VT EJ IAC Public Meeting-20260428_100342-Meeting Recording

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1h 56m 19s

Barrett, Kim started transcription

Barrett, Kim 0:06

All right.

Excellent.

Okay, thank you all for being here. Thank you for joining us for a meeting of Vermont's Environmental Justice Interagency Committee.

Barrett, Kim 0:21

I.

Here are our relational community agreements. So I would like folks, if you can, to just take a moment and read them through and then give us a thumbs up when you're ready.

All right, sounds good. Think we got thumbs up from everyone.

So here's our agenda for today. We're going to start off approving the April 2nd meeting minutes, which are in the chat right now. And then after that, we're going to have a section on the community engagement plans excited

for that discussion today and then do our regular public comment. We'll take a break and then talk through some next steps and updates.

So folks could take a look at the minutes and then give us a thumbs up if you if you approve.

Barrett, Kim 2:08

Got thumbs up from everyone. Yes, there we go.

Awesome.

Barrett, Kim 2:18

I'm going to pass it on to Juliet to get us started for the community engagement portion of the meeting.

Birch, Juliet 2:26

All right, cool. So today's meeting is going to be focused on the community engagement plans deliverable, which is due in July of 2027. I'm going to say before we get into any of the substance today that we're going to do sort of like a hybrid activity.

where we're going to go back and forth between Mentimeter, which is like a digital platform where you can provide written responses, back and forth between Mentimeter and discussion. So today's conversation is going to require that you use your device. So please be prepared to do so. And if you don't have a device, you can use, like if you can't.

you know, use your laptop for this. You can also use your phone. It, Mentimeter has like a really good mobile program. So just putting that out there, that'll probably start in like 15 minutes or so. And I just wanted to warn you guys in advance. So today we're talking about the community engagement plans because as you're aware, the

the IEC and the Advisory Council last year decided that it would be helpful to create a community engagement subgroup that would help create some community engagement plan guidance. The intention being making it so that the covered agencies are all starting their community engagement plans from like generally the same place where all we all have like a unified sort of rhetorical

understanding and we're using similar concepts and intentions in the building of our individual community engagement plans. We're going to spend today's meeting talking about the community engagement plan deliverable so that we can bring some information back to the community engagement subgroup.

that will help inform that guidance. But also, hopefully, this will be an opportunity for you guys to just learn from each other and bounce off of each other as we continue to develop our understanding of what meaningful community engagement looks like. Before we get into the really fun part of today's meeting, we're just going to do some kind of level setting. So some of this, most of this is going to be

you know, just reminders of things you're already aware of. But don't be afraid to just like ask questions and ask for clarification as needed as we go through this sort of like brief framing and review section of the meeting.

Does that sound good, folks?

Cool. All right. So first and foremost, let's get a reminder of the statutory

requirements here. So the covered agencies community engagement plans must describe how agencies will engage with EJFPs as it evaluates new and existing activities and programs.
So that's number one, really focusing on engagement with EJFPs and describing how that engagement will take place. Describing how agencies plan to provide meaningful participation in compliance with Title VI. So this is like, this is where the community engagement plans become very broad because Title VI and meaningful participation covers a lot, a lot, a lot of concepts.
here. The community engagement plans must be informed by the core principles of community engagement, which we hopefully are all mostly familiar with, but we will also spend some time today reminding ourselves of those principles and thinking about how it could potentially apply to our work.
And then finally, the community engagement plans must be developed in consultation with the advisory council. So as we are developing our individual community engagement plans in the next year, there will be opportunities for us to, in public meeting, bring those community engagement plans, the draft versions, to the advisory council for review, for feedback, for discussion, et cetera.
But we're also, we're starting off on a really good focus. We have advisory council members who are helping us build the community engagement plan guidance. So that's a huge part of the consultation process as well. As a reminder, the statutory deadline for this deliverable is July 1st of 2027.
So we still have about a year and two months or so. I cannot believe it's almost May to work on this project.
All right. I'm going to pass it to Sarah, Sarah McElvany from the Agency of Agriculture, who's going to help co-facilitate today's community engagement workshop. And she's going to sort of talk us through a reframing of the core principles of community engagement.

MS **McIlvennie, Sarah** 7:21
Thanks, Juliet. Can everyone hear me? I almost never use these headphones.

BJ **Birch, Juliet** 7:23
What?
Yeah, I can hear you.

McIlvennie, Sarah 7:26
Okay. Before I start, Juliet, can you see Grace's question in the chat? I just want to make sure it doesn't get missed.

Birch, Juliet 7:35
Nope, I unfortunately can't see anything in the chat. Let me pull it up. Sorry. Let me just check.

McIlvennie, Sarah 7:38
Yeah.
I can, I can read it up.
Grace had said, do you have any examples from other states that have EJ laws that have done this? I would find it very helpful to put this all into a greater context.

Birch, Juliet 7:43
Yeah.
Yeah, so as part of the development of the community engagement plan guidance, the subgroup has been collecting up resources of pre-existing community engagement plans that we can build off of or compare to. And I'd be happy to share those with you. I'm not sure that so far we've looked at community engagement plans from other states. We do have in state in Vermont, the Agency of Transportation and the Department of Health already have their own versions of a community engagement plan that predated this requirement in the EJ law. So those could be helpful models as you're trying to envision what a community engagement plan could look like. Does that answer your question, Grace?

Vinson, Grace 8:40
Yes, thank you.

Birch, Juliet 8:44
I'll put those in the chat while Sarah's chat talking.

McIlvennie, Sarah 8:44
Awesome!

Yeah, so I think I've met everyone on the call, but just in case I haven't, my name is Sarah McElvany. I use she and her pronouns. I work at the Agency of Ag and I'm helping, I do, I both do community engagement as part of my scope and also I'm helping Abby with our agency's implementation of the EJ law.
And I'm on the CEP group along with Ricardo, who's also here today from the public service department. So one of the things we're going to do is we're going to quickly review the principles, but
We're going to do it in a little bit of a different way. So I'm going to, instead of reading each principle out as it is structured, I'm going to offer each in slightly different language. A little bit of a hopefully helpful tangential backstory is some of my other work. I do a lot of work with food safety and farmers.
And I was telling Juliet that something that has felt really helpful for them is shifting framing from.
a sentence structure that you can say yes or no, I do or I don't, at the end of it, to a sentence structure that creates the possibility for continuous improvement. So how can we continue to move towards something, towards a state? So I'll read these one at a time and I'll leave a little space after each.
And then I think we're, and then I'll hand it back to Juliet and we'll see if there's some time for questions if folks have them. So principle one reads, utilize existing guidance for equitable community engagement and a reframing could be covered agencies should rely on pre-existing community engagement resources and expertise to build their community engagement plans.
and implement engagement efforts.
Principle 2, value and integrate community input at every stage of agency action.
And A reframing of that more actively is, covered agencies should strive to engage community members early and often throughout decision-making processes.

BJ **Birch, Juliet** 10:51
Yeah.

MS **McIlvennie, Sarah** 10:57
I might actually just read the reframe, so it's half as many words for you all to process. But you're welcome to read along. Principle 3, a reframe would be, covered agencies should build capacity to devote time to quality engagement, which

including relationship building, consistent outreach, and thoughtful translation of technical information.

Birch, Juliet 11:01
Good.

McIlvennie, Sarah 11:21
Principle 4, covered agencies should strategize and communicate with other agencies about their engagement efforts.
Principle 5, covered agencies should strive to develop strong relationships with community partners and members through consistent presence and engagement, including outside of decision making needs. Oh, I think there's a little bit of an error there. Including presence outside of decision making windows is what that's supposed to indicate.
Principle 6, covered agencies should identify Vermonters most impacted by environmental justice and actively address systemic barriers for their participation in government decision making.
Principle 7.
Covered agencies should strive to develop policy solutions that are at minimum informed by communities' experiences or are co-developed through community perspectives.
Principle 8.
Covered agencies should have engagement strategies that can be tailored to the audience rather than using a rigid approach for every engagement.
Principle 9, covered agencies should ensure that all engagement efforts comply with accessibility requirements.
Principle 10.
Covered agencies should strive to communicate clearly with community members about their engagement efforts, including the scope of the engagement and the community's agency to impact decision making. Communication should be completed in a consistent and timely manner and in plain language.
Principle 11.
Covered agencies should build capacity to devote time to quality engagement.
and principle 12.
Covered agencies should compensate community members for their time and

expertise wherever and however possible.
So I appreciate that was a lot of words and not the words you were looking at, which if you're like me, that might be hard for processing, but.

Birch, Juliet 13:28
Yeah.

McIlvennie, Sarah 13:34
We wanted to offer a different approach to these principles as we're going to continue to talk about the scopes of work that each of your agencies and departments are doing to hopefully help you start to see like what is this going to need to look like when our agencies are enacting these plans.
which hopefully can help us help you all in how those plans are being built and can kind of guide some of the questions and conversation today.
Juliet, do you, I think we're a little, uh...
Yes, I can put the text in the chat. Is that okay, Juliet?

