STATE OF VERMONT

Policy Impact Assessment

SECTION I: INTRODUCTION

Purpose

This assessment is intended to act as a useful framework for the development and review of a proposed policy and its potential impacts, both direct and indirect. It can be used in multiple ways:

- to inform decision makers prior to a final decision on legislation, rules, or spending;
- to inform project planning and community/economic development approaches; and
- to assess legislation, policies, and programs that are already in existence.

Regardless of when it is used, it serves as a powerful mechanism to help qualify, quantify, and provide transparency into the decision-making process.
The order of the questions is intentional and is meant to mimic an ends-to-means thinking process which should bring to light the assumptions and logic behind the proposal, as well as the ways in which progress towards desired ends will be monitored over time.

Many of the questions focus on equity. Historically, policy has been made based on the needs and preferences of people in dominant groups, which has created disparate impacts for groups who are marginalized. Further, some well-meaning policies are intended to be neutral but still result in disparate negative impacts for specific groups.

Vermont recognizes that in failing to protect our most vulnerable community members from the impact of our policies and programs, we are only hurting ourselves. One crucial defense against disparate impacts of policies and programs is to conduct an impact assessment prior to budgetary or programmatic decisions that will impact communities.

How to Use This Tool

This tool is intended to serve as a systematic examination of

1. The theory of change, and the assumptions therein, embedded within the proposal;
2. How different marginalized groups will be affected by a proposed action or decision; and
3. The degree to which we can measure, track, and align our proposals with overarching goals.

Use it to

- ✓ **minimize** unanticipated adverse consequences in proposed policies, institutional practices, programs, plans, and budgetary decisions.
- ✓ **maximize** investments and staffing by anticipating needs, benefits, and harms.

These analyses are best conducted during the decision-making process, *prior* to enacting new proposals (much like environmental impact statements, fiscal impact reports, and workplace risk assessments).

This form is not to be used as a "final check" before submitting a proposal. Rather, it should be used early in the idea-generating phase to ensure you have gathered the community input, demographic data, and resources necessary to make the program **efficient**, **inclusive**, and **successful**.

SECTION II: ASSESSMENT

Instructions: Complete this form as thoroughly as possible and submit with any supporting documentation to your reviewer/approver. For questions regarding this form, contact the Chief Performance Office or the Office of Racial Equity. **At a minimum you must answer the bolded questions for initial review by the Governor's Office: 1, 4, 6-9, 12, 16, 18-25, 27-31, 33-34, 38, 39**

BACKGROUND

1. **What population-level outcomes from the Annual Outcomes Report and/or breakthrough indicators from the Statewide Strategic Plan does this proposal contribute to?**

   Grow the Economy
   - Size of workforce

2. What Statewide Strategic Plan strategy is this proposal associated with?

   Grow the Economy
   - Expand agricultural economy

3. What other priorities (e.g., agency, department, etc.) does this proposal align with?

   Outreach to marginalized communities in increase participation in funding opportunities

PROBLEM DEFINITION

4. **What is the specific problem/gap being addressed by this proposal?**

   Funding to support innovation for the next generation farmer & branding of VT

5. What is known about the problem/gap? What specific data are available that indicates there is a problem/gap? What trendlines are you attempting to turn?

   Farming infrastructure is aging, farms are diversifying in response to consumer preferences & market demand; succession planning & transition support needed;

6. For whom does this problem/gap exist? Who is the target population of the proposal? **Include demographic information such as race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, ability, etc.**

   Vermont meat, produce, maple producers & processors; focused on new and beginning operations or those preparing for farm transfer, sale or, succession. A farm demographic data is incomplete in VT and not a comprehensive assessment of the target population.

7. **How was this group(s) determined?**

   Based on input from Future of Agriculture Commissioners, stakeholders, and industry experts about the needs experienced in the agriculture sector

8. **What geographic areas of the state will be most impacted by the proposal?**

statewide, with a focus on counties with greater % of farm operations and on small and mid-scale ag and food businesses processing maple, meat or produce

PROPOSAL

9. **Is this proposal related to COVID-19 response or recovery?**

☐ Yes ☑ No

10. What are you proposing to do?

11. Why do you think it will work? What data or evidence supports this proposal?

12. **What does success look like?**

Businesses are able to better plan for significant capital investments, farms will achieve a better loan-to-value ration and be able to secure loans; more innovative practices implemented on farms; toolkit utilized by small and mid-scale businesses to reach new customers and grow the VT brand

13. Are changes to statute needed? If so, what changes or new language are needed? Can this be done via rulemaking? What other laws or regulations will be implicated by this change?

