Transcript

April 23, 2025, 2:10PM

Birch, Juliet started transcription

VS **victor slingshot** 0:03
Be present with your body and feelings. If you need to take a break to take care of yourself, please do so.
Be present for one another by listening deeply.

Kim Barrett 0:18
Who's next?

RH **rich holschuh** 0:20
I'll go #2 calling in and calling out.
Assume best intent, but attend to impact.
We can stop things that are being said that are hurtful and be curious and create a space for learning.
Tools include using oops or Ouch to indicate a pause is needed.

DX **Davis, Xusana** 0:42
Expect and accept nonclosure are unlikely to leave here feeling 100%.

Kim Barrett 0:45
I'm Xusana.
Just real quick.
It's still really hard to hear you, so I don't know if the mic needs to be closer.

DX **Davis, Xusana** 0:54
How's this any better?

BJ **Birch, Juliet** 0:56
Yeah, a little bit, yeah.

Davis, Xusana 0:58
OK.
Hold on.
Is this any better than the that?
I'll just yell.

Kim Barrett 1:05
It's still really low.

Davis, Xusana 1:07
OK.
I'll just yell.
I love yelling. It's fine.

Birch, Juliet 1:10
This is great. This is great.
That's better.

Davis, Xusana 1:14
Expect and accept nonclosure.
We're unlikely to leave your feeling 100% ready to go or to have everything on our agenda wrapped up.
Especially if we are committed to moving at the speed of trust.

Kim Barrett 1:26
Thank you. Thank you.

Watson, Britaney 1:37
I could go next. This is Brittany.
For #4 center respect, be respectful, intentional, and work to build trust and create a safe and inviting space.

Kim Barrett 1:49
Thanks, I can read the next one.

Share verbal and other space.
Mindfully consider the balance of taking and making space. Move up. Move back.
Tools to do this include the acronym wait. Why am I talking? And vocalizing
Support for another person's comment without repeating the same points that have already been made.
OK, for the folks who are here.
If you agree, you can just give us a thumbs up.
OK.
All right.
How's everyone cool?

Juliet Birch
Does it look normal on your side?

Kim Barrett
Yeah.

Juliet Birch
OK.
It's kind of looking a little crazy on the monitor.
It's being very slow, so I just want to make sure everything's working well. Mm hmm, yeah.
OK.
So as soon as we hit Quorum, we'll approve the meeting minutes from March 28th.
And then also.
The meeting minutes from.
18 and then we'll approve this agenda.
So what we have, we're gonna do a reintroduction to the environmental benefit spending guidance, which is one of the deliverables under the law.
We spoke about it several times last year, but just wanna reintroduce it.
And then after that you all have an UN facilitated session to actually review the.
The draft evsg the draft guidance.
Together, we'll do a public comment.
We'll take a break and then we'll come back and then you all have another unificated discussion on actually.

Planning the public comment period and community engagement connected to that.
And then we'll debrief and then close out.
Two-bedroom.
Alright, so the next few slides, we're gonna cover a lot of ground. If you have any questions, raise your hand.
And we'll, we'll get started.

Juliet Birch
Awesome. So the first thing that we wanna talk about is just goals for this reintroduction to the environmental benefits spending guidance. And for you, Victor, this might be more of a outright introduction.
So we'll try and put a lot of context in as we explain.
So some of the goals here are, you know, basically answering these questions.
How does the A/C contribute to the Vermont EJ law?
So you know what what are?
What are the ways that the A/C weighs in and ways that the A/C can support?
Implementation. What is the environmental benefits spending guidance?
How does the Advisory Council specifically contribute to the environmental benefit spending guidance? Or, as we'll call it, throughout this the evsg?
What is the public comment period?
The environmental benefit spending guidance needs to go to 40 day public comment.
And so we'll talk a little bit about what that's going to entail and how can the A/C contribute to the public comment period itself.
This is one of the many ways that we can connect with the communities that we all represent and so A/C contribution will be really key here and I will pass it to Kim.

Kim Barrett
OK.
So what does environmental justice define as the environment?
What does that look like?
So the framework here is where community members with work in play, you know, and we know that that can that framework continues to where do folks worship?
Where do they eat all of those different things?
And so another way that we've been describing the environment as well and this is

also helpful in the context.
Of the spending that we're gonna talk about.
Their characteristics, you know, in addition to the physical ones, their social and their cultural.
Dynamics of the spaces where we live, work and play.

Juliet Birch
So kind of expanding on that concept when we think of the environment with that really expansive definition of, you know places, physical, social and cultural of the places where we live, work and play.
An environmental benefit is something that increases individual and community well-being in the environment, and that's also a very expansive definition. We should clarify that.
These definitions are ones that were developed by the environmental benefits spending Guidance Task Group that includes both covered agency members, interagency committee members and Advisory Council members.
So these are not the definitions that are shown in the law, but they are definitions that we've worked with throughout the development of the ebsg.
So these are just like kind of foundational concepts that will be bringing into the rest of this conversation.
Some other good context to provide is that this is kind of just a an image that shows the way that information typically flows in the implementation of ACT 154.
So everybody here, all of you Advisory Council members, are represented in red, next to the Interagency Committee, which is folks who.
There's one representative on the Interagency committee from each of the covered agencies.
Plus, one representative from the Office of Racial Equity, Suzanna, who has a seat on both the Interagency Committee and the Advisory Council.
And so you folks are advisors on Act 154 guidance and deliverables.
So the Vermont legislature that created Act 154 also appointed you all to these positions, and so you can provide recommendations directly to the legislature and they provide you your appointments and responses.
And then you guys also communicate directly with us at the Agency of Natural Resources because we are the lead covered agency.
We provide you with Technical Support, support and decision making.

We also develop guidance and are the lead covered agency in the implementation of deliverables.
So we communicate directly with you as well as with the covered agencies who we are supporting in directing the implementation of the law.
This is a lot of information that kind of high level covers. The way that information flows. When we think about the environmental benefits spending guidance, we're thinking about how the agency of Natural resources is the responsible party.
We are the lead agency that created the spending guidance, but we did it in consultation with the Advisory Council and the IAC through public meetings last year as well as through the task.
That we've developed this is really important information to understand as we go into understanding how the the guidance was developed.
Does anyone have any questions about this flow of information?
So, OK, cool. All right.
Passing it to you,

Kim Barrett
yes, OK.
And I just want to say that I don't think that we're going to be able to hit quorum today. Mariana had shared in that e-mail to everyone that she's unavailable.
Tre had let us know ahead of time that he won't be joining.
And then Jennifer, we haven't heard from. So I'm just saying ahead of time. I don't think we'll hit quorum.
So we're gonna start our reintroduction to Ebsg environmental benefit spending guidance.

RH **rich holschuh** 10:33
Can I say something?

Kim Barrett 10:35
Sure.

RH **rich holschuh** 10:36
I'm sorry I missed the moment a minute ago.
I know we have deadlines and we have mandates and all those kind of things.

I I just want to keep it up in the air as we move ahead that.
Oh, my camera just died.
Can you see me still?

BJ **Birch, Juliet** 10:59
No.

RH **rich holschuh** 11:04
Can you hear me?

BJ **Birch, Juliet** 11:06
Yes.

RH **rich holschuh** 11:07
OK, I'll I'll try to work on the camera in a minute.
I just want to keep up in the air that some of these definitions as I've I've raised previously are, are really, really narrow and from.
You know.
Western viewpoints.
Environmental justice basically does not discuss the environment at all.
It's all about justice.
And that justice is based on private individual rights system.
And property protection.
And being a representative for the Vermont Commission on Native American Affairs, that is not how we look at things.
So I just wanna keep that afloat so it doesn't get lost completely.
Thank you.

Kim Barrett 12:01
Thank you, rich.
And I know this is something that's come up before and that we also spoke with you about.
In those one on ones earlier in the year.
So I'm interested in, you know, in this conversation and maybe in some of the facilitated sessions, maybe you all can talk about that as well and finding space in

you know this larger section of that as well.
Feel free to come off of mute at any time.
Yeah, I just wanna make sure that's clear that we're open to talking. Umm, OK, So what?

rich holschuh 12:38
Thank you.

Kim Barrett 12:40
Sure. What is the environmental benefits spending guidance?
So this is a document again that we put together based on information from the whole host of places that clarifies how these agencies that are covered under the law, how they actually evaluate.
Create an assess environmental benefits and then also report on environmental benefits.
So the idea is that there's more transparency, there's more of an ability to say, you know, this is the, this is what we're doing.
This is where the environmental benefits are going.
And then eventually be able to say what adjustments.
Where possible, can we make to make that more equitable over time?
So the environmental benefits pending guidance recognizes the need for environmental justice, and it recognizes that these environmental benefits, which, as we said, there's physical, there's social, there's cultural benefits in relation to all of the different kinds of covered agencies, those things need to be proportionate across Vermont.
And then the law also reflects the need to center.
Environmental justice focused populations as well. It also provides flexible guidance.
So that means again, we have these ten different covered agencies with different you know, operations, processes, procedures, all of those types of things. And so the guidance, the challenge for us is the covered agency has been how do we make this guidance, you know, usable and relevant across.
The board.
It's not legally binding, but it's an R agency of natural resources.
Interpretation of the law.
And so again, it's just another way for us to provide that technical assistance across

the board.
So it explains the laws intent with around environmental benefits, and then it offers some minimum standards that each of the agencies need to follow.
To properly assess and report on these benefits.
What else? It supports the Vermont EJ law deliverables. Like other deliverables over time, and some of those deliverables include. So in this larger picture of environmental benefit spending. And I'm also interested just as an aside, ways that we can change that language. You know, 'cause, I don't think.
That this, you know, in the context of the public comment period and even in these conversations like the turn environment.
Benefit spending cuts.
But like as accessible. So if you all have thoughts on other times that you'd like to use, let me know.
But so the idea is that there's this guidance.
That the covered agencies would follow.
And then each covered agency would report.
So they'd create what we're calling a baseline spending report, but at the end of the day.
It's really just a snapshot of where are the agencies at right now in.
Their investments or their spending towards environmental benefits and then later down the line each year, each covered agency will be required to annually report out a lot of these benefits.
You all will be able to view them.
The public will be able to view them and then from there after you know a couple more years then you know.
We can make these changes to proportionately distribute these environmental benefits, so that's the wider kind of story.
Does anyone have any questions on that?
You know, it's a lot of information.
OK.
Next slide. Thank you.
OK.
I think this slide is for you, Juliet.

Juliet Birch

Awesome, so.
We just talked a lot about what the ebsg is, and now we're gonna talk a little bit about what it isn't or what it can't really do. Because as Kim said before, it's really an Rs interpretation of the law.
It's kind of a suggested approach and it's guidance. It's not like a legally binding document.
So one of the things that the evsg does not do is that it doesn't outright decide where money goes.
It can't prescribe funding priorities for individual programs or agencies, but rather can make suggestions for how agencies will develop their baseline spending reports, which will hopefully in the future influence.
Where those funding, how those funding priorities change over time?
The Evsg also does not direct how dollars are spent, so it's not a mandate.
It doesn't have a specific a mandate for specific investments.
A really important concept that comes up here is this idea of discretionary and non discretionary funds.
So essentially, that's the of all the state dollars that we as covered agencies have some of them we have the ability to say.
Here's how we're going to spend it.
We we we're going to make decisions about how those funds are are spent and some of them which are non discretionary funds we're told by other entities how that money is going to get spent. And we are simply doing the delegation. So those non discretionary funds which are.
Typically, you know federal dollars that pass through us, that we then delegate to where they they need to go.
To the end user those non discretionary funds are not an example of funding.
Thing that can be reproportionalized because you know those funding priorities are set by someone higher than us that makes those decisions, and we can't make those decisions. But we do have discretionary funds and that's where the question of proportionality really comes in.
Additionally, the EVSG doesn't override any agency budget processes.
However, in the future it could, as we continue to do these assessments.
Of the proportionality of our spending.
These deliverables could influence agency budget processes.
But in general, state processes, procurement processes, etc.

