

2025 Rhode Island Energy Efficiency Equity Working Group Report

Prepared by Green & Healthy Homes Initiative
For inclusion in
Rhode Island Energy's 2026 Annual Plan

August 2025

Contents

Executive Summary	3
Background & Introduction	5
Methodology	5
EWG Member Recruitment	5
2025 Recruitment Efforts & Process.....	6
EWG Meeting Timeline	7
Recommendations, Actions, & Metrics	7
Community Outreach & Education: January 27 th , 2025, Meeting	7
Equitable Marketing Strategies: February 24 th , 2025, Meeting	9
Removing Participation Barriers: March 24 th , 2025, Meeting	12
Equitable Workforce Development: April 28 th , 2025, Meeting	14
Energy Efficiency Equity Metrics: June 23 rd , 2025, Meeting.....	16
Additional Feedback	19
Prioritization Exercise Results	20
Conclusion & Future Direction	21
Acknowledgements	22
Appendix	22
About GHHL	22
EWG Guidelines & Expectations	23
2024 Year 4 RI EWG Recommendations	23

Executive Summary

Building on its commitment outlined in the 2021–2023 Energy Efficiency Program Plan, Rhode Island Energy continued its collaboration with the Green & Healthy Homes Initiative (GHHI) in 2025 to facilitate the Rhode Island Energy Efficiency Equity Working Group (RI EWG). The RI EWG remains focused on developing actionable recommendations to inform the planning, design, and delivery of Rhode Island’s energy efficiency programs. These strategies aim to help the Company more effectively reach and serve historically underrepresented and underserved communities. From November 2024 through July 2025, the RI EWG brought together 80 stakeholders from diverse sectors, including housing, health, energy, workforce, and community-based organizations, to assess ongoing efforts and set new priorities for the 2026 Annual Energy Efficiency Plan.

Two core themes emerged in 2024 as central to advancing equity:

1. The need for enhanced transparency and accountability, particularly in how outcomes are measured and shared; and
2. The importance of greater representation from community-based organizations and residents to ensure lived experience informs program design and delivery.

Members strongly emphasized the importance of improved tracking and public reporting across key equity indicators, such as outreach and engagement efforts, program accessibility and uptake, and workforce development impacts. These focus areas shaped the RI EWG’s 2025 recommendations and include proposed implementation strategies and equity-focused metrics to help the Company evaluate progress more effectively and identify opportunities for continuous improvement. In August 2025, RI EWG members provided additional feedback to the recommendations below and are highlighted later in the report in the “Additional Feedback” section.

2025 RI EWG Equity Issues & Key Themes
Building on Past Recommendations: The RI EWG urges Rhode Island Energy to remain committed to advancing the core recommendations from previous years to ensure continuity, accountability, and long-term impact.
Community Engagement & Outreach: RI EWG members emphasized the need for deeper community partnerships and culturally competent outreach to build trust and drive participation across underserved populations. 1) Continue to Strengthen Partnerships with Local Organizations & Communities 2) Enhance Clarity & Transparency of Program Offerings 3) Improve Accessibility for Non-English Speakers 4) Launch Centralized Outreach Calendar and RI EWG website
Equitable Marketing Strategies: Effective marketing must be multilingual, accessible, and tailored to meet the needs of renters, non-English speakers, and frontline communities. 1) Feature Community-Based Storytelling Across All Channels 2) Pilot Multilingual Text Messaging Campaigns 3) Compensate Community Members Featured in Campaigns 4) Build a Contractor & Assessor Ambassador Program 5) Expand In-Person Presence in Trusted Community Settings 6) Track & Report on Outreach/Marketing Event Outcomes
Removing Participation Barriers: Continued focus on identifying and addressing pre-weatherization barriers, deferrals, and eligibility challenges that prevent residents from participating in available programs.

- 1) Layer Funding Sources to Address Pre-Weatherization Barriers
- 2) Coordinate with the Efficient Housing for All Community of Practice (EHACoP) on Shared Barriers and Solutions

Equitable Workforce Development: Rather than reinventing the wheel, the focus is on better coordination across existing training programs and initiatives across the state to connect underrepresented workers, MWBEs, and even new entrants and career changers to clean energy and energy efficiency job opportunities.

- 1) Expand Multilingual Training and Outreach for Diverse Contractors
- 2) Establish Clear Workforce Development Metrics
- 3) Continuing to Leverage Integrated Service Delivery Models
- 4) Improve Access to Contractor Resources & Workforce Opportunities (New Entrants/Career Change)

Energy Efficiency Equity Metrics: As Rhode Island Energy continues to improve and refine equity metric reporting, the focus remains on developing more actionable, transparent data reporting that highlights who is being served, where gaps exist, and how data can reveal room for program improvements to better support underserved communities.

- 1) Increase Funding for CAP Agencies
- 2) Disaggregate Equity Metrics for Deeper Insight
- 3) Track and Report on Pre-Weatherization Barriers
- 4) Add Tracking and Reporting for Workforce Diversity

Background & Introduction

The Company, as a part of its 2021-2023 Energy Efficiency Program Plan (2021-2023 EE Plan), committed to working with the Rhode Island Office of Energy Resources (OER) to co-host an Energy Efficiency Equity Working Group (EWG). The EWG was envisioned to 1) be comprised of representatives from state agencies, community-based organizations, advocacy organizations, and local subject matter experts in equity; 2) provide a space where the voices and concerns of impacted communities could inform discussions on equity issues; 3) identify areas of importance and focus around issues of equity for the energy efficiency programs; and 4) be a resource in the development of future Annual and Three-Year Energy Efficiency Plans, alongside related evaluation efforts. The desired deliverable from the EWG was to provide the Company with written recommendations to advance equity in the planning, design, and delivery of its Energy Efficiency Programs. The Company would then use these recommendations to propose the elimination of or alteration of current programs, or the development of new programs or services that would help to better serve the Company's diverse customer base.

The EWG has given impacted communities, and the organizations that serve them, an ongoing and structured opportunity to collaborate and provide input and feedback on the planning and delivery of The Company's energy efficiency programs, with a specific focus on equity. In 2024, the RI EWG introduced a new meeting structure informed by the key themes outlined in the 2024 RI EWG Annual Report. Instead of general updates, each meeting agenda was built around a specific theme—such as outreach and engagement or equitable workforce development - which allowed for deeper, more solution-focused discussions tied directly to member priorities and lived experiences. Lastly, to further elevate member voices, the Working Group also launched a new "Member Spotlight" segment, providing individuals and organizations an opportunity to share their work, challenges, and insights with the broader group.

The Company contracted with the Green & Healthy Homes Initiative (GHHI) in 2021 to facilitate the development and implementation of the EWG throughout Years 2-5. GHHI is a national non-profit organization dedicated to addressing the housing-based causes of lead poisoning, asthma, injury, and energy inefficiency by creating homes that are healthy, safe, and resilient. By delivering a standard of excellence through merit-based, data-driven solutions, GHHI aims to eradicate the negative health impacts of unhealthy housing for children, seniors, and families to ensure everyone has the opportunity to live, learn, work, and play in homes that support their health and well-being

Methodology

EWG Member Recruitment

In 2025, GHHI continued to build on past momentum by sustaining engagement from long-standing members while successfully recruiting new stakeholders and residents who bring fresh perspectives and lived experience to the RI EWG. As in previous years, recruitment efforts were guided by the goal of ensuring meaningful representation from communities historically excluded from energy efficiency planning and policy development. Specifically, GHHI prioritized individuals and organizations with deep experience serving limited-income households, Black and Brown communities, and other under-resourced populations disproportionately impacted by energy burdens.

