



Virginia Clean Cities 5- Year Strategic Plan January 2024 – December 2029

January 30, 2024

Virginia Clean Cities
1401 Technology Drive, MSC 4115
Harrisonburg, VA 22807
www.vacleancities.org

SECTION I: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Virginia Clean Cities (VCC) is a regional nonprofit organization dedicated to *advancing energy, economic, and environmental security through petroleum reduction and facilitating increased deployment and use of alternative fuel infrastructure and vehicles*. Virginia Clean Cities is a state and federally recognized coalition of stakeholders staffed in partnership with James Madison University. The coalition operates dozens of domestic fuel and environmental education and deployment projects for federal and state agencies as well as for private partners.

VCC acts as the Commonwealth of Virginia’s Alternative Fuel Vehicle deployment agency partner and has worked to deploy federal and state programs on behalf of the Commonwealth since foundation.

Since its inception in 1996, Virginia Clean Cities (VCC) has grown from an organization with volunteer staff to a fully functioning non-profit with a dozen state employees. Currently VCC delivers multiple programs and an operational budget that could incorporate \$1 million in staff time funded by grants, sponsorships, and memberships across JMU and the nonprofit side actions. Current market conditions position VCC in a leading role for a clean fuel economy in Virginia and is growing rapidly to expand again in 2024 to meet the ever-increasing demand.

The need to convert to clean transportation strategies is rapidly becoming more urgent as climate change accelerates and public awareness grows. The fast-changing political landscape, technological advances, and the workplace shifts following the COVID-19 pandemic, have radically changed the country and the economy. Given the dramatic changes in our social and economic world the VCC Board of Directors prioritized the update of the 2012 Strategic Plan. The board met in person in Richmond in March 2022 for a strategic working session for the organization. This document is the result of labors from that time which included: a review of the outcomes from the 2012 Strategic Plan, SWOT analysis from the board and the staff, and a brainstorming session for the future direction of the organization, and dozens of meetings. (See Appendix E for the summary of the board’s SWOT analysis)

During strategic planning the Bi-Partisan Infrastructure Legislation and the Infrastructure Reduction Act were passed in Congress, catapulting clean transportation initiatives forward with funding and incentives to support the growth. Based on this shift in the political landscape, the Board of Directors determined that a more aggressive strategy was possible to advance the VCC mission in a productive policy environment. Throughout 2023 there were frequent meetings to fine tune the priorities and goals of the organization. In August of 2023, staff met with the board strategic planning committee to assess goals and strategies.

The 2024 Strategic Plan will set the direction for the organization until 2030. The staff will provide an updated annual plan format to measure the progress of the strategic plan. New accountability metrics such as the Key Performance Indicators (KPI’s) which will be published for members and the public.

Plan Overview:

This plan was developed over the last year by the VCC Strategic Planning Committee. The committee is composed of select stakeholder board members, executive leadership, and staff with frequent engagement with all staff and board members. The committee has dedicated considerable time and talent collecting information and researching options to craft a solid and effective plan to serve as a roadmap for the next 6 years.

Creating a plan that shows leadership, to push VCC further through “best in class” status, was a priority to the committee. This is demonstrated by an aggressive aspirational goal of reducing carbon by 25,000,000 million tons of emissions annually by 2030 with a VCC direct impact of more than 1 million tons annually. This important commitment most accurately reflects our true impact. In the plan, all the goals are intended to influence the achievement of the aspirational carbon reduction goal. In addition, the introduction of the Inclusive Action, Communication, Continuity Plans, are intended to ensure that the organization has the capacity and the proper trajectory to achieve these goals. The KPI’s will help monitor the progress of our efforts. The addition of these initiatives gives strength and depth to the 2024 VCC

Finally and most importantly, VCC is subject to outside influences that can aid or obstruct the progress of the work. However, it is the intention of VCC to remain in service to the people of Virginia, regardless of political wind or market changes. Air quality, energy security, and economic opportunity are bipartisan initiatives, and the population of the Commonwealth resides in every community and district. *VCC is a politically neutral organization, dedicated to the service of all Virginians, the Governor, and the General Assembly.*

VCC has the capacity to meet and exceed these goals. VCC has the momentum, organizational infrastructure, financial stability, and professional talent, to make Virginia a leader in the clean transportation sector. This is an exciting time to be engaged in the shift to clean transportation. The goals and strategies listed in this document will provide the staff with clear objectives to meet as we move to the completion of our mission. This comprehensive strategy has the full support of the Staff and Board of Directors, and all in the Coalition will strive to provide the necessary resources to achieve the stated goals.

Key Initiatives:

In conjunction with the development of this plan, four key initiatives were identified by the organization as priorities for the new plan. The decision to make each plan an independent document allows these supporting plan sections to be more nimble. These plans are in service to the VCC 2024 Strategic Plan, and provide more detail to each initiative.

The Inclusive Action Plan:

VCC is determined to maintain inclusion a cornerstone of all its activities. In 2023, VCC appointed a Chief Equity Officer to promote inclusivity and diversity throughout VCC's operations and programing. Shortly after the appointment, VCC was invited to participate in the Clean Cities Equity Cohort to learn how to successfully plan and execute an inclusivity initiative. The Chief Equity Officer applied for a grant to strengthen the program, which included the addition of the Community Engagement Liaison, who was also hired in 2023. Together they have developed The Inclusive Action Plan, which is summarized in the following statement: *Virginia Clean Cities is committed to bringing alternative fuel transportation to all people.* This Inclusive Action Plan serves as a foundational and dynamic document, establishing metrics for accountability and adaptability to industry and organizational evolution. It commits to annual reviews and updates, aligning with the organization's commitment to continuous improvement. To direct the organization's inclusivity efforts this plan details where we have been, where we are going, and what actions we will take to get there. Virginia's transportation systems carry the weight of past discriminatory practices, resulting in underserved communities burdened by economic, health, and environmental challenges. The legacy of redlining and urban renewal has left lasting impacts on social cohesion and economic opportunities in transportation energy, emissions, and costs. Virginia Clean Cities hopes to address some disparities by acknowledging and rectifying historical injustices. There are benefits to planning for inclusivity as equitable practices not only contribute to social justice but also bring significant financial benefits to workplaces and local economies. Virginia Clean Cities recognizes the importance of fostering an inclusive community for long-term success and has seen this success first-hand. Through an inclusivity audit (2021) and Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities Threats (SWOT) Analysis (2023) conducted by the organization, VCC established a baseline for the organization's assets and needs. The Virginia Clean Cities Inclusive Action Plan is a dedicated commitment to equitable access in alternative fuel transportation. With a focus on historical context, benefits of inclusivity, and detailed strategies, the plan outlines key principles, forming the foundation for meaningful and sustainable progress for all people.

The Communications Plan:

VCC's rapid growth requires a more focused and intentional communications strategy. To address this, VCC created two new positions, a full-time Communications Director, assisted by a part time Communications and Engagement Coordinator. The team will evaluate and update the current communications protocol, to reach new audiences, keep members and stakeholders better informed and to build the VCC brand. In addition to revamping the existing strategy, an exploration into new media technologies will create new opportunities to remain current in the market.

The Continuity Plan:

Successful organizations are prepared by unexpected changes and ready to continue operating at a high level even during times of transition. VCC has prepared a detailed Continuity Plan to outline steps during transitional periods. The plan includes a New Employee Checklist, to assure that new members to the coalition have the best onboarding experience.

Key Performance Indicators:

Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) have been developed to measure and monitor performance. The collection of the critical data from the programmatic outcomes and organizational performance gives VCC an easy and efficient way to communicate the effectiveness of VCC's impact. Creating a standard metric that can be shared with the Board of Directors, stakeholders, grantors, and the community at large, was a priority for the planning committee. The KPI targets will be reassessed annually to guarantee accurate and relevant targets each year.

SECTION 2: BEST PRACTICES WITH OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

With 28 years of operational experience, VCC has refined its daily operations and expanded the organizational capacity each year. VCC's programs are highly successful, and the financial position is strong, and they are appropriately staffed to grow and expand. And, like any organization that grows quickly, there are numerous lessons in resilience and adaptability that must be addressed. VCC's super-power is its ability to adapt to changing conditions, meet their existing obligations and keep the pipeline full of new business. VCC intends to build on their existing strengths, improving feedback loops, engaging stakeholders, and providing employees with a rich and fulfilling professional environment.

Best Practices:

1. **Updated Plan:** VCC strategic goals are challenging and ambitious. The 2024 VCC Strategic Plan is organized to build internal capacity; expand outreach and program awareness with an emphasis on underserved communities; improve program efficiency; and increase employee satisfaction and retention. This plan clearly sets goals, targets and strategies to take the guesswork out of the planning process.
2. **Stakeholder Engagement:** VCC has increased staff time and budget to upgrade the website, improve tools for stronger communication, and keeping pace with the current media trends. Feedback will be collected by hosting live events, workshops, and conducting surveys, to maintain the proper perspective on the needs of the community. Adherence to the Inclusive Action Plan and the Communications Plan will guide VCC's outreach and engagement for comprehensive, and equitable results.
3. **Strong Grant Writing Program:** VCC has a highly successful track record for grant writing and awards. With the increased staff capacity, more time can be devoted to developing priorities such as grant writing and sponsorship.
4. **Build Membership and Sponsorship:** The investment in engagement focuses on strengthening the brand, reaching out to new markets, and developing new partnerships. The Communications Plan is designed to aggressively increase engagement and membership. The Inclusion Action Plan is focused on reaching communities that have previously been ignored. VCC has not only taken the time to create these plans but has provided additional resources to guarantee that the tools are in place to get results.