Are not going to be influenced directly by this document that you're going to be reviewing today.
It doesn't provide an exhaustive.
List or or guide it's more of like a list of suggestions.
It's a suggested approach.
It's a flexible framework and as Kim mentioned before, it needs to apply to all of the covered agencies, not just ANR, not just the Agency of Transportation.
It needs to apply to all of them, and so it's important for this guidance to have.
Like I'm not a not one-size-fits-all sort of approach.
And so you'll see as you're reading the document, that there are a lot of opportunities for flexibility and for decision making for covered agencies to right size the ask to their own processes.
And then finally, the Evsg doesn't work in a vacuum.
It's just one tool that's in the EJ law, but there are a lot of other deliverables and a lot of other things that are gonna be happening.
As we continue to implement the EJ law that play into the proportionate distribution of environmental benefits and play into all the other ways that we're hoping to operationalize EJ across the state.
And you know there are.
A plethora of equity issues that exist in any state, and it certainly exists in Vermont, and this one deliverable is not able to address.
All of those equity issues?
It it addresses a handful of ones that are particularly relevant to this kind of area of work.
But it's not going to be able to necessarily resolve all issues, nor is that kind of the goal. That would be, I think, kind of hard to achieve, so.
Yeah. So does anyone have any questions about, you know what, what the evsg is or what it isn't?
OK, I'm seeing head shaking.
No, thank you, rich.
Any hands?

Kim Barrett
Oh, no, no hands. Oh, actually.
Suzanna, we do have a couple of hands up.

I did just really quickly wanna say thank you, Juliette, for the for the second bullet that that you know, we're not always able to.
You know, adjust spending because of the nondiscretionary funds.
I wanted to also.
Bring to y'all's attention that some covered agencies have more discretionary funds and some covered agencies don't. And so in the context of this flexible guide, but also in the context of reporting, you may see some differences.
And that's just because some covered agencies get more federal funding.
Yeah, sufsana.

DX **Davis, Xusana** 22:45
I'll I can wait for after Jennifer speaks.

Karla Raimundi 22:48
OK, we have quorum too.

Kim Barrett
OK. Are you there? OK.
Yeah, Jennifer.

JB **Jennifer Byrne** 22:57
Just for clarity, you were saying that I was trying to follow.
There was a lot of like what it doesn't do.
I.
I guess I didn't really fully grasp what you were saying, but.
Are you saying that the federal money? I understand that it like the state doesn't always decide where the federal money goes, but it will be included in the benefit reports, right?

Kim Barrett 23:28
But so for some one of the things that have come up in like IC meetings, but also the task group, the environmental benefit Spending Task Group is that.
Some agencies have less capacity right now because of just a lot of different things that are going on in the federal level, different capacity issues.
So what?

We're like a model that seems to work for folks, is in the cases where folks have the ability.
Leave right now to report on discretionary and non discretionary.
So reporting on funds that they do have the ability to adjust and change and then funds that they don't.
We're telling people that that's like that would be great, but for the covered agencies who don't have the ability to do that and maybe they're, you know, kind of need for this first reporting process.
This snapshot of what's happening.
Maybe they can only report.
On things that are discretionary.
Or maybe they can report on some of both.
But that's kind of the approach that.

JB **Jennifer Byrne** 24:35
Strongly support.
Yeah, I don't know if that's a decision that's like already made or something, but I would strongly support needing to report on nondiscretionary funds.
We have to know where the federal money is going.
That's oh, sometimes it's the bulk of the money that's spent, and there are lots of ways to influence where federal money gets spent.
I know it's not like what a staff member at ANR can do, but it's what many many other people can do to influence how the federal government spends money and it impacts.
You know where.
Like different thinking environmentally where we do testing and that kind of thing because a lot of the times it's like it's the communities that have the know how and skills and funding to go and prove that their water is dirty, then they get the federal priority money so.

BJ **Birch, Juliet** 25:14
OK.

JB **Jennifer Byrne** 25:25
We we kind of need to know that.

So I would say.
And also it seems like if it's nondiscretionary funding and it's already preset then it should be kinda easy to have that data.
So I would definitely think that non federal funding needs to be included in these environmental benefits spending reports.

Kim Barrett 25:48
Yeah, totally agree.
And I just wanna make a couple of suggestions.
So one would be when you all meet with the IAC. Again, I think sharing that with them and maybe troubleshooting with them could be helpful.
Also, you'll see in the guidance that the task group we came up 'cause this idea has come up before as like a pain point for example. And we've been trying to develop. You know, technical assistance around how to work through that.
So you'll see in the in the guidance that there's a section about what some of the challenges are and you have thoughts on that that would be really helpful if you want to come to a task group meeting that would be helpful or if you just want to. Send suggestions and thoughts. We can also find ways to include your thoughts in the guidance just for like books to reference so thanks.
Susanna.

DX **Davis, Xusana** 26:46
Yeah, I was going to say this isn't really a question for you all so much as.
I suppose a semi rhetorical question for the rest of the Council, which is we you talked a little bit about.
What that there are equity concerns and issues that may not be addressed by the EBSG and.
So my.
Question to the rest of the Advisory Council is I I think it's very important to highlight what those are.
It's fine if we do not issue guidance or recommendations or reporting that have to do with those ancillary equity issues, but I think it's appropriate for us to name them and insist that somebody be working to address them.
So my question for the Advisory Council is what appetite do you all have for us making sure that even if there are equity issues that the ebsg does not or cannot

address that we still at least call them out and recommend some action be taken on them by?
Those who are empowered to do that, or by whatever process is designed to get at those.

RH **rich holschuh** 28:13
I think you raise a good point, Susana.
I'm not sure how to go about that, but I I don't think all of these things should be ignored because they're not included in a scope of work that.
Was was, was and is limited at the time by a a narrow lens, yeah.

Kim Barrett 28:41
Yeah, I think that that's a really great point and the intention by that bullet is not to say that we want to limit, but it's to manage expectations because some of what the so like some equity issues may be able to be addressed specifically in these reports just.
Simply because of data available, but for example.
With equity issues that maybe we don't have the ability to collect.
Collect and report on that data.
We don't want that to again, like stop us from being able to.
Like support those efforts.
So I think it would be a great idea to for you all.
I think your suggestion makes sense, Susanna.
And I think, you know, there's a process here where we're also asking cover agencies. If you're not able to report on these things right now, how can you make a plan to report on it later? So if we had a list of.
You know other equity issues that you all wanna make sure that you know that they're on folks's radar. Then we can like put a list together, for example, and say, hey, over the next few years, can you start to try to work this into your data?
So that's kind of what we were thinking there.

DX **Davis, Xusana** 29:58
Yeah.
And.
Yeah, I think that makes sense and it doesn't have to be a huge lift from this group in

terms of what it would look like. What I'm thinking is it's often the case that I'm put on an Advisory Council and we're asked a very specific question by the.
Legislature and we're supposed to create a report, and it's often the case that they've asked the wrong question.
And so the bill has us reporting on something that actually isn't really the crux of the issue.
And sometimes the conversation comes up about whether we need to just answer the question we're asked in law or.
Answer the question that needed to be asked.
The first place, and I think it's appropriate to do the latter because if people impanel us as subject matter experts, then to some extent you have to assume that we're going to bring expertise that perhaps you had not anticipated, but that you needed.
And so I think that that may just be something as simple as in a report that we draft to say.
We get that Ebsg is addressing ABC, but we also think that XYZ are super important here and we need those to be addressed. And here are some things that we think might be.
Ways to do that.
And and I think that that will be helpful because.
Otherwise.
If we respond only to what we're asked.
Then.
Were limited by the imagination of the enquirers.

Karla Raimundi 31:29
If I if I may go.
Thank you very much Susana and.
What you what you are contributing to this conversation?
Falls directly under the expertise that we believe you all possess and really identifies a space.
Where we would very much welcome and invite conversation.
On to think just beyond.
What is contained in statute and may recommendations to the General Assembly regarding how else to capture the things that you all or all well aware that should be captured in order to meet the goals of the law is definitely a space where the

Advisory Council definitely have.
An important role.
Role that we do not and so thank you very much for identifying that space. I've Kim indicated at the beginning of the meeting there will be unfortunate time today for you to.
Study and assess where you would like to take this conversation regarding the ebsg to gather your feedback and recommendations on the content of the guidance itself.
So perhaps that is an opportunity to start exploring.
The ways in which the Advisory Council can occupy this most important space that you've identified Susana. And then, if I may also say something about what Jennifer identified, the question regarding discretionary and non discretionary is definitely captured in the guidance, the non discretionary funds.
So for hospital funds may be discretionary.
And non discretionary, right?
So to the extent that there are federal funds that are discretionary, those are directly addressed by the guidance.
Non discretionary funds are also addressed by the guidance and are identified at enhancements to reporting processes that agencies will be undertaking and gathering information to produce these reports on.
The goal?
And I think this is really important for scoping and what is and what is not part of this guidance document. If the goal is as it's stated in law, proportionality, then the question about non discretionary funds.
Tends to sit outside of that proportionality question because the agencies do not have the prerogative.
To redistribute those non discretionary funds.
So I think it's important that when we're talking about what is possible and what is not possible within the mandate in the law, as it is captured in the law, to understand that what the law is asking covered agencies to do is to redistribute.
Expenditures.
That that.
Are not being distributed proportionately, and the ability of the agencies to do that depend on whether those funds come with strings attached.
From inception and so it's important that we make that distinction.
And then the other question that I have for you.

Jennifer is what about these five bullets here?
Which of them are not clear to you?
Because I think it is really important that we create foundational understanding and that we're all talking about the same thing when we look at the environmental benefits spending guidance, so that we are not confusing what the purpose of this guidance document is.
Yeah. And real quick, Jennifer, we can also.

JB **Jennifer Byrne** 35:52
I can't see you're wearing something. I I can't see any five bullets, but just a quick point of clarification so.
Does don't state agencies request funds from the federal government to address specific issues in the state, like the state agencies apply on behalf of the state for federal funds, and that's driven by data at some level.
Correct.

Karla Raimundi 36:29
I I think I need a rephrase of your question, Jennifer.

JB **Jennifer Byrne** 36:36
So my my understanding is that state agencies in the state of Vermont.
Will request federal money.
From the federal government to address specific issues in the state.
So it's not like the federal government is coming in and saying you have this water issue and we are, we are gonna pay for it and only this water issue. But the state of Vermont is requesting money to address issues that it knows about because of data that.
It's collected or some reasons or like, you know, public requests or you know there's there's a decision making process for what the state applies for from the federal government, right?

Karla Raimundi 37:23
Right, correct.

Jennifer Byrne 37:25
To that extent.

Karla Raimundi 37:26
Sometimes, sometimes, sometimes within the delegated programs.

Jennifer Byrne 37:28
There.

Karla Raimundi 37:29
That is framework that applies.
Yes, I think if I can go.

Jennifer Byrne 37:34
Yeah. So and the the govern the the THIS spending document I I'm trying to remember exactly the words that you just used, but in terms of like the purpose I don't know that I completely.
I'm not sure if it's completely clear that it's just about redistribution of state funds, or is it understanding the landscape of where money is being spent so that we can do future planning and future decision making based on like real knowledge of where is money spent and how.
And who's benefiting from money in the state?

Birch, Juliet 38:19
I think that this is a good clarifying question.
So.
Our interpretation of what the law is asking for is that overall this area of work related to environmental environmental benefits spending. The goal is for covered agencies to establish a goal of proportionate distribution of spending towards the environmental benefits they provide.
And So what Carla was saying before.
If I'm not mistaken, is that some federal dollars are discretionary and so they apply to this question of redistribution because we can decide how to redistribute them.
However, there are some federal dollars that are non discretionary, which therefore

are not eligible to be redistributed because there are set kind of rules and regulations around how that money is spent.
So kind of speaking to what you were asking Jennifer in.
Some there are some federal dollars that will be definitely reported on because they fall under discretionary funds.
There are some federal dollars that, depending on the capacity of the covered agency and where they are in their reporting process, they may report on non discretionary funds. If they see that that fits kind of their prerogative.
And if it doesn't currently fit their capacity and resource constraints, they can make a goal to report on those non discretionary funds in the future.
But all of this is to say that yes, there are some federal funds that are discretionary that we decide how we spend them and those will be reported on. Does that answer your question?

