled for mid-June and additional regional coordinators beginning work on May 27.

Advisory Board: The EC4 Advisory Board convened on April 30. **RIDEM presented its Solid Waste Management Plan, and the RI Division of Statewide Planning presented an Overview of the RI Transportation Planning Processes**. Regarding the Solid Waste Management Plan, RIDEM is developing both state and municipality level recommendations and legislative action items.

The Advisory Board asked how state agencies, councils, and regulatory bodies could support the implementation of the finalized strategies. management strategies and circular solutions.

RIDEM noted the need for a funding strategy to help municipalities lift up the program as well as a shift to consumption-based emissions tracking for better alignment with waste management strategies and circular solutions. The Advisory Board reported that **the Energy Efficiency Section of the RI Climate Dashboard was renamed to include Buildings, and a sixth section titled "Health, Justice, and Resilience" was added**. Chris Gaynor informed the Advisory Board that the next Climate Justice Hour is in development for summer of 2025. In the meantime, RIDEM has been working on Community Connections events and supporting Green Energy Consumers Alliance and Roots2Empower workshops. RIDEM is brainstorming how to leverage existing institutions and resources to enhance the Community Connection Plan. Gaynor stated that **although the Environmental Justice Government to Government Grant was shut down, RIDEM is still committed to supporting green justice curriculum.** RIDEM will continue to use the available funds until they are depleted and offer support in any capacity possible afterwards.

The EC4 Advisory Board met again on May 28. The Advisory Board reported that **there were roughly six hundred attendees across all of the CAS engagement sessions, and E3 is moving into the modeling stage while incorporating stakeholder feedback.**

Chief Resilience Officer, Kim Korioth, provided the Advisory Board with an update on the Statewide Coastal Resilience Plan and stated that all state agencies and bodies are welcome to contribute to the brainstorming process.

Next, the Advisory Board discussed the design of the upcoming "Climate Conversations" and the tentative selection of Horsley Witten as the lead vendor. Horsley Witten is planning three phases of work for this process, the delivery of an engagement plan, the implementation of the engagement plan, and providing feedback from the engagement process.

The Advisory Board decided that the Climate Conversations would take place in North Kingstown to serve to the southeastern portion of the state, Central Falls to serve the northern inland and urban regions, and Westerly to serve the western coastal areas. Finally, the Advisory Board discussed legislative updates including the passing of a Senate bill to create a special senate commission that will monitor the Act on Climate targets, and second bill that would create a special commission on renewable energy programs. The full EC4 will convene on June 25.