

# Updating New Hampshire's Climate Action Plan

## Greater Capitol Region Community Conversation

*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).



*Figure 1. Community Conversation, Concord, NH, February 12, 2024*



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

*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>)

## Goals, Facilitation, and Participation

On February 12, 2024, NH Listens and NHDES held an in-person community conversation in Concord, 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 Capitol Region. 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 2. Community Conversation, Concord, NH, February 12, 2024*

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

**Participants attended from:**

- Alton (x2)
- Amherst
- Bow
- Canterbury (x2)



- Concord (x13)
- Epsom (x2)
- Loudon
- Manchester
- Middleton
- Pembroke
- Penacook (x2)

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

- Cowasuck Band of the Pennacook Abenaki People (x2)
- The Dupont Group
- Northern Forest Center (x2)
- Ecological Solutions
- The Nature Conservancy NH
- League of Conservation Voters
- Sierra Club
- Friends of the Northern Rail Trail
- NH Department of Environmental Services
- NH Department of Health and Human Services Office of Health Equity
- NH Audubon
- Society for the Protection of NH Forests (x2)
- No Affiliation (x13)

## **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**

- Supporting public infrastructure that is accessible (i.e. universal adapters) to expand electric vehicle use.
- Expanding public transportation, with a focus on smaller transit vehicles that can serve smaller populations with flexible routes.
- Partnering with employers, landlords, and local Chamber of Commerce.

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

- Providing education and training for incoming workforce to install and maintain energy-saving measures, like solar and heat pumps.
- Upgrading local scale transmission to support new sources of energy.
- Partnering with community power providers, utility companies, and solar businesses.





## **Commercial and Residential Buildings**

- Providing incentives to prompt increase use of sustainable materials to build commercial and residential units.
- Expand weatherization investments for non-profit social services agencies, mental health centers, community health centers, childcare centers, etc.
- Working with local and regional groups like Resilient Buildings Group and Clean Energy New Hampshire, as well as local property owners.

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

- Providing support for municipal and local trusts to purchase conservation easements on forested lands from willing private landowners.
- Promoting urban forestry and engaging in sustainable practices like planting trees and planning across forest parcels.
- Partnering with farmers, natural resources services, and land trusts.

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

- Supporting regional composting facilities and anaerobic digester processes.
- Addressing wastewater plant repairs and updates.
- Partnering with local composting companies, solid waste management companies, and researchers.

## **Workforce Development**

- Coordinating a needs assessment to understand what employment and educational gaps are present in the Greater Capitol Region.
- Supporting post-secondary institutions that are working to recruit and retain talent in the Greater Capitol Region.
- Partnering with practitioners and institutions like trade associations, credentialed mentors, and apprenticeship programs.

## **Linkages to Public Health**

- Expanding opportunities to farm and harvest fresh produce, focus on growing and eating local foods.
- Partnering with local organizations like Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts, UNH Extension, and NH Audubon.

## **Opportunities for Engagement Moving Forward**

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Concord 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 Capitol Region. When debriefing the activity, NH Listens asked participants to identify supplementary priorities for greenhouse gas and air pollution reduction in Greater Capitol Region.

### **Additional priorities for the Greater Capitol Region include:**

- Acknowledging that there may be a lack of incentive for landlords to take advantage of energy-efficient measures. Any measures taken by landlords may inadvertently shift costs of heating from landlord to tenant.
- Coordinating with high schools, community colleges, trade schools and other post-secondary institutions to expose careers to high school students and other potential students.
- Feelings of NIMBY-ism (or “not in my backyard”) from community members that resist change that can impede climate-related progress.
- Understanding sustainable management of forests, the benefits it provides, and sharing that information with the public.
- Addressing lack of grid support as local power plants are closing and are not being replaced with sources of power.

### **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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