

## **School Indoor Air Quality Emergency Grant Program**

The Program's goal would be to make immediate improvements to publicly funded K-12 Schools' indoor air quality to improve health safety in schools in response to the COVID-19 health threat. The program will work with public schools across Vermont to upgrade heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems in accordance with COVID-19-specific guidelines from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the American Society of Heating, Refrigeration, & Air Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE).

All publicly funded school districts are eligible. The total number of schools participating in the initiative will be based on school interest in the program and available funds. This grant program is focused on immediate improvements to HVAC and is not expected to cover all COVID-19 preparation needs for the participating schools.

### **Grant Program Overview:**

#### **Work Scope:**

- 1) A list of pre-approved measures for improving indoor air quality in response to concerns of COVID-19 spread will be made available to K-12 schools. Efficiency Vermont will create the measures list in consultation with engineers and health experts, and with reference to the COVID-19-specific guidance for schools put out by the CDC and ASHRAE.
  - a) The pre-approved measures will include, but will not be limited to, improvements related to ventilation, air filtration, and relative humidity. The list will cover the most common improvements most schools will need to make but will not limit schools from implementing site-specific improvements based on unique systems and needs. The measures will be written such that they can be applied appropriately to each school's mechanical systems' design and conditions, and occupancy and space-use requirements.
  - b) Free-standing, independent room filtration and ventilation systems will be included as a pre-approved potential measure, in order to support schools A) without adequate existing ventilation/filtration systems, or B) with existing systems that cannot be modified appropriately to meet COVID-19-specific air quality standards.

#### **Grant Awards:**

Available funding for each school will be based on:

- a) Total funds available within the program<sup>1</sup>; and
- b) A cap of \$0.50 per square foot per school, with an exception for schools under 10,000 square feet to spend up to \$15k. The cap includes cost of an assessment, if needed.
  - a. This cap may be modified depending on the total dollar amount appropriated to this initiative.

Other funding resources, such as energy efficiency incentives and technical assistance as currently provided by Efficiency Vermont, will be leveraged whenever possible.

---

<sup>1</sup> A minimum of \$5 million is needed to address the basic emergency needs.

Process:

- 1) Project Intake: School districts (“schools”) will contact Efficiency Vermont to discuss pre-approved measures and site-specific measures the school would like to implement. Efficiency Vermont will work with the school to determine if any assessment is necessary prior to implementing those measures. In some schools an assessment may be necessary to determine the school’s most urgent indoor air quality deficiencies, and to design an appropriate remediation plan.
  - a) If an assessment is deemed necessary, Efficiency Vermont will support the school in choosing an appropriate assessment provider. The assessment provider may be an Efficiency Vermont staff member, engineer, contractor, or consultant, depending on the unique needs of the school.
- 2) School-specific Scope: Efficiency Vermont will support the school in engaging the appropriate providers (school facilities staff, contractors, engineers, other professionals) to develop a scope of work for implementing the measures.
- 3) Funding Approval: Efficiency Vermont will approve the commencement of assessments and project implementation on a rolling basis. Each school will receive a notification of funding approved with corresponding scope of work.
- 4) Project Implementation: Schools will implement projects with support from Efficiency Vermont as needed.
- 5) Project Reimbursement: Upon assessment or project completion, schools will submit an invoice for reimbursement for the pre-approved funds along with proof of installation (invoice, photo, other documentation as deemed appropriate by Efficiency Vermont in coordination with the school). Efficiency Vermont will reimburse schools following Efficiency Vermont’s administrative protocols.

Administration:

Efficiency Vermont will administer the program, including planning, marketing, stakeholder outreach, initiative management, project coordination, project oversight, engineering and technical support, dispersal of funds, verification, and reporting. Efficiency Vermont has the technical and market expertise, administrative infrastructure, and extensive customer and partner relationships to implement this program quickly and effectively, to maximize the benefit for the money spent.

- 1) Efficiency Vermont Services: All services and incentives typically provided by Efficiency Vermont to schools, such as engineering support, Level 1 ASHRAE assessments and technical assistance, will be provided at no cost to the Improving K-12 Schools’ Indoor Air Quality Grant Initiative.
- 2) Indirect Cost: To cover overhead costs, Efficiency Vermont is required to charge 9.3% of the Initiative budget, as required by VEIC’s federally approved indirect rate filed with the U.S. Department of Energy.
- 3) Efficiency Vermont Labor Costs: Given that Efficiency Vermont staff are already working with many of the schools that will participate in this initiative and that energy savings opportunities can be identified at the same time air quality upgrades are made, it is expected that the majority of labor on this initiative will be appropriate to bill to Efficiency Vermont. To cover any labor costs unrelated to energy efficiency, approximately \$75,000 will be set aside to ensure that no ratepayer funds are spent inappropriately, and that Efficiency Vermont can offer as much technical expertise as possible.

Efficiency Vermont will coordinate with the Agency of Education (AOE), and others, on the program assisting smaller schools that may not have on-site staffing to work on HVAC issues.

Statutory Changes:

Due to the emergency nature of the work and the benefits of completing the work before students and staff return to the schools the bidding requirements imposed on school construction<sup>2</sup> should be lifted for all approved COVID-19 related work.

A prequalified contractor lists could be created. If the contractor is on the list and the work being done has been approved as part of the emergency grant program then bids would not be required.

School districts could still implement their own procurement policies and modify them if needed to address this emergency.

---

<sup>2</sup> 16 V.S.A. § 559