

CHS Equity Advisory Group

Equity Frameworks Subgroup

April 15, 2024, Meeting

12 pm - 1 pm ET

Meeting Link: <https://meet.goto.com/552661509>

Participant Agenda

5 Minutes	Opening	Dominic
40 Minutes	Discussion	Subgroup
10 Minutes	Public Comments	Dominic
5 Minutes	Closing	Dominic

Preamble

Whereas the Climate Council Just Transitions Subcommittee drafted the *Guiding Principles for a Just Transition (Guiding Principles)* in August 2021; and

Whereas the *Guiding Principles* advises that “[s]tudies continue to show that low-income communities, indigenous peoples, and black and other communities of color are among those who are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change”; and

Whereas low- and moderate-income and historically marginalized, disadvantaged and under-served communities include Indigenous communities; people of color; new Americans; mobile home communities; renters, including subsidized housing renters; communities near electric plants, fuel-manufacturing plants, and fracking sites; and rural and floodplain communities; and

Whereas Vermonters have also been historically marginalized or may be marginalized due to language barriers, gender inequality, LGBTQ status, socioeconomic status, education level, employment status, disability, immigration status, religious beliefs, culture, or incarceration history; and

Whereas the *Guiding Principles* were drafted to help guide the Climate Council and its subcommittees ensure that strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions...benefit and support all residents of the State of Vermont fairly and equitably”; and

Whereas the Clean Heat Standard was enacted in May, 2023; in order to help “meet the greenhouse gas emission reductions required by the GSWA”; and

Whereas the Clean Heat Standard established the Equity Advisory Group to assist the Public Utilities Commission “in developing and implementing the Clean Heat Standard in a manner that ensures an equitable share of clean heat measures are delivered to Vermonters with low income and moderate income”; and

Whereas the Clean Heat Standard directs the Commission to “biennially assess harmful consequences that may arise in Vermont and elsewhere from the implementation of specific types of clean heat measures and shall set standards or limits to prevent those consequences”; and

Whereas these harmful consequences include but are not limited to “environmental burdens as defined in 3 V.S.A. § 6002, public health, deforestation or forest degradation, conversion of grasslands, increased emissions of criteria pollutants, damage to watersheds, or the creation of new methane to meet fuel demand”; and

Whereas these consequences have a disproportionate harmful consequence on low- and moderate-income and historically marginalized, disadvantaged and under-served Vermonters; and

Whereas among the duties of the Equity Advisory Group is “supporting the Commission in

assessing whether customers are equitably served by clean heat measures and how to increase equity”; and

Whereas the *Guiding Principles* is meant to ensure that disenfranchised populations are not unduly impacted by emissions transformation projects including proposed clean heat measures under the Clean Heat Standard; and

Whereas the *Guiding Principles* was not drafted specifically to evaluate potential eligible clean heat measures, but the *Guiding Principles* does provide a rubric that the Equity Advisory Group can build upon; and

Whereas the EAG dissolves upon the implementation of the Clean Heat Standard, though equitable clean heat measures are needed after the dissolution of the Equity Advisory Group;

Therefore the Equity Advisory Group offers this rubric to:

1. assist the Commission in developing and implementing the Clean Heat Standard in a manner that ensures an equitable share of clean heat measures are delivered to Vermonters with low and moderate incomes;
2. assist the Commission to assess whether proposed clean heat measures will equitably serve all Vermonters;
3. assist the Technical Advisory Group to evaluate proposed clean heat measures through an equity lens;
4. assist delivery agents and obligated parties to create clean heat measures that serve all Vermonters.

Score the answer to each question in the seven sections based on its potential harm or benefit.

I. Health

The proposed Clean Heat Measure should improve health (physical and mental) outcomes for low- and moderate-income and historically marginalized, disadvantaged and under-served Vermonters. The strategy upholds the fundamental human right to safe, clean, healthy and adequate air, water, land, and housing.

1. Does the proposed clean heat measure reduce air pollution (CO₂ and other greenhouse gasses, PM 2.5, Ozone, VOC, NO_x, etc.) and reduce asthma and other respiratory-related hospital visits?
2. Does the proposed clean heat measure extend the expected longevity and/or quality of

- life for populations experiencing health disparities?
3. Does the proposed clean heat measure reduce stress, anxiety, and depression, and improve mental health?
 4. Does the proposed clean heat measure help restore or protect ecosystem health (air, land, water, soil)?

Overall response to these questions with justification:

II. Affordability

The proposed Clean Heat Measure should lower and stabilize costs related to home heating as well as basic living needs (housing, food, utilities, healthcare, transportation, etc.) for low- and moderate-income and historically marginalized, disadvantaged and under-served Vermonters.

1. Does the proposed clean heat measure prioritize low and moderate income Vermonters?
2. Is the proposed clean heat measure affordable to residents, and/or does the proposed measure offer inclusive financing strategies that prioritize the most income-burdened populations? (be specific about whether you're financing through an organization or the city, etc)
3. Does the proposed clean heat measure reduce energy cost burdens and the number of families that are cost-burdened by housing including utilities?
4. Does the proposed clean heat measure generate burdens (including financial, and health costs), either directly or indirectly, onto others including communities of color or low-income populations? If yes, are there opportunities to mitigate these impacts?
5. Are grants available for low- and moderate-income and historically marginalized, disadvantaged and under-served Vermonters to access the proposed Clean Heat Measure and/or does it offer these Vermonters inclusive financing at favorable rates?
6. Will low- and moderate-income and historically marginalized, disadvantaged and under-served Vermonters lose fuel subsidies as a result of the proposed action?

