



Developing New Hampshire's Comprehensive Climate Action Plan

Technical Input Session 3, Commercial and Residential Buildings

Summary Report by NH Listens, March 2025

Purpose and Background

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 investments in Low Income Disadvantaged Communities (LIDAC) across the economic sectors of air pollution and greenhouse gas reductions.

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

Between January 2025 and May 2025, NH Listens is hosting a series of conversations, or Technical Input Sessions, for people to learn, listen, and inform a CCAP for the state. The CCAP allows NHDES to identify strategies and measures to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in the near- and long-term. The CCAP must touch on all significant GHG sources and sinks across economic sectors present in New Hampshire.

Technical Input Sessions provide opportunities for NH agencies, outside experts, stakeholders, and the public to discuss and vet potential GHG emission reduction measures for inclusion in the CCAP. The five Technical Input Session conversations are organized by these economic sectors defined by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA):

- Transportation
- Commercial and Residential Buildings



- Electrical Generation and/or Use
- Agriculture and Natural/Working Lands
- Industry and Waste/Materials Management

Goals, Facilitation, and Participation

On March 11, 2025, NH Listens and NHDES held the third technical input session for the Commercial and Residential Buildings sectors. The purpose of this gathering was to:

- Provide context about New Hampshire's greenhouse gas inventory.
- Draft preliminary strategies to reduce GHG emissions in the sector.
- Share models for analyzing measures.

In addition, NHDES engaged participants in discussions about their experience in the sector regarding modeling, innovative practices, cross-collaboration, and barriers to implementation.

Participants engaged in a workshop that allowed them to review possible strategies that would reduce greenhouse gas emissions and increase efficiency ([find agendas and guidance documents on the NHDES CCAP landing page](#)). The potential strategies prepared were derived from previous meetings, including individual interviews with statewide providers, cross-sector stakeholder conversations, and community conversations.

During the workshops, NH Listens helped keep time, facilitated group discussion, and made sure everyone who attended had a chance to contribute. **18 people attended the session, 25 people registered.** Collectively, they named key considerations and priorities relevant to CCAP planning in the Commercial and Residential Buildings sectors.

Focus Areas

The focus areas for this session were:

- Implementing Energy Efficiency Measures for Small Businesses
- Implementing Energy-Efficient Retrofit Program for Foodservice Equipment
- Sealing and Insulating HVAC Supply and Return Ductwork
- Installing Individual & Whole-House Heat Pump Systems

NHDES provided relevant information through slides and corresponding guidance documents to inform participants on the measures' alignments with EPA's required elements. **Participants reviewed these measures and provided feedback on their appropriateness; they also suggested additional actions to ensure a comprehensive and effective implementation approach ([find agendas and guidance documents on the NHDES CCAP landing page](#)).** The potential measures prepared were derived from previous meetings, including individual interviews with statewide providers, cross-sector stakeholder conversations, and community conversations.



Themes and Key Points

During the technical input sessions, participants provided information and resources related to their experience in the sector. See **Resources** for the full list of organizations, programs, reports, and case studies shared by participants in this session.

Considerations for the Regional Heat Pump Accelerator Program

After reviewing the [Regional Heat Pump Accelerator Program](#), a CPRG implementation grant to be initiated among a New England coalition, participants provided the following considerations.

- Having a workforce ready to implement this work is important. Participants questioned whether there could be opportunities for entities like community colleges to apply for grants. Orienting this program with vocational and community college programs was frequently mentioned.
- The Heat Pump Program was noted to help shift the HVAC industry toward heat pump solutions—including geothermal—for most new builds.

State Energy Efficiency Projects

- Energy use in office buildings has been declining since 2005, due to a general decrease in fossil fuel use. A recent increase in energy costs, despite minimal changes in use, prompted questions about how this measure is being analyzed.