Birch, Juliet 14:17
Yeah, that's fine. That's perfect.
The, as Sarah said, while she's putting that in the chat, the purpose of...
You know, what we were talking about as we were developing the facilitation for this meeting was that we often, especially since the core principles became final, we kind of, we remind ourselves of them when we talk about community engagement. We've been getting into the habit of kind of reading them to ourselves as part of the meeting.
but not necessarily delving into what it means to embody these principles in community engagement work. And so as part of framing today's conversation, we just wanted to kind of take a look at how these principles would specifically result in actions that the covered agencies could take. And so of course, a lot of these are aspirational. There are things that we don't yet have the systems to make happen every day. But a lot of these are things that we do have well within our grasp and we just have to commit to having it be part of the actions that our agencies take. So that I think, you know, as Sarah's dropping in the chat, the language there, that's really the purpose of reframing these is like covered agencies will
do X, Y, or Z, because that's what these principles really are, is like guidance for the

covered agencies as we approach engagement.
Sorry, Sarah, I kind of, I did a little ramble.

MS **McIlvennie, Sarah** 15:48
No, that's great.

BJ **Birch, Juliet** 15:52
Are there any thoughts or questions on any of this reframing before we move on?
We're going to really dive into the meat and potatoes momentarily.
Seeing like a kind of a smile and like a head shake a little bit from Elizabeth. So I can't see everybody, but I'm hoping folks are feeling good.
Okay.
Good, I got a thumbs up from Janet. All right, great. So...
You know, just as a really quick update as well, so you guys are aware of what's going on behind the scenes here and what kind of is the background behind today's meeting. As you guys know, the AC and IAC created this community engagement subgroup
That is, you know, there are several people who participate in it from the advisory council. We have three advisory council members. Carla participates as an IAC member. And then we have Ricarda from the Department of Public Service, Sarah from the Agency of Agriculture, and Charlotte Safran from the
Department of Health, who are all participating as well as covered agency representatives. And the purpose of this subgroup is to develop community engagement plan guidance. And so far through the work of this subgroup, we've determined that at minimum, this guidance is really going to cover
What sections should all of the covered agency community engagement plans include? And what should those sections look like? What should those sections be addressing so that we have some consistency across the board? The guidance is also going to provide recommendations for language that you can include in your community engagement plan.
as well as recommendations for what meaningful community engagement efforts look like.
And it will provide some examples of what successful engagement efforts can look like, just so that for folks who are still trying to envision what engagement can look like under this different framework, this provides a little bit more of a clear vision.

And this guidance is still under development. We're hoping that we can maybe bring it to you in June.
for review and feedback and discussion. But we wanted to just share this update with you that this is kind of the idea behind this guidance. I did want to make it clear that we had, I know, talked about the possibility of this guidance document being more like a template where all the agencies
plug their unique agency identifying information into, you know, the same plan. And through discussion with the subgroup, we determined that because engagement is so case by case, because each agency has like, you know, vastly different areas of work, as opposed to doing more of a plug and play, quote unquote, template, we're doing more of a guidance that can be
There's a lot that you can take from and draw from to have strong foundations for your engagement plan, but a lot of it will also be tailored to the unique needs and circumstances of your agency. So yeah, think about this more as guidance and recommendations, and you can kind of take what you want and leave the rest.
And so that's the update on what we're doing with this guidance document. And the purpose of today's conversation will be to help sort of bring in some information to the subgroup so that we have more information about what you guys are already doing, what's working, what doesn't work in terms of engagement.
to help build out this guidance. Are there any thoughts or questions on this subgroup update?
I want him.
Yeah, Amy.

RA **Redman, Amy (She/Her)** 20:00
Thank you so much for the update and also the reframe feels really, it felt really good just in hearing it and reading those reframed in that way. I was wondering, has the subgroup talked about, I, a both and in terms of like maybe not, maybe there's
Like could agencies adopt some core content from the VDH guide, for example, if it really resonated with the agency and then tailor it? So maybe not a template, but there is the option to adopt versus creating, recreating something. Has that been talked about?

BJ **Birch, Juliet** 20:40
Yeah, that's a great question, Amy. And Sarah, Kim, Carla, Ricarda, if there's anyone

else on the call who's part of the subgroup, please feel free to weigh in. But I guess the way that we approached it, or we are approaching it in the guidance is, I guess, similar to the core principles where
There's a resource, there's going to be like a resource section under each section of the plan. And so there will be like specific excerpts from different resources that we're building the plan, the guidance off of. One of those resources being the VDH community engagement guide. So we're very heavily, I think, leaning on the community engagement guide as one of those resources that provides like a strong. wrong example of what a plan could look like.
So that said.
I guess, in part, I guess the answer to your question is yes, sort of. I don't know if that answers your question at all, actually.
Does Sarah or Ricardo or someone else want to weigh in on that too?

MS **McIlvennie, Sarah** 21:51
Grace, do you want to go first and then I can offer some thoughts?

VG **Vinson, Grace** 21:57
Yeah, sorry. I just wanted to underscore my chat and Amy's thought. I will just say I'm feeling a little nervous about this deliverable. I know it's a year out, but given the Well, I guess here's a question. Sorry, I'm sort of thinking out loud. The baseline spending report was a huge lift for ACCD and most agencies, I think, even though the intent was to use existing data, right? So I guess I'm just feeling a little concerned about
the community engagement plans, not having, I know you're preparing this guidance and that's great, but I'm going to echo my chat and say it would be really great to have any sort of template or guidance on what exactly to include.
that I can take to my agency in terms of translating like the actual text and content that needs to be included. I'm sort of just thinking out loud about my process and what I'll sort of do to get started. And yeah, so that's just my thought.

MS **McIlvennie, Sarah** 23:17
Grace, do you mind if I actually ask you a follow-up question?

VG **Vinson, Grace** 23:21
Yeah.

MS **McIlvennie, Sarah** 23:23
And it's totally fine if there is not a clear, easy answer for this, but when you're feeling...

MS **McIlvennie, Sarah** 23:31
anxious? I think that's what you said, but if not whatever word you said, do you think it's in...
Is it from a place of like, when you say translating, are you thinking like the principles we just read through into your ACCD scope of work? Okay. That's very helpful.

VG **Vinson, Grace** 23:46
Yes.
Yes, so I'm just thinking about, I guess, I guess I'm a little burned from the baseline spending report and how little support I got from a higher up agency level. And I'm sort of, I guess, worst case scenario, thinking about how to translate these principles and bring these to, you know, division directors and commissioners and have them say, okay, this is great, but like,

BJ **Birch, Juliet** 24:10
Yeah.

VG **Vinson, Grace** 24:12
what do we need to do? Like, what do you want from me? What's your ask, I guess? And I know the guidance will have like that. I guess I'm saying I'm looking for as much guidance from ANR on what the ask is, I guess, if that makes sense.

BJ **Birch, Juliet** 24:16
Okay.
Yeah. I, so I guess the way that I could say this, Grace, that hopefully this is helpful. You know, honestly, we were debating yesterday as to whether or not to kind of share with you guys what the guidance currently looks like. It's in a very early draft

form. So I'm going to put like a, I'm putting like a level of trust in you guys, but it might just be easier if I share my screen and show you guys what the table of contents looks like right now.
So you can see this is the outline of what our draft is looking like for right now and what it covers. Is that helpful?

VG **Vinson, Grace** 25:08
That would be super helpful. Thank you. Yes, thank you. And I didn't mean to take over the meeting and share my stress, but.

BJ **Birch, Juliet** 25:12
Good.
You're not taking over. It's important to share your stress because that's like our whole job is addressing your stress and making this easier. So if it's helpful, I'll do this.

VG **Vinson, Grace** 25:23
Oh.
Yeah, I just want to make sure we do a good job. Yeah.

SE **Schilling, Elizabeth** 25:29
I think everyone shares your stress, Grace. I echo everything you were just communicating.

BJ **Birch, Juliet** 25:30
What?
Okay.

VG **Vinson, Grace** 25:32
Thank you.
Yeah.

BJ **Birch, Juliet** 25:37
So I'm giving you guys fair warning, which is that the reason why we had discussed perhaps not sharing this draft with you guys is because it's really early on. There's

very little that's like substantively fleshed out. We just basically have an outline that we're working on fleshing out.
So what I'm asking is that you all share a little like faith, trust and pixie dust if I'm going to show this to you guys and just and we can talk through like the what this outline looks like. But hopefully this provides you more clarity than it provides you with like unanswered questions. How's that sound?

VG **Vinson, Grace** 26:14
That sounds great.

BJ **Birch, Juliet** 26:14
Okay.
Great, awesome. Let's see. I'm going to scroll right to the table of contents. As you can see, we have a lot of predominantly blank pages here. And let me hide the comments just so that it's not distracting. I can't. All right, so the...
Guidance itself, the way that we currently have it sectioned out is that the meat is really these sections on sections of a community engagement plan, recommended steps and recommended steps for a community engagement process. I'm sorry, my mouse is doing something really weird. So hopefully you guys can still see.
Hold on.
is not working. Okay.
So right now, what we're thinking is that the sections of a community engagement plan section will provide recommendations of like every covered agency's community engagement plan should at minimum have an introduction, a policy statement, a legal background, values and commitments.
and explain the engagement process for your agency. And there will be example formats of what a community engagement plan looks like. And that's based in part on the Agency of Transportation, the Department of Health. We also have a great community engagement plan template from the White River NRCD, thanks to Jennifer Byrne from the Advisory Council.
And for each of these sections, we're going to kind of explain why, what the point is of this, like each section as part of a community engagement plan, what it is intended to communicate both to your staff and to the public. And for most of these, we want to provide either recommended language, especially for the policy statement and legal background. It would be great, I think, if the

covered agencies could generally share policy statements that are similar. But then for the things like values and commitments, we could recommend, here's a couple of value statements, pick five, or like, you know, of this list of 15 value statements, pick the ones that most apply to your agency in your area of work. So it is a little bit of like a plug and play.
But then when you get into this like recommended steps for a community engagement process, this is where it gets a little bit more tailored to the unique experience of your agency. So for example, I can only see Elizabeth right now. And PUC is as a quasi-judicial.
agency, you guys are so unique because you guys, if I understand correctly, only ever really engage with members of the public through the context of like hearings. So there are some parts of this that you need to figure out how best it can be tailored to your engagement. But just thinking about how to meet your unique needs.
Go ahead, Elizabeth. Sorry.