☐ Yes ☑ No

14. What contextual conditions (e.g., social, political, economic, legal, technological, environmental) might facilitate or hinder your ability to successfully implement this proposal?

15. What assumptions are being made about your approach to addressing the problem identified above?

16. **What are the consequences of not implementing this proposal?**

Permanent loss of agricultural land, loss of farming income and culture in Vermont, fewer next generation (new and beginning) farmers on the landscape; lost market opportunity for VT and opportunity to make tourism connection and value to VT

17. What are the possible unintended consequences, both positive and negative, of implementing this proposal?

Stakeholders & Impacts

18. **Which other agencies (SOV or non-SOV) may have an interest in this proposal or its outcomes? What is likely to be their perspective on it?**

ACCD is supportive of the Future of Ag Commission recommendations; maple, meat and produce producer associations; agritourism industry

19. **What outside stakeholders will likely have a position or testify on this proposal? What is likely their perspective on it? Examples of possible stakeholders include municipalities, organizations, business, and regulated entities.**

Future of Ag Commissioners - supportive of the need and can share perspectives received from new farmer panel and marketing/branding stakeholders

20. **Did you meaningfully consult community members in developing this proposal? If so, how?**

☐ Yes ☑ No

Engaged a small group of new farmers and branding stakeholders, but was a limited reach

21. **Does the proposal enhance services and/or seek to reduce disparities to underrepresented or underserved communities? If so, how?**

☑ Yes ☐ No

Aims to make farm viability and farm transitions easier, leads to higher paying jobs, new income streams, better work-life balance; new customer access; marketing assistance

22. **Could a disparate racial impact or other unintended consequence result from the proposal? Do you have sufficient data to understand whether the proposal would address or create any racial disparities? If not, what data would be needed?**

☐ Yes ☐ No ☑ Maybe

Disparate racial impacts are unintended consequences of these infrastructure investments, but could occur. Ongoing engagement, outreach, and attention to the needs of these populations will occur.

23. **Could a disparate impact for any other marginalized group result from the proposal (including but not limited to groups identified by national origin, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, ability, etc.)?**

☐ Yes ☐ No ☑ Maybe

Hopefully not but age could be a factor with new and beginning farmers being the focus of these opportunities

24. **How will the proposal incorporate cultural concerns of specific groups (i.e., use of traditional healing practices, use of culturally appropriate diagnostic assessment tools, etc.)?**

not sure

25. **Will public written materials and/or other social marketing strategies generated through this proposal be translated for the target population? Why or why not?**

☐ Yes ☑ No

Not sure, would like to make transition services available. hope additional resources will make this possib;le

RESOURCES

26. What resources are needed to implement this proposal (human, financial, technological, environmental, etc.)?

27. **Does this proposal have financial implications for the Agency/Dept or other state funds?**

☐ Yes ☑ No

28. **Are cost savings anticipated? If yes, what are the estimated savings and to which fund(s)?**

☐ Yes ☑ No

29. **Does this proposal require modifications (reductions, changes, elimination) in other agency/department programs? If yes, where and what is the justification for reprioritizing?**

☐ Yes ☑ No

30. **Does this proposal require new General Fund dollars? If yes, what is the cost estimate and the source of funding?**

☑ Yes ☐ No

$10M - one time general fund appropriation

31. **Does this proposal relate to deploying federal dollars (ARPA, IIJA, ESSER, FHWA, etc)? If yes, what is the cost estimate and source of federal funding? If yes, what major initiative category does it fall under?**

☐ Yes: ☐ Housing ☐ Wastewater/water ☐ Economic Development ☐ Other
☐ Broadband ☐ Transportation ☐ Climate Change

☑ No

32. If you are proposing to expand an existing program or staffing, what steps have been taken or completed to improve existing processes to make them more effective and efficient?

33. **Will this proposal require or make changes to any technology, platform, or software?**

☐ Yes ☑ No

34. **Does the proposal encourage or prioritize contractors led by members of marginalized groups? This may include, but is not limited to, vendors designated as Minority- or Women-Owned Business Enterprises or Disadvantaged Business Enterprises.**

☐ Yes ☑ No

Measurement and Monitoring

35. What performance measures will you use to track how much service was provided by this proposal? What are your expected targets?

