

**Public Meeting of the Vermont Environmental Justice (EJ) Interagency Committee
(IAC)
Hybrid Meeting Minutes
March 7, 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: March 7, 2025

Meeting Time: 11:00 AM to 2:00 PM EST

Meeting Information: [Meeting Materials](#)

Attendees:

Interagency Committee: Stephanie Smith, Dave Pelletier, Gabbie Wray, Amy Redman, Elizabeth Schilling, Jenny Ronis, Claire McIlvennie, Abbey Willard, Karla Raimundi, Xusana Davis

State of Vermont: Juliet Birch, Kim Barrett, Grace Vinson, Janet Hurley, Collin Smythe

11:00 AM

Welcome & Introductions:

- Consent to [Community Agreements](#)
 - Principles read and consent obtained. No comments
- Approve [November 18, 2024 Minutes](#)
 - Minutes approved. No comments.
- Approve [March 7, 2025 Agenda](#)
 - Agenda approved. No comments.

Icebreaker: My intention today is to _____.

11:10 AM

Updates

- Kim B.: Civil Rights and Environmental Justice Unit (CREJU) has one on one meetings with the Interagency Committee in January and February. Here are some takeaways:
 - Collaboration with the Advisory Council is important
 - Explore the AC's CR and EJ Complaint Summary Report recommendations from 2024
 - Expanding intra-agency support for work under Act 154
 - More engagement from leadership

- Environmental Benefits Spending Guidance (EBSG) work is a priority
- Juliet B.:
 - Other takeaways:
 - Coalition-building across covered agencies – connecting and strategizing around shared obstacles
 - More structure could be helpful – potentially a Steering Committee
- Kim B.: Reminder about the Environmental Justice Online Resource Library. 2024 Progress Report is on the EJ Online Resource Library.

11:20 AM

Steering Committee Proposal and Vote

- Juliet B.: CREJU sent a Steering Committee proposal to all IAC members. This was covered in the one-on-one meetings but we want to open up the opportunity to discuss as a full group.
- Jenny R.: What are the tasks of the Steering Committee?
- Kim B.: There is a want amongst the IAC to strategize. Perhaps the Steering Committee, or some other structure, could support that need.
- Juliet B.: Highlights responsibilities listed in the Draft Steering Committee Proposal:
 - Promoting collaboration and internal communications across the IAC – building efficiencies
 - Provide strategic oversight, such as legislative asks
- Claire M.: Supportive of adding organizing capacity to the IAC. Reminds the team that Act 154 allows for the creation of co-chairs. Collaboration outside the limited number of public meetings. Trade off of capacity and resources
- Stephanie S.: What is the challenge we are hoping to resolve? Limitations of number of public meetings?
- Karla R.: Efficiency and strategizing around deliverables would be the main goals of a Steering Committee. Meeting cap is a challenge.
- Janet H.: Where did the number of 3-4 Steering Committee members come from? Would this be exempt from public meetings? I don't think it would be.
- Juliet B.: Number was chosen to be a subset of the entire IAC. Public meeting is convened based on quorum. 12 meeting cap, minimum of 4 of those meetings must be joint. The document is a proposal and therefore can be changed at the IAC's discretion
- Karla R.: Janet's comment speaks to transparency. Using time more efficiently at a time where the law asks covered agencies to move multiple deliverables forward simultaneously.
- Janet H.: Does not see Steering Committee as exempt from Open Meeting Law.
- Elizabeth S.: Decisions would not be made outside of public meeting?
- Karla R.: Correct, but CREJU should bring this to legal counsel.
- Janet R.: LURB defining quorum for subcommittees based on the number of members in the subcommittee. Still subject to Open Meeting Law
- Juliet B.: Transparency is the ultimate goal no matter what. The public meeting cap is the main challenge

