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## MEMORANDUM

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**TO:** EXECUTIVE CLIMATE CHANGE COORDINATING COUNCIL

**FROM:** EC4 CHAIR TERRENCE GRAY AND EC4 VICE CHAIR NICHOLAS UCCI

**SUBJECT:** SCOPE OF THE 2022 UPDATE TO THE 2016 GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS REDUCTION PLAN PER 2021 ACT ON CLIMATE

**DATE:** DECEMBER 16, 2021

This memorandum summarizes the Act on Climate’s requirement to update the state’s 2016 Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction Plan and results of the Public Sharing Session held on November 16<sup>th</sup>. Also, we present a draft workplan to guide this effort toward its completion by December 31, 2022.

### **2022 Update to the 2016 Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction Plan**

On April 14, 2021, Governor Dan McKee signed into law the 2021 Act on Climate ([S-0078A](#), [H-5445A](#)), which sets mandatory, enforceable climate emissions reduction goals culminating in net-zero emissions by 2050. This legislation updates the previous 2014 Resilient Rhode Island Act, positioning the state to boldly address climate change and prepare for a global economy that will be shifting to adapt to clean technology.

As required by law, the Executive Climate Change Coordinating Council (EC4) will deliver an update to the [2016 Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction Plan](#) to the Governor and General Assembly by December 31, 2022 (referred to as the ‘2022 Update’). The 2022 Update will be informed by public comment and stakeholder discussions.

Subsequently, the EC4 will develop a plan to incrementally reduce climate emissions to net-zero by 2050 to be delivered to the Governor and the General Assembly by December 31, 2025 (referred to as the ‘2025 Climate Strategy’). The 2025 Climate Strategy will be developed via a robust stakeholder process and will address areas such as environmental injustices, public health inequities, and a fair employment transition as fossil-fuel jobs are transitioned into green energy jobs. The 2025 Climate Strategy will be a comprehensive working document that will be updated every five years thereafter.

#### ***A note on terminology:***

- **2016 GHG Plan** refers to the GHG Emissions Reduction Plan published in December 2016 in response to the 2014 Resilient Rhode Island Act
- **2022 Update** refers to the required update to the 2016 GHG Plan, as mandated by the 2021 Act on Climate
- **2025 Climate Strategy** refers to the set of “strategies, programs, and actions to meet economy-wide enforceable targets for greenhouse gas emissions” due “no later than December 31, 2025, and every five (5) years thereafter”, as mandated by the 2021 Act on Climate

## Public Sharing Session

On November 16, 2021, the EC4 held a public sharing session to help scope the 2022 update to the 2016 Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction Plan. This session was held via Zoom and a project webpage was first updated with notice of the session on October 28. The project team, which is comprised of staff and leadership from the Office of Energy Resources and Department of Environmental Management with guidance and input from the remaining EC4 agencies/offices, conducted outreach for the sharing session beginning November 2, with emailed announcements distributed to OER's and EC4's distribution lists, and announcements made at the Energy Efficiency and Resource Management Council's public meeting on November 8 and the Green Buildings Advisory Committee's public meeting on November 16.

At the sharing session, DEM Acting Director Gray and State Energy Commissioner Ucci provided introductory remarks and summarized the directives of the 2021 Act on Climate. Liz Stone, EC4 Coordinator for DEM, reviewed the development and contents of the 2016 Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction Plan. Dr. Carrie Gill, Chief Economic and Policy Analyst for OER, led participants in a facilitated discussion. Finally, Ms. Stone concluded the sharing session with next steps. The slide deck used for this session was made available on [www.climatechange.ri.gov/aoc](http://www.climatechange.ri.gov/aoc) on November 17.

The sharing session was attended by 89 people including Senator Anderson, Representative Carson, Representative Cortvriend, and Senator Valverde, and Karen Bradbury on behalf of Senator Whitehouse, as well as EC4 members DEM Acting Director Gray, State Energy Commissioner Ucci, and DPUC Administrator George. State Administration representatives also included staff from OER, DEM, DOT, DSP, DPUC, RIPTA, DOA, and Commerce. Several stakeholder groups were represented as well, including Acadia Center, Green Energy Consumers Alliance, Audubon Society, Conservation Law Foundation, The Nature Conservancy, Environmental Council of Rhode Island, National Grid, Brown University, and members of the clean energy industry.

