

Climate Action Committee (CAC) Meeting Minutes - 1/21/26

Pursuant to a notice duly filed with the Town Clerk, a public meeting of the CAC was held on January 21st 2026 at 7:00 pm in person at the Select Board Meeting Room and via Zoom (hybrid). A recording of this meeting is available on [YouTube](#).

Committee members attending: Brad Dye (BradD, chair), Bob Shatten, Brad Hubbard-Nelson (BradHN, clerk), Shelly Karlin, Paul Kirshen, Fran Cummings (via zoom), Kathryn Hopkins
Other attendees: Dean Banfield, Wendy Rovelli (Select Board liaison), Megan Zammuto (via zoom), Sophia Annunziata (via zoom), Jerry Frenkil (via zoom), Charlie Parker

High level summary (AI): The Climate Action Committee meeting focused on reviewing a warrant article for municipal solar policy, which the committee unanimously endorsed. The group discussed the town's progress toward its solar goals and the challenges with the current distribution system. They also reviewed plans for updating the Climate Action Plan, including community engagement strategies and the need to track progress toward sustainability goals. The committee addressed the importance of involving relevant stakeholders, such as CMLP and other town departments, in the planning process. Updates were provided on various initiatives, including GSEP filing, school projects, and the upcoming consultant-led Climate Action Plan update.

- All committee members: Send one-paragraph bio with photo to Shannon by close of business Friday
- Shannon: Add GSEP follow-up meeting with National Grid to parking lot list for climate action plan
- BradD: Contact Laura Scott about attending future climate action meetings
- BradD: Send solar task force report to committee members
- BradHN: Request complete data dump of assessor's database for building information
- Fran: Conduct emission inventory analysis for 2024 using MAPC tool
- BradHN/Shelly: Meet with student group in next 1-2 weeks to help develop induction cooking promotion campaign

Meeting opened at 7:05 pm.

1. Welcome – comments and announcements
 - a. BradD mentioned an application for a gas station at Kenny Dunn Square, West Concord. CAC could discuss at a future meeting
 - b. BradD highlighted two Jan 28th events: a Metro West Climate Solutions webinar and a Bedford chapter meeting on composting, and encouraged attendance.
2. Approval of minutes: Bob moved to approve Dec 1th CAC minutes , Paul second, approval unanimous. BradHN moved to approve Jan 5 minutes, with minor correction on attendee list, Bob second, unanimous approval.
3. Chair update:
 - a. The CAC Annual report submitted (Attachment 1).
 - b. Town Meeting Warrant is closing on Friday, with 47 articles so far, and the committee will review these in February and March as needed.
4. Deputy Town Manager's update: Megan Zammuto (written report - Attachment 2)
 - a. Megan has been doing a lot of public outreach, including a Civic Concord [podcast episode](#) with Ethan Herberman, (75 listeners).
 - i. BradHN suggested the [CoolerConcord.org](#) website and newsletter could promote these podcasts, most of which are sustainability related.
 - b. Megan discussed progress on the SUASCO Climate Collaborative, including four community focus groups and plans for a youth outreach effort, assisted by Sophia.

