

**Wolfgang and Myhre Northwest Consulting**

Sarah E. Myhre, Ph.D.  
Karen Wolfgang, M.A.  
16825 SE Woodward St.  
Portland, OR 97236

503-929-7170  
wmnconsulting@gmail.com

**Organizational Analysis: Global Warming Solutions Act and the Climate Council**  
*Just and Equitable Climate Outcomes for the People of Vermont*

***Overview***

The State of Vermont is in a catalytic, precipitous moment in moving toward a just climate transition. With the signing of the Vermont Global Warming Act, and the formation of the Climate Council, the state is poised to initiate the comprehensive, systemic changes necessary to address the climate crisis. This leadership moment has come with a profound commitment to a Just Transition process.

Climate change provokes a deep reconciliation with the past, present, and future across all forms of public life. Because the forces and consequences of climate change precipitate an analysis of structural harm and systems of oppression, a socially reparative and technically sophisticated approach is necessary. To steward a just, equitable, and responsive outcome, we recommend an intersectional, process- and relationship-based model of leadership.

Through the development of organizational guidelines and processes, the Climate Council can steward inclusive, transparent, and just norms of decision-making. Below, we discuss a set of potential development and consensus-building pathways for the Climate Council to develop the Vermont Climate Action Plan and to act as a long-term leadership hub for climate justice, resilience, and accountability within the state.

## ***Leading on Climate Justice***

To effectively lead on climate justice as an organization and function of government, the Climate Council will need to address the mechanics of organizational development. Developing and implementing internal and external practices to support the intention and execution of a Just Transition will be key to the success of the Vermont Climate Action Plan.

The Climate Council must lead on justice, equity, and inclusion work from the top down. Ultimately justice-focused work cannot be successful if it is seen as a single committee's work; moreover, it cannot be successful if the external communication and valuation of justice is not mirrored by internal practices and approaches. Functional internal processes and guidelines for inclusivity, diversity, and equity are directly tied to Just Transition outcomes.

Therefore, we recommend here an ambitious program to insert and uphold justice and solidarity work across the working groups of the Climate Council and within the Steering Committee's leadership. Indeed, the scale of change necessary to meet this moment is huge, and our ambition to do so in a just and reparative way should rise to meet this challenge.

## ***Organizational Analysis Recommendations***

The existing Draft Process Roadmap provides the scaffolding for the Climate Council to initiate a comprehensive process to move forward and iterate on the goals and timeline of the Global Warming Act. That Roadmap anchors the organizational analysis process outlined here.

This analysis is principally focused on internal practices, composition, and operational norms of the Climate Council and subcommittees, with the goal of building a robust internal culture that will have the strength and flexibility to ensure just and equitable outcomes for the people of Vermont on an ongoing basis.

Already, there has been public critique of the Climate Council and the roadmap process. This rich feedback from the Vermont Renews BIPOC Council provides a necessary and informative external perspective. This letter is, essentially, a vital gift of engagement and solidarity with the process that the Climate Council is stewarding.

Therefore, the organizational analysis and recommendations presented here, including the proposed steering committee and subcommittee work as well as the organizational guideline development and implementation plan, all reflect an integration of and engagement with the core message of the letter.

## ***Proposed Steering Committee and Subcommittee Work***

The following items, detailed further in the next section, describe the necessary work for building robust internal systems within the Climate Council through the Roadmap. These proposed foci would enable the Steering Committee to lead and execute, producing high-leverage work during the initial push for a 2021 Climate Action Plan and into the future.

1. Just Transition Guidelines
2. Organizational Guidelines for Internal Equity and Inclusion
3. Solidarity Guidelines between the Just Transition and Science & Data Subcommittees
4. Coordination Guidelines between Subcommittees
5. Implementation Plan and Facilitation Schedule

## ***Steering Committee and Subcommittee Detailed Work Plan***

### 1. Just Transition Guidelines

*This document is being developed through the Just Transition Subcommittee. It will need to be adopted by each subcommittee and used by the Council as a whole to align the technical and scientific vision of the council with the social and cultural goals of a Just Transition.*

- a. This document represents a “North Star” alignment document, and will facilitate the development of shared understandings of terms, goals, and cultural assessments of justice, equity, inclusivity, and diversity
- b. All decision-making at the highest level of leadership within the Climate Council will need to be reviewed and vetted through this lens
- c. Through a review, sign-on, and solidarity process, the Just Transition Subcommittee values can be empowered by the Steering Committee
- d. Abbreviated versions of, or rubrics based on, this document may be generated to provide a reference for subcommittees as they complete their work, as a way to ensure alignment with Just Transition concepts and objectives
- e. The Council may use the Just Transition Guidelines as a facilitation tool to understand, evaluate, and recommend conclusions from all other subcommittees

### 2. Organizational Guidelines for Internal Equity and Inclusion

*This is a key component of the work ahead, which aims to clarify and uphold internal practices to ensure that the Climate Council and its subcommittees work collaboratively and equitably. It will be a cornerstone for the success of the subcommittees and the overall effort. For ambitious, inclusive, justice-focused leadership to succeed, the norms of power-sharing, listening, and accountability must be set and modeled throughout the internal organizational culture.*

*Some initial analysis will be required prior to level-setting internal goals for inclusion, representation, and organizational culture.*

