

Summary Report

On January 26, 2024, an offshore wind (OSW) energy community engagement event took place at Rutgers – Newark’s School of Business in Newark, New Jersey. The event brought together approximately 50 attendees from across academia, industry, non-profit organizations, and governmental agencies.

As part of the event, the attendees were divided into small breakout groups where they answered questions about the challenges, benefits, and considerations for offshore wind energy in New Jersey. This report provides a listing of the responses received.

1. What are some of the challenges for businesses, communities, and residents that may arise as the offshore wind industry continues to be developed, and how can these challenges be addressed?

- Community Impact - Huge amount of misinformation and non-information regarding OSW. It needs to be tackled by all the stakeholders together. Employment and supplier diversity is essential in this process, they need to use the industry to expand capacity, so every business is affected. Meeting with communities one at a time might be a potential solution. Speaking to small businesses, chambers of commerce, underrepresented populations, etc. - there is a lack of jobs, these people have high school diplomas maybe and they need to be aware of the potential of the industry and the kind of job opportunities this new industry develops.
- Joint fact-finding - Listen to all viewpoints with the same volume so that no specific voice is amplified/there isn't bias. Need to have a better process to build consensus; for instance, routing cables through communities is a huge issue that needs collective consensus.
- Skill-building opportunities for the underserved and disadvantaged: Essex County Skill Development Authority provides skill-building and training opportunities for basic skills, tailor-made for specific industries to get hired. Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act helps individuals across different trades.
- Problem/Opportunity: There is no roadmap for high school graduates to figure out that college education is not for them, but they could be in the trades. But they don't have that clarity among them. Organized labor has not been open to underserved communities joining the workforce, how is that being addressed? The Essex County has relationships with Organized Labor Unions, but currently, there is no apprenticeship program with them to integrate them into the workforce. While they aren't directly involved, some support services can be provided. For example, the Ivey Hill neighborhood received a grant from the NJEDA. The unions, developers and tier-one suppliers don't have a hugely diverse workforce. The reason? The underserved do not have certifications. Maybe we need to have a dialogue with Department of Labor (DOL) to ensure we have more workers, and the training that is needed. The training must be done today, and the jobs must be created accordingly to match the skilled labor population. A GED or a high school diploma is needed. The Ivey Hill program also teaches towards the IBEW exam and once that is cleared, these people can work in the utility industry, manufacturing industry, OSW farm, etc.
- Financing
- Accelerator Programs, Networking
- Procurement
- Access to FTP Site – Engineering
- Current business model – business process
- Employment training
- Community concerns – Where will the transmission lines be situated? Underground?
- Industry Knowledge – Getting them the skills they need by connecting them to industry. This will lead to the creation of jobs.

Summary Report

- Resources like childcare, transportation, and mental health services need to be provided to overburdened communities to ensure they have the space and means to focus on work and professional development. For example, Soulful Energy is an organization in New Jersey that provides transportation, childcare, food, etc.
- We need to have intermediary organizations that help with the recruitment and retention of people who join the program and see it through.
- What are those things we can take away from today to begin to engage the next generation, those students, and even teachers? The danger of having STEM and climate change programs as after-school is that they are *after* school.
- Two projects announced – Orsted pulled out. 4–5-year plan before they can hire anyone. Time frame, interest rates, supply chain. These large global players are impacted heavily by macro-economic factors. How do we address this?
- Communication of accurate information. The public is reluctant to even attend these informational events. “What’s in it for me” mentality. Environmental concerns are typically a primary concern.
- No subsidization – at least not substantial enough.
- The change in administration – “once the money is in the pipeline its contractual, you can’t just cut it off.”
- Continuity through election cycles
- Developing the curriculum and building the narrative in youth. Allowing the educational material to be readily available to individuals who might not be in the STEM community (construction, business etc.).
- Decarbonizing the supply chain
- Overcoming the misconceptions

2. How can New Jersey benefit from the growth of the offshore wind industry?

- More community forums to raise awareness and promote education.
- Physical fitness
- Economic impacts
- Education, certifications, career awareness, middle school OSW technology program
- Early, crossover with STEM education including industry field trips
- Communities in Newark and Atlantic City will have the opportunity for the NJ Department of Education to utilize the Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment (CLNA)
- New technologies
- Traditional careers can be used in this industry: painting, welding, women in welding
- Bridging current certification programs with industry – PSEG HVAC 11 month program
- Current/future employment trajectory
- OSW resource hub
- Manufacturing vessels – supply chain logistics
- Wind Turbine technicians - High job security because there are no wind turbine technicians in the US as of yet. Electrical engineering certifications and tower climbing certifications (6-month certification). The starting salary is around \$70,000.
- Long Beach Island - They need solar and energy storage solutions for emergency and resiliency solutions. When the next storm hits, the bay will be exposed. There is also significant opposition to OSW, so solving this will lead to reduction of some opposition.
- Invenergy has a new lease for a wind energy farm of 2.4 MW which will also lead to more job opportunities and adoption.
- Societal: Accountability (legal)
- Stakeholder feedback matters to regulation

Summary Report

- From executive orders to legislation – educating for legislative advocacy
- OSW, long-term is going to lead to a lot of energy savings
- Education stipulations
- Total cost of fossil fuels need to be shown
- The entire adjacent network that would support manufacturing – restaurants, mediators etc. Tapping into the entire ecosystem that will benefit.
- Avoiding the indirect/direct costs of not doing it – unhealthy ecosystems
- Local jobs
- Bringing in foreign capital
- Creating space for innovation

3. What specific considerations for communities should be taken into account when developing offshore wind projects in New Jersey, and how can these communities be involved in the planning process?

- Education is key!
- How can we get more dollars behind advertising and marketing?
- Increased presence on social media
- Educating youth but also educating older generations who currently have the power to vote with their wallet
- Ecosystem rehabilitation
- Impact on homeowners' conversion to OSW – how will it impact their electric bill and their taxes?
- Land – Onshore/Offshore 10-40 miles offshore, landscape
- Transportation – Economic impact
- Renewable energy costs and return on investment
- Storms, environmental concerns, and marine life
- Politicians – engaging local policymakers