Transcript

March 11, 2026, 2:07PM

Birch, Juliet started transcription

0:06
OK we should be recording now.

Barrett, Kim 0:09
OK. Can everyone see?
In times.
OK, cool.
Alright, so welcome to the joint meeting of the Vermont Environmental Justice Advisory Council and the Interagency Committee.

0:44
Oh Kim I think you muted yourself I'm sorry.

Barrett, Kim 0:46
I'm totally new.
I've been talking this entire time, I apologize.
Welcome to a joint meeting of the Vermont Environmental Justice Advisory Council and Interagency Committee.
We thank you all for being here.
Here are our community agreements.
I think Victor is joining us.
Hey, victor.
So we'll just give everyone one minute to review these.
Think about them and then we'll move on.
Here is our agenda for today.
So today is all about the baseline spending reports.
We're really excited to have the each IAC member share about their report.
We know that this is something that's really important to the Advisory Council.
So what we're going to do is we'll take about 15 minutes to do a introduction to the

presentations and so.
Amy and Jenny are gonna be leaving us in that, which is exciting.
And then from there, we'll transition into the actual presentations.
So each ISD member will take, you know, between 5:00 and 10:00 minutes.
Doesn't have to be that long.
It's just depends on how much content you're sharing.
But we have a specific order and that order is in the agenda.
So for the first hour of the presentations, we'll do five agencies and then use the rest of the time in that hour.
Therefore, the AC to ask questions will take a break.
And then we'll come back to finish the second-half of the presentations, take a break and then talk about next steps.
So that's what we have planned.
All right, so here's our I can't see everyone.
So if anyone has a question or anything of that, please just raise your hand or come off mute.
So here's our reintroduction. We're gonna go over the baseline spending report deliverable just really high level so that everyone knows is familiar with what we're talking about.
Today, we'll talk about the purpose of these presentations and then also go through.
A and Rs agency of Natural Resources baseline spending report.
Cover letter that we created and submitted to the Advisory Council.
And now I'm going to stop sharing and have.
Any takeover and go through a couple of slides.

RA **Redman, Amy (She/Her)** 3:48
Thank you, Kim.
Gosh, it's so nice to be with everyone this morning, Jenny.

BK **Barrett, Kim** 3:50
Thank you.

RA **Redman, Amy (She/Her)** 3:53
I didn't know if you wanted to give a kind of like quick re introduction of the

deliverable first and then I'll share.
Does that feel good?

Ronis, Jenny 4:05
That sounds great.
I'd be happy to jump in. Umm.
I'm Jenny ranis.

Redman, Amy (She/Her) 4:07
Awesome.

Ronis, Jenny 4:08
I'm general counsel with land Use Review Board, which is one of the interagency committees for the for the environmental justice stuff.
So I'm a lawyer, so I'd love to go back to the statutory language of stuff.
And I'm just gonna use the 6000 for the the statute as a basis for sort of explaining why.
How we got to this deliverable and what you're going to hear about today?
But I do wanna.
Emphasize that there is just miles and miles of space between the base statutory language of what the legislature handed us and how we got to these final reports today. And I think that.
The whole goal of this presentation is to show you guys how we get there, how each individual covered agency sort of had to approach this problem differently and our efforts to really incorporate the advice that we've been getting from the Advisory Council and and sort of.
Help you guys get to know us better.
So a lot of different things. So.
The original implementation of the evsg spending could we had to implement state policy.
By September 15th, 20 September 15th, 2025, there was a deadline for providing guidance to the the advisory or to the covered agencies. On undoing that in order to accomplish that, the they put together.
For an ebsg focus group that spent the last, I want to say a year and a half meeting regularly to try to understand definitions of terms and how to apply this idea of.

Contemplating how our spending is directed or can be directed or is impacted.
To an environmental justice focus groups. So we really use the group via Ebsg focus group to set definitions and expectations.
Our most recent deadline was the February 15th, 2026 deadline on the baseline reports, and that's what the Advisory Council has received. Last month, that package of reports from every covered agency and the cover letter.
Kind of introducing them.
And the goal of the baseline reports is to talk about where investments have been made, who receive those benefits, trying to quantify what benefits have been received as an outcome of those investments, etcetera.
And generally setting the stage for how the financial side of environmental justice works for the various agencies.
I'll just flag that we have some more next steps coming up that you'll be hearing more about, which is that in July under the Statute by July 1st, 2026, the legislature has set a goal for us to direct our investments proportionately within our environmental justice pop.
That obviously create causes.
Or requires a lot more than just.
The direction of financial investments, we have to identify those populations we have to do our mapping. Lots of other things going on and then ultimately starting on January 15th of 2028, the covered agencies will be submitting annual reporting, building off of the baseline reporting to show.
Sort of trends and where our financial information is going.
So that's, that's the really blunt.
High level.
Explanation of what?
The world of environmental benefit spending guidance is looking like and then I'll pass it over to Amy for some more, some less dry ways of explaining what we've been up to for the last year or so.

RA **Redman, Amy (She/Her)** 7:48
Oh my gosh, that was great.
Thank you, Jenny.
OK.
I am going to share.

Slides again.
See where this comes up?
Let's get to our slide, OK.
Don't worry, this is not a blank slide.
But to frame up the iece baseline spending report summary presentations, we're about to see, I'm going to very humbly provide the AC with an overview of the cover letter, the environmental justice and Civil Rights Unit prepared to accompany, excuse me, our reports, so informations for the cover letter.
Which gives a summary of the limitations.
And challenges we face while preparing these reports was gathered by the EJ and Civil Rights unit over the last two years at public meetings.
The environmental benefits, spending guidance, feedback sessions during task group meetings, office hours and one-on-one meetings.
So additionally, EJ and civil rights units tracked AC concerns and questions, which also informed the cover letter so.
In short, the cover letter is like a qualitative summary of patterns they have heard.
Over the past year, and I think it's important to note that I wanted to share this overview today because when I first read it, I felt like really heard and seen in the experience I was having as an AC member trying to prepare the report for the health.
Department and it also brings together the agencies, kind of like a collective experience into one place.
So it's a, it's a.
Yeah, I feel like it's an important.
It's important document to kind of go over.
Together. So that's what I'm gonna do.
I'm gonna give kind of like the high level, umm patterns that are in are in this cover letter.
So let's see, first the the content of the cover letter, maybe many of you have already seen. It is really about the limitations and challenges.
That they were hearing over the last couple of years, namely quantifying environmental benefits. So this is content from the cover letter mostly. So the environmental benefits spending guidance did not provide guidance on.
On how to measure these benefits or define the ultimate purpose of the exercise, environmental benefits can be expressed in many ways, such as dollar saved. People served energy conserved or pollution reduction, for example, but without clear

guidance from the General Assembly.
We were agencies made assumptions about which units of measurements are most appropriate, introducing a lot of uncertainty and inconsistency.
So I'm going to give some more.
Even more specifics that are in the cover letter that were heard over the last couple of years as we prepared these reports, namely financial systems, so across the state of Vermont agencies use different financial systems for distinct purposes, which are not necessarily comparable. And as I learned many.
Of the systems are not set up for analyzing environmental benefits at a system level.
For example, at the Department of Health, we use a system called Zahara.
And there's no searchable fields for environmental benefits.
There's a lot to say about each one of these, but I'm just going to kind of give a brief high level overview that's that is named in the cover letter.
So the next one is staff capacity and resources.
Data gathered across multiple programs within an agency is the labor intensive, and many agencies lack dedicated staff to conduct the level of analysis indicated in the statute for the reports.
Adequate staff capacity is is necessary not only for the reporting, but also for ongoing analytical work needed to meaningfully and meaningfully inform decision making.
Also in the report we have data gaps in inconsistencies. Covered agencies collect data in different ways, shaped over time by legislative, federal and program specific requirements.
Existing data collection practices were not designed to support.
The implementation of the Vt EJ law.
As a result, agencies would need to develop new, new data fields, tools and processes to fully align with the laws reporting and analytical requirements. Also in the cover letter is a specific section for some agencies that have like unique challenges.
I don't know, Jenny, if you want to come back on Mike for a second to kind of explain a little bit about this one.

RJ **Ronis, Jenny** 12:37
Well, I think what the land use Review Board and the Public Utilities Commission encountered very early in this process is that the environmental environmental

benefit spending guidance assumes that agencies have discretionary discretion in how they disperse funds, how they receive them, how they direct them, etc. And you. Hear more from both me on behalf of the LURB and and the Public Utilities Commission later, but we.
Work in a very different way.
Way and so.
The basically coming up against a wall immediately saying we don't have discretionary funds.
How do we still address the concerns and and meaningfully participate in this exercise was a huge challenge for the board and the Public Utilities Commission.
But Elizabeth Schilling, I welcome you to jump on if you want to correct or you can explain more when we get to your point in the presentation so.

RA **Redman, Amy (She/Her)** 13:34
Thank you.

RJ **Ronis, Jenny** 13:34
Thanks.

RA **Redman, Amy (She/Her)** 13:36
Great.
OK, OK.
We're gonna hear more about this.
Just pause.
Kim, is that OK? OK, great. OK.
I'm gonna just keep moving through here.
Another section in the cover letter is about interpretation and utilities, so the reports are not comprehensive accounts of all agency spending.
Rather, they represent a thorough effort to identify and document environmental benefit and investment consistency.
Assistant with existing data and capacity, so those are the main sections. But before we leave this, I want to also say that one of the greatest takeaways that I and I think we have learned from engaging in this process is that while there are many limitations and Challen.
In creating baseline spending reports inherent in the limitations and challenges are

also a lot of opportunities for change.
The as I'll share in just a second for the health department.
Department. Our report doesn't capture the number of like really fruitful conversations that were happening and the ideas generated.
So I think it's really important to just name that there are a lot of opportunities for for change that have come from this process.
OK. Moving.
On OK.
So we're gonna move into agency presentations. So during the presentations.
As Kim was saying, IEC members will share takeaways from the baseline spending reports, which will hopefully highlight for the AC kind of, among other things, the inner workings of federal and state, the federal and state climate right now that we're working in and that we have been working.
In inherent complexities of translating laws into actual deliverables that Jenny named, and also where there's like alignment and possibilities for moving forward.
So these are some of the some of the things we're hoping the AC members and all of us can take away from from today.
So here's the first group, the Order of the the first group that's gonna go, and as you'll see, you're not quite done with me. 'cause. I'm gonna kick this off before I do. I wanna pause.
Kim, Juliet. Carla, do you have anything to add in framing up?
Our time together and these presentations, I miss anything.

BK **Barrett, Kim** 15:59
No, you did beautifully.
So thank you.
If we Oh yeah, go ahead.

16:05
I oh sorry Kim.
I don't know if the camera is gonna turn towards me so I guess I'm just a disembodied voice but I wanted to share.
For for AC members who didn't see the e-mail communication.
The reason why we are having this as a focal point today is because specifically Mariana saw the reports and was like it would be super helpful to get maybe like.

A high level or plain language summary.
Of what these reports entail.
So this is our best effort to you know speak to that specific request from Mariana and although she's not here today we'll certainly reach out to her and send her the meeting recording so that she can get that information.
Despite I think she's still in Argentina so she's hopefully having fun.
That's all I wanted to share.
Thank you.

