



## Request for Information

### Demonstration of Interest in Weatherization Workforce Development Program

RFI Post Date: 11/12/2021  
Responses Due: 12/20/2021  
Submit To: [afode@veic.org](mailto:afode@veic.org)

## Introduction

Efficiency Vermont, a statewide Energy Efficiency Utility operated by Vermont Energy Investment Corporation, is seeking input from organizations that are considering participation in the **Weatherization Workforce Development Program** ("the Program").

Efficiency Vermont seeks information about organization interest and participation in the Program, wherein participants shall be awarded funding by Efficiency Vermont in exchange for implementing weatherization workforce development programs to bring new entrants into Vermont's weatherization workforce in compliance with American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) requirements.

Responding to this request for information (RFI) is not a prerequisite for participation in the Program and does not commit an organization to applying in response to the upcoming Program request for proposals (RFP), though interested organizations are **strongly** encouraged to respond to the RFI.

## Background

### Vermont Energy Investment Corporation

Vermont Energy Investment Corporation (VEIC) is a mission-driven, nonprofit organization dedicated to reducing the economic and environmental costs of energy use. It carries out its mission, in part, by designing and implementing innovative energy efficiency and renewable energy programs. Founded in 1986, VEIC is nationally and internationally recognized for

advancing energy efficiency, energy conservation, and renewable energy programs and projects across the United States, Canada, and Europe. VEIC employs 280 professionals and is headquartered in Winooski, Vermont. It has offices also in Washington, DC, and Ohio. For additional information, please see: VEIC Website: [www.VEIC.org](http://www.VEIC.org)

VEIC is a **Just-labeled** organization, committing itself to corporate transparency on social justice and equity indicators. We've also adopted the **Social Vulnerability Index** across our entire organization to measure the impact our work has on underserved communities. With ongoing employee engagement in **social and energy justice principles**, justice and fairness are embedded in everything we do. We see opportunities everywhere to create new tools that can help us build the kind of company—and the kind of society—we want to see.

### **Efficiency Vermont**

Launched January 1, 2000, Efficiency Vermont helps ratepayers reduce energy costs, strengthen the local economy, and protect the environment by making homes and business energy efficient. Efficiency Vermont provides technical assistance, rebates, and other financial incentives to help Vermont households, businesses and other institutions—such as K-12 schools—reduce their energy costs with energy-efficient equipment, lighting, and approaches to construction and major renovation. Efficiency Vermont partners extensively with contractors, suppliers, and retailers of efficient products and services throughout the state.

VEIC operates Efficiency Vermont under an Order of Appointment issued by the Vermont Public Utility Commission. For additional information, please see the Efficiency Vermont website: [www.efficiencyvermont.com](http://www.efficiencyvermont.com).

## **Program Overview**

Efficiency Vermont is anticipating deploying \$1 million over 2022 and 2023 in support of bringing new entrants to the statewide weatherization workforce. This Request for Information (RFI) will be followed by a Request for Proposals for formal funding application. Responses to this RFI will be reviewed by Efficiency Vermont and the Vermont Department of Public Service to gather information about the level of interest in the Program and training organization ability to meet ARPA requirements, and will provide organizations an opportunity to offer reasonable input into potential Program design.

Proposed workforce development programs are encouraged to give priority to bringing new entrants into the weatherization workforce and to the Vermont Weatherization Installer training pathway, and to leverage the recommended training curriculum, certification, and training delivery framework outlined in the Vermont Weatherization Worker Training & Certification

Framework, in the **Weatherization Workforce Plan** where possible. This plan has identified five barriers to market entry, four of which are of particular interest to this RFI. These four barriers are:

1. A “four-year college-or-bust” mindset promoted to the state’s young people preparing to graduate from high school, and unclear career pathways in Vermont’s construction trades;
2. A shortage of workers in general – and specifically, a shortage of skilled workers willing to undertake weatherization projects under uncomfortable conditions (hot attics and damp crawlspaces, for example);
3. Wage competition with jobs requiring less-strenuous working conditions, and current low unemployment rates; and
4. A shortage of affordable housing for construction workers.

