



# WHAT WE HEARD

New Brunswickers share their view on the opportunities and barriers we face in a clean energy transition

March 31, 2025



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## Acknowledgements

Please join us in a moment of self-reflection as we acknowledge the land that this project was carried out on as the ancestral and unceded territory of the Wolastoqey, Mi'kmaq, and Peskotomuhkati (Passamaquoddy) Nations. This area where we listened to and recorded hundreds of voices on is protected by the Peace and Friendship Treaties.

The project team extends its sincere gratitude to the 420 New Brunswickers who contributed their perspectives to inform this report. As energy discussions impact everyone, the inclusion and amplification of diverse voices are essential in shaping a just and effective clean energy transition.

## Executive Summary

### Introduction

In 2022, Smart Grid Innovation Network (SGIN) launched a multi-faceted, New Brunswick-specific program to enhance knowledge and strengthen the overall understanding of clean energy, specifically electricity, in sustaining a healthy economy powered by a **cost-effective, reliable, and sustainable energy source**. This project included an Indigenous and public engagement campaign titled the “Clean Energy Transition Listening Series”, the results of which are summarized within this report.

The expected outcomes from this work were to provide a non-partisan, open perspective on how energy decisions are made in the province. This information will provide the planning activities of the utilities, department of energy, other government departments and industry a window into the perspectives of those who took part.

To strengthen the engagement efforts, SGIN has collaborated with the following organizations to connect and report on the feedback we heard during this project:

- **Clean Energy Connections Inc.**
- **North Shore Mi'kmaq Tribal Council**
- **University of New Brunswick**
- **Portfolio**

A literature review of New Brunswick related energy surveys and reports was completed to understand the scope of earlier bodies of work and expose common elements previously found. Building on the contributions of these pieces of work, we identified four themes consistent throughout that have the opportunity for improvement to support New Brunswick's clean energy transition:

- **Trust and Confidence**
- **Communication and Collaboration**
- **Workforce Attraction and Retention**
- **Clean Energy as an Economic Driver**

Over the course of 17 in-person and virtual engagement sessions, 420 respondents provided feedback on these four themes as they relate to energy in the province with the intention of moving from barriers to progress.

## What We Heard Summary

Across all sessions, conversations centered on fundamental principles of how our energy system should function. Participants consistently identified three key pillars: **reliability, affordability, and sustainability**. Concerns were raised about the affordability of clean energy for New Brunswickers, but a common theme emerged—the need to find balance between the **benefits** of clean energy with its **costs**. While reliability, affordability and sustainability remain the key pillars for energy in New Brunswick, the following themes came up again and again as issues to meeting the needs of New Brunswick when it comes to energy transition.

### 1. Communication and Collaboration

In each session, points were raised around the need for stronger Indigenous representation in energy decisions and projects. We heard the strong desire for transparent, accessible, and proactive communication about energy policies, strategies, infrastructure investments, and benefits, with clear explanations of timelines, environmental impacts, and financial implications. Respondents expressed the need for stronger Indigenous representation in energy decisions and projects, emphasizing the need for respectful dialogue and decisions that reflect long-term sustainability rather than short-term costs. One key opportunity identified is the varying literacy levels on energy and

the environment based on individual experience, highlighting an ongoing challenge to effective communication.

## **2. Trust and Confidence**

Respondents emphasized the need for greater transparency and bi-directional dialogue from government agencies, energy utilities, and regulatory bodies to build trust in future energy projects and policies. We heard the need for early and consistent community engagement, proactive education on energy literacy, and attention to combat misinformation.

## **3. Workforce Attraction and Retention**

Engagement sessions highlighted the need for stronger partnerships between government, industry, and educational institutions to communicate future job opportunities, support early youth engagement and education, and increase access to training and certification programs to offer capacity development opportunities to support the transition with a local workforce. We heard the need to look at labor policies to create a more competitive and sustainable workforce.

