

Act 179 Report: Meeting 1

Department of Public Service

September 6, 2024

Welcome!

Agenda

- Welcome & Introductions (30 min)
- Report & Meeting Series Overview (20 min)
- Defining Foundational Terms (20-30 min)
- Break (5 min)
- Discussion of Prioritization Criteria for Recommendations (75-90)
- Next Steps (5 min)

Meeting Etiquette & Process

Respectful sharing of space – Come to these meetings with an open mind, willing to hear suggestions and thoughts from different perspectives, and to share the space so that all who wish to speak have an opportunity to do so. **Please raise your virtual hand during discussion periods.**

Mindful use of the chat – We invite you to use the chat to share links to resources (which we will capture for the notes) and voice agreement with sentiments being expressed. Please avoid using the chat for substantive conversation.

Cameras on if you are able.

We are not recording, but **we are** taking a transcript to support notes. We intend to include notes from these meetings as an Appendix to our final report.

Please state your name and organization when you speak.

Introductions

- **Name & Pronouns**
- **Organization**
- **What perspective are you bringing to these meetings** (one sentence - please be brief)

Report & Meeting Series Overview

Act 179

Group net metering has historically allowed a net metered renewable energy system to serve “more than one customer, or a single customer with multiple electric meters, located within the service area of the same retail provider”.

Act 179 of 2024 (“An act relating to the Renewable Energy Standard”) sunsets the current group net metering program as of January 1, 2026 and requires the Department of Public Service to write a report making recommendations for a replacement program.

This report is due January 15, 2025.

Act 179

According to Act 179 of 2024:

“The goal of this report is to develop a replacement program for group net metering to reduce operating costs, reduce resident energy burdens, and encourage electrification and decarbonization of buildings and enhance the financial capacity of housing providers to electrify the buildings developed or rehabilitated and provide relief to residents of manufactured home communities from their energy burdens.”

Act 179

There are five requirements of the report outlined in the law:

(1) Discuss and prioritize recommendations for replacement programs based on how they would impact Vermont's impacted and frontline communities and identify opportunities for these communities to benefit from investments in renewables to adapt to climate and economic change within the framework of a replacement of the net-metering program.

(2) Discuss current programs electric utilities have in place to serve income-eligible customers, the number of participants in those programs, and their trends over time.

(3) Discuss progress affordable housing funders and developers have made to date in connecting projects with solar resources, as well as any barriers to this, and the comparison of the availability and cost of net metered installations on single-family dwelling units.

(4) List funding sources available for solar and other energy-related projects benefiting affordable housing and customers with low-income, including if it is federal or time-limited

(5) Propose comparable successor programs to group net-metering for connecting affordable housing developments and income-eligible residents of manufactured home communities with solar projects in order to reduce operating costs, reduce resident energy burdens, and encourage electrification and decarbonization of buildings. Programs that meet the intent of this section shall include the following:

- (A) a process to bring additional solar or other renewable energy projects online that could be owned by affordable housing developers;
- (B) a process to enroll eligible customers, including property owners of qualified rental units; and
- (C) if connecting directly to customers, a bill credit process to allocate a customer's kWh solar share on a monthly basis.

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We see items 2, 3, and 4 as primarily relying on information requests.

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(3) Discuss progress affordable housing funders and developers have made to date in connecting projects with solar resources, as well as any barriers to this, and the comparison of the availability and cost of net metered installations on single-family dwelling units.

We see items 1 and 5 as primarily the focus of this meeting series

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Meeting Series & Report Timeline

Meeting 1: September 6th (Today!)

- Topic: Introductions, Report Overview, Prioritization Criteria

Meeting 2: September 19th, 9am-12pm

- Topic: Existing (or potential) models to connect communities with renewable energy & initial drafting of recommendations

Meeting 3: October 10th, 1pm-4pm

- Topic: Refinement of draft recommendations & prioritization

Public Comment Period: November - early December

Stakeholder Engagement for the Report

In developing this report, **Act 179** requires the Department of Public Service to consult with numerous stakeholders:

- the Public Utility Commission
- the Vermont Housing Finance Agency
- Vermont Housing and Conservation Board
- Evernorth,
- Green Mountain Power, Vermont Electric Cooperative, Vermont Public Power Supply Authority, and other electric utilities that wish to participate,
- the Office of Racial Equity

We have also invited additional stakeholders to participate in this meeting series to ensure a diversity of perspectives are represented as we develop these recommendations.

