

Advancing Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion (DEI) in Vermont's Energy Efficiency Programs



Efficiency Vermont is committed to reducing energy burdens that disproportionately impact people of color in Vermont. Below are the goals and strategies we have adopted to meet this commitment. This plan will continue to evolve and grow as we learn from our partners, our customers, and our community.

Embed a core focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion into all aspects of our work to help Vermonters reduce their energy costs and burden.

- Develop and launch an equity impact assessment for evaluating all new and proposed programs by the end of 2021.
- Create a compensated customer review panel to provide feedback in the product development process.
- Ensure BIPOC Vermonters are represented in our public and visual communications.
- Proactively engage BIPOC organizations and BIPOC owned businesses to learn more and share energy efficiency opportunities.
- Ensure that the Targeted Communities program serves at least one of Vermont's ten most racially diverse communities each year, starting with 2022 and 2023.
- Expand outreach, engagement, and incentives for renters and property owners.
- Ensure all incoming calls have access to translation services by the end of 2021.

Leverage our resources to support and uplift historically disenfranchised businesses, partners, and communities.

- Include DEI criteria, including BIPOC ownership and participation, in event, sponsorship, and RFP decisions.
- Include an energy equity track for presentations at Efficiency Vermont's annual conferences, Better Buildings by Design and Best Practices Exchange.
- Participate in statewide forums to learn about how to advance DEI across the state.

Actively engage in the broader state-level effort to advance equity through public policy, working collaboratively with our regulators and efficiency utility partners to center energy justice in our collective work.

- Share updates on our DEI plan and progress with partners, customers, and regulators.
- Look for opportunities to coordinate DEI efforts to increase impact.
- Work collaboratively with regulators and legislators to seek opportunities to embed DEI into our future plans and goals.

Encourage all staff to participate in creating a work environment that values diverse viewpoints, cultures, and lived experiences; and fosters compassionate, open, and honest dialogue while supporting continuous improvement.

- Invite participation and additions to this plan.
- Require DEI training for all current and new staff.

Understanding existing participation in energy efficiency programs

To inform this plan, Efficiency Vermont undertook an analysis of participation in existing energy efficiency programs. The analysis was intended to inform opportunities for improvement. Key learnings and takeaways from this analysis are below.

- Customer-level demographic data is limited. Imperfect data can be misleading, but a focus on obtaining better data could delay or blunt needed action.
- No clear geographic gaps exist in current program participation. This indicates that at a town-wide level, towns characterized by a high number of BIPOC or low-income residents, renters, or seniors are not under-served.
- An even distribution of program participation across the state does not indicate equity in program participation.
- The map on the right shows the results of the analysis. The heat map demonstrates town-level lifetime energy savings for residential customers that participated in efficiency programs. The towns with the highest level of energy savings are dark blue, and the towns with the lowest level are white. Grey areas on the map indicate that the population of those towns is too small to share data, given data privacy restrictions.
- This plan proposes to advance DEI in energy efficiency with the information we currently have, rather than try to improve the data to better understand current participation levels.

