



Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Opportunities for Community Building Energy Efficiency

Community action for building energy efficiency and emissions reductions is critical for achieving local and state goals, and many communities in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic are leading the way. With new funding from the [Bipartisan Infrastructure Law](#) (BIL), even more will be possible. Local governments are eligible to apply for and receive a large part of the available money, so planning for these applications is key. Roughly 60 percent of BIL funding will be allocated through formulas, and about 40 percent will be made available through competitive grants, loans, and federal programs.

The White House sent a [letter to all of the U.S. Governors](#) asking them to appoint a state-wide Infrastructure Implementation Coordinator to work with the state budget team and across departments. The federal government's Infrastructure Implementation Coordinator also [outlined steps for local governments](#) to prepare for the competitive funding.

This resource outlines building energy efficiency and electrification actions that NEEP recommends communities in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic pursue, along with the funding opportunities that NEEP believes could be used to support them. The “Grants” section below includes details on each one listed, and further resources are at the conclusion.

Community Decarbonization Actions and Potential BIL Funds to Support Them

Writing an Energy Master Plan or Climate Action Plan

Having an Energy Master Plan (EMP), Climate Action Plan (CAP), or an energy chapter of a Comprehensive/Master Plan is an important yet often overlooked element of planning at the local or facility level. The goal of an EMP is to develop a roadmap for an efficient, cost-effective energy infrastructure system. These typically include existing energy policy and strategies; energy use data and energy sources; forward-looking goals, objectives, and strategies; a guiding framework; and methods for monitoring and verification, among other items.

When developing an EMP, use federal funds to hire consultant services to conduct a thorough analysis of the existing building stock and of which strategies can be implemented across each building sector to make progress towards goals. Have consultants create building-specific roadmaps for larger, poorer performing buildings and integrate these into EMPs. They can also assist in developing strategies for engaging the commercial and residential building sectors. See [West Hartford, CT's Energy Plan](#) for example.

Additionally, jurisdictions can partner to create joint energy plans, pooling resources, sharing lessons learned, and reducing administrative burden. See [Portland and South Portland, ME](#) and [Beverly and Salem, MA's](#) joint plans for examples. The 2022 [RFP from Mercer Island, WA](#) (population of around 25,000) for developing a



climate action plan lists a total project budget of \$120,000, and an [RFP from Erie County, NY](#) for a CAP lists a project budget of \$125,000 for plan development and marketing.

- *Federal Funding Sources May Include:*
 - Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant
 - Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (Robert T Stafford Act Section 203(i))

Establishing an Energy Manager

Using this money to fund internal capacity will help ensure that results will be lasting and well-organized. Energy managers generally take the lead on getting a baseline of a town's energy use and planning and implementing energy-related programs. Their work can cover just government-owned buildings or can be community-wide. Specific tasks could include overseeing a town's benchmarking or residential energy labeling program, grant writing and reporting, leading the development of an energy plan, overseeing retrofit projects, etc.

Smaller or more rural towns could potentially cooperate and share energy managers, or the position could be at the planning commission level. Pennsylvania hired an engineering firm to [offer energy management services to five municipalities](#), and Rhode Island published this [RFP for energy management services](#) across multiple municipalities in 2020. The Metropolitan Area Planning Commission (MAPC) in MA created a [resource on hiring a shared energy manager](#), which details important steps in the process. According to a [MA Department of Energy Resources report](#), energy managers often save towns enough money to cover the costs of their own salary. The uses of BIL money will be subject to final guidance from the federal agencies, so refer to Requests for Proposals for eligible uses.

- *Federal Funding Sources May Include:*
 - Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (includes management/admin costs)
 - Appalachian Regional Commission Funds + Community Capacity Initiative
 - Investing in municipal building performance
 - Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant
 - Energy Improvement in Rural and Remote Areas

Benchmarking and Building Performance Standards

Benchmarking is the practice of comparing the measured performance of a building to itself, its peers, or to established norms. Building performance standards go a step further by requiring building owners to meet a mandatory level of performance (based on property type) and to disclose that data publicly. These policies can save building owners and taxpayers money and help meet government GHG reduction goals.

