

**ACEEE Technical Assistance Program** - ACEEE's [Energy Equity for Renters](#) initiative is offering no-cost technical assistance for at least five local governments and community-based organizations (CBOs) to help tackle the challenge of reducing energy waste in rental housing. This opportunity is available for communities seeking to improve the energy efficiency of rental housing while also preserving or expanding housing affordability. Technical assistance work must involve CBOs working alongside local governments to ensure that any initiatives supported through this work are community-driven.

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## Rhode Island Energy Navigator Training Pilot

Design and pilot an Energy Navigator Training focused on energy efficiency access to income eligible renters. ACEEE technical assistance would supplement and enhance the University of Rhode Island's 2026 proposal to the RI Energy Efficiency Council to fund development of the training and other supporting elements.

### **Summary / Objectives**

1. Pilot a **renter-focused Energy Navigator Training program** to help income-eligible renters participate in weatherization and energy efficiency programs.
2. Strengthen and operationalize a proposed Energy Navigator model through **targeted ACEEE technical assistance**, with a focus on program design, training materials, evaluation, and replicability.
3. Develop a **Digital RI Home Weatherization Roadmap** as a core tool used by Navigators to guide renters through programs, permissions, and next steps.
4. Test a **city-CBO-utility partnership model** that can be replicated by other municipalities and states.

### **Partners and Roles**

#### **City of Central Falls – Municipal Partner (Lead Applicant)**

- Serve as the host community for the Energy Navigator Training pilot
- Support identification of and connection to potential trainees (CHWs, CBO staff, etc.)
- Support renter outreach and alignment with local housing and related initiatives
- Participate in Energy Navigator program design and coordination
- Contribute to program evaluation lessons learned for replication
- Support the integration of energy efficiency info into existing community-facing work

#### **Children's Friend – Community-Based Organization (Lead Applicant)**

- Serve as a trusted, established community anchor for the Energy Navigator Training pilot
- Support identification and connection to potential trainees (CHWs, CBO staff, etc.)
- Provide venue to hold in-person training sessions if needed
- Participate in Energy Navigator program design and coordination
- Provide translation and interpretation services as needed
- Contribute to program evaluation lessons learned for replication
- Support the integration of energy efficiency info into existing community-facing work

#### **URI Cooperative Extension (Project Lead)**

- Lead overall training program design and facilitation
- Develop and deliver the Energy Navigator train-the-trainer curriculum
- Coordinate partners and integrate lessons learned into broader statewide efforts

### **Rhode Island Energy (Utility Partner)**

- Coordinate program access, referrals, and navigator touchpoints
- Advise on alignment with utility energy efficiency offerings
- Participate in partnership design and pilot implementation

### **ACEEE (Technical Assistance Provider)**

- Provide technical assistance to strengthen program design, curriculum, and tools
- Scan national best practices and models for renter-focused navigation and weatherization access
- Co-develop a digital Home Weatherization Roadmap Tool
- Support creation of training materials and case study one-pagers
- Help define success metrics and document a replicable city–utility–CBO partnership model and lessons learned

### **RI Energy Efficiency Council (Project Oversight)**

- Contract with URI Cooperative Extension and fund the work of developing and implementing the Energy Navigator Training pilot
- Provide close oversight, partner coordination, and project management as needed
- Provide strategic guidance, policy context, and broad alignment and integration with statewide energy, equity, and affordability goals and efforts

### **RI Office of Energy Resources, RI Department of Health (Additional State Agency Partners)**

- Provide strategic guidance, policy context, and broad alignment and integration with statewide energy, equity, and affordability goals and efforts

## **Project Timeline**

### **February 2026 – June 2027**

- PHASE 1: Landscape Scan, Curriculum Design, & Tool Development (February - July 2026)
- PHASE 2: Training Implementation (July - November 2026)
- PHASE 3: Learning & Documentation (July - April 2027)

## **Technical Assistance Applicant Information**

1.

Local Government Agency / Dept. Name: **City of Central Falls**  
Primary Contact Person: **Derek Collamati**  
Title of Primary Contact Person: **Director of Development & Strategic Partnerships**  
Primary Contact Email Address: [dcollamati@city.centrfallsri.gov](mailto:dcollamati@city.centrfallsri.gov)  
Primary Contact Phone Number: **401-327-4438**

2.