5. Improved Workflow & Internal Communications: A fast growing organization is frequently challenged to keep pace with the work at hand. VCC is no exception, therefore a number of systems and processes have been developed to manage time and priorities. Staff meets weekly and the project management staff assignment document is regularly updated to help set priorities and meet deadlines. The organizational chart has been expanded and modified to better serve the organization. These changes along with the KPI's, should provide the guidelines for regular self-assessment under the leadership of the board of directors.
6. Improved Onboarding and Employee Training: The existing Employee Handbook has been updated to include the Continuity Plan and the New Employee Checklist. These are intended to streamline and strengthen the new employee experience. Currently, employees do receive regular training opportunities and under this plan more time and attention will be given to continuing education.
7. Informed Board of Directors: The executive leadership has done an outstanding job keeping the board of directors informed of organizational developments. The addition of KPI's was an important opportunity for the board providing critical data to monitor the health and progress of VCC's activities.
8. Align Programs with Mission: VCC is committed to stay aligned to the mission with programs that support the goals and strategies outlined in this document.
9. Develop Sound Financial Strategies: VCC has been strong in developing resources to support the program, including an investment account for contingency planning. With the newly expanded staff and commitment to increase membership, sponsorship and grant writing, VCC is dedicated to sound financial planning.
10. Accountability: Inherent in every successful organization is the ability to measure success and track progress of key goals and initiatives.
 - a. Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) to be shared with the Board of Directors and stakeholders in January and July of each year. These particular measurements have been crafted to capture the key areas of deliverables that coincide with achievement of the goals, strategies, and objectives, outlined in this plan. The KPI's targets will be updated annually to ensure proper alignment with the goals stated in the strategic plan.
 - b. Annual Plan: Annual Plan that will include the KPI's, major accomplishments, current challenges, organizational changes, and upcoming coalition activities. This plan will also update new targets for the KPI's for the upcoming year. The Executive Director is responsible for the delivery of the Annual Plan, and the bi-annual update of the KPI's to the Board of Directors.
 - c. Internal Staff Processes: Staff meetings occur on a weekly basis, where job assignments are coordinated, deadlines are reviewed, and employees have an opportunity to address general issues regarding their workflow. Professional development, staff retention and team building are critical to VCC's leadership. In the SWOT analysis VCC leadership received very positive feedback from staff for an outstanding work environment and care for the people that serve them. Simple efforts like taking a group walk, are appreciated by the people that work at the coalition.
 - d. Board Engagement: VCC's Board of Directors has been very impressed with the strong results VCC delivers. Board updates are consistent and timely, the executive leadership is willing to accept feedback and guidance. The board is a strong group of industry leaders that are vested in

the success of VCC. The Board of Directors will hold the staff accountable to this plan and deviate themselves to provide the necessary resources to support the coalition.

The Virginia Clean Cities 2024 Strategic Plan was thoughtfully created with extensive research and reflection, board and staff participation, with aggressive goals and accountability. This plan is a living document, supported by the Annual Plan, which may adjust and respond to the unpredictable nature of the work at hand. VCC is powered by outstanding executive leadership, an experienced and passionate Board of Directors, and a talented staff. VCC is a results oriented organization that has a track record of success; and is ready and able to meet the challenging times ahead.

The coalition will integrate into all of the work, a strong commitment to inclusivity and fairness and a non-partisan approach to serve all Virginians. However, time is running out for the important corrections that must be made to protect the environment. There is a tremendous amount of work that needs to be done and VCC is ready to tackle the transition to clean energy in the transportation sector. The path has been outlined and the work has been mapped out, the VCC is ready to lead the charge for Virginia.

Aspirational Goal: Program Expansion and Success with 1 Million Tons Annually by 2030. Decarbonize Transportation in Virginia by 2050

VCC commits to achieving 1 million tons of avoided carbon emissions through direct action and facilitating indirect reduction in 25 million tons annually by 12/31/2029. This also motivates our gasoline gallon reduction to 156 million gallons annually by 2030.

Total GHGs reduced (2022) (gal)	2023 w/required 16%	2024 w/required 16%	2025 w/required 16%	2026 w/required 16%	2027 w/required 16%	2028 w/required 16%	2029 w/required 16%	2030 w/required 16%
258,367.40	299,706.18	347,659.17	403,284.64	467,810.18	542,659.81	629,485.38	730,203.04	847,035.53
Total GGEs reduced (2022) (GGE)	2023 w/required 20%	2024 w/required 20%	2025 w/required 20%	2026 w/required 20%	2027 w/required 20%	2028 w/required 20%	2029 w/required 20%	2030 w/required 20%
36,706,183.87	44,047,420.65	52,856,904.77	63,428,285.73	76,113,942.88	91,336,731.45	109,604,077.74	131,524,893.29	157,829,871.95

Signed:

Alleyn Harned
Executive Director

Nell Boyle
Board President

Dr. Keith Holland
Vice Provost of Research JMU

SECTION 3: KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (KPI)

Alternative Fuel Progress

	KPI	Metric
1	GHG displacement (Annual Report)	CO2 tons <ul style="list-style-type: none"> GHG displacement (Goal 16%)
2	Gallons of diesel and gasoline reduction (Annual Report)	Unit: Gallons of Gasoline Equivalent <ul style="list-style-type: none"> GGE reduction (Goal 20%)
3	Number of Clean Fuel Stations	All Fuels station expansion for interconnected statewide networks and hubs Consumer EV and PHEV per 1,000 people <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Closeness to 8 EVs per public L2 leading infrastructure metric for increasing community capacity on a per locality basis (EVI Pro Tool Lite) (data to be retrieved from DMV VIN info) % of EVs and PHEVs in all communities/DAC communities
4	Fleet support and Local and state government engagement and education	Detailed tracking of calls and meetings and government sessions # Fleet meetings/analysis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> # of fleet meetings/ analysis with fleets serving DACs # Conference and Meeting Speaking <ul style="list-style-type: none"> # of speaking events in or related to disadvantaged communities, rural localities, and call log tracking with community members <ul style="list-style-type: none"> # of speaking events that focus on disadvantaged communities as a topic of discussion

Organizational/ Employee Career Pathways and Advancement

5	Employee retention	Employee tenure (total) Net change in staff <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retention/ increase in staff diversity
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6	Program stability or expansion	<p>Grants onboarded at sustainable scale</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 1 grant \$ onboarded to replace each expiring grant ▪ # of grants onboarded following Justice 40 guidelines ▪ # of grants onboarded specifically serving DACs and or Rural Communities <p>New Partnerships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 1 new partnership (public or private entity, each quarter) ▪ # of partnerships with VA local and/ or SWaM businesses <p>75% Stakeholder retention and addition- From Membership Tracker % active vs “renew or lapsed”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ % retention of VA local and SWaM members
7	Profitable task-based or margin hours billed boosting projects	<p>Successful accomplishment of projects on time and on budget</p> <p>Employment opportunities placed for stakeholders # placed</p>

Communications/ Engagement Expanded Outcomes

8	Impressions/ engagements	Event Attendees
9	Member benefits	Per-member metric of meaningful engagement per year tracked

Inclusive Excellence and Model of Engaged University

10	Diverse partnerships	<p># and detail of student outcomes metric # of outcomes</p> <p># of documented internal stories with diverse and disadvantaged communities</p> <p># of funded programs and level of funding for engagement with disadvantaged communities</p> <p># of success stories with diverse and disadvantaged communities</p> <p># of events hosted that promote DAC community work and expertise and number of attendees</p>
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SECTION 4: GOALS AND KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

GOAL 1: Transportation Energy Transition Services Advancement

By 2030, Virginia Clean Cities will have expanded outreach and services leading to an increase in partnerships and fleet transitions, including at least one additional fleet of varying and increasing size achieving zero emissions annually, identifying 10 new green and aspirational fleets annually, increasing consumer EVs and PHEVs in the Commonwealth by 5% annually, and increasing VCC’s effectiveness through the maintenance of partnerships and acquisition of new funding opportunities.

Objective 1: Collaborate with one fleet to achieve net zero emissions annually

KPIs/ Measurement: GHG displacement, Gallons Diesel and Gasoline Reduction, Local and state government engagement and education

Resources required: staff time, grant support, technical assistance

Responsible parties: Executive Director, Fleet Program Coordinator, Communications staff

Strategy 1: Identify three prospective fleets for net zero emissions planning and implementation. Complete at least one transition annually with ever increasing fleet sizes.

Strategy 2: Increase public and business awareness of the benefits of clean transportation options through the detailed publication of net-zero fleets and eventual net zero transportation communities.

<i>Staff Needed (FTE) 2024</i>	<i>Staff Needed (FTE) 2025</i>	<i>Staff Needed (FTE) 2026</i>	<i>Staff Needed (FTE) 2027</i>	<i>Staff Needed (FTE) 2028</i>	<i>Staff Needed (FTE) 2029</i>	<i>Staff Needed (FTE) 2030</i>
.33	.66	1	1.33	1.33	1.33	1.33

Objective 2: Identify and support 10 new green fleets annually

KPIs/ Measurement: GHG displacement, Gallons Diesel and Gasoline Reduction, Local and state government engagement and education

Resources required: staff time, grant support, technical assistance

Responsible parties: Executive Director, Fleet Program Coordinator, Communications staff

Strategy 1: Attend at least one fleet-focused event or conference annually.

Strategy 2: Host at least 3 fleet-targeted outreach and education events or webinars. Intentional fleet recruitment by dedicated VCC staff.

Strategy 3: Enhance current fleet members to elevated green fleet status through technical support, funding opportunities, close collaboration, and connection to peer fleets.

<i>Staff Needed (FTE) 2024</i>	<i>Staff Needed (FTE) 2025</i>	<i>Staff Needed (FTE) 2026</i>	<i>Staff Needed (FTE) 2027</i>	<i>Staff Needed (FTE) 2028</i>	<i>Staff Needed (FTE) 2029</i>	<i>Staff Needed (FTE) 2030</i>
.8	.8	.8	.8	.8	.8	.8

Objective 3: Increase the number of consumer vehicles by at least 5% annually (compared to a 2022 baseline of 46,197 EVs and 19,569 PHEVs)

KPIs/ Measurement: Consumer EV and PHEV per 1,000 people, Local and state government engagement and education

Resources required: staff time, grant support, technical assistance

Responsible parties: Executive Director, Fleet Program Coordinator, Communications staff, Equity Staff

Strategy 1: Present or host vehicle demonstrations at least one consumer-oriented conference or expo.

Strategy 2: Host booths at a minimum of two community events such as Earth Day events and local festivals to raise alternative fuel vehicle awareness in Virginia communities.

Strategy 3: Collaborate with the EV clubs to attend, host, and staff consumer-oriented events.

<i>Staff Needed (FTE) 2024</i>	<i>Staff Needed (FTE) 2025</i>	<i>Staff Needed (FTE) 2026</i>	<i>Staff Needed (FTE) 2027</i>	<i>Staff Needed (FTE) 2028</i>	<i>Staff Needed (FTE) 2029</i>	<i>Staff Needed (FTE) 2030</i>
.33	.66	.66	1	1	1	1

Objective 4: Increase VCC effectiveness

KPIs/ Measurement: Program stability or expansion, Impressions/ engagements, Member benefits, Profitable task-based or margin hours billed boosting projects

Resources required: staff time, grant writing, fundraising, external agency support

Responsible parties: Executive Director, Deputy Director, VCC staff

Strategy 1: Secure at least one grant dollar or funding opportunity annually for each dollar expiring that funds technical support or fueling equipment for fleets.