[West Virginia passed a statewide benchmarking program](#) for state-owned buildings with the goal of reducing energy consumption by 25 percent by the year 2030. [South Portland, ME](#), Lexington, MA, and Charleston, WV have launched similar programs at the local level. This information can be used to design more targeted energy efficiency programs. Consider establishing a mandatory benchmarking policy for municipal buildings or commercial buildings over a certain square footage, and see [NEEP's Benchmarking Toolkit](#) for guidance. BIL funding could be used to cover program administration, building owner outreach, subsidized energy audits beyond the basic benchmarking, or the planning, time, and resources required to implement a BPS.



BIL funding could also be used to help building owners comply with standards. Implementation requires more time and resources during setup and the first year, and the number of full-time employees needed depends mostly on the number of covered buildings. More resources are required for performance standards than benchmarking. An [LBNL report on benchmarking and disclosure programs](#) reports that benchmarking implementation required 1.5-4.25 FTEs for the large U.S. cities surveyed during the first year of implementation. Smaller towns and cities would likely require far less staff time. See section 3.8 of the report for more information on software and other costs.

- *Federal Funding Sources May Include:*
 - Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant
 - Energy Efficiency Revolving Loan Fund Capitalization Grant Program - this money will be coming through state energy offices so will require collaboration with the state, but can be used to cover commercial building audits.
 - Building Codes Implementation for Efficiency and Resilience - final rules might include funding for building performance standards. Will require collaboration with the state.

Residential Energy Labeling

Labeling is like providing a MPG rating for a home's energy use, and it can empower homeowners, buyers, and renters to make more informed decisions about their energy use and costs. Creating a policy that, for example, requires a homeowner to include an energy label on the home listing would incorporate information about the home's efficiency into a real estate transaction and allow it to be valued appropriately. See the EMPRESS [Home Energy Labeling Guide for States and Local Governments](#) for details on how to establish labeling programs.

Local labeling programs might use federal funding to offset the cost of energy audits, if the program requires or prompts people to use labels that require in-person professional audits. Communities can also use funding to cover administrative costs, or for realtor, homeowner, buyer, or tenant outreach and education. Finally, funds may cover funneling customers towards energy efficiency upgrades or retrofits.

- *Federal Funding Sources May Include:*
 - Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant – can cover residential audits
 - Energy Auditor Training Grant Program - use of this money will require
 - Collaboration with the state
 - Energy Efficiency Revolving Loan Fund Capitalization Grant Program - will also require collaboration with the state, can cover energy efficiency audits

Hiring an Energy/Electrification Coach

An energy/electrification coach is an individual, usually from the community, who offers to discuss electrification projects one-on-one with other members of the community. The coach acts as a support while homeowners navigate the complex world of electrification projects. Services can include but are not limited to: recommendations for weatherization, discussion of electrification technologies best suited to the homeowner's needs, and comparison of contractor quotes. [Bedford, NY](#) and [Concord, MA](#) (among others) provide residents with free electrification coaching.



- *Federal Funding Sources May Include:*
 - EECBG - technical consultant services, establishment of programs,
 - Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (only for homes where heating electrification would reduce heating bills, i.e. with oil, propane, or electric resistance heating).

Grants

Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant \$550,000,000

- Open to states, local governments, and tribes (68 percent will go directly to cities and counties)
- Eligible Uses:
 - Development and implementation of an energy efficiency and conservation strategy
 - Technical consultant services for the energy efficiency or conservation strategy
 - Residential and commercial audits
 - Establishment of financial incentive programs for energy efficiency improvements
 - Provision of grants to nonprofits and government agencies for performing energy efficiency retrofits
- Development and implementation of energy efficiency and conservation programs for buildings and facilities, including
 - Design and operation of the programs
 - Identifying the most effective methods for achieving maximum participation and efficiency rates
 - Public education
 - Measurement and verification protocols
 - Identification of energy efficient technologies
- Development and implementation of programs to conserve transportation energy
- Development and implementation of building codes and inspections
- Energy distribution technologies that significantly increase energy efficiency (distributed resources and district heating and cooling)
- Material conservation programs
- Landfill GHG (specifically methane) reduction, capture, and use
- Replacing traffic signals and street lights with cost-saving LEDs
- Onsite renewable energy in government buildings
- Programs for financing (loan programs and performance contracting programs) for leveraging additional public and private funds

Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (Robert T Stafford Act Section 203(i)) \$1,000,000,000

