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Community Engagement Plan Guidance

Version 1

Vermont Environmental Justice Law (3 V.S.A. Ch. 72)

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Environmental Justice Coordinator
Agency of Natural Resource, Civil Rights and Environmental Justice Unit
ANR.EJCoordinator@vermont.gov

For other state agencies interested in receiving support on implementing meaningful participation, please reach out to the [Community Engagement Community of Practice](#).

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Part 1: Foundations

Introduction to this Guidance

This Guidance supports implementation of the Vermont Environmental Justice (EJ) Law (3 V.S.A. Ch. 72). The VT EJ Law requires all covered agencies under the Law to develop Community Engagement Plans. This Guidance helps covered agencies develop Community Engagement Plans that support meaningful participation in State decision-making processes and improve relationships with Vermont communities.

This Guidance establishes a shared foundation for engaging communities across State government while recognizing that each agency has different responsibilities, capacity, expertise, and relationships with the communities it serves. Rather than prescribing a single approach, it provides common principles and practices that agencies can adapt to their own work and community context.

A Community Engagement Plan is not a public involvement plan for a single project, permit, rule, or decision. Rather, it is an agency-wide management framework that describes how an agency will build the internal capacity, relationships, policies, and practices necessary to support meaningful community engagement across all of its work.

Community engagement is an ongoing practice of learning, listening, reporting back, and improving. Community Engagement Plans provide a consistent foundation for engagement while remaining flexible enough to respond to different communities, situations, and opportunities.

See [Appendix A](#) for a complete background on the VT EJ Law, the Community Engagement Plan deliverable, and the development of this Guidance.

How to Use this Guidance

This Guidance is intended to help covered agencies develop agency-wide Community Engagement Plans. The Plan establishes the agency's shared commitments, expectations, and approach to engaging communities and serves as the foundation for future engagement efforts.

This document provides recommendations, practical considerations, and tools that agencies can adapt to their own work. Not every recommendation will apply in every

situation. Agencies are encouraged to use this Guidance thoughtfully, considering their responsibilities, the purpose of engaging communities, and the communities involved.

As you move through this Guidance, consider how each recommendation aligns with your agency's values, goals, and commitments. Strong community engagement is built on relationships, transparency, meaningful participation, and continuous learning. These principles should guide the development of your Community Engagement Plan and the engagement efforts that follow.

Goals of a Community Engagement Plan

The [Core Principles of Community Engagement](#) establish the values and expectations that should guide meaningful community engagement across covered agencies. Community Engagement Plans are the primary mechanism through which covered agencies can implement those principles by integrating them into agency policies, organizational practices, and day-to-day decision-making.

While each agency's Community Engagement Plan will reflect its unique mission, statutory responsibilities, and the communities it serves, all plans should advance a common set of implementation goals that directly support the Core Principles of Community Engagement. The following goals are intended to support agencies at every stage of implementation, whether they are strengthening existing engagement practices or building new systems and capacity.

Build Lasting Relationships and Trust

Speaks to: Core Principles 2, 5, and 6

Community Engagement Plans should help agencies develop long-term, reciprocal relationships with communities. Effective plans also help agencies recognize community members as experts in their own lived experience and prioritize sustained engagement with communities that have historically experienced disproportionate environmental burdens or barriers to participation.

Strengthen Coordination

Speaks to: Core Principle 4

Community Engagement Plans should strengthen coordination within agencies, across the ten covered agencies, and with trusted community partners. Agencies should

prioritize building upon existing relationships, sharing resources where appropriate, and coordinating engagement whenever practicable to reduce unnecessary duplication.

Reduce Burdens on Communities

Speaks to: Core Principles 1, 4, 8, and 12

Covered agencies should learn from and build on previous engagement to reduce engagement fatigue. This includes reviewing existing data and coordinating with other agencies whenever possible. Agencies should engage communities through trusted community networks and existing gatherings whenever practicable.

Build Internal Capacity

Speaks to: Core Principles 3 and 11

Community Engagement Plans should help agencies develop the systems and capacity to consistently implement the Core Principles of Community Engagement across programs, divisions and regional offices. This includes building leadership support, staff knowledge, internal coordination, training, staffing, and organizational systems.

Promote Accessible and Inclusive Participation

Speaks to: Core Principles 7 and 9

Community Engagement Plans should establish agency practices that make participation meaningful and accessible. This includes:

- reducing barriers to participation,
- providing appropriate language and accessibility accommodations,
- recognizing and compensating community expertise where appropriate, and
- designing engagement processes that are inclusive of the communities the agency seeks to serve.

Preserve Knowledge and Build Upon Community Knowledge

Speaks to: Core Principles 1, 2, 5, and 8

Community Engagement Plans should establish processes for documenting and learning from previous engagement, preserving knowledge, and ensuring agencies build upon existing relationships and community input rather than starting over with each new initiative.

Improve Transparency, Accountability, and Continuous Improvement

Speaks to: Core Principles 10, 3, and 4

Community Engagement Plans should establish processes for communicating how community input informed agency decisions, explaining when and why recommendations can or cannot be implemented, evaluating engagement practices, sharing lessons learned across agencies, and continuously improving implementation over time.

Definitions

Accessibility: The practice of designing spaces, services, information, and experiences so they can be used and understood by as many people as possible.

Community engagement: The process of working together with and alongside groups of people to address issues that affect their lives and well-being.¹ Authentic partnerships amongst government agencies and communities of people that nurture relationships, build trust, ensure equity, and lead to sustainable outcomes and improvements.²

Covered agency: Ten state agencies, departments, and bodies directed by the VT EJ Law to develop Community Engagement Plans by July 1, 2027.

Decision-making: The process of making choices that shape plans, policies, services, programs, or outcomes.

Environmental justice: All individuals are afforded equitable access to and distribution of environmental benefits; equitable distribution of environmental burdens; and fair and equitable treatment and meaningful participation in decision-making processes, including the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies (see [Appendix B](#) for full statutory definition)

Environmental justice focus population: Any census block group in which:³

¹ [Community Engagement Guide](#), page 5.

² [Community Engagement Initiative California, Definition of Community Engagement](#).

³ 3 V.S.A § 6002 (4). **Note on terminology:** The phrases “people with limited English proficiency” and “people with LEP” are commonly used in federal and state law. The Vermont Office of Racial Equity does not recommend using the term “limited English

- the annual median household income is not more than 80 percent of the State median household income;
- Persons of Color and Indigenous Peoples comprise at least six percent or more of the population; or
- at least one percent or more of households have limited English proficiency.

Key partner: People, groups, or organizations who may influence or be affected by a decision, policy, program, or process.⁴

Meaningful participation: All individuals have the opportunity to participate in... decision-making (see [Appendix B](#) for full statutory definition).

Program evaluation: The process of understanding what is working well, what could improve, and how a program or engagement effort is affecting people and communities.

Systemic barriers: Policies, practices, systems, or cultural norms that make it harder for some groups of people to access opportunities, resources, or decision-making power.

Technical Assistance and Support Available

Covered agencies are encouraged to use collaboration and technical assistance to support this work. Technical assistance and consultation are available throughout the process of preparing for, drafting, and implementing a Community Engagement Plan. Agencies are encouraged to reach out early and often, rather than waiting until a draft Plan is underway.

Technical assistance is advisory support provided to help covered agencies understand and apply this Guidance as they prepare, develop and implement a Community Engagement Plan. It may include answering questions, discussing approaches, identifying resources and tools, providing training, and helping agencies think through implementation challenges.

proficiency” or “LEP”. Instead, this Guidance uses the phrase “people who speak languages other than English.” See Vermont Office of Racial Equity, [2023 Language Access Report](#), pg. 15.

⁴ **Note on terminology:** This Guidance does not use the word “stakeholder,” due to its origins in colonialism that harm indigenous communities to this day. Instead, it uses “key partners.” For more information on moving away from the term “stakeholder,” please see [Research Impact Canada](#).

Technical assistance does not include developing, drafting, or approving an agency's Community Engagement Plan; determining the content of the Plan, including its goals, priorities, engagement strategies, timelines, or implementation approach; conducting engagement activities or making decisions on the agency's behalf; or otherwise performing responsibilities assigned to the covered agency.

ANR Civil Rights and Environmental Justice Unit

For covered agencies with questions, concerns, or requiring technical assistance on the contents of this Guidance or on developing a Community Engagement Plan, please contact the Environmental Justice Coordinators at ANR.EJCoordinator@vermont.gov.

Both are Environmental Justice Coordinators with the Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) Civil Rights and Environmental Justice Unit (CREJU) and can help covered agencies think through any of the preparatory steps above, including scoping a team, developing an assessment (and its look-ahead forecast), using the Community Engagement Inventory Tool, and identifying training or capacity needs. CREJU can also connect agencies with the staff who administer the statewide Community Engagement Inventory Tool for hands-on support using the tool.

The Interagency Environmental Justice Committee

The [Interagency Environmental Justice Committee](#) (IAC) is made up of one representative from each of the ten covered agencies. In addition to the coordination role described above, the IAC is a resource that agencies can draw on directly: agencies can bring questions, draft approaches, or implementation challenges to a monthly meeting, or reach out to their agency's IAC representative or the ANR CREJU between meetings to request assistance.

The Environmental Justice Advisory Council

The [Environmental Justice Advisory Council](#) (AC) is the advisory body established under the VT EJ Law to bring community and environmental justice expertise to covered agencies' work, and its recommendations must be taken into consideration in developing Community Engagement Plans.

