

**Public Meeting of the Vermont Interagency Environmental Justice (EJ) Committee
(IAC)
Hybrid Meeting Minutes
November 6, 2025**

Note to reader: These draft minutes were compiled by staff from the Agency of Natural Resources. If you would like to see any changes to these draft minutes, please reach out to anr.ejcoordinator@vermont.gov

Meeting Information:

Date: November 6, 2025

Meeting Time: 1:00 PM to 4:00 PM EST

Attendees:

Interagency Committee (IAC): Karla Raimundi, Bob Donohue, Dave Pelletier, Abbey Willard, Grace Vinson, Jenny Ronis, Janet Hurley, Elizabeth Schilling, Claire McIlvennie, Amy Redman

State of Vermont: Juliet Birch, Kim Barrett, Rebecca Walsh, Richarda Ericson, Sarah McIlvennie, Charles Martin

1:00 PM

Welcome & Introductions

- Consent to [Community Agreements](#)
 - Consent received, no comments.
- Approve September 17, 2025 [Meeting Minutes](#)
 - Minutes approved, no comments.
- Approve November 6, 2025 Agenda
 - Agenda approved, no comments.

1:10 PM

Re-Orientation to the Community Engagement Plans

- Kim B.: We will review what is required for the Community Engagement Plans and review the Core Principles of Community Engagement (CPCE)
- Kim B.: Statutory requirements. Community Engagement Plans must:

- Describe how each covered agency will engage EJFPs as it evaluates new and existing activities and programs
- Describe how each covered agency will provide meaningful participation in compliance with Title VI
- Be informed by the CPCE
- Be developed in consultation with the Advisory Council (AC)
- Statutory deadline: July 1, 2027
- EJFP will be discussed further in upcoming Joint Meeting
- Kim B.: Reviews what community engagement is
- Kim B.: Reviews why community engagement is important for covered agencies to do -- Civil Rights requirements and Vermont Environmental Justice Law
- Juliet B.: Reviews what a Community Engagement Plan is not
- Jenny R.: What do you mean by extractive efforts?
 - Juliet B.: Engagement communities to gather information without giving back, without developing continuous relationships, and without demonstrating how their feedback improved the outcome
- Dave P.: Have we achieved quorum?
 - Juliet B.: Yes, quorum has been achieved
- Juliet B.: Reviews CPCE with group

1:25 PM

Agency CEP Share-Outs

- Juliet B.: Each agency present will share out about CEP development process:
 - Types of Community engagement their agency currently does
 - Where the agency needs support
 - Tangible steps that have been taken towards creating a CEP
- Kim B.: Shares about the main purpose of ANR's CEP and the first 4 steps of ANR's CEP workplan:
 - Task 1: Build capacity for the work
 - Task 2: Assessment of current community engagement practices
 - Task 3: Define the scope and objectives
 - Task 4: Draft and ANR staff review
- Juliet B.: Shares about the final steps of ANR's CEP workplan and the overall timeline for this work:
 - Task 5: Revise and ANR leadership review
 - Task 6: Revise and external review (AC and potential public comment)
 - Task 7: Finalize and publish

- Currently closing out the assessment of current community engagement practices

1:40 PM

Public Comment

- No comments

1:40 PM

Agency CEP Share-outs continued

- Grace V.: ACCD has had administrative staff changes. Chief Marketing Office was put into AOA. Current communications staff structure is unknown. Next target is to review materials from Division of Tourism and Digital Marketing. Working to get more people at ACCD involved in the development of the Baseline Spending Report. ADA WCAG compliance is taking up a lot of staff capacity.
 - Karla R.: CREJU is happy to support as needed with engagements with ACCD leadership
- Elizabeth S.: PUC is focused on CR and EJ Complaint reporting and the Baseline Spending Report. Also working on the development of a Language Access Plan. Unlikely to be able to focus on PUC CEP until Baseline Spending Report is complete. Would like to discuss ways to achieve commonalities across covered agency CEPs. Has a lot of questions of how to apply a CEP to state-wide engagement projects.
- Claire M.: PSD has a new Outreach Program Manager – suggests that anytime we engage with the public is technically community engagement. PSD met with Dave, Amy, Abbey, etc. to start talking about this deliverable outside of the public meeting. Talking about shared content that could be good for all covered agencies to include! Interested in talking about a shared process and timeline to support coordinated consultation with the Advisory Council. Incorporating knowledge from the Communications Office and the Office of Racial Equity
- Janet H.: LURB has statutory requirements for public engagement in the context of permitting and rulemaking. LURB interested in developing a CEP not only to meet EJ requirements, but also to improve their program. Budget is primarily dedicated towards paying the people who run the program. No money dedicated for community engagement
- Juliet B.: ANR DEC does a lot of rulemaking and permitting. How to improve public participation with limited resources and rigid structures

