

# **Vermont Declaration of Inclusion Implementation Ideas**

## **Introduction**

These recommendations for implementing the Declaration of Inclusion are designed to help Vermont towns and cities take meaningful steps toward fostering a more inclusive, welcoming, and thriving community. Beginning with the public adoption and display of the Declaration, municipalities can signal their commitment to diversity and belonging. Through ongoing and in-depth efforts—such as forming inclusion committees, partnering with schools and libraries, and reviewing town policies—communities can turn this commitment into lasting cultural and institutional change. The following suggestions provide a roadmap for getting started and sustaining progress.

## **Getting Started**

- Add the Declaration of Inclusion to the town website and include the reasons why the Select Board or municipal leadership believes it is an important step forward.
- Hang a framed copy in the Town/City Clerk's office, Police, Fire Department and Public Works offices and other town/city facilities. Post it on town bulletin boards. Request the School Board to follow your lead. Contact Awesome Graphics in Rutland (877-269-1025) for a prepared 16x20 poster of the Declaration's Reasons for Adopting, ready for framing.
- Print the Declaration in your town/city newsletter, explain that you are participating in a statewide effort that aims to increase inclusion. This could be the first of a series of articles.
- Include the Declaration each year in the town/city Annual Report, along with a statement of what your municipality has accomplished the previous year to further inclusion, welcoming and belonging.

## **Ongoing Implementation**

- Create a small volunteer committee to recommend a series of implementation steps for the town. Give the committee a modest annual budget for printed materials or posters, etc.
- Work with your school administration to bring inclusion into the classroom via art, poetry, drama, debate club, etc.

- Encourage community faith leaders in the community to guide their congregations to embrace inclusion as the human and humane way to treat our fellow citizens.
- Engage the town's library director to develop a speaker's series, discussion groups, reading groups, film series etc. and include students in these programs.
- 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. Promote this service on your town website.

### **In-Depth Implementation**

- Form an Inclusion Committee with a mandate to guide the town in its effort to become more diverse and inclusive. It should report to the Select Board at least annually. A principle duty 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.
- Consider allocating a modest annual budget (\$1,000 for instance) for the Inclusion Committee to cover the costs of materials and events.
- Review economic development, recruitment and employment policies to ensure they are welcoming, supportive and reaffirming of commitment to inclusion. Arrange for "implicit bias" training for city or town staff.
- Brainstorm with other adopting towns for creative ways to reach out to marginalized groups or 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 to offer bias training.