- i. BradD asked about the March meeting at Harvey Wheeler, 7pm Mar 28th. This will be advertised 6 weeks in advance
 - ii. Paul said the group plans to reach out to EJ communities in the watershed and will translate materials into other languages to reach them.
 - c. A draft decarbonization roadmap from Power Options is being reviewed, and there are efforts to end the town's natural gas supply contract to join Power Options' building decarbonization service as an Energy Services Company (ESCO)
 - i. Fran volunteered to review the roadmap. He also asked whether there might be a way to invite nonprofits to join with Power Options to take advantage of the service..
 - ii. Bob asked about whether the ESCO covered electricity purchases. It only involves natural gas and not electricity, as CMLP provides power to municipal buildings.
 - d. Shelly mentioned there would be a Schools Sustainability Meeting next Wednesday. Megan or Shannon will get on the distribution list and attend
- 5. Presentation on proposed municipal solar policy: Charles Parker, Dean Banfield.
 - a. Dean gave a presentation (**Attachment 3**) about a proposed bylaw on municipal solar policy for April Town Meeting. He shared the town's solar goals and progress since 2010, highlighting the Solar Task Force's recommendation to integrate solar design into new building projects to avoid overlapping responsibilities and ensure economic viability. He discussed the challenges of integrating solar arrays into new public buildings, highlighting the need for an integrated design approach to avoid timeline conflicts and overlapping maintenance responsibilities. The proposed bylaw would require implementing rooftop solar on all new public buildings, which would reduce operating costs and align with the town's goals. The discussion also covered the financial implications of embedding debt for solar projects, with a payback period of 6-8 years, and the introduction of a bylaw requiring solar installations on new buildings, with an option for the select board to waive it in certain cases.
 - b. They identified four potential sites for ground solar, but bureaucratic challenges prevent development on three of them. The town is currently at 7.5 megawatts of solar capacity, with plans to add 2.5 megawatts at the landfill this year.
 - c. The discussion also covered commercial solar development, noting that while it's not part of the current article, CMLP has been resistant to large-scale installations due to grid stress concerns, though they are working on interconnect agreements to address this issue. It is important to complete the battery project to enable further commercial solar projects and future opportunities at 2229 and the MCI property for integrating solar into development plans. The group discussed the need for better marketing and outreach to commercial entities, as well as the importance of creating a bylaw to formalize solar initiatives, with Town advocating for a bylaw to ensure long-term implementation.
 - d. Paul asked about the importance of being "Behind the Meter": This is so that the savings for the building would be the full retail price, rather than the wholesale price which CMLP pays for systems not behind-the-meter.
 - e. Fran asked whether CMLP supported the article, which was answered affirmatively.
 - f. The proposed article doesn't address building design for solar orientation and architectural integration. Megain clarified that most municipal buildings use flat roofs, which provide optimal solar orientation, and confirmed that the policy should aim to blend sustainability with functionality rather than treating it as an afterthought.
 - g. BradHN made a motion to endorse the article, Kathryn seconded, and the committee voted unanimously in support.
- 6. [Climate Action and Resilience Plan](#)
 - a. Debrief of brainstorming session on Jan 6. BradD to send the digital version of everything captured.
 - b. BradD to consider how to include outside people in a systematic way. One finance person (Ryan Ferrara, assistant CFO) was at the session. Kathryn commented that we should definitely have a finance person involved as a stakeholder
 - c. Fran commented that CMLP is more than just another stakeholder, but tht role should be formalized and elevated.

- d. *First steps for engaging vendor: Shannon and Megan met with Weston & Sampson. Shannon shared timeline graphic (attachment 4). W&S will attend Feb 11th meeting, and every other month*
 - e. *Committee members were asked to provide to Shannon a one-paragraph background on interests and sustainability, by Friday.*
 - f. *Anticipating a draft Community Engagement plan to review in February. BradD suggested making using elements of the engagement plans from CMLP and wastewater treatment. They gave examples about how committee members could have greater roles in community engagement*
 - g. *BradD said we need a system in place to collect ideas, before deliberating and dispensing. Kathryn described a school project which is a similar exercise, a parking lot for ideas.*
 - h. *Homework assignment for committee members, is to think of parking lot items and send to Shannon and BradD*
 - i. *Fran suggested we need to soon do the emissions progress for 2024 using the MAPC tool. BradHN will request a complete copy of assessors database for 2025.*
7. *Other updates*
- a. *GSEP/non-pipeline alternatives: Fran filed the GSEP comments which were discussed at the December meeting. Fran asked about a follow up meeting with National Grid. Niot yet scheduled, though should e added to*
 - b. *Networked Geothermal - no update*
 - c. *Schools*
 - i. *Solar panels on the agenda for the school committee agenda for this evening. Schools are intending to move forward with a new RFP*
 - ii. *Shelly reported that Bruce Feeman connection approved by school committee*
 - iii. *BradHN reported that sthodont group working on the Youth Climate Solutions Challenge is working on promoting induction cooking. This project wraps up in April. Bob suggested focusing on induction in developing world, since impacts are much greater, but this needs to be a local project*
8. *Public comments - None*
9. *Adjourned at 9:06ppm*

Attachments:

- 1. *CAC 2025 Annual Report, as submitted*
- 2. *Staff monthly report - January 2026*
- 3. *Presentation on Municipal Solar Bylaw (Dean Banfield)*
- 4. *Timeline on Climate Action Plan update, from Weston & Sampson*

Town of Concord Annual Report 2026
Climate Action Committee (CAC)

