

Transcript

November 18, 2024, 6:33PM

● **Barrett, Kim** started transcription

BK **Barrett, Kim** 0:04

How are you all?

PD **Pelletier, Dave** 0:17
Busy but well.

BK **Barrett, Kim** 0:38

Yeah.

I think most folks are here so we can get started, OK.

OK, great. All right, thank you all for being here.

We're going to jump right in.

We're here at the interagency.

Environmental Justice Committee meeting.

Yeah, let's just keep on rolling.

Thank you to anyone from the community if you're here as well.

Go to the next slide.

So normally we do.

Our community agreements where everyone like, you know, takes a different agreement and reads it.

If we could just have one person read them all just because this is a truncated meeting and hopefully that'll make it go a little bit faster and then we'll still get everyone's consent and agreement afterwards.

Is there someone that wants to volunteer?

Mariana, you're you're unmuted.

MH **Mariana Sears / HFVT (s-h)** 1:54

I'm sorry.

BK **Barrett, Kim** 1:56

But we loved your singing.
Whatever tune that was, it was beautiful.

MH **Mariana Sears / HFVT (s-h)** 2:00

I was humming. I'm so sorry.

BK **Barrett, Kim** 2:05

But is there anyone from the IC that would be willing to lead the Community agreement?

DX **Davis, Xusana** 2:16

This is Xusanna. I can do it.

You press one number one be present with yourself and one another be present with your body and feelings. If you need to take a break to take care of yourself, please do be present for one another by listening deeply.

#2 calling in and calling out assume best intent, but attend to impact.

We can stop things that are being said that are hurtful and be curious and create a space for learning.

Tools include using Ouch oops to indicate a pause is needed.

#3 expect and accept non closure.

We're unlikely to leave your feeling 100% ready to go.

Or to have everything on our agenda wrapped up, especially committed to moving at the speed of trust.

#4 center respect be respectful, intentional, and work to build trust and create a safe and inviting space.

And #5 share verbal and other space.

Mindfully consider the balance of taking and making space move up and move back.

Tools to do this include the acronym wait. Why am I talking and vocalizing support for another person's comment without repeating the same points that have already been made?

BK **Barrett, Kim** 3:20

Thank you.

Alright, let's go ahead and get thumbs up from everyone.

Alright, awesome.

Thank you. Yes.

Birch, Juliet 3:41

Alright, so thank you all for being here today. As you know this is a slightly different meeting than is typical for us. And so we're working on a kind of tighter schedule. And so we appreciate you being here and being flexible. This is our agenda for today. And the first thing I'll note is that this agenda today is very much driven and dependent on.

Your kind of contributions to the discussion, so it'll be a little bit more laid back on our end and we'll hope that you guys will drive the discussion.

So in a few minutes here, we'll start with this first section here that we called painting the picture.

What does implementing the Vermont environmental justice law really require? And the impetus for this discussion is really that, you know.

We know that there are things we need to do under the law.

We know that those things are a.

A lot of them are really big ask, but we don't necessarily have a picture of what exactly. Why is it a big ask? What is needed in order to get to the finish line on a lot of these deliverables?

And so that's what this discussion is really going to be is like, OK.

What do we need to do and what are some of the challenges that we anticipate running into in doing that element of implementation?

The next section will be, you know, public comment and then we will go into.

Developing a collective approach. So in the first section we've really kind of outlined some challenges of two implementing the law and we will hopefully get to have a little bit of a discussion of solutions.

You know, we wanna always fall back on a solution building mindset.

And then we'll wrap up the discussion there with some thoughts about, you know what we need to do for next year in order to set us up for success in 2025.

So if everyone's OK with that agenda?

I'd like to see some thumbs up.

Folks.

Oh, lots of thumbs. Great.

Alright. And then it looks like we do have forum today, so if.

We could get some approval of the July 8th, 2024 minutes.

Those have been available in the EJ Online Resource Library and were sent to you via e-mail.

Many, many moons ago at this point, but the July 8th meeting was the last time that you guys met as an interagency committee.

So if we could get some visual consent to approving those minutes, that would be awesome.

All right, seeing some thumbs.

Give it, give it a second for a couple more folks.

Very nice. I think we've got everybody awesome. So thank you.

And so as we said before, we're gonna start the conversation today with like a kind of assessment of what implementing the Vermont environmental justice law is really gonna ask of us in terms of some of these deliverables.

And so as you saw via your e-mail, we did send you a document that was created.

It's, you know, a draft.

It's still in progress.

Of some you know, breaking down some of these tasks that are that are required of covered agencies in order to get to implement the deliverables, so.

If you guys are OK, we would like to sort of open up that document and have the conversation jump off from there.

And actually, before we open up the document, I'm just gonna show you guys this slide with discussion questions. If you'd like to introduce those questions.

Barrett, Kim 7:37

Yeah. So these are just some suggestions. I think for me an important place to start is like zooming all the way out and asking are there ways that implementing the EJ law doesn't feel in alignment with your work and the reason why I'm asking that and full disc.

We firmly believe that.

This law, it does align with with anything and everything.

It's just a matter of not only perspective, but.

Trying to find the ways to make things align more easily and figuring out similar to what Juliet said earlier.

Like what are the areas that what are the ways that we need to address the issues so

that things easily align?

And so I'm bringing that up because I think it's come up a few times.

Just not only in these meetings, but in some of the internal meetings that we're having and I think that that would be a really, really good place for us to be vulnerable.

And share so that you know we can address some of these other discussion topics.

So hopefully that lands, but some of the other questions.

Are what is the scan or span or scope of your operations?

What would completing the task required under under this deliverable look like for your agency? Which departments and units need to be engaged?

What are the challenges?

And I think again in thinking about what those challenges are going back to, that first question could also be really helpful.

Are there any capacity building actions that can be taken?

And what tools can facilitate the work?

So those are just some suggestions that we have, but we'd love to the conversation to go wherever you wherever you want it to.

Birch, Juliet 9:33

OK, awesome.