Strategy 2: Secure three net additional Diamond Level (\$3,000) or higher coalition memberships a year. The top prospects will be solicited toward the end of the fiscal year for donations or memberships (develop customized approaches and target asks for each).

Strategy 3: Leverage existing programs offered by the state, such as the CMAQ program, to increase alternative fuel adoption by fleets in Virginia.

Strategy 4: Maximize collaboration and support with Virginia Department of Energy, Virginia Department of Transportation, Virginia Department of Environmental Quality and other state agencies.

Strategy 5: Expand consistent revenue generating apparatus to provide additional consultation or technical services.

Strategy 6: Deliver technology integration assistance to Clean Cities Coalitions, VCC offices statewide, and peers nationwide.

<i>Staff Needed (FTE) 2024</i>	<i>Staff Needed (FTE) 2025</i>	<i>Staff Needed (FTE) 2026</i>	<i>Staff Needed (FTE) 2027</i>	<i>Staff Needed (FTE) 2028</i>	<i>Staff Needed (FTE) 2029</i>	<i>Staff Needed (FTE) 2030</i>
.66	1	1	1	1	1	1

GOAL 2: Communication and Outreach Services Advancement:

This will be measured complete by: an increase in stakeholder engagement of 10% over 2023 baseline data, sharing three program success stories each year, executing numerous events and webinars, and creating a “knowledge ecosystem.” Additionally, increasing diverse partnerships such as those with Small, Women, and Minority (SWaM) owned businesses with a goal to increase diverse stakeholder membership by 15% annually.

Objective 1: Increase stakeholder engagement each year by 10%.

KPIs: Local and state government engagement and education, Program Stability or expansion, Impressions/engagements, Member benefits

Resources required: staff time, grant support

Responsible parties: Communications staff, Executive Director, VCC staff

Strategy 1: Build on and further organize VCC’s “knowledge ecosystem” online virtual educational library with tools and resources for targeted audiences, education, and outreach with annual report on milestones and progress

Strategy 2: Update and expand the communications program to increase visibility, strengthen the brand, and increase engagement with the intended audience by meeting objectives outlined in the Communications Plan

Strategy 3: Executive outreach events and online webinars; continue to measure and report attendance numbers against program baselines in our annual report.

Strategy 4: Attend and present at national conferences and events to raise visibility of the organization.

Strategy 5: Publicize at least three program success stories each year and detail program closure successes with formal reports as often as applicable. This can be accomplished through external media, internal blog posts, videos, and other channels.

<i>Staff Needed (FTE) 2024</i>	<i>Staff Needed (FTE) 2025</i>	<i>Staff Needed (FTE) 2026</i>	<i>Staff Needed (FTE) 2027</i>	<i>Staff Needed (FTE) 2028</i>	<i>Staff Needed (FTE) 2029</i>	<i>Staff Needed (FTE) 2030</i>
1	1	1	1	1	1	1

Objective 2: Increase event partnership diversity including disadvantaged communities and Small, Women, and Minority (SWaM) owned business by 15% in event partnerships and and speaking roles

KPIs/ Measurement: Program stability or expansion, Diverse Partnerships

Resources Required: Adequate staffing, grant support

Responsible Parties: Chief Equity Officer, Executive Director, Communications staff

Strategy 1: Host or collaborate in three forums on inclusivity in clean transportation

Strategy 2: Host three events or webinars with diverse partners as featured guests or speakers.

Strategy 3: Ensure marketing materials, websites, and social media contain diverse representation.

Strategy 4: Contract with at least one SWaM business per year for project work.

<i>Staff Needed (FTE) 2024</i>	<i>Staff Needed (FTE) 2025</i>	<i>Staff Needed (FTE) 2026</i>	<i>Staff Needed (FTE) 2027</i>	<i>Staff Needed (FTE) 2028</i>	<i>Staff Needed (FTE) 2029</i>	<i>Staff Needed (FTE) 2030</i>
.5	.5	.5	.5	.5	.5	.5

GOAL 3: Internal Excellence Advancement:

By 2030, and each year of the strategic planning period Virginia Clean Cities will achieve an increase in organizational and staff effectiveness. This will be measured complete by: a staff retention rate measured annually by 2030; the establishment and maintenance of an inclusivity task force; and increase in VCC’s rainy day recovery fund by 10% annually to meet with a growth mentality.

Objective 1: Integrate into staff meetings and monthly role meetings and individual meetings a process for monitoring organization for employee satisfaction and retention, financial solvency, and efficacy of workflow process measured through staff retention with a goal of 75% retention annually through 2030.

KPIs/Measurements: Employee retention

Resources Required: Funding for training and tools, staff time for facilitation and training

Responsible Parties: Executive leadership

Strategy 1: Maintain frequently daily team walks, weekly internal staff meetings, keep communication lines open, and promote collaboration and information sharing.

Strategy 2: Maintain monthly internal roles meetings with staff address project roles to reinforce coalition goals, enhance communication, facilitate team building, and engage VCC’s territory.

Strategy 3: Encourage two professional development sessions annually for employees to increase skills and quality of work, including focus areas of grant writing, IT training, fundraising, finance, alternative fuel education, communications, and other relevant topics.

Strategy 4: Utilize university and department onboarding and offboarding procedures and continual updates to employee handbook to facilitate positive smooth staff transitions upwards in careers.

Strategy 5: Develop project budgets and backup systems that foster acquisition of resources for staff development with increasing roles and and accompanying compensation.

Strategy 6: Improve workflow system optimization through the constant use and reinforcement of VCC’s project management and financial tracking for staff and leadership and consistent program management structures, always improving where appropriate.

<i>Staff Needed (FTE) 2024</i>	<i>Staff Needed (FTE) 2025</i>	<i>Staff Needed (FTE) 2026</i>	<i>Staff Needed (FTE) 2027</i>	<i>Staff Needed (FTE) 2028</i>	<i>Staff Needed (FTE) 2029</i>	<i>Staff Needed (FTE) 2030</i>
.5	.5	.5	.5	.5	.5	.5

Objective 2: By December 31, 2024, and operating through 2030, VCC will have established an Inclusive Excellence Task Force (Or name TBD) composed of at least five relevant stakeholders from across the VCC service area and networks. The group will be established to function as an advisory team and to provide guidance on VCC’s inclusivity work and the expansion of access to clean transportation to all people in the Commonwealth.

KPIs/Measurements: Diverse partnerships, Program stability or expansion

Resources Required: Funding for staff time, potential funding for training

Responsible Parties: Executive leadership, Equity staff, VCC staff

Strategy 1: Improve organizational capacity to expand equitable access to clean transportation through staff training on best practices for engaging with diverse communities and how to use data-based approaches to support decision-making and program design utilizing Clean Cities University, trainings offered through James Madison University, and additional training provided to Clean Cities staff from government agencies and national labs.

Strategy 2: Support and uplift key partners by prioritizing and measuring SWaM businesses in VCC’s membership and partnerships, thus expanding our networks to reach more diverse audiences when recruiting new staff, board members, project partners, and inclusivity task force members (goal of 75% retention and expansion of three new partnerships annually).

Strategy 3: Attend at least one equity-focused conference or training annually.

Strategy 4: Inclusive action plan to include steps for a more diverse staff, board, and stakeholder membership (See appendix #)

Strategy 5: Annual report on inclusive excellence progress to the board and public.

<i>Staff Needed (FTE) 2024</i>	<i>Staff Needed (FTE) 2025</i>	<i>Staff Needed (FTE) 2026</i>	<i>Staff Needed (FTE) 2027</i>	<i>Staff Needed (FTE) 2028</i>	<i>Staff Needed (FTE) 2029</i>	<i>Staff Needed (FTE) 2030</i>

.25	.25	.25	.25	.25	.25	.25
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Objective 3: Complete projects and grow programming at a 10%-20% increase per year resources including VCC's investment fund by 10% to shore private resources to have less reliance on federal funding fluctuations.

KPIs/Measurements: Program stability or expansion, Nonprofit fund balance, Profitable task-based or margin hours billed boosting projects

Resources Required: Staff time, software, training

Responsible Parties: Executive leadership, Communications staff

Strategy 1: Compete project tasks and deliverables on time and on budget, VCC successfully operates dozens of projects and can perform on these obligations and then repeat for success annually.

Strategy 2: Implement and execute a stakeholder campaign to add new stakeholders for a total goal of six new dues paying stakeholders annually.

Strategy 3: Annually identify three prospective individual private donors and cultivate/qualify them throughout the year. The top prospects will be solicited toward the end of the fiscal year for donations or memberships (develop customized approaches and target asks for each).

Strategy 4: Host annual alternative fuels Rally fundraiser event with targeted goals.

Strategy 5: Establish at least one new partnership with a non-profit organization with similar missions that can open avenues for collaborative funding annually and spread throughout the Commonwealth.

Strategy 6: Build additional sources of unrestricted funding for growth and development.

Strategy 7: Achieve an annual 75% member retention rate of current dues paying members by providing a high level of value for stakeholders, delivering continual staff contacts and early membership renewal notifications, maintaining an organized and timely invoicing system, and contacting each stakeholder quarterly.

<i>Staff Needed (FTE) 2024</i>	<i>Staff Needed (FTE) 2025</i>	<i>Staff Needed (FTE) 2026</i>	<i>Staff Needed (FTE) 2027</i>	<i>Staff Needed (FTE) 2028</i>	<i>Staff Needed (FTE) 2029</i>	<i>Staff Needed (FTE) 2030</i>
9	10	11	12	13	13	13

Appendix Attachments:

- A. Inclusive Action Plan
- B. Communications Plan
- C. Organization Continuity Plan

Virginia Clean Cities

Strategic Inclusive Action Plan

[January 2024]

Summary

Virginia Clean Cities is committed to bringing alternative fuel transportation to all people. This Inclusive Action Plan serves as a foundational and dynamic document, establishing metrics for accountability and adaptability to industry and organizational evolution. It commits to annual reviews and updates, aligning with the organization's commitment to continuous improvement. To direct the organization's inclusivity efforts this plan details where we have been, where we are going, and what actions we will take to get there.

Virginia's transportation systems carry the weight of past discriminatory practices, resulting in underserved communities burdened by economic, health, and environmental challenges. The legacy of redlining and urban renewal has left lasting impacts on social cohesion and economic opportunities. Virginia Clean Cities aims to address these disparities by acknowledging and rectifying historical injustices. There are benefits to planning for inclusivity as equitable practices not only contribute to social justice but also bring significant financial benefits to workplaces and local economies. Virginia Clean Cities recognizes the importance of fostering an inclusive community for long-term success and has seen this success first-hand. Through an inclusivity audit (2021) and Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities Threats (SWOT) Analysis (2023) conducted by the organization, VCC established a baseline for the organization's assets and needs.