## **4. Clean Energy as an Economic Driver**

Respondents expressed desire for affordable and renewable energy expansion to drive economic growth, attract investment, and create local job opportunities. They called for clear policies, reduced regulatory barriers, community involvement, and strategic collaboration amongst government, industry, and Indigenous groups to ensure that energy projects, including clean energy supply and uses, deliver long-term economic benefits while supporting sustainability and local prosperity.

## **Recommendations**

This body of work recognizes the importance of the planning processes that New Brunswick has today to perform its energy decision making including the integrated resource plan for the bulk electrical systems in the province and overall provincial energy plans. The entire industry is moving from steady state planning mode to a more dynamic mode to support energy transition planning.

The bulk electrical system is a crucial component of the overall energy transition plan, enabling economic opportunities for current and future businesses to harness clean energy in their operations. It is, however, a fraction of the overall energy systems and opportunities in the province. The participants and project team recognize that climate

disaster impacts, net zero goals, and global political uncertainties necessitate enhancements to the energy decision-making processes. The recommendations below are based on input from both Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants, acknowledging that we are in a time of significant change that did not exist when our current operational procedures for governance of our energy systems were designed. The feedback from the participants was constructive and provided insights into our policies, workforce, and technology in ways we have never had to consider before. To achieve a resilient, affordable and sustainable energy system that leverages all-energy components, it is recognized that working differently, where it makes sense, is the right approach.

### **1. Establish an Independent Clean Energy Resilience Council**

This recommendation focuses on the establishment of a Clean Energy Resilience Council (Council) for New Brunswick that is non-partisan, enduring, responsive, coordinated, additionally transparent, and outside perspective. Establishing a permanent Council with this intention would have responsibility to engage all stakeholders – including clean energy providers, government agencies, regulatory bodies, business stakeholders, communities and Rightsholders to establish a process that maintains the current view of the clean all-energy opportunities and requirements for the province. This multi sector view would be a key input into the planning activities of the various government ministries, including the department of energy, and others effected by energy resilience. The establishment of this Council will provide input to Integrated Resource Plans (IRPs) and the dynamic and enduring Long-Term Vision and Energy Strategy developed by the province, with a periodic Clean Energy Transition Plan that outlines clear milestones between now and 2050. This will provide a structured and collaborative approach to achieving an informed, economical, resilient, and sustainable energy system for New Brunswick. The Council will have the opportunity to support these aligned plans by providing input to modernizing regulations, supporting the shaping of Indigenous-led projects, and enhancing energy literacy to support a just and inclusive transition.

### **2. Empower Indigenous Governance**

This recommendation would see First Nations provided with governance representation on entities having authority/jurisdiction over energy and resource development projects in their traditional territories. Expanding on this, First Nations are active contributors to the Clean Energy Roadmap (see recommendation #3) and bodies tasked with implementing, monitoring progress, and re-defining the roadmap.

### **3. Define and Maintain a Clean Energy Roadmap for New Brunswick**

This Clean Energy Roadmap and Pathways Study would follow national guidelines as available, and at a minimum include long term policy and legislative planning that looks to increase alignment across government, public, Rightsholders and business stakeholders.

A clean energy roadmap would also guide future policy and investment decisions to facilitate growth in the provincial and regional energy sector. By clearly establishing and communicating the province's clean energy intentions — specifically outlining the affordability, health impacts, and overall benefits — a strong, fact-based foundation will be created to support informed discussions, public engagement, and decision-making. By highlighting both the costs and the environmental, social, economic, and energy provider advantages of transitioning to cleaner energy sources, the long-term value of a sustainable system can be integrated into the near- and long-term planning efforts of both public and private sectors. Aligning the province in this way will foster broader support for a collaborative clean energy transition. This ongoing initiative can be championed and enabled by the Council

