

**VERMONT ENERGY INVESTMENT CORPORATION
SERVICE QUALITY & RELIABILITY PLAN**

Updated January 31, 2024

I General Provisions

- A. The purpose of this Service Quality and Reliability Plan (SQRP) is to establish performance standards and associated reporting requirements for energy efficiency services provided by the Vermont Energy Investment Corporation (VEIC) in its capacity as Efficiency Vermont, the State's Energy Efficiency Utility.
- B. The parties to the SQRP are Efficiency Vermont and the Vermont Department of Public Service (Department).
- C. Section II defines certain terms and concepts of the SQRP. Section III identifies the applicable service categories and establishes their respective minimum performance standards. Section IV establishes the measurement, reporting and compliance protocols for the performance standards. Section V outlines service quality compensation. The parties will have an opportunity to review the SQRP every three years during energy efficiency utility (EEU) Demand Resources Plan (DRP) Proceedings. The purpose of this review will be to ascertain the need for modification of performance standards throughout the life of the plan. Parties recognize the Public Utility Commission (Commission) reserves the right to make modifications to the SQRP in the future, either as a result of parties' review or on the Commission's own motion.

II Definitions

Abandoned call: A telephone call to the Efficiency Vermont customer support center that did not reach an agent because the caller disconnected before the minimum time threshold.

Annual: A calendar year, beginning January 1 and ending December 31.

Answered call: A telephone call to the Efficiency Vermont customer service center that is answered by a live person during normal business hours.

Normal business hours: Monday through Friday, 8am – 5pm, excluding days on which legal holidays are observed and times when VEIC is closed to routine business operations.

Call Abandonment: Calls abandoned before reaching a contact center representative during normal business hours.

Corrective Action Plan (CAP): A plan filed by Efficiency Vermont indicating how it will remedy performance for failing to meet specific performance standards.

Closed complaint: A complaint is considered “closed” by Efficiency Vermont when:

- Action is taken to resolve the complaint, the customer indicates agreement with the resolution, and Efficiency Vermont sends a written communication to the customer outlining the resolution;

OR

- Action is taken to resolve the complaint and customer declines to accept the resolution and / or opts to file a grievance with the Department;

OR

- Efficiency Vermont is unable to reach the customer for follow-up after making at least three contact attempts within two business days of the initial complaint, followed by one attempt to reach the customer via mail to which the customer does not respond within ten business days of the mailing.

Complaint: A Customer communication of dissatisfaction to Efficiency Vermont or the Department which, upon investigation, through the process described in section III.D., is determined to be attributable to a deficiency in Efficiency Vermont’s service quality and/or responsiveness.

Customer: Any person, company, organization, or other entity eligible to participate in Efficiency Vermont programs.

Custom project: Projects involving measures that do not fall under an existing prescriptive offer.

Participants: Customers with efficiency measures installed, as reported annually by Efficiency Vermont.

Performance Period: EEU performance periods are three-year (calendar year) time periods in which energy efficiency utility spend and performance are established.

Prescriptive project: Projects involving prescriptive measures, which are measures with a high volume and with relatively low per unit savings, where individual customer calculations would be cost-prohibitive, or where the likely variation of savings is low and/or the availability of input data is prohibitive to a customer application of the measure.

Root-cause analysis: A methodology for identifying the causal factors that resulted in the harmful results of past events in order to identify what needs to be changed to prevent

recurrence of similar harmful results and to promote the achievement of improved outcomes.

Transaction completion: The effective “end-point” of an Efficiency Vermont interaction with a customer. For projects, this occurs when efficiency measures have been installed and associated savings have been officially captured and reported. For contact center inquiries, transaction completion occurs when the customer support representative responds to customer inquiry.

III Service Categories and Performance Standards

A. General Customer Satisfaction

To ensure customer feedback continues to drive continuous improvement efforts, and to establish meaningful SQRP Customer Support satisfaction metrics, Efficiency Vermont commits to tracking customer satisfaction data as follows:

- Residential and business Customer Support satisfaction surveys shall be conducted by independent, third-party research professionals every three years to align with Efficiency Vermont’s Performance Period.
- Both Residential and Business Customer Support satisfaction surveys (including sampling methodology) will be designed by independent, third-party research professionals in collaboration with Efficiency Vermont and the Department prior to commencing data collection.

