Public Engagement Chapter Draft

5/16/25

Why engagement matters

The breadth and scale of a climate action plan impact all Vermonters in various ways. It is crucial to ensure that diverse voices, perspectives, and lived experiences are welcomed and valued throughout the process. It is especially important to prioritize the needs and considerations of frontline and impacted communities.

To reach Vermonters from all walks of life, we need to adopt new and different engagement approaches, recognizing that not everyone has the time, means, or ability to attend a typical government public meeting—yet it is still important to hear from them.

One approach involves speaking with people in places they already frequent. Meeting people where they are means having conversations that are accessible and transparent, and providing information or resources that are of interest to them. Another involves collaborating with community partners and using creative communication methods to spread the message. Finally, recognizing that public meetings are still important, we can modify the design of those events to better welcome all. To succeed at these engagement activities, we must invest the necessary time and energy to build and maintain ongoing relationships, and to ensure engagement is inclusive and accessible.

This round of public engagement learned from and improved upon the initial Climate Action Plan engagement in 2021. However, we recognize that there is still much work to be done to amplify the voices of those disproportionately affected by climate change impacts and to expand our reach further to Vermont communities we have not yet engaged with.

Engagement for the 2025 Climate Action Plan Update

One important lesson from the first Climate Action Plan was the need to involve Vermonters continuously and include their input throughout the entire update process. To achieve this, engagement started in early 2024 and continued until the Plan was finished.

Boots on the ground outreach

Starting in early 2024, the Climate Action Office, with help from Vermont engagement experts at the Consensus Building Institute, attended events across the state. They worked with community partners to host focus groups with frontline and impacted communities. These events provided compensation and sometimes food and were held in familiar places. The feedback gathered at these events was shared with the Climate Council every three months to help shape the Climate

Action Plan. This engagement also aims to influence ongoing climate-related programs and systems in Vermont beyond the creation of the Climate Action Plan. To support this, summaries are regularly shared with the Inter-Agency Advisory Board to the Climate Action Office, the Civil Rights and Environmental Justice Unit, and other key partners. View all Vermont Voices on Climate engagement summaries.

CHARTS (Image Farm to beautify)

Events Attended

January 2024	
Community Dinner at Islamic Society of Vermont	Burlington
February 2024	
Northeast Organic Farmers (NOFA) Conference	Burlington
June 2024	
Vermont Afghan Alliance Lunch	Burlington
Capstone Community Action's annual gathering "Community Impact"	Hyde Park
Memory Lane Car Show	Essex Junction
Juneteenth Celebration	Winooski
Juneteenth Celebration	Burlington
3rd Annual "Summer Jam" free family day	Bennington
Lamoille Pride Event	Morrisville
July 2024	
Wellness Day	Barton
Vermont Council on Rural Development Community Forum	Johnson
Memphremagog Festival	Newport
Old North End Ramble	Burlington
August 2024	
Farmacy Distribution Day with Addison County Relocalization Network	Middlebury

Abenaki Land Link Harvest Festival	South Burlington
Vermont State Fair (2 days)	Rutland
First African Landing Day	Burlington
All Brains Belong Community Health Education Fair	Montpelier
October 2024	
Missisquoi Festival	Swanton
Intervale Fair Share Distribution Day	Burlington
November 2024	
Deer Check	West Enosburg
Vermont Maple Conference	Randolph
December 2024	
Youth Climate Leadership Academy	Fairlee
January 2025	
Free Ice Fishing Day	Barnard

Focus Groups hosted

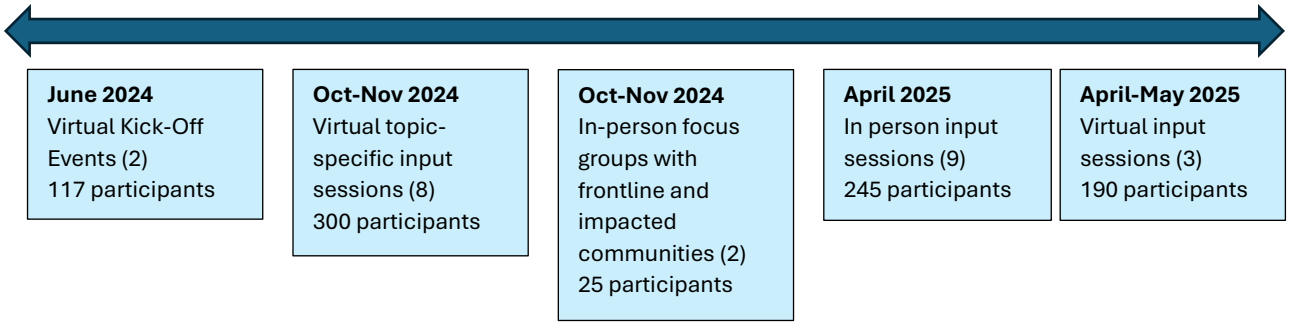
Focus group: Equity Advisory Committee to Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission	Winooski

Climate Action Plan Events

The Vermont Climate Council, Climate Action Office, and Consensus Building Institute hosted events throughout the entire Climate Action Plan process. At key moments, community-based organizations and Regional Planning Commissions supported and collaborated on these events. The timing intentionally lined up with key decision-making and drafting periods of the planning

process. Locations were chosen to cover a broad geographic range and reach areas that had not had a 2021 Climate Action Plan event.

TIMELINE



In addition to events, approximately 250 Vermonters or Vermont-based organizations submitted written comment by email or through the Public Comment Portal. The Climate Council and subcommittees adopted an improved process for receiving written comments at meetings (see Just Transitions Chapter).

View summaries of fall and spring input sessions.

STILL NEEDED: Results – How subcommittees & Council* incorporated/referred to engagement in their work.

a. RRA – Danielle will email co-chairs
b. A&E – Sophi email Abbey
c. CSM ?
d. Quotes/reflections from a few Councilors and/or Co-Chairs – Kelly will gather
e. Writing about how Council incorporated engagement will occur mid-June (because they'll be doing the revisions/edits during the month of May in response to engagement)