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DECLARATION OF INCLUSION

**A VERMONT DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION
INITIATIVE**

IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE

**PREPARED FOR
GOVERNMENT LEADERS**

Vermont's Declaration of Inclusion is a grassroots effort working with community leaders to reinforce the message that Vermont is a welcoming and safe place for all.

Our Partners

- Vermont Chamber of Commerce
- Vermont Interfaith Action
- Vermont League of Cities and Towns
- Vermont Social Equity Caucus
- National Association for the Advancement of Colored People - Vermont

Visit Our Website

vtdeclarationofinclusion.org

INTRODUCTION

It is our vision that Vermont will become known as the most inclusive state in our nation for all people, regardless of how they identify.

With that vision in mind, a small group of Vermont citizens organized in January of 2021 to develop strategies to assist the state, cities, and towns in the planning, adoption, and implementation of a Declaration of Inclusion.

Bob Harnish, Pittsford

Al Wakefield, Mendon

Norman Cohen, Rutland City

The following information is intended for use by cities and towns in Vermont for taking steps toward implementation of your Declaration of Inclusion.

QUICK & EASY

Immediately inform your residents of the wording of the DOI and the reasons behind adopting it:

- Add the Declaration to the town website or hang a framed copy in the Town Clerks office, library, fire station, and recreation facilities.
- Print the Declaration in the Town Newsletter and include reasons why the Select Board believes this is an important step forward for the town. Perhaps this is the first of a series of articles.
- Include it in the Town's Annual Report along with a discussion of the broader role that Inclusion, Diversity and Equity are playing throughout Vermont and the far-reaching implications of the 2020 Census which show that Vermont has a dwindling and aging population.

IN-DEPTH IMPLEMENTATION

Steps requiring more thought and time:

- Form a Diversity Equity and Inclusion Committee, perhaps including a high school student, with a mandate to guide the town in its effort to become more diverse and inclusive and to report back to the Select Board. An important early objective of the committee will be to review the town's official policies, programs, ordinances and procedures to be sure they are free of implicit or institutional bias.
- Task the committee with researching, gathering and overseeing the most effective ideas for creating a more welcoming community and to issue periodic reports to the Select Board and the town.
- Review economic development, recruitment and employment policies to ensure they are welcoming, supportive and reaffirming of commitment to inclusion.
- Assess the need for “implicit bias” training for city or town staff, police and fire departments.
- Brainstorm with other adopting towns for creative ways to reach out to marginalized groups, individuals and new arrivals to give them a sense of belonging and value within the community.
- Assess current work environment for town employees; do they feel safe, welcome and appreciated? Update policies to clarify how workers can have grievances heard and reviewed in a timely, fair and comfortable manner.
- Urge local schools, non-profits, corporations, etc. to adopt a statement of inclusion and offer bias training.

ON - GOING IMPLEMENTATION

Steps for engaging partners now and in the future:

- Work with school administration to bring inclusion and diversity into the classroom in art, poetry, drama, debate club, etc.
- Work with faith leaders in the community to guide their congregations to embrace diversity as the human and humane way to treat our fellow citizens of this planet.
- Engage the town's library director to arrange a speakers series, discussion groups, reading groups, film series etc. and include students in these programs and their planning.
- Create a "concierge service" to assist new people in town or those considering a move to the town, with housing options, and the many other questions that a new arrival might have.

PROFESSIONAL RESOURCES

For more specific information, guidelines, and assistance on implementation, the following are excellent resources:

State of Vermont, Office of Racial Justice

The Vermont IDEAL Program. IDEAL stands for inclusion, diversity, equity, action, and leadership. IDEAL is a coalition of Vermont municipalities dedicated to advancing racial and other forms of equity across the state through shared learning and tangible action.

For further information contact:

Xusana Davis, Executive Director of Racial Equity for the State of Vermont
xusana.davis@vermont.gov, 802-828-3322

Vermont League of Cities and Towns, Equity Resources for Vermont Municipalities

The VLCT has two initiatives designed to help cities, towns, and village leaders create and maintain welcoming communities. These are:

- The Municipal Equity Toolkit, an online ten-part resource that covers everything from creating a municipal equity committee to building a framework and action plan to listing equity-related books, podcasts, and videos.
- VLCT Welcoming and Engaging Communities Cohort, a partnership with the Abundant Sun consultancy that offers municipal leaders' participation in the firm's Ethical Performance Improvement Campaign. This is a 6-month, 8-two-hour virtual workshop on topics that include equality, equity, diversity and inclusion.

PROFESSIONAL RESOURCES CONT.

Vermont Community Foundation Grants - Equitable and Inclusive Communities

The Vermont Community Foundation awards grants of up to \$10,000/municipality from a fund of \$200,000 to support Vermont villages, towns, and cities engaged in local efforts to foster inclusion and belonging for people of all races and backgrounds.

Contact the grants and community impact team at grants@vermontcf.org or 802-388-3355 opt.6 with questions.

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