RA **Redman, Amy (She/Her)** 17:00
Thanks, Juliet.
OK.
I am going to kick off the presentations with a really short overview of the main takeaways. I want to acknowledge Kim Juliet, Karla.
I took a template as just A1 slide to share also to my agents, other agency IAC friends.
There's no one way to present.
So whatever you have prepared will be perfect and beautiful, so no visuals.
Are needed necessarily.
Ah.
OK, so the mission of the Vermont Department of Health is to promote the health and well-being of all Vermonters by providing equitable opportunities for health, advancing HealthEquity and preparing for health emergencies.
I think going starting this these presentations is it makes sense to me because I think our report and process really embodies all of the cover letter limitations and challenges and the things we were dealing with and moving through this process. So it became very clear to me early.

17:55
Thank you.

RA **Redman, Amy (She/Her)** 18:03
On that doing.
All exhaustive environmental benefits spending report was not going to be possible because we're not set up at a systems level to do it.

So I worked with the department.
I worked with program leads, division, directors and also our Commissioners office and our legal team to create a sample methodology.
So I did that by doing quickly a program scan the Department of Health has all our programs listed, just description.
So I started there.
Selected programs that likely had environmental benefits.
Spending had meetings with those programs and then invited them to do what's listed here on Step 2 to fill in a program inventory.
Thank you to Abby and Claire and IAC members for sharing a spreadsheet that was made from the environmental benefits spending guidance. They turned that into a spreadsheet that then programs in our departments and agencies could fill out.
To try and see if they had environmental benefits.
Spending there was no data in that spreadsheet.
It was just a vetting to see like which programs we might wanna draw data from.
So from that process of of having about 20 programs at the Department of Health Fill in the spreadsheet and through having meetings and then having having them fill in the inventory, I did an environmental benefit sample data.
So two programs that had the capacity and and data.
And data analysts offered to.
Kind of mock up what this would look like if we did it at the program level and you can see there's a quick data visualization here from the health disparities grant on indigenous food and cultural resource spending by by county.
So just a small part of that health disparities fund. So that was part of it.
Healthy homes was analyzed and then also a part of the health disparities funding.
Two other really quick things that I want to say in terms of the highlight of this process is that in, in.
The report I added a section of nodal, a notable environmental benefits spending trends.
One is one of which, at the Department of Health, much of our work is funded by federal grants, which have either been terminated or severely restricted due to executive orders. For example, the EPA, we had an EPA, EJ grant, that was terminated and on and had an impact.
Actually on reducing my position to a halftime position.
So I these are not analytical pieces.

We didn't analyze it, but it was like high level, kind of like spending trends. And then lastly, as I was saying in terms of opportunities in moving forward, we did have conversations about our next steps being to explore adding environmental benefits to an existing grantee inventory form we.
Don't know if this is possible, but one of the ideas and the conversations that we had.
To systematize environmental benefits, so we can do the annual reporting was to use our department's performance improvement unit units grantee intake form, which does actually track spend some.
Spending by investment, location and priority population.
So we want to explore the feasibility of adding environmental benefits to that intake into that inventory form so we can systematize this moving forward.
OK.
That was a lot.
I am going to be quiet.
Thank you for listening and I'm going to mute myself.

BK **Barrett, Kim** 21:36
Thank you, Amy. That was wonderful.
Let's give everyone just a minute to, like, recalibrate and then I'll offer Jenny if you want to jump in again.
And then we can move from there.

RJ **Ronis, Jenny** 21:50
Sure.
I just want to make sure any AC members who had any questions for for Amy don't get cut off.
OK.
I'm seeing a thumbs up, so I'm gonna keep moving.
So now you're gonna see something that's totally like the opposite of of what?
Great information Amy just provided.
So I'm putting our the land use review board Spendletting report in the chat right now.
You'll notice it's incredibly short.
It does not have any quantitative information and so I think what's the most useful is

kind of giving everybody an explanation as to what my mystery organization does, I think.
We're not necessarily as well understood as a lot of other places and that will help to explain our spending report, but I understanding that land use and active 50 and all that is really complicated.
I really welcome anyone to jump in with questions, because if I'm moving too fast, it's not helpful for anyone.
So interrupt away the land use Review Board is the sort of successor.
Board to the Natural Resources Board and so for the last.
56 years we have been administering ACT 250 since 1970. Act 250 has been a land use review process that issues permits for large scale development in the state of Vermont.
As you know, we sort of sit at I like to tell people we sit at the intersection of of development and Environmental Protection. So it's.
Traditionally been a quasi judicial.
Hesitate to even say agency, because.
Because they've it's been a very limited scope of of work in the issuing of active 50 permits and policy and throughout so.
It's the land use Review Board is a creature of Act 181 from a few years ago.
Our board has.
We'd like to overuse the metaphor that we have been with this new five person professional board.
We've been building a plane as we've been flying it.
Sarah had our vice chair is here and can definitely.
Attest to that and Act 181 has added.
A massive has massively changed the way our organization works. Traditionally act 250 is applied statewide so.
For the most part, a square mile in Chittenden County is treated the exact same way as up in the Kingdom. Act 181 creates a tier system for review, which very briefly.
Requires our board.
To basically map out the state into different levels of tiers that will have varying levels of ACT 250 review depending on on different factors like like density and critical, natural resources etcetera.
And I'm sure you've heard a lot in the news about about how complicated and complex this is.

Interestingly, Act 181 actually has some call outs to environmental justice in the board's tasks of determining where are these different levels of review. Tiers are going to be.
So it's been very important to really keep an eye on the environmental justice work as our board is sort of building us out into what I like to think of as more of an policy and directive agency than we have been in the past.
So.
Brandon, sorry. So with all of that said, coming from a more quasi judicial.
Perspective means that traditionally active the active 50 and and our organization.
Does not have any discretionary funding.
All of our our budgeting goes towards the staff that run the organization.
We do not choose the projects that come to us for permitting.
We don't approve or deny the projects based on greater policy other than whether projects satisfy the ACT 250 criteria and that legal system so.
So we don't have discretion in pushing funds or projects or development in One Direction or another.
We're we're using a base like organization to make those determinations.
We intake funds from the fees that are calculated by statute.
They go to the general fund and then the General Fund Fund administers.
The General Fund fills out our budget from there so.
We frankly had nothing.
To report on the environmental basis, the other thing about the way our organization works is that we're very, very small.
There's, I think, 34 of us.
Right now, compared to a lot of the other agencies that are here and.
I so we're very thin.
And lack a lot of of those other like of of resources or like individual. You know, we don't have our own mapping people.
We don't have our own like funding people we don't.
We don't receive or administer grants all these things, so it's it's a lot of like, here's what we don't do.
As Act 181 continues in the board's efforts, moving us to a towards a tier based jurisdiction system.
Continue. That may change.
We don't really know.

We're in a huge period of transition right now.
But so we wanted to make sure that in our reporting that we were very open to the idea that in the future there are going to be ways for us to quantify our staff efforts in more directly into environmental justice categories.
So now that I've taken you down that wonderful rabbit hole, I'm just wondering if anyone has any questions.
Otherwise I can pass on to the next person.
Thanks guys.
All right.
Back to you, Kim.

BK **Barrett, Kim** 28:00
Thank you, Jenny. That was wonderful.
It's actually great to hear, you know, to actually give you the floor to share more and I hope Advisory Council members kind of understand more about what the alert does.
So thank you for that.
So now agency of Natural Resources is going to go.
So I'm going to share my screen again and then pass it to Karla.

28:27
Thank you.
OK.
So agency of natural resources.
We are more traditionally what folks may think about when thinking about how environmental benefits are provided around the state.
As opposed we don't.
We're not the luby's quasi judicial in nature.
We are very regulatory in nature.
And.
What we're gonna do with this presentation is the agency of natural resources has 3 departments?
Each of the.
3 departments provided their own baseline spending reports and each of the departments underwent.

A process whereby they started by identifying environmental benefits this process started about 2 years ago.
And through the engagement of working group members within the agency that are these individuals who are specialized in doing and connecting environmental justice to their departments.
They gathered insight and information from their staff.
Regarding which programs provide environmental benefits of the kind that are listed in this statute so really briefly.
What we did at the agency is we captured direct investments that provide environmental benefits?
That flow to certain geographic areas.
And also reported on where the impacts where the benefits.
Flow to geographically I am also joined here by Megan cusino from the Department of Environmental conservation and Abigail Connolly from the department of Fish and Wildlife.
I don't know if cake yeah.
Cake is virtual cake Everly from the department of forest Parks and Recreation.
I will provide.
A general overview of what the 3 departments reported on and if there are any programmatic questions on these 3 folks.
Here can answer any questions that the Advisory Council may have but I wanted to provide.
What it is that we did and what is included in our reports?
Next slide please.
OK the Department of Environmental conservation the mission is to preserve enhance restore and conserve Vermont 's natural resources.
Protect human health for the benefit of this and future generations.
Based on the mission of the department it is reasonable to conclude that almost all of the actions taken in the programs managed by the department full under the category of environmental benefits.
So the department identified.
An incredibly long list of environmental benefits and then applying very strictly the environmental benefits spending guidance identified based on availability of data the reasonability.
Of accessing that information and the capacity the department reporting on 18

programs which is an incredible number.
Programs and these programs invested 100 $60,000,000.00 in communities and projects throughout Vermont.
And these again are direct investments that provide environmental benefits.
When you look at the spreadsheet provided in the report you will be able to identify where geographically these investments occurred?
35 BC staff spent 100.
65 hours over 18 months we started having conversations 2 years ago.
And an opportunity that the department has identified is that it will prioritize collecting data from other investments.
And our visitors, you can see programmatically the effort that the department.
Took to be able to gather the data that was reported in on the on the baseline spending reports.
After an incredibly thorough process, again of identifying benefits and which of the programs invested direct funds?
To provide those benefits, FBR identified four programs that directly invested $8.3 million to communities and projects throughout Vermont. Again, due to the mission of the department.
The the majority of our programming within this department could be identified as providing environmental benefits.
So then a thorough process.
Was undertaken to to identify which of these programs the agency has discretion to.
To distribute and.
Are are provided by direct investments.
If they are also identified, that additional funding and resources are needed to advance this work, and also the finance systems presented a challenge.
Just because.
When, when these financial systems were created, we were not thinking about tracking environmental benefits and where they flow to in, in the state. I'm gonna stop talking.
Now we have a few minutes left.
The three folks from the three departments, Megan, Abigail and Kate are here for Advisory Council members. If you have any questions.
About the programs that are included in the baseline report.
Please feel free to ask any questions.

Barrett, Kim 39:01
I know we just gave you a lot of information, though there will also be time to ask questions as well after you kind of Mull everything over.

victor davila- slingshot 39:01
Great.

Barrett, Kim 39:09
Hey Victor, you have a question?

victor davila- slingshot 39:13
When the clarification.
The spending that we are talking about between the the 8 million and the 100 million and how that gets distributed, how is that in relation to the environmental justice map is the emulation to the map and like where?
Where does the intersection happen?
And I know there was discussion about.
How we would be identifying those community groups innovations for that I have also been.
This is my reintroduction to this. Unfortunately 'cause I I was out for.
Medical reasons for a hot 2nd.
So I'm this might have been covered and I just not be up to date on it, but I'm I'm gonna. There could be a point of clarity on how these relate to that.

40:01
Thank you, victor.
That is a great question and one that many folks have asked and still remain sort of like a question that we are working towards as at this factory answer.
Because the answer, unfortunately is the order of operations established by the statute.
Forces us to work on these deliverables at the same time.
Ideally, we would have a mapping tool already created so that we can very easily identify the geographic areas where the environmental benefits are flowing to so that we could have an accurate depiction of.

