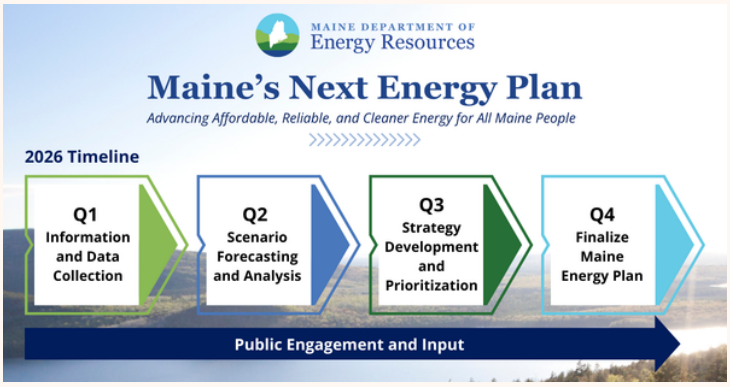
PENOBSCOT CLIMATE ACTION

Newsletter Volume 3 - November 2026

Maine's New Energy Plan
Opportunities for Penobscot County

Maine's latest energy strategy lays out an effort to make energy more affordable and reliable while reducing dependence on imported fossil fuels. The Maine Energy Plan calls for expanded energy efficiency, heat pumps, electric vehicles, renewable generation, grid improvements, and workforce development to meet Maine's requirement for 100 percent clean electricity by 2040.



For Penobscot County, this transition represents an economic development opportunity. The county added 335 clean-energy jobs between 2020 and 2023, more than any other Maine county. Expanding careers in electrical work, heat-pump installation, weatherization, and clean-energy construction could position Bangor and surrounding communities as a service hub for central and northern Maine.

Municipalities can turn state energy goals into projects that reduce operating costs such as by upgrading public buildings, installing heat pumps, adding electric-vehicle infrastructure, and improving facility resilience during storms. Maine's Community Resilience Partnership provides grants and technical assistance, offering up to $75,000 for individual communities and $175,000 for regional projects.

Penobscot County communities do not need to wait for large projects to arrive. Towns can organize locally and regionally to pursue efficiency grants, develop resilient facilities, and support workforce training. At the same time, local officials, businesses, and residents can influence the 2027 Energy Plan during 2026 by advocating for investments tailored to the region's needs: lower heating costs, reliable electricity, workforce development, and storm-resilient infrastructure.

CITY OF BANGOR PROGRAMMING

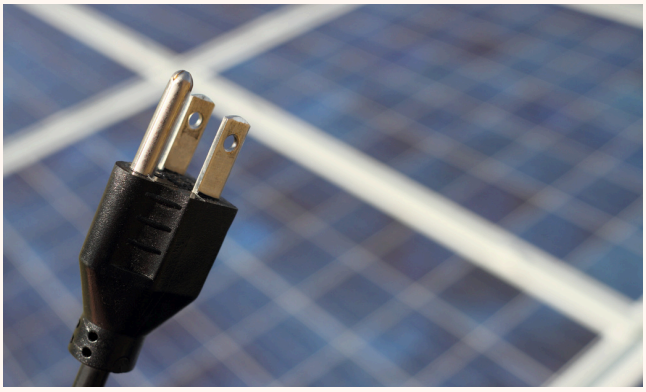
Starting the week of November 16th, Bangor will have grants available for home energy efficiency projects such as weatherization and heat pumps, up to $2,000 per household. If you live or rent out units in Bangor and are interested, you can email planning@bangormaine.gov to receive more details and/or to be contacted when the application is available.

PLUG-IN SOLAR

Maine residents will soon have a new way to generate electricity at home. Plug-in solar, also called balcony solar, uses small solar panels connected through an electrical outlet to reduce electricity bills.

Maine's new law permits qualifying systems up to 1,200 watts. Systems exceeding 420 watts must be installed by a Maine-licensed electrician using a dedicated circuit with a single outlet. Customers must notify their electric utility within 30 days of installation. Even smaller systems should be inspected by a licensed electrician to prevent electrical hazards or fire.

According to estimates cited by the Natural Resources Council of Maine, a 1,200-watt system could save households approximately $388 annually, or nearly 20% of their electricity bills. Actual savings will vary. Plug-in solar also expands access to renewable energy for renters and multifamily residents.



Important: Systems must meet UL 3700 certification, comparable safety certification, or applicable National Electrical Code requirements. As of October 2026, no complete UL 3700-certified kits have been independently verified as available for installation in Maine, although some components are certified. Consumers should confirm compliance with Maine's safety requirements before purchasing.

CONNECTION BETWEEN CLIMATE CHANGE AND INFLATION

Climate change is increasingly showing up in our grocery bills. Rising temperatures and more frequent heat waves, droughts, floods, and heavy rains can damage crops, reduce harvests, and disrupt food supplies—putting upward pressure on prices. A major international study found that unusually high temperatures cause persistent increases in food inflation, with effects lasting up to a year. Here in the Northeast, changing rainfall patterns, summer heat, and warmer winters are already creating costly challenges for farmers. Reducing climate pollution can protect both our food supply and household budgets.

COMMUNITY CHOICE AGGREGATION

A recently enacted Maine law enables a town or tribe, or a group of towns or tribes, to pool the electric accounts of local homes and small businesses in order to purchase electricity directly from wholesale suppliers for the whole group, instead of each account buying power alone from the investor-owned utility. With Community Choice Aggregation (CCA), the responsibility for delivery and billing remains with the utilities, while allowing the purchasers to get electricity at lower rates and from renewable sources. This can help communities address both high electricity costs and climate change. CCA programs must be approved by local voters, and residents and businesses have the choice to "opt out" if they prefer not to participate.

THANKS FOR FOLLOWING ALONG!

Check out https://www.penobscotclimateaction.org/ for more.