#### **4. Promote Energy + Economic Awareness**

This recommendation aims to enhance public awareness and understanding of this critical linkage by ensuring that individuals, businesses, and communities are well-informed about the transition to a low-carbon future. By launching a comprehensive all energy, all sector literacy campaign, the initiative would coordinate with and enhance existing work in the province and nationally and provide accessible, accurate, and practical information to help the public and government employees navigate the evolving energy landscape of both the costs and benefits of energy sustainability. This approach will empower New Brunswickers to make informed decisions, support policy advancements, and actively take part in clean energy initiatives. Through these enhancements, greater public engagement and alignment with the province's long-term economic and environmental goals will be fostered. The United Nations sustainable development Goal 7 is about ***“ensuring access to clean and affordable energy, which is key to the development of agriculture, business, communications, education, healthcare and transportation.”*** Goal 7 clearly links the development of clean energy and economic development.

#### **5. Finance the build by aligning Provincial, Federal, and Private Equity Funding**

While it is generally accepted that most would welcome cleaner energy options, there is debate regarding how and who should fund the energy transition. This recommendation suggests that NB leverage national frameworks to define a holistic view of the benefits for energy providers, society and consumers to provide better clarity in the division of investment. We recommend that both traditional and non-traditional funding options be explored to maximize financial incentives from federal and other sources and that the work take a Comprehensive Economic Development approach to finding investment opportunities.

## What's Next?

Thank you to everyone who took the time and provided open dialogue and constructive comments included in this report and to the government and utility stakeholders who took the time for us to present the findings. The project team appreciated the opportunity to work with everyone involved to play our small part in supporting the province as it works toward enabling cleaner energy opportunities. We would welcome the chance to continue to work with provincial stakeholders and Rightsholders to enable these recommendations.

## Introduction

### About Smart Grid Innovation Network

Smart Grid Innovation Network (SGIN) is a non-profit, member-driven organization, founded in New Brunswick with a national mission to foster Canada's transition to a clean energy future. The organization sets out to enable the decarbonization and electrification of Canada's grid by supporting real implementation and providing centralized focus for knowledge, best practices and experiences from our leading smart grid implementation communities.

### Project Team

To enhance engagement efforts, SGIN partnered with the following organizations to gather, analyze, and report on the feedback collected throughout this project.

- Portfolio
- North Shore Mi'kmaq Tribal Council
- University of New Brunswick
- Clean Energy Connections

## Background

New Brunswick is at a pivotal stage in its transition toward a more affordable and sustainable energy future while maintaining a high level of reliability. While challenges such as aging infrastructure, energy affordability, and the need for greater collaboration remain, the province has also seen significant progress, including increased investments in energy projects. This work aims to build on these successes while ensuring that the voices of New Brunswickers are included in the ongoing transition.

This report is part of a multi-dimensional program led by SGIN, designed to enhance public understanding of energy—particularly electricity—and its role in economic stability and growth for New Brunswick. Since its launch in 2022, the urgency of this transition has only



intensified amid global economic and political instability, trade disputes, territorial conflicts, and escalating climate impacts. Reliable, affordable, and clean energy is critical to the province's long-term economic sustainability.

Rather than duplicating past efforts, this work builds upon the contributions of various organizations in the region. By identifying common themes and challenges within existing research, we have engaged the public to ensure that their insights help shape a more inclusive and effective energy transition.

## Purpose of this Report

This summary of feedback serves as a platform to elevate the voices of Indigenous peoples, residents, businesses, and organizations in New Brunswick, capturing their insights, concerns, and aspirations gathered through various engagement sessions. By documenting and sharing these perspectives, we aim to ensure that the lived experiences and priorities of the public are not only heard but actively considered in New Brunswick's energy transition.

This summary serves as a reaffirmation that meaningful discussions related to the clean energy transition must be inclusive of the public, fostering continuous dialogue in which residents actively contribute to shaping policies, investments, and strategies. A successful clean energy transition in New Brunswick depends on integrating public perspectives into the decision-making process, ensuring that the path forward is equitable, transparent, and representative of the communities it serves.

