2026 Energy Efficiency Council Education Proposal_v3

Submitted by University of Rhode Island Cooperative Extension, last updated 02.26.26 by KVH

SITUATION

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.

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.

GOAL: This education and engagement effort seeks to bridge the gap between participation in energy efficiency programs, high energy burden, high energy consumption and unhealthy housing through the development of community-based energy navigators.

INPUTS

1. Facilitation by the URI Cooperative Extension Energy Literacy Initiative (CEELI) team based on learnings from the *Efficient Housing for All* Community of Practice;
2. Technical assistance from RI Energy and the American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy (ACEEE) related to training content development and training evaluation;
3. Advisement from the RI Energy Efficiency Council (RI EEC) Education team and RI Energy Equity Working Group (EWG);
4. Community engagement and participation through the RI Department of Health (RIDOH) Health Equity Zone (HEZ) Initiative Training and Technical Assistance Program (TTAP), RI Energy Equity Working Group (EWG), Children's Friend, City of Central Falls and the Community Health Worker Association of RI (CHWARI); and
5. Translation services.

AUDIENCE

1. ***Primary:*** Community-based health workers who are members of CHWARI
2. ***Secondary:*** Income eligible ratepayers, including renters

ACTIVITIES

1. **Energy Navigator Training:**
    a. Develop a training workbook / guide for participants that includes foundational information about energy efficiency for homes, programs, incentives and resources; and
    b. Design and deliver bilingual (English/Spanish) Home Energy Navigator trainings for community-based workers using lessons learned from the EHACoP, targeting 100 participants in two cohorts.
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. **Workforce Development Incentive Development:**
    a. Work with the CHWARI and the RIDOH Health Equity Zone Initiative / Learning Community to formalize a public health workforce development incentive structure that encourages engagement in energy efficiency.
4. **Plugged into Energy Research (PIER) workshop:**
    a. Host one in-person Plugged into Energy Research workshop that is also livestreamed to share information about the Energy Efficiency Council's commitment to workforce development through this project.

OUTPUTS

1. **Home Energy Navigator training lesson plans and instructional materials**
2. **Digital RI Home Weatherization Roadmap web tool**
3. **(2) Home Energy Navigator trainings and workforce development incentive plan**
4. **URI Plugged Into Energy Research (PIER) workshop**

OUTCOMES

Short-term (Knowledge)

Community-based health workers [primary audience] are empowered to assist ratepayers with weatherization programs using the EE Roadmap through an Energy Navigator 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. Training	URI staff salary & fringe for partner coordination, training content development, facilitation and collaboration with ACEEE to conduct evaluation for (2) training cohorts	$40,000
2. Tools	URI staff salary & fringe for tool content development and URI Environmental Data Center consultant to build digital story map development	$12,000
3. Stipends	CHWARI for incentive scheme development and cultural context input to support content and participation in Energy Navigator Trainings	$10,000
4. Incentives	Home Energy Assessment Opportunity incentives for CHWs who complete the Energy Navigator training (Group 1 + Group 2)	$6,000
5. Plugged into Energy Research (PIER) lecture	Focused review of accomplishments and visions for 2027	$3,000
6. Refreshments	In-person session refreshments	$1,000
Indirect Costs	*Need to confirm state agency rate of 25%*	$18,000
	TOTAL:	**$90,000**

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