- Claire M.: Still thinks co-chairs could be helpful to support facilitation and other planning logistics
- Elizabeth S.: Are there 3-4 IAC members who would want to be part of a potential Steering Committee? Would a subset of the IAC be representative of the very diverse IAC?
- Stephanie S.: Would appreciate having more opportunities to meet and information-share with other IAC members in more intimate settings
- Janet H.: Seems like we need to give ourselves permission to reach out to each other outside of meetings in smaller numbers – not decision-making
- Claire M.: How much of this is about ANR folks needing more support?
- Juliet B.: Steering Committee could make collaboration easier and could help alleviate some of the administrative burden from CREJU
- Kim B.: Deepening technical assistance through collaboration makes it easier to meet needs of covered agencies
- Karla R.: Providing adequate and meaningful technical assistance is a huge part of CREJU's work and takes up a lot of CREJU's resources. Steering Committee could support more efficient use of time
- Gabbie W.: Sees a lot of benefit in having more opportunities to strategize in intimate groups. Not sure she has the capacity for a Steering Committee
- Dave P.: Agrees with Gabbie. More intimate opportunities to connect between meetings would be helpful. Setting this as an action item.
- Elizabeth S.: Steering Committee members would have to be deputized. Comfortable with informal conversations with committee members between meetings for information sharing
- Jenny R.: Reaching out to covered agencies in similar circumstances could be helpful
- Janet H.: Same could be said about reaching out to covered agencies in very dissimilar circumstances. Concerns about how the Steering Committee can align with the Open Meeting Law
- Abbey W.: Focused on implementation. Wondering if it is appropriate to create task groups to support certain parts of implementation
- Karla R.: It is important for folks to keep EJ Coordinators in the loop on conversations outside of meetings to support public meetings. Task groups cannot be the only space where the deliverable is discussed/advanced
- Amy R.: Could imagine supporting an entity like a Steering Committee.
- Stephanie S.: In agreement with group
- Xusana D.: More structure would be helpful to support continued involvement in this work (externally generated structure). May be worth going to the legislature to reconsider the meeting cap
- Karla R.: Agrees with Xusana. Engaging meaningfully with the Advisory Council is an important component of this as well
- Elizabeth S.: Each agency will need its own task groups within the agencies to do the work of developing the Baseline Spending Reports
- Juliet B.: Consensus seems to be that more structure is needed, but not necessarily in the form of a Steering Committee. Informal collaboration and

information sharing outside of the meeting is a big takeaway/action item for everyone:

Public Comment

- No comments.

12:00 PM

Civil Rights and Environmental Justice Complaint Summaries

- Kim B.: Take a few minutes to allow covered agencies who haven't already submit their reports. Questions for reflection outside of this meeting:
 - What did you learn from the AC's 2025 recommendations to the CR and EJ Complaint Summary Reports?
 - What were these recommendations trying to solve for/improve?

12:10 PM

Budgetary Reality Memo

- Juliet B.: The Budgetary Reality Memo was discussed in previous public meetings and devised by the Agency of Education to allow covered agencies the opportunity to capture some of the challenges they are facing with regard to capacity and resources. This is entirely optional. EJ Coordinators will email to ask each covered agency if they would like to opt in
- Stephanie S.: Can't ask the executive for anything that wasn't included in the budget

Break

12:45 PM

Environmental Benefits Spending Guidance (1)

- Kim B.: Updates:
 - Environmental Benefits Spending Guidance (EBSG) Task Group (including members of the AC, IAC, and other folks from ANR) has worked over the last several months to draft the current guidance document.
 - ANR has hosted EBSG Feedback Sessions with seven of the ten covered agencies to get feedback on the current draft EBSG and to revise according to this feedback
 - EBSG will be subject to a public comment period
- Kim B.: Reviews EBSG definitions of "environment" and "environmental benefit"
- Juliet B.: Reviews EBSG definitions of "investment" and "environmental justice focus population"
- Abbey W.: AAFM has a pass through appropriation that is distributed to food banks which is then distributed in the form of food to individual Vermonters. How far down are we tracking the end user of the investment
- Kim B.: Reviews the timeline for deliverables related to the proportionate distribution of environmental benefits:
 - Environmental Benefits Spending Guidance

