

Municipal Energy Resilience Program (MERP)

Testimony House Committee on Energy & Digital Infrastructure
April 29th, 2026

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MERP

Program
Description

January Report

- Four Phases:
1. RPC Funding
 2. Mini Grants
 3. Assessments
 4. Implementation

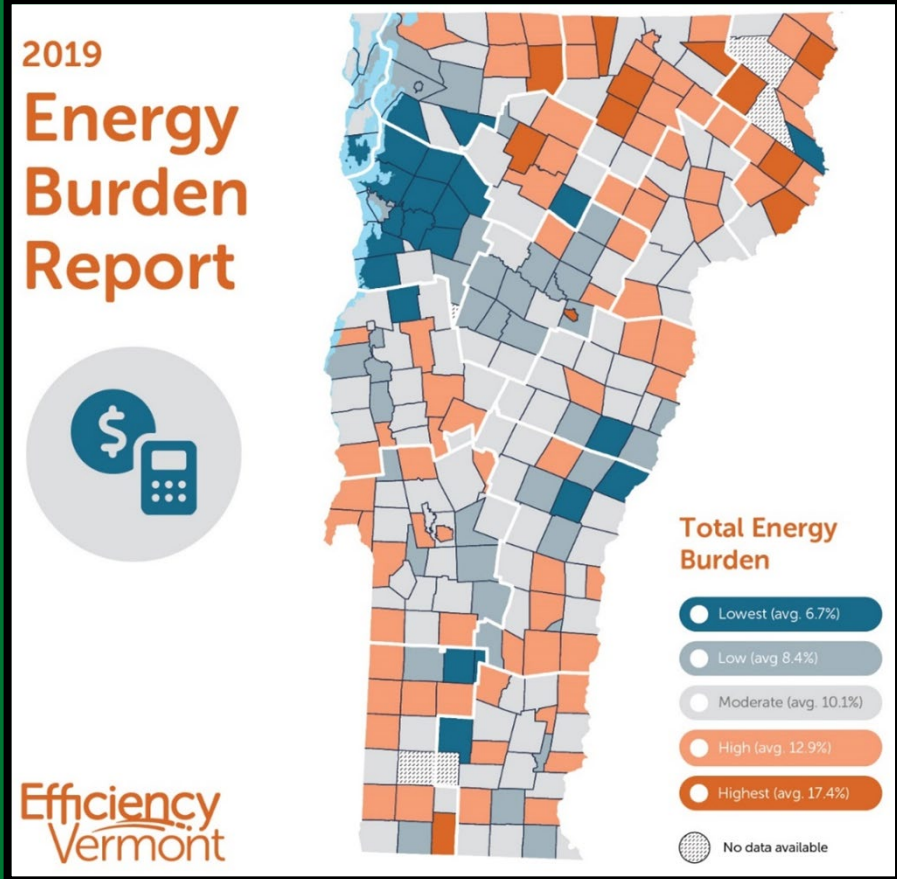
\$45M Grant Program

Phase 1- \$2.4M to VT Regional Planning Commissions (RPCs)

Phase 2 - \$1.1M for Mini Grants (\$4k max)

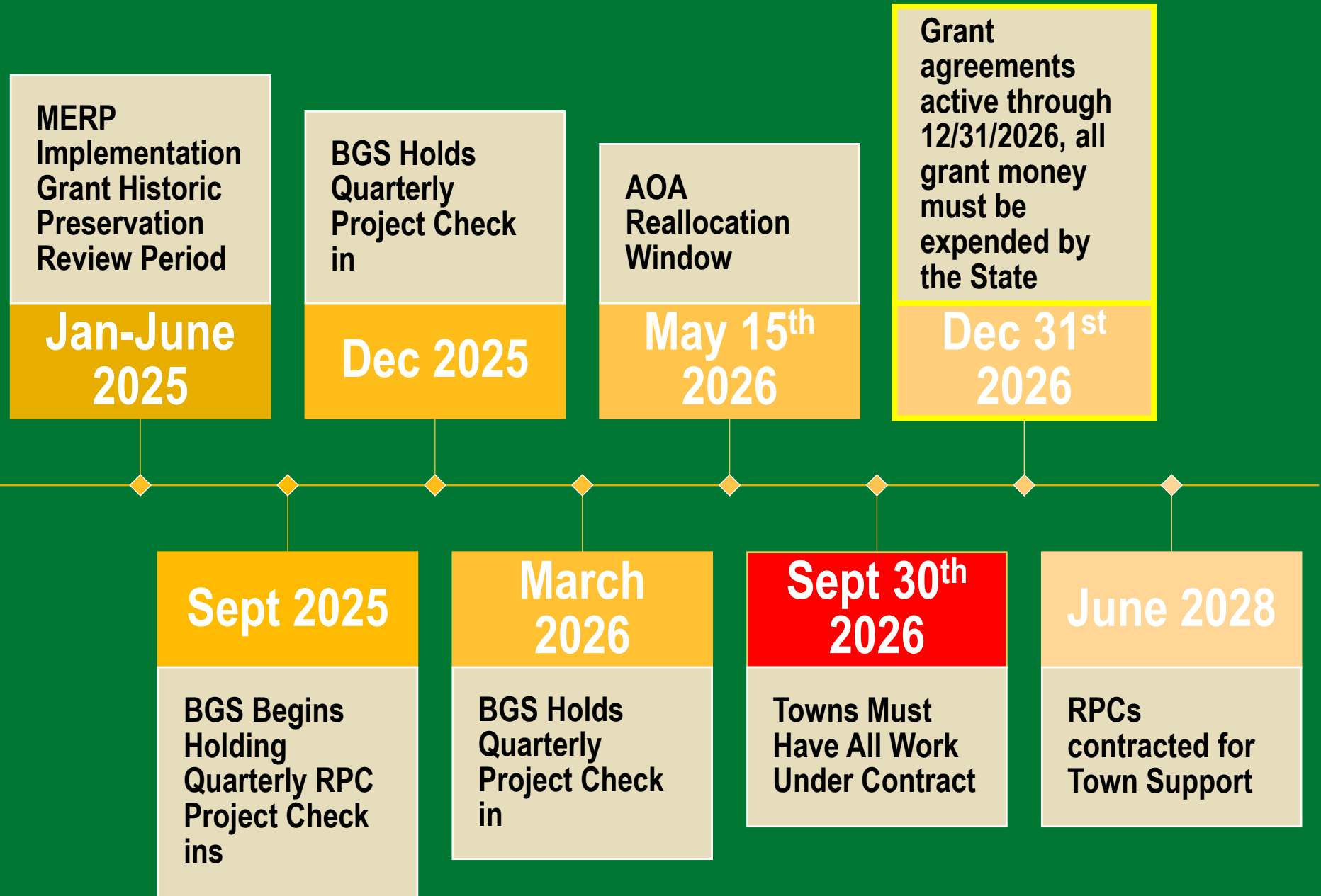
Phase 3 - \$5M for energy resilience assessments.

