

Transcript

October 25, 2024, 5:30PM

□ **Birch, Juliet** started transcription

WA **Willard, Abbey** 0:03

But I just said good. How are you doing?

Well, I eat my lunch.

BJ **Birch, Juliet** 0:08

I'm. I'm good. I you would.

It's crazy that I thought that this was gonna be easier 'cause it's all virtual, but turns out.

Every mode has it's own.

Has its own kind of pros and cons, so I appreciate you guys being adaptable.

So thank you for that.

I don't know if you guys saw in your emails, and Gaby, I probably didn't include you in this e-mail.

I may have included grace, but I can share this with you as well.

Today, we're gonna be doing an activity for, you know, about 25 minutes or so, just identifying environmental benefits that our covered agency provides and then we can reflect and take a look at all the different benefits that each covered agency provides.

To to get an idea of what each other is doing in our work, and also to know the like breadth of what it means to implement this law and what environmental benefits truly cover.

Which is a ton of stuff.

So yes, Michelle.

BM **Boomhower, Michele** 1:20

I just wanted to check and see like it seemed as though I very briefly glanced at what you sent right before this meeting.

That this is more of a like roll off the top of our head sort of thing.

But are you gonna be asking us to then, like, take a deeper dive on this back, you know later.

BJ **Birch, Juliet** 1:32

Totally.

BM **Boomhower, Michele** 1:40

And get it back.

BJ **Birch, Juliet** 1:40

Yeah. So.

For a little bit of context.

We have been working on this environmental benefits spending guidance deliverable for some time with the task group. And of course we've been having these discussions during our monthly public meetings that have helped inform the work of the task group and that's part of what this activity is going.

To do is help us help you really.

And so I think that.

Now it's super helpful to get that kind of rolling off the top of your head, brainstorming about the benefits that you all provide, and then when it comes time to do the reporting, especially, I think that this activity to do this with your agency in a more deli.

Fashion will be super helpful.

And so thank you for asking that question, Michelle.

I think that for right now it's totally cool for this to be off the cuff and then one day down the line when it comes time.

This is something that I think will be really helpful for you all to do as an exercise.

Probably with other people who work at your covered agency.

And so.

Just to kind of walk us into this activity, I wanted to know if anyone who's from the environmental benefits spending Guidance Task group.

Maybe Claire Mcelweeny, since I know you've been really involved over the last couple of weeks. If anyone would like to share sort of where we are and why it's helpful to get this feedback kind of right now in our process.

MC **McIlvennie, Claire** 3:21

Yeah, you can talk to that Juliet. So we.

I think I touched on some of this at the last meeting, but so earlier in the year, the task group really focused on walking through these five key decisions that were laid out in the guide to the guidance that the previous iteration of the task group had come.

Up with and in the last six weeks or so, we've started taking all of the discussion that we had.

And during that process and actually started drafting kind of what the guidance might look like and I think some of the sections we've really been diving into are some core definitions that we feel like.

We would benefit from having kind of a shared understanding of as we approach this task, one of which, unsurprisingly, given this conversation maybe is how we define environmental benefits and then also how we as agencies.

Invest in them in a variety of ways.

So we obviously have a definition in statute that both have like a very high level definition and then provides a couple of examples.

But is by no means an exhaustive list, so.

Since there aren't representatives, I think from all the covered agencies in the task group, we were hoping that kind of use this time to get, I think a broader view of what each of the agencies do. And then.

Also, one of the other topics we've wrestled with is that you know we there potentially that multiple agencies that invest in different ways, but related to the same type of environmental benefits.

So we thought this exercise would be helpful to kind of inform how that section of the guidance is structured and then also how we think about guidance moving forward about how to approach identifying what you might need to report on so.

Think I hit most of the important parts, Juliet.

But feel free to fill in the gaps.

BJ **Birch, Juliet** 5:29

Yeah. Thanks.

So, so much. Claire, I think that that was a really good summary of, you know what it is that we're doing and why so, thank you.

So.

Just to bring us into this activity, I'm gonna give you a little kind of instruction moment.

Basically what we've devised for you all today is a brainstorming activity, so let me know if anyone doesn't have access to this document that I have up here that I'm sharing my screen on.

Should be in your emails and it's in the chat for this breakout room as well.