Under 3 V.S.A. § 6006(d)(1), each AC member is well informed about environmental justice principles and committed to working collaboratively to achieve environmental justice in Vermont, and the Council as a whole is intended to represent diversity in race, ethnicity, age, gender, urban and rural areas, and different regions of the State, with a goal that more than half of members reside in environmental justice focus populations.

Agencies can request AC consultation or technical assistance through CREJU, which coordinates outreach to the AC on agencies' behalf, or by raising the request at a [VT EJ Law public meeting](#).

The IAC and AC also partner on Working on Excellence (WOE) initiatives, which pair AC and IAC members to provide more sustained, hands-on assistance to individual covered agencies as they develop and implement their Community Engagement Plans. Agencies interested in this kind of paired support should raise it with their IAC representative or CREJU.

Community Engagement Community of Practice

Agencies can also receive support on community engagement practices through the [Community Engagement Community of Practice](#). The purpose of the Community Engagement Community of Practice is to foster collaboration and shared learning among professionals involved in building and sustaining relationships with communities. This community provides a forum for State of Vermont employees to exchange best practices, explore innovative strategies, and address challenges specific to community engagement, including outreach, stakeholder involvement, equitable participation, and feedback integration.

Part 2: Preparing to Develop a Community Engagement Plan

The planning process should begin well before drafting the Community Engagement Plan itself. This Guidance encourages agencies to use this preparatory process to understand how engagement with Vermonters currently happens across their agency. Doing so helps agencies identify opportunities for improvement and more fully implement the Core Principles of Community Engagement.

Community Engagement Plans will be most meaningful when they reflect not only community input, but also thoughtful internal reflection, cross-divisional collaboration, leadership support, and coordination with other covered agencies.

Effective community engagement begins inside the agency. Before engaging externally, agencies are encouraged to first “listen to themselves” — taking stock of the engagement activities, relationships, and knowledge that already exist across their own divisions, programs, and regional offices. This internal awareness, built primarily through the agency-wide Community Engagement Assessment described below, and in the future through the Community Engagement Inventory Tool, helps agencies avoid asking communities to repeat information already known elsewhere in the agency, and lays the foundation needed to coordinate effectively with other covered agencies.

The preparatory activities outlined below are intended to help agencies build a foundation for developing Community Engagement Plans that are practical, collaborative, and sustainable. These are recommendations, not mandatory requirements: agencies should adapt them to fit their agency's size, structure, existing practices, and available resources.

Getting Started

The VT EJ Law requires covered agencies to have a Community Engagement Plan in place by July 1, 2027 (3 V.S.A. § 6004(c)). To meet this deadline, agencies are encouraged to begin the preparatory work described in this part as soon as possible. The steps below, listed in a recommended order, outline the work agencies may complete before drafting their Plan.

1. **Build organizational commitment.** Identify a senior leadership champion, communicate leadership's commitment to the process, and allocate staff time and resources.
2. **Organize a Community Engagement Planning Task Group** with representatives from across programs, divisions, and regional offices, coordinated with your agency's IAC representative.
3. **Develop an agency-wide Community Engagement Assessment** covering every department and division to understand your agency's existing engagement.
4. **Coordinate planning and build on existing knowledge**, including across government through the IAC and consult on an ongoing basis with the AC.
5. **Use the Community Engagement Inventory Tool** on an ongoing basis, so agencies can learn from one another.
6. **Build organizational capacity** (staff knowledge, training, and organizational systems) needed to support implementation.
7. **Confirm agency readiness** using the reflection questions in [Appendix C](#).

Agencies do not need to complete these steps in strict sequence, and several may occur at the same time. However, agencies are strongly encouraged to substantially complete steps 1 through 7 before drafting their Plan, so that the Plan reflects genuine organizational learning and coordination rather than being written in isolation.

Agencies also do not need to complete this work alone — technical assistance and consultation are strongly encouraged and available at every step. For more information on this, see the [Technical Assistance and Support Available section](#).

Step One: Build Organizational Commitment

Meaningful community engagement is not solely the responsibility of communications staff, public participation specialists, or individual program managers. It is an agency-wide responsibility that requires leadership support, shared ownership, and coordination.

Agency leadership should understand:

- the purpose of the VT EJ Law;
- the role of Community Engagement Plans in implementing the Law;
- how meaningful participation supports better decision-making, transparency, and public trust;
- the agency's responsibilities under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act and related accessibility requirements; and

- the importance of dedicating sufficient staff time, resources, and organizational support to implement the Community Engagement Plan.

Leadership should communicate that developing the Community Engagement Plan is not simply a compliance exercise, but an opportunity to improve how the agency works both internally and with communities over the long term.

Recommended preparatory activities:

- Identify a senior leadership champion who will visibly support development and implementation of the Community Engagement Plan.
- Designate a planning lead responsible for coordinating development of the Plan.
- Communicate leadership's commitment to the planning process and establish expectations for participation across the agency.
- Allocate sufficient staff time, resources, and organizational support for development and implementation of the Plan.
- Develop an internal workplan that identifies roles, responsibilities, timelines, and key planning milestones.
- Identify existing agency priorities, strategic initiatives, policies, and organizational efforts that align with the Community Engagement Plan goals, or that may need to shift to support meaningful participation.
- Identify potential organizational barriers or resource needs that should be considered during plan development.

Step Two: Organize an Agency Community Engagement Plan Task Group

Although each covered agency designates a representative to the IAC, developing a Community Engagement Plan should not rest with one individual.

Community engagement occurs across many parts of state government. Planning for meaningful participation therefore requires perspectives from across the agency. Establishing a Community Engagement Plan Task Group helps ensure the Plan reflects the agency's collective knowledge, promotes coordination across programs and divisions, and builds shared ownership for implementation.

Task Group Composition

Task Groups should include representatives from the programs, divisions, regional offices, and functions that routinely interact with or make decisions affecting the public. Depending on the agency's structure, this may include staff responsible for:

- permitting,
- grants,
- compliance and enforcement,
- planning,
- rulemaking,
- operations,
- communications,
- civil rights,
- public information,
- customer service,
- regional offices,
- and other program areas with community-facing responsibilities.

Agencies should also consider including leadership representatives who can help facilitate organizational decision-making and implementation.

The size and composition of the Task Group should reflect the agency's organizational structure while ensuring representation from the areas responsible for developing, implementing, or supporting community engagement activities.

Task Group Responsibilities

The Community Engagement Plan Task Group should coordinate development of the Community Engagement Plan by:

- overseeing completion of the agency-wide Community Engagement Assessment;
- identifying organizational strengths, opportunities for improvement, and agency-wide priorities;
- understanding the allowable processes and procedures for compensating Community Members
- coordinating communication and information sharing across departments, divisions, and regional offices;
- reviewing draft materials and developing recommendations for leadership consideration; and
- supporting implementation, monitoring, and future updates to the Community Engagement Plan.

While the Task Group coordinates development of the Plan, responsibility for meaningful community engagement remains shared across the agency.

At the outset of the planning process, agencies are encouraged to establish clear roles and responsibilities for Task Group members. Responsibilities may include:

- gathering information from assigned divisions or offices,
- reviewing draft materials,
- identifying opportunities for coordination,
- communicating with colleagues throughout the agency, and
- supporting implementation of the final Community Engagement Plan.

Planning Task Group Operations

Agencies are encouraged to establish a regular meeting schedule for the Task Group throughout development of the Community Engagement Plan. Regular meetings help maintain momentum, facilitate collaboration across organizational units, provide opportunities to review findings and emerging issues, and support timely decision-making.

Before beginning substantive planning activities, agencies should also establish how planning decisions will be made, including:

- how recommendations will be developed,
- how differing viewpoints will be resolved, and
- when leadership review or approval is needed

Establishing these expectations early helps promote transparency, accountability, and efficient Plan development.

Agency-Wide Participation

Although the Task Group coordinates development of the Community Engagement Plan, meaningful participation should extend beyond its members. Staff throughout the agency possess valuable knowledge about existing engagement activities, community relationships, organizational challenges, and lessons learned.

Agencies are encouraged to provide opportunities for staff across the agency to contribute information, review findings, and identify opportunities for improvement throughout the planning process. Drawing upon a broad range of staff experience helps ensure the Community Engagement Plan reflects the agency's collective knowledge rather than the perspectives of a single office or program.

Agency-wide participation will be particularly important during development of the community engagement assessment. For more information on this, see the [Develop an Agency-wide Community Engagement Assessment section](#).

Role of the IAC Representative

The agency's IAC representative can serve as the primary coordinator of the planning effort while helping connect agency work with statewide coordination occurring across the ten covered agencies.

In addition to coordinating across agencies, the IAC representative can help facilitate coordination within their own agency by encouraging communication across divisions, identifying opportunities to share engagement findings, elevating recurring themes, and helping ensure that community knowledge gathered by one program can inform the work of others where appropriate. Agency leadership should support the IAC representative in fulfilling this coordinating role.

Step Three: Develop an Agency-wide Community Engagement Assessment

Speaks to: Core Principle 3

Before developing new engagement strategies, agencies should first develop an agency-wide Community Engagement Assessment. The purpose of the Assessment is to equip the Community Engagement Plan Task Group with the information it needs to develop an informed, agency-specific Community Engagement Plan. The Assessment does this by documenting how, where, and by whom community engagement currently occurs throughout the agency. This includes the policies, procedures, resources, staff capacity, and community relationships that support engagement.