SE **Schilling, Elizabeth** 29:13
Yeah, no, yeah, and to that, I mean, there are instances where we engage with the public that's not just through the contested case process. But I think that a question I have is,

BJ **Birch, Juliet** 29:21
Mhm.

SE **Schilling, Elizabeth** 29:26
Determining.
the scope, I guess. So like, when, what are going to be the situations where we need to follow this community engagement plan? You know, there are going to be things, or for certain agencies, there will be instances where like,
something is happening in a discrete community and that's really obvious. Like a building is going to be built in this community and you want input from the community about the building. But then the term...

BJ **Birch, Juliet** 29:56
Yeah.

Schilling, Elizabeth 30:01

It talks about engagement plans must describe how agencies will engage with EJFPs as it evaluates new and existing activities and programs. It's like, I guess, will the will the guidance define activities and programs? You know, like the one I think I brought this up before, but the instance that I struggle with is like.

Do these plans also apply to statewide initiatives? So like, if you're developing a new rule or a new program that's going to apply statewide, is the expectation that we'd still do community engagement? But maybe, I don't know.

But like that seems like it would be a, it would look different than when you have just like a building being built in one community. And so I guess that's a big question that I have for how these plans are going to address that, that those different situations.

Birch, Juliet 30:46

Thank you.

So.

Yeah, that's.

That's really the, thank you for asking that question. And in some ways, I feel like actually what you just asked is a great segue to the next section of what we're going to talk about. I don't know that it will answer all of the specifics of what you just brought up, but it'll start to frame the scope for engagement.

at least at a minimum, what our community engagement plans will address. But I love, yeah, I think we're as we get further into this process, we'll have to start thinking about the more about the specifics. So I appreciate you bringing that up, Elizabeth.

Karla Raimundi

May I offer something?

Juliet Birch

Yeah, sure. Hey, Carla.

Karla Raimundi

Hey, folks. Today's a busy, busy day.

for me, but thank you so much for being here. Elizabeth, I really appreciate your

question. And what I would like to offer is that what we've done with other policy documents here at the agency, for example, the language and access plan, that also is contained in the report that the Office of Racial Equity created.
for language access is that depending on the applicability of the engagement, in other words, the communities that are going to be impacted if it's statewide, if it's regional, if it's local, then you will tailor your engagement to that particular
For that particular project and the expectation is that the guidance will speak to those. Those diverse, you know, scoping projects, right? Like if it's state statewide, then these are the things that are recommended.
One thing that is important is that this document is a guidance document, and the idea is that we will try to put together recommendations that cover how all of our agencies engage with members of the public and the variety of programs and activities and services that all of us provide so that you have the ability to take from the guidance, the sections that are particularly relevant to you, and then incorporate them in your community engagement plan because they will be identified as minimum requirements as a minimum requirement of your engagement. Now, the ability to perform the engagement as per
the recommendation in the guidance will really depend on capacity and resources, right? So then there's always that consideration to be taken into account. And, you know, the idea is that as we move forward in the process of creating these plans is that we're also thinking about budget.
right? And perhaps thinking about ways in the future where we can create budget lines or identify programs that perhaps provide for engagement at the federal level or local level to be able to perform
on the standards and the minimum requirements that your plans will communicate. So that's sort of like a big picture way in which these questions will be answered by the guidance.

Juliet Birch
So with, thank you for sharing that, Carla. And what that is, I just want to emphasize that what part of what we want to learn from you guys today is some of these things of like, how do, what context do you uniquely engage communities in? What kinds of engagement methodologies are you guys?
comfortable with using at your agencies versus ones that you haven't used as much? Where are the obstacles that you anticipate facing when doing engagement or

implementing something new at your agency? These are all things that we'd love to learn so that we can bring it back to the subgroup to build guidance that addresses some of these
areas. And so with that said, that's part of the purpose of like our discussion section of today's agenda. And so I want to make sure that we do have time to do kind of those activities. I wanted to check, though, this subgroup update was, I think, more in depth than I was planning to. I was planning to give.
sure that there are lots of lingering questions around the, like what the guidance will look like. And I think that we can continue having these conversations as we continue to flesh it out. But I just want to know, how are folks feeling? Can I get a temperature check? Like, do we have more questions or are we feeling okay to continue our discussion?
Yeah, Janet.

HJ **Hurley, Janet** 35:57
Sorry, I actually didn't mean to raise my hand. I was going to give you a thumbs up to go ahead. But so, yeah, I'm ready to move forward.

BJ **Birch, Juliet** 36:01
True. Ohh, cool. Sure.
Thanks, Janet.
Bum.

DB **Donohue, Bob** 36:12
Yeah, I agree. The only thought that I have is, do we somehow want to consider integrating this with whatever advice ICAR has, right? Because ICAR, with the administrative rulemaking, I'm sure they have ideas of maximizing public engagement.

BJ **Birch, Juliet** 36:22
Mmh.

DB **Donohue, Bob** 36:31
And so whatever we come up with with if it kind of integrates in with what they are already putting forward, that might be something worthwhile to look at.

Birch, Juliet 36:42

Great question, Bob. Let me show you something. Can you guys still see my screen and see the Word document?

Even though my mouse is clicking on everything, it shouldn't be. So we have this section here that I did not talk about, that we're thinking about building out at least some of them. Best practices, sorry, best practices for different unique engagement contexts. So like rulemaking, permitting.

for those of us who do enforcement. Some of the ones that might be less likely for us to build out depending on the time we have and how much interest we are able to gauge from you guys today could be things like technical assistance, information gathering, education and information sharing. These ones are like less involved or more kind of along the typical or traditional lines of

community engagement. But when it comes to the rulemaking one, something that we've talked about as a subgroup is wanting to identify what's minimally required in a rulemaking process for engagement and how can we make recommendations to do better engagement within those minimum requirements as well. So you were on, I think,

Bob, you and I are on like the same wavelength right now.

So how are we feeling about...

Jumping back into the kind of process for today. Oh yeah, Stephanie.

Smith, Stephanie A 38:12

Sorry, I was just going to add a note on that last slide. I think that was, that would be incredibly helpful. The majority of, I would make a plug for technical assistance because the majority of what my team does, we fall in that category and not the first three. How we better engage through technical assistance feels like the most, from that list felt like the most important for the work that we do.

Birch, Juliet 38:22

Thank you.

Yeah.

Awesome. Yeah, thanks for that. And we part of our part of our prompts for today is going to be doing kind of like a poll to get a feel from everybody what types of work do you do versus what which ones you don't do so that we can figure out where

does the majority lie so that we know exactly where to prioritize our time as a subgroup.
in terms of building out that best practices per engagement context section. So loving, loving this conversation.
So I just want to set some really quick like foundational stuff before we get into our conversation for today.
Geez, I'm sorry, my mouse is doing like everything it's not supposed to be doing right now and just clicking on stuff. So as I mentioned earlier, we are going to be spending part of today doing...
Sort of like a...
a semi-digital, but predominantly discussion-based activity. And so I was wondering if folks would be open to opening a tab on your computer or possibly your phone and going to menti.com. That's M-E-N-T-I.com.
And then putting in this eight-digit code.
For the, there's also a QR code if people can snap pictures, but the eight-digit code is 15710493.
And since I can't see everyone and I actually don't know how many participants in this activity we have in the meeting, please just let me know if you're not able to get into the Menti before we get started.
The.
I'll give it a minute.

BK **Barrett, Kim** 40:27
Nakota is also in the chat if you need it.

BJ **Birch, Juliet** 40:31
Thank you.
So this first question here, when you need to make an informed decision, what kinds of information do you need? And I'm thinking, put yourself in the position of you are a member of the public. You're just a Vermonter. You're going to a town hall.
you're going to town meeting day and someone's asking you to vote on like a budget. What kind of information do you need when you're that person who's just a participant in order to make that informed decision?
You can put anything you want. I hope that I put in unlimited responses for everyone. If I didn't, I'm sorry.

Great.
Out.
Lots of information coming in. So we got people want to know things about the cost. They want to know about the context and like base and as much plain language information as they can get about the decision that they're going to make.
They want to know schedule and timeline. That's always important. They want to see if there's any educational materials that they can get their hands on to help make the decision. And the big one that's coming up, which I assume it's big because multiple people have said this, data. Data is really, really important.
to help make an informed decision. And so the reason why we asked this question as the like kind of starting point for today's conversation is when you're a member of the public.
You're being asked by the state to involve yourself in some sort of public participation process. There are things that we as state employees aren't always thinking about. You know, we're kind of in like, we're in step, we're in step like H. If we're thinking like steps A through Z, we're at step H or something. Well, everyone else is at like step A.
right? And so there's some information we think is just intuitive. There's some information that we haven't even considered folks might need in order to be prepared to make an informed decision. And so that's part of the engagement process too, is all the before work, you know, before you actually talk with someone and say,
tell me what you think, there's a lot of work you need to do beforehand to prepare them to tell you what they think.
Sarah, I didn't know if you wanted to weigh in also on the kind of framing for this question, because I know that we had designed this together. Do you have any thoughts or things you want to add here?

