Transcript

July 11, 2025, 4:05PM

Barrett, Kim started transcription

Barrett, Kim 0:04
OK, looks like it started.

Raimundi, Karla 0:07
Fantastic.
Now that we are recording, I would like to remind everyone that this public meeting.
And the purpose of the meeting is to receive comments on the environmental benefits pending guidance that the Agency of Natural Resources under the auspice of the Vermont environmental justice law created in consultation from the Advisory Council.
And in collaboration with the Interagency Committee, both entities created under the Vermont Environmental Justice Law.
My name is Karla Raimundi, and I work with the Agency of Natural Resources as the Director of Environmental Justice and Civil Rights.
I am accompanied by Kim Barrett.
And.
Juliette Burch.
And we are the civil rights on environmental justice unit at the Agency of Natural Resources.
Thank you very much for joining us.
I will pass it on to Kim to introduce us to this public comment meeting.
We wanna welcome you all.
Community members, I don't see any Advisory Council members or interagency committee members, but Emma, I see you.
Thanks for being here.
Kim.

Barrett, Kim 1:41
All right.

Thank you, Karla.
So here are some of the purposes of this meeting.
The first is to increase transparency of the environmental benefits pending guidance and for short. We use ebsg in the Vermont EJ law, transparency and trust building are really important and this public comment period in this meeting is one way that the law asks us to communicate what's what.
Happening.
The second purpose is to gather oral comments regarding the EVSG.
We'll also share information about the current public comment period, which runs from July 1st until August 11th, and then share details about the next public comment period meeting, which is happening on July 14th from 4:30 to 6:00 PM.
Next slide please. Thank you.
Now we'll go over some comment guidelines.
All speakers will be provided A2 minute time limit and depending on how many folks are in the room here, you might have more time.
A facilitator will put their hand up when you've reached your time limit, and so on.
Teams on the top left. It should be.
You'll you'll see.
A hand icon.
So if you see that little hand up in that yellow box, then that means that your time that you've reached your time limit.
If you'd like to provide your name and affiliation, you're welcome to at the beginning of your statement, you'll have an opportunity to complete oral comment and then also comments must pertain to the environmental benefit spending guidance, the Agency of Natural Resources staff, which is US, Juliet and Karla.
And I.
Will respond to your comments in a document in the coming months after the public comment period has closed.
And then I'll pass it to Juliet to share the the rest of the comment guidelines.

BJ **Birch, Juliet** 3:51
Thanks Kim.
So as Kim mentioned at an R, we will be responding to a lot of comments in writing after the close of the public comment period, but that doesn't mean that we can't respond to you guys during this meeting as well.

We will be providing some information introductory information about the EBSG and so we're happy to respond to any clarifying questions at the close of each section of the presentation.
So there will be opportunity for that as well.
Clarifying questions would be anything that you know would help support your understanding of the material that we present on.
Would kind of opt to respond to substantive questions in writing, in the responsiveness summary at the close of the public comment period. So if you have any questions that go beyond clarification and delve deeper into some of the topics that we discussed, then we can respond to those.
In writing.
Similarly to how you can submit oral comment here today, you can also submit written comments at anytime after this meeting. We have a Microsoft form that's available publicly for anybody in your network, including you to write written comments.
The team's chat in this meeting today is public record and will become available. Anything that you write will become available in the environmental justice Public resource library.
After the close of this meeting.
And also you can submit written comments in the teams chat during this meeting. We'll gladly accept comments there as well.
So just to take a look at our agenda for today.
We're gonna do a brief overview of the EJ law to get everybody on the same footing of, you know, what is the law that brought us here into this conversation today?
Then we'll take some time to talk about some foundational concepts that the Evsg asks us to understand.
And then we'll talk.
We'll have 15 minutes for public comment.
After those 15 minutes for public comments.
We'll take another brief period of time to talk about some of the reporting process steps that are in the edsg, and you'll learn more about what that means in a couple of minutes, and then we'll take another 15 minutes for public comment.
And we'll wrap up our informational section of the meeting.
With the last couple of steps in the ebsg reporting process and the rest of the meeting for the most part will be dedicated to public comment with about 20

minutes 21 minutes.
After around 1:04.
So now I will pass it to Kim to get us started on an EJ law overview.
Kim, it looks like you're muted.

Barrett, Kim 6:49
I'm here.
I'm I'm there.
I I hit the button.
So now we're gonna move into an informational part of the of the meeting.
It's just to get us all on the same page because we recognize a lot of information and we wanna make sure that whether or not you've read the guidance, you're still able to to contribute and and share your voice.
Next slide please.
So what is the Vermont EJ Law, also known as Act 154 of?
2022 It's Vermont's first law focused on fixing environmental health gaps.
It works to ensure that every person, no matter their race, income, language or background, is protected from environmental harm.
And all Vermonters benefit from this law.
It recognizes that some communities face more environmental burdens and fewer environmental benefits for more environmental burdens and fewer environmental benefits.
Right. And who I think this one is me or is this Leo?
Can't see that.

Birch, Juliet 8:04
I think it might be me, Kim.

Barrett, Kim 8:06
OK, cool.

Birch, Juliet 8:07
OK, cool.
So.
The next question really is who is involved in making this laws work happen?

First and foremost, the public is a really key part of everything.
Under the law, we are constantly seeking out public input and ask public servants.
You guys are really the center of what we're doing and are the intended beneficiaries of the law. Then there's the.
Environmental Justice Advisory Council, which is a Council of folks made-up of.
Ten Community representatives of folks who you know are disproportionately subjected to environmental health disparities.
So that's some examples include food security, communities, immigrant communities, indigenous communities, etc.
And then we also have the interagency Environmental Justice Committee.
Which has one representative from each of the 10 agencies that are asked to implement the law, and it also includes the Office of Racial Equity.
Also noting I didn't mention this before, but the Advisory Council also has a representative from the Office of Racial Equity as well.
So then next we have the covered agencies.
So there's ten agencies that are asked to implement the law. We at the Agency of Natural Resources are one of them.
And the next slide will include a complete list of those agencies. In case you're curious.
And then we have the Agency of Natural Resources listed separately as well, because we are the lead agency under the law, meaning we provide technical assistance to the Advisory Council, to the Interagency Committee and to the covered agencies to help kind of coordinate the implementation of the law.
And then finally, we have the Vermont legislature.
They wrote the law, and so they're a really key part of this as well.
As well.
I'm just gonna leave this screen up here for folks to read in case they're interested to know who are the covered agencies under the law.
These are the different areas of work that are represented under the law.
And then I'm gonna pass it to Kim.