Fran Cummings
Brad Dye, Chair
Kathryn Hopkins
Brad Hubbard-Nelson, Clerk
Shelly Karlin
Paul Kirshen
Bob Shatten
Wendy Rovelli, Select Board Liaison

The Climate Action Committee (CAC) was established in 2023 to implement policies and practices to achieve the objectives of the Town's Climate Action and Resilience Plan (CAP). CAC responsibilities include:

- reporting on progress in greenhouse gas emission reduction and other CAP goals;
- educating the public and businesses about sustainable practices;
- developing customer focused incentives and programs to reduce emissions;
- identifying present and future climate vulnerabilities and adaptation strategies;
- implementing projects and initiatives for encouraging sustainable energy practices; and
- providing input to and adopting revisions to the CAP.

The committee chooses projects which complement the sustainability work of the Deputy Town Manager, CMLP and other Town entities.

With the five-year 2020 CAP coming to the end of its intended life, the CAC spent much of its time evaluating the progress made under the current CAP and preparing to launch an updated five-year plan in 2026. The committee began the process of evaluating the successes and shortcomings of community efforts to address our climate emergency, including the recruitment of volunteers to help in our evaluation, Town staff to inform our research, and identification of missing or out-of-date data that we will require to analyze municipal energy usage. In conjunction with staff, the CAC worked on a successful search to secure a consultant to craft our next CAP. Completing our next CAP will be the focus of our efforts in the coming year.

Progress was made by CAC members and Town staff on several projects which measure Concord's emissions and help to guide the most cost-effective and practical methods for reducing emissions, or achieving a greater measure of climate resilience. These projects include:

- an audit of energy use in municipal buildings to establish updated emission baselines;
- a decarbonization roadmap exercise which is required for the Town to be certified as a Climate Leader under the Green Communities Program;

- identification of a state grant opportunity to build EV chargers for use by the school district, which the district successfully secured;
- successful pursuit of a Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness grant to establish a Regional Climate Collaborative for towns in the Sudbury, Assabet and Concord watershed;
- updates to the Sustainability Dashboard which we use to track emission reduction progress; and
- updates to the Cooler Concord website, mailing list and social media presence.

In 2025, CAC was involved in several policy deliberations. During or pursuant to these deliberations, we:

- Expressed our regret for the budget cuts that led to the elimination of the Sustainability Director position. This position had been approved by the 2017 Annual Town Meeting under warrant article 51, which passed by a near-unanimous vote. CAC has worked closely with the Deputy Town Manager and the Management Specialist who have absorbed the responsibilities of the Sustainability Director, and has helped to ensure continuity by recruiting CAC members or other volunteers to help on projects as needed.
- Unanimously endorsed 2025 Annual Town Meeting warrant article 36, a successful citizen petition which sought to ban second-generation anticoagulant rodenticides (SGARs). This ban requires enabling legislation, which has yet to be enacted by the General Court.
- Sought several improvements to the 2025-26 Select Board goals on effective governance and sustainability, some of which were incorporated.
- Unanimously endorsed the middle school Parent Teacher Group's efforts to establish a link between the new middle school building and the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail.
- Monitored outcomes from the popular composting pilot program. With the program now suspended, the CAC intends to seek opportunities to take what we have learned into a second-phase experiment in future years.
- Strongly encouraged a more enterprising role for Town policymakers to accelerate our efforts in reducing emissions and preparing and adapting to the future; to let the federal administration know our commitment to fight against shortsighted actions that will hurt people, the environment, and our communities; and to join local, regional, and global networks that are working together to address the climate emergency and push back against dangerous political forces.

One policy which the CAC considered, but did not vote on, is a proposed municipal solar policy which would require rooftop-mounted solar panels be installed in all new-construction government buildings. Given the current inability to install rooftop solar on the new middle school building - a project which has secured overwhelming community support and bonding authorization to build - we shall return to this discussion in 2026.

The CAC formally commented on state and federal policies which intersect with our climate emergency, sending letters to the legislature's Joint Committee on Telecommunications, Utilities

and Energy, the Department of Public Utilities, the Executive Office of Energy Resources, the office of the Governor, and the Environmental Protection Agency.