Efficiency Vermont commits to the following Customer Support satisfaction standards, based upon survey results:

METRIC 1: Residential Customer Support Satisfaction

Percentage of Residential Customers who contact Efficiency Vermont and rate their satisfaction with Efficiency Vermont Customer Support as 6 or higher (on a scale 0-10 where 0 means “very dissatisfied” and 10 means “very satisfied”) will be greater than or equal to 80%

METRIC 2: Business Customer Support Satisfaction

Percentage of Business Customers who contact Efficiency Vermont and rate their satisfaction with Efficiency Vermont Customer Support as 6 or higher (on a scale 0-10 where 0 means “very dissatisfied” and 10 means “very satisfied”) will be greater than or equal to 80%

B. Project Customer Satisfaction

To continuously monitor and improve resource acquisition implementation performance, Efficiency Vermont surveys its customers upon completion of projects for the following

categories:

- Business prescriptive projects
- Business custom project
- Residential new construction projects
- Residential existing homes projects

Customers rate the service they received on a 1 to 5 scale, in various service categories, with 1 representing poor and 5 representing excellent service. Efficiency Vermont commits to meet the following project customer satisfaction standard, based upon an annual roll-up tabulation of all project survey results:

METRIC 3: Satisfaction upon project completion

Per each project category, annual percentage of survey respondents who select “neutral” or better (on a five-point scale from “very dissatisfied” to “very satisfied”) $\geq 90\%$.

C. Contact Center Responsiveness

Efficiency Vermont utilizes an Automated Call Distribution system to measure call quality and responsiveness performance.

Efficiency Vermont commits to meeting or exceeding the following performance standards, based upon tracking of phone contacts Efficiency Vermont receives during normal business hours per calendar year quarter:

METRIC 4: Average speed to answer calls

Average answer time ≤ 15 seconds per call

METRIC 5: Percentage of calls answered by a live agent

Average percentage of calls answered $\geq 80\%$

METRIC 6: Call abandonment rate

Average percentage of abandoned calls $\leq 5\%$

D. Complaint Rate and Resolution

Customer complaints involving an Energy Efficiency Utility shall be subject to resolution in accordance with the statutory procedures established under 30 V.S.A. § 208. Complaint resolution protocols as defined under this SQRP are intended to comply with the statutory procedures. Should any application or interpretation of SQRP protocols conflict with

statutory procedure requirements, the statutory requirements will take precedence.

The term “complaint” does not necessarily indicate a negative interaction *directly with Efficiency Vermont*. For example, Efficiency Vermont may receive a complaint concerning the product or services of an Efficiency Vermont contractor or partner. In those cases, an Efficiency Vermont representative may contact the contractor / partner on behalf of the customer. These “third party” complaints, although not directly attributable to Efficiency Vermont service performance, are included in the SQRP.

If a customer contacts Efficiency Vermont to express dissatisfaction, an Efficiency Vermont representative will investigate the allegation to determine whether the customer dissatisfaction is due to a deficiency in the service quality or responsiveness of Efficiency Vermont or its contractor as per the Complaint Determination and Tracking Guidelines agreed upon between Efficiency Vermont and the Department.

If it is determined that the expression of dissatisfaction is not due to any deficiency in the service quality or responsiveness of Efficiency Vermont or its contractor, the Efficiency Vermont Representative will track the communication as feedback and work to resolve the issue without tracking the issue as a complaint.

If the contact is determined to be due to a deficiency in the service quality or responsiveness of Efficiency Vermont or its contractor, Efficiency Vermont will deem the contact a complaint, and track it.¹

Occasionally, Efficiency Vermont may not be able to resolve a complaint to the satisfaction of the customer. In these cases the customer may file a complaint with the Department. Efficiency Vermont commits to provide the Department contact information (and forms, if appropriate) to the aggrieved customer in such cases. Efficiency Vermont will also notify the Department that a complaint referral has been made, and will designate a single Efficiency Vermont contact person for all complaint-related communications with the Department. Efficiency Vermont retains responsibility for tracking the complaint through resolution. If no such resolution occurs within sixty days of the filing of a written complaint, Efficiency Vermont shall refer the complaint to the Commission for review. A customer also has the right to file a complaint with the Commission if there is no resolution or the customer is dissatisfied with the resolution.