BK **Barrett, Kim** 10:31
Thank you.
So how does the law work?
It intends to identify where the communities with the greatest environmental needs

are located in the state.
It creates tools and guidance to help agencies act more fairly, and one example of this is the environmental benefit funding guidance, which is what we're here to talk about.
So this is a new draft of this new guidance in this very new process.
The law.
Also asked us to consult with the Advisory Council on this guidance and also ask the Interagency Committee to inform the draft guidance as well.
The law also requires public reporting, and we'll talk about how reporting fits into or relates to this guidance. And then it also involves the public at key points just like this. The public comment period.
Next slide please.
All right, so now we're going to move into.
Talking about some foundational concepts in the ebsg.
And the first one is the environment that's important to qualify in this in this case.
So we're describing the environment as characteristics of the spaces where we live, where we work and where we play, which really encompasses many different aspects and parts of our lives.
Those things can be physical.
They can be social.
They can also be cultural.
And then there's environmental benefits.
Those increase individual and community well-being.
In the spaces where we live, work and play.
Those can include things like safe housing, nutritious food and clean water.
And so there are many covered agencies as we saw in the earlier slide. And so that means that there are many types of environmental benefits. Another key concept is investment.
What is an investment?
We are describing investments as commitments of resources.
So that could be the money, or that could be the time that's associated with creating an environmental benefit.
And one example we can use to think this through is tree planting.
So at the agency and this is a hypothetical example, just to further explain these concepts, but at an R, the agency of natural resources, you know, one thing that we

do is tree planting.
Trees are very important to our environment.
Physically.
In some cultures it can also have social and cultural importance.
It also help us breathe.
So that's part of their environmental benefit and there are many investments that go into tree plantings, the trees themselves, the time that it takes to plant the tree transportation. There are many commitments of resources.
So now we are going to, I think pass it to Juliet to talk about.
A few more concepts in the guidance.

BJ **Birch, Juliet** 13:47
Yeah. Thank you, Kim.
So this slide really is dedicated to sort of explaining on a high level what the, what, what the environmental benefits spending guidance is and what it impacts. So the environmental benefit spending guidance or ebsg is a guidance document that explains how agencies are going to approach.
Their baseline spending reports.
The next logical question would be well, what the heck is a baseline spending report?
The law has this thing where they're asking each agency to submit a report that explains.
And you know, provides like a quantitative reporting of the investments that they make that create environmental benefits where the most where they're most needed.
And so the baseline spending report in this case.
Takes a look at. You know, the last three years of spending that has gone towards environmental benefits and provides a report about it.
Then the next key concept here is proportionate.
Essential essentially, in this work we're thinking of proportionality as being an equitable share of environmental benefits based on need.
So after covered agencies finish their baseline spending reports, they will then have to work towards making their investments.
More proportionate.
So that's really why the EBSG is so important is because it's telling covered agencies. Here's how to do your report, and that report is ultimately going to be the first step in making our investments towards environmental benefits more proportionate for

members of the public across.
Vermont.
This image here.
This timeline really is just to help everybody understand, sort of what we're looking at in terms in terms of meeting the goals in the law. So the environmental benefits spending guidance which we're talking about here today is due September 15th of this year. So in about two months.
And then from there, the covered agencies will take that document and they will create their baseline spending report.
Those will be made public on February 15th of 2026 and then they have roughly 5 or so months to take their findings from those reports and establish a goal of proportionate investment.
And we'll talk a little bit more in the coming months about what it looks like to establish a goal of proportionate investment.
So if you're interested in that conversation, I would encourage folks to join some of our public meetings.
Because this is still an ongoing conversation.
OK.
Now I'm gonna pass it to Kim.

BK **Barrett, Kim** 16:49
Thank you.
So what is the environmental benefit spending guidance?
It clarifies how agencies assess and report on their environmental benefits.
It recognizes the need for environmental justice.
It provides flexible guidance so that all of the covered agencies are able to to use it.
It explains the law's intent and offers minimum standards, and then it supports other Vermont environmental justice.
As mandates or asks that the law has over time.
Next slide please.
What doesn't?
The environmental benefit spending guidance do it does not decide where money goes.
It does not direct how dollars are spent.
It does not override any agency budget processes and it does not make changes to

the law. And similarly, because the guidance kind of doesn't do those things, we're unable to use comments to also do those things.
I think now.
I guess we can stop and see if there are any clarifying questions and then we can move into public comment. And I think because there are two folks, we have 15 minutes allotted for this.
So I think it makes sense for each of you to take 5 minutes and then divvy up the rest in case someone else comes up.
Matthew, go ahead.

ML **Matthew LeFluer** 18:21
Yes greetings. My name is Matthew le floor.
I'm senior pronouns.
My association is the Vermont legal citizen found.
Ation my clarifying question is.
In the draft, you know I'm seeing a lot of technicality and complexity words here being thrown at me, which is, you know, this is exactly what I do across the Vermont Climate Council, which I'm a member of, because those are actually what gets us picked up, you know.
In.
Not just in the processes, but also trying to get the narrative of what you know as an individual myself, I like would like to know.
Is there a way to ask that question in a more simplified plain language version of it?
Because I noticed that you know that that my job is to make sure that the language remember Vermont Climate Council standpoint, make sure it connects with the residents across Vermont.
I am a resident of Vermont.
Thank you.

BK **Barrett, Kim** 19:31
Thank you.
That's a great question.
I'm gonna pass it to Takara.

