



**STATE OF VERMONT**  
GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEE

**MEMORANDUM**

To: Vermont General Assembly  
From: Government Accountability Committee  
Date: October 7, 2022  
Subject: Government Accountability Committee (GAC) Annual Report

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***I. Introduction***

The Government Accountability Committee (GAC) focuses on how Vermont State government can be more accountable to Vermonters. Pursuant to [2 V.S.A. § 970\(g\)](#), this annual report sets forth the GAC’s activities and recommendations to the General Assembly.

During the 2020 session, in [Act No. 166](#), Secs. 17–20, the General Assembly tasked the GAC with approving population-level indicators for Vermonters who are Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC). This report will provide an overview of the GAC, its work towards establishing new indicators for BIPOC Vermonters, and its recommendations for improving greater accountability in State government.

***II. Overview of GAC***

The GAC was created in 2008 to focus specifically on establishing a system of greater accountability and effectiveness in State government. The GAC’s charge is set forth in [2 V.S.A. § 970](#). This statute requires the GAC to “recommend mechanisms for

State government to be more forward-thinking, strategic, and responsive to the long-term needs of Vermonters” and provides nine specific tasks in pursuit of this goal.

The GAC is a joint legislative committee. However, the State’s Chief Performance Officer serves as a nonvoting liaison to the Committee, and, together with the advice of and collaboration with other important partners in the Executive Branch and other interested legislators, the GAC and its collaborators work for the purpose of ensuring State government is effectively and efficiently operating for the good of the State. This occurs in large part by analyzing data that demonstrates the performance of the operation of government. For example, *see* [the GAC’s 2020 Report](#) for more information on how data can be used to craft effective legislation, [the GAC’s 2019 Report](#) for more information on performance accountability tools that can be used during the legislative process, and [the GAC’s 2018 Report](#) for more information on the work the GAC did to establish the State’s population-level indicator data related to the State’s outcomes.

### ***III. State Outcomes and Indicators***

#### ***A. Generally***

The State’s 10 outcomes (goals) for Vermonters’ well-being are codified in [3 V.S.A. § 2311\(b\)](#), and the GAC is authorized by law to approve the population-level indicator data for those outcomes that the Chief Performance Officer reports in the State’s annual [State Outcomes Report](#). The State Outcomes Report provides data on the State’s progress in reaching the 10 outcomes so that the data can be analyzed over time and assist the State in making decisions on how to spend its resources.

### *B. Purpose*

In 2020, Act No. 166, Sec. 18, the General Assembly amended 3 V.S.A. § 2311 to clarify the purpose of the State’s outcomes and indicators:

“Vermont’s population-level quality of life outcomes are intended to reflect the well-being of all Vermonters, and indicators reported to measure the extent to which outcomes are achieved are intended to represent the experience of all Vermonters, including and especially Vermonters who are members of marginalized groups.”

This statutory language helps describe that the outcomes are the goals of well-being for all Vermonters, but the indicators demonstrate how well all Vermonters are faring in reaching those goals, especially Vermonters in marginalized groups who may experience inequity in attaining the quality of life the outcomes describe. [Chapter I, Article 7 of the Vermont Constitution](#) provides that “government is, or ought to be, instituted for the common benefit, protection, and security of the people[.]” Our indicators help us determine how well our State is adhering to that principle.

## ***IV. Indicators Demonstrating Quality of Life for BIPOC Vermonters***

### *A. GAC Work in 2020–2021*

In Sec. 17 of Act No. 166 (2020), the General Assembly directed the GAC to consult with the Executive Director of Racial Equity, the Social Equity Caucus, and the Chief Performance Officer and to accept recommendations from other relevant entities in order to approve population-level indicators that demonstrate the quality of life for Vermonters who are BIPOC, as those indicators relate to the existing State outcomes. Currently, there are no indicators that specifically demonstrate the quality of life for BIPOC Vermonters.

Accordingly, a GAC working group met during the 2020 adjournment with these partners and the Agency of Human Services (AHS) Director of Performance Improvement to review population-level indicators through an equity lens to determine the best available indicators and outcomes to measure the quality of life for BIPOC Vermonters. As a result of the GAC working group's findings, two members of the GAC introduced [S.95 \(2021\)](#) to amend the State outcomes in 3 V.S.A. § 2311. S.95 was preliminarily reviewed by the Senate Committee on Government Operations during the 2021 legislative session; however, the Government Operations Committee elected to wait to pursue changes to the State outcomes until the GAC could receive additional community feedback on population-level indicators.

#### *B. GAC Work in 2021–2022*

The GAC met to continue this work in early 2021 and hosted a public hearing by Zoom on January 28, 2021, to hear from members of the public and community organizations on the best indicators to measure the quality of life for BIPOC Vermonters. The GAC then held a working session on February 20, 2021, to discuss its findings and next steps. The GAC determined that despite outreach efforts by the Committee and its partners, it had not received sufficient community feedback to meet the scale of input needed to properly evaluate the proposed changes to State outcomes and population-level indicators. The GAC then began to explore other avenues to achieve greater community input and dedicated several of its meetings during the 2021 adjournment, in collaboration with the Chief Performance Officer, the AHS Director of Performance Improvement, and the Executive Director of Racial Equity, to work toward this goal. Ultimately, the GAC decided to instead use community feedback to be gathered as part of the AHS

[Community Profiles of Health and Well-Being](#) project to inform the GAC's recommendation on changes to State outcomes and approval of population-level indicators. The GAC had anticipated receiving project results for its consideration in late July or early August 2022, but after not receiving any results by that time, the GAC sent AHS a status request on August 13, 2022. On August 22, 2022, the AHS informed the GAC that the community outreach project had not yet begun and would not be able to produce the wanted information to the GAC in the time frame required for this report. The GAC continues to believe that the Community Profiles of Health and Well-Being project promises to be the more effective method of gathering community feedback, rather than additional GAC public meetings, and anticipates returning to this important work in the upcoming year upon receipt of the Community Profiles of Health and Well-Being project results.

#### ***V. Additional Work and Recommendations***

In addition to its continuing work on population-level indicators and outcomes, the GAC also reports the following recommendations based on its work during the 2022 session and adjournment:

- a. *Training*. The GAC recommends that orientation for new legislators include information about the GAC, the State Outcomes Report, and results-based accountability.
- b. *GAC statutory charges*. The GAC recommends that its statutory charges under 2 V.S.A. § 970(a) be reviewed to see whether any changes are needed to clarify the scope of the Committee's work.

## *VI. Conclusion*

The GAC has worked this past year to ensure that the State Outcomes Report will better represent the experience of all Vermonters, knowing that more complete data and increased community feedback can better guide the State in improving the lives of Vermonters. The GAC looks forward to continuing this work in 2023, which will be informed by the results of the AHS [Community Profiles of Health and Well-Being](#) work occurring this upcoming year.