The RI EWG's recruitment strategy also emphasized the inclusion of voices not traditionally heard in energy efficiency proceedings, such as grassroots organizers, renters, and frontline service providers and encouraged diversity across race, gender, income, geography, and organizational type.

In addition, new avenues for outreach helped expand recruitment opportunities. Rhode Island Energy began hosting Landlord Sessions in 2025, which proved to be a valuable venue for engaging property owners and tenants on available energy efficiency programs and offerings, and identifying potential RI EWG members. GHHI also leveraged its presence at local outreach events throughout the year to connect directly with community members, strengthen visibility, and invite broader participation in the RI EWG.

Through the listed efforts above, the RI EWG welcomed 32 new faces throughout 2024, however not every member was able to attend every meeting but requested to stay informed through meeting notes and updates. In addition, the following Rhode Island Energy staff attended meetings throughout 2024:

- Brendan Dagher, Senior Specialist – Energy Efficiency Policy & Strategy
- Carinel LeGrand, Program Manager
- Angela Li, Supervisor of Residential and LMI Programs
- Spencer Lawrence, Residential Energy Efficiency – Strategy & Planning
- Brett Feldman, Energy Efficiency Manager
- Kate Felder, Community Engagement – Energy Efficiency
- Atticus Makuch, Associate Specialist – Energy Efficiency EM&V

2025 Recruitment Efforts & Process

Our 2025 recruitment efforts for the RI EWG continued to follow a targeted outreach strategy designed to identify and engage diverse stakeholders committed to advancing energy equity across Rhode Island. GHHI employed a mix of direct outreach, community partnerships, and public engagement to attract individuals with relevant experience, lived expertise, and a strong interest in equitable energy outcomes. This includes recruiting through the Rhode Island Health Equity Zones, at Rhode Island Energy Customer Expos & Landlord Sessions, and by connecting with local organizations like the Providence Public Libraries.

The RI EWG was originally built to be an open invite to any resident or stakeholder interested in providing input and guiding the direction of our work. This allows interested individuals to join by request. New members can meet with the project facilitator to learn about the group's background, history, and current updates, ensuring they are well-informed and aligned with the group's goals.



Rhode Island Energy Landlord Session Hosted by the Washington Park Library Team

EWG Meeting Timeline

Month	Topic of Discussion	Description
January	Community Outreach & Education	The meeting focused on strategies to engage communities in energy efficiency programs, with an emphasis on outreach efforts that are accessible, inclusive, and culturally relevant. EWG members reviewed and discussed methods for educating diverse populations on the benefits and opportunities available through energy efficiency initiatives.
February	Equitable Marketing Strategies	The meeting focused on marketing strategies that ensure equitable access to energy efficiency programs. The discussion explored how to effectively communicate with underserved communities, ensure diverse representation in outreach, address barriers to participation in energy efficiency opportunities, and review ongoing efforts by Rhode Island Energy.
March	Removing Participating Barriers	The meeting addressed the challenges and systemic barriers that prevent certain communities from participating in energy efficiency programs. The meeting focused on identifying these obstacles and exploring solutions to remove them, ensuring equitable access for all individuals and households.
April	Equitable Workforce Development	The meeting focused on creating equitable opportunities within the energy efficiency workforce. Discussion topics included workforce training, diversity, and inclusion initiatives, as well as strategies to ensure that historically underrepresented communities have access to career pathways in energy efficiency fields.
June	Energy Efficiency Equity Metrics	Lastly, Rhode Island Energy reviewed and discussed the 2024 full year equity metrics and the metrics that will be tracked throughout 2025.

Recommendations, Actions, & Metrics

Community Outreach & Education: January 27th, 2025, Meeting

Year 5 of the RI EWG kicked off the new year with its first meeting focused on the key theme of Community Outreach & Education. At the kickoff meeting, the RI EWG focused on strategies to improve outreach, education, and participation in energy efficiency programs, particularly among underserved communities. Rhode Island Energy shared updates on their landlord-focused sessions and new partnerships with the Providence Public Library to host bilingual events in five equity areas, which included Providence, East Providence, Pawtucket, Central Falls, and Woonsocket. To increase awareness of these sessions, Rhode Island Energy sent fliers via direct mail to landlords and also partners with the Providence Public Library, city services offices of municipalities, council members, RI EWG members, and community organizations to help share the information on upcoming sessions.

As a landlord, I have renovated properties before, but the weatherization program made things incredibly simple. The assessors were professional, explained everything clearly, and helped me understand exactly what needed to be done - including my knob and tube issue. Once I got an electrician to sign off, the process moved smoothly.

- Landlord, Providence, Rhode Island

Based on member feedback, the meeting agenda now features a Member Spotlight section for attendees to share personal stories about their energy efficiency journeys. During the January meeting, attendees heard firsthand success stories from participants and landlords who benefited from the programs, but also highlighted barriers such as language access, clarity of incentive details, and logistical issues like in-person audit requirements for working residents.

I am really grateful my landlord got that mailer - it is what started everything. The RISE team was great, but I had to be home during the audit, which worked for me since I work remotely. That could be a challenge for others who cannot take time off. It would help if there were more flexible options.

- Renter, Providence, Rhode Island

Working group members also discussed best practices from community organizations such as One Neighborhood Builders, the Ocean State Center for Independent Living (OSCIL), and GHHI, which emphasized cross-program coordination, trusted partnerships, and meeting residents where they are (including libraries, senior centers, subsidized housing communities, etc.). For example, GHHI and the Community Action Partnership of Providence County (CAPP) entered a partnership in late 2024 to address units deferred from its Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) and units that require health and safety interventions in low-income households, with a focus on households with children, older adults 62+, and people with disabilities. GHHI RI will assess and perform initial home health assessments, develop a scope of work to address prioritized home health or safety hazards, remediate these barriers and home health hazards, and then re-enroll these units back into the weatherization program. This example reflects the working group's emphasis on coordinated, cross-sector partnerships and targeted outreach to historical non-participants and underserved communities.

RI EWG members also highlighted the need for clearer communication, expanded translation services, and stronger collaboration between agencies and community groups. One member emphasized the importance of connecting and inviting each other to events. Many non-English-speaking landlords are unaware of available programs or struggle to understand follow-up steps, limiting their participation and trust in the process. Two EWG members shared their own early hesitations while engaging in the process. One noted uncertainty about what to do once a barrier was identified, and another shared that they never received a promised rebate. While the missed rebate was not a dealbreaker for them, they stressed that for many community members, such experiences could break trust and deter future participation.

The meeting concluded with insights from Margie Lynch on the Massachusetts Community First Partnerships model to highlight a proven framework for scaling equitable outreach efforts through funding and local energy advocates. This model has been successful in reaching underserved communities through partnering with trusted local community partners. Massachusetts' Community First Partnership aims to provide funding, resources, training, and support to participating municipalities and local community-based organizations (CBOs) to increase awareness and participation in the Mass Save Programs. By partnering with trusted CBOs and

MA Community First Partnership Highlights

- CBOs can receive up to \$85,000/year throughout 2025-2027
- 26 Community First Partnerships (CFPs), representing 58 communities, participated in the 2022-2024 term
- Each partnership includes an Energy Advocate to boost engagement and support partners in overcoming barriers to participation
- Funded by Ratepayer Systems Benefit Charge and RGGI Funds

municipalities, this model directly addresses the EWG's calls for culturally competent engagement, streamlined communication, and stronger local partnerships to better serve underserved populations.

