



REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
For a
Comprehensive Whole-home Clean Energy Assistance
Program

Date Issued: April 4, 2022

Questions Due by: April 22, 2022

Proposals Due: May 6, 2022

Vermont Public Service Department

112 State Street

Montpelier, Vermont 05620-2601

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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 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 Clean Energy Development Board (CEDB) was allocated \$5 million of the Recovery Funding appropriated to the Public Service Department by the 2021 Vermont General Assembly. The CEDB designed five programs with this funding that offers relief to households, schools, and small businesses that experienced financial or health impacts from the pandemic. This request for proposals (RFP) is for a program, intended to provide recovery that is equitable and assists low- and moderate-income households to support their economic opportunity and lower their energy costs. The program will be funded with \$1 million of federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds via contract with one or more organizations through this RFP.

The Public Service Department (PSD or Department) requests proposals to create and operate a residential comprehensive whole-home clean energy assistance program to benefit low-income residents of Vermont. The Program should be designed to be complimentary to, rather than competing with, existing weatherization and energy efficiency assistance programs, e.g., the Weatherization Assistance Program and incentive programs by Efficiency Vermont.

Through this RFP, the PSD plans to award one or more contracts for the design, development, implementation, and administration of a residential low- and moderate-income whole-home clean energy assistance program within the State of Vermont that (at a minimum):

- Improves the health and safety of dwellings for residents having low- to moderate-income
- Assists with household energy cost reduction through energy audits, thermal energy efficiency measures, woodstove change-outs for new EPA Certified wood or pellet stoves, or the installation of new high efficiency pellet stoves, pellet boilers/furnaces, and or cold climate heat-pumps.
- Assists households needing utility/energy improvements via home repair and upgrades of electrical service and heating systems in their homes.

Any program funded through this RFP should advance ARPA goals and objectives to:

- Fight the effects of the pandemic with support for families affected by the impacts to public health and the economy
- Build a recovery that is strong, resilient, and increases equity with investments that promote growth and opportunity that has long-term effects

The program(s) supported through this RFP should support the following goals through the following program objectives:

1. Support COVID recovery by providing assistance to Vermont households with low- and moderate-income
2. Maximize long-term home heating cost savings, indoor air-quality improvements, and home safety through repairs, upgrades, and safety improvements for the participating residents
3. Maximize the displacement of fossil fuel use for space heating
4. Decrease the particulate emissions and inefficient use of wood heat

An applicant may only submit one proposal, however an entity is allowed to be a sub-contractor on more than one proposal. Proposals must be for programs based in Vermont. All incentives must be for the benefit of Vermont residents that meet a low- and moderate-income guidelines set by the PSD. Programs receiving contract awards and the subcontractors (subrecipients) retained by the contractor for the program(s) must complete projects related to the program no later than December 31, 2026.

PROGRAM SUMMARY:

Award Description	
Recipient Income Eligibility:	Low-Income: $\leq 80\%$ Area Median Income (AMI) Moderate-Income: $\geq 120\%$ AMI
Funding Type:	Program Contract
Total Amount available: <i>Maximum Contract:</i> <i>Minimum Contract:</i>	\$1,000,000 \$1,000,000 \$100,000
Cost Share Required from recipients:	Low-Income – None Moderate-Income – To be included in proposal
Services Allowed:	Energy Audits Weatherization Projects Installations of clean heating technologies Home repairs related to: energy efficiency, energy and electric code compliance, and health & safety measures. Necessary Electric Service and Electric Panel Upgrades repairs and modifications related to electrification measures
Clean Heating Technologies Allowed:	Cold-Climate Heat Pumps (air or ground sourced) Heat Pump Hot Water Heaters Residential Pellet Fueled Heating Appliances (stoves, boilers, furnaces) that have: High efficiency ($\geq 73\%$ efficient for stoves and furnaces, $\geq 85\%$ for boilers) Low particulate emissions (≤ 2.0 grams per hour) EPA Certified cord wood stoves that have:

	1) High efficiency ($\geq 73\%$ efficient) 2) Low particulate emissions (≤ 2.0 grams per hour) On-Site Wood Pellet Storage Systems Other technologies that facilitate the transition away from fossil fuels to clean energy can be proposed

SUBMITTING THE APPLICATION

Proposals must arrive at the Public Service Department (PSD) office by 4 p.m. on Friday, May 6, 2022. Applicants should allow adequate time to ensure receipt of their proposal by the deadline. Proposals received after this time and date will not be considered.

The following documents must be delivered to the CEDF at the PSD:

1. An electronic copy, delivered by email
2. An original, signed hard copy may be sent additionally

Any questions regarding this RFP should be submitted in writing, preferably by email, with the subject line, "Comprehensive Whole-home Clean Energy Assistance RFP Question." Questions are due by close of business, Friday April 22, 2022 and will be answered comprehensively at the CEDF web site (http://publicservice.vermont.gov/renewable_energy/cedf) alongside this RFP by Tuesday, April 26, 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: While applicants may submit only one proposal, subcontractors can be included in more than one proposal. Funds cannot be used for projects that have already begun construction or for equipment purchases that have already been made.

Term: The program funded under this solicitation should be operational within three months of the contract execution and completed on or before December 31, 2026.

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

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

Programmatic Cost Share: If applicants can demonstrate any cost share as part of the program, that cost-sharing opportunity should be indicated in the application. A letter of commitment identifying the cost share and its source of funding shall be included as part of the application. 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. Preference will be given to programs that demonstrate the most grantee cost share.

