

STATE OF VERMONT

EQUITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT TOOL

The State of Vermont is committed to advancing equity for all those who live, work, play, and learn in Vermont. Through data-informed program design and careful consideration of compounded historical inequity, agencies across the state can craft budgetary and programmatic proposals that align with the State's values and meet individual and shared goals.

Instructions: Complete this form as thoroughly as possible and submit with any supporting documentation to your reviewer/approver. For questions regarding this form, contact Racial Equity Director Xusana Davis or Policy and Legislative Affairs Director Kendal Smith.

At a minimum you must answer the bolded questions: 14-15, 17, 21 -22, 24-25

PROPOSAL BACKGROUND

1. Briefly describe the proposal. Include background information regarding the problem the proposal is intended to address.

Act 181 was signed into law transferring primary responsibility for enforcing the rental health and safety code program from the Health Department to the Division of Fire Safety. The new law authorized the division of fire safety to hire 5 full time Assistant Fire Marshals to carry out the duties. The new law was created to professionalize a complaint based inspection program. State Assistant Fire Marshals will be the primary point of contact for complaints rather than local health officers. The new initiative will professionalize the inspection program and improve rental housing health and safety.

2. Is the proposal related to COVID-19 response or recovery?

The proposal is not related to COVID-19 response or recovery

a. If so, is there federal or other COVID-19-related funding that may support the proposal?

3. What are the intended outcomes of the proposal?

The outcomes will result in a more comprehensive inspection and we are optimistic we can improve relationships between landlords and tenants by educating stakeholders.

4. What are the consequences of not implementing this proposal?
The existing rental housing code enforcement responsibility would stay with local health officers many of which are unpaid volunteers. There are numerous local health officer vacancies because of high turnover. Additionally, we are legislatively mandated to accomplish this.

5. Are there fiscal implications of this bill for the Agency/Department? If yes, please describe.
See answer above in the fiscal notes.

6. Is the policy evidence-informed?
Yes

STRATEGIC PLAN, METRICS, GOALS, INDICATORS

7. Does this proposal advance a strategic goal and/or key performance indicator of your Agency/Department, or State Government, as defined here: https://strategicplan.vermont.gov/ . If yes, which?
Protects the most vulnerable.

8. Are the desired outcomes specific and measurable?
We first have to establish baselines as this is a new initiative.

9. Do you have sufficient population-level data to understand whether the proposal would address or create any racial disparities?
Unknown
a. If not, what data would be needed?

10. If implemented, can you collect disaggregated demographic data, track it, and evaluate it to assess equity impacts?
The program will allow us to respond to all complaint inspections regardless where they are, who is complaining and so forth. We will respond to all complaints received.

11. Are there staff trained to analyze the data related to the proposal?
We have not filled the positions yet but there is need for training.

Inter-Agency or Multi-Sectoral Collaboration

12. Which other agencies (SOV or non-SOV) may have an interest in this proposal or its outcomes?
Mainly legal aid and other housing advocacy groups who are anxiously awaiting for us to initiate the program.

13. 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.
N/A

STAKEHOLDERS AND IMPACTED POPULATIONS

14. Describe the proposal’s target population. Include demographic information such as race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, etc.
This initiative of responding to complaint based inspections of alleged unsafe, unhealthy and or unsanitary living conditions applies to all sectors of rental housing across the state. Inspections are conducted regardless of populations, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, expression or etc.

15. How was this target population selected?
No population is targeted - any complaint received alleging unsafe, unhealthy or unsanitary living conditions will be inspected under the rental housing safety and health code provided the building is rented and is under the statutory authority of the Division of Fire Safety .

16. Did you meaningfully consult with community members in developing this proposal?
a. If so, how?
b. If so, did those community members include persons of color?

17. What geographic areas of the state will be most impacted by the proposal?
The fact our largest municipalities have existing complaint based programs in place the geographical areas likely to see an impact would be those towns with no viable health officer available to respond or those communities which may be under served meaning no one responds to a complaint.
a. Is there a larger-than-average population of Vermonters of color in those areas?
Unknown

18. 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.)?

19. Will public written materials generated through this proposal be translated?
a. If so, in which languages?

20. Does the proposal involve a social marketing strategy for the target population? Describe.

BENEFITS AND BURDENS

ADVANCING EQUITABLE IMPACTS

21. Does the proposal seek to reduce disparities for marginalized or underserved groups? If so, how?
The program is complaint based inspections so we will respond to any complaint. I suppose if complaints are not being responded to now than

22. What are the anticipated positive outcomes for the target population?
We hope to reduce the number of complaints, improve health and safety in rental properties and improve relationships between landlords and tenants.

23. Can those positive outcomes be replicated or extended to other groups? If so, which groups may benefit?

24. Does the proposal enhance services to underrepresented or underserved communities?
This program will enhance services to those who file complaints of alleged unsafe or unhealthy living environments.

MITIGATING ADVERSE IMPACTS

25. Could a disparate racial impact or other unintended consequence result from the proposal?
Not sure to be honest in our good faith effort we will respond to all complaints across the board in the same manner.
a. If yes, what steps are you taking to mitigate the disparate impact?
b. Beyond the steps describes in part (a) of this question, what additional steps could any entity take to mitigate the disparate impact?

26. Is there a disparate impact for any other marginalized group (including but not limited to groups identified by national origin, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, etc.)?
a. If yes, what steps are you taking to mitigate the disparate impact?
b. Beyond the steps describes in part (a) of this question, what additional steps could be taken to mitigate the disparate impact?

GLOSSARY

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

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[...].”

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, people with disabilities and others who have received limited access to benefits, services, investments and resources from public/private institutions, including the State of Vermont.

Equity: The condition that would be achieved when a person’s race or other demographic group