



13. Education, Workforce Development, Finance and Funding

Cross-Cutting Pathways is an area of climate action that provides a comprehensive approach by supporting emissions reductions as well as resilience and adaptation efforts. Through the development of the *Initial Vermont Climate Action Plan*, several cross-cutting pathways were identified as integral to climate action in Vermont. These pathways included Environmental Justice, State Government, Community and Partner Capacity, Building Codes, Transportation, Workforce Development, Education, and Compact Settlement. Since the adoption of the Initial Plan, there has been a completion of cross-cutting recommendations and acknowledgment from the Climate Council that some of the pathways would be best served by subcommittees with expertise in the particular pathway. For instance, the Environmental Justice pathway, which recommended the creation of an environmental justice policy, was addressed by the passage of Vermont's Environmental Justice Law (Act 154) in 2022. Additionally, the establishment of the Climate Action Office made progress toward what was envisioned by the State Government, Community, and Partner Capacity pathway. Furthermore, Building Code and Transportation pathways were moved to Cross-Sector Mitigation, as expertise on building codes and transportation reside in the Cross-Sector Mitigation Subcommittee.

As a result, the update of Cross-Cutting Pathways in the CAP focused on the following three key cross-cutting pathways: Workforce Development, Education, and Compact Settlement. These pathways were identified as necessary for climate action across various sectors. To support this work, representatives from Cross-Sector Mitigation, Rural Resilience and Adaptation, and Agriculture and Ecosystems subcommittees

worked to refine these pathways and build upon actionable recommendations in the update of the CAP. This collaborative effort involved public meetings to gather feedback and finalize recommendations, ensuring that actions under Cross-Cutting Pathways are comprehensive and forward-looking.

Following the development of the updated Compact Settlement actions and public input, the Council determined that it would be most effective for Compact Settlement to be integrated within the Rural Resilience and Adaptation section of the updated CAP.

Additionally, the Council added a Finance and Funding Pathway to Cross-Cutting Pathways. The Finance and Funding Pathway speaks to the need to leverage public and private capital to facilitate clean energy, resilience and adaptation investments, focusing on reducing barriers for Vermonters in accessing and affording cleaner technologies and necessary infrastructure.

Education

The Education Pathway encompasses strategies aimed at equipping Vermonters with the knowledge and skills necessary to take climate action. The update to the Education Pathway emphasizes the importance of creating accessible and equitable research, partnerships and education. Among these, a key priority is to offer technical assistance to Vermonters about energy choices and available funding to increase energy efficiency in their homes. For example, the Green Savings Smart Program, administered by Vermont's Community Action Agencies, plays a key role in ensuring that residents have the information and resources needed to make informed energy decisions about efficiency improvements they can make, ultimately contributing to reduced energy consumption and emissions. Additionally, there is a focus on creating an accessible climate curriculum for educators, which would be interdisciplinary, open source, and accessible, building on existing resources. Furthermore, incorporating environmental and climate change education at all grade levels is recommended to ensure that climate education becomes a fundamental part of the educational experience. Lastly, supporting educational programs that strengthen the workforce pipeline, with a focus on postsecondary educational models like apprenticeships and stackable credentials in fields such as construction, energy, agriculture, and renewable energy, is essential.

Additional Education Pathways that were not identified as priorities but are critical components to advancing education in the CAP include developing accessible educational materials that communicate climate science and local impacts and promoting equitable language use across state agencies. The collective priorities outlined in the Education Pathway support Vermonters with the foundational knowledge to build a just energy transition and implement the [Global Warming Solutions Act](#).

Workforce Development

The current capacity of Vermont's workforce will constrain efforts to achieve climate goals. The Workforce Development Pathway is critical to equip Vermont's workforce to meet the demands of a climate-resilient economy and enhance workforce capacity. One key priority is increasing access to equipment and supporting contractors in making investments that boost their operational capacity. Another priority focuses on targeting outreach and training for existing Vermont residents to enter and remain in climate careers, such as those in farm and forestry, clean energy, and resilience sectors. By supporting Vermont workers to join these trades and providing resources for readiness and retention, this action seeks to expand and maintain a climate-ready workforce. Additionally, creating clear career pathways for young adults to enter into climate-related fields is essential. Actionable steps include increasing the number of students supported in Career and Tech Ed programs and expanding registered apprenticeships, particularly in plumbing, HVAC, electrical, agriculture and forestry, and weatherization.

Supporting programs for individuals to start and build their own businesses in the climate field is also a priority, with initiatives advancing through partnerships with organizations with workforce development programs and adult-learning community-based organizations. These efforts collectively aim to build a robust workforce capable of driving climate action and supporting Vermont's transition to a sustainable and equitable future.

Finance and Funding

The Finance and Funding Pathway, a new addition to the CAP's Cross-Cutting Pathways, is designed to strengthen the financial mechanisms supporting clean energy, resilience and adaptation investments in Vermont. In order to immediately start to fund key CAP recommendations, such as weatherization and resilience strategies, it is important to identify revenue sources—new or existing—that can be used to immediately support this work. State funding for clean water can serve as a model. In 2017, then-Treasurer Beth Pearce issued a report establishing an annual target for funding necessary investments in clean water; she also recognized that it would likely take several years to put a long-term funding solution in place and so identified two years of “bridge funding” that was used to accelerate efforts in the near term. The Council is recommending a similar approach to accelerate climate action, recognizing that joining a cap-and-invest program will take several years. Putting in place bridge funding also provides time for essential efforts to design and structure a cap-and-invest program in a manner that intentionally mitigates impacts on Vermonters facing financial hardship. It is important that any source of bridge funding has a nexus with climate action and supports the transition toward less carbon-intensive fuels (i.e., the revenue source should not involve taxing renewable energy or electric vehicles).

Another critical component in the Finance and Funding Pathway builds on recent climate infrastructure financing efforts. The Vermont State Treasurer, in collaboration with the

Climate Action Office and Climate Council, is exploring opportunities to further leverage both public and private capital. A key priority is to address and reduce the financial barriers Vermonters face in accessing and affording cleaner, more energy-efficient technologies, weatherization, and essential infrastructure improvements. While many climate investments may have meaningful upfront costs, they can often save Vermonters money in the medium and long terms. This pathway recommends using existing structures and institutions, such as credit unions and banks, to maximize the impact of programs, partners and capital. Additionally, to support this pathway, the Council recommends exploring innovative strategies such as on-bill utility financing, bonding, and insurance markets to broaden financial accessibility. Key stakeholders in this effort may include the Vermont Housing Finance Agency, the Vermont Bond Bank, economic development associations, distribution and efficiency utilities, credit unions, and pivotal state entities like the Public Utility Commission, among others. Through these collaborative efforts, the Finance and Funding Pathway provides direction to ensure that financial resources are effectively mobilized and coordinated to support climate action moving forward.

Conclusion

The update to the CAP's Cross-Cutting Pathways—Education, Workforce Development, and Finance and Funding—are pivotal in advancing Vermont's climate goals. Each pathway addresses critical aspects of climate action, from access to low-cost capital and educational initiatives to strengthening the workforce needed for a climate-resilient economy. The Finance and Funding Pathway focuses on coordinating financial investments in clean energy, resilience and adaption, while the Education Pathway emphasizes equipping Vermonters with the knowledge and skills necessary to engage in climate action. Workforce Development ensures that Vermont's labor force is both prepared and of sufficient size to meet the demands of a sustainable future, with targeted training and career pathways in clean energy and climate change-related fields. Together, these pathways provide an important foundation for the specific actions identified in Chapters 16 through 21 of this updated CAP.