

A Guidebook for Covered State Agencies

Created to aid the implementation of the Vermont Environmental Justice Law (Act 154 of 2022).

This document is a working draft and subject to change

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A Note to the Reader

Welcome reader! This guidebook is written to support covered State agencies in the implementation of the Vermont Environmental Justice Law (VT EJ Law, also known as Act 154 of 2022). The first section of the document provides a thorough overview of the responsibilities of covered agencies. The second section has prompts and suggested action steps for your Interagency Committee representative and/or their designee(s) from within your agency who will be responsible for coordinating internal implementation of the VT EJ Law. Ideally, additional agency staff will become involved in these efforts over time and assist with completing suggested action steps.

Before diving into the content, a couple of items to note:

- This document is a working draft prepared by the EJ Coordinators (contact information on page 2) and is subject to change over time as we learn how to best facilitate the implementation process and adapt to the specific needs of covered agencies and other stakeholder groups.
- Members of the public, Interagency Committee members, Advisory Council members, and agency staff are all welcome to give feedback about any VT EJ Law guidebooks by emailing the EJ Coordinators.
- If you come across words and terminology that are unfamiliar while reading this packet, please consult the glossary at the end of this packet.

Nondiscrimination statement and language access

The Vermont Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) operates its programs, services, and activities without discriminating on the basis of race, religion, creed, color, national origin (including limited English proficiency), ancestry, place of birth, disability, age, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, or breastfeeding (mother and child).

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Introduction to Vermont's Environmental Justice Law

Purpose and Background

Also known as Act 154 of 2022, the Vermont Environmental Justice Law (VT EJ Law) is the state's first law specifically meant to address environmental health disparities and improve the health and well-being of all Vermont residents.

The purpose of the VT EJ Law is to:

- Ensure all Vermonters regardless of race, cultural background, or income have equitable access to **environmental benefits** such as clean air and water, healthy food, public transportation, and healthcare.
- Protect communities from disproportionate **environmental burdens** such as polluted air and water, utility siting decisions, climate change impacts, and limited access to green spaces.
- Promote the **meaningful participation** of all Vermonters in environmental decision-making processes.

The VT EJ Law was passed thanks to grassroots, BIPOC-led organizing efforts across the state; in particular, work led by the REJOICE Coalition (Rural Environmental Justice Opportunities Informed by Community Expertise).

Excerpts from the VT EJ Law:

Section 1. FINDINGS

"(4) A study conducted at the University of Vermont showed that in Vermont, Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) individuals were twice as likely to have trouble affording fresh food and to go hungry in a month than white individuals."

"(6) In 2020, the Center for American Progress found that 76 percent of BIPOC individuals in Vermont live in "nature deprived" census tracts. In contrast, 27 percent of white individuals live in these areas."

"(8) According to the Vermont Department of Health, inequities in access to and quality of health care, employment, and housing have contributed to disproportionately high rates of COVID-19 among BIPOC Vermonters."

"(9) During Tropical Storm Irene, mobile parks and over 561 mobile homes in Vermont were damaged or destroyed. Mobile homes make up 7.2 percent of all housing units in Vermont and were approximately 40 percent of sites affected by Tropical Storm Irene."

"(10) A University of Vermont study reports that BIPOC individuals were seven times more likely to have gone without heat in the past year, over two times more likely to have trouble affording electricity, and seven times less likely to own a solar panel than white Vermonters".

Implementing Vermont's Environmental Justice Policy

The VT EJ Law establishes an **Environmental Justice State Policy** (Section 6003):

"It is the policy of the State of Vermont that no segment of the population of the State should, because of its racial, cultural, or economic makeup, bear a disproportionate share of **environmental burdens** or be denied an equitable share of **environmental benefits**.

It is further the policy of the State of Vermont to provide the opportunity for the **meaningful participation** of all individuals, with particular attention to environmental justice focus populations, in the development, implementation, or enforcement of any law, regulation, or policy." (3 V.S.A. 72 Section 6003)

This state policy is to be implemented by ten State of Vermont "covered agencies" in coordination with the Environmental Justice Advisory Council and the Interagency Environmental Justice Committee. The ten covered agencies named in the VT EJ Law are:

1. Agency of Natural Resources
2. Agency of Transportation
3. Agency of Commerce & Community Development
4. Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets
5. Agency of Education
6. Public Utility Commission
7. Natural Resources Board
8. Department of Health
9. Department of Public Safety
10. Department of Public Service

Excerpts from the VT EJ Law: Section 1. FINDINGS

"(18) lack of a clear environmental justice policy has resulted in a piecemeal approach to understanding and addressing environmental justice in Vermont and creates a barrier to establishing clear definitions, metrics, and strategies to ensure meaningful engagement and more equitable distribution of environmental benefits and burdens."