Phase 4 - \$35.9M in Implementation grants for municipalities (\$500k max)



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General Timeline



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Phase 1. Establish Partnerships

MERP Administrative Partnerships stipulated in Act 172:



MERP Partnerships not stipulated in Act 172,
but established through course of the program:



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Phase 2. Mini Grants

Goal: Kickstart
Capacity
Building and
Town Planning

\$377K Not Yet
Reported on.
Many towns
spending in
support of IG
plans.

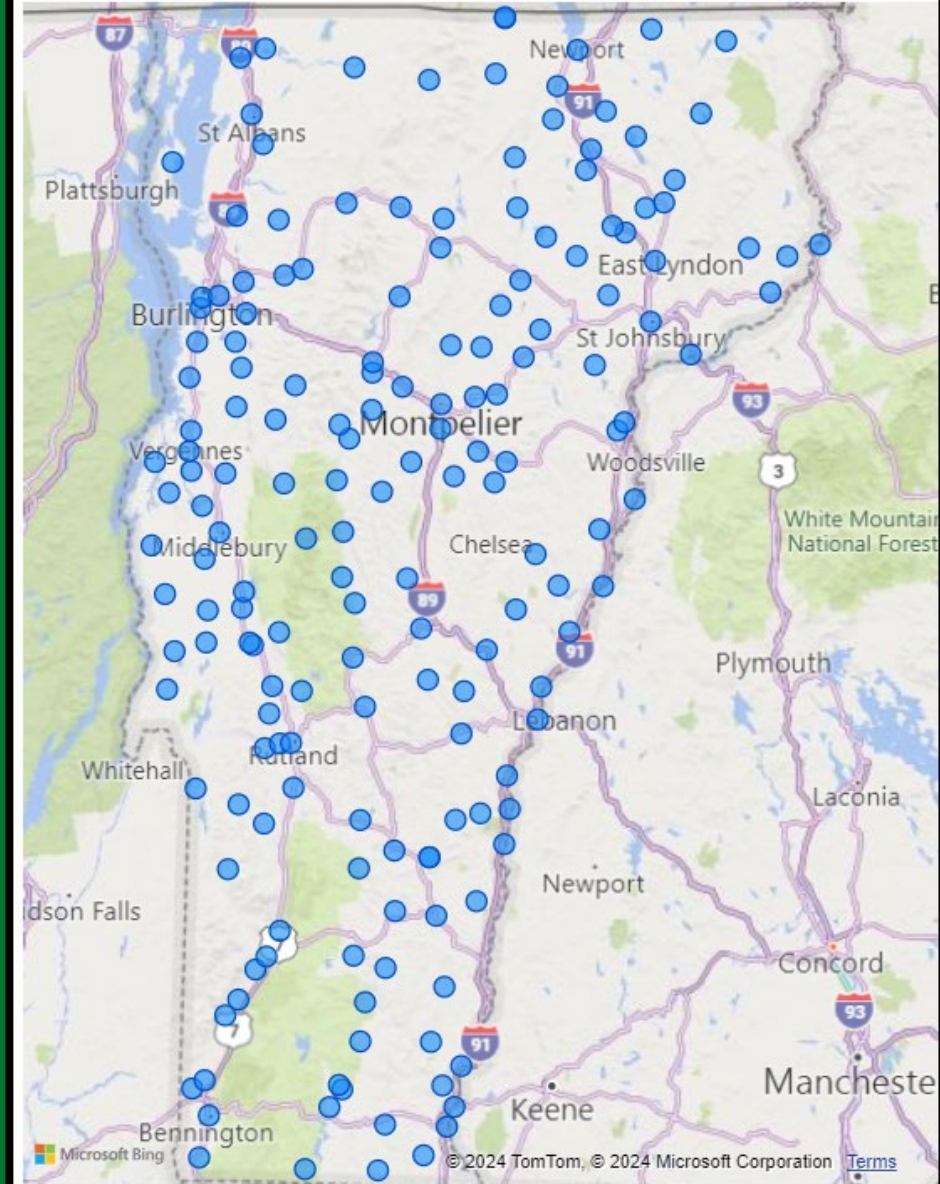
\$1.1M Budget in noncompetitive grants for municipalities: up to \$4,000

175 Awards Totaling almost \$700K



MERP Mini-Grant Awardees

Scroll or pinch to zoom in/out. Click and drag to pan around.



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Phase 3.
Energy
Resilience
Assessments