RK **Raimundi, Karla** 19:40

This is. Thank you very much Matthew for being here for your comment and for taking the time to share your perspective and for your contributions to the Climate Action Council.
Too.
Your question is very important and something that we definitely consider plain language in materials that are dense.
And because of the nature of the documents themselves tend to use language that is technical in nature.
I have to say, Matthew, that we did the best that we could to create the guidance.
Using language and converting some words to plain language to the best of our ability.
What would be extremely beneficial is to identify several things about who the intended audiences are for the guidance.
So the environmental benefits pending guidance is intended to be used by covered agencies.
So what that means is those 10 agencies.
That Juliet put on the screen. Those 10 agencies are identified in the law as the covered agencies that are asked to implement a bunch of different asks that are included in the law.
One of them is.
Actually do what the guidance is asking them to do.
And so this guidance document, as was explained earlier was put together by the Agency of Natural Resources.
With the help and support of the Advisory Council of the Interagency Council of an Environmental Benefit Task Group, we consulted all of the agencies.
We shared the documents with the partners that I already mentioned.
And one of the areas that we receive feedback on was what you just mentioned, plain language.
And so we've gone back to the document and try to simplify content. Now that does not mean that there's no space for improvement.
What would be really, really helpful, Matthew, is if there are areas in the guidance document.
That you think could benefit for from a more plain language explanation so that we are helping and supporting folks, understand what it is that the guidance is asking of agencies to do.

It would be great for us to know.
Whether there are areas that you think could benefit from that improvement?
Of course.
What we will do after.
Hearing from you is.
As we conclude the public comment period, Matthew.
We will make sure to provide.
Another review of the guidance and try to simplify where we find areas that perhaps may be needed to be simplified.
More but like I mentioned, there's really no substitute for feedback from folks like you who do this day in day out, right?
Like ensuring that content of dense materials, technical materials really translate and are relatable for members of our communities.
Because ultimately the goal of this guidance.
Is to.
Improve.
Prove the way that the agencies provide services to our communities.
So I do welcome more feedback from you or others regarding which areas you think could be improved by providing a more plain language.
Approach.
And you and there are ways in which we could do that again, you can provide written comments.
You could provide oral comments.
You can utilize the chat identify space.
The public comment period will be open until August 11th, so there is ample time.
To.
Go further into the document and identify those areas and we will make sure to do the best we can, Matthew.
To convert the those areas into more clean language. Thank you.

BK **Barrett, Kim** 25:16
Thanks.
OK.
So I also wanna make sure that we're not muddying the public comment time with just asking the clarifying questions.

I think what probably makes sense is worry if you have a comment that you'd like to share. If you'd like to do that now and then, I'd like to go back and give Matthew a chance to make a, you know, like a single comment. If you have any.
Else that you'd like to formally put as your oral comment.
OK, not hearing from Lori.
That's all right, Matthew.
Is there anything else that you wanna contribute as a comment?

Matthew LeFluer 26:10
No, no, I'm just. No, thank you for bringing that up.
It's just, you know, the IT was just, you know, how I do things.
This is just a draft document.
I'm I'm wondering if this was just clarifying if this was the draft document. You know that we're talking about with the, EG that you're putting forward that I know that's, you know, can get very technical sometimes, but yeah, but that's pretty much it.

Barrett, Kim 26:30
Yeah.

Matthew LeFluer 26:30
But thank you very much.

Barrett, Kim 26:32
Yes, definitely.
And what?
I also heard you say is that possibly kind of connecting your work specifically on that the Act, the Climate Action Council and being able to like substantively explain it to your communities? And I think that we can also set up a meeting to do that as well if.
We need more help with that.
I think we can move on to the next section here.

Birch, Juliet 26:59
Would you like me to share my screen again, Kim?

Barrett, Kim 27:02
Yes, please.

Birch, Juliet 27:03
OK, sounds good.
Just a SEC.

Barrett, Kim 27:14
Awesome. OK.
So now we're gonna go start going through each reporting PO process step.
So step zero is building capacity for the work, asking each agent or each agency would ask the question, how do I prepare for this?
So in the tree planting example, you'd ask how do we actually prepare to do this work?
The second step or the first step is assessing.
Assessment to identify environmental benefits.
So we'd ask, what are the environmental benefits that my agency provides and the outcome for that would be to identify the benefits?
And then we're going to go over step 2:00 and 3:00.
So Step 2 is the initiative assessment.
What initiatives in my agency provide environmental benefits?
So the outcome there is to actually identify the initiatives that directly invest, invest in environmental benefits.
And then the third is an investment assessment.
So does my agency have actual information on the investments it makes towards environmental?
Benefits and that's an important question because we recognize that the agencies may not have all of the information that we'd like on all of the investments that we make for all of the environmental benefits.
All right.
And then I'll pass it to Juliet to do steps 4:00 and 5:00.
Well, actually, yeah, we can stop for another public comment.
Let's do that.

Birch, Juliet 28:52
Sounds good.
On our agenda, at this point, we would have had like 15 minutes for public comment.
But if there's any other thoughts that you guys have that you'd like to share, you're welcome to do so now.
Or if you have further questions about, you know, steps zero through three that Kim just shared about, you're welcome to also ask those questions now.

Raimundi, Karla 29:22
Perhaps you can put them up on the chat, not on the chat.
Sorry on the screen.
Steps 0234 folks to look at and reflect on.

Birch, Juliet 29:33
Yep, that sounds good.

Raimundi, Karla 29:35
Thank you.

Birch, Juliet 29:35
And I've seen Matthew.
You have your hand up.

Matthew LeFluer 29:41
Thank you.
The the CL.
Yeah, it's just a processes. How that's how's 0?
How can we get from point A to point B?
Knowing that you know this is just a start up thing.
So we're just we're we're basically at the starting line here.
How can we, you know?
And I looked at this, you know, throughout throughout, you know, it's gonna take a lot of investments and money and finance. You know, as you may know, Vermont, like you said, cringes at the point of anything with money.

How can we succeed knowing that we may have a?
Some financial hiccups or financial issues, you know, going further down the line, as you may know.
What's going on around the world as you as you, as you see it playing out?
Yeah, that's just my one of my questions is, how can we I see the processes right there.
I'm just.
I'm just, you know, just a question of how can we get from the starting line to the finish line knowing that we need to have those goals completed or near completion.
In the coming future.
Thank you.

BK **Barrett, Kim** 30:51
Thank you for your comment. I feel like I'm hearing probably emphasizing problem solving as things may come up further down the line.
And it looks like Lori, you're still on the call. If you'd like to share anything now you're more than welcome.
OK.
Matthew, I'll kick it back to you.
Do you have anything else you want to share before we move on?