Drawing from the historical and organizational background, the “Recommendations, Systems, and Best Practices” section outlines four foundational principles: Define measurable metrics, Improve organizational capacity to address and expand equitable access to clean transportation, Support and uplift key partners, and Engage with local communities. These principles will act as the organization's building blocks for making inclusivity a natural part of VCC's work. The plan outlines detailed metrics, staff education initiatives, data-based approaches, community engagement strategies, partnerships with SWaM businesses and local communities, and the establishment of an Inclusivity Task Force as methods the organization can take to demonstrate dedication to meaningful and sustainable progress.

In summary, the Virginia Clean Cities Inclusive Action Plan is a dedicated commitment to equitable access in alternative fuel transportation. With a focus on historical context, benefits of inclusivity, and detailed strategies, the plan outlines key principles, forming the foundation for meaningful and sustainable progress.

Background and Context

Historical Background

Our transportation structures are rooted in past discriminatory practices that have unfairly impacted many communities. Current infrastructure, funding, planning systems and mentalities are embedded in these past decisions. This legacy perpetuates historical harms, reproduces social inequities, and obstructs economic opportunities that disadvantage communities. VCC borrows the definition of disadvantaged communities (DACs) from the federal government. A **Disadvantaged Community** is marginalized, underserved, and overburdened by pollution. These communities (grouped by geography or common condition) most suffer from a combination of economic, health, and environmental burdens. As shown in the Geospatial Energy Mapper, Virginia is home to many DAC's, many of which exist in rural communities.

The Legacy of Historical Underinvestment in Virginia

Redlining^{1,2,3}. In the 1930s, neighborhoods were graded by the Home Owners' Loan Corporation for mortgage security. Predominantly Black or minority neighborhoods had a higher likelihood of being given "C" and "D" grades (respectively "declining" and "hazardous"), indicating areas that shouldn't be invested in. Previously redlined areas have been strongly correlated with socially vulnerable ones today (identified by the Center for Disease Control). Formerly redlined areas have less tree canopy cover and more impervious surfaces (e.g., roads, parking lots) that lead to heightened flood risks and absorb heat. Redlining led to divestment and affected neighborhoods became targets of urban renewal projects.

Urban Renewal^{4,5}. Throughout the mid-20th century, urban renewal policies destroyed African-American neighborhoods across the country at disproportionate rates. Cities displaced thousands of families from their homes. In some cases, these areas were redeveloped for public or private low-income housing, but often the land was re-purposed for commercial or industrial development or to make way for highways. Urban renewal destroyed social cohesion and led to spatial fragmentation between cities and suburbs. This destructive land use practice has harmed Virginians of color for generations.

Benefits of Equity Planning

Financial Benefits^{6,7}

Numerous studies show that putting equitable practices and goals in place can lead to significant financial benefits for businesses, including reduced turnover costs, increased productivity, risk mitigation, improved innovation, and expanded market reach. Equity planning makes stronger and more successful organizations in the long-term. A McKinsey & Company study showed that companies in the top 25% for racial/ethnic and gender diversity were

¹ [Not Even Past: Social Vulnerability and the Legacy of Redlining](#)

² [In U.S. Cities, The Health Effects Of Past Housing Discrimination Are Plain To See](#)

³ [How Decades of Racist Housing Policy Left Neighborhoods Sweltering](#)

⁴ [In Harrisonburg, reconnecting Northeast will help heal urban renewal's old wounds](#)

⁵ [RENEWING INEQUALITY Urban Renewal, Family Displacements, and Race 1950-1966](#)

⁶ [Future business success: How diverse companies perform better | BenefitsPRO](#)

⁷ [Why Diversity and Inclusion Are Good for Business](#)

respectively 36% and 25% more likely to have superior financial returns. A Cloverpop study found that diverse teams outperform individuals about 87% of the time during business decision-making processes.

Workplace Benefits⁸

Multiple surveys reveal that employees want a work environment fostering inclusion and offering opportunities for collaboration, to learn together, and for personal and career growth. A GoodHire survey found that 81% of respondents would consider leaving their employer due to their indifference to DE&I. 54% of respondents say they'd consider a pay cut to ensure a more diverse and inclusive workplace. A Boston Consulting Group survey discovered that 81% of participants who felt their workplace was inclusive also felt happy in their jobs – the triple of those who didn't.

Local Success Story⁹

Rural communities are often left out or left behind in technology shifts due to lack of access to infrastructure and connectivity, lower tax bases, distance from metropolitan centers, ability to compete in large funding programs and more. According to a study on Clean Transportation Strategies for Rural Communities in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic States, rural counties have: more families living in single family homes; an older population; lower household income; more large vehicles; an older vehicle fleet; and more vehicles with lower miles per gallon (MPG) all which impact their ability to adopt clean transportation. Furthermore, in these communities we often find that individuals hold multiple roles at once. For example, in a large school district there may be multiple fleet directors, grant writers, and route planners, whereas in a rural school district the fleet director may also be the facilities manager and the route planner leaving them little time to travel to metropolitan centers to learn about the newest transportation technology or sit through webinars to learn how to apply for funding. Virginia Clean Cities has been making an effort to specifically engage these communities in the alternative fuel transition to prevent them from missing out on the benefits of this technology.

One recent example where VCC has seen the positive impacts of emphasizing inclusion was through the Mid-Atlantic Electric School Bus Experience Project. The project, designed to bring electric school bus demonstrations to school districts, brought a bus to Salem, Virginia, in the Spring of 2022. This demonstration was attended by four rural school districts, Salem, Lynchburg, Allegheny, and Boutentourt. During the demonstration event, VCC staff were approached by the attendees and thanked for hosting a demonstration event where they could easily attend. They expressed that many demonstrations typically take place in more populated areas such as Richmond, Northern Virginia, or the Tidewater Region that are too far away for school districts in rural areas to attend. To ensure that these populations are not left behind in the clean transportation transition, it will be vital for VCC to continue to design projects, programs, and systems that specifically include and prioritize these communities and remove barriers to their participation.

Inclusive Excellence and Engagement Audit

In 2021, as part of James Madison University's Department of Research, Economic Development, and Innovation, VCC completed an Inclusive Excellence and Engagement Audit. This audit provided us with a baseline assessment of VCC's practices, processes, and systems. The following takeaways were identified:

⁸ [Diversity and Inclusion Build High-Performance Teams](#)

⁹ [Clean Transportation Strategies for Rural Communities in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic States](#)

1. VCC’s staff, systems, and processes acknowledge we work in an industry built on inequalities and on the perpetuation of inequalities.
2. J40 provides direction and funding to Clean Cities Coalitions to complete energy and environmental justice work.
3. VCC has a strong focus on collaboration and knowledge sharing in our work.
4. There was a lack (not enough) of:
 - a. Diversity on staff and board,
 - b. Diversity, Equity, Engagement, and Accessibility (DEIA) Evaluation Criteria,
 - c. Specific DEIA acknowledgment in resources & communications (e.g., VCC’s mission statement).
5. VCC had staff retention challenges.
6. There is a need to acknowledge implicit bias in communications, systems, and program designs.
7. There is a need to establish systems and processes incorporating DEIA throughout VCC’s work.

Since this baseline was established, VCC has seen the following improvements:

- Staff diversity and diversity in board leadership has increased.
- Attention to collaborating with diverse and inclusive partners has increased.
- VCC led the nation to develop and show ways to utilize VCC led mapping tools and metrics in program development and deployment to confront bias
- VCC planed, guided, and secured a national pilot program budget for equity and established a staff beachhead for this in effort 2023 and attended federal trainings in the DOE EJ pilot
- VCC has led the nation in diversity and engagement in programs and activity and in dialogue

While there have been improvements, there is still a need to establish systems and processes to further VCC’s engagement and incorporation of DEIA and to establish metrics to keep the organization accountable. Through the creation of this plan and the new Strategic Plan, there will be direct incorporation of DEIA in the strategic planning process.

SWOT Analysis

In 2023, Staff refreshed their 2022 SWOT analysis with a focus on DEIA. This analysis identified pressure points that VCC can focus on to increase organizational capacity and extend those benefits to partners and communities. Many weaknesses and threats identified were observed across the industry (e.g., high staff turnover, human capital limits, capacity problems, and lack of diversity). In conjunction with human capital limits, staff cited that saying “yes” to everybody is not a sustainable practice to pursue as it leads to unserved requests and work overloads. With trust being the most important foundation when working with DACs, it will be vital for the organization to address and minimize situations where we overpromise and underdeliver. VCC recognizes that there must be consistency to overpromise (and overdeliver when possible). By leveraging our strengths and opportunities, such as our collaborative nature, long-standing experience, our individual and shared skills, expertise in technology and funding, and the trust we have established with our partners, we can begin to address our weaknesses and threat.

Recommendations, Systems and Best Practices

Foundations

These four principles will serve as foundations as we strive to make equity seamless in VCC’s work. These principles align with our participation in the Clean Cities Energy and Environmental Justice program and the values established for the organization as part of the 2023 strategic planning process.

1

Define measurable DEIA metrics

VCC acknowledges that to ensure long-lasting and impactful benefits to DACs, DEIA principles and metrics must be incorporated into our project designs, as integral parts of the strategic planning process, and tied to the Strategic Plan’s Key Performance Indicators and through staff input into published annual report.

2

Improve organizational capacity to address and expand equitable access to clean transportation

VCC understands the need for staff and partners to understand and address barriers, be it misconceptions, lack of accessibility and infrastructure, or exclusionary system design.

3

Engage with local communities

To ensure that VCC is doing work that uplifts and empowers underserved and overburdened communities, rather than just checking boxes, VCC needs to co-develop projects and solutions that meet real, on-the-ground needs.

4

Support and Uplift Key Partners

As a long standing and reputable organization in the Commonwealth, VCC has the platforms and access to promote and uplift diverse, and local businesses. As a frequent applicant and program designer, VCC also has the opportunity to select diverse and equitable partners for this work.

1 Define measurable DEIA metrics

The following metrics in **bold** indicate the DEIA metrics established in alignment with the coalition’s larger KPIs.

