

Vermont's Opportunity for Federal Climate Funding

Summary of Initial Public Feedback on measures to include in the State of Vermont's Climate Pollution Reduction Grant application

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT OVERVIEW:

Vermont's Climate Action Office (CAO) held two virtual public meetings in December to receive initial feedback on the measures the state plans to include in its application for federal funding under the Climate Pollution Reduction Grant. The CAO also briefed Vermont's Climate Council to receive additional input.

This document summarizes input received to date. 59 people participated in the interactive public meetings. Another 25 attended the Council briefing, which was also open to the public. At these sessions, the CAO gave an overview of the Climate Pollution Reduction Grant (CPRG) and outlined the specific climate actions that the office proposes to include for funding. The Climate Action Office described the criteria that state agencies used to prioritize actions for the grant. After the initial presentation, participants engaged in a facilitated discussion. Videos are publicly available on the Agency of Natural Resources [YouTube channel](#) and the [Climate Action Office website](#).

The measures in the grant application were selected from actions within Vermont's Initial Climate Action Plan, or complement the Plan. The Plan was adopted December 2021 after a participatory process that included involvement from 1,600 Vermonters through events, surveys, direct conversations, and public comment form.

The CAO also encouraged written input on the proposed measures for federal funding, using a press release, social media posts, community event calendars, personal email invitations, and the Climate Action Office (CAO) website to alert Vermonters to the public meetings and the opportunity to provide written comment. Nine people sent emails.

WHAT WAS HEARD:

- The vast majority of comments aligned with the proposed focal areas and programs for the Climate Pollution Reduction Grant. The only one that didn't was a suggestion to address wastewater plant emissions through flaring (reduces methane by converting to CO₂). Climate Action Office staff are reviewing this opportunity with Department of Environmental Conservation's Wastewater program staff.
- Comments were substantive, thoughtful, and oriented towards finding solutions together.
- Some comments either *could not* apply to this funding (such as retrofitting buildings to be resilient to floods) or *already* have adequate funding and are being implemented or planned.
- While the comments did not lead to any significant pivots in *what* the proposed measures are, they will help inform *how* these funds are used and how the Climate Action Office writes the implementation application for the Climate Pollution Reduction Grant.

MAJOR THEMES:

- Desire for these funds to support Vermonters who need it the most
 - Tax rebates don't benefit low & moderate income people
 - Make it easy to understand; make processes to access funds/benefits simple and accessible
 - Combine with other funding and technical assistance to maximize benefits to Vermonters
- Prioritize climate actions that have other benefits for Vermonters, too
 - Examples: job training/workforce development (Vermont Works for Women Serve, Learn, Earn), land conservation/restoration and improved agricultural/forestry/land management
- More capacity needed at the town and community level
 - Trust the people, organizations and community groups already doing work in this space
- Build on successes that are in high demand but need more funds
 - Examples: Municipal Technical Assistance Program, Municipal Energy Resilience Program, home weatherization and energy coaches, electric vehicle incentives suite

ENGAGEMENT NEXT STEPS:

1. Follow-up email to be sent to all attendees & registrants & emailers & CAO newsletter list by 12/20.
2. Detailed summary of comments heard to be prepared by 12/22 and circulated to CAO staff writing the PCAP and implementation grant.
3. Plan for additional stakeholder engagement to be developed and circulated to key staff by 12/22.
4. Stakeholder engagement focused on those most impacted by this funding opportunity to occur in January & early February 2024.
5. Share draft application materials with attendees, registrants, emailers & CAO newsletter list in early February 2024 with time for public comment.

EXAMPLES OF SPECIFIC PARTICIPANT IDEAS

Below are some of the results from an interactive exercise with participants in which they shared ideas and had an opportunity to show support for each other's ideas as well.

What does the state need to hear right now to ensure this funding will be meaningful for you and your community?

Co-benefits / alignment with community needs (denser affordable multi-unit housing). Viable public transit.

10 Popular

inclusive of low and moderate income folks, EJ communities.

8

regional approaches to outcomes, and investment in people to do the work within communities.

6

Improving thermal in people's homes is the most tangible direct way to improve their lives and get them involved in climate action. Thermal is much lower hanging fruit than transportation.

6

Investment in public transportation. The city of Mpls. has about 75% of its surface area devoted to the automobile

6

The funding needs to have impacts across all socioeconomic levels of the community - it can't be perceived as only benefiting one segment of the community.

6

Resiliency related to electrification.

5

state/regional procurement (culverts, lower embedded carbon building materials, grant writing & admin, HVAC, EVSE, etc); same day/week funding to meet acute needs (point of failure especially heating)

5



What does the state need to hear right now to ensure this funding will be meaningful for you and your community?

consider housing emissions reductions alongside the housing crisis - state housing construction of low-cost, super-sustainable natural building, to set a new building standard for our state

8 Popular

Municipal capacity is severely stretched just for day to day tasks, let alone adapting for the future. Funding and technical assistance would significantly ease the burden.

6

Prioritize actions and programs that result in tangible quality-of-life improvements alongside their climate benefits

4

Many municipalities need help applying for funding to accomplish climate goals. Could your office dedicate staff to helping them find and apply?

4

-More public transportation - buses, trains, expanded schedules and routes.-Buyback programs to help farmers move from a silage grain system to a grass-based system.-Limit harvest of Vermont forests

4

Municipalities need funding, expertise, and coordination to reduce their GHG emissions from buildings, town transportation, etc.

3

Assistance for communities to research and develop community based solar projects where electricity stays in the community

3

Do way more wetland restoration especially along rivers and streams, which can be our best carbon storers, along with habitat and flood co-benefits

3



In these four areas (Natural & Working Lands, Transportation, Buildings & Heating, Solid Waste), how can this funding be most meaningful?

Provide direct funding for electrification upgrades directly in customer homes and multifamily homes, which would benefit Vermonters directly; support training/workforce development for same

8 **Popular**

By identifying areas where "stacking" this funding can help increase uptake in some of existing programs by low income Vermonters

6

transportation and building and heating actions that do double duty (resilience and emissions reductions)

6

Stacking with other funding to support making things even more affordable

5

Technical Assistance and Navigators are needed.

5

Transportation and affordability of EVs

3

Include agricultural machinery in conversion to evUpgrade grid to support shift to electric aross se torsHands on support around building municipal efficiency

3

expanding the impact of exiting programs

2