Community-Based Organization Name: **Children’s Friend**  
Primary Contact Person: **Owen Heleen**  
Title of Primary Contact Person: **Director of Program Development & Innovation**  
Primary Contact Email Address: [ohleen@cfsri.org](mailto:ohleen@cfsri.org)  
Primary Contact Phone Number: **401-808-5277**

## Application Question #1

### **1. Please describe the rental energy efficiency policy and/or program that the proposed technical assistance will help advance.**

Rhode Island is advancing a renter-focused Energy Navigator Training pilot designed to improve participation by income-eligible (low income) renters in existing energy efficiency and weatherization programs, particularly Rhode Island Energy's Income Eligible Single Family and Multifamily programs.

Income-eligible renters in Rhode Island experience disproportionately high energy burdens and often live in unhealthy, inefficient housing. While robust energy efficiency programs exist, participation remains limited due to a combination of low awareness, lack of trust in utilities and energy programs, complex application processes, stigmatizing or technical language, and barriers unique to rental housing such as landlord permissions and pre-weatherization deferrals.

To address these challenges, the Energy Navigator Training pilot will launch a community-embedded, workforce-based support model that equips trusted community-based workers (CBWs), including community health workers (CHWs), and community-based organization (CBO) staff with the specialized knowledge and tools needed to actively support renters through the home energy efficiency process. Rather than serving as one-time educators, Energy Navigators are envisioned to serve as ongoing guides or “hand-holders” available to help renters understand program options, navigate eligibility requirements, coordinate landlord engagement, and provide continuity through multi-step processes such as home energy assessments, deferral resolution, and weatherization completion.

The pilot builds on several years of groundwork led by the University of Rhode Island (URI) Cooperative Extension's Energy Literacy Initiative. This includes the 2025 Efficient Housing for All Community of Practice (EHACoP) and a deepening partnership with the training and technical assistance program for the RI Department of Health's Health Equity Zone Initiative, which demonstrated that relational trust, consistent follow-up, and culturally competent support are critical to overcoming participation barriers. The Rhode Island Energy Efficiency Council has committed financial support for initial development and delivery of the pilot in 2026.

#### **Key components of the program include:**

- A bilingual (English/Spanish) train-the-trainer **Energy Navigator curriculum**, developed and facilitated by URI Cooperative Extension, that integrates home energy efficiency and weatherization knowledge into existing community health and outreach roles;
- A digital **Home Weatherization Roadmap** tool for use by the public and Energy Navigators to guide renters step-by-step through program eligibility, landlord coordination, deferrals, and available incentives;
- A **state-enabled, locally-implemented partnership model** that builds on an existing cross-agency partnership with a municipality and community-based organization serving as a local implementation hub. By grounding local delivery in strong state-level coordination, the pilot is positioned for replication in communities throughout Rhode Island.

Through this pilot, Energy Navigators will support renters in accessing Rhode Island Energy's Landlord/Tenant Program, which offers no-cost home energy assessments, fully subsidized insulation and air sealing improvements (up to \$10,000 per unit), and additional rebates and incentives for rental properties. By pairing existing utility programs with trusted, proactive navigation support, the program aims to increase completed assessments and weatherization projects while reducing energy burdens and improving housing conditions for renters.

Proposed technical assistance through ACEEE would add critical capacity at a pivotal moment, supporting the transition of this emerging program model into implementation while strengthening its effectiveness, evaluation, and potential for replication across Rhode Island and beyond.

## Application Question #2

### **2. How do you envision our technical assistance services being used to *advance your planned or active work?***

ACEEE's technical assistance would be used to strengthen and accelerate an Energy Navigator pilot that is already under development through URI Cooperative Extension, with support from the Energy Efficiency Council and multiple state and local partners. The pilot is intended to test whether trusted community-based workers can effectively help income-eligible renters navigate complex energy efficiency and weatherization programs and overcome common participation barriers.

Specifically, ACEEE's technical assistance would advance this work by:

- **Informing program and training design** approaches to ensure the Energy Navigator role is realistic, effective, and well-aligned with existing community-based staff workflows.
- **Grounding the pilot in national best practices** through scans of comparable program models, leveraging ACEEE's national perspective to inform design choices and strengthen outcomes.
- **Supporting equitable implementation** by helping translate complex program rules, terminology, and deferral pathways into effective tools and training materials for on-the-ground messengers.
- **Enhancing learning and evaluation** by supporting both quantitative and qualitative approaches to understanding how community-based workers employ energy efficiency topics in their work, how renters respond, and how to improve effectiveness in future iterations.
- **Positioning the pilot for replication** by documenting lessons learned and articulating a scalable city-utility-CBO partnership model.