So I'm just gonna pull up this document and you know, as Kim said, those discussion questions are really suggestions. We want this conversation to be more driven.

By what you guys think, you need to talk about in terms of implementation of the law.

And then here, let me just close this, sorry about that.

And you know, similarly with this document itself like, this is really just a jumping off point.

Point. So really the floor is open to you guys.

Hopefully you've gotten a chance to at least review this document, but if you'd like to take a look at it closer like more of a kind of guided discussion through this document, that's fine. But you know, let us know what you guys want to talk about the floor.

Is yours.



This is Grace Vincent from Accd.

I'm the environmental officer.

I think one thing that comes to mind is the second discussion question, which is what's the scope of my operations or something like that?

When thinking about the equitable the benefits spending report.

Scope of my position does not really include like authority or transparency over.

You know the agency's budgets or spending.

That's information I can get, but I think it's an important point like thinking about what your position does, whether you are actually in charge of distributing grant funding, or whether you have any like purview or vision over what goes on.

Because I know a lot of, at least in my experience, state agencies can be very siloed in terms of like who spends the money versus who administers those programs.

BK **Barrett, Kim** 11:42

That's really great point.

DB **Donohue, Bob** 11:54

This is Bob from AOE mean I think.

I think we've bounced these different ideas around through different meetings, but a challenge that we're seeing in the not a challenge, but things that we need to think about is.

We talking federal monies and state monies and in both situations, if they're federal or state monies that have prescriptive spending.

Do we even have to worry about that? If it's state monies or federal monies where there's discretionary judgment and how they're distributed, then that's a different topic.

So one, we just have to understand, are we simply talking discretionary funds regardless of the source of those funds?

And then.

When it comes down to environmental burdens and environmental benefits, I think we definitely need a clear understanding of what we define those to be. And then we really need to understand if we're going to engage the public.

Going forward in determining policies on how to deal with all of these issues and become partners in trying to come up with a way to equitably deal with both burdens and benefits.

How does that impact other state programs?

And I I'm being selfish. Talking about school construction, because that's all I know.

And I'm involved with.

But now we may have a school construction grant that was going to be awarded based upon a whole bunch of other merits of prioritization schema that was developed.

And now we're talking about a potential environmental influence.

You're all familiar with the PC BS in the schools, and if there's other contaminants like radon.

Be fast and any other toxin.

Asbestos, what have you? Do these now take on a new?

Prioritization factor in a scale that perhaps has already been established.

And does it have a rightful usurping of other priorities because of ACT 154?

And I think there's a very largely impactful especially for us as we go forward because we're we're the, the state legislature is now charging us with coming up with a way of determining what schools should get funded based on what priority in a construction ask.

And we're looking at overcrowding. We're looking at a whole bunch of other criteria, an environmental burden per say wasn't one of those criteria, but it will now become such under Act 154. And we really need to understand how does that change.

The distribution of awards because if the school's \$100 million and we have to do proportional spending, it now may change the equation.

That figures out how do we disperse the school district a as opposed to school District B?

And that's a huge undertaking.

It's not so simple at first glance, as it might appear.

Then again, it's the constant, the constant discussion that we've all had, or if we haven't discussed it, we probably feel it. All of us are probably under resourced agencies and I feel as though this is such an important task that the dilution of already under resourced divisions and.

Departments within agencies doesn't do anything to make this implemented successfully.

It means we touch many things and do them poorly or less optimal than we ought.

And so.

If we all subscribe to the idea that budgets reflect priorities, it has to be at a much

higher level in the state where the priority is established and funded accordingly, so that all the agencies can resource up to do all this work without detracting from their other core.

Responsibilities that prior to this, they were still probably underperforming it.

That's all I'll say for now.

BK **Barrett, Kim** 15:51

Thank you.

RJ **Ronis, Jenny** 16:03

If I may, this is Jenny Ronis from the Natural Resources Board.

I'd like to go back to one of the very first things Bob said. Among his many excellent comments.

But I am still struggling with the lack of definitional clarity that we've got.

I'm just wondering if there are more efforts to do that to define what these populations are define burden, things like that.

Thanks.

BK **Birch, Juliet** 16:36

Hey. So thank you for that question.

I think that's definitely like one of the kind of.

Overarching, I guess obstacles that we're facing is that you know, the law has these definitions that we want to ensure are reviewed in a way that, like, are the what comes of that review is consistent with the needs and perspectives of communities and ultimately the Advisory Council.

Because they are the representatives of the communities that are intended to benefit from the law.

And so yeah, there's definitely a lot of desire and effort to keep moving towards coming to a conclusion of how these definitions will be revised. But at the same time, you know, the Advisory Council, they're not state employees. Their time is used in many different ways than what.

Our time looks like and so we really can only have those discussions.

In the form of public meetings and so that that's gonna take some time. And it is a foundational thing. But there are things that we can do without necessarily having the, you know, concrete steadfast definitions.

An example is that you know, especially as it pertains to like the environmental benefits, spending guidance, we don't necessarily know what an environmental benefit is.

We only know what the, you know, current statutory definition says in environmental benefit is but.

There's lots of prep work that we can do in terms of internal discussions to be had building teams to, you know, preempt doing this work. And you know, that's something that we've been doing, you know, as a collective through the task group. But there's also work that you guys could turn internally within your covered agency to start prepping folks for that work and that can be done with or without.

A concrete revised definition.

But yeah, definitely something that we need to continue striving for.

Is having new definitions that we can rely on.

But just thinking about overall, what we're hoping to get out of this conversation in general is an understanding of what doing this work functionally in terms of coordinating internally.

Is really going to require from you guys in terms of like your resources, your time, your capacity, all of that stuff like getting an idea as a collective of what it means to really implement some of these deliverables.

Doesn't feel feasible.

What are the obstacles that we're facing?

And how can we, you know, in the latter half of this agenda, how can we start to collaborate to alleviate those those obstacles?

So yeah, I think that definitely the definitions are one of those obstacles. But I think there's other things that we can start to address too.

