Clean Energy NH currently has funding (October 2022 through September 2026) from the USDA Rural Development “Rural Community Development Initiative” program to provide our services to municipalities whose 2010 median household income was below 80% of the state average. Bethlehem is one of those towns.

In supporting you, the Energy Circuit Rider (Melissa) can bill time to that grant. Note: we are able to offer our staff time to help you pursue and complete municipal energy projects, but we do not have funding available to pass on directly to municipalities.

We can only bill our time to this grant if we have a signed **“Assurance Agreement”** from the town on file. So far, Whitefield, Stratford, and Gorham have signed Assurance Agreements. In signing this form, nothing would change on your end, but it would allow Clean Energy NH to bill any time spent assisting Bethlehem to this grant, therefore supporting Clean Energy NH.

Signing the **“Assurance Agreement”** does not obligate the town to any financial or administrative grant reporting.

Here’s some context:

**Why does an Assurance Agreement need to be signed?** The way this grant is structured, any community we provide technical assistance to under this grant is considered a “recipient” of services, and by extension, a recipient of federal funding. From a compliance perspective, USDA requires all “recipients” to sign an Assurance Agreement.

**What are you agreeing to by signing?** Our contacts at USDA explain that the assurance agreement is about three things:

1. Assuring the government that you don’t and won’t discriminate. They specifically cite anti-discrimination rules from [Title VI of the Civil Rights Act](https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/fair_housing_equal_opp/title_vi_civil_rights#:~:text=Title%20VI%20of%20the%20Civil%20Rights%20Act%20of%201964%20provides,activity%20receiving%20federal%20financial%20assistance.)  and [7 CFR Part 15](https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-7/subtitle-A/part-15).
2. Assuring the government that you are able to receive federal services (e.g. you are not delinquent on federal debt)
3. Agreeing to be available and willing to speak with USDA about the services you received from Clean Energy NH, should they ever want or need to reach out. This might happen as part of USDA’s compliance review of Clean Energy NH, for example.

**Who will have access to your signed form?**

* Your signed form will be on file at Clean Energy NH and at the Vermont / New Hampshire USDA Rural Development office, and only in a folder specifically related to the active USDA grant Clean Energy NH is operating under.
* USDA assures us your signed form will only live in that grant folder (as in, this form or the fact that you signed this form will not be shared with the federal government, it only lives in the file with our grant records)
* USDA assures us that the grant file is only active as long as the grant term, so the assurance agreement goes away when the grant is over.