MS **McIlvennie, Sarah** 43:43
Yeah, I think one of the things I'm thinking, Juliet, is that we should have also asked when do you need this information and how long do you need to have it before you're being asked to make the decision? Because I think that those, right, is it going to be different if you get it two hours before you're being asked to make a decision and vote?
put your vote into something or two weeks, time to respond, time to ask more

questions. And we really wanted to do this because we want this to get folks thinking about what does meaningful participation feel like for the members of the public, right? Meaningful participation is like,

Birch, Juliet 44:19
Yep.

McIlvennie, Sarah 44:21
they have the capacity to make an informed decision. And so what does that feel like? What does that require? What kind of timelines does that require, regardless of whether it's a policy or it's permitting or it's compliance or it's, you know, asking for input on a program or technical assistance?

Birch, Juliet 44:42
Yep, 100%. And as mentioned before, we want you guys to be in the shoes of what it feels like to be, you know, the regular Joe, because we all are, we're all Vermonters. We all benefit from public participation processes. And we've all been in like weird meetings where it's like you're, someone's asking you to do something and you're like, I don't have
Enough information to tell you what I think, and it's especially frustrating when you're a member of the public and you're paying people to do this thing on your behalf and you, you know, you feel actually less less interest in being involved because you feel like you've kind of been left behind, and so...
it's really important that we design engagement processes that bring people along and bring people into the decision making as opposed to just sort of like plopping them in and saying, just tell us yes or no, right? So this is all really getting at what exactly is community engagement and what does it mean to do meaningful participation, which is the thing that we're required to address in the community engagement plan.
So...
High level community engagement is any opportunity to connect and interface with community members. But the really key term here is this idea of meaningful participation. The law
the law, defines meaningful participation specifically as all individuals having the opportunity to participate in energy, climate, and environmental decision making. I

will say this is obviously very kind of industry specific, but if we think about it,
This is the law is really emphasizing this idea of being part of the decision making process as being meaningful. You can meaningfully change the outcome of what's happening around you and the decisions that the state is making on your behalf to support you, your loved ones, your communities, et cetera.
So that's kind of how we want to think about what is engagement. Engagement in the context of the law is kind of speaking to what Elizabeth was saying.
It's anytime we should be doing engagement anytime that we're making a decision where the actions or choices by an entity could actually be altered, like the outcome could be altered by members of the public and community input. The way I think about this is like,
You know, at ANR, for example, when we think of the engagement that we do, of course there are, there is engagement that we do that is specifically decision making. So you can think like at a minimum, engagement is this little circle. But at your agency, you may also include or want to include other things that don't explicitly relate to decision making in your engagement and in what you address in the community.
community engagement plan, and you're welcome to do that. So like the world of engagement could be this giant circle, but we're asking you at minimum to address engagement that relates to decision-making processes, because that's at minimum what we're being asked to address in the law. Does that make sense in terms of the scope here? So it could be bigger, but we're asking you to at minimum do the small thing.
Amy.

RA **Redman, Amy (She/Her)** 48:14
Thank you for this. And I really appreciated that exercise to kind of like try, like, try on, like, what do I need? I'm just thinking about this meaningful participation and so all individuals and what's in the law around
EJFPs and trying to reconcile that piece. We don't have to do it now. I'm just thinking that for VDH's community engagement guide, community engagement decision making is really around marginalized communities. It's not so so that's we don't have to unpack that and just wanted to name.

Birch, Juliet 48:36
Mhm.

Redman, Amy (She/Her) 48:52
name it in terms of like, what is community engagement and in this work, it's, it is, this feels a little bit different than the law and then also what the guide. So we're going to have to do some thinking about that. That's all.

Birch, Juliet 49:08
Peter.
Yeah, good point, Amy. And I'll just say that I think that the EJFP element of the community engagement requirements is something that we may need to discuss at another meeting and possibly in kind of our continued series of executive sessions where we're having conversations alongside our legal team.
I'm not trying to be cagey, just trying to say this is probably something we can address in a different forum. But I appreciate you bringing that up because it is a really important part of the intention of the law.
Thanks, Amy.
So I'm going to ask you guys to whip out your Menti meter again and thinking about what Stephanie's question was earlier around, you know, like sharing sort of the type of work that relates for the Department of Public Safety versus other covered agencies.
We have just a couple of examples of types of work that might involve very specific types of engagement as per state processes. So we're asking if you could please select from this list, and hopefully you can read it better than it's coming up on the screen. It's really, really small on this screen, but if folks need me to...
read them out loud I can, but please select from this list for the type of types of work that your agency does.
Wow.
Yeah.
There are a lot more people who do rule making here than I expected. This is exciting. Sarah, do you want to take the take the reins?

McIlvennie, Sarah 51:47

Yeah, I'll give a couple more minutes, like maybe one more minute for completion of the Mentimeter and folks to take a kind of like absorb.

Birch, Juliet 51:50
Yeah.

McIlvennie, Sarah 51:59
as I myself am absorbing.
And.
Okay, so what we're going to, well, before I start, because we are a little bit off the time that is set in the agenda, I'm going to maybe look to Juliet and Kim around, you know, like break, public comment, like how do we want to fit those in? Maybe do one topic and then do them.

Birch, Juliet 52:30
I think what?
I think what we should do is aim to maybe just cut the last discussion question if, and we'll just do, we can keep going on the same pace where we'll do discussion, the discussion question one and discussion question two at about like 40 minutes and we'll transition.
now, more or less, and then you can just cut that last question and pick up on it at another time, if that's okay with you, Sarah.

McIlvennie, Sarah 52:58
Okay, that sounds good. And I will just say, please cut, you know, give me the like 5 minute sign or just cut me off if I lose track of timing a little bit.

Birch, Juliet 53:08
Sounds good.

McIlvennie, Sarah 53:10
Okay, so what we're going to do is have a bit of an open discussion. We're going to have an open discussion.
So we kind of wanted to build up to this place with the context of the meeting, right? We talked a little bit about, and then showed you the template of the guidance, the

guidance, not the template that the small group is working on. We talked a little bit about scope and meaningful participation. We did a bit of an activity to kind of get you all thinking around like,
from the perspective of the public, what is required to meaningfully participate in decision making. And now we're trying to get you all to think about like, what activities am I representing, right, as an IAC member for my agency or department. That was a lot of pieces. And I think we started having threads of this discussion around like what's coming up for you all. And so I'm just curious with all of those pieces, like what's bubbling for folks.
And if nothing is bubbling, I could offer a question that I just, I have right now, which is like the people who said information gathering. I'm curious, like, where does that information go?
Gathering information for what?

VG **Vinson, Grace** 54:32
This is Grace. I can give a really niche example, which is that ACCD includes the Department of Historic Preservation. And we have many databases on all the historic properties throughout the state, whether it's architectural or archaeological. And They maintain databases and they, you know, gather information from communities across the state about their structures.

MS **McIlvennie, Sarah** 55:03
Okay.
That is, that is actually a very helpful example of information gathering.
Jackler.

MC **McIlvennie, Claire** 55:16
Well, we do a lot of like data collection, largely from utilities who we regulate, but other entities as well that we make available in like annual reports and...
pass along, well, I would say we use the information and like some of the activities that are also represented here, like grant making and policy development. But we also pass it along to other entities like regional planning commissions to use like in their planning efforts.
So, yeah, so it's kind of like it was related to some of the things that are here, but then we also have this role where we do data collection just to like share information

on the energy system in Vermont, and then other entities use that in their reports and planning activities.

McIlvennie, Sarah 56:12
Bye.

Vinson, Grace 56:12
This is Grace. I just wanted to add quickly to what Claire was saying. I used to work at a regional planning commission and that data is extremely critical to not only regional plans, which is, you know, basically overseas how development should occur in a region for the
next 10 years, but just extremely critical to towns who have no understanding of like their energy needs or their energy usage. It's helpful for energy committees. So I just want to plus one to what Claire said in that her, I mean, DPS is.
Information is.
used in so many different avenues and it's extremely important.

McIlvennie, Sarah 56:58
That's super helpful. And right, so I think what I'm hearing is like information gathering maybe is, maybe there's a little bit of a longer arc to where that informs decision making sometimes, but it still is informing decision making, which is helpful.

Birch, Juliet 57:12
Mm.

McIlvennie, Sarah 57:14
And.

McIlvennie, Claire 57:16
Yeah, I would just say though, I don't know if you were going to ask us what might be missing from this list, but those kind of like planning activities that don't immediately necessarily inform decisions, but have like long-term impact on decision making. I kind of picked information gathering because...
Planning wasn't listed here, and that's a big reason why we we gather that kind of information, whether it's like technical data like Grace was talking to that other

entities use, or like doing public engagement related to the topic we're talking about today. Yeah.

McIlvennie, Sarah 57:53
Okay.

Birch, Juliet 57:53
Can I ask a question about that, Claire or Grace?

McIlvennie, Claire 57:57
Yes, go ahead.

