



DECLARATION OF INCLUSION

ADOPTION GUIDE PREPARED FOR
GOVERNMENT LEADERS

REASONS TO ADOPT THE DECLARATION

America has always welcomed all people and embraced their cultures, languages, foods, customs, and religions. This is nothing new. The Statue of Liberty is our monument to this sacred tradition. Let's take this small but affirmative step to continue this most meaningful piece of our heritage. Adopting the Declaration of Inclusion would mark the town and its leaders as a caring community of people doing what is right and deeply rooted in Vermont values.

1. Vermont is in competition for businesses and residents. New businesses and new residents are vital. The Declaration of Inclusion positions our state to better compete, domestically and internationally.
2. Most Vermont towns are losing population, those who remain are aging. Young Vermonters get their education and often leave the state. New young families are not coming here. If this continues, we do not attract the new people that we need to grow.
3. The Governor and key statewide organizations have strongly endorsed this initiative. Among them are the Vermont Chamber of Commerce, the Vermont League of Cities and Towns, the Vermont Council on Rural Development, and Vermont Interfaith Action.
4. In guiding a town in addressing its various challenges and opportunities, it is increasingly important that its leaders be creative, positive and forward thinking. Attracting new businesses and new people are a vital part of leadership responsibility.
5. Vermont Futures, the research arm of the Vermont Chamber of Commerce, in July 2023, reported on the positive, direct connection between growth and inclusion. The report states

that 10,000 Vermonters will be retiring each year for the next 10 years. A 2025 follow-up study by Vermont Futures confirmed the findings of the earlier one. In short, we need more people.

6. Lastly, there is power when entities, including Vermont towns, stand together. There is a reason why businesses government and non-profit organizations, promote their strengths. As a unique state, adopting the Declaration showcases that Vermont has a powerful opportunity to be seen as.... and reap the benefits of being.... a welcoming state.

ADOPTING THE DECLARATION

Guidelines For Adoption:

Recently, some municipalities have adopted declarations which we feel do not reflect the level of spirit, scope, and intent we seek. For that reason, for a municipality to be listed as having adopted a Declaration of Inclusion, its declaration should meet the following guidelines:

- A strong welcome for all people.
- A condemnation of discrimination against members of marginalized groups.
- Enumeration of marginalized groups, visitors, and employees.
- A commitment to fair and equal treatment of all residents.
- A commitment by town leadership to review and act on town policies, activities and operating procedures to ensure they are free of bias.
- Rewording the Declaration: The town may wish to change the wording. This is acceptable provided the basic thoughts are preserved, the designated groups are considered, and they continue to be included.

THOUGHTS ON SELECTBOARD LEADERSHIP

- Select Board members are recognized by their towns for their leadership skills and their good judgment.
- Adopting a Declaration of Inclusion is the type of Select Board action that is expected by the voters.
- The role of the Select Board is changing. It is no longer limited to budgets, law enforcement, and maintaining infrastructure. Select Boards are now called upon to affirmatively institute and promote policies and programs which support the town's economic growth.
- By adopting a Declaration of Inclusion, a Select Board sends a powerful, forward thinking message and aligns it with other towns that are seeking healthy growth of its population and tax base.
- By adopting a Declaration of Inclusion, the Select Board joins the statewide effort to encourage businesses, talented individuals, and investors to come to Vermont and specifically, to your town.
- By adopting a Declaration of Inclusion, the town joins with the Governor to emphasize the importance of inclusion.

UPDATED MAY 14, 2025