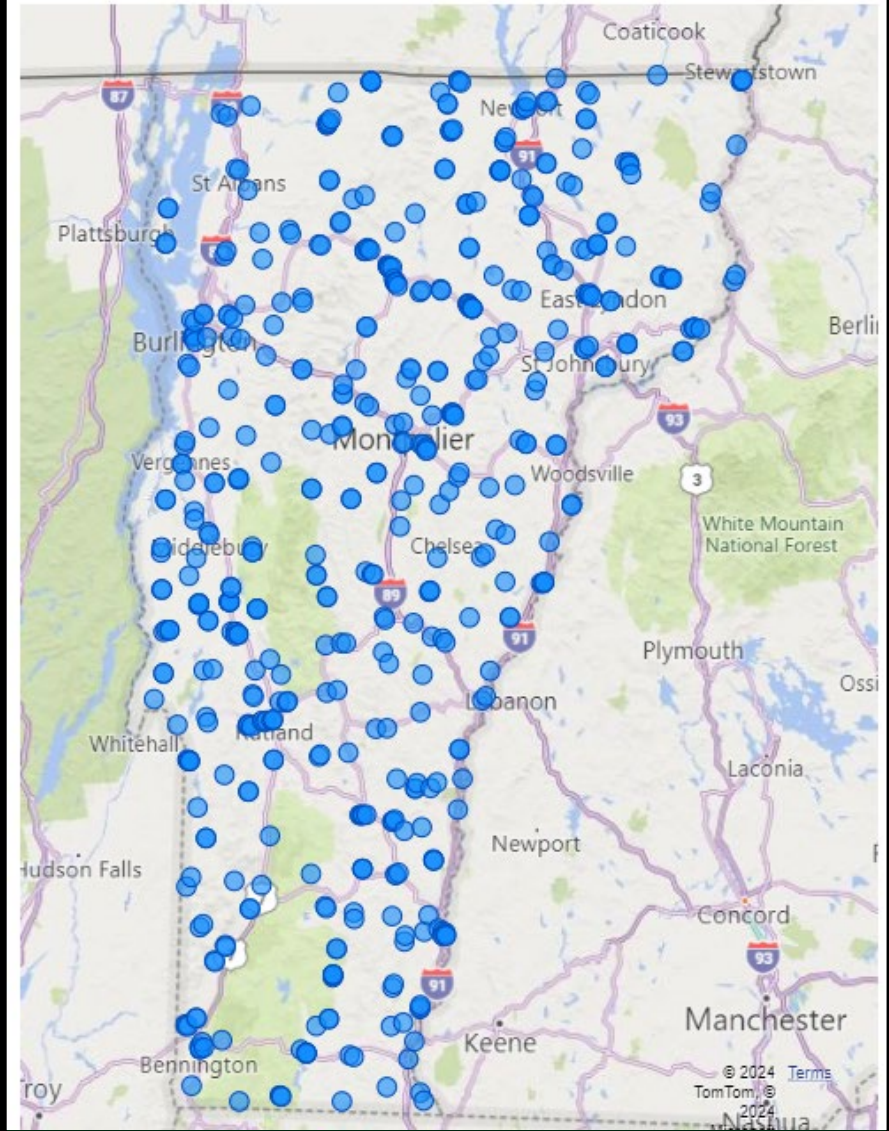


\$5M Budget
\$3.2M Spent



MERP Completed Site Visits

Scroll or pinch to zoom in/out. Click and drag to pan around.



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Phase 3. Energy Resilience Assessments

Level 1: A streamlined assessment meeting Act 172 §2(d) requirements, qualifying recipients for implementation grant funding.

Pros:

Shorter Duration

No documents

Cons:

No blower Door test

Not applicable to loans

Level 2: A comprehensive assessment including §2(d) items, an ASHRAE II energy audit, and a blower door test.

Pros:

Enhanced Savings calculations

Applicable for loans

Cons:

Longer Duration

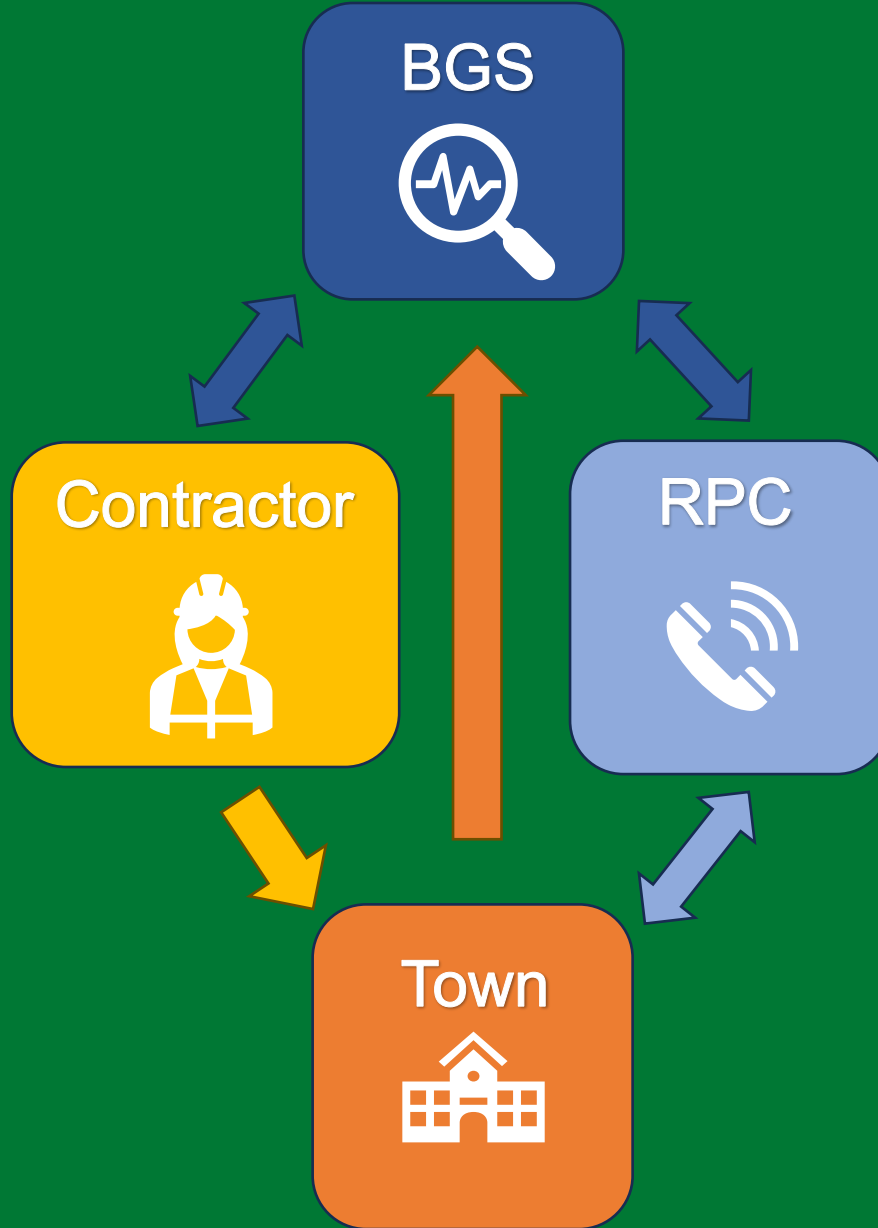
Additional Documentation



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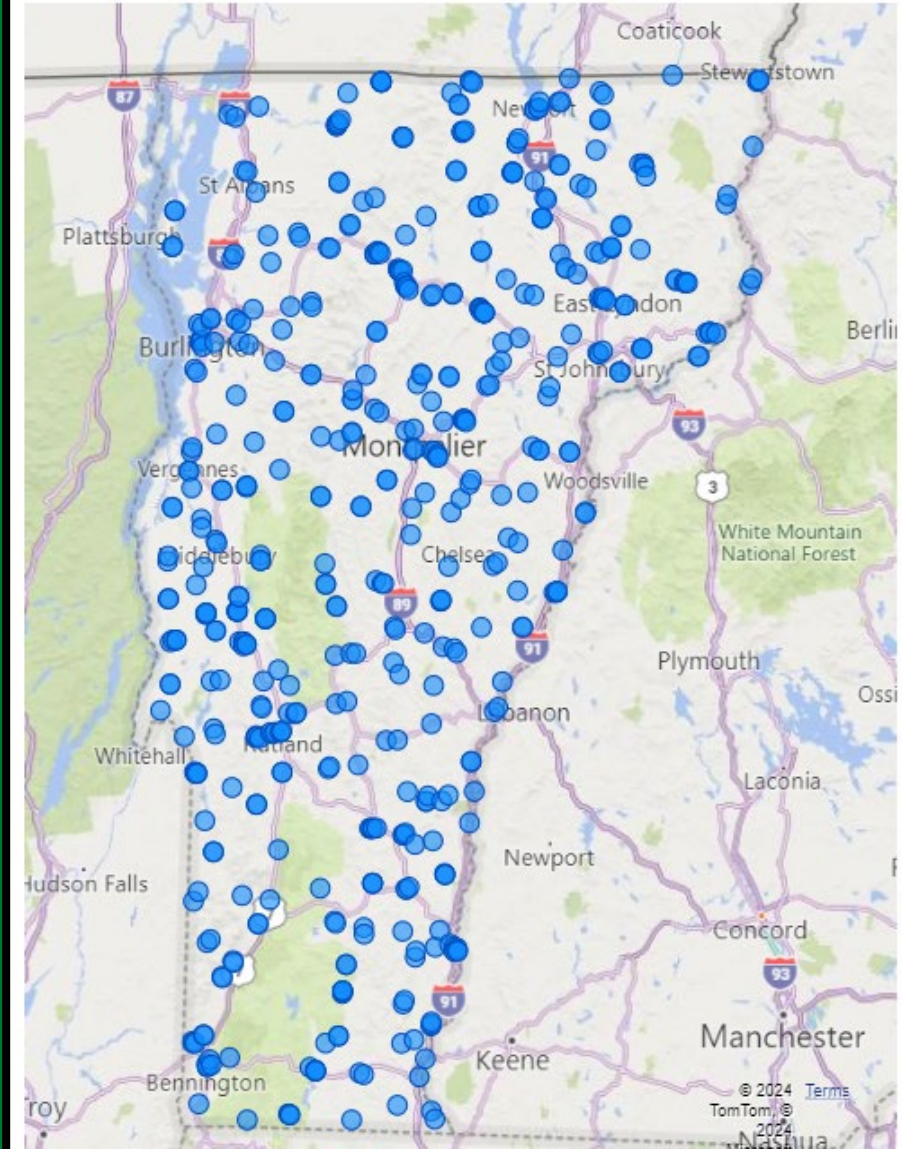
Phase 3.
Energy
Resilience
Assessments

201 Level 1 & 330 Level 2



MERP Completed Site Visits

Scroll or pinch to zoom in/out. Click and drag to pan around.

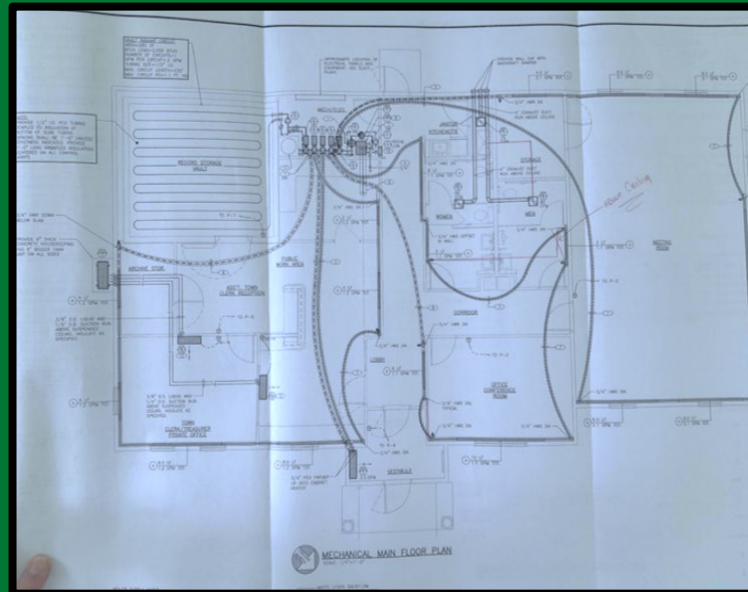


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Phase 3. Energy Resilience Assessments

201 Level 1 & 330 Level 2

Soft	# of Bldgs	% Total	Avg Cost	Min Cost	Max Cost	Avg Cost per soft
1-5,000	338	64%	\$6,443.63	\$2,115.00	\$25,825.00	\$3.04
5,001-10,000	116	22%	\$9,279.66	\$3,909.00	\$29,140.05	\$1.30
10,001-15,000	32	6%	\$13,472.93	\$4,850.00	\$30,977.75	\$1.13
15,001-20,000	18	3%	\$14,108.34	\$4,850.00	\$36,831.12	\$0.79
20,001-50,000+	27	5%	\$15,931.90	\$5,332.04	\$25,507.30	\$0.42
Grand Total	531	100%	\$8,100.17	\$2,115.00	\$36,831.12	\$2.35



Sunderland Town Hall Mechanical Floor Plan (image via DuBois & King)