In the Vermont on the Vermont map, where the agencies are spending.
Dollars and which benefits are being received by which geographic areas?
Because of the structure of the EJ law, we are working now towards the creation of that map and.
Found that in order to get us closer to the statutory intention, which is to.
Will be able to ascertain exactly where the agencies are spending dollars and later on establish a goal of proportionality based on those expenditures.
What we will do is once the the mapping tool is finalized, we will be able to create a goal of proportionality that is informed by accurate information.
That's going to be gathered through the process of the creation of the mapping tool.
This is a lot of words.
I hope I answered your question, Victor.

VS **victor davila- slingshot** 42:11
Yeah. Thank you.
I think Juliette has their hand up.

42:16
Yeah. Thank you again.
I'm sorry that the camera is making me into like a disembodied voice, but hopefully you can hear me OK.
The other part of your question, so like your question was kind of two-part.
Victor, obviously Carlos spoke to the mapping tool part, sort of how there's, you know, the mapping tool isn't necessarily going to be available for use to help this exercise.
At least not in the early stages.
But the other part of your question was about, you know, how would we go around identifying community groups that would receive spending and that, you know, the focus on proportionality and that kind of question. And I just wanted to highlight one of the obstacles or I guess points.
Of interest for all of us that we can work on as an AC and IAC is that.
The environmental justice focused populations definition.
As it's currently defined, applies to over 90% of the census block groups in the state.
So in short, it is kind of a flawed definition if we want to be able to focus.
Any of our work on, you know, being able to identify target community or target is a

terrible word for that focused communities, I guess.
For to to be the beneficiaries of this work.
So when it comes to identifying.
Community groups. I think the first step would be to take a magnifying glass to that definition and figure out how can we improve it to actually function for the purposes of the law.
But that's a big conversation, perhaps for another day.
I just wanted to flag it.

BK **Barrett, Kim** 44:11
Thanks. Any other questions.
Go ahead, Jennifer.

JB **Jennifer Byrne** 44:26
Because the order of operations was brought up, that isn't that also in the order the redefining of the definition.
And.

44:37
Yes, yes it is.
It is and technically.
The the IT went by already.
This is information that's been provided.
For some time, and I don't know if you remember that we had John Adams come to one of our meetings and provide, like a depiction a visual.
All of what the definitions are capturing and what the definition applied to the state looks like.
So yes, it is it.
Is it is contemplated in the EJ law that the Advisory Council can make recommendations regarding definitions in statute.
Also to say just because the deadline technically passed doesn't mean that like we could.
We could do that at any time.
It's just a matter of taking the time to do it, so I believe the statute identifies that every five years. It would be good for the Advisory Council to revise definitions.

So it's it's an open invitation for the Advisory Council to apply to the definition, see statute.
What experiences they have and knowledge they have regarding?
The location and existence of populations that may or may not be captured.
By the current definition, or in this case because of the over broadness of the definition, perhaps it renders the definition.
Obsolete in terms of what it is trying to achieve.
One last thing I want to mention that I think it's important for to contextualize this conversation regarding the the baseline spending reports that the agencies put together is that this is a series of deliverables that the law established.
The first one was for the agency of Natural Resources in consultation with the Advisory Council and the support of the Interagency Committee to put together the guidance.
The guidance document that was going to.
Tell agencies how to put together these reports now.
We provided the reports as per the statutory.
Mandate and those baseline spending reports include three years, and then the next deliverable. And this is Victor. Relevant to your question regarding the mapping tool, the next deliverable in in statute is to utilize that information.
And to create a goal of proportionality.
And that exercise would benefit greatly from having an environmental justice mapping tool, so that agencies have the ability.
To.
Analyze the data that was gathered in the spent in the baseline spending report and come up with reasonable.
With reasonable goals that are based on data.
Data.
Kim.

BK **Barrett, Kim** 48:05
OK.
Thank you for that.
I'll just give a little more space in in case someone else has a question.
OK.
Now we're gonna pass it to Bob to go over ABC of Education's report.

Donohue, Bob 48:29
OK, great.
Hey Kim, can I share the screen, OK.

Barrett, Kim 48:31
Sure. Yeah, go ahead.

Donohue, Bob 48:33
Great. OK.
And can you all see the screen?

48:38
Thank you guys. Thanks.

Donohue, Bob 48:40
All right, good.
So the Agency of education.
Pretty much.
Amy framed it up pretty well.
You know, we all had limitations in terms of maybe our accounting systems that all the agencies have in our particular case.
We we focus on the discretionary grants kind of as was alluded to earlier, the formula grants really have.
A specified distribution. Requirements with them. Therefore, since they're not under the the purview of the AU to decide how they get allocated.
We focus simply on our discretionary grants.
So given that, then there was basically a query of the grants management system where we keep all of that financial data and that that generated 100 lines of reports for individual investments. And then the finance team went through all those investments and started to try and find were.
There any keywords as defined by environmental benefits in Act 154?
That were in the grant descriptions.
And if they were, they were then extracted, and that is what constituted the basis of the report that was submitted.

When you take a look at those findings.
This this table here summarizes by fiscal year the number of total grants that we administered and what percentage of those grants were in the discretionary category.
So every year was basically hovering somewhere in the low 40% of what the grants were in the discretionary category that carried with them some kind of environmental benefit as defined in ACT 154.
4.
And then when we further took a breakdown of those grants.
The percentage for each of the discretionary grants by the fiscal year was very low.
That carried an environmental benefit.
So for FY23, 6.75% carried in environmental benefit for FY24 7% and FY25 less than 1% carried environmental benefit.
Oops, sorry, I think I clicked the wrong button.
No, I guess that I guess that's it.

50:52
Yeah.

DB **Donohue, Bob** 50:56
So we don't have a lot to tell in that regard.
The thing to keep in mind is the education spending that comes from the state.
Is defined in statute, so it's not up to the discretion of the AOE.
How that education funding is allocated?
That said, what everybody needs to be aware of is two of the three environmental focus populations, right?
There's 3 environmental.
Focused populations.
The Bipoc Community English language level proficiency and then some poverty metric when it comes to education spending that's defined in statute. Two of those 3 populations.
Poverty metric is used and English language learner metric is used and those students actually get a higher weighting in the per pupil education spending calculation than somebody who is outside of those two metrics.
So therefore, we're actually doing disproportionate spending on a higher amount

than having to worry about proportionate spending.
So there's a good story to be told in that those that are in most need are actually getting already a higher waiting towards the amount of dollars spent on those students.
So that's something to keep in mind going forward with the education transformation that's happening in the state. The foundational formula system is going to try and level set what is the education spending per pupil across the state so that there's equity across all communities. Higher wealth communities may.
Be able to spend more per student, lower, lower or economically challenged communities may not be able to spend to the level that a higher income community can.
The foundation formula is kind of try and level. Set that and say all communities will get a certain amount per student. Despite that the waiting for those students that need.
Extra care.
Which is typically tied to poverty level and then their English language proficiency. They will continue to get a higher per pupil weighting in the foundation formula system.
So going forward, the Agency of Education is hoping there's an RFP out for a new grants management system.
And in that new grants management system RFP, we're hoping to incorporate some sort of alphanumeric specifier that we can code any kind of spending that's tied to environmental justice.
This benefit spending so we can then do an automated query of it rather than do a laborious manual review of all the line items.
So we're in the process of a reorganization in the Agency of Education. It's been going on for several months. And so there are going to be a shifting of work focus across the different groups. And once that all settles out, there'll be probably another representative on this, I.
Instead of me, it's probably somebody either from communications and or finance who can speak more towards the deliverables that are going to be moving forward more eloquently than I certainly can.
So I will stop there and if you have questions, just let me know.

BK **Barrett, Kim** 54:08

Thank you, Bob.
That was really helpful.
The percentages also were helpful as well.
Does anyone have any questions?
Go ahead, Reg.

RH **rich holschuh** 54:24
Bob, is there a simple explanation for the big drop off in percentages in the past year?

DB **Donohue, Bob** 54:32
Yeah. Yes, Rich, there is most most of the discretionary spending was everything to do with COVID relief funding.
In other words, the elementary and secondary school Emergency Relief Fund that came from the COVID era that had a three-year we had three years to enjoy that money. And then that came to an end.
So all of the spending that was associated with the bulk of.
Environmental benefits spending.
Had to do with Esser relief monies coming in.

RH **rich holschuh** 55:07
Thank you.
Makes sense?

DB **Donohue, Bob** 55:09
Yep.

BK **Barrett, Kim** 55:21
Any other questions for Bob?

VS **victor davila- slingshot** 55:27
This is also coming from spending that is technically meant to be allocated in an environmental justice lens.
Still, even though it's in the Department of Education, is that correct?

Barrett, Kim 55:39
Yes.

victor davila- slingshot 55:41
Is there a percentage of the funding for these schools that are kind of purposely meant to be allocated towards?
Like infrastructural rearrangement to some extent, like for example, I know that Vermont has an increasing issue with P files, contaminations and things like well water.
I would imagine there are potentially some schools in Vermont that are not technically hooked up to Tom Water that might now need a poet system, for example.
Is this the kind of scenario for schools?
That this money can be allocated towards them.
Is there any guidance for schools on that spending?

Donohue, Bob 56:17
Why we could spend the rest of the meeting talking just about that topic.
So yeah, to your point, there are.
There are just staying current with everything that's going on with PCBS in schools, right?
Vermont's the first state to require schools to test for PCBS. All of that would be coming through statute.
It wouldn't be at the discretion of the Agency of Education.
We may be given the funds to administer the funds, but the decision says to how to go about doing that.
The legislature has a big part of doing that.
In terms of infrastructure associated with those type of concerns, that's what the whole discussion going on now about school construction programs. School construction was suspended back in 2007.
It's never been reinstated ever since.
And because towns are struggling with passing.
Local operating maintenance budgets, let alone capital investment bonds.
The deterioration of the school facilities is quite severe, so we conducted a school

facilities assessment back in 2022 and it ran into 2023 and it identified what we didn't even need a study to tell us that the schools are sick. The infrastructure is fail.
And that we need to do something from a state perspective to reinstate a school construction program that is totally within the purview of the legislature.
And they're actively discussing.
The question becomes in a state like Vermont, where you get the revenue we're talking about on an annual basis $300 million just to bring schools back up to a level where they're safe, warm and dry has nothing to do with modernizing the schools and at a.
Time when we're talking about decreasing enrollments, but a growing facility infrastructure need, there's going to have to be a lot of hard decision making going on about where to best invest those funds.
Because we're talking. If you're, if you're, you know.
In the news, everything about education transformation is reducing the number size of the school districts, increasing the number of seats being occupied per class and all of that is to one get better education equity across all of the school districts, but also get economies of scale by right.
Sizing the school system for the size of the state that we are.
So they're all interrelated, Victor and.
Environmental contaminants is something that's certainly in one of the prioritization.
Schemas being considered for when deciding to award construction aid. Does a school have a an environmental contaminant?
Whether it's asbestos raid on PCB vfa's take take your flavor of the day of what is the contaminant we want to think about.
All those are being thought about as construction regulations and rules are going to be coming forward.

VS **victor davila- slingshot** 59:08
Clarification.

BK **Barrett, Kim** 59:14
Big question. If we don't have any other questions, we can move to Agency of transportation.
Let's see. Dave, should we pass it to you?

Pelletier, Dave 59:28
Yeah, I'll just say hi. And I'm gonna. I am gonna pass it over to Colin Smythe. Who did the lion's share of the work and kind of coordinated us in AOT. And I'll just hand it right over to him to not take up anymore airtime.

Barrett, Kim 59:41
Michael.

Pelletier, Dave 59:43
Thank you.

