A Climate Resilient Essex County

Year One Update

OVERVIEW

One year ago, Essex County Community Foundation (ECCF) launched an ambitious commitment: a five-year, $4 million investment to help build a more climate-resilient Essex County.

Our belief was simple, and it remains at the heart of our work today. The complex challenges created by climate change cannot be solved by individual organizations working in isolation. Lasting solutions require partners from across sectors working together, sharing knowledge, aligning resources and investing in what works. That is the essence of ECCF's systems philanthropy approach.

A STRONG FIRST YEAR

During our first year, we've built the foundation for long-term regional impact.

Through research with Tufts University and hundreds of conversations with residents, municipalities, nonprofits, businesses and community leaders, we confirmed both the urgency of climate risks and the opportunity to work differently. Rather than creating new programs, we focused on connecting and accelerating the remarkable work already underway.

Today:

- **400+ organizations** have joined ECCF's Climate Coalition.
- Communities across Essex County are collaborating on regional solutions to address extreme heat, flooding, clean energy and climate education.
- ECCF has begun deploying resources that strengthen partnerships and help successful local models grow across the county.

CASE STUDY 1

HELPING FAMILIES ACCESS CLEAN ENERGY

Partner: Nectar Community Investments

Many Essex County homeowners want to lower their energy costs and improve their homes but face barriers such as aging housing stock, limited access to affordable financing, or the need for repairs before clean energy upgrades can be installed.

Through ECCF's partnership with Nectar Community Investments, a community-based financial institution, families are gaining access to flexible financing, technical assistance and project management for weatherization, heat pumps and solar improvements. This community-based approach makes the clean energy transition more accessible while reducing utility costs, improving housing quality and strengthening household financial stability.

This work demonstrates how climate resilience can also advance housing, health and economic opportunity.

CASE STUDY 2

PREPARING COMMUNITIES BEFORE DISASTER STRIKES

Partner: TownGreen

Flooding and severe storms do not stop at municipal boundaries. Through our partnership with TownGreen, a climate-based nonprofit focused on regional preparedness, Cape Ann communities are building resilience by working together before emergencies occur.

Local leaders are coordinating planning, sharing resources and building stronger communication across municipalities to improve resilience before the next major storm. By investing in regional collaboration rather than isolated responses, communities are better prepared to protect residents, infrastructure and natural resources when disasters occur.

This is systems change in practice — building capacity across an entire region instead of solving problems one community at a time.

COLLABORATION MATTERS

In addition to the case studies, **collaborative and innovative work is underway** in several areas, including:

- **Greening our communities and strengthening grassroots organizations** in cities such as Lynn, Gloucester and Lawrence.
- **Expanding regional climate literacy,** with programming expected to reach 1,000 students by 2027.
- **Launching a Local Impact Pool** to make place-based investments in energy transition and climate solutions.
- **Prototyping geothermal investments** in Salem.
- **Developing weatherization programs for municipal utilities** that do not participate in Mass Save.

ESSEX COUNTY IS A LEADER

Essex County is helping lead the way on regional climate action, enabling communities, institutions and partners to accelerate the transition to a more resilient and sustainable region. We were proud to participate in Boston's inaugural Climate Week, play an active role in the National Community Foundation Climate Coalition and support organizations such as Climate Beacon in expanding their reach and impact across Essex County.

LOOKING AHEAD

The first year has reinforced what we believed from the beginning: **lasting change happens when communities work together.**

As we enter year two, we will continue growing the coalition, investing in collaborative solutions and expanding successful models throughout Essex County. Together, we are creating a regional approach to climate resilience that is becoming a model for communities across Massachusetts.

Collaboration is making it possible for ECCF to convene partners, align investments and help our communities build a stronger, more resilient future — together.