Community Outreach & Education Recommendations:

The following recommendations aim to strengthen engagement with underserved communities by promoting clear, culturally relevant, and accessible information about available energy efficiency programs. These recommendations emphasize building trust through community partnerships, multilingual materials, and outreach strategies that reflect the needs and voices of diverse Rhode Islanders. **Note:** Additional stakeholder feedback that complements or expands on the recommendations below can be found in the "Additional Feedback" section at the end of this report.

RI EWG members recommended Rhode Island Energy:

1. Continue to Strengthen Partnerships with Local Organizations & Communities

- Emulate the Massachusetts Community First Partnerships model by funding community-based organizations (CBOs) and municipalities in Rhode Island to act as trusted Energy Advocates. These partnerships can recruit and train residents as Energy Advocates or Weatherization Ambassadors who can serve as champions in their communities. Residents already trust local CBOs, and RIE could leverage those existing relationships by partnering with these organizations to more effectively reach residents for their energy efficiency programs.

2. Enhance Clarity & Transparency of Program Offerings

- Create simple, multilingual explainer materials (print & digital) outlining steps to participate, estimated timelines, incentive amounts (i.e.. "...up to \$10,000 per unit"), receive rebates, and solutions to common barriers or challenges.
- Develop FAQs based on past participant feedback and concerns (e.g., delays, audit attendance challenges).

3. Improve Accessibility for Non-English Speakers

- Provide real-time interpretation services at meetings and outreach events
- Translate all materials, applications, deferral forms, and program instructions into multiple languages.
- Offer interpretation services for RI EWG meetings to make meetings more accessible for non-English speaking residents and members. GHHI will look to include interpretation services (if needed) on future RI EWG members via Zoom/Microsoft Teams.

4. Launch Centralized Outreach Calendar and Public RI EWG website

- A centralized website can streamline communication, increase transparency, and provide a single hub for meetings/presentations member updates, annual reports, public comments, and equity metrics reporting

Equitable Marketing Strategies: February 24th, 2025, Meeting

In Year 5, the RI EWG deepened its focus on a key topic over the past years - equitable marketing strategies. Equitable marketing strategies ensure community-specific engagement reaches all residents across Rhode Island. Rhode Island Energy shared updates on its 2024 residential marketing efforts, which targeted five equity communities including Providence, East Providence, Woonsocket, Pawtucket, and Central Falls. A key target audience was Spanish and Portuguese-speaking homeowners and renters. The campaigns included multilingual direct mail to over 116,000 customers

Home Energy Assessments:

Over 12,000 households across Rhode Island took action toward energy efficiency in 2024 by participating in Home Energy Assessments

and localized email outreach to over 92,000 households in April and 99,000 households in November, with subject lines tailored to specific towns and content offered in English, Spanish, and Portuguese. These efforts achieved impressive open rates (up to 47%), indicating strong engagement among targeted groups.

Rhode Island Energy staff also presented plans to expand these campaigns with real-life case studies drawn from each of the five priority communities to enhance relatability and trust. These stories, such as a story of a family from Central Falls and their multifamily unit energy upgrades and a Providence family's successful weatherization, will be featured across digital ads, emails, and printed materials. Multilingual social media ads will support this effort, along with QR codes for easy access to translated content. This approach underscores the value of personal storytelling and visual representation in building connections with underserved communities. Residents who may initially be hesitant are often more likely to engage after seeing a neighbor, family member, or friend successfully receive support from the program – and highlighting more of these stories can be an effective strategy.

In the meeting, RI EWG members explored marketing strategies for small businesses, with Rhode Island Energy highlighting tailored campaigns for Minority- and Women-Owned Business Enterprises (MWBEs), including partnerships with the RI Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, RI Black Business Association, and the Center for Women & Enterprise. Recent efforts included a successful clean energy workshop at Quonset Development Corporation and targeted campaigns during Black History Month, which led to dozens of small business energy efficiency audits and interest in promotional features.



Let's optimize energy use and style a brighter future.

When cold weather sets in, we'll make sure your business is equipped to keep heat in and energy costs down. With a no cost energy assessment, our experts uncover ways to manage your energy use and improve your bottom line. **plus, we'll pay up to 70% of weatherization costs** and determine if you're eligible for 0% financing. Schedule your convenient, no cost energy assessment today to get started. Rhode Island Energy. Let's make waves.



Visit rienergy.com/small-business or call 1-877-784-3709 to learn more.



These programs are funded by the energy efficiency charge on all customers' gas and electric bills in accordance with Rhode Island law. The program is administered through the Rhode Island Energy Efficiency Fund. The program is subject to funding availability. The program is subject to funding availability. The program is subject to funding availability.



Vamos optimizar el uso de energía y diseñemos un futuro más brillante.

Quando llegue el clima frío, nos aseguramos de que su negocio esté equipado para mantener el calor y reducir los costos de energía. Con una evaluación de energía sin costo, nuestros expertos descubren formas de manejar su uso de energía y mejorar su rentabilidad. Además, **pagaremos hasta el 70% de los costos de climatización** y determinaremos si es elegible para financiamiento al 0%. Obtenga hoy su evaluación energética conveniente y sin costo para comenzar. Rhode Island Energy. Hagamos olas.



Visite rienergy.com/small-business o llame al 1-877-784-3709 para obtener más información.



Estos programas se financian con el cargo por eficiencia energética que se aplica en las facturas de gas y electricidad de todos los clientes, de conformidad con las leyes de Rhode Island. Este programa se ejecuta con el financiamiento del Fondo de Eficiencia Energética de Rhode Island Energy para clientes elegibles en el territorio de Rhode Island.

Lina Bravo, Digital Learning & Outreach Coordinator at the Providence Public Library, emphasized how accessible language resources and trusted settings like libraries are key to building sustained engagement. Residents have been asking for this type of information for years, and these sessions are making a huge difference for community members. Ms. Bravo shared an experience about how the

Rhode Island Energy's Small Business Program Advertisement in Multiple Languages

Spanish-language support at a Landlord Session helped a ratepayer re-engage with a stalled application and complete an overdue electrical inspection. In addition, others highlighted the value of community radio, with Lina using her platform on La Mega 94.9 FM to promote programs in Spanish each month.

Members also shared ideas on using text messaging for higher engagement, developing contractor training to turn assessors into program ambassadors, and compensating families featured in marketing materials. Rhode Island Energy acknowledged these suggestions, noting current efforts to build case study pipelines, update tracking systems, and explore customer incentives. Finally, RI EWG members stressed the importance of tracking and reporting on marketing outcomes, including how many audits result from targeted outreach, what barriers are identified, and how they are resolved. These metrics are key for assessing Rhode Island Energy's marketing efforts to see if they effectively reach and benefit underserved communities. RI EWG members acknowledge that while this level of tracking may be challenging, it is key to understanding which outreach strategies are truly moving the needle with increased participation.