MC **McIlvennie, Claire** 19:39
I do think.

DB **Donohue, Bob** 19:39
So do you think, do you think it's. Oh, sorry, Claire. Sorry.

MC **McIlvennie, Claire** 19:43
No, go ahead, Bob.

DB

Donohue, Bob 19:44

Juliet at all. Great points.

In the absence of more specificity, then it's up to the discretion of the agency to do their best in their mind to define what they think might be a benefit and or burden, right?

And then it's just a matter of having a way to back up the logic that was applied in saying that we think that this spending is addressing environmental benefit and and so long as there is, you know a process of review.

View that seems rather rigorous.

And then I think we can justify at least for this first go round, we've done our job in trying to determine what environmental benefit is and then?

If in the subsequent years we find there should be an improvement on that because it's either too lax or very vague or whatever, we now we just make adjustments and and make the improvements as we go forward.

I don't think. I think it's such a huge undertaking, which so many.

BK

Birch, Juliet 20:35

OK.

DB

Donohue, Bob 20:42

Aspects to it that all we can do is our best and it's better than doing nothing and we just do this through an iterative process of always trying to improve.

It's just the continuous improvement process I believe.

At least that's how you see it.

BK

Birch, Juliet 20:58

Thanks for that Bob, I think.

What what you said about, you know the, you know, we can do this work and then the thing that we need to really fall back on is, you know, sharing and being transparent about the rationale. If there's not necessarily like a, A A concrete revised definition and I.

Think that that's really.

A. A really poignant reflection, because that's something that we've talked about a lot in the environmental benefit spending guidance Task Group.

Is that you know, we do have a definition currently, but it's not.

It's definitely not gonna be the one that will have a couple years down the line and so.

You know the the the best way to do this deliverable is to fall back on. Like you know, we've done what we can and we will provide a lot of transparency about our methodology and our rationale behind the decisions that were made because that's really the best way.

To make the deliverable feasible in a lot of ways.

I think Claire. Yeah. You were gonna say something.

MC **McIlvennie, Claire** 22:08

I was, although it was separate from like definitions. It was more about like resource and staff capacity.

So I don't know, Carla, if you wanted to react to that conversation before I shift gears. Or yeah, shift a little bit.

RK **Raimundi, Karla** 22:23

Thank you, Claire. I was.

I was just going to share strong support for what Bob mentioned regarding the approach.

And I'm looking to.

To have a conversation with Advisory Council members regarding expectations for the reporting process.

You know where I'm talking about the environmental benefits spending.

And I think you hit the nail on the head with this being on the reporting process and the assessment and evaluation process.

Is an ongoing an ongoing task and the first the first. The first attempt will be. You know the things that are we're able to track that we're likely are tracking already that touch on certain well known benefits.

And.

Communities that are.

Well known to be underserved.

Marginalized. And then as we move forward.

The we're anticipating that we're gonna get more knowledgeable about how to do this. And with time, we're gonna get more clarity with regards to a definitional status,

right?

Like what's gonna happen with the definition with the thresholds remain the same.

And moving forward, there will be opportunity to find tune the data.

And then to review the data that.

Are being gathered as compared to the one that we could gather. And so so that we can as we move forward, identify gaps and make that ultimate evaluation of proportionality.

But yes, I think this is a lot to do with expectation setting and just naming.

That we are constrained by.

The current structures.

But that we're not able to do much with.

At this moment in time.

So I just wanted to highlight that I that what you mentioned, Bob, really resonates with me and sort of like how we can do this in a way that's respectful and considerate of the intention of the law without.

Without minimizing how important it is.

That we recognize that the data.

May not be as telling as we would probably like it to be.



McIlvennie, Claire 25:21

Yeah, I think I just was going to echo what one of what Bob original comments was around the challenge of.

Resources, I think primarily like staff in each of the agencies and.

Was on caveat that I I feel like we have been talking about that for like the first meeting since the first meeting we had of this body and I feel like what the fresh maybe not the frustration point, but it feels like the tension point is like a.

Lack of ability.

To organize amongst ourselves to actually do something about it, if that is what we so choose, we want to do.

Like collectively advocate or work within our agencies to to build support to collectively advocate.

Because otherwise it feels like we're just sort of repeating the same things, which is that we all know that we're resource strapped and don't all really have the capacity need to implement all this work in it.

So it feels like I don't know if the solution is to develop a small task group. To develop time that none of us really have, as we've all stated to like like consistently work on that piece as if it is like a deliverable of this flaw because it is like fundamental ultimately to successfully doing a lot of the work or to just decide that.

That is something that maybe individual agencies will work on as they have bandwidth to add staff or advocate for staff, but then just continue doing the work. To the best of our abilities.

Be reflecting that this is the best that we can do with no more resources.

But it it feels like.

A shift in that conversation would be helpful to either like decide like, OK, this is really the significant of barrier that we are going to collectively advocate and like put the time into doing that or just put that time into meeting the deliverables the best we can until.

We can can advocate in that way.

I just, yeah, wanted to add that.

DB

Donohue, Bob 27:37

I think you summarized it so more, much more eloquently than I ever could. I think that's.

I think that's the heart of the issue.

I think if we could present a collective document that Carla could present to others in the decision making circles that says more than willing to do and jump into this very important work, we just need help making that happen and that that creates a budgetary reality that they.

Then can give a thumbs up or thumbs down and if the budget doesn't support it there then has to be a concession. That this work, though important, has.

Have a longer time frame and then it.

Now we maybe have to charge individual agencies to now reprioritize their already prioritized work in a different way in order to achieve some sort of annual goal with ACT 154, but not the goal and timeline that was originally thought.

It's it's none of these are excuses.

They're just the realities of resourcing and and funding and in a state that's facing so many other demands.

All these are important, but we don't have enough resources to deal with it.

So something has to slide down in the priority list.

So I think, Claire, you nailed it.

It's I think if we could, each agency could create a document where we say these are what are obstacles or concerns are this is what we think the additional Manning would be to deal with that issue that all now funnels up into one summary.

