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COLLEGE OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND LIFE SCIENCES  
COOPERATIVE EXTENSION  
ENERGY LITERACY INITIATIVE



EFFICIENT HOUSING FOR ALL  
COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

April - July 2025



# Executive Summary

The 2025 Efficient Housing for All Community of Practice (EHACoP) was a collaborative initiative designed to improve access to energy efficiency programs for income-eligible households across Rhode Island. Funded by the Rhode Island Energy Efficiency Council (EEC) and facilitated by the University of Rhode Island Cooperative Extension Energy Literacy Initiative (CEELI), the EHACoP convened residents, community health workers, public health professionals, and energy experts over six sessions from April to July 2025.

The EHACoP model emphasized peer learning, trust-building, and cross-sector collaboration. Sessions combined technical education on energy literacy with interactive discussions, role-playing, and reflection. All meetings were bilingual (English and Spanish), with interpretation and translated materials ensuring full accessibility. Participants were also offered the opportunity to complete Home Energy Assessments (HEAs) with financial incentives, and collectively helped to shape the development of tools for future engagement around energy efficiency on Rhode Island.

Key findings include:

- **Potential for Systems Change:** Substantial work has been completed to improve the structure of Rhode Island's energy efficiency programs and efforts have been made to engage community members. However, in order for these programs to reach all residents, an emphasis must be placed on relational change.
- **Participation and Engagement:** Residents and community-based workers made up 90% of active participants, with nearly half attending three or more sessions. In-person meetings proved more effective than virtual sessions for building relationships.
- **Learning and Behavior Change:** Survey data and participant anecdotes indicated increases in knowledge, stronger trust in the utility, and early evidence of participants sharing information with their communities. However, knowledge and incentives alone were not sufficient to overcome systemic barriers to home energy assessment participation.
- **Community Insights:** Participants identified trusted channels for engagement, such as local community organizations, libraries, cultural associations, and religious institutions, and emphasized the importance of cultural competence, personal outreach, and consistent follow-up.
- **Structural and Relational Barriers:** Nonparticipation was often linked to challenges like unclear scheduling processes, pre-weatherization barriers, and a lack of trust. These findings highlight the need for both structural improvements and deeper relational change.

Recommendations center on reducing enrollment friction, addressing pre-weatherization funding gaps, requiring cultural competency training, and institutionalizing feedback loops. Strategies to achieve relational change include leveraging community health workers as "Energy Navigators" and finalizing the Roadmap to Weatherization as a living tool co-owned by community organizations.

The EHACoP demonstrates that meaningful engagement of underserved communities in energy efficiency is possible, but it requires intentional investment, culturally competent facilitation, and trust-building strategies.

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## List of Abbreviations

CAP	Community Action Program
CEELI	Cooperative Extension Energy Literacy Initiative
CoP	Community of Practice
EEC	Energy Efficiency Council
EHACoP	Efficient Housing for All Community of Practice
EWG	Equity Working Group
HEA	Home Energy Assessment
HEZ	Health Equity Zone
RIDOH	Rhode Island Department of Health
URI	University of Rhode Island
WAP	Weatherization Assistance Program

# 1. Defining the Efficient Housing for All Community of Practice (EHACoP)

## 1.1 Introduction

The *Efficient Housing for All Community of Practice (EHACoP)* aimed to improve access to energy efficiency programs for income-eligible households across Rhode Island. Designed and facilitated by the University of Rhode Island (URI) Cooperative Extension Energy Literacy Initiative (CEELI) and funded by the Rhode Island Energy Efficiency Council (EEC), the EHACoP served as a knowledge-sharing and action-oriented network that identified obstacles, co-developed solutions, and enhanced program implementation through cross-sector partnerships. It was convened over six sessions from April to July 2025, bringing together residents, community-based workers, public health and energy professionals, and other engaged stakeholders.

## 1.2 Mission & Purpose

The mission of EHACoP was to foster collaboration among a diverse cross-section of stakeholders to increase engagement in energy efficiency programs and thus, improve access for all. The EHACoP aimed to connect energy and health experts, community organizations, and residents to work together on improving outreach and program design for energy efficiency programming in Rhode Island. This community-driven approach is meant to ensure that program improvements are informed by on-the-ground insights and lived experiences. Ultimately, the EHACoP's purpose was to reduce obstacles to participation in energy-saving programs for income-eligible households, leveraging community input to drive more equitable and effective outcomes.

While the EHACoP was focused on increasing participation in weatherization across Rhode Island, particularly in underserved communities and income-eligible households, it is important to note that this effort is one of

Figure 1

### *Six Conditions of Systems Change*

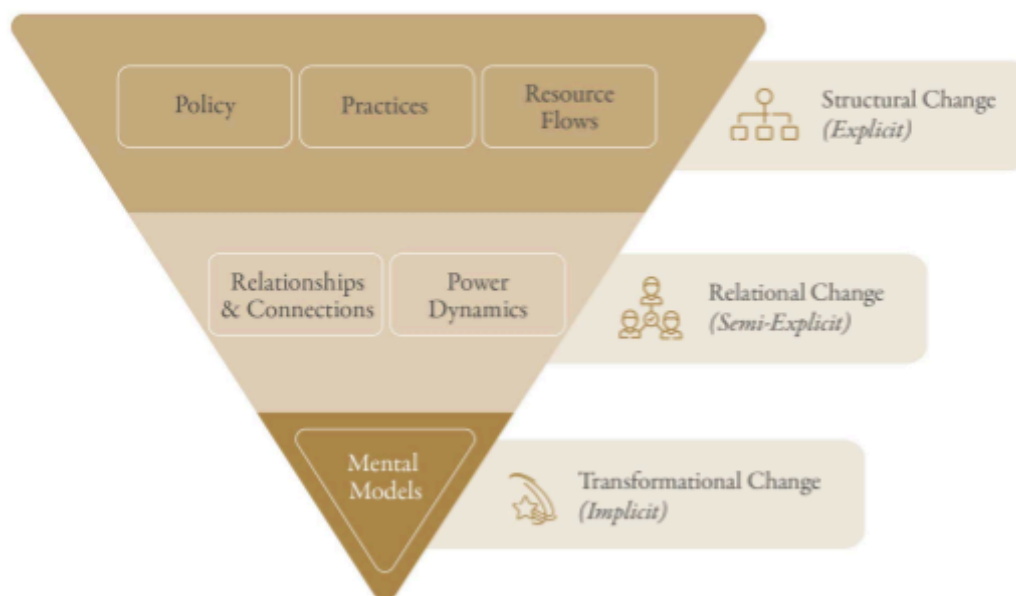


Image courtesy of The Chandler Foundation, accessible at

<https://www.chandlerfoundation.org/social-investor/systems-change-why-it-matters-and-isnt-just-a-buzzword>. 9.24.25

many in the space, and builds upon the existence of progressive policies that seek equitable access for the state's most vulnerable, invest in research to understand nonparticipation barriers, and rely on a community of practitioners working to improve the situation. These elements relate primarily to the structure of energy efficiency programs: the policies, practice and resource flows that contribute to an energy efficient Rhode Island. While impactful and important, structural components are only one leg of a three-legged stool (Figure 1) that includes relational and transformational components. One could argue that the focus on

structural change has made it possible for RI energy efficiency programs to reach **XX%** of households. The EHACoP was an intentional effort to focus on the elements of relational change – relationships, connections, and power dynamics – to move the needle on progress in this space. By convening a range of stakeholders – from under-resourced Rhode Island renters to senior policy analysts at the highest levels of state government – and facilitating conversation among them, the EHACoP sought to build trust among participants, diffuse existing power dynamics, and provide a venue for community ownership of potential solutions to nonparticipation in energy efficiency. The EHACoP gathered additional information to supplement all that has been gathered thus far through related efforts. In sum, the information gathered and the resulting recommendations will help lead to transformational change in the energy efficiency space in Rhode Island.

## 1.3 Goals

The EHACoP was guided by goals developed through a *logic model framework* (see Appendix A). The logic model defined short-, mid- and long term outcomes that drove the design and implementation of the effort in relation to the situation (e.g. nonparticipation in income-eligible energy efficiency programs). With the outcomes clearly defined, the logic model helped to identify inputs (e.g. resources), activities, and outputs (e.g. products) that would assist in meeting the intended outcomes of the effort. In order to understand the purpose of the EHACoP and evaluate its effectiveness at this stage, the relevant indicators from the logic model are included in the list of outputs and short-term outcomes below. These goals are iterative and were pursued with an adaptive evaluation mindset, meaning that results were measured throughout the EHACoP and strategies were adjusted during the process based on evolving evidence and understanding of the situation.

### 1.3.1 Outputs

- **Form a Community of Practice** composed of individuals with professional and lived experience build relationships and connections and diffuse existing power dynamics, and: a) survey; b) create tools; and c) measure effectiveness of outputs on outcomes stated herein.
- **Create a decision tree** (e.g. Weatherization Roadmap) as a tool to assist in guiding ratepayers and community-based workers through the weatherization application process.
- **Empower community-based workers to assist residents** in navigating energy efficiency programs with: a) knowledge about the interconnectedness of home energy efficiency and social determinants of health; b) a firmer understanding of the structure of energy efficiency programs as it relates to ratepayer cost; and c) monetary incentives for participation in the EHACoP.
- **Curate the Plugged into Energy Research lecture series to build awareness** among the general public and professional community **of the EHACoP plan, outputs and outcomes.**
- **Evaluate the effectiveness of the above** on completion of projects addressing pre-weatherization barriers and home energy efficiency during the project period.