Smythe, Collin 59:43
Alright.
Thanks Dave.
And hi everybody.
Let me just find my couple of slides here.
Alright, can you all see that?

59:58
Yep.

Barrett, Kim 59:59
Yes you can.

Smythe, Collin 1:00:01
Great. Thank you.
As Dave mentioned, I'm Colin Smyth with the Agency of Transportation.
And yeah, so I guess I'll, I'll kind of kick it off by saying that.
Our our kind of analysis and spending report I'd say was probably most similar to to Amy's in in the Department of Health.
So we started off kind of this process by inventorying kind of all of our.
All programs within AOT and and we kind of used an existing reporting and tracking framework to do that and so it kind of matched up nicely with the funding to that framework for those programs.

Once we had them once, we had them inventoried, we kind of reviewed all the individual programs to determine which of those programs kind of provided environmental benefits and and which were either kind of a bigger, maybe stretch as to whether or not they had an environmental benefit or.
Or had no environmental benefit to speak of.
So out of those we.
We picked 3 to kind of dig deep into and I'll kind of get to this a little bit later in the in the challenges piece. But we picked 3 because we weren't sure how long it's gonna take to really dig into these programs.
So we have we have the financial information for kind of all of the programs, but the three programs that we kinda focused on in the report.
Are the ones where we kind of met with the program staff.
Kind of throughout the process and really got very specific data from them and dug in to understand both the data and more about the programs themselves to see, yeah, how kind of see how that funding was actually distributed and what are the nuances behind it.
And so I I have like a final slide will show kind of a a mapping exercise.
Is that that we did and that was kind of my attempt to to geographically distribute this this information, but I'll I'll get there in a minute. But all that was informed through, yeah, through coordination with the with the three programs and the the programs were public transit it.
Was a clean vehicle incentives and the bicycle and pedestrian program.
So yeah, some of the I kind of obviously the challenges have been touched on already, but I mentioned the uncertainty around the level of effort.
It really depended on the program and the specific data source as to how long it took to actually complete the analysis. For these and some of them were much more straightforward than others.
And it yes.
We had a couple of different data sets.
Generally, we had the kind of higher level financial data, but then we had the program specific data that was, for example, public transit in the form of like 21 different Excel spreadsheets and had to kind of go through and classify all those.
So there was just a big a big difference in in level of effort between the different programs and it was hard to know without.
Getting really in the weeds on them.

So some of them took a lot of.
Of effort and and all the data sets, because we have kind of a lot of different programs at the agency transportation, some of the they all have kind of different data sets and there were some common themes, but a lot of times we had to tie kind of.
Existing kind of geographically located datasets to not geographically located datasets and that took some level level of effort as well.
So the other, the other piece that I know it's been mentioned already, but is the kind of tying of the funding distribution to the actual environmental benefits that those provided was also a big challenge.
And so we just stuck more to the distribution of funding.
And at this point anyway, made the assumption that the benefits would kind of very closely mirror that in terms of the location.
They were provided.
So I'm gonna move on to my second slide here. So as not to take too much time, I think I am anyway.
There we go.
So our findings, some of them are are a little bit more kind of challenges as well than findings, but.
In the mapping work, it was interesting to think about how to get the data down to a scale that it would be meaningful, like on a Community level like the level it was reported at is a much broader geographic scale than kind of a community.
Pacific one and so kinda grappling with how how to even think about that was kind of something I came out of this process having a greater appreciation for the for the kind of trickiness of that.
We'll say for a couple of AOT programs I'm thinking of transit specifically.
It was also interesting to think about kind of the trade off between.
The total funding spent versus.
Kind of. The amount of people. And so again for transit, it's kind of like you're spending way more money in Chittenden County, but you also have way more people in Chittenden County.
And so it there's just kind of some some interesting, yeah. Interesting trade-offs in terms of how the funding is distributed, whether you should consider population density somehow in those calculations and so.
Don't have any kind of prescribed way to.

Handle that. But it was just another kind of interesting thing that we came upon or kind of had talked through thought about in this process.
Another interesting piece was that a lot of times and I noticed this specifically for the bicycle and pedestrian projects.
Some of these projects are very expensive and so having just a three-year window. Probably a location, even a town may not get a project within a three-year window and so.
So it just felt like kind of an incomplete picture and understand the limitations of you have to set the set the window somewhere, put thousand other piece where it just kind of made us think about the nuance of that.
And and kind of similar to a couple other programs that have been mentioned.
Bob kind of touched on it a little bit for education.
Also interesting to think about how.
A lot of the AOT programs already have some components of equity built into them and so not saying it's enough, certainly, but but it is.
It's at least being considered somehow.
And the other part.
That kind of sort of relates to that.
Is that this kind of gets a little bit at a discretionary funding question, but the last point is that.
A lot of the funding, at least for the programs like the Clean Vehicle Incentive Programs.
Are applications and so the agency doesn't really decide on where the money specifically goes, but it and and those programs as well already have kind of a a lower income component built into them, but.
Point being that that funding kind of goes wherever the applicants.
Kind of apply for it. And so that was another one where that one very clearly has an environmental benefit but is not totally.
I guess discretionary in terms of we don't, the agency doesn't decide specifically what location it goes to.
So I'm gonna jump down.
I guess I've been feel like I've been prattling along for a while now, but our our kind of next steps are or kind of lesson learned.
And the next steps are that coordinating with program staff is very helpful and

necessary to understand kind of the the nuances of these programs and the more in depth funding data.

1:09:06
Thank you.
Hello.

Smythe, Collin 1:09:12
That that I feel is is helpful.
To kind of get these funding distributions at a level that's meaningful.
It will be helpful to kind of have that the framework that we put together for this report.
The baseline report already kind of there and so adding more programs in in the future, which is kind of the last point will hopefully be more manageable being that we kind of already set it up.
To kind of be able to add additional financial information into this framework.
And so we're gonna try to.
We're gonna try to.
Kind of add programs as we go as we go forward in the reporting process.
To the to the extent we're able.
So yes, I'm sorry.
I feel like I've been talking fast again, but I'll just move quickly to my last slide, which is kind of just a a snapshot of some of the some of the kind of maps I put together from these programs. And and certainly these these don't have anything to.
Do with environmental justice focus populations.
This is just the distribution of the funding.
And certainly not trying to kind of replace.
Usurp the the mapping tool that's coming out here, but this is just kind of how since we have some kind of mapping expertise in in the agency and that we were able to kind of lean on.
Just our way of understanding this distribution, you know.
Yeah, visual way.
I think that's about all I've got.
So Dave, unless you have anything to add or any questions, happy to happy to take them.

Pelletier, Dave 1:10:57
No, that's good.
That gives us gives a good snap the the maps in particular give a kind of a snapshot of of the mechanics of our work and what and what Colin was digging through with others at the agency for financial information and and maybe does foreshadow a little bit of.
What can be done?
At least in some cases, for programs that are well enough to find and and discrete to kind of show where those investments are going.
Thank you.

1:11:26
His visuals are very helpful.

Smythe, Collin 1:11:30
Thanks.

1:11:34
Thank you.

Barrett, Kim 1:11:34
I'm wondering if Colin, you might, if you could explain a little bit what each map is showing, just cuz it might be difficult for folks to see the legend.

Smythe, Collin 1:11:47
Sure. Yeah.
Sorry, they are.
They are pretty small I'm sure.

Barrett, Kim 1:11:51
Yeah, no worries.

Smythe, Collin 1:11:52
Yeah. So the the farthest to the left one is just public transit funding by county and

so.
That exercise and I I won't go too deep in the details unless unless you want me to. But that essentially took kind of the public transit area boundaries, which is where the funding is kind of distributed.
And had to kind of break that out into the various counties and for public transit. There's also the wrinkle of kind of demand response, which is like call for a ride. Kind of a service versus a fixed route transit service. And so that that exercise was trying trying to put all those together and then kind of aggregate it at the county level.
The Clean Transportation Incentive Program one was was really just.
Taking kind of the EV and or electric vehicle and other kind of clean transportation incentives and they have, they have that information by town. And so that was just kind of totaling all those incentives by town and kind of attaching it to that town data layer and then.
The bicycle and pedestrian one on the right.
Sorry, the clean transportation's in the middle.
Bicycle pedestrian on the right.
Was taking kind of some existing.
Information that was already in kind of the mapping, geographic format and kind of attaching some of our capital program budget information into that.
Kind of by project and then just displaying where those specific projects were and so like identifying the towns where all those specific projects were.
And kind of, yeah, aggregating the totals by the town.

PD **Pelletier, Dave** 1:13:46
I'll just jump in and add that the color coding is the key.
Is represented, represents level of investment and the darker blue ish colors.
Are a call and help me out?
Those are the the lower amounts and the brighter yellowish colors represent increasing or higher dollar amounts for the. For those that can't read the key.

SC **Smythe, Collin** 1:13:59
The lower, yeah.
Yep. Thanks Dave.
Should have. Should have left with that.

Pelletier, Dave 1:14:08
And the other thing I'll just add.
Sorry, Juliet, just one more comment.
It's in the report itself. Colin also developed tables of of information to represent what you're seeing on the map. So for for people that are wanting to see it, maybe in a different format to to digest it in a different way that's available as well. Thank you.

Smythe, Collin 1:14:29
Thanks, see.
Juliet, go ahead.

1:14:35
Thanks Colin.
This is really really cool.
I'm excited to see any sort of visualization of this, so thank you for sharing this.
Don't take this as me being like, oh, you should definitely do this.
I'm just putting an idea out into the world, which is that it would be really cool to see.
These maps, but instead of just representing the amount of funding by county, it would be cool to see the proportion of funding per population by county.
So like if if a county got $2,000,000 it we could see the percent of spending per person within the county. I think that would be a really interesting tool too because like.
Obviously we've got a lot of spending in it for all of these it shows.
That Chittenden county. Rutland.
There's also some hubs in, like Bennington and Montpelier for a lot of this.
But you know that also is I think partially because that's probably where there's more population.

Smythe, Collin 1:15:41
Yeah, absolutely.
And I did.
We did kind of talk about that, but I didn't kind of get there in the end.
But I think you're right.
That is a really that's a really important and potentially helpful way to look at this too.

Barrett, Kim 1:15:58
Thank you.
Great work does.
Oh yeah, Victor, go ahead.

Smythe, Collin 1:16:00
Thanks.

victor davila- slingshot 1:16:04
I I have two questions that I can space them out of it, which is the first one is at any point were you able to look at whatever the current version of the environmental justice map is and see how these figures overlay with that map? Was there any? Of interest that made-up to you as far as like correlation was concerned of these things.

Smythe, Collin 1:16:27
I have looked at that data, I did not actually kind of put that data overlay it on this and I I was considering that. But then with all the work that has been going on with the mapping tool and I that's going to be kind of the offic.
I guess layer for lack of a better term for that. I I I didn't go there, but I think it is in a format anyway.
Where that should be pretty easy to do.

1:16:54
Mm-hmm.

Smythe, Collin 1:16:55
When that when that EJ mapping tool kind of is is finished.

victor davila- slingshot 1:17:03
Excellent. My second question was about looking at this map.
This is a map of the current funding distribution happening in Vermont.
Not intended distribution changes.
That's that's what I'm understanding.

Smythe, Collin 1:17:18
Yes.

victor davila- slingshot 1:17:20
Is there with this?
Information. Is there an intent to then modify spending within the Department of Transit for Vermont on how to better adjust?
For balancing out this or is this like what?
What is the plan for this data?
I guess I want to get a more concrete idea.

Pelletier, Dave 1:17:40
Yeah, at the moment. Yeah, I can take that.