Alternative Fuel Progress

	KPI	Metric
3	Consumer EV and PHEV per 1,000 people	· % of EVs and PHEVs in DAC communities
4	Local and state government engagement and education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · # Fleet meetings/analysis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o # of fleet meetings/ analysis with fleets serving DACs · # Conference and Meeting Speaking <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o # of speaking events in DACs, rural localities, at events related to DEIA, with community members o # of speaking events that focus on DEIA as a topic of discussion

Organizational/ Employee

5	Employee retention	· Retention/ increase in staff diversity
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6	Program stability or expansion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Grants onboarded <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o 1 grant onboarded to replace each expiring grant o # of grants onboarded following Justice 40 guidelines o # of grants onboarded specifically serving DACs and or Rural Communities · New Partnerships <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o 1 new partnership (public or private entity, each quarter) o # of partnerships with VA local and/ or SWaM businesses · 85% Stakeholder retention and addition- From Membership Tracker % active vs “renew or lapsed” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o % retention of VA local and SWaM members
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DEIA

10	Diverse partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · # of funded programs with specific funding for engagement with disadvantaged communities · # of success stories with DAC communities · # of events hosted that promote DAC community work and expertise
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2 Improve organizational capacity to address and expand equitable access to clean transportation

We recognize the value of numerous tools, resources, and training in improving our systems and practices. And we build the future.

Staff Education

Clean Cities University offers an Equity Learning Path to all Clean Cities employees. This will be taken by all VCC employees. Courses cover best practices for engaging diverse communities, marketing electric vehicles to diverse consumers, and more.

Data-Based Approaches

Mapping

With the creation of the Justice40 Initiative and other equity-based initiatives, many mapping tools have been developed that focus on equity or that include equity-centered layer options. VCC supported Argonne to lead to product that created the initial map tool, and worked since 2021 to frequently publish ease of use of the tool. Utilizing these tools can help us identify underserved and overburdened communities, gaps in access (e.g., EV charging stations, public transit), factors that may impact quality of life (e.g., household transportation energy burden, income, education), and communities that have multiple overlapping burdens. We recommend use of these tools throughout project planning and development, and emphasize that background research is a key component in our ability to help communities address their transportation needs. This is also a way to ensure that we are taking data-based approaches in our work and tracking where the benefits of our projects are flowing to. See appendix for example mapping tools.

Analysis tools

Many Federal and State agencies and National Labs have created tools that can measure transportation technology, needs and impacts. As with mapping, these tools should be utilized to identify, justify, and address community needs. See appendix for example tools.

Qualitative Data

When it comes to addressing community needs qualitative data can be just as valuable as its quantitative counterparts. While mapping and analysis tools can show us trends and layers that indicate lack of access or burdens, qualitative data such as community experiences can provide context, confirm if the data accurately represents the community's experiences, identify priorities and direct solutions. See section 3, Engage with Local Communities, for engagement methods to collect and utilize qualitative data.

3 Engage with local communities

We recognize the importance of community engagement as non-negligible to build sustainable systems and account for the diversity of communities across Virginia. We seek to create long-term mutually beneficial relationships that are built towards empowering communities.

We've outlined a few principles that help create an environment compatible with this goal.

1. **Recognition:** We value community input and expertise. We seek collaboration. In this context we will understand communities and detail their hopes and dreams into our recording systems to understand and assist and evolve goals together.
2. **Authenticity:** We recognize intentions should be shared and expectations aligned. We seek transparency.
3. **Consistency:** We seek to give regular updates and input requests and to maintain a relationship.
4. **Accessibility:** We want to meet people where they are. We seek convenience.
5. **Build capacity, not silos:** We seek to prepare communities to pursue funding opportunities. We want to identify gaps, assets, strengths, and resources to help them decide how to best move forward.

6. **Stepping back:** We want to take a people-first, process-second approach. We want to practice sensitive, culturally-relevant, and responsive engagement. It starts with listening and recognizing our position, how we can be perceived, and why that matters.
7. **Identify Resources:** We do not want to abuse partners by teasing resources that are inaccessible or by engaging in partnerships that are not beneficial – we will identify resources before we step forward.

Community Participation Continuum

The Community Participation Continuum (shown below) outlines five different stages of engagement: **inform** → **consult** → **involve** → **collaborate** → **empower**. The right-facing arrows indicate the progression of community engagement through the continuum. When designing a program or project it’s important to consult this continuum through the process to determine the level of engagement that the community and organization have capacity and interest in achieving and how it aligns with the applicable funding opportunity. There are three stages to community engagement: before, during, and after. While engagement may lie in different parts of the continuum during different stages of a project, the overarching goal should be to bring the project as close to empowerment as possible. Increasing community engagement and empowerment can increase the positive lasting impacts of a project and the community’s capacity to continue and maintain the project after other partners have left. Co-designing with a community can ensure that project activities align with community needs and priorities, and are designed in a way for the community to continue to benefit from and maintain once our organization’s role in the project ends. This continuum can also be utilized as an accountability tool. If the tool is employed in the design and planning of the project, and promises to the community are identified, they can be used as measures for the organization and project to hold itself to throughout the work.

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION CONTINUUM

	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
Community Participation Goal	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decision.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision-making in the hands of the public.
Promise to the Community	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.



Consider where you are at in the continuum during the three Stages of Engagement: Before, During, and After. Decide beforehand what level of engagement interests you and the community, or what aligns with the applicable funding. Then commit and hold your systems/programs accountable. The goal is to move towards empowerment.

Engagement Methods

We recognize that our engagement methods need to be an accessible process at a convenient time (e.g. many may want to find able partnerships which can providing childcare, access to transportation, and direct financial compensation). We want to meet people where they are which may mean accruing resources to travel to where they are. We thus understand that clean transportation projects might not be a priority for communities, whereas jobs, safety, health and economic opportunity may be high priority.

We seek to remain intentional and empathetic as to not let assumptions (about communities, their needs and wants) guide us. On grounds, this translates to culturally-relevant, sensitive, and responsive engagement. It starts with recognizing our position within diverse communities, how we can be perceived by them, and why that matters. **Empathy** and **listening** are integral parts of any project set in community engagement. It starts with the simple question: where could our message get lost from the perspective of community members?

While we seek to implement widely applicable systems that can be reproduced in multiple communities, we recognize that every community is different and diverse. We thus move towards creating systems that can be adapted into place-based assessments, and forgo one-size-fits all approaches. Considering these matters, we've delineated a few engagement methods to complement our projects with community input. These methods require different types of engagement, and call for various levels of time, resources, skill sets, trust and relationships with the community. We've highlighted them below along with best practices for each if resources are available.

- **Attend Community Events:** Show up where the community is already gathering. Be invested in the community outside of your assessment
- **Listening Sessions:** Larger and less structured meetings with the community. Ask open-ended questions, let the conversation flow naturally, allow community members to direct the conversation which can lead to plans for action.
- **Focus Groups:** Work with smaller groups of key community members. Ask specific questions which can translate into public or internal reports.
- **Key Informant Interviews:** In-depth one-on-one interviews with key community members which can translate to public or internal reports.
- **Community Input and Voting:** Avoid overuse of paperwork. Consider how to make the methods of distribution widely and equitably extended, including physical delivery. Work with others to review your questions to address any questions that may not be culturally sensitive or any leading questions.

4 Support and Uplift Key Partners¹⁰

We have identified several key partners to bolster our mission, goals, and values.

SWaM and local businesses

VCC acknowledges that supporting Small, Women-owned, and Minority-Owned (SWaM) Businesses boosts industry diversity and innovation, and uplifts those who have been historically and systematically barred from

¹⁰ [Virginia SWAM & DBE Certification Programs:](#)

participation in the industry. Furthermore, supporting Virginia and local businesses is a way to give back to and strengthen communities, create job growth, reduce carbon footprints, and collaborate with businesses that have a stake in the health and wellbeing in the communities they are serving. We recommend prioritizing and measuring SWaM and local businesses in VCC's membership and project partnership. Furthermore, as VCC is invited to speak and organize events SWaM and local businesses should be prioritized as guests, speakers, and recognized for their contributions. VCC can track and report on this progress.

Expand our Networks

Addressing staff, board, and industry diversity was identified as a key need for VCC. One of the most effective ways to increase organizational diversity is by increasing the diversity of organizational partners. Representation matters and helps create diverse, inclusive, and innovative organizations. Working with and uplifting diverse partners can address two of VCC's needs, 1. By continuing in the ground-work to show our investment in the success of these partners to build relationships and 2. By expanding our networks through continued leadership with partners to reach more diverse audiences when recruiting new staff, board members, or other project partners. VCC has wide success here and can continue to grow this.

Inclusivity Task Force

It is the action of this plan to establish a regularly meeting "task force" with community advisory groups composed of relevant stakeholders from across the Virginia Clean Cities service area and networks. This group will be made from and with strong contributing members of the Coalition who desire to collaborate in inclusion and will also have approximately 5 members for meeting no less than once a year.

Conclusion

This Inclusive Action Plan represents a commitment to bringing alternative fuel transportation to all people. Recognizing the historical legacy of discriminatory practices in Virginia's transportation systems, the plan aims to rectify these injustices and address the economic, health, and environmental challenges faced by underserved communities. This document outlines measurable metrics, and methods to improve organizational capacity, support key partners, and engage with local communities.

Acknowledging the longstanding organizational emphasis on inclusion, and the significant national leadership, and the organizational progress and made since audits and analyses in 2021 and 2023 Recommendations, systems, and best practices are detailed, emphasizing the four foundational principles: defining additional measurable DEIA metrics, improving organizational capacity, supporting key partners, and engaging with local communities. These principles serve as building blocks for seamlessly integrating inclusivity into VCC's work.

By working to address historical disparities, leveraging financial benefits, and actively engaging with communities, the Virginia Clean Cities Strategic Inclusive Action Plan charts a course toward a more equitable and sustainable transportation future for all Virginians.

APPENDIX

Equity Centered Definitions

General Definitions¹¹

Equity refers to resources and the need to provide additional or alternative resources so that all groups can reach comparable, favorable outcomes. (Greenlining Institute)

Mobility is the physical movement of people through space. (Greenlining Institute) We borrow this definition from the Greenlining Institute because it includes active, public, motorized, and even future forms of transportation yet to be developed.

Mobility Equity refers to a transportation system that increases access to high-quality mobility options, reduces air pollution, and enhances economic opportunity in low- income communities of color. (Greenlining Institute)

Diversity refers to the difference or variety of a particular identity. This framework focuses on race, but other markers like gender and sexual orientation can be addressed as well. (Greenlining Institute).