The VT EJ Law provides an opportunity for state government to more effectively promote environmental justice as defined by the VT EJ Law. Through representation on the Interagency Committee, and through consultation with and advice from the Advisory Council, the 10 covered agencies are empowered to share best practices and de-silo efforts to engage meaningfully with communities.

Implementation of the EJ Law will also help state agencies receiving federal funding advance compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and other federal environmental justice related requirements.

Specific Responsibilities of Covered State Agencies

There are five specific areas of work required by the VT EJ Law to advance implementation of the State EJ Policy by covered agencies:

1. **Civil Rights (CR) and EJ Complaint Reporting**
2. **Community Engagement Plans**
3. **Equitable Distribution of Environmental Benefits**
4. **Consideration of Environmental Burdens using EJ Map**
5. **EJ Action Reporting and Review of Definitions**

The specific requirements of the VT EJ Law within these five areas of work are detailed in the sections that follow. The table below provides an "at-a-glance" timeline of when covered agencies can expect to receive guidance from ANR, the EJ Advisory Council, or the Interagency EJ Committee and/or when key deliverables are due. Please note that there will be interim steps built in for the Advisory Council and EJ focus populations (EJFP) to be meaningfully engaged and consulted on how these deliverables are implemented.

2023

- 09/01/23*: Core Principles for Agency Community Engagement Plans
- 11/15/23*: Environmental Benefit Spending Report Guidance
- 12/01/23: EJFP Definition Changes Proposed to General Assembly

2024

- 01/15/24: Agency Annual Reporting (1): CR and EJ Complaints
- 04/15/24*: Agency Baseline Environmental Benefit Spending Reports
- 07/01/24: Agencies Set Goals for Proportional Investment in EJFPs

2025

- 01/01/25: EJ Mapping Tool Available
- 01/15/25: Agency Annual Reporting (2): CR and EJ Complaints **plus** EJ Actions
- 07/01/25: EJ Map and Environmental Burden Rulemaking (ANR)
- 07/01/25: Agency Community Engagement Plans
- 12/15/25: ANR Summary of Agency Baseline Benefit Spending Reports

2026

- 01/15/26: Agency Annual Reporting (3): CR and EJ Complaints **plus** EJ Actions **plus** Environental Benefit Spending -- *annual reporting continues beyond 2026*
- 07/01/26 (ongoing): Agencies update policies and procedures, plans, guidance, and rules to implement the EJ Law

* Due date reflects a two-month extension resulting from a two-month delay required to statutorily authorize per diem payments for EJ Advisory Council members during the 2023 Legislative Session.

1. Civil Rights and EJ Complaint Reporting

- **Section 6004(d): "**The covered agencies shall submit an annual summary beginning on **January 15, 2024** and annually thereafter to the Environmental Justice Advisory Council, detailing all complaints alleging environmental justice issues or Title VI violations and any agency action taken to resolve the complaints."
- **Section 6004(d):** "The Advisory Council shall provide any recommendations concerning those reports within 60 days after receipt of the complaint summaries. Agencies shall consider the recommendations of the Advisory Council and substantively respond in writing if an agency chooses not to implement any of the recommendations, within 90 days after receipt of the recommendations."

Excerpts from the VT EJ Law: Section 1. FINDINGS

"(12) Vermont state agencies receiving federal funds are subject to the antidiscrimination requirements of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964."

"(19) It is the State of Vermont's responsibility to pursue environmental justice for its residents and to ensure its agencies do not contribute to unfair distribution of environmental benefits or environmental burdens on low-income, limited-English proficient, and BIPOC communities."

Timeline: Civil Rights and EJ Complaint Reporting



2. Community Engagement Plans

- **Section 6004(c):** "Each of the covered agencies shall create and adopt on or before **July 1, 2025** a community engagement plan that describes how the agency will engage with environmental justice focus populations as it evaluates new and existing activities and programs."
- **Section 6004(c):** "Community engagement plans shall align with the core principles developed by the Interagency Environmental Justice Committee(…) and take into consideration the recommendations of the Environmental Justice Advisory Council(...)."
- **Section 6004(c):** "Each plan shall describe how the agency plans to provide meaningful participation in compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964."

Excerpts from the VT EJ Law:
Section 1. FINDINGS

"(16) The 1991 Principles of Environmental Justice adopted by The First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit demand the right of all individuals to participate as equal partners at every level of decision making, including needs assessment, planning, implementation, enforcement, and evaluation."