Efficiency Vermont commits to meet or exceed the following complaint rate and resolution standards, based upon Efficiency Vermont internal tracking of all complaints received per calendar year quarter:

METRIC 7: Next-business day follow up assurance for contact that requires additional internal follow-up

*Percentage of complaint follow-up attempts by end of next business day
≥ 95%.*

³ Metrics 7 and 8 apply only to complaints registered with Efficiency Vermont. If a customer contacts the Department with a complaint Efficiency Vermont and the Department will coordinate appropriate complaint follow up.

Metric 8: Complaint processing time

Percentage of complaints closed within 12 business days of initial complaint \geq 95%.

METRIC 9: Complaint ratio

For each reporting year, the ratio of total complaints received per total number of Efficiency Vermont participants shall not exceed 0.5% (one-half of one percent).

IV Measurement, Reporting and Compliance Protocol

- A. Monitoring periods for Metrics 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 shall be calendar year quarters, with quarterly reports for the first, second, and third quarters submitted to the Commission and the Department in alignment with EEU quarterly reporting requirements as identified in Section 2 of Appendix B of the *Process and Administration of an Energy Efficiency Utility Order of Appointment (P&A Document)*.² The fourth quarter report will be submitted with the savings claim summary by April 1 of the year following the end of the quarter. Monitoring periods for Metrics 1 and 2 shall be every three years, as indicated above, and reported with the savings claim summary on April 1 of the year following the end of the performance period. Monitoring periods for Metrics 3 and 9 shall be every year, as indicated above, and be reported with the savings claim summary by April 1 of the year following the end of the quarter.
- B. The parties will jointly develop a reporting format. A minimum quarterly performance standard shall be considered met if, in each quarter's reporting, the 3-month average met or exceeded the standard. Achievement of minimum annual performance standards shall be determined on the basis of a twelve-month average as calculated at the end of the reporting year. Efficiency Vermont will continue its current practice of submitting quarterly "Voice of the Customer Complaint and Feedback Report" to the Department.
- C. If any annual or performance period standard (Metrics 1, 2, 3 and 9) is not met, Efficiency Vermont shall, by the time of the filing of the savings claim summary of the reporting year in which this provision is triggered, submit a detailed Corrective Action Plan (CAP) indicating how it will remedy the failed standard. Any CAP will be subject to Department approval.
- D. If any quarterly performance metric is not met for two consecutive quarters, or if one quarter's performance substantially deviates from the standard (see table in E., below), Efficiency Vermont shall, by the time of the filing of the quarterly report of the quarter in which this provision is triggered, submit a detailed CAP indicating how it will remedy the

² The P&A Document is a comprehensive document that describes the procedural and administrative framework for all EEU Orders of Appointment. The Process and Administration Document is intended to be a "living document" that is revised when changes are made to the EEU Program. As of December 2023, the P&A Document was last amended on December 27, 2022 in Case No. 22-1647-PET. To find the most recent version of the P&A Document in ePUC, click on "[Search Orders](#)," type "process and administration" in the "Title of Order" field, and click the search button.

failed standard. Any CAP will be subject to Department approval and must include a quarterly progress reporting mechanism until quarterly performance is restored to compliant levels.

- E. Substantial deviation from a quarterly performance metric for one reporting period will trigger a CAP based on the following standards:

<u>Metric</u>	<u>Substantial Deviation Definition</u>
4	Average speed to answer calls ≥ 20 seconds
5	Average percentage of calls answered $\leq 75\%$
6	Average percentage of abandoned calls $\geq 7\%$
7	Percentage of complaint follow-up calls attempted by end of next business day $\leq 86\%$
8	Percentage of complaints closed within 12 business days of initial complaint call $\leq 86\%$

- F. Any Cap pertaining to sub-standard performance in Metrics 4, 5 or 6 (contact center performance) will include an analysis of customer contacts and contact center staffing for the period of substandard performance and a description of staffing adjustments to be made in order to restore performance to compliant levels.
- G. Any CAP pertaining to sub-standard performance in Metric 7 (complaint follow-up) will include either:
- An analysis of contact volumes and contact center staffing for the period of substandard performance and a description of staffing adjustments to be made in order to bring performance back into compliance with standards; or,
 - A training plan for complaint handling policies and procedures; or,
 - Both a. and b., depending upon the nature of the performance issue as determined via detailed, root-cause analysis of the problem by Efficiency Vermont.
- H. For any CAP pertaining to sub-standard performance in Metrics 1, 2 and 3 (general and transactional customer satisfaction), corrective actions will be determined via detailed, root-cause analysis of the problem by Efficiency Vermont and may include staffing adjustments, training programs or other actions as deemed appropriate by Efficiency Vermont and as approved by the Department.
- I. Annually, Efficiency Vermont shall submit an annual SQRP “roll-up” report of all metrics, including a narrative summary of the year’s performance and activities with the submission of the annual savings claim summary.