Inclusion refers to internal practices, policies, and processes that shape an organization’s culture. It speaks to how community members of a shared identity experience their environment. Spaces can be inclusive of particular groups while still lacking representation (i.e. diversity) of others. (Greenlining Institute)

Intersectionality is the complex, cumulative way in which the effects of multiple forms of discrimination (e.g., racism, sexism) combine, overlap, or intersect especially in the experiences of marginalized individuals or groups. (Merriam-Webster)

An example from the [Equity Network](#) “A gay man has to deal with homophobia. A black man has to deal with racism. But a black gay man will have to deal with homophobia and racism (often at the same time)”

Justice40 Definitions¹²

The Justice40 Initiative, created by Executive Order 14008. J40 sets a goal of 40% of the benefits of certain federal investments flowing to disadvantaged communities (DACs). Its purpose is to confront and address decades of underinvestment in DACs. The initiative will bring resources to communities most impacted by climate change, pollution, and environmental hazards.

A Disadvantaged Community is marginalized, underserved, and overburdened by pollution. These communities (geographic or common condition) most suffer from a combination of economic, health, and environmental burdens.

Clean Cities Environmental and Energy Justice Initiative (CCEEJI) Definitions

Environmental justice refers to the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.

Energy justice refers to the goal of achieving equity in both the social and economic participation in the energy system, while also remediating social, economic, and health burdens on those disproportionately harmed by the energy system. Energy justice aims to make energy accessible, affordable, clean, and democratically managed for all communities.

¹¹ [The Greenlining Institute: DEI Framework](#)

¹² [Justice40 Initiative](#)

Mapping Tools

- [Geospatial Energy Mapper](#) (Argonne National Labs and Lovingly Created by VCC and Argonne in MAEP project)
- [Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool](#) (U.S. Council on Environmental Quality), Mapping tool that highlights census tracts overburdened and underserved
- [USDOT Equitable Transportation Community \(ETC\) Explorer](#) (U.S. Department of Transportation), Interactive mapping tool that explores the cumulative burden communities experience, as a result of underinvestment in transportation, in the following five components: Transportation Insecurity, Climate and Disaster Risk Burden, Environmental Burden, Health Vulnerability, and Social Vulnerability
- [Energy Justice Mapping Tool - Disadvantaged Communities Reporter](#) (Argonne National Labs), Mapping tool to explore and produce reports on census tracts that the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) has categorized as disadvantaged communities (DACs)

The Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool (CEJST) identifies areas across the nation where communities are faced with significant burdens. CEJST considers the following 8 categories of burden: climate change, energy, health, housing, legacy pollution, transportation, water and wastewater, and workforce development. Other mapping tools can help us identify more specific burdens that are affecting communities and how various factors might be interconnected.

VCC Strategic Communications Plan

January 2024 – Edited Q3, 2024

I. Background

VCC is an established organization with a robust network and suite of programs. A formalized communications plan is necessary for the continued maturation and scaled-up success of the organization. The U.S. Department of Energy is requesting strategic plans from all Clean Cities Coalitions, which should include communications plans. This plan will unify, formalize and professionalize communications functions as well as provide a strategic direction in line with the overall strategic plan. *The Strategic Communications Plan is tailored to support and interact with the execution of the goals in Strategic Plan.*

This plan's vision is to *raise VCC communications excellence and to be one of the best marketed Clean Cities Coalitions in the nation.* This would include continual storytelling of our program successes for numerous stakeholder audiences and frequent national recognition of the work done in a visually engaging manner.

II. Goals

There are many goals that will be addressed in this communications plan. These goals aim to be measurable when possible.

1. Strengthen the VCC brand and reputation enhancement.
2. Support the VCC Strategic Plan's goals
3. Further outreach (Expansion) to potential clients and partners (external relations/business development)(through specific materials for fleets, community event targets, audience specific language)
4. Support VCC's diversity equity and inclusion efforts
5. Proactively tell VCC's story in a positive light understanding our key audiences
6. Formalize and professionalize communications functions
7. Event attendance reported into post-event page, annual report (location, attendance, partnerships)
8. Outreach metrics reported (subject, people contacted, partnerships)

III. Strategy

Achieving these goals will require bolstering the communications apparatus within the organization. Benchmarking against other top level Clean Cities and other environmental organizations is necessary to understand the marketing landscape. Identifying areas for improvement as well as what makes VCC unique (differentiator) or a situational analysis is essential.

This is an opportunity to further hone VCC's brand identity through documented communications instructions. VCC already has strong underpinnings of a good brand with its built-up reputation, network, website, logo, tagline, and color schemes. Opportunities exist for VCC to further build on positive technology neutral and outcomes oriented tone messaging through documenting and sharing systems to advance VCC's efforts and reputation to audiences. VCC's funding comes from two main sources: federal grant programs and stakeholder support from industry, utilities and communities through a membership program. Honing our image, appeal

VCC Strategic Communications Plan January 2024 – Edited Q3, 2024

strategy and reputation content creation guide can help increase external funding and financial sustainability.

Create style guide for Virginia Clean Cities, updating the colors and adding audience content based on evolution past VCC and upcoming federal style guide and communications/branding collaboration. Peace meal instruction elements including support level guides down to how we write blog posts, how we write press releases. Tone: positive, solutions oriented, technology neutral, problem solving, collaborative; mention specific audience(s) where possible.

Strategy: Execute each project campaign plan in ways that benefit and build on the organization and stakeholder audience

- explore new channels for its marketing in comparison to its peers,
- create short videos,
- content repurposing (reuse of content for new purposes) and
- partner influencing through leveraging popular partners/dignitaries . (I.E Billy Never Idles)
(Secure celebrities and dignitaries for statements, collaborations, joint events, marketing)

Increase the connection and logo interplay allowability between VCC and JMU. VCC is based at James Madison University (JMU), and is often disconnected from the university brand. The university's brand carries a positive reputation in the Commonwealth of Virginia, and it is worth examining using it for certain audiences and collaborations through the university. For example, if an organization has not heard of VCC, leveraging alumni or association with JMU can be a foot in the door for JMU and VCC to succeed. Additionally, as VCC rounds JMU's future research portfolio, JMU's name can help bolster this effort.



Balance and leverage sub-brands of projects so that the brands where appropriate are additive and bring audiences back to the main VCC brand as often as possible. Side brands can be related closely to VCC's logo and color but flexibility can build successes – keeping proximal coloring and fonts can keep it comfortable. VCC also maintains a many sub-brands, such as DRIVE Electric Virginia and the Hydrogen Nexus website. Balancing and leveraging these brands in relation with the main brand is a key strategy.

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[Example of VCC and sub-brand Drive Electric VA and Rural Reimagined at a public event.]

VCC does an excellent job of sharing information and resources with our stakeholders, and we can always do more to tell our success stories and provide original content to the broader public and key audiences. We do good work, we report on good work, and we get more good work.

VCC Communications Rules 2024

- 1) Know our audience
- 2) Concentrate effort to tell stories,
- 3) Securing frequent earned media, with Press and with outreach partners
- 4) Connecting publicity with programmatic goals and organization goals for lead communications efforts

Since a majority of VCC's work is tied to funded programming, the continued incorporation of communication tasks in project statements of program objectives (SOPO) and work plans is essential.

The communications team meets with VCC leadership regularly to determine upcoming needs and campaigns in the near quarter. Advance planning aligned with at least a month runway ahead of project/program events and webinars will ensure that communications products look professional and achieve stated goals. VCC has an annual program calendar that communications leadership can overlay with priorities from communications schedule.

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Plan for Implementation and Improvement

One goal is to become better at capturing peoples' attention with compelling content while relying on timely and high-quality information sharing. We must follow our best practices which ask "What's in it for our audience" on behalf of our specific audience segments. The first rule of VCC's communication is to know our audience. Since we have several audience segments, a certain amount of tailoring is continually necessary depending on interests desired outputs and outcomes.

Medium: Explore budget concepts and funding avenues from federal or stakeholder sponsors for outreach and marketing while tuning our funnel into leads for the business operations of program change, i.e., digital advertising, partnerships with social influencers, use of video, podcasts, search engine optimization research with vendors and partnerships, etc. can lead to advancements in outcomes.

Professionalization: Maximize use of communications staff and interns to ensure no typos, copyright infringements, aligning the editorial calendar, brand guidelines, defining roles, communications priorities and scheduling, advising leadership on the best path forward.

Brand guidelines: Reinforce VCC's logo, tagline, with the use of specific brand approved colors, fonts in all branded and sub-branded activities with unification of the brand across mediums and channels

Content Quality: Use of professional photography, graphics and iconography in materials, finding and planning budget for staff time input to produce quality content

Influencing: Communications that influence audience behavior, i.e., include a call to action in every piece we can. Be specific about the audience we are addressing whenever possible (e.g. fleets, small businesses) to increase sense of connection.

Name recognition: VCC should review outreach metrics for social media, followers, google analytics (direct search) and keyword search and news hits compared year to year and incorporate our annual report outcomes to measure increasing growth of our excellent name recognition and our positive, known reputation all across Virginia and fill in the gaps in engagement.

Expansion and growth strategies: Communications will support project outputs and greater coalition participation including growth opportunities for VCC and its mission to achieve greater emission reductions

Proactive Communications Lane: The VCC Communications team would review the calendar and project plans and work with members of other project team to gain knowledge of program activities, as well as advise on communications decisions, plans and strategy. Project leaders should coordinate with Communications team formally.

Diversity, equity and inclusion: Communications has a large role to play in ensuring our messaging is inclusive and is reaching intended audiences, especially on programs with

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environmental justice components. Examples include the use of alt text for photos, defining acronyms, inclusive language, diverse imagery and avoiding overly technical jargon and acronyms.

IV. Target Audiences and Analysis

VCC has a unique set of stakeholders in comparison to other environmental organizations. Our messaging should be tailored refining our audience worksheets from the Clean Cities toolbox or other audience avatars depending on the audience's interests and goals. In no particular order of importance, they include:

- Local governments, fleets
- Federal and state agencies
- General public for education purposes
- Underserved and rural communities
- Partner and allied organizations
- Companies engaged in clean transportation
- James Madison University (and other universities)

There is a need to attract new segmented clients (Such as fleets, or partners) and always space for increasing dues-paying members for our coalition to strengthen VCC's standing financially and strategically.

Market research into new clients and potential stakeholders remains a valuable task to be better incorporated into our audience outreach efforts to grow our coalition.

Shared Messages Across Audiences:

While segmentation is important, finding common themes is important for an overall communication strategy. Key messages such as emissions reduction, reduction in fuel use, cost savings, cleaner air and new technologies can be shared by all stakeholders. Additionally, the message that VCC is a helpful, public resource covers all of these segments.

These audiences' collective values often include learning about energy, reducing emissions, and reducing costs, opening new markets for their work, and furthering the clean transportation industry. Thought exercises and surveys to these audiences on what they value from VCC can inform future marketing decisions.

