Engagement

Contents

Introduction

The 2026 Climate Action Framework reflects the input of over 1,000 Minnesotans from Tribal Nations, local governments, businesses, sector experts, and communities across the state.

This is a summary of how the state engaged with Minnesotans to develop the framework. Minnesotans provided detailed, wide-ranging feedback and differing perspectives that helped create a fuller picture of the opportunities and trade-offs of climate solutions.

How we engaged

The framework engagement process gathered public input from August 2024 to November 2025. During this period, the Climate Change Subcabinet worked with Tribal Nations and engaged local governments, state agencies, organizations, and individuals through 75 engagement activities centered on three iterative documents with public comment periods:

- Ideas for Climate Action document (Winter 2024-2025)
- Draft Action Steps (Spring-Summer 2025)
- Draft 2026 Climate Action Framework (Fall 2025)

Public comments

Members of the public submitted 490 comments, representing individuals and organizations, during these comment periods. Letters from organizations and some individuals often covered multiple topic areas.

Governor's Advisory Council on Climate Change

This governor-appointed council represents 15 community leaders and stakeholders in business, agriculture, conservation, and environmental protection. The Council met quarterly to identify opportunities and barriers related to emissions reductions and climate resilience and help shape the framework. Their input was translated into ideas like the addition of case studies into the final framework.

Webinars

From August 2024 to October 2025, the staff from subcabinet agencies held five public webinars to share updates, present draft materials, answer questions, and gather feedback. Attendance ranged from 30 to 200 participants per webinar.

Sector-based conversations

From January to October 2025, 300 Minnesotans across the state volunteered to take part in sector-based conversations with interagency state staff to inform the framework. Great Plains Institute staff helped facilitate and document these conversations. The conversations provided in-depth feedback on the topic areas of transportation, natural and working lands, resilient communities, energy, buildings, climate equity, economy, local governments, and greenhouse gas modeling. To facilitate more equitable engagement, foundation funding organized with the Minnesota Council on Foundations and Minnesota Climate Donors Table was used to pay optional honoraria to conversation participants.

Tribal-State coordination

During the development of the framework, MPCA, working as coordinator of the Climate Change Subcabinet, employed a Tribal-State coordinator to meet with leaders, staff, community members, and others across Tribes in Minnesota and incorporate Tribal priorities and perspectives into the state's climate planning efforts.

The coordinator, along with Subcabinet agency staff, agency Tribal liaisons, Tribal leaders and environmental staff, the Office of Collaboration and Dispute Resolution, Minnesota Climate Adaptation Partnership staff and Minnesota Indian Affairs Council staff, formed a Tribal Coordination Team. This team convened government-to government meetings with staff and leaders from the 11 Tribal Nations that share geography with Minnesota. Additionally, the team hosted an online Tribal Climate Conversations series with Tribal leaders, staff, and members, as well as virtual and one-on-one meetings to gather Tribal perspectives.

Climate equity-focused engagement

To meaningfully incorporate perspectives from overburdened communities in developing the framework, the project team used several targeted approaches described below. Feedback gathered during these activities is incorporated throughout the goal chapter summaries.

- **Climate Equity Conversations:** As part of the sector-based conversations series, 28 participants representing health, community organizing, planning, resource management, climate education, and equity advocacy met six times to share lived experiences and advise on how climate actions can better serve overburdened communities.
- **State councils, advisory groups, and networks:** members of the project team met with state agency councils, advisory groups, and networks representing communities facing inequities, including the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency's Environmental Justice Advisory Group; Department of Commerce's Community Energy Collaborative; Department of Children, Youth and Family's American Indian Food Sovereignty Workgroup; and Minnesota Department of Health's HEAL Council, Health Equity Networks, Rural Health Advisory Committee, and Rural Hospital Flexibility Program Advisory Committee.
- **Existing engagement efforts:** The team coordinated with other environmental justice engagement efforts, including the Metropolitan Council's Community Climate Collaborative and Hennepin County's Climate Connections project to incorporate more insights and reduce stakeholder fatigue.

- **Minnesota StoryCollective (MNSC)**: MNSC is a state program that centers Minnesotans' lived experiences and generates ideas for change through story collection. Interagency staff participated in an MNSC session to review stories submitted by Minnesotans who identify as Black, Indigenous, or people of color and identified strategies to incorporate their experiences into climate actions.
- **Community organizations:** Agency staff from MPCA, MDH, and Commerce held one-on-one meetings, presentations, and discussions with community leaders and local public health, Tribal health, and equity-focused community organizations to gather additional input.

