



# Creating Prosperity and Opportunity Confronting Climate Change Summit

## Key Ideas

From the Summit Breakout Group Sessions  
February 18, 2015

The following is a report of the key ideas developed by Breakout Session groups and gathered at the Summit on Creating Prosperity and Opportunity Confronting Climate Change on February 18<sup>th</sup> 2015 at Vermont Technical College. Each breakout group was asked to report back to the assembly three key action items that could advance the Vermont Climate Economy. In the morning, a panel of speakers began the discussion by exploring the challenges and opportunities in each area. In the afternoon, the same group reconvened with neutral facilitators to discuss the following questions:

1. What are the key issues for the future of this sector?
2. What specific actions should Vermonters take to advance opportunities in this issue area?
3. Of all we've been discussing, what are the three ideas or recommendations for action we want to share with the full conference?

Action ideas from each session, are listed below and will be shared with the new Vermont Climate Change Economy Council to inform their work to frame a platform of practical action designed to rally business, policy, and community leadership to advance the Vermont economy while confronting climate change.

### **SESSION A: Marketing Vermont as the Innovative Climate Economy Destination**

1. Dedicate funding to state marketing to attract consumers, youth, businesses, and climate economy enthusiasts.
2. Plan a national conference to create a rallying point around Vermont as a Climate Economy leader. For example, host a "ClimateJam" following the Tech Jam model.
3. Create a common language to be used consistently across business and state government, to have consistent messages and integrated communications. Leverage partnerships between tourism destinations, business organizations, and educational institutions to promote shared messages. Create Sharing Ambassadors, a group of self-identified innovators to develop their stories and promote the shared vision.

### **SESSION B: Advancing Community-Based Climate Action**

1. Build a statewide campaign to advance Vermont's Climate Economy. The campaign would be a public-private partnership for an initiative that would have a clear, easy framework for communities or individuals to implement. The following are examples of potential campaign ideas:
  - a. Vermont Solar Challenge in 2016 to seize the opportunity to press on investment before the ITC expires or is significantly reduced in 2017.
  - b. A campaign/challenge oriented at "Whole Building/Home/Community," that would address heating, transportation and electric transition solutions.
2. Strengthen the capacity of communities and grassroots energy groups and leaders through support, funding, guidance, tools, and templates. Enact a carbon pollution tax to fund this "social infrastructure" investment.
3. Increase public engagement and raise awareness about climate economy opportunities. Engage a broader segment of Vermonters, with a particular focus on youth (such as fostering, building, strengthening "green teams" in high schools or other schools) as well as "fence-sitters" through education and engagement with a particular targeted focus on the economic value of clean energy investments.

### **SESSION C: Promoting a Vision for Transportation Renewal**

1. Transform how money is generated for transportation with the development of a new funding mechanism. Explore where funding for implementation comes from at the state and local level.
  - a. Implement a Carbon Tax.
  - b. Implement a regional cap and trade scheme (like in California).
2. Lead by example and implement a “perfect transformation” of a community that incorporates multiple concepts such as access and multi-modal transportation to create a carless experience. Capture other benefits (such as health) that are not as easily tracked.
  - a. Create a broad-based model that brings housing, transportation, and land use policies together.
  - b. The model would include a ban on single occupancy vehicles in designated downtown areas, parking at the edge of town, EV incentives and car share and rideshare availability.
3. Shift policy to address transportation inefficiencies of current land use. Incentivize settlement patterns based on integrating land use and transportation planning to make it more feasible and less expensive to live in or near a village or city center. Explore the connection to strategic disinvestment of infrastructure.

### **SESSION D: Innovating for Renewal, Recycling and Resource Limits**

1. Encourage resource renewal technologies via an incubator where technologies can be tried out.
2. Develop “Climate Regulatory Enterprise Zones” as regulatory incubators that act as a safe place for innovation and testing experimental regulations.
3. Coordinate nutrient information regionally through a platform for sharing information around nutrient streams.
4. Develop an initiative where youth could work on low-income home improvements on a TV show with energy flavor. Call it “This Cold House.”

### **SESSION E: Developing Ubiquitous Distributed Energy**

1. Improve public understanding through the development and dissemination of a clear message on what distributed energy is and why it is important.
2. Ensure effective and early public participation in community energy planning and siting processes.
3. Create a one-year task force to identify where alignments could be made between state agencies (Agency of Agriculture, Forest Parks and Recreation, Agency of Natural Resources), and local communities.
4. Develop a tariff system at the regional level that treats efficiency, distribution, and storage equally to even the playing field.
5. Advance a carbon tax to begin on 1/1/17.

