

# MEMO

**TO:** Energy Efficiency Council  
**FROM:** Rhode Island Energy  
**CC:** Consultant Team and Office of Energy Resources  
**DATE:** April 18, 2024  
**RE:** Responses to Follow-Up Items Identified at March Council Meeting

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this memo is to provide the Council with an update on two items that Rhode Island Energy (the Company) flagged from the March Council meeting that it wanted to follow up on with the Council. This brief memo covers follow-up items on Multifamily heat pump projects and the income eligible weatherization shortfall.

## Q4 REPORT STATEMENT ON MULTIFAMILY HEAT PUMP PROJECTS

The Company's Q4 report made a statement about "the high cost of site power upgrades" for some Multifamily heat pump projects. The Company has looked into this and has determined that this was referring to one specific recent project, not multiple ones. This specific project has an oil-fired boiler, and an estimate for the cost would be \$10,000-\$20,000 for a technical study and electrical plans, and \$150,000-\$250,000 for electric upgrade costs. These costs are all related to building-specific upgrades and not distribution system-related upgrades. Given that it is an oil heat customer it would not be eligible for the Company's program.

## INCOME ELIGIBLE WEATHERIZATION SHORTFALL

The Company is aware that 2023 Income Eligible Single Family weatherization numbers fell short of goal. The Company is working hard to continuously improve all of our programs, and address issues such as these. We recently redesigned how the Income Eligible Single-Family program is delivered. Previously there were two audits in the program: one focused on direct install upgrades and appliance replacements and the second assessment focused on heating systems and weatherization. Customers frequently completed the first and did not make the second appointment a priority unless they had heating system issues. Starting in 2024, there is one comprehensive assessment which should increase the number of weatherization assessments. This single comprehensive assessment has thus far been well received by customers, as well as by the Community Action Partnership (CAP) agencies' auditors.

There were also some performance issues with certain CAPs in 2023. These issues impacted our ability to achieve goal. In response, we are working with RISE – the lead vendor for the market rate single family program (i.e. EnergyWise Single Family) to provide end-to-end service (audits through install) for the impacted areas, which include key towns such as Pawtucket, Central Falls, Woonsocket, Providence, and East Providence. Another issue that played a role in 2023's weatherization numbers is that of pre-weatherization barriers (PWBs). Weatherization remains challenging given the limited PWB funding available. While many customers without PWBs were served, and many customer with PWBs were also served (in part through leveraging outside funding such as LIHEAP and WAP), 2023 weatherization ended lower than anticipated.

The Company is taking several steps to address the problem of PWBs.

- We are working to improve data collection on the issue. This has myriad benefits. It allows us to better understand the scope and extent of the issue. We can use this data to make evidence based arguments for additional funding sources. We can also keep track of projects that did have weatherization opportunities, but couldn't resolve the PWB. As things evolve in the future (e.g. new or more funding becomes available) we can reach back out to these customers to get the project done.
- We have applied for external funding to help solve customer PWBs.
- We are working with community partners on the issue.