Timeline: Community Engagement Plans

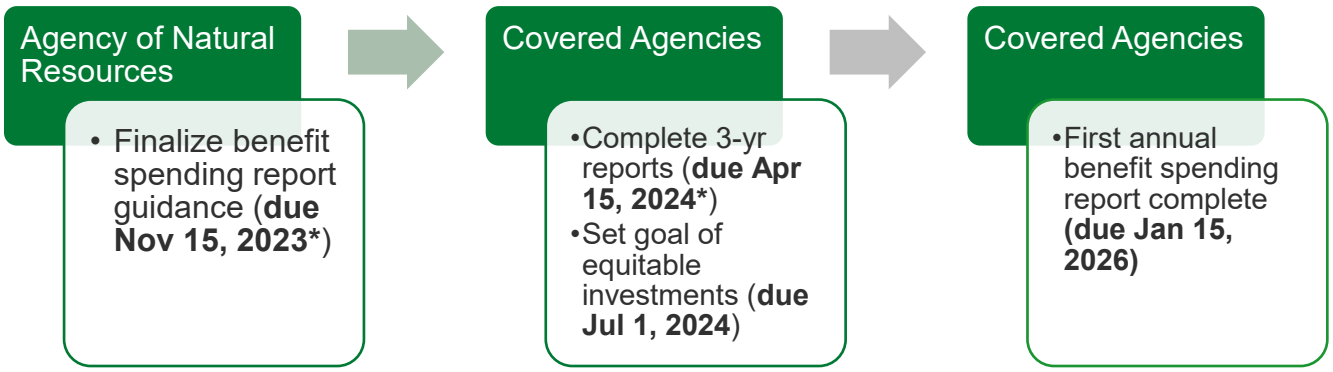


* Due date reflects a two-month extension resulting from a two-month delay required to statutorily authorize per diem payments for EJ Advisory Council members during the 2023 Legislative Session.

3. Equitable Distribution of Environmental Benefits

- **Section 6004(g)(1)**: "On or before **[April 15, 2024*]**, the covered agencies shall, in accordance with the guidance document developed by the Agency of Natural Resources (…) review the past three years and generate baseline spending reports that include:
  - (A) where investments were made, if any, and which geographic areas, at the municipal level and census block group, where practicable, received environmental benefits from those investments; and
  - (B) a description and quantification of the environmental benefits as an outcome of the investment. The covered agencies shall publicly post the baseline spending reports on their respective websites."
- **Section 6004(h): "**On or before July 1, 2024, it shall be the goal of the covered agencies to direct investments proportionately in environmental justice focus populations."
- **Section 6004(i): "**Beginning on January 15, 2026, and annually thereafter, the covered agencies shall either integrate the following information into existing annual spending reports or issue annual spending reports that include:
  - (A) where investments were made and which geographic areas, at the municipal level and census block group, where practicable, received environmental benefits from those investments; and
  - (B) the percentage of overall environmental benefits from those investments provided to environmental justice focus populations."

Timeline: Equitable Distribution of Environmental Benefits



* Due date reflects a two-month extension resulting from a two-month delay required to statutorily authorize per diem payments for EJ Advisory Council members during the 2023 Legislative Session.

4. Consideration of Environmental Burdens Using EJ Map

- **Section 6005(b): "**On or before **July 1, 2026** and as appropriate thereafter, the covered agencies, in consultation with the Environmental Justice Advisory Council, shall adopt or amend policies and procedures, plans, guidance, and rules, where applicable, to [consider cumulative environmental burdens in decision-making using the EJ mapping tool and implement VT's EJ Law]."

  Note: ANR will adopt a rule to provide guidance on how to define and consider cumulative environmental burdens and how to use the EJ map by July 1, 2025 (Section 6005(a))

- **Section 6005(b): "**Prior to drafting new rules, agencies shall consult with the Environmental Justice Advisory Council to discuss the scope and proposed content of rules to be developed. Agencies shall also submit draft rulemaking concepts to the Advisory Council for review and comment."