Smythe, Collin 1:17:41
If I let Dave. Yeah, take that.

Pelletier, Dave 1:17:43
I mean, at the moment this isn't just in baseline information to inform ourselves about about where the investments are going. And I think maybe Carly can speak ultimate or can speak to the environmental justice law itself and sort of the intent that's that's that it embodies but for.

1:17:49
OK.

Pelletier, Dave 1:18:03
The moment we're we're just trying to learn about what what we've got going on and and where, where things are being spent.

1:18:11
Yes, thank you. Yes, victor.
So the short and long answer is that these baselines spending reports.
Need to be analyzed by the agencies so that there's clarity with regards to where

funds are going with regards to these particular expenditures that were captured. So that then into the future.
The agencies are in a position to establish a goal of proportionate distribution and goal of proportionality is what the statutory language is.
So therefore, I'm like doing air quotes.
So that's the purpose of this exercise, but at this point, what the agencies concentrated their attention on which was.
The mandate in law is to capture.
Those direct investments.
That agencies has have the discretion.
To you know that their discretionary funds that provide certain benefits to certain geographic areas. And so that's the information that the agencies captured.
The next step will be analyzing the data.
And coming up with conclusions regarding the spending on these programs and then later down the line.
The law asks for a goal of proportionality.

VS **victor davila- slingshot** 1:19:51
Thank you for that clarification.
Last question.
Is there I? I would be curious if there's any specific data on kind of density of car ownership in specific districts and regions.
Is that available data that you guys have access to because that would also like, but looking at this, what I'm looking at like way of public transit funding is going and where pedestrian and bicycle funding is going. I'm wondering if those are in areas that do have less.
Dense car ownership.
And if that's another part of proportionality that could potentially be considered.

PD **Pelletier, Dave** 1:20:27
Colin, you're probably better qualified from some of your previous work experiences to answer that.
I know, I know.
There is census data available on that, but I'll let Colin respond directly.

Smythe, Collin 1:20:39
Yeah, I think you're right, Dave. And I don't know, I I'm assuming.
You could get that by census block group, but I think that's probably as kind of fine grained as that exists, at least that I can think of for a data set.
That.
Yeah, I I think like Dave mentioned, I think the census is probably the like household survey data is probably where that information would have to come from.
And I I don't remember now, but I think that's a more kind of specific ask in the census.
And so it does not come out like with every with every release, if I recall.
But I'm I can't remember for sure.
So but yes.
That is a a metric. I think that we could probably add in there, at least at some level of granularity.
That's a good point.

1:21:40
Colin, if the question doesn't come out with every census release, like if you're, if you're correct in that, does that have some sort of impact on the margin of error of the data?

Smythe, Collin 1:21:55
Well, I think that would be, I mean we didn't incorporate that into this into this, but I would imagine, yes, because it would just be older data like that. We'd have to look at.

1:22:01
Mm-hmm.
Yeah.

Smythe, Collin 1:22:09
But I I'm not. I'm not clear enough or I'm not remembering enough. Like what? What the actual dates of that kind of release are? I know there's there was some information that was similar to that.

That either was like an add on that we paid for.
Or one time and are not getting anymore to some survey data or. But I think there might be some metric like that in the just general Census too.
But I'd have to look back at it.
Sorry to kind of be speculating here.

1:22:40
No. Sorry, Colin, I'm asking you to speculate.

SC **Smythe, Collin** 1:22:42
No, you're fine.

1:22:43
So it's not your fault.

SC **Smythe, Collin** 1:22:46
Not a problem.
All right. Any any other? Any other questions?
Great. Well, I guess I will turn it.

BK **Barrett, Kim** 1:22:59
I think we're going.

SC **Smythe, Collin** 1:23:02
Back over here.

BK **Barrett, Kim** 1:23:08
Thank you for that great questions.
Does anyone have any thoughts?
Otherwise, I think we're right on time for the agenda.
So that's great, but I'll just give some space to see if anyone has anything else to share and then we'll.
Break for public comment.
On the call.
That's not on the AC or IC that wants to ask a question or share anything.

See.
OK, doesn't look like it.
Alright, let's take 10 minutes.
Come back at 11:40 and then we can keep going.

1:24:05
Thank you.

Barrett, Kim 1:35:12
Hello everyone.
If everyone is ready, we're gonna continue on with the presentations.
I'm gonna put the the next order.
Like the presentation order in the chart, so everyone has it.

Willard, Abbey 1:36:43
OK. Kim, do you want me to just go get started, OK.

Barrett, Kim 1:36:47
Thanks. Yep.

Willard, Abbey 1:36:48
Could I?
I'm also gonna do a screen share if I could.

Barrett, Kim 1:36:52
Yep, sounds good.

Willard, Abbey 1:37:01
Let me see here.
I'm only on one screen today so.
Here.
I'll see them.
And you still see them?
I'm sorry.
I'm gonna see if I can. You still see it in display mode?

Barrett, Kim 1:37:30
Yeah.

Willard, Abbey 1:37:33
OK, I'm gonna give it a try. All right, so.
Yeah. Excited to join the ranks of sharing sort of our environmental benefits baseline spending report process.
Sure, if this is showing in the right way. It's funny.
See if I can.
I want to just start by just showing the Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets Mission, which I think was helpful that other folks shared as well.
So our mission is to facilitate support and encourage the growth and viability of agriculture in Vermont while protecting the Vermont working landscape, human health, animal health and plant health, as well as consumers and the environment.
So that gives you a sense of the collective work that happens across our agency.
We're a small enough agency of about 155 folks.
That we don't have departments, but instead we have 6 divisions.
So that's how our organization is structured a little bit differently than some of our other agency partners.
Sharing a little bit about the.
Process that we went through, so we created environmental benefits spending subcommittee at the Agency of Agriculture.
That group started meeting in June of 2025.
And that had a few representatives across different divisions at the agency.
And we used that team as some of the other folks have shared to review the various programs that we have.
So we started with just like an inventory of the different services and programs that we provide at the Agency of Agriculture.
We used the guidance that was provided to help us create our own criteria of how we were gonna decide what to include across the various programs and services that our agency offers Vermonters.
We made the decision that we were going to use the data that we already had available to us and so we used our financial reporting system, which we use at the agency vision, and that program provides the actual payments that are made to

individual businesses through our GR.
But doesn't include contracts. So right off the bat we knew that that was going to be a distinction of what was captured.
We.
Wanted to make sure following the guidance that we were only considering of all the services and programs that the Agency of Agriculture offered, those that offered a direct environmental benefit to individuals. So many of our programs have an economic development intent and so we considered those to be.
An indirect environmental benefit because their intended purpose was for economic development.
Then we wanted to ensure that the direct that the investment that was being made was a direct investment to an individual. So money that went to an organization that was then distributed across to other organizations or numerous individuals, we did not capture those.
We considered those an indirect investment to Vermonters.
And then we wanted to ensure that the investment could be tracked or traced to a specific Vermont location.
And so again, we needed that to be a payment that was direct to an individual that we could track in our financial reporting system of vision. And then as others have shared, we wanted this not to be part of our one time appropriations that we may have rece.
Through the legislature as a one time program or through ARPA or IRA, investment of federal funds.
And so again, we were looking at our typical programs and investments received.
Agency.
So what?
That turned out was we reviewed 45 programs and efforts across the agency.
We identified that eleven of those programs qualified as we interpreted the guidance for this reporting process.
And then we took all those programs and we organized them by the categorized environmental benefit types and within the Agency of Agriculture, we had those eleven programs where most directly associated with the two environmental.
Benefit categories of clean air, water and land.
Or safe nutritious food.
So the quick kind of assessment across the three fiscal years of fiscal year 2324 and

25 was that based on that criteria as we just described, we had $26.5 million as an agency that was directed in environmental benefit investments across.
That three-year period when looking at each of the three years, 2324 and 25 separately, it was between.
Eight and $9 million approximately invested.
Annually.
And that was to individuals or organizations across 193 towns.
So what that meant was that we primarily captured grants to farms.
That were associated directly with an environmental benefit and that they received that direct funding.
What that meant that was not captured in this was programs that were focused on economic impact, as I mentioned.
Statewide or regional environmental benefit investments, because we couldn't pinpoint that to a specific Vermont location or to an individual and then a majority of the technical assistance and the regulatory compliance work that our agency does was also not captured in this inventory. And one of the learned less.
And we'll talk about that in a in a later slide.
Is that we recognize that much of our agency's work is in.
About 80% of the work that our agency does.
In the compliance and enforcement arena.
So then we started.
So we had all of that data captured by our business office probably done by October and then the process was we needed to share that information with leadership.
We needed to start working on the narrative interpretation of the results.
Create a website so that information could be more publicly accessible and then decide how we really wanted to accessibly represent the results.
And that was an important part.
To our team, especially given the intent behind the EJ law, was that we didn't want the information to be too overwhelming and too confusing for the various audiences.
We wanted to ensure that we were protecting personally identifying information in any of our reporting of the results.
We wanted to make sure that the data was organized in a way that was really digestible for people to be able to manipulate.
The data and play with it and sort of seek out what it was that they were particularly interested in. So we ended up.

Deciding to create an agency of agriculture environmental justice webpage which had not existed at the Agency of Agriculture previously.
We also decided that we wanted to do some visualization of the data and so I can share that, but we decided to do both some pivot tables that allowed people to sort. Of anyone to be able to sort the data by program by environmental benefit type by year, by county, by geography. And then we had some existing data that we could do similar to AOT, some data visualization across the state of where investments were made from a impact rad.
Perspective.
We also as an agency felt like it was a really important to do a nod to the amount of inspection and compliance work that our agency does.
And so we actually included in our report a full appendix that summarized the programs and services that didn't qualify per our interpretation of the criteria for inclusion in this report, but we didn't.
We wanted to use this as an opportunity to say that this agency still does a lot of environmental benefit work.
It just may not have qualified for inclusion in the calculation of this baseline report.
So when and if you take a look at our report, you'll see there's a whole section of non qualified inspection technical assistance in granting programs captured in the report.
Let's see.
So under kind of lessons learned.
Actually, maybe before.
Yeah, I think that's fine.
We.
Did include.
Nondiscretionary funds.
In the report.
Acknowledging that.
Kind of like Bob said around agency of Education and others identified most of our resources are from federal funding or through state appropriation, and we don't have a lot of discretion around how those resources are spent. This sort of like captured typically in statute.
We also learned that many this was the time period where.
Much of the work in the Agricultural Development Division, which is actually a division that I work in, were one time funding, so there was a lot of U.S. Department

of Agriculture, New State dollars and Federal American Rescue Plan Act dollars that were made as investments in the AG.
At that time and again, most of those were not captured in this data poll.
We did also just acknowledge that we do make a lot of investments to private businesses and so those are mostly the the data that was captured in this baseline report.
Umm.
The quantify the the impact radius was something that was really complex for us to consider and we really didn't feel that we had the currently available tools or systems to really accurately assess this across all of our quantifiable programs.
But we had a few examples that we captured on the website and in the report.
Where we could, we did have available data to quantify like food may have been distributed to a food bank or to a particular entity and we knew what their distribution radius was.
And so then that way we were able to identify both direct environmental investment that was made.
And also kind of like the area of impact, their impact radius that could was associated with that?
As others have shared, and as the the cover letter you know also reiterated.
Looking at an inventory in the programs, pulling the data, doing a fair amount of preparation of the data of what was truly quantifiable, and then figuring out how to discuss this and share this in a really transparent but also accessible way was a really time consuming task for.
Those 3 fiscal years and we don't have the number of hours that were invested because that's not something that our agency currently tracks. But we know that.
It was time of six staff.
Across eight months and on many occasions it was probably.
30 to 50% of that FTE per week spent working on this task for at least a period of time within those eight months.
And I think to that point, it was really important for our agency to spend some time really thinking about how the direct environmental benefits and investments were.
Situated within the work of the Agency of Agriculture, but the investment of staff and capacity that was committed over this eight-month period really doesn't feel like we have the sustainability for that. We also like logistically have a big part of our team that are considered limited service.

