

Notes for SNRE Hearing on Weatherization Workforce, 3/24/2021

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Topline

- Efficiency Vermont is well-positioned to coordinate weatherization workforce development efforts.
- With a statewide platform, the technical expertise in-house, the power of our Efficiency Excellence Network, and recent experience devising programs under Act 62, we are intimately familiar with the issue, key players, and solutions necessary to grow our workforce and scale up weatherization efforts.
- This \$2M appropriation can help build a foundation – but it will be important to strike a balance between making foundational investments, implementation, and engagement in the Weatherization Workforce Group process. It won't be enough to do everything, and it will be important to understand the highest priorities for policy makers.

Current state

Vermont is home to a large number of organizations that have worked to expand, train, and employ the skilled weatherization workforce:

- Trade organizations such as **VBRA** and **BPPA**, who work to advance the skills of their members and connect them with support, education, and programmatic opportunities
- Organizations and contractors such as the **NWWVT Heat Squad**, **Authenticated Building Performance Diagnostics**, and **Analyzing Energy**, which have developed a business model that enables them to recruit and support non-BPI certified contractors, overseeing their weatherization projects – which expands access to rebates and programs, especially in underserved regions of the state
- Regional organizations such as **SEON** and **ReSource**, who have created and implemented successful training programs. SEON, in particular, has taken a leadership role on training and has been convening stakeholders and partners to advance that work in southeast Vermont for many years.
- Organizations such as **Vermont Passive House**, which have deep expertise in building science and knowledge of best practices and successful programs underway nationally and internationally.
- **Vermont Technical College**, has served as a BPI training center, and has collaborated with Efficiency Vermont over the last two years in an effort to expand the trained workforce, leveraging investments made possible through Act 62.
- Educational organizations such as **Vermont Adult Learning** and **Community College of Vermont** who are exploring certification and training programs for the students they serve
- Several **high school technical centers** and **career and adult education centers** embed this training into their curricula, at various levels – even including “hand-on” components working directly on demonstration projects and/or local homes
- **Efficiency Excellence Network contractors**, who leverage a variety of business models and range from one person shops to larger employers.

- Finally, program implementers, such as **VGS, 3E Thermal, Vermont's five Weatherization Agencies, the Office of Economic Opportunity, and Efficiency Vermont**, that design and manage programs to support Vermonters in weatherizing their homes

Gaps, Opportunities, and Critical Considerations

- There is no one place to get information on current weatherization workforce development activities – or even to know for sure all of the organizations doing work in this space. The above list is likely not comprehensive, but it is grounded in years of experience collaborating with partners on weatherization efforts.
- Creating a cohesive and consistent career path, taking into account the full spectrum of weatherization work, and how it fits in with other construction trades.
- There will be need for a coordinated approach to recruitment, to create a pipeline of trainees across all programs
- The market for skilled weatherization jobs is still nascent and highly dependent on public and programmatic investments. This includes programs such as low income weatherization, 3E Thermal, VGS, and Efficiency Vermont's Home Performance with ENERGY STAR® program. For this reason, workforce investments can't be made in a vacuum, or there is a risk that workers will be trained and not have an outlet for their skills because customers are not signing up for projects. It is therefore critical that workforce investments be kept in balance with programmatic funding that is adequate, consistent and oriented to develop the weatherization market over the long-term.
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Concluding Thoughts

Efficiency Vermont has already provided some high level thoughts on how the \$2M weatherization workforce development could be invested – but this plan will continue to evolve, and it is important that there is flexibility in how this work is done. Our intention is to create an inclusive and transparent process for collaborating with all the partners in this space (including those we aren't yet connected to) in order to build the plan together.