



## “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 skilled tradespeople.

The focus behind this program is to bring hands-on trades education to middle and high school students and give them the opportunity to develop lifelong skills that can be turned into a career.

Explore The Trades would like to thank [Ferguson](#), as the program’s founding donor, for their continued support. Ferguson is a North American Fortune 500 company and a leading distributor of HVAC and plumbing products. This program, founded in 2021, creates new and refurbished skilled trades classrooms in middle schools and high schools throughout North America. We are pleased that this program is beginning its fifth year in building partnerships – and technicians – in our own communities.

Explore The Trades is proud to continue our partnership with [SkillCat](#) to further enhance the student experience and complement existing curriculum. All school recipients receive free access to SkillCat’s online, accredited training platform for both instructors and students during the academic year (approximately nine months).

SkillCat offers certifications like EPA 608 and OSHA-10, helping students build foundational skills and prepare for careers in the trades.

The “Explore The Trades Skills Lab, Built by Ferguson” program will accept applications from October 1, 2025 – March 31, 2026. Recipients will be announced on May 6, 2026.

### **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 previously are not eligible.

### **How many labs will be created?**

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

The number of equipment awards allocated are directly proportional to the number of applications submitted.

### **How does the equipment process work?**

Once recipients are selected, each school will be matched with the nearest Ferguson branch to handle the order.

### **What is the timeline for receiving equipment?**

Schools will be paired with a Ferguson branch by July 1, 2026 and it's recommended that orders are placed by **July 31, 2026**. Please note that order shipments will be arranged between the school and their Ferguson contact. All skills labs, both new and refurbished, need to be operational for student use by Fall 2026.

### **If a school is selected for a Skills Lab grant, but can't begin the Skills Lab for the 2026-2027 school year, what happens?**

If a school is selected for a Skills Lab grant but isn't able to have the lab complete by Fall 2026 due to unforeseen circumstances, they may defer their equipment grant award for one year. If the school is not in a position to complete the lab after a deferment period, the grant award is forfeited.

### **How will recipient schools select the equipment and products for their skills lab (new and refurbished)?**

Recipients will have the ability to design their skills lab and order equipment, tools, and consumables best suited for their curriculum and space needs. 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.

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

No. Recipient schools will place one order and are encouraged to use as much of their equipment grant as possible. Equipment orders are due to Explore The Trades by **July 31, 2026**, to ensure materials are ready for the start of the school year.

**Please note:** Schools are strongly encouraged to use as much of their grant award as possible when placing their equipment order. Any remaining funds cannot be saved for subsequent orders.

**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. (\$2,500 is available for new Skills Labs, and \$1,000 is available for refurbished Skills Labs).

**Does the recipient school pay Ferguson for the order?**

No. Once the order is created, Explore The Trades will manage the payment process directly with Ferguson. The recipient school is not responsible for any payment.

**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.

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

Yes. The recipient should expect to provide success metrics up to three times for a period of two years. 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.

### **How will our school access the free training from SkillCat?**

Each recipient school will be emailed a registration link in Summer 2026. 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?**

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