



12. Priority Actions

We present a significant and broad set of recommendations intended to guide climate action over the next four years. At the heart of our efforts is a commitment not only to reduce emissions, but also to ensure Vermont remains a vibrant, healthy place for current and future generations.

In all, this 2025 update to the CAP identifies more than 250 recommended actions (see [Appendix 2](#)). To focus the state's efforts, we highlight 52 priority actions as well as a shortlist of the top 10 priority actions. The 52 prioritized actions are comprehensive, providing important recommendations for how Vermont communities can become more resilient and reduce climate pollution while recognizing the changing context for this work.

Context for the 2025 Plan Update

A period of unprecedented federal investment in climate action is abruptly coming to an end. We must now change our understanding about how we support Vermont's climate action and consider who will have the financial and operational capacity to do this work. The end of federal investment will affect Vermont's efforts to reduce emissions as well as its disaster recovery and resilience initiatives.

The federal government is also pulling back on key policies, such as support for electric vehicles and renewable energy. Even before this challenging context, Vermont faced a heavy lift to achieve its 2030 emissions reduction requirement under the GWSA and has struggled to fully recover from recent disasters. Reduced federal funding, coupled with the limited financial capacity of Vermonters and their municipalities, is requiring the state to carefully decide how to raise funds and prioritize investments in climate action.

Despite this difficult moment, the reality of the climate hazards facing the state and our urgent need for action drives us to take responsibility for Vermont's own contribution to

the climate crisis. This plan identifies a series of meaningful actions Vermont can take to reduce emissions and become more resilient.

This plan emphasizes actions that:

- **Reduce climate pollution** – Make homes more energy efficient and help Vermonters, particularly those living on low and middle incomes, to switch to price-stable and affordable sources of heat and transportation.
- **Create resilience** – Make investments in resilience, preparedness, and community development that will help Vermonters recover more quickly from disasters and save money and lives as Vermont faces future climate hazards.
- **Build the workforce** – Invest in building the workforce needed to implement these actions, including support for education and skills training, new technologies, and business opportunities.
- **Fund the work** – Identify sustainable, long-term funding to support climate action and meet the requirements of the GWSA.

Given the current federal landscape surrounding energy efficiency, clean energy, hazard mitigation, and other climate action, we recognize an increased responsibility for state-level action and the necessity for collaboration across states. Important progress can be achieved through partnerships with other states, such as Vermont's continued involvement with the U.S. Climate Alliance and evaluating possible participation in multi-state programs such as the Western Climate Initiative. As we lean into new state and multi-state action, we believe we can and should advance solutions that reduce costs and deliver benefits, especially for households with lower and middle incomes. In sum, the actions in this plan represent opportunities to make positive changes in a challenging context.

Criteria for Action

The Council offers the following criteria as especially important when designing policy and implementing climate action:

- Minimize financial hardship of Vermonters living on low and middle incomes through the intentional design, prioritization, and pacing of programs, and ensure those in need receive timely financial support.
- Balance investment in emissions reductions and adaptation measures to strengthen resilience against current climate impacts.
- Ensure adequate capacity for state agencies to advance the actions (e.g., new staff, funding, technology).
- Identify revenue sources that are compatible with climate actions (e.g., raising the cost of electricity is not compatible with the adoption of climate-friendly electric heating and transportation options).

- Ensure necessary supporting technologies are being funded and implemented (e.g., residential electric panel upgrades, expanded availability of electric vehicle charging infrastructure).
- Support and develop enough trained workers to implement the actions.
- Take into account the costs of not acting, including Vermonters' continued dependence on price-volatile fossil fuels for home heat and transportation and the cost of rebuilding after all-but-certain future climate disasters.

Sequence of Actions

This updated CAP includes actions that will reduce emissions now. It also contains critical steps we need to take on more complex efforts that will serve Vermont in the medium and long terms. Similarly, the plan urges the Legislature and administration to find funding sources that can be immediately put towards climate action while concurrently taking steps to secure sustainable, long-term funding for climate action.