Because engagement is often decentralized across departments, divisions, regional offices, and programs, agencies may not otherwise have a complete picture of their overall engagement system. Engagement can exist in separate areas of permitting, rulemaking, advisory bodies, grant programs, planning initiatives, inspections, technical assistance, outreach, and partnerships. A comprehensive Assessment brings this information together in one place, helping the Task Group recognize existing strengths, identify opportunities for coordination, and ensure the Community Engagement Plan builds upon existing practices rather than duplicating or overlooking them.

What Should Be Included in the Assessment

The Community Engagement Assessment should provide a comprehensive picture of the agency's current community engagement system.

At a minimum, agencies should document:

- Existing community engagement activities and programs;
- Departments, divisions, regional offices, and programs that engage the public,
- Staff responsible for community engagement, including dedicated engagement positions and other staff with engagement responsibilities;
- Existing community engagement policies, procedures, guidance documents, and standard operating practices;
- Advisory committees, councils, boards, task forces, and other standing engagement bodies;
- Recurring public meetings, workshops, listening sessions, and engagement events;
- Existing community partnerships and collaborative networks;
- Community engagement tools and platforms (mailing lists, websites, surveys, mapping tools, notification systems, social media channels, etc.);
- Community engagement databases, contact lists, and records management systems;
- Translation, interpretation, accessibility, and other engagement support resources;
- Community engagement data, reports, and information previously collected,
- Existing trainings, curricula, and policies related to community engagement broadly and pertaining to specific agency functions, such as rulemaking, permitting, grantmaking, or other processes with public participation requirements;
- Complaint, grievance, and other community-initiated feedback mechanisms. This should include Title VI and other nondiscrimination complaint procedures, public records request processes, constituent inquiry processes, hotlines, and other mechanisms through which community members provide feedback or raise concerns;
- Engagement the agency can reasonably anticipate over the next one to two years (such as rules, permits, grants, contracts, standing committees etc.).

How to Develop the Assessment

The Community Engagement Plan Task Group should coordinate development of the Assessment using a consistent process across the agency. While individual departments, divisions, programs, and regional offices are responsible for providing

information about their own engagement activities and resources, the Task Group can be responsible for compiling the information, identifying agency-wide patterns, and developing the overall Assessment.

To develop the Assessment, agencies should:

- Collect information across the agency.
 - Identify every department, division, program, and regional office that interacts with the public.
 - Designate a point of contact within each organizational unit, if practicable.
 - Gather input from staff at multiple organizational levels, including leadership, program and regional staff, and frontline employees utilizing qualitative and quantitative tools such as staff surveys and listening sessions.
- Use a consistent template or format across departments and divisions so information can be compared within the agency and across organizational units and, where appropriate, across covered agencies.
 - ANR's Civil Rights and Environmental Justice Unit will make available the inventory template developed for ANR as a resource that agencies may adapt to meet their own needs. CREJU may also offer joint office hours, in coordination with the AC and IAC, to discuss the inventory and assessment process. (see the [Technical Assistance and Support Available section](#)).
- Compile agency wide information.
 - Document information consistently for each organizational unit, including engagement activities, communities engaged, frequency of engagement, staff responsible, organizational resources that support engagement, and the overall impact of the engagement.
 - Organize the information by department or division before preparing an agency-wide summary so differences in engagement practices remain visible.
- Review the Inventory. As you develop or update your Assessment, review the Community Engagement Inventory Tool (see [Use the Community Engagement Inventory Tool](#)) so that what your agency has already heard from communities in the past — and what other agencies have already heard from those same communities — informs your own findings. Because the Inventory Tool is still new, this becomes more valuable with each update, as more agencies contribute their engagement history.
- Review and synthesize the information.

- Review the information collectively to identify organizational strengths, successful engagement practices, recurring community concerns, opportunities for coordination, staffing and training needs, resource gaps, and anticipated future engagement.
 - Share the completed assessment with agency leadership for review and use the findings to inform development of the Community Engagement Plan.
- Contribute to statewide learning.
 - Enter the documented information into the statewide Community Engagement Inventory Tool (see [Utilize the Community Engagement Inventory Tool section](#)) so agencies can contribute to statewide learning and coordination.

See [Appendix D](#) for examples of community engagement assessments completed by other covered agencies.

Analyze the Assessment and Develop Agency-wide Findings

Once the Assessment is complete, the Community Engagement Planning Task Group should review the findings collectively to develop an agency-wide understanding of how community engagement currently occurs across the organization. The purpose of this review is not to evaluate individual programs or staff, but to identify organizational patterns, strengths, opportunities, and needs that will inform development of the Community Engagement Plan.

While the Assessment provides an important foundation, documentation alone may not fully explain how community engagement occurs in practice. Agencies are encouraged to conduct internal listening sessions and surveys with staff where additional context is needed. These steps can help interpret findings, validate observations, and identify strengths, challenges, opportunities for coordination, and organizational needs that may not be evident from documentation alone. To support consistent agency-wide findings, listening sessions should use a common set of guiding questions tailored to the agency's work. Questions could address how engagement occurs in practice, barriers to meaningful participation, successful approaches, opportunities for coordination, and staffing, training, or resource needs.

The Task Group's Analysis should consider questions such as:

- What community engagement strengths already exist across the agency?
- What successful engagement practices should be maintained or expanded?

- Where do opportunities to improve coordination across departments, divisions, programs, or regional offices exist?
- Where are engagement practices inconsistent across the agency?
- What staffing, training, technical assistance, or resource needs are evident?
- What accessibility, language access, or other barriers may limit meaningful community engagement?
- What recurring community concerns or themes have emerged through previous engagement?
- Which existing community relationships and partnerships should be strengthened or leveraged?
- What organizational resources, tools, or systems should be shared more broadly across the agency?
- What engagement activities anticipated over the next one to two years may require additional planning or coordination?

The Task Group can synthesize the Assessment into agency-wide findings that identify:

- Organizational strengths,
- Opportunities for improvement,
- Opportunities for coordination across the agency,
- Existing community relationships and partnerships,
- Successful engagement practices,
- Recurring community concerns,
- Staffing, training, and organizational capacity needs,
- Accessibility and language access needs,
- Resource gaps,
- Priorities that should be addressed through the Community Engagement Plan.

Agencies should document assessment findings and listening session outcomes to reflect agency-wide patterns. Results should be presented as synthesized, anonymized themes rather than comments attributed to individual staff or specific programs. The completed Assessment and agency-wide findings should be shared with agency leadership and used by the Community Engagement Plan Task Group to establish goals, priorities, implementation strategies, and resource needs for the Community Engagement Plan.

Step Four: Coordinate Planning and Build on Existing Knowledge

Speaks to: Core Principles 4, 8

Many Vermont communities interact with multiple covered agencies, often on related issues. Community Engagement Plans are intended to strengthen not only engagement within individual agencies, but coordination across government. By building upon existing knowledge and coordinating planning and engagement efforts, agencies can reduce duplicative outreach, improve consistency where appropriate, and lessen unnecessary burdens on communities. Whenever practicable, the responsibility for coordination should rest with government rather than with the communities it serves. Understanding when and how coordination should be prioritized is an important step in preparing to write your Community Engagement Plan.

Coordinate Development of the Plans Across Agencies

Community Engagement Plans should model the coordination they are intended to create. Rather than each covered agency independently drafting, releasing, and seeking public comment on their Plan in isolation, agencies are encouraged to develop their Plans within a common, coordinated framework.

A coordinated approach can include:

- a shared statewide planning framework and common core Plan components (see [Part 3](#));
- consistent terminology and definitions (see [Definitions](#));
- coordinated timelines for drafting and public review, where practicable;
- joint public review opportunities for shared elements; and
- opportunities for agencies to learn from one another throughout Plan development and implementation, including through the IAC and AC.

Developing Plans within a common framework reduces review fatigue for communities, creates a more consistent experience for Vermonters navigating multiple agencies, and makes Plans easier to compare and continuously improve over time. This does not mean every agency's Plan should look identical — agencies should still tailor their Plan to their own mission, statutory responsibilities, and the communities they serve (see [Part 3](#)).

Covered agencies are also encouraged to build collaboration and co-learning into their plan development. These tools reduce duplicative efforts and provide further support to the goal of uniform experiences for Vermonters when they engage with state entities. Collaborative activities could include:

- share planning approaches and training resources;

- identify overlapping engagement efforts, including through the look-ahead forecasts described above;
- coordinate timelines where practicable;
- discuss common implementation challenges;
- exchange lessons learned;
- identify opportunities for joint engagement or training;
- share outreach strategies and trusted community contacts;
- identify opportunities for shared facilitation or technical assistance;
- coordinate communications and public notices; and
- promote consistency while respecting agency-specific responsibilities.

Coordinate Through the Environmental Justice Interagency Committee

The IAC exists to guide and coordinate how covered agencies implement the Environmental Justice State Policy. Agencies are encouraged to use the IAC to support co-learning, leverage resources, and facilitate more uniform outcomes for communities. In addition to this coordination role, the IAC is a resource that agencies can draw on directly; bring questions, draft approaches, or implementation challenges to a monthly meeting, or reach out to your agency's IAC representative or the ANR CREJU between meetings to request assistance.

Before initiating new engagement, agencies should also ask whether the engagement can be coordinated with another agency's effort (see [Doing Your Research](#)).