ML **Matthew LeFluer** 31:38
At this time, thank you.

BK **Barrett, Kim** 31:39
OK, great.

BJ **Birch, Juliet** 31:47
Alright so.
We'll also share with you the last couple of steps of the reporting process.
So step four, step three was identifying investments, making making an assessment of the investments that agencies are making towards environmental benefits, and so Step 4 is really taking a look at those investments and saying of all of these, which can my agency actually report on?
And so thinking about what you said, Matthew, about some of the limitations that

agencies might be facing around capacity, around money and resources.
Or even, as Kim mentioned, just data.
This step is really an opportunity for agencies to say, OK.
I have all these investments, but which ones are are feasible for my agency to report on in this first round of reporting?
Something to note here is that.
This first round of baseline spending reports is only again a first round.
Starting in 2027, I believe agencies will start reporting annually on their environmental benefits investments. And so those annual reports are an opportunity to start incorporating other investments that didn't get to be included in the first report.
So not only does this give us a chance to be more transparent with the public, but it also is asking agencies to kind of make a plan.
To, you know, improve their data intake so that we have all the information we need to make informed policy decisions.
So the outcome of step four would be really creating a list of the investments that the agency will report on.
And committing to that list.
And then something that we'll talk about a little bit more in the appendix is that agencies have an opportunity to create like a prioritization scheme where if they determine that there are certain investments they can't include in their report.
They can start to bring them into future reports as these reports continue to pass us by.
So then Step 5 is data gathering.
The main question here is how will my agency collect, organize, and store data on these investments?
That's a big question, even though some may say, oh, it's very cut and dry, let's just put all this stuff into a spreadsheet.
It it can be hard to track all that stuff down.
So that's where a lot of the capacity is going to come in and the main outcome of Step 5 is going to be creating a data set with all information needed.
For the report, all of the you know, numerical information needed for the report.
So then we move on to step 6.
Step 6 is describing and quantifying environmental benefits.
The law asks that covered agencies not only report on the investments that they're

making towards environmental benefits, but also try to quantify what the public is getting out of those investments.
So the main question here is, can my agency measure the outcome of the environmental benefits?
It provides and the outcome of this step would be, where practicable. Agencies should try to develop a description of the environmental benefit in the case of tree planting, that would be we plant trees in communities throughout the state and this results in better air quality, lower temperatures perhaps.
Lower energy bills for folks, especially if the tree canopy is really wide.
And then in addition to that description, covered agencies are going to do their best to assess the outcomes of those investments.
So then finally we come to step 6, which is reporting. This is really where everything where everything lands us.
How can my agency be transparent and clear while completing the baseline spending report?
This really brings us back to what we were talking about with prioritization.
There may be some investments that agencies just can't include in their report at this time, but what we're asking through this guidance is for agencies to be transparent about why can't those investments be included and when will the public be able to see those investments further down the.
Line as we continue to do this reporting, so the outcome of step seven would be to create a report of investments made towards environmental benefits and then also create.
Explanation of what was and was not included and why.
So I'm going to stop sharing now, and if there are any questions on steps 4 through 7.
We can totally take those now and then there's also more opportunity for folks to give comment if they are interested.
I'm gonna put the steps back up on the screen, actually, just so that folks can see them for reference. And Matthew, I see you have your hand up again.
So you can take the floor.

ML **Matthew LeFluer** 37:32
Yeah. Thank you again.
Yeah, that data.

That last step of data reporting which is is very critical and crucial of where we go from here and how we succeed on that.
There are some, like I said, there are ways to, you know, get that data just, you know, first of all, one other question is, is this a live document for one?
Because most you know documents you know are preset from.
Years past years times is this is this? Does this refresh and update the software update software agencies could come in here and update it like you said, that data is gonna be very very.
Critical for the outcomes, there's also suggested an idea that using AI artificial intelligence, like most of Vermont's, using right now to quantify that, not just quantify that data, but try to know where the outcomes of you know of where it should be.
Or where we should be going so that data in the disk portrays that data, reporting that maybe you know just giving suggestions that those might be, you know, integrated in a coming in the coming years, you know or in this plan that we're trying to build out in.
The near future. So we're not trying to guesstimate on, you know, where we should be at. You know, it's just, you know, trying to just trying to make that quantified data more accurate.
To what we're seeing on the ground.
Oh oh, thank you.

RK **Raimundi, Karla** 39:08
I would like to respond to your one of your questions, Matthew.
And clarify.
That.
This document itself.
Is not a life document in the sense that it will be updated regularly to respond to changes.
That are coming from the actual gathering of the information.
And the reporting process.
But what's interesting about this area of influence that the environmental benefit?
Spending guidance is the first step of is that what follows after this document is finally approved.
Is that the agencies are going to gather information from?

A three. A three.
Year period.
That's established in the guidance and then based on that information.
And that is called the baseline report.
After that baseline report is done, then the agencies are asked in the law to provide an annual report.
And then in the way that the that the process will respond to current events and and by current event, I mean the the ability of the agencies to gather more information.
Information and more data will be reflected in that annual process.
So again.
The the continuum.
In the.
In this area of influence, the benefit distribution in the law is guidance goes 1st and this is what we're talking about here then.
2nd.
Agencies are gonna use this guidance to go back in time and create a baseline report.
And then after that, the agencies are asked to produce yearly reports.
In between that process.
There is an ask for the agencies to establish a goal of proportionality, and so that's where the iteration will occur in the yearly reporting.
And the establishment of the goal of proportionality will.
Respond to the contents of this guidance.
And so that's where the iteration is.
This guidance is not intended to change into the future, but rather the reporting the annual reports.
Will improve over time.
At least that's the expectation.

ML **Matthew LeFluer** 42:44
Thank you for your clarifying question answer.

BK **Barrett, Kim** 43:00
Hold space and see either Lori or Matthew if you wanna contribute another

comment. It's still 6 on the call, so if we wanna, if you wanna ask another question, we're happy to to answer any other clarifying questions. Yeah, Lori.