10 Highest Priority Actions

This shortlist was created in direct response to public input. Actions are not listed in priority order; rather, they are equally important as a collective suite of actions. These 10 highest priority actions identify immediate steps needed to reduce climate pollution and make Vermont more resilient to climate-related hazards:

Make Vermont more resilient

- Expand and maintain a permanent Flood Resilient Communities Fund
▶ See [Rural Resilience and Adaptation #3](#)
- Invest in municipal infrastructure to support compact development
▶ See [Rural Resilience and Adaptation #11](#)

Support climate-informed land use

- Increase funding and adapt existing Vermont programs that achieve climate goals on farms and in forests
▶ See [Agriculture and Ecosystems #1](#)
- Promote equitable landscape connectivity and conservation for 30x30 and 50x50 goals (Act 59)
▶ See [Agriculture and Ecosystems #13](#)

Reduce climate pollution

- Weatherize homes, focusing on low- and middle-income households
 - ▶ See [Emissions Reductions #7](#)
- Take preparatory steps now and join a cap-and-invest program as soon as a viable option is available
 - ▶ See [Emissions Reductions #1](#)
- Support utility programs that ensure the electric grid supports customer electrification and resilience
 - ▶ See [Emissions Reductions #4](#) and [Emissions Reductions #6](#)
- Reduce GHG emissions from vehicles and buildings through electrification
 - ▶ See [Emissions Reductions #2](#) and [Emissions Reductions #9](#)

Identify funding and also support the needed workforce

- Identify revenue sources to immediately support these priority actions
 - ▶ See [Cross-Cutting Issues #7](#)
- Implement the U.S. Climate Alliance’s Climate-Ready Workforce Initiative and related actions
 - ▶ See [Cross-Cutting Issues #4](#)

Emission Reductions: Transportation, buildings and thermal, electricity

1. Take the following steps to join a cap-and-invest program.

- Develop a framework for the reporting of GHG emissions data from fuel suppliers and other significant emitters of climate pollution. ANR will work expeditiously to put a reporting framework in place and recommend to the Legislature by December 15, 2025, statutory changes and funding needed to support streamlined reporting requirements and a stepped implementation plan.
- Determine the most appropriate and feasible mechanism(s) for addressing affordability concerns related to the implementation of a cap-and-invest program.
 - Ensure that a significant portion of cap-and-invest revenues are used to provide direct payments or rebates in as close to real time as possible to Vermonters with low and middle incomes, to prevent cost-of-living increases for those households from the program. Another significant portion of revenues should be used to provide direct incentives to support low- and middle-income households in reducing pollution and saving money via increased energy efficiency and adoption of no-carbon or low-carbon technologies.

- ANR, in collaboration with the Department of Public Service, the Vermont Agency of Transportation, and the Vermont Climate Council, will advance a study that will make specific technical recommendations around achieving affordability, including potential limits on allowance prices (a price ceiling).
- Monitor cap-and-invest programs and continue to track updated economic analysis to understand the costs and benefits on implementing the program in Vermont, and join the best available program, such as Western Climate Initiative or New York Cap-and-Invest, based on the above analysis.

The Council views a cap-and-invest program as an overarching policy to provide predictable and substantial emissions reductions in Vermont over time. However, alongside such a program, additional policies will be needed to achieve targeted reductions, deliver benefits to lower-income Vermonters, and achieve the scale of emissions reductions required by the GWSA. In the thermal sector, this plan recommends important investments in weatherization and lower-emissions heating systems, which can provide near-term emissions reductions. The Council also acknowledges the need to explore and implement other complementary policies to accelerate the transition to non-fossil heating fuels. Options include a thermal energy benefit charge and thermal sector performance standards, such as a modified clean heat standard, equipment standards, and fuel standards.