Consult the Environmental Justice Advisory Council

Community Engagement Plans are required to take into consideration the recommendations of the AC (See [Appendix A](#) for a complete summary of the Community Engagement Plan deliverable requirements). AC members are appointed under 3 V.S.A. § 6006(d)(1) to bring lived experience along with community, municipal, Tribal, and statewide organizational expertise, directly into covered agencies' planning and decision-making.

Consultation with the AC should be viewed as an ongoing component of Community Engagement Plan development rather than a single review of a completed draft. For more information see the [Technical Assistance and Support Available](#) section.

The AC can assist agencies by:

- identifying recurring statewide themes;

- highlighting common barriers experienced by communities;
- sharing successful engagement practices;
- identifying opportunities for statewide coordination; and
- informing future improvements to guidance, training, and implementation.

The AC meets monthly, with roughly four meetings each year held jointly with the IAC, providing agencies with regular opportunities for consultation throughout Community Engagement Plan development. For more information or to attend a public meeting, see the [VT EJ Law Event Calendar](#).

Coordinate Through Existing Community Infrastructure

Coordination should also include recognizing and building upon Vermont's existing community engagement infrastructure. Whenever appropriate, agencies should consider partnering with trusted organizations, community liaisons, and existing community networks rather than creating entirely new or stand-alone engagement processes.

Building relationships with Vermont's existing community engagement infrastructure at the organizational level — before any single engagement comes up — means staff aren't starting over each time they engage with communities. Some of the specific partners to draw on for a given engagement are described in [Identifying Key Partners](#); building on those relationships can improve participation, reduce engagement fatigue, and strengthen trust between communities and the State.

Step Five: Use the Community Engagement Inventory Tool

Speaks to: Core Principles 4, 8

The [Community Engagement Inventory Tool](#) was created to help reduce the burden on Vermonters by supporting coordination, collaboration, and shared learning across State government. It was developed collectively through participants in the [Community Engagement Community of Practice](#) with support from the Chief Performance Office and Office of Health Equity.

Across agencies and departments, State employees are conducting interviews, facilitating advisory groups, gathering public input, partnering with community organizations, and learning directly from Vermonters. The Community Engagement Inventory Tool helps State employees:

- Learn from engagement efforts happening across State government
- Identify opportunities for collaboration and coordination
- Reduce duplicative outreach to communities
- Build on existing relationships and lessons learned
- Support more thoughtful, effective, and equitable engagement

Using the Inventory is one way we can do our homework before and during engagement. It helps us understand what has already been learned, coordinate with one another, and approach communities with greater intention and respect.

Building the Habit into Your Plan

As part of preparing to develop a Community Engagement Plan, agencies should identify:

- who within the agency will be responsible for checking the Inventory before new engagement is planned; and
- who within the agency will be responsible for uploading information to the Inventory after engagement concludes.

Step Six: Build Organizational Capacity

Speaks to: Core Principles 3, 11

Building organizational capacity is an ongoing process, not a one-time planning activity. The goal is to improve an agency's long-term ability to engage communities meaningfully, consistently, and effectively. This requires capacity beyond individual staff training to include leadership support, staffing, organizational policies, internal coordination, resources, technology, partnerships, and systems for continuous learning.

For example, agencies may identify staff training needs related to plain language communication, cultural humility, accessibility and language access, or trauma-informed engagement. Agencies should begin with the trainings, policies, and resources already identified in the Assessment (see [Develop an Agency-wide Community Engagement Assessment](#)) — including existing trainings or policies tied to rulemaking, permitting, or other public participation requirements — rather than creating new curricula from scratch.

Agencies should use development of the Community Engagement Plan as an opportunity to identify both existing strengths and areas where additional organizational capacity may be needed to fully implement the Core Principles. The development of a

Community Engagement Plan establishes an expectation of meaningful opportunities for participation that agencies can be held accountable to.

Step Seven: Confirm Agency Readiness Before Drafting

Before drafting a Community Engagement Plan, agencies are encouraged to reflect on whether they have established the organizational foundation necessary to support meaningful participation — including having completed the steps described in this section. See [Appendix C](#) for reflection questions on agency readiness before drafting a Community Engagement Plan.

Agencies are also encouraged to carry this preparatory work forward into the Plan itself — for example, by referencing the agency's Assessment in the Plan's approach to staff training, coordination, and continuous improvement — so that this preparatory work directly informs ongoing implementation rather than serving only as a one-time exercise.

Compensation of Community Members

Compensating community members reduces barriers such as lost wages, childcare, transportation, or technology access, and recognizes the value of lived experience in shaping public programs.

Compensation can:

- Increase participation and sustained engagement
- Reduce financial barriers
- Recognize lived and community experience
- Improve program and policy outcomes
- Strengthen relationships and trust between communities and government

Compensation is intended for **active contribution**, not general participation. Activities that are eligible for compensation can include:

- Focus groups, listening sessions, or interviews
- Advisory councils, steering committees, or workgroups
- Workshops or community conversations designed for public input

Not all participation requires compensation. In general, compensation is not provided when participation is more passive or when input is not being actively solicited for decision-making. Examples of activities typically not compensated include:

- General public attendance at events without a participatory role
- Passive receipt of information (e.g., webinars, public briefings)
- Voluntary civic participation where no direct input is requested

Note: submitting public comment or testimony as part of a formal rulemaking or hearing process is not a compensable activity.

Agencies should provide compensation in a timely manner. Where possible, covered agencies should work towards community members receiving payment within 30 days of their having participated in an engagement.

A more detailed compensation resource is in development for state agencies. In the meantime, agencies with compensation questions are encouraged to contact CREJU (see [Technical Assistance and Support Available](#)).

Current State of Vermont Compensation Rates

Statutory Boards, Commissions, and Advisory Bodies

Under 32 V.S.A. § 1010, members of legislatively mandated boards, commissions, and advisory bodies may receive per diem compensation for official duties. Vermont law establishes a **minimum per diem of \$50 per day**. Agencies can use their discretion to provide additional compensation. Compensation can cover attendance at meetings, meeting preparation (such as review of materials), and post-meeting follow-up.

Non-Legislatively Mandated Engagement

There is currently no standardized rate for compensation for non-legislatively mandated community engagement activities. As with statutory boards above, preparation and travel time should be counted as compensable time, not just time spent in the room, so that participants are not effectively paid a lower rate for the same engagement.

When determining the rate, compensation should reflect the value of community members' time, lived expertise, and contributions. Compensation amounts may be informed by several factors, including:

- Living wage data (e.g., Burlington estimates)
- Level of expertise
- Preparation time, travel, and coordination
- Market rates for comparable work

How Can Participants Be Paid?

There are two main methods for compensating participants for participation in community engagement. Two payment methods are available below. Programs are encouraged to offer both and let the participant choose. See description of methods below. Note that Method 1 may be the only realistic option for some participants and should not be treated as a lesser choice. Method 2 requires providing a Social Security or Individual Taxpayer Identification Number, which is not accessible or comfortable for every community member.

Method 1: Fiscal Agreement with Community Partner

Agencies can enter into a grant or contractual agreement with a Community Partner who can distribute payment to participants. Recognizing when to support community partners to conduct engagements themselves honors and builds upon the relationship and expertise held by communities. The form of payment through community partners can be more flexible and can include gift cards, checks, etc.

Method 2: Direct Payment from the State to the participating Community Member

Requires:

- Supplier setup in [VISION](#)
- [IRS Form W-9](#) (wet signature required)

Payment options:

- Mailed check
- Direct deposit ([ACH form required](#))

What Are the Tax and Reporting Considerations?

- Individuals receiving \$2,000 or more annually in compensation from the State of Vermont will receive a Form 1099 (federal reporting threshold increased from \$600 to \$2,000 per payee for 2026 payments).
- Payments are cumulative across State agencies and departments
- Staff is responsible for informing participants of potential tax implications but cannot provide tax advice
- Participants should consult a tax professional

Participants should be informed that payment or a stipend are available and they may choose whether or not to receive it. This ensures transparency while allowing individuals to decline compensation if they prefer.

Opt-in information, including whether compensation is reportable income, should be shared with participants in plain language and, where feasible, in their preferred language, before they decide whether to receive payment. Staff are responsible for informing participants of potential tax and other implications (including but not limited to eligibility for SNAP, TANF, SSI) but cannot provide tax advice.

Part 3: Sections of a Community Engagement Plan

These recommended elements of a Community Engagement Plan were informed by existing plans from across the state and an analysis of recurring strengths, gaps, and capacity needs. The recommendations are designed to build on what agencies are already doing while providing clearer and more practical guidance to support community engagement efforts moving forward.

There are many quality examples of what a Community Engagement Plan can look like or how one could be organized. See [Appendix E](#) for a list of example Community Engagement Plans. Covered agencies can draw on these examples to design and organize their own Community Engagement Plans.

Section One: Introduction

The Introduction provides important context for agency staff and community members who read the Community Engagement Plan. It explains why the Plan exists, what it is intended to accomplish, and how it will be used. A strong Introduction helps readers understand the agency's approach to engagement and the role the Plan plays in supporting meaningful participation.

The Introduction can also establish transparency by describing how the agency has engaged communities in the past and how the Community Engagement Plan will strengthen or guide future engagement efforts.

What should covered agencies include in their Introductions? In a Community Engagement Plan, the Introduction should:

- Answer the question: What does this Community Engagement Plan do?
 - **Example:** “This Community Engagement Plan describes how [AGENCY] will design and carry out inclusive, non-discriminatory, meaningful public participation in all its community engagement efforts. This Plan applies to all [AGENCY] efforts to engage with members of the public, focusing on those engagements that impact the outcomes of decision-making processes at [AGENCY].”
- Briefly summarize legal requirements the Plan intends to meet.

