

(16) Implementing Vermont's Climate Action Plan 11/9/21

Just Transition and Equity Considerations in Implementation

The Just Transitions Guiding Principles adopted by the Vermont Climate Council identify ambitious and critical steps for the Climate Council to take during the development and ongoing implementation of the Climate Action Plan. These principles set expectations regarding how the Climate Council and its subcommittees conduct their work, what recommendations are made by the Council and how investments, implementation and oversight of the plan must occur. The Guiding Principles have helped to shape a process of engagement, development and the prioritization of recommendations that speak to issues of equity and justice. The Climate Council has taken some important first steps. However, the Council and Just Transitions Subcommittee have also heard significant frustration around the timeline which has prevented adequate and inclusive engagement. Time and resource constraints have prevented a robust equity analysis and public engagement process. Both are essential to move away from a status quo which exacerbates inequities and places impacted communities at greater risk from climate change. Historically, impacted, and frontline communities have been marginalized by insufficient governmental responses to environmental crises at the local, state and federal levels. Procedural equity requires that impacted communities have the opportunity to provide input on the climate policies that directly affect them, and policy makers have the opportunity to collaborate with communities so that Vermont's climate solutions meet community needs.

The Climate Council will provide ongoing oversight and policy planning; however, the legislative and executive branches both have important roles to act on Climate Council recommendations. For these reasons, it is crucial for the next steps of the Climate Council, the legislature, **and** the executive branch to consider the following:

Expand Public Engagement

- **Provide adequate funding and staffing resources** for the Climate Council, the legislature, and agencies responsible for taking action to adopt more inclusive and innovative engagement strategies.
- **Present key materials in plain and accessible language**, including translation into multiple languages during ongoing planning and implementation efforts, particularly outreach materials intended for a public audience.
- **Create opportunities for engagement with impacted communities** in a way that is ongoing and allows for dialogue over time, rather than one-time or one way communication. Direct and inclusive engagement is different from traditional marketing or public hearing processes. It requires meeting people in their communities and using trusted organizations and community members to support outreach.
- **Create opportunities to hear from Vermonter's experiences** during all of the processes created by the Global Warming Solutions Act, including the finalization of the Climate Action Plan, the considerations of specific processes, throughout the rulemaking process, during oversight of implementation, and so on.

- **Coordinate public engagement efforts related to climate actions.** The Climate Council’s public engagement plan calls for supporting and working through and with trusted community organizations to reach impacted communities. This strategy is critical to reaching impacted communities and will require coordination and support. The Climate Council is well-poised to support coordination.

Commit to Ongoing Use of the Guiding Principles

- **Support the use of the Guiding Principles, assessment questions and rubric are during the legislative, rule-making, and ongoing implementation.** The Climate Council has adopted the Guiding Principles and should play a lead role in supporting their ongoing use by all relevant stakeholders.
- **Provide training to support the adoption and ongoing use of the Guiding Principles** by the Climate Council, the legislature, and the executive branch.
- **Incorporate the Guiding Principles Assessment Questions into the Equity Impact Analysis (EIA)** tool currently used by the executive branch for evaluating budget needs, new program development and policy recommendations. This will enhance and broaden the EIA, as well as add consistency to ongoing climate efforts.
- **Encourage the legislature and joint fiscal office to use the Guiding Principles** in its work, specifically the role that the assessment questions and rubric could play in priority setting and policy development.
- **Encourage the legislature to include strategies to mitigate burdens and maximize benefits for impacted communities in climate-related legislation,** which could include a minimum percentage of climate action investments for impacted communities.
- **Ensure that future Legislative deadlines consider procedural equity and allow adequate time and resources** to support the necessary public engagement.

Commented [PS1]: Should we recommend an amount

Commented [PS2R1]: Or we could suggest that this could be something our Sub Committee could work on establishing?

Remain Accountable to Achieving a Just Transition

- **All climate action strategies and actions should include metrics to measure equity impact.** The Climate Council plays an ongoing role in monitoring and tracking progress and results during implementation and future planning. Metrics related to equity impact should be part of regular, ongoing reporting and will help the Climate Council understand whether Vermont is achieving its goals related to a just transition.
- **Keep impacted communities informed of results** as the Council assesses the equity impact of climate actions.
- **Conduct a regular review of progress and issue a Just Transitions progress report every two years.** A report is an important tool for accountability and offers an opportunity to share strategies and establish best practices in reaching Vermont’s climate equity goals.

Commented [PS3]: Is a report feasible? (would require additional resources) What is the best timeframe?