ACEEE's technical assistance would not replace or duplicate URI's planned work, but would supplement it by adding rigor, national context, and structured learning to ensure the pilot produces actionable insights for Rhode Island and other jurisdictions.

## Application Question #3

3. Please outline the **scope of technical assistance** work you are requesting from ACEEE. This should outline specific tasks and the timing of those tasks for all involved parties (local government, CBO(s), ACEEE, and other partners).

### PHASE 1: Landscape Scan, Curriculum Design & Tool Development (Feb - Jul 2026)

#### URI Cooperative Extension (Project Lead)

- Lead overall program design and coordination
- Integrate ACEEE findings into the Energy Navigator training framework
- Convene structured design discussions with CBOs, municipal staff, utility, state partners
- Draft curriculum and delivery plan, including training format and pilot logistics
- Work with CHWs/CBWs to ensure program design aligns with existing workflows
- Design trainee incentives, potentially including credentialing and monetary incentives

#### ACEEE (Technical Assistance Provider)

- Conduct a **scan of national policies, programs, and models** related to:
  - Energy program navigation and customer support
  - Use of community-based workers to address energy burden and health
  - Incentives for navigators and program participants
- Produce a **synthesis of best and emerging practices** relevant to renter-focused navigation
- Provide guidance on **equitable program design considerations** (trust-building, stigma reduction, renter–landlord dynamics)
- Support **Energy Navigator curriculum development**, including:
  - Core competencies for navigators
  - Integration of energy efficiency into CBW practice
  - Energy literacy to empower renters
- Assist with development of **training materials** (modular lessons, visual aids, case-studies)
- Co-develop the **RI Home Weatherization Roadmap** as a digital decision tool for CBWs

#### City of Central Falls & Children’s Friend (Municipal & CBO Partners)

- Participate in discussions throughout the program design process to ensure feasibility and fit with existing services
- Provide local context, connections, constraints, priorities
- Support alignment with existing utility offerings and community initiatives

#### Utility & State Partners (RIE, EEC, OER, RIDOH)

- Participate in regular project coordination meetings
- Advise on program rules, eligibility, timelines, renter/landlord considerations, etc.
- Provide strategic guidance and ensure alignment with state policy goals

### PHASE 2: Training Delivery (Jul - Nov 2026)

#### URI Cooperative Extension (Project Lead)

- Lead delivery of Energy Navigator Training
- Coordinate pilot logistics and partner engagement

#### Children’s Friend (CBO Partner)

- Help identify and recruit local trainees (CHWs, CBO staff, etc.)
- Host in-person training sessions

- Provide translation and interpretation services as needed
- Designate staff to complete training

#### **City of Central Falls (Municipal Partner)**

- Help identify and recruit local trainees (CHWs, CBO staff, etc.)
- Support renter outreach and coordination with local housing efforts and community initiatives

#### **ACEEE (Technical Assistance Provider)**

- Provide guidance on **measuring effectiveness**, including:
  - Quantitative indicators (applications, assessments, completions)
  - Qualitative learning (navigator experiences, renter and landlord feedback)
- Support development and application of **evaluation tools** (surveys, focus group guides, reflection prompts)
- Advise on ethical and feasible **approaches to data collection** by CBWs

#### **Utility & State Partners (RIE, EEC, OER, RIDOH)**

- Participate in regular project coordination meetings
- Provide ongoing policy context and alignment support

### **PHASE 3: Learning & Documentation (Jul 2026 - Apr 2027)**

#### **URI Cooperative Extension (Project Lead)**

- Synthesize findings and integrate lessons into future program planning and statewide efforts
- Share results with project partners and other stakeholders

#### **ACEEE (Technical Assistance Provider)**

- Support **synthesis of findings** into:
  - Lessons learned and recommendations on next steps
  - Guidance for replication and scaling
  - Documentation of multi-partner approach
- Support **framing of results** for broader dissemination
- Advise on pathways for **program evolution** and institutionalization

#### **Municipal, CBO, Utility & State Partners**

- Participate in learning and evaluation activities
- Inform recommendations for program improvement and future expansion

## Application Question #4

4. Please describe any **funding and/or information challenges** you may face in completing the work outlined in the scope of work.