Attendees were asked to complete surveys before and after the sharing session. Twenty-four (24) attendees (27%) completed the pre-session survey – while the response rate is typical, the low number of completions should only be interpreted as being suggestive of general trends. According to the pre-session survey, 29% of respondents represented state government and 29% of respondents represented environmental organizations. Most respondents (84%) were already familiar with the 2016 Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction Plan. The demographics of respondents skewed white, non-hispanic/latinx, and female. While these data should not be interpreted as conclusive trends in participation, they do suggest likely underrepresentation of several communities across Rhode Island, including indigenous communities and people of color, as well as Rhode Islanders not already familiar with state climate efforts.

- Recommendation for continuous improvement: Partner with community groups to attend existing group meetings and hold sharing sessions directly within communities

The facilitated discussion walked through four discussion prompts, all with the aim of reaching consensus on the scope of the 2022 Update.

First, attendees were asked to describe their objectives for this update. Attendees suggested over twenty objectives and engaged in lively discussion both orally and in Zoom's chat feature. Notes describing suggested objectives were taken in real time on the screen. Following the brainstorming session, objectives were grouped into similar themes to produce the following set of objectives.

### Objectives of the 2022 Update to the 2016 Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction Plan

The 2022 Update should:

- Be responsive to the Act on Climate
- Center equity and be developed using a meaningful public participation process
- Leverage lessons learned since 2016
- Build a foundation for the 2025 Climate Strategy
- Reconsider and confirm technical aspects of modeling, be action oriented, promote resilience and reliability, and emphasize the role of renewable energy resources

Next, attendees noted major changes and lessons learned since 2016 when the last Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction Plan was published. Attendees noted new emissions reduction targets directed by the Act on Climate; new learning from analyses, reports, progress on actions, and advances in science, technology, and business; emergency events leading to a renewed and stronger sense of urgency to act; and changing factors like new funding opportunities, renewable energy procurements, and potential changes in utility ownership.

Given objectives and changing conditions, attendees strategized what specific components of the 2016 GHG Plan warranted an update – these components constitute the scope of the 2022 Update. Specifically, the following updates were suggested:

#### Scope of the 2022 Update

- Technical updates:
  - Update greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets to comply with the Act on Climate, and define the goal of reaching ‘net zero emissions by 2050’
  - Review modeling to ensure the 1990 baseline is sound, data are defensible, and modeling assumptions are reasonable
- Update pathways, policy and implementation strategies
  - Restructure pathways and policies from 2016 Plan to coordinate with emissions sectors
  - Provide updates on progress for each policy and implementation strategy recommended in the 2016 Plan
  - Add policy and implementation strategies recommended by more recent studies
  - Refine policy and implementation strategies based on lessons learned
  - Update policy and implementation strategies to reflect actions, clarify roles, and identify mechanisms for accountability
  - Consider new and forthcoming funding opportunities
- Review and update the entire 2016 Plan with equity appropriately centered and integrated throughout
- Identify key stakeholders to engage (and engage them!)
- Develop a climate dashboard that tracks progress on community-prioritized outcomes using clearly defined, transparent, and meaningful metrics
- Identify and address the prerequisite needs of the 2025 Climate Strategy and preview the work ahead

Components of the 2016 GHG Plan that do not need to be updated include the model itself; the guiding objectives to build on state success, enable markets and communities, and leverage regional collaboration; and the process of DEM’s triennial greenhouse gas reporting.

Finally, attendees brainstormed stakeholder groups that should be included in future conversations. These groups are listed in the sharing session slides and should be considered a working list. Attendees were encouraged to help connect the project team to their contacts within these groups and to continue to recommend stakeholders with whom to engage.

Few attendees (7 attendees, 8%) completed the post-session survey. Of those who did, respondents expressed general preference for afternoon meetings (46%). All respondents (100%) stated there was a sufficient opportunity to share their thoughts and found the sharing session to be at least moderately helpful.

## **2022 Update Workplan**

We propose the following high-level workplan to ensure successful and rigorous completion of the 2022 Update, responsiveness to stakeholders and the Act on Climate, and continued public engagement.