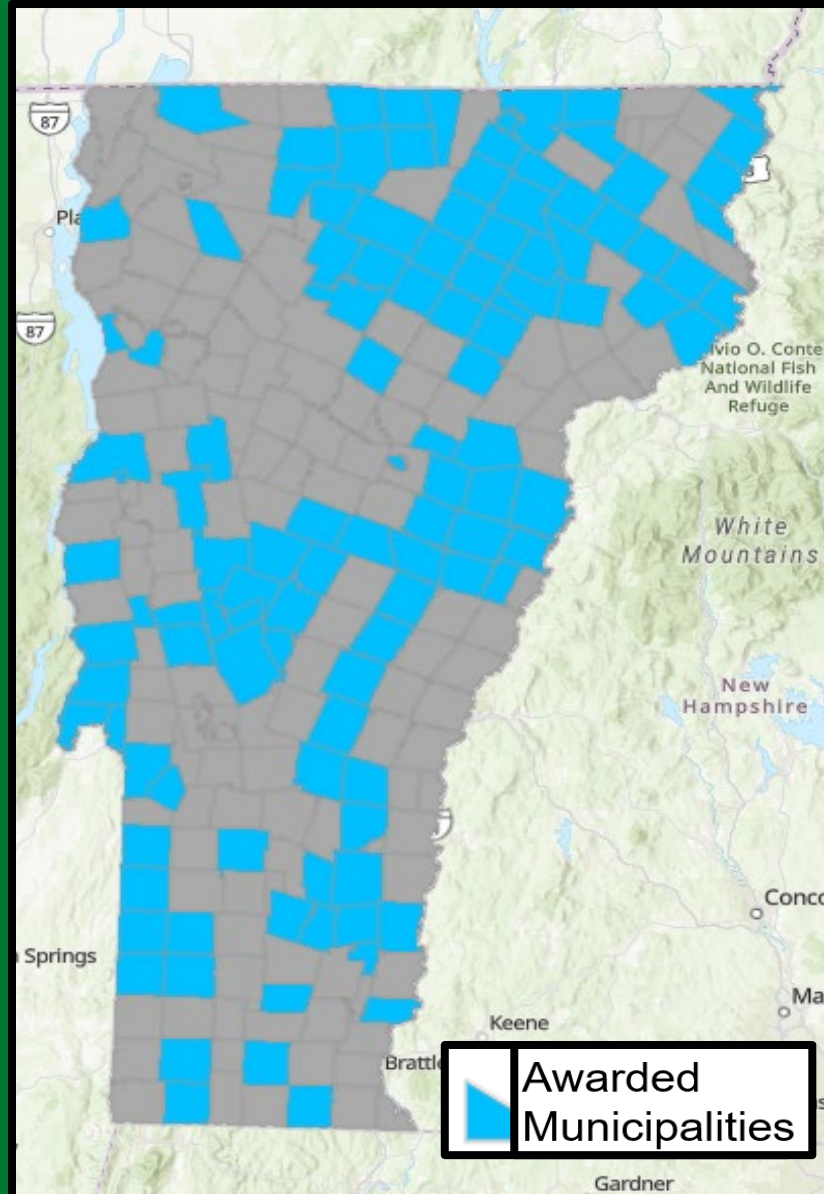
Hartland Public Library Solar Feasibility (image via John Turner Consulting)

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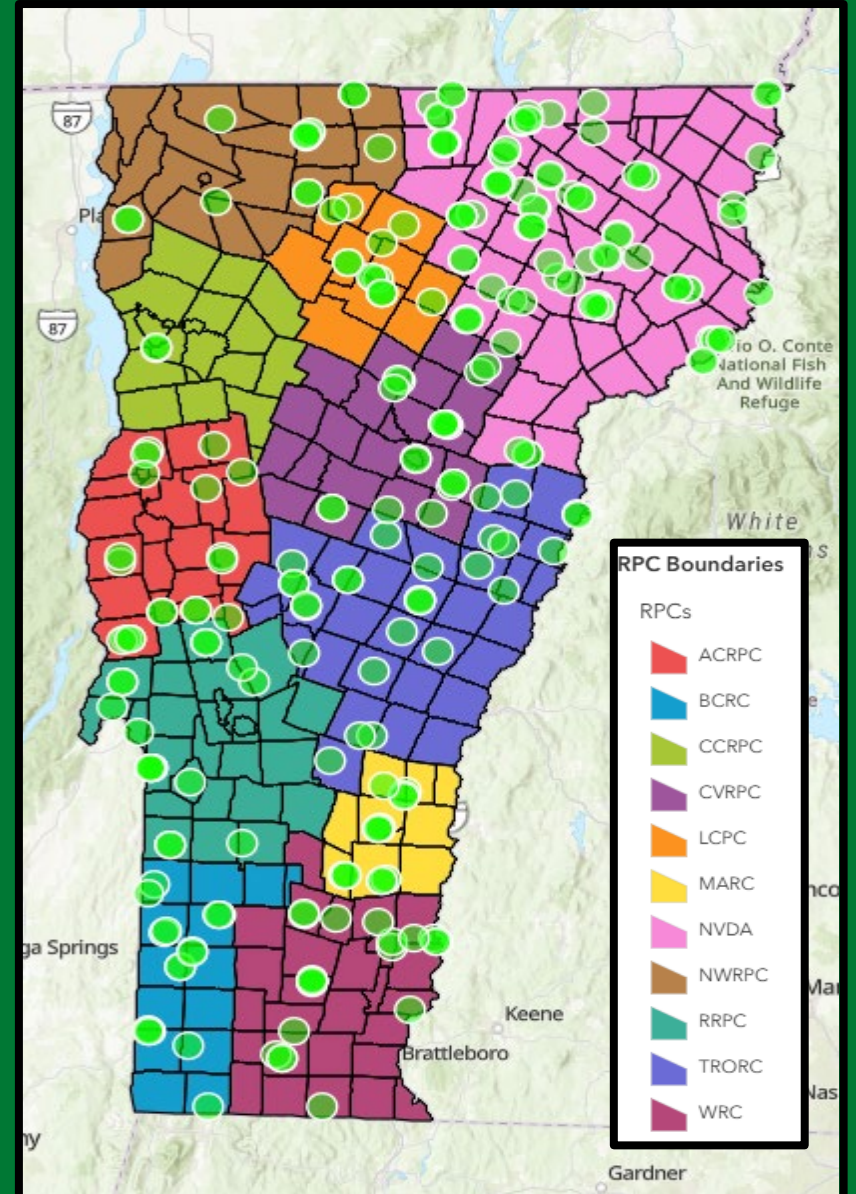
Phase 4. Implementation Grants

- \$35.9M awarded
- \$10.1M Spent to date across 108 Towns
- 6 Towns Completed
- About \$2M in Hardship

MERP Implementation Grant – Awarded Municipalities



MERP Implementation Grant – Awarded Buildings



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Phase 4. Implementation Grants

Envelope



Equipment
Electrification and
Fuel Switching



Resilience

#	Measure
234	Thermal Envelope Projects
136	Smart Control Systems
148	LED Lighting Upgrades
74	ERV Installations
106	ADA Improvements

232	Heat Pumps
5	Radiant Infrared Heaters
7	Geothermal Heating Systems
10	Wood Pellet Heating Systems
46	Conversions to High Efficiency Boiler

76	Solar Photovoltaic Systems
56	Battery Backup Systems
56	EVSE Level 1 & 2 Chargers

Envelope work is consistently costing more than original estimates.