PERFORMANCE MEASURE	TARGET

36. What performance measures will you use to track how well service was provided by this proposal? What are your expected targets?

PERFORMANCE MEASURE	TARGET

37. What performance measures will you use to track if customers are better off or you made a difference (e.g., change in knowledge, skill, behavior, circumstance) as a result of this proposal?

PERFORMANCE MEASURE	TARGET

38. **Are there staff trained to analyze the data related to the proposal?**

☑ Yes ☐ No

39. **How and how often will you communicate your performance on this proposal to relevant stakeholders (e.g., PDF report, dashboards, quarterly, annually)?**

Annually

SECTION III: REFERENCE

Glossary

Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE): As defined by the U.S. Department of Transportation, DBEs are "for-profit small business concerns where socially and economically disadvantaged individuals own at least a 51% interest and also control management and daily business operations. African Americans, Hispanics, Native Americans, Asian-Pacific and Subcontinent Asian Americans, and women are presumed to be socially and economically disadvantaged. Other individuals can also qualify as socially and economically disadvantaged[…]"

Disparate Impact / Disparity: An imbalance or inequality between the treatment of different groups. These imbalances may manifest as differences in economic outcomes, income, housing options, societal treatment, safety, justice outcomes, health, educational opportunity, or other dimensions.

Equity: The condition that would be achieved when a person's race or other demographic group membership is no longer predictive of that person's life outcome.

Marginalized population/group: Communities or groups that have historically experienced systemic barriers to access, resources, and infrastructure investments. It may include communities of color, women, sexual orientation, transgender individuals who identify along the gender spectrum, immigrants and refugees, or people with disabilities. It may also include others who have received limited access to benefits, services, investments, and resources from public/private institutions, including the State of Vermont.

Minority- or Women-Owned Business Enterprise (M/WBE): Businesses that are at least 51% owned and substantially managed by people of color and/or people identifying as women.

Performance Measure: A measure of how well a program, agency or service system is working. Performances measures answer one of these three questions:

1. How much are we doing?
2. How well are we doing it?
3. Is anyone better off?

Performance Measure Target - The quantification of a desired result associated with a particular performance measure.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. **What should we do if we identify a disparity or other issue after using this tool?**
   Next steps will vary on a case case-by -case basis. At one extreme, it may be wise to withdraw the proposal altogether. More realistically, it may just require tweaks to make the proposal more equitable or efficient in design or delivery. This might mean more money is needed to reach more people or specific people. Other times, this means lengthening the timeline to complete translations *before* launch, not after. There are many ways to improve upon our policy ideas in ways that make our work more effective and more inclusive—contact the Chief Performance Office or the Office of Racial Equity with questions or concerns.

2. **For questions related to demographic or other data, what if there are no data on point?**
   In Vermont, we face challenges with demographic data collection, especially on race and ethnicity. You may struggle to find recent or accurate data to answer the questions in this tool—do your best, cite your sources as needed, and thoroughly explain what we know and what we don't know. If there are gaps in data that are relevant to the proposal, consider using the proposal as a vehicle to capture those data—this helps our colleagues across state government who will rely on these data in the future.

3. **For questions related to demographic or other data, should we only provide quantitative data? Or should we provide qualitative data too?**
   Anecdotal and qualitative data are important to policymaking. They provide policymakers and analysts a glimpse into the reality "on the ground," and provide a line of communication for people with lived experience to provide meaningful insight into programs and policies that impact their lives. That said, use these sorts of data judiciously: have a plan for how, when, where, and why to collect it. Create spaces where respondents know they are safe to share their feedback, and return to the community to show them how their feedback impacted our work. Data, time, and feedback are valuable, so consider compensating people for their participation.

Further Learning

- Learn more about the State Strategic Plan and the Act 186 Population-Level Outcomes:
  - Statewide Strategic Plan
  - Annual Outcomes Report

- Learn more about continuous improvement, Results-Based Accountability and performance measurement:
  - Chief Performance Office
  - Continuous Improvement SharePoint Site (SOV Internal)
  - Results-Based Accountability Overview
  - Performance and Productivity Measure Primer (SOV Internal)

- Learn more about how to advance equity and inclusion through policy and programs:
  - Equity Toolkit
  - The Curb Cut Effect