CAC members also engaged with our community by:

- staging Green Home Tours in conjunction with CMLP to highlight opportunities for residential emission reduction and to connect interested residents with Heat Pump Coaches;
- communicating with other town committees on issues of mutual interest;
- tabling at Ag Day;
- attending briefings and events on a wide variety of environmental and transportation issues; and
- staging a successful Sun Day, in conjunction with Mothers Out Front, the First Parish Church and organizers of a national day of action to celebrate the power of clean energy.

The Climate Action Committee believes that we must accelerate our efforts to mitigate global warming and climate change. We encourage ourselves, our town leadership, and our neighbors to do more for our planet in 2026 than we did in 2025.

January 2026

Sustainability Staff Update

1. Community Engagement & Education: Home Electrification and Heat Pumps

“Does It Work?” Mid-Winter Home Tour

Staff supported outreach for the “Does It Work?” Mid-Winter Home Tour, a resident-facing event designed to demystify heat pump performance during cold weather. The tour highlights local homes using air-source heat pumps and provides residents with an opportunity to hear directly from homeowners about comfort, energy use, and real-world performance. **Register for the Mid-Winter Home Tour here:** <https://cmlp.jotform.com/253446079268063>.

Civic Concord Podcast – Heat Pumps and Home Electrification

Last week, staff hosted a special episode of the *Civic Concord* podcast to highlight the Mid-Winter Home Tour and broader opportunities for residents to make the switch to heat pumps. The episode features Ethan Herberman, Heat Pump Coach with the Concord Municipal Light Plant, and covers how the technology works, what affects performance in cold weather, and what homeowners and communities should understand as adoption grows.

The episode is intended for both local and regional audiences interested in practical, real-world experiences with home electrification and decarbonization.

Listen here: <https://open.spotify.com/episode/4kmWidgCIL7563W67k2cXY>

2. SuAsCo Climate Collaborative (MVP Action Grant)

Status and Engagement Progress

The SuAsCo Climate Collaborative continues to move into the active engagement phase.

- Four focus groups were held in the last month – two for municipalities and two for community-based organizations.
- A youth focus group is scheduled for the end of January, with assistance from a Concord resident and a Concord-Carlisle High School student to support youth outreach and facilitation.

Summary – Municipal Focus Group #1 (December 17, 2025)

The discussion centered on challenges communities are already facing and where regional collaboration could add the most value.

Flooding and drought emerged as the most common climate hazards across communities, with heat and extreme weather also frequently cited. Participants noted that vulnerability varies by town and population, with seniors, people with disabilities, small businesses, farmers, environmental justice communities, and aquatic ecosystems all identified as particularly at risk.

Aging stormwater infrastructure—especially culverts—was a major theme. Several communities described rising costs tied to updated Stream Crossing Standards, turning projects that once cost hundreds of thousands of dollars into multi-million-dollar efforts. This has pushed many towns into a reactive posture, addressing urgent failures rather than pursuing long-term, proactive planning.

Stormwater utilities and enterprise funds were discussed as an important tool for building sustainable funding. Communities shared a range of experiences, from recently launching utilities and conducting public outreach, to long-standing enterprise funds that now anchor MS4 compliance and multi-year capital planning.

Water supply resilience also featured prominently. Participants highlighted the growing need to diversify water sources and improve drought preparedness. Regional collaboration is already underway, including a joint MassDEP Water Management Act grant application submitted by Acton, Concord, and Littleton to explore shared system capacity during extreme drought.

Capacity constraints were identified as a persistent barrier, with limited staff and technical resources making it difficult to advance climate work alongside other municipal priorities. There was strong interest in shared tools, standardized outreach materials, and regional data platforms—particularly for flood modeling, water quality, and groundwater impacts.

Overall, participants expressed that the Climate Collaborative’s greatest value lies in helping communities address shared challenges together—through regional grant applications, shared data, and coordinated engagement—rather than each town working in isolation.

3. Decarbonization Roadmap

Staff received the draft Decarbonization Roadmap at the end of December. The document is currently under internal review. Once this item is finalized, Concord will be on track to achieve Climate Leader designation in Spring 2026.

4. Energy Procurement and ESCO / PowerOptions Coordination

Staff continue to make progress on a phased approach to building decarbonization and energy procurement.