Birch, Juliet 57:58
for anyone. I hopefully this doesn't derail. I'm just curious. When you guys do information gathering with communities in order to do like long-term planning, how do you demonstrate as part of the like
outcome of the planning, how community input impacted the plan. I'm just curious.

Vinson, Grace 58:23
I can answer that quickly. For municipal plans, there's always a ton of engagement required. So I guess that's an interesting point, though, Juliet. Like, there is community engagement that already goes on at, you know, underneath ACCD. funding, I guess, because we provide grants to towns to do municipal plans. Those towns then create, you know, a municipal plan committee basically made up of townspeople or people on the select board that then update the plan. And the only reason they can do that is because of our funding and the data that Claire
or that her agency provides. So I guess my answer is there is an inherent amount of planning already going on, I guess, or engagement going on.

Birch, Juliet 59:05
Mm.

McIlvennie, Claire 59:11
Ohh.

Yeah, and Julia, I would say like, I don't, I think that's a work in process for us. I don't know that we've always done a particularly good job of.

McIlvennie, Sarah 59:16
Yeah, go ahead.

Birch, Juliet 59:22
Mhm.

McIlvennie, Claire 59:28
Reflecting back like how all that, I mean, I think if you're talking about technical data, that might be obvious and that it like shows up in the planning document. The engagement piece, I think we're both working on building out what that really looks like to include robust engagement in our planning processes and then reflect.

Birch, Juliet 59:40
Yeah.

McIlvennie, Claire 59:46
Back how that informs decision making, so...
Yeah.

McIlvennie, Sarah 59:53
Go ahead, Dave.

Pelletier, Dave 59:55
Yeah, I mean, just in a really practical manner, what we'll often have in a, in a, in a, either in a statewide plan or in something that's more focused or in a project development documentation will have just very simply, you know, we'll have a summary. We might have something that's so formal as like a

Birch, Juliet 1:00:11
Okay.

Pelletier, Dave 1:00:18

a table of summary of comments with action or response, you know, to each one of them, even if it's we heard it and nothing practical we can do right now, or just to at least document the input. And then oftentimes in a like in a statewide plan, for instance,

Birch, Juliet 1:01:01
Mm.

Pelletier, Dave 1:01:01
how we took in someone's specific individual comment and, you know, addressed their specific concern, but we try to document overall what we've done for public participation and engagement so that it's transparent as much as possible without without getting too far into it, but just show some, show that we've done our due diligence, kind of call out themes that arose over multiple venues or multiple approaches to public input, whether it's, you know, meetings, surveys, meant to meter, et cetera.
and just kind of feed that back into the plan for awareness. And then, you know, oftentimes it's apparent in the plan when we get to kind of the strategies that support the overall goals of the plan, how those things tie together.

McIlvennie, Sarah 1:02:01
That's super helpful. I think a follow, I appreciate I may be not following the previously agreed upon thread, Juliet, I talked about, which I currently can't remember, but I'm just going to follow this thread until I'm stopped, which is, I'm curious for you all, like, thinking about, like, say there's like...

Birch, Juliet 1:02:10
Keep.

McIlvennie, Sarah 1:02:21
in the plan we're talking about like before the engagement, the engagement's going on and then afterward. I'm curious what is the like relative capacity lift?
for those 3 buckets, because what you're talking about sounds like equally, if not more capacity for staff, right, to follow up in that way. And I'm just curious if that feels accurate.

Pelletier, Dave 1:02:41

Yeah, I agree with Grace. I mean, the public engagement aspect of any, for the things that I work on most frequently, public engagement for a statewide plan update or development, it can be extremely high. And we could, yeah, it's easy to become overwhelmed.

with it. And I mean, that's honestly like thinking back months, if not years in this discussion about enhancing community engagement and doing better than we've done before in terms of engaging environmental justice focused populations or disadvantaged communities or the

the groups of people that can't easily come to us, that we really need to go out to and reach, there's trepidation about how we're going to do it and that we're overwhelmed and don't actually don't have the resources, even for a well-funded agency, to do really what would be the ideal

level of effort. So that just, I'm getting off track here, but it can be a high level of effort and expense. And there's been much thought about how to balance a reasonable level of effort with getting out to hear from everyone so that everyone has a chance to provide input into the

Into our planning efforts.

Birch, Juliet 1:04:01

Yeah.

McIlvennie, Sarah 1:04:02

Thank you, Dave. That's definitely not off track.

Birch, Juliet 1:04:02

Can I?

Yeah, can I offer something? Because I know that when Dave, when Dave started pulling on the thread of like, what are the obstacles standing in our way of doing good engagement, hands shot right up. I'm wondering if folks would be open to, we actually have a Menti meter is specifically tailored to this. And I was wondering if folks would be open to turning to that.

McIlvennie, Sarah 1:04:17
Yeah.

Birch, Juliet 1:04:26
taking a look at it and then continuing the discussion from there. Would that be okay?

McIlvennie, Sarah 1:04:32
Awesome. Yeah, and then we'll go Janet and then Grace when we come back.

Birch, Juliet 1:04:35
Yeah, so Sarah, in this case, we'll skip the first discussion question and we'll do discussion questions two and three.

McIlvennie, Sarah 1:04:45
Great.

Birch, Juliet 1:04:46
So skipping this. So our question is, what kinds of obstacles do you face when doing community engagement at your agency? And let's try and think of things, obviously, like everyone's going to say resources and capacity, yep, funding. Let's also think of other things too. Budget, capacity. If there's other things that culturally, process-wise stand in the way. Go ahead, Sarah.

McIlvennie, Sarah 1:05:09
I would I would offer like specificity here is a gift for the CEP and for ANR.

Birch, Juliet 1:05:13
Yeah.

McIlvennie, Sarah 1:05:17
Because like, you know, as someone who doesn't do a lot of policy, but I do grant implementation, like capacity might mean something really different to me than it

does to even Juliet and Kim and Carla or to Claire and Dave.
You know, maybe not like a full sentence, but like a phrase.

Birch, Juliet 1:05:32
Mm.
Yeah, so let's all just pretend that we all, and it's not pretending, this is real. We all agree that capacity, funding, time, like these are all things that we are really lacking. Let's think about the other things that we, that definitely stand in our way of doing good community engagement.
I love urgency. Being risk averse. These are...

McIlvennie, Sarah 1:06:09
Mhm.

Birch, Juliet 1:06:09
These are great.
She.

McIlvennie, Sarah 1:06:59
Thanks, Juliet.

Birch, Juliet 1:07:01
Just like, why is it getting smaller? Hopefully this is better.

McIlvennie, Sarah 1:07:15
As people are finishing putting in answers, I just want to like appreciate all of you for your honesty and specificity and just offer back to all of you that, you know, Charlotte, who works for Department of Health, and I co-facilitate a community of practice.

Birch, Juliet 1:07:26
Yeah.

McIlvennie, Sarah 1:07:34
across state of Vermont and these are all incredibly widely shared. And I just want to

like applaud the transparency.
Okay.
Yeah, yeah. And so super quickly, and then we'll go to Janet and then Grace, because I think there are some that are slightly phrased differently, so they're not bigger, but there is a bunch of fear, risk aversion, belief that we already have the answer, leadership or general agency.

Birch, Juliet 1:08:11
Mm.

McIlvennie, Sarah 1:08:15
maybe lack of active support, inability to compensate, and distrust, not mistrust, or lack of public interest or no capacities, which kind of feels a little bit like a group together.

Birch, Juliet 1:08:23
No.

McIlvennie, Sarah 1:08:33
Thanks, everyone. Okay, Janet and then Grace.

Hurley, Janet 1:08:44
I'm just feeling like a little bit of the elephant in the room as an example.
For.
A rule-making process that was derailed.
And you know that, you know, at the basis of this was a public.
sort of revolt.
against Act 181. And so we are preparing testimony to speak today at the Vermont Environment Committee or the House Environment Committee.
and the House Environment Committee is looking at ways to sort of, okay, we're going to repeal these two aspects and where do we go from here? And a lot of it is looking at public engagement. And, you know, there's a lesson to be learned with the rollout of Act 181 and the time frames weren't there. There wasn't funding for this. How do you do rulemaking? I'm really interested to sort of get into that. You know, how do you do rulemaking and engage the public?

do you need to have engaged the public long before you start the rulemaking? And, you know, the timeframes around all of this didn't allow that. So anyway, just feeling a little like the elephant in the room here and a good example of
What, what can go wrong?

VG **Vinson, Grace** 1:10:30
Well, Janet, this is Grace. As you know, the ACCD rep, I will share your...

MS **McIlvennie, Sarah** 1:10:31
Thank you.

VG **Vinson, Grace** 1:10:37
elephant in the roomness. I know that you know part of the actual 181 stuff was for ACCD too so I share your and our leadership shares that.
shares that feeling. But Sarah, sorry, my comment earlier was just about how some agencies lack, I mean, most agencies lack capacity and how I mentioned in the chat that some end up hiring community engagement firms. But then I guess my point was that
We live in Vermont and there are also a very limited number of these firms. And that also leads to questions about...

BJ **Birch, Juliet** 1:11:14
Mhm.

VG **Vinson, Grace** 1:11:21
Who are we learning community engagement from? What lessons are we taking from what people do the community engagement?
firms and practitioners represent these focus populations and things like that.

1:11:34
Mm.

BJ **Birch, Juliet** 1:11:35
Mm.

McIlvennie, Sarah 1:11:37
Thank you, Grace.
Go ahead, Stephanie.