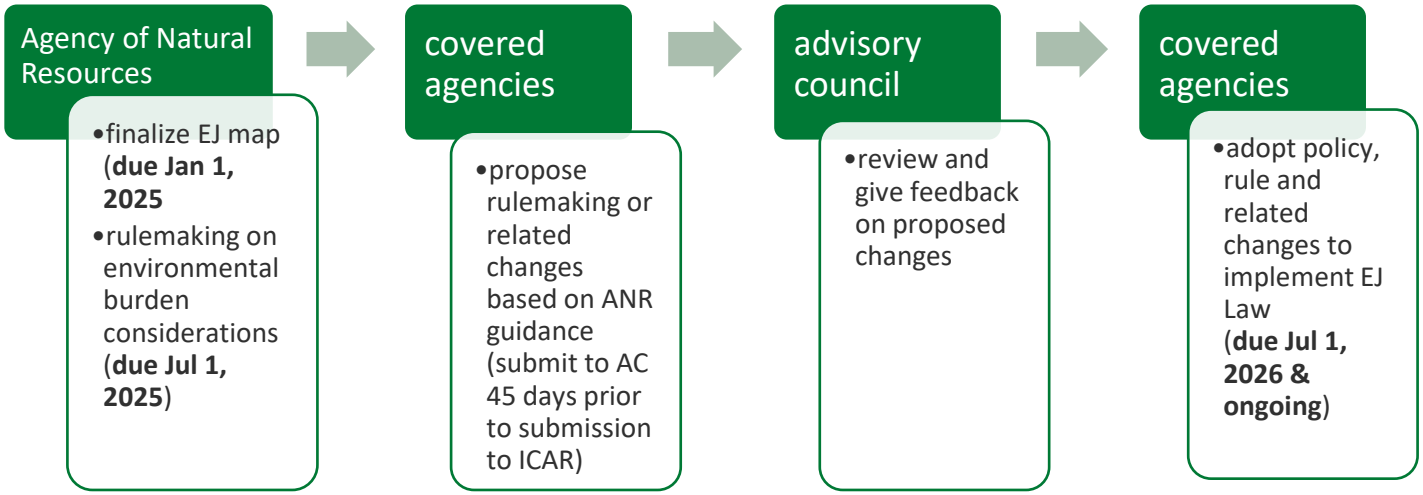
- **Section 6005(b): "**Any proposed rule and draft Administrative Procedure Act filing forms shall be provided to the Advisory Council not less than 45 days prior to submitting the proposed rule or rules to the Interagency Committee on Administrative Rules (ICAR)."

Excerpts from the VT EJ Law: Section 1. FINDINGS

"(2) The cumulative impacts of environmental harms disproportionately and adversely impact the health of BIPOC and communities with low income, with climate change as a threat multiplier (…)"

"(14) At least 17 states have developed mapping tools to identify environmentally overburdened communities and environmental health disparities."

Timeline: Consideration of Environmental Burdens Using EJ Map



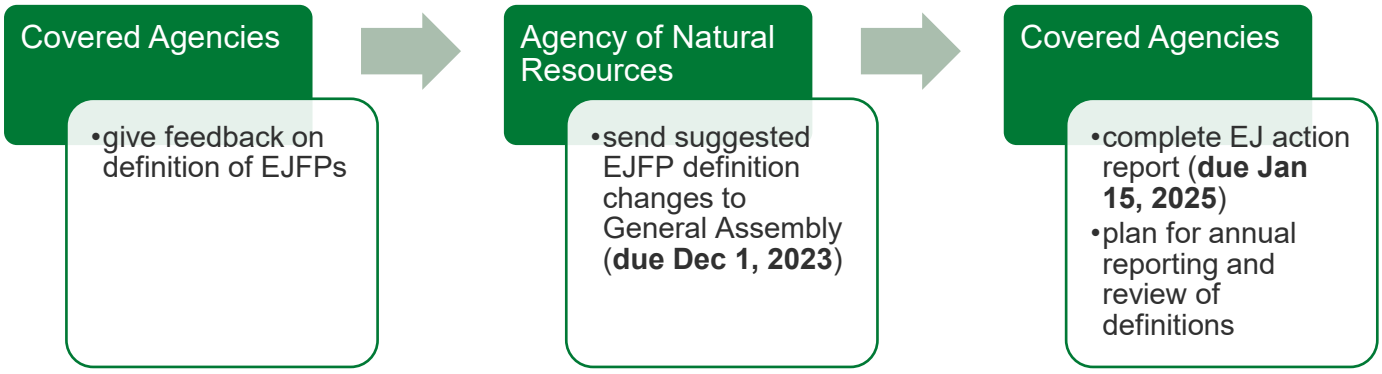
5. EJ Action Reporting and Review of Definitions

- **Section 6004(j)**: "Beginning on **January 15, 2025**, the covered agencies shall each issue and publicly post an annual report summarizing all actions taken to incorporate environmental justice into its policies or determinations, rulemaking, permit proceedings, or project review."
- **Section 6004(e)**: "The Agency of Natural Resources, in consultation with the Environmental Justice Advisory Council and the Interagency Environmental Justice Committee, shall review the definitions contained in Section 6002 of this title at least every five years and recommend revisions to the General Assembly to ensure the definition achieves the Environmental Justice State Policy."

Excerpts from the VT EJ Law:
Section 1. FINDINGS

"(17) Article VII of the Vermont Constitution establishes the government as a vehicle for the common benefit, protection, and security of Vermonters and not for the particular emolument or advantage of any single sets of persons who are only a part of that community. This, coupled with Article I's guarantee of equal rights to enjoying life, liberty, and safety, and Article IV's assurance of timely justice for all, encourages political officials to consider how particular communities may be unequally burdened or receive unequal protection under the law due to race, income, or geographic location."