JB **Jennifer Byrne** 40:14
A little bit, yeah, I don't really.
I'm definitely not clear on the distinction that like specifically what you're making with discretionary non discretionary, but that's, you know and maybe the other Advisory Council members are in the same boat. If there's like examples or something that would be great.

Kim Barrett 40:31
Yeah, I was gonna say that, you know, and this will make the conversation really helpful, but I think an example would help.
So, for example, the agency of AG or you know things have come up where if a program maybe gets some federal money, that's nondiscretionary.
Meaning that money needs to go specifically to.
To a food bank or a set of food banks, and that entity, that agency, that program.
Who's passing this money to a food bank?
May not be able to make any adjustments to how much money is going to that food bank because the federal government is saying here's what we're giving you.
This is the amount. This is how you send it to that food bank.
So the idea is that for this guidance, we wanna.
Focus where possible on the monies that we have the ability to adjust because the end goal is to make adjustments on what the actual investments that we're making.

But to your point, it's also really important.
Like looking big picture at where funds are going in general and the thing that I want to say is that the IC.
Members actually want to report on as much as possible.
But at a minimum, you know because we have to go with like, at a minimum, what folks can do.
What we're asking is focus on what you have the ability to change.
So that's an example of, you know.
Like a situation where we'd be getting funds but don't have the ability to adjust it.
So I hope that that.
Example provides more context.

JB **Jennifer Byrne** 42:32
I mean, it does.
And it also just like I, I feel like it it potentially.
Compounds on these issues of access, if we're like, if we're not counting the money that the state agencies feel like they don't have any say so in.

Kim Barrett 42:42
Mm hmm.

JB **Jennifer Byrne** 42:49
But this is our government, you know? So we do have a say so and so it's just, you know, there's a reason that those you know in your example those five food banks got the federal money because they had access.
So it's just I wouldn't want to leave out.
Like particularly large sums of money that are being invested into the state that, you know, touch these areas of environmental justice, health, food.
It yeah, it it wouldn't be a complete picture of investment if we're leaving out money, just just because we, you know, it doesn't seem like it can be changed.
It's more about like, well, why?

BJ **Birch, Juliet** 43:26
Yeah.

Jennifer Byrne 43:27
You know and and where so.

Kim Barrett 43:29
Great. Yeah, which we agree. And I think that would be great for the legislature to hear.

Karla Raimundi
And this is thank you, Kim, for that comment because I think this is really important and we've talked about.
Ways in which the Advisory Council can actually harness.
The knowledge that it possesses and the expertise that it possesses and an important way in which the Advisory Council can influence this work.
Is through communicating directly to the General Assembly what it desires to be contained and captured in the deliverables in the law.
So that we are all very clear about what we're looking at here, the environmental benefits pending guidance.
Is contained in law, and the statute identifies what?
What this will do right?
What the intention of the guidance is.
And so to the extent that that is captured in that statute, that's what the Agency of natural resources, in consultation with the task group ACNIC members.
Developed this guidance document and the way that the guidance document looks right now is a reflection of the values that we hold.
All those individuals, right? And as professionals in this space, transparency is one of those values, but another important value of this guidance is flexibility.
It is important that the guidance applies to all the covered agencies and the covered agencies are very distinct from each other. And so as you will have an opportunity to see and discuss amongst yourself.
The guidance identifies area.
That are minimal, minimally required for reporting processes and those minimum requirements really inform the question of proportionality. That is, that is the output that is intended in law for this guidance to support.
So then the guidance.

Has to provide.
Steps in actionable.
Instructions and recommendations to covered agencies that will allow those agencies to make that.
Goal for for for proportionality possible and so we need to start somewhere and that is another important question is how do we operationalize the goal that is captured in law. And So what that looks like for the covered agency?
This and this is also a space where we invite conversation from the Advisory Council and feedback and advice on is what are the expenditures that we are tracking.
That, that, that we are that we will track that we do have the ability to redistribute the picture creating which is I believe how you captured that component.
Of the conversation, Jennifer.
The creating of the picture, the knowing of all of the expenditures that each agency.
Engages in is helpful for many other purposes, but for purposes of this guidance document and the goal established and captured in this law, we need to be aware that if we are seeking.
To distribute, redistribute expenditures.
That are provided to certain geographic locations in the state. Then we need to be to be able to move those funds around to capture a whole picture where there are funds that the agencies do not have the ability to redistribute, to ensure that we are proportional in the.
Benefits that we're providing.
Members of communities.
Then it would create a picture that is not necessarily answering the question that we are supposed to be answering in the stature, right?
So then why?
Why we captured in the guidance and like I mentioned, we welcome input is these are enhancements to the reporting process to the extent that the agencies have the capacity.
And the ability to capture those expenditures.
That are touching on environmental benefits. So the law really establishes what we are to consider.
Expenditures that provide certain benefits to certain areas.
But then we will be able to, based on that accounting, redistribute proportionally across the board.

And so I think it's really important that we understand that we don't conflate conversations here.
It is helpful to have information regarding non discretionary funds, but for for purposes of answering the question that Delois asking us to do, which is to distribute benefits and expenditures that cultural environmental benefits proportionately the abilities of the agencies.
To do that are with discretionary funds.

Juliet Birch
I just wanted to slide in and say I want to acknowledge the time and also make sure that Advisory Council members have some time to have an unfulfilled about the evsg.
So I just want to acknowledge what time it is, make sure that we allot that time, but I think this is a really important conversation. And I also think if we could kind of take note of some of these questions that are coming up, some of these convers.
Would be great to bring to a joint meeting.
With the IAC.
Jennifer, do you have another thought?

JB **Jennifer Byrne** 50:16
Yeah, just two, two things. Kind of questions kind of thoughts like one being you know if we if we know where non discretionary funds are spent then you know the state could in theory you know use its limited discretionary funds in the regions where they're not getting funding.
So that's one reason to have, you know, all the data, but then also like it.
Just what's what's on my mind is like.
For example, like Lake Champlain.
And all the money that goes to the communities around Lake Champlain to address water quality, I'm. I've served people on the other side of the state, so we don't have access to that funding pool.
Is that something that's considered like the Lake Champlain Basin program?
Is that a nondiscretionary fund?

Karla Raimundi 51:08
I think for purposes of this conversation that we're having right now, if you're

interested in having specific conversations about specific funding sources and whether they touch on benefits and whether these are going to be part of the conversation, I think we should try to have this conversation at.
A later time, when all of the.
When all of the Advisory Council members have had an opportunity to look at the benefit the the ebsg.
I think it is really important that we keep ourselves on task.
We need to share this guidance with members of the public for a 40 day public comment and we want to ensure that we have your reflections and we've been asked multiple times and we are trying to do that today to provide unificated time for you all to consid.
The guidance, I know there are a lot of questions, but please let's try to.
Focus the conversation on the topic at hand and then to the extent that there remain questions about specific programs and activities that the agencies are undertaking and whether they're going to be included or not in the reporting process, I think we can have that conversation at a later.
Time when all of us are aware of the contents of that guidance because it could be that the answer is provided to you when you have an opportunity to read the guidance.
Document.
It.
Because there are many programs you know, there are many programs.
There are 10 agencies. We all very diverse.
We we've, we've, we've had conversations with all of the agencies with representatives from their business offices, from program staff.
So this is a very complex conversation and.
I I am actually.
Very.
Very motivated by, you know, the conversation.
But in order for us to have a meaningful conversation, I think you all should have an opportunity to discuss amongst yourself the content of that guidance. If you have not done so already.

Kim Barrett
OK.

With that, we're gonna move forward to the next. We're gonna look at the presentation.

Juliet Birch

Can we take a pause for maybe we could do the vote? Yes. OK. So we have quorum here now and if you may recall from April 18th meeting, we weren't able to approve the March 28th minutes yet.
And of course, we haven't approved the April 18th minutes either, because it just happened a couple days ago.
So I wanted to take a moment and, you know, just ask if folks would like to approve the March 28th minutes.
If you could please raise your hand or provide a thumbs up or something, that would be awesome.
So one hand, OK.
2/3.
And for reference, the Minutes are available on the EJ Online Public Resource Library as well as I believe LinkedIn the agenda typically.
So Victor, Britney and Walter, are you guys comfortable with approving the minutes?

VS **victor slingshot** 54:55

I am not sure I can.

BJ **Birch, Juliet** 54:59

That's a good point again.
Yeah, that's a good point.
Yeah, but I saw a thumbs up from Walter.
Any majority in the Committee of Britain, yeah, yeah.
OK. Jennifer, I see your thumb and Britney, do you?
Are you comfortable with approving the March 28th minutes?
Yeah, Brittany did a thumbs up before. OK. And I'm gonna pose the same question for the April 18th minutes if I can see thumbs. If folks wanna approve those as well.
Great.
I want to talk to you.
OK.
I saw Walter Rich and Susanna.

Jennifer and Brittany, if you guys are comfortable with approving the April 18th minutes, just give us a thumbs up.
That'd be awesome.
Thank you, Jennifer.
Is that everyone?
No, I didn't see Brittany's thumb yet, but.

Karla Raimundi
We can always return to this if it's. Yeah, I think we should keep going. OK. We want to make sure that we you have time to discuss the spending guidance.

Juliet Birch
Yep.
All right. So the last things that we wanna share with you before we put you in or before we start the unfacilitated session.
Is first as you guys are going into this conversation with each other, how can you specifically contribute to the environmental benefits spending guidance?
As you all know, the EJ law put an R as the responsible party for this guidance, but it mandates that the Advisory Council and the Interagency Committee are consulted. This meeting is part of that consultation.
Several of the meetings that we've had throughout 2024 were related to this topic. As well as consultation that occurred through the EBSG task group, I will shout out Trey, Trey Martin, who's not here today.
He has been a really great and helpful member of the Evsg task group, who is an Advisory Council member.
And yeah, so.
The we.
That's one way that you can contribute is just providing your console trace consultation. If you could review the draft and provide your feedback.
Back, especially pertaining to you know what's clear and what language perhaps is confusing, or just like too complex. We wanna try and keep content as plain as we can.
If you could identify what parts of the document are most relevant to your communities and to the public, what parts of the document do you think they would have the most interest in?

What do they? What do you think they could influence the most? That would be helpful, providing examples perhaps of how you adjust.
Or prioritize resources in your own work with your communities. That would be great. And as always, the invitation is always open to join the environmental benefits, spending, guiding Guidance Task Group.
This is not something that you have to necessarily commit to to join.
You could literally join us for one meeting if you want to jump in and just be part of the conversation or review something you really want to share. We always welcome additional feedback and having your present.
Something.
Especially that we're looking to do, as I mentioned before, is developing plain language and as folks who work with a wide variety of communities, you may have a better idea of what would be planar language than we do.
So we always welcome that participation.
And then the last thing that we'll share, I will pass to Kim.
Yeah, so here are some considerations for you all.
So we want to make sure.
That we're all on the same page about, particularly for this deliverable. So particularly for this guidance, who's responsible for editing?
Who's responsible for approving it?
Who's responsible?
What is that?
What does that look like?
And 1st I'll start with just again for more context.
You all were the lead on the core principles of community engagement.
So that was a specific deliverable that you all had to take the lead on and specifically approve.
So we want to make sure that there's a distinction there so that everyone's on the same page about what the environmental benefit spending guidance clarifying what advising actually means in this context, because it can kind of be confusing.
So there's that.
You know, there's advising and there's direct directing.
So in this particular case, with this deliverable, you all can offer suggestions.
You all can, you know, do a number of the things that Juliet just mentioned sharing if the guidance makes sense from your perspective, helping us develop materials that

are going to work for your communities. But what you aren't able to do is make specific.
Prescriptions or.
Provide directives.
On how exactly things can be implemented, and I also want to point out that that isn't something that's unique to you that.
There are a whole host of folks who have interest in this guidance.
You know, we meet with the the Ebsg task group.
We get folks across the different agencies who come and have suggestions or thoughts or questions, and sometimes.
It's just not.
We're not able to actually include everything in the guidance, so I just want to make that clear.
It's not to call you out on not being able to make prescriptions.
Not being able to change specific investments or directly influence budgeting, and I think that that's really important.
For there to be a distinction on because you all may have areas that you are passionate about or particularly interested.
And and So what the what? The guidance in general can't do is say for this particular program you need to make X changes.
And then also prescribing when the investment changes may happen because this is kind of a multi year process.
You know, and the idea is to make this incremental change.
And so I also want to make sure that we're managing expectations on like what the timeline could be for seeing adjustments.
And then there's the consultation versus like the actual approval.
So what you all can do is participate in the formal consultation which?
We love and is, you know, mandated in the law.
So again, like meetings like this, that's part of part of the formal consultation process.
The public comment period that's also part of, you know, that's another version of consultation.
But what?
You can't do.
Is vote or use any sort of consensus process to actually approve this particular document?

