



# Convene & Commit

## Convene decision makers and commit to an energy transition

### Phase 0

**Transitioning to a cleaner, more resilient energy system will require leadership and commitment from various parts of the community.**

To begin, a group of community leaders—such as utility managers and local officials—expresses their commitment to the public and to potential investors. With an expression of commitment, the challenge then becomes selecting a path, rather than whether the transition is possible.

### 0.1 Compile a List of Energy-Related Risks and Resilience Opportunities

There are likely many compelling reasons to transition to a cleaner, more resilient energy system. Identifying these reasons will facilitate initial conversations and inspire community leaders to become involved.

Resilience opportunities will evolve over time—and as more stakeholders join the conversation. In this phase, clearly articulating the risks can move decision makers to embrace such opportunities. Use data to build your case.

#### Phase 0 describes how to:

- ☐ 0.1 Compile a list of energy-related risks and resilience opportunities
- ☐ 0.2 Identify key decision makers and resources
- ☐ 0.3 Convene decision makers for initial discussions
- ☐ 0.4 Identify a community energy champion
- ☐ 0.5 Document your commitment to an energy transition

**Example Risk and Opportunity Assessment Table (illustrative, not comprehensive)**

Energy-Related Risks	Key Data Points	Resilience Opportunities	Key Data Points
Residential energy costs are high and volatile		Enhance customer participation in markets	
CO <sub>2</sub> emissions impact health, environment, and tourism		Clean, utility-scale solar energy development	
Increasing frequency and intensity of disasters causes outages		Develop community microgrid	
Reliance on imported fossil fuel leads to energy insecurity; funnels money out of the community		Develop indigenous energy resources; keep energy dollars local	

## 0.2 Identify Key Decision Makers and Resources

The entire community stands to benefit from energy resilience, and success hinges on the input and participation of multiple stakeholders. In later phases, you will engage stakeholders with diverse interests, concerns, values, and perspectives—individuals, nonprofits, businesses, utilities, and more. At this stage, however, your stakeholder list should focus on decision makers and resources with the expertise, influence, and resources to launch the transition.

As your initial stakeholder list grows to include all parties active in the local energy market—from developers and consultants to international organizations—new partners, teams, and resources with potential to help implement the transition will emerge. With broader participation comes more expertise, resources, and capacity, all of which facilitate success.

### Sample Stakeholder Matrix

Name	Role in Transition	Impact on Transition	Interest in Transition	Engagement Required

*Illustrative only. The downloadable worksheet on page 0-3 can be adapted to suit your community's needs.*

## 0.3 Convene Decision Makers for Initial Discussions

After identifying which energy opportunities to pursue and which stakeholders will be involved at the outset, it is time to start the dialogue about leading the transition. It can be beneficial to have a credible, objective third party—one that does not stand to gain financially or politically—convene and facilitate meetings because its representatives may be perceived as neutral experts.

These early conversations should yield support from key stakeholders to begin Phase 1, including those willing to demonstrate their leadership in the transition. These discussions can also begin to identify aspects of the vision that will take shape in Phase 1.

## 0.4 Identify a Community Energy Champion

It is difficult to overstate the pivotal role a trusted, widely respected community leader can play in building credibility and trust, generating interest, and inspiring action—all of which are essential to a successful energy transition. Identifying and engaging an influential local champion early to advocate for the transition can be a game changer when it comes to securing stakeholder and community buy-in.

## 0.5 Document Your Commitment to an Energy Transition

Because an energy transition is a significant undertaking, it may be beneficial for key stakeholders to demonstrate their commitment to the effort in a written document, such as a memorandum of understanding or partnership agreement.

This document formalizes the community's overarching, time-bound clean energy goal. It can also define the terms of the agreement, including the level of commitment necessary to undertake the transition, the scope of the effort, and expectations about roles, responsibilities, and broader participation in the effort.

## 0.6 Tools and Resources

### Worksheets and Templates

#### Stakeholder Matrix

*Identify key stakeholders*

#### Risk and Opportunity Assessment Table

*Map risks to opportunities*

#### Memorandum of Understanding

*Establish an agreement to formalize partnership terms*

### Case Study

#### U.S. Virgin Islands Signs Memorandum of Understanding To Launch Energy Transition Pilot

In February 2010, the U.S. Virgin Islands (USVI) committed to reduce the territory's dependence on fossil fuel by 60% by 2025. More than 25 government leaders, energy office officials, and utility company executives convened at the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) in Golden, Colorado. Governor John P. de Jongh Jr. signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) formalizing the territory's commitment to an energy transition.

##### ***What common energy transition challenge or need did the project solve or address?***

To launch a successful energy transition, a group of community leaders must come together and formally express their commitment to the project or initiative.

Because energy sector stakeholders range from providers to government to end users and represent a wide range of interests, many parties needed to have roles and be represented to support a more resilient sector.

##### ***Why is this a common challenge for communities pursuing resilient energy transitions?***

The formal involvement and support of key decision makers from across the community lends credibility needed to garner critical support from project sponsors and partners, potential investors, and the public.