Timeline: EJ Action Reporting and Review of Definitions



Preparing for Implementation

It is essential that agencies take steps to prepare for the implementation of Vermont's Environmental Justice policy. The comprehensive and ongoing nature of this work requires bringing agency staff on board in collaborative ways and taking steps now to prepare for long-term sustainability. The following sections are intended to guide you in these early steps so that you set up a strong foundation for implementation efforts in your agency moving forward. Please share your progress on this section with your EJ Coordinators, who can connect you with other agencies to share best practices and lessons learned.

Identify Training and Technical Assistance Needs

The following suggested action steps are intended to help you identify and access educational resources that will support you as you move forward with guiding agency staff through implementation of the VT EJ Law.

- ❑ Review this Covered Agency Guidebook, the online resource library, the deliverable Learning Packets (posted in the online resource library as they become available), and other guidance provided by the EJ Coordinators.
- ❑ Assess where you have specific gaps in your understanding of how to move forward on different expectations of the VT EJ Law.
- ❑ Build relationships with other Interagency Committee and Advisory Council members. Identify opportunities to share resources and knowledge, and discuss emerging challenges, ideas, inspirations, etc.
- ❑ Determine what additional training and technical assistance will help you as you guide your agency through implementation of the EJ Law. Reach out to your EJ Coordinators (contact information on page 2) to help you identify resources to meet those needs. Consider:
  - Access to technical subject-matter experts
  - Support with staff and/or community engagement
  - Trainings, conferences, or other educational resources
  - Sharing of best practices and program examples across state agencies
  - Starting topical affinity learning groups
- ❑ As you bring more agency staff on board to engage in this work with you, continuously reevaluate your training and technical assistance needs. Environmental justice literacy and knowledge level-setting related to the VT EJ Law is critical for staff to engage meaningfully in the work!

Inform Agency Staff and Establish Task Group(s)

A foundation of shared knowledge, open communication, and early engagement will be important as you seek to garner staff support for program changes that will move your agency toward achieving environmental justice. The following suggested action steps are intended to help you inform agency staff about expectations for covered agencies, and to engage staff who will support you with implementation:

- ❑ Provide learning opportunities for all agency staff about the VT EJ Law and the expectations for covered agencies. Encourage agency staff to attend public meetings or other educational opportunities (reach out to the EJ Coordinators for opportunities or resources).
- ❑ Brief leadership and managers as appropriate on expectations and clearly communicate what resources and support you need for your agency to implement the VT EJ Law (in particular, dedicated staff time).
- ❑ Identify additional staff from your agency that can be part of task group(s) directly supporting you with implementation of the five deliverable areas:

Staff person (department / program)	Specific deliverable(s) person will support	Specific role(s) / time commitments
add rows as needed…		

- ❑ Clarify expectations for your task group(s): How often will you meet? How will meetings be facilitated, etc.? What specific work plans are you committed to achieving? Reach out to the EJ Coordinators for support with facilitation ideas or resources.
- ❑ Identify communication methods for keeping staff up to date on implementation progress. Develop methods for gathering and responding to staff feedback as implementation moves forward (for example, a dedicated Teams Channel or SharePoint site, all staff email updates, all staff trainings and Q&A sessions, surveys, etc.)

Plan for Long-Term Sustainability

The VT EJ Law creates ongoing systems of accountability, with three annual reporting requirements. The Law also calls for systemic changes in how programs operate, from the way community engagement occurs, to how program funding is distributed, to siting and permitting determinations. The following suggested action steps are intended to help agencies consider how to sustain these efforts long into the future:

- ❑ Demonstrate the Alignment of EJ with Your Agency's Stated Mission
    - Connect environmental justice and equity considerations to your agency's mission to demonstrate the importance of this work to agency staff
    - Find opportunities to promote Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion practices within your agency as a foundation for staff to deepen into their understanding and practice of equity work.
- ❑ Identify and Address Policy Barriers to EJ Implementation:
    - Keep track of systemic barriers to building more equity considerations into agency operations. For example, funding restrictions on community engagement (e.g. not being able to provide childcare or stipends); contracting requirements that prevent more diverse small businesses from competing; or funding restrictions that prevent more equitable funding allocations.
    - Identify the decision-makers who can affect those barriers – either within your agency, from other agencies, or within the Legislature, and collaborate with other stakeholders to address them.
    - Identify creative solutions to ensure systemic barriers do not stop efforts to continue improving practices.
- ❑ Build / Improve Systems for Data Collection:
    - What data collection systems does your agency need to develop to meet the reporting requirements in the VT EJ Law?
    - What is needed to build data collection protocols into program operations?
- ❑ Determine Staff Capacity Needs:
    - Identify staff in your agency with roles directly related to the EJ Law's expectations – what can you do to have them increasingly factor EJ considerations into how they approach their work?

- Are there existing positions that need to be modified through a Request for Review to explicitly include responsibilities related to EJ implementation?
- Are there new positions that your agency needs to create/hire?