One core communication tool is our website and that should regularly serve as easy-to-understand backbone of VCC's communications toolbox. Clear statements on the VCC website should articulate what we are and what we do for audiences, i.e., services provided and to whom. VCC can continually learn and compare information from other Clean Cities and Communities coalition partners in the network which sites often provide a wealth of comparative language to evaluate their articulating of projects, activities and values. **Exploratory / Experimental Tools** – VCC could further innovate and modernize some communications tactics through exploration of artificial intelligence (AI), greater use of

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our search engine optimization (SEO) website tools, or greater analysis of digital advertising through external companies where appropriate, and behavior analysis, and more targeted marketing.

Improving physical event and marketing materials for audiences will go a long way in properly reaching them and in balancing from frequent disconnect of Clean Cities branding on some federal fliers. In addition to brand unification, outreach materials should be visually appealing, physically smaller such as half or quarter sheets, brief, and with methods to return to VCC's main website. VCC should review our existing materials at least every two years, and following content creation, posting copies to VCC publications resources.

- **Key Virginia Clean Cities Messages** – These messages are approximate to convey the tone and overarching spirit of our work – this list is general not specific /limiting text:
 - VCC is here to help and collaborate as a coalition - with everyone to reach their clean transportation goals.
 - We are alternative fuel, vendor and technology neutral focused on outcomes and support
 - Clean Cities and Communities is a national Department of Energy partnership, of which Virginia (VCC) is a leader, supporting the entire state and wider region
 - Clean fuels are an economic benefit for Virginia which produces no oil and local renewable energy production benefit the entire Commonwealth, and country.
 - We have subject matter experts, we provide technical expertise, advice and we connect clients with resources.
 - VCC is supportive of the clean transportation industry and economic development in Virginia.
 - Etc and So-on

V. Key challenges

Capacity: Even with a larger team, VCC staff individual capacity is often full due to the priorities in federal programs and the wide range of program task outputs and outcomes through our suite of complementary but overlapping initiatives. Some communication projects that lack advanced budgets and planning default to simple language and lean content. Consistent internal tracking and planning for expected communications outputs and outcomes can align labor with calendars. Identification of communications priorities and enhanced internal communications can occur at frequency. An overall billable alignment and scheduling and communications templating on project and communications priorities aligns inputs, outputs, and outcomes for the mission and the programs.

Content Overlap: There are instances where VCC is promoting several events in a similar timeframe and blast emails “overflow” of communication outputs can confuse and overload our audiences. Delay or urgency can lead to audience confusion, tuning out, or unsubscribing. Weekly staff meetings, attention to project calendars and annual calendars, and engagement on campaigns and organizational priorities can reduce overflow.

Budget: VCC's marketing budget is very small compared with similar environmental organizations some who are entirely focused on market engagement for revenue. Most Clean Cities coalitions do not have substantial marketing budgets and lack communications staff so this is a national problem.

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Consideration for unrestricted funds and fundraising or creative, lean marketing methods are two solutions for stretching the lean budget into positive outcomes.

Reactive and Proactive Editorial Calendar: Portions of VCC’s communications such as our news blog content is reactive based on major milestones and information received from federal agencies or stakeholders. Value can be gained by drafting and utilizing an editorial calendar for project outcomes. The Communications Director should be aware of project milestones and be informed and engaged early and often in outcomes, with a seat and at the discussion table. These campaigns can be informed by program deliverables and the VCC Strategic and Annual Plans. Also, efforts to provide specific value outputs by creating content should be planned and pursued. Labor division can reflect completing both tasks.

Internal shift: VCC is innovating with a communications director and communications department and recognizes this may be a long process of educating leadership, staff and funders about the role of this department and how it can add value to VCC’s outputs. VCC’s prior nonprofit model relied often times on pro-bono rapid communication tasks assigned and quickly carried out by expert staff and interns. This new model involves the communications department engaging communications products, inputs, outputs and plans where possible.

VI. Situation analysis

Brand Visibility: VCC has an excellent external reputation among our stakeholders. Due to the wide range of transportation audiences, there are still some audiences who have never heard of VCC. Is this a major issue? Sometimes it can be, when we have to spend time establishing our credibility. We compare very well with other Clean Cities coalitions; and while our visual brand is well regarded, there are always reasonable spaces for enhancement. Further work on visual brand, design and imagery may come out of this plan.

Federal funding agencies, our stakeholders and other groups view us as leading, competent, helpful and knowledgeable. We are seen by Virginia stakeholders and visitors as a go-to organization for clean transportation; many constituents find resources online primarily through our webpages. However, with a wide population some potential partners and localities are not fully aware and engaged in our coalition.

Some organizations also have not fully analyzed the strategic path for technology change and align only on smaller portions of our marketplace. Transportation decarbonization over the decades ahead is a complicated thing to communicate.

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VII. Competitor and Collaborator Analysis

A handful of Clean Cities Coalitions have very attractive and defined brand visual identities, starting with their websites. Other Clean Cities do a great job of telling stakeholders what they are and what they do (their suite of services). We can learn from the things we like on their pages, and share that internally as we explore how to change our pages if appropriate. Website changes are a constant area for collaboration, communications and engagement.

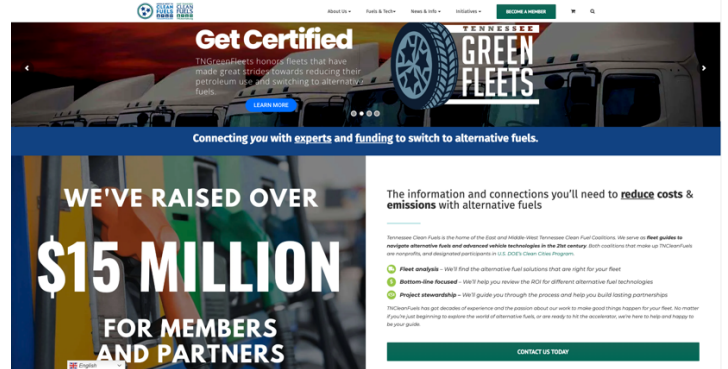
Empire Clean Cities:

<https://www.empirecleancities.org/>



Tennessee Clean Fuels:

<https://www.tncleanfuels.org/>



Utah Clean Cities:

<https://utahcleancities.org/>



Other Examples:

Clean Fuels Ohio: <https://cleanfuelsohio.org/>

Columbia-Willamette Clean Cities:

<https://www.cwcleancities.org/>

Drive Clean Colorado:

<https://drivecleancolorado.org/>

Notable attributes of good websites, many of which are established on VCC's website:

- They clearly and simply state their key services, where and to whom.
- Comprehensive navigation bar that isn't overwhelming with information.
- They have professional "hero" banner images that give engaging information.
- Hero imagery has elements of geographic/cultural significance, i.e., mountains in Colorado
- Aesthetic and organized layout that often incorporates brand colors
- There are elements of movement: video blocks, carousels, and/or fade-in content.
- Interactive graphics: some change properties when scrolled over
- They often have an "outreach" section for media, publications, events, and how to contact them for those things.
- They emphasize funding received *for* their partners
- They talk about their active and completed projects

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Common issues of Clean Cities websites:

- Too little information on front page: visitors have to know what they are looking for, instead of being guided/funneled to the information they need.
- Too much information: the front page is filled with links that aren't relevant to most visitors.
- Infrequent website updates can lead to promoting old information

How we might improve our site/brand:

- Front page: Increase how we describe *who we are and the range of active services we provide*. VCC can regularly update carousel with additional targeted information for audiences and focus on our best photos. Use images that are high quality, diverse and representative of VCC's current activities and Virginia's communities.
- For content philosophies we can emphasize our website navigation bar as a system of organization and consolidation and avoid lost or extra pages.
- Blog posts: VCC uses the news/blog to present content to all, and recirculates best content in our monthly newsletter – this is our space to utilize the blog to create original content, such as success stories VCC related news, in addition to showcasing partner content – this will require project managers and staff professionals to continue to produce content in coordination with the communications team.
- VCC can continue to improve pages like our resources pages: some examples of resource layouts that inspired staff are [Clean Cities Georgia \(simple\)](#) or [Empire Clean Cities \(more built out\)](#). [Resources should continually be tested with users and work to satisfy their needs.](#)

Virginia Clean Cities is recognized as the authority for clean transportation in Virginia given our long track record in this space. Our messaging can enhance this and help visitors and stakeholders realize our dedication and our reliability as a resource.

The national Clean Cities and Communities partnership has limited external marketing and general public name recognition due to the work on fleets. Updated DOE Clean Cities and Community branding can be used and leveraged with VCC products.

VIII. Implementation and tactics

Virginia Clean Cities currently uses traditional communications methods including these listed below:

- Fliers, handouts
- Giveaway materials or swag
- Events, outreach
- Strategic partnerships
- Social media
- Google Analytics
- Video, photography –VCC led nation Clean Cities TV and can stand out with short videos by tracking our handbook guides
- PowerPoints, backgrounds video, table displays
- Websites
- Earned media

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- Email marketing
- Webinars and podcasts

Our communications team will seek to implement the following into our communications: Recognize and utilize VCC’s leading status with video content and publicly accessible public photography, expanded digital marketing, increased SEO use and web content updating, creating and publishing podcasts, and technology enhancement (CRM such as VCC’s call log and other systems and AI experimentation with basic internal communication).

The communications department is involved with all aspects of outreach and events, including creation, staffing, promotion and documentation (photography, video). VCC uses events extensively to carry out its mission. This plan will contribute to the professionalization of event materials and promotion.



[Alternative fuel and electric vehicle showcase at VCC’s annual Rally in Richmond event.]

Solutions:

1. We endeavor to use these channels more thoughtfully with outreach partners in planned concerted campaigns, with different channels, while also recognizing the value for many content elements from many activities with a “Create Once Post Everywhere” and partner-provided language strategy for some content. VCC will continue basic metrics analysis of communications campaigns primarily tied to goals and contractual programs outcomes.
2. Larger campaigns can be detailed in one-page work plans with messaging, images, a timeline, goals and metrics, and shared with partners for their further reach. Smaller one-off coalition communication tasks are now being placed in an internal queue for staff to track and prioritize communicate, and report on workflow.
3. Most communication campaigns start with the “why” or goal of the work. This type of “W” inquiry should be a guiding force in each campaign; What are we trying to accomplish? How many of them? Where is this? Who is taking action? Examples: We are sharing content for an event seeking to present path for X number of attendees, X number of sponsors, and X partner

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recognition at an event or X of consumers understanding a tax credit so they can secure new funding.