Laurie Kozar 43:18
Yeah. Thanks so much, Kim.
I do have to say I stepped away for a few moments for flood recovery work. I live in the Northeast Kingdom and as you all know, there has been flooding up here. So and that is My Portfolio.
So I'm sorry that I missed part of it, but I'll hope to catch up with slides from this presentation or recording of it.
But I'm curious if you have language to suggest some of the measurables. You know when you talk about reporting data.
What exactly actually being captured do you have some suggestions for descriptions for reporting?
For language, does that make sense?

Birch, Juliet 44:00
You mean just to clarify Lori, do you mean?
Like what would?
The fields be for reporting.
Like what?
What type of data needs to be included in the report? Is that what you're asking?

Laurie Kozar 44:15
Yeah, exactly. As you know, if you are, if you are asking an agency to respond to you know and frame the impacts of the work that they're doing and funding in in different areas in the state through their programming, do you sort of give them prompts on what?
That might, like you've given us the example of planting trees and how that might impact and what they might say about that, you know, tree canopy, carbon sequestration, reducing temperatures.
You know, securing land from, you know, from water that is that might be fast moving and the roots helping to hold it in position.
Do you have some suggestions for language you know to kind of bucket? So that year over year you're looking at similar data points?

Birch, Juliet 45:06

Great question.
And Kim and Karla, feel free to jump in as well, but I'll just say.
Off the top of my head, I think what your question speaks to is both the like.
These physical data that needs to be included in the report as well as what we're saying is like a description of the environmental benefit itself.
And so.
In the.
Data based report. We're asking that agencies include what we're calling like minimum data field. So they at the minimum have to include these things, which I'll list to you. But we're also, you know, leaving it open for if they want to include other data in their report they.
Welcome to, but that's really at their agency's discretion.
So the minimum data fields are the initiatives name.
So if there's like a program benefit or service that they're reporting.
On the title of that should be there. Also, the type of environmental benefit.
The investment quantity in dollars.
The funding source.
So where did those money?
Where did those monies come from?
The funding cycle.
So how often does their agency actually get that funding?
Whether or not the funding is discretionary, do they get the option to decide where the money goes?
And then where does the investment?
Physically impact the public is there like a geographic location that is specifically impacted by that investment?
So those are kind of the minimum data fields that we're asking people to report on in their quantitative report when it comes to the description.
I'm not sure that we've developed language yet to kind of support agencies in.
You know, what exactly should their description include?
What should it not include?
I think you know part of our role, the three of us who are here with you today is to provide technical assistance to each of the covered agencies.

And so I right off the top of my head, I would say that if there were questions from folks about what the description should look like, they could come to us.
But if you have any suggestions on you know what like what are things that you would like to see from that description?
That would be really helpful 'cause you know this this report is not just, of course, for us to support decision making, but it's also for transparency to the public.
So if there's specific things you'd like to see that's not represented yet, we'd love to see, we'd love to know.

LK **Laurie Kozar** 47:53
Yeah, that's great.

BJ **Birch, Juliet** 47:54
And Karla and Kim, I don't know if you have any thoughts.
Sorry, Lori didn't mean to cut you off.

LK **Laurie Kozar** 47:57
Yeah.
I was just gonna say that that was a great description. And you know, you know, quantitative versus qualitative data capture, information capture.
Is really helpful and I think getting those stories.
About impact is, you know, leaving it open to some degree, but I could also imagine wanting to do a search like if I was doing research on impacts at a later date and wanted to kind of compare year over year what programs across the different state agencies were.
Impacting the environment.
You know, being able to search for certain keywords in those reports in the in the qualitative reports might turn up some different.
Context for that qualitative data that would be rich in in trying to come you know, gather like how especially when you're talking about social or community benefits that are non tangible per SE, non physical attributes.
I imagine that could be.
A lovely way to capture that.

BJ **Birch, Juliet** 49:06

That makes complete sense, Laurie and.
For context, for you, Matthew, we've emailed Lori over the last like day or so about the her attendance of this meeting.
So I'm a little bit familiar with what Lori does at kind of a superficial level.
Knowing that you work a lot in disaster recovery for communities, I was wondering if there are specific, you know, key terms that if you were to use this data in your work that you would like to see be searchable.
Call.
I'm just curious.

LK **Laurie Kozar** 49:40
Oh golly, what a what? An opening.
Let me let me think on that.
I'd be happy to get back to you with some you know, since I work with the long term recovery groups as well as the state and other partners across the state responding to disasters and the environmental impacts and our team.
Also works with farmers and you know communities.
As well as emergency response personnel in this state there there could be some some good cross talk here.
For sure.

BK **Barrett, Kim** 50:15
Thank you for that.
I also wanted to say that it makes me think about the possible 'cause we're talking about those kind of key terms and making things searchable and how that would definitely support, especially with the social and cultural aspects.
And I'm I'm also thinking about the mapping tool and other.
Mandates and asks under the law and how it can be interesting to to have some of those searchable terms threaded throughout some of these other deliverables and ask.
To paint that that broader picture.

LK **Laurie Kozar** 50:58
Yeah, for sure.
I think you know when when we talk about things like access to mental Wellness, you

know, especially people who are impacted by environmental events like the flooding. Or, you know, impacts to specific age groups that are more susceptible to extreme heat that we're starting to see in the state of Vermont, those sorts of environmental impacts across departments, could you know, could I?
I imagine there could be all sorts of things tracked.
Through through a mapping tool, you know when you're talking about, you know, go go back to the tree planting example.
You know, installing more trees in downtown areas to create more shade or creating, you know, you know, large parking lots instead of them just being parking lots with lighting that they install, you know that there's funding to install trees or permeable parking membranes.
So that the water doesn't pool and and you know.
I could see a lot of different impacts being able to be tracked across physical Wellness as well and air quality.

RK **Raimundi, Karla** 52:12
If I may say something here.
Just a brief comment, Lori.
Another ask or mandate or deliverable that the EJ law established for the Agency of Natural Resources is to create an environmental justice mapping tool.
The scope of this guidance is benefits and investments.
That contribute to those investments.
And the mapping tool.
Will expand.
And to identifying.
Impacts potential impacts in the in the shape of indicators.
That could also allow for a more in depth search.
Of geographies and environmental burdens and impacts and.
At that time.
We could also.
So be in a position to make an assessment regarding the outputs of the reporting process based on this guidance and the information that could be accessed via the environmental justice mapping tool.
So this is sort of like a plug, Lori.
To either stay tuned or.