### Funding Challenges:

- CBO staff will need to dedicate time to coordinating community engagement, hosting Energy Navigator trainees, and integrating energy efficiency knowledge and resources into their existing programs. Without dedicated funding to offset these responsibilities, there is a risk that participation could detract from their core work and limit the effectiveness of the pilot.
- CHWs taking on the Energy Navigator role may need incentives or stipends to integrate energy efficiency activities into their existing workload without reducing time spent on their core health or social services responsibilities.
- Bilingual delivery and accessibility require dedicated funding for interpreters, translated materials, and culturally competent facilitation.
- Scaling the Energy Navigator pilot beyond the initial municipal/CBO context will require additional resources.

### Information Challenges:

- Measuring the outcomes of individual CBW interactions with residents is complex and requires systematized data collection methods. Implementing these measures may require updates to existing CBW or CBO procedures, as well as technical resources to track engagement, program uptake, and energy savings.
- Capturing both qualitative and quantitative results in a meaningful way is critical to demonstrating the effectiveness of the Navigator model and informing replication, but doing so may require additional support for data collection, analysis, and reporting.

## Application Question #5

**5. Please share information demonstrating local government leadership's commitment to establishing the policy or program the technical assistance is meant to support in the response box below. Examples include (but are not limited to) adopted policies or resolutions, letters of support from policymakers, or allocation of funding to specific projects.**

The City of Central Falls has demonstrated sustained, multi-year leadership in advancing the housing, health, and neighborhood stability priorities that the Energy Navigator pilot is designed to support. Mayor Maria Rivera has made safe, affordable housing and healthy homes a core policy priority of her administration, beginning with the City's first-ever Housing Summit in March 2021, which brought together more than 200 residents, landlords, developers, health providers, and community organizations across three multilingual sessions to identify needs, funding strategies, and an action plan for improving Central Falls' housing stock. That summit produced a citywide housing strategy focused on affordability, safety, and reinvestment in aging rental housing.

Since then, Central Falls has translated this vision into concrete policy and investment. The City operates one of the state's most proactive housing safety systems through its Central Falls Lead Prevention Program (CFLPP), which enforces Rhode Island's lead-safety laws, brings landlords into compliance, and protects children and families from environmental health hazards. Under Mayor Rivera's leadership, Central Falls has partnered with the Attorney General to strengthen lead protections and has already brought 1,250 rental units into lead-safe compliance, issued 557 violations, and successfully abated 302 properties through Housing Court, a scale of enforcement and remediation that few municipalities in Rhode Island have achieved.

In 2024, the City of Central Falls became Rhode Island Energy's first partner, alongside CBO Progreso Latino, to conduct targeted energy efficiency outreach and education to landlords through a new initiative. These "landlord sessions" were designed to educate landlords about Rhode Island Energy's relevant efficiency offerings and the benefits to participating in them. These inaugural sessions in Central Falls, held in person at Progreso Latino, featured strong turnout from landlords across the city due in no small part to the City's partnership and commitment. The success of these sessions served as a model for Rhode Island Energy as it expanded this initiative across the state.

The City has also committed significant political and financial capital to expanding the supply of safe, affordable housing. Mayor Rivera led the effort to prepare Central Falls to access Rhode Island's historic \$65 million affordable housing bond, the largest housing investment approved by voters, and has identified multiple city- and redevelopment agency-owned sites for energy-efficient, affordable housing development. These include townhomes, mixed-use rental housing, and mill conversions near the new commuter rail station. These projects are explicitly designed to stabilize renters and prevent displacement in a city where over 80% of residents rent and more than half of households are cost-burdened.

Together, these actions demonstrate that Central Falls is not treating energy efficiency, lead safety, and housing affordability as isolated programs, but as an integrated policy agenda led directly by the Mayor and City leadership. The Energy Navigator pilot builds directly on this foundation by engaging trusted, community-based partners to help renters and landlords access and benefit from the City's housing, health, and energy investments.

Please also refer to the letters of support from Mayor Rivera and Councilwoman Baena included as supporting documentation.

## Application Question #6

**6. How do you expect the initiative(s) will affect housing affordability in your community? Please be as detailed as possible.**

This initiative is designed to improve housing affordability for income-eligible renters by reducing utility expenses, which are a significant and often overlooked driver of housing cost burden. Housing affordability in Rhode Island has deteriorated rapidly in recent years. According to the 2024 Housing Fact Book, Rhode Island renters now require an income of \$60,320 to affordably rent the average-priced two-bedroom apartment including utilities, exceeding the state's median renter income (\$48,434) by nearly \$12,000. One-third of Rhode Island households are housing cost burdened, and nearly half of those households are severely cost burdened, paying more than 50% of income toward housing costs. These pressures are particularly acute for renters in older, inefficient housing stock, which is common in Central Falls and cities throughout the region.