Smith, Stephanie A 1:11:42
Thanks, Janet. I appreciate that comment a lot because I am part of, to me, the higher level in that is who, like a results-based accountability sort of framework for this, like who's responsible for what and when. And if we're working in a framework where the legislature makes a decision and now we have to act or I'm managing FEMA funding and I don't control the regulation, but I can control how we talk about it in our technical assistance. So I think part of, to me, the really important component there is like how can we do the best that we can within the space that we have, but how do we define that space so that that's gotten understood? Does that make sense?

Birch, Juliet 1:12:08
Yeah.
Yeah.
Two.
And.

McIlvennie, Sarah 1:12:24
Yeah, thank you, Stephanie. I think, and please correct me if this is a misinterpretation, but I think one of the things that will be in the guidance, like one of the subheaders in that table of contents is like,
is like defining scope early and communicating it like really clearly to the public, which is not going to say that that will then alleviate all of the things that might not go as we hope are planned. But I would also just offer to this group

Birch, Juliet 1:12:44
Yeah.
Mhm.

McIlvennie, Sarah 1:12:56

Something that.
I appreciated hearing from someone about interpersonal relationships, right? Which is like, in some ways, these are interpersonal relationships. They have their own power dynamic. Like we are acting on behalf of an entity. Maybe it's bigger than us. But like, harm is not preventable, but like muscles can be built and flexed around repair.
And I think that that is something that is showing up on the Menti meter. And so I really just want to appreciate and name that.
And because I think that can help support moving forward, right? Like there is such a thing as like reflection and learning and integration and moving forward.
I'm curious.
for folks as we're having these conversations, which I appreciate, you know, scope is kind of oscillating. I think this is really important. And like, if we think about these plans, maybe not the plans, if you think about.
the different things your agencies do that, you know, get to a point of decision making.
How is what's coming up? Like what is bubbling up for folks?

BJ **Birch, Juliet** 1:14:24
Can you repeat that question, Sarah?

MS **McIlvennie, Sarah** 1:14:27
Yes, thank you, Juliet. I'm curious, I think we've, we've, our conversation has gone both like really specific to examples and then also quite broad in terms of like relational dynamics. And so I kind of want to, I'm curious if folks recenter on the scope of all of what your agency does and the concept, right, that there is this deliverable

BJ **Birch, Juliet** 1:14:28
Thank you.

MS **McIlvennie, Sarah** 1:14:48
that each of you will write a plan that then enables your staff.
to like do their jobs in a way that supports meaningful participation.

Does that make sense? Like if we overlay all these things together, what feels like it's coming up?

Birch, Juliet 1:15:07
Hmm.
Like in terms of, yeah, like what kinds of obstacles come up when thinking about. That.

McIlvennie, Sarah 1:15:22
Yeah, or maybe a less nuanced question is like, if you could ask anything of the CEP subgroup and the guidance we are creating, what would it be?

Birch, Juliet 1:15:23
Yeah.
Ohh boy.

McIlvennie, Sarah 1:15:35
Go ahead, Claire.

McIlvennie, Claire 1:15:38
Well, it's just it's highlighted here, but we haven't talked about it as much. But the lack of training and like expertise on staff feels like just a huge thing to address. Like even if you have, as we are fortunate to do in Ricardo's position.
someone whose job it is to focus on community engagement. Like, Ricardo, you can push back on me if you disagree, but having tried to do it before you joined us, like, it's just not possible, I feel like, for one person to be fully engaged in everything an agency is doing at the level of specificity of like,
developing community engagement plans and building all those relationships and just like, like the comprehensiveness of that cannot sit, I think, in one position in an agency and I'm in like the tiniest little agency. So I feel like a plan that can
Like, that's why I really love that best practices section. Something that can try and create tools that someone could take with like a little bit of training, right? As we like expand consciousness of this work in our agencies and do some of the work themselves without one person needing to be like deeply engaged in everything feels.

Birch, Juliet 1:16:41
It.

McIlvennie, Claire 1:16:58
really important.
Yeah.

McIlvennie, Sarah 1:17:03
Claire, a quick follow-up question is, are you thinking like permitting? Like, this is what it could look like. This is what a, you know, steps could look like specific to permitting that could support meaningful engagement.

McIlvennie, Claire 1:17:16
Yeah.
Yeah, like, where Carter and I just started thinking about this in the community of practice we facilitate at the department is like, if we were to build a toolkit, right, which may or may not live as part of our community engagement plan, to actually give someone like,
How do you build a budget? And like, what should you be thinking about? You know, the actual, like, not just like the best practice, but the tool to do it without needing to like hold their hand from start to finish.

Birch, Juliet 1:17:42
Mm.
Yeah.

McIlvennie, Claire 1:17:54
That the actual, like, yeah, operational tools that, yeah, if that helps.

McIlvennie, Sarah 1:18:02
That's very helpful. So like I heard budgeting, trainings, probably around like things that have come up for the subgroup are, and I'm saying this in case you're like, no, something's missing, facilitation, mediation, you know, like you're in a space that

could be nuanced, like you want to feel prepared as any staff member.
Those arenas.

McIlvennie, Claire 1:18:23
Yeah, even something as simple as like...
I think, how do you use the master contracts to get your documents translated? Like, I intellectually know we have master contracts, then I can develop a scope of work, but having someone who's done it in my agency write out like the step by step, right, having done it themselves, I feel like would be really helpful.
Um, like that.

McIlvennie, Sarah 1:18:50
That's very helpful. Thank you, Claire.

Birch, Juliet 1:18:50
I know that. I know that Abby has her hand up. I just wanted to say that.
This is something we could do. We could do that exact thing in the guidance because we have a lot of that information on like maybe not exactly how your department would do it, but at least like step by step how any state employee could generally do it. So that could be cool because it is a huge part of the guidance is accessibility.

McIlvennie, Claire 1:19:18
And just, sorry to keep putting off your hand, Abby. I just, I, Ricardo and I have been really fortunate to work with Jean Hamilton and the Land Access Opportunity Board on a project with some students at Middlebury. And I just want to say this is something that I feel like Jean has really started to emphasize for us as we work with those students on like, how do we move beyond best practice?
this to actually do the work. So I wanted to give her some credit for raising that to my consciousness.

Birch, Juliet 1:19:42
Yeah.
Ohh.

McIlvennie, Sarah 1:19:48
Thanks, Claire. Go ahead, Abby.

Willard, Abbey 1:19:50
Thanks. Yeah, I'm loving Claire's positivity and like real practical examples much better than what I'm getting ready to share. But I'm part of me is wondering and just like feeling that there's this like cultural piece that somehow maybe just needs acknowledgement in

Birch, Juliet 1:19:54
Two.
This is.

Willard, Abbey 1:20:10
The guidance or because even just well, so what I'm thinking is that a lot of those challenges or obstacles that like we all typed into the Mentimeter speak to aspects that are far bigger than our individual agency or department and that like.
are more about the complexity of the culture change that's needed for us to really effectively implement the community engagement efforts and plans as like this law is really challenging us to do. And so again, I really love the like practical accessible suggestions that Claire and others are offering, but there's also like this framing somehow of...

Birch, Juliet 1:21:12
Yeah.

Willard, Abbey 1:21:14
That's all.

Birch, Juliet 1:21:16
If, if I could just offer Abby, um...
Something that you mentioned a long time ago, like maybe in December, was that after this guidance or whatever it was that we were thinking about at the time, after that was done, it could be really helpful for us to create spaces, whether it's in the

public meeting or at each individual agency where we are training on like applying principles of community engagement. And I really think that, and this could be just my perspective at ANR, but I don't know. I think that training and like repeated opportunities to engage with the same material in an applied sense and like ask questions in like a private setting,
That is how you slowly change culture from the ground up. And of course, there's also the cultural element of leadership and budget and like where you put your money is where your priorities lie. Like I get that, but I just want to acknowledge that the training that will come alongside the community engagement plans, which we should discuss like
at some point how we want to actually execute that could be a huge part of, you know, influencing culture. And that's something that really excites me.

WA **Willard, Abbey** 1:22:34
Love that, Juliet. Thanks for remembering that. And I think that's a really great, positive, practical suggestion. Glad you remembered it. Thanks.

MS **McIlvennie, Sarah** 1:22:44
Yeah, and Amy, right before you go, I'll just say something I spend a lot of time thinking about, not even thinking about the EJ law, is like the incredible and wonderful apparatus of the continuous improvement network and the trainings they offer and being curious around

BJ **Birch, Juliet** 1:22:58
Mm.

MS **McIlvennie, Sarah** 1:23:05
if that can be a tool for like broader scale availability of trainings around facilitation, around, you know, you're a state employee, but you're also a member of a community. And how do you hold those two things at once, regardless of your scope? So that is something I think about in the evenings.

BJ **Birch, Juliet** 1:23:19
Yeah.

McIlvennie, Sarah 1:23:25
Go ahead, Amy.

Redman, Amy (She/Her) 1:23:30
I love that idea. And I'd love to see that continuous improvement networks, like those resources, either in the guide or I would just love to see them. I think something, Abby, this like cultural change and shifts, I feel like is so important to me. So I want to kind of just say an offshoot.
of that reflection that's related, but separate, is that in the workforce development trainings that we have done at VDH with the community engagement guide, we hear internally that these core principles need to be applied internally, right? So for example, we're set up a little bit differently, but we have offices of local health that are on the ground.
And often they're the like experts in the community and feel sometimes like overlooked. So I say that in terms of interrogating ourselves internally and how we're doing with community, with these like core principles, how are we enacting them? And I also might even suggest or I've wondered about like, how are we doing with our own advisory council? How are our core principle, how are

Birch, Juliet 1:24:40
Mm.