If this is an area of interest.
To reach out to us, umm to uh, get more information about the process of the creation of the mapping tool for the state of Vermont under the EJ law.

Laurie Kozar 54:06
Yeah, that's wonderful.
I love the mapping.
You know different mapping tools that have been available and developed in this state, often with the Leahy Institute as partners.
So I I really appreciate those maps. They help inform a lot of the work we do at VCF and looking at important impacts.
Across regions across socioeconomics and you know being able to know where their.
Their funds moving from the state and different agencies will also be a good way for VCF to partner closely with the state, I think.
And we certainly have other other communication opportunities between different state agencies, but but I love the mapping tool because if I'm trying to explain to partners of the board or others to be able to have a visualization of something, it's always an amazing helpful tool.

Barrett, Kim 54:50
Thank you.
Thank you.
Wondering, Matthew, if you have any clarifying questions or any other comments or advice that you'd like to share?

Matthew LeFluer 55:25
Not this time. Thank you.

Barrett, Kim 55:28
Mm-hmm.
OK.
Well, we have 30 minutes left of the meeting and so you all are welcome to stay on.
But I do think there might be a couple of other folks who might join for the last 20-30 minutes or so.
But we'll be here. So if you want to continue chatting, asking questions, commenting

you will will keep the meeting open.
Karla or Juliet, do you have any thoughts or anything?

Birch, Juliet 56:19
I was wondering, just in case Matthew and Lori.
Wanted to know should we share some of our information and other ways for them to participate now and then we could share it again at the end of the meeting?

Barrett, Kim 56:31
Sure. Yeah.
Yeah, we can do that. Thanks.

Birch, Juliet 56:34
OK.

Barrett, Kim 56:42
OK.
So you're more than welcome to contact us. It sounds like there's a lot of synergy here and things that we can connect on and also you know, there's still several weeks left of the of the public comment period. So there might be ways that we could collaborate to.
Support community members.
In in providing comments.
So here are our emails if you wanna put your e-mail in the chat as well I think.
Matthew, maybe we emailed like a long time ago, but if you'd like to put your e-mail in the chat, we're happy to to send a note to you.
Thank you.
All right.
And then how else can you participate with written comments?
Of course, we have two meetings, one in Brattleboro.
We wanted to make sure that there was at least one opportunity for folks down there to, to contribute and then we have a meeting next Wednesday.
Where it was.
You can sign up for updates on the implementation of our responsiveness summary, and then you can also.

We'll consider attending a public meeting of the Advisory Council or the Interagency Committee, and that QR code goes to the written comments submission form.

RK **Raimundi, Karla** 58:15
Hello, Liz.

BK **Barrett, Kim** 58:15
Hi, Liz.

RK **Raimundi, Karla** 58:22
We just went through the presentation and had a really good conversation with the folks who are here from the public.
I am wondering less whether you already have thoughts you would like to share or. Since we still have.
Some time, whether you would like us to.
Go back to the reporting process and a little bit of the context, and then perhaps if we don't have time now, then you are gonna be in a better position to submit comments later on.
But I just want to allow you to decide what would be most helpful for you, because we really appreciate you being here.

LC **Liz Curry** 59:21
Thank you so much.
I I really just wanted to say two things and I apologize if they are not. You know, Jermaine, because I don't have that context.
I just don't want to make you go through the whole thing again and then it's a little easier for me to just to share what I'm thinking, whether it's relevant or not than to spend the time writing.
So if it's OK, I'll just share these two things.

RK **Raimundi, Karla** 59:43
OK.

LC **Liz Curry** 59:46
One is that.

I'm. I'm sure there's a good reason for it.
And if there is, then no, you know, like totally not relevant.
Is that under Addison County?
I mean, sorry, under agency of, I was just in the mobile Home Park Subcommittee meeting of the Affordable Housing of the Housing and Homeless Alliance, like my words.
The Agency of Commerce and Community Development administers the manufactured home program, which is, you know, a sector specific program because of all the regulatory overlay.
On mobile, home parks and the mobile home parks that I work with and Cooperative Development Institute works with and the nonprofits work with all need to use the Agency of Natural Resources, Water and Wastewater program.
But there's a disconnect between.
Like working with mobile home parks, using public money in the affordable housing space is an environmental justice.
Act like it is a inherently an environmental justice thing to do that to preserve affordability, to help those parks have healthy infrastructure.
In the water and wastewater program, that program was created essentially for municipalities.
So there's a educational curve.
For the water and wastewater program folks in understanding the Mohamed Park sector would and they are going up the curve.
They are awesome.
They're doing great.
You know, they're really being responsive to our suggestions, but I do want. I did wonder, just rhetorically, like, why Accds Mobile Home Park program doesn't have to report on environmental justice benefits.
And.
And if there is an opportunity for them to report, that'd be great because I think as a state, we're under counting the benefits if they are left out.
Because they do a lot for the sector in terms of protecting mobile Home Park residents from being displaced.
Making sure like health and safety stuff is met.
They are like keeping it affordable.
They are just a really important program.

So that says one comment.
And then secondly, the other thing that comes up with environmental justice spending benefits is kind of like what's the standard. And I see that census tract income standard is like the standard.
But.
Sometimes environmental justice populations.
Are in buildings that get renovated or mobile home parks that get redeveloped that are not in environmental justice?
Census tracks.
Sometimes they are in other census tracts that are high income.
And so I'm just wondering if there's a risk that the spending would miss those benefits because like, I was working with a park in Shelburne and it senses tracts very high, but the people live in the park are very low income and they need water, wastewater help so.
If I went to A&R and help them with water wastewater money, it would get spent there.
But I just.
It wasn't clear if it would be counted because it's the census tract standard that's being used, and I just wanted to recommend a way around that is to either allow the agency to demonstrate that it's assisting low and moderate income people using like one of three different stand.
Which would be the census standard or the USDA income standard?
Which is a median income chart that is aligned with HUD, but it's different than the census.
Median. And then there's federal poverty level, which is always gonna be below census, and the USDA median income, but.
Like it's like you would want accd to be able to demonstrate that they spent money on environmental justice populations for mobile home in mobile home parks, even when they're not in a census.
Census tract.
That's low income, but they're USDA income guidelines say they are low in mod income.
Yeah. So I hope that's clear.
And unfortunately, like the HUD and EPA environmental justice screening tools no longer exist because there used to be this mapping tool, right?