## What We Engaged On

A literature review of 15 reports and surveys relevant to New Brunswick's clean energy landscape revealed four recurring themes that underscore barriers in the province's transition to clean energy. Across various engagement methods, we gathered input on opportunities for improvement within these key areas.

### Key Engagement Themes

- Trust and Confidence
- Communication and Collaboration
- Workforce Attraction and Retention
- Clean Energy as an Economic Driver

## Engagement Summary

The following engagement methods were utilized:

- Virtual and in-person Listening Sessions
- Listening booths at open houses
- Feedback collected through worksheets distributed at briefings and existing events

# What We Heard: Indigenous Engagement

## 1. Communication and Collaboration

### Foundational Relationship Building and Representation

Respondents emphasized that genuine, respectful dialogue and collaboration among all Rightsholders and stakeholders are essential foundations for meaningful engagement. They noted that openly acknowledging capacity limitations could create opportunities for deeper cooperation. Respondents also stressed the need to move beyond tokenistic inclusion toward building relationships grounded in mutual respect, strengthened through in-person engagement that supports the development of shared visions for the future.

There was a strong and consistent sentiment that Indigenous inclusion should be central from the outset of any energy project. Many expressed a clear preference for active involvement of Indigenous communities in shaping energy strategies and for integrating Indigenous traditional knowledge—embodied in concepts like two-eyed seeing—into project planning and decision-making.

Ensuring Indigenous representation in key decision-making processes was seen to support nation building, long-term economic development, and the respectful stewardship of cultural values and the land. Feedback suggests visualizing all thematic efforts of this project within a “foundational circle,” where respect and relationship-building are central.

This approach should be championed by all stakeholders in the energy sector with Indigenous communities ensuring the transition moves forward with mutual respect.

### Modernizing Energy Legislation and Decision Making with a Unified Goal

We heard that many respondents feel the current energy roadmap is seen as outdated and too focused on short-term costs instead of long-term development and investment. Respondents noted that existing frameworks and ownership models may be disconnecting communities from the benefits of energy projects. They expressed a preference for a critical review and update of these frameworks to enable more collaborative and sustainable energy initiatives, with clear delineation of responsibilities for infrastructure upgrades and long-term cost management.

Many also highlighted the importance of establishing a common goal among various energy players, recognizing the value of having a unified and cohesive approach to the energy future in the province. There was a strong sense that fostering such unification

would help ensure all projects are designed with long-term, intergenerational benefits in mind.

### **Communication and Community-Led Success Stories**

We heard a strong call for increased transparency, early engagement, and the sharing of success stories that demonstrate real benefits from clean energy projects. Many respondents suggested that sharing success stories- with respectful, mutually agreed upon consent- would demonstrate how trust, input, and collaboration lead to tangible outcomes. to inspire broader participation.

There was also a sentiment that communication strategies be developed collaboratively with local groups to ensure that the narratives are authentic and reflect community values. This approach was seen to help bridge the gap between broader plans and community expectations.

## **2. Trust and Confidence**

### **Collaboration and Engagement**

We heard that many view transparent, honest communication and strong relationship building as essential for fostering trust. Respondents emphasized the value of in-person meetings to overcome barriers and create positive impressions, noting that active, authentic participation from all stakeholders is key. There was a strong call for clear, digestible, and timely communication.

Additionally, some respondents highlighted the benefits of initiating, Indigenous led projects that gradually build capacity and demonstrate success, fostering a collaborative approach that encourages shared goals across all levels. To support these projects, respondents called for increased financial support for Indigenous-led energy projects.

There was a strong sentiment that funding mechanisms and project opportunities should explicitly support Indigenous participation, creating equitable outcomes that benefit the communities directly involved.

### **Indigenous History Awareness**

Respondents shared that having a deep understanding of Indigenous history with New Brunswick specific context, and its ongoing generational impact is vital. Respondents suggested that government, utility and non-Indigenous partners take the time to learn

about treaty rights and historical contexts, recognizing the long-standing responsibilities these treaties entail.