### 1.3.2 Short-Term Outcomes

#### **Primary audience will understand:**

1. Why energy efficiency is important vis a vis reducing energy burden, home air quality and how both relate to social determinants of health;
2. The difference between market rate and income eligible EE services, the commonly used terminology for each, and the most common weatherization deferrals in RI; and
3. The Weatherization Assistance Program application process and income-eligible programs and funding to address weatherization deferrals.

#### **Secondary audience will understand:**

1. The importance of working with community-based organizations (CAP agencies, HEZ) in under-resourced communities to effect nonparticipation in energy efficiency programs.

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1 What is a Community of Practice?

The EHACoP model aligns with the Community of Practice (CoP) model as described in Wenger-Trayner et al. (2015), which defines a community of practice as a group of people who share a concern and learn how to address it through regular interaction [2]. The EHACoP was designed around this concept – creating a regular forum where members with a common interest in efficient, affordable housing could learn together and co-create solutions. The CoP model emphasizes peer learning, trust-building, and the generation of insights through dialogue. Following best practices from other CoPs in public health and energy equity, the EHACoP ensured its sessions were collaborative and participant-driven [3,4]. In practical terms, this meant each session included interactive elements (discussions, breakouts, activities) so that participants could both contribute their experience and gain knowledge from others. This approach built a sense of community among participants and created a space where **residents, community workers, and professionals became co-learners and co-creators of solutions.**

### 2.2 EHACoP Structure

#### 2.2.1 Engagement Model

The EHACoP adopted a multi-tiered engagement model to convene participants regularly and maintain active involvement. In total, six CoP meetings were held, with a deliberate mix of virtual and in-person formats: two of the sessions were conducted via Zoom, and four were in-person at community venues such as libraries and community centers. This hybrid approach was chosen based on a survey of prospective participants and aimed to balance convenience and accessibility (through virtual meetings) with the relationship-building benefits of face-to-face interaction. Each meeting was facilitated by the URI CEELI team and followed a structured agenda:

- **Knowledge Sharing:** Sessions began with an “Energy Literacy Learn” segment, led by the facilitators or guest presenters, to provide relevant information (e.g., the home energy assessment process, understanding energy bills, health impacts of weatherization, etc.). These presentations addressed knowledge gaps identified in pre-surveys and were aligned with the CoP’s goals (such as improving participants’ understanding of energy efficiency programs).
- **Breakout Groups:** After the Energy Literacy Learn, meetings transitioned into interactive discussions in breakout groups during which participants were prompted to discuss obstacles, brainstorm solutions, and practice what they learned. This portion of the sessions served as an opportunity for participants to share their perspectives and learn from each other. In later sessions, participants were asked to practice using the information they had gained through the previous sessions (see Section 2.2.2 for the specific activities from each session).
- **Reflection:** Following the breakout group discussions, participants brought what they learned to the larger group. The reflection took different forms, including presenting posters with the information discussed, voting on other groups’ responses that resonated the most, and sharing verbal feedback about the activity. The sessions were then closed by recapping the key takeaways from the reflection, to be shared again at the start of the next session.

The EHACoP also capitalized on external community events as a form of broader engagement. One session was held in conjunction with a Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH) Health Equity Zone (HEZ) Learning Community event. This provided an opportunity to open up the conversation to a wider audience of community-based workers and to disseminate information beyond the core CoP group.

Throughout all meetings, interactive methods were emphasized, including ice-breakers, problem-solving exercises, role-playing scenarios, and group activities. This ensured that sessions were not passive lectures but active working meetings. Notably, sessions were conducted in either English or Spanish, with real-time English-Spanish or Spanish-English interpretation to accommodate participants’ language needs. Additionally,

all written materials were provided in both English and Spanish. The engagement model was therefore inclusive by design, meeting participants “where they are” in terms of language and location.

## 2.2.2 Content Definition

The content and topics of EHACoP sessions were defined in alignment with the CoP’s goals and were

continually refined through input from key partners and participants. Prior to the launch of the CoP, the planning team (CEELI staff) consulted with several strategic partners to shape the agenda. These partners included members of the RI Energy Efficiency Council (EEC), NV5 consultants to the EEC, representatives from Rhode Island Energy (the utility company), as well as professionals working at community-based or community-serving organizations like the Brown University Health Community Health Institute, Providence Public Libraries, and many of the RI Community Action Programs (CAPs). Through regular planning meetings with these key informants, the facilitators identified priority topics that the CoP should address, including: trust and communication challenges, the process of obtaining home energy upgrades, and policy feedback opportunities. Figure 2 outlines the learning objectives for each of the EHACoP sessions, as well as the scheduled check-ins with the EEC Education Committee which provided continuous feedback and support throughout the EHACoP.

#	Date	Objectives
1	Date: April 24 Time: 6:00-7:30 p.m. Location: Olneyville Resilience Hub	1. Participants have a baseline understanding of energy efficiency for the home. 2. Begin to build a list of obstacles to accessing energy efficiency programs in RI. 3. <i>Administer Pre-EHACoP Survey</i>
2	Date: May 8 Time: 6:00-7:30 p.m. Location: Zoom	1. Participants understand what happens during an in-home energy assessment. 2. Participants are aware of common pre-weatherization barriers that hold up the weatherization process. 3. Participants share their experiences about trust and access to trustworthy information.
3	May 21 (in person at HEZ LC) Date: June 5 Time: 2:30-4:00 p.m. Location: Crowne Plaza Warwick	1. Participants share their experiences about trustworthy sources of information. 2. Participants share their experiences about communication across language and cultural barriers.
4	Date: June 5 Time: 6:00-7:30 p.m. Location: South Providence Library	1. Participants increase their awareness of ratepayer engagement efforts and communication strategies employed by RI Energy. 2. Participants propose specific ways to improve engagement and communication for RI’s energy efficiency programs.
	Date: Week of June 2 Time: TBD Location: In Person	Check-in With EEC Education Committee
5	Date: June 26 Time: 6:00-7:30 p.m. Location: Zoom	1. Participants understand the components of and know how to read energy bills. 2. Participants understand the Weatherization Assistance Program application process, income-eligible programs, and weatherization deferral funding. 3. Prioritize solutions for each obstacle to be further developed through the Community of Practice
	Date: Week of July 7 Time: TBD Location: Zoom	Check-in With EEC Education Committee
6	Date: July 17 Time: 6:00-7:30 p.m. Location: Brown University Health Community Health Institute	1. Participants understand the interconnectedness between energy efficacy and human health as it relates to building performance 2. Participants will “test” the Roadmap to Weatherization in Rhode Island tool and provide feedback to facilitators 3. <i>Administer Post-EHACoP Survey</i>
	Date: September 30 Time: 1:00-2:30 p.m. Location: Crowne Plaza Warwick	1. Report out at HEZ Learning Community 2. Roadmap to Weatherization Test Activity, Part II

## 2.2.3 Adaptive Learning

From the outset, the EHACoP embraced an adaptive learning and continuous improvement approach. This meant that monitoring and evaluation activities were embedded in the CoP process, allowing the organizers to learn and make adjustments between sessions. This approach involved several mechanisms:

- **Regular Reflection and Check-Ins:** The facilitation team held bi-weekly check-in meetings with members of the EEC Education Committee throughout the CoP (see session timeline in Figure 2). In these meetings, the team presented updates on what had transpired in the CoP sessions, including attendance numbers, key discussion outcomes, and survey results. The EEC Education Committee provided feedback and suggestions for upcoming sessions. These check-ins ensured that the CoP remained aligned with broader program goals and allowed for mid-course corrections.
- **Participant Surveys and Data-Driven Adjustments:** The EHACoP conducted a **Pre-CoP survey** before Session 1 and a **Post-CoP survey** after the final session, as well as quick pulse surveys during

sessions (such as interactive polls on needs and perceptions). The results from these surveys were analyzed and incorporated into future session content.

- **Monitoring Attendance and Engagement:** Participation and engagement trends were tracked across sessions and analyzed to make improvements. For instance, after the first virtual meeting, a few adjustments were made to improve future sessions. The session had higher participation but lower engagement than the in-person sessions, so the number of virtual sessions was reduced and the CEELI team incorporated more non-verbal activities and an interactive role-play in the next virtual session to boost participation.

Throughout the process, the CEELI team aimed to remain responsive and goal-aligned when updating EHACoP content. The proposed session plans were not static, and the framework was updated to reflect changes made during the course of the CoP. As the CoP progressed, feedback from participants, facilitators, and advisors informed content adjustments. The CEELI team reviewed feedback to identify opportunities for improvement and areas needing clarification or deeper discussion in subsequent sessions. For instance, when early sessions revealed confusion about how to schedule a HEA, the team ensured that a later session included an explanation of the scheduling process. Collaborators at RI Energy also provided ongoing feedback, such as the suggestion to address common misconceptions (e.g., explaining why the energy assessment is provided at “no cost,” funded through an energy efficiency program charge on monthly energy bills).

This collaborative approach ensured that by the end of the CoP, the discussions had covered both the community’s concerns and the informational priorities of program administrators. The result was a well-rounded curriculum that included technical and community-engagement knowledge. It also models a valuable lesson: community engagement efforts benefit from being flexible and iterative, rather than rigidly pre-planned.

#### 2.2.4 Home Energy Assessment Opportunity for Participants

Another aspect of the EHACoP methodology was offering participants an opportunity to receive an additional incentive for participating in the no-cost Home Energy Assessment (HEA) and subsequent weatherization upgrades. The purpose of this was threefold: first, as an opportunity for experiential learning (participants would better understand the process by doing it themselves and could give feedback about the barriers they faced) and second, for immediate benefit (households could start saving energy and money). The full description of the Home Energy Assessment Opportunity is included in Appendix B.