Budget impact for the state to consider in the next session, and then they either grant each agency the additional resources required or they don't.

And when they don't, there's just a recognition of what is the impact to implementation of ACT 154.

My only concern is if we dilute our resources, which we're doing currently, the product will be poor at best and all we can say is we tried but we struck out rather than let's put a real full faith effort into it as though it was something very import.

And then knocking the ball out of the park.

We can only get out of it what we put into it, and that's truth of it.

RK

Raimundi, Karla 29:54

This is Karla Raimundi, the agency of natural resources.

And in addition to that.

Bob and Claire.

And others have mentioned similar concerns.

Part of the conversation is also that.

Every legislative session since Act 154 was enacted.

There are other acts that get written and passed that include EJ without a recognition of the foundational work that this law is asking agencies to do, and so it actually adds on another layer of complexity that.

In addition to ensuring that the conversations are hot regarding the implementation of the deliverables within this law and that the structures are created in the within the agencies to be able to deliver on this act, there are then on top of this, add other mandates and requirements and.

Responsibilities that got that get.

That get added on that impact, EJ.

And so I would.

I would like to show support for that kind of analysis of.

You know where each agency is regarding.

The implementation of each of the deliverables and capacity that can be identified.

In support of the implementation of the law and identify also.

The extent to which there have been other acts laws.

Regulatory requirements that have been added on that impact environmental justice.

And and perhaps that is this question that was first asked and presented by Kim about what other things are going on at the agency level that may impact the implementation of the EJ law because they actually.

Require some of this foundation.

That we're looking to problem solve for or create structures for.

Is just not being allowed the time to get it done, and so that also adds on an incredible strain in the already very limited capacity.

And so I think we, we are going to be in a better position to have these conversations when they become ripe, if we are able to create a picture.

Of these are the things that were asked to do under EJ and these are the other things that pertain to EJ or impact EJ that we're working on as a result of another.

Legislative.

Mandate that was created.

Because I I I am detecting a lot of like compounding complexities and challenges.

Beyond the internal ones.

DB

Donohue, Bob 33:20

I think jokingly I always say to Jill and others at the AOE, we need to have a law that says there'll be no more mandates legislatively until we can get our arms around the mandates that we already are not fulfilling. I mean, it's just silly it. It just.

Lacks logical coherence in terms of a strategic plan going forward, right? Because if we know we can't get done what we've already legislated, why do we add more to it?

And so there should be a legislative coming together.

And a recognition with the governor that although many of the initiatives statewide are wonderful and well intended, if they're not resourceable, it's just a dream.

So why don't we just curtail the dream a little bit and just click done? What we need to get done just to get up to speed without all the requirements are to date.

It sounds so trivial, but I think it's really at the heart of where we are in Vermont.

We just don't.

We're not a resource rich state.

So let's pick our battle strategically and let's stop making mandates that keep coming out.

And just keep making us have to make our snorkel a little bit longer to get some air.
That's what it feels like.

BK **Barrett, Kim** 34:37

Yeah. Any other thoughts?

WG **Wray, Gabbie** 34:43

Hi, I'm Gabby.

I am the environmental specialist from Accd and I'm trying to figure out like I'm very new to this.

I've only been working for the state for about four months and I've only been here the past couple meetings, so I'm definitely learning a lot still, but I'm trying to figure out like how to get our like people in our within our agency involved in this and like. Organizing some sort of like group or committee or.

Whatever to get these deliverables done.

I'm curious about what other people are doing.

How you're getting this information out to your agency in general?

I'm sure there's plenty of people within our agency that don't know about, like this work and don't know like what the deliverables are.

The EJ law in general.

So I'm curious to hear like how are you guys getting this information out?

And getting other people involved too.

BK **Barrett, Kim** 35:44

Yeah, feel free to go ahead.

That's a great question, Gabby.

MC **McIlvennie, Claire** 35:50

I.

I mean, I can speak from the like, Claire McIlvennie, the Department of Public Service, from the department's perspective, with the caveat that we are relatively small compared to many other agencies, so.

I have initially primarily been working with leadership to just make sure all of our directors and Commissioner were up to date on kind of the requirements of the law and.

Recent more recently, I think feeling that my own capacity was strapped to push a lot of this work alone have taken more of the approach of trying to develop workgroups as deliverables come up.

So we now have.

I mean, it's a broader community of practice around community and public engagement, but it has representation from all of our divisions and I think will be a forum to talk about the community engagement plan.

Verbal in addition to all the other ways that we are like called to engage with the public at large.

I have also started having kind of a separate set of conversations with others involved in the environmental benefit spending groups and we are small so that, you know, sometimes involves overlapping people, so it may not be the most efficient approach, but I have found for me personally Bre.

It down deliverable by deliverable has been hopeful and bringing it not just at the leader's level but staff level.

As well, because you know you need kind of a mix to push things forward and.

That's just.

I'm just starting to make that shift, but see how it goes.



Pelletier, Dave 37:40

Hi. I'm Dave Pelletier with the Agency of Transportation.

Michele Boomhauer is the I guess the primary representative on on this committee.

But she occasionally will ask me to to jump in here and and cover for her when she's got any conflicts and I I work in the policy and planning section in the Agency of Transportation, which is within the division that Michelle.

Is the director of so.

In terms of how the Agency of Transportation.

Sort of grappling with this work and how I'm communicating about it within the agency. I'm in a relatively advantageous position because in the policy and planning section.

The the deliverable the the deliverables are sort of akin to much of the work that we already do.

We do a lot of outreach and engagement around statewide plan development.

Whether I mean, we're working on the the update of the statewide rail plan.

Right now we do a fair amount of engagement through our regional planning

commissions. We have direct relationships with with them and so back to Claire's point about sort of kind of grappling with this work based on deliverable.

That's all really part and parcel to the community engagement planning aspect of this and we do have a public involvement guide that we're working on an update to right now.

And that's while it is intended to apply to the entire agency.

It's sort of, umm, owned a little bit by policy and planning because it is so, so much of a component of the work that we are focused on on.