2. Reduce GHG emissions from vehicles.

- Continue to monitor and maintain Vermont's adoption of the California Advanced Clean Cars II (ACC II) and Advanced Clean Trucks regulations, including adopting rule amendments adopted by California Air Resources Board (CARB) that provide increased compliance flexibility.
- Urge the Vermont Attorney General to join and participate in any litigation defending California and states' authority under the Clean Air Act's Section 177.
- Support vehicle electrification, ensuring long-term, consistent funding for EV incentives to low- and middle-income car purchasers, which aligns with estimates provided for the Vermont Agency of Transportation's February 2024 Clean Transportation Incentive Programs report, as well as guidance from the February 2025 Legislative Report on Vermont Clean Transportation Incentive Programs.
- Support vehicle electrification investment for the equitable deployment of fast charging and Level 2 charging options to levels needed to meet the modeling done in the Pathways 2.0 Report and as estimated in the Agency of Transportation's January 2025 Statewide Level 3 Report, Map, and Funding.

3. Invest in public, active, shared, and multimodal transportation, such as transit, micro transit, biking and walking.

- Use the VTrans July 2024 Vermont Smart Growth, Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT), and GHG Research Project Report and the November 2023 Carbon Reduction

Strategy and associated GHG Sketch Tool to guide investments that reduce the need for single-occupancy vehicles (also known as reducing vehicle miles traveled), which has important co-benefits such as cost savings to individuals and families, access to jobs, and health and environmental benefits.

- Leverage the Downtown Transportation Fund in a manner that most effectively accelerates this policy.

4. Support cost-effective load management, grid hardening, and optimization (through advanced metering, storage, targeted siting of generation, rate design, and distributed energy resource management systems statewide) to enable customer programs and avoid or delay more expensive physical upgrades.

- Continue Public Utility Commission (PUC) oversight of utility load management programs, investments, and rate designs, and consideration of regulatory approval improvements for efficient generation and infrastructure siting.

5. Review and implement as appropriate recommendations from Act 179 study⁽⁸⁴⁾ regarding evolution of community-level renewable energy programs, especially for low-income customers.

- With community and customer input, utilities continue, or consider, creating procurement and customer enrollment programs to support community-based renewable energy projects. Primary considerations for any such program should be cost-containment actions, funding avenues that are not electric-customer supported, and how approval for community-based project siting occurs.

6. Support existing programs and expand as needed to ensure the electric grid supports customer electrification necessary to meet Global Warming Solutions Act goals, including service drops, transformers, smart panels, EV chargers, storage, and more. Highlight importance of cost-effectiveness and equity in design, implementation, and affordable funding.

- Continue Public Utility Commission oversight of utility programs (e.g., Tier III); consider expanding credit in Tier II for these purposes; seek state or federal sourced funding where possible; strive for deployment across utility territories with ability to participate for all customers, including rural and low-income customers.

7. Sustain and expand funding for comprehensive weatherization focused on low- and middle-income households. Through legislation or administrative action, ensure that the current scope of weatherization being conducted is sustained, while aggressively working to ensure that 79,000 additional homes are comprehensively weatherized as soon as practicable, with a priority on low- and middle-income households.

⁸⁴ [Act 179 of 2024 Report](#). This report was prepared by the Department of Public Service as required in Act 179, An Act Relating to the Renewable Energy Standard

- The weatherization work should recognize energy efficiency broadly. It should include: traditional energy efficiency measures; electrical, health, and safety measures needed to comply with codes; and needed infrastructure upgrades such as wiring and service panels to enable electric vehicle charging, the adoption of heat pumps for space and water heating, and other strategic electrification opportunities.
- Current programs (funding and workforce) are able to weatherize approximately 4,000 homes per year at an average cost of \$11,000 per unit. Much of the recent funding has come from federal sources, which are unlikely to be renewed.
- It is essential that Vermont take steps to maintain and accelerate its current pace of weatherization in order to complete the additional 79,000 units as soon as practicable.

