

Utilities, Facilities & Services – Equity & Technical Assistance Framework

The Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission will apply this Equity & Technical Assistance Framework across all Utilities, Facilities and Services Goals, Strategies and Policies.

Equity Framework

- 1.1. Prioritize:
 - a) investments that reduce climate risk for vulnerable populations;
 - b) investments that reduce disparities in service access, reliability, affordability and environmental burden; and
 - c) technical assistance for municipalities with limited staffing, aging infrastructure or disproportionate risk.
- 1.2. Evaluate infrastructure investments for equity impacts, including cost burden, service access and cumulative environmental effects.
- 1.3. Promote equitable resilience by supporting investments that reduce disproportionate climate risks for vulnerable populations.
- 1.4. Discourage infrastructure decisions that create or exacerbate inequities for low-income, rural or historically underserved communities.
- 1.5. Integrate equity considerations into utilities, facilities and services budgeting and capital planning decisions.
- 1.6. Implement:
 - a) inclusive, accessible public engagement practices that reflect community demographics and capacity and ensure historically underserved populations can meaningfully participate in planning decisions; and
 - b) transparent, data-driven criteria to evaluate equity impacts of planning, capital investments and siting decisions.

Technical Assistance Framework

Strategies:

- 1.1. Provide technical assistance to municipalities to:
 - a) adopt equitable service policies and affordability strategies;
 - b) employ technology and data tools to support real-time monitoring, system optimization and performance tracking; and
 - c) implement hazard-resistant design, siting and construction practices for all utility, facility and service upgrades.
- 1.2. Provide technical assistance to municipalities to **integrate**:
 - a) climate resilience, hazard mitigation and sustainability into infrastructure planning and design;

- b) efficiency goals into capital planning, design standards, and procurement policies;
- c) green infrastructure, low-impact development and nature-based solutions into utility and facility upgrades;
- d) utilities, facilities and services considerations into local and regional land use and hazard mitigation plans;
- e) utilities, facilities and services planning with housing, transportation and economic development priorities; and
- f) infrastructure data, asset management information and capital schedules across systems to improve long-term coordination.

1.3. Provide technical assistance to municipalities to **align**:

- a) capital investments with long-term operations, maintenance needs and projected demand;
- b) long-term investment schedules across water, wastewater, stormwater, broadband and transportation;
- c) utility, facility and service siting decisions with regional and municipal future land use maps; and
- d) capital investments with long-term operational needs and projected demand.

1.4. Provide technical assistance to municipalities to **plan**:

- a) improvements that address known service interruptions;
- b) corridors where multiple utilities can be co-located;
- c) for long-term climate impacts when evaluating project sustainability, capacity, operations and service life; and
- d) coordinated expansions that reduce duplication and support cohesive development patterns.

1.5. Provide technical assistance to municipalities to **prioritize**:

- a) investments that increase affordability and reduce long-term operating expenses;
- b) upgrades that improve operational performance, enhance reliability, extend infrastructure lifespan, and minimize emergency costs; and
- c) the preservation of essential utility corridors to maintain access for repair and maintenance.

1.6. Provide technical assistance to municipalities to **evaluate**:

- a) system resilience using climate projections and risk modeling;
- b) infrastructure capacity to ensure proposed expansions match projected growth; and
- c) infrastructure financing policies to ensure anticipated growth pays for service area expansion.

1.7. Deliver training and shared-service support for asset management, operations, maintenance and emergency preparedness.

Policies:

1.1. Support:

- a) infrastructure system inventories, mapping, capital improvement planning, funding strategy development and data management;
- b) integration of utilities, facilities and services into local plans and capital programs;
- c) grant writing, funding coordination and regulatory compliance;
- d) asset management, lifecycle planning and operations best practices;
- e) siting, design standards, mitigation practices and environmental review for infrastructure projects;
- f) co-location of utilities and infrastructure to reduce construction and long-term maintenance costs; and
- g) investments that coordinate operations and reduce service fragmentation.

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