

VLCT Equity and Social Justice Plan

Reason for the Plan

The Board of the Vermont League of Cities and Towns believes strongly that its member municipalities must center justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion in all aspects of local government.

As part of its mission “to serve and strengthen Vermont local government,” the VLCT Board wishes to develop tools to assist municipalities with this important work.

In its recent [Statement of Equity and Racial Justice](#), the Board outlined primary elements for this framework/strategy:

- Equity Committee – This advisory committee to the VLCT Board will help create an action plan for VLCT to actively promote equity and inclusion internally as well as with our members.
- Partnerships – VLCT will work with current partners, including state municipal leagues, the National League of Cities and Vermont organizations, to “amplify all of our efforts and help effect real change around these critical issues.”
- Representation – VLCT will encourage diverse candidates to apply for staff and board positions.
- Education – VLCT will invest in raising awareness and training staff and board members about implicit bias, racism and equity issues at the local level. Resources will be shared with members.
- Resources – VLCT will collaborate with experts and affected communities to develop a digital toolkit of resources and information for members, partners and staff.
- Communications – VLCT will promote inclusion of diverse voices, perspectives and imagery in our messaging and publications.

VLCT’s Role

VLCT is a membership-based organization that provides services and resources to Vermont’s municipalities. Member elected and appointed officials (and staff) avail themselves of these benefits as they choose. VLCT does not tell member municipalities what to do, but rather provides direction on what should be considered when making decisions, and helps identify activities or policies that might be of assistance.

Our members include cities and towns (regular) as well as other “political subdivisions of the state,” including villages, fire districts, regional planning commissions and others (associate). Recipients of our benefits must hold an official office for the municipality.

The Equity Committee

Charge

The Equity Committee's charge is to help create an action plan that outlines concrete ways that we will actively promote equity and inclusion, both within the organization and with our members.

Scope of Work

The Committee's work will assist municipalities (external) as well as VLCT's operations (internal). The action plan will establish tasks and a timeline to accomplish them.

Member Assistance

The committee will discuss and investigate tools municipalities may need and how to develop them, as well as explore other ways the League can support its members as they seek to establish a culture of equity in their own communities.

In addressing the scope of work, the Committee must be mindful of the following considerations:

- Municipal officials need practical tips and resources to engage in community conversations and requests for action.
- Municipal officials need tools to facilitate leadership on equity matters within their governing boards and their communities.
- In many cases, member municipalities may need help understanding equity and inclusion issues within their own government organizations and their communities and how to identify and prioritize action steps.
- Vermont's towns are mostly small to medium-sized, with an average population of 1200 and with little to no staff capacity to assist equity efforts. Governing board members may take the lead or formally appoint volunteer committees or individuals to help them.
- Most municipalities don't provide services beyond statutory requirements.
- VLCT's relationship with municipal members, and the League's role to provide assistance and options.

Within the scope of work are several core issues the Board believes must be considered:

- Operational issues/best practices/ standards
- Municipal communications (municipal websites, public notices, forms, advertising, information sharing)
- Municipal recruitment, hiring, and human resources practices, including recruitment for volunteer positions on boards and commissions
- Equitable budget processes
- Effective citizen engagement
- Community development – planning, housing, businesses
- Data collection and data driven decision making

Other considerations for municipalities may include:

- Law enforcement policies in accordance with the town's voted governance structure
- Human services provision
- Overall service delivery and accessibility
- Facilities accessibility

Potential tools and resources the Committee may recommend developing can include but are not limited to:

- Equity Impact Assessment for municipalities
- Best practices by area or topic
- Templates for policies, resolutions, and other municipal documents
- Communications and facilitation tools to help with difficult conversations
- Operational guidance for various resident requests such as flying flags, painting streets, forming committees, or developing statements of support

The Committee must ensure that the tools recommended or developed address justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion in a broad sense that includes meeting the needs of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), those covered under the Americans with Disabilities Act, the elderly and the young, members of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer or Questioning (LGBTQ+) community, faith-based communities, and those who are low income, as well as any other segments of the community who are considered marginalized or vulnerable.

The VLCT Board recognizes the enormous breadth and depth of the work to be accomplished and acknowledges that it, in fact, will never be finished. The Board recognizes that every Vermonter must take part in the ongoing effort to ensure that justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion are a part of the everyday fabric of life not just in Vermont, but everywhere. In recognizing this, the VLCT Board acknowledges that the charge and scope of the Equity Committee may expand into new areas not previously considered as they pursue their work. The Board will work with the Committee to address additional areas of exploration and scope as they arise.