

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS  
**PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION**

IN RE: THE RHODE ISLAND OFFICE :  
OF ENERGY RESOURCES REQUEST :  
FOR FUNDING TO HIRE A CONSULTANT : DOCKET NO. 4604  
FOR THE 2018 RENEWABLE ENERGY :  
GROWTH YEAR :

**ORDER**

On July 25, 2017, the Rhode Island Office of Energy Resources (OER), in consultation with the Distributed Generation Board, submitted to the Public Utilities Commission (Commission or PUC) a request for funding in an amount not to exceed \$145,000 to perform a solar quality assurance study and issue a report entitled *2017-2018 Study of Renewable Energy Installation Quality in the Renewable Energy Growth Program* (2018 Study).<sup>1</sup> In addition to drafting and issuing the 2018 Study, OER stated that the scope of work would include performing inspections, conducting a formal customer survey, and making a presentation to the Distributed Generation Board and the Commission.<sup>2</sup> OER explained that the study was a follow-up to a study and report issued in April 2017, *Study of Renewable Energy Installation Quality in the Renewable Energy Growth Program* (2017 Study), at a cost of \$125,000.<sup>3</sup>

OER asserted that the increased cost for the 2018 Study is attributable to an anticipated increase in the volume of medium, large, and commercial project inspections. The inspections would begin in the fall of 2017 and continue through the winter of 2017-2018.<sup>4</sup> The increased funding request would also support a customer feedback survey that includes “developing survey

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<sup>1</sup> The Rhode Island Office of Energy Resources’ Request for Funding to Hire a Consultant for the 2018 Renewable Energy Growth Year (July 27, 2017) (OER Funding Request); [http://www.ripuc.org/eventsactions/docket/4604-OER-DGB-BudgetRequest\\_7-25-17.pdf](http://www.ripuc.org/eventsactions/docket/4604-OER-DGB-BudgetRequest_7-25-17.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> *Id.* at 2.

<sup>3</sup> See PUC Order No. 22477 (Docket No. 4604) (July 15, 2017); [http://www.ripuc.org/eventsactions/docket/4604-OER-Ord22477\\_7-15-16.pdf](http://www.ripuc.org/eventsactions/docket/4604-OER-Ord22477_7-15-16.pdf) (PUC approved funding of up to \$125,000 to complete a quality assurance study.); The Cadmus Group, Inc., Study of Renewable Energy Installation Quality in the Renewable Energy Growth Program (Apr. 20, 2017) (2017 Study); <http://sos.ri.gov/documents/publicinfo/omdocs/minutes/6154/2017/54002.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> OER Funding Request at 2.

content, coordinating with National Grid,<sup>5</sup> issuing the survey, compiling responses, analyzing feedback, and providing a report detailing the survey results.”<sup>6</sup>

In response to data requests filed by the Commission, OER indicated that only one recommendation of the 2017 Study was implemented.<sup>7</sup> OER helped facilitate municipal inspector training which National Grid funded. In addition, OER worked with the Rhode Island Building Code Commission to make the training mandatory for all building and electrical officials.<sup>8</sup> OER further provided that the 2017 Study did not identify a specific entity responsible for implementation of each recommendation.<sup>9</sup>

On October 27, 2017, Stephen Scialabba, Chief Accountant, Division of Public Utilities and Carriers (Division), submitted a memorandum in support of the funding request. He indicated that a quality assurance review of the renewable resources supported by ratepayer dollars and which includes a customer survey is “a worthwhile project, and a prudent expense given the size of the RE Growth program.”<sup>10</sup> Mr. Scialabba stated that National Grid has estimated the total cost of the RE Growth program at approximately \$626 million. He noted that the estimate was calculated prior to 2017 legislation that extended the program beyond the original 160 megawatts.<sup>11</sup>

At an Open Meeting held on November 9, 2017, after review of the record and based on the recommendation of the Division, the Commission voted to approve OER’s request for \$145,000 to perform a study of renewable energy installation quality and complete a customer feedback survey. In the event that the total cost of preparing the report is less than the \$145,000

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<sup>5</sup> The Narragansett Electric Company d/b/a National Grid.

