

# City of Cincinnati Energy Efficiency Matching Grant Program: Low Income Tenant Multi-Family Buildings

## Frequently Asked Questions

**1. Where can I find the grant application materials?**

All grant application materials are located on the Office of Environment and Sustainability website at the Energy Equity Programs page at:

<https://www.cincinnati-oh.gov/oes/energy-equity/energy-equity-programs/>

**2. What is the total amount of grant funding available for the program? How much funding can I apply for?**

- a. Maximum award is \$5,000 per project. A minimum of \$20,000 is available for this program. The City may elect to increase the total amount depending on availability of quality projects.

**3. Are buildings outside the city eligible? For example, buildings in Norwood, Forest Park, or Golf Manor?**

- a. This grant program is only for buildings located in the City of Cincinnati. Contact the Hamilton County Auditor to determine if your building is located within or outside of the city of Cincinnati.

**4. Can an application include more than one multifamily property?**

- a. One building address per application. An owner can submit more than one application. Applications can be submitted that have multiple buildings only if the buildings are designated by the Auditor as the same address.

**5. How do I check tenant income levels during COVID?**

- a. The way in which incomes are ascertained will likely vary depending on the building or owner. However, you have the income of your tenants, please use the link <https://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty-guidelines> to estimate their income level for the proposal application.

**6. Is a one unit that is rented to a short-term rental operator eligible?**

- a. Tenants must be under a lease agreement for the unit they are renting. Short-term rentals are not eligible. This grant program is only for multifamily buildings and that is being defined as 2 units and above.

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- 7. Can I use the grant to add new electrical features in the units? For example, switch from boiler (owner paid heat) to tenant paid electric baseboard heat?**
  - a. No. The grant funding cannot be used to shift the cost burden to the tenant. Project proposals must demonstrate net electricity energy savings for tenants.
  
- 8. Are buildings eligible if there are a mix of tenants who are above and below the poverty threshold?**
  - a. Yes. The building must have tenants who are at the income level and have their Duke Energy electricity bill in their name. While not all tenants need to meet the income level, the percentage of tenants in the building that meet the income criteria will be a factor in determining the award.
  
- 9. Can I submit one application for multiple improvements? Or should I submit multiple applications for multiple improvements?**
  - a. Each application is for one building address and that address can include multiple upgrades. The city will only match up to \$5,000 per application.
  
- 10. For the purpose of estimates, would projections based on cost per sq ft from a local company suffice, or would I need to have an in person quote provided by a representative?**
  - a. Quotes and estimates are acceptable from either.
  
- 11. Am I eligible for the tenant program if I meet tenant requirements?**
  - a. If you meet the tenant program eligibility criteria, you may participate in that program. It is called WarmUp Cincy. To participate, contact the Community Action Agency a(513) 685-4478.
  
- 12. Is this a one-time program?**
  - a. The city expects to release another round of small grants available in the Spring of 2021.
  
- 13. Will I be eligible for the 2nd round if I receive a grant this round?**
  - a. A grant award in 2020 does not preclude additional grant awards in future years.
  
- 14. When will the next application cycle be?**
  - a. The City expects to release another round of small grants available in the Spring of 2021.

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**15. Do all units need to be occupied in the building?**

- a. The building must have tenants at the income level. While not all units need to be occupied, the occupancy rate for those tenants that meet the income criteria will be a factor in determining awards.

**16. What is the time period to do the upgrades?**

- a. An award recipient may upgrade their buildings between December 18, 2020 and April 16, 2021. Unique circumstances that make this timeline unrealistic may be considered on a case-by-case basis.

**17. With the current lag-time for new appliances, what happens if they are ordered and don't come in before the deadlines?**

- a. The grant timeline takes into account possible disruptions due to COVID-19. However, the Office of Environment and Sustainability will work with award recipients in the event of disruptions in the supply chain for materials and appliances

**18. How long will it take to receive reimbursements after updates are completed?**

- a. Payments are processed through the Treasury Office in the city's Finance Department. It typically can take 2 weeks to process the reimbursement request once approved.

**19. Will there be any retroactive reimbursements for replaced appliances?**

- a. No. The award can only be applied to upgrades that are made between December 18, 2020 and April 16, 2021.

**20. Does installing solar panels qualify?**

- a. No. Solar panels are not eligible upgrades.

**21. Can I use the grant to add new electrical features in the unit?**

- a. The grant award will only reimburse those upgrades that are included in the criteria document. This grant program is for the purpose of reducing the tenants electricity costs. You can download the document from the Office of Environment and Sustainability website on their Energy Equity Programs page at:  
<https://www.cincinnati-oh.gov/oes/energy-equity/energy-equity-programs/>

**22. Am I limited in approved contractors or vendors for the upgrades?**

- a. Proposals do not need to have City approved contractors for upgrades.

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**23. What is the application selection process like to award the grant?**

- a. The grant review committee will evaluate all completed applications and proposals in accordance with eligibility criteria, program requirements, and funding preferences.

**24. Are there grant programs for individuals who rent single family homes? Do you anticipate a grant program for single families with a tenant who pays their own electricity?**

- a. Please visit the websites of People Working Cooperatively at <http://www.pwchomerepairs.org/energy-conservation> to find out about their energy conservation programs for homeowners.

**25. If you have low income tenants in a multi family building and the owner pays the utilities, would the owner be disqualified for the grant if they are already advocating for the tenants utility bills?**

- a. The grant requires tenants to be responsible for paying their Duke Energy electricity bills at the time of your application. If your tenants have their Duke Energy electricity bill in their name, your proposal meets that eligibility requirement.

**26. Can tenants be month-to-month (but have been stable for years) or only those with current leases?**

- a. The building must have tenants on a lease who are at or below 200% of the FPL and have their Duke Energy electricity bill in their name.