8. Through legislation or administrative action, ensure additional commercial, industrial, municipal, and non-residential buildings, as modeled to be necessary, are comprehensively weatherized by 2030, and secure the funding needed to achieve the target.

- Including “weatherization ready” project needs
- With priority for supporting/expanding existing programs (i.e., the Municipal Energy Resilience Program, Municipal Technical Assistance Program, Building Communities, etc.)

9. Secure funding for electrification of space and water heating for low- and middle-income households.

- Develop programs for implementation regarding 200-amp service and related building upgrades, coordinated with weatherization, efficiency, and equipment incentive programs (EV chargers, heat pumps, storage, etc.), and ensure that any potentially related statewide program (such as Clean Heat Standard, if adopted, or enhanced weatherization efforts) includes building electrical upgrades in their design and funding models in order to enable decarbonization.

10. Conduct a study that considers the technological options and market feasibility for emission-based equipment standards for various types of heating. The purpose is to better understand the feasibility and considerations of Vermont adopting a thermal equipment emissions standard(s), either for oxides of nitrogen or, more broadly, for GHGs.

- The Legislature needs to fund the study.
- The Agency of Natural Resources needs to file a report with the Vermont Climate Council by June 30, 2027.
- The study shall consider:
 - adoption by other states

- the means by which equipment standards can influence market activity
- the most equitable approaches
- how to secure the greatest emissions reductions
- The study is contingent on securing funding.

- 11. Analyze options for a performance-based Clean Fuels Standard that implements a declining carbon intensity (CI) score eligibility requirement for residential, commercial, and industrial (RCI) fuels and can be implemented gradually alongside complementary policies that would be necessary.** As a potential alternative, analyze instituting a minimum percentage clean fuel blending requirement for all residential, commercial, and industrial liquid and gaseous fuels, utilizing an approved list of eligible clean fuels.
- 12. Utilities and their regulators should adopt standards and programs to support thermal energy networks, waste heat recovery, and community-scale geothermal.**

Cross-Cutting Pathways: Education, workforce development, finance and funding

- 1. Amend the Vermont State Board of Education's Education Quality Standards to incorporate environmental and climate change education at all grade levels.**
- 2. Compile an open source, accessible, and interdisciplinary climate change curriculum for Vermont educators that builds off existing resources and programs to enable teaching across subject areas.**
- 3. Maintain funding for programs to educate Vermonters about their energy choices and funding options to increase energy efficiency in residential homes, including the Green Savings Smart Program, which supports energy coaches at Community Action Agencies.**
- 4. Implement the Climate-Ready Workforce Initiative to grow career pathways in climate change and clean energy fields, support new and existing workers, retain recent graduates, ensure job quality and safety, strengthen workforce diversity, and train workers in service of the collective U.S. Climate Alliance goal of 1 million new registered apprentices across 24 states by 2035.**
 - Increase the number of registered apprenticeships that can be supported in the state by Vermont State University, the Department of Labor, and other registered apprenticeship programs, especially in plumbing/HVAC, electrical, and weatherization.

- Support training from middle school through adult education and service-learning programs for a wide variety of audiences, including through the weatherization training center and the many existing training programs.
 - Target outreach, training, support, and service-learning systems for existing Vermont residents to enter and stay in careers that support climate action, including farming and forestry, conservation, clean energy, weatherization, outdoor recreation, and resilience and adaptation careers.
 - Invest in instructors and physical infrastructure to increase the number of students who can be supported in the Career and Tech Ed system in the state, including electrical, plumbing, and building trades programs, as well as agriculture, forestry and other sectors mentioned above.
- 5. Support programs for people to start and build their own businesses in the trades, including business development and climate change career programs.**
 - 6. Monitor the impacts of decarbonization on the workforce and create programs to support impacted workers by tracking leading indicators.**
 - 7. Interim funding for priority climate actions.** Until new and significant sources of revenue are in place to fully implement the recommended priority actions in this plan, the State of Vermont should identify, authorize, and appropriate revenue from existing or new sources that will immediately support the creation or expansion of certain priority actions. This funding should be used to: (a) Establish or grow programs proven in Vermont, or demonstrated in other jurisdictions, to be cost-effective strategies for achieving climate benefits, while optimizing other public policy co-benefits; and (b) Increase investment in building state agency capacity to design and implement the priority action recommendations.

