

Final EJ Community Engagement Plan for Comprehensive Climate Action Plan (CCAP)

November 2024

Background

NJDEP [received a federal EPA grant](#) to develop a statewide Comprehensive Climate Action Plan (CCAP) which is due to the EPA in late 2025. This plan has many required elements including meaningful engagement with the State’s environmental justice (EJ) communities and low-income and disadvantaged communities (LIDAC). The plan must outline the greenhouse gas (GHG) reducing actions, referred to as “measures,” that the State will take to meet its climate goals by 2030 and 2050. The CCAP is the second climate action planning deliverable due to the EPA. In March of 2024, NJDEP submitted a [Priority Climate Action Plan \(PCAP\)](#). Under a tight timeline, NJDEP gathered input on the priority climate action measures that were included in the PCAP. This included holding a community dialogue with EJ community-based organizations in Newark; holding 5 sector-based, general public outreach webinars; and hosting a digital comment form on the [NJDEP program webpage](#). With more time for planning and consultation for the CCAP, NJDEP intends to engage the State’s EJ community earlier in the process.

EJ Community Engagement Approach

The DEP’s Bureau of Climate Change and Clean Energy commits to utilize a values-based engagement approach to work with NJ’s environmental justice communities in a respectful way while collecting input for the CCAP. These values of respect include being accessible, informative, interactive, continuous, and accountable (Figure 1).

