

## Playbook Lesson Learned Phase 1: Setting the Vision

### Working Groups Collaborate on U.S. Virgin Islands Clean Energy Vision and Road Map

The Energy Development in Islands Nations (EDIN)-U.S. Virgin Islands (USVI) pilot project offers a valuable example of how to approach vision and goal setting for an energy project or initiative.

At the inaugural EDIN-USVI workshop in February 2010, USVI Gov. John P. de Jongh Jr. announced his goal to reduce the territory's dependence on fossil fuel 60% by 2025. To define and realize the vision for a clean energy future, the governor put in place a leadership team and steering committee with specific roles and responsibilities. Their first duty was to engage key stakeholders in a series of local energy planning workshops.

#### Challenge

In the first workshop in June 2010, the leadership team and steering committee needed to inform diverse public and private stakeholders about key aspects of the project. Workshop attendees had varying levels of technical knowledge about the USVI's energy profile, clean energy technologies, and potential pathways for achieving the governor's goal of 60% clean energy by 2025. The organizers needed to engage their stakeholders in the process of refining the territory's clean energy vision, setting goals for achieving it, forming consensus about the path forward, and securing community buy-in.

The first challenge the leadership team faced was finding a balance between engaging the community in identifying technology and programmatic pathways to achieving the vision, and not getting so technical that participants became disengaged. The next was in giving the participants insights into the opportunities for achieving the fossil fuel reduction goal, as well as the difficulties and barriers.

In order to facilitate an effective conversation among the diverse stakeholders who represented a broad spectrum of knowledge and perspectives, the leadership team needed to begin with information sharing to help stakeholders with primarily social concerns understand more technical elements, and vice versa. The team needed to present information objectively and examine the issues from all sides, and also needed to create an open environment that invited dialogue and brainstorming. The biggest challenge was securing buy-in and establishing the necessary level of consensus to establish a shared vision and mutually agreed-upon goals for moving the project forward.



A diverse set of stakeholders brainstorming on the vision for the EDIN-USVI project at the first community energy planning meeting, June 2010, University of the Virgin Islands, St. Thomas, USVI. *Photo from Aldeth Lewin, Virgin Islands Daily News*

## Solution

1. Present technical information about USVI energy profile, clean energy technologies, policies, and barriers and opportunities based on initial assessments.
2. Facilitate dialogue that helps stakeholders understand the project opportunities and barriers from the leadership team's perspective, and gives the leadership team insight into the barriers and opportunities from the community's perspective.
3. Form consensus on a shared vision and establish broad goals.
4. Organize an interactive group exercise to lay the groundwork for communicating project vision and goals to the public and generating grassroots support.
5. Task working groups with identifying and implementing specific solutions for achieving energy goals, and assign local stakeholders to co-lead the working group, with technical support from U.S. Department of Energy and National Renewable Energy Laboratory experts.

## Key Takeaways

The USVI project demonstrates the importance of sharing key information in a transparent and objective way, facilitating open dialogue between key stakeholders, and exploring project barriers and opportunities from all sides when setting the vision and goals for a clean energy project or initiative. By employing these tactics, the USVI leadership team and steering committee succeeded in bringing together stakeholders with vastly different viewpoints and agendas to form a shared vision and set mutually agreed-upon goals that established a path for achieving energy transformation in the territory.

Bringing together people with disparate perspectives and agendas—social, political, and economic—to shape a common vision is always an uphill climb. At this stage, it is important to recognize that although some individuals and groups will already have an understanding of—and a vested interest in—the effort of defining a sustainable energy future, others may not yet be engaged in the conversation or moved to action.

In the USVI, involving a broad cross-section of public and private stakeholders—potential opponents included—in setting the vision created an opportunity for civil discourse that was critical to the project's long-term success. Inclusiveness was not necessarily the easiest path; however, it proved an effective strategy for securing a sense of community ownership. Involving detractors in the early planning stages improved transparency, gave project proponents a chance to understand and assess barriers to project success, addressed opposing views, assuaged objections through thoughtful and reasoned arguments backed by hard data, and ultimately achieved consensus.

Key lessons learned for engaging USVI stakeholders include:

- Obtaining input from stakeholders helps prioritize recommendations based on the community's aspirations.
- Providing objective information about clean energy technologies and hard data about the community's energy landscape, available resources, barriers, and opportunities helps strike a balance between stretching the goal and doing what's technically feasible.
- Developing a communications strategy that conveys the vision, goals, and ways for stakeholders to be engaged lays the groundwork for building grassroots support.

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](http://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.