

Transition from Contextual Chapters to Recommendations

As the Climate Action Plan transitions from the foundational elements to the specific recommendations that will guide climate action over the next four years, it is important to recognize the groundwork that has been laid. The [Global Warming Solutions Act](#) (GWSA) has set forth targets for greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reductions, as well as objectives to advance building resilience and adaptation strategies in both our communities and natural environment.

The Vermont Climate Council, established under the GWSA, has been tasked with the challenge of not only identifying and evaluating strategies to meet these targets but also ensuring that Vermont's communities, infrastructure, and economy are prepared to adapt to the ongoing and future impacts of climate change. The Council's work is guided by foundational criteria the initial Climate Action Plan: impact, cost-effectiveness, co-benefits, equity, and technical feasibility. Further information of the prioritization framework can be accessed in the [Initial Climate Action Plan](#). The foundational criteria are essential in evaluating and prioritizing actions that will be most effective in achieving the GWSA's goals.

The GWSA provides the framework for reducing GHG emissions and enhancing resilience, and the following chapters of this update to the Climate Action Plan will outline the pathways, strategies, and actions necessary to meet these objectives. The following context is intended to setup the reader to understand both the structure of the Plan and criteria used to evaluate the recommendations.

Vermont Climate Action Plan Requirements

On September 22, 2020, the Vermont Legislature passed Act 153, the Vermont Global Warming Solutions Act of 2020 (GWSA) that created the Vermont Climate Council (hereinafter the Council) and set forth specific greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction requirements for the State to achieve.

The Plan shall include specific initiatives, programs, and strategies that will:

1. Reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the transportation, building, regulated utility, industrial, commercial, and agricultural sectors
2. Encourage smart growth and related strategies
3. Achieve long-term sequestration and storage of carbon and promote best management practices to achieve climate mitigation, adaption, and resilience on natural working lands
4. Achieve net zero emissions by 2050 across all sectors;
5. Reduce energy burdens for rural and marginalized communities;
6. Limit the use of chemicals, substances, or products that contribute to climate change; and
7. Build and encourage climate adaptation and resilience of Vermont communities and natural systems.

In addition, the specific initiatives, strategies and programs identified in the Plan must further the following objectives:

1. Prioritize the most cost-effective, technologically feasible, and equitable GHG emissions reduction pathways, adaptation and preparedness
2. Ensure that all regions of the State benefit from GHG emissions reductions
3. Provide for GHG emissions reductions that reflect the relative contribution of each source of emissions
4. Minimize negative impacts on marginalized and rural communities and individuals with low and moderate incomes
5. Support economic sectors and regions of the State that face the greatest barriers to emissions reductions (rural and economically distressed regions and industries)
6. Support industries, technology, and training that will allow workers and businesses in the State to benefit from GHG reduction solutions
7. Support the use of natural solutions (inc. working lands) to reduce GHG, sequester carbon and increase resilience; and

8. Maximize the State's involvement in interstate and regional initiatives and programs designed to reduce regional GHG emissions and build upon state, national, and international partnerships and programs

Using this Plan

The Climate Action Plan outlines the path forward for Vermont to take meaningful climate action and is organized around four key areas:

Using this Plan

1. Emissions Reductions ("Cutting climate pollution")
2. Building resilience and adaptation in Vermont's natural and working lands
3. Building resilience and adaptation in Vermont's communities and built environment
4. Cross-cutting Pathways: Workforce, Education, Funding & Finance (those that are particularly impactful in supporting both the emissions reduction and resilience and adaptation efforts called for by the GWSA)

For each area, the Plan identifies a set of pathways, strategies, and actions that strive to meet the intent of the objectives for that area. Recommendations are outlined in three categories: Pathways, Strategies and Actions. Each category serves a distinct function in the overall recommendation.

1. Pathway: A pathway is a high-level means of achieving GHG emissions reductions or adaptation, resilience, and sequestration goals.
2. Strategy: Under each pathway, a suite of strategies has been developed. These strategies are a statement of measurable activity, a benchmark, to be reached in pursuit of the pathway.
3. Action: Actions have been identified as the "operational" tasks that the state, regional organizations, municipalities, non-governmental organizations, and Vermonters will undertake to meet the pathways and strategies.

Foundational Criteria

To meet both the requirements and objectives laid out in the Global Warming Solutions Act (GWSA) the Council utilized foundational criteria from the initial Climate Action Plan: impact, cost-effectiveness, co-benefits, equity, and technical feasibility. These criteria speak directly to the priorities put forward in the GWSA while building upon the specific work to develop the Update to the Climate Action Plan (CAP) to inform high priority actions. More detailed information on the foundational criteria utilized can be accessed in the [Initial Climate Action Plan](#).

Table 8: Foundational Criteria

Impact	Mitigation: Impact is the consideration of actions' contribution to achieving 2025, 2030, and 2050 emission reduction requirements. The gross GHG emissions reductions required by 2025 are 1.26 MMTCO ₂ e below our most recent (2018) levels. 3.46 MMTCO ₂ e of reductions are required by 2030.	Resilience: The assessment of impact for adaptation, resilience, and sequestration actions takes into consideration both the scale at which a particular action occurs and the effects (both short and long term) of that action.
Cost-Effectiveness	Mitigation: Cost-effectiveness refers to the lifetime net cost per ton of GHG emissions avoided (acknowledging that some mitigation measures do not generate net costs and save money). Cost effectiveness shall also be understood to account for lifetime or dynamic costs, not merely upfront or static costs.	Resilience: Cost-effectiveness for actions seeking to build resilience, further adaptation, and enhance sequestration and carbon storage refers to the relative lifetime net cost of the action compared to the desired outcome or impact. This definition only deals with the true cost to Vermonters and 43 does not

		speak to the cost of avoided damages which we know is very important.
Co-Benefits	Comprehensive climate policy will advance actions that work to mitigate climate pollution, while also building resilience, adaptation and storing and sequestering carbon. Actions must also seek to advance broader societal benefits such as public health, equity (specific focus on impacted communities), economic prosperity, biodiversity conservation, workforce opportunities and other benefits that improve the quality of life in Vermont broadly.	
Technical Feasibility	This speaks to the degree to which the required technologies are developed and reasonably available. As this is called out in the GWSA, it is important to simply answer yes or no to ensure the action is implementable.	

The release of this updated Climate Action Plan is a step forward in the Council’s ongoing work to inform climate action in Vermont. The following chapters outline recommendations that can be utilized by legislators, state agencies, and communities to fulfill the charge of the GWSA.