

**Vermont Commission on Women FY2018 Governor's proposed state budget**  
**Senate Committee on Appropriations**  
**March 28, 2018**  
**Cary Brown, Executive Director, Vermont Commission on Women**

### Department Overview

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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

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We have continued active work on an initiative called **Change the Story Vermont**, a partnership created with the Vermont Women's Fund and Vermont Works for Women, aimed at significantly improving 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 FY2017 we published two new reports on women's economic status: "Women's Business Ownership and the Vermont Economy," and "Vermont Women and Leadership."

Change the Story's Business Peer Exchange brought employers together for a year-long, facilitated program of monthly meetings to support their efforts at gender equity in the workplace. They shared best practices, learned about new approaches, and built allies with each other and within their workplaces. This work continues with new groups of employers and our hope is to replicate it in new parts of the state.

Recognizing that improvements for women's work situations benefits all of us, and recognizing that making change necessitates investments from all quarters, we piloted an event specifically targeted to

men, called **Champions for Change**. This brought together men who are leaders in business, government, and nonprofits, and in facilitated discussions and activities gave them an opportunity to learn more about how to make their workplaces equitable, as well as to share strategies with one another.

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. Fifty-seven employers signed on in FY2017. 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.

The US Department of Labor Women's Bureau awarded us a grant to conduct a **Paid Family and Medical Leave Feasibility Study**, which took place during FY2017. The study was carried out 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. The final report was released in December 2016.

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

- a **statewide events calendar** to serve as one centrally located source for any event focused on issues of concern to women, which saw significant growth in both consultation by people looking for events (up by 62%) and posting of events (up by 390%) in FY2017
- continued updating 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, including printing and distributing hard copies in binders
- **direct responses to inquiries** for help and information via phone and email

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:

- 2016 Gubernatorial forum with all three major party candidates
- Women's Business Owner's Network fall conference
- New England Women's Policy Initiative regional conference (in Boston) on women's economic security in New England
- Women's History Month panel presentation on women of the counterculture

### Results-Based Accountability

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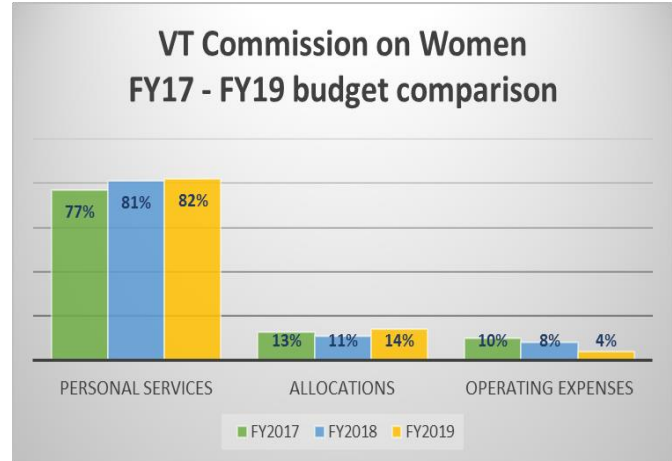
Our FY2019 budget request includes the following performance measures:

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| 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:<br>22 in FY2015<br>160 in FY2016<br>140 in FY2017<br>50 projected in FY2018<br>50 projected in FY2019   |
| How well did we do it?      | We measured the percentage of employers contacted who then signed on to the Vermont Equal Pay Compact:<br>100% in FY2015<br>44% in FY2016<br>43.5% in FY2017<br>26% projected in FY2018<br>26% projected in FY2019   |
| Is anyone better off?       | We measured the number and percentage of Vermont Equal Pay Compact signers who articulated specific strategies to improve:<br>9, or 40.9% in FY2015<br>46, or 69.69% in FY2016<br>40, or 66% in FY2017<br>7, or 53.8% projected in FY2018<br>7, or 53.8% projected in FY2019 |

All of the numbers measured 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 FY2019 and so we expect our numbers will decline accordingly.

### Key Budget Issues/Ups and Downs

- Approximately **82%** of the Commission's budget is for personal services, providing for 3.00 FTE staff positions
- Approximately **14%** is for allocated expenses such as fee-for-space, insurance and information technology
- Approximately **4%** 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



The total budget request for FY2019 is \$375,462. This represents a **1.2% increase** over FY2018.

The personal services budget is **2.7% higher** than FY2018, due to increases in salaries and fringe benefits.

In order to get as close as possible to fulfilling the request for a level-funded budget, the operating budget request is **5.1% lower** than FY2018.

Reductions will be made in printing, conference calling and mobile phone services, remote access, and postage.

### Statement of Impact

Continued reductions in our printing and postage budgets over the last several years have resulted in a sharp decrease in the availability of hard copies of our publications to the public. Much of this decrease flows naturally – and without harm – from the shift towards the Internet for sharing information. We have seen huge rises in the traffic to our website that correlate with downturns in the phone calls we get, as well as in requests to mail out hard copies of materials. However, there are still quite a few places and populations in Vermont for whom the Internet is not a reliably accessible means of getting information, and we have received feedback that our materials are not widely enough distributed.