Program descriptions must be shown to be compliant with the guidelines of U.S. Treasury published as an Interim Final Rule on May 17, 2021<sup>1</sup> as may be amended, supplemented or finalized by the U.S. Treasury. Respondents are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the U.S. Treasury guidance on requirements for the use of ARPA funds, which is located online at: <https://home.treasury.gov/policy-issues/coronavirus/assistance-for-state-local-and-tribal-governments/state-and-local-fiscal-recovery-funds>.

Respondents should suggest program descriptions that meet the Interim Final Rule’s eligibility criteria under §35.6, *Eligible Uses*, subsection (b): *Responding to the public health emergency or its negative economic impacts*. Categories of workforce development under consideration in this RFI must demonstrate compliance with one or more subparts of this subsection 35.6(b), with the following subparts expected to be the primary eligible uses with which proposed workforce development programs might comply:<sup>2</sup>

- (4) *Assistance to unemployed workers.* Assistance, including job training, for individuals who want and are available for work, including those who have looked for work sometime in the past 12 months or who are employed part time but who want and are available for full-time work.
- (6) *Small businesses.* Assistance to small businesses, including loans, grants, in-kind assistance, technical assistance or other services, that responds to the negative economic impacts of the COVID-19 public health emergency.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2021/05/17/2021-10283/coronavirus-state-and-local-fiscal-recovery-funds>

<sup>2</sup> Respondents may propose program descriptions that they believe comply with other eligible uses if they provide an explanation demonstrating such compliance.

- (7) *Nonprofits*. Assistance to nonprofit organizations, including loans, grants, in-kind assistance, technical assistance or other services, that responds to the negative economic impacts of the COVID–19 public health emergency.
- (8) *Assistance to households*. Assistance programs, including cash assistance programs, that respond to the COVID–19 public health emergency.
- (12) *Disproportionately impacted populations and communities*. A program, service, or other assistance that is provided in a qualified census tract, that is provided to households and populations living in a qualified census tract, that is provided by a Tribal government, or that is provided to other households, businesses, or populations disproportionately impacted by the COVID–19 public health emergency.

In addition to complying with one or more of the Eligible Uses categories, proposed programs will need to comply with all other applicable requirements of the Interim Final Rule.

## Information Request

By submitting a response to this RFI, the respondent acknowledges that it is doing so voluntarily and without guarantee of future participation in the Program.

### Instructions for Respondents

Responses to this **Request for Information** must be delivered electronically to Efficiency Vermont by 5:00 pm E.S.T. on Monday, December 20, 2021. Please submit your response via email to [afode@veic.org](mailto:afode@veic.org) with **RFI Submittal for Weatherization Workforce Development Program** in the subject line.

All formats will be accepted; however, we encourage responses to be saved as either a Word document or PDF file and attached as such to the e-mail submission. Responses are limited to 10 pages, with no less than a 12-point font and one-inch margins.

For ease of review, we request that all responses adhere to the numbering protocol for questions as written below. Though not required, we request that respondents provide complete answers to all questions where possible. Complete information allows Efficiency Vermont to design the Program requirements to be of highest value.

### RFI Questions

1. Name and address of organization, including name and contact information for person submitting RFI response.
2. If selected to participate in the Program, how might this organization use the funds to bring new entrants into the Vermont weatherization workforce within the bounds of the eligible uses of this ARPA funding? Please provide as much detail as possible regarding

your organization's proposed use of the funds and a description of how it complies with one or more of the Interim Final Rule's Eligible Use categories (see the Program Overview section above for a description of the Eligible Use categories).

3. What level of funding does your organization anticipate requesting?

As a reminder, responses to this **Request for Information** must be delivered electronically to Efficiency Vermont by 5:00 pm E.S.T. on Monday, December 20, 2021. Please submit your response via email to [afode@veic.org](mailto:afode@veic.org) with **RFI Submittal for Weatherization Workforce Development Program** in the subject line.

All formats will be accepted; however, preference is for responses to be saved as either a Word document or PDF file, and attached as such to the e-mail submission.

**Limitation:** Efficiency Vermont will not pay any costs incurred by respondents in the preparation or submission of responses. This RFI does not commit Efficiency Vermont to issue an RFP or to award a contract if an RFP is issued. Efficiency Vermont reserves the right to cancel in part or in its entirety the RFI if deemed by Efficiency Vermont in its sole discretion to be in the best interest of Efficiency Vermont, the state of Vermont, or Vermont ratepayers.