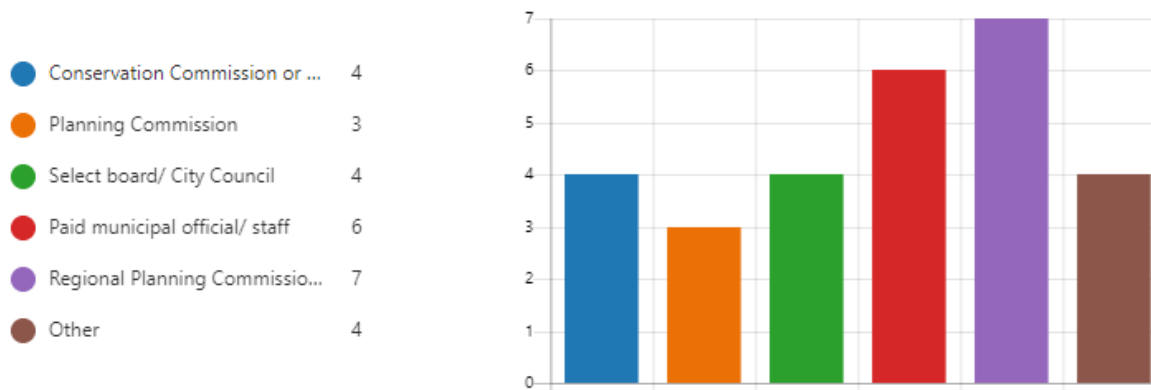


## Climate Toolkit Focus Group Notes

March 23<sup>rd</sup>

### 3. Please select your organization/ municipal affiliation?

[More Details](#)



### 1) In what areas of climate action have you done projects or planning work?

#### • Climate Justice & Equity

- *Climate justice operates at the intersection of racial and social rights, environmental and economic justice. It focuses on the root causes of climate change, and call for a transformation to a sustainable, community-led economy. Climate justice begins with recognizing key groups are differently affected by climate change and connects the dots between civil rights and climate change.*
- *Equity: distributive (disparities in allocation of resources), procedural (equitable planning and implementation), contextual (mitigation and adaptation strategies consider low-income communities, BIPOC, etc.), corrective equity (clear processes to hold the State accountable to commitments).*

- Energy
- Transportation
- Agriculture
- People & Communities
- Education
- Food Systems
- Land use planning
- Infrastructure
- Housing
- Natural Environment

## Climate Toolkit Focus Group Notes

March 23<sup>rd</sup>

- **Public Health**
- **Hazard mitigation**
- **Other**

### **Top responses:**

Infrastructure, **Energy**, Transportation, Land Use, flood resilience

### **Key themes**

- Many have done some work in all of the areas listed.
- Implementing climate justice and equity work is a new challenge for many communities. Participants noted focusing work on weatherization and energy burden with low-income communities and mobile home parks.
- Partnering with organizations that have existing relationships with frontline communities (example given was CVOEO) is key to making headway.
- A number of participants noted that due to community size, they have struggled to identify and connect with impacted communities such as mobile home parks and BIPOC community members. Outreach to those communities a key difficulty when discussing equity work.

---

## **2) Which areas of climate would you like to work in that you have not had the resources or capacity to do so? What tools do you wish you had? What tools have you looked for and not found?**

### **Top responses:**

- All of them! Could do all of them more with more staff and money and time.
- Education is an area where more work can be done.
- Would like to do more in Climate Justice & Equity – do not know where to start.
- For municipalities like Burlington that have a steep hill to climb in terms of cutting GHG emissions, the challenge is whether and how to address financial incentives, and/or policy hooks. Difficult to piece those together for successful climate planning and implementation.
- A list of all state funding opportunities would be really helpful.

### **Key themes**

### **Staff capacity:**

- Staffing, financial, and policy capacity are always constraints
- Staffing at regional planning commission level – help fill in the gaps where paid staff are not possible at the town level

## Climate Toolkit Focus Group Notes

March 23<sup>rd</sup>

### Needed data:

- There was a clear concern around the sheer scale of work that needs to be done to stay on track with emissions goals. Questions from town representatives about how to communicate that to community members, and how much would be needed in the way of resources to implement those solutions.
- Toolkit from VTRANS on transportation changes to more bike/ped friendly would be helpful.

### Energy efficiency:

- Resources for towns to hire an energy inspector to enforce a yet-to-be passed stretch code for new/ refurbished housing and other structures not regulated at a State level.
- Energy building code – reviewing certificates – having trouble finding people to do the basic testing
- Utilize efficiency code – very little hands-on support for meeting base code because they don't get credit for that – they have been the only source for energy ratings.
- On Net Metering: it would be great to have a master list for all Vermont's municipalities (and maybe a separate one for school districts) to see which ones have used all / part / none of their available credits from solar development. I can motivate our Town (and School District) to take advantage of the credits if they see that an adjacent municipality has used them up.
- We would like state enforcement/compliance of building energy code. Not sure that relates to the toolkit but wanted to take the opportunity to mention it.

### Grants, resources, tools:

- Would be helpful to have data all in once place to inform climate related planning and implementation.
  - Ensure close tie to work already done at the town level on hazard mitigation plans; “the hardest part of developing mitigation plans is developing the actions, as the towns don't always have a lot up their sleeve. A resource of action ideas would be very helpful, not just case studies, but also just plain ideas for towns to consider. FEMA ideas don't always what makes sense for VT, and there are other good ideas out there they just need to be compiled.”
- Previously RPCs had not done much work in public health but there are now several grants with a focus on health equity that RPCs (BCRC specially) have received.
- Need assistance with identifying grants to implement proposed projects – difficult at that level of specificity.
- Case studies of how communities similar to yours/ours have been successful in achieving goals – what have neighboring communities gone about ex. Enforcing an energy code.
- Documents should be provided in Word on the toolkit so they don't have to reinvent the wheel.

## Climate Toolkit Focus Group Notes

March 23<sup>rd</sup>

- Seeing how other towns have approached similar projects based on town size/structure would be really helpful.
- I would love to see the toolkit include more coverage on other aspects of Climate planning and resilience in addition to energy (tree management which includes not only consideration of power lines but also green space to counter act hotter summers; soil health; how do we adapt housing especially low-income to increasingly intense flooding? What does changing seasonality mean for local food production? How communities that are largely dependent on wells can adapt to drought cycles, Etc!)
- needs tools for education, common theme throughout committees in Waitsfield – specifically planning commission is submitting town plan – land use – ecological resources, critical habitat, habitat crossings, energy grid, would like to present it to residents using climate change as reason they have done the plan in that way – understanding how nature mitigates climate change.
- Increased info about how to address climate change in land use planning would be really helpful for towns.
- Include info on how to create revolving loan funds.

### Collaboration:

- Agricultural has been a difficult space to work in – there seems to be a disconnect between planning commissions/local government and agriculturally focused government organizations.
- “Another challenge is so many organizations are doing so many things, it gets confusing on how to best network and collaborate, without being redundant.”
- CROs was developed to raise volunteer capacity at the local level – after Irene they realized that the towns that did best had great social networks and trust across silos – environmental, emergency, social work (food and shelter).
- Similar to the CRO program Peg mentioned that began with Irene, the Northeast Kingdom Collaborative put together a project during Covid 2020 for communities to share all the various local efforts. People learned from each other. Hearing what others were doing in their town was inspiring to others.