Exclusions: All programs must be based in Vermont and for the benefit of Vermonters with low-to moderate-income as defined by the US Department of Treasury’s final rule for the ARPA funding. Funds cannot be used for projects that have already begun construction or for equipment purchases that have already been made or ordered.

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 FROM APPLICANTS

Proposed programs should promote the development and deployment of health, safety, clean energy, and efficiency measures as listed above in the [award description table]

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. Resumes, letters of support, and the Budget Worksheet, or appendixes **do not** count toward the 10-page limit. The Summary Page and all other information count towards the 10-page limit.

*A. **Summary Page** - Applicants 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 organization responsible for the proposal and list the main contact and their contact information.
3. **Program Description** that shall include, at a minimum:

- **Statement of Program** describing the program.
- **Population Served** including the description of how target populations/households will be identified and enrolled in the program, what geographical areas of the state the program will include.
- **Results** including a description of the measurable proposed impacts of the program, with performance measures that will be tracked and reported.
- **Evaluation** describing the data collection, analysis, and quality assurance measures you will use to assure ongoing, effective tracking of contract requirements and outcomes.
- **Equity Impact** describing how this program will help build a just, equitable and sustainable COVID-19 recovery and how disproportionate impacts of inequities are addressed.
- **Budget** including all proposed program revenues by funder and expenditures.
- **Special Considerations** describing any other information that might assist the State in its selection.

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.

B. Program Narrative

Describe the program for which funding is requested. Provide a statement of to the program’s goal(s) and objectives. Describe what the program will accomplish if successful. State why this program should receive PSD contract funding and whether the program would happen without PSD contract funding.

C. Personnel

Applicants should have demonstrable knowledge, skills, and experience as it relates to the required work of the proposal. Proposals should include a description of the applicant’s prior experience in all areas relevant to the proposed program. The proposal must identify all persons that will be employed in the proposed program by skill and qualifications. Identify key personnel by name and title and provide their prior experience (if resumes are included they **do not** count toward the 10-page limit). Subcontractors (if known) must be listed, including the firm name and address and contact person, and complete description of work to be subcontracted. Include descriptive information concerning subcontractor’s organization and abilities.

D. Work Plan & Timeline

Describe in narrative form the plan for accomplishing the work required to create and deploy the 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, financial management, and which team member(s) will have these responsibilities.

Provide a timeline for the program development and implementation.

E. Public Health, Economic, & Community Impact

Applicants should describe the specific public health, economic, long-term growth, and equity impacts to, as well as opportunities for, Vermonters with low- to moderate-income that the proposed program will create. This should be an expansion of the metrics listed on the summary page and can include other benefits including, but not limited to: jobs created; monetary value of the program to the recipients; health impacts on the local community; fossil fuel use reductions; thermal energy efficiency measures completed; fossil fuel to be displaced; and any other benefits.

F. Budget & Budget Narrative

Applicants must submit a detailed estimated budget range for administration and delivery of the Program and include narrative explanations. The PSD estimates that within the timeframe of the budget, \$1,000,000 of incentives would be award via the Program. The budget should indicate the administrative/program delivery costs for administrating the incentives.

The following cost elements should be included in each proposal:

- Personnel costs (position, \$ rate/hr.)
- Fringe Rate to be applied to the personnel costs
- Indirect Cost Rate
 - List all costs subject to the indirect cost rate
- Travel (include mileage rate, etc.)
- Supplies & Materials
- Sub-Contractors' costs
- Other (specify)

G. Additional Information

Proposals must include information described in sections A-G 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 that include projects in 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:

- Statement of Program

- Population Served
- Measurable Results and Evaluation
- Equity Impact
- Opportunities for Coordinated Projects
- Program Specific Considerations
- Municipal Match, if applicable
- Number of income-eligible Vermonters assisted
- Number of homes/buildings improved
- Program risks (e.g. securing matching funds) are acknowledged
- Program's complimentary coordination with other existing programs (e.g. Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP), Efficiency Vermont, etc.)
- Program's leverage of other programs, projects or funding
- Other specific considerations

2. Experience & Qualifications:

- Knowledge and experience in the relevant program area, including successful experience with similar programs
- Demonstrated ability to complete program on time, on budget, and to complete the reporting requirements
- Previous experience with state and/or federal contracts or grants

3. Budget:

- Budget line items and amounts are sufficiently described and justified to explain the necessity of each item
- Costs are reasonable and competitive
- Degree of financial leverage
- Amount of cost share included

GENERAL TERMS AND CONDITIONS

1. Projects funded through this RFP must comply with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. While energy improvements to historic buildings are greatly encouraged, they must be carefully planned to avoid unintended consequences. 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. Generally, thermal energy measures and residential stove and boiler/furnace upgrades will meet preservation guidelines. 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, contract 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 contract agreement resulting from this RFP, the awardee shall comply with all federal, state and local laws respecting non-discrimination in employment.
7. After a contract agreement is executed, the PSD will reimburse the contractor(s) for actual work performed and expenses incurred up to the specified contract 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. In most instances, the contract payments made under this program will be treated as taxable income by the IRS and the State of Vermont. It is the responsibility of the recipient of this contract payment to consult with their tax advisor to determine the correct treatment of this payment for Federal and State tax purposes.
9. Insurance:
 - a. Workers Compensation: With respect to all operations performed, the Party 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 contract, the Party 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 Party 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 Contractor shall name the State of Vermont and its officers and employees as additional insureds for liability arising out of this Agreement.**
10. 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.
11. All contract awards are subject to the availability of funding.
12. All funding for contract awards will be federal American Recovery Plan Act (ARPA) funds and therefore all ARPA fund requirements and restrictions will apply.