

1 **Building Equity into the CAP and Ensuring a Just Transition**

2 The Vermont Climate Council recognized early in the process the further work it needed to do –
3 both internally and externally – to build equity into climate action in Vermont and Vermont’s
4 Climate Action Plan and ensure a just transition. To realize the transformative change that is
5 needed to meet the objectives of the Global Warming Solutions Act (GWSA), Vermonters must
6 be part of not only the solutions but in determining them, supporting all residents of the State
7 fairly and equitably. Specifically, the Council took a three-pronged approach to incorporating
8 and applying equity principles in policy and decision-making: holding space, organizational
9 analysis, and engagement.

10 The act of holding space refers to the Council’s commitment to start every Council meeting with
11 a presentation or discussion related to equity. Rather than having one or a few specific trainings
12 in the area, this has provided a continual opportunity to hear from experts in the field, working
13 on the ground in Vermont and/or have facilitated conversations around what the work looks like
14 in practice. This work will need to be continued as the State of Vermont and Vermonters work to
15 implement the Climate Action Plan (CAP).

16 The Council also recognized that there is further work to do around the organizational structure
17 of the Council. The formation of the Council itself, and the five subcommittees needed to
18 develop the Climate Action Plan, took place at an astonishing speed and are imperfect. The
19 systems needed to support the full work of the Climate Action Plan and represent the diversity in
20 Vermont were developed in real time. As such, the hierarchy of the Council and its
21 subcommittees created a system with imperfect power dynamics and under-represented sectors
22 of Vermont’s population. The Council itself is not representative of the BIPOC, low income and
23 rural communities that are likely to be most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, not is
24 the Council representative of the economic sectors that will be most impacted by this
25 transformation, such as the building trades. The Council cast a broader net when forming the
26 subcommittees in order to bring more voices to the process, . The subcommittees, however,
27 which are more representative, do not determine the final actions in the CAP but rather serve as
28 advisory to the Council. The Council holds the decision-making power. In recognizing and
29 appreciating this issue, the Council seeks to engage with the legislature going forward to

30 consider new appointments to the Council and other tools, such as re-evaluating the State’s per
31 diem policy, to seek and create opportunities to add diversity to the Council.

32 The final approach to equity is co-creation of and broad-based public engagement in the
33 development of the CAP and ultimately, its implementation. While detailed in the preceding
34 section, the Council engagement efforts were significantly impacted by the aggressive timeline
35 proscribed in the GWSA. That said, engagement cannot be a “point in time” effort in the
36 development of the, but rather must be a commitment by the Council and its staff to work in an
37 ongoing fashion to engage Vermonters in climate action. It is with this commitment, that the
38 Council will continue to strive to do better in providing a platform for Vermonters to see
39 themselves in this process.

40 **Developing the Guiding Principles**

41 The GWSA charges the Just Transitions Subcommittee with ensuring that strategies to reduce
42 greenhouse gas emissions and build resilience to climate change impacts will benefit and support
43 all residents of the State of Vermont fairly and equitably. The term “Just Transitions”
44 encompasses both public policy and business action that address the impacts of the transition
45 away from greenhouse gas emissions for jobs and livelihoods (the transition "out") and the
46 generation of low or zero greenhouse gas emission jobs and livelihoods of a sustainable society
47 (the transition "in").

48 The Just Transitions Subcommittee intentionally formed as a collaborative and diverse group of
49 Vermonters, representing voices of indigenous, black, people of color, youth, people with low
50 incomes, New Americans, labor unions, rural Vermonters and more. **The Subcommittee**
51 **promoted proactively centering equity in the work of the Climate Council, rather than**
52 **reactively measuring it.** To support this goal, the subcommittee created the *Guiding Principles*
53 *for a Just Transition*. The Guiding Principles provide a framework for the Council and
54 subcommittees to use in evaluating, adjusting and prioritizing recommendations that are outlined
55 in the Vermont Climate Action Plan. By providing a checkpoint to ensure active discussion of
56 equity concerns, the Guiding Principles are especially useful in climate policy areas where equity
57 has not traditionally been considered. It is critical to provide an equity lens to incorporate the

58 perspectives of historically marginalized, disadvantaged and underserved communities that are
59 otherwise overlooked or neglected.