There was also a sense that collaborative efforts—through training programs aimed at raising awareness and fostering mutual respect—could help all parties build a stronger, more informed relationship.

### **3. Workforce Attraction and Retention**

#### **Indigenous Inclusion and Diversity**

We heard a strong call for increased collaboration with Indigenous organizations and incorporating Indigenized human resources practices to foster psychologically safe and inclusive work environments. Many expressed the view that engaging more directly and frequently with Indigenous communities—through school visits, career events, and structured recruitment and training initiatives—could be beneficial. There was also a suggestion to develop scholarship programs and mentorship opportunities aimed at supporting Indigenous youth and underrepresented groups.

#### **Partnerships and Collaboration**

We heard a call for improved collaboration among various sectors. Many respondents noted that partnerships between industry, public entities, and educational organizations could help design curricula that better align with labor market needs.

There was also a view that support for funding, research partnerships, and practical demonstrations of emerging technologies might help bridge the gap between academic training and real-world job requirements in the clean energy sector. We heard that having a dedicated entity to link potential hires with available positions could help streamline the process and ensure that job postings are inclusive and transparent.

### **4. Economic Development and Energy**

#### **Building Internal Capacity and Knowledge**

We heard that many feel limited internal capacity restricts the role of energy in fueling economic growth. Respondents expressed a desire for enhanced efforts to build capacity—both in technical knowledge and understanding of energy opportunities. They mentioned that providing mentoring, workshops, invitations that support knowledge

sharing, and resources to bridge knowledge gaps could help increase overall trust in the energy sector.

### **Funding, Investments, and the Link to Capital Access**

Many respondents outlined the challenge that without adequate funding and investment, neither workforce development nor broader economic growth in the energy sector can be obtained. Respondents noted a critical need for improved financial strategies—whether through increased public investment, private partnerships, or innovative funding models—to secure the necessary capital and design initiatives that directly support job creation and sustainable economic development.

There was also a strong call for mechanisms that connect communities with investment resources, including the development of guides or mentorship programs that clearly outline energy sector opportunities and support the funding application process.

### **Strategic Planning and Long-Term Vision**

Respondents shared that they are urging a shift from short-term, rate-payer-focused approaches to a long-term strategy that emphasizes economic development and nation building. Many noted that this shift should involve moving away from projects burdened by high debt and costly refurbishments and instead focus on innovative energy projects developed in close partnership with Indigenous communities.

There was also a call for clear and proactive leadership that offers a flexible, adaptable vision to navigate uncertainties. A strong call for increased Indigenous representation on decision-making bodies. Respondents noted that mandating dedicated representation—such as reserving specific seats on relevant boards—could help ensure Indigenous perspectives are fully integrated into energy planning and foster true collaboration and nation building.

# What We Heard: General Community Feedback

## 1. Communication and Collaboration

### Transparency & Clear Communication

There is a strong desire for open and honest information about energy projects, policies, costs, and benefits. Stakeholders expressed the need for clear explanations of project timelines, environmental impacts, financial implications, and the rationale behind energy transitions. There was a clear emphasis on addressing misinformation, with many urging that the public receive factual updates rather than speculation or politically driven messaging.

Participants also noted the importance of proactive and engaging communication—reaching diverse audiences through social media, public forums, media outreach, utility bills, and in-person sessions—while ensuring that information is accessible to everyone, regardless of literacy levels, language, or technical understanding.

### Education & Public Engagement

The people engaged called for a continued improvement in public understanding of the energy transition. Participants noted the need for clear explanations about how the grid works, why clean energy is essential, and how these changes affect jobs, costs, and daily life. Many expressed that schools, universities, government agencies, industry professionals, and non-profits could play key roles in boosting energy literacy—with trusted third-party sources seen as valuable for providing unbiased information.