- **Example:** “This Plan is intended to ensure compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and to provide meaningful participation opportunities according to the Vermont Environmental Justice Law (3 V.S.A. Ch. 72). To fulfill its obligations under 3 V.S.A. Ch. 72, this Plan provides particular attention to environmental justice focus populations as defined under the Law.”
- Briefly outline how your agency has engaged with communities in the past and how the Community Engagement Plan will impact that approach to engagement. This will transparently communicate the intentions behind the Plan and the aspirations the agency has for the Plan.
- Briefly outline what is included in the Community Engagement Plan, referencing the topics and sections covered in the Plan.

Section Two: Values and Commitments

Values and Commitments statements communicate how an agency approaches community engagement and what community members can expect when working with the agency. They help establish a shared culture of engagement by describing the principles and behaviors that guide staff when building relationships, gathering feedback, and making decisions.

Well-crafted Values and Commitments statements can help create consistency across engagement efforts while demonstrating the agency's commitment to meaningful participation, transparency, and accountability.

What should covered agencies include in their Values and Commitments statements? Covered agencies should use this as an opportunity to outline the agency's values and commitments when providing opportunities for meaningful participation or executing community engagement efforts. They should highlight values that are specific to the nature of the agency's work. To develop Values and Commitments statements, ask yourself: What values should the agency highlight and uphold when engaging with the public?

Value or Commitments statements should be:

- **Action-oriented:** These statements should focus on practical and achievable actions that lead to better engagement outcomes (for example: “be responsive”)
- **Concise and memorable:** Keeping the statements short (1-2 sentences) makes them easy to recall and therefore easier for agency staff to adhere to.
- **Timeless:** These statements should be enduring values rather than short-term goals. They should not be specific to a time-bound circumstance.

- **Plain language:** These statements should be simple and must be easily understood by all readers.

Section Three: Policy Statement

A Policy Statement establishes agency expectations for when and how staff will prioritize inclusion of communities' perspectives and input across scopes of work. The Policy Statement provides a foundation for consistent implementation across programs, projects, and initiatives. It communicates the agency's commitment to meaningful participation and helps ensure engagement efforts align with both agency goals and legal requirements.

The Policy Statement establishes an accountability mechanism for agencies to be held to. A clear Policy Statement can help staff and community members understand how engagement should be conducted and what standards the agency seeks to uphold.

What should covered agencies include in their Policy Statement? A Policy Statement should include:

- A statement of agency policy – What expectations or standards should all covered agency employees adhere to when implementing engagement efforts?
- A definition of meaningful participation (see [Definitions](#) section)
- Citation of the legal framework upholding the Plan and Policy:
 - Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
 - VT EJ Law (3 V.S.A. Ch. 72)
 - Other agency-specific legal requirements for public participation
- Reference to other guiding policies and principles for the covered agency:
 - Core Principles of Community Engagement
 - Covered agency Language Access Policy
 - Other covered agency accessibility or civil rights policies
- An acknowledgement of room for improvement
- Incorporation of an opportunity for public feedback, including opportunities to file a complaint

See [Appendix F](#) for an example Policy Statement agencies can use as part of a Community Engagement Plan.

Section Four: Legal Background

While the Policy Statement merely cites the legal framework upholding the Plan and Policy, the Legal Background provides a description of that legal framework. This establishes a legal justification for proper implementation of the Plan and provides transparent communication to community members as to the legal context of the Plan. This provides a helpful and easy reference for members of the public who may not be familiar with the laws that are cited in the Policy Statement, but ensures that the Policy Statement remains brief.

What should covered agencies include in their Legal Backgrounds? A Legal Background should provide a description of the legal mandates that the Plan seeks to satisfy. Specifically, covered agencies should address the VT EJ Law and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 in their Legal Backgrounds, at a minimum. If a covered agency chooses to include other relevant legal context specific to their work, that is encouraged.

See [Appendix G](#) for an example Legal Background agencies can use as part of a Community Engagement Plan.

Section Five: Engagement Process

The elements described above provide the foundation for every Community Engagement Plan. The planning steps that follow are different. Rather than prescribing a single approach, they offer a framework to help staff make thoughtful decisions about how to engage communities in different situations.

Meaningful community engagement requires both consistency and flexibility. While every engagement effort is unique, the goal remains the same: to create meaningful opportunities for Vermonters to participate in decisions that affect them. Staff should adapt their approach based on the purpose of the engagement, the communities involved, and what they learn throughout the process. Agencies may also choose to develop project-specific workplans (commonly referred to as “public involvement plans”) for each discrete engagement based on this outlined engagement process.

Most engagement efforts include four key steps:

1. Prepare for engagement,
2. Design engagement activities,
3. Facilitate engagement,
4. Learn, adapt, and follow through after engagement.

Step One: Preparing for Engagement

Scoping & Budgeting for Adequate Capacity

Creating conditions for meaningful participation often begins long before agency employees work directly with communities. Best practice is to plan as much as possible to ensure both the agency and communities have adequate resources and notice for meaningful participation. This time scale will look different depending on the scope of work; for example, permitting processes have tighter windows and are episodic. Resource allocation programming often has a much longer planning and implementation runway.

Planning ahead can include:

- Mapping out future engagements to support coordinated efforts
- Budgeting for compensation early and any time possible
- Understanding staff capacity and resource availability and limitations

Scoping helps agencies to understand why they may be engaging communities. This in turn supports appropriate scaling of engagement. Starting engagement without enough staff time, budget, or decision-making clarity can lead to rushed or transactional processes and inhibit meaningful participation.

Scoping may include:

- identifying the purpose of the engagement;
- assessing available staff, time, and budget;
- understanding decision-making timelines; and
- evaluating agency readiness to receive and use feedback.

The goal of this preparatory work is to make sure agencies are prepared with the framework, resources, and mindset needed to execute meaningful participation processes.

Note: Procedural requirements, statutory deadlines, procurement requirements, permitting procedures, public notice requirements, and federal program rules may sometimes limit or determine what's possible for a given engagement. Agencies are responsible for identifying the requirements that may shape their engagements. These legal requirements do not always align with community needs for meaningful participation. Agencies need to identify ways to reduce the inequities in these processes. For support with this, reach out to your agency's legal team and seek technical assistance. See [Technical Assistance and Support Available](#).

Reflection Questions:

- What decisions can communities meaningfully inform?
- What level of engagement is appropriate?
- Are timelines realistic for meaningful participation?

Identifying the Reasons for Engaging

Setting goals means identifying the explicit reasons for engaging communities. To do this, agencies should consider the end result: What are you hoping to achieve? What would success look like for the agency and for the community? Clear goals help shape:

- engagement methods,
- outreach strategies,
- facilitation approaches, and
- evaluation processes.

Examples of reasons why agencies engage communities may include:

- building relationships;
- sharing resources;
- improving a policy or program through gathering feedback (for example, on rules and permitting); or
- understanding community priorities and identifying the barriers communities experience.

Reflection Questions:

- What are we hoping to learn?
- What decisions will this engagement inform?
- What does successful engagement look like?

Doing Your Research

Speaks to: Core Principles 4, 8

Doing your researching means developing an understanding of the topic that you are intending to engage communities on. This also means prioritizing learning from previous work that has been done across the state related to this topic. This step helps agencies understand:

- previous engagement efforts,
- historical relationships between communities and the State, and
- prior harms, frustrations, or successes.

Researching history also helps agencies avoid repetitive and extractive engagement. It is recommended you use this [Community Engagement Inventory Tool](#) as a starting place to learn from peers about previous State of Vermont engagement efforts.

The Inventory works best when agencies use it in both directions: checking it before planning new engagement and adding your own engagement efforts afterward. Rather than a one-time reference, it should become a routine part of how agencies plan, coordinate, and learn together.

Reflection Questions:

- What feedback have communities already shared that is relevant to your scope?
- Are these communities experiencing engagement fatigue?
- Has another agency already engaged this community?
- What reports or recommendations already exist? What remains unknown even after checking available records?
- What have communities already told us through complaints, grievances, or constituent inquiries on this topic?

Establishing Information Use Expectations

Speaks to: Core Principles 2, 6

Community knowledge gathered through engagement and shared through the internal Assessment or the Community Engagement Inventory Tool should be treated as an institutional asset. This is data that government should work to remember. As agencies prepare to use the Community Engagement Inventory Tool and other tools to preserve community knowledge, they should also establish clear expectations for how that information is handled, including:

- attribution — whether and how input is connected to specific individuals or organizations;
- anonymity and confidentiality — how sensitive or personally identifiable information is protected;
- culturally sensitive information — additional care for information tied to Tribal or cultural knowledge;
- data stewardship and retention — who is responsible for maintaining shared information and how long it is kept; and
- appropriate sharing — what level of detail (individual comments versus high-level themes) is shared internally, across agencies, or publicly.

Agencies are encouraged to preserve recurring themes, recommendations, barriers, successful practices, agency responses, and lessons learned at a high level, rather than individual comments or attributed statements, consistent with the approach described in Develop an Agency-wide Community Engagement Assessment, above.

Coordinating Across Agencies

Speaks to: Core Principle 4

Before initiating new engagement, agencies should also ask whether the engagement can be coordinated with another agency's effort. For example, agencies can coordinate by:

- participating in one another's meetings,
- holding joint listening sessions where appropriate,
- coordinating outreach and timelines,
- or developing shared communications or outreach materials.

