



# Updating New Hampshire's Climate Action Plan

## Greater Connecticut River Valley Community

### Conversation in Claremont, NH

Summary Report by NH Listens, January 2024

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## Purpose and Background

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In August 2023, New Hampshire was granted federal funding to update New Hampshire's Climate Action Plan to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases. The four-year program runs from 2023-2027. Objectives of the plan are to:

- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions while supporting the creation of good jobs and lowering energy costs for families.
- Empower community-driven solutions in neighborhoods overburdened from pollution and impacts of climate change by directly seeking input from those communities.
- Deliver cleaner air by reducing harmful air pollution in places where people live, work, play and go to school.

These plans are part of the Climate Pollution Reduction Grant (CPRG) funding from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. **They lead to additional implementation funding that will support community-engaged projects** with an effort to focus on Justice40 investments among the sectors of air pollution and greenhouse gas reductions ([see more on Justice40 here](#)).

New Hampshire Listens is working on behalf of the NH Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) to design and facilitate community engagement—an essential component of NH's Priority (PCAP) and Comprehensive Climate Action Plans (CCAP).

*Each climate action plan requires meaningful community engagement. The design and initial efforts to identify climate action priorities must actively involve the participation of people who live in communities that experience a disproportionate burden of environmental hazards that affect their quality of life [...] There is much to talk and engage about across New Hampshire!*

(NH DES - <https://www.des.nh.gov/climate-and-sustainability/climate-change/climate-pollution-reduction-grants>)

Between December 2023 and early February 2024, NH Listens hosted a series of conversations and gatherings that offered time for people to learn, listen, and talk with each



**other to help develop a priority climate action plan for the state.** From these conversations, NHDES will identify priority projects and linking measures based on community engagement along with a series of analyses by (March 1, 2024; [see more about the CPRG process](#) and [training/technical tools](#)). The PCAP allows the state to apply for implementation funding from the federal government (April 1, 2024) to move projects forward in New Hampshire ([see more about the implementation grants](#)).

The conversations focused on talking about local issues and potential solutions in many different areas of concern:

- Agriculture
- Commercial and Residential Buildings
- Electricity Generation and/or Use
- Industry
- Natural and Working Lands
- Transportation
- Wastewater
- Wastewater & Materials Management

## **Goals, Facilitation, and Participation**

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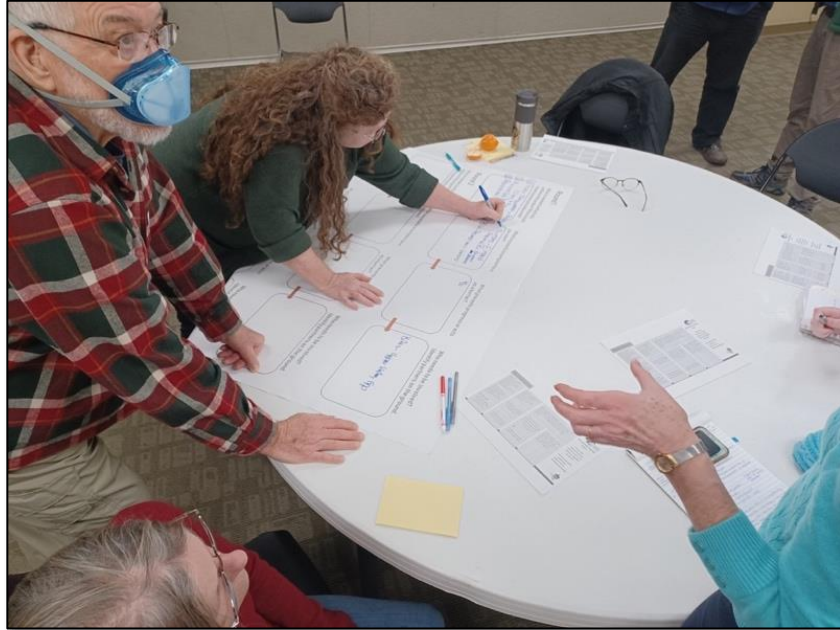
**On January 25, 2024, NH Listens, NHDES, and the Rockingham Planning Commission (RPC) held an in-person community conversation in Claremont, NH. The purpose of the gathering was to share information about the Climate Action Plan and have a conversation about implementation grant goals and projects that can be implemented in the Greater Connecticut River Valley.** This meeting continued ongoing conversations about key priorities for reducing air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions in New Hampshire. Additionally, NH Listens and NHDES were interested in identifying/building a list of local and statewide partnerships, so that projects locally and statewide include a robust mix of perspectives needed to move this work forward.

