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New VLCT Program Aims to Help Members Learn the Humane Side of Governing

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The Vermont League of Cities and Towns (VLCT) will launch a new curriculum called **Governing All with Skill** during a **virtual roundtable discussion on January 13 at 1 PM**(opens in a new tab). The eight-part virtual education program, free to VLCT members, aims to help municipal officials and staff combine the legal requirements of running their cities, towns, and villages with essential communication and engagement skills that drive participation.

“Being a local official has become more difficult than ever due to increased polarization, apathy, and skepticism,” said VLCT Executive Director Ted Brady. “Municipal officials can’t simply rely on following the law: they need to be masters of de-escalation, navigating complicated relationships and understanding complex systems.”

Governing All with Skill(opens in a new tab) will 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.

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"The skills central to this new model of governance are not just for professional development; they are citizenship skills that have profound personal benefits," said Dr. Jude Smith Rachele, founder of Abundant Sun. "When officials feel good about themselves and are equipped to handle the human complexities of their roles, they are happier and more likely to love their jobs. This, in turn, allows them to provide great service to their communities, creating a virtuous cycle where better, **more self-aware individuals become the fundamental building blocks of a resilient democracy.**"

Brady said the new program aims to introduce municipal officials to concepts that **facilitate pro-social behavior – behavior that focuses on benefiting the community**, not just the individual. He said a key component of that behavior is understanding how to engage with individuals of all different backgrounds, ethnicities, and socioeconomic statuses, and why the hard wiring of the human brain makes doing so difficult.

All VLCT members can access the program through **VLCT's Governing All with Skill webpage**. The course includes four quarterly roundtable meetings with the course creators, on-demand access to custom classes for VLCT, and access to Abundant Sun's online learning platform, JuJuBee – where members can share observations and engage with curated content related to psychology and pro-social behavior.

VLCT members can register now for the first virtual roundtable discussion: **Tuesday, January 13 from 1 PM to 2 PM**(opens in a new tab). **Also mark your calendar** for the three additional roundtable discussions:

- Tuesday, April 21, from 5 PM to 6 PM
- Tuesday, June 23, from 10 AM to 11 AM
- Thursday, November 19, from 12 PM to 1 PM

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For questions or information about this program, please contact Abby Friedman, afriedman@vlct.org.

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