Identifying Communities

Speaks to: Core Principle 6

Identifying communities means understanding who a decision affects and who should be engaged in that work. It also means considering which communities have historically held power and had a voice at the table, and who has not. The goal is to ensure that agency engagement with communities includes those who have not historically been heard. This is vital in reducing barriers for invested or impacted communities to engage in decision-making processes directly. Agencies can rely on the Environmental Justice Mapping Tool (forthcoming) and other related maps to support this effort.

When identifying communities, agencies should consider:

- Does a community stand to benefit or be harmed by this decision, policy, program, or project?
- Who has historically had access to decision-making?
- Who may have been excluded?
- What barriers may affect participation?

Reflection Questions:

- Who is most impacted by this legislative, rulemaking or permitting decision or resource allocation?

- Whose voices may be missing?
- What barriers may communities face in benefitting from a decision, policy, or resource?

Identifying Key Partners

Speaks to: Core Principle 6

Identifying key partners means developing an understanding of who else could support the goals of your scope of work — including whether the State needs to convene this engagement directly, or whether it would be better served by supporting an existing trusted liaison or partner.

A community liaison model is recommended to build strong communication channels and relationships with Vermont communities. The community liaison model focuses on intentional relationship building with a community leader or entity who can support bridging gaps between state agencies and communities.

Community liaison relationships should be built over time following the same principles outlined in this guidance. Additionally, community liaisons should be compensated for their expertise and effort in working with agencies. How they are compensated can vary and may include monetary compensation via a contract or receiving capacity support from the agency for their own work. For more information, please see the [Compensation of Community Members](#) section.

Community liaisons may include:

- community-based organizations,
- local leaders,
- service providers,
- municipalities,
- watershed organizations,
- cultural organizations,
- libraries,
- schools,
- neighborhood organizations,
- faith communities,
- Tribal governments,
- Natural Resource Conservation Districts,
- Conservation Commissions,
- Regional Planning Commissions,

- other State agencies, and
- trusted community connectors/liaisons.

Strong partnerships can:

- improve outreach,
- reduce engagement fatigue,
- improve trust, and
- support more reciprocal engagement.

Step Two: Designing Engagement

Building Relationships with Communities

Speaks to: Core Principles 1, 5, 7, 10

Creating conditions for meaningful participation requires strong relationships. Like any other part of our work, building relationships is a skill that can be learned, practiced, and strengthened over time.

In practice this includes:

- showing up consistently,
- practicing transparency,
- meeting people where they are,
- avoiding tokenism,
- using trauma-informed approaches, and
- remaining accountable.

Reflection Questions:

- Where is trust building needed?
- Who will maintain continuity over time?
- How will staff communicate transparently?

Addressing Access Considerations

Speaks to: Core Principle 9

There are many barriers that can make decision-making processes inaccessible for communities. Identifying access considerations is a crucial step in creating conditions

for meaningful participation. Agencies should proactively prepare to meet community members' physical, mental and emotional needs to support engagement. This includes:

- Considering how much time communities need to digest information before responding;
- Choosing physically accessible and culturally relevant engagement locations;
- Choosing a variety of meeting times given typical work hours;
- Providing multiple opportunities for engagement at different times and/or in different formats to support access;
- Providing context and participation instructions in plain language
- Providing timely language access to people who speak languages other than English;
- Providing hard copies of materials as needed;
- Ensuring digital materials are accessible to all following [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.1](#);
- Clearly communicating that accommodations are available, and who community members can contact to receive or request support.

The goal of identifying access considerations is to give the agencies adequate time to create inclusive engagement opportunities and meet the needs of community members so they can participate meaningfully. Some communities experience systemic barriers that can be addressed through access considerations as well. A community liaison could be a helpful resource when identifying and addressing barriers to access.

Planning for Compensation

Speaks to: Core Principle 12

Compensating community members can reduce barriers to participation and help make community engagement more accessible and equitable. Incorporating compensation into project budgets early in the planning process is a current promising practice that helps ensure adequate resources are available and funding requirements can be met. Accordingly, compensation should be considered during the development of the Community Engagement Plan and included when planning for and requesting funding to help ensure it is feasible, timely, and appropriately administered.

Key considerations:

- Build compensation into grant proposals, contracts, or program budgets when possible
- Identify whether the funding source allows compensation

- Work with your agency or department's Business Office and/or Appointing Authority to understand budgeted and allowable expenses

Determining whether compensation is appropriate for a particular engagement, including who is eligible, what activities may be compensated, and appropriate compensation amounts, occurs during engagement planning. See [Compensation of Community Members](#) for more details on ensuring the systems and processes needed to administer compensation are already in place.

Matching Engagement Methods to Meet Community Needs

A Community Engagement Plan should identify how an agency will engage communities throughout the decision-making process.

Effective community engagement requires selecting methods that are appropriate for the purpose of the engagement, the communities involved, and the level of participation or decision-making authority available. Because communities have different needs, preferences, capacities, and lived experiences, engagement should be tailored rather than relying on a single approach. Using a combination of engagement methods can help reduce barriers to participation and provide multiple opportunities for community members to participate in ways that are meaningful and accessible.

Possible methods include:

- listening sessions,
- focus groups,
- advisory bodies,
- workshops,
- surveys,
- public comment opportunities,
- tabling at community events,
- one-on-one dialogue, and
- community-led meetings.

When selecting engagement methods, agencies should consider:

- the purpose and scope of the work;
- community's participation and decision-making authority;
- community preferences, interests, existing relationship;

- accessibility, language access, cultural, geographic, and scheduling considerations; and
- available staff, funding, time, and organizational capacity.

Agencies should also be transparent about the role community input will play in the decision-making process. In some cases, statutes, regulations, funding requirements, or other legal mandates may prescribe or limit engagement methods or constrain the extent to which community input can influence a decision. When these limitations exist, agencies should clearly communicate them while continuing to provide meaningful opportunities for participation within those parameters.

Informing Communities of Opportunities to Engage

Speaks to: Core Principles 5, 7, 11

Communities must know about opportunities to engage in decision-making before they can participate in them. Outreach encompasses mostly one-way information sharing and communication from agencies to communities. This step helps build awareness and invites communities into engagement opportunities.

Effective outreach:

- begins early,
- uses trusted communication pathways,
- provides clear and accessible information, and
- meets communities where they are.

It is recommended to use multiple outreach methods and communication formats whenever possible. To make outreach effective and accessible, agencies should consider:

- At **minimum** a consistent public notice location;
- Collaborating with community partners to share information
- Posting in physical locations where impacted or eligible communities gather
- Identifying and utilizing internet mediums (newsletter, listservs, etc.) used by community
- Utilizing staff capacity to coordinate on outreach activities

Step Three: Facilitating Engagement

Setting Expectations and Boundaries

Speaks to: Core Principle 10

Setting expectations means transparently communicating how community members can expect agency staff to engage with them. Setting boundaries means transparently stating how community input can influence decision-making, what it may inform, and any limits on how it can be used. The goal of setting expectations is to help agency staff and community members begin an engagement with a shared understanding of how agency staff can interact and the potential outcomes of the interaction, reducing confusion and miscommunication.

At the beginning of an engagement, agencies should communicate:

- how the engagement will function,
- what participants can expect,
- how feedback will be gathered,
- how staff will interact
- what decisions are open for influence,
- what limitations exist,
- what input gathered will be used for, and
- how feedback may or may not shape outcomes.

Clear expectations reduce confusion and support transparency.

Developing Community Agreements

Speaks to: Core Principle 10

Having community agreements establishes shared expectations for respectful participation and communication. Invite all participants (including key partners) to help shape or add to community agreements. These agreements can support:

- safety,
- accessibility,
- equitable participation, and
- respectful dialogue.

Community agreements may include:

- respectful listening,
- time-sharing expectations,
- accessibility practices, and
- processes for addressing harmful behavior.

Members of the public have the First Amendment right to express themselves, so long as they are doing so safely. Agency staff may address situations in which a member of the public is behaving in a way that is unsafe or disrupts others' ability to participate.

Step Four: Learning, Adapting, and Following Through After Engagement

Integrating Feedback

Speaks to: Core Principle 2

Integrating feedback means thoughtfully reviewing and applying community input where possible. The goal of integrating feedback is to make sure feedback is considered openly, fairly, and with an awareness of context. This includes past harms, existing relationships, and any assumptions agency staff may bring into the process.

This process should:

- remain open to lived expertise,
- consider historical context,
- challenge assumptions and bias, and
- evaluate how feedback may inform agency work.

Being Responsive

Speaks to: Core Principles 2, 10

Responsiveness means responding to feedback in a timely manner and maintaining communication after engagement. Being responsive does not always mean having all the answers right away. Sometimes it is simply acknowledging receipt of feedback and sharing what the next steps will be for their feedback.

Transparency is a key part of responsiveness. Being honest about what feedback you can incorporate is important. It is also important to be open about what feedback you cannot incorporate, or are choosing not to, and why.

Examples of responsiveness may include:

- follow-up emails,
- public summaries,
- updates on decisions,
- explanations of limitations, or

- descriptions of how feedback was used, such as a responsiveness summary.

Evaluating Engagements

Speaks to: Core Principle 11

Evaluation allows agencies to assess how the engagement went, and if the stated goals were met. Evaluation has multiple layers and should include understanding the impact on the scope or topic, the experience for agency staff and the experience for community members. Evaluation helps agencies understand:

- what worked well,
- what barriers remained,
- who participated, and
- what improvements may be needed.

