



# Updating New Hampshire's Climate Action Plan

## Greater Manchester Community Conversation in Manchester, 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 February 1, 2024, NH Listens, NHDES, and the Southern New Hampshire Planning Commission held an in-person community conversation in Manchester, 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 Greater Manchester.** 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, Manchester, NH, February 1, 2024*

During the workshops, NH Listens helped keep time, facilitated group discussion, and made sure everyone who attended had a chance to contribute. **Twenty-three people attended the session.** Collectively, they identified key projects and priorities relevant to the Greater Manchester and surrounding localities.

### **Participants attended from:**

- Amherst
- Bedford (x4)
- Dunbarton
- Durham/Manchester
- Londonderry
- Manchester (x12)
- Nottingham
- Raymond
- None recorded

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

- 350 New Hampshire
- Bedford Energy Commission
- Dunbarton Garden Club
- Energy Audits Unlimited, LLC
- League of Conservation Voters / Climate Action NH
- NH House of Representatives
- SEE Science Center
- Southern NH Planning Commission
- Town of Bedford
- Unitarian Universalist Action NH
- No affiliation shared (x13)

### **Themes and Key Points**

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**

- Expanding public transportation access, as well as bike and pedestrian infrastructure.
- Establishing a diverse ecosystem of electric vehicles and charging stations.
- Partnering with tech-focused companies and organizations.

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

- Supporting investments in community solar including solar for multi-unit dwellings, public buildings, and commercial spaces.
- Partnering with property and landowners to encourage solar panels and other energy efficiency measures.

## **Commercial and Residential Buildings**

- Providing HVAC professionals with information about alternative cost-saving, and energy-efficient HVAC measures that can be relayed to homeowners.
- Offering incentives to homeowners and landlords to install weatherization measures.
- Partnering with installation and weatherization services.

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

- Creating an urban incentive for greenspaces that benefits the public including projects that address run-off reduction, carbon sequestration, and biodiversity.
- Educating the public on good forestry practices and delineating extractive versus destructive practices to promote ongoing care of local trees and forests.
- Partnering with land trusts, research institutions, and other relevant stakeholders on land management.

## **Waste & Materials Management and Wastewater**

- Supporting stormwater treatment through natural filtration; avoiding mixing stormwater and sewage.
- Partnering with community planners that support improving wastewater treatment.

## **Linkages to Public Health**

- Providing incentives for building and maintaining greenspace, expanding the capacity of local farms, and providing education around urban corridors for wildlife.
- Acknowledging public concerns that specific measures to improve neighborhood are believed to lead to gentrification.



- Partnering with the local community to create coalitions of citizens that want to improve public health.

## **Workforce Development**

- Promoting training and licensure for workforce development, with attention to youth programming.
- Working with local schools to promote existing and cultivate new accessible pathways to community colleges, trade schools, and apprenticeship programs.

## **Opportunities for Engagement Moving Forward**

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Manchester is one of the eight communities where NH Listens and NHDES is 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 Greater Manchester. When debriefing the activity, NH Listens asked participants to identify supplementary priorities for greenhouse gas and air pollution reduction in Greater Manchester.

### **Additional priorities for the Greater Manchester include:**

- Solving current barriers to trade and technical schools, including staff shortages and cost of living, to better support apprenticeships and other forms of postsecondary education.
- Addressing current stigmas around public transportation, greenspaces, and apprenticeship programs, that could hold otherwise impede on potential progress.
- Recognizing that incoming building improvements programs and projects can lead to unintended increase in cost-of-living that could displace current residents.
- Identifying zoning and regulation barriers and navigating with relevant partners to achieve desired outcomes.
- Having an accessible communications channel to understand the City's public transit system.
- Providing forthcoming workshops, information, and resources in multiple languages.

## **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>.

## **NH Listens, NH Department of Environmental Services, and Southern NH Planning Commission Contacts**

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