



CLEAN ENERGY NH

Your Voice in All Energy Matters

125 N State Street | Concord, NH 03301 | 603.573.9926

Energy Circuit Rider Program

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Energy Circuit Rider (ECR) Program?

In December 2018, Clean Energy NH was awarded a three-year grant from the Neil and Louise Tillotson Fund to deliver technical assistance for energy projects to North Country municipalities and communities. From 2019 to 2022, the North Country Circuit Rider helped more than a dozen communities complete over 30 energy efficiency and clean energy projects. The Circuit Rider Program has helped North Country communities receive more than \$1.2 million in incentives and grants, resulting in over \$3 million dollars invested in clean energy projects. In 2023 and 2024, CENH added three additional Energy Circuit Riders serving municipalities in the Monadnock, Seacoast, and Sullivan County regions. Our goal is to expand that program statewide.

The Energy Circuit Rider program also supports small businesses, including farms. In early 2022, a new kind of Energy Circuit Rider was added, specifically to provide similar technical assistance to small businesses in the North Country. In 2024, CENH received a three-year USDA grant to expand that program statewide, specifically to assist small businesses (including farms) in applying for USDA's Rural Energy for America Program (REAP).

What is an Energy Circuit Rider?

An Energy Circuit Rider is a shared staff person providing services to multiple cities and towns across a region. Energy Circuit Riders help municipalities and small businesses plan, finance, and implement energy-saving upgrades to buildings and infrastructure, as well as clean energy technologies such as renewable energy or electric vehicle charging infrastructure. Working side-by-side with municipal officials and business owners, Energy Circuit Riders provide capacity and expertise to support informed decision-making.

Why is the Energy Circuit Rider program needed?

The need for the North Country ECR Program was identified during a series of stakeholder workshops organized by the Tillotson Fund and Vermont Energy Investment Corporation. Municipalities and small businesses often lack dedicated staff capacity necessary to implement beneficial energy projects, despite being ideally positioned to capitalize on the financial benefits of these capital intensive, but long-lived investments. While energy funding, financing, and technical assistance services exist, there is often a gap between the organizations offering these services and the demand. The ECR program addresses these challenges. The ECR program began in Coos County because North Country communities experience higher energy burdens (proportion of income spent on energy) than the rest of the state.

What are the benefits of the ECR program?

The ECR program focuses on energy projects that reduce energy costs for participating municipalities (thereby freeing up local property tax revenue for enhanced local services or decreased tax burden) and businesses (contributing to the viability of locally owned businesses and a thriving local economy). These investments also stimulate economic activity in the local energy economy.

The ECR program builds the capacity of municipalities to implement future beneficial energy projects. Public energy projects serve as powerful examples to community members and educate the local electorate about the financial benefits of investing in clean energy and energy efficiency.



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Who runs the ECR Program?

Clean Energy NH manages the ECR Program, in close collaboration with a network of local organizations in different regions throughout the state. These organizations include but are not limited to local and regionally focused non-profits and other NGOs, regional planning commissions and economic development councils, and local clean energy business partners.

Who are the partners contributing to the ECR program?

Energy projects are complex and often involve numerous entities including utilities, federal and state agencies, funding and financing institutions, contractors, and more. Clean Energy NH has established relationships with many of these organizations and works to coordinate resources and information among them to streamline energy projects.

What kinds of energy projects does the ECR Program support?

Any energy projects that reduce costs for municipalities and small businesses and provide other local benefits can be supported by CENH's ECR team. The ECR program also remains responsive and nimble to changing an economic and policy landscape. Already the types of projects we are supporting in communities across the state have expanded to include more renewable energy and transportation projects. Oftentimes it makes sense to prioritize energy efficiency projects first, including lighting and appliance upgrades, building weatherization, and retrofits, as these types of projects realize excellent returns. The ECR program also works with municipalities and businesses to examine the potential for fuel switching, beneficial electrification, modern wood heating, solar energy, electric vehicle charging, and other priorities identified by community partners. The ECR program always seeks to create economies of scale through project aggregations and partnerships.

Which municipalities and businesses are eligible to participate in the ECR program?

Long-term, CENH intends to expand the ECR program statewide. However, currently our service is available to all municipalities in Coös County, the Monadnock Region, Rockingham and Strafford Counties, and Sullivan County. Municipalities within those regions are to be selected for participation based on need and willingness to work collaboratively to realize the benefits of local energy projects in their communities.

We are able to support small businesses in the North Country, as well as help small businesses and farms statewide to access USDA Renewable Energy for America Program (REAP) funding for energy efficiency and clean energy projects.

Demand for our ECR program is high and CENH is actively seeking funding sources to grow the ECR team.

How do I learn more about the ECR Program?

To learn more about the ECR Program, please contact Clean Energy NH's Circuit Rider Program Director, Sarah Brock at sarah@cleanenergynh.org.