And we could all just go mapping tool and use that. That'd be really simple.
But of course that's gone. So it's like kind of we're on our own.
Thank you very much.

Birch, Juliet 1:04:27
Thank you for your comment, Liz.
I just had a quick clarifying question because so you asked two questions. The first being about the Accd mobile home program.
I'm not totally familiar with that program, so I'd be. I'd love to learn more. I was just curious.
What? Like where you read that or were put under the impression that they wouldn't be included in this report?

Liz Curry 1:04:56
Oh yeah, sorry.
I mean, that's the thing.
I'm not, you know, totally well versed in the document. I got it.
I could.
First of all, I do want to say I could not find it online, which I thought was problematic. So I emailed Karla like at 11:30 and like where's the document so I not fluent in it yet.
But there's a table that indicated, you know, like accd training.
Training and something was a function that they performed.
But it related to the business sector.
And so, you know, my take away is probably wrong, but it just was weird. Under training and funding Accd partnering with employers and training providers to cover training costs.
Will they also do technical assistance to, you know, the affordable housing sector and mobile home parks? And so I just noticed that and it made me wonder about the mobile Home Park program.

Barrett, Kim 1:05:51
Mm-hmm.
That's really helpful feedback, yeah.
So that was sort of generated just as examples.

So it's not exhaustive, but that we can definitely emphasize that.
So it's so it's not a red flag for anyone.
Thank you for that.

Raimundi, Karla 1:06:17
If I may say, well, first of all, Liz, thank you so much.
The guidance is on the website. We're going to look at, you know how many clicks away it is.
For accessibility purposes, I did already share that with the team that you were not able to find it.
So we're gonna look at that for sure.
So I appreciate that feedback.
And regarding your second.
Question.
Slash comment which is very accurate regarding the level at which we are making assessments.
And I already did that did this earlier and I do it again.
It's a blog for the mapping work. One of the mandates under the EJ Law assigned to the Agency of Natural Resources is the creation of an environmental.
Mental justice mapping tool like you mentioned right now, the tools that we were relying on from the federal level to to assess either priorities or assign.
Assign funds.
They disappeared.
So the EJ law had when it was enacted included an ASK and appropriations.
To create a mapping tool.
And.
The language of the law, which I will well, I'll share with you later, because it's not relevant for the for the purposes of this meeting, but I think you may be really interested.
In getting more information about this work.
So this is a plug for Liz.
Reach out after the meeting so that we can share more information, because this question about the geography is something that we are very aware of.
And the stash actually mentions to the smallest geographic level practicable.
So that is the question.

What is practicable here in Vermont?
And we are aware that what you mentioned is definitely a concern based on feedback that we've received from program staff, right, because they're on the ground, they're engaging with these communities and they've shared that. The federal tools that existed. Thank you, Laurie.
The federal tools that existed were not sufficiently granular, even for the purposes that we were looking to assess for.
So this is a really important question. It's outstanding.
We're working and will continue to work and now that we're in the process of selecting a contractor for the creation of the mapping tool.
This conversation will become more important.
And.
So thank you, Liz, for that.

LC **Liz Curry** 1:09:28
That's really exciting to hear.
I appreciate that and and that would be amazing. I think it would solve so many problems.

RK **Raimundi, Karla** 1:09:36
The other thing too that I will say and again I am distancing myself from the scope of this public comment meeting. But since you brought it up, I think it is important for the members of the public to be aware that as part of the creation of that.
Mapping tool.
There will be a community engagement group, a team that will help inform the GIS component.
And so that is key for assessing this question.
And so the intention is that we're gonna, we're gonna ask Vermonters for information that is important for the mapping tool to capture, and then we'll go through the process of analyzing that information. And the two teams, both the Community engagement team and the GIS team, will work to.
To come up with recommendations for how to.
Conceptualize and and share that information.
That's.
Found for Vermonters and for agencies to utilize.

So this is a very important question that's super alive and it's at the center of the creation of this mapping tool.
And it informs the spending guidance as well.

Barrett, Kim 1:11:07
We're just gonna kind of pause and let folks unmute as as you'd like.
To either share, submit a comment whatever you'd like.
Yeah, Matthew.

Matthew LeFluer 1:11:28
Thank you and thank you for your you know, this engagement, wonderful engagement.
And thank you, Liz, for bringing up that whole the mapping tool of of how it should look like if we were to design it out.
I do wonder about the mapping tool.
Will it be like you said, there's some nuances in it you know, will this be geography demographically or will include all the above for each?
You know, not just each region that mapping to.
Not just include each region of Vermont statewide.
Would I also include down to the, you know, the population, the marginalized communities, the vulnerable communities, because there's a lot of that across Vermont and and like, like the Lori said before she went off, she said it it it. And then then Liz, like, you brought up a.
Good point that it has a, you know, down to down to the the trailer park down to the.
The middle second. So down to that low. You know that everybody.
Lagging about having that because those like you said, there's some discretion.
Ary within a system that says oh, this says you're the individuals are low, but in each district they could have a high you know. Is there a way to, you know, it sounds like there should be some accountability measures in place when we're building this out because we.
Don't want funding to be like, you know, spent on a high, you know.
No benefit, you know type of you know, area where it doesn't need the money, where the money should be going to places where.
It needs it the most. I do think there's some just some accountability, but thank you

for answering that, Liz, for answering that. Where where money should be best.
You know, utilized and spent, you know because you said the clarity that you know, some senses some senses gets it wrong and you know it's a it's a learning curve for Vermont too as well.
I mean, Vermont's not perfect by no means.
But our systems, you know, can't adapt.
You know, to make sure we're not making the same mistake.
The question I have is during this mapping tool that we're building out or going to envision envision, you know that we could use. Will it be, you know, as accurate as it could be?
We are.
We know Vermont has problems with its data centers.
We know there's not enough capacity or not enough, you know.
Finance to provide all of the above.
You know, my question is to is there a way to make sure that?
That the money is being spent where it should be spent for the account accountability side of the whole entire process because we wanna make sure the money gets into those communities that need it the most and make sure we're not duplicating that area more than once. Thank you.

