



April 17, 2025

Vermont Public Utilities Commission
112 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05602

To the Vermont Public Utility Commission:

The [Building Electrification Institute \(BEI\)](#) is pleased to submit this letter of support for VGS's request to use innovation funds to implement a community geothermal system at the Windy Ridge development in Hinesburg.

BEI is a nonprofit organization that partners with local governments and utilities to design and implement equitable building decarbonization strategies. We provide technical analysis, policy development, program design, and capacity-building support to help jurisdictions and utilities align their climate goals with tangible, community-scale solutions. In Vermont, BEI has served as an advisor to the Clean Heat Standard process, bringing national expertise and in-state stakeholder engagement to support an equitable transition to clean thermal energy. We have also supported the Burlington Electric Department on various building decarbonization policy and program initiatives, including their Carbon Pollution Impact Fee, Benchmarking ordinance, and rebate programs.

Local agencies are powerful change agents that can, through thoughtful planning and thorough stakeholder engagement, pilot innovative and equitable solutions. The Windy Ridge project exemplifies this approach. It is a promising pilot of a utility-owned thermal energy network (TEN), one of several ownership models that deserve exploration as Vermont pursues equitable building electrification projects, policies, and programs to achieve its ambitious climate goals.

We are particularly interested in the project's robust measurement and verification (M&V) components, which will generate critical data on grid impacts, affordability, and system performance compared to other electrification technologies. This information is essential to proving that TENs can work at scale in Vermont—delivering reliable, affordable, and fossil-fuel-free heating and cooling while supporting grid resilience.

Later this spring, BEI, in collaboration with our partners in Vermont, will release a white paper that models the grid and climate benefits of community-scale geothermal. Our research confirms the potential of TENs to reduce peak electric demand, moderate load growth, and improve system reliability, while also providing clean and affordable heating and cooling to Vermont homes and businesses.

The Windy Ridge project offers a timely, data-driven opportunity to test these benefits in a real-world setting and demonstrate how innovation funds can support place-based, scalable models that meet community needs and statewide climate mandates under the Global Warming Solutions Act.

We urge the Commission to approve VGS's request and view this project as an essential step toward unlocking scalable solutions for decarbonizing thermal energy in Vermont.

Sincerely,



Keara O'Laughlin
Assistant Policy Director
Building Electrification Institute