

Vermont Commission on Women FY2018 Governor's proposed state budget
Senate Committee on Appropriations
February 14, 2017
Cary Brown, Executive Director, Vermont Commission on Women

Department Overview

The Vermont Commission on Women is an independent, non-partisan state agency dedicated to advancing rights and opportunities for women in Vermont. The Commission:

- advises and consults with the legislative and executive branches of state government on policies affecting the status of women in Vermont;
- conducts research and study of issues affecting the status of women in Vermont;
- educates and informs business, education, state and local governments and the general public about the nature and scope of sex discrimination and other matters affecting the status of women in Vermont; and
- serves as a liaison and clearinghouse between government, private interest groups and the general public concerned with services for women.

The Commission consists of 16 commissioners, appointed by multiple appointing authorities, and drawn from throughout the state from diverse backgrounds. An Advisory Council, representing 27 partnership organizations, provides information and assists the Commission.

The Commission is staffed by an Executive Director, an Executive Staff Assistant, and a Communications & Program Coordinator.

Key Activities

We created an initiative called **Change the Story Vermont** with the Vermont Women's Fund and Vermont Works for Women in order to significantly improve women's economic security in Vermont. Using private funding sources to supplement the staff time we can provide under our existing appropriation, we have been able to contract researchers to create the most comprehensive reporting on women's economic well-being in Vermont available. In FY2016 we published two reports on women's economic status: "Women, Work & Wages in Vermont" and "Where Vermont Women Work and Why it Matters." We researched women's entrepreneurship for a report released in October 2016.

The **Vermont Equal Pay Compact** is a voluntary pledge that employers make to indicate their commitment to taking steps to close the gender wage gap. Seventy employers signed on in FY2016. These employers are encouraged to take steps that expand beyond simply paying their employees fairly, such as changing their recruiting practices to encourage more women to apply for STEM jobs.

We were awarded a grant in the amount of \$173,794 from the United States Department of Labor to conduct a **Paid Family and Medical Leave Feasibility Study**. The study was conducted by IMPAQ International, with subcontracts to the University of Vermont Center for Rural Studies, the Institute for Women's Policy Research, and Lake Research Partners. All activities associated with the grant were conducted in FY2017, and all grant funds were all expended during FY2017.

We collaborated with Norwich University to deliver **Start Smart salary negotiation skills training** to Vermont women in college, and to train additional trainers in order to increase the capacity of Vermont to deliver this service.

Our **Information and Referral Service** efforts included:

- a new **statewide events calendar** to serve as one centrally located source for any event focused on issues of concern to women, which saw approximately 150 events posted in FY2016
- a retooling of our electronic newsletter and other **Internet-based communications**, resulting in significant increases in the number of people reached
- updating our **Legal Rights of Women in Vermont** handbook
- 429 direct responses to inquiries for help and information

Our **Public Education** efforts included addressing issues or publicizing current data through presentations and workshops to groups around Vermont; creation and distribution of educational publications; via media in interviews, articles and commentary; and on our social media channels. We partnered with other organizations to hold events, including:

- Women, Poverty, & Justice – Housing and Homelessness
- Women of the Long Trail, Women’s History Month
- Women’s Economic Security Summit

Results-Based Accountability

Our FY2018 budget request includes the following performance measures:

Population-level outcome:	Vermont has a prosperous economy
Population-level indicator:	The percentage of Vermont women age 18+ who are below 200% of Federal Poverty guideline (31.5% in 2015)
How much did we do?	We measured the number of employers who were contacted about possibly signing on to the Vermont Equal Pay Compact: 22 in FY2015 160 in FY2016 160 expected in FY2017 50 projected in FY2018
How well did we do it?	We measured the percentage of employers contacted who then signed on to the Vermont Equal Pay Compact: 100% in FY2015 44% in FY2016 44% expected in FY2017 26% projected in FY2018

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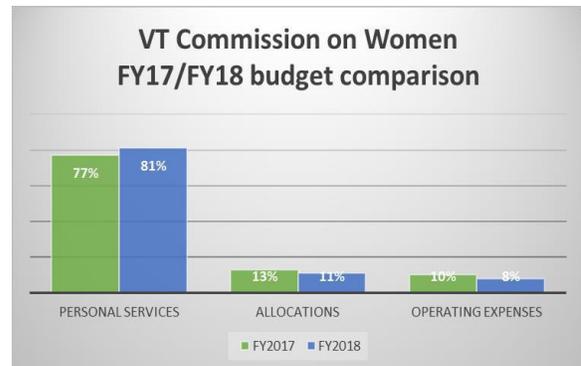
Is anyone better off?

We measured the number and percentage of Vermont Equal Pay Compact signers who articulated specific strategies to improve:
 9, or 40.9% in FY2015
 46, or 69.69% in FY2016
 46, or 69.69% expected in FY2017
 7, or 53.8% projected in FY2018

All of the numbers measure for the Vermont Equal Pay Compact are higher in FY2016 and FY2017 because in these years we have had carry-forward funds that allowed us to contract with someone who can be out in the field, visiting employers and signing them on. We do not expect to have that surplus funding available in FY2018 and so we expect our numbers will decline accordingly.

Key Budget Issues/Ups and Downs

- Approximately **81%** of the Commission's budget is for personal services, providing for 3.00 FTE staff positions (up from 77% in FY17)
- Approximately **11%** is for allocated expenses such as fee-for-space, insurance and information technology (down from 13% in FY17)
- Approximately **8%** covers all other operating expenses, such as commissioner travel reimbursement (mandated), staff travel, phone, printing/publications, postage, membership/dues, copier maintenance fee, computer repair and maintenance (down from 10% in FY17)



The total budget request for FY2018 is \$371,061. This represents a 3.9% increase over FY2017.

The personal services budget is 6.9% higher than FY2017, due to increases in salaries and fringe benefits, so in order to get as close as possible to fulfilling the request for a level-funded budget, the operating budget request is 7.1% lower than FY2017.

Reductions will be made in travel, professional development, and postage.