❑ Identify Needs/Advocate for Additional Funding:

- Develop proposals for funding requests to the General Assembly as needed to sustain EJ implementation efforts and coordinate with other stakeholders via the Interagency Committee and Advisory Council.
- Identify grant funding or other resources to support EJ implementation

Conducting Environmental Justice Program Inventories

NOTE: THIS SECTION IS IN DRAFT FORM TO ALLOW FOR ONGOING INPUT FROM INTERAGENCY COMMITTEE AND ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBERS

The following section outlines key information that agencies will need to gather to initiate implementation of the requirements of the VT EJ Law. Data collected through covered agency Environmental Justice Program Inventories will be critical for drafting deliverables such as the Civil Rights Complaint Report and Environmental Benefit Spending Reports, both due in early 2024 (more specific learning packets dedicated to these deliverables are forthcoming), as well as later deliverables.

Your feedback is necessary to ensure the questions and collection methods are adapted to the specific needs of your agency. **Please review the expectations for these EJ Program Inventories outlined below, and then reach out to the EJ Coordinators via your Interagency Committee representative to identify the best approach for collecting this information.** EJ Coordinators can assist with the creation of data collection forms, piloting the program inventory with select programs in your agency, or other technical assistance as needed.

Part 1: Civil Rights Reporting

Note: *This information will prepare you for writing your annual Civil Rights and EJ issues complaint report. If Civil Rights compliance is coordinated at the Department or Agency level, you may submit a coordinated answer to this question rather than asking every program to respond.*

- ❑ Does the program have a system for civil rights or EJ issues to be reported? If so, provide information on how such a report is filed and who the information goes to within your agency (please consult with legal counsel regarding confidentiality).
- ❑ What procedures are in place for responding to civil rights or EJ complaints? Please provide documentation as available.

Part 2: Community Engagement Requirements and Practices:

Note: *Once complete, this information will be shared with the Advisory Council and Interagency Committee members to inform the design of a coordinated approach to engaging EJ focus populations throughout the implementation of the VT EJ Law. This*

section will also help prepare your agency for writing your agency-wide Community Engagement Plans due in 2025.

- ❑ Identify community connections and relationships that already exist in your agency using the below. This chart is organized by the groups represented by the EJ Advisory Council with the goal of facilitating coordination. If there are organizations that help you reach more than one of these focus populations, please note that relationship/connection in all relevant rows in the chart.

EJ Focus Populations represented on Advisory Council	**Existing relationships.** Please note the name of the person or organization and a brief description of the nature of the relationship
EJ Focus Population: low income	
EJ Focus Population: Black, Indigenous, or Persons of Color (BIPOC)	
EJ Focus Population: Language access barriers ("LEP")	
Federal and State recognized Native American Indian tribes in Vermont	
Mobile Home Communities	
Municipal government	
Social justice organizations	
Organizations working with populations impacted by food insecurity	
Organizations working on / populations impacted by food security issues	
VT-based environmental organizations	
Immigrant communities	
Other	

- ❑ Share any requirements for administering your program that involve public engagement, community engagement, public involvement, public outreach, meetings, notices, or comment periods, etc.

- ❑ Identify existing platforms, resources, and strategies used for public engagement or outreach in your agency and make note of ways they can be leveraged for

community engagement in the implementation of the VT EJ Law. Examples include:

- Dedicated public outreach, engagement, or education staff
- Other community partners or contractors supporting public engagement
- Public websites (include links) or social media (include handles)
- Newsletters or email listservs
- Press release protocols and other media relationships
- Recurring community events
- Protocols for mandatory public input or comment periods

❑ Share any written guidance currently used by your program to inform community engagement practices

Part 3: Reviewing Program for Environmental Benefits and Burdens

Note: *this section is designed to determine whether program activities fall within the purview of the Environmental Justice law, identify methods for conducting Environmental Justice benefit spending reports, and determine where considerations of environmental burdens will be relevant.*

What is/are the main output(s) of your program? Provide a brief description, for example:

- *Managing state owned parks*
- *Monitoring drinking water quality and informing the public of health risks*
- *Approving business development decisions*
- *Maintaining public school facilities*
- *Distributing grant money for local transportation projects*
- *Enrolling Vermonters in health insurance programs*
- *Providing technical assistance to farms on how to protect wetlands*
- *Maintenance of public transportation resources*

Note: *Do not worry about defining the outputs in terms of "Environmental Benefits" or "Environmental Burdens" – you will be given guidance based on your descriptions on which aspects of the VT EJ Law relate to your program.*

For each key output area identified by the program, what specific resources are dedicated to achieving that output and what is the funding source?

❑ Total budget (with specific funding sources broken out).

❑ Agency Staffing (full time equivalents (FTE) supporting this output): specify the job title and role (planning, implementation, management, enforcement, permitting, etc.).