Midway through the CoP, participants were informed about this opportunity in detail. Facilitators explained how the HEA works, what to expect during the visit, and how it leads to free or discounted efficiency upgrades, like LED bulbs, insulation, appliance rebates. This explanation addressed any skepticism about the assessment. For example, clarifying that it truly has no cost and is funded via a small charge on all ratepayers’ bills.

The team communicated the HEA opportunity through multiple channels. During sessions, announcements were made encouraging participants to sign up. Follow-up emails were sent with the sign-up link and a flyer (which is also included in the Facilitator Workbook in Appendix C). Additionally, during in-person sessions, staff and witnesses answered questions about the process. This approach was meant to ensure that all EHACoP participants could access the opportunity.

By integrating an outside opportunity into the CoP, the organizers hoped to move from talk to tangible impact while gaining valuable feedback about the HEA process. Participants had spent time identifying potential obstacles, and this gave them a chance to experience them. All EHACoP participants were offered financial incentives (\$50 per step) for completing the following three steps: 1) scheduling a HEA and completing a feedback survey, 2) having a HEA and completing a feedback survey, and 3) completing energy efficiency and weatherization upgrades (as well as pre-weatherization barriers, if applicable) and completing a feedback survey.

#### 2.2.5 RI Energy Efficiency Roadmap & Guide

In parallel with the CoP’s focus on building community and sharing knowledge, the EHACoP team developed a draft *Roadmap to Weatherization in Rhode Island* and accompanying Guide (see Appendix D). The Roadmap is intended to serve as a comprehensive guide to all the available energy efficiency and weatherization

resources in the state, including programs at the state and municipal level. Its purpose is to assist Rhode Island residents, especially those with low or moderate incomes, in navigating the often complex landscape of energy efficiency offerings and addressing common barriers, such as the pre-weatherization barriers and lack of information. The roadmap consolidates information on who to contact, what programs or subsidies exist, and how to tackle prerequisites like mold remediation or electrical upgrades that might be needed before weatherization. On paper, the tool on the first page graphically represents decision tree functionality that a future digital tool would possess, and the subsequent pages articulate each section of the tool and how to move through it.

**Roadmap Development:** Throughout the EHACoP, the facilitators collected input from participants about what information they find most confusing or hard to find. One activity explicitly asked participants to evaluate the usefulness of relevant resources and identify gaps, providing an opportunity to usability-test the tools that would ultimately be referenced in the roadmap tool; witnesses provided comments on accuracy and completeness. During the final EHACoP session, the Roadmap and Roadmap Guide were shared with participants in small groups, and they were asked to practice using the tools and reflect on the experience (see Section 3.3.3 for feedback results). This collaborative development ensured the final product would be user-friendly and relevant.

**Sharing with Stakeholders:** Beyond the CoP participants, the draft Roadmap was circulated to members of the EEC and other key policymakers for feedback during the EHACoP period. A refined version of the Roadmap and Roadmap Guide is being developed, incorporating all feedback. The intention is for the Roadmap to be made public (e.g., hosted on a website) and continuously updated with input from various stakeholders submitted via an online form where community organizations or program administrators can submit updates or new resources over time. Thus, the RI Energy Efficiency Roadmap is both a product of the EHACoP and a living tool for the future.

## 3. Summary of Results

### 3.1 Participation

**Participant breakdown by role:** The EHACoP engaged 59 unique attendees over its six sessions. Of these, 41 were considered participants and 18 were non-participant attendees, or “witnesses”. The participants represented a diverse cross-section of stakeholders, though residents (43.9%) and community-based workers (46.3%) made up the majority of EHACoP participants; they are the target audiences identified in the logic model (Appendix A). The EHACoP participants shared their lived experiences – stories of energy insecurity, low income, lack of familiarity with social service programs – and insights from working directly with community members in their professional capacities. The non-participant attendees (9.8%) were health and energy professionals who served either as facilitators and note-takers (URI staff and students) or institutional observers (such as agency representatives, subject matter experts, and program staff). The witnesses were present to contribute expertise and hear directly from community members. This mix of roles was intentional, as the EHACoP sought to put residents in dialogue with officials and experts.

Approximately three in ten participants preferred communications in Spanish only. All sessions provided simultaneous interpretation (either English-to-Spanish or Spanish-to-English) to accommodate the participants. The inclusion of Spanish-speaking residents was a critical aspect of making the EHACoP culturally inclusive and accessible.

Attendance per session ranged from 18 to 36 participants, with an average of 28 present at each meeting (not every participant attended every session). In the end, 48.8% of participants attended 3 or more sessions (two participants attended all six sessions, 10 participants attended five sessions, four participants attended four sessions, and four participants attended three sessions). This core group helped maintain continuity in discussions throughout the EHACoP, and received monetary compensation for attending three sessions or more, which assisted with encouraging engagement and continuity.

## 3.2 Learning & Behavior Change

One of the primary learning objectives of the EHACoP was to increase participants' awareness of and knowledge about energy efficiency and its connectedness to social determinants of health as a means of inspiring related behavior change on a personal and community-level. To evaluate this, the team repeated several key questions in the Pre-EHACoP Survey (before Session 1) and Post-EHACoP Survey (after Session 6) to measure trends in increased knowledge, attitudes, and self-reported behaviors. Since the sample size was small and respondents differed somewhat in the Pre- and Post- Surveys), **the results should not be considered conclusive**. Still, the information gleaned from the surveys has proven helpful in confirming trends observed in the qualitative evidence collected through discussion notes, feedback, and session participation. The following general trends can be drawn from the Pre- and Post- Survey results:

- **Uncertain change in knowledge and confidence:** The Pre-EHACoP and Post-EHACoP Surveys included questions aimed to assess participants' knowledge of home energy efficiency programs and processes. For example, participants were asked how comfortable they were talking about weatherization and energy efficiency programs, as well as the purpose of a HEA, who qualifies for one, and how to sign up. The survey results didn't show much of a change in respondents' self-assessments of their abilities to discuss these topics with clients, friends and family. The average level of comfort increased slightly from 3.8/5 to 4/5, on average across the questions. The relatively small change in responses may indicate that participants became only slightly more confident in their knowledge; however, it may also demonstrate that the Pre-Survey respondents did not fully understand the amount of information that they had yet to learn. Qualitative feedback supports the latter theory. For example, in the Post-EHACoP survey, one participant wrote:

*“My experience and what I have learned here has given me the knowledge and tools to teach others about this program and how to weatherize and improve the environment of their home.”*

- **Sharing knowledge with others:** The EHACoP sought to empower participants to act as ambassadors by sharing what they learned with friends, family, neighbors, or clients. In the pre-survey, only 13% of participants said they had ever talked to anyone about doing an energy assessment. By the end of the CoP, 75% of participants had had this type of conversation outside of the CoP. Several community health workers in the group mentioned that they had started incorporating energy program information into their home visits or client consultations. Likewise, some resident participants talked to family and neighbors about scheduling a HEA.
- **Increased trust in the utility:** Trust is a critical barrier to participation in energy efficiency programs, as identified in the Nonparticipant Market Barriers Study (RI-21-RXNP Study) completed by Illume Advising for RI Energy in 2022. At the start of the EHACoP, baseline trust in Rhode Island Energy (the utility) among participants was moderate to low. Several participants expressed cynicism about whether programs would truly be no-cost. Figure 3 shows the change in rating of participants' trust in the utility, which changed from an average of 2.13 out of 5 in the pre-survey to an average of 4.06 out of 5 in the post-survey. An increase in

understanding about the structure of RI energy efficiency programs, and hearing from a RI Energy representative were a few things respondents mentioned as contributing factors to this increase.

- **Early changes in personal behavior:** Although the EHACoP was held over a relatively short period of time, there were some early indications of behavior changes among participants. The Pre- and Post-EHACoP Surveys asked if participants had scheduled HEAs, and the percentage who had scheduled assessments increased from 20% to 35%. Qualitative feedback supports this outcome, as well. For instance, one participant shared in the Post-EHACoP Survey:

*“Participating in this program got me moving on addressing issues within my home.”*

### 3.3 Participant Recommendations & Feedback

During the EHACoP, participants were not only gaining knowledge through the “Energy Literacy Learn” section of the session agenda, they were also active contributors, offering their own recommendations for improving community engagement, program processes, and policy. This section summarizes the feedback from participants, particularly about how to better engage communities and improve specific program components like the HEA process and the draft Roadmap to Weatherization. These insights were derived from interactive activities, group discussions, and survey responses.

#### 3.3.1 Recommendations for Community Engagement

One recurring theme when participants were asked about best practices for engaging under resourced ratepayers was the importance of trust, cultural competence, and meeting communities “where they are.” Participants stressed that community engagement efforts need to leverage trusted local organizations and social channels to be effective. In group discussions, participants generated a general list of channels for engagement that they believe would help to make energy efficiency programs more accessible, approachable, and thus equitable. We categorize these channels into “general” (i.e. advertising) and “social / community-based”. Suggestions of the latter include, in order of ranking: 1) Trained community ambassadors; 2) Community events; 3) Educational institutions; 4) Word of mouth; 5) Social media.

Participants also identified specific trusted sources of information in their communities. These ranged from local community centers and cultural associations to churches, libraries, radio stations, and events. The list below includes those organizations mentioned more than once as “highly-trusted messengers.”