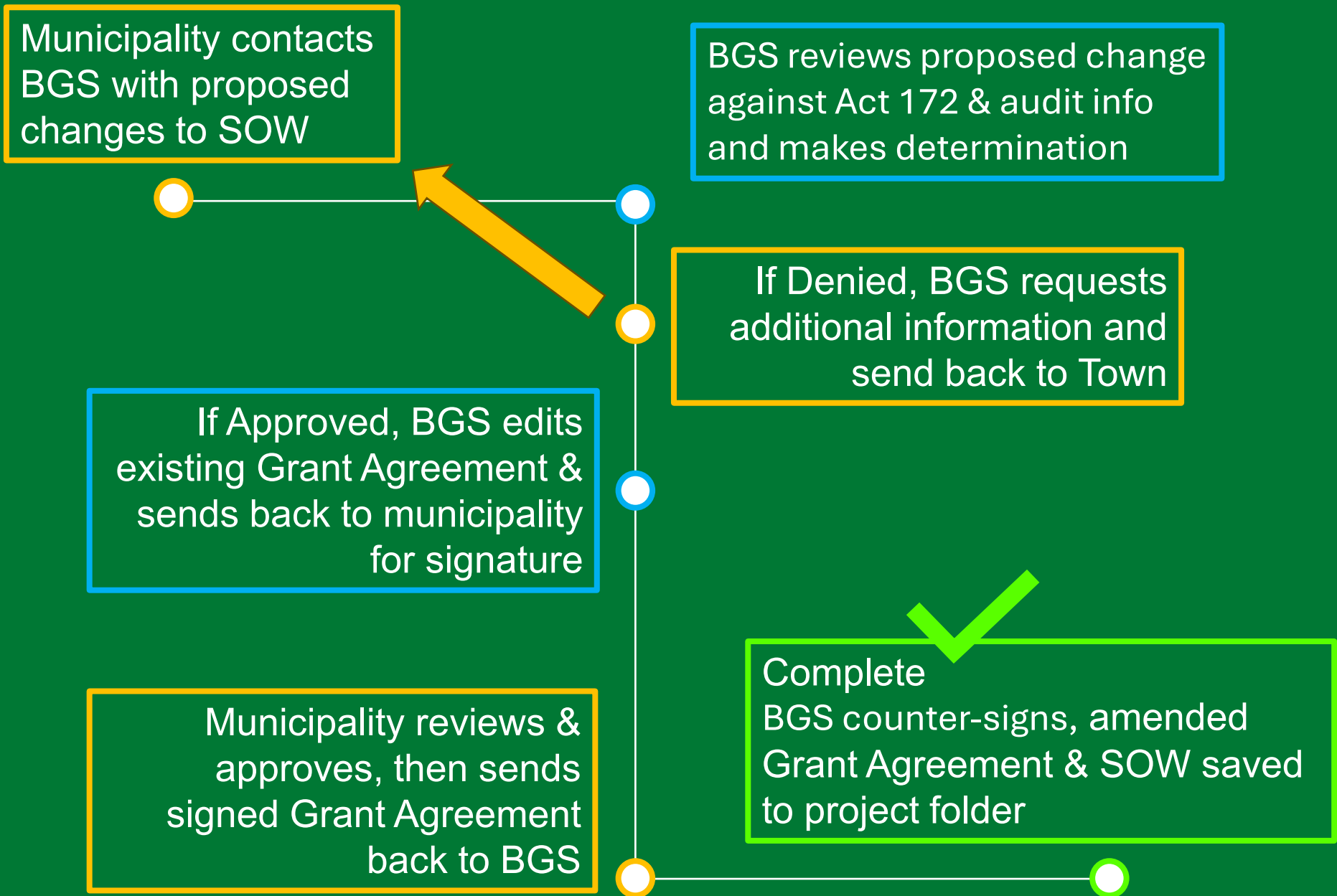
HVAC and Fuel switching-many towns choosing to keep the primary system as back up. Integration of mini splits with the existing system is common.

Budget for resilience measures often used to fully fund envelope and HVAC. Some are reducing the size to still implement resilience measures.

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Scope of Work (SOW) Amendment Process

76 SOW
amendments to
date



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Phase 4. Implementation Grants

MERP Municipal Projects: Field Notes

Why an increase in costs for envelope work? Demand and costs of materials and labor have increased year over year.

Involvement of professional designers and architects has also encouraged towns to focus on building shell. Some towns have expressed that the grant has empowered them to pursue envelope measures that the towns would never have afforded on their own.

Because this is a unique opportunity, communities can afford to do it right. Not just a one-off measure, but a total package of air sealing, insulation, new windows and doors, removing moisture issues and improving the over all envelope.

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Phase 4. Implementation Grants

MERP Municipal Projects: Field Notes

HVAC systems cross-over point. Integration of smart thermostats allows town to optimize boiler to kick on at 10F and use heat pumps for heating and cooling above that temperature.

For the first time many towns will have the ability to cool in summer. While this may not reduce electricity consumption, it will increase quality of environment for workers and citizens and provide access to cooling shelters for the community.

Resilience measures will be lower in the overall number installed, but towns are keeping them in SOW, waiting to see if the budget allows for install.

Installing solar to cover the heat pumps is by far the best ROI for the grant. Adoption by the boards/towns is higher when they understand that the solar production will "pay" for the heating.

MERP Survey Takeaways

427 Recipients from
Program Email Listserv

Survey received 88 valid
responses, for a
response rate of 20.6%

Of the 88 respondents,
85 reported participating
in at least one of the
three phases of MERP

The Regional Planning Commissions that responded scored lower on quantitative responses compared to municipalities:

- Qs re: Implementation Grants = ~2.33 points lower
- Qs re: Energy Assessments = ~2.95 points lower
- Qs re: Mini-Grants = ~3.05 points lower

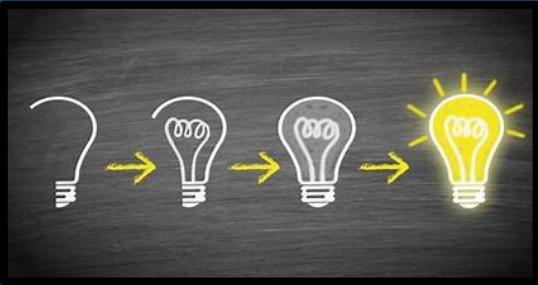
Municipalities were extremely reliant on Regional Planning Commission support and assistance throughout all aspects of MERP.