There were also calls for community events, expert panels, school programs, and public tours of energy facilities as effective hands-on learning opportunities, along with social media campaigns and structured energy literacy workshops to engage the public.

Additionally, respondents emphasized the importance of highlighting the personal benefits of clean energy, rate stability, economic growth, and job creation, so that the transition is viewed as a positive change rather than an imposed burden. Many expressed that developing online, real-time public dashboards to provide consumers with insights into electricity usage, and costs could be beneficial.

### Indigenous Inclusion & Collaboration

Participants expressed the need partnerships with Indigenous communities and organizations as a vital element in the energy transition, with many noting that integrating

Indigenous leadership, priorities, and perspectives into decision-making is valued. Respondents mentioned the benefit of sustained engagement with Indigenous leaders, Elders, and youth, and highlighted approaches such as Indigenous-led energy committees, direct invitations for participation, and dedicated spaces for dialogue to help shape policy and project development.

There was also feedback on the request for more transparent communication to explain how Indigenous communities may benefit from clean energy projects through economic opportunities, resource management, or community-led initiatives, with an emphasis on fostering ongoing partnerships to build trust over time.

### **Cross-Sector Collaboration & Policy Reform**

We heard a desire for a unified approach that brings together government, utilities, businesses, Indigenous communities, municipalities, and the public to create a shared vision for the energy transition. Participants noted that having discussions facilitated by a mix of government agencies, industry groups, research institutions, and community organizations—with independent convening bodies to ensure balanced decision-making—could be beneficial. Respondents highlighted the value of knowledge sharing through industry partnerships and public-private collaborations, as well as clearer communication of incentives. Concerns were raised about grid capacity limits and outdated regulations that may slow the clean energy transition.

There were repeated calls for amending the New Brunswick’s Electricity Act to provide more opportunities for new entities to invest and contribute to New Brunswick’s energy future, to offer more flexibility, foster competition, and reduce overall risks to a reliable, affordable clean energy system(s). Many emphasized a clear desire for long-term, stable policies that extend beyond government election cycles to support sustained progress in clean energy development.

There was also a view that implementing policies to encourage market competition while safeguarding consumer protections might be valuable.

## **2. Trust and Confidence**

### **Transparency & Open Communication**

We heard a desire for government agencies, energy utilities, and regulatory bodies to lead in promoting open, honest, and consistent communication. Many respondents mentioned that publishing accessible reports, providing regular updates, and explaining energy costs,



technical details, and policy changes in plain language would be beneficial. Some participants noted that independent convening bodies, such as consumer advocacy groups or an ombudsman organization, could help monitor and verify transparency efforts.

Additionally, there was a call to utilize media outlets and industry stakeholders might play an important role in amplifying accurate information and ensuring consistent messaging reaches the public to help counter misinformation. We also heard a desire for an independent mechanism to enhance transparency and accountability.

### **Community Engagement & Education**

Many engaged participants expressed a desire to see provincial and municipal governments, in partnership with energy providers and educational institutions, to support the enhancement of public education on energy literacy. Respondents noted that incorporating more energy-related content into curricula at schools, colleges, and universities could help raise awareness, while community organizations and nonprofits might bridge the knowledge gap through public forums, facility tours, and awareness campaigns.

Additionally, there was a desire for early engagement with communities during energy project planning processes, ensuring that public input is incorporated from the outset rather than presenting communities with predetermined plans.

Finally, there was a call to focus on the sharing of success stories to help build momentum for the energy transition. Respondents mentioned that showcasing demonstrable wins through open forums, conferences, and other engagement sessions are important efforts.

### **Indigenous Inclusion & Collaborative Approaches**

Many participants expressed value in Indigenous inclusion in energy projects including Indigenous leadership roles. There was a call for increased collaboration to establish formal agreements that foster enduring partnerships.

Additionally, research institutions and advocacy groups were seen as potentially playing an important role in facilitating cross-sector collaborations that integrate Indigenous perspectives into policy development.