<sup>6</sup> OER Funding Request at 2.

<sup>7</sup> OER Response to PUC 2-1; [http://www.ripuc.org/eventsactions/docket/4604-OER-DR-PUC2\(10\\_16\\_17\).pdf](http://www.ripuc.org/eventsactions/docket/4604-OER-DR-PUC2(10_16_17).pdf).

<sup>8</sup> *Id.*

<sup>9</sup> *Id.*

<sup>10</sup> Memorandum of Stephen Scialabba (Oct. 27, 2017); [http://www.ripuc.org/eventsactions/docket/4604-DPU-Comments\(10-27-17\).pdf](http://www.ripuc.org/eventsactions/docket/4604-DPU-Comments(10-27-17).pdf).

<sup>11</sup> *Id.*

authorized, that lower amount is the amount to be recovered from National Grid's ratepayers pursuant to R.I. Gen. Laws §39-26.6-4(b) and §39-26.6-25.

The PUC, however, also expressed concern with the funding request, given that prior funding for the 2017 Study found significant quality assurance problems.<sup>12</sup> That study presented at least ten recommendations, only one of which was implemented – municipal inspector training. The PUC stated that it would address the 2017 Study recommendations when it reviewed the 2018 RE Growth program filing.<sup>13</sup> The PUC found, nevertheless, that an additional study would provide more information and recommendations regarding quality of the renewable energy installations. Moreover, given that the ratepayer-funded RE Growth program will cost well over \$600 million and that quality assurance appears to be an ongoing issue, the PUC found it appropriate and reasonable to continue evaluating the installed projects.

The PUC directed OER to attach to the 2018 Study a section indicating whether OER adopted or rejected each of the recommendations contained in the report, and explaining each of those decisions. In addition, the PUC ordered OER to provide the Commission with an implementation plan for each Study recommendation that OER adopts. Finally, noting that the 2017 Study had not been filed with the PUC or provided to the service list service list of record, which includes parties to this docket and individuals who have requested notice of proceedings in this docket, the Commission ordered OER to do so.

Accordingly, it is hereby

(23012) ORDERED:

1. The Rhode Island Office of Energy Resources' request for funding to retain the services of a consultant to perform a study of renewable energy installation quality in the

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<sup>12</sup> For example, *see* 2017 Study at iv (finding that 41% of renewable energy systems inspected exhibited major or critical installation deficiencies).

<sup>13</sup> *See* PUC Docket No. 4774; <http://www.ripuc.org/eventsactions/docket/4774page.html>.

Renewable Energy Growth Program and complete a customer survey (2018 Study) in an amount not to exceed \$145,000 is approved.

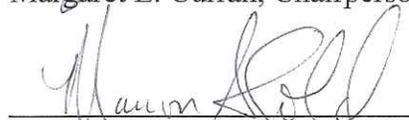
- a. The Rhode Island Office of Energy Resources shall attach to the 2018 Study a section indicating whether it adopted or rejected each of the recommendations contained in the 2018 Study and explaining each of those decisions.
  - b. The Rhode Island Office of Energy Resources shall provide the Commission with an implementation plan for each 2018 Study recommendation that it adopts.
2. The Rhode Island Office of Energy Resources shall file with the Commission and provide to the service list of record in this docket the Study of Renewable Energy Installation Quality in the Renewable Energy Growth Program, issued April 20, 2017.

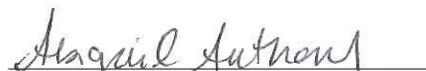
EFFECTIVE AT WARWICK, RHODE ISLAND ON NOVEMBER 9, 2017 PURSUANT TO AN OPEN MEETING DECISION. WRITTEN ORDER ISSUED JANUARY 16, 2018.

PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION



  
Margaret E. Curran, Chairperson

  
Marion S. Gold, Commissioner

  
Abigail Anthony, Commissioner

**NOTICE OF RIGHT OF APPEAL:** Pursuant to R.I. Gen. Laws §39-5-1, any person aggrieved by a decision or order of the PUC may, within seven days from the date of the order, petition the Supreme Court for a Writ of Certiorari to review the legality and reasonableness of the decision or order.