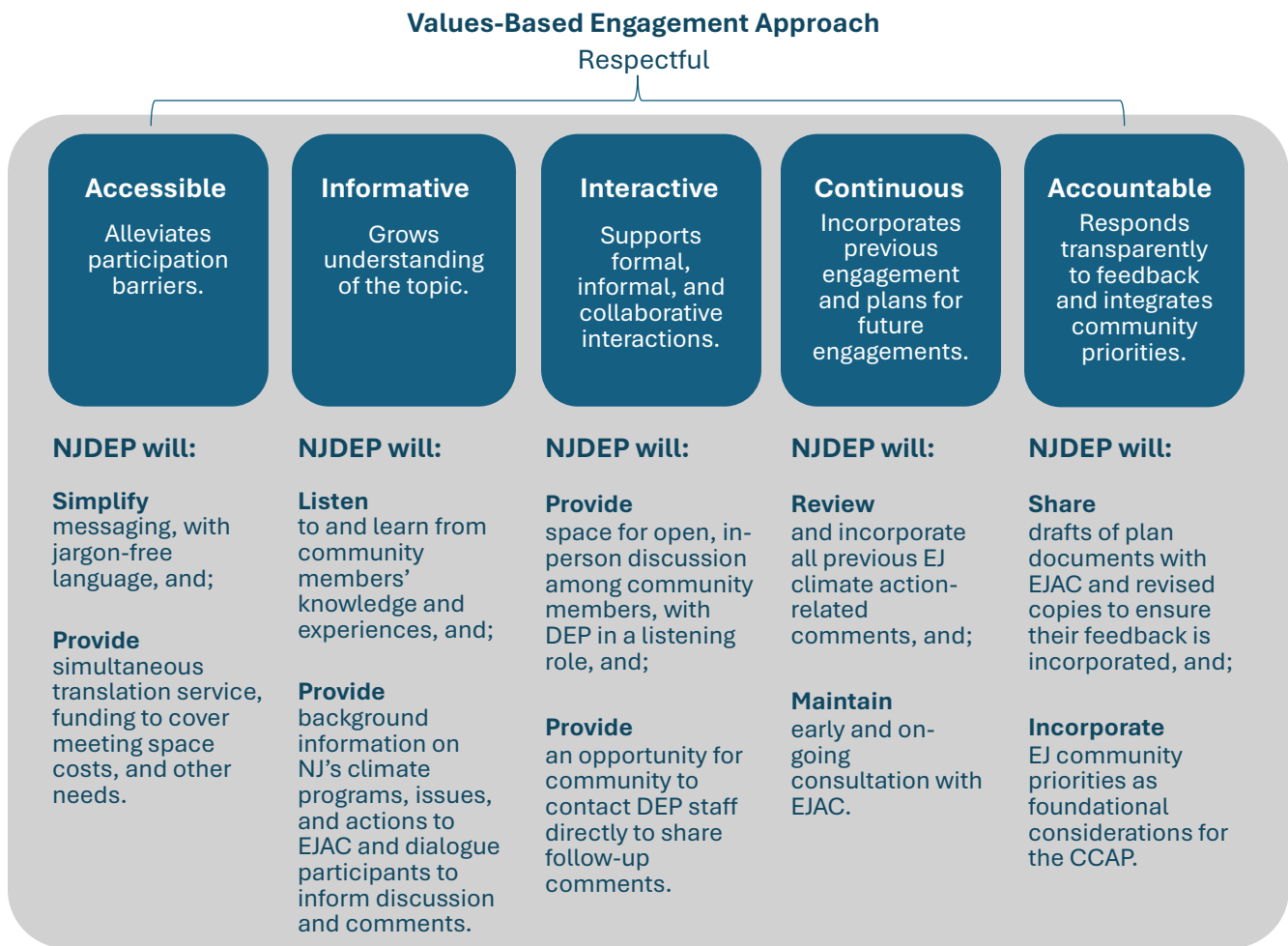


Figure 1: Values-Based Engagement Approach (blue bubbles) was taken from US EPA’s Low Income and Disadvantaged Community Analysis Technical Assistance Forum presentation in August 2024. The lower half of the graphic (gray bubble) is what NJDEP commits to during this engagement process.

EJ Community Engagement Plan

The EJ community engagement for the CCAP will consist of five phases (shown in Figure 2 below): 1) NJDEP Environmental Justice Advisory Council (EJAC) Consultation; 2) Analysis of Previous EJ Feedback; 3) Active Engagement; 4) Synthesis and Summary; and 5) Incorporation into Comprehensive Climate Action Plan.

Proposed Engagement Phases

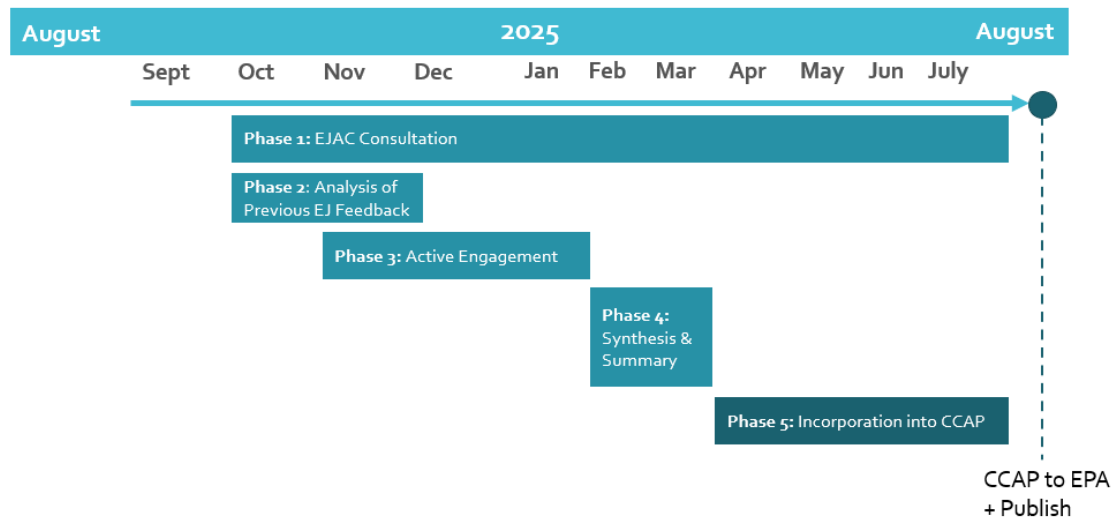


Figure 2: Proposed Engagement Phases for CCAP EJ Community Engagement

Phase 1: EJAC Consultation

October 2024 – August 2025

First, staff will present the EJAC with the draft of this EJ community engagement plan and will incorporate edits and feedback prior to the start of the engagement process. Following finalization of the engagement plan staff will regularly check in with the EJAC and Office of Environmental Justice (OEJ), including at key milestones in the process. While being considerate and cognizant of EJAC members’ time and capacity, staff will ask for EJAC and OEJ to provide comments or feedback via email or however is most preferred and incorporate that into the documents. These key check-in dates will include:

Table 1: Key NJDEP check-in milestones with EJAC

Key NJDEP check-in milestones with EJAC	Request of EJAC	Timing (subject to change)
2024 update on NJ’s CPRG work	Review	Oct 2024
Draft CCAP – EJ Community Engagement Plan	Review	Oct 2024
Revised CCAP – EJ Community Engagement Plan	None	Nov 2024
Initial draft CCAP GHG-reduction measures	Review	As available
Share information about any planned CCAP sector, and/or stakeholder-specific public engagement opportunities for EJAC to attend and cross-promote	None	Continuous
Draft “EJ Community Priorities for Climate Action” document	Review	Feb/Mar 2025

Revised “EJ Community Priorities for Climate Action” document	Review	Mar 2025
Revised draft CCAP GHG-reduction measures	Review	Mar 2025
Final draft of CCAP GHG-reduction measures	None	<i>As available</i> (Spring 2025)
Initial drafts of Low-Income Disadvantaged Community (LIDAC) ¹ benefits, Co-benefits, & Workforce analyses	Review	<i>As available</i> (Late Spring 2025)
Final draft of CCAP with high-level summary	None	July/August 2025+ ²

Phase 2: Analysis of Previous EJ Feedback

October 2024 – December 2024

Once the engagement plan is finalized, staff will review all previously collected comments from New Jersey’s environmental justice communities that pertain to climate change, climate pollution, climate justice, clean energy or workforce development. This will consist of reviewing the following resources:

- All OEJ Community Listening Sessions from Nov. 2021- present (recordings and/or meeting notes available online);
- All EJ-related comments DEP has received in previous climate mitigation stakeholder outreach processes (especially the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, RGGI)
- Comments heard from the EJ Community Dialogue that DEP Air, Energy, and Materials Sustainability (AEMS) hosted in Newark in December 2023;
- The Summary Report “*Stakeholder Engagement Informing the NJDEP’s Priority Climate Action Plan*”, prepared by Rutgers University in 2024, especially the “EJ Cross-cutting issues” section;
- All feedback collected during public and invite-only stakeholder meetings held by the BPU or its contractors E3 or ILLUME, for NJ’s Energy Master Plan (EMP) in 2024, including comments heard at EJ-community specific meetings;
- The draft of BPU contractor E3’s robust workforce analysis component of NJ’s 2024 EMP, which will involve interviews with community groups, labor unions, schools, etc. to gain additional context on the state of offerings in NJ.
- Any studies, reports, or whitepapers developed by or in partnership with NJ-based environmental justice advocacy organizations (e.g., NJEJA)

The DEP staff recognizes that New Jersey’s environmental justice communities are not a monolith. Accordingly, the staff will catalog the comments based on the topics or issues as well as by the geographies and specific communities or identities the commenters self-identify. This review will also help staff generate a short list of potential discussion topics or issues that they may share with participants at the community dialogues.

Phase 3: Active Engagement

Fall 2024 – Winter 2024-2025

In this phase staff will participate in listening sessions and host two in-person community dialogues with environmental justice communities across the State. The purpose of these dialogues will be to hear the

¹ NJDEP will follow EPA-issued guidance and intends to use the same method used in the PCAP for defining the scope of this analysis. Analysis will consider both the NJDEP’s Adversely Impacted Overburdened Communities (AIOBCs) and the White House’s Disadvantaged Communities (DACs) and will focus on the overlap of these two designations.

² Final plan must be submitted to EPA by the end of 2025, though NJDEP is tentatively planning to have the CCAP completed by August 2025.

communities' priorities and concerns related to climate justice, reducing climate change, and transitioning to clean energy.

