

Identifying Core Components of the Vermont Climate Council's Strategy in 2023-2024

The Vermont Climate Council will meet on March 13 to develop core components of its strategy for the next two years, during which it will prepare to update the Initial Climate Action Plan by July 1, 2025, as well as address pending issues that may require an addendum to the current plan.

Below are a set of questions that will guide this discussion. They are divided into four interrelated issues:

CAPACITY

What is the capacity of the Council, Subcommittee members, and State Agency Staff? Is the proposed work realistic given what we know about capacity? How can we set ourselves up for success?

A hypothesis to test: The Council needs to be clear-eyed about its own capacity to engage in the work, as well as listen to ANR's signals around state staff capacity detailed in a memo to Council last fall. The extraordinary level of effort invested by all parties to complete the Initial Climate Action Plan can't be replicated. The Council needs to consider its capacity when identifying proposed tasks and roles for the next two years.

TASKS

What are the tasks needed in the next 12-24 months to set the Council up for a successful update process (i.e., what work needs to get done?) Consider: learnings from the development of the initial plan, the role of meaningful and timely public engagement, as well as the implementation of the Just Transition Principles

What other tasks are needed, in particular to address pending items that merit an addendum to the current plan? What will be the process for deciding what else merits an addendum and the mechanism for doing it?

A hypothesis to test: The best and highest value use of Council time in the coming two years is to start the revision process of the Initial Climate Action Plan, as well as finalize addendums to the current plan, limited to biomass and transportation. There is an opportunity to do excellent work around public engagement and implementing the Just Transitions Principles if the revision process is planned out in advance. Based on the capacity conversation, the Council should signal early in the process how it plans to focus revision efforts – it is impractical to attempt a wholesale re-write.

ROLES

What are the respective roles of the Council, Steering Committee, Subcommittees, Task Groups and administration staff to conduct these tasks (i.e., how should the work get done?)

A hypothesis to test: After completing the Initial Climate Action Plan, much of the work shifted to

Task Groups that either looked at cross-cutting issues (biomass, public engagement) or focused on implementation steps (municipal vulnerability index etc.) This structure has become unwieldy, very taxing on staff time, and outside the normal public process (which also means no per diems). Going forward, the work should probably return to the sub-committees, while cross-cutting issues should be addressed at the Council level, getting Councilors more involved in those issues early on.

PROCESS & GOVERNANCE

Are there obvious updates needed to the Process Roadmap?

A hypothesis to test: The Council's Process Roadmap was developed in early 2021 as the Council was starting to develop the Initial Climate Action Plan. The document needs updating. There are gaps to fill, such as how Steering Committee members are chosen. In addition, the document can be oriented towards the functioning of the Council on an ongoing basis.