The source of revenue should be a bridge to having adequate revenue from other programs, such as a cap-and-invest system, be structured to mitigate impacts on Vermonters facing financial hardships, and not burden those economic sectors and programs that are essential to a transition to a low-carbon and climate-adapted landscape and economy.

- 8. Support the implementation of the Climate Superfund Act (Act 122),** including by funding the work at the Agency of Natural Resources and Vermont State Treasurer's Office and any other work deemed necessary to support its implementation, helping to provide essential revenue to invest in resilience and adaptation measures.
- 9. Building off recent climate infrastructure financing efforts, the Vermont State Treasurer's Office, in consultation with the Climate Action Office and Climate Council, should explore opportunities to further leverage public and private capital to make needed clean energy, resilience and adaptation investments.** This effort should focus on reducing hurdles facing Vermonters in accessing and affording

cleaner and more energy efficient technologies, weatherization, and necessary infrastructure and resilience investments. It should seek to build off existing structures and institutions (such as credit unions and banks) to leverage programs, partners and capital as well as explore other potentially useful strategies (such as on-bill utility financing, bonding and insurance markets).

Rural Resilience and Adaptation: Community capacity and planning, infrastructure and built environment, public health

- 1. Increase state capacity to manage funding programs and provide technical assistance for the development and implementation of climate resilience plans, with a focus on maximizing the efficacy of Local Hazard Mitigation Plans and augmenting existing programs with the Municipal Planning Grant program, the Municipal Climate Planning Framework and Guide, and the Municipal Climate Toolkit.**
- 2. Establish permanent, dedicated funding for Regional Planning Commissions to hire and retain staff for climate resilience and natural resources planning work, hazard mitigation application development, and management of hazard mitigation grants on behalf of municipalities or other eligible grant recipients as well as cover overhead costs related to completing Local Hazard Mitigation Plans.**
- 3. Secure sustainable, long-term funding to expand and maintain a permanent Flood Resilient Communities Fund (also known as Community Resilience and Disaster Mitigation Fund) for the design and implementation of local and regional climate change adaptation projects and community resilience.** Funding may be used as the local match for federally funded hazard mitigation programs as well as hazard mitigation activities not eligible under FEMA.
- 4. Expand the Business Emergency Gap Assistance Program (BEGAP) to provide financial support and one-on-one coaching to businesses and non-profits before a disaster, in addition to providing funding to businesses that are impacted by climate disasters and disruptions. Link and coordinate efforts with organizations and networks providing similar support to businesses.**
- 5. Integrate regional housing targets and ongoing mapping, including Flood Insurance Rate Map updates, river corridors, and landslide hazards; identify areas that are suitable for new, climate-safe housing; and increase funding mechanisms where communities are investing in development-ready infrastructure.**
- 6. The State of Vermont, through the Public Utility Commission and Public Service Department, should complete the PUC resilience planning investigation underway,**

which is analyzing whether and how to define, value, measure, and set targets for grid resilience. Utilities should continue to integrate resilience planning into their operations.