- a. Representation
  - i. Demographic analysis and assessment of gaps in representation on the Climate Council & subcommittees
  - ii. Longer-term compositional goals for committee membership and leadership, with the goal of representative engagement across marginalized and underrepresented constituencies
  - iii. Succession planning and Council member appointment guidelines, to be shared with legislators who will appoint future members
  - iv. Guidelines for engagement of non-Council members within subcommittees
  - v. Cultivation and retention of marginalized leadership within all Council structures
- b. Internal culture
  - i. Anti-harassment and anti-bullying policy and expectations for Council, subcommittee, and external participant behavior
  - ii. Compensation policy for participant engagement in Council and subcommittee work, to ensure equitable outcomes for historically marginalized communities
  - iii. Commitment to annual training in equity and inclusion practices for Steering Committee and subcommittees, possibly including a public or internal speaker series
- c. Accountability
  - i. Organizational process of listening to, responding to, and integrating internal and external critiques of Climate Council leadership
  - ii. Facilitation of reparative process to address historical and ongoing oppression and systems of harm

### 3. Solidarity Guidelines between the Just Transition and Science & Data Subcommittees

*The Just Transition and Science & Data Subcommittees are both charged with informing input and reviewing output from the other three subcommittees. These two committees must work in harmony; to do so, they need a coalition statement and signature process to establish collaborative leadership. Science and justice need to work together through alignment, solidarity, and inclusive practices, to steward the outcomes and recommendations through the subcommittee process.*

- a. Consensus and coalition-building must be prioritized here, because these committees are performing similar roles and won't be effective if they are at odds with one another
- b. These guidelines would represent a solidarity commitment and alignment of inclusive scientific practices with the goals of a Just Transition
- c. These guidelines would demonstrate an embrace of both Traditional Ecological Knowledge and western scientific perspectives
- d. This process could also stipulate the ongoing expectations and working relationship between the two committees, bringing together ongoing procedural steps and work plans in relation to the Climate Council and the three other subcommittees

#### 4. Coordination Guidelines between Subcommittees

*The Climate Council Roadmap stipulates that the subcommittees execute on interrelated work plans. Core to this execution is establishing the relationships between committees, as the Science & Data and Just Transition committees are tasked with both informing and reviewing the work of the other subcommittees.*

- a. These coordination guidelines will facilitate and clarify the relationships moving forward between the Just Transition Subcommittee and the three other topical subcommittees, to inform and review the approaches completed in Rural Resilience and Adaptation, Cross-Sector Mitigation, and Agriculture and Ecosystems
- b. Through a discursive, inclusive process, these guidelines will allow for a transparent and internal vetting process to facilitate Just Transition engagement, by providing inputs to, and reviewing outputs of, the three other committees

#### 5. Implementation Plan and Facilitation Schedule

*The Climate Council has a near-term goal of production of a Climate Action Plan by December 1, 2021; it is our understanding that the Council will remain in effect indefinitely, with ongoing responsibilities including but not limited to reviewing Plan progress every four years. The primary focus for our work, then, would be the window between now and the Climate Action Plan launch, but the Implementation Plan and Facilitation Schedule would likely extend into the post-Plan period. Below are some considerations for that timeline.*

- a. The schedule would focus on meeting the 2021 December deadline for the Vermont Climate Action Plan, along with defining ongoing, iterative organizational development and accountability plans for the Climate Council moving forward
- b. Scheduling would hinge on an assessment of the systems in place at present for managing committee workflow and agendas, as well as alignment with existing contractor engagement
- c. Particular attention and support is needed to steward the creation of the Just Transition Subcommittee's work plan and relationship with the Steering Committee and the other subcommittees according to their existing commitments and timelines

### ***Statement of Work Prioritization and Feedback***

We envision the implementation and facilitation of the entire process proposed here to be a \$100,000 contract. Each step in the proposed Steering Committee and subcommittee work requires significant facilitation, analysis, and document preparation. As well, this work must be matched and tailored to the existing and ongoing committee processes and relationship-building; therefore sensitive, timely implementation and facilitation of the proposed work is key.

Due to the emergent work of the Climate Council and subcommittees, we request a review and prioritization of the proposed components in order to finalize a statement of work. With such feedback, we can tailor a specific statement of work to include, for example, an initial contract and a secondary contract with unique work products and deliverables for each. However, at this time, we expect that feedback and level-setting will help us respond gracefully to the needs and expectations of the Climate Council leadership.

We appreciate the opportunity to be a part of this transformative and necessary moment in the history of the State of Vermont. We look forward to engaging with you and the process.

## ***Biographical Sketch***

**WMN Consulting** is a consultancy providing organizational leadership and analysis to support just and equitable processes for public climate leadership.



### **Sarah Myhre, Ph.D.**

Dr. Myhre is a scientist, climate justice advocate, and organizational leader. She has worked with organizations and leadership teams to build and cultivate evidence-based, equitable, and just outcomes for people, policy, and place. She sees her work as rooting together scientific process and culture work, to catalyze climate justice leadership. Previous leadership and climate justice development work completed through organizations such as Rowan Institute, the North Cascades Institute, the Environmental Defense Fund, FutureWise Washington and 500 Women Scientists.

### **Karen Wolfgang, M.A.**

Karen Wolfgang is a skilled organizational administrator, with experience in the non-profit, business, and governmental sectors. Her work focuses on empowering individuals and organizations to take effective action toward personal and societal transformation. After undergraduate work at Princeton, she earned a Masters degree in Educational Leadership, and founded and led Independence Gardens LLC. She lives in Portland, Oregon with her two children.