#### **Examples of trusted community organizations and events identified by EHACoP participants:**

- **Community Action Agencies (CAPs):** Community Care Alliance, Comprehensive Community Action, Eastbay Community Action Program, Tri-County Community Action Agency, Westbay Community Action, Community Action Partnership of Providence, Blackstone Valley Community Action Program
- **Nonprofit Organizations:** Amos House, Brown University Health Community Health Institute, Federal Hill House, Federally Qualified Health Centers, HealthSource Rhode Island, Meals on Wheels, Operation Stand Down, Smith Hill Partners Initiative, United Way of Rhode Island, YMCA of Greater Providence
- **Cultural Organizations and Events:** 50th Cape Verdean Independence Day Festival, Juneteenth Rhode Island, Korean American Association of Rhode Island, Progreso Latino Inc., Puerto Rican BayFest, Rhode Island Cape Verdean Heritage, Rhode Island Indian Council, Rhode Island Pride, The Dominican Parade of Rhode Island
- **Faith-based Organizations:** Beacon Avenue Church of God, Blessed Sacrament Church, Cathedral of, Saints Peter and Paul, Iglesia Fuente de Salvación CLA, NGC Church Rhode Island, Saint, Bartholomew Church, Saint Michael's Rectory of Providence

- **Libraries:** Fox Point Library, Knight Memorial Library, Mount Pleasant Library, Olneyville Library, Providence Public Library, Rochambeau Library, Smith Hill Library, South Providence Library, Wanskuck Library, Washington Park Library
- **Public Education Institutions:** Community College of Rhode Island, Providence Public School, District, Rhode Island College, University of Rhode Island
- **Radio:** Power 102.1 / Poder 1110, Big 101.3
- **[RI Department of Health Health Equity Zone Initiative:](#)** Bristol Health Equity Zone, Central Providence, Unidos Health Equity Zone, East Providence Health Equity Zone, Newport Health Equity Zone, OneCranston Health Equity Zone, Pawtucket Central Falls Health Equity Zone, South Providence, Health Equity Zone, Tri-County Health Equity Zone, Warren Health Equity Zone, Warwick Health Equity, Zone, Washington County Health Equity Zone, West Elmwood 02907 Health Equity Zone, West, Warwick Health Equity Zone, Woonsocket Health Equity Zone
- **State Agencies:** PVD311, Rhode Island Department of Corrections, Rhode Island Department of Health, Rhode Island Regional Adult Learning, Rhode Island Department of Human Services Long Term Services and Supports

This diverse array of organizations demonstrates participants' insight that community engagement should be woven into the fabric of existing community services and cultural networks. Rather than expecting residents to seek out programs on their own, the programs must go to where people already gather and trust.

By collaborating with these existing trusted entities, program administrators can make energy efficiency programs more culturally resonant and credible in the eyes of underserved ratepayers. A complete list of venues for community engagement is available here.

### 3.3.2 Feedback on Home Energy Assessment Process

In an effort to encourage participation in the HEAs available to low- and moderate-income ratepayers and to collect data about the process, the EHACoP offered the HEA Opportunity described in Section 2.2.4. Feedback about the assessment process was collected through a group discussion in the final CoP session, as well as through two distinct surveys: one series of surveys for those who completed the HEA Opportunity and one non-participation survey for those who did not.

#### Feedback from HEA Opportunity *Participants*

A brief survey was administered specifically for those who participated in the HEA Opportunity (described in Section 2.2.4). This survey asked about their experience scheduling and completing the assessment. It should be noted that only two people have provided feedback on this process so far (see responses in Appendix B). Nevertheless, a few insights came out of these results:

- **Scheduling:** There was some confusion about which entity to contact to schedule the assessment. One participant did not know if she was income eligible or not. Another participant noted that there was no description of the home assessment process on the website, leaving them with no resources to share with friends who might be interested in an audit but want to learn more about what it entails.
- **Assessment Process:** Both of the participants reported positive experiences during the assessment, but the feedback about assessment follow-up was mixed. One participant mentioned that they were left with some questions about their heating system that the auditor brought up but did not explain. In addition, they noted that the auditor explained what the next step should be, but didn't provide any references to help facilitate and the participant would have found those to be useful to continue with the next step right away.

#### Feedback from HEA Opportunity *Non-participants*

In response to the fact that only two participants (of the thirty individuals in the room) had scheduled HEAs, the facilitators asked participants in the final session why they had not yet scheduled a HEA, even after learning about the program and its benefits. A few themes emerged from the conversation. First, some participants mentioned that they struggled to find the right phone number to call. Those who had this experience either

gave up or called their local Community Action Agency for assistance. As a landlord, one particular participant was given a lengthy contract to sign without yet having scheduled an assessment. Another noted that they were not comfortable inviting an auditor into their home.

In reflecting on how to gather additional data related to nonparticipation, the facilitators created a “Post-EHACoP Home Energy Assessment Opportunity Survey” in an attempt to more systematically understand the barriers that were holding people back from scheduling an assessment, despite having an understanding of the program and being offered monetary incentives. The survey responses can be found in Appendix E. Nineteen people completed the survey, and of those, fifteen had not yet scheduled a HEA. Of the fifteen, five had tried to schedule an assessment but were unsuccessful. The reasons cited for not scheduling a HEA were:

- 32% - Pre-weatherization barriers: Knob and tube wiring (3), Mildew (2), Foundation (1)
- 21% - No follow-up from energy assessment scheduler
- 16% - Landlord or- property manager unwilling / unable to participate - relational / training
- 11% - Fear of expensive repairs needed before the home is eligible for weatherization
- 5% - Not comfortable signing the landlord contract from CAP
- 5% - Not comfortable letting strangers into my house
- 5% - Need to apply for A-60 discount rate first
- 5% - RISE cited “no work to be done”

One key takeaway from these results is that many of the barriers are structural or are perceived to be structural. In other words, people identified structural barriers, but they may not actually exist. For instance, several people mentioned that the scheduler never followed up with them; however, this may not be a problem with the system but rather a misunderstanding on behalf of those attempting to schedule assessments.

### 3.3.3 Feedback on RI Energy Efficiency Roadmap & Guide

During the final session, participants also reviewed and provided feedback on the draft RI Energy Efficiency Roadmap & Guide (described in Section 2.2.5). All participants either *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that the tool was “helpful to navigate the weatherization process.” In addition, all but one participant *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that, with the Roadmap as a resource, they felt “confident in [their] ability to help a friend / neighbor through the weatherization process.” Participants supported the concept of having a single resource to help ratepayers through the weatherization process. Nevertheless, some recommendations emerged to improve its usability and reach. Key themes from the feedback include:

- **Regular updates:** One recommendation was that the information must be kept current. Participants recognized the need for a version of the Roadmap that is updated consistently. Community-based workers mentioned throughout the EHACoP that out-of-date information is a common barrier for community members to access programs.
- **Accessibility:** One participant noted that the text on the Roadmap was small and difficult to read. Others suggested using a digital format to make it easier to find relevant resources at each step in the process.

## 4. Key Takeaways

During the course of planning for, facilitating, and evaluating the EHACoP, discussions around measures of success frequently arose. This section acknowledges the fact that despite the CEELI team’s boutique-level efforts to educate, incentivize and empower this small group of residents and community-based workers, the majority still have not scheduled, completed or implemented recommendations from a HEA. This has led to thinking about measuring success based on incremental progress via continued investments in structural changes to existing policies, practices and resource flows, as well as the prioritization of addressing power dynamics that are amplified by cultural differences and language barriers, among other socioeconomic drivers.

To synthesize the learnings gleaned from the facilitation of these conversations with community members and community-based workers, it's useful to frame the insights in terms of a systems change model (see Figure 1). In this model, change can be understood at three levels: structural, relational, and transformative [1]. Structural changes involve the explicit aspects of the system: policies, practices, and resource flows. Relational changes refer to the semi-explicit aspects of the system: the relationships, connections, and power dynamics between stakeholders. Transformative changes involve the implicit aspects of the system: the mental models, beliefs, and behaviors in the community. Sustainable impact requires shifts at all three levels of the system.

The systems change model helps to frame the key takeaways and recommendations for future investment (as outlined in Section 5) from the EHACoP. Even after learning about Rhode Island's HEA and weatherization programs, barriers to action remain. These barriers are categorized within the systems change model to better translate them to actionable recommendations that align with the best practices for engaging underserved ratepayers that were identified through the EHACoP.

## 4.1 Meaningful Community Engagement is Not Free or Quick

The EHACoP proved that it is indeed possible to engage income-eligible ratepayers in discussions about policy and programs, spaces where voices such as these are often missing. However, doing so requires significant thoughtfulness, time, and resources. In the case of the EHACoP, it took dedicated funding to cover participant stipends, food and translation, persistent and continued outreach, and careful relationship-building to bring people to the table and keep them engaged. One of the EHACoP participants phrased it well, noting that the community will participate "if you meet us where we are and show you're committed." The EHACoP's success was built on culturally-sensitive facilitation, accessible meeting formats, and incentives that valued participants' time. These aspects are not incidental, they are fundamental. Any future efforts to involve underserved communities should include these elements. In practice, that means paying community liaisons, allowing ample time for trust to develop, and being present consistently. The takeaway is that equitable engagement is possible, but policymakers must be willing to invest in it.

### 4.1.1 Community of Practice Best Practices

The EHACoP offers a model that can be replicated and improved. The lessons learned about logistics and content sequencing can be applied to community engagement efforts in the future. These lessons are documented in the Facilitator Workbook (Appendix C) and this report so that others can adopt or adapt the model. The CoP approach can be applied to other challenges to bring community voices to the table for crucial policy conversations in Rhode Island and beyond. For the community and funders, the takeaway is that investing in such collaborative forums can yield actionable insights and foster a network of engaged citizens who will continue to champion the cause.

**Accessibility:** Participants and facilitators observed that the virtual format posed challenges: many community members were not familiar or comfortable with Zoom, some joined by phone, and few used their cameras or spoke up extensively in breakout rooms. In contrast, the in-person meetings had livelier discussions and more organic networking (some participants lingered after to continue conversations). In-person engagement was more effective for relationship-building and active participation, whereas virtual meetings, while lower cost and more convenient for some, saw lower interaction levels and required additional support to be truly inclusive (e.g., more technical orientation and facilitation tactics to draw people in).