- Jenny R.: Recent improvements to Open Meeting Law has helped with public engagement. EJ Law and Open Meeting Law as legal access points to explain why this work is really important as a focus.
- Karla R.: Creative outreach approaches that bring in more folks than the ones who usually participate in engagement processes.
- Amy R.: VDH has a Community Engagement Guide. Next step is to determine what commonalities can be established across covered agencies, determine what VDH can tailor for their own needs, and then meet with legal to ensure that they are meeting minimum requirements.
- Sarah M.: AAFM has an agency-wide EJ committee, and the Community Engagement subcommittee. They are working on an inventory of programming by scope, based on how the work engages with the public. Wants to create a proposal for their CEP to share with the agency leadership. How to engage with the public, but also how to build relationships. Identifying gaps. Need support for compensation with the public, providing food for participants, translation and interpretation, childcare. Sarah works on a Community Engagement Community of Practice with Charlotte Safran from VDH. Has connected with Rebecca Kelley, Chief Communications Officer.
 - Juliet B.: Is the Community of Practice still thinking about creating a statewide inventory of community engagement practices
 - Sarah M.: Yes, Rebecca Kelley Is very interested in this. Beta version is forthcoming. A usable version may not be available until next spring
- Dave P.: AOT already has a Public Involvement Guide. Small group is working to survey current community engagement practices. Gauging needs from staff and their desire to be involved in a CEP development process
- Bob D.: AOE community is mainly leadership at the supervisory district level. Less about broad community engagement and more about family engagement. Schools already have a lot of resources for accessibility with family engagement. AOE has a community engagement plan, and it is limited to necessary scope. Does not necessarily address EJFPs directly.
 - Bob D.: Legislators solicit public engagement before creating a law
- Claire M.: Would like for group to discuss expectations for consultation with the Advisory Council
 - Kim B.: Next public meeting will be joint and AC and IAC can coordinate this consultation process
 - Claire M.: PSD is very deadline driven. Establishing milestones would be helpful
- Sarah M.: AAFM has thought about role of closing the loop on follow up and expectations for staff members (timeline for engagement including needing time

to get back to community). Meaningful participation requires work on the front and back end of engagement

- Karla R.: Feedback loops! Also wanted to mention that before Act 154 was passed, she shared with the legislature that they have a responsibility to implement the policy of the state.

2:35 PM

Discussion: Sample CEP Formats

- Kim B.: Space to share ideas about good CEPs that could be good models, space to share concerns that you need feedback on, etc. Perhaps using an outline for a common CEP?
- Juliet B.: Claire, Dave, Amy, and Abby, I think, have talked about this a little bit outside of the public meeting setting. You may have thoughts on things that could be common across our community engagement plans to build synergy across the covered agencies.
- Karla R.: I would like to invite members of the IAC that have met to talk about community engagement plans specifically. Perhaps there is an opportunity to identify commonalities and content across the board. We could then assign a space in each agency's community engagement plan to develop these areas that are that are unique to that agency.
- Elizabeth S.: I'm supportive of that. The potential for a core plan that addresses things that are commonalities across the covered agencies, like statewide rule making. Obviously, each of the entities is unique and will have their own individualized plan for some of their unique activities. This is consistent with the type of feedback we've gotten from the Advisory Council. That folks don't want to have to look at 10 different plans. They want to go to one place and find most of the answers and maybe that one place links to the other plans and the other things that are specific to the different agencies.
- Jenny R.: I would also love definitions. Or some sort of an effort to make sure that we're all using the terminology. So that if we're talking about an Action Group or something like that, we're not talking past each other.
- Juliet B.: Can you give examples of definitions that would you think you would benefit from?
- Jenny R.: I think starting from the biggest things. Having definitions of who are communities that we need to be engaging with. For example, types of community engagement that we do. We do public meetings, but that's not the same thing as hearings, even though they're public. So some of us have different types of engagement. if we can understand the types that we're all doing the same and that work consistently, that would be really cool. I'm really thinking about this

more like mailers. That's public engagement. Like you were saying, advertising and things like that.

- Juliet B.: So having definitions of what the different types of engagement are and being able to clearly delineate them. Also, what is our common definition of community engagement in general and what fits within the scope?
- Juliet B.: It's been mentioned before, but I'll just repeat it for folks. On the 17th, we'll have a conversation with the AC that will hopefully go into executive session. So we can chat about the EJFP definition and get some legal support with it too. Hopefully, you'll get some answers then about that particular element, but I hear you.
- Abbey W.: The meeting on the 17th is from 12:00 pm to 3:00 pm.
- Juliet B.: Jenny, do you have any other thoughts?
- Jenny R.: No
- Bob D.: One of the things that Janet brought up earlier too is, sometimes no matter how hard you try to disseminate information for people to be knowing of a community engagement meeting- some will always say they were never communicated to. That they didn't have the right information. So we almost have to have metrics. When have we done something adequately for the average Vermonter to be informed? That there is an opportunity for community engagement and the other thing that partners with that is if the budget doesn't allow the ideal to happen. Then you are stymied by the budget limitations.
- Bob D. They are real, but sometimes uncomfortable, and they have implications about how effective the communication disbursement happens. So there's the reality of what we would love to do, but it's constrained by what we are able to do because of fiscal limitations.
- Abbey W.: I want to be sensitive that if there's anything that I'm asking or offering that's already been discussed, my apologies. I'm thinking about process before going back to scope. It might it make sense to create a task group that wants to design the Community Engagement Plan deliverable. Similar to what happened around the Environmental Benefits, Spending Guidance.
- Abbey W.: Then feeling how we especially on this topic, have more robust Advisory Council engagement. So there's real alignment between IAC and AC objectives. The sooner that group begins working on process and then understands the scope, the better. There are various agencies and departments that are updating their plans. Something I felt regarding the Environmental Benefit Spending Guidance is as early in the process and in advance of the deadline that we can have that kind of like clear process, the better. Some of our efforts take longer than others and some of us are operating on different timelines and capacity.

