

News from the Green Communities Division



Green Communities 2023 Competitive Grants

The Green Communities team is currently revising the grant application and anticipates it will be posted on CommBuys in the next few weeks. While some programmatic decisions are still under review, the following changes are likely to be made:

- Applications will be accepted in two blocks - spring and fall of 2023
- Projects that reduce the use of fossil fuels will be viewed favorably
- Funding will be limited for lighting projects

To be eligible for the spring block, Green Communities must have:

- Expended all prior Green Communities designation and competitive grant funds and submitted their final grant reports by **February 3, 2023**
- Submitted their FY 2022 Green Communities Annual Report by **November 4, 2022**

A list of key dates and deadlines is posted on our [website](#), to help with project planning. Please note that this will be updated periodically and will be subject to change. If we are delayed in posting the Competitive Grant Program Opportunity Notice on CommBuys, the application deadline will be adjusted accordingly.

Please contact your [regional coordinator](#) with any questions.

New Western Green Communities Coordinator Hired

Chris Mason has joined DOER as the **Western Massachusetts Regional Coordinator**, taking the place of **Mark Rabinsky**, who was recently promoted to Deputy Director of the Green Communities Division.

Chris previously worked 15 years as the Energy and Sustainability Officer for **the City of Northampton** and a decade as the Education Director for the Northeast Sustainable Energy Association. In these roles he led energy efficiency and renewable energy projects and programs to lower climate change emissions and worked with educators to increase energy literacy. Chris holds a Master's Degree in Resource Management and Administration from Antioch New England, a Bachelor's degree in Electrical Engineering from the University of Connecticut, and is trained as an elementary and middle school level teacher.

He can be reached at Christopher.Mason2@mass.gov.

Benchmarking and Building Performance Assistance Offered

Benchmarking and building performance standards (BPS) are some of the most powerful tools that local jurisdictions can deploy to manage and reduce emissions from the existing building stock. It's no secret that these programs can be resource intensive and challenging to implement, but they don't have to be.

Join an [information session](#) at **3 pm on January 10** to learn about resources and guidance the Northeast Energy Efficiency Partnership (NEEP) can offer to streamline the development and management of new and existing programs. It will showcase the [Building Energy Analysis Manager \(BEAM\) tool](#), a U.S. Department of Energy (U.S. DOE)-funded **database for managing building energy data, tracking compliance, and communicating with building owners**. The intention of BEAM is to reduce the workload of energy and sustainability offices and make these programs achievable for everyone.

The BEAM tool is currently being used by communities both large and small across the region. Our project partners, ClearlyEnergy, **can help onboard new jurisdictions free of charge thanks to the support of the Department of Energy**. [Register](#) for this information session to learn more about developing and managing a building performance standard in your community.

Initiative to Accelerate Energy Upgrades for Affordable Housing

A new initiative, [Residential Retrofits for Energy Equity \(R2E2\)](#), was recently formed to provide deep technical assistance to state, local, and tribal governments as well as community-based organizations to **jumpstart energy upgrades for single family and multifamily affordable housing, especially in frontline communities**. These retrofits will lower utility bills, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, improve residents' health, create good-paying local jobs, and help mitigate racial inequity.

R2E2 will kick off with [training sessions in January](#) for state, local, and community teams on scaling up building energy retrofits and **leveraging the unprecedented federal funding available** from COVID-19 relief programs, the bipartisan infrastructure law, the Inflation Reduction Act, and other sources.

Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant Update

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) Office of State and Community Energy Programs (SCEP) released a Notice of Intent (NOI) announcing the **\$550 million Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG) opportunity available to local and state governments**.

The EECBG Program, which received funding through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) will support communities to develop and deploy strategies to increase energy efficiency, cut emissions, and reduce energy use.

Municipalities with a population over 35,000 will receive direct formula grants from the DOE. Communities with a population under 35,000 will be eligible to apply for subgrants, which will be administered by MA DOER.

To expedite the administration of the EECBG Program, to provide feedback, and to indicate program preferences, DOE is offering an opportunity to submit the [“EECBG Program Optional Information Collection Form for Eligible Entities,”](#) which will help

DOE to plan for the EECBG Program requirements. Responses to this form are due by **January 17**.

To view the EECBG Program NOI, please visit: Financial Opportunities: Funding Opportunity Exchange. To learn more about the EECBG Program, visit DOE's webpage on the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant Program.

Renew America's Schools Grants Available

DOE's Office of State and Community Energy Programs (SCEP) has issued a Funding Opportunity Notice to support **energy upgrades in America's highest-need K-12 school facilities**. Titled **Renew America's Schools**, this substantial investment under BIL will target infrastructural investments in key project areas to reduce utilities costs, improve energy performance, reduce carbon emissions, and create safer and healthier learning spaces for students and teachers.

In tandem with the Renew America's Schools grant program, DOE launched a \$4.5 million prize program called the **Energy Champions Leading the Advancement of Sustainable Schools (Energy CLASS Prize)**. This prize facilitates **capacity-building within school districts to staff and train school energy managers**.

Both programs will concentrate funds in **rural and high-poverty school districts** to lower energy costs, reduce carbon emissions, and build healthier learning environments for students and teachers.

Concept papers are due on **January 26, 2023**. DOE posted slides from its [December 6 webinar here](#).

To view the Funding Opportunity Announcement, visit DOE [EERE Exchange](#). For the latest announcements and resources, visit [energy improvements at public school facilities](#).