

Equity Committee Charter for Vermont League of Cities and Towns

Committee Members:

Dom Cloud, City Manager, St. Albans City

Brian Carroll, Selectboard, Glover

*Kerin Durfee, HR Director, City of Burlington

Ellen Kaye, Diversity and Equity Committee Member, City of Barre

Marguerite Ladd, Assistant Manager, Essex Town and Village

Emily Ruff, Selectboard, Orange

Amanda Smith, Selectboard, Windsor

Sasha Thayer, Selectboard, Plainfield

Phoebe Townsend, HR Director, Winooski

Hannah Tyler, Public Works Director, Hartford

Al Voegele, Planning Commission, Town of St. Albans

Elaine Wang, Assistant Town Manager, Barre Town

Deborah Wright, Village President, Bellows Falls

Joy Dubin Grossman, Assistant Town Manager, Hinesburg

VLCT Staff:

Ted Brady, Executive Director

Karen Horn, Director of Advocacy

Abigail Friedman, Director of MAC

Trevor Whipple, Law Enforcement Risk Management Consultant

Jessi Hill, Human Resources Director

**leave of absences*

Purpose

As part of its mission “to serve and strengthen Vermont local government,” the VLCT Board has established an Equity Committee with the purpose of aiding Vermont municipalities on matters of justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion.

Charge

The Equity Committee’s charge is to help create an action plan that outlines concrete ways that VLCT can actively promote diversity, equity and inclusion, both within the organization and with VLCT members.

Mission:

The committee will investigate tools that municipalities may need and how to develop them, as well as explore other ways that VLCT can support its members as they seek to establish a culture of diversity, equity and inclusion in their own communities.

Scope of Work

As directed by the VLCT Board, the Committee’s work will be to assist VLCT in evaluating its operations for inequities and areas in need of a diversity lens. The Committee will serve as a liaison to municipalities seeking advice and support on diversity, equity, and inclusion matters.

Core Values

- We value diversity, equity, inclusion, and dignity for all.
- We strive for civic excellence and recognize that our differences make our communities stronger.
- We acknowledge that institutional and systemic racism exist and that we must be intentional in dismantling them.
- We promote a culture of respect and recognize that words and actions matter, and the absence of action and words also matter.
- Every municipality shares the responsibility of creating equitable and inclusive communities.
- Diversity, equity and inclusion should be embedded in all aspects of local government.

Guiding Principles

In alignment with the VLCT Board's direction, the Equity Committee will be guided by the following considerations:

1. Municipal officials need practical tips and resources to engage in community conversations and requests for action.
2. Municipal officials need tools to facilitate leadership on equity matters within their governing boards and their communities.
3. In many cases, member municipalities may need help understanding diversity, equity and inclusion issues within their own government organizations and their communities and how to identify and prioritize action steps.
4. Vermont's towns are mostly small to medium-sized, with an average population of 1200 and with little to no staff capacity to assist equity efforts.
5. Governing board members may take the lead or formally appoint volunteer committees or individuals to help them.
6. Most municipalities don't provide services beyond statutory requirements.
7. VLCT's relationship with municipal members, and the League's role to provide assistance and options.

Membership:

1. The Equity Committee is a temporary committee of the VLCT Board of Directors.
2. The VLCT Board of Directors shall appoint all members to the Equity Committee in accordance with VLCT Bylaws.
3. The Executive Director shall conduct a search for volunteers from the VLCT membership in accordance with VLCT Board policy. The Equity Committee may appoint up to three members to a nominating committee who may recruit and recommend members to the Board. All those charged with building the committee shall seek a mix of volunteers with the following characteristics:
 - Municipal experience
 - Varied types of experience and municipal positions
 - Diversity with relation to race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, and (dis)ability
 - Represent varied types of cities and towns (rural and urban)
 - Represent varied geographies
 - Committed to diversity equity, and inclusion work and who will actively participate in the mission and objectives of the Committee
4. The Equity Committee shall have no fewer than fifteen (15) members and shall include a member of the VLCT Board. The VLCT Executive Director, the VLCT Director of Advocacy, the VLCT Director of the Municipal Assistance Center, and the VLCT Director of Human Resources shall serve as ex-officio members without voting rights. VLCT staff may serve irrespective of term limits.
5. Members will serve a one-year term on the Committee commencing after the annual meeting and terminating at the next annual meeting. Members who have already served a term may request to serve for up to two additional terms.
6. The committee shall have two co-chairs. The member from the VLCT Board shall be one of the two co-chairs. The second co-chair may not be a current Board member or staff member of VLCT.

Administration:

1. The Committee shall meet on the third Monday of each month from 1 p.m. – 2:30 p.m. and may choose to meet more frequently as deemed necessary to accomplish its responsibilities in appropriate time frames.
2. The co-chairs will be selected by the committee at the first business meeting of the year following the annual VLCT meeting. A member of VLCT's Board shall be a cochair.
3. The chair and/or co-chairs in collaboration with the VLCT Executive Director will be responsible for scheduling meetings, meeting facilitation, follow-up on action items, communications, and liaising with the DEI consultants.
4. A quorum is defined as a simple majority of voting members (whether virtual or in person).
5. Committee consensus is reached when, after discussion, the majority of the members present agree that an action should or should not be recommended.
6. The committee will appoint a secretary to take minutes and distribute the minutes.
7. The Committee may form and delegate authority to one or more workgroups as it deems appropriate from time to time.
8. At least annually, the Committee will review and reassess the adequacy of this Charter and make changes to ensure efficient and effective progress towards the goals and objectives of the VLCT Strategic Plan.

Committee Member Responsibilities:

1. Regularly attend Committee meetings and, if appointed, work group meetings.
2. Devote the time and engagement necessary to accomplish committee goals.
3. Commit to on-going professional development activities to build awareness and knowledge of diversity, equity, and inclusion principles.
4. Attend and participate in Equity Committee events, activities, and initiatives. Failure to attend three consecutive meetings will result in removal from the committee.
5. Appropriately represent the Equity Committee and the principles of DEI internally and externally.
6. Use a DEI lens when making all decisions related to the work of the Equity Committee.
7. The Committee is responsible for recommending actions and/or activities to the VLCT Executive Director and Board.

Meeting Norms

1. Listen actively -- respect others when they are talking.
2. Speak from your own experience.
3. Do not be afraid to respectfully challenge one another by asking questions, but refrain from personal attacks -- focus on ideas.
4. Participate to the fullest of your ability -- growth depends on the inclusion of every individual voice.
5. The goal is not to agree -- it is to gain a deeper understanding.
6. Be conscious of body language and nonverbal responses -- they can be as disrespectful as words.
7. Ask questions for clarification to help avoid making assumptions.
8. Make sure everyone's voice is heard.
9. Balance your participation - speak and listen.
10. Listen actively to teammates without interrupting others.
11. Clarify when you are advocating vs offering an idea.

12. Say it now, in the room. Avoid waiting till later to raise an issue.
13. All voices count. All opinions are valid but offer reasoning behind your thinking.
14. Ask for help: It's okay not to know.

Adopted by the VLCT Equity Committee 11/15/21