Equitable Marketing Strategies Recommendations:

RI EWG members recognize the improvements made over the last year as Rhode Island Energy is committed to meaningfully engaging customers in their communities. New and improved engagement requires tailored and community-informed marketing to be effective. Whether reaching a first-time participant or reconnecting with someone previously engaged, the RI EWG encourages Rhode Island Energy to continue to focus on building trust and increasing awareness of energy efficiency programs across all communities. A key priority is ensuring that historically underserved populations, including renters, non-English speakers, and small businesses, have equitable access to information and services.

Note: Additional stakeholder feedback that complements or expands on the recommendations below can be found in the "Additional Feedback" section at the end of this report.

RI EWG members recommended Rhode Island Energy:

1) Feature Community-Based Storytelling Across All Channels

- Highlight real customer stories in case studies across print, digital, and in-person outreach, focusing on diverse lived experiences (e.g., renters, small business owners, multigenerational households, immigrants). This will humanize the data and highlight program impact beyond just the numbers. In addition, RI EWG members suggest launching a short video series featuring bilingual customer testimonials, amplified through partnerships with local, trusted community champions and advocates.

2) Pilot Multilingual Text Messaging Campaigns

- Launch opt-in campaigns using SMS/MMS in English, Spanish, and Portuguese, with referral links, deadline alerts, and quick reply Q&A options. Through collaborating with community partners, this can help promote opt-ins through community events and workshops.

3) Compensate Community Members Featured in Campaigns

- Provide stipends or incentives for families and small businesses featured in Rhode Island Energy's marketing campaigns to reflect their time and lived expertise.

4) Build a Contractor & Assessor Ambassador Program

- Compensate and train assessors and contractors to act as informal program ambassadors by equipping them with culturally relevant talking points, translated materials, and testimonials to share with customers during site visits.

5) Expand In-Person Presence in Trusted Community Settings

- Continue outreach at libraries, local events, and job fairs, especially in partnership with community radio, ESL programs, faith-based networks, and ethnic grocery stores. The Rhode Island Energy Landlord Sessions have continued to increase awareness of available energy efficiency programs and incentives in underserved communities. Ensure all in-person events are tabled with bilingual staff and digital sign-up stations.

6) Track & Report on Outreach/Marketing Event Outcomes

- This includes collecting data on the number of audits initiated as a result of targeted outreach events, identifying common barriers for participation, and documenting the strategies used to overcome those barriers.

Removing Participation Barriers: March 24th, 2025, Meeting

This meeting kicked off with a RI EWG Member Spotlight from Kevin Drumm from the University of Rhode Island's Cooperative Extension to share about the new [Efficient Housing for All Community of Practice \(EHACoP\)](#). The EHACoP is an Energy Efficiency Council-funded collaborative initiative focused on increasing participation and access to energy efficiency programs among low-income and historically non-participating communities. Introduced at the March 2025 HEZ Learning Community Event, the EHACoP engaged 55 diverse participants, including community health workers, energy auditors, tenants, homeowners, students, and social service professionals in building shared understanding around energy efficiency and generating actionable solutions.

The EHACoP aims to create a safe, inclusive space for Rhode Islanders to explore barriers to participation in energy efficiency programs, co-develop solutions, and ultimately increase program uptake. Through in-person and virtual sessions, participants will identify and prioritize a comprehensive list of access barriers, ranging from technical (e.g., mold, knob-and-tube wiring) to social (e.g., lack of time or awareness). The process will culminate in a final report to be shared at a future HEZ Learning Community Event. While EHACoP and the RI EWG share similar goals, they differ in structure and scope. EHACoP is a time-limited, grassroots initiative generating community-led recommendations for state-level actors, while the RI EWG is an ongoing working group focused on integrating and improving equity into Rhode Island Energy's planning and delivery of its energy efficiency programs. Both groups expressed interest in aligning efforts and sharing findings to maximize impact and avoid duplication.

On the topic of removing participation barriers, the RI EWG invited Bert Cooper, GHHI's Vice President of State & Local Strategic Services, to discuss GHHI's Whole House Pilot in Trenton, NJ, where the goal of the pilot is to address pre-weatherization barriers and develop a systemic solution to address those barriers. In collaboration with the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities and Comfort Partners (New Jersey's income-eligible rate payer funded weatherization program), GHHI New Jersey is piloting a program to address pre-weatherization barriers, including mold, moisture intrusion, knob and tube wiring, asbestos, pests, etc. by coordinating health and safety interventions before re-enrollment in weatherization and energy efficiency services. Key elements of the Trenton pilot include baseline home assessments, healthy homes, and weatherization education, and layered funding from the U.S. Department of Energy and state ARPA funds to perform health and safety interventions in eligible households. GHHI New Jersey is also rolling out a new asthma education program to support the whole-home model.

[GHHI's Whole-House + Electrification Playbook](#)

GHHI has developed a Whole House + Electrification Playbook and offers technical support to local entities seeking to implement similar models, access federal funding, and build sustainable cross-sector partnerships. The Playbook is a healthy housing resource informed by our more than 30 years of experience implementing healthy housing programs, training healthy housing implementers, and evaluating the efficacy of healthy housing interventions. The materials included in this Playbook are intended to help state and local-level implementers of healthy housing and energy efficiency programs learn how to integrate additional measures into their programs to maximize health, safety, and energy benefits for low-income residential households using a “one-stop shop” approach to deliver timely services and cost-efficient results.

Mr. Cooper explained that GHHI Rhode Island is applying learnings from its work in Trenton to implement a similar model in Providence through a \$2 million HUD Healthy Homes Production grant funded through the Office of Housing & Urban Development (HUD). In December 2024, GHHI Rhode Island entered a partnership with the Community Action Partnership of Providence County (CAPP), where deferred homes from its Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) are referred by CAPP to GHHI to address health and safety barriers that resulted in the unit being deferred from CAPP’s weatherization program. Once barriers are addressed, homes are returned for weatherization services. This program supports income-eligible residents (under 80% AMI) and aligns directly with RI EWG’s goal of reducing systemic access barriers to energy efficiency by addressing pre-weatherization barriers.

The RI EWG and initiatives like the Efficient Housing for All Community of Practice are making meaningful strides toward increasing equity, access, and participation in Rhode Island’s suite of energy efficiency programs. The EWG’s diverse membership and open, community-led conversations are uncovering a broad range of barriers, from technical and structural issues to time, awareness, and trust that limit program participation, especially among low-income and historically underserved residents. Initiatives like GHHI’s Whole House model and partnership with CAPP demonstrate the importance of integrating health, safety, and energy interventions, while also highlighting the critical need for coordinated funding and streamlined pathways for residents.

Removing Participation Barriers Recommendations:

Moving forward, continued alignment between the RI EWG, EHACoP, and community-based partners will be essential to developing comprehensive, equity-driven solutions. RI EWG members recommend that Rhode Island Energy and its partners support flexible, layered funding approaches, expand electrification-readiness efforts, and adopt collaborative models to eliminate pre-weatherization barriers. To note, there are also recommendations related to tracking and reporting on these efforts in the Equity Metrics section. **Note:** Additional stakeholder feedback that complements or expands on the recommendations below can be found in the “Additional Feedback” section at the end of this report.