Implementing Energy Efficiency Measures for Small Business & Implementing Energy-Efficient Retrofit Program for Foodservice Equipment

- Small businesses operate on tight timelines, being sensitive to Return on Investment is important—participants noted that even a few years may be too long.
- Participants discussed challenges with the NHSaves program. The NHSaves model does not include continuity over multiple years or on-the-ground outreach. Businesses must seek out these measures, which is a barrier. Small businesses are receiving support from organizations, which can fill the capacity needed to find opportunities. Participants noted that most NHSaves funding goes to large businesses, which have the capacity to sustain the work.
- Having workshops and informational sessions for small businesses would be valuable. Due to individual business owners being busy, reaching out to business coalitions like Rotary, Kiwanis, local Chambers, and Lion Clubs could be a great way to centralize efforts.
- Energy efficiency programs are overwhelmed capacity-wise. Organizations like Community Development Loan Fund and Community Power Coalitions are offering cost-sharing and municipal funding opportunities for residents to improve their homes efficiency. Supporting cost-saving measures like 0% financing and local “adder” fees will support ongoing work in this sector.



Sealing and Insulating HVAC Supply and Return Ductwork

- Participants noted the high cost of residential retrofitting.
- In addition, structural barriers can also slow down the retrofitting cost, potentially raising costs and straining capacity. One participant mentioned that a majority of residential homes have ducting that is too high. The state's [PCAP](#) reported that residential homes are being heated through means that don't require the ducting needed when retrofitting homes (see Fig 6.3).

Installing Individual and Whole-House Heat Pump Systems

- There is an ongoing knowledge gap regarding heat pumps and how they operate. Investing in heat pumps education can stimulate consumer buy-in in New Hampshire.
- Other states, like Maine, have launched successful incentives heat pump.
- Overall energy efficiency remains a priority among participants; sealing homes before switching to another heating system is an important and crucial step to take.

Climate Action in New Hampshire

Across the five technical input sessions hosted in February, participants identified the following programs and projects as being instances of great climate action work being done in New Hampshire and the greater New England Region.

Transportation	The Volkswagen Environmental Mitigation Trust Fund has committed and expended \$10 million to support emission reduction in the state.
Buildings	In New Hampshire, municipal energy has been decreasing since 2005 as the state has shifted to energy efficiency interventions.
Electricity Generation	The NH Network brings together energy committees that share resources, ideas, and information .
Agriculture and Natural & Working Lands	UNH is working with the NH Timberland Owners Association on identifying research needs for invasive species management .
Industry and Waste & Materials Management	The town of Atrim, NH was awarded \$5,000 for a new electric fork truck to assist in transporting bales of recyclables —without the need for gas.



Resources

Participant-Shared Resources

Developing a Voluntary Comprehensive Climate Action Plan for NH (2025). *Carsey School of Public Policy*. https://carsey.unh.edu/sites/default/files/media/2025-03/03.05.2025_Climate%20and%20Air%20Pollution_SurveySummaryFindings.pdf

Efficiency Maine's Heat Pump and Heat Pump Water Heater Initiatives Receive "Leader of the Pack" Award from the American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy (2024). *Efficiency Maine*. <https://www.energymaine.com/efficiency-maines-heat-pump-and-heat-pump-water-heater-initiatives-receive-leader-of-the-pack-award-from-the-american-council-for-an-energy-efficient-economy/#:~:text=In%202023%20alone%2C%20more%20than,round%20residences%20in%20the%20state>

Hannah Grimes Center for Entrepreneurs. <https://hannahgrimes.com/>

Kaiterra. <https://www.kaiterra.com/> (Air quality monitoring to document improvements)

Microgrid Investigative Project (2025). *NH Department of Energy*. <https://www.energy.nh.gov/sites/g/files/ehbemt551/files/inline-documents/sonh/inv-2024-001-stakeholder-session-1.pdf>

Sustainable Craft Beverages. *NH Department of Environmental Services*. <https://www.des.nh.gov/business-and-community/greening-your-business/sustainable-craft-beverages>

NH Listens & NH Department of Environmental Services Contacts

NH Listens

- Carrie Portrie, PhD, Research Assistant Professor & Program Manager, Carrie.Portrie@unh.edu
- Mikayla Townsend, Program Coordinator, Mikayla.Townsend@unh.edu

NH Department of Environmental Services

- Kurt Yuengling, Community Engagement Specialist, Environmental Health Program, Air Resources Division, kurt.r.yuengling@des.nh.gov