And you should all have editing access.

But you know there's we're, we're all human.

So let me know if there's anything I can do to better manage the access.

So essentially for this activity, well, we're asking you to do is take a look at the.

The table that we've created for your specific agency.

And reflect on different applied examples of how you're.

Agency provides a type of environmental benefit.

So as you know, we have a definition of a definition of environmental benefits from the law that isn't exactly exhaustive, but it provides a lot of really good, overarching ideas of environmental benefits.

So clean air, water and land.

That's a really great example of a an environmental benefit, however.

It's very broad and so an example that I came up with just for you guys to take a look at from a.

Are of a specific way that we provide clean air and water, and land is increasing access to safe drinking water and sanitary sewer systems, and similarly working to reduce.

And prevent waterborne and respiratory illnesses.

So that's just one example.

So if everyone could take about 10 minutes or so to locate your agency's chart and just off the cuff, what are some examples that you know of that you do your coworkers do to provide?

These environmental benefits, and if for some reason you feel like the type of environmental benefit that's listed here for any one of these isn't applicable to your agency, please write not applicable and highlight it in yellow because that's also really helpful information for us.

So I'll give you guys, let's say 10 minutes.

We'll meet back at 1:48 to just reflect on how this activity went.

This is really going to be independent work.

Thank you so much guys and let me know if.

There's, you know, anything I can do to give you better access to this document?

I'm really gonna be just sharing my screen scrolling.

And feel free to go off camera if it helps.

OK, everyone just take two more minutes to get your last thoughts out and we'll return together at 1:48. Thank you.

OK, if everyone could come back and maybe turn your camera on just so that I know that you're here, I can't see everybody. So I'm trusting you all to let me know that you're here.

But yeah, I would love to have a little bit of a discussion about how those last 10 minutes went.

You know how easy it was to identify environmental benefits for your agency, where you feel like you might have gaps in knowledge gaps in data.

Of course, we don't know where we have gaps in data right now at this minute.

But where we might anticipate those gaps to exist?

And you know, talking a little bit about direct and indirect examples of benefits that our agencies provide.

I've created here some potential reflection questions.

Feel free to reflect on any of them, but we'll take until you know, maybe 155 when we'll return to the main group.

Yeah, if anyone.

I'm seeing that we still have some folks who maybe are taking some time to jump back in, but we'll give another minute and then if anyone has any thoughts, happy to hear them.

RK **Raimundi, Karla** 19:21

If I may, time in really quickly, my name is Carla Raimondi.

Again ANR and what this exercise and I was not able to populate the form.

BJ **Birch, Juliet** 19:32

OK.

RK **Raimundi, Karla** 19:33

Technology's not working for me.

But what this exercise really underscored for me is the need to rely on program staff. You know, there's so much knowledge that I have regarding specifically indirect. Fits, but the vastness of the areas that we cover is so expensive that. This is really highlighted for me that we need to rely more and engage with program staff more to help us in the identification of these benefits.

BJ Birch, Juliet 20:18

That's a really good point, Karla. I think that. You know, when it comes time to do this activity just for your agency when it comes to do time to do the reporting, definitely this needs to be a collaborative effort in order to accurately represent everything that every covered agency does 'cause it's just such a it's a. Broad scope. Does anyone else have any thoughts?

WG Wray, Gabbie 20:44

I can say I've only been working here for a couple months now, so I am very like still trying to learn more about just my department specifically and also there's I'm in Department of Housing and Community Development and there's also tourism, historic preservation and economic development and I. Really could not tell you much about the other three of those departments. So I did find it really challenging to fill this out. So. Like a lot of the the examples I could've come up with were more like specific to my job and I really could've answered like all of them with just like things that I do as environmental specialist. But I was trying to like think. More broadly about my agency in general. And it just really made me think like I have a lot more to learn and I need to kind of branch out and talk to the other people within my agency, which is hard when we're only in office once a week. So in our once a week, they don't overlap with all the other departments either, so it is. I think that this is a good exercise that kind of opened my eyes to like I need to understand more about what thing like what other departments are doing in the

scope of environmental justice, not just specifically.

The Vermont Community Development Program, which is what I work in so.

Yeah.

BJ Birch, Juliet 22:20

Thank you, Gabby. Yeah, Amy.

