



REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
For an
Affordable Community Renewable Energy (ACRE)
Program

Date Issued: July 19, 2022

Questions Due by: August 5, 2022

Initial Proposal Due: August 30, 2022

Comprehensive Proposals Due: TBD

Vermont Public Service Department

112 State Street

Montpelier, Vermont 05620-2601

(802) 828-2811

TTY/TTD (VT): 1-800-734-8390

Internet: <http://publicservice.vermont.gov/>

OVERVIEW:

Vermont was awarded \$1.05 billion in Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (Recovery Funding) as part of the federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) of 2021. The Governor's Recovery Plan is focused on transparent investments in key infrastructure needs including housing, broadband, wastewater and sewer systems, climate change prevention and mitigation, and economic development. The explicit objective of this Plan is to provide long term economic recovery opportunities to communities statewide, with a focus on those regions or counties struggling the most with job losses and declines in demographics and income levels.

The Vermont Public Service Department was appropriated \$10 million of the Recovery Funding by the 2021 Vermont General Assembly "to be used on the Affordable Community-Scale Renewable Energy Program, consistent with the parameters of the Clean Energy Development Fund, to support the creation of renewable energy projects for Vermonters with low-income."¹

The Public Service Department (PSD or Department) requests proposals from distribution electric utilities for programs designed to make access to renewable energy and lower electric bills available to Vermonters with low-income.

Through this request for proposals (RFP), the PSD plans to award grants for programs that meet the following ARPA goals:

- Ameliorate the economic effects of the pandemic for those who were disproportionately affected by the pandemic through utility bill assistance
- Build a recovery that is strong, resilient, and increases equity with investments that promote growth and opportunity that have long-term effects

Programs eligible to be supported through this RFP shall (at a minimum):

1. Reduce the energy burden of low-income qualified Vermont utility customers/members through the reduction of electric utility expenses via on-bill credit(s) with minimal or no cost-shift to, or cross-subsidization by, other ratepayers.
2. Increase the installed capacity and generation of renewable energy in Vermont
3. Increase the availability of renewable energy to Vermonters with low-income

An applicant may only submit one proposal. All incentives must be for the benefit of Vermont residents that meet low-income guideline set by the PSD. Programs receiving grant awards must be operational and fully subscribed by no later than December 31, 2026.

¹ Act 74 of 2021 Section G.600

PROGRAM SUMMARY:

Award Description	
Recipient Eligibility:	Electric Distribution Utilities (DU) serving Vermont Residents; Organizations or agencies that work directly with DUs serving Vermont residents
Funding Type:	Program Grant
Total Amount available: <i>Maximum Grant:</i>	\$10,000,000 Grant amount to be determined by the pro-rata share of residential customers per participating DU with an adjustor for energy burden
Cost Share Required from grantees:	There is no cost share required grantees.
Eligible Projects/Technologies:	Renewable energy plants commissioned after July 1st 2021 that qualify as Renewable Energy Standard (RES) Tier II generators

SUBMITTING THE PROPOSAL

This grant program will include a two-step proposal process. An Initial Proposal will need to be submitted. Initial proposals will be reviewed, and selected proposals will be invited to submit a Comprehensive Proposal. Applicants will be notified of their selection before the end of September 2022. Being invited to submit a Comprehensive Proposal is not a confirmation of funding for a proposed program.

Initial Proposals must arrive at the Public Service Department (PSD) office by 4 p.m. on Friday, August 30, 2022. Proposals can be mailed or emailed. Applicants should allow adequate time to ensure receipt of their proposal by the deadline if mailing in a hard copy. Proposals received after this time and date will not be considered. Information for what information to be included in the Initial Proposal is below on page 4 of this RFP.

Any questions regarding this RFP should be submitted in writing, preferably by email, with the subject line, “ACRE RFP Question.” Questions are due by close of business, Friday, August 5, 2022 and will be answered comprehensively at the CEDF web site (http://publicservice.vermont.gov/renewable_energy/cedf) alongside this RFP by Tuesday, August 10, 2022.