Communications

The Subcabinet communicated about the framework update process and invited Minnesotans across the state to participate through multiple methods, including:

- **Engagement HQ online engagement platform:** The subcabinet used the Engagement HQ platform for online surveys, information about the framework update process, and access to documents. The platform had over 19,000 visits and 427 survey contributions.
- **GovDelivery email list:** The Subcabinet used the GovDelivery email list to communicate updates and engagement opportunities. The list included 3,800 subscribers, including interested Minnesotans and representatives from local governments, Tribes, and other interested parties.
- **Social content:** The MPCA partnered with the Minnesota Department of Health's multicultural communications team to create social content using language that was relatable to multicultural communities. The MPCA, MDH, the DNR, and other subcabinet agencies promoted this content throughout the framework public comment periods.
- **Paid media:** The social content was also promoted on Meta channels in environmental justice communities and throughout Greater Minnesota. These paid posts generated comments on the framework from individuals outside of those following state channels and media.
- **Earned media:** During the public comment period on the Draft Climate Action Framework, the MPCA shared a news release on the opportunity to provide feedback, driving coverage on Minnesota Public Radio, Outdoor News, the Duluth News Tribune, Rochester Post-Bulletin, and other local media outlets in Greater Minnesota.

Summary of public feedback

This section summarizes the major themes from public feedback received from individuals, organizations, businesses, and Tribal and local governments. The feedback received is not a representative sample of the views of Minnesotans but rather reflects the diverse perspectives of those who chose to participate. While this approach cannot measure the prevalence of an opinion or differences between groups, it can surface ideas and identify gaps and unintended impacts to address.

Public input was instrumental in the development of the framework, helping to shift it to be more outcomes-oriented, with greater emphasis on clearer and more specific actions, detailed targets, and nearer-term milestones. Participants' insights shaped the framework by introducing new action areas and innovative solutions, refining messaging, clarifying priorities, and improving the framework's overall organization.

Considering and incorporating feedback

Many state agency staff worked on reviewing and addressing public feedback on the framework. Consideration and incorporation of feedback happened through an iterative process.

For each of the three rounds of public feedback – covering the Ideas for Climate Action document, Action Steps draft, and Climate Action Framework draft and draft supplementary documents – a core team of staff from MPCA and MDH organized the feedback. This core team organized feedback from public comments, sector-based conversations, Climate Change Advisory Group meetings, and Tribal coordination and equity-focused conversations. The feedback was organized by each framework goal, and, in many cases, the core team suggested edits or potential responses to the feedback.

Relevant Goal Teams considered whether and how to incorporate feedback, including suggestions for responses from the core team. Goal teams are interagency groups of subject matter experts from state agencies relevant to each goal. Goal teams used their own processes to consider and incorporate feedback. They then sent these documents back to the core team to bring together all the parts of the framework document and supplementary documents.

A group of staff from EQB, MMB, MDH, and MPCA comprised the Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting Team and met regularly over the course of a year to develop a more robust approach to metrics, targets, and reporting in the framework. This reporting team organized public feedback in the final engagement round that was focused on key desired results, potential metrics, and targets. This reporting group made suggestions on target-related content for consideration by goal teams.

While considering public feedback, goal teams relied on their own expertise and thought through how the input aligned with the framework's vision of carbon neutrality, resilience, and equity. Some feedback conflicted with other feedback or recommended detail beyond the scope of the framework. While not every comment is overtly reflected in the final framework, all insights and perspectives Minnesotans shared in the engagement process were considered through this iterative process, and the project team saved all comments to inform future implementation planning.

General feedback themes

The following are themes that applied to more than one goal area or document or that applied to the framework as a whole.

Participants:

- **Reported already feeling climate change impacts.** Participants shared stories showing how climate change is already disrupting their lives, health, and communities. Wildfire smoke and extreme heat have closed childcare centers and limited safe outdoor activity, while farmers face flooding and heat that strain their physical and mental health. They emphasized that harm extends beyond acute events to chronic losses — harms to natural spaces, reduced tourism, and diminished connections to nature that underpin cultural identity, local economies, social connections, and well-being.
- **Called for greater urgency and commitment to action.** Many participants urged faster, more ambitious climate action, both broadly and on specific initiatives, and a stronger state commitment. Youth called for urgent action to protect their generation's future, such as industrial emission caps or pricing. Respondents called for clearer metrics and strong targets to help encourage action.

- **Requested a greater focus on implementation information in the framework.** Participants called for clear criteria to prioritize high-impact climate actions, along with a funding strategy. They sought greater specificity in targets and investments, "lead/enact/encourage" designations on action steps, and regular reporting.
- **Emphasized the importance of affordability of climate actions.** Participants expressed a desire to be able to afford the energy that powers their lives. Commenters highlighted that ambitious climate actions are essential to protect local economies and address energy and transportation cost burdens. Participants highlighted the need to address affordability barriers to participation in climate mitigation and resilience.
- **Highlighted a desire for collective action, not just individual action.** Respondents suggested a range of solutions, including voluntary actions, policy, and regulation.
- **Urged clearer, more accessible communication to help Minnesotans understand how climate change affects their health and daily lives and to build trust in government programs.** They recommended using storytelling, plain language, visualizations, culturally relevant communication, and clear, research-backed climate messaging to engage the public. Some strategies recommended include strengthening community engagement through multilingual outreach; ensuring equitable participation from youth and overburdened communities; highlighting the tangible benefits of climate action; partnering with trusted local messengers; providing accessible storytelling and guidance for community-led communication; and using asset-based messaging that emphasizes community strengths.
- **Stressed that climate action is an opportunity to fix long-standing systemic issues.** Respondents expressed a desire to ensure basic needs are met and address structural inequities across health care, housing, childcare, and transportation as Minnesota takes climate action.
- **Expressed opposition to climate action.** Some commenters were concerned about societal changes and monetary costs of climate action. Others opposed action because they doubted the science and reality of climate change or viewed it as inevitable and unworthy of action.