The EHACoP also aimed to provide an accessible experience by running bilingual sessions. The sessions were facilitated either in English or Spanish, and then live interpretation was provided to ensure that everyone could participate in real time. Beyond the interpretation, this also required the translation of all session materials, which were printed so that participants could follow along with the session slides. In the EHACoP, groups for small group activities were generally created based on language preferences, and then results were translated for the rest of the group. A real-time interpreter, as well as bilingual facilitators and witnesses, are critical to ensure that the sessions are fully accessible to all participants. The CEELI team includes one bilingual staff member, which allowed for special attention to the important matter of accessibility, especially for written translation of materials, slides and phone and email communication with Spanish-speaking participants.

**Witnesses:** In addition to the facilitators and participants of the EHACoP, subject matter experts (or “witnesses”) representing different sectors (energy, health, housing, community organizations) attended each of the EHACoP sessions. Having the witnesses present during the sessions provided several benefits to the participants and the CoP process. First, witnesses could interject during sessions to share their expertise. Witnesses were also asked to share their feedback with facilitators after each session to help improve for future sessions. Lastly, witnesses had the chance to listen directly to residents’ stories, offering them the opportunity to build a deeper understanding and instill a sense of urgency that numbers alone could not have offered. This model highlights the importance of the relational change component of the systems change model, which helps actors at all levels to build connections, redefine power dynamics, and build new mental models that can change how they approach their work within the system.

## 4.2 Knowledge, Monetary Incentives and Community Connections Weren’t Enough to Inspire Action

Increased knowledge and awareness did not automatically translate into action for many participants. Despite knowing the benefits, process, and zero cost of HEAs, and being offered a monetary incentive through the HEA Opportunity, the majority of participants still had not scheduled an assessment by the end of the EHACoP. Anecdotes from data collected through the Home Energy Assessment Opportunity Non-participation Survey indicated that those who took action to try to engage in the HEA Opportunity often encountered minor hiccups that derailed their progress entirely. Others didn’t try at all, likely because of assumptions they hold. In thinking about how to address these issues, it is helpful to return to the Systems Change model to take inventory of existing investments in EE policy, practices, resource flows, relationships and connections, and power dynamics inherent in the model to guide recommendations moving forward.

## 4.3 Systems Change Focus for Incremental Success

Addressing the key takeaways from the EHACoP will require a holistic approach to transforming the system through which underserved communities engage with energy efficiency programs in Rhode Island. The information gathered through the EHACoP suggests that a combination of structural improvements and relational, community-driven strategies is the key to transformative change.

On the structural side, Rhode Island has made significant progress. The Energy Assessment program is one of a number of programs that support Rhode Islanders to improve the energy efficiency of their homes and businesses. These programs have been updated over time to improve their operations and reach. The dedication of the program administrators to respond to feedback is evidenced by the fact that structural improvements have already been instituted as a result of the feedback shared by EHACoP participants. For instance, participants noted that the automated answering system on the income-eligible scheduling line required callers to press 1 to schedule an assessment; however, this instruction was only given in English. Once callers pressed 1, if the call was answered, a bilingual (Spanish/English) operator would answer the phone. If the call was not answered, the voicemail was also only in English. In response to this feedback, RI Energy immediately contacted the service provider and made the necessary changes to the automated system in order to make the process more accessible.

In addition, The EEC and RI Energy have instituted process improvements and new initiatives aimed at equity and engagement. For example, RI Energy’s Customer Advocate program provides direct support to ratepayers and the Equity Working Group (EWG) has created a forum for discussion of energy efficiency topics, RI Energy has also engaged a network of libraries in underserved communities to expand their reach and to facilitate Spanish-language sessions for landlords (in parallel to the English-language sessions led by RI Energy staff). These efforts represent important steps toward transformative change; however, they will remain limited in scale, constrained by the resources that RI Energy has at their disposal and by the nature of the direct facilitation being done by a small (albeit effective) team.

The combination of existing structural changes and engagement efforts has allowed energy efficiency programs to reach an estimated XX% of eligible Rhode Island residents. Reaching the other XX% will require expanding beyond the previous approach. Focusing on relational change can help to fill this gap. The EHACoP demonstrated that working through community relationships by empowering local ambassadors and partnering

with trusted organizations can effectively engage harder-to-reach populations. A stronger focus on relational strategies such as these to complement structural changes can lead to transformative change and, ultimately, accelerate adoption of energy efficiency programs in Rhode Island.

The EHACoP demonstrated that, given the right support and knowledge, community-based workers and residents can become effective energy efficiency ambassadors in their communities. Participants left the EHACoP feeling empowered to share information and encourage others to participate in energy efficiency programs. We heard from residents that they started coaching neighbors and from community health workers that they have integrated energy efficiency topics into their client visits. This result supports the Energy Navigator model and aligns with the theory that people are often more receptive to learning from someone they know and trust (a friend, a local organizer) than from an external authority. Thus, the key to engaging with the public is to empower those trusted individuals to meet community members where they are.

## 5. Recommendations

Based on the EHACoP's outcomes and participant feedback, the CEELI team developed a set of recommendations to improve energy efficiency program engagement, implementation, and policy. These recommendations are intended for a broad range of stakeholders, including the Energy Efficiency Council and program administrators, Rhode Island Energy, community organizations, and Rhode Island policymakers. They are presented in two groups: 1) Engagement Recommendations (i.e. practical steps for program outreach and delivery) and Policy Recommendations (i.e. changes needed to address systemic barriers).

The keys to increasing program uptake are to reduce friction in the process, provide hands-on assistance to homeowners, landlords and renters, and address other barriers (e.g. funding for pre-weatherization). Most barriers cited are structural or are perceived structural barriers. Often, with the right information, a resident could overcome the barriers without additional structural change.

### 5.1 Reduce Structural Barriers to Energy Efficiency Programs

- **Simplify program enrollment:** Wherever possible, streamline the enrollment process for energy efficiency programs. For example, RI Energy could reduce confusion and uncertainty by creating a single unified application for both income-eligible and market rate customers. A single application would allow for marketing to be simplified, as well, since all customers could be directed to a single website or phone number.
- **Institute Follow-up Procedures:** Ensure there is a structured follow-up process for after a customer gets an assessment. Feedback collected from EHACoP participants and witnesses revealed that the immediate summary and additional follow-up provided by CAP agencies is not the same as that which is provided by RISE Engineering. Having an auditor or other representative review findings, answer questions, and discuss next steps is crucial to ensure that residents move forward with the weatherization process.
- **Secure (more) funding to address pre-weatherization barriers:** One of the key barriers that participants faced when considering energy efficiency upgrades for their homes were pre-weatherization barriers. Some funding has been established to help residents of certain municipalities to cover the financial burden of overcoming these barriers; however, increased funding is necessary to ensure that home weatherization is accessible to all residents.
- **Require cultural competency training for program staff and contractors:** Some participants noted that they encountered challenges when attempting to communicate with program staff. This was problematic particularly in phone communications where the operators were unable to speak the language of the caller or, in one case, they hung up because they could not understand the caller's accent. Another participant mentioned that the recommendations and instructions they received after their HEA were only provided in English. To mitigate these challenges, program staff and contractors could be required to participate in cultural competency training to give them the tools to navigate these difficult situations and provide support to residents in spite of language or cultural barriers.

- **Create feedback loops:** Establish a mechanism for customers to provide feedback on their assessment experience, both directly through auditors at the end of assessments and afterwards through online or phone surveys. To increase participation, an incentive could be linked to responses, like an opportunity to win a prize. Increasing the amount will help to identify issues for improvement, as well as aspects of the program that are working well. Specific program staff should be identified to review the responses and institute changes based on the feedback.
- **Increase the use of culturally-sensitive community engagement:** Specific resources should be dedicated to increase the reach of community engagement for energy efficiency programs. This entails both funding and partnership strategies. First, a portion of the program marketing budget should be used for personal, Spanish-language outreach (as well as other relevant languages, such as Portuguese, Cape Verdean Creole, etc.). EHACoP participants noted that they learned about the CoP when they heard interviews in their own language on a trusted radio station. In addition to being presented in their language and shared via a trusted source, engagement efforts are most effective when personalized (e.g. an interview is more likely to convince people than a paid advertisement). Additionally, culturally-sensitive engagement will require further partnership with community-based organizations. For example, encouraging conversations

## 5.2 Enhanced Approach to Relational Change

The EHACoP was an effort to convene conversations, build relationships and connections among residents, CHWs, energy and health sector professionals and facilitators. Convening the EHACoP, which was a small group relative to the nonparticipant population under study, illuminated the fact that despite investments in increasing participant awareness and knowledge, providing monetary incentives for participation, and cultivating personal and professional relationships did not significantly impact participation in energy efficiency programs. More often than not, the barriers to participation resulted from minor hiccups in navigating the process, which were enough to stop participants from continuing when attempting to complete the process on their own. Assumptions, missed connections, and misunderstandings were the most common causes of nonparticipation among EHACoP participants.

Changing systems inherently requires shifting power dynamics from a "power over" model based on dominance to a "power with" model of collective collaboration and justice. One way to achieve this is to build "islands of coherence," collaborations that align their power use with their desired just outcomes, acting as nodes for systemic transformation. Through the EHACoP, an island of coherence was created among community-based workers as a way to increase their ability to improve public health outcomes by offering training and education around weatherization as a tool. Continued investment in this type of community building can create opportunities for impacting program participation.