But what you all can do is vote or use a consensus process to vote on recommendations, for example.
Or vote on things that you would like to share to the legislature, which in the context of everything that's happening now, I think I can't stress enough how important or how helpful that would be.
But you all can use that vote and consensus process to do whatever it is that you feel like you need or want to do to provide the best consultation that you can to get this document to the best place that it can be.
So I just wanna make sure that we're on the same page about that and see if anyone has any questions.
Yeah.
OK. The last thing I'll say is that also you we don't, I've heard folks say last year that they're unsure of how they can contribute to this body of work because you may not be aware of all the processes and procedures that are going on at the state.
Level and I just want to say that that is not required at all to participate in this and even if you have a bunch of questions, being able to provide the task group with that and being able to share those questions.
With the agencies will be extremely helpful, so thank you.
I think we can move on, OK.
So if there are no questions or anything, we're gonna give you, like, 45 minutes.
Yeah. Or so. Yeah. OK. And I guess one clarification or, you know, this is up to you.
We have a few slides that are specifically about the public comment period.
Do you all wanna see those slides now or do you wanna take the the unificated time to look at the document?
And then go over that information later.

RH **rich holschuh** 1:05:10
I'll. I'll jump in here.
I'm looking at the agenda and I see that we're we're way off of where we were headed, which is fine.
That's the way it.
That's the way the cookie crumbled.
So are we.
Are we just kind of running with the whole the whole thing right here now and and

and scrapping that agenda because it was a public comment at 11:25, I know there's no public hear but.

Kim Barrett 1:05:40
Yeah, if there were members of the public, we would do that public comment period. But This is why I'm kind of leaving it up to you all to make that decision is you can reallocate any of that time the way that you, you know, want if you all feel like you just wanna have one large chunk of time to meet on FAC.

RH **rich holschuh** 1:05:50
Mm hmm.

Kim Barrett 1:06:02
Then I would suggest we look at.
The kind of last remaining slides, but if you wanna portion.
You know your time. However, we can go with what makes sense for everyone.

RH **rich holschuh** 1:06:15
Mm hmm.
Yeah, that's what I thought you were.
You were. You were getting at there, Kim. Thank you.
Speaking for myself, I I think you might as well show us what you've got there and then we can just talk about what we're able to talk about.
I think we're all.
I I speak for myself, but I think we're all a little bit wandering here.
I mean, there's a lot of material here and we're having a hard time keeping up.

BJ **Birch, Juliet** 1:06:38
Yes.

RH **rich holschuh** 1:06:44
I think the attendance at this meeting again demonstrates that.
Yeah.
You guys have a job, you guys have jobs to do and you know you're on, you're on payroll and deadline, and we're we're scrambling.

Kim Barrett 1:06:53
OK.

rich holschuh 1:07:04
Yep. So yeah. Thank you.

Kim Barrett 1:07:04
I hear that.
Why don't we take a break then?
Just like a quick 5 minute break to give ourselves.
Yeah, just like a break break and come back and convenient.
We'll see it like, let's say, 1125.

rich holschuh 1:07:24
OK.

Birch, Juliet 1:14:38
Hey folks, welcome back.
Yes. OK. We're gonna just finish up those last couple of slides and then you all can take.
The rest of the time. OK. Do you wanna wait a minute for? Yeah. Cosa shows if they're here.
Yeah. If you're here, just give us a thumbs up. If you're not on camera.
Can we?
Oh.
Yeah, that's where we are. Yeah. OK.
You're on this slide, OK?
Welcome back everyone.
I hope that your brain break was kinda restful.
I know that we shared a ton of information before that break, so I'm I hope you got a chance to process.
I see Rich's nodding.
So before we bring you into the facilitated time, you know we're gonna do a little switch from the previously planned agenda.

As Rich suggested, you know reminder that we are going to be having a 40 day public comment period for the environmental benefit spending guidance.
Where this guidance is going to be released to all of Vermont to tell us what they think about it and to weigh in. And then those comments will be used to revise the guidance as necessary.
So what is the public comment period?
We just wanted to quickly have an understanding of that. The law mandates that the public reviews this document.
It's a formal process for improving the document and its purpose is to inform how agencies report, not necessarily what they report on, but how they're going to do it.
You'll see in the guidance that there's a suggested reporting process there.
And then.
Finally, it's an opportunity to receive diverse feedback from all over the state about how they'd like to see covered agencies provide.
This engage with this reporting process.
The next one, yeah.

Kim Barrett
The other thing actually you're on it, but I can do it.

Juliet Birch
I can do it.

Kim Barrett
OK. OK.

Juliet Birch
So then last but the other thing we want to talk about is what can't public comments do?
There are limitations to the sway that public comments can have. For example, a public comment can't necessarily rewrite the law.
We know there are some things that have even come up in this conversation.
Where, you know, perhaps the language in the law could be improved from our perspectives, but that's not something that the public comments can do at this time.
That's something that we would have to do some, you know, speaking with the

General Assembly to make happen.
The public comment can't decide how money is spent, and it can't prescribe when or how investments might change.
This public comment is really strictly tied to the guidance itself.
Which is all about how the agencies report.
And so these comments don't.
They can't necessarily influence what happens after the reporting process takes place yet.
And then finally, public comments can't necessarily guarantee change.
There's lots of different parties that are weighing in on this guidance and.
There, you know, we we have to ensure that the guidance is speaking to the needs of Vermont, but also is speaking to the needs of the covered agencies to make sure that.
The reporting process is actually a feasible one for them to undertake.
And then finally I will pass it to Kim.
Walter, go ahead.
Oh, you're muted. Oh, Walter.

BW **Brownridge, Walter** 1:19:05
I'm sorry, I just had a quick question, Julia.
I understand what you were saying. What public comment can't do, but you did say and then it for some reason you broke up.
You said public comments.
What public comments can do or what was the purpose of it?
I I just didn't hear that part of your.

BJ **Birch, Juliet** 1:19:23
Yeah. Are you talking about this previous slide?

BW **Brownridge, Walter** 1:19:27
Yes, the previous slide.

BJ **Birch, Juliet** 1:19:29
Yeah. So maybe you're talking about this third bullet. The purpose of the public comment is to inform how agencies report.

Brownridge, Walter 1:19:33
Oh, how?
Yes, thank you very much.
Thank you very much. That's it.
Thank you.

Birch, Juliet 1:19:40
Awesome. Thanks, Walter.

Brownridge, Walter 1:19:41
That.

Birch, Juliet 1:19:43
All right. Are there any other questions?
Correct. Yeah.

Kim Barrett
And I think that slide well, the reason why we're sharing this is so that you all can support in making sure you know the folks that are in your networks understand what their comments will do.
And I think that that would help support how folks craft their comments and also just mitigate expectations.
So what are some ways that you all can contribute to the public comment period?
A huge a very important thing is the development of plain language materials.
It took months for folks, even in our agency, to wrap our own heads around it.
And so I think just being able to translate some of this information in ways that make sense.
To folks in your communities.
We have some ideas on on some supplementary materials that we would like to Co develop with.
You if you're able to, if not just being able to review some of the documents would be helpful for thinking about putting. Like I said, some of these materials before the document.
So like in the document where folks can read it before viewing it.

So we're trying to think about that, but we feel like you all would have more expertise.
In translating this to your specific communities that you're working with and then identifying and engaging folks.
And so I'll suspend and just put something in the chat.
Identifying and engaging your constituents would be really helpful.
Sharing materials and encouraging participation.
Again, helping to manage expectations about the public comment period and also submitting comments yourself would be great.
I also want to mention that you know we believe that we so we want the public comment period to be accessible.
And we also want there to be like a great representation.
In there. So in your, you know networks that you know of, people who receive funds from the state. If you know of people who need funds from the state, you know, however you feel would be most relevant.
I think just thinking about that and keeping that in mind would be helpful.
Yeah.
And then one other thing that's not on the slide is that we're gonna read all of the comments and kind of take it from there.
And try to adjust the guidance where possible. Mm hmm, yeah.

Juliet Birch
Oh, I skip the slide.

Kim Barrett
Yeah. So this one's really important.
Some things to think about as outcomes from your UN facilitated time. It would be really helpful to for you all to establish some smart goals for you as a collective.
Things that we can, you know, support with, especially because you know where I'm sure the next time that.
You all will be able to meet.
By yourselves, so establishing some goals that you can kind of keep moving towards would be helpful.
I think it would be important for everyone to define some action steps that you know

will each take, including us, and if you have any support needs or pathways that you'd like to collaborate, please share those with us.

Juliet Birch
Awesome. So we're gonna probably open on facilitated time until like 12351240 or so.
And this is opportunity.
This is an opportunity for you to.
To digest the.
Actual guidance itself with your fellow Advisory Council members and to talk about how you can get organized around this public comment period.
Some suggestions or gentle suggestions?
For this unfacilitated time is to be aware of equity and air time to be, to embrace silence and be comfortable with taking pauses to be solutions focused and action oriented. As Kim mentioned before.
If we could all walk away from this meeting with a couple of next steps that we're going to take to support this public comment period, that would be one way to really help make this public comment period successful.
So these are just a couple of gentle suggestions as we move into this UN facilitated time.
One more thing on that too is just wanting to also say it would be helpful just to make sure that everyone can participate in the.
In the conversation kind of to to focus on developing that kind of ground level understanding of the topic.
So that, yeah, everyone can be involved and you know need like more expertise to support the conversation, if that makes sense.
Yeah. So we will give you until like 1235 or 12:40 and we'll be here, but we'll probably turn camera off and Mike off and if there are any questions.
Questions, just like, yell our names.
But enjoy.
Your UN facilitated time.
I'm just gonna drop these outcomes in the chat. If you need anything, just let us know. So we'll see ya.

RH **rich holschuh** 1:25:47

This is awkward.
On facilitated time.
I have a copy of the environmental benefits spending guidance up on my other screen here, the draft and it's 32 pages long.
There's a lot of material here.
It definitely comes across to me as a non.
State employee or civil servant as a whole, lot of you know.
Boilerplate and.
I I have a really hard time finding out how to approach this.
It is what it is.
I, you know, have in mind. What? What, what Carla has been sharing that the law is the law is what the law is.
And there's there's a lot of guardrails there and.
We are in a consultation role and I'm not sure what we can, what what, what we could say that would be helpful.
Other than as Jennifer was touching on that there's this is really limited and prescribed so.
I did note that toward the end of the document there are there is a list of.
Only starting on page.
Where is it?
Age 26, there's a list of common pain points and some of the things we've been talking about are in that in that list, discretionary, non discretionary things like that qualitative versus quantitative.

BW **Brownridge, Walter** 1:27:58
Could we?
I have just one quick housekeeping I wanna I think I know everyone except. Hi, victor.
You must be one of our new newly appointed members.
And I joined a little bit late, so I didn't get a chance to introduction if if you've already had an introduction.
But I'm Walter Brownridge in Burlington.
I'm an Episcopal priest.
I actually serve a congregation in Montpelier and.
And one of the Bipoc community representatives.
Also, besides the priest is a lawyer and worked had many years.

Until about 30 years ago. I'm I'm probably the oldest person in this space.
Work in government, both federal and state, and local.
So anyway, just introduce myself to you. Thank you.

VS **victor slingshot** 1:28:53
Nice to meet you.
I eventually get around to emailing folks here.
I'm technically a part of the Advisory Council, but won't be officially on until some dots get crossed to some extent.
Those the transfer from Haley's position to mine.
Has been a bit shakier than expected previously.
But the goal for this was this moment is to go through the document correct to kind of like talk about amongst ourselves, the draft.

BW **Brownridge, Walter** 1:29:30
I think that's what it was. Jennifer did.

RH **rich holschuh** 1:29:30
I believes.