Positions, which means they're funded with very specific dollars and a lot of those dollars are shifting and changing as a result of the loss of the federal funds that that our agency and programs have experienced over the past couple of.
Since January.
So just a few more slides, I just wanted to share.
This is one of the outcomes, so this is the web page that was created for environmental justice.
So I'm not expecting that you would.
Necessarily read this, but you can sort of see that we created a home page and then three widgets that relate to the three primary deliverables related to EJ. So one being the you know access to environmental benefits, which is where this baseline report, the pivot tables and the.
Power BI.
Kind of maps. Heat maps are then the middle widget is public feedback and input.
That's where the community engagement efforts would be captured on our website.
And then the third widget is equitably sharing environmental burdens and under that section is where currently the civil rights and environmental justice complaint reports are posted.
So this is the first time that our agency had.
Shared any of this information publicly so that.
Was all as of the March 10th date.
Just really quickly.
I don't know if it's of interest to Advisory Council members to just be able to see what some of the results looked like and how we categorized it.
This is just one way.
It's not necessarily the right way or the best way, but we did three different tables that we included in the report to kind of summarize the data as best we thought was valuable. So this first table.
Table one shows.
The investments by program that are organized by environmental benefit types.
So you can see the clean air, water and land is in the light purple and the nutritious food is in the light blue.
And then you can see across the three fiscal years what the investments were by program, by environmental benefit type and in total Table 3.
Was we wanted to kind of like put this into some degree of context and other folks

have asked questions and agencies and entities have talked about kind of context around their data.
We wanted to try to show what kind of like proportion of these environmental benefit investments were of the entire agency's base budget. Each of the three years. So you can see the, you know, fiscal year 2324 and 25 data that shows what are. Quantifiable investments were broken out by environmental benefit type and then the remainder being.
The non quantifiable investments as an agency.
So just thought that that could be of interest to some if they wanted to understand little bit more context around the data and then this table.
Table two was our geographic representation and we chose to do it by county because we made investments in 193 towns over those three years like that didn't feel like a very accessible chart of information. We don't obviously have the mapping tool yet or the.
Census block information available so.
We rolled it up into counties and so you can see by county by environmental benefit type across the three fiscal years what are environmental benefit investments were, what I think was interesting and a take away for us that kind of feels like it's working towards this environmental benefits focused.
Population, I mean environmental justice focused population.
Is that our greatest investments are made in?
Not surprisingly, but kind of reassuringly, in our primary ad counties.
So Franklin, Addison and Orleans counties, not our most populated counties in Vermont of, say Chittenden, Washington and Rutland counties.
So while we don't have kind of like the full census block tracking, we were at least able to like.
Sense check, you know, did these investments make sense given kind of the work and nature of the Agency of Agriculture? And then the last slide, just very briefly thinking of what the next steps are and everyone has already mentioned?
And you know, preparing that proportionality plan by July.
I really find this Advisory Council sort of request for us to share the results with you really meaningful, because I think we've all used different processes even though we had similar guidance.
I think it's really we're really open to the feedback that we might receive on whether we followed the guidance as expected and on the accessibility of the report.

In the data that we've shared and if there's any improvements or changes that we should make in our process and reporting.
Going forward.
One of the things that I think it was also reiterated by our presentation of this is that we all used somewhat different vocabulary and processes around what was included in the reports. And I think that can make it challenging to come.
And then.
And really, ideally, I'd love to see us look at some exploration of some uniform metrics.
You know again like do.
Is it important to know environmental benefits per program or by town, or across all programs? Or, you know, by environmental benefit type, you know those types of data points that we chose to kind of capture in our report, but I don't know if that's what's feeling most import.
To everyone.
So that's it from Agency of agriculture.
Thanks for thanks for listening.

BK **Barrett, Kim** 1:56:34
Thanks, Abby.
That was wonderful.
I just wanna give some space to see if Advisory Council members have any questions.

WA **Willard, Abbey** 1:56:50
Was that helpful?
Like did that give like a better sense of like what the task was and how at least one version of it?
How an agency an entity approached it.

WB **Watson, Britaney** 1:57:13
Hi, this is Britney.
I found it helpful. Thank you.

WA **Willard, Abbey** 1:57:16
You're welcome, fitny.

RH **rich holschuh** 1:57:20
I think I think obviously going through this the second time now.

WA **Willard, Abbey** 1:57:20
Marriage.

RH **rich holschuh** 1:57:26
And it's still early.
It's been really hard to find ways to approach this angles of approach and like the agencies are doing what they can.
Yeah.

WA **Willard, Abbey** 1:57:41
Thanks rich.

VG **Vinson, Grace** 1:57:49
All right. Am I up?

BK **Barrett, Kim** 1:57:51
Yeah, I think you're up.

VG **Vinson, Grace** 1:57:54
Hi. Grace Vinson, environmental officer Accd here.
Very hard to follow you, Abby.
I just have a few quick slides, so I'm gonna share my screen.
So, oh gosh, I can't see anyone now, so if.

BK **Barrett, Kim** 1:58:19
Yeah, I'll let you know if anyone has.

VG **Vinson, Grace** 1:58:19
Are you still?
Can you still? OK, cool.

Barrett, Kim 1:58:21
Yeah, we can see you and we can see your sides and I'll let you know if anyone picks their hands up or anything.

Vinson, Grace 1:58:26
Awesome. It's just two slides. So it'll be quick. So I work at accd, the Agency of Commerce and Community development. We're one of the covered agencies.
Our mission is pretty straightforward.
We help Vermonters improve their quality of life and build strong communities.
So right there you can see that a lot of our programs and initiatives have environmental benefits.
So for the purposes of the report, for our baseline spending report, we looked at the hierarchy of accd.
And sort of split it out as this flow chart shows.
So there's accd, and then there's four sort of departments, I guess, for lack of a better word, Department of Housing, Community Development, Department of Economic Development and then Department of Tourism and Marketing.
And then we also have historic preservation.
So those four divisions are the main divisions we looked at and then within.
DHCD we looked at.
3 divisions.
Within DHCD, which was Vermont community development program community planning and revitalization and housing, and these are all spelled out in the report.
But I just wanted to give that overview of how we're sort of structured.
So this is just our very.
High level summary slides so our report process was led by me, the environmental officer and the environmental specialist. Similar to what was discussed in the other presentations.
We didn't have a lot of staff capacity or time to dedicate a loan to this report and I did not have the authority or.
Yeah, I didn't have the authority to sort of redirect any staff time, so that was.
A big challenge in terms of just me and Becca Walsh, who's the environmental specialist sort of being responsible for pulling this whole thing together.
One thing that really helped was the other covered agencies submitting. You know,

the templates that Abby submitted and stuff like that.
But I just wanted to flag that that this first year was a big lift because it was just the two of us and we were, you know, developing the template.
So our process was.
We looked at all the programs that.
That could be exported from vision, which is our main financial system, as some other agencies use.
We have a a interesting range of programs in terms of how the money is dispersed or how it's even allocated.
We have someone time programs that the you know general fund or the statehouse sort of says here accd here's, you know, a pilot program, but it's just for this year. So we have some of those. We have a lot of annual grant programs.
That we allocate funding to municipalities from, but then we also have the Department of Economic Development, which is very different and sort of provides more direct incentives or business incentives and tax incentives as well.
So.
We we met with program staff and said, you know what are your programs that.
Provide a direct environmental benefit and again.
Program staff were limited in their capacity, so you know, some of them did contribute information, but DED in particular Department of Economic Development did not have basically any capacity to contribute to the development of this report.
So that's sort of a big.
Information gap I would say Becca and I used our own discretion in deciding what what programs to include and what benefits those programs had.
So that's a department that has less programmatic data than you'll see in other programs.
So we will backing up.
I missed this step.
1st, we met with our financial program staff and they said sure we can get you the data from vision.
But we just need the program list.
That's when we then met with the program staff to identify the that program list. We took it back to our financial staff. They got us the raw financial data and then we sort of.
Formatted it into the report that we submitted.

So that was our process. And then in terms of environmental benefits.
We found that our programs had five major benefits and that's outlined on this slide.
So obviously a lot of our programs are focused around either rehabbing housing or new construction of housing. So healthy homes and buildings is a big one that we that our programs, that healthy homes and buildings is a big benefit that our programs provide training and funding like I.
Said we have a lot of annual grants that we distribute either to municipalities through competitive program or we also distribute grants to Regional Planning Commission.
So those provide environmental benefit in terms of distributing training and funding.
Public transportation. We have a lot of those programs, including, you know, the Downtown Transportation Fund as an example of one clean renewable energy.
The CPNR, which is community planning and revitalization, has a specific environmental or specific electric vehicle infrastructure program that their transport their.
Partnering with Vtrans on I believe to sort of actually like set up EV charging infrastructure throughout Vermont.
So that's cool.
And then fulfilling and dignified green jobs, I would say those are more for the DED program.
So an example of one of those is the state trade expansion program.
So that's our basic process.
Oh, and I'm gonna put in the chat a link to our report on.
The EJ SharePoint.
Any questions?
Sorry, I'll just add one more thing.
For context, this is sort of outlined in the report, but one thing Beck and I sort of struggled with in terms of housing money is a lot of these housing projects, you know, require dozens, if not more funding sources. And our funding sources, a small part of that.
Project, but it's sort of the the lever that allows the project to go forward.
So in future years, we want to sort of showcase that more in terms of like.
What did our funding allow to, you know, be built, if that makes sense?

BK **Barrett, Kim** 2:05:41
Great job, grace and Becca.

You all did really awesome work here.
You all came a good way.
So we're proud of you.
Does does anyone else have questions or thoughts feedback.
But if not, we can move on to public safety.