- Abbey W.: When a few of us met, it was really to help the Agency of Agriculture. Like what do you have as a community engagement? Because we have nothing. We're not an agency that has a very formal process around our community engagement efforts. We were curious about what others had and what we could learn from that process. We re-looked at the statute and I had like this real aha moment of like. Are we writing agency wide community engagement plans or are we doing something far smaller in scope, which again is like I think as the statute reads. Identifying a process for evaluating new and existing activities and programs. I read that more an evaluation tool that we might use in the place of reviewing our community engagement efforts. Not to say that we don't all need and should be thinking comprehensively agency department wide around a community engagement plan. I'm just still unclear if that's the deliverable in charge per this ACT 154.
- Juliet B.: I also am interested in talking about that particular language because I it's interesting and we should figure out what that means for us. The law also says that the community engagement plans need to address how the covered agencies will provide meaningful participation under title VI of the Civil Rights Act. The community engagement plans already have to be pretty broad or I mean the scope has to be broader than just what that one phrase shared.
- Claire M.: I just will voice my support for some sort of template or guidance about like a minimum. We'll call it a minimum viable product which would speak to meeting the requirements in a coherent way. This has been mentioned but I would just bring up again, a consistency element would be like an approach to compensation. That feels like it would be consistent with the Core Principles of Community Engagement and it's something I know a lot of us grapple with.
- Claire M.: Like for example, when we've done community engagement and have looked for like a best practice, we've looked at the DEC report which has some guidance in it. I have also struggled with feeling like where do we sit on needing to be consistent across agencies in terms of how we compensate for a focus group versus a community partner interview versus all these other types of engagements that we may be doing in different contexts. I'm not suggesting there may be like a "1 size fits all" scenario, but like some core part of that.
- Claire M.: To Bob's point about metrics for success- that came up, in one of our small group meetings of just how we might think about measuring success towards meeting or acting in alignment with our community engagement plans? That brought a discussion of two other deliverables that we could think about how this work connects to. One being the Environmental Benefits Spending Reports, how over the long run, our agencies are investing in community engagement in communities across Vermont and whether that's something we might want to think about.

- Claire M.: Then the other was a deliverable we haven't talked much about yet, but the annual report of actions taken to advance environmental justice would be potentially another place where we could identify metrics to hold ourselves accountable for, we could collectively report and maybe use that space to highlight those.
- Claire M.: We don't have a community engagement guide. So in terms of formats, I've read parts of the VDH plan and I printed out the AOT plan. I would love to hear from you both at some point. If you think there are components of your existing documents that work really well for your agencies, that would be worth carrying through.
- Elizabeth S.: We've been talking about the concept of our fiscal limitations in implementing community engagement plans and the Core Principles of Community Engagement and one thing it raises for me is Yes- right now we are fiscally limited. We also have the power to go to the legislature and say we need money and they can tell us no, but like are we doing our due diligence if we don't go and make those asks. I'm just putting that out there as a like question to all of us that this year, as we're contemplating working on these plans, should we also be going to the legislature and saying this work requires funding and then when they tell us no, then we can at least in our plan, say there's no funding.
- Elizabeth S.: Another thought that's on percolating in my mind is like, wouldn't it be great, and this would probably never happen, but wouldn't it be great to have a State Office of Community Engagement?
- Elizabeth S.: That they did this day in and day out, and they supported all of us in doing this type of work correctly, organizing these events, providing the support for translation and food and child care, and that kind of thing. That's the kind of tool you need to do for a lot of us to do this, right? We've been working on a report for the past couple months and there was a call for us to do more engagement. We were like, well, we don't have funding and we aren't experts in this and we're small. Having that kind of support in the State would be ideal and in implementing something like this. Just putting that out there. Do we need to be going to the legislature as a group and raising the thought that we probably all need more funding if we're actually going to do this work the way it's supposed to be done.
- Bob D.: I think those are wonderful ideas. Like if you look at some of the stuff that's going on with the redistricting task force for schools. They have a facilitator. They're just gifted at leading the discussions and stopping rabbit holes from happening. I think that's a wonderful idea to want to have a centralized State Office who are experts in doing this. Who can then deploy help for each of the agencies on particularly challenging community engagement efforts.

