

Community Engagement and Communications Strategy

Vermont's Climate Action Plan and Global Warming Solutions Act

May 2022

Vermont's Initial Climate Action Plan calls for proactive steps for engaging a broad range of Vermonters on climate action. The purpose of this engagement is to:

- **Enhance awareness** around climate action efforts in the state, with a particular focus on communities experiencing impacts and other frontline communities¹.
- **Lift up the voices and viewpoints of communities** into the implementation of climate-related initiatives and the ongoing work of the Vermont Climate Council, so that a diverse group of Vermonters can influence these efforts.
- **Build relationships and communication channels** that will help Vermonters work collaboratively on future climate action.

Engagement has also been a central focus of the Just Transitions Subcommittee of the Climate Council, which sees it as an opportunity to implement the Just Transitions Principles developed in 2021. Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) staff are working in partnership with the Just Transitions Subcommittee and its Public Engagement Task Group to implement engagement efforts.

This work is happening in three main areas:



Plan Accessibility

The Climate Council adopted the Initial Climate Action Plan in December 2021. ANR is leading efforts to make this more accessible for Vermonters, with a specific focus on:

- **Formatting, synthesizing and visualizations:**
 - Reviewing templates provided by Vermont Chief Marketing Office to consider reformatting the current plan.
 - Working to make the plan more communicable to Vermonters through the development of a storymap (See examples [here](#) and [here](#)).

¹ Define here from JT Principles

- Developing real-life stories to include in the plan with input from the Council and Subcommittees.
- **Multiple languages** to reach non-native English speakers:
 - Prepared a public notice in the 11 most spoken languages in Vermont about the availability of the state’s initial Climate Action Plan. The intent is to notify communities that any part of the plan can be translated into those 11 languages upon request. Coordinating with the Health Department to learn how they distributed these notices to access the communities they are intended for.
 - Developing a video in multiple languages to put on the website as another avenue to notify the public about the plan’s availability and our capacity to translate components of it upon request.
 - Considering how to incorporate translation services into an eventual story map format.

Broad Based Public Engagement

ANR and the Consensus Building Institute (CBI) developed and ran two online public forums in April on behalf of the Climate Council, to share information about the Council’s work and receive feedback. The interactive sessions generated input to the Council and state agencies as they continue their work on climate action in 2022. The feedback will be discussed during the Council’s May 16, 2022, meeting.

Looking forward, ANR is considering additional broad-based events this year based on capacity and discussions with the Public Engagement Task Group. The focus of these “listening sessions” could include the following ideas:

- Substantive areas of ongoing policy work by the Council (e.g. transportation and biomass)
- Anticipated legislative priorities in the next session (e.g. Renewable Energy Standard)
- Implementation of Climate Action Plan priorities (e.g. climate toolkit)
- Other topics identified through public and focused partner engagement.

Targeted Engagement through Partner Organizations

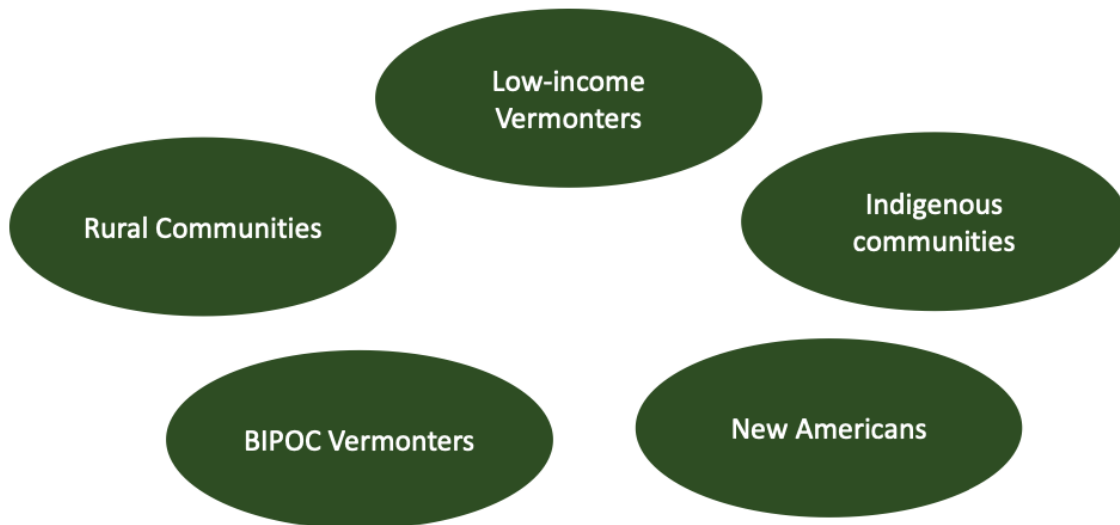
The Climate Council identified the need for targeted engagement with communities, working with partner organizations to build relationships that will allow more Vermonters to get involved on climate-related issues.

The approaches, which will vary depending on the community and partner organization, will aim to meet people where they are, improve awareness around relevant climate actions, and lift up views and ideas around priority issues for those communities.

The goal is not to immediately “get feedback” on the initial Climate Action Plan, but rather create conversations that can be sustainable over time around climate action issues – how we heat and cool our homes, how we get to work and move around the state, how we use the land

around us, how our families prepare for, and react to, threats such flooding and heat waves, among other topics.