Summary of responses to general feedback

The updated framework addressed this feedback by:

- Working through the process of GHG forecasting to better understand, especially in a quantitative way, the pace and scale of action needed to achieve the state's statutory GHG emissions goals as well as the health and economic benefits of this action. The final framework includes high-level take-aways from the forecasting work as well as a full technical support document.
- Adding "Big Things Now" to highlight some key near-terms strategies needed to make faster progress toward long-term goals.
- Restoring the "lead/enact/encourage" designation for action steps.
- Including targets for each goal area, developed using logic models, to better connect actions with the impact we are aiming to achieve.
- Adding key data visualizations to the overall framework and case studies for each goal chapter to better tell the story of action, impact, and what Minnesota communities are doing to address climate change.

- Expanding the focus on equity throughout the framework by explicitly weaving the three pillars of the framework vision — one of which is equity — into targets in each goal chapter. In addition, the framework now has a new initiative in goal 5 that addresses an overall approach to equity for the framework.
- Focusing on affordability and cost in economic benefit analysis, focusing on affordability as a broad value in the "Big Things Now" section, and adding specific action steps in different goal chapters to address cost barriers and focus on affordability.

Feedback themes by goal chapter

Goal 1: Clean transportation

Reduce car dependency and urgent need to shift priorities

Participants emphasized the need for a fundamental shift in transportation planning to prioritize reduced vehicle miles traveled (VMT), safer streets, and a multimodal future. Participants expressed concern that achieving GHG emissions reduction targets will not be possible without VMT reduction and that reducing VMT would have significant climate, livability, and equity benefits. There was concern that multimodal projects lack effectiveness without corresponding reductions in car dependence. Proposed strategies include roadway reduction, highway closures, fewer parking spaces, and congestion pricing while enhancing sustainable transit and active travel options. Key points raised were that single-passenger vehicle travel contributes to over 25% of emissions, exacerbates urban heat islands, degrades water quality, and compromises safety.

Multimodal transportation and safety

Many participants expressed support for expanding walking, biking, and public transit networks, with calls for more protected bike lanes, improved pedestrian infrastructure, and statewide uniformity in road design for bicyclists. Some suggested implementing policies that slow down vehicles and charge fees based on vehicle weight to enhance safety. Others advocated for expanding light rail, regional passenger rail, and tram systems to better connect urban and rural communities.

Participants called for transit-oriented communities, where residents can safely get to their destinations. They emphasized improving transit connectivity, providing planning support for small communities, and prioritizing clean, electric bus rapid transit and ensuring the state's transportation system serves Black, Indigenous, people of color, and low-income communities throughout the state that have fewer transportation options. Commenters stressed that transit must be desirable, comfortable, faster, safer, and efficient – not just more abundant, so people with cars will want to use it.

They also highlighted the need for long-distance travel options, noting gaps in intercity transportation such as the Duluth–Minneapolis corridor. Suggestions included expanding passenger rail, developing high-speed regional rail, and improving rideshare and options for the final segment of the passenger's journey. Overall, commenters sought a statewide, multimodal system that improves mobility, reduces pollution, and supports tourism and accessibility.

Rural community needs

Participants recommended the framework respond to different needs and solutions for rural, suburban, and urban contexts. Participants raised concerns about the feasibility of multimodal options in rural communities, given the current dependence on personal vehicles due to a lack of transit and active transportation infrastructure. They highlighted limited EV charging networks and longer travel distances, expressing concerns about range.

Telework

Participants expressed support for increasing telework to reduce driving. They called for incentives for companies to allow and encourage telework such as tax discounts or other benefits. They also noted that telework supports equitable employment opportunities for rural communities, caregivers, and people with disabilities.

Equity

Equity emerged as a major theme. Participants noted that Black, Indigenous, people of color and low-income communities have lower transportation access but face higher levels of traffic pollution.

Land use

Many participants stressed that transportation planning must go beyond vehicles and focus on reversing car-centric urban development and that transportation investments alone cannot meet climate goals without reshaping land-use patterns. They urged the state to support revising zoning codes, encouraging compact development and smart growth, urban revitalization, increased housing density, mixed-use development, and limits on suburban sprawl to create walkable, transit-friendly communities. They cited the benefits of affordability, natural resource protection, environmental justice, and climate mitigation. They called for significant investment in walking, biking, rolling, and transit infrastructure, stronger Complete Streets implementation and more street trees. Several noted the environmental and social harms caused by past freeway projects, particularly in communities of color. Overall, commenters advocated for redesigning community infrastructure to make active and public transportation easier to use, reduce dependence on cars, and better serve all Minnesotans.