RK **Raimundi, Karla** 1:14:22
Yep. Yep. Yep. Yep. Yep. Yep, Yep.
Thank you for that, Matthew.
And as you can tell, I get very excited when we talk about these things because, yeah, you're hitting the nail on the head with your feedback to bring it back to the conversation that we're having here today around the environmental benefits spending guidance.
And I try to take notes on the several areas that you touch and each of them are very important.
You talked about distribution.
The utilization of funding.
The the needs.
And the granularity of the data.
And to bring it back to the ebsg, as we call it, environmental benefit spending guidance and the mapping tool which when created will help us get more accurate.

In the depiction of the reporting processes.
I'm gonna also list you were not here and I think this will be really helpful to contextualize the conversation and the mapping piece and how the mapping will help us get better at reporting.
So the environmental benefits pending guidance is the first step in a series of mandates that the law created when it was enacted in 2022.
And the agency in charge of creating the guidance is the Agency of Natural Resources.
Sources so the team here has been working and for several years to put together this guidance and we've had conversations with a bunch of different individuals.
And partners, including the Advisory Council, the Interagency Committee, Business Office staff from all of the agencies that are covered in the law.
And now we're hearing from members of the public to ensure that that accountability mechanism is there.
Matthew, that you mentioned to ensure that.
This series of deliverable.
Get us to the goal of proportionally.
Spending investments where the needs are.
So This is why.
This series of deliverables is so important for the work of environmental justice for Vermont and the implementation of this law.
So we start with the guidance after the guidance, the agencies are going to utilize the guidance.
And track the information that the guidance is identifying.
Then they're gonna produce a report.
That goes back three years and the period is in the guidance, and they're gonna use that as a baseline.
To then establish a goal of proportionality.
And the interesting thing is that the law took it a step further and it asked the agencies to every year provide a report.
On how these things are looking.
So the goal is that over time, the agencies are going to get better.
This is the first time that this has been asked of agencies, so the goal is that agencies are going to get better at identifying direct investments that provide benefits.
And then assessing geographically and this is where the mapping tool would come

in at the smallest geographic level.
Where those things are going?
And then into the future, the agencies are gonna establish a goal proportionality.
And then start distributing according to that goal of proportionality.
So this is this work and I'm getting goosebumps because this is really meaningful for the state of Vermont.
And then the question about communities, Matthew, that you're raising and the level and the building, the buildings and where they sit within a certain community that your race list.
Is complex.
Because we also need to ensure that we're protecting privacy.
And that we are having a conversation that's respectful and considerate of the interest of the communities that we will be talking about, right, and engaging with.
So then this is where the community engagement component, the team informing the creation of the GIS component will come in.
We need to ensure that when we're talking about the level at at which we're gonna be assessing.
These things that we're not running afoul of private privacy considerations.
Because that is sensitive, right?
And also there is a question about self-determination and autonomy of these communities.
S.
So this is all to say that the law in the way that it shaped the actions that the agencies need to take.
Allow for a certain.
Flexibility in how we're gonna get to where we need to get in the future, but the considerations and the impacts on the ground and how we're going to.
To how we're going to.
Work to stand up these structures and these mechanisms and tools is a very sensitive.
So that's why you know when we talk about the level of granularity, the census blows, Census tract, community level, household level.
In Vermont is very important because of what you mentioned, Liz, but there's the other side of the argument, right, which is how much information are we gonna be gathering?

What kind of information will be gathered?
How would it be used so that we're not running afoul of important considerations like privacy, right?
And also holding that information in a way that.
Is transparent and so that's the role of the mapping tool. And then this exercise that the environmental benefit area of influence that the law created will allow for that iteration.
So the agencies every year are going to go back.
And improve their reporting process because the law asks a lot. This didn't exist before.
What this requires is to.
Look into how we're doing things right now and look at those processes in the context of the bigger picture to ensure fairness, equitable distributions, transparency.
So anyway, this is very exciting work, I hope you.
Continue engaging with us all along, all throughout.
This is a multi year work but I just really wanted to bring it back to to the conversation to the environmental benefit spending guidance because they're all related.
And so we cannot have a conversation about distributing proportionately investments in in a void.
So that's what I wanted to say. Thank you.

BK **Barrett, Kim** 1:23:04
Thank you, Karla.
It's 128. I think it would be helpful if we just put up that those last couple of slides for Liz on how to.
Contribute or interact.
And while we're doing that, if Matthew and Liz, you want to share anything else in our last few minutes, you're more than welcome.
Thank you, Juliet. So.
Problems can you participate?
I think that there's a lot of opportunity for all of us, even on this call, to collaborate in supporting folks in written comments.
We have two in person meetings on Monday.
There's one Brattleboro and then on Wednesday, there's one here in Montpelier and

can sign up for updates, and we'll keep you updated on the responsiveness summary.
And then you're welcome to attend a public meeting of the Advisory Council.
Or the interagency committee. And these are kind of the mapping tool and some of these considerations they've been talking about them as well. So encourage you to come at any point that you can throughout the year that would be great.
And then the QR code takes you to the to the written form.
And yeah, with that we're at the end of the meeting.
Thank you all for coming.

Liz Curry 1:24:46
Thank you so much for holding this space open.

Raimundi, Karla 1:24:51
Thank you for participating and for engaging in us with us in this dialogue, I hope.
You find it helpful.

Liz Curry 1:25:03
Definitely good.

Liz Curry 1:25:04
Thank you.

Raimundi, Karla 1:25:06
Talk soon.

Barrett, Kim 1:25:08
Thank you.

Raimundi, Karla 1:25:09
OK folks.
Thank you, Emma. Thank you.

Ramirez-Richer, Emma 1:25:14
Yeah, that was great.

RK **Raimundi, Karla** 1:25:16
Thank you for being here.

BK **Barrett, Kim** 1:25:17
Stop recording.

RE **Ramirez-Richer, Emma** 1:25:20
The book on Monday.

◉ **Barrett, Kim** stopped transcription