***There is a unique opportunity to leverage Community Health Workers (CHWs) and other frontline community-based workers by integrating the importance of weatherization and energy efficiency into their work vernacular.*** The CEELI team recommends developing a formal CHW training module on energy literacy and energy efficiency programs, which would involve creating a curriculum that covers the basics of home energy efficiency and how to navigate program referrals and includes effective communication strategies for clients who may be distrustful or uninformed about these programs. By empowering people who already work in and are trusted by the community, the lack of trust in the program will be reduced, and a greater number of low- to moderate-income residents, landlords, and tenants will be exposed to weatherization and energy efficiency through their interactions with professionals at social service and health agencies. During the EHACoP, the impact of CHWs in the community was apparent; several EHACoP participants mentioned that they came to a session because they were referred by CHWs. CHWs also reported sharing information about energy efficiency and how it relates to public health once they had a general understanding of it themselves. Formal training has the potential to scale and standardize this impact. In this model, CHWs would become Energy Navigators, incorporating energy efficiency education into home visits, health workshops, and other community health interactions. This strategy not only extends the reach of program information but also ensures that it comes from trusted messengers already embedded in communities. To incentivize participation in the Energy Navigator training, CEELI recommends coordination between the Community Health Worker

Association of RI (CHWARI) and the RI Certification Board to institutionalize the training as a component of either the core CHW training or continuing education requirements.

### **5.2.1 Develop an Energy Navigator Training Guide**

One of the outputs of this initiative is the wealth of materials and insights generated. One recommendation is to build upon the resources in the Facilitator Workbook (see Appendix C) to create an Energy Navigator Training Guide. This would serve two purposes: 1) offer a tool for training CHWs on energy efficiency in RI, and 2) provide a resource for other communities or organizations that want to replicate a similar community-driven engagement model. The Guide will include the session plans, agendas, slide decks, handouts, survey instruments, and summaries of activities, along with additional commentary on what worked or should be adjusted. The Guide would also detail best practices for organizing a Community of Practice or other community engagement tools, including timelines, staffing roles, and tips for facilitation. The Energy Navigator Guide should also be made available in Spanish and Portuguese. Ideally, a debrief webinar or workshop should be hosted to present the model and lessons to a wider audience. By documenting and sharing the EHACoP methodology, the aim is to scale up the impact of this initiative in support of the institutionalization of successful elements of the EHACoP.

### **5.2.2 Implement the RI Energy Efficiency Roadmap**

Another recommendation is to finalize and implement the RI Energy Efficiency Roadmap as a public resource and practice guide to support Energy Navigators in their role as weatherization ambassadors, using the feedback from EHACoP participants to guide its development. The Roadmap should be made accessible both online and in print, in multiple languages (at least English, Spanish, and Portuguese). Beyond publishing it, there needs to be an ongoing mechanism to keep it up-to-date and relevant. We suggest forming a small Roadmap Advisory Group that includes community representatives (perhaps even some EHACoP alumni) along with program staff. This group can meet periodically (e.g. once a year) to review the content of the Roadmap, incorporate any new programs or changes, and decide on any needed revisions. Additionally, a feature should be added to the online version (such as a “Submit an Update” form) to crowdsource updates from organizations in the field. By doing this, we ensure the Roadmap remains a living document, which was a concern participants voiced. The utility and EEC should also invest in promoting the Roadmap by, for example, hosting webinars to walk people through it, distributing the Roadmap via community partners (libraries, nonprofits, etc.), and possibly integrate it into customer communications (for instance, a link or insert in energy bills). The Roadmap, as a comprehensive guide to resources and pathways, can become a cornerstone of energy-related community engagement in RI. Its success will depend on visibility and continuous improvement, hence our emphasis on a maintained feedback loop with the community.

## **6. Conclusions**

The EHACoP succeeded in convening diverse voices to build community and identify barriers to energy efficiency participation in Rhode Island. While increased trust, knowledge gains, and stronger community networks were indicated by surveys and feedback, most participants still did not complete HEAs, illustrating that information and incentives alone are not necessarily sufficient motivators of action. The structural, relational, and transformational elements of systems change must work together to achieve equitable outcomes.

The experience shows that meaningful engagement requires time, resources, and trust. It also demonstrates the value of embedding energy efficiency into existing community health and social service networks, where trusted messengers can reach residents most effectively. Future efforts should build on this foundation by institutionalizing the Energy Navigator model, implementing the RI Energy Efficiency Roadmap, and strengthening partnerships with locally connected organizations.

By prioritizing both systemic improvements and community-driven strategies, Rhode Island can move closer to ensuring that all residents, particularly those in income-eligible households, benefit from energy efficiency

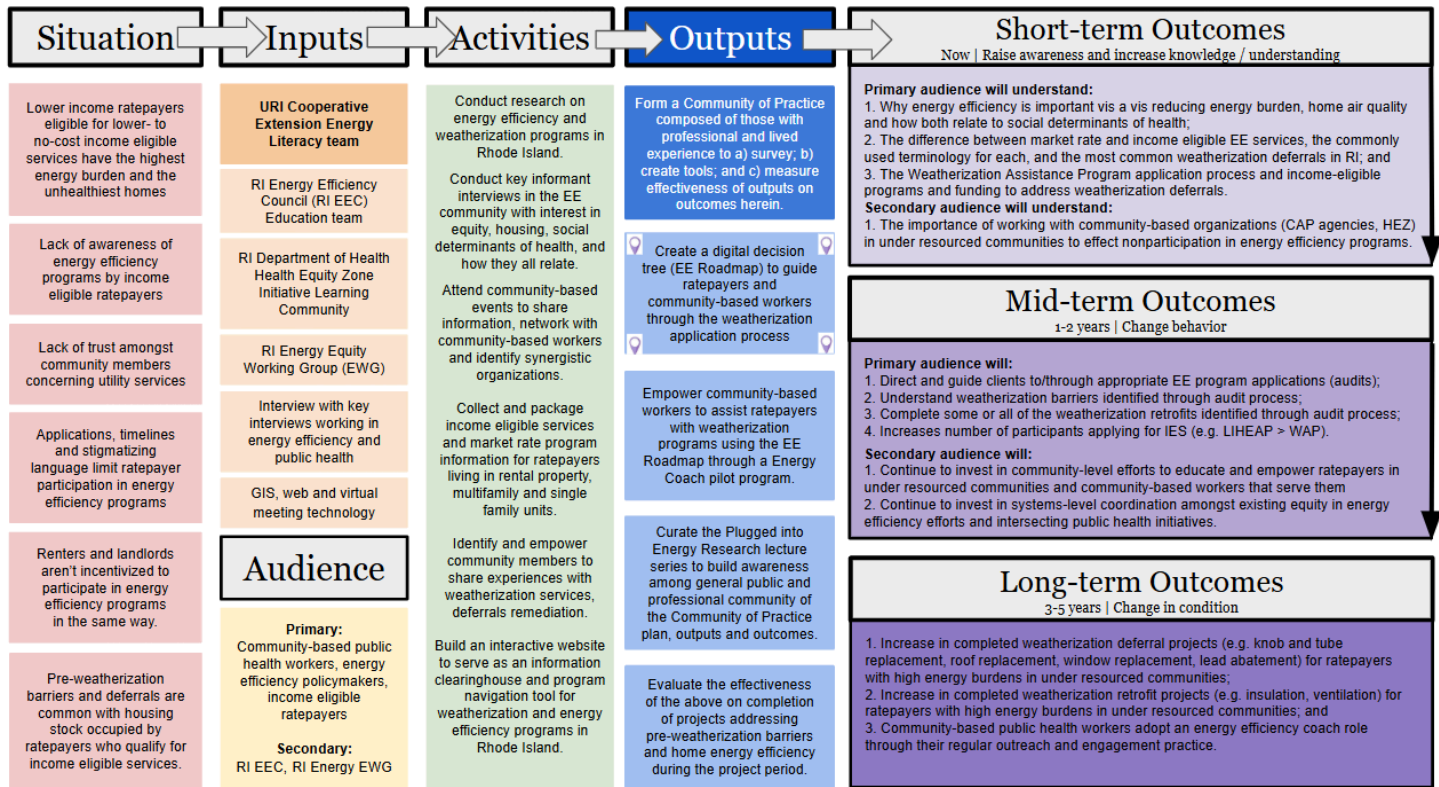
programs. The EHACoP offers a replicable model for how collaborative, equity-focused engagement can help transform energy policy and practice into more accessible and effective systems for all.

## 7. References

- [1] [Systems Change: Why It Matters \(and Isn't Just a Buzzword\)](#). Chandler Foundation.
- [2] Kelsey, Kathleen, and Eric Stafne. "A Model for Evaluating eXtension Communities of Practice." *Journal of Extension*, vol. 50, no. 5, Oct. 2012.
- [3] "Community of Practice Facilitation Guide." Center for Positive Organizations, Stephen M. Ross School of Business, University of Michigan. 2020.
- [4] "Convening Design 2022." The Rockefeller Foundation. 2022.

# 8. Appendices

## Appendix A: Logic Model



## Appendix B: Home Energy Assessment Opportunity Description

### Rhode Island In-Home Energy Assessment Opportunity for EHACoP Participants

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Greetings! We are looking for Efficient Housing for All Community of Practice (EHACoP) participants who are willing to complete an In-Home Energy Assessment in June 2025 and share their experience with us for additional compensation. The purpose of this opportunity is to learn about the experience of scheduling and carrying out an In-Home Energy Assessment in Rhode Island. We will use your feedback to recommend improvements to the process and create a public awareness campaign so that other RI residents better understand the value of energy efficiency and what to expect.

