

# Vermont's Climate Action Plan: 2025 Update Kick-Off

*Summary of Feedback During Virtual Public Kick-Off Meetings*

June 2024

## **PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT OVERVIEW:**

Vermont's [Initial Climate Action Plan](#) was adopted in 2021 and is due to be updated by July 2025. The [Vermont Climate Council](#) and its Subcommittees held two virtual meetings in June 2024 to hear from Vermonters as the revision process gets underway. During the meetings, on June 17 and June 20, more than 150 participants joined Councilors and subcommittee members for a discussion to learn about the current Plan, voice priorities for its revision, and connect to future engagement opportunities for climate action in Vermont. The meetings represented one component of a multi-pronged engagement strategy that is reaching a wide range of Vermonters around climate action.

This document summarizes the public input received during the two meetings. At these sessions, members of the Climate Council gave an overview of the Initial Climate Action Plan and the process for updating it. Participants then split into smaller groups for discussion on three substantive topics: rural resilience and adaptation; agriculture and ecosystems; and reduction of climate pollution in all sectors of the economy. The meeting concluded with a summary of the group discussions, additional comments from participants, and next steps to stay engaged. [Slides are available here.](#)

## **WHAT WAS HEARD:**

In the smaller group discussions, participants provided substantive input to the Council and subcommittees. Key themes included:

### Agriculture & Ecosystems

- Natural systems and nature-based solutions, including regenerative agriculture, must play an important role in adapting to a changing climate, mitigating warmer temperatures, addressing flood risks, and supporting natural and working lands.
- Wildlife bridges should be an important focus of supporting ecosystems and biodiversity.
- This work should connect with local processes that have happened or are happening, such as through conservation districts.

- All Vermonters should have equitable access to project planning & permitting processes. Engage communities in the decision-making processes around land development, management, and protection. These issues also intersect with renewable energy siting. There are federal funds available to support community-led initiatives.
- Food security for the state should be a priority.
- The state should be accounting for biomass emissions in its greenhouse gas inventory and stop burning biomass for electricity.

### Rural Resilience and Adaptation

- Communication is essential and should be simple, focusing on the most vulnerable communities. Use infographics and other tools. Communication feels insufficient today. Local organizations can help with education. Pursue a cooperative approach.
- Take steps to build community support around resilience and adaptation measures. Consider how to talk with people about actions and their effects.
- Rural and more developed areas will require different approaches.
- Energy resilience should be part of the conversation—including planning for micro-grids and battery storage.
- The state needs to invest in planning capacity at local and regional levels so that Vermont can have a pipeline of ready-to-go projects.
- Public health wasn't part of the initial Plan and should be a focus of the revision.
- Vermont needs to be more prepared for heat emergencies and other impacts that are happening right now.

### Reduction of Climate Pollution

- In addition to incentives, Vermont needs policies to support workforce, navigators, and other high-touch support. The state needs a structure that supports a change.
- The updated plan should be clear-eyed about the cost of what it proposes, as well as the costs of inaction.
- Vermont should prioritize building renewable energy within existing buildings and infrastructure to lessen the potential conversion of natural and agricultural lands, which are providing important facets of climate resilience.
- All programs need to have an on-ramp for low-income folks to participate, whether it's transport, energy, weatherization, or heat pumps.
- Consider creating a "Weatherization Corps" patterned after AmeriCorps that could be a way for young people to support a climate workforce.
- Take full advantage of the many federal funding opportunities.
- For transportation, focus on non-car solutions such as electric buses, light rail.

- Electric vehicle charging infrastructure is needed in rural communities.

Participants also provided general comments about the process of updating the Climate Action Plan and engaging Vermonters. Key themes included:

- Take steps to keep people engaged in, and aware of, this planning process.
- Don't only rely on virtual meetings to reach Vermonters.
- Improve the way the Council and subcommittees receive and act on public comment, to demonstrate that peoples' voices matter.

#### **ENGAGEMENT NEXT STEPS:**

1. The Climate Action Office will send follow-up emails to all attendees & registrants with a summary of participant input.
2. Participants were encouraged to:
  - Sign up for the Climate Action Office's newsletter: <https://lp.constantcontactpages.com/s1/LKntU76>
  - Attend a meeting (or meetings) of Climate Council Subcommittee(s): [climatechange.vermont.gov/calendar](https://climatechange.vermont.gov/calendar)
  - Respond to a survey, submit written comment, or leave a voice message: [climatechange.vermont.gov/get-involved](https://climatechange.vermont.gov/get-involved)