

2026 Energy Efficiency Council

DRAFT Education Proposal

Submitted by University of Rhode Island Cooperative Extension, last updated 10.23.25

SITUATION

1. Income-eligible ratepayers have the highest energy burden and the unhealthiest homes, but participation in energy efficiency programs that reduce energy costs and enhance building performance because:
 - They lack of awareness of energy efficiency programs;
 - They lack trust in utility services and energy-related programs; and
 - Applications, timelines and stigmatizing language limit ratepayer participation in energy efficiency programs.
2. Community-based health workers have the skills and community trust needed to fill this gap, but they lack the specific knowledge required to teach income-eligible ratepayers about:
 - Why energy efficiency is important vis a vis reducing energy burden, home air quality and how both relate to social determinants of health;
 - 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
 - The Weatherization Assistance Program application process and income-eligible programs and funding to address weatherization deferrals.

INPUTS

1. Facilitation by the URI Cooperative Extension Energy Literacy team based on learnings from the *Efficient Housing for All* Community of Practice
2. Advisement from the RI Energy Efficiency Council (RI EEC) Education team and RI Energy Equity Working Group (EWG)
3. Community participation through the RI Department of Health Health Equity Zone Initiative Learning Community, RI Energy Equity Working Group (EWG) and the Community Health Worker Association of RI (CHWARI)
4. Translation services

AUDIENCE

1. **Primary:** Community-based health workers
2. **Secondary:** Income eligible ratepayers

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ACTIVITIES

1. **Comprehensive Action Program (CAP) Agency Focus Group:**

- a. Develop and facilitate a focus group for key CAP agency staff (e.g. leadership team members, weatherization program coordinators) from each of the seven RI agencies to:
 - i. Gather information about CAP agency in-home energy assessment, weatherization and deferral procedures and best practices;
 - ii. Provide a platform for CAP leadership to share ideas and identify opportunities for collaboration; and
 - iii. Serve as an entry point for future structural change in CAP agency energy efficiency program implementation.

2. **RI Home Weatherization Roadmap:**

- a. Refine the roadmap drafted in 2025 with input from the EEC and EWG to create a digital decision tree that can be used as an educational tool for community-based workers and to guide ratepayers through the weatherization process.

3. **Energy Navigator Training:**

- a. Design and deliver a bilingual (English/Spanish) Home Energy Navigator training for community-based workers using lessons learned from the EHACoP, including a training workbook.

4. **Workforce Development Credential:**

- a. Work with the CHWARI / RI Certification Board and the RIDOH Health Equity Zone Initiative / Learning Community to formalize a public health workforce development microcredential for workers to provide an upskilling opportunity

5. **Plugged into Energy Research (PIER) Lecture:**

- a. Host one Plugged into Energy Research lecture to share information about the Energy Efficiency Council's commitment to workforce development through this project, in conjunction with other lectures in the series that may highlight the URI Energy Fellows Program as another workforce development initiative.

OUTPUTS

1. **Digital RI Home Weatherization Roadmap web tool**
2. **Home Energy Navigator training lesson plans and instructional materials**
3. **Home Energy Navigator training through RIDOH HEZ and CHWARI events**
4. **Home Energy Navigator Public Health Workforce Development Credential**
5. **CAP Agency Focus Group**
6. **URI Plugged Into Energy Research (PIER) lecture**

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OUTCOMES

Short-term (Knowledge)

Community-based health workers [primary audience] are empowered to assist ratepayers with weatherization programs using the EE Roadmap through a Weatherization Ambassador pilot training program with knowledge about:

- a) Why energy efficiency is important vis a vis reducing energy burden, home air quality and how both relate to social determinants of health;
- b) 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
- c) The Weatherization Assistance Program application process and income-eligible programs and funding to address weatherization deferrals.

Mid-term (Behavior)

Community-based health workers [primary audience] will:

- a) Guide clients through appropriate Energy Efficiency programs using the RI Home Weatherization Roadmap;
- b) Share Energy Efficiency program information with landlords to increase participation; and
- c) Increase the number of residents applying for IES (e.g. LIHEAP > WAP).

Through training and support offered by community-based health workers, income-eligible ratepayers [secondary audience] will understand:

- a) Why energy efficiency is important vis a vis reducing energy burden, home air quality and how both relate to social determinants of health;
- b) 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
- c) The Weatherization Assistance Program application process and income-eligible programs and funding to address weatherization deferrals.

Long-term (Conditions)

We expect to see:

- a) An increase in completed home energy assessments for ratepayers with high energy burdens in under-resourced communities;
- b) An increase in completed home weatherization projects for ratepayers with high energy burdens in under-resourced communities; and
- c) Community-based public health workers adopt an Energy Efficiency Coach role through their regular outreach and engagement practice.

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BUDGET BY ACTIVITY

ACTIVITY	LEAD	COST
1. Focus Groups	URI staff salary & fringe for focus group sessions with CAP agency professionals	\$20,000
2. Tools	URI staff salary & fringe for tool content development and URI Environmental Data Center consultant to build digital story map development	\$12,500
3. Training	URI staff salary & fringe for training content development and facilitation, refreshments and instructor stipends	\$30,000
4. Credential Development	URI staff salary & fringe for employer partner coordination and credentialing consultant to develop skills matrix and evaluation plan	\$7,500
5. PIER lecture, HEA opportunity	2026 Energy Literacy Fellow to coordinate one PIER lecture; refreshments for lecture and incentive payments for in-home energy assessment (HEA) opportunity participants	\$5,000
Indirect Costs	<i>Need to confirm state agency rate of 25%</i>	\$25,000
TOTAL:		\$100,000

QUESTIONS about this proposal should be directed to Kate Hardesty at kate@uri.edu or 401-874-4096.