So that's that's I guess you know, one of the things that we're working on right now is is that and then the the environmental benefits spending report, we've been thinking about for quite some time and I also.

Am fortunate to be.

Kind of adjacent to our our GIS mapping staff.

So we I have some capacity, a little bit.

I mean, and let's just acknowledge like I'm I am the big well funded agency, right?

Transportation.

There's hundreds and hundreds of people and we get a lot of federal funding and it takes a lot of funding to to to do what we're tasked with doing.

But along with that comes some staff capability and some some bench depth to work on things like this as they come up.

So not sure if that answers your your question directly Gabby, but give me some sense of how we are sort of working on that and the fact that Michelle at leadership level and I are both involved definitely enables us to sort of communicate even informally throughout the the.

Agency, sort of. The status of these of this work and the law itself and.

And where we're at with.

With working toward achieving the deliverables and the last thing I'll say is just that we do have a relatively well staffed.

Civil rights.

Labour compliance section, who's taken a great interest in this work as well. And so we've got some staffing that already have all sorts of other things that they're required to do and are responsible for doing. But are I think you know invested in this work just as a.

In terms of the mission?

The in the the goals. And so we're all I think between all of us were sort of carving

out like that extra.

You know, 10 minutes beyond the 24 hours that are in the day to, like, cut, try to inch this stuff forward 'cause. We know it's important, even though everybody's real busy so.

Thanks.

WG Wray, Gabbie 41:51

Thank you both for answering a little bit towards that. That was helpful.

BK Birch, Juliet 41:57

Yeah, I think.

Thank you, Gabby for asking this question. I think it's really cool to hear.

From all the other agencies of how they've sort of organized disseminating information.

And we've mentioned this before in previous meetings and Carla said this in the chat. But at ANR you know we are in a somewhat unique position because we are the lead covered agency and we're also pretty we're relatively large.

We do have a really interesting structure that I am very like when I, you know, I just started this position, you know, 8-8 months ago. And so coming into this structure pre-existing, I was like very impressed with it.

We have basically like what we call an environmental justice network, where there's one staff member, at least one staff member, identified from each division within our agency who?

Basically agreed to.

Have EJ be part of some of their work each week or each month, and so thus far because there hasn't been a lot asked of covered agencies in terms of implementation, this isn't.

This has been mostly like information dissemination and getting folks kind of on the same page of what the law's asking us for. But you know, especially as we're coming into starting to think about like, for example, a community engagement plan.

The members who.

Are involved in the environmental Justice Working Group who are like, they're kind of a little. They're like unique to the liaisons.

It's a convoluted distinction, but they are.

They've been really helpful in starting to brainstorm what our community

engagement plan will look like, and so part of their job is to start like being prepared to do that actual part of the work.

And so I think that, you know, just identifying folks within your agency.

Me, who you know have different types of work that are still in the know about the EJ law is really helpful for disseminating information in like an organized way that everybody's on the same page when it comes time to actually do.

RK

Raimundi, Karla 44:19

Something. This is Karla Agency of Natural Resources is regarding the environmental benefits pending.

Deliverable the interesting thing is that we are asking.

These representatives from their departments and divisions to let us know.

Why they're providing for benefits, right? We've had conversations with the groups about what environmental benefits are according to the definition in the law.

We're we've asked questions about does this seem?

Exhaustive representative of the work that you do.

Representative of the understanding that you have regarding the engagement.

That you.

Are in with members of the community and then also asking is this. Is this doable?

What and how can you assess those benefits, benefits and then you know, we've had conversations with the different divisions and different departments within the three departments at the agency.

About, you know, for example with forest Parks and Recreation, what does that mean regarding some of the facilities that are in some parks?

We really do not have a lot of flexibility regarding how much money to spend where, but.

But there are ways in which we can track what kinds of expenditures are going into each of the parks.

So like having conversations investigating.

What the departments and the divisions?

Or items that are benefits and so it really allows an opportunity to check conversations that are happening at this level within the this committee and happening at the task group level with staff knowledge, which is certainly very important because ultimately they're going to be the ones that are.

Going to be gathering this information for us, so we also ask them.

What kind of information can you?

Obtain right now.

And so they've developed some spreadsheets and they're working towards identifying the answer to that question and we're not sure what that is gonna look like, but at least there's an investigative sort of, like, research engagement that's going on right now.

And it's been going on for a while.

At the agency.

MC **McIlvennie, Claire** 46:57

Wait just a second for Michael to public service again, just to I guess bring it back to my first comment about resources and I feel like like we can all I feel like we often almost every meeting talk about a lack of resources.

But I feel like then when we actually get into it like there's all these interesting things that are happening in our agencies where we're trying to innovate around that issue of not having more staff.

And I wonder if like.

Right, we either.

Say like, OK.

But we still need more staff, so let's, like, organize to advocate for that.

But like actually do it.

Let's find let's create a task group and then like, let's move on that ask or let's spend that time having this conversation about how we can collectively use our power to like, like Dave said, be trans as well big and well resourced.

So how can we like all, learn from what you guys are doing? So we don't have to do all that work on our own or like Amy sent around that amazing community.

Like, how do we start from there instead of Ground Zero? For those of us who haven't done that work yet?

And like, how do we collectively like become more than while we do that other work or just like decide that that's not the right time?

So I think I just wanted to like that was the comment I was trying to make earlier.

BK **Barrett, Kim** 48:19

Yeah, that's a really important comment and it's in line with kind of what we were hoping to to discuss.

I think we're gonna do a quick public comment, but I think when we come back, it would be interesting for everyone to take a moment and think about what are the ways that they've been innovating and what like lessons have come out of that and share them 'cause.

I think their strengths for sure in this group and being able to share that.

In the collective, as you said, Claire would be helpful.

Yeah. So let's see if anyone wants to jump in for a public comment.

We don't see any folks from the public here, so we'll do a 5 minute break.

And then come back.

No.

Hello back.

But one of the things that we were talking about before we had our break.

