



# Summit on the Future of Vermont

May 26 & 27 2021

VIRTUAL



## Ideas for Action

Produced by: The Vermont Council on Rural Development



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## The Vermont Proposition and Action

### Where do we go from here?

The Vermont Proposition at the center of the Summit on the Future of Vermont is a statewide public dialogue that aims to answer the question—what should Vermont do in the next 2 to 3 years to secure our future for the next generation? On May 26 and 27 2021, the Vermont Council on Rural Development welcomed 700 participants from all backgrounds and corners of the state to the Summit on the Future of Vermont to review the draft Proposition from all sides and consider ways to move each element forward.

The Summit, and the Proposition itself, are the result of a deep and wide statewide conversation. The first draft of the Proposition was based on 60 early interviews, and all we've learned from our engagement with Vermonters for COVID recovery and long history of community and policy convening. We turned the draft into a survey and then interviewed almost 500 people in groups ranging from the board of the Lake Champlain Chamber of Commerce to the New American Advisory Council and Vermont Woodlands Association. Over 1,300 people took the survey and corrected or added ideas to the first draft—giving us almost 500 pages of dense ideas—at least 5,000 of them! To see the results, the current edition of the Proposition can be reviewed here: [www.futureofvermont.org](http://www.futureofvermont.org).

Based on the ideas and strategies contributed by Summit speakers and participants, we will adjust the Proposition elements, and over the coming months work will ramp up to advance them. To be involved in the effort moving forward, [join the Partnership for the Future of Vermont](#), a non-partisan network of individuals, businesses and organizations who will help advance these Proposition ideas in action. All are welcome! Over time, we'll invite members to work with us to:

- Participate in collective action around prioritized strategies;
- Partner to advance key ideas;
- Lend voices in non-partisan advocacy;
- Consider ways businesses or organizations can work together to drive needed change.

As a central point of leadership to drive the work forward, a new **Future of Vermont Action Team** is being convened to coordinate this effort. As the leadership team for the Partnership, this team will:

- Finalize a working Proposition document;
- Prioritize strategic actions to advance Proposition elements;
- Convene partnerships and advance public engagement and communications;
- Lead non-partisan and aspirational policy advocacy to drive priorities forward.

We need to add up what we stand for in our time to tell a new story of Vermont. The Vermont Proposition proposes that together our story is of reinvented progress, built on our best ideals and values, dedicated to our next and future generations; a story we hold based on our hopes, common faith and commitments, and carried forward in hard work, and in marketing the state as a destination and model of common purpose and innovation for a vital future.

It is a time to raise our hopes and take the courage to embrace new ideals, new partnerships, new responsibilities, new roles; for a renewal of the Vermont we love.

# Summit Sessions

## Presentation of Issues

Moderated panel discussions on each Proposition element. Panelists framed the content and importance of the concept and responded to participant questions. These sessions were recorded: <http://bit.ly/FOVSummit>.

- I-1. Expanding Affordable Broadband & Optimizing its Community and Economic Benefits
- I-2. Combating Racism & Building Safe and Welcoming Communities for People of Color
- I-3. Advancing Creative Economic Solutions to Climate Change
- I-4. Reducing Economic Disparity & Advancing Opportunity
- I-5. Ensuring Quality, Affordable Child Care for All Families
- I-6. Supporting Business Creation, Workforce, & Innovation
- I-7. Advancing Efficiency in State Planning & Regional Coordination
- I-8. Protecting Vermont's Land, Water, & Working Landscape
- I-9. Encouraging Local Democracy and New Leaders

## Perspectives and Connections

Moderated panel discussions on how Proposition elements connect with current challenges and opportunities. Panelists considered how the elements connect to their work, to key sectors, and to leadership for the progress of Vermont. These sessions were recorded: <http://bit.ly/FOVSummit>.