- Abbey W.: I'm not in a position to assign additional responsibilities to anyone, but we have a Chief Marketing Office and we have an Office of Racial Equity. We have a Chief Communications Officer in State government. There are some positions that could have a role related to these community engagement plans. I don't know if they would identify and say that this deliverable or this template feels related to them. Amy, your new Health Equity Office is a perfect example.
- Abbey W.: Not that I don't feel like there's a need for advocacy for the covered agencies having capacity and resources to do this work. That's been a challenge from the day that Act 154 passed. I don't know that we've sufficiently addressed this or unified around a strategy yet. And yet, we're still beholden to some deadlines. It feels like there's some other folks that like may already have positions in State government that we could engage on this conversation to see both what they have for capacity or collaboration. Suggestions or alignment with the focus and scope of their work.
- Juliet B.: I appreciate this conversation. I'm noticing that there's two tracks of conversation happening. One being things that we can do related to the Community Engagement Plan deliverable that are within the parameters that we currently are living in. Then also having conversations around how do we change these parameters too because they're not necessarily realistic. So I think that both of those conversations are really important and I think especially the changing of parameters conversation is one that could also be had with the Advisory Council because they are folks who have a lot of passion for this work and could also provide us with support in terms of being advocates for the law. Not to make assumptions about their capacity. I'm just saying that I think that the Advisory Council would love to be involved in this more strategic conversation around building capacity and like more recognition of the importance of this work.
- Juliet B.: And I also think that in terms of what we can tackle within the parameters that we've have set, that's something that I would be interested in fleshing out more before we close out this meeting just so that we can start with some tangible action items and then we can figure out when we meet with the Advisory Council what those less tangible or broader action items could potentially look like.
- Karla R.: Yes. Thank you, Juliet, for that. And I would also like to offer that the Office of Racial Equity may be a good resource to help us situate ourselves in the larger conversation with the Governor's office. I think they are particularly well situated for engaging around this one particular deliverable. Having conversations with Xusana about how her office can support this work differently.
- Karla R.: The Advisory Council is the entity that's really well situated to advocate before the legislature for getting the support that we've been needing from the beginning. Perhaps this is a conversation that should be had when we meet with

the Advisory Council next week specifically around community engagement and what can the AC do to further enhance and support our work. So that we're more effective in actually fulfilling the deliverables under the law. Community engagement is something that they've actually expressed incredible interest around. That strategy conversation should be had with the Advisory Council. And then yeah, reach out to Xusana and have a really tailored conversation about community engagement per se and what can be done to centralize some of this work.

- Juliet B.: We're kind of coming to the close of this section of the agenda and we'd like to give you an opportunity to just move into like a pretty decent chunk of time for a working session to maybe think through those more tangible action items for the Community Engagement Plan deliverable. Maybe identifying commonalities across each Community Engagement Plan for the covered agencies or what Abbey offered of maybe developing a task group.
- Kim B.: What we have listed on the agenda is that you all will: 1. Define your community engagement development process. 2. Determine how you want to structure your plans. 3. Determine what needs to happen outside of the public meetings and then the outcomes are for you all to leave with a clear map of the committee's process and teams. Like if you want to create a working group or something like that. And then also that each IAC member will leave with one to two concrete steps to move their process forward, and then after that you'll have a debrief for 10 minutes where you can identify and assign tasks.
- Janet H.: In small groups or as a whole group?
- Kim B.: This is unstructured, so it's totally up to you all.
- Janet H.: I was just telling Juliet during the break that the LURB has an enormous amount of statutorily required work with deadlines through the end of next year, and I think I'm looking at the language of a deliverable: "The Agency will engage with Environmental Justice Focus Populations as it evaluates new and existing activities and programs. Even though I think that we need an agency-wide Community Engagement Plan that goes beyond just that, I think that the only thing we're going to have capacity for before July 2027 is to focus on that. That's why I asked the question in the chat as to when the mapping tool was going to be available, because that's going to be refined from what we understand currently as the Environmental Justice Focus Populations in the state of Vermont.
- Jenny R.: We're also supposed to be policy-building and mapping in our work. Thinking about Environmental Justice Focus Populations and we don't know where they are right now and we're still trying to policy build around them.
- Juliet B.: Pin in that until November 17th! But I hear you. It is definitely difficult to coordinate.

- Sarah M.: Earlier in the conversation, there was a lot of agreement around the concept of core content and then also I think in this group it was also referred to as core structure. I'm curious if that feels accurate to folks, and if it feels like taking some time to outline what that could be, would feel helpful.
- Juliet B.: Karla put bullets in the chat.
- Claire M.: That that would definitely be helpful. Also, maybe as we start doing that, we could go back to like hearing from Amy and Dave, if you guys have readily available thoughts about anything that you have found particularly helpful or unhelpful about your current structures in terms of the guides that you have.
- Claire M.: Amy, I was saying that Sarah was talking about in our structured working maybe diving deeper into like the structure or content of like a core product.
- Amy R.: Ok. Thanks
- Claire M.: I was suggesting maybe we could go back to one of my asks previously, which was hearing from you or Dave about given your existing documents what you feel works well? What doesn't work well as we like kick that off.
- Amy R.: One of the things that I'm finding from the guide which has the core principles, but it is best practices and then doing this like workforce development and trying to implement it. There's a lot of level setting. Going back to whoever made the ask for the definitions. There are definitions in that front matter and just like "What are we talking about"? "What are best practices"? The Community Engagement Continuum is on there, which I think does some level setting but it also invites people, programs and initiatives into seeing what they are doing because I think when I work with like my colleagues, I think a lot of times there's a lot of interest in doing it, but just not knowing how or where to start. Those level setting pieces in terms of that core content in ours around what are we talking about in terms of community engagement? What are the different kinds of partners? The general public, people who are working with marginalized communities. All of the different kinds of engagement and what we mean by community engagement. There's also a really cool section on common barriers and solutions. We're really trying to advocate to focus on focus populations. So really working and partnering with people who are serving underserved populations.
- Dave P.: I just dropped something in the chat. We'll see if it works.
- Dave P.: Maybe that works for you. That's from the front of our public involvement guide and you asked a question, Claire of like, what works, what doesn't. We got some feedback directly on that in the little survey that we did and I was just reminded that even among our improvised little working group right now, we've identified that that when this guide was put together initially, it was very much

