Request for Information

To Support Program Design of the
New England Heat Pump Accelerator Program, State Grants

Purpose

The Rhode Island Office of Energy Resources (OER) is requesting feedback on the design of a state heat pump pilot program as part of the New England Heat Pump Accelerator (Accelerator). The pilot is expected to launch in Spring 2026 and operate through November 2029, contingent on funding. Potential pilot programs should look to accelerate the adoption of cold climate air-source heat pumps (ASHPs), heat pump water heaters (HPWHs), and/or other efficient, electric heat pump technologies, such as ground source heat pumps (GSHPs), in single-family and/or multi-family residential buildings in Rhode Island.

The OER seeks to design one or two state-wide pilot programs that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and overcome barriers to adoption of heat pumps faced by low- to moderate-income households and communities. The state program will be a component of the "Innovation Hub" of the Accelerator and will be led by individual states in the 5-state coalition. **For Rhode Island, OER will lead the design and implementation of this program.** These state-led programs are separate from the regional parts of the Accelerator, which include the "Market Hub" and "Resource Hub".

The pilot will be a state-wide program that looks to accelerate the adoption of heat pump technologies through innovations in technology, program design and delivery, policy, customer education and outreach, and/or financing to achieve project goals. Given the ambitious number of installations to be achieved in a short time, we are interested in projects that can achieve efficient economies of scale and can benefit from leveraging state, utility, or nonprofit program referral and financial resources.

Estimated Emissions Reductions Targets

The pilot seeks to meet ambitious emissions reduction targets. The targeted GHG emissions savings for Rhode Island to achieve through this grant (estimates, subject to change) are below:

Savings by 2030 (MTCO2e): 158,523

Savings by 2050 (MTCO2e): 649,379

Funding Opportunity

The State of Rhode Island anticipates awarding one or two grants, which combined are estimated to be in the range of $9.6 to $12.8 million. Funds must be expended between April 2026 and October 2029. Rhode Island anticipates issuing an RFP by January 2026.

This Request for Information (RFI) seeks information on the design for the pilot program with respect to strategy, partnerships, future use, and feasibility. A long-term goal of the program is to find solutions that can be scalable after the pilot ends. OER is interested in pilots that can be adopted, in whole or in part, permanently to support heat pump adoption. This RFI is not a funding opportunity.

Eligible Respondents

Anyone can respond to this RFI. OER is particularly interested in responses from community-based organizations in underserved areas, local governments, HVAC installers, manufacturers of heat pump equipment, residents, building owners, and landlords.

Instructions for Responding to this RFI

The deadline to submit responses to this RFI is **November 10, 2025 at midnight, ET,** via email to mailto:sarah.doherty@energy.ri.gov**.** Please include "Accelerator State Grant RFI" in the subject line of the email.

Respondents are not required to submit responses pertaining to every question and sub-question, but the OER encourages interested parties to respond to all aspects of this RFI that are relevant to them. All comments related to the Accelerator State Grants are encouraged and are not required to be in direct response to any question listed below.

The Rhode Island Office of Energy Resources has designated the individual below as the Official Contact for the purposes of this RFI. The Official Contact is the only authorized contact for this RFI, and, as such, handles all related communications on behalf of OER. Respondents may submit questions regarding this RFI to the Official Contact.

Name: Sarah Doherty
Address: sarah.doherty@energy.ri.gov

Please submit your response as either a Microsoft Word or PDF (preferred) file to the Official Contact on letterhead, if relevant, above by the deadline. Please label responses according to the question number, if applicable.

Disclosure & Waiver Authority

The Program Team may, from time to time, make changes or modifications to this RFI. It is the responsibility of the respondents to regularly monitor the OER website for any addenda or modifications to this RFI.

The Program Team is not making public funding available for this RFI. No conditions or provisions of this RFI shall bind the Program Team to award any funds; pay any costs incurred in preparing a response; or procure or contract for services or supplies with any respondent or any other entity in connection with this RFI.

Responses to this RFI may be subject to the Access to Public Records Act (APRA, R.I.G.L. 38-2-1). Do not include market sensitive information.

Questions

Reminder: Stakeholders may respond to as many or as few questions as is relevant or practical.

Program Design and Goals

This program is intended to overcome barriers to adoption of heat pumps by low- and moderate-income households. The program will achieve this through innovations in technology, program design and delivery, policy, customer outreach and financing, economic, and/or job growth. This program will serve to test and deploy scalable strategies that can result in adoption of program features in whole or in part in permanent heat pump programs that address the most important state priorities in the transition to heat pumps.

For Rhode Island, we are hoping to prioritize:

Commonly cited barriers in the state include upfront cost, operational costs, emergency replacements resorting to replacing HVAC systems with “like” systems under duress due to lack of planning, lack of weatherization and barriers to weatherization, lack of coordination between energy programs that affect program ease of use and accessibility, lack of owner awareness, matching the right heat pump solution to the building and technology.

Please provide feedback on the following:

1. What are the top 1-2 barrier(s) to adoption of heat pumps by residents of low-to-moderate income (LMI) households and communities in Rhode Island? Please be as specific as possible, for example with regard to building type, technology, population group, etc.
    a. What is an approach that you believe will be successful in overcoming the barrier you stated in response to question 1? Is it lowering cost, aligning with existing programs to leverage, addressing emergency replacements, owner education, advancing new technology solutions or other?

2. Do you think the state should focus on a particular type of building, such as buildings with oil, propane or electric resistance, multifamily or single family? What is a recommended method to reach this building type?

3. Should the state implement one program for the full grant amount or two programs with less funding for each? Please provide your reasoning.

4. What are the top 1-2 criteria that Rhode Island should use when comparing projects for selection at the state-level? How should the selection criteria be weighted?

5. The program may target specific types of projects. What kind of projects should this pilot program prioritize to meet the state's goals? For each type of project suggested, please consider the sub-questions below.
    a. Describe the barrier to heat pump adoption that the pilot program should address and describe the best methods to address this barrier.
    b. Please describe whether the type of project(s) strategically targets key decision-making moments in the HVAC and water heating replacement cycle (e.g. emergency replacements, system failure, or planned upgrades).
    c. If the project(s) require(s) access to utility or other information, how can the Program facilitate securing permission for, access to, and transfer of the data?
    d. Who are the relevant decisionmakers for the project(s), if applicable, and when are decisions required? How should the program address delays?
    e. What other funding sources might be braided or leveraged with this program? If the project(s) require(s) braiding multiple funding sources, how can the program provide technical assistance and case management to customers and project partners?
    f. If the project(s) require(s) participation of multiple contractors, how should the program streamline the process or reduce bottlenecks?
    g. What is the realistic duration of such a project? Do you think the proposed project design will have a high likelihood of achieving the desired number of installations within the stated timeframe and budget?
    h. Please describe how the project(s) approach may facilitate scaling up or scaling out. What specific program or policy decisions in the state or elsewhere might be modified or informed by the results of the pilot? How large is the potential

application of pilot experience or results (e.g. how many buildings or households)?

i. If the project(s) require(s) marketing resources, how can the Program reach the intended audience(s)?

6. Please describe whether and how the potential pilot would produce results that would be relevant to other New England states.

7. What potential problems could you foresee in the implementation of this program? How can these be overcome?

8. Who are the key organizations that the program manager should coordinate with in Rhode Island to achieve the goals on this specific program proposal?
    a. Please provide feedback on the best referral mechanism for the proposed program

9. How should the program seek input and feedback from LMI stakeholders on the program design and participation? What existing state- or community-level groups should the program coordinate with? Please provide any contact information.