

Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grants (EECBG)

Competitive Local Government Sub-Grants

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

RFP Correction: On page 12 of the RFP, under “Federal Funds Questionnaire”, where it asks “Is there any reason you cannot accept federal funds-for example, project already uses a federal funding source”. There is **not** a restriction for this grant on using other federal funds towards the project.

Additional information required by EECBG Applicants for Street Lighting Category:

We are asking all applicants in this category to address the following issue in their Comprehensive Application. This should be included in addition to the other Comprehensive Application requirements.

In most cases, the fixtures used for street lighting are owned by the utility. As a result, the tariff charge for street lighting service from a utility includes both an energy charge for the estimated kWh used by a street light and a charge for the depreciation of the fixture and the anticipated maintenance requirements. Changing out these fixtures before the end of their useful life could leave the utility with an unamortized cost for those fixtures. As a result, a utility may require a customer proposing to remove fixtures pay all or part of that balance. We encourage applicants to contact their utility to discuss this issue (if the street lights are owned by the utility) and provide a discussion of how this may be resolved in their proposal. Applicants should note whether there will likely be a charge by the utility and the amount of the charge if known. If the street lights are not owned by the utility, but are owned by the town, simply state that in your application.

All applicants in this category should also include an estimate of expected annual energy savings (kWh) and cost savings.

Davis Bacon

- ***If the EECBG funds are just a small portion of a larger project, do Davis-Bacon requirements need to be applied to the entire project?***

Davis-Bacon applies to all parts of the proposed project (both match and federal funds). For example, if you are completing a \$100,000 project and EECBG funds are being used for \$50,000 of the costs and the rest is included as match, Davis Bacon would apply to the entire \$100,000 project.

- ***Are the Davis-Bacon wage rates a minimum requirement?***

Yes.

- ***Do Davis-Bacon wage rates apply to in-kind donations, such as personnel? What rate should be used for in-kind time donation?***

Davis-Bacon wage rates only apply to wages associated with construction. So the applicants in-kind time would not have to follow Davis-Bacon unless they were doing construction. Then they would have to follow Davis-Bacon requirements.

Procurement/Bid/Subcontractor Questions

- ***Is there a process that must be used for procuring equipment and services if awarded a grant?***

Yes, when procuring equipment and services price or rate quotations need to be obtained from an adequate number of qualified sources.

Additionally, applicants must include its selection procedures for procurement transactions in their Comprehensive Application. Grantees will also need to maintain records regarding the procurement process (such as copies of the quotes received).

- ***Can we do a no-bid contract if we have already contracted someone to design a unique system for our web-based control system?***

You must at minimum follow the process described above unless one of the following circumstances applies:

- The item is available only from a single source;
- The public exigency or emergency for the requirement will not permit a delay resulting from obtaining price or rate quotations;
- After solicitation of a number of sources, competition is determined inadequate.

- ***The application asks you to list contractors. What if you don't have a contractor yet?***

If an applicant hasn't yet selected sub contractors they should list all the parts of the projects that will be subcontracted out, whether they will be selected on a bid process, and what qualifications they will require for the work.

- ***Is a competitive bid process required for hiring sub contractors?***

No, see above

Change in project scope

- ***Can you change the nature of the project in the comprehensive application, if recent audit results show more energy savings?***

Yes, if an audit shows more energy savings for other measures than initially identified in your Initial Application you can change the scope of the project based on those recommendations.

- ***If bids come in below the estimated cost used for the Initial Application for energy efficiency retrofits can additional efficiency measures not originally included be added?***

Yes, if based on an energy audit you can change/expand the scope of the project based on those recommendations as long as you don't increase the total requested amount by more than 5% from the original amount requested.

- ***Can the scope of the project be modified for the Comprehensive Application based on revised costs, keeping the grant amount the same (for example, if you figured to replace 100 light fixtures but the price came in higher than anticipated could you reduce it to 90 and keep the same match and total cost?)***

Yes, but the applicant should describe the proposed change from the Initial Application and the reasons for the change, such as a higher than originally anticipated cost.

- ***After grant award, if costs increase (based on actual bid amounts) can the scope be modified and keep the same grant, contribution and total cost?***

The Grantee must obtain prior written approval for changes of substance in the project scope of work from the Grant Administrator.

- ***What if your project has changed and you need to increase energy consumption, but will use energy efficient measures, e.g., you are replacing lighting, but will also be adding lighting or you intended to replace a two-door refrigerator but realize you now need a 3 door refrigerator?***

We would recommend you contact Efficiency Vermont to receive direction on this or other non-typical project questions about energy efficiency, you can reach Efficiency Vermont toll free at 888-921-5990 for assistance.