The workplan stages interim deliverables through the next 12 months to ensure appropriate time is given for public and Council review and comment on each deliverable. EC4 events include Council meetings, sharing sessions, and workshops, all of which will be coordinated by topical theme and aimed to directly inform the deliverable in development.

We propose multiple and flexible opportunities for public participation in the development of the 2022 Update. Not only will there be sharing sessions on several key topics throughout the year, but there will also be multiple sharing sessions per topic held at various times/days to ensure Rhode Islanders who want to participate have sufficient opportunity to do so.

Throughout the year, the project team will hold additional one-on-one meetings with stakeholder groups, attend meetings for community groups, and accept public comment both orally or written during EC4 events and through the online comment platform available at [www.climatechange.ri.gov/aoc](http://www.climatechange.ri.gov/aoc).

In order to ensure responsiveness to needs and flexibility to prioritize matters, this workplan is subject to change. Please refer to the official notices posted to the Secretary of State's website for all final information regarding meeting dates, locations, and agendas.

<b>2022 Update to the 2016 Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction Plan – Tentative Workplan</b>					
<b>Month</b>	<b>Focus</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Topics</b>	<b>Deliverable</b>
Nov 2021	Scoping the 2022 Update	Sharing Session	11/16 @ noon	<input type="checkbox"/> Scope of the 2022 Update	-
Dec		Council Meeting	12/16 @ 1 pm	<input type="checkbox"/> Updates from COP26 <input type="checkbox"/> AOC workplan <input type="checkbox"/> Clean transportation	Workplan
Jan 2022	Technical Updates	Workshop	TBA	<input type="checkbox"/> Federal climate agenda <input type="checkbox"/> GHG plans from across the US	-
		Sharing Sessions	1/11 @ noon 1/13 @ noon 1/13 @ 6 pm	<input type="checkbox"/> Defining ‘net zero emissions by 2050’	-
Feb		Council Meeting	2/9 @ 10:30 am	<input type="checkbox"/> Greenhouse gas inventory <input type="checkbox"/> Climate-economy nexus	Definition of ‘net zero’
Mar		Sharing Session	3/16 @ noon	<input type="checkbox"/> Reviewing the 1990 baseline	Updated GHG emissions inventory
Apr		Council Meeting	4/7 @ 10:30 pm	<input type="checkbox"/> Clean energy jobs and just transition	Update to GHG accounting section
May		Workshop	5/19 @ 1 pm	<input type="checkbox"/> Climate-health nexus	-
Jun	Updates to Pathways, Policy and Implementation Strategies	Council Meeting	6/23 @ 10:30 am	<input type="checkbox"/> Climate resilience	-
Jul		Workshop	7/12 @ 1 pm	<input type="checkbox"/> Meet the utilities	Draft update to pathways, policy and implementation strategies
Aug		Sharing Sessions	8/16 @ noon 8/16 @ 6 pm 8/17 @ 3 pm	<input type="checkbox"/> Ensuring strategies are actionable	-
Sep	Preparing for 2025 Climate Strategy	Council Meeting	9/22 @ 2:30 pm	<input type="checkbox"/> Climate-education nexus	Final update to pathways, policy and implementation strategies
Oct		Sharing Session	10/17 @ 1 pm	<input type="checkbox"/> Preparing for 2025 Climate Strategy	Climate Dashboard

Nov	Delivering the 2022 Update	Council Meeting	11/3 @ 2:30 pm	<input type="checkbox"/> Presentation on draft 2022 Update	Draft 2022 Update
Dec		Council Meeting	12/15 @ 1 pm	<input type="checkbox"/> Vote to approve final 2022 Update	Final 2022 Update

*This is a working calendar and dates, times, and agenda items are subject to change.*

*Council Meetings will be held as hybrid meetings with both in-person and remote participation options. Locations of Council Meetings will rotate throughout the state. All other EC4 events will be remote. All events will be noticed via the Secretary of State's website, on [www.climatechange.ri.gov](http://www.climatechange.ri.gov), and through other distribution channels.*

*All EC4 Council Meeting agendas will be posted in advance. Deliverables will be made public as meeting materials.*

*Please contact [doa.climatechangeri@doa.ri.gov](mailto:doa.climatechangeri@doa.ri.gov) with questions.*