RI EWG members recommended Rhode Island Energy:

1. Layer Funding Sources to Address Pre-Weatherization Barriers

- This includes promoting funding opportunities like HUD’s Lead Hazard Reduction Grant Program, Healthy Homes Production Grant Program and Healthy Homes & Weatherization Cooperation Demonstration Program. These opportunities allow cities, towns, and non-profits to submit proposals that provide funding to eligible applicants to address home health and safety hazards such as lead, mold, asbestos, pests, and knob

and tube wiring in low-income homes and support innovative partnerships that integrate weatherization services with health and safety improvements.

2. Coordinate with EHACoP on Shared Barriers and Solutions

- The RI EWG and EHACoP should work collaboratively to share learnings, best practices, and impactful solutions to ensure that no household is left behind. Additionally, consider funding or scaling successful EHACoP solutions, particularly those related to outreach, education, and customer experience improvements.

3. Increase Funding for CAP Agencies

- By providing more funding to CAP Agencies, this can improve their capacity to support residents by addressing pre-weatherization barriers and enhancing capacity for tracking and reporting.

Equitable Workforce Development: April 28th, 2025, Meeting

This meeting kicked off with a slate of RI EWG Member Spotlights, beginning with Cindy Vargas, Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Manager at PPL Corporation. As part of Rhode Island Energy's broader commitment to equity and workforce development, Cindy highlighted several initiatives aimed at increasing awareness of utility careers among underrepresented communities. In partnership with the Community College of Rhode Island (CCRI), the Introduction to Utilities (Utility 101) program was launched. The program is a free, one-day course designed to introduce residents to the utility industry, including gas, electric, and renewable energy sectors, while outlining accessible career pathways. The program targets individuals with a high school diploma or GED and requires no prior experience, making it ideal for recent graduates or adults seeking a career change. Additionally, Rhode Island Energy has been actively engaging with local high schools and middle schools, including Davies, Central Falls, and West Warwick, to spark early interest in energy careers and broaden participation in the energy workforce pipeline.

Margarita Robledo from the Rhode Island Builders Association (RIBA) shared efforts focused on advancing equitable workforce development within the residential construction sector. RIBA supports housing and economic growth by offering leadership, education, and training to contractors, with a strong emphasis on expanding opportunities for Latino and minority-owned businesses. Through programs like the Latino-Female Based Enterprises Program and the Minority Business Accelerator, RIBA helps contractors build skills, access market opportunities, and maintain necessary certifications. To improve diversity and impact, RIBA emphasizes multilingual training, expanded outreach, and stronger data tracking of training outcomes. Recommendations include integrating workforce development into license renewal processes, improving access to funding and certification resources, and aligning with Whole-House models to connect contractors with broader housing, health, and energy efficiency goals.

Steve Chybowsky, Chief of Program Development at the Rhode Island Office of Energy Resources (RI OER), then shared updates on the Home Electrification & Appliance Rebate (HEAR) Program. The HEAR Program will provide \$31.8 million in funding to support energy efficiency and electrification upgrades in low- and moderate-income households from September 2024 through 2031. The program will offer two tracks, one for income-eligible residents managed through the state's CAP agencies and currently being offered now, and a second for moderate-income households expected to launch later this year. Upgrades covered under the program include items such as induction cooktops, electric ovens, heat pump clothes dryers, and other efficient appliances, with no out-of-pocket costs for participants. RI OER also emphasized the need for licensed electricians, plumbers, and pipefitters to participate in the program and outlined key requirements, including state registration, insurance, permitting, and invoicing procedures. Contractors interested in participating are encouraged to reach out directly to RI

OER to begin the onboarding process. Additionally, RI OER has developed a vetted list of EnergyStar-certified appliances and pricing to help contractors and CAP agencies keep project costs within allowable limits. The program highlights the opportunity for greater engagement of local and minority contractors and calls for clear communication pathways and ongoing technical support to ensure effective implementation.

Lastly, Karen Verrengia of CLEAResult highlighted critical workforce challenges and opportunities in Rhode Island's energy efficiency sector. Key hiring gaps persist in roles such as energy auditors, insulators, and tradespeople, positions that are consistently difficult to fill across RISE and local Community Action Programs. To better understand and respond to these trends, stakeholders were encouraged to reference several industry reports, including studies from [Cadeo](#), [BW Research](#), [Peregrine Energy Group](#), and others. Karen also emphasized the need for stronger collaboration across existing Rhode Island training and workforce development programs to streamline efforts and reduce duplication. She also suggested that Rhode Island could benefit from replicating successful out-of-state training models like [Massachusetts' Green Jobs Academy](#).

During the discussion, RI EWG members discussed opportunities to link rebate programs with workforce training initiatives, highlighting an upcoming presentation between RIBA and Rhode Island Energy as a key step toward engaging more contractors in delivering federal rebates. RI EWG members also noted the importance of paid internships and flexible training schedules to support career transitions, especially for families who cannot afford unpaid positions. Various existing programs, such as the [Residential Construction Workforce Partnership \(RCWP\)](#) and the [Clean Energy Internship Program](#), were noted for their role in offering accessible training and paid opportunities in energy efficiency and clean energy fields. The need to replicate successful training models (like Philadelphia's Energy Coordinating Agency) and to enhance connections between students, contractors, and job placements was also stressed. Tabling at high school and college career fairs can increase visibility into energy efficiency careers among the younger generations. Finally, RI EWG members called for improved coordination and communication among the many workforce development stakeholders in Rhode Island to ensure aligned efforts and maximize impact, including Climate Jobs RI, the Department of Labor & Transportation (which runs the Green Energy Workforce Advisory Committee), Skills for RI's Future, Prepare RI's Internship Program, etc.).

Equitable Workforce Development Recommendations:

To continue to build on equity efforts, RI EWG members emphasized the need to strengthen coordination between workforce training programs and rebate implementation efforts, ensuring that local, minority, and entry-level workers can access opportunities created by clean energy and energy efficiency investments. Recommendations included expanding paid internships, aligning training with licensing and certification pathways, and replicating successful workforce models to meet growing demand for skilled labor in energy efficiency and electrification sectors. **Note:** Additional stakeholder feedback that complements or expands on the recommendations below can be found in the "Additional Feedback" section at the end of this report.

RI EWG members recommended Rhode Island Energy:

1. Expand Multilingual Training and Outreach for Diverse Contractors

- Invest in and expand multilingual contractor training programs to better engage non-English speaking contractors, especially in high-demand trades like HVAC and weatherization. Increased targeted outreach and marketing for existing contractor support can raise awareness among diverse and underrepresented businesses.

- Promote access to licensing and certification pathways in multiple languages
- 2. Establish Clear Workforce Development Metrics**
 - Implement quarterly tracking and public reporting of contractor recruitment, training participation, and retention, disaggregated by race, ethnicity, language, and business size. In addition, develop and publish case studies highlighting success stories from minority contractors to inform future training strategies.
- 3. Continue to Leverage Integrated Service Delivery Models**
 - Continuing to collaborate with programs such as the Rhode Island Builders Association (RIBA), Residential Construction Workforce Partnership (RCWP) and other workforce development and training organizations to strengthen workforce pipelines.
 - As the HEAR Program rolls out, Rhode Island Energy and RI OER should prioritize recruiting contractors trained through RIBA's Minority Business Accelerator and bilingual training programs, helping to ensure diverse and qualified participation. Leveraging these partnerships can align home health, energy efficiency, and electrification goals while supporting economic opportunity and expanding access for MWBEs across the state.
 - Create a feedback loop between program administrators and training providers to ensure that workforce training aligns with market demands. Identify and promote high-demand career pathways within the energy efficiency sector to inform training development and better prepare trainees for in-demand careers.
- 4. Improve Access to Contractor Resources & Workforce Opportunities (New Entrants/Career Change)**
 - Maintain a centralized and regularly updated resource hub both for contractors and new workforce entrants that includes funding opportunities, licensing information, technical assistance, job/internship/apprenticeship openings, and certification pathways.
 - Expand access to paid internships, apprenticeships, and job shadowing programs through partnerships with high schools, trade schools, and programs like PrepareRI. This can also include supporting residents by offering paid training opportunities that include wraparound supports such as childcare, transportation, and stipends.