- 7. Expand upon the Municipal Vulnerability Indicator tool to create a Municipal Vulnerability Index that can be used by state agencies and others as a resource to assist in prioritizing infrastructure resilience investments across the state based on specific vulnerabilities or combinations of vulnerabilities.** Ensure it includes currently missing data such as historical utility outage data, to the extent available, and the Agency of Natural Resources' Environmental Justice mapping tool, when complete.
- 8. Develop a framework that creates a plan to identify prioritized state investments in resilience projects. The framework should be attentive to fiscal constraints, similar to the State Transportation Improvement Program, and build upon the Resilience Implementation Strategy, the State Hazard Mitigation Planning process, and Hazard Mitigation Project Review process.** The purpose of this action is to have a standing list of projects, vetted through an interagency prioritization and public engagement process, that could be implemented as funding is available.
- 9. Create a transportation flood resilience funding program to design and construct transportation projects identified as high-priority locations via use of the most relevant risk and vulnerability assessment tools.**
- 10. Replace or harden electric and communication infrastructure with the most appropriate resilient alternative when cost effective.** For example, for aging or unreliable lines, utilities should continue to evaluate improving resilience by relocating lines underground or through other options, where demonstrated to be feasible and cost effective to electric customers.

Planning frameworks, valuation tools, and metrics resulting from the Resilience Investigation (Case No. 25-0339-PET) being conducted by the Public Utility Commission should be used to inform this evaluation.
- 11. Increase investment in municipalities to harden, improve, expand and build new drinking water, wastewater, stormwater and other infrastructure to support compact development, especially growing away from climate hazards such as flooding, and ensure the long-term operation and maintenance of these assets.**
- 12. Continue to implement and monitor for progress and outcomes Act 181,⁽⁸⁵⁾** which is the statutory framework for updating and implementing many State and local land use policies (such as designation program reform and Act 250 updates).

⁸⁵ [Act 181, An act relating to community resilience and biodiversity protection through land use](#). Vermont State Legislature. 2024.

13. Provide increased capacity to strengthen messaging and awareness of local and state emergency preparedness, response, and recovery structures.

14. Provide funding and technical assistance to municipalities and local partner organizations to support adaptation and preparedness planning in communities, with specific focus on disproportionately affected and vulnerable populations.

Include the identification, adaptation, and equipping of facilities to serve as community resilience hubs that serve as places for learning, collaboration, resource access, and refuge in response to climate-related hazards and other community needs.

15. Provide funding for equipment, supplies and services that improve resilience and reduce the health impact of climate-related hazards for income-qualifying households needing extra assistance.

The intent is to provide financial support for resilience needs in a similar way to existing financial support for energy efficiency (e.g., through heat pump and EV rebates). Resilience equipment and strategies should address health risks related to flooding, power outages, extreme temperatures, hazardous air quality, humidity, vector-borne diseases, and other climate-related hazards, and could include:

- Supplies and equipment to improve heat resilience, such as trees and other vegetative shade, window treatments (shade and thermal barriers), efficient air conditioning (heat pumps) fans, and dehumidifiers
- Equipment to improve indoor air quality, such as air purifiers and mechanical ventilation (e.g., ERVs)
- Backup power equipment
- Window screens
- Services such as water intrusion and moisture mitigation and management, private drinking water testing and treatment, and others.

16. Provide state-contracted community mental health service partners with more capacity to address anxiety, depression, distress and trauma caused by climate change and climate-related disasters.

Agriculture and Ecosystems: Reducing and sequestering emissions, supporting adaptation, climate-resilient land

1. Increase funding for, enhance, and adapt existing State of Vermont programs that support GHG emissions reductions, soil carbon sequestration, and/or climate adaptation and resilience on working lands, including through manure management. Coordinate with applicable agencies to defend and accelerate the

implementation of federally funded climate mitigation and resilience practices in Vermont.