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#### REQUIREMENTS:

- Schedule an in-home energy assessment prior to Thursday, July 31, 2025;
  - Have the in-home energy assessment completed prior to Friday, August 15, 2025;
  - Allow URI staff to attend the assessment to take photos and videos;
  - Sign a media release to allow URI to use in program marketing materials; and
  - Provide detailed feedback on their experience (see steps below).
- 

#### PARTICIPANT INCENTIVES:

- One \$50 gift card *per step* completed (see steps below);
  - An in-home energy assessment;
  - Support with scheduling weatherization retrofits after the assessment;
  - No cost or low-cost energy upgrades to make your home more comfortable and healthier to live in;
  - 5-30% reduction in their energy bill; and
  - The opportunity to use their experience to educate their community and benefit the environment!
- 

#### STEP 1: SCHEDULING (\$50)

- Schedule the in-home energy assessment by contacting RI Energy;
  - Complete the survey below to provide feedback about your experience; and
  - Contact Kevin Drumm to inform him of the date and time of the assessment.
- 

#### STEP 2: ENERGY AUDIT (\$50)

- Allow the Home Energy Auditor and URI staff inside your home to complete the energy assessment;
  - Sign a media release and allow URI staff to take pictures and videos during the home energy assessment; and
  - Complete a survey to provide feedback about your experience.
- 

#### STEP 3: WEATHERIZE (\$50)

- Review the results of the Home Energy Assessment and contact Kevin Drumm with information about next steps (e.g. pre-weatherization barriers need to be addressed, upgrades identified)
  - Schedule weatherization upgrades;
  - Complete the survey below to provide feedback about your experience.
- 

***Interested in participating in one or more of the steps above?  
Please contact [REDACTED] at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED].***

## Appendix C: Facilitator Workbook

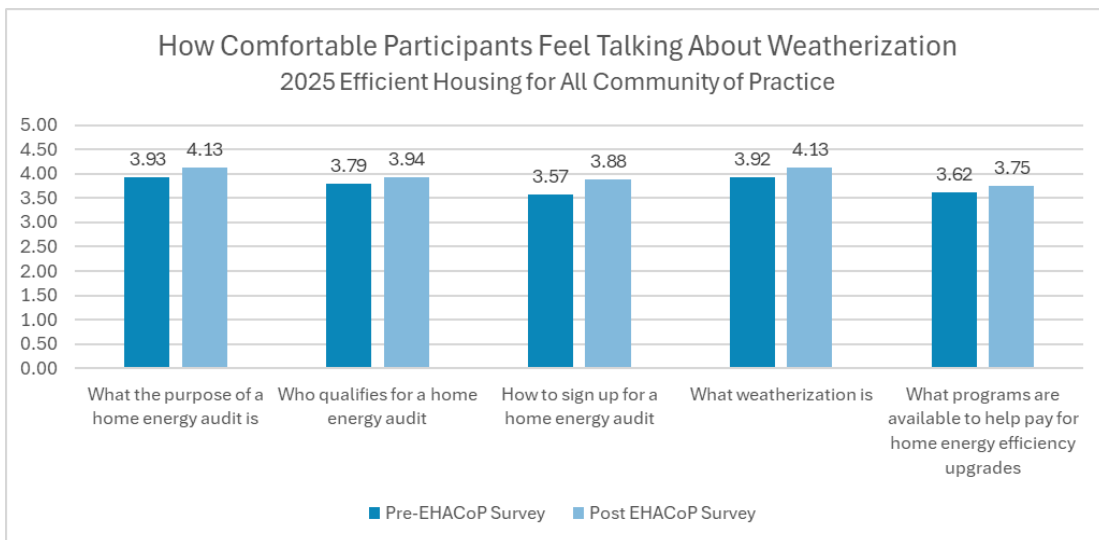
The [Facilitator Workbook](#) was created to provide a guide for future Energy Navigator training. The purpose of the training is to increase awareness and knowledge among community-based workers about a) home energy efficiency and weatherization's connection to social determinants of health; b) RI programs and incentives that exist for residents, and c) how to navigate utilization of the programs and incentives.

## Appendix D: Roadmap to Weatherization in Rhode Island

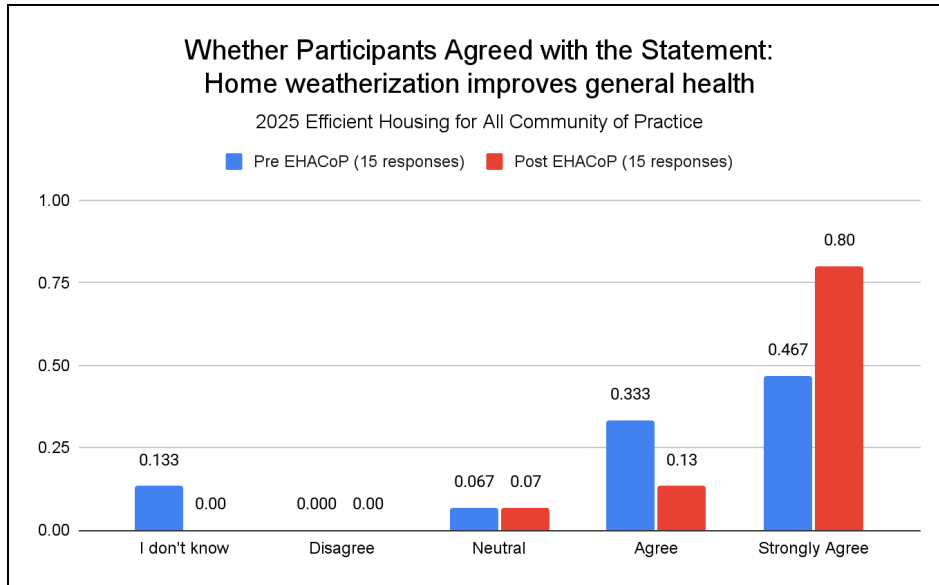
The [Roadmap to Weatherization](#) and accompanying guide is intended to provide information to Rhode Island residents and community-based workers about home energy efficiency, in-home energy assessments through the Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) and other venues, and help answer questions about the process.

## Appendix E: Additional Results

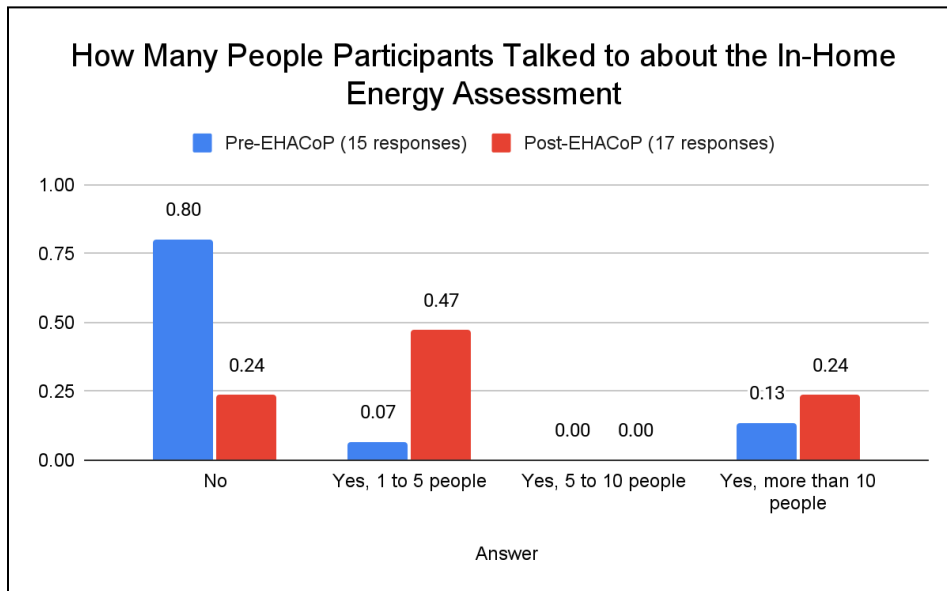
**Appendix E1:** Results from Pre-EHACoP Survey and Post-EHACoP Survey illustrating how comfortable participants felt discussing specific aspects of weatherization with their clients, friends, or family.



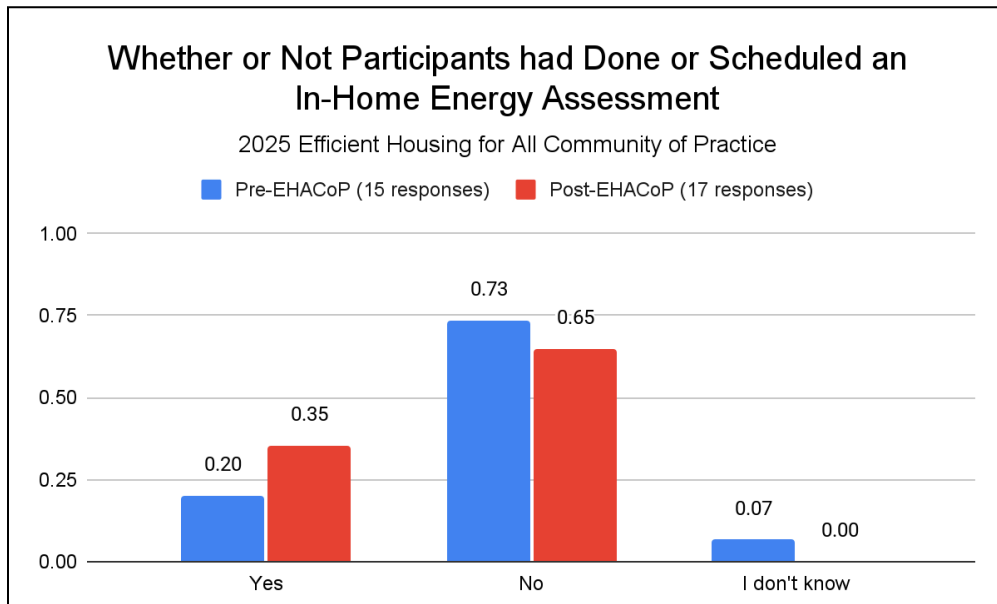
**Appendix E2:** Results from Pre-EHACoP Survey and Post-EHACoP Survey illustrating the Percent Frequency of how much participants agreed with the statement: home energy assessments and home weatherization upgrades improve general health.