Electric vehicles

Public commenters expressed broad support for EV adoption. Many urged the state to set more ambitious EV adoption goals, expand electrification strategies for medium- and heavy-duty vehicles, and provide stronger support for public and private fleet electrification, and reduce EV fees. Participants noted electric vehicles are only effective if they are paired with robust and accessible public charging infrastructure.

Others raised significant concerns about the environmental impacts of battery production, mining, tire wear, and power plant emissions and called for prioritizing public and corporate accountability over consumer-focused solutions. Participants also noted concerns about infrastructure limitations and reliance on an electricity grid that is not yet fully clean.

Participants emphasized the need for more accessible EV incentives and a more equitable vehicle-licensing fee structure. Participants stressed that low-income and BIPOC communities should receive higher levels of support to transition to EVs because they face higher exposure to traffic pollution. There is also a push for stronger financial incentives and educational outreach to help lower-income communities transition to EVs.

Biofuels

Public feedback on biofuels was mixed. Some commenters supported biofuels — particularly lower-carbon or perennial options — and saw opportunities to replace fossil fuel-based liquid fuels with alternatives such as sustainable aviation fuel derived from renewable feedstocks that could also provide other environmental benefits. Others raised concerns about the potential environmental and social impacts of biofuels.

Many questioned the need to expand liquid biofuels at all, arguing that most transportation modes can already be electrified and that continuing to rely on liquid fuels — especially for passenger vehicles — distracts from more effective, equitable climate solutions. Some urged phasing out liquid fuels, eliminating subsidies, and discouraging production due to lifecycle impacts.

Others emphasized that biofuels have a strategic role in the transition to a cleaner transportation sector, particularly for existing vehicles and harder-to-electrify applications, and recommended incentives that align biofuel use with environmental integrity. They supported regenerative agriculture, carbon-sequestration practices, and a well-designed clean fuel standard that reduces emissions while protecting soil, water, and land resources.

Goal 2: Climate-smart natural and working lands

Support for peatlands

Participants expressed support for peatland restoration and called for peatland restoration as a core climate mitigation strategy. They highlighted peatlands, wetlands, and native landscapes as critical carbon sinks, with recommendations for increased conservation efforts. Many commenters suggested setting clear targets for peatland restoration and protection. Some emphasized that drained peatlands contribute significantly to greenhouse gas emissions and should be a priority to address. Participants also called for recognition of peatland's cultural significance, particularly for Tribes.

Forest and land management support and concerns

Participants supported reforestation and active forest management to reduce wildfire risk and promote carbon storage. Commenters shared concerns that included climate-driven shifts in species viability and operational challenges due to warmer winters. Participants generally expressed support for tree planting and conservation, while some raised questions about tree harvesting rates and practices. They expressed support for forest management that prioritizes protection of mature forests, biodiversity considerations, climate-adaptive approaches, and science-based implementation.

More sustainable agriculture

Participants urged the state to transition toward more sustainable farming. They expressed concerns that they believe conventional cropping approaches and animal agriculture have significant climate, water, and soil impacts. Some commenters supported incentives for farmers to advance climate solutions, while others called for regulations to promote continuous living cover, restrict drainage, and limit farming on drained wetlands or other ecologically vulnerable areas. Participants expressed support for crop diversification, regenerative agriculture, precision agriculture, conservation tillage, expanded cover crops, and reduced reliance on nitrogen fertilizers. Some participants also expressed support for Tribal governments maintaining water quality standards for ceded and unceded territories.

Farmer support and rural economic transition

Participants expressed support for incentivizing regenerative agriculture and sustainable crop production. They recommended transition assistance, technical support, and market development for emerging crops and diversified farming. They advised that climate policy should avoid alienating rural communities and instead create new economic opportunities. Participants expressed concerns about land conversion for development and energy project siting.

Animal agriculture and plant-based diets

Many commenters urged the state to address the climate and environmental impacts of meat and dairy including methane, manure, fertilizer use, water consumption, and land demand. Participants called for reducing reliance on animal agriculture and supporting farmer transitions from livestock or feed crops to food crops. Comments urged elevating plant-based diets from an individual choice to a system-level climate strategy, including funding for farmers growing plant-based foods, shifts in institutional procurement (at schools and hospitals, for example), and emissions tracking specific to animal agriculture. They also called for robust public education on the environmental impacts of dietary choices.

Natural lands and community resilience

Participants called for connecting natural and working lands to the resilient communities goal and noted that land-use practices shape rural economies, community health, and long-term viability. They recommended strengthening content relating to urban natural lands, soil health in developed landscapes, and regional parks in the natural and working lands goal. They noted urban planning and policies should expand green spaces and tree canopy, limit excessive asphalt use, and reduce urban heat island effects.

