

1. **Pitch Submitted By: NeighborWorks of Western Vermont**

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4. **Pitch Title:** Energy Efficiency Starts at HOME

5. **Pitch Summary:**

HEAT Squad, a service of NeighborWorks of Western Vermont, is a one-stop-shop for energy, home repair, health, and safety, aging-in-place assessments and improvements for homeowners. HEAT Squad provides free or low-cost energy audits and then walks homeowners through the entire rehab process, including help finding contractors, working with contractors, financing the projects, and ensuring work is high quality and homeowners are satisfied. HEAT Squad is currently in Rutland, Addison, Bennington, Windham, and Windsor counties, and proposes to expand statewide over the next few years, helping more Vermonters. In this presentation, we will share our success story and our plans for expansion of the HEAT Squad program, and let folks know how they can help, both at the community and state policy level. We respectfully ask for \$250,000/year for five years of state funding to launch our statewide expansion. Current HEAT Squad customers, the majority of whom are earning less than 120% of area median income, are collectively saving \$1.25 M a year and 7.5 M pounds of carbon. HEAT Squad has created more than 62 jobs and, with another \$1M investment, will create 16 more jobs.

6. **What energy sector(s) does this Pitch apply to? (Check all that apply):**

- X Energy Efficiency
- X Electricity
- X Thermal Heating &/or Cooling

7. **Which criteria category(ies) does it address? (Check all that apply):**

- X Economic Activity
- X Affordability
- X Vulnerable Vermonters

8. **Scale of impact on Vermont's energy and climate goals:** If this proposal came to fruition, how might it move the needle in helping to meet Vermont's energy and climate goals by 2025 and/or 2050? Please outline assumptions and, if available, provide calculations.

HEAT Squad has completed 1500+ retrofits since 2010 in five counties, approximately a third of all residential retrofits completed in the state since we began. These retrofits are saving 7.5 million pounds of CO₂ per year. More than 60% of our customers earn less than 120% of Area

Median Income, pay as much as 10% of their disposable income on heating, and have challenges maintaining their homes. We know that low-income households are 164% more likely to install efficiency measures after working with HEAT Squad versus working directly with a contractor. In addition, because of an agreement with Efficiency Vermont, our low-income customers also benefit from free replacements for ENERGY STAR appliances and LED bulbs, and efficient heat pump hot water heaters, lowering their electrical bills. HEAT Squad has visited over 4,000 homes the past seven years and educated all of those homeowners about steps they can take to save energy, regardless of whether they complete a retrofit. Because NeighborWorks is fundamentally a low-income housing organization, all homeowners interested in energy savings also enjoy a report and access to help with home repair, health, safety and aging-in-place measures specific to their homes. These outcomes are a result of our work in five Vermont counties over the past seven years. Our hope is to scale up further and work statewide, so that we can impact more Vermont home owners to reduce energy usage, dependence on fossil fuels, and to improve the housing stock across the state. With adequate funding for labor intensive work required to encourage and enable low and moderate households to engage in complicated but valuable retrofit work, HEAT Squad could engage as many as 300 more households per year to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 1.5 M pounds of carbon and costs of energy that is a significant burden to Vermont residents.

9. Benefits/costs of this proposal for Vermont and Vermonters: Including, where possible, economic, financial, social, and environmental.

Our customers who complete energy retrofits save an average of \$900/year on their energy bills, or in aggregate, about \$1.25 million each year. Our HEAT Squad program has generated over \$9 million in contractor revenue since 2010, and because of this program \$1.2 million has been invested in Vermont communities. According to the IMPLAN economic model, every \$1 million invested in home repair and maintenance results in 16 jobs created and \$615,000 in labor income for a total economic output of \$1.6 million. Our retrofits are saving seven million pounds of CO₂ each year. Efficiency measures also provide significant health benefits to residents, particularly those dealing with asthma, COPD and other respiratory ailments because mold, moisture, rodents, and other triggers to poor health conditions are arrested. Recent studies prove, for example, that asthma-related hospital visits are reduced 25% immediately upon completion of home efficiency improvements. In response to these findings NeighborWorks now has a partnership with Rutland Regional Medical Center, where doctors and medical staff refer patients to us and we assist with home repair and rehab to address health and safety issues, reduce medical costs, and improve health outcomes dramatically.

10. Decision-makers necessary for this proposal to be adopted or move forward (e.g., Legislature, Governor, a regulatory agency, a business, organization, media outlet, or financing institution, etc.)

Our policy request is first to adapt current practices and policies to give more attention to efficiency programs aimed at individual homeowners. Individual residences are much harder to do, more labor intensive for less impact per project than the large public or commercial facilities. However, Vermont residents deserve and need to partake in the investment dollars and the potential savings from the efficiency programs. Our pitch, therefore, is a budgetary one. We are seeking \$250,000/year for five years of state funding to launch our statewide expansion. Our decision makers are the legislature and the Governor.

11. Strategy and key considerations: Outline the overall strategy, including gaps, barriers and opportunities for moving this proposal forward.

Expanding into different areas of the state requires up-front investment to develop partnerships, conduct outreach to homeowners, hire staff, and train contractors. Our program has been recognized nationally and is being adopted already in nine counties in Appalachian Kentucky. We want to bring this service to all Vermonters! We have been working for the past year to educate legislators and the administration about the HEAT Squad and our plan for statewide expansion. We have met with some success and interest from all parties. The major barrier is the tight state budget. We have a campaign plan and messaging strategy, and we have been building our cadre of satisfied customers, spokespeople and community partners who will work on our behalf as well.

12. Timeline: To meet our 2025 goals, we need some proposals that can be implemented in the next couple of years as well as some “game changers” that will bend the curve even further out. What timeline do you foresee for your proposal to be developed and implemented?

We are already working on statewide expansion. HEAT Squad has boots on the ground now and can add more as soon as funding is secured.