- P-1. Next Generation Vermont Leaders
- P-2. Vermont's Farm and Forest Future
- P-3. Welcoming New Vermonters
- P-4. Investing in Vermont's Economic Future
- P-5. Visions from the Vermont Legislature
- P-6. The Next Stage of Business Creation and Innovation
- P-7. The Future of Vermont's Creative Economy
- P-8. Vermont Vision for a Multicultural Future
- P-9. What Can the Data Tell Us? Trendlines & Markers for the Future
- P-10. Planning for the Future: Vermont Futurists Roundtable
- P-11. Infrastructure Investments for the Future

## Proposition elements discussion

Evening sessions of small facilitated groups to discuss the Proposition, consider what is missing, and share action ideas to move its elements forward. [Notes were captured.](#)

## Forums on Action

Groups of 20-50 participants shared strategies to move Proposition elements forward—what’s happening now, what needs to happen next, and what partners should be brought together to advance it. Notes were captured for these facilitated discussions. [See raw notes](#). The following pages synthesize the ideas we heard.

**A-1. Expanding Affordable Broadband & Optimizing its Community and Economic Benefits**

**A-2. Combating Racism & Building Safe and Welcoming Communities for People of Color**

**A-3. Advancing Creative Economic Solutions to Climate Change**

**A-4. Reducing Economic Disparity & Advancing Opportunity**

**A-5. Ensuring Quality, Affordable Child Care for All Families**

**A-6. Supporting Business Creation, Workforce, & Innovation**

**A-7. Streamlining Regional Governance & State Planning**

**A-8. Protecting Vermont’s Land, Water, & Working Landscape**

**A-9. Encouraging Local Democracy and New Leaders**

## “Moth-style” Storytelling Event

Stories by Vermont voices on the theme of “Connection and Community—Why I Choose Vermont.” Hosted and produced by **Susanne Schmidt**, comedic storyteller and Producer of The Moth StorySlam in Burlington Vermont. This event was recorded: <http://bit.ly/FOVSummit>.

- **Judy Dow** – Nationally known activist, basket weaver and teacher of traditional Abenaki culture and native practices.
- **Marlon Fisher** – Marlon has dedicated his career to supporting at-risk youth in various settings including residential, wilderness, and in the community. He works for the State of Vermont Department of Children and Families Family Service Division as a Juvenile Service worker in Chittenden County. Marlon is the treasurer and active member of Dad Guild, an organization dedicated to supporting and empowering fathers by offering opportunities for connection, education, and community engagement. Marlon lives with his wife, Aron, their two boys, Percy and Malachai, in Burlington.
- **Kevin Gallagher** – Moth GrandSLAM winner, seasoned storyteller, coach and performer, and also a clinical mental health counselor.
- **Max Jennings** – Max lives and works in central VT as a physical education teacher. When not teaching, Max can be found making balloon animals, riding bikes, sewing bandanas or seeking the best cup of coffee in the neighborhood.
- **Rene Pelerin** – Storyteller and Coordinator for the VT Center for the Deaf and hard of hearing who has dedicated his professional life to the deaf community. Long recognized by his peers as an amazing entertainer, he is a sought-after storyteller for various events.
- **Mark Snelling** – President of the Snelling Center who has owned and operated businesses in the ski, bike, and hardware industries.

# Summary of Ideas shared at the Summit

On the afternoons of May 26<sup>th</sup> & 27<sup>th</sup> 2021, after over a year of social isolation and economic slowdown amid a global pandemic, over 700 Vermonters came together virtually to discuss ideas for the future of Vermont. From every corner of the state, participants brought forward their ideas and perspectives on the action we should take now, in this historical moment, to be successful and thrive in the coming decades. Building off the **Vermont Proposition**, a year-long initiative facilitated by the Vermont Council on Rural Development to listen to and synthesize the ideas of thousands of Vermonters, Summit participants joined over 100 dynamic and diverse speakers, panelists and moderators, for two days of deep-dive conversations into nine major issue areas, corresponding to the nine elements of the Vermont Proposition. The perspective and feedback from Summit participants helped to enrich and improve the Proposition statements, and their ideas for action offer starting points for consideration by the **Future of Vermont Action Team**, a non-partisan council to be convened by VCRD in the wake of the summit, that will take a leadership role in working to advance each element of the Proposition.

On the first day, participants listened to panelists describe important aspects of the Proposition elements and share their perspectives and vision for the future of the state. The second afternoon featured interactive sessions where participants shared ideas in facilitated discussions on each element of the Proposition. What follows is a summary of the ideas we heard on the second afternoon. For more detailed notes from each session visit [www.futureofvermont.org](http://www.futureofvermont.org).