BW **Brownridge, Walter** 1:29:32
Is that what you understood?
Xusana.

JB **Jennifer Byrne** 1:29:36
It seemed like that was the goal.
But then those other questions indicated a more like a broader conversation around.
What our roles are and how we want to move forward and all that kind of stuff.
So I think it's kind of two parts.

DX **Davis, Xusana** 1:29:54
That was my sense too.

BW **Brownridge, Walter** 1:30:01
I I will.

I will.
Rich, thank you.
You just, you offered.
I I appreciate your your initial COM.
Ments are.
Yeah, I don't want this to sound uncharitable or cynical, but.
A good part of me.
This is just something about state government and and that's probably what I I'm I'm only been in Vermont for years, but it's similar to other places.
It it sounds like to me that the.
And I'm pulling up the 32 page document on my thing.
I roll and Jennifer, I really appreciate what you raised at the last meeting we had and this context about what should be done with our best practices in the area of environmental justice.
But it would seem like.
The state of Vermont.
Even though they passed this law Act 154.
3 three years ago that on some level.
The role, at least, of the Advisory Council.
Might be just a little bit of.
A.
And I'm not saying this in a negative way.
I actually like kabuki theater, but it's kabuki theater, meaning that.
We play parts.
They're asked to us to play parts.
That you already know what's gonna happen.
They're like prescribed roles. If you, if you follow what I'm saying because when they give you a set of those slides, said what the environmental.
Benefits spending guidance.
What it?
What? It's not for and it's basically just how reporting is done.
Just explaining how does it get to the question of. I mean I think for us to have an impact and I guess that's the question, you know this body should we're trying to have an impact on how this law is implemented and when it comes to this area.
Of environmental benefits, burdens and proportionality.

I mean, I do think on some level as many of us who can attend.
Some of those meetings might be helpful, but the real question is.
How can we improve this so that it has some real impact?
So that's just my question and point on on this, I guess.

Davis, Xusana 1:33:09
When you say improve this, you mean the actual substance of it, or just the process?

Brownridge, Walter 1:33:16
I guess.
I'm saying. I don't know if we can prove the actual content because this is the law and we're not able to change. And then one of the slides that we can't change any of that.
But if I guess, is there a way that in this reporting process, is there any way that we can?
By and by improve I mean in the way they report that can have a positive impact.
Act on the communities that we hope can receive benefits.
Does that make sense? What I'm.
Sometimes I'm not always clear in what I want to say. It's.
It's it's some level.
Our hands are tied, sort of.
Our hands are tied, is what we can do and it it it's it's more like.
Comment but comment.
That doesn't necessarily change anything, and I guess I'm struggling to figure out how can our participation actually make.
A tangible difference.
In this.

Davis, Xusana 1:34:34
Yeah, I think that's a really good point.
I mean, you know.
I think that the the Statute can actually be changed.
It's just that it would take time and an unknown level of effort to get buy in from all of the right policy makers, and usually people don't like touching any of these types of laws because it takes so much negotiating to get everybody at the table to agree.

To what they created that nobody wants to open it back up again, which is a lot of times the the.
Hesitation around, you know, acting 50 and those kinds of discussions, so it can happen.
It's just time consuming and still kind of unlikely.
That doesn't mean it's not worth trying, but I find it helpful just to be clear.
About what? About the difference between cant and won't?
Because sometimes we and our communities end up being told something, and I'm not saying that's not a critique of you at all. That's just.

BW **Brownridge, Walter** 1:35:27
OK.

DX **Davis, Xusana** 1:35:32
I find that systems.
In general frame things a lot as can't when really it's won't.
So. So that's that's one piece I I I appreciate your question about.
If we assume that that's the landscape and that's where we are right now, how can we improve this best? And I think one big way is a lot of warning to people and a lot of accessibility in the the the materials themselves.
So what that means for me anyway, is if there's gonna be a 40 day notice and comment period.
Then you know we want to make sure people aren't finding out about it on day one of the 40, right?
But well in advance, because it's often the case that people find out about stuff when it's already happening.
And by the time they're able to organize and mobilize, it's too late.
And I will say 40 days, a lot of groups and organizations tend to have monthly meetings. And so you have to assume at least one cycle for them to be able to to talk about it.
And 40 days just barely gives you that.
So I would love if we did.
Robust outreach to to people so that they know this is coming.
That's one thing. And then the other thing I think again is is accessibility of the technical documents themselves.

And I think and I put this in the chat, but I think that we should be looking for these relevant documents to be rewritten using clean language summaries.
And it depends on who you ask.
But generally, plain language.
Which is accepted to be as anywhere from a fifth grade to an eighth grade reading level. I've even heard as low as a third grade reading level.
So if we're able to meaningfully.
Condense and enhance the relevant materials.
To perhaps the 5th or 8th grade reading level, I think that could really be helpful to people and.
And I think that translation would also be tremendously impactful, that also takes longer runway though 'cause you have to allow time for the turn around of those documents into the languages selected. But I think those are some ways that we can capture people who are otherwise kind of.
Shut out of this process.
Yeah.

VS **victor slingshot** 1:38:03
Can I engage people's feelings on the task force previously presented cause based on description, it seems like those are potentially opportunities where individuals from this larger coalition could.
Do those things being described currently at specific points?
Is that an incorrect observation based off what's been presented?

BW **Brownridge, Walter** 1:38:35
I was going to.
I just spoke so I was going to wait to see if someone else was going to speak.

RH **rich holschuh** 1:38:43
I think you're bringing up a good question there, Victor, about a task force.
Apparently the task force was involved in drawing this up in the first place.
I'm.

BW **Brownridge, Walter** 1:38:57

I would.
Yeah. I'm sorry, rich. I were you on the task force, rich.

RH **rich holschuh** 1:39:01
I was not.
I'm completely uninformed about a task force. Other than that there is one.

BW **Brownridge, Walter** 1:39:06
Any.
Brittany, Jennifer, and I'm sorry. I always is it.
Do you pronounce it exana? Or how do you pronounce your tusana?

DX **Davis, Xusana** 1:39:17
Xusana, I think.
Xusana, thank you for asking.

BW **Brownridge, Walter** 1:39:19
Thank tusana.
Susana, where are any of you on that task?
Part of the task force that met with the other Pope from the other parts in that none of us were involved in that.
Is that what I'm understanding?

JB **Jennifer Byrne** 1:39:34
I was involved maybe a year and a half two years ago.
I don't even know at this point how long it's been, but there were some initial meetings that I went to.
A while back.

BW **Brownridge, Walter** 1:39:55
So that I think that's one of our problems in looking at it.
Here's here's the thing.
I guess this is the question like the first paragraph of the executive summary says, this document outlines the suggested approach for completing these reports.
As well as additional information that covered covered agencies may need to

effectively inform their reporting process.
So I guess the question is, as Susanna talked about and I really appreciate.
Thank you.
The difference between can't and won't.
Is a big there is a that.
This is the guidance about how.
Various agencies.
A and R and and others that will have to.
Comment and give reports.
How they do that?
And I have to admit, I haven't gone through all 32 pages, but.
Looking at it, I guess what I'm trying to figure out is there any way, any way in of?
Of helping make that reporting process.
More effective for the public.
Susanna just said.
The reporting the language needs to be very accessible to public and so yeah, it should be at some level of elementary school education.
You know, maybe I don't know middle school, but you know, some level that.
You know, Vermonters of every level of education could perhaps understand that this.
I think that's just.
I think that's just one really important, if I could say one thing would be helpful so that people understand what is being said in the reporting.
So they could even at least be well informed and also be able to respond and ask questions as they need.

DX **Davis, Xusana** 1:42:08
You know.

VS **victor slingshot** 1:42:08
I'm sorry please.

DX **Davis, Xusana** 1:42:12
Oh, thanks.
I was just gonna say, you know, I I think also.

My my understanding is that we we do have an opportunity to influence the EBSG think that.
I think that if we are able to rally ourselves and potentially other important interested parties.
Then the the comment period in our input can be and I'm going to use this term in a positive light aggressive enough.
That we can actually meaningfully.
Influence it? I mean, it is really hard to be hopeful about that when something feels like it's already baked.
Umm.
But I mean it is the purpose of a comment period.
I think we should hold hope for the.
You know, ability to to do that and if we can get our coordinators from A and RI think to help us kind of champion what input we're giving, then maybe that helps add weight.
I don't know the extent to which they can do that.
Maybe they're supposed to be neutral? I don't know.

BW **Brownridge, Walter** 1:43:30
So maybe if I get because I know times gonna I don't how much time we have left. I think they gave us 45 minutes.
I wonder if there's like like two things that I that come to jump out to me.
In my review of this of the document, one is.
Is the agencies have until February.
Of next year, February 15.
So that's about 10 months. All the covered agencies.
Must have a submitted a baseline report.
Space line spending report and that covers.
The past three years.
And they're supposed to a look, where were investments made and which geographic areas?
Municipal Census block group and so on. And then describe and describe and also give data quantity of of the environmental benefits. So.
They have to do that.
They have 10 months to do that, so they probably should be working on this now or

very soon.
The other and and I don't if if it's the task group and the other issue. To me there's this task group.
Which says this is guidance document, civil rights and environmental justice unit of ANR in consultation with the Ebsg task group.
Which says that there are people from the Advisory Council as well as the Interagency Council and program staff.
Now I think Juliet just, you know, before we broke off, invited us if we wanted to participate or even attend a meeting.
And I think maybe I know I should.
More about this, but I guess the question is.
Do we just sit?
Do we just wait until these agencies submit their spending reports this baseline report?
Ten months from now.
Or are there things that we can do like consulting with them?
You know, see how they're you know, how they how their progress.
You know, tracking their progress on this, if they're, you know, maybe they have questions for.
Umm.
Us, as members of the Advisory Council, I think that might be the best thing is, would we have any interactions with these covered agencies?
Who in the next between now and February 15?
They will.
Be compiling the baseline report.
That's sort of it.
That's a discrete and I don't want to say simple, but it's a discrete and.
Identifiable project that at least some of us on the Advisory Council can be involved in.
Is that I don't know if that makes sense or not. And and Susanna is that 'cause. I really like the direction you were saying and I like the word aggressive in there.
Does that make sense if we can at least find out?
You know, if we have any role in.

RH **rich holschuh** 1:47:09
Jennifer's got your you have your hand up.

JB **Jennifer Byrne** 1:47:13
Yeah, but Rich, I saw your hand too.
Are were you gonna comment?

RH **rich holschuh** 1:47:18
And victors as well.

JB **Jennifer Byrne** 1:47:19
Oh.

RH **rich holschuh** 1:47:20
I I was just going to respond to what Walter's saying right here about do we have any opportunity to work with these folks?
A question that comes up in my mind is the fact that our our our advisory group does meet occasionally with the Interagency Advisory Council.
And are those the same people?
Are the people making these?
Reports for their respective agencies are those the people that.
We see periodically is that an opportunity for that cross pollination or are we talking about a whole different group of staff somewhere else, all the, you know, bean counters somewhere, I don't know.
And I use that term kindly.
Xusana.

BW **Brownridge, Walter** 1:48:08
Xusana and Jennifer. I don't.
I don't wanna interrupt you, but I just.
Rich, there was a link inside the document.
Inside the evsg thing that's called it was said that a Guide to creating the guidance.
For covered agency EBS.
Spending reports.

The subtitle a guide to the guide.
So in that I'm just looking at it.
So in that there is.
So there are people.
Carla's directive, civil rights and environmental justice.
We know Carla.
And I think I don't know if Carla's in the room, but I still see her.
Picture her place, Mark Phoebe.
Phoebes.
That Phoebe with thieves Potter.
Is also.
There. I don't know if maybe that's out of, I don't know if that's out of date because feeds she's she's left.

JB **Jennifer Byrne** 1:49:12
They're no longer with.
Yeah. OK.

BW **Brownridge, Walter** 1:49:18
I don't know if she's left.
An R or not. But we do have Carla.
And then I'm suspecting and I don't know if any of us, Jennifer and I and Mariana had that meeting.
With the secretary of ANR.
About two weeks ago. Was it Jennifer?
So I I would suspect there may be some other people from ANR, at least for at least as far as an R, and I don't know if they're being counters, but I think they're like deputies that.
The Secretary will task with driving the reporting and.
I think we can ask if if is there any role for us to play in the next 10 months.
As these agencies prepare their baseline report.
Would be helpful.
There is at one level.
There is supposedly in this.
A public input survey.