Energy efficiency improvements directly address this affordability gap by reducing monthly utility bills and improving housing stability. Weatherization and energy efficiency measures have been shown nationally to reduce household energy bills by 15–30% on average, with the greatest benefits accruing to low-income households with high pre-retrofit energy burdens. For renters, these savings can be the difference between maintaining stable housing and facing utility arrears, shutoffs, or displacement pressures. This initiative supports affordability in several ways:

- **Reducing ongoing housing costs:** By increasing participation in weatherization and income-eligible energy efficiency programs, renters benefit from lower heating and electricity costs, reducing total housing expenditures.
- **Protecting renters from displacement:** Participation in Rhode Island Energy's income-eligible and landlord-tenant programs includes landlord agreements that restrict rent increases for a defined period following improvements, helping ensure that energy upgrades do not lead to rent hikes that negate affordability gains.
- **Addressing split incentives:** Energy Navigators help renters and landlords navigate program requirements together, reducing administrative barriers and encouraging landlord participation in no-cost or low-cost efficiency improvements.
- **Targeting those with the highest energy burden:** The pilot focuses on income-eligible renters in under-resourced communities who are most likely to live in older, inefficient housing and face disproportionate utility costs.

By embedding energy navigation within trusted community-based health and social service networks, this initiative helps ensure that energy efficiency investments translate into real, sustained affordability benefits for renters—not just improved buildings.

## Application Question #7

7. What are **other potential impacts** of the policies and/or programs? Please be as detailed as possible.

In addition to housing affordability, this initiative is expected to generate significant health, environmental, climate, workforce, and equity impacts, particularly for communities experiencing long-standing disparities.

### HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH IMPACTS

Rhode Island's housing stock is among the oldest in the nation, with substantial health implications. Between 2019 and 2023, Rhode Island had the highest percentage of low-income children (78%) living in older housing in the U.S. Poor housing conditions—including inadequate insulation, moisture intrusion, mold, and poor ventilation—are closely linked to respiratory illness, stress, and other adverse health outcomes.

Energy efficiency and weatherization improvements can:

- Improve indoor air quality by reducing moisture, mold, and drafts
- Stabilize indoor temperatures, reducing heat- and cold-related health risks
- Reduce asthma triggers and respiratory stress, particularly for children

Asthma is the most common chronic condition among Rhode Island children and a leading cause of school absences and hospital visits. Weatherization investments have been shown to improve indoor environmental quality and are associated with reductions in asthma-related symptoms and healthcare utilization. By training community-based health workers as Energy Navigators, this initiative explicitly links energy efficiency to social determinants of health, enabling trusted messengers to address housing, energy, and health challenges together.

### CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

Increased participation in weatherization and energy efficiency programs will:

- Reduce household energy consumption and associated greenhouse gas emissions
- Support Rhode Island's climate and decarbonization goals by improving building performance in existing housing stock
- Advance equitable climate action by prioritizing households with the highest energy burdens and least access to capital

This work aligns with state climate mandates ([Act on Climate](#)) and strategy ([Rhode Island Climate Action Strategy](#)) and complements existing utility and state-led efficiency programs ([EEC Annual Report](#)).

### ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE IMPACTS

This initiative incorporates workforce development elements by:

- Expanding the skill sets of community-based health workers and other frontline staff
- Creating pathways for Energy Navigator training to be institutionalized through existing certification or continuing education frameworks
- Strengthening coordination between the health, housing, and energy sectors

By investing in trusted local workers, the pilot supports a more resilient, community-rooted workforce while improving program delivery outcomes.

### EQUITY AND SYSTEMS-LEVEL IMPACTS

At a systems level, this initiative operationalizes recommendations from Rhode Island's Energy Equity Working Group by translating high-level equity goals into on-the-ground practice. It strengthens coordination among state agencies (EEC, OER, Department of Health), the utility, local government,

and community-based organizations, creating a partnership model that is both locally grounded and state-supported. The result is not only improved access to energy efficiency for renters, but a replicable framework for delivering equitable energy programs through trusted community institutions.