❑ Contracts for goods or services: specify the good or services provided.

- ❑ Grant funding (pass-through): specify the grant recipient and purpose of the grant.
- ❑ Natural assets or resources managed (public lands, waters, etc.): specify the resource being managed and its current use.
- ❑ Capital assets or resources managed (buildings, equipment, etc.): specify the capital asset being managed and its current use.
- ❑ In-kind resources collaboratively managed with organizational partners: specify the organization and what resources they bring to your program.

How can you measure which Vermonters benefit from or are burdened by each of those output areas and how your program operates?

Note: *You do not need to actually measure the benefit or burden distribution at this stage, just consider how one might consider where benefits / burdens accrue generally:*

- ❑ **Direct program beneficiaries/burdened groups:**
    - **Geographic beneficiaries** (benefits or burdens go to a particular geographic region, town, or municipality): provide a conceptual description and note what, if any, data exists to conduct such an analysis.
    - **Individual beneficiaries** (benefits/burdens go to a specific household and/or person): provide a conceptual description and note what, if any, data exists to conduct such an analysis.
    - **Entity beneficiaries** (benefits/burdens go to a specific public program/building, such as a specific housing shelter, school, hospital, etc.)
- ❑ **Secondary beneficiaries:**
    - **Staffing diversity:** to what extent does your program hire and retain people from EJ focus populations?
    - **Subrecipient diversity:** to what extent does your program support businesses and organizations owned by/run by people from EJ focus populations?

What factors or tools determine who (individuals, households, geographic regions) is benefitting from and/or impacted by decisions made within your program? Specify and provide available documentation related to:

- ❑ Grant-making requirements and their source (federal, state)
- ❑ Contractor requirements that restrict who can bid

- ❑ General funding restrictions on allowable expenditures
- ❑ Specific laws, rules, and/or regulations that drive decision-making in your program
- ❑ Program guidelines, policies, or procedures that you follow and can be adapted without rulemaking or legislative changes
- ❑ Any mapping tools (internal or external) your program currently uses to guide policy or programmatic decision-making
- ❑ Other

Online Resource Library

The EJ Law **online resource library** includes an evolving collection of resources related to environmental justice. The library is maintained and regularly updated by the Civil Rights and Environmental Justice Unit and is accessible to the general public. The resources found in the library were co-curated by the EJ Advisory Council, the Interagency EJ Committee, the Agency of Natural Resources, and community partners.

Please visit the **online resource library** to explore the full range of learning resources available. To submit suggestions for resources to add to the library, please reach out directly to the EJ Coordinators (contact information on page 2).

Glossary of Key Terms

The goal of this glossary is to support reader comprehension. Definitions of terms are pulled from a wide array of sources. Citations are provided. Whenever possible, definitions were taken from the Vermont EJ Law (Act 154 of 2022) or resources in the online resource library.

Term	Definition
Agency of Natural Resources (ANR)	"The Vermont Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) is charged with oversight and management of Vermont's natural environment on behalf of the people of Vermont. [The Agency endeavors] to draw from and build upon Vermonters' shared ethic of responsibility for our natural environment, an ethic that encompasses a sense of place, community and quality of life, and an understanding that we are an integral part of the environment, and that we must all be responsible stewards for this and future generations." Source of definition: Agency of Natural Resources
Community	"A community is a group of people who are brought together by something in common. This can include things like cultural background, shared experience, and geographic location. One person can belong to many different communities." Source of definition: Washington State Department of Health
Community Engagement	"The process of working collaboratively with and through groups of people affiliated by geographic proximity, special interest, or similar situations to address issues affecting the wellbeing of those people.

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	It is a powerful vehicle for bringing about environmental and behavioral changes that will improve the health of the community and its members. It often involves partnerships and coalitions that help mobilize resources and influence systems, change relationships among partners, and serve as catalysts for changing policies, programs, and practices." Source of definition: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Community Engagement Plans	A community engagement plan is a document that describes how the covered State agencies will provide meaningful participation to all individuals, with particular attention to environmental justice focus populations, in the development, implementation, or enforcement of any law, regulation, or policy.
Covered Agencies	"Covered agencies" include "the following State agencies, departments, and bodies: the Agencies of Natural Resources, of Transportation, of Commerce and Community Development, of Agriculture, Food and Markets, and of Education; the Public Utility Commission; the Natural Resources Board; and the Departments of Health, of Public Safety, and of Public Service." Source of definition: VT EJ Law
Deliverable	Generally, a deliverable is an element of output within the scope of a project. It is the result of objective-focused work completed within the project process. Within the context of the VT EJ Law, a deliverable is the final work product created through the implementation process of the VT EJ Law. Examples of deliverables in the VT EJ Law include the Core Principles of Community Engagement or the VT State EJ Map.
Equitable / Equity	The term "equity" refers to fairness and justice and is distinguished from equality: Whereas equality means providing the same to all, equity means recognizing that we do not all start from the same place and must acknowledge and make adjustments to imbalances. - National Association of Colleges and Employers https:// www.naceweb.org/
Environmental Benefits	"Environmental benefits" refers to "the assets and services that enhance the capability of communities and individuals to function and flourish in society. Examples of environmental benefits include access to a healthy environment and clean natural resources, including air, water, land, green spaces, constructed playgrounds,