Strength that that folks already are innovating are already building strengths in different areas and wanting to share that and then figuring out how we can do some solution building and maybe look at ways to structure.

This group to support that work.

So I just want to open the floor to see if anyone has thoughts around that.

Or, you know, you can start by sharing how you've been innovating or what challenges you've been working around.

I think, Claire, the way that you worded that was really, really helpful and it definitely made me think a lot more so.

MC **McIlvennie, Claire** 56:43

Alright. Kim, can you just restate that one time to ask?

I feel like I was like half listening as it came back to my seat.

BK **Barrett, Kim** 56:51

Yeah, no problem.

OK, so one ask is for folks to share.

If they have.

So you mentioned this concept of innovating around.

Resource constraints and basically trying to shift the mindset to a strength based space.

And so I think in in order to do that and in order to.

Support this collective doing what you said, which is not starting from Ground Zero

kind of share.

What things are going well, where folks are innovating?

How are you moving around those challenges?

So I think that, you know, some folks have already shared.

Examples of what's been going well and so I think hearing from other folks about.

What their strengths are, where they're innovating, that would be helpful.

And I think starting from that place, there's some like mutual learning that can happen.

And then you know, the conversation can also flow into the area of governance like you mentioned. And we were hoping to also kind of talk about, well, if there's ways that that their strengths in this group.

And some folks have expertise. That's helpful.

And some folks, you know, have identified areas of challenges.

How do we organize around those things like more officially? And is that a? Is that a desire?

And so are we at the point in the work where that would be beneficial?

So those are the two kind of main buckets of conversation.

And anything else that you all feel would be helpful. Does that resonate?



McIlvennie, Claire 58:53

And that was helpful.

And then I was on mute.

So but thank you for restating that.

Well, I also wanna honor talked a lot today, but I'm happy to give one success. I think in that.

The idea.

To start an internal group specific around engagement was just.

I found myself having a lot of fun up conversations with people in different divisions and feeling like the barrier was that we were all siloed from each other, even though we were in the same agency and just getting everyone and someone from each division in the same.

Room for an hour really highlighted that all of our divisions are doing some form of public or community engagement. And so the sense that like it was.

A. It just expanded.

I think everyone's collective view of how many people are already tasked with doing

some form of that work and so also like by bringing those groups together highlighted that there, I think is more capacity in our agency to think about this than maybe initially felt apparent because.

While we all have, like, our individual responsibilities.

This is more or less already some folks job, so I think there was like bringing folks together internally really helped highlight that we only had one meeting and how we structure going forward. I think it's still TBD but that was I think really empowering JC and then also.

To hear that others were struggling with the same barriers in different divisions.

So I think like maybe one thing we could do is make sure we have time as is possible on some of these meeting agendas specifically to cross pollinate on like different.

Deliverables like it feels like the benefit spending reports in the community engagement plans are the most tangible to me because we've been work talking about them the most.

But it just feels like you've been having just dedicated.

Sharing time but in a structured way could help is one idea.

BK

Barrett, Kim 1:01:19

Do anyone have thoughts on responses?

RK

Raimundi, Karla 1:01:37

I do have a question, Karla Agency of Natural Resources.

I'm reflecting on what you mentioned, Claire, and the question asked by Kim regarding innovation at the agency level. And I'm wondering whether whether there is some innovation required within the Interagency Committee as a collective in terms of organizing ourselves and creating a governance structure so that we are. More able.

To respond and or react to asks in a more effective and efficient way, and so bringing some of the things that we've that we have been doing and advancing at our agency, into the committee itself.

And I think perhaps.

An area that could be further explored by a student committee of our or.

You know.

Like a semi permanent group Task Group Working Group in governance, maybe this capacity issue at the legislative level. I don't envision this being a challenge that can

be solved this legislative session, nor the next one.

I think this is going to be an ongoing challenge with this and other work that we're asked to do, but I think it's important that we remain ahead of.

The conversation and are able to speak amongst ourselves regarding what best approach to take regarding, you know, the challenges that we're faced with at any given time.

So I'm wondering whether.

We should be asking ourselves.

About.

About how to organize this committee.

To serve the needs that we have in help us address challenges, challenges in a more efficient way.

 **Donohue, Bob** 1:03:53

This is Bob.

I feel like Claire too.

I've been talking a lot, so I don't want to over talk, but.

I think.

Part of me thinks that.

It has to come from the secretary and Commissioner level.

What the priority of ACT 154 is relative to the other agency priorities and I can speak for the AOE and say right now there's just so many other things that this is kind of like taking a second slot or third slot or fourth slot to many.

Other pressing things that are just.

As important, so regardless of what I may feel.

About something here.

It doesn't really trickle up.

It can be information going up, but priorities really trickle down and so I think.

I think perhaps there's a recommendation that at that level there should be discussion about how we handle implementation of actfin 54 priorities into our work, given all the other ones, because I think it has to come from the top down.

My priorities are set by my boss, which is set by her boss, right, and so I work on what I'm told to work on, even though I may say, geez, I think this might be important, right?

And that's just a reality. I think that's at least in my in my world, yeah.

BK **Birch, Juliet** 1:05:45

Yeah. So.

From so I'm hearing two things.

One from what?

Carla said.

I guess my big question really for everybody is Carla kind of suggested the possibility of creating a steering committee.

And so my big question there is like, is that something that folks feel would be helpful?

You know, like that not only could help with things like legislative asks and working more collaboratively like.

Kind of behind the scenes, but also helping with like. I don't know, more autonomy with like.

With oh, my God. Agenda. That's the word I'm trying to remember. Agenda setting.

So like if that's a question here is does a steering committee feel like something that would be helpful?

So that's question one and the other question kind of speaking to what Bob is saying about, you know needing this to be kind of a.

We need an assessment of what our leadership in each of our agencies sort of sees as the priorities and obstacles for their agency, both as it pertains to EJ and as it pertains to EJ in the context of like all this other work that.

Every agency does, right?