Detail, clarity, and implementation planning

Many participants asked for detail, clarity, and information on implementation planning. They recommended examples, case studies, or stories to make actions more relatable. They emphasized that success depends on implementation quality, not just high-level goals. Participants called for measurable targets on agricultural methane and nitrous oxide reductions, land conservation, peatland protection, and biodiversity and habitat metrics.

Goal 3: Resilient communities

Funding, capacity, and state support

Participants stated repeatedly that local governments cannot meet resilience goals without sustained state and federal investment. Communities — especially overburdened and low-income areas — need grants, technical assistance, dedicated revenue sources, and expanded state agency staffing. Participants recommended long-term funding for resilience programs, disaster preparedness, climate-ready schools, community forestry, and adaptation planning.

Linking land management and community resilience

Participants stressed that the management of natural and working lands is inseparable from community resilience. Land-use decisions directly affect local economies, flood risk, habitat, and the long-term stability of rural and urban communities. People urged the state to integrate natural-lands policy with community resilience planning rather than treating them as separate efforts.

Education, awareness, and community engagement

Many participants emphasized the need for climate and sustainability education, especially in grades K-12, covering recycling, gardening, tree planting, and the impacts of consumption. Several noted that the plan focuses heavily on government and property owners and asked for clear roles for everyday community members, including civic advocacy, stewardship, and participating in local resilience planning.

Economic resilience and local ownership

Climate resilience must include economic resilience. Communities want protection for locally owned utilities, small businesses, and essential services from corporate mergers and acquisitions. Some called for investigating recent utility buyouts and preventing future takeovers that remove local control. Participants noted rural communities need clear pathways to transition away from vulnerable sectors (e.g., ethanol dependence, shrinking family farms).

Transportation as essential resilience infrastructure

Participants noted transportation is essential infrastructure for resilience, and some suggested integrating transportation into the Goal 3: Resilient communities chapter, including improving walkability, supporting intercity rail, planning for shared mobility, and resolving space conflicts between road design, tree canopy, and green infrastructure.

Land use, development standards, and smart growth

Participants urged stronger regulation of development to increase climate resilience. Themes included restricting development in flood-prone areas, eliminating parking minimums, enabling the building of denser neighborhoods, and protecting natural water storage areas. Some wanted inclusion of upstream storage — not only urban stormwater systems — to manage stormwater and prevent flooding.

Nature-based solutions and community greening

Respondents supported reducing turf lawns, increasing tree planting, expanding native plant diversity and urban agriculture, and developing community forests. Many requested incentives for homeowners, homeowner associations, and municipalities for these actions. Participants expressed support for green infrastructure for stormwater management and urban heat island mitigation. They called for rewilding lands (restoring ecosystems and reversing biodiversity declines by allowing wildlife and natural processes to reclaim areas no longer under human management), invasive species management, and wildlife corridors in communities.

Climate equity, frontline communities, and just resilience

Public input called for prioritizing frontline, marginalized, and rural communities for resilience investment and ensuring equitable access to resources.

Cross-agency coordination and multi-hazard planning

Participants wanted to see more collaboration among state, local, Tribal, and regional agencies, especially around land management, flood response, water storage, wildfire risk, and transportation planning. Several asked for better modeling of hazards beyond heat and rain, including extreme winds, freeze-thaw cycles, and winter ice conditions. They called attention to the need for wildfire risk reduction in wildland-urban interface.

Resilient schools

Comments included support for resilience planning in K-12 districts, using schools as cooling centers, expanding Green Ribbon School programs, planting and maintaining school forests, and providing funding for climate-ready school infrastructure. Many suggested formalizing the role of schools in climate resilience.

Resilience in state government

Some participants proposed establishing a state resilience office to support community resilience planning. They encouraged the state to lead by example with resilient infrastructure decisions.

Goal 4: Clean energy

Affordability and reliability

Participants expressed concerns about rising electricity rates, unequal cost burdens, and grid reliability — particularly during extreme cold. There were calls to reform utility rate structures, share infrastructure costs more equitably, and ensure visible benefits for host communities. Energy efficiency, weatherization, and peak-load reduction were suggested by participants as ways to quickly and affordably meet clean energy goals.

Nuclear energy

Nuclear energy generated strong and divided feedback. Some participants argue nuclear power is essential for baseload reliability, emissions reduction, and economic development and urge lifting the state's nuclear moratorium or expanding existing facilities. Others oppose the inclusion of nuclear in the framework, citing waste management, environmental justice concerns, and impacts on Indigenous communities. Many expressed that nuclear energy's role — if any — requires further discussion, transparency, and community consent.

Fossil fuel retirement

Some participants expressed concerns that closing coal or natural gas facilities before adequate clean replacements are available could increase costs, reduce reliability, and shift emissions outside Minnesota. Several commenters urged focusing on emissions reductions from existing facilities while maintaining reliability during the transition.

