

Vermont Climate Council

Guidance for Subcommittees for the Update of Vermont's Climate Action Plan
March 2024

DRAFT – V2

Overview

This document provides guidance to the Vermont Climate Council subcommittees as they start the process of helping to update the state's Climate Action Plan. The document includes guidance on:

- **Expected level of effort and outputs** from the subcommittees
- **Major milestones** in the update process over the next 16 months, and
- **Substantive areas of focus** that are a priority for the Council

In addition, subcommittees will have at their disposal an up-to-date **Progress Report** (excel sheet) on the Initial Climate Action Plan actions, to help orient conversation and provide baseline information.

Expected level of effort and outputs

The subcommittees are the primary vehicle for developing recommended updates to Vermont's Initial Climate Action Plan. Three subcommittees – Cross-Sector Mitigation, Agriculture & Ecosystems, Rural Resilience – will take the lead in generating substantive recommendations. Just Transition and Science and Data will support this work. Some cross-cutting issues will require the Climate Action Office to convene joint meetings of subcommittees.

After developing the Initial Climate Action Plan, many subcommittee and Council members said the process was too time-intensive, and encouraged the state to set clearer expectations when it came time to update the plan. This document attempts to do that.

Expected process steps for subcommittees: The three subcommittees working on substantive recommendations are expected to:

- Review in detail the Progress Report on the Initial Climate Action Plan, which is the foundation for the update.
- Determine where additional action is needed. Adapt existing actions as needed.
- Invest time in prioritizing strategies/actions, with the goal of 1) keeping all relevant strategies/actions 2) signaling a handful of highest priority strategies/actions that require immediate attention by lawmakers and/or state government and 3) suggesting one or two strategies that could be included in a "Top-10" list of strategies in the updated Climate Action Plan.

Expected deliverables from subcommittees: The three subcommittees working on substantive recommendations are expected to produce:

- (July-August) At least one update to the Council about the subcommittee's progress in developing these prioritized strategies/actions.
- (November-December) A prioritized list of strategies and actions. The Climate Action Office will provide a template that minimizes the amount of writing required.

The Just Transition Subcommittee will provide support to the process by:

- Having members participate actively in subcommittee meetings
- Assisting subcommittees in using the Just Transitions Principles and Scoring Rubric in the prioritization process
- Bringing in stories and learning from the public engagement work, and encouraging community members/leaders to share their lived experience in relevant Council and subcommittee meetings

The Science and Data Subcommittee will provide support by:

- Reviewing and guiding technical studies, in particular the Business-As-Usual study
- Synthesizing relevant technical and scientific information that will be helpful to the subcommittees and the Council

Expected level of effort by subcommittees: The work of subcommittees will restart in April 2024 and be most active in the fall of 2024. The estimated time commitment is roughly

- 4-6 hours of work per month for the first few months, with monthly meetings.
- Starting in September 2024, more frequent meetings will be needed to finalize the recommended strategies and actions, likely becoming weekly or bi-weekly meetings in October and November, meaning up to 4 hours per week at the height of the work.
- Once recommendations are presented to the Council in late 2024, the rhythm of work will slow significantly, with just a handful of meetings prior to the Council finalizing the revised Climate Action Plan in June 2025.

Key Milestones in the process

- ⇒ April 2024 (or late March 2024): Subcommittees convene with their updated membership, sketch out a workplan for the next 8 months, do a detailed review of the Progress Report.
- ⇒ May – August 2024: Subcommittees determine where additional strategies/actions are needed to address key gaps (or lack of progress) and

begin to draft revised strategies / actions. Subcommittees present an update to the Council.

- ⇒ September – December 2024: Subcommittees prioritize strategies / actions and present a final recommended list to the Council.
- ⇒ January – March 2025: Council consolidates subcommittee inputs into a single document, approves version for public comment. Subcommittees don't have tasks in this period, unless the Council asks for help.
- ⇒ April – June 2025: Subcommittee members can help support the public engagement process around the draft. Council reviews input, finalizes document.

A note on public engagement: Throughout the process, a public engagement team will be using multiple strategies to reach a diverse set of Vermonters and have discussions about climate action generally as well as specific issues being addressed by subcommittees and the Council. The results of this ongoing engagement will be shared with subcommittees and the Council. In addition, Councilors and subcommittee members will have opportunities to attend engagement events. The Just Transition Subcommittee will help to orient the engagement work and assist in transmitting what is being heard.

Substantive areas of focus that are a priority for the Council

The Council has expressed the following priority areas for subcommittees to focus their efforts. While this is an orientation, it is not intended as an exhaustive list or a limitation if subcommittee identify other areas that merit attention.

Additional detail can be found in the meeting [notes](#)¹ from the Council's January 29, 2024 meeting.

Cross-Sector Mitigation

- Must generate a suite of recommendations that allow the state to meet its statutory emissions reductions goals.
- Transportation: Specific focus on additional action in the transportation sector
- Other sectors: Review of implementation of actions across all sectors to consider complementary actions needed to meet climate goals.
- Low-income households: Emphasize implementation and impacts/opportunities for low-income Vermonters
- Workforce: Development of strategies and action to support workforce development

Rural Resilience & Adaptation

- Goals: Establish quantitative goals and metrics to track progress

¹ <https://outside.vermont.gov/agency/anr/climatecouncil/Shared%20Documents/1-29-24%20Minutes%20-%20Vermont%20Climate%20Council.pdf>

- Vision: Vision / goals for climate resilience to inform metrics & actions
- Timeline: To achieve desired outcomes and goals
- Level: What does success look like for resilience at the landscape vs. community vs. individual level?
- Compounding impacts: Develop strategies to address cascading and compounding impacts
- Smaller communities: Actions that help smaller communities move from planning to implementation
- Land use: Explore land use and land use policy with Ag & Eco
- Health impacts: Develop strategies to address the mental and physical health impacts of climate change
- Resilience Implementation Strategy: look for opportunities to complement this parallel work process

Agriculture & Eco-Systems

- Overarching goals
 - Fewer emissions
 - More sequestration
 - More resilience
- Three buckets of likely climate actions
 - Farm and forest-sector viability (in the face of climate and other impacts)
 - Farm and forestry practices (particularly opportunities for lower net emissions)
 - Supporting natural lands (to support overarching goals)
- Balancing interests will be crucial (VT's needs around housing, ag, nature & wetlands, managed forests, etc)