oriented toward the highway division. Our agency struggled with some consistency and best practices and just a protocol for public engagement. It's not exactly in the table of contents, but it sort of represents the major sections of the guide. I'm reminded of that. And so the first section there you see is like a quick reference based on the project development process. I think we're going to try to reformat this a little bit to be more of an agency oriented guide. Acknowledging that that we do a lot of other things other than just bricks and mortar projects, even though that's most visible part of what we do and the engagement is part of everything.

- Dave P.: What we do is really more of the purpose and the point of the of the document. The other thing that was shared was that it's too long. It's 50 or 60 pages or something like that. I think less is going to be more even if we have appendices or you know, other documents maybe to lead them to. I like what Amy shared from the health department. It was kind of a tool kit and kind of quicker access and way more approachable for somebody that's like: What do I need to be doing?
- Dave P.: In acknowledgment that, at least for our agency, that there's a whole like spectrum of different types of engagement that we do for different purposes. It's going to have a table of with: What are you working on? Is it a plan? Is it a project? Is it a press release? You know, et cetera. What are you doing on the left and then across, a kind of a matrix of these are the strategies or tools that you should consider and or employ or kind of the steps that you should consider. In the spirit of trying to keep things accessible, and kind of just approachable for staff who are trying to do a lot of other work, we need to make this as approachable and accessible to be successful with.
- Karla R.: Yeah, that's all super helpful. I'm wondering whether anyone else has comments regarding the conversations that you've all had outside the public meetings?
- Karla R.: If not, I would like to offer some of the things that we've been thinking about and identify whether that could be in terms of a common approach or framework, something that would be useful to apply to the outline of sorts that we would be putting together. In thinking about clarity for staff and usefulness of the document also thinking about capacity and resources, or the lack thereof. We've been exploring the idea of tiering engagements and with that tiering would come different levels of rigorosity that would be prescribed under each of the phases.
- Karla R.: So rulemaking, we know that it's attached to a lot of regulatory requirements that we cannot forego. So in terms of thinking about tiers and what resources would go into supporting our staff? One could think that that kind of engagement would be high-level or resource intense, right, because the energy

needs to focus on meeting. The timelines and hitting the milestones so that we can provide information coming from communities to inform the rule. We're engaging in an iterative process with communities before the rule is finalized and not only just one engagement that can be sort of like pro forma. Then under each of the tiers, what kind of capacity it needs to be successful and then identifying separately the methods that would inform each of the tiers. That would be another phase of assessment depending on whether it's statewide, if it's regional or if it's local.

- Karla R.: What I mentioned earlier, Elizabeth, regarding your question about how to do statewide and what could be successful in terms of statewide engagement is that in our experience, doing the Language Access Plan was very helpful in identifying methods to engage for the different levels of engagement. Then for statewide, we created a tiered approach too because the tier approach allows us to assess where capacity and resources are and then employ really what's needed. The Language Access Plan we would translate into a certain number of languages. The Office of Racial Equity recommends 13. We ended up recommending 6 because of capacity restraints.
- Karla R.: We would translate into those. In terms of identifying what kinds of resources would be necessary and what kind of techniques could be employed. Of course we have the question about EJFPS. We will talk about that in a upcoming meeting. So there's a lot that we need to figure out with regards to that one. It asks in statute that we need to identify Environmental Justice Focus Populations in our Community Engagement Plans.
- Karla R.: And I think that's something that Dave mentioned earlier, creating awareness at the agency level on what the different engagement practices are and methods that are utilized so that when it's needed and I like the idea of a table, staff can go to that table and then very clearly identify, "This is the kind of engagement that I am doing and it's going to reach this certain geography. Then I should look into these methods". Then you could elaborate on that content elsewhere. So that's initially some of the thoughts that we've discussed internally.
- Janet H.: Karla, have you written it down?
- Karla R.: The tiers? No. We created a Community Engagement Task Group and we just finalized the survey assessment of the practices. We're not prescribing approaches, but rather we're offering options and the decision making will come actually from program staff. In having hallway conversations with folks, it seems to be the preferred approach to just tier engagements, because that would allow us to also assess for capacity and resources. And then accompany the tier with the potential methods that could inform that engagement process. We are in very early stages at the agency. We're moving into the scoping stage, which will ask the question of what kind of engagements will fall under the scope of this plan.