**Participants engaged in a workshop that allowed them to review near-term, high priority, implement ready priorities, projects, programs, and policies that would reduce greenhouse gas emissions ([see slides and transcriptions on the Carsey School of Public Policy Page](#)).** Projects prepared were derived from previous online meetings, including individual interviews with statewide providers, cross-sector stakeholder conversations, and community conversations. They were organized by sector. The sectors are as follows: Transportation, Electricity Generation and/or Use and Industry, Commercial and Residential Buildings, Natural & Working Lands and Agriculture, and Waste & Materials Management and Wastewater. Participants reviewed projects as they related to the said sectors and worked through the prompts provided.

### **The four overarching questions for the evening's workshop were:**

- What is needed to effectively achieve this project? What would make success possible in NH?
- What successful examples have you seen?

- What prevents progress or acts as a barrier?
- Who needs to be involved? Identify partners on the ground.



*Figure 1. Community Conversation in Claremont, NH, January 25, 2024*

During the workshops, NH Listens helped keep time, facilitated group discussion, and made sure everyone who attended had a chance to contribute. **Eleven people attended the session, and 15 people registered.** Collectively, they identified key projects and priorities relevant to the Greater Connecticut River Valley and surrounding localities.

### **Participants attended from:**

- Claremont (x5)
- Grantham
- Plainfield
- Lebanon (x2)
- No community shared (x2)

### **They identified with the following organizations/affiliations when asked:**

- City of Lebanon
- Cogan Climate Strategies
- NH Healthcare Workers for Climate Action (x2)
- Retired
- Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission
- No affiliation shared (x5)



## **Themes and Key Points**

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During the workshop, community members worked together to identify priorities, barriers, and potential partnerships. Participants provided input across three rounds of small group conversation, switching sectors with each round, which provided multiple perspectives for each of the five sectors.

### **Transportation**

- Community members discussed investing in sustainable, reliable public transportation.
- Urban infrastructure could also tend to pedestrian and bike-friendly design.
- Public education was also emphasized to inform the community on what it means to transition to cleaner modes of transportation.
- Potential partners mentioned include schools, bicycle groups, and energy-focused organizations.

### **Electricity Generation and/or Use and Industry**

- Priorities under this sector include investing in solar infrastructure.
- Ideas for solar projects include general investment for solar arrays and incentives for homeowners to purchase solar.
- Recycle and reuse was also discussed, including filtering ash, metals, and nitrogen and sulfur oxides.

### **Commercial and Residential Buildings**

- Energy efficiency programs were considered under this sector, one major project discussed being the bulk buying and installation of residential heat pumps.
- The groups talked about the potential to provide weatherization efforts to neighborhood homes in clusters.
- Potential partners include housing authorities and energy efficiency contractors.

### **Natural & Working Lands and Agriculture**

- Participants wanted to prioritize conservation.
- One group discussed efforts to empower conservation commissions to protect wetlands.
- In the second round, the group discussed forestry education for landowners and foresters alike.
- Partners that could be involved in the mentioned processes include farmers, waste management companies, and school boards.



## **Opportunities for Engagement Moving Forward**

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Claremont is one of the eight communities where NH Listens and NHDES are hosting in-person meetings during the first phase of engagement under the Climate Pollution Reduction Planning Grant. Participants spent time reflecting on current projects and discussing potential implications for the Greater Connecticut River Valley. When debriefing the activity, NH Listens asked participants to identify supplementary priorities for greenhouse gas and air pollution reduction in Greater Connecticut River Valley.

### **Additional priorities for the Greater Connecticut River Valley include:**

- Building strong partnerships with city departments and managers to achieve much of the climate reduction measures discussed.
- Promoting education to the general public regarding the importance of implementing climate reduction measures.
- Upgrading the energy efficiency of residential property, with an emphasis on cluster renovations.

## **Additional Resources**

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New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services. Climate Pollution Reduction Grants. <https://www.des.nh.gov/climate-and-sustainability/climate-change/climate-pollution-reduction-grants>.

New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (2023). NHDES using EPA grant to update state's Climate Action Plan. <https://www.des.nh.gov/news-and-media/blog/nhdes-using-epa-grant-update-states-climate-action-plan>.

Executive Office of the President of the United States (n.d.) Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool: Frequently asked questions: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/CEQ-CEJST-QandA.pdf>.

The White House (n.d.). Justice 40: A whole-of-government initiative. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/environmentaljustice/justice40/>.

United States Environmental Protection Agency (2023). Climate Pollution Reduction Grant Program: Planning grant question and answer document. <https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2023-11/climate-pollution-reduction-grants-frequently-asked-questions.pdf>.



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