And so, Bob, you suggested earlier this idea of like maybe having.

Agency leadership create some sort of like summary report for each agency.

Of obstacles and like things that they're facing in terms of coordination and capacity and stuff.

And so I think that's question #2 for me is you know, does that seem like something folks would want to do?

Does it feel feasible?

Does it feel like something that would be productive to sort of seek out having assembling a collective summary report of, like, you know, each agency, this is what we're kind of.

Expecting to be challenges in terms of implementation of the law.

So steering committee, yes or no? Summary report. What do we think?

DB

Donohue, Bob 1:08:03

Yeah, I guess I would vote for a summary report.

I can't steer anything.

I can only offer opinion so so I I don't.

I'm gonna be influential in steering any kind of outcome, although I could speak passionately about what I think.

So I think that the only way to then communicate is a summary report that's well thought out that articulates clearly to decision makers.

Not a lack of desire to implement or work, but.

Need to say the word obstacles.

But what we think needs to be added on and or changed.

Not necessarily by Adon, but maybe we dropped some other priorities that are not so substantively impactful in Vermont.

So I'm not.

I'm not saying we have to hire 100 people.

What I'm saying is we just need to have a really hard look and say when resource strapped, how do we reprioritize?

I also think that at a higher level, I think the legislative level and the governor and then all agency Commissioners and or directors, they really need to start talking going forward.

We have to stop making these legislative decisions without full regard to the impact.

And I understand it's because we're in such a compressed legislative time where we don't really put that much effort into it. It seems we we have wonderful initiatives that we.

Put into law without regard for either the budget and or resources. As Carla alluded to earlier, while you're still trying to do things at your three or four years behind on anyway, so to make new demands is kind of silly in this environment, right?

So how do we have a really robust discussion about that? And we're not going to do that.

I mean, right. The governor would laugh if you or I were to say, you know, you really should sit down and talk with the legislative leads and say we should revisit how we'd go about the law making process.

Yes, right. But but maybe Commissioners and division directors can say, you know, this is kind of not working and This is why it's not working.

Look at the laws that have been mandated and we're not getting things done.
How do we change that paradigm and come up with a new way of collaborating?

RK

Raimundi, Karla 1:10:31

Yeah, I would like to echo the sentiment underlying your comment on Bob.
And I would.

Urge miss not to mention that this is an ongoing conversation at the Agency of
Natural Resources.

We get unfunded mandates regularly.

And so with regards to the implementation of this law in particular, we're looking at.
You know what can we do when I think?

To actually make a strong.

Argument that creates as good as a as good a picture as possible. At this moment,
regarding the real challenges regarding the implementation of this law, and I think
this report.

The agency.

Each of the agencies, each of the covered agencies, looking at what the law is asking
and where the constraints are.

For implementation is really fundamental in making that case.

And I think really unnecessary step to communicate clearly, tangibly beyond us. Just
saying it.

What the what the challenges are and then you know, as part of that elaboration and
identification, then conclusions can be made regarding.

Implementation.

How the extent to which we're gonna be able to implement the deliverables as per
the law is asking us to do, but I think that first step of critically looking at what the
law is asking us to do and thinking about.

Internally, what structures can be set up to advantage of the deliverables and then
identifying where?

Where the mandate, basically the capacity and the resources that are available, we're
gonna fall short.

And then communicate that.

So that we are advancing things that are very foreseeable to us from inception, you
know, from the moment this law was enacted, I had these concerns real concerns.

And so I think I responded to Claire's question regarding what do we do, do either

or.

Do we either dedicate time to making this evaluation an assessment, or you know, just innovate with what we have and move forward?

Looking for ways to implement the law the best way that we can and my response is on the chat and I believe we should do both and I know it's it's.

I know it's hard because it's more of the same, right?

Like trying to do things.

When we really don't have a lot of capacity to do those things, but I I I do believe that this is a necessary step to.

Help folks.

See what we see very clearly.

Which is that some of this law is.

Yeah, underfunded under resourced and I'm specifically thinking about the mapping tool, which is a huge deliverable.

And there's no maintenance appropriation for this mapping tool.

And so that's a very evident shortcoming, but it really underscores the the systemic issue that we're having with unfunded mandates.

DB **Donohue, Bob** 1:14:42

I guess the only other thing Karla, could you summarize that so well is not only is it discussion about how we're going to implement it, but do we understand what its implications are for already existing programs that are in place and how do we now weave these new?

Requirements into already existing programs, and I think that requires a subset within each agency to review. OK.

Now, what does this mean?

And that has a whole nother.

Fallout from it that's not directly related to the implementation of this act, but there's definitely gonna be consequence of it.

RK **Raimundi, Karla** 1:15:23

Indeed, that's the ultimate goal of this act is that we look critically.

At how we're conducting business at the way that we are providing services and benefits and distributing.

Funds and then go back, review our programs and reassess and restructure. So it's

this is really.

This is really looking at or looking to.

Influence the way that all of the corporate agencies engage with members of the public, not only at the inter personal level, but at a programmatic level.

And that will definitely require.

An assessment of programs against the proportionality requirement and then further down the line cumulative burdens.

And then once we have the mapping tool check in our intuitions and data against what the mapping tool is capturing, so very much so these are the foundational.

Conversations regarding deliverables and then after that this is ongoing and I foresee become perhaps more intensive internally as we look to.

Rearrange our programmatic structures as per the intention of the law.

So thinking strategically about what's needed, where we're going, where the shortcomings are.

Is important to do at this time so that we don't, we don't run ourselves into.

Like.

A.

No exit.

Kind of position, right where we're just creating things and ultimately not a lot is coming out of those actions taken.

BK Barrett, Kim 1:17:39

Xusana, you came off you, you turn your video on and so did you.

Elizabeth, I just wanted to see if you all have things you wanted to share.

DX Davis, Xusana 1:17:48

I'm sorry, I was dealing with somebody before. I grab you with headphones and it it was a mess. You didn't need to witness. So I have been off camera but.

BK Barrett, Kim 1:17:55

No worries.

