

Project Abstract/Summary

The Vermont Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) aims to plan and launch a Weatherization Training Center to support Vermont's goals to diversify and grow the weatherization workforce to achieve the State's goal of weatherizing 120,000 homes by 2030. To achieve this goal, Vermont will need to rapidly grow a qualified workforce (5x) while also heeding Vermont's *Guiding Principles for a Just Transition*, as established by the State's Climate Council. Recruiting and training a qualified workforce is essential to delivering weatherization services which realize the energy savings intended. Currently, workers in the low-income Weatherization Assistance Program must travel several hours to NY at great expense and effort to access training, which inhibits the ability to diversify and grow the workforce at the pace required.

Growing and diversifying the workforce will require new strategies and supports for training and job placement, and a Vermont Training Center also can attract and retain additional workers to participate in scaling up weatherization. OEO, which administers Vermont's low income Weatherization Assistance Program, will partner with the Vermont Energy Investment Corporation, Vermont Works for Women, Vermont Technical College, ReSOURCE, Vermont Adult Learning and Vermont's Adult Career & Technical Education Centers to deliver an inclusive community engagement process, a DEI-informed training center design, a sustainable business plan and launch a Weatherization Training Center that effectively supports BIPOC, women, opportunity youth, and other underrepresented communities in joining the workforce.

Vermont's Weatherization Training Center will leverage existing expertise and resources of Project Partners to better coordinate and enhance training efforts to support bringing weatherization to scale. This work will build on the 2021 *Vermont Weatherization Workforce Plan* to coordinate the delivery of standardized statewide building science curriculum through both field-based and facility-based training throughout Vermont. This curriculum lays the groundwork for a career pathway in energy efficiency construction and for certification that is broadly recognized, transparent, and portable.

The proposed plan recognizes that commitment to equity applies to both planning and implementation processes and requires that currently underserved communities have a meaningful opportunity to shape the Training Center. Attention to procedural equity requires a thoughtful, deliberative, and inclusive planning process, and thus year one will be focused on engaging communities in the development of a governance structure, center design and business plan. Even as planning is undertaken, more than \$3m in one-time funding has been mobilized to support weatherization training programs to target new workers, provide hands-on learning opportunities, and offer training in underserved markets. This project will look to leverage and learn from these efforts, while working towards a sustainable, lasting infrastructure. Year two and three will support the start-up and launch of the Training Center. DOE E&I Funds will support planning and start-up costs, including capital and equipment needs.

Vermont's planning process and training center model will offer an innovative path towards workforce diversity and inclusion that is lacking in the Weatherization field nationally. By the end of the project period, more than 1,100 people will be trained, earning one or more industry-recognized credentials; at least 40% will be from underrepresented groups in the industry, and at least 70% of all new trainees will be supported with job placement.