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## Application Question #8

**8. Please provide an in-depth description of the past and current relationship between the local government and community-based organization (CBO) partner(s) listed at the beginning of this application.**

Children's Friend has been a valued community partner in Central Falls since opening its Dexter Center at 621 Dexter Street in 2000. The Dexter Center includes two infant-toddler childcare classrooms, two preschool classrooms and offices and staff space for four family support programs. The programs are part of the Children's Friend intergenerational model, braiding together early care and education and family support. In 2024, Children's Friend served 22,042 individuals and families at its 12 centers in Central Falls, Pawtucket, and Providence and in families' homes.

The family support programs at the Dexter Center include:

- **Women, Infants, and Children Special Supplemental Nutrition Program** nurtures children by providing healthy foods such as milk, juice, cereal, cheese, eggs, infant formula, tuna, and fresh vegetables. Our team of nutritionists provides education to empower families to achieve better health outcomes. Lactation consultants provide breastfeeding support and advice. WIC also makes referrals to doctors, dentists, and other community services.
- **Early Intervention** works in partnership with families to promote the growth and development of infants and toddlers. Our services help children from birth to three years of age who have or may have a disability, are experiencing developmental delay, or are at risk for significant developmental problems. All services are family-centered and individualized to ensure the most successful outcomes for a child and their family.
- **First Connections** supports moms by empowering them with the knowledge and resources needed to care for themselves and nurture their newborns. Registered nurses and social workers provide culturally competent, comprehensive services in the client's home. Services can include blood pressure screenings for moms, weight checks for infants, connections to the Department of Human Services, WIC, obstetricians, pediatricians, housing, and domestic violence shelters. All children in the home receive developmental screenings, and staff from Children's Friend make referrals to local school departments as needed.
- Our **Centralized Intake and Enrollment** teams serve all agency programs and are the Children's Friend way of connecting families with the programs and supports they need as soon as possible. The team prioritizes high-need families and follows up to ensure connections are made. Centralized Intake aims to eliminate redundant data-gathering, increase families' engagement with programs, and prioritize access to programs for families with the most acute needs.

Throughout this work, Children's Friend draws on the resources of other community organizations and government, building a stronger community and more resilient families. The City of Central Falls has been a strong supporter of our work. In fact, Mayor Maria Rivera volunteered in a Dexter classroom last month reading to preschoolers.

## Application Question #9

### 9. How would you like to see these **relationships grow in the future?**

The City of Central Falls and Children's Friend envision their partnership evolving from a strong service-delivery relationship into a long-term, place-based systems partnership that centers families, strengthens housing stability, and integrates health, housing, and energy supports under one coordinated umbrella.

This next phase will be anchored by El Centro, the City's new \$14 million Ralph Holden Community and Senior Center, which Mayor Rivera has made one of her top priorities. El Centro is being developed as a one-stop, culturally responsive community hub where residents can access housing support, health services, food assistance, workforce development, and family programming in a single, trusted location. It will house the City's Office of Constituent Services and Health alongside nonprofit partners providing services ranging from housing and tenant support to behavioral health, domestic violence services, and after-school programming

As El Centro opens in the coming months, Children's Friend will be able to use this shared space to deepen its collaboration with the City by hosting Energy Navigator trainings, family-centered energy and housing workshops, and cross-referrals between its WIC, Early Intervention, and home-visiting programs and the City's housing, lead-safety, and energy-efficiency services. Rather than operating in parallel systems, families will be able to move seamlessly from a pediatric or WIC visit into housing, lead, or energy support, supported by trusted staff they already know.

This model reflects what Central Falls learned during the COVID-19 pandemic: that families face deeply interconnected challenges, and that the most effective responses are coordinated, relationship-based, and rooted in trusted local institutions. El Centro is designed to give that approach a permanent home. The Energy Navigator pilot is one of the first opportunities to operationalize this vision, turning strong mayoral leadership, community-based trust, and new civic infrastructure into a scalable system for improving housing quality, reducing energy burdens, and supporting family stability across Central Falls.

## Application Question #10

**10. ACEEE can provide some *funding to compensate CBOs* for their participation in work related to our technical assistance. Please share the specific amount you are requesting and any information about these funding needs.**

We anticipate that the CBO partner will require modest compensation to support its active participation in the Energy Navigator pilot and related ACEEE technical assistance work. Specific funding needs include:

- **Translation and interpretation services:** To ensure bilingual delivery of training materials and workshops, CBO staff will need support for translating materials and providing interpretation for participants.
- **Incentives for participation and staff time:** CBO staff will devote time to hosting Navigator trainees, coordinating community engagement, and integrating energy efficiency activities into their ongoing programs. Funding will help offset staff time and allow for meaningful engagement without detracting from other core responsibilities.