But when I clicked on it.
It said cannot find the page, so I don't know if it's up ready to upload already or if it's if it's already disappeared.
But I think that's I think maybe that's a start to find out.
You know what role do we have?
Can we have a role in that?
And just the last thing there.
Are.
There are.
10 agencies that are supposed to make these reports.
A and R being the first one, but also transportation, commerce and community development, agriculture, education, public utility, Natural Resources Board, Department of Health, Department of Safety, Department of Public Service.
And and here's just my last piece. My experience certainly in working.
I mean, I've worked in certain places like public safety.
Particularly.
There, these folks are not necessarily.
They they they know about as much about this as say I did three years ago.
And they're being asked to do this. And on one level they don't need to be experts, but they do need to be able to make reports about their baseline of spending. The last three years.
So in some level it's research, but.
They're not gonna have anyone dedicated to this.
This is this work is gonna be done by people who already have other functions and roles within their particular agencies I'm thinking.
Which means that.
If we really want a thorough report.
They're gonna need help or assistance somehow in making this happen.

JB **Jennifer Byrne** 1:52:40
Yeah, I I have. I'm on.
There's no page numbers, but I'm on the page that starts with reporting process.
And it says step 0, building capacity for the work.

Brownridge, Walter 1:52:53
On page 10, about page 10.

Jennifer Byrne 1:52:54
OK. Thanks.
And that just a thought in terms of adding to that bullet point list of who is recommended to be involved in the report, I think it should be the representative to the Interagency Advisory Council should certainly be listed there. I don't think they are.
But that would be a miss if we didn't include the the people who actually meet with us.
In this reporting.
Guidance.
I'm also noting.
And I know we've brought this up.
A like a bunch of times in the past around when we were discussing push, like advocating to have all those dates pushed forward.
And it was, you know, a strong recommendation from an R that the our Council took up.
And then just for the for the people who aren't aware, I was sent to testify in favor of delaying all these dates.
It's but a point that I I know was made many times was that when the law originally passed and asked for these, there's actually two kind of phases of reporting.
It's kind of getting all clumped into one document right now, but the first reporting phase was this three-year look back.
And that was intended to capture the pandemic. It was intended to capture 2020-2021, 2022.
And it was.
Do I think in 2023?
I'm I'm not sure I have the law right here, but I have to swap screens.
So now I'm seeing in this guidance document, it specifically says that it captures three years from now, which doesn't go back to 2020.
And I remember being told, like, don't worry, we're gonna capture those dates. We're gonna go from the original time.

So that's one thing I don't know if that's something that this Council.
Thinks is important.
I think it's really useful and valuable information to understand, like in a time of crisis.
Where did the money flow?
So that's one thing that I I see as maybe a potential change.
And then also a way that maybe we could help impact and improve?
This is how some of the definitions like how they define environment I could see.
An agency that doesn't consider itself an environmental agency, not really understanding how this applies to them.
And so maybe there's a way that we can make it more clear in this guidance document.
I also just like we still haven't adjusted the EJ focus population in their and they're relying on that. But I just wanna.
Be sure and I'm trying to see it in this document.
I'm not quite clear, but I hope it's very clear that this is guidance agency wide statewide spending. Not just did you spend money in an EJ focused population, but like where did you spend money?
That's the first question and then you get into like targeting.
So yeah, that's all I have to say.

VS **victor slingshot** 1:56:21
I am curious as to whether or not there is a general interest to meet on the quorum.
Like under the quarant threshold to do kind of just a work phase day because there's of all the things being said, the consistent thing is that this document has to be looked at, potentially had have added language to it, but also there needs to be a strategy about.
How to turn this down to 1/5 or potentially even 3rd grade reading level?
And to do that to other documents in the future that it might be good to start establishing.
At least like a once a month or twice a month culture of getting together to actually work on that in a small enough group to talk it through and actually like write that out.
Because I I I'm new and I'm technically still not officially on, but I also know that I am probably like many of you got a lot of things to do.
And it would be made easier to do any of these individual things if there was like an

hour that was kind of forced into my workflow to address it more appropriately, because it's not like we're going to get things structurally made better from within. Official channels.
So it feels like we have to do that outside of these aligned times to make them work. And I could be wrong about that, but I'd be interested in gauging people's interest in potentially doing that, in which case I would happily help set that up for, you know, under quorum.

BW **Brownridge, Walter** 1:58:09
That's that sounds like a good idea.
We could, if we could get.
The time for that, yeah.

VS **victor slingshot** 1:58:25
I can send out a doodle poll today out of the meeting.

DX **Davis, Xusana** 1:58:41
So I just wanted to say I agree with Jennifer's point about if we do, if there is advocacy or if there was advocacy to advance the dates and it ended up creating a gap for an extremely critical time period that impacted the state, then I think it. Would be really important to make sure that any changes that we make are still able to capture those data and so I wanted to express agreement with that and then.
The second thing was about the the IAC.
Oh yeah, it was about.
I had a clarifying question for you, Jennifer.
You talked about if there's a way that we can clarify the definition for what constitutes environment, just to make sure that agencies, to put it bluntly, don't feel like they can get let off the hook if they can feasibly or positively claim that they're not part of that.
And I'm curious to know, do you mean the covered agencies or do you mean any ancillary state entities that may end up?
Coming up in the course of the work.

JB **Jennifer Byrne** 1:59:43
No, I really mean.

I mean the covered agencies and just in the I don't if you all have seen the definitions section in this document, but environment is defined and it's not defined in the law, it's defined in this guidance document though.

Davis, Xusana 1:59:47
OK.

Jennifer Byrne 1:59:58
But it's it's pretty brief like I I do now.
I'm trying to find it again. Kind of going cross eyed but.
If anyone sees the definition section.
Maybe we could read it.

Davis, Xusana 2:00:13
I would be while you're finding it, I would be open to clarifying that definition, but the sense that I get from the IAC meetings is that the covered agencies appear to be on board. I don't.
I don't get the sense that anybody's looking for an out.
But but again I I also don't.
I don't mind creating a little bit more explanation or structure around that. What I what I what?
I wanna caution is against is making something too limited.
Or too detailed, so much so that people do feel like.
This does not apply to me, so I think this there's a sweet spot there between broad bread and you know Deb.

Jennifer Byrne 2:00:54
Yeah, I I think I found it. So I'll read it and I and I do have a thought on that as well.
So environment slash environmental the definition is characteristics, IE physical, social, cultural of the spaces where we live, work and play.
Not every agency employee, I don't think would be able to really interpret that and apply that to what they do.
So I so there's that.
And I'm thinking about the question around like in the next 10 months, how do we?
Engage with the Interagency Committee on this, and I could see it being really

helpful, like as a like different phases of check in around this, like when they develop their list, which is one of these steps where they develop like what services does our agency provide, you know.
What environmental services or however it's phrased, it'd be great for the IAC to come to us with that list once they generate it.
Kind of throughout these steps that they've laid out.
To keep coming back to us and then we could reflect on what their.
Like what kind of conversations are they having in their agency around this?
I think that's where we could potentially be really helpful and provide just some advice which is, you know, what an Advisory Council is meant to do. So that could be a way that we like regularly are engaging with the interagency Committee if they're willing to come to us.
You know, with sort of not just the end deliverable, which is really part of this ongoing issue.
But like throughout the process, what their what? Their conversations are like and what lists they're generating.

RH **rich holschuh** 2:02:48
That sounds like a good idea.
Jennifer to have check insurance as the process on unfolds.

BW **Brownridge, Walter** 2:02:54
Yeah. Yes, I agree.

RH **rich holschuh** 2:02:55
I'm.
Just you know on that note, I'm kind of curious, maybe the environmental justice coordinators that we've been meeting with have some idea as to what?
The.
Future agendas of our our Council meetings are going to be are they going to be that back and forth, going on like, what's what's on the docket?
Right now, we're supposed to be reviewing this draft and we've still got the the mapping tool sort of dangling out there. And you know what? What, what are we?
What are we supposed to be working on six months from now?
Is it just back and forth? I don't know.

I I think these are important questions that we can bring back to those to the staff, to to Carla and.
And Kim and Juliet.
They're kind of.
Steering the boat here.

JB **Jennifer Byrne** 2:04:22
Victor, is your hand up?

VS **victor slingshot** 2:04:30
Sorry, I didn't lower it from the last time.
Aside from also just so I can make sure when I send out this due to poor moment sitting at the people who are interested to keep the number under the sixth person threshold.
Who would be interested in trying to fill out a dutiful to figure out when there could be a date to just kind of sit down and work on this document and then potentially discuss other things in a more?
Condense setting.

BW **Brownridge, Walter** 2:05:13
Victoria. Victor. I'm. I'm. I'm willing to be able to do that.
I I would just say.
That Kim.
Stepped away normally when we get doodle poles, she sends them out 'cause. She can send them out to the entire Advisory Council.
So.
And and and. I'm just wondering if we might want to expand the list to beyond just.
A handful of us who are in this meeting.
Who might be able to participate?
But but they they have.
Their doodle account, they they send it out to all of the members. They can do so.
We we could ask them to send it out, if that's.
You know you can work with Kim or.
Juliet, in making that happen, I would be my suggestion.

VS **victor slingshot** 2:06:08
My only thought there would be that if it's going out to everyone and it's minus setting that we can't meet above a certain threshold regularly, how do we cut people who may have wanted to go if it hits the ballot threshold?
Like who's? We decide not to have show up.

BW **Brownridge, Walter** 2:06:22
Alright, I I suspect however I su.
I suspect that we won't.
Not trying to be cynical, I don't if we'll get even if we send it out to everyone. I don't know if we'll get.
More than six people able to participate.
That would be the question.

VS **victor slingshot** 2:06:42
Then I can.
I can communicate with Kim directly to have her send out a Doodle poll.

BW **Brownridge, Walter** 2:06:49
And then we can just say the first six who respond or whatever are able to attend.
You know, we can cut it off or something like that.

JB **Jennifer Byrne** 2:07:16
I'm thinking about that other slide they shared where they asked like more general questions.
And something that I would like to offer to do is at least from like thinking about that question like what is the next six months?
I would really like to and I'm offering to put together like a sort of like a task list timeline from at least from my perspective of what the law is asking us to do as an Advisory Council.
And just put it out there to y'all.
I don't.
Yeah, with the the new dates, I'll have to get like the new version with the new dates because I have a old version of the law.

But, but that's one thing that I I like for me, just having a grasp on cause a lot of things right now are kinda happening out of order.
And so that's something that, yeah, I would be willing to do just to just to share like what might be on the horizon.
For us, what kind of discussions?
And I know they've done this as well, but.
Might be helpful in a different format.
And and then I do have like a question which we don't have to really. I mean we can go into it if we want, but I, I I see this response from the agency that came in that detailed the whole RFP EJ map tool process, I see that.
They were saying that they took additional time to do it right, but then also they decided to, you know, put it out to this approved contractor list.
I'm still really not OK.
With how that went down and they are moving forward this with this community engagement contract, which I feel that.
I don't know that we need it or like what?
What is it and and why?
So I'm I'm concerned about that because I've seen how how wrong these community engagement contracts can go sometimes.
And it's very performative.
So just like floating that to you all 'cause, I don't know what you know.
As an Advisory Council, like how do we feel about that?
I know we put this statement out and Julie Moore came back to us with a response that was basically. Thank you. But we're still gonna do what we are planning to do.
But thanks for your input so.
Like, how are people feeling about that as well?
I I would love to have that kind of conversation with just the Advisory Council members.
Doesn't have to be. Now if you don't wanna have it now, but I think it's still lingering.

DX **Davis, Xusana** 2:10:16
What do you see as an alternative to the Community engagement contract that you think could garner?
You know, really robust input.

Jennifer Byrne 2:10:34

I mean.

If an agency was interested in being creative, you know, and trying something new, I wonder, Susanna, if you have any.

Like advice or or do you?

Do you know whether an Advisory Council like you know a such as this? This Council could be responsible for, but not recipients of funding?

To host events, to engage with community.