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	and other outdoor recreational facilities and venues; affordable clean renewable energy sources; public transportation; fulfilling and dignified green jobs; healthy homes and buildings; health care; nutritious food; Indigenous food and cultural resources; environmental enforcement; and training and funding disbursed or administered by governmental agencies.
Environmental Burdens	"Environmental burdens" means any significant impact to clean air, water, and land, including any destruction, damage, or impairment of natural resources resulting from intentional or reasonably foreseeable causes. Examples of environmental burdens include climate change impacts; air and water pollution; improper sewage disposal; improper handling of solid wastes and other noxious substances; excessive noise; activities that limit access to green spaces, nutritious food, Indigenous food or cultural resources, or constructed outdoor playgrounds and other recreational facilities and venues; inadequate remediation of pollution; reduction of groundwater levels; increased flooding or stormwater flows; home and building health hazards, including lead paint, lead plumbing, asbestos, and mold; and damage to inland waterways and waterbodies, wetlands, forests, green spaces, or constructed playgrounds or other outdoor recreational facilities and venues from private, industrial, commercial, and government operations or other activities that contaminate or alter the quality of the environment and pose a risk to public health.
Environmental Justice	"Environmental justice means all individuals are afforded equitable access to and distribution of environmental benefits; equitable distribution of environmental burdens; and fair and equitable treatment and meaningful participation in decision-making processes, including the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies. Environmental justice recognizes the particular needs of individuals of every race, color, income, class, ability status, gender identity, sexual orientation, national origin, ethnicity or ancestry, religious belief, or English language proficiency level. Environmental justice redresses structural and institutional racism, colonialism, and other systems of oppression that result in the marginalization, degradation, disinvestment, and neglect of Black, Indigenous, and Persons of Color. Environmental justice requires providing a proportional amount of resources for community revitalization, ecological restoration, resilience planning, and a just recovery to

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	communities most affected by environmental burdens and natural disasters." Source of definition: VT EJ Law
Environmental Justice Advisory Council	"The Environmental Justice Advisory Council (Advisory Council) provides independent advice and recommendations to State agencies and the General Assembly on matters relating to environmental justice, including the integration of environmental justice principles into State programs, policies, regulations, legislation, and activities." Source of definition: VT EJ Law
Environmental Justice Focus Population	"Environmental justice focus population means any census block group in which: (A) the annual median household income is not more than 80 percent of the State median household income; (B) Persons of Color and Indigenous Peoples comprise at least six percent or more of the population; or (C) at least one percent or more of households have limited English proficiency." Source of definition: VT EJ Law
Interagency Environmental Justice Committee	"The Interagency Environmental Justice Committee (Interagency Committee) shall guide and coordinate State agency implementation of the Environmental Justice State Policy and provide recommendations to the General Assembly for amending the definitions and protections." Source of definition: VT EJ Law
Meaningful participation	"Meaningful participation means that all individuals have the opportunity to participate in energy, climate change, and environmental decision making. Examples include needs assessments, planning, implementation, permitting, compliance and enforcement, and evaluation. Meaningful participation also integrates diverse knowledge systems, histories, traditions, languages, and cultures of Indigenous communities in decision-making processes. It requires that communities are enabled and administratively assisted to participate fully through education and training. Meaningful participation requires the State to operate in a transparent manner with regard to opportunities for community input and also encourages the development of environmental, energy, and climate change stewardship." Source of definition: VT EJ Law

Acronyms List

Acronym	What does the acronym stand for?
AC	Advisory Council
ANR	Agency of Natural Resources
BIPOC	Black, Indigenous, (and) People of Color
CA	Covered Agency
CR	Civil Rights
DEC	Department of Environmental Conservation
EJ	Environmental Justice
EJFP	Environmental Justice Focus Populations
IAC	Interagency Committee
CR	Civil Rights
VT	Vermont

The 10 "Covered Agencies" under the VT EJ Law

Covered Agency	Acronym
Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets	VAAFM
Agency of Commerce and Community Development	ACCD
Agency of Education	AOE
Agency of Natural Resources	ANR
Agency of Transportation	AOT
Department of Health	VDH
Department of Public Safety	DPS
Department of Public Service	PSD
Natural Resources Board	NRB
Office of Racial Equity	ORE
Public Utility Commission	PUC