Proposals and questions should be addressed to:

Christopher Heine
Clean Energy Program Specialist
Vermont Public Service Department
112 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05620-2601

Phone: (802) 828-8198
Email: christopher.heine@vermont.gov

INFORMATION FOR APPLICANTS

General Information: Only one proposal may be submitted per applicant. Funds cannot be used for generators that were commissioned before July 1, 2021

Term: The programs funded under this solicitation should be operational and fully subscribed on or before December 31, 2026.

Reporting: Reporting shall be required for all programs receiving an award. Reporting shall include quarterly progress reports as well as a final report submitted within three months of the grant end date or by January 30, 2026, whichever is comes first.

Quarterly reports and a final program report shall include expenditures made, specific activities, and results. Five percent of grant funds will be held back until the final report has been received and approved by the PSD

Cost Share: There is no cost-share requirement for awarded grants, however, if applicants can demonstrate additional funding from other sources that provides the opportunity for their program to have a greater impact, that cost-sharing should be indicated in the proposal. A letter of commitment identifying the cost share and its source of funding shall be included as part of the proposal. For example, if an applicant has received a commitment from an organization to provide funds that cover part of the cost for the program, the applicant must provide a copy of the commitment letter.

Exclusions: All programs and associated generators must be based in Vermont and benefit Vermonters with low-income. Funds cannot be used for generators producing non-renewable energy nor that have been commissioned before July 1, 2021.

Revisions: The PSD reserves the right to make necessary changes to this RFP at any time including termination of the program if in the best interest of the State.

INFORMATION REQUIRED FOR THE INITIAL PROPOSAL

All grant funds must be used for activities related to the program during the grant period. Programs that receive grant funding must be fully operational and fully subscribed on, or prior to, December 31, 2026.

Applicants must submit an electronic copy of the proposal to Christopher Heine the Vermont Public Service Department. Proposals must arrive prior to the deadline.

Initial Proposals will be reviewed and scored and those proposals that best meet the objectives for the program will be invited to submit a Comprehensive Proposal. See “Evaluation Criteria” on page 7-8 for scoring criteria.

Proposals should be prepared simply and economically, providing a straightforward, concise description of the applicant's ability to meet the requirements of the RFP. Fancy bindings, colored displays, promotional materials, and so forth are not desired. Emphasis should be on completeness and clarity of content.

Proposals should be no longer than 10 pages, with no less than a 12-point font and one-inch margins. Appendices (if included) **do not** count toward the 10-page limit. The Summary Page and all other information count towards the 10-page limit.

A. Summary Page - Proposals must include a one-page summary that includes the following four items:

1. **Program Title** - Provide a descriptive title for the program.
2. **Identification of Applicant Organization** - State the full name and address of the DU or organization responsible for the Proposal and list the main contact and their contact information.
3. **Program Description** that shall include, at a minimum:
 - **Budget** - Simple budget that includes any other possible funding for the program.
 - Duration of the program
 - Customers/members served
 - Customers/members expected monthly savings
4. **Signature** - Please sign to indicate you have read and acknowledge all of the conditions of this request for proposals, and that, to the best of your knowledge, the information you have supplied is accurate. Electronic signatures are allowed.

B. Program Narrative

Describe the program for which funding is requested. Provide a statement of to the program’s goal(s) and objectives. **Program Narratives shall:**

1. **Demonstrate how the program will meet the requirements of both ARPA and the statute² that allocated the funding.**
2. **Identify the generators to be utilized for the program, clearly stating the type, size, location and commissioning date, or expected commissioning date of the generator(s).**

²Vermont Act 74 of 2021 (H.439) - §G.600(5) (p. 219) – “...\$10, 000,000 is to be used on the Affordable Community-Scale Renewable Energy Program, consistent with the parameters of the Clean Energy Development Fund, to support the creation of renewable energy projects for Vermonters with low-income.”
Found at: <https://legislature.vermont.gov/Documents/2022/Docs/ACTS/ACT074/ACT074%20As%20Enacted.pdf>