More than 25 USVI government leaders, energy office officials, and utility company executives convened for an MOU signing committing the territory to an energy transition in 2010. *Photo by Adam Warren, NREL*

**“Forming a public-private partnership among stakeholders with diverse interests, capabilities, and perspectives is foundational to achieving audacious clean energy goals.”**

—Adam Warren, Director of NREL Integrated Applications Center

### ***How did the community address this challenge or need?***

After establishing the USVI's clean energy goal in late 2009, Governor de Jongh set out to charter and empower an effective team to lead the Energy Development in Island Nations (EDIN)-USVI pilot project. The project partners and stakeholders he assembled had different priorities and agendas, but each had expertise, resources, capacities, and capabilities that were essential to advancing the territory's goal.

### ***What key decisions were integral to this project?***

- The governor's office appointed the Virgin Islands Energy Office (VIEO) director and the Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority (WAPA) chief executive officer to co-lead the project with support from a steering committee.
- The USVI leadership team scheduled a meeting with federal partners and sponsors at NREL—an objective technical resource, sponsoring partner, and project facilitator.
- The USVI governor, project co-leads, and other community leaders met at NREL to formalize the EDIN-USVI partnership by signing an MOU with the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI), and NREL; consider elements of the territory's vision; and identify next steps.
- Basil Ottley of DOI, a former USVI senator, agreed to serve as the project's local energy champion.
- Key USVI decision makers, along with representatives of DOE, DOI, and NREL, formed a steering committee tasked with engaging stakeholders and developing and implementing a plan for achieving the USVI's 60% goal.

### ***Who decided on this course of action and why?***

The governor's office appointed top executives from the VIEO and WAPA to jointly lead the project with support from a steering committee made up of federal partners and key decision makers within USVI's government.

The governor, co-leads, and other USVI decision makers selected the local energy champion because of his deep roots and strong connections in the territory; lack of ties to any political administration; and keen understanding of the community's concerns, needs, and values.

DOE and NREL brought to the table unbiased technical expertise that USVI decision makers considered essential to ensuring that proposed technical solutions best used USVI's resources while meeting the community's goals.

### ***What key takeaways or lessons learned might benefit other communities?***

- Establish a diverse leadership team that shares a common commitment.
- Identify a community energy champion with the influence, charisma, and insight needed to garner community buy-in.
- Form a public-private partnership to achieve aspirational goals.
- Commit to an energy transition in writing.

Assembling a strong local leadership team to convene with federal partners and formalize a commitment to transition to clean energy provided a solid foundation of technical expertise, credibility, funding support, and local leadership. The USVI leveraged those combined assets to engage other partners, investors, and local stakeholders in advancing the USVI's energy transition.

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## Resources

### Compile a List of Energy-Related Risks and Resilience Opportunities

**Climate Extremes Communications Guidebook**—A resource developed by the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives to help local governments communicate about weather and climate extremes in the context of climate change.

**Country Risk Assessment**—An activity from NREL and USAID’s Resilient Energy Platform to guide communities in assessing risks to the power sector by linking and scoring vulnerabilities and threats.

**Developing Vulnerability Statements and Assigning Vulnerability Severity Scores**—The Resilient Energy Platform’s step-by-step guide to identifying vulnerabilities the power sector may face from possible threats, forming vulnerability statements, and assigning severity scores.

**Guide to Resilience Solutions**—Part of a larger Power Sector Planning Guidebook to help policy makers, system operators, and other energy-sector stakeholders complete key steps of a power sector resilience planning process, this section describes numerous resilience solutions that combine technological diversity, redundancy, decentralization, transparency, collaboration, flexibility, and foresight considerations.

**Identify Resilience Solutions**—The Resilient Energy Platform’s step-by-step guide to identifying potential solutions for enhancing power sector resilience based on identified threats, vulnerabilities, and risks.

**Island Energy Snapshots**—Designed to capture the energy landscape of islands in the Caribbean, the Pacific, and surrounding areas at a glance, these DOE Energy Transitions Initiative fact sheets highlight key data on each island’s electricity sector, clean energy policy environment, energy efficiency and renewable energy projects and resource potential, and opportunities for clean energy transformation.

**Mini-Grids and Climate Resilience**—An overview of socioeconomic, environmental, and resilience benefits mini-grid systems can provide for remote communities, as well as climate risks posed to mini-grids and measures to increase their resilience.

**Renewable Energy to Support Energy Security**—A Resilient Energy Platform fact sheet that describes some of the key sectors where energy security is vital, provides an overview of some example categories of energy security threats, and explores opportunities for renewable energy to support energy security.

**Strengths/Assets and Vulnerabilities**—A guide for identifying institutional strengths and vulnerabilities in the context of climate change. Geared toward campuses, the process is applicable and scalable to jurisdictions of various sizes.

**Understanding Power System Threats and Impacts**—A “quick read” from the Resilient Energy Platform describing how natural, technological, and human-caused threats can impact the power sector, and how power sector vulnerability assessments can be used to understand potential impacts to various sectors and develop climate resilience action plans.

**Valuing Resilience in Electricity Systems**—An NREL report outlining the steps involved in quantifying, valuing, and monetizing energy resilience to give utilities and system operators methods to consider resilience benefits of different system designs.