



REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF RACIAL EQUITY

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SUBMITTED TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF VERMONT
SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS
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INITIAL IMPRESSIONS

Through the creation of the position of Executive Director of Racial Equity (EDRE), the State of Vermont has demonstrated its commitment to advancing racial equity in its dealings as an employer and a provider of services to the public. However, it is crucial that the members, partners, and clients of Vermont state government recognize that achieving equity of any kind is (a) deliberate, continuous work that (b) requires members of dominant groups to be vocal and active in addressing and correcting systemic discrimination.

It has become clear to the Executive Director that Vermonters have a great need for more education about the collective harm of racial inequity and the collective benefit of equity. The fact is, Vermont cannot survive the economic, legal, and demographic tolls of inequity—this cannot be overstated. And yet, too many Vermonters see racial equity as a project that does not impact their lives, or as a handout to groups with interests that do not align with their own. This flawed thinking embodies what we know as the separate fates mentality, and contributes to a high meaning gap, wherein members of different groups show high variation in how meaningful an action or process is to them. It is of critical importance that Vermonters of dominant groups recognize that equity—in this case, racial equity—benefits the whole, and that continuing to ignore or actively resist efforts to undo structural inequity will lead to the continued shrinking of Vermont’s local and tourist economies, the hollowing of its school systems and underperformance of students from marginalized groups, the weakening of its state workforce, and the exodus of its young people who are leaving in search greater diversity and social cohesion.

FOCUS AREAS AND WORK IN PROGRESS

Intergovernmental Partnerships: The Agency of Administration has joined the Local and State Government Alliance for Race and Equity, a national network of governments working to “achieve racial equity and advance opportunities for all.” Membership in the Alliance allows Vermont to participate meaningfully in national dialogue among policymakers, and to teach and learn from other jurisdictions pursuing racial equity solutions.

Strategic Planning for Equity: The Executive Director has engaged leaders in the General Assembly, the state Judiciary, and communities around the state to develop and refine strategic plans that are racially inclusive. The Executive Director intends to present more details around this work in or about Spring 2020.

Data collection: The Executive Director is working with the Racial Equity Advisory Panel, the Governor’s Cabinet, and others to assess the effectiveness of race data collection. A common approach to poor or incomplete datasets is to urge the collection of ever more data. However, equally important are the analyses performed on the data collected, and the action steps taken to address the disparities that the data reveal. The Executive Director intends to create formal recommendations regarding breadth, depth, and methodology of race data collection in 2020, particularly as the U.S. Census looms and brings with it the risk of legal and economic harm to the state as a result of potential undercounts of undocumented Vermonters and other difficult-to-count groups.

Standards and Rules: The Executive Director has been made aware of numerous state policies and practices in need of modernization, including vendor contracting practices, minimum standards and goals for maintaining inclusive workplaces, and forward-thinking initiatives that could be implemented to draw more prospective Vermonters and visitors to the state. The Executive Director intends to continue mapping the state’s policies to develop proposals designed to fill gaps that have had disproportionate impacts for communities of color.

WITH WAGE EQUITY AMONG RACIAL GROUPS, ALL VERMONTERS WOULD HAVE ENJOYED AN INCREASE OF

\$0.42B IN THE 2015 STATE GDP

FROM 2006-2010, BUSINESSES OWNED BY NEW IMMIGRANTS IN VERMONT GENERATED

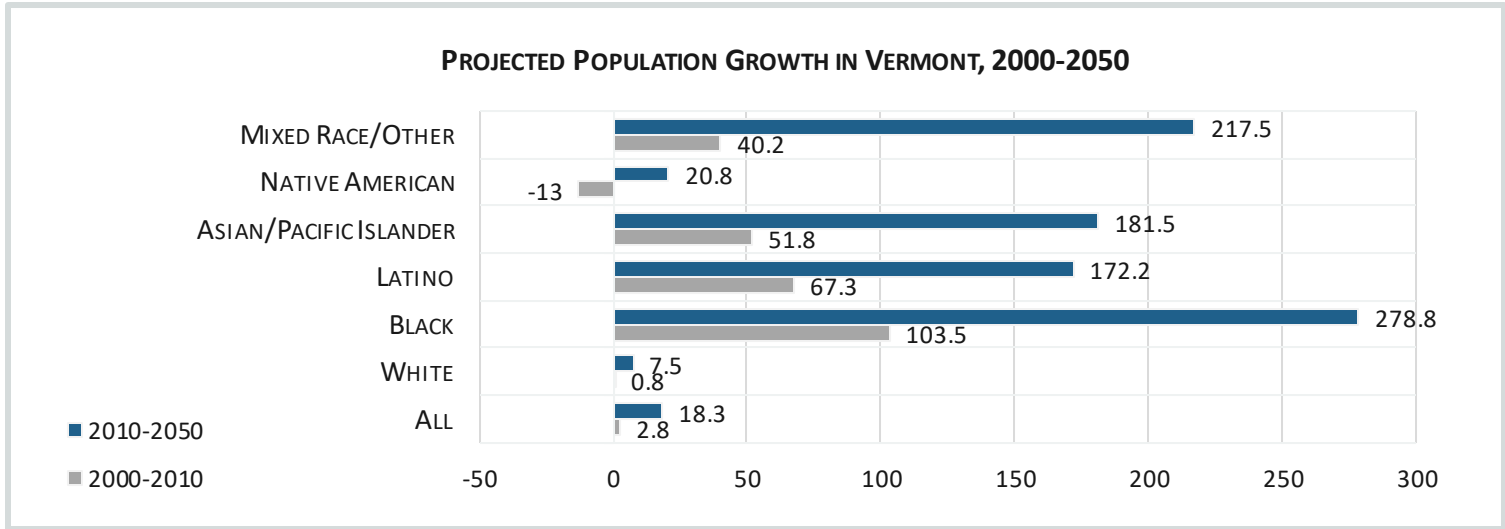
\$84M IN NET INCOME

BLACK VERMONTERS COMPRISE 1% OF THE STATE POPULATION, BUT

11% OF VERMONT'S JAIL POPULATION

THE PERCENT OF INDIGENOUS ADULT VERMONTERS DIAGNOSED WITH DEPRESSION TOTALED

30% FROM 2011-2016



Since July 2019, EDRE has delivered approximately 33 presentations and speeches on racial equity and inclusive policymaking strategies to state agencies, community groups, higher education faculty consortia, the Governor's cabinet and staff, and inter-agency working groups.

EDRE sits on or works with more than a dozen committees and workgroups, including the Racial Equity Advisory Panel, the Ethnic And Social Equity Standards Advisory Working Group, Justice Reinvestment, the State House Curatorial Special Task Force, the New England Secondary Schools Consortium, the Racial Disparities in the Criminal and Juvenile Justice System Advisory Panel, the Vermont Commission on Native American Affairs, the Governor's Workforce Equity & Diversity Council, the Child & Family Trauma Workgroup, and the Fair and Impartial Policing Committee.

EDRE has visited many of Vermont's unique communities, including all 14 counties, and over 35 towns. EDRE has liaised and/or worked with colleagues in jurisdictions spanning at least 7 states across the U.S.

SOURCES: National Equity Atlas; U.S. Census Bureau; Vermont Department of Health; The Pew Charitable Trusts: Immigrant Employment by State and Industry, Vermont; Bureau of Justice Statistics, Prisoners in 2017