This phase will consist of taking actions that include:

- Attend OEJ's scheduled EJ Community Listening Sessions in 2024 (Morris County 12/4)
- Attend other environmental and climate justice community-based summits, conferences, public meetings or events, taking a listening role
- Co-host and convene a Central Jersey EJ Community Dialogue (Late 2024/Winter 2025)
- Co-host and convene a South Jersey EJ Community Dialogue (Late 2024/Winter 2025)

OEJ Listening Sessions

Staff will attend the upcoming OEJ listening sessions in Morris County and note any comments regarding climate change, air pollution, clean energy and workforce development. OEJ will briefly describe the CCAP work at the beginning of the meeting and will share the contact information for our Bureau's staff so that participants can follow-up directly. Their comments will be recorded and cataloged along with the other comments received from EJ communities.

EJ Community Dialogues

Staff plan to work with environmental justice community leaders to convene and host a Central Jersey and Southern Jersey EJ Community Dialogue.³ Staff will work with community leaders to determine a meeting space that is accessible and as 'of the community' as possible, with the intention of 'meeting the community where they are' rather than asking the community to come to state or other government institutions.

Outreach to promote the meeting and convene stakeholders will not be done broadly or publicly by the DEP. Instead, these community-based organizational partners may determine the methods of promotion and invite whomever they would like to the dialogues. DEP staff will assist with promoting as requested. DEP will fund costs associated with space rental fees, language interpretation services, and light refreshments or a meal, depending on the expected number of attendees.

Meetings will be co-led by DEP and the community-based partners and conveners. DEP will work collaboratively with community-based partners and conveners to develop the agenda and identify roles. If appropriate and desired by the community-lead convener, DEP may provide a facilitator from the DEP OEJ's trained facilitator corps to help facilitate the discussion.

If desired by community stakeholders, staff may hold an additional community dialogue in North Jersey, returning about a year after the Community Dialogue our Bureau held in Newark in December of 2023. Staff may also host a virtual dialogue that would allow for participation from EJ community members from across the state.

Phase 4: Synthesis and summary

February – March 2025

Following the listening sessions and community dialogues, staff will review all the comments collected. Staff will draft a document that summarizes the major points of consensus across NJ's EJ communities, as well as highlight

³ For this plan, DEP loosely defines Central Jersey as including the following counties: Burlington, Hunterdon, Mercer, Middlesex, Monmouth, Ocean, Somerset, and Union; and South Jersey as including the following counties: Atlantic, Burlington, Camden, Cape May, Cumberland, Gloucester, Ocean, and Salem; with Burlington and Ocean counties being considered part of both Central and South Jersey. These loose definitions will help inform which community-based organizations and leaders are contacted to convene stakeholders but the dialogues will be open to NJ participants in neighboring counties.

differences in community members' opinions on the State's climate actions and desired approaches to addressing climate issues.

Voices from New Jersey's overburdened or environmental justice communities will not be interpreted as monolithic or wholly representative of the priorities of all EJ communities and subcommunities across the state. At the same time, all the comments received from New Jersey's overburdened communities are valuable and will be treated with equal value. Detailed meeting notes from the dialogues will be shared with OEJ for their records and ability to follow-up on both climate and other non-climate change related environmental issues that may arise.

A draft of this summary document called "EJ Community Priorities for Climate Action" will first be shared with the EJ community-based partners and conveners from the dialogues to confirm they reflect what was said at the meetings. The draft copy of the summary document will then be shared with the EJAC for their comments, additions, and revisions. DEP staff will incorporate their edits and revisions into the document and incorporate those priorities into the CCAP.

Depending on the issues heard during the dialogues, the DEP may arrange additional public stakeholder engagement meetings regarding priority issues. The DEP may also incorporate questions around certain topics into the broader, general public and sector-specific outreach that the DEP intends to conduct in spring or summer of 2025.

Phase 5: Incorporation into the Comprehensive Climate Action Plan (CCAP)

April – August 2025

By conducting outreach and engagement with NJ's environmental justice communities, DEP will be able to incorporate EJ community priorities into the final plan and apply the information collected to inform the Low-Income and Disadvantaged Communities (LIDAC) Benefit Analysis⁴ and Workforce Planning Analysis⁵ that the Department is required to include in the plan. This includes embedding workforce strategies that bring residents cutting-edge training and good-paying jobs in New Jersey's green economy within each GHG measure in the plan.