Energy Efficiency Equity Metrics: June 23rd, 2025, Meeting

This meeting's topic of discussion was energy efficiency equity metrics and kicked off with the Rhode Island Energy team presenting on their 2024 full-year review of tracked energy efficiency equity metrics (snapshot below). This process of establishing baseline data will allow for better tracking of progress over time and help inform future program improvements and strategies. The presentation highlighted key trends in participation, pre-weatherization barriers, and program access across different customer groups. The discussion that followed focused on how to better support Community Action Program (CAP) agencies, improve data tracking and sharing, and ensure that programs are meeting communities where they are, both through stronger relationships and more meaningful data.

Key 2024 Year End Equity Metrics Snapshot

- 1) Single Family Program (Market Rate): 27% of all energy audits conducted in the Single Family Program were conducted in Environmental Justice (EJ) communities. Of those audits in EJ communities, 25% proceeded to weatherization interventions.
- 2) Single Family Program (Income Eligible): In Q4 2024, the Single Family Program saw a 38% increase in audits completed compared to Q3 2024, with 49% of households in EJ communities. Completed weatherizations tripled, including 213 weatherization projects in EJ communities
- 3) Multifamily Program: Throughout 2024, 52% of audits completed were conducted in EJ communities, with 18% moving on to getting weatherized
- 4) Small/Micro Businesses: Throughout 2024, 787 small businesses participated in the Direct Install Program, with 37% of them located in EJ communities
- 5) Pre-Weatherization Barriers (PWBs): Throughout 2024, among the 613 total deferrals in the Income Eligible Single Family Program, 281 households were identified to have PWBs. Top barriers include knob & tube wiring, mold & moisture issues, carbon monoxide, and combustion hazards.

As highlighted above, Rhode Island Energy revealed a range of equity impacts across the various program types. Notably, the Income Eligible Single Family Program showed strong 2024 Q4 improvements, with audits increasing by 38% with 49% of those audits occurring in EJ communities. In addition, completed weatherization projects in this category tripled from Q3 to Q4. The Multifamily Program completed 52% of audits in EJ areas, although only 18% of those assessments resulted in completed weatherization projects.

A major focus of the discussion was pre-weatherization barriers (PWBs). Of 613 deferrals in the Income Eligible Single Family Program, 281 were due to PWBs, most commonly knob & tube wiring, mold/moisture, and combustion hazards. Throughout the discussion, RI EWG members agreed on the need to break out deferral data by region and CAP agency and to track how many of these barriers are eventually resolved and enrolled back to the weatherization program.

In addition, RI EWG members emphasized that simply tracking numbers is not enough, understanding who is reached and what obstacles they face is critical to improving program participation rates. Suggestions included differentiating metrics by geography, customer type, and program track (e.g., market rate vs. income eligible multifamily). EWG members also proposed adding metrics such as conversion rates, unit counts, and deferrals resolved to offer more meaningful insights and provide a fuller picture of program reach, not just participation. Improved metrics will allow EWG members and Rhode Island Energy to pinpoint underserved areas and tailor actionable recommendations and solutions. For example, tracking how many audits lead to completed weatherization upgrades can highlight drop-off points in customer journeys, while deferral resolution rates can signal progress in overcoming PWBs across CAP agencies.

Another key part of discussion focused on data tracking. Rhode Island Energy staff are working to improve clarity and standardization between their systems, particularly by reporting on the resolution of deferrals using DHS data for the Income Eligible Programs. In the interim, the group suggested basic reporting tools to monitor deferrals and remediation progress across market rate and income eligible programs.

Broader themes of outreach, capacity building, and community engagement were also central to the discussion. RI EWG members noted that CAP agencies continue to face persistent challenges related to funding and staffing, which limit their ability to address pre-weatherization barriers. Participants emphasized the need to strengthen support for these agencies. Promising outreach models, such as the landlord sessions with the Providence Public Library, were highlighted as key opportunities for scaling across the state. Trust, collaboration, and meeting communities where they are were described as essential to effective engagement. Understanding both hard barriers (like knob-and-tube wiring or mold) and soft barriers (such as a tenant unwilling to participate) requires flexibility and a long-term commitment to partnership with the communities these programs aim to serve.

What are Environmental Justice (EJ) Communities?

Designated by RI DEM, many areas across the state are disproportionately impacted by environmental and public health risks, often facing higher exposure to pollution, limited access to clean air and water, and other hazards due to historic and systemic inequities.

“Environmental Justice Focus Area” is a census tract that meets one or more of the following criteria:

- Annual median household income is not more than that 65% of the statewide annual median household income
- Minority population is equal to or greater than 40% of the population
- 25% or more of the households lack English language proficiency
- Minorities comprise 25% or more of the population and the annual median household income of the municipality in the proposed area does not exceed 150% of the statewide annual median household income

[Click Here](#) to check if a property is in an EJ Community

Energy Efficiency Equity Metrics Discussion Recommendations:

To strengthen decision making, RI EWG members emphasized the need for improved tracking and reporting of program data. In addition, members also recommended including leaders from all the CAP Agencies in discussions around data to ensure that tracking tools and data reflect real-world conditions and are useful for agencies delivering these services across the state. To that end, Rhode Island Energy should pursue the following strategies in 2026.

1. Disaggregate Equity Metrics for Deeper Insight

- RI EWG members recommend breaking down the equity metrics data further by geography (e.g., rural vs urban), customer type (e.g., renter vs homeowner and other demographics), and program track (e.g., market rate vs. income-eligible) to generate more actionable insights. This includes the total number of individual units for Multifamily Program participants, rather than only reporting just building count

2. Track and Report on Pre-Weatherization Barriers

- This includes deferrals that later result in weatherization (e.g., resolved barriers), by program type and by CAP and/or region. While full data standardization discussions are in progress, develop a basic interim reporting tool to track deferral rates and barriers from the Income Eligible program to better allow for data analysis between Income Eligible and Market Rate Programs

3. Add Tracking & Reporting on Workforce Diversity

- Rhode Island Energy have not yet finalized the workforce development metrics and will continue to work with the PPL Supplier DEI team in 2026 to explore what is possible

Additional Feedback

In August, RI EWG members were able to review and provide additional feedback, comments, and priorities on the final report of recommendations and strategies. The following feedback emerged from member input during the August 25th meeting:

- 1) Highlight Grant Opportunities for Community Engagement to Support Energy Efficiency Outreach Efforts
 - a. By identifying and promoting available grant opportunities (federal, state, and philanthropic), Rhode Island Energy can work with other partners to pursue additional funding to support local outreach. This can include grant writing, program development and planning. These funds can be used to engage and resource community-based organizations, municipalities, and other trusted messengers to expand education and awareness around energy efficiency programs. Some examples include:
 - i. [Rhode Island Energy](#)
 - ii. [Office of Community Engagement | RI Department of Labor & Training](#)
 - iii. [RI Foundation | Community Priority Grants](#)
 - iv. [Papitto Opportunity Connection](#)
 - v. [RI Agricultural Energy Program](#)
- 2) Expand Community Outreach Through “Energy Expos”
 - a. Develop Community-Focused Energy Expos: RI EWG members recommended exploring an additional “Energy Expo” outreach series to complement existing RIE events like the Customer Expos and Landlord Sessions. These sessions would focus on one or two specific energy efficiency programs at a time and be co-hosted by RIE, the RI Office of Energy Resources (RI OER), and local community based organizations (CBOs). Similar to the community engagement strategy used for the Rhode Island Affordable Solar for All (ASAP) program, these events would provide accessible, targeted information to residents, with support for translation and interpretation (e.g., Spanish, Portuguese and Cape Verdean Creole).
 - b. Lower Barriers and Leverage Existing Community Networks: To ensure broad and equitable participation, members suggested using available grant funding to address common barriers such as transportation, childcare, food, and stipends. RIE and OER could partner with CBOs to integrate these expos into their existing outreach efforts. This would allow outreach efforts to tap into trusted community networks and reach residents more effectively.
 - c. Expand & Engage New Community-Based Organizations: Members recommended creating a list of potential new community-based organizations (CBOs) to partner with, using referrals from current partners to ensure trusted connections. Suggested CBOs include the [Racial and Environmental Justice Committee \(REJC\)](#), the [George Wiley Center](#), and [Roots2Empower](#). Expanding the network of partners can enhance outreach and engagement in underserved communities. This can also apply to improved relationships with municipalities, where RIE can work with partners like the League of Cities and Towns for improved municipal engagement.
- 3) Language Accessibility in Program Delivery
 - a. To improve accessibility for non-English speakers, members recommended ensuring interpreter services are available during energy assessments and installation processes.

Clear communication throughout each stage is essential for building trust and ensuring informed decision-making.

- 4) Coordination Among Key Partners for Energy Advocate Efforts:
 - a. URI's Cooperative Extension team is working with the Energy Efficiency Council to build on and complement existing energy outreach efforts in Rhode Island, using successful models from Massachusetts and other states. This aligns closely with RIE's Energy Advocate strategy. A coordinated conversation between RIE, the EEC, and URI was recommended to align goals, avoid duplication, and create efficiencies in managing outreach efforts while maximizing impact.
- 5) Strengthen Workforce Development Tracking with Both Metrics and Qualitative Insights:
 - a. A RI EWG member emphasized the importance of pairing measurable outcomes (such as the number of people trained, placed in jobs, etc.) with more qualitative reporting that captures how well the workforce development strategies are actually working over time. This might include stories of participant experiences, feedback from employers, or barriers encountered by job seekers - these provide a fuller picture of impact and not just what is being done.
- 6) Explore Alternative Funding Sources Beyond Ratepayer Dollars for Workforce Development:
 - a. RI EWG members also emphasized that funding doesn't always need to come from ratepayers and shouldn't be seen as a barrier. If Rhode Island Energy identifies clear workforce gaps within energy efficiency trades, they should consider partnering with workforce development organizations, such as Building Futures, Real Jobs RI, and Skills for RI's Future, and support them in applying for grants.
- 7) Improvements to Equity Metrics to Better Track Progress:
 - a. RI EWG members noted that some metrics use raw numbers instead of participation rates or percentages, which makes it hard to measure and track progress over time. For example, simply reporting the number of small businesses in EJ vs. non-EJ communities doesn't show whether participation is proportional. Using percentages or rates would better reflect equitable outcomes in equity metric reporting.

During the discussion, Rhode Island Energy emphasized the importance of RI EWG members taking a more proactive role. They encouraged members to think about the people or groups they are already working with and identify opportunities where Rhode Island Energy may not be present. Members can support outreach by attending community events, sharing flyers or materials, and reporting back to the group with specific examples, such as conversations with residents or challenges identified. URI's Cooperative Extension team also shared that they have collected information on where residents go for trusted information in their communities from their Community of Practice, which further highlights the need for closer collaboration between URI, the EEC, and Rhode Island Energy.

Prioritization Exercise Results

To help guide planning for Rhode Island Energy, EWG members were asked to complete a ranking form to prioritize the key recommendations and strategies across the main theme areas. Ten members submitted responses, identifying which actions they believe are most impactful and essential to pursue first. This will help ensure that limited resources are directed toward strategies that will have the greatest impact. The results of the ranking poll are below:

Community Engagement & Outreach

- 1) Continue to Strengthen Partnerships with Local Organizations & Communities
- 2) Enhance Clarity & Transparency of Program Offerings
- 3) Improve Accessibility for Non-English Speakers
- 4) Launch Centralized Outreach Calendar and RI EWG website

Equitable Marketing Strategies

- 1) Expand In-Person Presence in Trusted Community Settings
- 2) Feature Community-Based Storytelling Across All Channels
- 3) Track & Report on Outreach/Marketing Event Outcomes
- 4) Build a Contractor & Assessor Ambassador Program
- 5) Pilot Multilingual Text Messaging Campaigns
- 6) Compensate Community Members Featured in Campaigns

Removing Participation Barriers

- 1) Coordinate with the Efficient Housing for All Community of Practice (EHACoP) on Shared Barriers and Solutions
- 2) Layer Funding Sources to Address Pre-Weatherization Barriers
- 3) Increase Funding for CAP Agencies

Equitable Workforce Development

- 1) Expand Multilingual Training and Outreach for Diverse Contractors
- 2) Establish Clear Workforce Development Metrics
- 3) Improve Access to Contractor Resources & Workforce Opportunities (New Entrants/Career Change)
- 4) Continuing to Leverage Integrated Service Delivery Models

Energy Efficiency Equity Metrics

- 1) Track and Report on Pre-Weatherization Barriers
- 2) Disaggregate Equity Metrics for Deeper Insight
- 3) Add Tracking and Reporting for Workforce Diversity

The prioritization exercise results highlight where RI EWG members believe the most immediate and meaningful impact can be made. Across the key theme areas, RI EWG members elevated strategies that strengthen relationships with trusted local organizations, increase in-person and multilingual engagement, and address participation barriers, such as pre-weatherization issues that prevent residents from participating in energy efficiency and weatherization programs. In the workforce development category, members emphasized the need to make contractor training and resources more accessible to underrepresented groups, while also calling for clearer metrics to track and evaluate progress.

Lastly, the emphasis on disaggregated data and barrier tracking in the equity metrics section reflects a growing interest in not just measuring participation, but understanding who is benefiting and where gaps still exist. In all, the rankings highlight a shift toward more community-centered and data-informed approaches to improving equity in Rhode Island Energy's energy efficiency programs.

Conclusion & Future Direction

As Rhode Island Energy and the RI Equity Working Group enter Year 5 of this collaborative effort, 2025 marks a pivotal milestone in advancing equity within its energy efficiency programs. Building on years of

foundational work, this year saw Rhode Island Energy begin publicly reporting on equity related metrics outlined in previous annual reports, translating recommendations into measurable action, and greater transparency. These efforts have enhanced understanding of participation barriers and program outcomes, ensuring strategies are better aligned with the diverse needs of Rhode Island's communities.

