



“Explore The Trades Skills Lab, Built by Ferguson”

About the program:

Explore The Trades is focused on bridging the technical talent gap to the service trades of plumbing, heating, cooling and electrical. Ferguson is committed to strengthening the communities it serves with a focus on the skilled trades. Together, both organizations are dedicated to building the next generation of plumbers and HVAC technicians.

Explore The Trades would like to thank Ferguson, as the program’s founding donor, for their continued support. This program will create new and refurbished plumbing and HVAC classrooms, in middle schools and high schools, throughout North America. We are pleased that this program is beginning its fourth year in building partnerships - and technicians - in our own communities.

The focus behind this program is to introduce the trades to middle and high school students and give them the opportunity to build a foundation of trades education.

New this year, Explore The Trades has partnered with [SkillCat](#) to further enhance the student experience and complement existing curriculum. All school recipients will receive free access to SkillCat’s platform - this encompasses the instructor and students in the plumbing or HVAC classes. Access to the platform will take place during the academic year (approximately nine months).

SkillCat is an app-based training program for those looking to begin, or develop, their careers in the trades. With various certifications available like EPA 608, OSHA-10, and trade school diploma programs, SkillCat is making trades education possible, which makes their place in the Skills Lab program a great fit.

The “Explore The Trades Skills Lab, Built by Ferguson” program will accept applications from October 1, 2024 - March 31, 2025. Recipients will be announced on May 7, 2025.

Who is eligible?

Middle and high schools (grades 6-12) located in the U.S. and Canada, including public, private, CTE or charter schools. Schools that have received a Skills Lab award in the past 24 months are not eligible.

If a school wishes to participate, but isn't able to "open" the skills lab for the 2025-2026 school year, is that OK?

Equipment needs to be ordered by **July 31, 2025**. All skills labs, both new and refurbished, need to be operational for student use by Fall 2024 (before December 31, 2025).

How many skills labs will be created?

Those applying for a new skills lab may submit a grant application worth up to \$25,000 of equipment, products, and consumables. For those schools applying to refurbish an existing plumbing or HVAC lab, they may submit a grant application worth up to \$10,000 of equipment, products, and consumables.

How do recipients receive equipment?

Once recipients are selected, they will be matched with the closest Ferguson branch and then equipment, products, and consumables may be selected. **Schools must be in contact with their respective Ferguson branch by July 1st, 2025. The identified Ferguson branch and representative will work with the school to arrange delivery of the items.** Explore The Trades will review the final quote prior to ordering and will pay the Ferguson store directly.

Does the recipient school pay Ferguson for the order?

No. Once the order is created, Explore The Trades will review the quote prior to order submission and manage the payment directly with the Ferguson branch. The recipient school is not responsible for any payment.

May multiple orders be placed with the grant award throughout the year?

No. One order must be placed for the entirety of the grant amount awarded. Equipment orders are due to Explore The Trades by **July 31st, 2025** so equipment is ready for the start of the school year.

How will recipient schools select the equipment and products for their skills lab?

Recipients will have the ability to design their skills lab based on the equipment options available. The equipment selections must fit into the skills lab space and be identified on the proposed classroom floor plan.

Recipients may use the Ferguson website as a guide, but will finalize product and equipment details, pricing, and delivery with their respective Ferguson branch contact.

For those schools who are submitting applications for refurbishments, information is required for space refurbishments and/or equipment and product requests.

After being selected as a recipient of the equipment, will there be follow-up reporting to complete?

Yes. The recipient may expect to provide success metrics up to three times during the academic year. Regular reporting may include but is not limited to: student and/or instructor surveys, number of students enrolled in the class, student success rate for completing tasks and skills, student and/or instructor testimonials about the new skills lab, in-person and/or virtual site visits.

May the equipment be installed in a different space other than the recipient school?

No. The equipment and products are intended only for the recipient school and must be installed on-site.

The applicant school has an established relationship with a local contractor. May the contractor use some of the grant funding to request equipment from Ferguson for the company's training needs?

No. All equipment requested must be installed and used at the identified school. Please note that all equipment requests must match the application and proposed skills lab floor plan and curriculum.

May funds be allocated towards classroom supplies or small construction projects for a skills lab space?

Yes; however, this amount must not exceed 10% of the grant award.

How will our school access the free training from SkillCat?

Each recipient school will be emailed a registration link in Summer 2025. Schools have the option to receive free access if they choose. After signing up for access, an orientation call will be organized from SkillCat that will review how to utilize the program.

Who should individuals contact with questions?

Kate Cinnamo, Executive Director: katec@explorethetrades.org or 651-789-8518

Maddy Sorenson, Project Coordinator: maddys@explorethetrades.org or 651-314-3856