Smith, Stephanie A 2:06:09
All right.
Thank you, Ken.
Let me share my screen. I have a couple of slides.
They're very simple and basic, so just wanted to give people something to look at.
As I talk through this, so hi everybody.
So I'm Stephanie Smith.
I'm the deputy director at Vermont Emergency Management, so I'm in one of the divisions of the Department of Public Safety, which the primary divisions are Vermont State Police.
The where I work the forensics lab.
And the division of fire safety, it was the big divisions about fall under public safety.
We reviewed 44 distinct funding programs, so that was any of the funding program.
Any programs that were received and we're putting out funding during the three-year look back period.
So I met with our finance staff, had them put together the list of what those programs were, the high level provision that they could pull.
On the programs and the financials for the full list of programs.
And then worked with the the program managers within every section for any any of the funding programs to get an an overview of what the program was, what they used it for. Sorry.
What they use the funding for, whether it would meet the requirements here. So we landed on three programs that have distinct environmental benefits and similar to other agencies. We were looking at a bunch of different things that are outlined in the spreadsheet in the report.
Such as whether the their discretionary or not.
So if the state is actually deciding what to fund, or if we're funding what we're told to fund, if it's direct funding.
So our report, like a lot of the others for this first round, really focuses on that direct

funding that's going to a project and not funding for staff time.
And funding.
That's reoccurring so similar similarly to some of these others like Abby spoke about with ARPA funding, we've got programs that are more one time pots and that we've received a little bit of funding.
And but really, what focusing on one of those programs that we're receiving over time so that we can really push how we how we allocate that funding.
The the programs that we just three programs in in greater detail, the rest of the programs, they're all included in the report with a quick overview of what the program is and based on our review why it ended up not being addressed in the report in detail, so.
Of those 44 million, we're talking about $461 million.
The three programs addressed in detail over this three-year period. The funding under those programs that was direct was about 11.6 million.
And that's not allocated funding that's funding that actually went out the door during that period.
So a lot of these are projects that are in process where especially funding following the flooding in 2023 and 24, which I'll get into in a little bit more detail.
Those projects are started based on the end of this period, but a lot of work happened directly following that.
So some of the projects, this is just the beginning of that project and then the full the document includes a full list of all of the projects that.
Received any funding during this period, so a piece of that project, even though it's not done and it'll still be continuing in future years.
So what's the funding that has actually been spent on work already?
OK.
So the three programs that rose to the level of meeting the requirements based on our review.
Were all funded programs that were funded with FEMA dollars that are managed by Vermont Emergency Management under our Hazard Mitigation program.
So there's three main buckets of that.
One is the Hazard Mitigation Grant program that's funding that directly follows federally declared disasters in the state.
So based on the scale of a federally declared disaster, we get a certain amount of money for immediate needs, for public infrastructure, for that sort of work. And then

in addition to that, based on the scale we get funding to use in our housing mitigation program and I.
Explain a little more about that too.
But that's really the House of Radiation grant program.
So in following the flooding in 2023, that was the largest pot of funding we have ever seen, but we've had funding almost every year since 2011 to some degree in that program. But it changes based on the disasters that we're seeing.
The second category is prediscer mitigation funding.
So there's different programs that fall under this one code within our system.
We get some congressional directed spending which that is non discretionary.
We don't get to decide how to spend that.
We're told how to.
Brick, which is the building resilient infrastructure and communities program and then what predated that program is the pre disaster mitigation program.
So that's all lumped into this PDM bucket and that's annual funding. So usually we have a small amount of funding we can spend every year that's allocated across the country. We get a PS small piece.
And then there's the opportunity to apply for much larger competitive projects.
And based on the competitive criteria, we have not been successful so far.
And applying for those larger dollars.
So this ends up being a fairly small amount of money each year, and then the flood mitigation.
Oh, I pulled up brick on here. The last one addressed in the report is the flood mitigation assistance Swift current program, which is also disaster based. When we receive that following flooding in 23 and 24.
And it's a little bit more of a one time plot, but because we have a little bit of year over year and we're addressing these others, we include that as well.
OK.
So I talked about Hauser mitigation funding, but just to take a quick step back on what this high level of what we're looking at has remediation funding is used to reduce our future long term risk.
So predominantly what we're doing is addressing flood hazards and using the funding proactively to give the river space, give the river space to access its floodplain. When water is high. The intent is really to remove risk before it happens.
So we're reducing long term vulnerability.

The reality is based on that Hazard Mitigation Grant program thought that I talked about.
The majority of our funding comes after a disaster.
So that's when we actually have funding available and the project types.
So this is the sort of stuff that we fund under these different programs. The majority of what we're funding are property buyouts, floodplain restoration projects, where we're moving, removing fill, restoring flood plains so that the river can access its floodplains. And upsizing infrastructure like bridges and culverts.
This is a landslide buyout.
That was one of the ones that we purchased a few years ago.
So the report includes a map of where all funding was allocated across Vermont under these programs.
Often those are focusing communities that have experienced flooding in the past because that's where the interest is in doing this work, and the report also gives an overview of our Project review committee who's on it.
How they make decisions around what projects get funded and predominantly that's going, that's funding that goes to municipalities. So government governmental entities are eligible.
As sub applicants for this funding.
And then we've other people today have talked a little bit about this need for the difference between direct and indirect funding. One of the future considerations we're looking at in particular for this report is how we address that indirect spending.
So it's not addressed in detail in this report. The example I'll give you is FEMA's public assistance program.
So when we have those federally declared disasters, public assistance pays for emergency needs on the ground when a disaster is happening.
But predominantly for replacing infrastructure, upsizing culverts and bridges that were damaged, removing debris, repairing public buildings and infrastructure.
So in the case of a program like this, this is the vast majority of the funding that comes through DPS as a whole is through this program.
And we're not controlling what we fund. It's it's just, it's determined by what's damaged in a flood event. But because it's based on those damages, but we do control our own technical assistance.
What we're doing?
Between disasters to ensure that communities are prepared, how we're supporting

communities following a disaster.
So that's the sort of stuff that is a lot squishier, doesn't get captured here under that indirect category, but is something that we'd like to address better going forward.
So that's what I had.
I'll stop there and happy to answer any questions if there are any.

BK **Barrett, Kim** 2:14:48
Any questions?
10 let's go to Claire.
Thank you, Stephanie.

MC **McIlvennie, Claire** 2:15:03
Thanks Kim.
I went rogue, I guess maybe with the exception of Jenny and I do not have slides.
I just thought I would talk through at a high level some of like the core highlights from our report.
Which really I think our report covers a lot of what's already been talked about, like who the department is, what our work area is, the process we took to conduct this analysis, what we understood the requirements to be and then.
Some core findings, which I'll highlight briefly today and then we have an appendix which I'll also talk through in terms of some of the programs that we identified as meeting some of the criteria for the baseline spending report, but not enough of that criteria to consider them as.
Like a baseline assessment for where we might wanna.
Think about directing investments in the future.
So just to start with.
For the Department of Public Services, I'm and I should say I'm Claire working one of our nine divisions.
But the work of the Department of Public Service, we're standalone department, we don't sit within a broader agency and state government, but we really work in the areas of energy, telecommunications and some limited water and wastewater energy services.
So we do.
A lot of planning around those areas for the state in addition to public advocacy and regulatory work.

Specific to the largely utility services that are being offered in those areas and we very occasionally deliver public facing programs, which I'll talk through in a minute. We have roughly 60 employees, so we're relatively small in nine divisions like I mentioned in our typical operating budget is about $12 million plus any federal or one time funds that we might receive above and beyond that.
And when I think about.
The work of the department and the environmental benefits that were named in the environmental justice law, the ones that really, I think, resonate the most with the work we do, is advancing affordable and clean renewable energy, healthy homes and businesses through some of the work we advocate for.
For example, through weatherization services and fulfilling and dignified green jobs, we do some work in workforce development as well.
And then there are other.
Areas of our work that aren't explicitly named as an environmental benefit in the law, but I think still technically qualify under the broader definition, like supporting energy efficiency of buildings, making sure we have resilient and reliable grid infrastructure in the state, and then things like making sure we.
Have access equitable access to adaptive telecommunications technologies or other energy infrastructure?
So kind of a high level overview.
Review of the department.
And our process to conduct this work.
Is very similar to those that I that others have talked through.
So I work directly with each of our divisions to better understand their scope of work, which actually was really interesting.
I don't know if others felt this way, but I feel like we can get so siloed even in a tiny department.
It was fun to like, check in and learn and help like cross some of those silos and think about how we can work together more collaboratively.
Going forward, but we had kind of three core criteria that we were looking to identify programs that fall under, you know those that directly invested funds in work areas. That deliver direct environmental benefits and that obviously those direct investments fell within the three-year reporting period. And then for any programs we identified, we went through kind of a list of filters to see what would qualify for, including in like a baseline.

Assessment of our spending over those three years that we were thinking about and that was things like discretionary versus non discretionary funds one time versus recurring funds.
Availability of data, like others have talked about.
And.
Our report highlights.
Kind of three core things that came out of that inventory and I don't know if anyone actually mentioned it, but the guidance that was issued had kind of included two core components of this reporting.
There was the qualitative kind of narrative reports around all the process work and then a data inventory that.
We interpreted to be like programs that met the inclusion.
For like a baseline investment period and we ended up determining that there were no programs that we ran that qualified to be included in that baseline assessment.
And so we only had a narrative.
Report, which is different from some agencies and that really stems from the three findings. I wanted to just highlight and talk through briefly today.
The first was that as I mentioned.
And we occasionally run public facing kind of direct investment programs, but really the bulk of the department's work occurs through indirect investments of staff time.
So we we have historically not run very many like kind of public facing direct investment like incentives and grant programs.
I'll talk about that a little bit more in a moment, but a lot of our work is really.
Staff time based and that was optional to report on this.
In this round, but also would be really challenging for us to do with the current systems we have at a very precise level, so.
It's just kind of a big finding as we like talk through all the divisions.
And then related to that sort of the second big piece is that a lot of that staff time focuses on a regulatory work. I think like Abby had highlighted and you know others have talked about.
Which again really focuses on.
Evaluating and.
Times regulating the work of the utilities in Vermont.
So all of our gas and well are one gas and all of our electric utilities are efficiency utilities.

And then other other types of work. And so that's like.
Like like.
Looking at are the rates that electric utilities in Vermont charging their customers? Are they reasonable? And then advocating at times before the public utility Commission about whether or not they are just and reasonable, and if not, how they should be adjusted? And a lot of that work, we don't have direct authority to direct the way that utilities spend their money.
It's really an advocacy role, so.
That was a big, I think.
Theme that came up when we were evaluating the scope of our work and a big uncertainty as to whether or not that kind of regulatory work would really fall in this reporting requirement because again, it's where we conduct a lot of advocacy, but we don't always directly influ.
Or have control over the decision that is made about how utilities spend their money.
So that's an area I think for our future work for us is as we dive deeper into this.
And potentially one where some clarity could be helpful in terms of guidance moving forward. If there are similarities in other agencies.
And then the last binding I wanted to highlight was that we did identify a couple programs within two of our divisions, the State Energy Office and our telecommunications division that met those kind of Core 3 core baseline criteria of making direct investments that deliver direct environmental benefits and.
The reporting period, but that we.
Chose to exclude from our quantitative baseline for a couple reasons.
The first was that all of the telecommunications programs were considered non discretionary, so like many others have mentioned, they're directed in statute.
They're not often even included in our base operating budget and they're funded by an external funding source. So we chose to exclude them for that reason. And then as many others have touched on.
The programs in RC Energy office are all one time funded.
Largely through federal funding and sometimes through other one time pots of money. And so like I highlighted, the department hasn't historically run a lot of those public facing programs.
And I think this recent kind of phase with COVID relief and then the Biden administration's focus on energy and climate funding has really shifted that in a big way.

And as others have teed up, is just very uncertain about whether or not it will continue going forward.
So we we talked a lot about the pros and cons of including some of those investments in a detailed report.
The one of the pros being that any programs we run in our current structure will likely be one time funded.
So there's definitely an argument for saying we should include some of them in a report like this, but the other con, which we ended up.
Kind of carried the weight.
Was that it's just so uncertain about the future of those funding sources that it didn't feel.
Accurate to build a baseline that would then influence the way we invest funding in the future based on those fundings.
So what we decided to do in that realm was take kind of a middle ground. And actually I think Abbie mentioned this. The one thing I'll share.
If I can pull it up quickly.
Which is that our report does include a program appendix where we at least tried to summarize each of those programs that we excluded and offered.
Hopefully what you're seeing is my report and not something else I accidentally shared with you, but you know a short description of the program.
The the types of services it offers, like for example, incentives to upgrade your home heating equipment or.
A subscription to a community solar array that will give you a discount on your electric bill.
What benefit the program delivers, why we chose to exclude it from a quantitative baseline.
And then we did provide the high level fiscal year investment.
So we did provide at least some data on the program.
So yeah, that is my brief summary of our baseline spending report and happy to take any questions.
Thanks.