The targeted engagement will begin with a handful of community organizations as partners, to test the model. The table in Annex 1 shows the status of these conversations. As a first step, the work is concentrated among the following communities.



These efforts will be successful if we can:

- Develop tailored ways to **enhance awareness** in these communities around relevant climate action efforts in the state
- Have a system for **capturing voices and viewpoints and transmitting them** to the Climate Council, state agencies and other bodies making decisions around climate action
- **Build relationships and communication channels** that are mutually beneficial and can be sustained over time

Annex 1: Specific Actions – Partner Engagement

Organization or Community	Conversations to date	Next Steps (and who)
<p>Council on Rural Development</p>	<p>Multiple informal conversations and a meeting with the Public Engagement Task Group on April 18, 2022. Discussed the VCRD Climate Economy program and its 2022 work plan. Developed likely areas for collaboration, in particular:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) ANR and the Council, together with its sub-committee/task groups, can provide the VCRD programs with substantive input on climate action 2) ANR and the Council, particularly its Just Transitions Sub-Committee members, can provide input to VCRD on how to incorporate just transitions principles in its work 3) The VCRD Climate Economy programs can provide input into the Climate Council, ANR, and other state agencies about rural perspectives. We need make this information-sharing systematic and relevant for the decision-making around climate action policy and implementation. 	<p>Continue to develop these ideas and implement them as VCRD starts its new activities around the Climate Economy program. Jane will continue to serve as primary contact.</p>
<p>Capstone, CVOEO and other Community Action Agencies</p>	<p>Sue Minter and Amanda Carlson (Capstone) and David Plumb discussed partnership opportunities in April 2022 with Capstone and other Community Action Agencies. Key points of the discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Action Agencies – together have reach across the state. Are connected and trusted. Are 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need some more clarity around the goals of the Council, ANR in this engagement (David to help write this up) • Convene a focus group of key staff working directly doing the work. Amanda can help to

	<p>service provided, directly interacting with low-income people. Uniquely positioned.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every month colleagues from all 5 agencies meet. • Had raised funds for climate engagement, all spent. NE Kingdom and Capstone worked on it. Need to get these results to the Council! Kaskha and Indra outreach, plus a survey. • No enthusiasm to go out and raise more funds, but willing to be a partner and facilitate and use of the network. Think about CBI/another organization getting funded, employing Kashka, Indra etc.. • Output of work to date – there is a report. Offers ideas on how to move forward. They reached out to the people who work for us, and there is a group that is mobilized around this. (fyi, Facebook is a surprising used tool for the people we work with) 	<p>set this up. Virginie at CVOEO is a good contact as well.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If goals align with ANR and the Council, secure funding for someone like Kashka to continue working alongside the agencies (but not managed by them), doing the type of work done earlier, and also with other ideas that might emerge from the focus group. ANR would consider for future budgets.
<p>Tribes in Vermont and Vermont Commission on Native American Affairs</p>	<p>Beverly Little Thunder and David spoke in early May about how to engage authentically with indigenous people in Vermont. They discussed a pathway to speaking with the four federally recognized tribes in the State. The preference would be to work with the Vermont Commission on Native American Affairs to request invitations to speak at Tribal community meetings of the four federally recognized tribes in the state.</p>	<p>Beverly will speak to the chair of the commission about getting on the agenda of the commission’s June meeting (which will be held on Beverly’s land.)</p> <p>David will take a first stab at writing an introduction that explains the work of the Climate Council and the intent of our engagement with tribes around climate action. This will focus on building long-term relationships to consider solutions and barriers to climate action.</p>
<p>Vermont Language Justice Project</p>	<p>David spoke with the director of the Vermont Language Justice Project, Alison Segar, in early May. Born during</p>	<p>The project needs at least a month to sort out some new funding and staffing arrangements,</p>

	<p>COVID, the project is providing Vermonters short health videos in 13 languages, using trusted interpreters who not only provide voiceovers, but also are trusted voices in their respective communities, extending the reach of the content.</p> <p>In the future, the project could potentially produce health-related or health-adjacent video content around climate action in the 13 languages. This could be potentially interesting tool to broadcast key messages.</p> <p>Mona and Virginie are interpreters for the project.</p>	<p>and then would be in a position to discuss potential collaborations. We would need to learn more about the advantages gained by partnering with this organization rather than state translation contracts.</p> <p>A typical video segment in 13 languages costs several thousand dollars.</p>
<p>VT LEND HDCC (Health Disparities Cultural Competence Council)</p>	<p>“The group's innovative approaches to diversity and meaningful community collaboration and partnership have been highlighted regularly as effective and best practice models in community participatory and engagement work, reaching thousands of community members annually.”</p> <p>Mona & David have been trying to connect with Dr. Mercedes Avila, and will continue to try.</p>	
<p>DEC engagement contractors</p>	<p>ANR’s Department of Environmental Conservation is working with several partner organizations to do focused engagement with specific communities in different areas of the state. This effort is parallel to the climate action engagement, yet can provide valuable insights for the Council, ANR and other state agencies working on climate</p>	<p>CBI and Jane will meet with DEC internal team and their contractors to develop a system for lifting up the results of their process into the Council conversations and other decisions around climate action.</p> <p>CBI’s Catherine Morris and Carey to lead that coordination with engagement from Jane.</p>