### **SESSION F: Improving Education, Workforce Development, and Youth Entrepreneurship**

1. Promote, expand and create educational opportunities for our youth in the climate economy field.
2. Market the opportunities and jobs within the climate change economy in Vermont.
3. Create entrepreneurial competitions around climate change for students and adults.
4. Build affordable, energy efficient housing, or renovate housing to be more energy efficient and affordable.

## **SESSION G: Strengthening Farm and Forest Carbon Sequestration and Profitability**

1. Develop better and more consistent language to communicate the benefits of carbon sequestration to individuals, families, and Vermont communities.
2. Identify and share case studies of innovators and best practice models.
3. Identify sound data and metrics to develop a better understanding of the benefits of best practice models. Use metrics to demonstrate value to the public and private sector, individuals, and communities in a tangible way.

## **SESSION H: Seeding a Vermont Climate Investment Strategy**

1. Improve financing mechanisms for clean energy and cooperative projects.
  - a. Initiate a Vermont “Green Bank.”
  - b. Assess and revivify the PACE Program for home energy conservation.
  - c. Institute a Vermont “YieldCo”. (a publicly traded company that is formed to own operating assets that produce a predictable cash flow).
  - d. Improve networking between clean energy businesses at all stages of growth, cooperative energy projects, and all levels of interested investors.
2. Develop further public funding for clean energy companies and projects.
  - a. Initiate an immediate carbon tax plan to replace the waning Vermont Yankee Storage Fund.
  - b. Explore investment access to a portion of the VT State Employee Pension Fund.
  - c. Encourage and enlist investments from Vermont-based companies doing business nationally such as National Life, GMCR, Ben & Jerry’s, colleges, and hospitals.
  - d. Explore additional ways for casual investors to participate by allocating portions of their stock portfolios or retirement accounts to Vermont clean energy initiatives.
3. Develop an educational awareness and advocacy program to enhance Vermonters’ understanding of the importance and value of clean energy solutions and policies for investors, consumers, and youth.

## **SESSION I: Spurring Research and Development for New Technologies in Vermont**

1. Develop an interactive talent, resources and solutions clearinghouse supported by a skilled staff, like a small business development center. DesignBook or Kickstarter are possible platforms to match dollars with ideas and idea people with those with technical skills to offer.
2. Offer organized networking events to connect small businesses and entrepreneurs with each other and with investors.
3. Clearly define areas of focus for research and development.
4. Create more flexible RFPs and finance research and development rather than specific technologies.

## **SESSION J: Supporting Smart Growth, Reuse, Preservation, & Downtown Development**

1. Increase capital:
  - a. Aggregate capital sources of investment for downtown redevelopment. Look to the private sector and Vermont’s smaller funds to make them more useable.
  - b. Incentivize development in downtowns vs. green fields.
2. Improve communication:
  - a. Make sure to reach all Vermonters. Utilize an inclusive approach.
  - b. Share case studies about resilient smart growth.

- c. Articulate a community vision.
  - d. Market Vermont and downtowns as places to live and work, not just places for tourists to visit.
3. Invest in infrastructure:
- a. Make investments to ensure buildings are resilient.
  - b. Make jobs and housing available to all in our downtowns.

### **SESSION K: Coordinating State Governmental Policies & Regulations**

- 1. Adopt a Carbon Pollution Tax.
- 2. Repair the division between electrical and thermal energy issues. Enlist Efficiency Vermont to look at the whole energy picture, not just thermal and electric.
- 3. Use benchmarks to measure progress towards 90% renewable energy by 2050. Poll Vermonters to determine attitudes/desires on progress. Widespread public engagement is critical.

### **SESSION L: Advancing Next Stage in Efficiency and Conservation**

- 1. Make efficiency and conservation visible.
  - a. Institute mandatory MPG stickers for commercial, industrial, and residential buildings. Offer training and education to implement an MPG program.
  - b. Mandate building codes and improve enforcement.
- 2. Make efficiency and conservation easy.
  - a. Design a package for weatherization/energy efficiency for homeowners through a network of entities like NeighborWorks of Western VT, Efficiency Vermont, other housing organizations, Regional Planning Commissions, contractors and fuel dealers, lenders, personal connections, and local groups and channels.
  - b. Design a clearinghouse and case manager to coordinate the weatherization package.
- 3. Make waste more painful and pay for it.
  - a. Institute a Carbon Pollution Tax to monetize the impacts on future generations.
  - b. Invest in efficiency and weatherization.

### **SESSION M: Adapting Outdoor Recreation & Tourism**

- 1. Market Vermont as an authentic and sustainable tourism destination through genuine community engagement.
- 2. Review and reform policy to support private landowners in increasing public access for seasonal recreation and tourism by addressing liability and allowing for adaptations to historical and cultural sites.
- 3. Invest in growth sectors such as State Parks and agritourism.



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