

**From:** [Fuller, Megan](#)  
**To:** [Bristol Town Administrator](#)  
**Subject:** MERP Implementation Grant  
**Date:** Friday, August 23, 2024 3:59:40 PM  
**Attachments:** [image001.png](#)

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**Department of Buildings and General Services**

*Agency of Administration*

**Office of the Commissioner**

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Greetings,

In 2022, the Legislature passed Act 172, an act relating to municipal energy resilience initiatives. Now known as the Municipal Energy Resilience Program (MERP), the intent of the legislation is to assist Vermont's municipalities with investments into energy efficiency and resilience projects in municipally owned buildings, with the goals of lowering operational costs and reducing greenhouse gas emissions to help meet Vermont's Global Warming Solutions Act. The MERP, a modest expansion of the State Energy Management Program (SEMP) within the Department of Buildings and General Services (BGS), encompasses four components: funding for Regional Planning Commissions to assist their member towns with technical assistance; \$4,000 mini-grants to facilitate community meetings about municipal energy resilience; building assessments; and implementation grants of up to \$500,000 for weatherization, thermal efficiency, and supplementing or replacing fossil fuel heating systems with more efficient renewable heating systems.

Fortunately, the MERP turned out to be even more successful than we anticipated. 175 of Vermont's 272 cities and towns applied for and were awarded mini grants to kick-start their energy work. There were over 230 applications for energy assessments, representing 660 buildings, 538 of which were approved. Given the higher than anticipated demand, our initial plan for working with four consultants to conduct building assessments turned into six. As of this writing, they have completed over 500 assessments, and the remaining ones are scheduled for the immediate future.

Act 172 explicitly prioritized the 84 communities identified as having high or highest energy burden in Efficiency Vermont's 2019 Energy Burden Report for funding through the MERP program. Those communities were scheduled for early assessments and, as mandated by law, they are given a strong advantage in the implementation grant scoring matrix.

The funds for the MERP program must be fully obligated by December 31, 2024, or they will be eligible to be recouped and appropriated for other purposes. In order to report to the Treasurer that the funds are indeed obligated, they must be awarded by October. Due to this unexpectedly aggressive timeline, the number of anticipated interested applicants, and the scoring matrix outlined in Act 172, the application will be opening this month, and only communities designated high and highest energy burden in the 2019 Efficiency Vermont Energy Burden Report will be eligible to apply.

We understand that this news will be disappointing to the communities outside of those two categories that participated in the program through mini grants and assessments and hoped to secure an implementation grant. While the timeline and available grant funds limit what we can do at this time, we are hopeful that the SEMP might serve as a model for a municipal version in the future, and that the communities that were assessed during MERP will be able to use those assessments to prioritize their infrastructure investments and secure other grant funding.

Thank you for your engagement and commitment to MERP. I hope the knowledge you have gained from the program is useful in planning for your community's future, and I look forward to being able to reach out in the future with other opportunities to invest in municipal energy resilience.

Please direct any inquiries regarding the reversion of funds to [adm.covid@vermont.gov](mailto:adm.covid@vermont.gov).

Sincerely,

Jennifer M.V. Fitch, P.E.  
*Commissioner of Buildings and General Services*