Redman, Amy (She/Her) 1:24:40
are we embodying our core principles with our AC? Like, can we come close to home? So those are just a couple like more reflections as it relates to culture shift, which are sometimes harder to write out or to put. So anyways, just a few more reflections. Thank you.

McIlvennie, Sarah 1:24:59
Thanks, Amy.

Birch, Juliet 1:25:01
Yeah, I love it.

MS **McIlvennie, Sarah** 1:25:01
Um...
I have a, yeah, I was going to say, do we want to take a 5 minute break? We're almost right there anyway, or at the public. Can we switch the public comment period in the break?

BJ **Birch, Juliet** 1:25:14
Yeah, let's do, if is anyone on, is there anyone from the public who wants to give a public comment?
And then we can take a 5-minute break and close out.

BK **Barrett, Kim** 1:25:32
I don't believe so.

BJ **Birch, Juliet** 1:25:32
Okay.
Okay, let's take five and come back at 1135. What we'll do is we'll take one last discussion question, which is all about the type of technical assistance you guys want from us, including things like training possibly. And then we'll close out today's conversation. Does that sound good?
All right, see you at 1135.

BK **Barrett, Kim** 1:31:42
Alright, it looks like everyone's back.
Okay, so Juliette, how do you want to proceed?

BJ **Birch, Juliet** 1:31:52
What do you say we take 15 to do that last discussion question and then we do the next steps and close out as planned?

BK **Barrett, Kim** 1:32:00
Sounds good.

BJ **Birch, Juliet** 1:32:01

All right, cool.
Welcome back, everybody. I hope the break was productive. I really, really needed to go to the bathroom because I drink so much water during these meetings. Oops, I turned the camera off. So I'm grateful. Elizabeth is always holding us accountable to the breaks and I always appreciate that.
Alright, let's see.
So before we went on the break, we were talking a lot about, you know, culture, finding like long-term, I'm doing a poor job of maybe paraphrasing or summarizing, but culture, finding long-term ways to change the way that we do engagement, the way we think about engagement,

MS **McIlvennie, Sarah** 1:32:31
The.

BJ **Birch, Juliet** 1:32:49
We're thinking about like funding, capacity, training, making sure that staff feel comfortable and confident doing engagement, even if we don't have necessarily like engagement experts per se that we contract out, as Grace was saying. So that really makes me think about like, what is it, if we think about ourselves as being at like square zero, which some of us are not.
There are some agencies that have, you know, we're all at different levels of comfort levels with engagement, but let's all just pretend we're at square 0 or square one with this engagement process. Our final Mentimeter question, and if folks want to pull up your Mentimeter tab, hopefully you're getting this new question.
is what kind of support or technical assistance would be beneficial for your agency when it comes to developing this community engagement plan? And I'm going to ask you to maybe respond in two different ways. One, what kind of stuff do you want to see in the guidance that maybe isn't already?
something that we've discussed being addressed in the guidance, but two, thinking more long term. Once the guidance is done, what kind of help do you need when developing your community engagement plan for your covered agency? Once the community engagement plan is developed, what kind of help do you need training staff, getting people aware of this plan and actually implementing the plan?
Think about this in like many, many, many ways.
And this is a, this will just share your straight up responses as opposed to a word

cloud. So feel free to be as specific as you want.
Or not specific if you're not in the mood.
We didn't do the public comment. Oh, yeah, we did. We did. Yeah.

MS **McIlvennie, Sarah** 1:35:11
Juliet, could I ask you a process question, like an open meeting long question while folks are filling that out?

BJ **Birch, Juliet** 1:35:16
Sure.

MS **McIlvennie, Sarah** 1:35:18
Would it be?

BJ **Birch, Juliet** 1:35:18
I might not have the answer.

MS **McIlvennie, Sarah** 1:35:21
Would it be considered forum if folks sent their existing resources to you, Carla and Kim, and you shared out like an Excel or some like resource library to all of the IAC members?

BJ **Birch, Juliet** 1:35:34
Nope.
That would not be quorum as long as it's, you know, it's sent to each of us and there's, yeah, so that would be great, that would be fine.
Creation of a state office of community engagement. I'm just calling that out as like, wouldn't that be awesome?

MS **McIlvennie, Sarah** 1:37:25
There are states that have that.

BJ **Birch, Juliet** 1:37:38
Oh.
Holding space for agency or department leadership and the governor's office staff to

understand this deliverable and the required cultural change to implement. Thinking big.

McIlvennie, Sarah 1:38:02
So I can offer, interestingly, that state group of agency communication directors does exist. Rebecca Kelly does oversee a group that meets monthly out of the chief communications office.

Vinson, Grace 1:38:15
Ohh, that's great. OK.

McIlvennie, Sarah 1:38:17
They have monthly meetings.
But that is like more focused on communications folks.

Vinson, Grace 1:38:22
Yeah, like that could be something.
Ohh.
Could be something to bring up in the future to them.

McIlvennie, Sarah 1:38:30
Mm-hmm.

Birch, Juliet 1:38:31
Mm.

McIlvennie, Sarah 1:38:33
Go ahead, Janet.

Hurley, Janet 1:38:33
Sarah, can I ask a question about that group?

McIlvennie, Sarah 1:38:37
Yeah.

Hurley, Janet 1:38:38
Is it a meeting of people who have that, you know, job description or can others that don't necessarily have that?

Birch, Juliet 1:38:49
It's the only way we can see those.

Hurley, Janet 1:38:52
Yeah.

McIlvennie, Sarah 1:38:54
I can only offer my like lens into that group, which is that I have presented to that meeting. And my understanding is that it is communications directors and or, you know, equivalent staff. I would say

Hurley, Janet 1:39:03
Mm.

McIlvennie, Sarah 1:39:12
that you should reach out to Rebecca Kelly. She, it's part of her scope of work and like increasing inter-agency and department communications and consistency. And I think she would really welcome that outreach.

Hurley, Janet 1:39:25
Great, thanks.

Birch, Juliet 1:39:41
We've gotten so many good and many very lengthy responses that the scrolling required to see all of them is intense. So I'm sorry that it can't be all on the same screen, but this is awesome. Thanks for all the great responses.

McIlvennie, Sarah 1:39:59
Juliet, can I ask the group one more question?

Birch, Juliet 1:40:02
Yeah.

McIlvennie, Sarah 1:40:04
What would meaningful engagement with the AC on this topic look like for you all?

Birch, Juliet 1:40:18
Speaking to this one.

McIlvennie, Sarah 1:40:23
And I would say like I've heard that as an arc across the meetings I've attended.

Birch, Juliet 1:40:27
Yeah.

McIlvennie, Sarah 1:40:31
Go ahead, Abby.

Willard, Abbey 1:40:32
Or do you want to hear from us rather than, yeah, not put it in the chat. Yeah.

McIlvennie, Sarah 1:40:35
Yes. Oh, yes. Thank you.

Willard, Abbey 1:40:40
I...
I suspect that AC, so this is like a timing piece for me. Like I think I suspect that AC members would have some really thoughtful suggestions for government around how to do community engagement. I think there would be a kind of like an exchange of information for them to understand sometimes the constraints or the obstacles that we face.
Ace when given a mandate or have a...

Birch, Juliet 1:41:24
Yeah.

Willard, Abbey 1:41:24
kind of like internal processes to develop our community engagement plans before we've had a chance to really hear from advisory council members about their suggestions and experience. So I think I'm just offering more of like a timing suggestion that
I don't want to wait until my plan is done to ask them their thoughts, because I feel like that will be too late to really get thoughtful, potentially helpful, both perspective and suggestions from them.

Birch, Juliet 1:41:57
I handle. Yeah, Carla.
Yeah. Yeah. Thanks for that, Abby. Yes, that's really important. And it's something that also is part of the core principles of community engagement, that consultation of, you know, individuals that are going to be impacted by
policy development of agencies be consulted early and early enough so that that consultation can be incorporated so that it's meaningful. So that's definitely something that's on the radar. It's a matter of identifying
you know, timing based on the progress that the subgroup can make. You know, it's really important also to recognize that the subgroup has members of the advisory council contributing and availability and capacity and resources for all of us, including the advisory council members, is very limited.
So we have those constraints as well to work around. And it's, you know, definitely true that we're not going to allow, you know, rushing processes for the sake of meeting a deadline.
if that means that we're not considering and incorporating feedback from ASIN members robustly. So that is definitely something that the subgroup will consider and we'll be touching base with
all of the covered agencies to ensure that everything that you've provided here gets considered by the subgroup as well. And then next steps will be identified. Hopefully, we will have a revised timeline to offer so that you all know what's coming down the

pipeline and when to expect
These tasks to be performed.

McIlvennie, Sarah 1:44:10
Thanks, Carla. Go ahead, Claire.

McIlvennie, Claire 1:44:16
Um, I think...
Generally, I would just agree with what Abby said earlier in the process than later. And I was going to offer like a tangible example of like where I think that could be helpful. So I happened to be showing it front and center, Juliet. But one of the things I put in the mentor meter was like thinking through like what would be small steps you can take.
you were like time constrained or resource constrained or otherwise constrained versus like bigger steps you could make to advance the principles as Sarah read them out. Like if you have more time, more budget, or as you're working like through processes and it feels like if we were to develop something like that or develop other like tools that would go on this guide, like gut checking that.