We are also planning for a public comment period for broader engagement & pursuing community engagement efforts as resources allow.

Foundational Definitions

Defining Core Terms

(1) Discuss and prioritize recommendations for replacement programs based on how they would impact Vermont's impacted and frontline communities and identify opportunities for these communities to benefit from investments in renewables to adapt to climate and economic change within the framework of a replacement of the net-metering program.

Defining Core Terms

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1. Communities Identified in the Law

- Income-eligible residents of manufactured home communities
- Affordable housing tenants & affordable housing developers and funders
- Tenants & owners of qualified rental units
- Income-eligible customers / customers with low income
- Customers with high energy burden

2. Environmental Justice Focus Populations (Act 154 of 2022)

....any census block group in which:

- (A) the annual median household income is not more than 80 percent of the State median household income;
- (B) Persons of Color and Indigenous Peoples comprise at least six percent or more of the population; or
- (C) at least one percent or more of households have limited English proficiency.

3 § VSA 6002(4)

Municipalities, schools, those who have not yet attained affordable housing, how do we help serve individuals in need of support, affordable housing as a community serving a mix of incomes,

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Defining Core Terms

(1) Discuss and prioritize recommendations for replacement programs based on how they would **impact** Vermont's impacted and frontline communities and identify opportunities for these communities to **benefit from investments** in renewables to adapt to climate and economic change within the framework of a replacement of the net-metering program.



Types of Impacts (benefits or burdens)

- **Economic** e.g. electric bills and rates, grid impacts, lease or tax payments, jobs
- **Social** e.g. meaningful participation
- **Environmental** e.g. land use, aesthetics, preferred sites, natural resources protections, emissions & energy requirements

Notes:

- These types of impacts are not necessarily mutually exclusive
- These considerations extend to both participants and non-participants of a group net metering successor program, both within and outside of Vermont.

Break

Prioritization Criteria

- (1) Discuss and **prioritize recommendations for replacement programs based on how they would impact Vermont's impacted and frontline communities** and identify opportunities for these communities to benefit from investments in renewables to adapt to climate and economic change within the framework of a replacement of the net-metering program.

Impact Type: Economic

Economic e.g. electric bills and rates, grid impacts, lease or tax payments, jobs

- Reduce energy burdens for program participants
 - Ensuring those who live in affordable housing can receive benefits of ownership (distinguishing rental v. affordable housing v. manufactured housing (resident owned v nonprofit v for-profit) – distinct challenges)
- Maintain affordable rates for all ratepayers – not shifting costs to those who can't participate (i.e. income eligibility thresholds)
- Costs now v when? (what timeframe are we considering)
- Potential economic impacts for customers who have low income who may be receiving other benefits
 - How do different benefits intersect & how can people engage with different programs
- Ownership v rental, within rental split incentive (who pays for the utilities)
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Transparency as a broad criteria – ex. program design, compensation, eligibility, what do we mean by the benefits of solar ownership and how they are translated to communities, representing both costs and benefits

Impact Type: Social

Social e.g. meaningful participation

- Create opportunities for communities to co-develop and/or govern projects
- Thinking through the PUC / application process and opportunities for greater public participation
 - Is this report the right process to raise these issues?
 - How does the process impact the ability to engage in these processes
 - Cost involved / administrative oversight
- Access opportunities / address disenfranchisement for rental communities
- The social impact of being part of a community solution
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Impact Type: Environmental

Environmental e.g. land use, aesthetics, preferred sites, natural resources protections, emissions & energy requirements

- Reduce emissions and/or encourage decarbonization of buildings
 - How should we think about electrification
- Locational considerations – ex. building on the built environmental v undeveloped natural areas
- Scale of the system – RES Engagement: preference for smaller or community-scale systems and conversations of larger systems highlighted land use considerations/concerns
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Not sure where this fits:

- Consideration of solar + storage (allowable under Solar for All)

Next Steps

Meeting 2

September 19, 9am-12pm

Teams

Email Claire if you need the meeting details!