## A-1. Expanding Affordable Broadband and Optimizing its Community & Economic Benefits

The pandemic has underscored the need for affordable connection for all Vermonters, and the legislature, the Department of Public Service, and other key stakeholders have been working to create the financial incentives and structure to enable the last-mile roll-out of high-speed connectivity across the state. Summit participants highlighted the urgent need for progress, and explored the complex barriers to getting it done. Participants also discussed the host of benefits resulting from increased connectivity. From opportunities in telemedicine and remote learning, to online sales for local businesses.

At the same time, “Zoom fatigue,” political tension and division stoked in online forums, and the rise in extractive online purchasing are just some of the challenges inherent in an increasingly virtual world. As Vermonters and their leadership continue to push for access, participants shared the need to also enable the best possible uses of digital tools to strengthen our local community ties and thriving downtowns. The issue of affordability was also prominent in the discussion, and participants urged continued exploration of ways to center equity in this work moving forward.

### PARTICIPANT IDEAS FOR ACTION

- Engage financial professionals in providing channels for private investment to supplement public dollars.
- The ongoing operation and maintenance costs of broadband networks can be substantial and should be considered along-side build-out estimates. Ensure operator entities have the capacity to maintain extensive rural network infrastructure.
- Vocational and higher education institutions can be key partners in digital upskilling.
- Lean into collaborations with entities that have proven track records of providing service, and highlight successful, replicable models.
- Establish a Broadband Corps to streamline and simplify the consumer experience. Volunteers could help with education to close the digital divide.
- Develop sector-specific support—healthcare, education, remote employers could add resources to help Vermonters get connected and maximize digital tools.
- A centralized state entity could help coordinate and facilitate cross-sector connection.
- Given Vermont’s topography, small-cell cellular infrastructure is more effective than hilltop towers. Building out fiber networks can help enable local broadcast, a last-mile alternative for some Vermonters.
- Prioritize cellular coverage in major transportation corridors. Collaboration with major carriers will be critical.

## A-2. Combating Racism and Building Safe and Welcoming Communities for People of Color

Along with the COVID pandemic, the past year has seen a national awakening around the issue of systemic racism in America, and Vermont. Acknowledging and reconciling our state's history with a vision for a vibrant, multi-cultural future was a critical issue for many participants. Participants shared a long list of community groups, schools, churches, and others taking action to build safe and welcoming communities and address racial inequities. Despite the strides made over the past year, however, participants spoke to the fact that there is still a lot of work to be done, and that the effort to ensure Vermont is a safe and inclusive place for all people is one that must occur on all levels of our society. From schools to Select Boards, advancing justice, equity, inclusion and opportunity is critical to the successful future of Vermont communities; and it was often underscored that our collective success depends closely on the well-being of each of our residents.

### PARTICIPANT IDEAS FOR ACTION

- Education is at the forefront of this issue. Schools, employers, state agencies, and local boards that invest in and prioritize learning around this topic and implement plans for action will be those best poised to meet the challenges of the coming decades.
- While empathy and understanding are core to advancing racial justice, this work has ramifications for economic and community vibrancy. Diverse communities tend to be more resilient and prosperous than their homogenous counterparts.
- Property ownership and land-access are foundational to systemic inequity. Zoning and land-use conversations should be approached through an equity lens.
- It's important to engage local law enforcement in building community partnerships and explore alternative crisis response models that add human services capacity to advance public safety.
- Accessible, ready-to-use curricula could be instrumental to helping small schools with limited capacity make progress in this arena. Support local school boards to ensure they include diverse representation and perspectives.
- Continue a critical examination of our criminal justice system for implicit biases.
- Citizen engagement with local officials in constructive goal-oriented dialogue can help build momentum for meaningful change.
- Funders continuing to learn and re-evaluate barriers inherent in funding mechanisms can help lower barriers to access for many Vermonters.
- Local business leaders, chambers of commerce, and economic development professionals can play a key role in fostering a culture of inclusivity. Catering to an increasingly diverse national market strengthens Vermont's brand.

## A-3. Advancing Creative Economic Solutions to Climate Change

Climate change poses a serious threat to the planet, and summit participants shared a number of innovative ways Vermonters have been stepping up to advance work in this arena. From the legislature to local energy committees, climate-focused non-profits and business leaders, there is a shared and profound sense of urgency, and a great deal of good work is being done.

