Civic Engagement and Belonging Resources

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One of the most important roles a municipal leader has is to ensure local government is accessible, responsive and impactful to all residents. To do so during the best of times is difficult. People are different, and that means how a municipal leader invites people to the table, seeks community input, or provides services also needs to be different. Ensuring people from different cultures, with different abilities, and from different socio-economic backgrounds are connected to their local governments is hard in the best of times. Today's combination of divisive politics, social media misinformation, and incivility makes it even harder.

VLCT is committed to helping Vermont municipal leaders create engaged communities where everyone feels they belong. To do so, we're curating a series of resources and tools we think can help.

- **Governing All with Skill: Where Leadership Meets Wisdom**(opens in a new tab) **–** The Governing All with Skill course is designed to help municipal leaders combine the legal requirements of governing with the reality that the hardest part of the job is often effectively communicating and engaging with community members. **The eight-part, online and on-demand educational sessions focus on the "psychology of governance,"** equipping leaders with crucial skills in diplomacy, conflict resolution, and dealing with complexity. Designed in collaboration with Abundant Sun, a cultural transformation agency led by Vermonters Dr. Jude Smith Rachele and Rosi Gowdey, the course aims to help municipal leaders create and maintain an engaged democracy.

- **Dignity Index Campaign –** As political and cultural divisions continue to increase in the country, so do the tensions and challenges facing local government leaders who must bridge these divides within their communities. The **Dignity Index**(opens in a new tab) is a compelling take on speaking with people of differing opinions – using ways that are respectful rather than oppositional. One

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co-founder, Tami Pyfer(opens in a new tab), delivered the keynote address at Town Fair 2025, explaining how dignity can be a powerful tool in helping leaders ease divisions and solve problems in our communities and our country. The other co-founder, Tim Shriver(opens in a new tab), reflected on dignity(opens in a new tab) after attending a meeting of the National Governors Association. Find the organization's 2026 research report on building a culture of dignity in the blue Related Links panel on this webpage.

- **New Effective Meetings Tools –** VLCT will provide municipalities with new tools and trainings to improve public meetings.

- **Public Campaign to Encourage Service –** VLCT is helping to bring new voices into municipal government through a media campaign to encourage municipal service (Vermont Town Careers(opens in a new tab)).

Civic Engagement and Belonging Committee

Governing All with Skill

Read VLCT's Civic Engagement and Belonging Plan, which outlines how we will undertake this work.

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