BK **Barrett, Kim** 2:26:22
Great job, Craig.

Schilling, Elizabeth 2:26:31
Should I go last to go?

Barrett, Kim 2:26:32
Yep, jump in.

Schilling, Elizabeth 2:26:35
Alright, thanks everyone for hanging in.
Hang in with all these presentations. I'm Elizabeth.
Elizabeth Schilling with the Vermont public utility.
The Commission regulates the Public Utilities in the state of Vermont, where a small entity we have less than 30 full time staff.
So like the land Use Review Board, the Commission does not make direct investments.
We don't administer grants or loans or make any payments.
We have a budget with de minimis discretionary spending. The majority of our budget goes towards staff compensation.
And staff don't dedicate significant time to providing indirect investments like technical assistance, capacity building, education outreach or service provision.
A lot of those roles are fulfilled by the Department of Public Service and Claire, just whatever some of their work.
So most of the Commission's work is the product of a utility or a developer petitions related to.
Renewables development or utility rate cases and in those instances?
The Commission is operating much like a court.
They're a lot like a case in their parties and testimony and evidence, and the Commission's staff who are hearing officers in those cases, can only communicate with parties through formal processes, and that's why we have we don't have significant indirect investments and those aren't tracked.
So Despite that, the Commission went and reviewed the Vermont statutes to identify utility programs that we regulate where the legislature has dictated that utility.
The customer should have equitable opportunities to participate in and benefit from that programming, which is consistent with the EJ goal of proportionate spending on environmental justice focused populations.

So we identified 2 program areas.
That was the energy efficiency utility program. Spending on residential customers on the electric distribution, utility spending on Vermont renewable Energy, Standard Tier 3 energy transformation projects for residential customers.
So those programs provide money for things like weatherization.
Then she pumps and other beneficial electrification, such as incentives for EVs and other electrical equipment.
So the utility specifically report on that residential spending and then within that there are specific metrics and goals for program spending on customers with low income. As you all know, individuals with low income are included within the definition of environmental justice focus population.
So we hope that the continued tracking.
Reporting on this funding will help to meet that goal.
A proportionate spending in EJ focused populations.
And while we don't have the geographic.
Data on where that spending is happening and we we know that.
Large portions of the spending are going towards customers with low income.
I didn't have any slides either.
Sorry about that.
Have to take any question.

2:29:57
What now?

BK **Barrett, Kim** 2:30:00
Thanks, Elizabeth.
Someone at catamount.
Has something to share?

2:30:08
Never mind, I think I just pressed the wrong button.

BK **Barrett, Kim** 2:30:11
Oh.

2:30:11
Thank you.

Barrett, Kim 2:30:13
OK.
All right, so this was wonderful. I think we should just take like 5 minutes cameras off just to, you know, regroup a little bit.
We there's a lot of information shared.
We are super appreciative to Advisory Council members for being here and thank you to all the IEC members who presented, but just want to give us 5 minutes to clear our heads and then.
Move forward.
Together.
Let's do that.
Alright.
Carla or Juliet, do you have anything to share before we move on?

2:37:24
Yes, thank you.
This is Carla. In the Catamount room at the agency of Natural Resources. And I would like to 1st thank you. The Advisory Council for their feedback in when we were reviewing the environmental benefits pending guidance.
That was really helpful for us to shape.
What these reports now look like.
And I also would like to share my gratitude with you all. All of the Interagency Committee members, the work that you've done, the time that you put towards gathering the information, having conversations with program staff with your leadership, with management teams.
Then, taking all of that data and capturing it.
And writing this report, it's been a Herculean task and it's been a great learning lesson for me.
I hope for all of us and also is a great testament to what can be done if there's the will.
You know, we accomplished a lot with very little.

Now that is not to say that this is sustainable.
I think you know something that we should continue raising awareness around is the lack of resources.
How underfunded this work is and the opportunities that exist to communicate this broadly to the General Assembly and beyond.
But I just wanted to take time to thank you all.
All for the magnificent work you've done. Even those agencies that do not really fall squarely on the framework that the law is speaking to the PUC, the PSD and the LERD. Thank you very much for all of your work.

BK **Barrett, Kim** 2:39:55
So now we're gonna move on to finishing up the meeting.
I'm gonna share my screen for one last slide and then pass it to Richard.

2:40:06
Thanks Kim.
All right.
This has been.

BK **Barrett, Kim** 2:40:15
Thank you.
It didn't share the right spot.
One SEC.

2:40:21
No worries. I'll just say a couple things before the screen chairs.
This has been a really from my perspective at least, and I hope that folks feel the same way. I feel like this was a really enlightening meeting.
Despite how much time our unit has spent talking with so many of these agencies to prepare for these reports, I feel like I'm constantly learning new things.
Obviously I don't work for you guys so.
So there's always more to learn, and so I I just really, I feel very connected to you all in having gotten some of the nitty gritty details of this reporting process. And I really appreciate everybody for kind of holding out and sitting through this meeting because I think.

Really valuable, albeit long.
There's a lot of information.
But with that said, kind of in the spirit of feeling connected to each other.
Or finding ways to be in closer relationships with each other in this work. I think that that it's a really valuable part of this work that we that, especially Advisory Council members have acknowledged over and over again, that sort of missing like we need more opportunities.
To connect with folks on the other side of the aisle or whatever, we want to call it in the other committee so that we can feel like we know what direction we're going in and we know the people we're working with and we're building allyship and, you know.
Trusting relationships.
So that brings us to this slide and our last point for the day, which is these working on excellence partnerships or woes, if you're familiar with this acronym, it comes from Adrienne Marie Brown.
And and and her and her book emergent strategy.
Our Co workers Ricarda Erics Erickson from the Department of Public Service and Sarah Mcelveeny from the Agency of Agriculture.
Very generously offered some of their time to help us revamp what we've been calling the buddy system for the last couple of years and see if we can get some partnerships set up so that folks can work with people on the other committee or Council.
Get to know each other and start working on excellence.
So basically we have a lot of information. We'd love to continue sharing with you about these partnerships if you haven't yet filled out this the survey that's in your e-mail to indicate if you're interested in working with somebody else.
From the other council or committee, please do so. We'd love to get you paired with someone who piques your interest. If you have already filled out your survey. Which Amy? Yes, you have.
Don't bother filling it out again. We've read the results and Sarah and Ricarda are planning to reach out very soon with an e-mail with more information introducing you to your partner or in some cases, your group.
And get you guys started.
So just basically letting you guys know, this is an opportunity at your disposal if you have time and you're interested, please take advantage of this opportunity and if

you've already filled out the survey.
They expect to see some information in your inbox, but yeah, looking forward to seeing how these partnerships could.
Help you know, advance our work and make us feel more connected with each other.
Yeah, I would like to want for those folks who have concerns regarding capacity, which I assume are the majority of us here.
The great thing about.
Well, the the framework that's being developed and thought through is that it will allow each of the pairs or the groups that are working together to come up with their own cadence of meetings.
The topics of conversation and the pace of work.
So it is really flexible. I think the intention is to strengthen relationships within between Inter agency.
Agency committee members and Advisory Council members and also.
Bring in Advisory Council members into our agencies so that there's a better understanding of some of the limitations and challenges and where opportunities exist to continue embedding environmental justice.
Additionally, I think it's particularly cool that we have the opportunity to hear.
From folks who do this work on a daily basis and perhaps inform differently the way we do our work at our agencies anyway, just sharing that again there is.
There is great flexibility in the amount of meetings in the content of your conversations and how you all are going to work with each other.
Yeah. Thank you for that.

BK **Barrett, Kim** 2:45:48
OK.

2:45:50
I think that that's a really key point.
So yeah, closing out if you're interested, let us know.
We'd love to get you set up with a partner.

BK **Barrett, Kim** 2:45:59
Abby.

Willard, Abbey 2:46:02

Another question, I love the idea of the woes, and I think that'll be a really nice way to connect with the Advisory Council membership and the IAC membership.

I guess I have two maybe related questions.

One are we?

Are we going to talk about the proportionality plan at the next IAC meeting and if yes, I'm curious if AC members.

Like if there's an opportunity to include them in the conversation.

I.

I I love again.

I love that we used today to kind of like share the process that each agency and into covered entity went through. But it was after the fact. And so I'm really just wondering if there's like a proactive way that we can sort of like make sure we're all. Like moving along with shared understanding about the the tasks and the deliverables.

So rather than like.

Doing the same thing again, where we all go and write our proportionality plans and then everyone's like, I don't know what this means.

This doesn't make any sense.

To me, and then we do the presentations at the end to bring everybody up to speed.

I'm I'm just wondering if if there's another strategy of like, could we have some shared joint time that could be helpful in addressing that deliverable before?

We have to do it, but we also it's due very soon, so it's not like we can wait six months for that, so.

Those are my thoughts and questions.

2:47:31

Yes, that's a really good question, Abby.

And the response is that we already started that engagement process when we when we had the executive session.

We have.

We have that joint executive session where we talk where we talked about this one deliverable and some of the and some of the external considerations that we are all considering as we move forward.

And the next steps here are going to be office hours to further inform these conversations and then in public meetings there will be opportunities to further. Engage around this one deliverable, but the engagement process started already and the consultation process started already when we all met in executive session and we had counsel answering questions regarding.
This one deliverable and the baselines reports themselves and all of the concerns around the environmental justice focus population.

WA **Willard, Abbey** 2:48:42
What's the executive group?
I'm not sure I'm even aware of what that is.

2:48:46
We had an executive session to discuss the environmental justice focus population and some of the concerns at the federal level that have been shared with state agencies regarding this area of work and in during that meeting, we talked about this deliverable.
And how we're going to move forward talking about it.

BK **Barrett, Kim** 2:49:16
Claire.

MC **McIlvennie, Claire** 2:49:18
Yeah. Thanks, Carla.
I think I mean well, I I I don't know if this is where you're coming from, Abby, I think. Having some discussion about like the definition of proportionality sooner than later would be helpful.
I don't really remember talking about that explicitly in executive session and also just would second Abby's concern that July is feeling very close, especially given how long it can take some of us to run deliverables through leadership review and approval and discussion and so having.
Some conversations as soon as possible.
Or amongst the two committees on some of those definitions, I think would be really helpful.

Just 'cause. Yeah, it does feel like we don't have a whole lot of time to figure out how to approach that in a code like coherent or consistent manner across our agencies.

2:50:18
I agree.
So we'll be reaching out.

Barrett, Kim 2:50:25
OK.
Thank you all so much for today's meeting.
And we're gonna. We're gonna end this here.
Oh, wait, Rich, go ahead.

rich holschuh 2:50:37
It just, it just occurs to me that we talked about possibly having a vote on minutes toward the end of the meeting.
We have 4 AC members here.
I don't know if that's enough.

2:50:47
Unfortunately, we need 6 AC members to be able to have quorum, so I think that we'll be able to vote on these minutes the next time we have a joint meeting.

rich holschuh 2:50:53
OK.

2:50:56
But thanks Rich for keeping an eye on that.

rich holschuh 2:50:56
Oh.
Yep, Yep. Thank you.

Barrett, Kim 2:51:00

Thanks.
All right. Take care, everyone.

DB **Donohue, Bob** 2:51:05
Yeah. Bye, bye.

BK **Barrett, Kim** 2:51:06
Hi.

SA **Smith, Stephanie A** 2:51:07
Thank you.

RA **Redman, Amy (She/Her)** 2:51:07
Thank you. Bye.