- Enhance and adapt programs to better incorporate nature-based solutions as well as Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Indigenous Knowledge.
- State programs include, but are not limited to:
 - Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets: Agriculture-Clean Water Initiative Performance (Ag-CWIP), Best Management Practice (BMP), Forestry Acceptable Management Practices (AMP), Capital Equipment Assistance Program (CEAP), Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), Farm Agronomic Practice (FAP), Grassed Waterway and Filter Strip (GWFS), Pasture and Surface Water Fencing (PSWF), Vermont Pay for Phosphorus (VPFP), Vermont Farmer Ecosystem Stewardship Program (VFESP)
 - land acquisition
 - river corridor easements
 - wetland conservation
 - County Forester Program
 - the recommendations in the ANR report *Maintaining and Creating Resilient Forests in Vermont* (2015)

2. Utilize best practices to quantify carbon sequestration and emissions reductions from agriculture and forestry.

3. Fund and implement Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) programs to encourage landowners and land and water caretakers⁽⁸⁶⁾ to implement practices that improve soil health, improve crop and forest resilience, increase carbon storage, increase stormwater storage capacity, and reduce runoff. Fund existing agricultural PES programs and expand to include or develop new programs for forestry.

Note: Payment for Ecosystem Services programs recognize and reward land and water caretakers for practices that enhance ecological function and community wellbeing, rooted in both traditional stewardship values and modern land management. These programs do not include carbon markets or trading.

4. Leverage the power of peer learning to advance climate resilience by funding a Request for Proposal (RFP) that provides funds to support Vermont Natural Resource Conservation Districts, farmer organizations, and non-profit organizations with the specific objective of allowing them to reach other farmers and foresters and do peer-to-peer education about improved soil and manure management strategies that enhance climate resilience.

86 The Agriculture and Ecosystems Subcommittee used the word “caretakers” to refer to any individual who makes decisions around the land and water. This could include land and water managers and stewards as well as landowners.

- 5. Create a dedicated climate impact emergency recovery fund for farms and forestry operations or related infrastructure (or ensure the agriculture and forestry sectors are given specific considerations in existing recovery funds), support leverage of federal funds and expansion of programs to support the adaptive capacity and restoration of farms and forests, and promote insurance for farm and forest landowners and businesses to ensure that they can equitably and viably recover from climate-induced disasters.**
 - The fund should be simple to access, deploy sufficient funds quickly following a disaster, be sustained over time with predictable and consistent funding, and be flexible, equitable, and proportional to meet the diverse needs of the farming and forestry community.
- 6. Dedicate robust funding for farm and forest supply chain resilience and state food security, including significant investment in storage, processing and distribution infrastructure.** Prioritize investments in farm, food, and forestry businesses, cooperatives and non-profits, as well as Indigenous and community projects, that have climate resilience, adaptation and mitigation goals.
 - Funding should include:
 - a substantial increase in base funding for the Working Lands Enterprise Initiative, the Agriculture Development Grant program, Crop Cash Plus, and Farm Share
 - dedicated appropriations for distribution and food hub operations and infrastructure, and appropriations for research, development, and support for siting and permitting process improvements that recognize the vital conservation benefits of market expansion opportunities for local wood products processing and manufacturing in Vermont
- 7. Improve funding opportunities and create equitable access for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) farm, food, and forest organizations and businesses by developing multi-year unrestricted BIPOC-centered grants and loan programs.** This includes uplifting and resourcing the work of the Abenaki and other Indigenous Peoples in the state, Land Access and Opportunity Board, and other BIPOC communities and organizations in Vermont.
- 8. Promote and incentivize the use of agricultural and sustainably harvested wood-based construction materials (subject to existing certification criteria or procurement standards to be developed) over less climate-friendly options, such as imported wood from locations lacking required sustainable harvest requirements and/or non-wood materials with high carbon footprints (such as steel and concrete).**
 - This could include using state procurement standards to require that publicly funded building projects, or those subsidized through low-interest loans or tax benefits, use chain-of-custody certified wood products (mass timber, cellulose insulation, advanced wood heating, and others) and prioritize building materials

(such as sustainably harvested wood) that align with climate goals and ecological values, while reducing reliance on high-carbon, non-renewable materials like steel and concrete.

- Continue to research and develop the lifecycle accounting of these products for the greatest impact.