**Appendix E3:** Results from Pre-EHACoP Survey and Post-EHACoP Survey illustrating the percent frequency of participant answers for how many people they talked to about the HEA.



**Appendix E4:** Results from Pre-EHACoP Survey and Post-EHACoP Survey illustrating the percent frequency of participant's response to whether or not they had done or scheduled a HEA.



**Appendix E5: Feedback on the EHACoP experience from the Post-EHACoP Survey**

<b>Do you have any other feedback you would like to share about your experience participating in the EHACoP?</b>
Participating in this program got me moving on addressing issues within my home. Especially as my husband and I will be reaching retirement age in the near future. Also helpful in my profession in helping families with individuals with special needs.
no
Uplifting! A very caring community. Glad to be a part of something positive. My friends had barriers with 100 year old house. Was afraid of having too many problems and didn't know what to say.
Keep hosting! The RI EWG + EHACoP can be a great partnership [ILLEGIBLE] groups to fuel recommendation + potential solutions
Learned about moneys still available which is great if you can get it. Programs are out there with funds. I will promote this program to everyone and I have been doing it already.
Have Spanish groups and English groups.
Very interesting and eye opening. A lot of great information presented in a clear fashion
No, loved it. Currently going through the process. Handy info to pass on to family and friends.
My experience and what I have learned here has given me the knowledge and tools to teach others about this program and how to weatherize and improve the environment of their home. Thank you all for having these sessions for us.
I enjoy this education very much.
Great experience. EHACoP feels like family.
I enjoyed it & appreciate the opportunity to be part of this.
I would like to have meetings every three months with the Energy Efficiency Council to hear about the progress of energy efficiency adoption in our community.
I really liked it. I'd like to participate in more workshops like this one and help more people learn more about energy efficiency. And the EHACoP program! I liked the team dynamics; it was great! Excellent work.
Very good and very important because the communities have the knowledge with practices and objectives

**Appendix E6: Results from the Home Energy Assessment Opportunity Survey**

**HEA Opportunity Step One Survey Responses**

Rating of experience completing the Home Energy Assessment steps on a scale of 1 to 5				
	Finding information about the HEA program	Contacting and communicating with a representative from the HEA program	Scheduling the assessment at a time that is convenient for you	How could this process be improved for ease of accessibility, scheduling, etc.?
<b>Response 1</b>	4	5	5	Honestly it wasn't clear (even to me!!) whether I should go through RISE or Clear Result by getting LIHEAP qualified first. Hope I did the right thing.
<b>Response 2</b>	3	5	5	It was a little difficult to find the RISE webinar initially. On the form to reserve your preferred appointment date and time. The questions "How did you hear about us?" The drop down doesn't include "URI – Energy Literacy Initiative as a choice, Unknown/Other is a choice without a further space to add one's answer. I did receive the email confirmation timely. The tried finding a description of the home assessment process, but couldn't find a good outline of the actual process. The assessment process was covered in our sessions, but if a friend wanted to see it on the actual site, I couldn't find it. I have received a call from RISE with a potential earlier appointment date due by a cancellation, but this day & time didn't meet my schedule. All in all the request & setting a date & time process was been smooth.

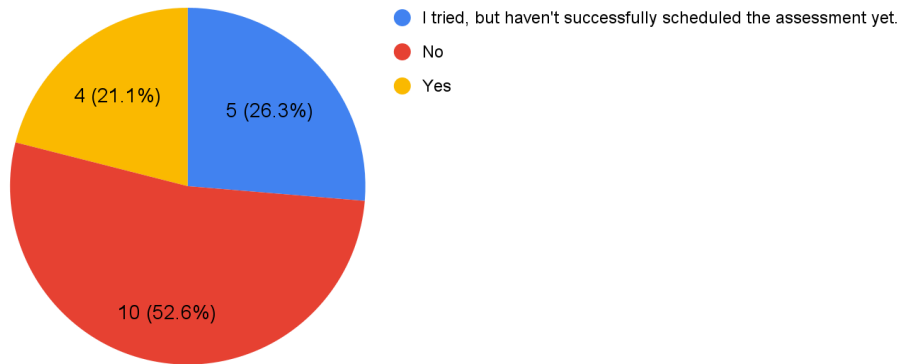
## HEA Opportunity Step Two Survey Responses

	Rating of experience completing the Home Energy Assessment steps on a scale 1 to 5					
	Communicating with HEA program representative prior to assessment	Having the HEA completed on your home	Understanding the results of your HEA	Understanding what next steps are	How could the HEA scheduling, completion, and after-process be improved?	Did anything surprise you during the HEA?
<b>Response 1</b>	5	5	3	2	Just give me one or two recommendations for an electrician for the barrier sign off and tell me approx what the cost will be. Who has time to research these things? Also, it's not clear if there is going to be some issue with my crawl space.	My auditor seemed surprised at certain aspects of how my boiler was installed - I am questioning whether it was installed incorrectly because it gives me a lot of trouble - but I'm not sure what to do about that
<b>Response 2</b>	5	5	4	4	Process was easy, just wish I had a better understand about the knob & tube wiring prior to the visit. I was totally unaware of the fact, even though several family members are electricians.	The fact that I have Knob & Tube wiring in my home. I thought it had been removed many years ago. It was removed from the cellar only, being an exposed area. However, glad to discover this fact now vs when I go to sell the house in the future.

**Appendix E7: Results from the Home Energy Assessment Nonparticipation Survey**

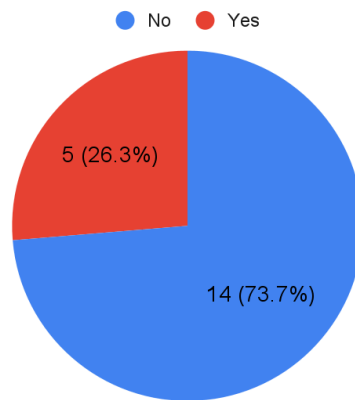
**Whether or not Participants Scheduled an Assessment Since the Beginning of the EHACoP**

2025 Efficient Housing for All Community of Practice



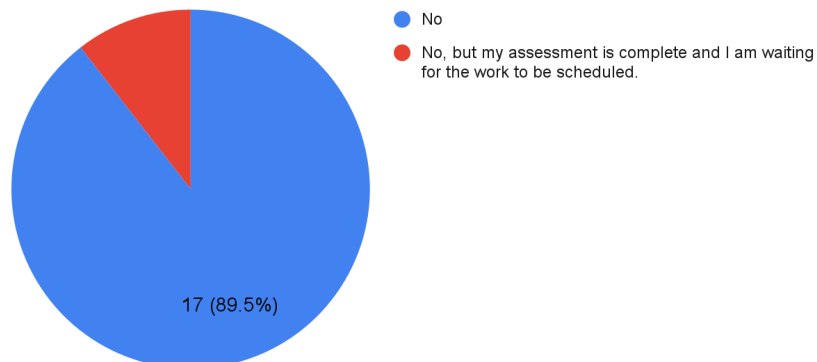
**Whether or not Participants Had a Home Energy Assessment Completed Since the Beginning of the EHACoP**

2025 Efficient Housing for All Community of Practice



**Whether or not Participants Completed the Recommendations for Weatherization in their Home**

2025 Efficient Housing for All Community of Practice



**If you answer "No" to any questions above, what are the top 1 or 2 reasons why you haven't engaged in the process of weatherizing your home? Please be as specific as possible.**

I was placed in a Que and never reached out to again. 2) it was circuitous to find the right person to reach out to as i kept being passed around to different people for my housing complex

Fear. Sadly I know there will be lots of expensive fixes before I could get weatherization.

We are afraid that it'll be too many repairs to be done before we could get the weatherization which is out of our pocketbook.

I recommend and referred people to sign up for the program. I rent and the house I live in is updated energy efficient. I'm privileged to live here, but I will be actively referring families to benefit from this awesome program. Thank you!

I try ones and do not work for me

I have to put my low income  
Status on my utility accounts

No response back from you.

Next step is knob & tube sign-off, I need to schedule it

My property manager stated that they are unwilling to engage and that they are as efficient as they are going to be.

Yo alquilo el apartamento y la dueña no me dio el permiso

Me faltan unas information y la persona que me estaba atendiendo en RISE no me volvio a contactar.

Rise Engineering came to assess because I own a 3 family and only 1 unit was low income. They didn't find any work that was possible to do. House previously insulated over 5 years. Rise does not do the amount of measures community action agencies offer; RISE found no work needed even if sections were not fully insulated

I scheduled a home energy assessment in my three units rental property in February 2025. It was completed by RISE in May 2025. They found knob-and-tub in the basement of one unit, and mildew in the roof of another unit. I'm working on removing these barriers to continue with the weatherization, but have not been able to find an electrician to fix the electric system. And I'm waiting for a constructor to work in the roof (the original installer). Unfortunately, those are hard-to-solve pre-watherization barriers.

I have a barrier ( my house foundation). I am in the process of trying to get that repaired. I applied to revolving fund . Hoping to get approved. Once and if it gets repaired I would love to have my house weatherized.

En la casa se presentó un problema de filtración en el baño del segundo piso, y el propietario está tratando con el seguro.

We have a Community Agency with our case and they send us a legal contract also we contact rise they send us an email asking a coupe of information including questions about my tenant and I couldn't get the information from my tenant yet.

Not comfortable inviting strangers into my house.

Assessment completed; However, I have Knob & Tube wiring which I wasn't aware of. Electrical work (removal of tube & knob wiring) will need to be completed, before I can move forward with the weatherization recommendations.