Budget Questions

- ***Can a grant amount higher than what was in the initial application be applied for in the final application based on new estimates or bid amounts?***

Yes, but the total requested amount cannot be increased by more than 5% from the original amount requested.

- ***Can someone request less money in the Comprehensive Application than in the initial application?***

Yes.

- ***Can you explain in-kind match? Can consultants used be in the in-kind match?***

For this grant solicitation, applicants' time/labor committed to the project is considered in-kind match. Subcontractors/third party donated labor/services, equipment, and materials would also be considered in-kind match.

- ***Can you count volunteer time, such as a school board member, towards your match? If so, at what rate?***

Yes, the following should be used for Valuation of volunteer services:

Unpaid services provided to a grantee or subgrantee by individuals will be valued at rates consistent with those ordinarily paid for similar work in the grantee's or subgrantee's organization. If the grantee or subgrantee does not have employees performing similar work, the rates will be consistent with those ordinarily paid by other employers for similar work in the same labor market. In either case, a reasonable amount for fringe benefits may be included in the valuation.

- ***Most local governments vote on their budget on town meeting day. They cannot simply allocate funds to match EECBG money without first putting it in their budget and allowing the townspeople to vote on the matter. How can this be resolved?***

If a town has pending match dollars that need to be voted on they can include it in the budget and state that it's pending with a vote required by town residents in March.

Energy Audit/Design Questions

- ***Can an engineer estimate savings instead of doing a whole building audit?***

An audit is recommended so there is documentation that the measures that are being chosen to implement will result in the most energy savings.

- ***If a town applies to do energy efficiency retrofits, can they include the cost of the audit in their budget? (ie, is it a reimbursable expense?)***

No. The only eligible items for funding are as listed under the Energy Efficiency Retrofit category (installation of insulation; installation of efficient lighting; heating, venting, and air conditioning (HVAC) and high efficiency shower/faucet upgrades; weather sealing; the purchase and installation of ENERGY STAR appliances (including boilers and furnaces); installation of solar powered or conventional garbage compactors with improved efficiency; and replacement of windows and doors).

- ***How recent should the energy audit be?***

Generally, an energy audit is good until the condition or use of the building changes from what was evaluated during the audit. Examples of changes that warrant a new audit are: new windows or doors, added insulation or sealed air leaks, closed existing or opened new heated spaces within the building, temperature settings, hours of use, heating/cooling system replacements, lighting upgrades, etc.

- ***What if an applicant can't complete an energy audit prior to the application deadline?***

As stated in the RFP, energy audits are not required, but applicants may receive preferential consideration if an energy audit has been completed. If an applicant did not complete an audit they may want to include an explanation of why (costs, timing, etc.) If an audit has been scheduled or planned but not yet completed applicants should indicate that in their application.

- ***If you need to have engineering or design work ahead of time, can you include this design work in the project budget?***

No.

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

- ***In regards to the NEPA Certification, will there be an environmental review? What are the environmental requirements that will have to be met?***

We do not anticipate additional NEPA review. The RFP was designed to meet NEPA Compliance Guidance issued by the U.S. Department of Energy to allow all projects funded under our RFP to receive categorical exclusion from additional NEPA review. Applicants will need to certify that the project will meet the requirements as stated in the NEPA Compliance Form in Appendix C of the RFP.

Waste Management Plans

- ***What needs to be included in our waste management plan that needs to be submitted in the Comprehensive Application?***

Waste Management Plans should conform to the State's waste management hierarchy: reduce, reuse, recycle, then dispose of what remains. The plan, at a minimum, should contain the following information:

1. Type(s) and estimated volume(s) of waste that the project proponent anticipates will be generated.
2. The disposal path for each waste stream (e.g., landfill disposal, recycling, reuse).

Waste types will vary by project. Examples of types of waste are asphalt debris, glass, mercury-containing fluorescent lights, scrap metal, paper, asbestos, and lead paint chips.

General information about the management of construction and demolition wastes can be obtained from the VT Agency of Natural Resources, Waste Management Division website: <http://www.anr.state.vt.us/dec/wastediv/recycling/CandD.htm> A recycling markets directory, and an "Act 250" waste management plan template that may be a good starting point for your project are also available at this site.