- Juliet B.: Just to add to what Karla said really quick. I think that this group and what we develop as a full group here in terms of scope will be really helpful to inform what Karla just mentioned.
- Bob D.: I love the idea of the tiering, especially when look at what the task is and like we're supposed to solicit community engagement development on the development implementation, enforcement of any law, regulation or policy. That's like three different steps, right? Who communicates to the powers that be, the time expansion for any rule, regulation or policy? To now get rolled out, like if you're under some sort of legislative mandate or governing body like the State Board of Education in our case, and they say by this time you will have this done. If they are not cognizant of the impact of all of this field work, their timelines might be unachievable, but nonnegotiable. No matter how compelling you can make the story that they be compliant with Act 154, we can't do it in the timeline. You've already locked us into. I think that's a really important point that can't be underestimated.
- Janet H.: I mean, you know that, Karla, you had to go back in the legislature and say we can't do this in this amount of time and ask for more years, not just months, right?
- Sarah M.: I would like to speak like from my helping Abbey with EJ capacity and for my like personal role or my other role capacity, I think something I'm struggling with hearing as someone who does community engagement and has heard a lot of feedback from the community. Regardless of the intentionality of like of how the state goes in when there is a deliverable at hand, if there is not consistent tending to relationships when there's not a deliverable at hand, I think that that is still extractive. How do we this intentionally to make sure it's accessible and to make sure Environmental Justice Focus Populations can like access that work that we do? A bigger question around community engagement is how do we have relationships with the communities that our programs are meant to serve and that our legislation is meant to support so that it's not just a one and done ask regardless of intentionality of the structure? We can create wonderful, beautiful plans, but if we're not tending relationships long term, they are still extractive.
- Abbey W.: I was thinking along the same lines. You always can help me frame it a little bit better. I think the piece that is coming to mind for me is where in the process resulting in a CEP deliverable do we incorporate the culture change in government? You spoke to this Bob that we are given unrealistic timelines for inclusion of community engagement on a routine basis. We often engage in extractive relationships. We don't always have transparent communication about the feedback that we receive when we talk about the end result of what we're going to do. We don't have a consistent, appropriate way of compensating

people for their contribution and their time. Those still feel like fundamental cultural changes that unless we make those in government or we identify that those need to be made in government, pretty plans mean very little. I mean they will make some improvement and drive some intention. Maybe that's the mindset that I have to get into. Maybe we may only get so far in the plan that we're going to put in place by 2027. And that culture change may come after that, but I still need to put my head around do I remove all those like ideals that government would be better serving its constituents and our communities if we could address these cultural pieces and we can like work with what we already can do, as insufficient as it currently is. Or do we try to embed those components into a vision of a CEP?

- Karla R.: These are all really good questions and I think unanswerable. What I can offer from my perspective is that.
- We should perhaps afford ourselves a little bit of grace. You know, when we think about this area of work, because you're 100% right, Abbey. This one deliverable does not do anything on its own. You know, if we write a really good comprehensive community engagement plan and we don't have the resources nor the understanding is developed among the folks who are to implement the document, it's just not going to go anywhere. I could say something along the lines of, yeah, well, we start one engagement at a time.
- Karla R.: I can provide you with an example of our little Unit engaged around the Core Principles of Community Engagement. We held several public meetings and had really good in-depth conversations. We actually answered questions, which is not standard procedure. Depending on the questions that come our way and what kind of engagement it is that we are holding and afterwards we followed up with the individuals and not only that, but we showed them where their feedback was incorporated and how it informed the documents. That did it do something meaningful to change perspectives and to build trust, perhaps amongst those individuals. And then we haven't done much else.
- Karla R.: I think it's a matter of consistency and I think this one deliverable may help us coalesce behind what are we committing to do consistently and then hold each other accountable to the content of that document by releasing it into the world. There are limitations in resources and capacity, but also holding ourselves accountable to do the best I can with what I have. Hopefully, enough of us for this for enough time that then there's a perceived difference in the way in which government is seen. I don't think we're there, but that's not to say that sometime in the future we will. I share all of your concerns and all of your questions. I love that we're asking ourselves these questions.
- Claire M.: I think the conversation we're having points to another component of the core plan. One of the aspects of VDH's plan I really like is the spectrum of

engagement. I like that VDH tailored it from the State perspective, because it makes it very approachable to state employees and is explicit about where the power of state government lies and how it's used.

- Claire M.: I wonder if this conversation is pointing towards another component speaking to explicitly understanding that trust building is long-term process. Even if it's just an intention or some initial steps agencies can take toward investing in that through systems or practices. That would be consistent with the Core Principles, especially around moving at the speed of trust, and it would help show that these plans aim to advance those objectives.
- Claire M.: I also resonate with what Karla said about doing an engagement well in the moment but not having the capacity or systems in place to follow up. I've experienced that with our renewable energy policy engagement a few years ago. It was well received and a good experience for us, but because we didn't have systems to continue the relationship building, the effort stopped and hasn't really continued. Hopefully, Ricarda's position at the department will help shift that, but what Karla said really resonates — doing well in a single engagement but not connecting the dots afterward.
- Elizabeth S.: The legislature totally ignored that engagement.
- Karla R.: That speaks to the culture, right? There's a sense in which the legislative body does what they do, and then it ends there. The burden is shifted to agencies to actually do right by the process, even though the system isn't built to support engagement in the way it's written.
- Karla R.: What Claire said made me think that another component could be engaging long-term with community-based organizations — not only around discrete projects, deliverables, or mandates in law, but more about relationship building. If an agency is having a conversation and there's an entity in our state with particular expertise, inviting those folks into the conversation and treating them as peers, as opposed to eliciting, using and then not engaging again.
- Karla R.: There's a potential for synergy or mutually beneficial relationships to arise from that kind of regular engagement or informing CBOs about conversations we're having at the Agency of Natural Resources. Inviting their perspectives but doing that systematically. Maybe the way to do that is elevate that to the CEPs.
- Jenny R.: I keep tripping over that stuff we were talking about. Tables are a great way to reduce volume, because if the document's too big, it feels inaccessible. Then then we run into an accessibility issue with tables. I'm really trying to remind myself that perfect is the enemy of good.
- Bob D.: Karla, what you're speaking to—the paradigm shift has to happen at a higher level for this to actually work. Like what Sarah was saying, it's all wonderful to make this pretty document, but unless it's actually something we