- Review of Definitions
 - Baseline Spending Report
 - Establish a Goal of Proportionate Investment
- Juliet B.: Reviews the timeline for deliverables related to the proportionate distribution of environmental benefits:
 - Environmental Justice Mapping Tool
 - Baseline Spending Report Summary
 - Environmental Benefits Spending Reports
 - Agency changes to rules, policies, and procedures
- Kim B.: Reviews example internal milestones to support moving the environmental benefits work forward:
 - Define environmental benefits for the agency
 - Identify relevant metrics
 - Data collection
 - Establish baseline
 - Quantify direct benefits
 - Identify distributional impacts
- Abbey W.: Question about the quantification of the outcome of the environmental benefit
- Kim B.: Reviews steps 1-4 of the draft reporting process:
 - Environmental benefits assessment
 - Program assessment
 - Investment assessment
 - Identifying investments to report on
- Juliet B.: Reviews steps 5-7 of the draft reporting process:
 - Data gathering
 - Describing and quantifying environmental benefits
 - Reporting
- Juliet B.: The reporting will include both a quantitative report and a written transparency report that outlines the methodology and rationale of the decisions made to move the covered agency through the reporting process
- Juliet B.: The Law asks covered agencies to describe the nature of the environmental benefits they provide and to quantify the outcome of the environmental benefits they provide. Quantifying the outcome can be difficult due to the subjectivity of the outcomes of some types of benefits.
- Jenny R.: Needs to talk to agencies where they have overlapping benefits to coordinate and avoid duplicate counting
- Stephanie S.: Some investments are within the control of DPS and others are not.
- Juliet B.: The guidance is starting to address what to do with discretionary vs. nondiscretionary funds
- Amy R.: What is the control for comparison?
- Abbey W.: Looking at all investments, what proportion currently goes to EJFPs?
- Claire M.: There may still be benefit to reporting on pass-through or nondiscretionary dollars as resources allow, for transparency and awareness – long-term aspiration

- Abbey W.: Does the reporting period capture date funds are appropriated, date funds are obligated, or date funds are spent?
- Juliet B.: Appropriated dollars and obligated dollars can change. Spent might be best
- Amy R.: Would be helpful to share the guidance with the business office early
- Abbey W.: Has already begun sharing this guidance, but noting that it is a draft

1:45 PM

Next Steps & Close Out

- Kim B.: Can everyone reflect on some actionable steps they'll take coming out of this meeting?
- Stephane S.: Share guidance and create an EJ working group in DPS
- Amy R.: Share guidance and Feedback Session slides. Develop an EJ group for VDH
- Abbey W.: Create an EBSG task group in the AAFM EJ working group. Meet with business office to identify exactly what kind of information Vision provides. Cataloguing programs that provide environmental benefits
- Jenny R.: Email the single business office representative for LURB and ensure she has the EBSG draft. Reach out to similarly situated covered agencies between meetings
- Janet H.: Identify how many more people at LURB beyond business office need to be looped in on the work?
- Elizabeth S.: Sketch out PUC's reporting process, reach out to other PUC entities to collaborate on data gathering
- Dave P.: Get in touch with AOT business office on EBSG, be intentional about collaborating with other covered agencies between public meetings.
- Kim B.: Reach out to covered agencies with pointed feedback on the EBSG, build out the workplan for the EBSG task group
- Juliet B.: Reach out to PUC specifically to learn more about the unique PUC reporting process
- Karla R.: Talk to LURB about exploring ideas proposed during this meeting, consider how to organize task groups within the IAC – specifically for community engagement?
- Juliet B.: Reminder to submit the CR and EJ Complaint Summary Reports by March 13 at the latest.