### **Combating Misinformation**

What we heard was that many feel there is value in different stakeholders working together to combat misinformation by sharing fact-based communication. Respondents noted the potential benefit of a centralized, publicly accessible hub providing trusted data on energy usage, policies, costs, and transition strategies.

There was also a suggestion that various actors might play a role in addressing misinformation by flagging false claims and promoting verified information. Additionally, some expressed that an independent review body could help fact-check energy-related statements. Finally, there was a call for including independent experts in legislative hearings and policy development to support balanced, research-driven decision-making.

### **3. Workforce Attraction and Retention**

#### **Early Youth Engagement and Education**

We heard that many believe it's important to introduce energy opportunities to youth as early as possible—even before middle school—to spark interest in the clean energy sector and prepare the next generation for future roles. Respondents suggested that early intervention through age-appropriate curricula and outreach programs, developed collaboratively by educators and community groups, could be key. There was interest in increased collaboration between Indigenous communities and educational institutions to enhance education and job training in the energy sector. Respondents expressed that such partnerships could focus on creating tailored programs and capacity-building initiatives that reflect Indigenous knowledge and address local needs, with a proactive and supportive approach from all involved.

Additionally, there was a strong sentiment that an optimistic, forward-looking narrative plays a crucial role in building capacity and retaining talent in the energy sector. Many noted that promoting job opportunities, sharing success stories, and cultivating a positive narrative around the energy transition can inspire confidence and attract skilled workers. In so doing, this is underscoring the need for communication strategies that resonate with diverse audiences and foster a bright future for the industry.

#### **Improving Workforce Compensation and Conditions**

Respondents noted that competitive wages and improved working conditions are seen as critical components in the transition—especially when compared to opportunities in other regions. Many wish to address low wages, review overtime policies, and challenges of the housing shortage as key factors influencing worker retention. There was a strong call for collaborative efforts among various stakeholders to advocate for wage increases, update labor policies, and invest in affordable housing for energy sector workers.

Finally, respondents emphasized the importance of addressing worker credentials to facilitate greater workforce mobility between provinces.

## **Enhancing Clarity on Future Job Opportunities**

We heard that there is need for clearer communication about the job prospects emerging from the energy transition. Respondents emphasized the importance of providing a clear vision of where and how jobs will be created, noting that such clarity is essential for attracting and retaining young talent.

Many suggested that developing and sharing detailed roadmaps outlining career pathways in the renewable energy sector could help ensure that the workforce is prepared for future opportunities.

## **Workforce Development and Education**

We heard a strong desire for a comprehensive strategy to build a robust clean energy workforce. Many respondents noted that this strategy should encompass career and technical training across all educational levels, as well as early engagement initiatives in schools. There was a sentiment that closer collaboration between education providers and industry leaders could help integrate energy literacy and career exploration into curricula.

Some also mentioned the potential benefits of developing shorter courses and micro-credential programs to lower financial and time barriers for underrepresented groups, including newcomers and women.

Additionally, feedback highlighted the importance of support measures such as subsidies, bursaries, and retraining programs to assist workers transitioning from traditional sectors, as well as the value of partnerships that increase apprenticeship opportunities to upskill local talent for sustainable, well-paying jobs in the evolving clean energy sector.

Many respondents expressed that establishing mentorship schemes and nuanced apprenticeship opportunities could enhance hands-on learning and help workers upskill and retrain, especially those transitioning from other sectors. There was also a call for supportive measures to ensure the workforce is well prepared for new technologies, including emerging digital tools and AI.

## **4. Economic Development and Energy**

### **Energy Production and Infrastructure**

What we heard was that many feel affordable, stable, and reliable energy is essential for a thriving economy. Numerous comments emphasized the importance of expanding renewable energy sources—such as wind, solar, and battery storage—while modernizing

grid capabilities and exploring decentralized models. There was a sense that leadership from key stakeholders, in collaboration with local communities, could help ensure that new projects are both economically and environmentally sustainable, with long-term impacts including decommissioning costs are managed responsibly.