can do, it's just an action to check off the box that says we did it, and it results in no positive change.

- Bob D.: It would be wonderful if you could have an audience—or whoever could have the audience—at the start of every legislative session, and we say: this is all part of what you're doing. You have to consider the ramifications of this law you passed when you pass any subsequent law from this day forward. If every legislative session could start with that and end with supportive dialogue, it would acknowledge that this work expands the time within which any of your initiatives are hopefully going to be achieved.
- Bob D.: It may not happen in your biennium; it may happen after you're out of office after two years. But it's that kind of paradigm shift that has to happen if we're really going to seriously say we're doing what we say we're going to do. I really wish, in parallel with our efforts here, there was someone at a higher level convincing the Governor and legislative leaders: you have done this already. We're only responding to the law you've already passed, and this is what you now have to do to support us in achieving this.
- Bob D.: It's a recognition that timelines have to be realistic. It's a recognition that, as Elizabeth said, we're going to be asking for more money. And these things have to happen if this work is to be done effectively, well, and sustainably.
- Sarah M.: Karla, I really appreciate how you described this deliverable as what we, as a group, are agreeing to do to increase meaningful participation—and that we are here to support each other in accountability. I agree that a lot of this feels above and beyond what we can do, but I also heard some very tangible pieces in this conversation. For example, what if every covered agency—if we, as a group—said we want a compensation process that all of us are using that is the same? What if that's step one, and that's in our plan?
- Sarah M.: We all have clear and uniform translation and interpretation standards. When you go out into the community or have an event, we try to figure out child care, language—these feel like more tangible things at this level. In the Community of Practice, we hear this at a very individual level across the State of Vermont, but making those standards uniform would be a huge step.
- Sarah M.: The other thing I want to mention that hasn't been talked about is training—training for State of Vermont staff in how to acknowledge harm. We have so many trainings about risk mitigation and identifying and mitigating risk, but staff should also be trained in how to be a state employee who goes into a community, works with people, and knows how to engage in trauma-informed ways.
- Sarah M.: We have training associated with trauma-based work, and we do that all the time in our interactions. But those feel super tangible and helpful to make uniform across these agencies.

- Elizabeth S.: Jumping off from one of the points you made. I think that the child care example is a great example of why there needs to be a set of core things that we're all doing the same. I have no idea where we would begin with trying to organize child care for a public meeting. I've never had to do that. Does anyone on this call? Something where just having a standard that we're all applying. Resources that we're all using that's consistent would be very helpful.
- Abbey W.: This is why I love working with all of you, and particularly with Sarah—when you bring up harm acknowledgment and reduction. My first reaction to that is: I don't know how to do that. I hope I don't cause harm every time I engage with the community and the public, but I need to acknowledge that I don't believe our agency knows how to effectively do that. Writing a plan for how we're going to do that when we are so far from the experts—and actually a common contributor to harm, poor acknowledgment, and lack of transparency. The list could go on.
- Abbey W.: I feel like these plans can still be valuable, even if they're somewhat aspirational—of where we want to go. I think we need knowledge and expertise from outside of this group to write parts of it. Maybe that's the other list we make: what are the common and standard core components? What are the pieces we have great templates for—from AOT, VDH, DEC, and others—to build upon? And where are the areas that we don't actually know how to do it? Even referencing the Core Principles isn't sufficient—we need to bring in expertise.
- Claire M.: I think another benefit of this collective work, could be identifying unified barriers that we face—like what Karla mentioned in the chat about childcare and the challenges around providing it. It sounds like ANR, AOT, and maybe it was AOAg that mentioned doing inventories of current practices.
- Claire M.: Ricarda and I have talked about doing similar baseline work here, and I think that's a real opportunity to identify collective barriers and then advocate as a unified voice. Maybe there's something that needs to be changed statutorily for us to do this work, and a collective of agencies making that ask is stronger than a single agency doing it alone.
- Claire M.: I wanted to circle back to what Abby mentioned earlier—in our small group, the question of whether or not there's interest or value in forming a small task group to continue this conversation more frequently than we can in full IAC meetings. Curious if there is interest, and if so, who might be interested in participating. The other option is to continue this discussion IAC meetings and maybe if that's the preferred path, we could think about what that could look like as well. I personally won't volunteer to be on the task group—but Ricarda would.
- Juliet B.: I'll add that I've been leading the community engagement plan work internally at ANR, so I'd love to be involved in a task group of this nature. I think it would be really valuable.

