

BRIEFING SHEET: IDEAL VERMONT - ADVANCING EQUITY AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

SITUATION

Municipalities around the state and the country are recognizing the need to prioritize equity and social justice. Already, dozens of Vermont's communities have taken steps to be more inclusive:

- 15 municipalities are represented on the Equity Committee of the VT League of Cities & Towns.
- 20 school districts are known to have an Equity Coordinator role as of December 2021.
- at least 25 municipalities have adopted a Declaration of Inclusion as of December 2021.

As towns grapple with the desire to go beyond public statements and gestures of support for equity work, they do not always have the resources, information, or support to translate their intent into actionable policies. Numerous towns have expressed that they cannot advance their equity work without assistance. Unsure where to begin and lacking subject matter expertise, local leaders across VT turn to the State for answers on how to advance equity.

STAKES

- **Economy:** Municipalities that nurture a more diverse small business sector have larger, more resilient local economies. This helps Vermont keep more consumer dollars in the state & retain more diverse entrepreneurs and residents.
- **Civics and Cohesion:** Diverse communities have greater civic cohesion, productivity, & democratic participation rates. By contrast, more segregated communities lose civic participation and sense of community.
- **Education:** Inclusive education policy & faculty benefit all students academically & socially.
- **Ecology:** Less diverse localities are more likely to have higher pollution levels and toxic exposure.

PROPOSAL

"IDEAL" stands for **I**nclusion, **D**iversity, **E**quity, **A**ction, **L**eadership. Through this statewide initiative, the State will play a convening and assistive role for municipalities seeking to advance equity through policy and knowledge-sharing. Member municipalities must opt in to join and will be held to a high standard to ensure genuine commitment among the cohort. The initiative will unify, educate, empower, and support municipalities that are committed to making Vermont more equitable through

- Regular **convenings** as a cohort with the Office of Racial Equity
- Valuable **workshops** on topics including policing, school curricula and mascots, language access, hiring, housing, communications, health equity, ecology, demographics, etc
- **Data** sharing (specifically sharing data with the state)
- **Technical assistance** as needed from relevant state agencies
- Online **platform** where members can connect through forum discussions, access written materials, post and view upcoming date/events, and exchange resources.
- **Grant funding** to assist municipalities with small projects that will meaningfully advance equity.

PARTNERS

IDEAL Vermont has strong support from well-known and trusted entities around the state, including

- the Vermont League of Cities & Towns
- the Vermont Community Foundation
- Town Managers
- State Legislators

COST

The Governor's FY23 recommended budget includes \$220,000 in one-time funding, (\$110,000 each year for two years) to support this initiative. Additional support will be provided through philanthropic partnership for small grants to member municipalities to implement equity initiatives in their communities. Grants will be vetted through the Office of Racial Equity and program partners.