Renewable energy siting and

Participants pointed to siting conflicts as a barrier to renewable energy deployment. Some stressed that utility-scale wind and solar projects should not convert farmland, forests, or prairie, while others pointed out that solar can be compatible with some agricultural land uses. Many commenters expressed support for prioritizing solar on rooftops and previously developed sites. Commenters shared a desire for community benefit agreements and local compensation.

Grid modernization

Participants expressed support for grid modernization, but large-scale transmission expansion yielded comments in support and opposition. Participants suggested maximizing local- and distribution-level resources — such as community solar, storage, microgrids, and virtual power plants — rather than large-scale transmission infrastructure. Many stressed that reducing demand through efficiency is as important as adding new generation.

Large energy users

Participants expressed strong concern regarding large energy users, especially data centers, driving up energy demand and costs. Participants want large energy users to be held accountable for efficiency, environmental impacts, and cost impacts, rather than shifting burdens onto residential customers.

Transparency and consistent definitions

Commenters called for clear, consistent definitions of “clean” and “carbon-free” energy, improved metrics, regular reporting on fossil-fuel use and project deployment, and stronger utility oversight.

Goal 5: Healthy lives and communities

Heat safety protections

Commenters expressed support for expanding heat protections for workers, renters, and residents in housing without access to air-conditioning. Suggestions included establishing a “right to cooling,” making energy assistance available year-round, removing barriers to pre-weatherization (preparing homes for energy efficiency improvements, such as mitigating mold), integrating resilience hubs, and offering education on low-energy cooling techniques.

Mental health and public health impacts

Some participants felt that current framing overemphasizes acute disasters and underrepresents chronic climate stressors, such as biodiversity loss, changing seasons, declining livelihoods, and loss of culturally important landscapes. They noted that slow changes generate grief, anxiety, depression, and social disconnection — particularly in rural, Indigenous, unhoused, and marginalized communities. Participants called for community-led, culturally grounded mental health approaches, space to address loss and grief, and long-term mental health supports beyond emergency response. Many respondents suggested replacing terms like “prevent” with more realistic goals such as “minimize risk.”

Public guidance during poor air quality events and wildfire smoke

Participants expressed urgency for improved public guidance, increased access to public data tools, better interagency coordination, and clearer protections during smoke events. Commenters requested guidelines for statewide emergency measures (e.g., driving restrictions, nonessential work stoppages), youth outdoor exposure, HEPA filtration for schools and homes, and stronger protections for people with conditions like asthma and lung disease.

Reducing emissions relating to food systems and improving food access

Participants expressed support for diversified, local, sustainable agriculture, emphasizing that that climate-smart food systems must reduce emissions while improving nutrition and affordability. Many urged the framework to explicitly address plant-based and plant-rich diets at a systemic level, not merely as individual choice, to reduce GHG emissions through the food system. Participants also highlighted food insecurity, lack of access to fresh foods, and the importance of culturally appropriate foods.

Affordability and equity

Commenters urged the state to assess affordability impacts of climate actions on energy, housing, food, and transportation, particularly for communities already burdened by inequities. There were calls for clearer metrics, actionable steps (not aspirational language), and protections for unhoused Minnesotans, elderly residents, pregnant people, outdoor workers, and youth. Many emphasized that safeguards should apply automatically, without requiring people to prove they are overburdened.

Education, youth, and community empowerment

Commenters expressed support for youth involvement in climate planning and action and climate education. Participants called for funding youth leadership and comprehensive climate change education — both in K-12 schools and through informal community programs — to build long-term momentum for climate action.

Goal 6: Clean economy

Stronger policy tools and corporate accountability

Participants expressed support for mandatory policy approaches over voluntary or incentive-only strategies, particularly for large emitters. There were calls for emissions disclosure laws, carbon taxes or fees, and methane regulations. Many stressed that corporations are significant contributors to GHG emissions and should be held to higher standards than individuals with transparent reporting, enforceable reduction requirements, and guardrails to prevent greenwashing. Several participants also urged new funding mechanisms — such as fees on large industrial emitters or data centers — to support climate programs and assist energy-burdened households.

Workforce and business support

Participants called for shifting emphasis from technology toward people-centered strategies. Priorities included workforce development, just transition planning, and climate and clean energy education in K-12 schools and accessible career pathways into green jobs. Participants expressed support for wage standards and worker protections and enforcement rather than voluntary employer commitments. Public input showed support for displaced workers through retraining, income assistance, and priority hiring in clean economy jobs. There was also interest in supporting local and small businesses with grants, tax credits, technical assistance, and energy audits to reduce cost barriers to decarbonization.