### **Economic Growth and Investment**

Many engaged participants expressed that they believe increasing energy production and efficiency could attract investment, create export opportunities, and enhance competitiveness.

There was a call for a unified message that communicates the link between clean energy investments with local economic growth. A desire for increased support for streamlining funding processes, tax incentives offerings, and fostering an environment where innovative energy solutions can be validated locally and scaled globally.

An additional desire for fostering innovation through support for startups, research initiatives, and technology centers in clean energy was expressed. Many expressed that investing in new products and services to validate innovative solutions—both locally and internationally—could bring significant benefits. Respondents also mentioned the potential of exploring advanced technologies, such as decentralized grids, micro-generation, and hybrid energy systems, to drive economic and environmental gains.

### **Policy, Regulation, and Strategic Planning**

There is a strong desire for a clear, long-term strategy that reduces administrative hurdles and establishes stable, predictable frameworks that encourage both private and public investments. There was also a sentiment that strong leadership in developing comprehensive plans to align policies and create a regulatory landscape supportive of innovation—while balancing traditional energy sources with new renewable technologies—would be highly beneficial.

Coupled with this strategy, respondents hope for a strategic communication plan that reduces regulatory uncertainty and shares the economic and environmental benefits of the clean energy transition. Respondents noted that consistent messaging and coordinated efforts could build public trust and help ensure that the overall energy strategy is both inclusive and forward-thinking.

### **Community Involvement and Local Benefits**

We heard that ensuring energy projects bring tangible benefits to local communities is very important. Many respondents expressed that promoting community energy projects,

implementing home energy audits, and encouraging participation from local suppliers could contribute to this goal.

There was also a strong sense that involving local communities in project planning and decision-making could help align energy development with local needs and keep the generated wealth within the community, ultimately driving broad-based economic growth and a more inclusive energy transition.

## **Other:**

### **Green Energy Preference and Fossil Fuel Phase-Out**

From a few respondents, there is a clear preference for renewable, green energy sources over forms of cleaner energy that include nuclear, natural gas, and biomass. There were calls for New Brunswick to utilize Natural Gas resources and counter responses that prefer energy strategies that aim to phase out fossil fuels entirely and prioritize technologies that produce the lowest emissions.

There was also a sense that policies excluding fossil fuels and encouraging investments in wind, solar, and other renewable projects could be beneficial. Additionally, many expressed the view that long-term plans should be aligned with a renewable future.

### **Innovation, Technology Adoption, and Storage Solutions**

What we heard was that many are calling for an acceleration in the adoption of new technologies to enhance energy storage and distribution. Respondents mentioned exploring options like long-duration storage—such as iron-air batteries, compressed air systems, thermal mass storage, and hydrogen for seasonal storage—as well as refurbishing decommissioned hydro stations and exploring tidal and geothermal opportunities.

Many expressed a desire for collaborative efforts among various stakeholders, supported by appropriate funding, to help validate these innovative solutions locally and create opportunities for broader application.

We heard favor of distributed generation and local energy projects as responses spoke to the great potential for empowering communities and boosting economic development. Respondents noted that decentralized systems, district heating, and local energy audits could help ensure that communities directly benefit from renewable projects.

There was a sense that collaborative efforts in designing and implementing these projects might prevent communities from shouldering decommissioning costs and help keep economic gains—such as lower energy bills and job creation—within the local area.

### **Behavioral Change and Public Engagement**

We heard that many feel technological change alone is not enough without a shift in public behavior and mindset. Respondents noted that a broad, movement-style campaign could help foster a sense of shared responsibility for climate change and energy efficiency.

Many expressed that public education initiatives, open houses, and demonstrations of successful projects might play a key role in overcoming skepticism and accelerating the transition.