

Playbook Lesson Learned

Phase 2: Assessing Opportunity Pathways

An Inclusive and Open Integrated Resource Planning Process in Saint Lucia Fosters Stakeholder Buy-in

In 2016, the Government of Saint Lucia and St. Lucia Electricity Services Limited (LUCELEC) led an integrated resource planning (IRP) process as part of developing a National Energy Transition Strategy (NETS). This process, the first of its type undertaken in Saint Lucia, led to a successful assessment of Saint Lucia's opportunity pathways.

Challenge

There are many diverse stakeholders in the energy sector. Keeping all parties well informed throughout the strategic planning process is a common challenge for those leading island energy transitions. After aligning around a vision, communities need to ensure that stakeholder engagement continues in order to secure buy-in. Coordinating and managing a multistakeholder process over a six-month time frame comes with many hurdles. As a result, a common challenge is maintaining an inclusive and open process that gives all key stakeholders a voice and a seat at the table in providing input that factors into strategic decisions about practical pathways to realizing a community's energy vision.



Government, utility, and other stakeholders discuss opportunity pathways to help Saint Lucia realize its energy vision.

Photo from RMI-CWR

Solution

In Saint Lucia, both the government and LUCELEC, including ministerial and executive leadership, committed to participating in the NETS process, which was facilitated by an independent and objective analysis by Rocky Mountain Institute - Carbon War Room (RMI-CWR) through the Islands Energy Program.¹ This group of key stakeholders comprised the core NETS team in Saint Lucia and led the IRP process. Keeping both the government and LUCELEC engaged throughout ensured that their respective priorities and concerns were integrated into the IRP analysis. The first step required identifying the primary goals and objectives of stakeholders for the NETS, as well as agreeing on the questions to be answered by the IRP.

¹ The Islands Energy Program is funded by the Dutch Postal Code Lottery and the Global Environment Facility with support from the United Nations Development Program Office for Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean.

In addition, public input was solicited throughout the NETS process in Saint Lucia, starting with a public consultation conducted early in the process to share information about the NETS and invite questions and comments. Obtaining the views from members of the public aided the NETS team in designing and shaping the process to appropriately address the priorities of Saint Lucians, especially since feedback was obtained early. At the same time, the core NETS team needed to maintain a degree of confidentiality while relevant information was gathered. This confidentiality both built trust within the NETS team and protected sensitive information and conclusions until the appropriate time in the process. With that in hand, the Government of Saint Lucia and LUCELEC were ready to receive input from the wider group of stakeholders to ensure the information—and the conclusions drawn from it—were accurate and understood.

For example, important stakeholders included developers of specific projects being considered in Saint Lucia, including geothermal and wind generation. Striking the appropriate relationship with these developers was key to the success of the NETS process. Maintaining contact with these developers allowed their interests and industry-specific information to be incorporated into the IRP analysis, and openly sharing the completed analysis provided an opportunity for them to review its conclusions. This approach ensured that the NETS outcome, which is designed to meet the energy goals of the citizens of Saint Lucia, adequately and accurately captured inputs from relevant private industry stakeholders.

Maintaining an inclusive process also requires a balance of listening to key questions that may arise and maintaining an appropriate scope. In Saint Lucia, several stakeholders raised questions around the potential adoption and impact of electric vehicles (EVs). Based on that stakeholder input, the core NETS team opted to include EV questions in their information gathering and analysis. The NETS team maintained a focus on other priority areas, while creating the potential to revisit EV strategies as their work progresses and technology costs continue to change.

Project Ownership: A Key Consideration in Assessing Opportunity Pathways

To meet goals related to identifying least-cost investments for Saint Lucia's electricity distribution system and ensuring reliable service, several stakeholders wanted to analyze whether new generation assets should be owned by LUCELEC, a third party, or a combination of both.

Some considerations that supported utility ownership of new generation assets in Saint Lucia include:

- Internal capacity to operate the new project (given appropriate training)
- Maturity of the technologies identified for utility ownership (solar, wind, and energy efficiency programs)
- Ability to finance the project using low-cost utility capital
- Potential for training and capacity development once the new project is online.



A view of Saint Lucia's iconic Pitons. *Photo from iStock 21273893*

Key Takeaways

Maintaining stakeholder engagement facilitated the successful assessment of opportunity pathways in Saint Lucia. While considering a wide array of opportunities as part of the NETS process, the completed IRP focused on specific projects that could be completed in the near term. This sharp focus led to a smooth transition from planning to project implementation.

The leadership and enthusiasm from the Government of Saint Lucia and LUCELEC addressed the common challenge of maintaining an open process and fostering stakeholder input into energy planning and analysis. This commitment to transparency and stakeholder engagement is fundamental to a full analysis that accurately addresses community priorities.

This lesson learned is one of many provided in the Energy Transition Initiative Islands Playbook—an action-oriented guide to help island communities successfully initiate, plan, and complete a transition to a clean energy system and eliminate dependence on imported fuels. See the full Islands Playbook at www.eere.energy.gov/islandsplaybook.

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The Energy Transition Initiative leverages the experiences of islands, states, and cities that have established a long-term vision for energy transformation and are successfully implementing energy efficiency and renewable energy projects to achieve established clean energy goals. Through the initiative, the U.S. Department of Energy and its partners provide government entities and other stakeholders with a proven framework, objective guidance, and technical tools and resources for transitioning to a clean energy system/economy that relies on local resources to substantially reduce reliance on fossil fuels.