The "EJ Community Priorities for Climate Action" document will inform the draft comprehensive GHG reduction measures that are presented to the public for comment in spring 2025 stakeholdering and ultimately influence which measures are included in the final plan. EJ community input around climate mitigation policies or actions will be directly cited in the final plan to provide justification, context, and documentation of EJ community narratives around climate topics.

⁴ US EPA defines the **LIDAC Benefits Analysis** as an analysis of the extent to which any GHG reduction measures in the CCAP will deliver co-pollutant (e.g., criteria air pollutants and air toxics) emission reductions or other benefits to low-income and disadvantaged communities. Examples of other community benefits include but are not limited to: increased climate resilience, improved access to services and amenities, jobs created and workforce development, and decreased energy costs from energy efficiency improvements. NJ's CCAP LIDAC Benefits Analysis will expand on [NJ's PCAP LIDAC Benefit Analysis](#).

⁵ US EPA defines the **Workforce Planning Analysis** as an analysis of anticipated workforce shortages that could prevent NJ from achieving the goals described in the CCAP and identify potential solutions and partners at the state, regional, and/or local level that are equipped to help address those challenges. Plans may note existing funding or programs that can help support the workforce needs of the plan. NJ's CCAP Workforce Planning Analysis will expand on [NJ's PCAP Workforce Planning Analysis](#).

Proposed Detailed Timeline (subject to change)

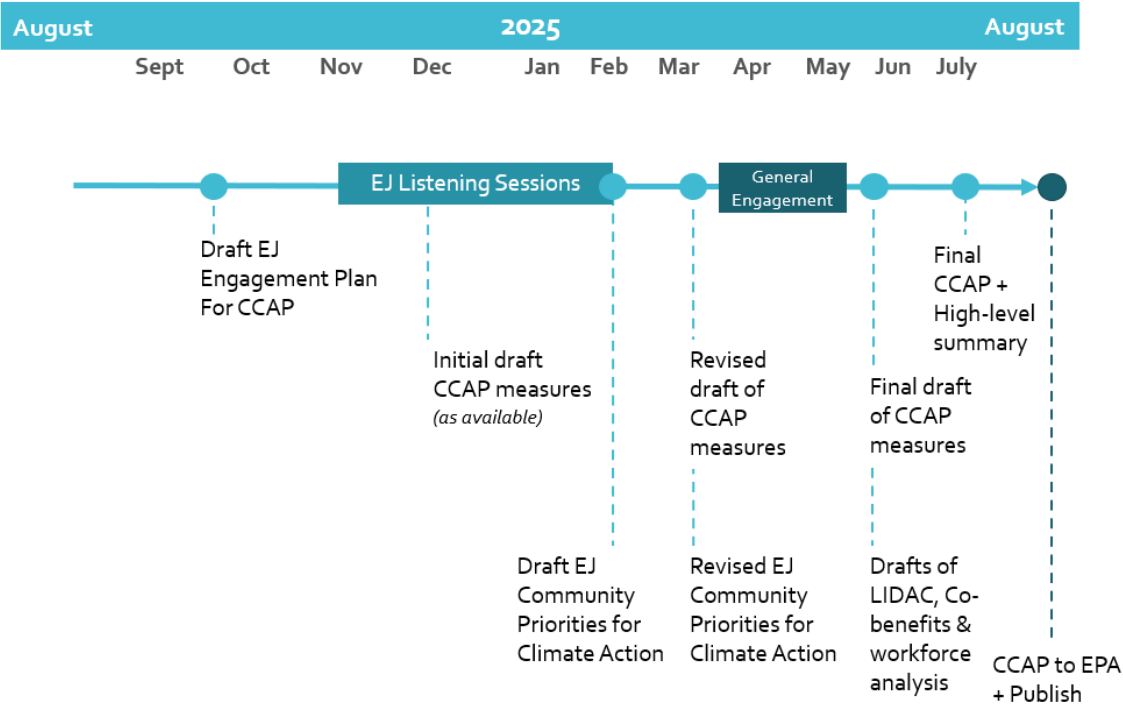


Figure 3: Proposed Timeline for NJDEP Engagement with Environmental Justice Communities for the Comprehensive Climate Action Plan (CCAP) due to EPA by late 2025.