

To: Vermont Climate Council  
From: Just Transitions Subcommittee  
Date: September --, 2021  
Re: Comments on the Guiding Principles at the Aug 23 VCC Meeting

At the 8/23 Vermont Climate Council, the Just Transitions Subcommittee Co-chairs presented a final draft of the *Guiding Principles for a Just Transition*. Councilors supported adopting the revised Guiding Principles with one caveat - some councilors expressed concerns that the rubric may create the impression that policies won't have negative impacts. Just Transitions Subcommittee members explained the intent of the Rubric was precisely to help identify potential negative impacts, who might bear them, and provide a mirror to where we are risking and where we are falling short. Councilors who expressed those concerns agreed to review the Rubric again in light of the conversation at the meeting. The Just Transitions Subcommittee Co-chairs agreed to take concerns back to the Just Transitions Subcommittee.

At its last meeting, the Just Transitions Subcommittee discussed the concerns expressed at the Climate Council meeting. Generally, the Subcommittee feels that the conversation may have misrepresented the principles and that many concerns raised by Councilors have actually been addressed in the full document. To that end, we supply a few excerpts of the Guiding Principles document below that address the issue of negative impacts. Moreover, we highlight aspects of the Rubric in order to illustrate how it is used, the context of positive numbers, negative numbers, and zero and why we chose to retain the 1, 2, 3 scale. That said, we feel that the best understanding of these concepts and the principles is gained by reading the whole document and implore anyone experiencing hesitations to re-read it.

One of the concerns raised at the VCC meeting was that the Guiding Principles told the Council not to advance plans with negative impacts, and that proposals with negative impacts would not be able to be included in the plan. The concern was that this is an unreasonable standard – and we entirely agree. There will be negative impacts(or “burdens”), but the Guiding Principles explicitly take this into account and address how to manage those impacts in the most equitable manner.

For example, though not exhaustive:

Under *Section IV, Guiding Principles for a Just Transition*:

- Potential impacts, benefits, and burdens of recommended climate actions are identified and shared publicly. This includes considering and naming known potential impacts, benefits and burdens outside of Vermont's borders.
- Recommendations must be broad enough for the well-being of all Vermonters and include targeted strategies for different groups that take into account their specific histories, sociocultural and economic realities. They should also recognize when negative impacts are being shifted onto frontline communities outside of the state.

- Where Recommendations create burdens, they also include ways to shift these burdens away from impacted communities.
- Recommendations are explicit in their identification of potential and likely impacts on workers, families and their communities based on the implementation of Vermont's Climate Action Plan.

*Section V. Self-Assessment Questions:*

- Which communities will be burdened the most by this recommendation and how can that burden be shifted away from impacted communities?
- What are the long-term and potential intergenerational impacts of this recommendation for identified communities?
- How will we know about the impacts of this recommendation on identified communities? Which data or indicators will be needed? What process was used to determine the indicators are resonant and relevant to most impacted community needs? How will it be collected and shared?

*Section VI. Scoring Rubric*

- Proposal clearly identifies who/what carries the burdens from the recommendation, if any
- Proposal includes solutions to shield frontline/most impacted communities from experiencing burdens from the recommendation, if applicable

In addition, there was discussion about the Rubric values and how negative or zero values would be included. To understand why negative and zero values were not included, we have outlined the reasoning below.

Of the Rubric criteria, 13 use the verbs: identifies, includes, reflects, defines, or outlines. In this way, a negative number is nonsensical, and zero can be easily changed by simply adding to the proposal itself.

The remaining questions are listed below for ease, and in reading them it is clear that negative values are nonsensical and/or the Sub Committee agrees that a zero is unacceptable:

- Vermonters can hear their voices in the recommendation
- Recommendation written in plain language and easy to understand
- Funding mechanism makes recommendation affordable and accessible to frontline/most impacted communities, if applicable
- Jobs created by recommendation offer fair, high paying positions with good benefits
- A wide range of traditionally underserved Vermonters and unions are prioritized in the jobs created by the recommendation

- Communities, local/regional governments, organizations and families have the capacity to implement the recommendation.
- The recommendation provides a specific, quantifiable commitment to a just transition
- The recommendation supports the natural environment and promotes fairness to all living things.

Overall, the Just Transitions Subcommittee believe that the Guiding Principles address the concerns raised at the Council Meeting. At the same time, we see the work of the Council as iterative, and we welcome additional feedback and follow up.

We are looking forward to seeing the Guiding Principles implemented and assisting Subcommittees to begin to assess strategies and actions with these tools. We implore the Council to fully adopt the Guiding Principles and begin that important work now.