For information about "special" and hazardous wastes, such as asbestos, mercury-containing fluorescent lights, lead based paint, and PCB containing ballasts, call the Waste Management Division at (802) 241-2481.

VT Solid Waste Management Districts are responsible for management of wastes in their member communities, and are the best source of "what do I do with...?" information. A listing of Districts can be found here: <http://www.anr.state.vt.us/dec/wastediv/solid/swmdlist.htm>

The waste management plans need not contain information about the particular disposal company or recycler.

Historical Preservation Questions

- ***For retrofit projects involving buildings that are less than 50 years old does the town need to submit anything to the SHPO? (for example a letter stating their project doesn't impact a historic resource because the building isn't 50 years old).***

If the building is less than 50 years old then the town does not need to submit anything to the SHPO.

- ***If only part of your building is more than 50 years old and if the work to be done is on the newer part, do you still have to go through historic preservation?***

You would need to contact the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation to get an answer on this at: (802) 828-3211

- ***If you are just changing lights and your building is a Historical site, do you need an approval letter?***

For the Energy Efficiency Retrofit category, the installation of efficient lighting in a historic building does not require review by the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation. Projects in this category that do require review are the installation of insulation; heating, venting and air conditioning (HVAC) upgrades; and replacement of windows and doors.

- ***If you can't get a 106 Historical Preservation Act consultant report by 2/2/2010, will they still review the report?***

Contact the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation at (802) 828-3211 to inform them of the delay and get the report in as soon as you can, they have said they will be flexible on the deadline.

Efficiency Vermont/Efficiency Questions

- ***What price per gallon of oil should we use when calculating fuel savings?***
Applicants should use their average annual cost per gallon for heating fuels based on recent pricing. If that information is not available, the Department of Public Service posts a document of average prices by fuel type. It can be found at: <http://publicservice.vermont.gov/pub/vt-fuel-price-report.html>

- ***How can we estimate savings from insulation?***

Although an audit is not required, it is highly recommended and applicants may receive preferential consideration if an energy audit has been completed. An energy audit should include these estimates. See Appendix D of the RFP for guidelines on energy audits. If an audit was not completed, applicants must submit justification for proposed measures and cost and energy savings estimates. Applicants can contact Efficiency Vermont to see if they can provide direction on estimates.

A listing of auditors is available on the Marketplace section of the Efficiency Vermont website at:

<http://www.encyvermont.com/pages/Business/Marketplace/>.

- ***Is there a square footage limit when using the Efficiency Vermont prescriptive forms?***

Yes. 10,000 square feet. Generally projects impacting over 10,000 square feet need to be processed on a custom basis. Efficiency Vermont is making an exception on this rule for Schools seeking the commercial boiler and furnace rebate. If there any questions on the prescriptive forms call Efficiency Vermont at 888-921-5990 ext. 1003.

- ***Is there a list of American made light fixtures, boilers, etc. for this grant and eligible for the Efficiency Vermont rebate?***

Efficiency Vermont recommends working with your vendor/contractor to identify qualifying equipment since they have the most current and accurate info about material sources.

- ***When and how do we receive the incentive rebates from Efficiency Vermont?***

Applicants wishing to incorporate Efficiency Vermont incentives into their application need to submit energy savings estimates, cost estimates and scope of work to EVT, allowing a week for review and determination of incentive amount. For prescriptive measures, a rebate check will be issued upon verification of measure installation. For custom projects, an incentive agreement will be issued defining the measures and energy savings determined to be cost effective, and the amount of incentive offered. When the custom measures have been installed and verified by Efficiency Vermont, the incentive check will be issued.

- ***Are there rebates for motion sensors?***

Efficiency Vermont provides rebates for motion sensors. For information about rebates offered on lighting system components, please refer to the Rebate Center on the Efficiency Vermont website at: www.encyvermont.com

- ***When calculating incentives are you calculating savings from the fixture, lamp or both?***

Both

Misc Questions

- ***When will grants be awarded?***

March, 2010. Grant agreements should be in place by May, 2010.

- ***Do you need to have paid a contractor to receive payment from this program or can you forward invoices prior to payment along with the request for payment?***

Yes, payments will be made on a reimbursement basis only.

- ***Are grant funds paid at the completion of the project? How? Is there a special form to request funds?***

Funds are paid on a reimbursement basis with the submittal of invoices and supporting documentation. Invoices can be submitted on a monthly basis.

- ***How long to we have to expend funds? Will there be any extensions if the work cannot be done this summer?***

Grant terms will be for one year from the award date, all funds must be expended in that grant period. Extensions may be granted on a case-by-case basis.