At the same time, participants shared that there remains a lot to do, and pointed to the critical importance of approaching climate action through an equity lens. Affordability remains a barrier to many Vermonters in adopting greener technologies, and Vermont's land-use and development patterns pose particular challenges to lowering our collective carbon footprint. This is a topic that touches housing, transportation, land use, recreation, agriculture, public spending and our collective culture, and all of them came up in the discussion.

### PARTICIPANT IDEAS FOR ACTION

- Younger Vermonters have been leaders on this issue. Engage students and empower young activists and innovators to help inform policy and action.
- Ongoing education for the general public is important. Messaging focused on opportunity, affordability, safety and preparedness can be constructive. Avoid shaming, doomsaying, or divisive rhetoric.
- Investments should be made to promote walkability, bike-ability and other human-powered transportation infrastructure, keeping in mind accessibility and equity concerns.
- A review of state programs should be conducted to coordinate cross-sector strategies.
- Taxation can be an important tool to guide consumer behavior.
- Seize opportunities to use federal recovery funding to advance climate goals.
- Innovative transportation alternatives to single-occupancy vehicles can help reduce energy use and provide more

- affordable options. Public investment should be made in public transit, micro-transit, and ridesharing.
- Soil management and agriculture have an important role to play. Moving towards models that quantify ecosystem services can help highlight hidden costs and set investment strategies to draw down and sequester carbon.
- Broadening the conversation to include Vermonters of diverse age, race, ability and income is critical. We need forward-thinking leadership willing to take short-term risk for long-term gain.

## A-4. Reducing Economy Disparity & Advancing Opportunity

In this session participants reflected on the ways the pandemic has exacerbated economic challenges for many Vermonters, and highlighted how many are living in precarious financial circumstances. Participants discussed the nuances and diversity of conditions that contribute to financial hardship, and the importance of holistic, individualized supports. How do we move from a paradigm of responding to crises to one of ongoing support and empowerment? Participants called for community volunteers, businesses, non-profits, and government to work together in a coordinated way to support the progress of people and families out of poverty, to remove barriers to the accumulation of resources, to build equity, and improve long-term financial stability for all Vermonters.

### PARTICIPANT IDEAS FOR ACTION

- Tackling economic disparity is bigger than just the public & non-profit sector. Many businesses realize the collective benefit of lifting people out of poverty, and are poised to play a key role. Public-private partnerships have track records of results, particularly in the realm of early education.
- Support multi-sector, interagency coalitions that can help to break down siloes and ensure coordination of efforts. Apply lessons learned from the pandemic and crisis response to ongoing sustainable partnerships.
- Bring folks with many different lived experiences into decision-making processes and leadership positions. Critically examine and eliminate barriers to their participation and ensure that doing so is to their benefit.
- Utilize existing neutral community spaces like schools and libraries to provide accessible safe spaces for engaging diverse cross-sections of the population.
- Employee ownership, credit unions, and other cooperative and distributed ownership models can help foster financial equity.
- Prioritize human-centered, relationship-based supports that meet people where they are and recognize the multiplicity of barriers to financial independence. Housing, transportation, food security, education, and our criminal justice system are all important.
- Restructure the public benefits landscape to eliminate the “benefits cliffs” that disincentivize some Vermonters from income growth.
- There are a number of misconceptions about wealth-inequality and poverty. Ongoing de-stigmatization and education around the issue would help shift the narrative to a collective problem.

## A-5. Ensuring Quality, Affordable Child Care for All Families

The complexities of remote work and distance learning over the past year have spotlighted the childcare crisis in Vermont and built a greater awareness of the benefits to Vermont’s communities and economy when young families have access to affordable, high-quality childcare. Summit participants shared stories of parents unable to return to the work because their salaries were outweighed by the cost of childcare, or having to decline pay raises for fear of losing childcare subsidies. At the same time the average compensation for child care providers significantly trails comparable positions in K-12 education, and the difficulty the industry has had attracting and retaining workforce.

This is an arena which has garnered significant attention at both the national and state levels, from the extension of childcare subsidies in the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), to the passage of H171 by the Vermont Legislature this past session. While forum participants celebrated these successes, they also pointed to the need for ongoing investment and support in this arena, and its complex interconnection with many other challenges facing the state.