Circular economy, waste reduction, and materials management

Commenters expressed support for a transition toward a circular economy that prioritizes waste prevention first, followed by reuse, repair, recycling, and composting. Strategies suggested included:

- Reducing food waste through mandates, incentives, donation programs, and recovery targets.
- Expanding organics recycling, especially in apartments and rural areas.
- Bans or restrictions on non-recyclable and single-use materials.
- Producer responsibility, source separation requirements, and recycled-content mandates.
- Investment in repair, reuse, and e-waste infrastructure, including a statewide e-waste facility.

Many commenters emphasized that circular systems must be paired with responsible sourcing of critical materials, such as timber, minerals, and agricultural feedstocks. They advocated for strong environmental and labor standards for the benefit of workers in the clean economy.

Clean fuels and technology

Participants expressed mixed views on clean fuels and emerging technologies. Some supported biofuels, sustainable aviation fuel, carbon capture, mineralization, and industrial decarbonization technologies. At the same time, others cautioned against solutions promoted by the fossil fuel industry that may be expensive, unscalable, or impediments to climate progress. There were calls for:

- Independent analysis.
- Full lifecycle emissions accounting.
- Clear guardrails to protect land, water, biodiversity, and communities.

Commenters supported proven, lowest-cost solutions such as energy efficiency, electrification, wind, solar, and storage before less well-developed technologies.

Agriculture, forestry, and food waste

Participants supported research and incentives for farmers, manure management, food waste reduction, and climate-smart practices, while stressing methane reductions and just transitions. Many emphasized that healthy forests, sustainable timber products, and forest-based industries play a critical role in carbon sequestration, rural economies, and clean fuel production, and must remain economically competitive.

Transparency, metrics, and implementation

Participants called for clearer targets, measurable outcomes, and transparent tracking of progress. They urged more action-oriented language, consistent definitions of “clean” and “clean jobs,” and clearer connections between funding, policies, and climate outcomes. Many stressed that public trust depends on visible accountability and demonstrated benefits.

Goal 7: Resilient and efficient buildings

Stronger standards, codes, and incentives

Participants expressed support for net-zero and decarbonized building standards, including electrification and phasing out natural gas in new construction as soon as feasible. Some called for statutorily defined timelines aligned with Minnesota’s net-zero-by-2050 goal, stronger requirements for existing buildings, and progress toward a building performance standard. There was concern that the framework relies too heavily on voluntary or aspirational measures, with repeated calls to mandate and incentivize rather than rely solely on education.

Commenters urged alignment with carbon-focused standards rather than certifications that do not directly drive emissions reductions unless strengthened. Comments included support for energy benchmarking but emphasized that measured building performance — not benchmarking alone — should be the core outcome.

Existing buildings, weatherization, and affordability

Participants supported expanding pre-weatherization and weatherization, building envelope improvements, and building science-based approaches that address both energy efficiency and occupant health, including moisture control, indoor air quality, and comfort in a warming and more humid climate.

Many noted that rebate-based incentives are not accessible to low-income households. Participants called for upfront financial support, dedicated carveouts for overburdened communities, and protections against displacement and rent increases. Education and technical assistance for homeowners, renters, landlords, and building operators were highlighted as necessary complements to financial incentives.

Electrification and resilience

Participants expressed support for beneficial electrification, while cautioning against assuming all electrification is inherently resilient or affordable without grid upgrades, demand management, and backup strategies, particularly in cold climates. Many supported dual-fuel or backup approaches, microgrids, on-site renewables, storage, and thermal energy networks as scalable, resilient solutions. District energy and geothermal systems were cited as high-potential strategies that deserve greater prominence in the framework.

Participants emphasized the need to clearly distinguish mitigation from adaptation, integrate future climate projections into building design and planning, and better define resilience goals — such as the ability to maintain safe indoor conditions during extreme heat, cold, smoke, flooding, or power outages.

Circular construction, materials, and embodied carbon

Participants expressed support for a circular economy in the buildings sector, including reducing demolition; prioritizing renovation over replacement; expanding deconstruction, reuse, and reclaimed materials; and integrating new-versus-renovation analysis early in capital planning. Participants emphasized the importance of addressing embodied carbon through established standards and existing Minnesota initiatives rather than starting from scratch.

Wood and mass timber were highlighted as carbon-storing, resilient materials. Commenters wanted to ensure non-toxic materials requirements, occupant health protections, and robust testing and rating systems would be put in place to build confidence in reused materials.

Workforce development, education, and implementation

Participants stressed that implementation will not succeed without workforce training and support, particularly for installing, operating, and maintaining high-performance buildings and equipment. They raised concerns about resistance from building owners and managers due to maintenance capacity gaps. Suggestions included making energy and building science education a standalone initiative, spanning K-12, higher education, and workforce pathways, with schools and districts serving as demonstration leaders.

Participants also called for clearer action steps, definitions, and metrics, improved coordination with existing programs, and state leadership to backstop federal uncertainty in funding, tools, and standards.