3. **Explain plans for outreach for the proposed program:**
 - a. **How will outreach be directed to customers/members that have low-income?**
 - b. **How will there be additional outreach to those communities within Vermont that have traditionally been left out of the renewable energy transition? (Those communities that identify as BIPOC or are New Americans that are learning English, etc.)**
4. **Define/describe any partnerships between the proposed program and those from other DUs**
5. **Describe how savings are to be delivered to the members of the program and illustrate any tariff design needed for the implementation of the program**

C. Work Plan & Timeline

Describe in narrative form the plan for accomplishing the work required to create and deploy the proposed program. Include a description of any activities in support of the proposal that have already been completed or are in process.

Describe the plan for program oversight, quality assurance measures, and financial management, and which team member(s) will have these responsibilities.

Provide a timeline for the program development and implementation.

D. Budget & Budget Narrative

Using pro rata residential customer data provided in Appendix A, provide an estimated budget for the program that includes

1. Power procurement Costs
2. Credits (\$ value) to members of community renewable programs
3. Administrative costs for:
 - a. outreach and marketing
 - b. income verification
 - c. billing
 - d. other

E. Additional Information

Proposals must include information described in sections A-D above. In addition, proposals can include any other pertinent and important information.

METHOD OF AWARD

Awards will be made in the best interest of the State. All other considerations being equal, priority will be given first to programs serving regions or counties struggling the most with job

losses, declines in demographics and income levels. Priority will also be given to those programs developed in coordination with other planned infrastructure development for the greatest transformative impact. Qualitative determinations will be made regarding community need and community impacts. Scoring will not be numerical.

1. **Evaluation Criteria:** A selection committee will review, analyze and rank all submittals based on their response to the information requested. At a minimum, the selection process will include the following criteria in the evaluation of proposals. These criteria are not necessarily listed in order of importance:

- Need
- Population served
- Measurable results and evaluation
- Equity Impact
- Geographical Equity
- Opportunities for coordinated programs
- Program's leverage of other funds and coordination with other programs
- Energy cost savings to participating customers/members
- Program's potential for expansion/sustainability
- Community involvement and acceptance of the program

2. **Experience & Qualifications of applicant and sub-contractors (if known):**

- Knowledge and experience in the relevant program area, including successful experience with similar programs
- Demonstrated ability to implement programs on time, on budget, and to complete the reporting requirements

3. **Budget:**

- Budget line items and amounts are sufficiently described and justified to explain the necessity of each item
- Costs are reasonable and competitive

GENERAL TERMS AND CONDITIONS

1. Programs and associated generators funded through this RFP must comply with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. Funded work must not harm or destroy historic buildings or archeological sites that are eligible for or listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Some buildings that are over 50 years old are likely to meet National Register criteria. The Vermont Division for Historic Preservation can provide information on National Register status, appropriate treatments for improving energy

performance in historic buildings, and a list of preservation consultants who can assist applicants in planning their projects. Applicants may want to consult the Division's website at www.historicvermont.org