Municipalities would benefit from State assistance in identifying & securing contractors to complete MERP-funded projects.

Municipalities experienced several struggles with the Energy Assessment process & the quality of the deliverables.

MERP is an extremely popular and successful program that has delivered high-value outcomes to hundreds of municipalities across the State. Appreciation & support for MERP was the single most prevalent theme across the qualitative responses provided by municipalities, appearing over 40 times.

MERP Lessons Learned



The ability for the State to coordinate RFP/Contracting process for IGs would alleviate a lot of capacity stress for small towns.

FLEXIBLE! We have consistently heard from towns that the flexibility built into program administration, SOW changes, and payments has been fundamental to completing the work.

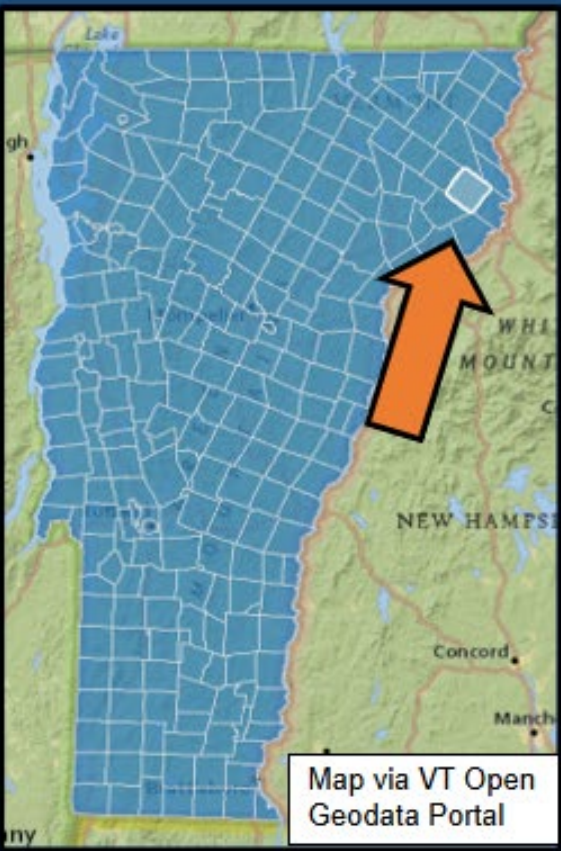
The “gap” between assessment reports and design build RFP scopes of work has been a major challenge for towns.

Towns without dedicated key staff/persons who understand the details of the program and can champion the work are at a significant disadvantage. TM turnover has impacted towns.

RPCs have been essential for coordinating on the ground, especially during assessment phase. However, there are stresses inherently built into the design of the program when making RPCs co-administrators with BGS to their member towns.

According to our survey responses, about 21% of Towns not awarded an IG said they would still pursue audit recommendations, while 25% said no.

GRANBY, VT



"The experiences we have had with all entities involved with the MERP grant have been wonderful. We are overwhelmed with the support we have received in navigating through the process, be it by emails, phone calls, in person meetings. This is a first in the world of Grants for Tyler and me. We wonder if all grants will run as smoothly as this one. We sure hope so. Thank you to you and the team for being here for us. The town of Granby could not have been successful without the connections and support that you have provided us. Mostly, we love the results of the project and how much it has benefited our town, especially in a time when we could not have done so ourselves on our small-town budget. Thank you, thank you, thank you."

- Terri Williams & Tyler Fournier, Granby Town Clerk and Selectboard Member

LONDONDERRY, VT



"Touring our completed Town Office renovation project with MERP staff was an opportunity to show off our newly renovated, historic school building, and to get ideas and advice on what to expect going forward with our Town Hall renovation, which is our next big renovation project. Staff have been helpful in guiding us through the reimbursement process as well. These projects would not have gotten off the ground without this funding, so it was definitely worth it."

- Aileen Tulloch, Londonderry Town Administrator

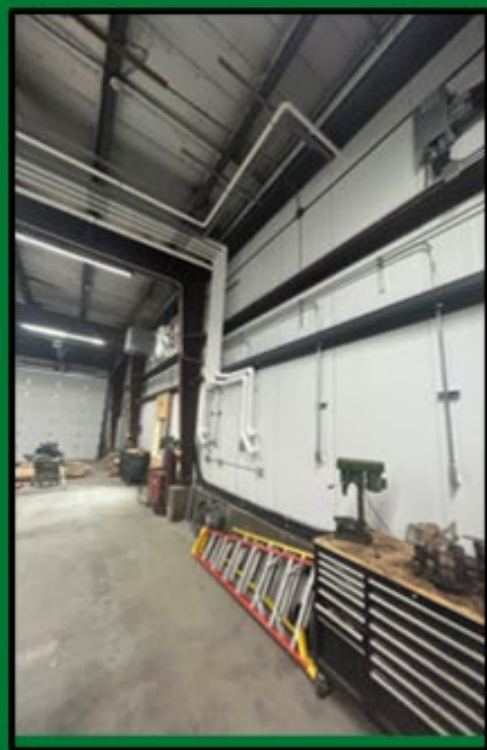
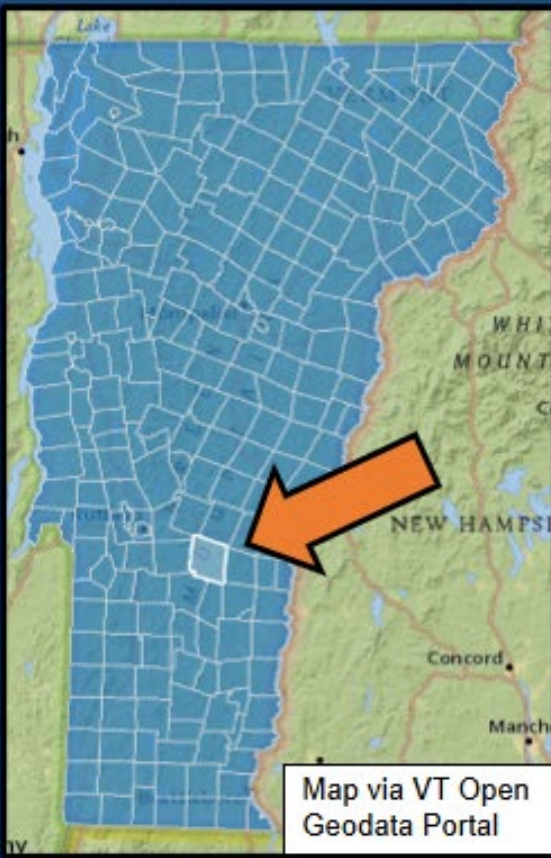
PLYMOUTH, VT

"The MERP program was straightforward and easy to navigate the process. It did not lack oversight or rigor and was clear what outcomes were desired. MERP is a model for all governmental grants."