- The Town’s current natural gas supply contract has been reviewed.
- Staff are working to align the conclusion of that partnership with the start of a new contract through **PowerOptions**, which offers a “building decarbonization as a service” model.
- A meeting is scheduled with School Administration next week to discuss priority facilities and coordination opportunities, given the significant energy use and decarbonization potential within school buildings.

This approach supports a building-by-building strategy rather than a single, comprehensive ESCO project, allowing the Town to sequence investments based on readiness, funding opportunities, and operational needs.

Article Text

To see if the Town will vote to adopt the following bylaw requiring integrated solar rooftop systems on all newly constructed Town buildings:

Solar Rooftop Bylaw

All new public buildings constructed by the Town shall include rooftop solar in their design and construction. The intent is to pursue a strategy of single, integrated bids for the design, and construction of new buildings, which minimize duplicative efforts by multiple town departments. As such, these systems are built-out at time of initial constructions, as opposed to separate, post-construction implementation.

- Applies to electrified buildings which can support a solar capacity of 7500kW or greater.
- Includes both Concord Public Schools (CPS) and town-government buildings.
- Systems shall be 'behind-the-meter' and will not directly involve the Concord Municipal Light Plant, except as required by CMLP policy.
- To the extent possible, consistent with financial objectives, these rooftop systems should be designed to blend seamlessly with the building's architecture, serving as both functional and aesthetic elements of the exterior.
- The Select Board shall include a reference to this bylaw in the charge to all future Town Building Committees (School and Town Buildings)
- Exceptions to this bylaw may be granted by the Town of Concord Select Board.

Article Descriptive Text

This policy implements a recommendation from the Solar Implementation Task Force 2024 final report that all new Town and School buildings include rooftop solar as an integral component of the building design and panels are included in the primary construction bidding process. Using new municipal rooftops helps Concord achieve its sustainability goal of up to 20MW of solar generation on Town owned property. It will reduce operating costs and is consistent with Concord's aim of minimizing the carbon footprint of public buildings. Financial payback without any subsidies is expected to be 6-8 years based on current construction costs and CMLP rate structure.

Solar Rooftop Bylaw Proposal

Climate Action Committee

Dean Banfield

Jan 21, 2026

Studies and Goals for Solar

- 2010 CMLP targeted 25MW of solar by 2030
- 2011 Solar Siting Report goal 22MW
- 2021 Climate Action Plan – 2030 goal 20MW
- 2024 Solar Task Force Report
 - 14MW max potential (4MW of which unlikely)

Efforts to Date

- 2010 48kW array, Willard School
- 2014 1.7MW former landfill
- 2017 5.6MW former WR Grace property
- 2026 Landfill expansion and upgrade
 - 1.7 -> 4.2MW (adds 2.5MW)
- 2026 CMS array designed @1.2MW

Solar Task Force Findings -2024

- Limit CMLP solar to cost neutral projects
 - 4 ground mount sites identified
- Canopies and CMLP-managed rooftops, not cost effective and/or overly complex to manage
- ‘Behind the meter’ systems are cost effective
- **Report recommends integrated design and bidding of rooftop solar on new public buildings**

Benefits from Rooftop Solar

- Equity – in our backyard
- Local renewable energy eases NE grid stress
- Reduced operating cost (lower electric bills)
- Aligned with Town goals for minimal carbon footprint public infrastructure

Implications

- Clear guidance for future building committees
 - Integrated design
 - Unified bid/construction responsibility
- Single entity responsible for maintenance
 - Town or School as designated responsible party
- Payback period likely 6-8yrs without subsidy
- Capital upcharge @ 1-1.5% for typical school

Warrant Article

- Codifies as a bylaw recommendation to include solar on all new Town buildings
- Provides lower limit and exemption for unelectrified storage structures
- Provides appeal/waiver process via Select Board action

