

Vermont Climate Toolkit (VCT)

Project Scope

What: The Global Warming Solutions Act requires the Rural Resilience and Adaptation Subcommittee of the Vermont Climate Council to recommend tools for municipalities to assess their climate emergency preparedness, evaluate their financial capacity to address infrastructure resilience, and prioritize investment in that infrastructure. In developing subcommittee workplans in early 2021, the Rural Resilience and Adaptation Subcommittee included the development of a Climate Toolkit that will connect municipalities with climate action resources. This toolkit will include resources that cover a broad approach, including public health, frontline and impacted communities, how to support a just transition, and how to reach rural communities.

In addition to providing a hub for existing tools and resources, the toolkit will provide access to resources yet to be developed as a result of the Climate Action Plan. In particular, the development of a Municipal Vulnerability Index (MVI) will be tied closely to the development of a toolkit, as the MVI is providing a climate vulnerability assessment of the targeted end users of the toolkit. There is a separate task group dedicated to the creation of the MVI, but a close line of communication will be maintained between both task groups.

The intent is to provide a centralized source for the information relevant for designing and implementing climate action measures or strategies, as well as information on financial resources and technical assistance. The toolkit will also provide opportunities to connect with state agencies and other engaged practitioners for technical advice and expertise.

Why: The development of a toolkit comprised of existing tools and resources that have a nexus to climate change will provide a one-stop-shop for municipalities looking to incorporate climate change into their municipal planning and processes. Currently, tools, resources, and technical assistance that address varied aspects of climate change exist across State government and non-profit partners, but there is no one location that links to those resources and programs. The intent of this toolkit will be to provide a hub that draws together resources, providing an all-hazards approach to climate action.

Who: This toolkit will be targeted at municipal decision makers and planners. Planning Commissions, Conservation Commissions, Energy Commissions, municipal planning staff, town managers, selectboards and elected officials, planning consultants, and Regional Planning Commission make up the targeted audience for this toolkit. By targeting decision makers at the municipal level, and those at the regional level that support them, technical assistance can be tailored to ensure a smooth delivery of resources that compliments existing municipal processes and responsibilities.

How: The Vermont Climate Action Toolkit will be developed through a multi-stakeholder task group comprised of state agency staff, municipal volunteers, and technical assistance providers, with primary support from the Agency of Natural Resources, Global Warming Solutions Act staff. The task group has specific membership and representation from: Vermont's State Climatologist, Vermont Emergency Management, the Northwest Regional Planning Commission, Municipal representation from the Town of Wheelock, the Vermont League of Cities and Towns, the Agency of Natural Resources, and the Department of Fish & Wildlife. Building on the work of the Rural Resilience and Adaptation

Subcommittee in identifying the needs of rural communities in addressing climate change, the toolkit task group identified key themes that should be consistent throughout the toolkit:

- *Simple – the toolkit should help streamline the process of connecting municipalities with resources and technical assistance and should not be adding to the information overload many municipalities are feeling.*
- *Highlights existing work – the toolkit should be a resource that connects the target audience to existing technical assistance and financial resources. The toolkit should not duplicate the many programs that already provide resources on addressing climate impacts, rather it should draw the connection between those many resources and help to categorize those resources in one place.*
- *Amplifies climate impacts and issues – As noted above, the primary content for the toolkit will be existing programs, resources, and technical assistance that exist throughout the state; the toolkit will be the hub where those resources will be pulled together. By pulling together existing resources into one toolkit focused on comprehensive climate action, challenges that municipalities face day to day can be viewed in the context of climate impacts, therefore building climate action into the municipal planning lexicon.*

To inform the scope and design of the toolkit, the task group will convene a focus group of the targeted toolkit users, to understand their needs and challenges when it comes to planning and utilizing resources for climate action. The input from this focus group will inform the design of the toolkit, as well as the structure of the resources housed within.

The toolkit will ultimately live on the www.climatechange.vermont.gov website and will be maintained and updated by GWSA staff and the Rural Resilience and Adaptation Subcommittee.