4. Evaluation of communication requests: task outputs can be discussed in terms of professional staff, workforce program interns, or volunteer time and effort required, and there may be staff capacity limits that can flow down through a system of action. Any action that does not fit will be dialogued with leadership and partners, but systems will allow for actions to occur on timely basis.
5. In order to enhance our communications and marketing functions, there may be a need for more funding and cost level budgeting.

XII. Positioning Statements and Tone

VCC is fortunate that it embodies messaging that is truly positive to the external audiences.

Suggested tone: helpful, a resource, subject matter experts, broad network, technologists, hopeful, collaborative, neutral party for advice with no hidden agenda, inclusivity for disadvantaged communities and for all.

As a hybrid-state government entity, VCC strives to keep a nonpartisan stance in politics, including on our social media channels. The bi-partisan nature of the national Clean Cities program has been critical to its continued success, by embracing alternative fuels and clean energy jobs from constituencies across the Commonwealth and nation.

These are the key messages to be used in the tone of how we write content for various channels (website, social, print, etc.)

XIII. Cost Strategy/Budget

Currently VCC has worked year over year to secure funding to enhance its promotions budget, which was increased each year in significant ways. Like our peers, we operated through limited funds and strategic-lean methods of communicating. Many of these tactics will continue with a more concerted and organized manner. The budget sketch explores possible ways to further our brand.

Print: \$1,000 VCC should work to minimize oversized paper/print materials that can easily be thrown away from events and has worked to design smaller-size content. VCC can print content from JMU Print Services and other potential print needs always incorporating our proper logo.

Event materials/giveaways: \$2,500 VCC has branded materials such as a branded tablecloth, feather flags, bumper stickers, water bottles, and pens. VCC can consider additional useful green giveaways may be appropriate.

Visual supplies: \$2,500 VCC could explore purchase of additional photography and video equipment. A shared procurement with other departments is an additional cost saving option to explore.

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Digital marketing: \$2,500. For those campaigns that need an extra push, some funds reserved for targeted outreach may be necessary.

Experimental AI: \$1,500 if appropriate Artificial Intelligence tools and social media management platform subscriptions if appropriate or use of approved university software. Some Microsoft and Adobe AI tools are already included in our subscriptions. VCC staff will communicate use of AI tools and carefully consider AI images through a team approach.

Total: \$10,000

XIV. Metrics for success

VCC will plan communications tasks for action for inputs in terms of staff costs then outputs in terms of actions, deliverables and timelines in terms of achievements as are reported quarterly and annually in projects spread across our actions:

- Events including webinars attendance numbers (reported to website past events)
- Social media metrics: likes, impressions, reshares, etc.
- Video views (reported monthly by YouTube)
- User surveys
- Program tasks and milestones met
- Email marketing open rates and subscription rates and interested list size
- Giveaway materials distributed
- Website Google Analytics
- Earned media numbers per quarter

Conclusion: Where we've been, where we're going

VCC has done an excellent job of building a leading coalition, and in building a communications network, and in fulfilling its mission and programs. This strategic communications plan will carry VCC to new heights and into the future.

Coalition Continuity Plan

Organization

Virginia Clean Cities is nonprofit environment, economic, and energy security organization with a major partnership with James Madison University. The organization was founded in 1996 (originally named Hampton Roads Clean Cities Coalition), expanded statewide in 2001, and partnered with JMU in 2009. Virginia Clean Cities is one of the country's largest nonprofit clean cities coalitions, and prides itself with diverse funding, strong financial and administrative processes, and as a key information hub for media, fleets, businesses and government in Virginia.

VCC's position as a hosted nonprofit represents a model for the nation for this structure of organizations. Keeping a balance with university and public service support, VCC is positioned to advance research, technology integration, and public service while maintaining state-employee state and benefits for a range of employees as well internship, career, and research opportunities for faculty and students and community members in the commonwealth.

Continuity of Staff: Deputy as Acting Director

The Executive Director (ED) of Virginia Clean Cities serves as the organization's Chief Executive. The Director is responsible for the operation of the unit at JMU and the organization. Director is responsible for 1) coordinating the nonprofit and university resources to annually achieve the missions of the organization and support the mission of the University under the laws of the Commonwealth of Virginia; 2) Securing resources for those missions and 3) reporting on those and 4) maintaining systems for repetition and growth and other duties as assigned in job title and role. Director plays a communications role in the continuity of staff operations.

The staff of Virginia Clean Cities play critical roles in support of the organization and roles in continuity of operations, and are led by a chief of staff, Deputy Director.

Temporary Operations:

From time to time there will by necessity be periods of operational continuity where Deputy Director or others will assume leadership roles. As required for operations, the Deputy Director will serve as Interim Director in the absence of the ED.

*Virginia Clean Cities has established internal systems and core excellence where **Deputy Director will serve as Acting VCC Director** in the planned or emergency absence of the Director. In these instances, Board President will serve as authorizing party for nonprofit, and Vice Provost of Research and Scholarship will serve that role.*

There should also regularly be leadership opportunities for others including events holidays and weekends – In the expected event of a temporary absence of ED and Deputy Director, leadership will be assigned through the Chain of Command and based on availability as appropriate such as available staff or interns. These events will be chances

to stress test. To serve as Acting Director staff should know some basics of the organization that are instilled in all staff from the program coordinator level and on up.

These leadership milestones include:

- Core **competency in the history of the organization** including founding in 1996, organized with a board and bylaws and financial policies, the organizational chart and other staff, details on address, and where to find other details such as SAM and DUNS information in shared files, information on the Board and copies of active or recent strategic and annual plans and understanding and access to employee handbook
- Leaders should be **aware of stakeholders in the coalition and be able to access call logs and communications tools** like Constant Contact and aware of how to process funding through our website and banks.
- Leaders should **be aware of the basics of program agreements with sponsors**, sponsor contact, as detailed in the active project awards, financial sites like ASAP, Fedconnect and Sam.gov and PMC.
- **Core knowledge of clean fuels** under the program purview
- And **aware of the local regional and state funding** and where to find resources to share.
- Finally, staff should be **aware of resources offered by JMU, DOE, EPA, and DOT** and where to find more information

Acting Director should have working knowledge of: History. Stakeholders. Financial. Program Contractual and culture of Virginia Clean Cities and should never feel alone in these operations as support is often a phone.

Career pathways

Virginia Clean Cities must continually provide a path for upward mobility for retaining of top talent including regular role and responsibility reviews, annual evaluations, and smooth transitions between roles. The organization depends on a width of staff capacities as well as detailed project and program work plans and early actions to achieve objectives even through vacations and absences.

Continuity of Operations

Continuity of operations is a key and is the basis on ongoing activities. We do good work, we report on good work, and we get more good work. The continual cutting-edge workflow of Virginia Clean Cities lets each operation and each year test and improve upon systems. Each system VCC operates is a way to maintain continuity of record, with an opportunity to treat systems as a place to make milestones continually high quality and growing in positive impact.

VCC will continually strengthen, evaluate, and adjust shared functional systems to achieve goals and milestones. This includes investing time in systems and investing time in cross-training staff on systems.

VCC Systems:

- *Cross Training perspective for work where staff are able to use systems and recall information as needed*
- *Culture of program excellence where learning opportunities maintain focus*
- *Annual Operating Plan and Strategic Plan (3-5 years)*
- *Google Suite for communications and emails and phones*
- *Continual Google Chat*
- *Toggl for project time tracking and recoverable reporting*
- *Dropbox File Services for shared projects*
- *VCC deep digital storage computer for long-closed past projects*
- *Physical Consistent folder organization*
- *Constant Contact communication database*
- *Shared google annual Call Log*
- *Website with news events and reporting sections and updated project content*
- *Social media communications including Flickr, X, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn*
- *Shared financial database*
- *Quarterly board meetings with recorded minutes*
- *Regular project meetings with recorded minutes*
- *VCC Employee Handbook and national Clean Cities Forum*
- *Shared physical offices and library of outreach material*
- *Others*

Emergency Preparedness

JMU has an Office of Emergency Management and an integrated comprehensive emergency management program for JMU. Harrisonburg, Rockingham, and JMU have Emergency Operations Plans detailed online.

Planned Succession Planning

1. Establish your target transition date for the leader to leave
2. Identify Advisory Group and meet with advisory group members to:
 - a. Discuss the implications for funding, staffing, and programs
 - b. Discuss opportunities and challenges presented by the leader's transition
 - c. Establish who will lead the process (established committee or a new search committee)
3. Identify resources required for the recruitment process (may include a search firm, consultant, or internal staff)
4. Develop an initial communications plan and language for an internal and an external announcement for the transition as well as the eventual new leaders
5. Determine whether additional strategic planning work or document updates needs to be completed to support the selection and onboarding of a new leader
6. Have the departing leader update the procedures and documents related to their work prior to departure
7. Have incoming leader and staff restructure partnerships and agreements as appropriate and reintroduce to stakeholders

Staff Onboarding and Offboarding Checklists

In addition to the Executive Director's continuity plan, we found a need for guidance through staff onboarding and offboarding. These checklists will serve as a resource to guide staff through the process in an effort to achieve more efficient and smooth transitions.

VCC New Staff Onboarding Checklist

- Existing staff to establish projects to bring new staff into based on strengths seen in the hiring process and project need
 - These should be outlined before the new staff start in a Pre-Roles meeting
- The VCC Employee Handbook should be updated in advance of hire with team approach to any changes
- Pair with a non-leadership mentor and with Leadership Mentor
 - Preferably someone who has had the same or similar role in recent years
 - Executive Leadership mentor
- Resource preparation
 - Office cleaned, prepped, or shared space identified
 - Temporary Computer Assignment (while waiting for JMU System)
 - Computer – Identify Mac or PC
 - Important relevant access to systems
 - Dropbox installed on computer for all relevant files
 - Clean Cities University
 - Coordinator Toolbox
 - Google Workspace
 - Keys and JACard once the employee has been added to the JMU system
- Roles meeting as soon as possible in person with new hires

VCC New Staff Offboarding Checklist

- Staffer should follow JMU offboarding checklist
- Update project partners and key stakeholders of transition
- Set up a long-term vacation responder in VCC Gmail email systems with a plan shut down date for that email account
 - Express that to partners of are leaving and provide new points of contact on staff
- Add/ update all of relevant login info in the UN PW sheet
 - Transfer ownership of relevant files or accounts
 - VCC Chief of Staff should change passwords on sheet after transition
- Transfer all remaining project relevant files from desktop or emails to Dropbox
 - *VCC and JMU staff do not review hard drives before wiping the computer, any files not shared or saved to the Dropbox will be lost*
- Extra diligence for timely update of project trackers and share any relevant project notes that are not already in a shared folder
- Meet with remaining staff to relay skills, roles, and project components that they may need to take responsibility over