

Reviewing Vermont's Renewable Electricity Policies & Programs

**Executive Summary:
Initial Takeaways from Public Engagement & Technical Analyses**

November 27, 2023

Introduction

On November 27th, the Department published a **draft summary** of the process it has taken to review Vermont's renewable and clean electricity policies and programs. This effort responded to recommendations from the 2022 Comprehensive Energy Plan and 2021 Climate Action Plan to review those policies in a transparent and open manner.

This document provides an executive summary of the report. The full report can be reviewed at:

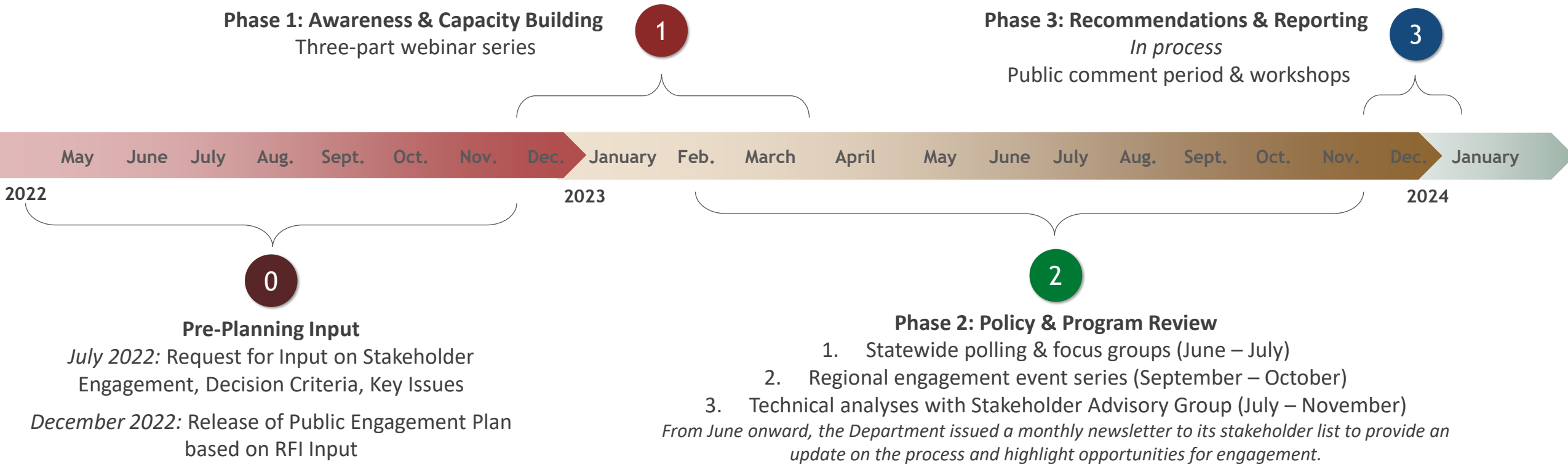
<https://publicservice.vermont.gov/document/renewable-clean-electricity-review-draft-report-initial-takeaways>

The report begins to synthesize learnings from across the public engagement efforts and supporting technical analyses conducted between January and November 2023. **It distills five initial takeaways** related to the future of electricity in Vermont and offers several reflections on the process taken to engage Vermonters in this effort.

The Department is releasing this draft report for public review and comment in advance of a final report that will be issued on this process in January 2024. While this report offers initial takeaways for public review, these do not represent the full suite of lessons to be learned from this process. The Department is still synthesizing and distilling all that has been learned from both the public engagement and technical analyses and will be considering, alongside the public during the comment period, what we might have missed or what additional information should inform recommendations for policy and program changes in the future.

The Process

Between December 2022 and November 2023, the Department, in collaboration with many partners, executed its three-phased process through educational webinars, polling, focus groups, regional events, and technical analyses. These efforts occurred through a mix of in-person and virtual opportunities. The [full report](#) summarizes each of the activities, the outreach undertaken, and who participated in each process and highlights how each of these activities informed the five initial takeaways presented.



Key Learnings Overview



In reviewing the public engagement efforts and technical analyses, the following initial takeaways have emerged about electricity in Vermont:

- 1 Affordability, reducing carbon emissions, and reliability were consistently highlighted as the most important issues to prioritize by Vermonters (discussed starting slide 34 of the full report)
- 2 A move toward a 100% Renewable or Clean Energy Standard, including increases in new renewable energy requirements, calls for tradeoffs between costs to ratepayers and societal benefits from emissions reduction (slide 37 of the full report)
- 3 There is general support for solar, wind, and hydropower as sources of electricity. Support for nuclear and biomass is more mixed; a majority of Vermonters at least somewhat support every resource (discussed starting slide 39 of the full report)
- 4 Many Vermonters are at least somewhat supportive of policy and program changes that increase requirements for low carbon and renewable electricity in a way that supports the most vulnerable Vermonters (slide 46 & 47 of the full report)
- 5 As Vermont considers achieving 100% renewable or low carbon electricity, it will need to do so in combination with a more granular understanding of the alignment of renewable generation and demand for electricity (slide 48 of the full report)

Initial Reflections on the Process to Date



Throughout this effort, the Department has sought to comprehensively engage Vermonters in the development of recommendations for policy and program changes in the electric sector. Although this process is not yet complete, the Department has the following reflections on this process to date and welcomes public input on this topic to help the Department refine its efforts to engage with the public moving forward. They are discussed in more detail on slides 50 and 51 of the [full report](#):



Centering public engagement in this process offered the opportunity to more meaningfully engage with Vermonters throughout the lifecycle of this effort



Establishing goals for the effort and accountability mechanisms for those goals ensured the Department collected data on who we were engaging and their experiences at events. This helped to build a baseline understanding of the success of public engagement



Partnerships were critical to reach broader audiences and think outside the box on engagement strategies to use



Prioritizing limited resources (staff capacity, budget, and time) to reach the most impacted is challenging and involves tradeoffs



There is a need for better educational materials and ongoing efforts to build capacity to engage in these discussions

Next Steps

We want to hear from you! This document will be open for public comment & review from **November 27 – December 20, 2023**. We want to know:

- Did we hear the public correctly? Are our interpretations of the process in line with yours?
- What did we miss?
- If you participated in this process, what worked well? What could we do better in the future?

There are multiple ways to weigh in:

- **Send us a note**: Feedback can be emailed directly to PSD.REPrograms@vermont.gov with the subject “Public Comment – RES Summary”
- **Fill out the survey**: Feedback can be submitted online through [this webform](#).
- **Attend a workshop**: We’re holding two virtual workshops on **December 5th (10am-12pm & 6pm-8pm)**. These workshops will be held via Zoom and will offer space to:
 - Review the initial takeaways presented in this report,
 - Answer questions on this process, and
 - Brainstorm where we go from here.

We hope you’ll join us:

- December 5th, 10am-12pm: [Register to attend](#)
- December 5th, 6pm-8pm: [Register to attend](#)

Following the public comment period, the Department will review comments received and revise this report with the aim of issuing final recommendations for next steps in advance of the 2024 legislative session. Any policy recommendations would be accompanied by an Equity Impact Assessment using tools developed by the Just Transitions Subcommittee of the Climate Council.