- ***Is there an advantage for applicants, which list projects as ready to start this summer?***

As stated in the RFP the “ability to start the project immediately and complete quickly” is included in the Selection Criteria.

- ***Is there any set distribution of the \$4.8MM in the different categories?***

We don't have any predefined amounts that will be allocated to each category.

- ***What does it mean in the RFP where it states that “renewable energy installations and energy efficiency retrofits applicants must certify that the building has met required state energy codes?” Does this mean my building needs to be brought up to existing codes?***

The commercial codes are effective as of January 1, 2007. If the building was constructed after that date (or if there were additions made to the building) there should be a Commercial Building Energy Standard Certificate showing that the building met the state energy code. We are not expecting that buildings built previous to January 1, 2007 are brought up to the current code. Additional information on the Commercial Building Energy Standards are available at: http://publicservice.vermont.gov/energy/ee_commstandards.html

- ***Do you need an actual resume for all school personnel working on this project or will a description of qualifications be ok?***

A description is OK, a resume is not required.

- ***Does each school/ applicant need a DUNS number?***

Each applicant will need a DUNS number. The VT Department of Education has informed me that currently all school districts already have a DUNS number.

- How do I handle different applications in different categories?***
Each application for each category should be a separate stand-alone application.
- Can entities apply for the maximum under the Financial Incentive Program (\$250,000) and still apply for another category?***
If entities submit a proposal for over \$100,000 up to the maximum amount in the Financial Incentive Program category, they can not submit a proposal for another category as they have exceeded the \$100,000 limit. They could submit a proposal for an amount under \$100,000 (for example \$50,000) under the Financial Incentive Program category and submit a second proposal for up to \$50,000 in another category.
- Are other efficiency measures not specifically listed under the “Energy Efficiency Retrofit” category (such as an air lock entrance) eligible for funding?***
No. Only the specific measures listed (installation of insulation; installation of efficient lighting; heating, venting, and air conditioning (HVAC) and high-efficiency shower/faucet upgrades; weather sealing; the purchase and installation of ENERGY STAR appliances (including boilers and furnaces); installation of solar powered or conventional garbage compactors with improved efficiency; and replacement of windows and doors) are eligible for funding.
- Are other renewable energy systems not specifically listed under the “Renewable Energy Technologies” category eligible for funding?***
No. Only the specific measures listed (Geothermal Heat Pumps (5.5-ton capacity or smaller horizontal closed loop); Biomass Boilers (3 MMBTUs or smaller with appropriate Best Available Control Technologies (BACT) installed and operated); and Combined Heat and Power Systems (boilers sized appropriately for the existing building in which they are located) are eligible for funding.
- Are other projects not specifically listed under the “Implementation of Transportation Programs” category eligible for funding?***
They may be, applicants should contact Kelly Launder at kelly.launder@state.vt.us or 802-828-4039 to check. Because these project category descriptions are developed by the U.S. Department of Energy we may have to check with them to see if a particular project would be eligible. So be aware it may take some time to get back to applicants on whether something not on the list would be eligible. Typically any project not involving construction or purchase of equipment would be eligible, but applicants should contact us for approval prior to applying. For example, the acquisition and use of route optimization software for school bus routes would be eligible.

- ***Would parking lot lights qualify for funding?***
Yes, they are eligible under the “Traffic Signals and Street Lighting” category if energy efficient lighting, such as light emitting diodes, are being installed.
- ***Would flood lights on a building qualify for funding?***
Yes, they are eligible under the “Traffic Signals and Street Lighting” category if existing flood lights are being replaced with energy efficient lighting, such as light emitting diodes.
- ***Would solar-powered LED parking lot lights qualify for funding?***
Under the Traffic Signal and Street Lighting category (which parking lot light projects would also fall under) the RFP states that “Entities may use grant funds to replace traffic signals and street lighting with energy efficient lighting technologies, including light emitting diodes; **and any other technology of equal or greater energy efficiency**”. If a solar powered LED parking lot light would meet this criteria it would be eligible.
- ***Do Clean Energy Assessment Districts fit within the "Financial Incentive Programs" category? Can you provide more information on this category?***

Yes I believe the Clean Energy Assessment Districts would fit in this category. The program categories were developed by DOE so I don't have a lot of specifics on what could be included. There is some information Financial Incentive Program category on the federal EECBG website at:
http://www.eecbg.energy.gov/solutioncenter/eligibleactivities/Activity_4.html