**Requested amount:** We propose a total of **\$5,000–\$7,000** to support these activities. This figure is preliminary and can be refined in collaboration with ACEEE based on scope and level of participation.

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## Application Question #11

**11. Please describe any current work being done by other organizations or groups that will affect the policy or program you are seeking to create and implement.**

The Energy Navigator Training pilot is being developed within an active ecosystem of ongoing statewide efforts related to energy, equity, climate, health, and housing. The pilot is designed to build on and coordinate with the initiatives and entities described here.

- **Energy Efficiency Equity Working Group:** Since 2022, Rhode Island Energy (in partnership with the Rhode Island Office of Energy Resources) has been convening an Energy Efficiency Equity Working Group (EWG) comprised of state agencies, community organizations, and advocates. The EWG provides a forum for voices from underserved communities to inform program design and identifies strategies to improve equity in energy efficiency programs. The EWG's recommendations are being integrated into program plans.
- **Green and Healthy Homes Initiative (GHHI):** GHHI is a national nonprofit with active programs in Rhode Island focused on making homes healthier, safer, and more energy efficient. GHHI uniquely bridges the energy and public health sectors. Out of its office in Providence's Olneyville neighborhood, GHHI provides comprehensive healthy housing services to low-income families. Through its Healthy Homes Asthma program, GHHI conducts free whole-home assessments to identify asthma triggers (mold, pests, poor ventilation, etc.) and installs interventions to remediate those hazards. They pair these fixes with energy-related improvements like ventilation and sometimes minor weatherization to ensure homes are not only free of asthma triggers but also energy efficient.
- **RI Energy Landlord Sessions:** Rhode Island Energy has been offering Landlord Information Sessions to educate and incentivize rental property owners to weatherize their buildings. These sessions highlight the benefits of insulation and other energy upgrades for tenant health, comfort, and cost savings, and advise landlords on available utility rebates. Engaging landlords is critical because tenant participation in efficiency programs remains low without landlord buy-in.
- **RI Energy Customer Advocates:** Rhode Island Energy employs Customer Advocates, a dedicated team that provides one-on-one assistance to customers – especially those facing financial or language barriers – to navigate billing and energy programs. The utility hosts in-person Customer Assistance Expos where residents can meet advocates to discuss discount rates, payment plans, LIHEAP fuel assistance, and no-cost home energy assessments.
- **Community Action Partnership (CAP) Agencies:** Rhode Island's network of CAP agencies plays a central role in delivering energy assistance and home energy upgrades to low-income households. CAP agencies in each region administer the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), providing heating bill relief each winter to income-eligible families. They also run the federal Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP), which offers no-cost home energy efficiency services (insulation, air-sealing, and heating system repair or replacement) for eligible homeowners and renters (with landlord approval). CAPs coordinate these weatherization projects by sending trained auditors to visit homes with the goal of finding opportunities to reduce energy waste, check usage of major appliances, and increase efficiency. Once the home audit is complete, the auditor will make recommendations for home improvements such as the installation of insulation, weather-stripping, pipe wrapping, and/or air sealing. The auditor will then make arrangements to complete any work, at no cost to the home owner.
- **RISE Engineering:** RISE Engineering is the lead implementer of Rhode Island's residential energy efficiency programs, which includes no-cost Home Energy Assessments for market-rate (non-income-eligible) households. After the assessment, RISE (similar to the CAP agencies) helps homeowners (including landlords) to access utility-funded incentives and rebates to complete the recommended upgrades. **CLEARResult** is a subcontractor supporting RISE by operating program call centers and providing customer service support.

- **Executive Climate Change Coordinating Council (EC4):** The EC4 is Rhode Island's high-level climate task force, composed of 13 state agencies, responsible for ensuring the state meets its mandates under the Act on Climate. The 2021 Act on Climate set legally enforceable emission reduction targets and required all state agencies to integrate climate considerations into their work. The EC4 guided the development of Rhode Island's 2025 Climate Action Strategy, a comprehensive plan to chart incremental steps toward the 2050 net-zero goal defined by the Act of Climate.
- **Community Health Worker Association of Rhode Island (CHWARI):** CHWARI provides training, certification, and resources for CHWs statewide. CHWARI offers a specialized training module on housing that introduces CHWs to the landscape of housing issues and resources in Rhode Island. In this training, CHWs learn about affordable housing programs, tenant rights, and housing advocacy, though their training does not currently include energy-related topics.