Birch, Juliet 1:44:46
Yeah.

McIlvennie, Claire 1:45:05
state agency priorities or kind of what we see as like a small versus like a big step to prioritize aligned with those that like the way the advisory council members would think about those. It feels like what I think of talking with them earlier.
versus later would be helpful, which is just a very long way of saying like, I feel like we were tasked with coming up with like, what's the most important thing you should do or what you should prioritize? Like, does our list match with what they would ask of us? Those kinds of kind of opportunities for dialogue.

Birch, Juliet 1:45:38
It.

McIlvennie, Sarah 1:45:49

Yeah, thank you, Claire. And I'll just, I was going to mention what Abby just put in the chat. If I know not everyone has a whoa or woes, but if you do, right, like those are always other avenues to keep having these conversations with AC members who some of them are in the small.

BJ **Birch, Juliet** 1:45:50
This is.
Looking the barnish.
But.

MS **McIlvennie, Sarah** 1:46:09
the subgroup, but not all of them are. So that is including more voices. And I will turn it back over to Juliette, but one other thing I would offer and maybe make as an ask as a CEP member to you all is that like information is always a gift. You know, don't reply all, I would say.
Don't reply at all. I'll say on Juliet's behalf, but like.

BJ **Birch, Juliet** 1:46:29
Sure.
Okay.

MS **McIlvennie, Sarah** 1:46:33
Context is always helpful. And so if you, I could imagine that if you were thinking of something and you share that information with Carla and Kim and Juliet, and then they can share it with the CEP group, like that is incredibly helpful and can continue these conversations in the spaces between 4 formal meetings and support our processes.
homing in on what is helpful for you all.
Go ahead, Amy, and then Julia, I'll hand it back to you after Amy.

RA **Redman, Amy (She/Her)** 1:46:59
Really just a very quick reflection on what's been shared. And Sarah, I keep thinking about how you remind us about the deeply relational work that this is. And I can't help thinking about like our relationship with the AC as like foundational to like embodying these practices. And so

Birch, Juliet 1:47:00
Thank you.

Redman, Amy (She/Her) 1:47:21
I think I'm happy to kind of see the like, OK, so how do we how do we do that? How do we give voice? How do we, you know, share space and have the AC really meaningfully engaged as kind of like foundational to these plans? Just it means a lot to be talking about in this space. So that's what I want to say. Thank you.

Birch, Juliet 1:47:42
And we should do a retreat.
Yeah, I love that, Amy. Everything about engagement is deeply relational. And I have this constant thought, which is like, if we can't achieve that with the people who are systemically, like, so.
Obviously, there's a compensation thing. You know, it's hard to compensate like members of the public for being involved in a public comment period. That's been like an issue that we have and that we run into. But we have a system with the advisory council where they are able to be compensated for this work with us.
in a way that's like, it is a little convoluted, but not as convoluted as some other ways. And it's like, if we can't even utilize these guys and develop relationships with them in a way that meaningfully shapes the work, then, you know, like, how are we, how can we expect to be able to create that kind of relational work with like,
you know, strangers, people who are just community members in Vermont who aren't brought in to be part of these more formal processes. And it's something that I think about all the time. And that said, I guess...
to close out that part of this because I think it's really important to address.
If you do not already have a working on excellence partner, but you want one, please let us know because there are a lot of AC members who want to have relationships with you guys on like a one-on-one or two-on-one or two-on-two basis. You know, like it, that would be, that's one way that we can start building more
intimate relationships with folks. I would also say that it doesn't.
threaten quorum or our public meeting cap to just shoot an email to someone and get to know them and see if like, if you live in the same part of the state, maybe we can go get coffee on a Saturday or something. You know, those things, we don't

have to be the middleman between you guys and the advisory council. I would encourage you to like just.
talk to folks. And that, you know, there are also things that we could do, like what Carla just said about maybe having like a retreat or something where we could, that would be a public meeting. It would achieve quorum, but we could have like a retreat of some kind where folks are, we'd have to think about how that.
applies to open meeting law. I don't know, is it spitballing here, but there are ways that we could build relationships and stuff, but I just want to say that.
We try to build meeting spaces where we can facilitate those kinds of relationships. And it's also, you know, sometimes the public meeting space is frankly not a place where it feels like you can build vulnerable, intimate relationships because you're being recorded.
So I would encourage you guys to like, you know, reach out to them as people in other contexts too. I think it's an important part of engaging.
That was a lot. That was on like a completely other note, but I appreciate you guys centering the AC as a huge part of this conversation. We have 5 minutes left. We have a couple of things we want to address with you that's not related necessarily to community engagement before we close out today.
So I was wondering, should I pass it to Kim to close us out?

BK **Barrett, Kim** 1:51:12
Yeah. Yep, sounds good. Thank you. So we had a meeting with the advisory council on April 8th. That meeting went really well. And they revisited, you know, the conversation around what an environmental justice complaint could look like. So I'd really recommend going back and looking at the minutes

BJ **Birch, Juliet** 1:51:15
Thank you.

BK **Barrett, Kim** 1:51:33
for that. That felt like a really like they made a lot of progress. And so we scheduled office hours for them to next week for them to come together and finalize a response for you all. So we're going to be supporting them with that. And then our agency's legal team organized

Birch, Juliet 1:51:48
Yeah.

Barrett, Kim 1:51:55
the Vermont EJ Law attorney calls. So one on May 5th and then the other one, a second option on May 8th. So if you, you should have invites, but if you have any questions or need anything around that, just let us know. And then we have the May 13 advisory council meeting, which will be
I just want to confirm that that'll be a joint meeting, correct, Carla?

Birch, Juliet 1:52:23
Yes.

Barrett, Kim 1:52:24
Yes. So we're hoping you all can join us for the May 13 advisory council meeting. It'll be joint and also an executive session. We wanted to let you know and then we'll forward updates or invites if we haven't done that already.

Birch, Juliet 1:52:42
Yeah, I just want to clarify, it wasn't originally scheduled, obviously as a joint meeting, but we've decided based off of your feedback that you guys want to have another executive session with the advisory council that that's the best way to do it. So we'll send you the meeting invite as soon as possible.

Barrett, Kim 1:52:46
Yes.
Mhm.
Juliet and Carla, is there anything else we want to let folks know about?

Birch, Juliet 1:53:07
Not on my end.

Barrett, Kim 1:53:09

Okay.
Alright.

Birch, Juliet 1:53:10
Just as usual, gratitude. I always try to end with gratitude. I appreciate all of you, your input, and this is really exciting work. And it's a pleasure to do it alongside you. So thank you very much. And thank you, Juliet and Kim.
and Sarah and Charlotte and all of the folks who have been helping us move this one deliverable forward. Thank you.

McIlvennie, Sarah 1:53:43
Yeah, and I'll just say Ricardo too. Also, thank Ricardo for the woes.

Birch, Juliet 1:53:46
Yes, Ricarda. Yes, Ricarda.

McIlvennie, Sarah 1:53:50
She was the one who brought the woes to us.

Birch, Juliet 1:53:50
We can't see everyone in the room right now, so that's why.

Barrett, Kim 1:53:58
Well, thank you all.

Birch, Juliet 1:53:58
Oh, now I can see everyone. Yeah, Ricarda. Yeah, it's actually been, it's actually been. You know, encouraging to have these conversations with with fellow corporate agency folks to have the perspective and knowledge of different ways of thinking about these deliverables and this one in particular has been very.
very refreshing for sure. Thank you so much for the engagement.
One last side note is that obviously we developed this meeting with Sarah and Abby was also involved in the planning here with the Agency of Agriculture. And I just want to say I loved doing this like collaborative meeting facilitation.
And if folks are interested in any particular topic and you're like, please God, I want

to be part of like planning this out. I have a meeting idea. Can you please just reach out to us? Because we only have so many ideas, right? And I know that you were all part of this process.
And we all care about how these meetings go and how we can continue to be productive in this in the implementation of the law. And you don't have to like do what Sarah did, which is like get up and talk in front of everybody. But it would be so awesome to be able to plan more meetings in a collaborative sense with other agencies. So
Please.
again and again and again. Do not ever hesitate to reach out to us. We would love that.
Thank you.

MS **McIlvennie, Sarah** 1:55:44
Also just say super duper fast. The community of practice is actually having two sessions on program evaluation, which might be quite helpful for folks thinking about this deliverable. Department of Health program evaluators are going to be presenting. That's next second Friday of the month for May and June.

BJ **Birch, Juliet** 1:55:47
Yeah.

MS **McIlvennie, Sarah** 1:56:03
and everyone's welcome to come if that would be helpful for this deliverable for folks.

BJ **Birch, Juliet** 1:56:08
Cool.

BK **Barrett, Kim** 1:56:10
All right, thank you. Have a good rest of your day.

BJ **Birch, Juliet** 1:56:10
Thank you, Sarah.
Thank you. Bye. Bye.

RA **Redman, Amy (She/Her)** 1:56:16
Thank you. Bye, all.

WA **Willard, Abbey** 1:56:16
Hello, thanks.

BK **Barrett, Kim** 1:56:18
Bye.

Redman, Amy (She/Her) stopped transcription