Evaluation may include:

- participant feedback,
- participation data,
- accessibility assessments, and
- qualitative observations.

When evaluating the engagement, agencies should upload information about the engagement to the [Community Engagement Inventory Tool](#), sharing lessons learned. This allows agencies to learn from one another and improve engagements over time.

Adapting Approaches Based on Feedback

Speaks to: Core Principle 11

Agency engagements should be responsive to community feedback. Adapting an engagement strategy means adjusting the approach to engagement in response to obstacles, changing conditions, or signs that the current approach is not working as intended. Engagement strategies may need to change in response to:

- low participation,
- accessibility barriers,
- confusion,
- emerging community needs, or
- changing circumstances.

Adaptation helps agencies remain flexible and responsive. Robust engagement processes are adaptive. Willingness to adjust an engagement strategy is often a sign of responsiveness, not failure.

Appendices

Appendix A. Background

EJ and 3 V.S.A. Ch. 72

EJ is a framework grounded in [seventeen principles](#) adopted at the First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit in 1991. Central to this framework is the understanding that all individuals have the right to live, work, and play in environments that are safe, healthy, and thriving. EJ seeks to address systemic and structural factors that contribute to ways communities access environmental benefits.

The [Vermont EJ Law](#) (3 V.S.A. Ch. 72) is the state's first law specifically meant to address environmental health disparities and improve the health and well-being of all Vermont residents. A key part of the Law's approach to this is ensuring that communities in Vermont are able to meaningfully participate in decision-making across Vermont. To achieve this, the VT EJ Law requires covered agencies to develop and follow Community Engagement Plans that ensure meaningful participation for Vermont's communities.

The Community Engagement Plan Deliverable

According to the VT EJ Law, covered agency Community Engagement Plans must:

- Describe how the covered agency will engage with environmental justice focus populations (EJFPs) “as it evaluates new and existing activities and programs”;
- Describe how the covered agency plans to provide meaningful participation in compliance with [Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964](#);
- Be informed by [the Core Principles of Community Engagement](#); and
- Be developed in consultation with the Advisory Council.

The statutory deadline for the covered agency Community Engagement Plans is July 1, 2027 (3 V.S.A. § 6004(c)).

The Core Principles of Community Engagement detail twelve core principles that AC and IAC members identified as intrinsic to meaningful participation. These principles are central to guiding the development of covered agency Community Engagement Plans.

Development of the Community Engagement Plan Guidance

This guidance document was developed by the Community Engagement Subgroup between January and August of 2026. The members who participated in this Community Engagement Subgroup were:

- Kim Barrett, Agency of Natural Resources

- Juliet Birch, Agency of Natural Resources
- Jennifer Byrne, White River Natural Resources Conservation District (AC)
- Victor Davila, SlingShot (AC)
- Richarda Ericson, Department of Public Service
- Sarah McIlvennie, Agency of Agriculture, Food, and Markets
- Karla Raimundi, Agency of Natural Resources (IAC)
- Charlotte Safran, Department of Health
- Mariana Sears, Hunger Free Vermont (AC)

Appendix B. Full Statutory Definitions

Environmental justice: “All individuals are afforded equitable access to and distribution of environmental benefits; equitable distribution of environmental burdens; and fair and equitable treatment and meaningful participation in decision-making processes, including the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies. Environmental justice recognizes the particular needs of individuals of every race, color, income, class, ability status, gender identity, sexual orientation, national origin, ethnicity or ancestry, religious belief, or English language proficiency level. Environmental justice redresses structural and institutional racism, colonialism, and other systems of oppression that result in the marginalization, degradation, disinvestment, and neglect of Black, Indigenous, and Persons of Color. Environmental justice requires providing a proportional amount of resources for community revitalization, ecological restoration, resilience planning, and a just recovery to communities most affected by environmental burdens and natural disasters.” 3 V.S.A § 6002 (3)

Meaningful participation: “All individuals have the opportunity to participate in energy, climate change, and environmental decision-making. Examples include needs assessments, planning, implementation, permitting, compliance and enforcement, and evaluation. Meaningful participation also integrates diverse knowledge systems, histories, traditions, languages, and cultures of Indigenous communities in decision-making processes. It requires that communities are enabled and administratively assisted to participate fully through education and training. Meaningful participation requires the State to operate in a transparent manner with regard to opportunities for community input and also encourages the development of environmental, energy, and climate change stewardship.” 3 V.S.A § 6002 (6)

Appendix C. Reflection Questions for Agency Readiness to Develop a Community Engagement Plan

The following questions are intended as a planning tool rather than a compliance checklist.

- **Leadership and Organization:**
 - Has agency leadership demonstrated support for the Community Engagement Plan?
 - Has a cross-divisional Task Group been established?
 - Have appropriate staff and programs been included?
- **Internal Assessment:**
 - Has the agency inventoried its existing engagement activities?
 - Have internal listening sessions or other organizational assessments been completed?
 - Have agency-wide themes and opportunities been identified?
 - Has leadership reviewed the findings?
- **Statewide Coordination:**
 - Has the agency coordinated with the IAC?
 - Has the Community Engagement Inventory Tool been reviewed?
 - Has the agency considered existing engagement conducted by other agencies?
 - Has the agency identified opportunities to coordinate future engagement?
- **Consultation and Due Diligence:**
 - Has the agency reviewed recommendations of the AC?
 - Has existing community knowledge been considered before initiating new engagement?
 - Has the agency identified trusted community partners and existing engagement infrastructure?
- **Organizational Capacity:**
 - Have staffing, training, and resource needs been identified?
 - Are systems in place to document and share community knowledge internally?
 - Has the agency identified barriers that may affect implementation?

Appendix D. Example Community Engagement Assessments

- [ANR Community Engagement Survey](#) -- The Agency of Natural Resources used this survey to understand staff's current relationship with and methodology behind engagement. This survey could be helpful for agencies that do not already have a Community Engagement Plan and are seeking to gather foundational information that the Plan can build upon. Note: To explore all the questions in this survey, viewers must select a response to the first two questions.
- [AOT Survey Public Involvement Guide Update](#) -- The Agency of Transportation used this survey to collect information about their current Public Involvement Plan, allowing them to identify areas of improvement that are tailored to staff needs. This survey could be a valuable jumping-off point for covered agencies that already have a Community Engagement Plan, or something similar.
- [VDH Health Equity Assessment, Community-Led Approaches](#) -- The Vermont Department of Health Health Equity Team developed an assessment for their programs that included assessment of community engagement efforts at the department.

Appendix E. Example Community Engagement Plans

- [VDH Community Engagement Guide](#) -- This Community Engagement Guide created by the Vermont Department of Health provides a values-oriented look at community engagement, focused on mitigating barriers to access for members of the public. a values-oriented look at community engagement, focused on mitigating barriers to access for members of the public. a values-oriented look at community engagement, focused on mitigating barriers to access for members of the public.
- [VTrans Public Involvement Guide](#) -- This Public Involvement Guide created by the Agency of Transportation provides an operations-oriented look at the engagement process. This guide provides staff with step-by-step guidance to complete engagement.
- [White River NRCD Community Engagement Plan Template](#) -- This template created by the White River Natural Resource Conservation District provides a project-specific template for designing an engagement effort. While this template differs from the covered agency Community Engagement Plans under the Vermont Environmental Justice Law in that it is project-specific rather than applied to all engagement efforts across the agency, it still provides actionable

steps and example language that agencies could draw on to build their own Plans.

Appendix F. Example Policy Statement

[AGENCY]'s policy is to provide meaningful participation to the public in all its community engagement efforts. This policy complies with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Vermont Environmental Justice Law (3 V.S.A. Ch. 72). Meaningful participation means that all members of the public have the opportunity to participate in decision-making.

It is further the policy of the State of Vermont to provide the opportunity for the meaningful participation of all individuals, with particular attention to environmental justice focus populations, in the development, implementation, or enforcement of any law, regulation, or policy.

To support meaningful participation, [AGENCY] seeks to:

- provide transparent and accessible education and/or training;
- integrate diverse knowledge systems and cultures;
- incorporate public participation at timely moments in decision-making processes;
- minimize or remove barriers to participation;
- identify which communities are impacted most by the decisions in question; and support their ability to participate meaningfully.

[AGENCY] acknowledges the diverse needs of individuals engaging with the Agency and recognizes the importance of accommodations and services that make it possible for everyone to participate in [AGENCY]'s community engagement. To provide these, [AGENCY] will continue to implement its:

- [Agency Language Access Policy]
- [Other Agency accessibility or civil rights policies]

To offer quality community engagement, [AGENCY] commits to learning and growth in pursuit of continually improving our practices. In all its community engagement efforts, [AGENCY] is guided by the Core Principles of Community Engagement. If a member of the public has feedback to improve [AGENCY]'s community engagement and meaningful participation, they may direct their feedback to the staff person leading the community engagement, or to [EMAIL].

To file a discrimination or environmental justice complaint, please [reference appropriate step according to agency grievance procedure]"

Appendix G. Example Legal Background

“The Vermont Environmental Justice Law (Act 154 of 2022, 3 V.S.A. Ch. 72) requires covered agencies to create and adopt community engagement plans which align with the Core Principles of Community Engagement developed by the Interagency Environmental Justice Committee and in consultation with the Environmental Justice Advisory Council. 3 V.S.A. § 6004(c). The EJ Law also requires the plans to describe how the agency plans to provide meaningful participation in compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Title VI prohibits discrimination based on race, color, or national origin under any program or activity of a Federal financial assistance recipient. Discrimination includes excluding the public from participation in or denying benefits of programs or activities. Recipients of federal funding must comply with the implementing regulations and guidance from their federal funding agencies. [AGENCY] must ensure that it does not discriminate in the public participation processes of their programs and activities.