2. The PSD reserves the right to reject any and all proposals received as a result of this RFP for any reason, to waive minor irregularities in any proposals received, and to negotiate with any party in any manner deemed necessary to best serve the interests of the State.
3. The PSD shall not be responsible for any costs incurred by any party in preparation of any proposal submitted in response to this RFP.
4. The PSD reserves the right to amend or cancel this RFP at any time if the best interest of the State requires such action.
5. News releases pertaining to this RFP, grant award, or the program shall not be made without prior written approval from the PSD.
6. All parties submitting proposals shall be Equal Opportunity Employers. During the duration of the performance any grant agreement resulting from this RFP, the awardee shall comply with all federal, state and local laws respecting non-discrimination in employment.
7. After a grant agreement is executed, the PSD will reimburse the contractor(s) for actual work performed and expenses incurred up to the specified grant amount. Specific payment provisions will be arrived at upon mutual agreement of the parties. All payments will require the submission of an itemized billing of work performed to date in sufficient detail to justify payment. Final payment will require the submission of a final report.
8. Insurance:
 - a. Workers Compensation: With respect to all operations performed, the awardee shall carry workers' compensation insurance in accordance with the laws of the State of Vermont.
 - b. General Liability and Property Damage: With respect to all operations performed under the grant, the awardee shall carry general liability insurance having all major divisions of coverage including, but not limited to:
 - c. Premises - Operations
 - d. Products and Completed Operations
 - e. Personal Injury Liability
 - f. Contractual Liability
 - g. The policy shall be on an occurrence form and limits shall not be less than:
 - h. \$1,000,000 per Occurrence
 - i. \$1,000,000 General Aggregate
 - j. \$1,000,000 Products/Completed Operations Aggregate

- k. \$ 50,000 Fire/ Legal/Liability
 - l. *Automotive Liability*: The awardee shall carry automotive liability insurance covering all motor vehicles, including hired and non-owned coverage, used in connection with the Agreement. Limits of coverage shall not be less than: \$1,000,000 combined single limit.
 - m. **The awardee shall name the State of Vermont and its officers and employees as additional insureds for liability arising out of this Agreement.**
9. The PSD and the State assume no liability in any fashion with respect to this RFP or any matters related thereto. All prospective contractors and their subcontractors or successors, by their participation in the RFP process, shall indemnify, save and hold the State and its employees and agents free and harmless from all lawsuits, causes of action, debts, rights, judgments, claims, demands, damages, losses and expenses or whatsoever kind in law or equity, known and unknown, foreseen and unforeseen, arising from or out of this RFP and/or any subsequent acts related thereto, including but not limited to the recommendation of a contractor and any action brought by an unsuccessful applicant.
10. All grant awards are subject to the availability of funding.
11. All funding for contract awards will be federal American Recovery Plan Act (ARPA) funds and therefore all ARPA fund requirements and restrictions will apply

Appendix A

The table below is included for applicants for the purposes of producing an estimated budget and should not be understood to indicate the actual amount of funding to be granted upon award for accepted proposals for this program. The provided data will be adjusted based on an adjutor for energy burden that will be based on available energy-burden data. DU participation, or lack thereof, will also affect funding available to an individual DU.

Distribution Utility	Residential Customers *	% of Residential Customers in VT	"Share" of "\$10M" **
Barton Village, Inc	1,958	0.62%	\$ 60,688
City of Burlington Electric - (VT)	17,260	5.46%	\$ 534,973
Village of Enosburg Falls - (VT)	1,544	0.49%	\$ 47,856
Green Mountain Power Corp	222,599	70.40%	\$ 6,899,456
Town of Hardwick	4,025	1.27%	\$ 124,754
Village of Hyde Park - (VT)	1,191	0.38%	\$ 36,915
Village of Jacksonville - (VT)	656	0.21%	\$ 20,332
Village of Johnson - (VT)	805	0.25%	\$ 24,950
Village of Ludlow - (VT)	3,045	0.96%	\$ 94,379
Village of Lyndonville - (VT)	4,836	1.53%	\$ 149,891
Village of Morrisville - (VT)	3,551	1.12%	\$ 110,063
Village of Northfield - (VT)	1,620	0.51%	\$ 50,211
Village of Orleans - (VT)	575	0.18%	\$ 17,822
Village of Swanton - (VT)	3,289	1.04%	\$ 101,942
Vermont Electric Cooperative, Inc	34,880	11.03%	\$ 1,081,105
Washington Electric Coop - (VT)	10,941	3.46%	\$ 339,116
Town of Stowe- (VT)	3,405	1.08%	\$ 105,537

* Residential Customer Data from EIA Electric Utility Sales to Ultimate Customers 2019

** \$10M less estimated 2% for PSD Administration of ACRE Program