- Open to states, local governments, and tribes
- Eligible Uses:
 - Capability and capacity building (include building codes activities, partnerships, project scoping, mitigation planning, and more)



- Mitigation projects
- Management costs (up to 15 percent of the total grant award)

Energy Improvement in Rural or Remote Areas \$1,000,000,000

- Open to industry partners, utilities, national laboratories, universities, state and local governments, community based organizations, tribal, and environmental groups in rural or remote areas (defined as cities, towns, or unincorporated areas with fewer than 10,000 inhabitants).
- Eligible Uses: financial assistance to increase environmental protection from the impacts of energy use and improve resilience, reliability, safety, and availability of energy in remote areas
 - Cost-effectiveness of energy generation, transmission, distribution systems
 - Siting or upgrading transmission and distribution lines
 - Reducing GHG emissions from energy generation by rural or remote areas
 - Providing or modernizing electric generation facilities
 - Developing microgrids
 - Increasing energy efficiency

Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) Funds \$800,000,000

- Open to states, local governments, and non-profits in the ARC region, including Maryland, New York, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia
- Eligible Uses: Activities that support the goals of building Appalachia's...
 - Businesses
 - Workforce Ecosystem
 - Infrastructure
 - Regional Culture and Tourism
 - Community Leaders and Capacity

Appalachian Area Development: Allocations to ARC States \$100,000,000

and ***Appalachian Area Development: Regional Multistate Initiative*** \$80,000,000

- Open to states, local governments, and non-profits in the ARC region, including Maryland, New York, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia
- Eligible Uses: Activities that support the goals of building Appalachia's...
 - Businesses
 - Workforce Ecosystem
 - Infrastructure
 - Regional Culture and Tourism
 - Community Leaders and Capacity
- [Area Development Program Website](#)

Appalachian Area Development: Community Capacity Initiative

- Open to states, local governments, and non-profits in the ARC region, including Maryland, New York, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia
- To develop capacity throughout Appalachian communities to deploy increased federal funding opportunities



- Federal cost share requirement: Maximum Appalachian Regional Commission share ranges from 30- 80 percent, depending on the county’s level of economic distress. Appalachian Regional Commission participation can increase the allowable federal share up to 100 percent in a grant. Waivers are available in some circumstances.

Northern Border Regional Commission \$150,000,000

- Open to states, counties, municipalities, tribes, nonprofits, housing authorities, and higher education institutions in the Northern Border Region (parts of Maine, New Hampshire, New York, and Vermont)
- Final uses still pending, but may include transportation, basic public, and communications infrastructure and renewable and alternative energy sources.
- Federal cost share requirement: Maximum Northern Border Regional Commission share is 50 or 80 percent, depending on the community’s level of economic distress. Waivers are available in some circumstances.

Hazard Mitigation Revolving Loan Funds/Safeguarding Tomorrow through Ongoing Risk Mitigation (STORM) Act \$500,000,000

- Open to states and tribes (**not** local governments) that have received a major disaster declaration during the five-year period ending on the date of enactment of the STORM Act
- Eligible Uses: establishment of revolving loan funds for hazard mitigation assistance for local governments

Energy Auditor Training Grant Program \$400,000,000

- Available to states (**not** local governments)
- Eligible Uses: the cost associated with individuals being trained or certified to conduct energy audits by the state or a state-certified third-party training program, or to pay the wages of a trainee during their training and certification

Energy Efficiency Revolving Loan Fund Capitalization Grant Program \$250,000,000

- Available to states (**not** local governments)
- Eligible Uses: loans and grants through the state for residential and commercial energy efficiency audits, upgrades, and retrofits



Resources

- [What You Need to Know About the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant - National League of Cities \(nlc.org\)](#)
- [State Infrastructure Coordinator's role](#)
- White House Fact Sheet: [Competitive Infrastructure Funding Opportunities for Local Governments](#)
- [Community Action Planning for Energy Efficiency \(CAPEE\) - NEEP](#)
- [DOE Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy Funding Opportunity Exchange](#)
- [Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Homepage](#) - Department of Energy
- [How to Apply for and Manage Federal Grants](#) - Energy Communities
- [State-City Partnership Opportunities through the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant Program](#) - National League of Cities (nlc.org)
- For more information about state and local matters contact stateandlocal@hq.doe.gov