

# IDEAS FOR LOCAL ENERGY COMMITTEES

## REVISIT YOUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Give yourself a pat on the back! Make a short summary/bulleted list of all you have done! Use it as a recruitment tool to inspire others to join you and to report to your town select board or planning commission on the committee's progress (if that's a requirement of your committee).

## REVISIT YOUR PLANS & GOALS

Review the enhanced energy chapter of your Town Plan. Most towns in Bennington County now have an enhanced energy chapter in their Town Plan that outlines specific energy goals and strategies. Identify some goals/actions in your town's energy chapter that the energy committee can work on and discuss ideas for how you will accomplish these items (see below). Your regional planning commission can help with this (see below)!

## GET INSPIRED: WHAT ARE OTHERS DOING?

- Do some research on the VECAN website – but don't get overwhelmed. <https://vecan.net/energy-committees/setting-priorities/>
- Review the Energy Action Checklists and other resources on the [Vermont Community Energy Dashboard](https://www.vtenergydashboard.org/). They cover all types of users – business, municipal, farm, residential. And all types of work, from transportation, home energy, electricity, as well as planning and outreach. <https://www.vtenergydashboard.org/actions>

## THINK REGIONALLY & SHARE THE LOAD

Reach out to neighboring towns, especially planning commissions. Your neighbors may not have the capacity to form their own town energy committee, but they may be really excited to share common interests and their energy and creativity with your group. Share resources, skills and marketing strategies, and grow the number of folks you can reach.

## CREATE A NEW PROGRAM OR STRATEGY

### Start small, with something tangible and work your way up!

- **Reuse information developed by others.** Organizations all over the state have been creating webinars and recording them for others to use. Create a "local series," and re-run them, with a discussion at the end about the best ideas for your community. A few examples:
  - [Under the Kitchen Sink](#): This short HEAT Squad video guides a homeowner to DIY safer storage of common household products.
  - [Asbestos & Vermiculite](#): HEAT Squad short video points out clues to these toxins common in older homes.
  - [Electric Vehicles - Waterbury LEAP/Drive Electric](#): Intro from LEAP, then the Drive electric coordinator with a few slides, then the best part, "interviews" with three different electric car users – different models, different lifestyles, different reasons why they purchased, and the different ways they use their cars.
  - [Energy Committees Webinar with Peter Welch, Organized by VNRC](#): Presentations by Congressman Peter Welch and three energy committees: St. Johnsbury, Waterbury LEAP, and South Burlington Energy Committee.
  - [Efficient Heating in VT](#): 6-minute video produced by Two Rivers Ottauquechee Regional Commission.
- **Contact [Bennington County Regional Commission \(BCRC\)](#)** to learn more about energy planning and meeting the state's energy reduction goals.
- **Raise awareness of energy-related technologies, programs, and rebates available.** Your committee can

distribute educational materials highlighting new energy-saving opportunities, and host webinars and events. Some committees have hosted energy-efficient home tours and Efficiency Vermont offers a number of workshops. Your regional planning commission may be able to help staff and promote these events.

- **Promote [Button Up](#) in Your Community.** Updated each year, the program gives town energy committees tools to engage community members in thermal efficiency projects and promote home weatherization.
- **Promote [Heat Squad](#) and [BROC](#) in Your Community.** Both programs offer low-cost energy audits and weatherization assistance to Vermonters (BROC provides assistance to low-income households). Spread the word about these programs through social media, word-of-mouth or tabling at a community event.
- **Champion locals.** Interview a local who works in the energy sector. Develop interview questions and make it into a series! e.g. A local solar installer, or a plumber or electrician who works independently or for a local fuel company installing heat pumps or pellet stoves.
- **Strengthen connections with town staff or volunteers responsible for town facilities.** Often towns have a long list of infrastructure projects, and energy improvements aren't always at the top. As you consider where your town's most effective investments might be, you can start by conducting a town-wide inventory of current energy systems - as simple as an overview of public heating systems, or as in-depth as a detailed energy audit for all municipal buildings. Work with your town and state efficiency programs to highlight opportunities for increased efficiency, retrofits, retro-commissioning and weatherization projects that could save taxpayers money.
- **Develop a community solar project.** Many schools and towns are participating in local solar projects to generate renewable energy and create savings for taxpayers. To start, engage with your local school or town to figure out electricity. Share the different ways that schools and towns have gone solar. Consider engaging one or more solar developers to explain projects. Sometimes a local energy committee serving as the liaison to a solar developer and helping navigate the regulatory landscape is all that is needed to get a project off the ground.
- **Promote electric vehicles.** EVs represent an enormous opportunity to cut carbon emissions and reduce transportation costs over time. Energy committees can promote EVs in many ways such as helping to install public charging stations or hosting webinars or events that bring EV owners together with those curious to learn more.

## RENEW OR DEVELOP A MARKETING PLAN

Do you need to recruit folks with skills in social media marketing, video conferencing, creating webinars? Define what you need help with and reach out. VECAN has recently developed a Town Energy Committee Communications Toolkit. [vecan.net/communications-toolkit](http://vecan.net/communications-toolkit)

## TALK IT OVER!

The BCRC Regional Energy Coordinator is always available to brainstorm, make connections, discuss challenges, or give you a shoutout! [cfishburn@bcrcvt.org](mailto:cfishburn@bcrcvt.org)



This document is based on a resource developed by [Heat Squad](#), a program of [NeighborWorks of Western Vermont](#)