

## Farm Energy Fellow Justification and Details

EERMC Communications Subgroup

1/15/2019

**Farmer Education** \_\_\_\_\_ \$5,000

This funding will leverage an additional \$5,655 in funding from National Grid to support an Energy Fellow (University of Rhode Island student) for March – December 2019. The Energy Fellow will assist with outreach to the farm community regarding energy management.

This is a professional development opportunity for the Energy Fellow, who will be guided by University of Rhode Island, OER, and National Grid staff. The outreach campaign will build on a similar campaign conducted by the University of Connecticut Extension Outreach Center and the Connecticut Farm Energy Program, and will integrate with National Grid's emphasis on "Design Thinking" outlined in the 2018 Annual Energy Efficiency Plan.

### **Alignment with Mission and Justification of Need**

This funding directly advances the Communications Subgroup's mission to educate businesses about energy efficiency as well as the EERMC's mission to promote cost-effective energy efficiency for all Rhode Islanders. Due to the volatile nature and seasonality of many farm businesses, keeping costs low is vital to their success. However, participation in the half-dozen available farm energy programs has remained low as has attendance at workshops on these programs. Conversations with farmers, energy program administrators, and National Grid suggest low participation is due to farmers' lack of knowledge of available programs. The Energy Fellow will help connect farmers to energy management resources and programs through online videos, social media, and attending professional farmer organization meetings, and will leverage the University of Rhode Island Cooperative Extension's pre-existing network of farmers.

### **Benefits**

**Benefits to Farmers:** Increasing outreach to farmers through additional channels will increase understanding of energy management resources, and ultimately lead to reduced energy use and lower energy bills for this business segment. Outreach to farmers is also a good opportunity to cross-market energy efficiency resources for homes and businesses.

**Professional Development Benefits:** The Energy Fellow will gain unique professional experience that bridges communications, business, and management skillsets.

### **Overview of Workplan**

The Energy Fellow will work closely with Kaylyn Keane (URI), Carrie Gill (OER), and Mona Chandra (National Grid) to ensure all following deliverables are completed successfully. The Energy Fellow will also interface with other staff at OER, National Grid, Northern Region Conservation District Farm Energy Program, RI Department of Environmental Management, USDA, RI Infrastructure Bank, and others as appropriate.

Deliverables:

2. Execute the outreach strategy that was initiated last year. This will include (1) video testimonials, (2) an enhanced social media presence, (3) attendance at professional farmer organization meetings and farmers markets, (4) other outreach channels discovered through conversations with farmers and other stakeholders
3. Develop an educational "resource manual" of farm energy management resources, programs, and key contacts appropriate for farmers and other stakeholders
4. Develop and maintain an up-to-date contact list for farmers and stakeholders interested in farm energy management

5. Provide quarterly updates to the EERMC Communications Subgroup and a year-end report of activities, recommendations, and next steps