That the money wouldn't be coming to us as Council members, but that the Council was endowed with a funding source that we could be the engagement.

And utilize it in our communities that we're here to represent.

Davis, Xusana 2:11:25

I have seen bills that I have seen, bills that attempted that, but just because of the way that the finance systems work for state government, it ends up getting put on whichever staff are the supporting staff in the agency.

So just as an example and I stop me if this is too in the weeds for details, but so when we want to pay something, maybe it's a vendor for a fee for space, like a venue, or maybe it's.

You know, a local restaurant for food or, you know, stipends.

People. Every entity who's gonna receive payment of state dollars is gonna have to give Aw nine federal form to indicate that they legally receive payment.

That right there might be a barrier for some folks who, for whatever reason, are unable or unwilling to be able to provide that documentation.

Let's but moving beyond that then we have.

We get that W nine, we process a payment, usually finance cuts of check to that entity.

And somebody on the state end has to have the authority to approve the payment.

So usually that is somebody who's given that authority, who's usually a person in an agency like administrative personnel or maybe a supervisor.

So it goes to finance and then finance comes back and says you didn't do this right? We need this or we need that or whatever.

And then that person goes and chases down the recipient for whatever missing information there is.

Or whatever. So.
I think that if this group were to be.
The I think if this group were to be named as folders of that pot.
It.
Is.
I guess an inaccurate picture because we still wouldn't actually be able to do any of that legwork. If you're not someone who's a state employee who's given the authority to approve or collect payments.
So I think that would be only in theory, but in reality would probably end up being the ANR staff doing it, which probably defeats the purpose.
Of it.
But.
But I mean I I also sit on other working groups where the group determines how to spend money and the administrative support staff just do it.
So if that is the kind of setup that would be acceptable to this group, then that can be done.
It just creates a little bit more workload for the administrative support staff.
And requires the bureaucratic part of the process to go through them.

JB **Jennifer Byrne** 2:14:10
Yeah. And I wonder in terms of the W9 like from.
When we deal with giving money out, it really only comes into play if it's over a certain amount like $600.
And lower than that, we're actually able to to spend money on individuals without that type of paperwork.
So I don't know if that's the state.

DX **Davis, Xusana** 2:14:36
My yeah, I mean the process as it's been described to me and as people have insisted that I follow, it has been any amount.
But again, you know, for all I know that might fall back under the difference between Canton won't, right?
Sometimes I get guidance from people saying, you know, finance won't accept blah.
And then I have a trusted colleague who says actually they will if you do XYZ so.
So my understanding is that it's irrespective of amount, but again, you know if there's

someone knowledgeable in the state who can clarify that for me, then you know I would be open to correction.

Jennifer Byrne 2:15:01
Yeah.
I think they can't and vote conversations very important. And it it's. Yeah, it's it's just important to kind of like question those words sometimes.

Davis, Xusana 2:15:25
Yeah.

Jennifer Byrne 2:15:26
And I guess that just on this community engagement piece and on this like there's this RFP that seems like they may have developed.
We haven't seen it yet.
Don't know how that process gonna look.
You know.
We've done so much around, like so many groups have done a lot around recommendations to the state on how to do community engagement and really like, I think there's there's a lot of validity to like a community liaison model where there are members in the community, people in.
The community who get the money to do engagement in their community, I would hate to see this community engagement contract go out and get scooped up by some.
Like a typical group that thinks they're gonna do statewide engagement but only know, you know, they only know one way to do it and they're not in based in community.
So that's kind of where like is there any way that we could be creative?
I wish we could see the RFP or like be engaged in the development of even this concept around community engagement.
Because maybe there's a way that this RFP could be written differently than a typical community engagement contract that it's not just all going to one.
Nonprofit, but it's actually going to be like invested in the community liaisons around the state, who exists, who are already doing this work.
I mean, I consider like everyone on this Council as a viable Community liaison, and it

actually is, I think, why a lot of us said yes to this role. But if we can't get the contract, then like, I certainly hope someone else in my community could to engage.
With the locals here, you know.
So like I don't what that looks like, but I would love to have a.
A conversation around that and like develop like, what would a community engagement contract look like that we design?
And it doesn't have to just be the standard, same old, same old.

Davis, Xusana 2:17:25
Yeah. And I think I think that that can be done.
And even when you do things like include a scoring rubric that specifically states, you know we will award points for the, you know, things that include community, you know, established community ties or, you know, demonstration of experience working with groups who are considered part of the focus pop.
Or what have you.
I know we've included language like that in our fees. We've been part of in the past.
You know, demonstrated commitment to equity and justice.
Or, you know, commitment to do any subcontracting work with mwbes or with other firms who are, you know, disadvantaged business enterprises or something like that.
So I think that there's a way that we can include language like that and.
And then, of course, you know also.
Who's on the review team?
Is an important question too.
And that can also be a tremendous decision point where.
You know, contracts get awarded to either the same old firms or maybe someone.
New and to the extent possible, maybe we could even encourage collaborative effort or an unbundled.
Contract so that you can get multiple entities participating.
And then the last thing I would say is when we did the economic stimulus equity fund in 2020.
I'll it was when Congress had authorized the Cares Act, which gave the $1200 stimulus payments to people at the time.
I don't know if you all remember, but at the time we didn't know that there would be another package for stimulus funds. We thought that would be it, and it was deliberately designed to exclude anybody who didn't have a Social Security number

because it was their effort of.
Excluding undocumented people.
So we created a state level fund.
To provide seamless payments to anyone who had been excluded based on not having Social Security number 'cause, it also excluded people with income mixed status households. So you could have U.S. citizen people who maybe had one parent who didn't have Social Security number and then it excluded the.
Whole household.
So we created a state level fund for that to avoid federal clawbacks, and one of the I see we're close to 10.
And one of the ways that we did that was we had an external entity managing the fund and they worked with five community based organizations that had established and trusting ties in the communities and they worked on doling out funds. And I'm going to put a link to.
Our report on that in the chat if case in case anyone's interested in kind of reading more about that model.

JB **Jennifer Byrne** 2:20:42
I I can't access the chat for some reason on teams, so if you could e-mail it maybe that would be. I would love to see that.

BW **Brownridge, Walter** 2:20:56
So we got a 5 minute warning or something like that.

RH **rich holschuh** 2:21:17
Do we have some sort of summary we want to bring back to the staff after this or we're just going to kind of lay it out there?

BW **Brownridge, Walter** 2:21:25
Well.
I think one thing is Victor's idea of if we wanted to have more time.
A group of US being able to how did you describe it, Victor?
What we would do is.
Dive into.

VS **victor slingshot** 2:21:45
Mostly to work hour to look at the draft and then gather all thoughts with Thomas.

BW **Brownridge, Walter** 2:21:48
To look at the drip.

VS **victor slingshot** 2:21:50
Then have an easier time editing it later.

BW **Brownridge, Walter** 2:21:53
Right, right.

VS **victor slingshot** 2:21:54
We have, like a knows the inside time the document that.

BW **Brownridge, Walter** 2:21:54
And then the right.
And the other thing would be, I just like the question I had, rich about whether we could.
What role, if any, do we have?
In these between now and the February reporting deadline.
For the various agencies.
That will be submitting their baseline spending.
Reports.
And do we have any role in that?
So.
That that's what I take away, Susanna or someone else may have something else they want to add to that.

RH **rich holschuh** 2:23:28
I think we're being.
I think we're being monitored so we could go back to the group meeting if we want, I guess, right.

Brownridge, Walter 2:23:38
How do we do that?

rich holschuh 2:23:38
If so.
I don't know.
Put something in the chat or I think we're being listened to.
I'm not sure, they said they were turning off mics and camera, but not speakers.

Davis, Xusana 2:23:49
They told us to call their names, so we'll save their names three time when they'll appear.

rich holschuh 2:23:51
Yeah.

Davis, Xusana 2:23:57
Kim Kim Kimi.
Ow ow
Oh my God. I'm off camp.
Sorry, I was off mute.
It's got pinched extremely hard.
Maybe we can cut this part of the video.

Brownridge, Walter 2:24:42
You got pinched, did you say?

Davis, Xusana 2:24:45
I got pinched really hard.
That's not funny.

Karla Raimundi 2:24:50
Yeah, yeah.
Hi.

How's everyone doing?
Susana.

rich holschuh 2:25:04
We're we're good. Where where are we being monitored the whole time? It wasn't clear.

Karla Raimundi 2:25:08
What do you mean monitored?

rich holschuh 2:25:10
Were you able?

Karla Raimundi 2:25:10
I I stepped out of the room for a meeting that I had Juliet and came were here, leaving the room on and off.

Davis, Xusana 2:25:12
No, thank you.

rich holschuh 2:25:13
Oh, OK.

Davis, Xusana 2:25:16
Delete.

Karla Raimundi 2:25:16
But what do you mean monitored?

rich holschuh 2:25:19
I.
I didn't.
I didn't.
I didn't know if the speakers were still on. If the mics and the cameras were off.

Karla Raimundi 2:25:25
Yeah, the mics and cameras were off. The speakers were on.

rich holschuh 2:25:28
OK, OK.

Kim Barrett 2:25:29
I got lunch.

Karla Raimundi
Yeah, but we were not in the room all the time.

Juliet Birch
Yeah, we were having some snacks.

Karla Raimundi
Yeah, in case you had any questions that you wanted for any questions that you wanted to ask, thought about that needed immediate attention.
Yeah, but it the conversation is being recorded. So it's a public meeting.
So the Vermonters can watch.
And all of us come too.
So yeah.
So I hope you had a good conversation about the environmental benefits spending guide. I think it would be really interesting for all the one of you or several of you could communicate.
Some of the conversations that were had.
And then we can move forward to next steps.
Generally, I think it would be helpful if the questions that you have given that.
A non work put on the chat and I am assuming that there are many questions because the guidance is a dense document and kind of complex to understand. If you could write those questions and send them our way that would be very helpful for us.
Then we will take the time to provide answers to your questions.
But how about we open the floral for about 5 minutes to hear your reflections on the

environmental benefits pending guide, and then we can move to next steps.
How does that sound?
Just giving a thumbs up.
Are there any initial reflections about the guidance? Any questions?
Any burning questions?
That you have.

BW **Brownridge, Walter** 2:27:54
Umm.
I I would like to either.
I don't know if rich or Victor wanted to add something with what?
I had one question and then we had one.
Suggestion. As for further reflection on this.
The question I had was in looking at.
The guidelines it states that.
The covered agencies need to by February 15, they need to submit their baseline spending report, which goes back.
Three years.
And So what we didn't know is.
Part of it is the capacity for the work, but part of it is, is there any role that the Advisory Council?
Perhaps its Advisory Council members who are part of the.
EBSG task force and and I think Juliet did ask if some of us wanted to.
Participate. I would be willing to participate in some of that.

Karla Raimundi 2:29:13
Oh, fantastic.

BW **Brownridge, Walter** 2:29:15
But.
Is there a role for us in in any way of giving input or assisting those agencies as they compile their baseline spending report?
And and that was that was the question.

Jennifer Byrne 2:29:30
And.

Brownridge, Walter 2:29:32
And then Victor, I had a great idea if we could.
If and, I know we have to. There may be a limit to the number of people, but if a smaller group within the Advisory Council wanted to, you know, take get some time. In in, in the close future to maybe do a a work a work. I'm not sure how much time Victor you suggested, but at work carve out some workspace to look at the.
Entire guy.
Would be helpful.
Victor can talk more about that.

Karla Raimundi 2:30:17
Thank you very much, Walter.
Victor, would you like to add something to what Walter just mentioned? I can take the questions as they were presented otherwise.

Jennifer Byrne 2:30:29
Oh, maybe we should.

victor slingshot 2:30:30
There was a potential.
There was a potential request because it's my understanding that Kim has a dutiful access that has everyone information on it to potentially try to time frame in which we could meet for just an hour to review the document and take down notes to then create more robust.

Karla Raimundi 2:30:34
Sorry.
Hmm.

victor slingshot 2:30:54
Kinds of information dispersal later, like there was a desire to like how can we take

this and examine it in plain language and see if we can like drop the reading level a little bit to make it more accessible.
And that would require maybe one or two work sessions for an hour to then get everyone starts on it and then get that down for.