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## Application Question #12

**12. What *other partners* (within or outside government) do you anticipate being involved in work on these policies or programs? Please describe their role in this work.**

This pilot is intentionally structured as a multi-partner effort that leverages the strengths of municipal leadership, community-based organizations, academic extension, utility implementation, and state-level oversight. Roles are clearly defined to ensure shared ownership, efficient coordination, and alignment with existing systems and community-facing work. Letters of support from each core partner are included as supporting documentation to demonstrate shared commitment, role clarity, and readiness to implement the pilot.

### **City of Central Falls – Municipal Partner (Lead Applicant)**

- Serve as host community for the Energy Navigator Training pilot
- Support identification of and connection to potential trainees (CHWs, CBO staff, etc.)
- Participate in program design, coordination, and implementation
- Support renter outreach and alignment with local housing and related initiatives
- Contribute to evaluation insights and lessons learned to support replication

### **Children’s Friend – Community-Based Organization (Lead Applicant)**

- Serve as a trusted community anchor for the pilot
- Support identification and connection to potential trainees
- Provide space for in-person training sessions as needed
- Participate in program design, coordination, and implementation
- Provide translation and interpretation services as needed
- Support integration of energy efficiency guidance into existing family support work

### **URI Cooperative Extension (Project Lead)**

- Lead overall program model design, curriculum development, and facilitation
- Develop and deliver the Energy Navigator train-the-trainer curriculum
- Coordinate partners and integrate lessons learned into broader statewide efforts

### **Rhode Island Energy (Utility / EE Program Administrator)**

- Coordinate program access, referrals, and navigator touchpoints
- Advise on alignment with utility energy efficiency offerings, eligibility, and timelines
- Participate in program design and pilot implementation

### **ACEEE (Technical Assistance Provider)**

- Provide technical assistance to strengthen program design, curriculum, and tools
- Conduct national scans of renter-focused navigation and weatherization models
- Co-develop a digital Home Weatherization Roadmap tool
- Support development of training materials, case studies, and implementation guidance
- Help define success metrics and document a replicable city–utility–CBO partnership model

### **Rhode Island Energy Efficiency Council (Project Oversight)**

- Fund and contract for development and implementation of the pilot
- Provide oversight, partner coordination, and accountability
- Offer strategic guidance and alignment with statewide energy, equity, and affordability goals

### **RI Office of Energy Resources & RI Department of Health (State Agency Partners)**

- Provide strategic guidance, policy context, and alignment with statewide energy, equity, public health, and affordability initiatives

## Application Question #13

13. Please **upload any supporting documents** and files for your application below. This includes any documents providing information to questions you chose not to respond to directly on the application form. You can upload up to 10 files.

- Letters of Support - *consolidate into one PDF*
  - ~~City of Central Falls~~
  - ~~Children's Friend~~
  - ~~Central Falls City Councilor Tatiana Baena~~
  - ~~URI Cooperative Extension~~
  - ~~Rhode Island Energy~~
  - ~~Energy Efficiency Council~~
  - Office of Energy Resources
  
- Other docs
  - [Central Falls Housing Report](#)
  - [Central Falls Lead Prevention Program Description](#)
  - [EHACoP Report](#)
  - [EWG report](#)
  - [Nonparticipant Market Barriers Study](#)
  - EEC Annual Report

## Application Question #14

**14. You may share any *additional information* that is relevant to your application in the response box below.**

This proposal aligns closely with ACEEE's *A New Lease on Energy* framework by grounding rental energy efficiency work in data, community engagement, and durable cross-sector partnerships. Rhode Island has invested significant effort in identifying barriers to renter participation through research, stakeholder engagement, and program refinements; the Energy Navigator Training pilot represents a deliberate shift from diagnosing challenges to implementing community-centered solutions.

By embedding energy navigation capacity within trusted community-based organizations and municipal systems, this approach prioritizes engagement with low-income renters and renters of color, supports improved energy and non-energy outcomes such as affordability, health, and comfort, and formalizes partnerships across local government, utilities, and service providers. With ACEEE's technical assistance, the pilot is designed to be rigorously documented, evaluated, and structured for replication—offering a scalable model that other municipalities can adapt to advance equitable rental energy efficiency nationwide.

While roles and core activities are clearly defined, we recognize that some implementation details will continue to be refined through partnership and learning. We welcome any questions that would help clarify elements of the proposal and look forward to the opportunity for further discussion.

DRAFT