SE Schilling, Elizabeth 1:18:00

I don't think I had anything too profound.

I I think one thing folks been talking a lot about the lack of resources that have been

put towards the EJ Lai unfunded mandates and I think that is absolutely true. I also think even if the state through tons of money and resources at this law that there are issues inherent in how the statute is written, how it's so broad and it's so vague and.

And trying to figure out what was intended and what falls under the law.

Is such a huge task and I think it it's causing all of us to get stuck.

Constantly and have the same conversations over and over again because of how big the asks are.

And so I I think I'm supportive of any approach where you go to the legislature and ask for greater clarity on what they're wanting the state entities to do because.

The Commission to the question earlier about, you know what if different and she's been doing.

The Commission had a.

An all staff in person retreat this summer where we had the environmental coordinators come, which was fantastic and go over the requirements and deliverables under the law and so all staff understand or have some initial understanding of the law and I think people are trying to think about.

It in an open minded and positive way, but it's still just such a huge undertaking and we're just one fairly small entity.

So I can only imagine how difficult this is for some of the other staff as entities.

So just putting that out there, that more clarity in the law would certainly help.

BK **Barrett, Kim** 1:19:53

It's time.

So I know where coming down to time soon, so just wanted to open it up to you.

Juliet, do you have any other things you wanna cover?

Birch, Juliet 1:20:03

I did have a thought based off of what you had just said, Elizabeth.

Which, by the way, hi.

It's good to see you again.

I hope you're well.

But something that I've been thinking about in terms of the sort of vagueness of the laws that.

No. As we said before.

I think the thing that we have to kind of fall back on if we don't get that clarity is transparency, transparency in the decisions that we make.

In some ways, the vagueness of the law could actually be helpful, because sometimes when clarity is provided, it's not always something that's feasible.

So like I I don't know.

It's the it's really up to you guys since you're all the covered agencies.

If that's clarity, we, if we were really want to seek that out, but you know, there could be benefits either way.

And so that's just something that I've been thinking about is like maybe we maybe we just have to figure out what to do with the information.

Have at our disposal and how to interpret it.

But yeah, clarity could be helpful.

SE Schilling, Elizabeth 1:21:12

But they're positives to I agree there are positives to that.

So we we can try and do stuff and see if what we do is what was intended by the legislature and then they can slap our hands and say no, that's not what we meant.

Go and do something different.

If you're like, that happens to us a lot.

Or we do one thing and it swings too far in One Direction and then they say, oh, no, go back the other way.

But, but we'll keep making efforts.

Yeah, and thank you. I I'm doing well.

I've been having my camera off periodically because of my baby.

In the other room.

BK Barrett, Kim 1:22:00

Yeah, just wanna hold space. If there any other thought and then we can move to wrapping up.

Well, if there's no further thoughts from you guys, I think that, oh, Carla, go ahead.

RK Raimundi, Karla 1:23:05

But I would really like to.

Take a moment here to thank you all.

For your willingness.

To explore alternatives to meet the intent of the law, I think.
It's been.
It's been for me.
A really good learning experience to work alongside you.
And quite inspiring, I'd have to say.
To find other civil servants that care about this.
And are really looking to do.
What what is intended?
For us to do, you know, to center, consider.
And provide services in a way that.
Do not overburden already burdened communities and individuals.
You know that center the conversation around historically marginalized and oppressed communities.
And so I do want to.
Thank you all for your commitment to this work for showing up and having conversations and doing this work when it feels so difficult.
And sometimes it feels like it's just not going to be able to get done.
But.
I know it will because you are doing this work alongside all of us at the agency.
You know Juliet and Kim. And so I remain optimist and I think it's a matter of continuing these conversations and just not losing sight of what it is really that we're doing here and who's ultimately gonna.
Benefit.
From this heart, super hard and sometimes seemingly impossible work.
So thank you so much for your commitment really. And for showing up and for contributing to the conversations.
Thank you.
Thank you. Thank you.

BK

Birch, Juliet 1:25:29

Thanks for that, Karla.
Oh.

SE

Schilling, Elizabeth 1:25:34

And and on a happy note that here's Jade. She says hi.

BK **Barrett, Kim** 1:25:34

Hi.

I can hear you.

SE **Schilling, Elizabeth** 1:25:41

She's a thank you for all for doing this work for me and future generations.

BK **Barrett, Kim** 1:25:47

Oh, it's so nice to meet you.

RK **Raimundi, Karla** 1:25:48

And what better way to end up a meeting that with a baby?

Welcome to the world. We're hoping to leave a better world for you, jade.

SE **Schilling, Elizabeth** 1:25:54

Yeah.

RK **Raimundi, Karla** 1:25:58

That's what we're doing here.

BK **Birch, Juliet** 1:26:03

Yeah, I think that.

Xusana said something to this effect in the previous meeting with the Advisory Council, but I think this work is really unique and it and it feels really slow going because of how unique it is and because of how intentional we're trying to be. And of course, there's all.

Kinds of obstacles that we're running into and and like things that we need to build solutions for, but.

I'm grateful that we are all on the same page in terms of wanting to, you know.

Do the work intentionally instead of just putting our heads down and meeting the deadlines.

You know, without really any thought.

So thank you guys for all being so committed to the, you know, intent behind the work.

And you know, we talked about a ton of things today.

We'll follow up in an e-mail as per usual, and hopefully we can start making some moves on some of the things that we talked about implementing as a team.

But you know, hopefully.

What I would think would be great is if when we do follow up with an e-mail, if you guys can all just like hit reply and let us know your thoughts, especially about like a steering committee and what next steps could be in terms of like a legisl.

Ask 'cause. I know we didn't really get enough time. Just really come to consensus about some of those items and if you have any other ideas of things that we can do to improve and like start creating a more efficiencies.

Across the covered agencies, that would also be a great time to do so.

We're we're just really thankful for you guys and we'll send you an e-mail to talk about 2025 as well.

So thanks everybody. Thank you.

● **Barrett, Kim** stopped transcription