60 **Defining “equity” is important for this process.** (1) *Distributive equity* recognizes disparities
61 in the allocation of resources, health outcomes, the inequities in living conditions and lack of
62 political power place frontline / impacted communities; (2) *Procedural equity* includes equitable
63 planning and implementation that requires communities have a meaningful opportunity to
64 participate; (3) *Contextual equity* ensures that mitigation and adaption strategies take into
65 account that low-income communities, black communities, indigenous communities and people
66 of color, and people with disabilities, amongst others, are often more vulnerable to climate
67 change; (4) *Corrective equity* ensures that mitigation and adaption strategies provide
68 communities with clear processes to hold the state accountable to its commitments to pursue
69 equity.

70 **Vermont’s Impacted & Frontline Communities**

71 The Guiding Principles point out the significance in Vermont’s climate work of recognizing
72 Vermont’s Impacted and Frontline Communities, defining these communities as those who:

- 73 ● Are highly exposed to climate risks, such as health impacts, flooding, and extreme
74 temperatures;
- 75 ● Experience oppression and racism, are excluded from opportunities, or have less
76 resources to adapt to climate and economic change;
- 77 ● Bear the brunt of pollution and negative effects from today’s fossil fuel and extractive
78 economies; and
- 79 ● Are more likely to experience a job transition as Vermont addresses climate change.

80 Studies show that low-income communities, indigenous peoples, black, and other communities
81 of color are among those who are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. In
82 addition, as industry and jobs transition away from greenhouse gas emissions and towards
83 “greener” jobs and livelihoods, particular focus must be given to the labor sector. Finally, some
84 Vermonters may also be necessarily focused on achieving immediate goals of food, shelter,
85 safety and health, which can impact ability to focus on long-term adaptation to climate and
86 economic changes. Recognition of the disproportionate impact of climate upon frontline

87 communities is essential to evaluating the impact of the transitions toward a carbon-free
88 economy, and to emphasizing the goals of adaptation and resilience strategies. Consequently, the
89 Guiding Principles encourage consideration of impacted and frontline communities in the
90 development of recommendations and prioritization of resources to address climate change.

91 **Guiding Principles for a Just Transition**

92 The Just Transitions Subcommittee designed six key principles to guide the recommendations of
93 the Climate Council in development of the Climate Action Plan. These include:

- 94 I. Ensuring *Inclusive, Transparent, and Innovative Engagement* in the development of the
95 plan and associated policies and program.
- 96 II. Creating *Accountable and Restorative* recommendations that recognize inequality and
97 seek to resolve them using clearly identified strategies.
- 98 III. Moving at *The Speed of Trust* where candor and honesty are recognized as essential for
99 public trust and preparing Vermonters for transition to a sustainable climate future.
- 100 IV. Incorporating *Solidarity* to create inclusionary spaces for all traditions and cultures,
101 particularly for Indigenous communities, recognizing them as integral to a healthy and
102 vibrant Vermont.
- 103 V. Prioritizing *The Most Impacted First* through recommendations that address the needs of
104 impacted and frontline communities first, providing the greatest benefits of transitions to
105 these communities.
- 106 VI. Developing *Supports for Workers, Families, and Communities* that consider and plan for
107 potential impacts on workers, families and their communities based on the
108 implementation of Vermont’s Climate Action Plan

110 **Self-Assessment and Scoring Rubric**

111 The Guiding Principles also include a process for assessing “equity and justice” which includes
112 an explicit reflection and analysis of:

- 113 ● Impacted and Frontline Communities;
- 114 ● Analyzing Burdens and Benefits;
- 115 ● Ensuring Equitable and Just Engagement;

- 116 ● Funding and Data;
- 117 ● Implementation and Outcomes

118 Moreover, a scoring rubric was developed to accompany a narrative response for each of the
119 Assessment Questions. Each recommendation put forth by a subcommittee is scored on how
120 applicable it is to the criterion of each prompt. The criterion include: *Frontline/Impacted*
121 *Communities; Analyzing Burdens And Benefits; Ensuring Equitable & Just Engagement;*
122 *Funding & Data; Implementation & Questions; Which Groups Derive Direct Benefits.* This
123 rubric was designed to be used in the recommendation prioritization process and supported
124 identifying strategies and actions that require additional equity and justice considerations before
125 being advanced to implementation.

126 The full Guiding Principles document, along with the rubric can be found in (INSERT
127 APPENDIX).

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