

**Legislative Counsel’s Introduction to
The Summer Government Accountability Committee**

Welcome to the Summer Government Accountability Committee (or “Summer GAC”). The below information will provide Committee members with some introductory information regarding the charge of this Committee as well as some historical context regarding the prior Government Accountability Committee.

I. Enabling Authority:

This Committee is authorized by [Act 53](#) from this past 2023 session. The relevant language is found in Secs. 2 and 2a of the Act.

Sec. 2 - Legislative Intent

It is the intent of the General Assembly that the House Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs and Senate Committee on Government Operations should reexamine the principle of government accountability with a focus on how evidence is used to inform policy, how information is publicly conveyed, and the Committees should propose statutory amendments as needed to accomplish these goals.

Sec. 2a - About the Committee

(b) **Membership.** (1) 4 members of the House of Representatives; (2) 4 members of the Senate.

(c) **Powers and duties.** The Summer Government Accountability Committee shall consider the issue of accountability in the Legislative Branch, including the following:

- (1) ways to ensure that the Legislative Branch is accountable to the people of Vermont by creating new processes and metrics by which to measure accountability;*
- (2) ways to ensure equity in pay across commissions, boards, and joint legislative committees based on the nature of the service and required skill level;*
- (3) ways to ensure equitable participation on boards and commissions and in any public engagement process mandated by the State or General Assembly by providing appropriate compensation and material support; and*
- (4) codifying mechanisms for controlling and restraining the increasing number of commissions, boards, and joint legislative committees.*

[Charge of the Committee, in other terms, on next page → → →]

Charge of the Committee, in other terms:

Legislative Look-Backs:

(1) Ways that the Legislative Branch has revisited past legislative initiatives to judge success and efficiency.

Board Composition & Compensation:

(2) Ways to ensure equity in pay across Executive Branch commissions and boards that consider factors like significant time commitments and professional credentials (e.g. engineers and doctors).

(3 – part I) Ways to maximize equitable participation across demographic groups on Executive Branch commissions and boards.

Public Engagement:

(3 – part II) Ways to maximize equitable participation across demographic groups in public engagement processes, especially by providing appropriate compensation and material support.

Controlling the Number of Executive Branch Commissions and Boards:

(4) How to best codify mechanisms for controlling and restraining the increasing number of Executive Branch commissions and boards.

(e) Report. On or before **January 15, 2024**, the Summer Government Accountability Committee shall report to the House Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs and the Senate Committee on Government Operations with any recommendations for legislative action.

- Note: The Committee has a lot of flexibility in what the report ultimately looks like. This report does not necessarily need to be a written report; it could be an oral report delivered to the Gov't Ops Committees in person. If the report were to be written, there is no prescribed length or format. Any recommendations for legislative action could range from 'no recommendations' to very involved statutory amendments.

(f), (g) Timelines: Committee members will be compensated (per diems and travel expenses) for up to four meetings. The report is due by January 15, 2024, and the Committee will sunset on November 1, 2024. The practical effect of these factors is that **this Committee will have 3-4 meetings prior to the report being due with one meeting being where they approve the report.** (some committees opt to reserve one meeting after the report is due in case the committee wants to meet again to address questions or directions from other jurisdictional committees). **Committee members should expect to have 2-3 meetings to decide what findings and recommendations to report.** [See excerpts from Act 53 on next page.]

(f) Meetings. (4) The Summer Government Accountability Committee shall cease to exist on **November 1, 2024**.

(g) Compensation and reimbursement. For attendance at meetings during adjournment of the General Assembly, the members of the Summer Government Accountability Committee shall be entitled to per diem compensation and reimbursement of expenses pursuant to 2 V.S.A. § 23 for **not more than four meetings**.

II. History of Prior Government Accountability Committee:

The prior Government Accountability Committee (“Prior GAC”) was created in 2008 with the aim of establishing a system of greater accountability and effectiveness in State government. The Prior GAC’s was to “recommend mechanisms for State government to be more forward-thinking, strategic, and responsive to the long-term needs of Vermonters.”

The Prior GAC’s charge was broad and included reviewing: service duplication mandated by statute; how programs serving Vermonters were created and eliminated and how these could be improved; program use of data and measurement of results; use of population-level population indicators to inform desired population well-being outcomes (see below for more on this); and how the State of Vermont should provide funds to nonprofit organizations, and whether this should require ‘results-based accountability.’

Much of the Prior GAC’s focus was on “State Outcomes and Indicators.” Ten Vermont “population-level quality of life *outcomes*” are codified in [3 V.S.A. § 2311\(b\)](#). These outcomes are general State goals for Vermonters’ well-being, such as “Vermonters are healthy” and “Vermont has a prosperous economy.” The general *outcomes* are accompanied by specific *indicators* (“population-level indicators”) which measure the State’s progress in reaching the outcomes. For example, “the percentage of adults who smoke cigarettes” is one of the *indicators* demonstrating whether the State is reaching its desired *outcome* of “Vermonters are healthy.” This method of using indicators to report on outcomes is called Results-Based Accountability (“RBA”). The Chief Performance Officer (“CPO”) annually submits a [State Outcomes Report](#) on these outcomes and indicators so that the data can be analyzed over time and assist the State in making decisions on how to spend its resources.

The Prior GAC could approve revisions to these indicators submitted by the Chief Performance Officer. (Note: With the repeal of the Prior GAC, these indicators would now be determined by “a standing committee of the General Assembly having jurisdiction over a population-level quality of life outcome. *see* [3 V.S.A. § 2311\(c\)](#).)

In its last two years, the Prior GAC, in cooperation with the Agency of Human Services (AHS), was attempting to create indicators that specifically demonstrate the quality of life

for Vermonters who are members of marginalized groups (please see the [2022 report](#) for more detail). In its [last report](#), the Prior GAC recommended that 1) training for new legislators include information about the State Outcomes Report and Results-Based Accountability, and 2) that the Prior GAC's statutory charge was to be reviewed to see whether any changes are needed to clarify the scope of the Committee's work. Note: The entire 2 V.S.A. chapter 28 (Government Accountability Committee) was repealed by the same act that authorized this Summer Government Accountability Committee.