RA Redman, Amy (She/Her) 22:25

I thought this was a really great exercise. I think in some ways it's making me feel like I wanna talk to a lot of people at vdh and in other ways. I was like, oh, I know that things are.

It was like made me feel like there's a part of it that's very doable, so I really appreciated it.

The other thing I wanna say is that Rich's reflections are like, really.

They're just at top of mind.

And so going through this exercise, I found myself wondering if there wasn't a way.

To do this, that really does highlight the social ecological intersection right.

The independence OR like are there ways that we might and I don't know if it's in this phase, but that's where my mind was going.

Can we like do this in a way that honors the interdependence that honors like, where dollars flow and who benefits?

So anyways, we don't have to talk about that at all, but that's what I was thinking about.

Claire, what were you thinking?

MC McIlvennie, Claire 23:26

Yeah, I love that reflection.

But I was just messing that I'm really struggling with these buckets which I know came straight out of statute in the definition, but in some ways are just very some ways very aligned with what we or I have been thinking about in some ways.

Different and like there, yeah.

So I'll just leave it.

I am struggling with these specific buckets, feeling like it's both like not an exhaustive list as we already talked about, but then there are.

Other things that I feel like are missing here or maybe like cut through multiple of these buckets that I'm having a hard time just like bucketing things in this way.

BJ Birch, Juliet 24:04

Really.

Totally. And Abby will take your comment last.

WA Willard, Abbey 24:14

OK. Thanks.

My additional comment would be.

I am finding I'm anticipating the challenge of actually trying to quantify some of these benefits based on kind of like.

The.

The ability to measure.

So for example, I think it would be difficult to disagree that managing the as an example to manage the viability of farms in Vermont to manage so much of our working landscape and open space doesn't both create green space and hopefully many would agree clean air, water and.

Land.

That means that almost everything that our agency does in some way could have a environmental benefit.

Value. And clearly that's not the exercise that we're going to engage in is quantification of every single thing that each agency does.

BJ Birch, Juliet 25:20

Yeah.

WA Willard, Abbey 25:23

So that's the part that I'm starting to think about is like, where are the boundaries and the lines of kind of what we and maybe this refers back to the definition, but.

I think these buckets remind me that you can put any and you can almost put anything in many of these buckets.

That we do.

BJ Birch, Juliet 25:46

Yeah, I think that is a really good summation of, you know, the position that a lot of us are in, especially, you know, working directly at Anri feel like we're we really relate to that as well.

And so I think that my big take away and to draw this back to the conversation that presumably you guys had with Kim, I I feel like it probably touched on some stuff of like structures that we need to develop at our own covered agencies to.

Start to implement the law and really organize that within our agencies.

Am I getting?

Is there any recognition there?

OK.

Yeah, great.

So I just to tie that into the conversation that you guys had before with Kim.

I think that this shows us why it's important to start thinking proactively and to start, you know, collaborating with program staff, start collaborating with folks throughout our agency.

To preempt preempt these deliverables, cuz they are big asks, and of course we do have a lot of unanswered questions, but part of our job as the task group in creating the guidance is to try and preemptively answer those questions.

But we can't preemptively answer them if they don't always get asked.

So that's why it's good to touch base with folks in advance.

And Michelle, you have your hand up.

BM **Boomhower, Michele** 27:19

Yeah. I just wanted to mention that and I don't know, maybe Dave mentioned it on a prior call, but our planning staff are gonna be conducting an exploratory GIS analysis of agency investments as they relate to identified environmental justice focused populations. And this is going to be int.

To be a test run in advance of eventual Act 154 benefits spending reporting.

As specific guidance of you know, evolves for that effort.

And so it what you were just talking about made me think of wanting to share that.

BJ **Birch, Juliet** 27:58

Thanks for sharing, Michelle.

And I think that we would love to hear more about that.

So we should touch base on that at some point?

Thank you.

I see that you need to hop off Amy.

Thank you so much for joining us.

I'm gonna return to the main room and call you all back.

Those of you who can join us after 2:00 PM, so I'll see you there.

Thank you all for this great discussion.



Willard, Abbey 28:44

There can I just ask.

We have another minute or so I guess, but as you've been working on the guidance, has it felt like there's like, clearly?

□ **Birch, Juliet** stopped transcription