Karla Raimundi 2:31:16
Thank you.
I'm gonna pass it on to Kim. Kim leading this work for the.

JB **Jennifer Byrne** 2:31:17
Yeah, and.

Karla Raimundi 2:31:19
Excuse me. Jennifer, please.

JB **Jennifer Byrne** 2:31:21
Well.

Karla Raimundi 2:31:21
We're gonna respond to Walter's question and Victor's suggestion, and then we'll go to you so that we're not missing anything.

JB **Jennifer Byrne** 2:31:22
Oh, OK.
Thank you.
Well, OK, you.

Karla Raimundi 2:31:31
I'm gonna pass it on to Kim to answer Walter's question about whether there's a role for the Advisory Council to support the Interagency Committee members as they are gathering information in the reporting process.

JB **Jennifer Byrne** 2:31:42
I have not that that would be helpful, I haven't.

Karla Raimundi 2:31:46
She's also.

JB **Jennifer Byrne** 2:31:49
I have an additional bit of yes, I have an additional piece.

JB **Jennifer Byrne** 2:31:53
You wanted a summary of what we discussed, so I think it would be great if we could just get that out and then have an R respond.
Can I add to that?

Karla Raimundi 2:32:03
Yes, can.
Can you please just hold off for a second?
Jennifer, hold your spot.
I just really want to have an opportunity to answer Walter's question, and then Victor's question, and then we'll go with you, if that's OK.

JB **Jennifer Byrne** 2:32:14
Yeah.
The.

Karla Raimundi 2:32:20
Thank you, Kim.

JB **Jennifer Byrne** 2:32:20
Well, my thing has a lot to say, just said.

Kim Barrett 2:32:26
Yeah. And I just noticed that sometimes we miss Folks's questions.
Particularly, folks who don't always get a chance to speak so, and it'll only take a second.
So, Walter, there are several.
Opportunities for A/C members to be involved that we're completely supportive of.

So yes, there's a task group.
Those meetings take place every Wednesday.
I think it's from 11:00 to 12:30.
If you had thoughts or questions or things that you wanted to support the agencies and working through as they're getting these reports ready and you can't go to those meetings, you're more than welcome to send emails with questions, things like that, and we'll make sure that they get.
To the covered agencies.
I think also a good space would be the other. I see meetings like when they're together providing some.
Technical assistance from you to them could be helpful.
Another thing that I wanted to share is that this is an ongoing process and we have like scenarios questions from you know, at least from an R side that they want your answers on.
So there are opportunities to support with this right away.
Victor, you mentioned the Doodle poll.
I am not sure that I can create the do the poll for you.
You all, but you all actually have access to all of your emails. And what I do is I just make the doodle pull and put the e-mail addresses in there.
So I think that that's something if that works for you all. We're in support of you all meeting separately.
The other thing that you mentioned is plain language.
I think that that's really important and we had shared that. That's something that the task group is specifically.
Interested in so if you all come up with content, we can take that content like if you didn't have capacity to meet with us again alongside that I want, I still want to make sure that that work moves forward. So whatever it is that you come up with.
We can take that directly to the task group and work on building on it, and then you we can send it to you via e-mail.
You can make comments like we can still.
Iterate on it outside of meetings.
If that would be helpful.

Karla Raimundi
Additionally, I want to thank you, Kim for that. I would like to add that you know the

relationship that we are that we are trying to create here is not communicate.
It's an open, open channels of communication.
We've talked about a body system.
It was proposed by Soraya.
We facilitated conversations around pairing Advisory Council members.
With Interagency Committee members so that you have direct access, that part of the conversation and the framework really was not captured by the interest. But you know it was.
It didn't seem to capture your interest, but what I am going to mention is that there's definitely opportunities for all of you to communicate directly with.
Interagency Committee members.
I think what is important here is that we get your input regarding the content of that benefit spending guide.
There are several avenues.
There's the task group that meets every Wednesday.
Tre is a regular participant.
Others can join as your availability allows.
We also have had office hours and Victor office hours is a way in which we've been.
Able to not hit quorum and do business.
So usually what we do is we make sure that not all the counselors attend the same office hours.
So if you're looking and you're interested as a body to have conversations regarding substantive content of the environmental benefits pending guide, I would suggest letting us know so that we can support you all in the process of.
Meeting and the way in which we would do that not to get quorum is to divide the group up. But then again this is something that it's your prerogative.
And it's actually highly encouraged that like you mentioned, Victor, the plain language is so fundamental for us and it's definitely work that would enhance the community engagement process for the ebsg.
So if if if we answered your questions to your satisfaction, then Jennifer, I would like to give you the time to expand.
On what?
Walter and Victor mentioned.
As you said you had something to share about that.
OK. So you mentioned Victor on the chat that you're gonna get on that.

That you're going to be coming to some of the ebsg path group meetings.
I think he was referring to making a dual goal.
Oh, making a dual goals. OK, fantastic, victor.
Jennifer.
I think perhaps Jennifer is not available now.
And then one last thing that you mentioned, Walter was the February 15, 2025.
That's a statutory deadline for the agencies to produce their baseline reports, and those reports and those reports aren't gonna be the ones that serve out the foundation for the proportionality evaluation later later on down the line.
And yes, you can definitely be involved in the process in that process.

Kim Barrett
Yeah. And there honestly, folks are constantly asking about.
Thoughts of the Advisory Council may have.
So I think that you know, it's helpful to know that there's this level of interest at this point.
And we did share about the Evsg task group last year, and I just would love to start fresh.
And and bring all in the process. Now. Also, if you're unavailable now you know this is gonna be happening over the next several years.
So, you know, like in five months, if you have more capacity to be on the task, you can do that then?
I also wanted to speak to a question I heard earlier.
That you had asked, I think it was you rich on.
It's the IAC. Members are the same people who are gonna be drawing up these reports.
And in most cases, no.
I think that's a really, really great question.
The IC members.
Are you know there to support their covered agencies and help coordinate?
But yeah, this these efforts like span across different departments and also programs.
And so part of what we've been doing with all of the covered agencies is meeting with their business offices, which are the people.
Who count the beans as you mentioned earlier, very willingly. But yeah, so it would be great if you all could even be in some of those spaces with us and sharing

clothing.
I think that that could be super helpful.
And one other just quick thought that I wanted to share is Susana, you had mentioned, you know if the EJ coordinators would aggressively support you all.
And the answer to that is yes. Like we wanna be partners, you know 100% of the way and if some of what you're proposing can't actually happen or it can't, you know, for example, make its way into the the guidance itself, we're willing to find other.
Ways to make sure that information gets to people.
And so yeah, I would just appreciate coming from that space of that's not even a question for us.
Yeah. Thank you.

Karla Raimundi
Again, I want to offer space for Jennifer.
She may be unavailable now.
Hopefully we can hear from Jennifer.
Perhaps you can share an e-mail with.
The information that you were looking to share.
We would be very.
Very happy to hear what you have to say.
And then I think what we should do now is.
Take the time to go over some next steps.
You all had an opportunity to see the environmental benefits pending guide.
The guidance documents.
Again, this is that guidance is not a done deal.
It's gonna go to public comment.
We are open to your advice and recommendations and.
We will provide your input to the task group. Walter, you mentioned that you're interested in participating in these meetings.
We will reshare with you all.
The schedule for those meetings and then additionally I believe there was a question.
Posed by rich at some point in the conversation regarding regarding what's coming down the pipeline in terms of focus of our work. And I think you characterized it as jumping back and forth and given given.
The the mandates in the law and the way that the Advisory Council.

Is intended to provide advice.
And consultation.
That's the way that we need to go about business. And so you know, today we're talking about the environmental benefits spending guide and when we're done with this conversation.
This theme of folks here will pick up mapping tool work, environmental benefits, pending lightwork community engagements, deliverables on top of civil rights.
So given the dense volume, the density of the work and the volume of the work, that's what we will be needing to do in the path.
You've noticed that.
Our agendas are usually split into two topics, and that is for us to be able to continue engaging with you and eliciting the feedback.
That we all need to ensure that we're centering your expertise.
And your knowledge.
I think this meeting today.
Was very productive.
I hope you feel that way.
I have yet to see what the content of your conversation was, but I am definitely looking forward to looking at the video recording if there are any questions again that you still have regarding the environmental benefits pending guide please.
Send them our way and we will provide answers to all of the questions that you send our way.
I also noticed that there were.
There was conversation about the mapping tool.
That that topic of conversation is open.
We are.
We are again encouraging folks to.
Come and participate as part of the mapping Tool task group.
We encourage you all also to if you're interested and have the capacity to be in the committee, that's gonna be reviewing the proposals so that we have your input that fail and ask that is open.
And then I'm. I'm gonna pass it on now to Kim, and she's gonna wrap up the meeting with.
With concrete next steps.
Apps.

Kim Barrett
Yeah. Thank you.
So just because we're talking about the mapping tool right now.
We are hoping to solidify the selection committee by April 30th.
That would be ideal.
I do want to mention, just like with you all, we sent out, you know, an e-mail to the IAC as well on this in about four of them four or five of them expressed interest.
And So what?
I'm telling them is that we want to make sure that we can get at least.
One Advisory Council member.
Two would be great 'cause we wanna make sure that there's balance on that selection committee and ideally more of you.
So just please send an e-mail this week if you're interested in in being a part of that in any capacity.
With respect to ebsg.
I did hear some thoughts around community engagement and possibly starting early on.
The like outreach, and I think Suzanne, your point was really, really good about folks meeting monthly.
So I don't know if you all discussed action steps on that, but if you have any that would be helpful for us to know and any way that we could support on that would be helpful. It sounds like another next step for you all is having this convers.
Around plain language, I would just ask that again if you come up with anything that you wanna share, please do that as early as possible so we can start working with the task group.
Were there any other next steps that?
You all have.

BW **Brownridge, Walter** 2:47:35
Oh.

Karla Raimundi 2:47:46
Actually, looking at my notes and we have interpreters.
Oh, rich, rich, rich.

You'll mute it.
I didn't see you.
Sorry, you have the floor.

rich holschuh 2:47:52
Oh no, I I just did.
I other, other than Victor's suggestion about us having some work groups, smaller work groups to to discuss amongst ourselves about the EBSG draft.
And and Susana's comments about public outreach, I think that's that's basically it.
It's where we're at.

Kim Barrett 2:48:17
OK.
OK.
Walther, you unmuted. You wanna say something?

Brownridge, Walter 2:48:30
No, I've said enough. Thank you.

Kim Barrett 2:48:33
OK.

Brownridge, Walter 2:48:34
Oh, I actually, I do have.
Actually, I'm sorry, I may have just asked this question.

Karla Raimundi 2:48:37
No, Walter, you can.
Never you.
You can continue. You know you have the floor. It is.

Brownridge, Walter 2:48:42
This this is this is more.

Brownridge, Walter 2:48:46
Economic are these meetings?
We join by zoom.
Are we also?
Compensated for those as well, we can we. Is that correct or they are OK?

Karla Raimundi 2:49:02
Yes, yes.

Brownridge, Walter 2:49:05
So I need.

Karla Raimundi 2:49:05
Definitely. And we encourage you to submit your your per diem forms within a month of the meeting.

Brownridge, Walter 2:49:07
To.
OK.

Karla Raimundi 2:49:15
That was included in the documents that we provided, but we want to emphasize that that's a new.
A new consideration, because we had been getting.
Some forms a year after, and we were running into budget issues.

Brownridge, Walter 2:49:33
OK.
Alright, thank you.

Brownridge, Walter 2:49:39
And I'm sorry, the per diem, the per diem forms is, is it?
If I needed to find a new one, would I need to go to the website or are they located in the teams in a folder, in teams or?

Karla Raimundi 2:49:51
We can send you a new form.

Juliet Birch
Yeah, they we, yeah, we'll send you a link so that you can access it at any time too.

BW **Brownridge, Walter** 2:49:54
Thank you.
Thank you very much.

Kim Barrett 2:50:02
OK.
Thank you all.
Thank you.

BW **Brownridge, Walter** 2:50:06
Thank you.

BJ **Birch, Juliet** 2:50:06
Have a great rest of your day. Bye.

BW **Brownridge, Walter** 2:50:09
Take care.

Watson, Britaney stopped transcription