Example federal rule related to meaningful participation:

- The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s nondiscrimination regulations at 40 C.F.R. Parts 5 and 7 contain important “procedural safeguards,” which are legal requirements for recipients of EPA financial assistance. The procedural safeguards include providing meaningful access for persons with “limited English proficiency” and providing qualified persons with disabilities an equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from programs and activities.”

Appendix H. Complete List of Resources

- [3 V.S.A. Ch. 72, The Vermont Environmental Justice Law](#) -- This is the complete Vermont Environmental Justice Law as passed and amended.
- [ANR Language Access Plan \(2024\)](#) -- This resource was developed by the Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) to describe what ANR must do to provide language access to people who speak languages other than English. This Plan was developed in compliance with Title VI and is a key part of meaningful participation for communities.
- [ANR Language Access Card](#) -- This resource was developed by ANR to provide real-time language access services to people who speak languages other than English or who communicate using methods other than spoken language. This card is specifically for engagements with community members where staff do not have prior knowledge of an access need. This card helps bridge any in-the-

moment communication gaps and allows staff to get real-time interpretation services.

- [ANR Disability Nondiscrimination Plan \(2026\)](#) -- This resource was developed by ANR to describe what ANR must do to ensure equal opportunity for people with disabilities to access ANR's programs, services, and benefits. This Plan was developed in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and is a key part of meaningful participation for communities.
- [ANR Reasonable Accommodation Request Intake Form](#) -- This resource was developed by ANR to provide members of the public with disabilities a clear pathway for requesting an accommodation. Although ANR accepts accommodation requests in any form, this intake form provides members of the public with prompts of what information to provide as part of their request.
- [Connecting People to Power Report](#) -- This resource was developed by members of Rural Environmental Justice Informed by Community Expertise (REJOICE), including Center for Whole Communities (CWC) and the Vermont Law School Environmental Justice Clinic (VLS EJ Clinic) in partnership with Rights and Democracy Institute (RDI) as part of a contract with the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). In this document, the authors provide DEC with many recommendations to improve community engagement and, therefore, build good policy.
- [Core Principles of Community Engagement](#) -- This resource was developed by the AC and IAC and finalized in 2024. It outlines guiding principles that covered agencies should employ when preparing for engagements and when implementing engagements. Covered agencies should use these principles as the foundation of their Community Engagement Plans.
- [Community Engagement Community of Practice](#) -- The purpose of the Community Engagement Community of Practice is to foster collaboration and shared learning among professionals involved in building and sustaining relationships with communities. This community provides a forum for State of Vermont employees to exchange best practices, explore innovative strategies, and address challenges specific to community engagement, including outreach, stakeholder involvement, equitable participation, and feedback integration.
- [Community Engagement Inventory Tool](#) -- The Community Engagement Inventory Tool is designed to help State employees:
 - Learn from engagement efforts happening across government
 - Identify opportunities for collaboration and coordination
 - Reduce the burden placed on communities by duplicative outreach

- Build on existing relationships and lessons learned
 - Support more thoughtful, effective, and equitable engagement practices
- [Community Engagement Resources Folder](#) -- This is a folder on the Vermont Environmental Justice Public Resource Library that compiles helpful community engagement materials that covered agencies can use and reference in the development of their Community Engagement Plans.
- [Environmental Justice Advisory Council](#) -- This is the public page for the AC, providing an up-to-date roster of membership.
- [Environmental Justice Public Resource Library](#) -- This is the public database on which all materials related to the implementation of the Vermont Environmental Justice Law are made publicly available.
- Environmental Mapping Tool (forthcoming: January 1, 2028) -- The Environmental Justice Mapping Tool is a GIS tool that is ANR is required to develop according to the VT EJ Law. This tool will depict environmental justice focus populations, environmental burdens, and environmental benefits across the state. This tool could potentially inform covered agencies when deciding where in the state to engage communities on different topics.
- [EPA Public Participation Toolkit](#) -- This resource was created by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to support state partners in facilitating public participation. This resource compiles a series of tools and techniques that the EPA recommends for public participation.
- Guidance for Compensating Community Members (forthcoming) – Agency of Administration, Vermont Department of Health and Chief Performance Office staff are developing guidance regarding compensation of individual Community Members. As of August, 2026 this document is in the review and iteration process.
- [Guiding Principles for a Just Transition](#) -- This document was developed by the Vermont Climate Council, Just Transitions Subcommittee in 2021. This document outlines principles that the strategies implemented under the Global Warming Solutions Act should be informed by. These principles focus on the importance of proactively centering equity as opposed to reactively measuring it.
- [Interagency Environmental Justice Committee](#) -- This is the public page for the IAC, providing an up-to-date roster of membership.
- [Metropolitan Area Planning Council, Community Liaison Model](#): This resource provides a description of a community liaison model and the ways it can be used to improve the quality of engagement.

- [National Library of Medicine, Trauma-Informed Approaches and Community Engagement](#) -- This resource provides recommendations for doing trauma-informed engagement with communities that are heavily affected by trauma to minimize unintended consequences and harm associated with receiving clinical, social, and other support services.
- [Spectrum of Community Engagement to Ownership](#) -- This tool was developed by Rosa González of Facilitating Power in 2014. This resource provides a clear depiction of how different engagement methods can be used to evoke different levels of engagement or shared ownership of outcomes with community members. On the other hand, this resource can be used to assess the quality of engagements based on the intended level of engagement or ownership.
- [State of Vermont Equity Impact Assessment Tool](#) -- This tool was developed by the Office of Racial Equity (ORE) to support State of Vermont in assessing the equitable nature of their programs and identify areas for improvement.
- [The Principles of Environmental Justice](#) -- These principles were adopted at the First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit in 1991. They are central to the environmental justice movement and all subsequent environmental justice policies.
- [Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964](#) -- This is the federal law that creates the framework for meaningful access. While the Community Engagement Plan deliverable is a product of the Vermont Environmental Justice Law, it must be created in compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act as well.
- [VDH Community Engagement Guide](#) -- This resource was created by the Vermont Department of Health (VDH) to provide guidance to staff on how to engage with community members. This guidance provides staff with tools to deepen relationships with community members.
- [VDH Procedure for Compensating Community Members](#) -- This resource was created by VDH to provide guidance to staff on how to compensate community members for their time and expertise in engagement. While the procedure for VDH may not apply to all agency financial structures, this may be a valuable resource for covered agencies to emulate within their own financial structures.
- [VDH Program Evaluation 101 Presentation](#) – VDH Program Evaluator Melissa Phillips presented an introduction to program evaluation for the Continuous Improvement Network. This is a recording of that presentation.
- [VDH Program Evaluation 201 Presentation](#) – VDH Program Evaluation staff Emily Smith and Melissa Phillips presented on the intersection of community engagement and program evaluation in the Community Engagement COP. This

session recording is accompanied by a suite of recordings, slide decks and notes available on the [Community Engagement COP Resource Library](#).

- [Vermont EJ Law Community Agreements](#) -- These agreements were developed by the AC and IAC to provide a collective vision for how the groups will be in relationship with one another during public meetings. These agreements establish cultural norms and behavioral expectations.
- [Vermont EJ Law Event Calendar](#) -- This is the public page through which anyone can learn about and access upcoming public meetings under the Vermont Environmental Justice Law. They can also find materials related to past public meetings here.
- [VTrans Public Involvement Guide](#) -- This guide was developed by the Agency of Transportation, a covered agency under the VT EJ Law. The guide has three purposes: 1) provide an overview of the rationale for outreach, 2) direct staff on how to properly prepare for outreach, and 3) provide tools for engaging key partners.
- [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines \(WCAG\) 2.1](#) -- These guidelines established under the Americans with Disabilities Act must be followed to ensure that all digital information created by covered entities, such as state governments, follow universal design and are accessible to as many people as possible.
- [White River NRCD Community Engagement Plan Template](#) -- This resource was developed by the White River Natural Resources Conservation District (NRCD) to direct staff on how to develop a Community Engagement Plan. Unlike the Community Engagement Plans required by the VT EJ Law which will generally apply to all engagement by the covered agencies, this template describes how to develop project-specific Community Engagement Plans. This resource provides a clear depiction of how meaningful participation can be operationalized.
- [White River NRCD Public Participation Packet](#) -- This resource was developed by the White River NRCD and the Environmental Justice Clinic at VT Law School as a tool for members of the public. This document is intended to help members of the public understand how to participate in public processes. Covered agencies may use this resource to improve their outreach with community members.
- [Whole Measures approach](#) -- This resource was developed by the Center for Whole Communities (CWC). It provides a brief description of the Whole Measures approach, where it came from, and what the approach is designed to do in supporting communities. The Whole Measures framework is a flexible tool

for community engagement, planning and evaluating that can be adapted to the needs and perspectives of those who use it.

- [Whole Measures of Community Food Systems](#) -- This resource was developed by the Community Food Security Coalition in partnership with Center for Whole Communities (CWC). It describes the Whole Measures approach in more detail and provides an illustration of how the approach can be utilized and operationalized for Community Food Systems. This resource provides a strong depiction of the engagement evaluation process.