Feedback on local government implementation

Engagement, communication, and coordination

Respondents called for ongoing, two-way communication between the State and local governments throughout climate planning processes, including early engagement, feedback loops, and clear opportunities to review and shape actions. Participants emphasized the need to centralize information on funding opportunities, best practices, tools, and examples to help local leaders act efficiently. Many encouraged better coordination among cities, counties, regional agencies, and the state — particularly in key corridors and investment areas such as river communities and transit corridors — so land use, transportation, and community development strategies reinforce each other and maximize climate benefits.

Financial and technical support

Reliable, consistent funding and technical assistance were identified as critical needs. Participants emphasized the need for grants that support staff capacity, infrastructure investments, and implementation — not just planning. Some noted that small and rural communities need templates, simple tools, and direct assistance to participate meaningfully. Participants supported leveraging existing programs such as Minnesota GreenStep Cities and the Gold Leaf Challenge, along with public–private partnerships, to provide recognition, coordination, and hands-on support.

Local priorities and sector-specific actions

Commenters identified local priorities including climate resilience, stormwater and natural resource protection, energy efficiency, electrification, clean transportation, affordable housing, and equitable outcomes. Participants also highlighted food systems as an important area for local action, including plant-based food education campaigns, community gardens, partnerships with local farmers, and incentives for businesses to reduce food-related emissions. Participants emphasized the importance of tracking progress, ensuring equitable access to programs, and publicly reporting outcomes to demonstrate impact and encourage replication.

Capacity building, equity, and partnerships

Commenters expressed concerns that limited staff capacity remains a key barrier, especially for smaller jurisdictions and special districts, with many unable to participate climate policy discussions. Stakeholders emphasized workforce development, peer learning, and collaboration across sectors, including coordinated city–county efforts on transit-oriented development, large-site redevelopment, district energy, and geothermal projects. Equity was consistently identified as foundational, with calls to ensure climate investments reach vulnerable communities and support inclusive, community-driven solutions statewide.

Feedback on GHG forecasting

The development of Minnesota's GHG emissions forecast scenarios was an iterative process. The MPCA and University of Maryland updated the model's inputs and assumptions in response to public feedback and peer review. Analytical teams from various agencies and a public modeling workgroup reviewed the project, scope, assumptions, and results at key points during development to provide expert advice and stakeholder engagement. The broad expertise of contributors and the model development team incorporated the best available information and assumptions about future energy supplies, energy demand, policy implementation, technological, and economic development.

The Potential Policies Pathway scenario was developed based on strategies prioritized for analysis through Climate Change Subcabinet interagency goal team collaboration, leadership consultation, and public engagement. The scenario includes potential policies to include in forecasting that could help Minnesota meet its GHG emission reduction goals. The Potential Policies Pathway scenario is meant to help better understand the pace and scale of action. Inclusion of a policy in this scenario does not indicate that the subcabinet endorses or advocates for the policies. The scenario represents a hypothetical set of actions, informed by the use of these types of actions by other states or countries, and evaluates the impacts of the portfolio of actions on GHG emissions and sequestration, health outcomes, and economic development.

The following are themes from this engagement.

Importance of natural and working lands forecasting

Public commenters and workgroup participants emphasized that accurately modeling natural and working lands is critical due to their ecological complexity and importance to Minnesota's economy and emissions profile. Agriculture, as the state's second-largest industry, was identified as a priority for improved representation by many commentors. Participants supported incorporating ongoing model improvements where feasible. Some respondents noted that more detailed land use, forestry, and soil modeling would be useful in a future phase.

Participants expressed appreciation for the detail in forestry modeling while noting areas where they wanted to see more information, including harvested wood products, wildfires, soil carbon, and emerging forest disturbances. Many emphasized that forests are currently Minnesota's only net-negative emissions sector and stressed that accurately projecting forest carbon sequestration through 2050 is essential, as it affects emissions reduction pathways in other sectors.

Model assumptions, transparency, and communication

Participants raised questions about the forecasting model's structure and assumptions, including how energy markets, offsets, and regulatory policies are modeled. Feedback highlighted the need for clearer explanations of model mechanics and assumptions to improve transparency and avoid public confusion, particularly where results reflect accounting conventions rather than real-world emissions changes. Participants also requested clearer graphics, consistent scales, and improved documentation of Minnesota-specific inputs.

Sector-specific policy representation

In the agriculture sector, commenters noted that some policies that have been proposed in Minnesota, such as a clean transportation standard, were not fully reflected and asked for their inclusion. Participants also questioned baseline assumptions and requested improved alignment with post-pandemic economic conditions. Questions were raised about how the forecasting model treats upstream emissions, ethanol, and carbon capture.

Uncertainty and future improvements

Participants encouraged clearer articulation of included policies and better alignment with state forecasts. They supported acknowledging uncertainty — particularly related to federal incentives — and emphasized the importance of continued refinement, expanded documentation, and iterative updates to forecasting in future Climate Action Framework revisions.

Policy design

Participants provided expertise and insight into industry best practices and developments, such as building codes, electricity forecasts, and interstate dynamics.