By further strengthening its role as a community-focused meeting collaborative, the RI EWG actively integrates the perspectives of community members, advocates, and experts in the field to ensure that data tracking systems and program designs are informed by people with lived experiences and on-the-ground efforts. The RI EWG 2025 recommendations reflect a clear focus on dismantling key participant barriers, enhancing targeted outreach and marketing, and advancing equitable workforce development.

Looking ahead to 2026, the emphasis will be on deepening the application of equity metrics to inform program improvements and funding decisions, expanding community engagement through trusted partnerships and investments, and increasing support for energy efficiency program administrators and workforce pipelines. Rhode Island Energy and the RI EWG remain dedicated to transparent, data-driven discussions that keep equity at the forefront of its energy efficiency programs, ensuring impact for underserved communities across Rhode Island.

Acknowledgements

The Green & Healthy Homes Initiative (GHHI) would like to thank:

- EWG members for their time, passion, and commitment to this work.
- The Rhode Island advocates that have continuously pushed the Company to develop, implement, and deliver their energy efficiency programs with a focus on equity.
- The Company for co-hosting the RI Equity Working Group.
- Each of the EWG & Spotlight Members for their participation and engagement.

Appendix

About GHHI

The Green & Healthy Homes Initiative (GHHI), a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, is the nation's largest and most influential Healthy Housing leader with over three decades of proven accomplishments in the advancement of programs, policies, and practices to eradicate childhood lead poisoning and create a healthier housing stock for all Americans. GHHI was founded in Baltimore in 1986 as Parents Against Lead ("PAL") in response to the twin tragedies of an unhealthy housing stock and poisoned children. Since that time, the scope of GHHI's work has grown locally and nationally to encompass the design, development and implementation of comprehensive and effective services and programs to create lead safe, healthy and energy efficient housing conditions for low-income communities of color across the United States. Over the course of its work, GHHI has shown a unique acumen for leveraging its stellar direct service programs into concrete policy change and programming at the local, state and federal level – directly contributing to the prevention of childhood lead poisoning, asthma and injury – while creating an increasing stock of affordable, energy efficient, and sustainable homes.

The Green and Healthy Homes Initiative – Rhode Island (GHHI-RI) is a Providence based nonprofit subsidiary corporation of GHHI that has worked to advance lead hazard control and healthy housing in Rhode Island for the past 15 years. Current GHHI-RI activities include: implementing the HUD funded Healthy Providence Healthy Homes program which provides healthy housing assessment, education, and remediation services to improve outcomes for pediatric asthma patients and to resolve pre weatherization barriers that prevent low income households from participating in weatherization and

energy efficiency programs; supporting HUD funded lead paint remediation/abatement programs at the City of Providence and statewide via Rhode Island Housing; and facilitating the Rhode Island Energy Equity Working Group to improve the delivery of energy efficiency programs in low income communities around the state.

EWG Guidelines & Expectations

Below are the guidelines and expectations that guided each EWG meeting. Meeting attendees shall:

- Make every attempt to attend every meeting on time
- Share the oxygen and ensure that all participants who wish to have an opportunity to speak are afforded a chance to do so
- Listen to other points of view and try to understand differing viewpoints and other interests
- Maintain a focus on collaboration and solutions
- Share information openly and respectfully
- Remain flexible and open-minded
- Review meeting notes and documents before the next meeting
- Respect the privacy of the meeting
- What is said during meetings is important, but who said it is not
- Make sure information given is accurate

2024 Year 4 RI EWG Recommendations

The Rhode Island Energy 2025 Annual Plan should build upon the adopted recommendations from previous years, ensuring that progress is sustained and that prior work is not set aside. As Rhode Island Energy looks ahead, it is essential that the Plan continues to advance key equity priorities, such as multi-family housing, the development and tracking of equity metrics, and other critical areas previously identified by the RI EWG and other stakeholders. The following is a list of recommendations from the 2024 Year 4 RI EWG that remain relevant and impactful. Even if certain items cannot be prioritized in the 2026 program year, Rhode Island Energy should explicitly document them and commit to revisiting these recommendations in future planning cycles.

1. Incorporate Prior Recommendations & Strategies

- **Strategically Align, Braid, & Leverage Additional Healthy Homes, Lead Hazard Control, and other programs to Address Pre-Weatherization Deferral:** The Company should continue to work with partners, including GHHI, to address pre-weatherization barriers. GHHI's whole-home strategy can significantly support in addressing pre-weatherization barriers that lead to deferrals including mold/mildew, carbon monoxide, and inoperable heating systems.
- **Increase Targeted Support for Small and Micro Businesses:** Implement targeted outreach strategies and create a Customer Advocate role within Rhode Island Energy specifically for small and micro businesses. Expand efforts in underserved communities such as Providence, Central Falls, and Pawtucket through initiatives like the Main Street efforts.
- **Provide Transparency in Planned and Actual Spending on Equity-Related Efforts:** Compile, provide, and report information on spending on equity efforts for renters, LMI customers, language access, low-income customers, small/microbusinesses, and workforce diversity.

2. Community Outreach & Education

- **Enhance Outreach & Education Efforts:** Leverage upcoming events such as the Health Equity Zone (HEZ) Learning Community Events and the University of Rhode Island's Plugged into Energy Research Lecture Series, as strategic platforms to enhance outreach and increase participation across the Company's energy efficiency programs. By focusing these

opportunities on engaging community-based workers, advocates, and residents, it will actively promote energy efficiency programs, increase awareness, and drive participation, especially in underserved and underrepresented communities

- **Strengthen Support & Collaboration w/ Community-Based Organizations (CBO):** To enhance collaboration with community organizations, it is critical to increase the funding available for community organizations to support energy efficiency outreach and education. RI EWG members suggested that the Company provide direct financial commitments in addition to the funding received by the EEC and rate-payer funds. By significantly boosting financial support for organizations supporting energy efficiency outreach and marketing, similar to Massachusetts' Community First Partnership Program, the Company can elevate its capacity to engage and educate residents to increase participation in its programs.
- **Utilize URI Cooperative Extension's Housing Community of Practice & Integrate Energy Efficiency into Health Initiatives:** Collaborate with the Efficient Housing for all Community of Practice with URI's Extension Energy Literacy Initiative to address key issues outlined in the RI EWG Final Reports. This community will serve as a forum for discussing energy efficiency alongside related housing concerns such as affordability, energy burden, health and safety, accessibility, and language barriers.

3. Workforce Training & Resource Development

- **Continue to Expand Language Accessibility:** Develop a language access plan and support existing initiatives like CLEAResult's development of a Spanish curriculum for the 2024 IECC Update trainings. Ensure these resources are widely accessible to Spanish-speaking contractors and builders to enhance their understanding of energy codes and efficiency measures. This includes more than just Spanish translation (e.g., Khmer, Portuguese, Creole, etc.) and should include end-to-end language support to support residents and businesses.
- **Strengthen Partnership with Builders and Contractors:** Collaborate closely with organizations like RIBA and CLEAResult to facilitate trainings that educate builders and other trades people on building science and energy efficiency requirements. Continue to focus on working with Minority- and Women-Owned Business Enterprises (MWBEs) to ensure inclusive participation in available training opportunities. This will help foster a supportive environment where builders and contractors can adopt energy efficiency practices seamlessly into their work.