Questions / Discussion

To: Climate Action Committee

CC: Megan Zammuto, Deputy Town Manager, Climate Action Committee Liaisons

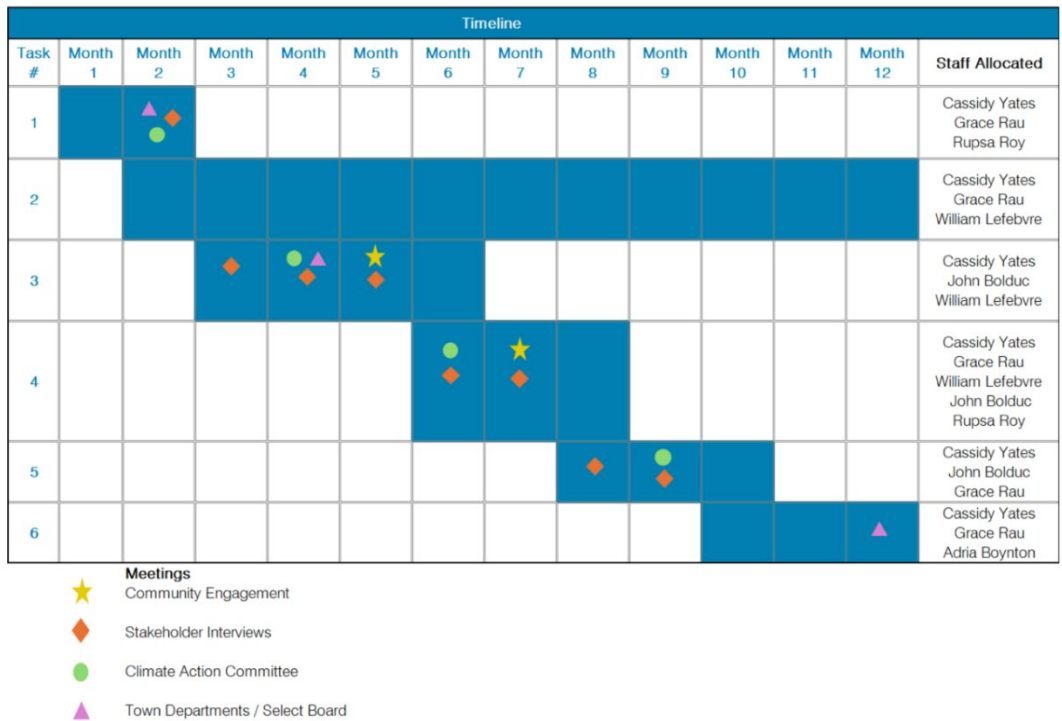
From: Shannon McAndrew, Management Specialist

Date: January 21, 2026

Subject: Climate Action and Resilience Plan Update with Weston and Sampson – Project Update

Project Timeline – *Standing Review Item*

The timeline graphic illustrates the anticipated 12-month project schedule, organized by task and showing when key engagement activities are expected to occur.



- Blue bars indicate active work periods for each major task.
- Icons identify points of engagement, including:
 - Climate Action Committee meetings
 - Community engagement workshops
 - Stakeholder interviews
 - Meetings with Town departments and the Select Board

Task 1 Review: Progress Assessment and Initial Planning

1.1: Review 2020 Climate Action and Resilience Plan and Other Related Documents/Plans

- SharePoint Folder with the 2020 CARP and other related documents/plans was shared with Weston and Sampson for their team to review.
- They are intending to have this review nearly complete by our next internal check-in meeting.

1.2: Develop a Community and Stakeholder Engagement Plan

Kick-Off with the Climate Action Committee

- The proposal includes two in-person and two virtual meetings with the Climate Action Committee over the course of the project.
- The first Climate Action Committee meeting with Weston & Sampson has been confirmed for Wednesday, February 11, 2026 at 7:00 PM.
- **Action Item for the Committee:** Please put together a one-paragraph bio of yourself, highlighting your background, expertise, and interests in the sustainability field. The Weston and Sampson Project Managers would like to review in advance of the meeting. **Due to Shannon at smcandrew@concordma.gov by Friday, February 6, 2026.**
 - This is intended to help Weston & Sampson to help identify opportunities for topic-specific participation from Committee members aligned with the project timeline.

Broader Community Engagement

- Weston and Sampson will prepare a draft Community Engagement plan for approval prior to beginning broader engagement.
- As reflected in the timeline, the proposal includes two in-person and two virtual community workshops:
 - First workshop: Tentatively scheduled for May 2026
 - Second workshop: Was tentatively scheduled for July 2026, but we flagged that community engagement in the summertime in Concord is challenging. Closer to, we will consider if it makes more sense to bump this up to June or to push until September.
- Thinking about Committee members' greater participation in broader engagement:
 - Intermedium engagement with the community directly
 - Participation at workshops, such as running small group activities/tabling
- Stakeholder interviews will be held throughout the main duration of the project.