- 9. State agencies should utilize financial incentives, siting policies, and regulations to incentivize, support, and preferentially site renewable energy capacity on buildings and parking lots (by installing solar roofs), in compact settlement areas (including renewable energy and charging facilities in rental housing), and in previously disturbed or developed areas, where feasible.**
 - Avoid conversion of ecologically sensitive areas, forests, and prime agricultural soils.
- 10. State agencies should promote nature-based climate solutions, Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Indigenous Knowledge by considering how to gauge their effectiveness⁽⁸⁷⁾ and incorporate them into assessments, planning efforts, prioritization frameworks, and funding programs to address climate change impacts.**
- 11. State land management agencies should continue to adapt their management of lands using nature-based climate solutions to address climate impacts, increase ecosystem resilience, enhance biological diversity, and improve water quality.**

State land management agencies should also enhance technical assistance and resilience funds to support the financial capacity of other land and water caretakers to achieve these goals.
- 12. State agencies and the Legislature should identify gaps and opportunities to expand and improve current programs that promote healthy, connected river corridors, floodplains, and wetlands that prioritize restoration and conservation, and that incentivize water storage in headwaters and natural areas, all to promote flood resilience and biodiversity through expansion of wetland, floodplain, riparian forest and river corridor easements that better compensate land and water caretakers for restoring, managing and conserving these natural water storage areas.** Also use opportunities presented by Act 121,⁽⁸⁸⁾ an act relating to the regulation of wetlands, river corridor development, and dam safety.
- 13. State agencies should work with partners, and the Legislature should fund the state agencies as necessary, to promote strategic and equitable statewide landscape connectivity and the conservation of priority forest blocks, farmland, and other actively and passively managed lands through planning and implementation toward 30x30 goals and 50x50 goals in alignment with Act 59 of 2023, an act relating to community resilience and biodiversity protection.**

87 The Council received a specific recommendation on how to gauge the effectiveness of nature-based solutions in [a written comment from the Transnational Environmental Law Clinic](#).

88 [Act 121, Flood Safety Act](#). Vermont Legislature. 2024.

This work should use the best available data and mapping, including Vermont Conservation Design, while braiding in Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Indigenous Knowledge.

- Conservation planning and implementation should meet the targets set forth in Vermont Conservation Design. These goals include managing forests to achieve a target of 3%–5% young forest and allow at least 9% of Vermont’s forest to become (or be maintained as) old forest, specifically targeting 15% of the matrix forest within the highest priority forest blocks—including National Forests—to achieve the old growth condition and ensure the protection of sacred sites or other historically or culturally important areas as determined by the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation.
- At the same time, protecting farmland and managed forests from development through land conservation and protection programs is essential to ensure these land uses continue to provide climate mitigation, adaptation, and resilience benefits. Existing state land-use protection programs, such as the Vermont Farmland Conservation Program and forest conservation easements, should be enhanced to improve farmland access and the protection of agricultural soils and working forests.

14. Enhance education, outreach, research, and technical assistance programming to encourage farmers, foresters, and other land and water caretakers to adopt strategies that increase climate mitigation, adaptation and resilience. State agencies should work with and support efforts to fund partners and higher education, such as University of Vermont Extension and Natural Resource Conservation Districts.

- These efforts should be incorporated into current programs, braiding Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Indigenous Knowledge and recognizing the value these bring to better understanding and taking care of the land. Initiatives should be designed to represent diverse perspectives while addressing a diversity of audiences and age groups. Simplify and assist with application processes for funding and support programs.

15. Fund and undertake as soon as possible the study previously requested by the Vermont Climate Council on the use of woody biomass for utility-scale electric energy facilities.⁽⁸⁹⁾ In addition, use the guidance previously provided by the Council to the Vermont Public Utility Commission (PUC) regarding biomass.

- [Read the Council’s biomass addendum.](#)

89 This study is not aimed at smaller-scale biomass such as advanced wood heat and agricultural waste methane generation.