### PARTICIPANT IDEAS FOR ACTION

- Given the payoff in retaining workers and reducing absenteeism, many employers are realizing the value of helping provide or support childcare for their employees. Let’s Grow Kids has been a leader in partnering with businesses to expand childcare availability, and are able to provide a number of successful models to be replicated.
- Child care providers are trapped between maintaining affordability for parents, and paying their employees competitive wages. Public investment and support for

- professional development and benefits for child care workers could help release some of this tension.
- There are a number of state and regional organizations doing good work in this arena. Lean into their expertise and find ways to support their efforts.
  - Parents' time is often unquantified or undervalued. Increased investment in paid family leave would allow parents to spend more time at home in the first months of a child's life.
  - Some childcare providers and parents live across state lines, complexifying benefits conversations. Inter-state coordination to share best practices, pool resources and align strategies could help.
  - Investment shifts at the state and national level take time. Significant progress has been made in this arena over the last year, and it will be important to maintain advocacy and public awareness over the coming years to remain on the right trajectory. There are many funding pathways to be explored and it's important to consider all of them.

## A-6. Supporting Business Creation, Workforce & Innovation

Vermont has a long history of innovation, and is home to a large variety of organizations and entities designed to support business and enterprise across the state. Even so, the economic slow-down caused by the pandemic combined with long-standing pressures of an increasingly global economy have posed significant hurdles to Vermont's private sector. Summit participants discussed the many resources available in this arena and grappled with ways to support Vermont's existing businesses and workforce, while making strategic investments to foster the innovation and ingenuity necessary to renew Vermont's economy and get ahead of changes to come in the years ahead.

### PARTICIPANT IDEAS FOR ACTION

- A variety of talent comes to Vermont through its higher education systems. Providing and highlighting internships and scholarships to connect students to job opportunities in the state can help boost workforce development and retention.
- Supporting and destigmatizing modernized technical education and alternatives for 4-year degrees can directly connect high school students with high-paying careers in growing or understaffed industries.
- More and streamlined small-and mid-sized capital opportunities should be made available for small businesses and start-ups, and seed grants can be particularly important in driving new opportunities.
- Ongoing professional development and upskilling opportunities can help keep current businesses competitive.
- There are lots of good models across the state that could be replicated or expanded to boost employment pipelines. Lean into existing expertise, and avoid re-inventing the wheel.
- American Rescue Plan (ARPA) funds can support strategic investments in business transformation and innovation.
- Leverage the experience of retiring professionals in a variety of fields to help foster and support new talent.
- Employers or state or regional initiatives that provide housing or childcare can help to attract and retain workers.
- Encouraging and investing in business affiliation groups and other support networks can enable the sharing of resources and best practices.
- Streamlined funding applications, access to business counselors, financial education, and digital tools consulting can all be incredibly valuable in helping businesses of all sizes navigate post-pandemic transitions.
- Centralized, visible job portals can help connect job seekers with employers.
- Diversity and multiculturalism are critical to a resilient and adaptable business community. Investment, education and leadership diversification can help make business more attractive to employees and reach new customers.

## A-7. Advancing Efficiency In State Planning & Regional Coordination

Vermont's geography, topography, and history have contributed to the organic evolution of county-lines, school districts, regional planning commissions, economic development entities, and other regional service territories, many of which are overlapping or may not be coordinated or clear to the general public. While this landscape reflects Vermont's strong culture of local control, we heard from participants the challenges this can cause for individuals trying to navigate services, and to organizations and agencies themselves in pursuing competitive funding. In many rural parts of the state, finding staff and volunteers to fill vacant positions on these regional and local entities is a perpetual challenge.

At the same time, Vermont lacks capacity for long range planning. Participants discussed the history of a state planning office, the value of having a centralized non-political entity to help bridge regional efforts and administrations, and how such an office might be set up to support, rather than replace, local control.