- J. Performance shall be evaluated and reported to one decimal place for all performance areas unless otherwise specified. Actual performance shall be rounded up when the second decimal place is greater than or equal to 5. Efficiency Vermont shall retain all of its reports that support the results for each of the performance areas for a period of not less than 36 months after the results are reported. Efficiency Vermont shall provide these reports upon request to the Commission and Department.
- K. Efficiency Vermont shall review with the Department any changes to Efficiency Vermont measurement protocol or to the internal reporting methods that are used to obtain the data prior to Efficiency Vermont’s implementation of such changes.
- L. Efficiency Vermont may seek a waiver of any applicable performance standard from the Department. A waiver may only be granted based on exceptional circumstances. The burden shall be upon Efficiency Vermont to demonstrate that its level of preparedness and response was reasonable considering the cause of the failure.

V Service Quality Compensation

Failure to meet the performance standards of Metrics 1 through 9 over the course of the 3-year Performance Period shall result in the reduction of the total performance incentive award through the Service Quality Quantifiable Performance Indicator (QPI). Each metric will be assigned points as outlined in the table below.

Metrics that are measured quarterly (Metrics 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8) will receive one point for each quarter that the performance standards are met. If the performance standards for that metric are not met during that quarter, no performance points will be awarded for that quarter.

Annual Metrics (Metrics 3 and 9) will be assigned four points for each year that the performance standards are met. If the performance standards are not met for annual Metrics that year, the points that would be achieved for that year will be forfeited.

The Customer Support Metrics (Metrics 1 and 2) will be measured every three years to correspond with the performance period. If General Customer Satisfaction Metrics are met (as defined in section III.A.) over the course of the performance period, 12 points will be assigned to each Metric. If the Customer Support Metrics are not met during the course of the performance period, the points for that part of the Metric will be forfeited.

The maximum service quality compensation that VEIC will be held accountable for over the course of the performance period is \$150,000.

<u>Metric #</u>	<u>Metric</u>	<u>Reporting Period</u>	<u>Performance Points to count toward Financial Award in Performance Period</u>	<u>Total Metrics in Performance Period</u>

1	Percentage of Residential Customers who contact Efficiency Vermont Customer Support are satisfied or very satisfied	Reported once every 3 years	12 for each reporting period	12
2	Percentage of Business Customers who contact Efficiency Vermont Customer Support are satisfied or very satisfied	Reported once every 3 years	12 for each reporting period	12
3	Satisfaction Upon Project Transaction Completion	Reported Annually	4 for each of 3 reporting periods	12
4	Average Speed to Answer Calls	Reported Quarterly	1 for each of 12 reporting periods	12
5	Percentage of Calls Answered	Reported Quarterly	1 for each of 12 reporting periods	12
6	Call Abandonment Rate	Reported Quarterly	1 for each of 12 reporting periods	12
7	Next Business Day Follow-Up Assurance	Reported Quarterly	1 for each of 12 reporting periods	12
8	Complaint Processing Time	Reported Quarterly	1 for each of 12 reporting periods	12
9	Complaint Ratio	Reported Annually	4 for each of 3 reporting periods	12
Total	Performance Points Possible			108

Based on this point system, it is possible for Efficiency Vermont to achieve a maximum of 108 points over the course of the performance period. The financial penalty is structured as follows:

- If Efficiency Vermont loses up to 16 points for the performance period, it will not incur a financial penalty.
- If Efficiency Vermont loses more than 16 performance metric points, during the performance period, it will incur a financial penalty of \$1,630 per point to a maximum penalty of \$150,000.

This structure is outlined in the table below.

VEIC Structure				
Points Lost Range	Points in Range	% of Points	\$ Penalty per point	Maximum Penalty
0-16	16	15%	\$ -	\$ -
17-108	92	85%	\$ 1,630	\$ 150,000
		100%		
108	108	Maximum Penalty		\$ 150,000