- Juliet B.: We've been keeping track of all the recommendations that have come up as potential common components of a community engagement plan—that list is in the chat. You've already done a lot of the structure-building; now it's just a matter of sitting down and making something come of those suggestions. It seems like whoever joins the task group we already have some good direction.
- Abbet W.: Remind me to avoid quorum we have to have less than five agency and departments represented?
- Juliet B.: Less than six.
- Abbey W.: And Juliet, do you count as one of those or no, you don't. OK, thanks.
- Karla R.: No, I do but Juliet doesn't.
- Jenny R.: If I felt like I had bandwidth, I would love to be part of it, but I just. I feel I'm sorry and I can't possibly.
- Juliet B.: It's better to say that than to commit to something that won't work.
- Claire M.: it maybe it makes sense for at least Sarah, Juliet and Ricarda- None of whom would count towards quorum technically, at least to follow up. And then if you're interested, you could reach out to the three of them to join around scheduling and then you know maybe you guys could meet once or twice and then think about when it would make sense to have another conversation about either further flushed out set of core content or like places where you have questions that the broader group would have benefit from having conversation.
- Abbey.: I wonder if we could add this to the joint meeting on the 17th or the 12th to solicit AC members that would also be interested in being in the Task Group.
- Karla R.: We have a sense of who from the AC is interested. We've been asking them about the Community Engagement Task Force, but now we have a fully appointed Advisory Council, so we should have conversations with the group as a whole to see whether any of the new members are interested. Right now, because of the next deliverable that we're putting together- the Cumulative Burden Rulemaking, I will not have a lot of capacity in November and December, but starting January, hopefully I will be freed up a little bit more because I'm doing internal engagement during November and December on the Cumulative Burden Rulemaking which we are all going to be talking about it soon. So be prepared.
- Juliet B.: So it sounds like, at least between now and the next couple of weeks, maybe Ricarda, Sarah, and I can find an opportunity to chat. Maybe we can get some Advisory Council members. I'm also going to acknowledge that there's a lot happening in the world right now that's affecting the areas of work our Advisory Council members work full-time on around the State. So I don't want to make assumptions about their capacity. It's really awesome to have them involved, but also everything is hard right now.
- Juliet B.: It sounds like we have a couple of action items. If anyone has additional thoughts about common components for the covered agency community

engagement plans, please send them to Kim and I to avoid potentially risk quorum over email. We'll keep track of them and make sure they're revisited at a later date. We're closing this conversation for this meeting, but that doesn't mean it stops here. Our inboxes are always open, and if anyone ever wants to chat over Teams, that's possible too. Kim, would now be an okay time to start with updates?

3:45 PM

Updates

- Kim B.: For the Mapping Tool, the community engagement RFP process has ended. The selection committee has started meeting and the review process is going on. We're meeting tomorrow, actually, for the third time to start talking about some of the proposals. In terms of the Benefit Spending Report Technical assistance, I have a request for all of you to just individually send me an email and CC, Juliet and Karla an update briefly of where you all are at with that and then what specific needs you have so that we can start developing our technical assistance.
- Kim B.: I still have everyone's availability, and so once we hear from you and see what it is that you need, we'll start sending out dates for that. We're going to be talking about Cumulative Burden Rulemaking at the November 17th meeting. We will potentially go into executive session to talk about the EJFP definition.
- Kim B.: Just a reminder, I think the majority of you filled out the December scheduling forms, so that's great. I'm going to send a reminder to AC members who still need to fill them out, and then tomorrow we'll send some holds just to get something on your calendar. If you can accept the invites that work for you as soon as possible.
- Abbey W.: Can you repeat which deliverable you want to hear from us again?
- Kim B.: The Benefits Spending Report Technical assistance. The reports are due in February. We want to provide you with support but it would be great to get feedback on where your agency is and any specific needs you have.
- Abbey W.: The Environmental Benefits Spending Guidance will be next discussed on an agenda? Or did you give us a date by when you want that status in TA needs?
- Kim B.: If you could do it in the next week or two, that would be helpful. We'll put it in the in our follow up e-mail, but as soon as possible would be great.
- Abbey W.: So we're probably not talking about them until January again, is that my sense then or December?
- Kim B.: Yes. Not in November but we'll probably talk about them in December. We'd like to start technical assistance as soon as possible.

- Karla R.: Just to be clear, we're looking at doing office hours outside of public meetings.
- Abbey W.: That's what I was going to ask. Is it one-on-one or you're saying office hours that are open?
- Karla R.: Yeah, yeah. We're looking at office hours so that we can have conversations about the spending reports, the baseline reports, communities and all of it.
- Karla R.: Yeah. So the question is about, you know, what are what are your needs right now. Then for timing, we're thinking about December. Maybe uh, early, mid-December? Uh, depending on what we receive from you all because, that's how we're going to structure it. If there's alignment, then perhaps we just meet in two groups and then have those conversations. But if there are some of you who are needing very specialized technical assistance, then we will meet with you separately.
- Kim B.: We went through all the updates. We appreciate you all. We'll see you on the 12th. It's been a year since you've seen the Advisory Council. Everyone have a great weekend.

3:55 PM Close Out