Overall response to these questions with justification:

III. Accessibility

The proposed clean heat measure should remove barriers and promote access for low- and moderate-income and historically marginalized, disadvantaged and under-served Vermonters.

1. Does the proposed action expand access to clean heat measures for low- and moderate-income and historically marginalized, disadvantaged and under-served Vermonters?
2. Does the proposed clean heat measure remove barriers that might prevent individuals in low- and moderate-income and historically marginalized, disadvantaged and under-served Vermonters from benefiting fully if the clean heat measure were implemented as communicated?
3. Does the proposed clean heat measure increase access to eligible clean heat measures for households living in manufactured homes and/or manufactured home communities?
4. Does the proposed clean heat measure increase access to eligible clean heat measures for renter households?
5. Is the proposal action expressed in clear language accessible to all Vermonters?

Overall response to these questions with justification:

IV. Just Transition

The proposed clean heat measure should ensure economic justice so that low- and moderate-

income and historically marginalized, disadvantaged and under-served Vermonters are prioritized in the benefits of the measure and are protected from any potential negative consequences.

1. Does the clean heat measure support low- and moderate-income and historically marginalized, disadvantaged and under-served Vermonters through workforce development, and contracting opportunities?
2. Does the proposed clean heat measure create local opportunities for livable wage jobs for low- and moderate-income and historically marginalized, disadvantaged and under-served Vermonters?
3. Does the proposed action prioritize low and moderate income Vermonters?
4. Does the proposed clean heat measure place responsibility on institutions and businesses to address historical disparities in contributing to climate change?

Overall response to these questions with justification:

V. Community

The proposed clean heat measure should elevate the voices of low- and moderate-income and historically marginalized, disadvantaged and under-served Vermonters by developing and strengthening the skills, abilities, and resources that a community needs to survive, adapt, and thrive.

1. Does the proposed clean heat measure engage and continue to empower low- and moderate-income and historically marginalized, disadvantaged and under-served Vermonters in a meaningful, authentic and culturally appropriate manner? Does it respect community-based knowledge and is it based on community identified needs and input/feedback?
2. Does the proposed clean heat measure help build community capacity through funding, educational opportunities, and/or other resources?
3. Does the proposed action include a plan to respond comprehensively to protect impacted workers?
4. Does the proposed action support low- and moderate-income and historically marginalized, disadvantaged and under-served Vermonters through workforce development, contracting opportunities?
5. Does the proposed action create local opportunities for livable wage jobs for low- and moderate-income and historically marginalized, disadvantaged and under-served Vermonters?
6. Does the proposed clean heat measure help foster the building of effective, long-term relationships and trust between diverse communities and businesses and institutions?

Overall response to these questions with justification:

VI. Accountability

The proposed clean heat measure should ensure that all Vermonters, including low- and moderate-income and historically marginalized, disadvantaged and under-served Vermonters can hold governments and institutions accountable for equitable implementation.

1. Is the proposed clean heat measure based on verifiable science unbiased by politics, lobbying, corporate sponsorship, or precedential decisions?
2. Does the proposed clean heat measure meet the intended thermal requirements of the building it serves?

3. Does the proposed clean heat measure have provisions to ensure ongoing collection of data (that can be disaggregated by race/ethnicity/income) and public reporting of data? Can this data be validated qualitatively by community members?
4. Does the proposed clean heat measure have clear markers of short-term and long-term success as well as timelines for meeting markers of success? If so, what are the mechanisms we will utilize to ensure that goals are met (successful implementation and enforcement)?
5. Does the proposed action address consequences if goals are not met? Is there a process for those impacted by the action to express grievances or satisfaction and to ensure that concerns are met?
6. Is the proposed action adequately funded to achieve its designed goals?

Overall response to these questions with justification:

VII. Cultural Preservation

The proposed clean heat measure should deliberately and respectfully honor cultural relevance and history to maintain cultural heritage from the past and present for the benefit of all generations.

1. Does the proposed clean heat measure acknowledge/respect/honor the culture, historic assets, and traditions of low- and moderate-income and historically marginalized, disadvantaged and under-served Vermonters?
2. Does the proposed action improve social cohesion (engagement and connection within/to the community) among low- and moderate-income and historically marginalized, disadvantaged and under-served Vermonters?
3. Does the proposed action’s decision-making processes go beyond dollars and cents to address shared values and cultural differences in order to support implementation?

Overall response to these questions with justification:

						Impact	
					Harm -1	Neutral	Benefit +1
I. Health							
1							
2							
3							
4							
II. Affordability							
1							

2							
3							
4							
5							
6							
III. Accessibility							
1							
2							
3							
4							
5							
IV. Just Transition							
1							
2							
3							
4							
V. Community							
1							
2							
3							
4							
5							
6							
VI. Accountability							
1							
2							

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6							
VII. Cultural Preservation							
1							
2							
3							