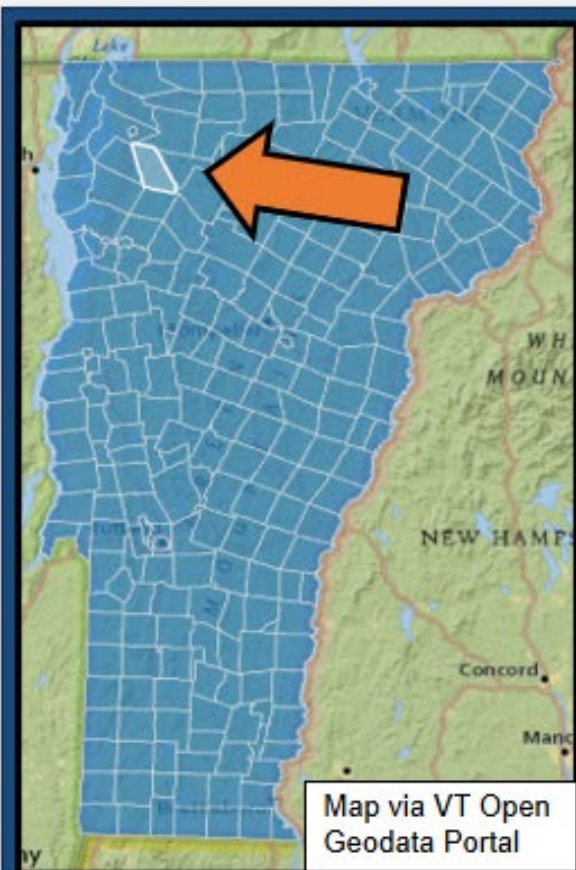
"MERP helped us stay focused on energy efficiency with our renovation project."

"MERP staff along with the Regional Planning Commission made the process easy to navigate."

- Jay Kullman, Plymouth Selectboard Chair



FAIRFAX FIRE DISTRICT #1, VT



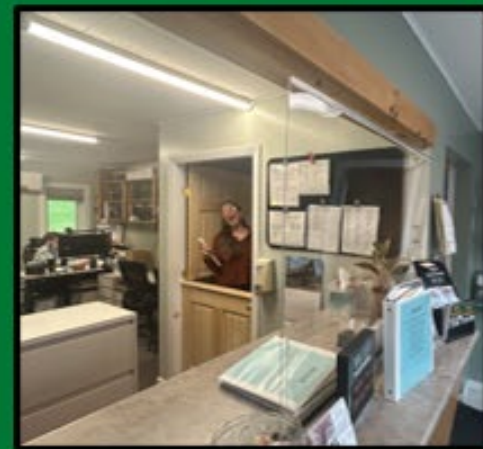
Map via VT Open Geodata Portal



"The MERP grant has helped the Fairfax Fire District #1 significantly move towards our mission of providing safe, clean, and reliable water to our small water district. Through this grant we have been able to install a ground mounted solar system, battery backup system at our pump house, and install a heat pump. This work reduces our reliance on propane, but more importantly will allow us to provide water to our neighborhood when we lose power. Our system has never been able to afford a back-up generator and annually we typically lose power for at least a day due to wind, ice, or snow storms. With our back-up batteries people will be able to access water even when we do not have power making an uncomfortable situation more manageable. As an all volunteer Board, we have not previously sought out State funding, however working with the folks from the MERP team has made the process move smoothly and taught our Board a lot about how State funds work. The email exchanges, phone conversations, and site visits with the MERP team have made our small system feel important and really assisted us with completing this vital work. Helping small systems like our 27 connection water district to ensure we can reliably provide water to our neighborhood and generate our own power allows us to complete work we would never have been able to prioritize or afford. Thank you MERP team and everyone who helped bring this project to our community."

- Emily Morgan, Fairfax FD #1 Clerk & Prudential Committee Chair

WALDEN, VT



"The site visit we had was a follow up for the work we had completed so far and where we could go from there. I was grateful for the suggestions from the team in how to use our remaining Grant funds. As we walked through what we had done, the team noticed that we could replace old appliances with energy efficient ones and that more energy efficient lighting could be done. The team discussed an air barrier with us, to stop cold air from front door to continue through to office area. The team was friendly, knowledgeable and more than happy to assist in any way they could to continue our projects forward. The Town of Walden office feels very fortunate to have been awarded this grant and to have the continued support of the Merp Grant Team."

- Debbie Messier, Walden Town Clerk/Treasurer

Map via VT Open
Geodata Portal

CRAFTSBURY, VT

"Our Craftsbury MERP Working Group hosted Doug and Grace in person to review our buildings and to discuss amendments we could make to our work-scopes mainly to address the details of preparing our 185-year-old Town Hall for energy conservation and HVAC upgrades. Their presence on-site was a huge help to our learning how to communicate our needs and their knowledge of our volunteers ready to get to work. Since their visit our Energy Committee members have put in over 100 hours of volunteer labor in preparation for building upgrades."

"The visit from Doug and Grace to our Craftsbury MERP building sites was a huge help in guiding us from our original grant application to grant work-scope and then to amended scope when changes were needed after engineer and contractor inspections. They answered a million questions and were really helpful in looking closely at the details of work needed."

- Craig Taylor, Craftsbury Energy Committee



Map via VT Open Geodata Portal

Thank you!

BGS.Vermont.gov/commissioner/energy-environment

BGS.Vermont.gov/municipal-energy-resilience-program