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## PARTICIPANT IDEAS FOR ACTION

- Many local communities struggle to find the capacity or technical expertise to address planning needs. Regional Planning Commissions are an enormously helpful resource, but there is an ongoing need for investment to support professionals that can work across town lines to augment volunteer capacity.
- Higher education institutions, like UVM's new Office of Engagement, can be partners to add capacity.
- Investments at the state or regional level should prioritize "bottom up" decision making, and focus on empowering local boards and committees rather than imposing structure from the top down.
- Ensure local planning exercises are incentivized by appropriate state and regional funding opportunities.
- Local boards and committees are often important conduits for new leadership. Investments in training and professional development for young and emerging leaders pay dividends to smaller communities.
- A centralized data office or partnership could help local and regional entities better assess needs and coordinate strategies.
- Ongoing education around the nuances of planning and development can help draw in new perspectives. Often assumptions about growth turn people away from participating in local planning.
- Professionalism itself can be a barrier. Informal, community-based engagement can provide meaningful input in establishing local priorities.

## A-8. Protecting Vermont's Land, Water & Working Landscape

Vermont's land, waters and working landscape are central to our state's identity. Reconciling the history of land sovereignty, current and future land use, conservation, and equity were all topics central to this summit conversation. Forum participants discussed the ways that we can collectively steward Vermont's greatest asset for sustainable use for future generations, while also recognizing past and current inequities in land access and removing barriers to Vermonters living on and from the land. The group explored tools that are available to us to assess our current impact on the natural environment and how to plan for potential population growth, while coexisting with the wild landscape, and ways to support sustainable local food and forest enterprises and the people who make them happen.

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## PARTICIPANT IDEAS FOR ACTION

- Smart Growth principles can help reduce forest fragmentation and lower future infrastructure costs. We should support ongoing investment in Vermont's downtowns and village centers.
- Farm and forest enterprises are key partners in stewarding Vermont's natural resources, and need sustainable economic models to remain viable. Support working lands businesses in transitioning to diversified, value-added production. Regional infrastructure like sawmills, food processing hubs, and distribution networks have cascading benefits to the working lands economy, and can help foster local resilience.
- Many Abenaki and other indigenous descendants continue to live in deep connection with the land, and should have a meaningful voice in leadership and decision-making.
- Outdoor recreation can bring significant economic activity, and when approached through the lens of accessibility and equity, can help to bring new people and energy to the state.
- Hunting and fishing are important wildlife management tools, vital means of sustenance for many Vermonters, and help create a culture of stewardship and connection. It's important to support ongoing public education and conversation about how we interact with wildlife, and the multiple uses of land.
- We should have a focus on increasing land access and stewardship opportunities for historically marginalized Vermonters and people of color.
- Vermont has multiple rich traditions of land stewardship. It's important to recognize and celebrate all of them, and draw lessons from our past. It's important to support young and new farmers in accessing land, and to provide the technical expertise they need to succeed.
- Regulations can be important tools for protecting natural resources, but are sometimes prohibitively cumbersome to smaller operations. Thoughtful review of our regulatory landscape with an eye towards small-scale viability could help promote a diversity of land-based enterprises.
- Programs that help to quantify and remunerate land-owners for ecological services can be an incentive for conservation. Acreage minimums often raise equity concerns.
- Renewable energy development can be an important part of land stewardship, so long as it's approached equitably and with community buy-in. Opportunities exist for productive multi-use.
- Alternatives to single-family private ownership like public trusts and cooperatives can help lower barriers to land access.

## A-9. Encouraging Local Democracy & New Leaders

One of Vermont's signature features is its network of strong communities, where local folks come together and step into leadership to drive action for the future of their communities. Forum participants discussed the importance of supporting leaders and engaging new and diverse voices in local decision-making. They discussed the barriers, cultures and expectations that limit opportunities and perpetuate inequities and ways to overcome them. After a year of social isolation and political division, it will be important to create constructive, welcoming, and accessible spaces for civic participation, bringing together neighbors with a variety of lived experiences and beliefs, to collaborate in the perpetual experiment of democracy, and to unite around points of shared vision for the future of our communities.

### PARTICIPANT IDEAS FOR ACTION

- Zoom and other virtual platforms, made ubiquitous by the pandemic, have lowered the barrier to civic participation for many Vermonters. As operations return to in-person, local boards and public bodies should try to continue remote participation options to accommodate participation from folks unable to attend in person.
- Timing and logistic hurdles prevent many Vermonters from holding leadership roles. Flexible meeting times can help accommodate full-time workers, and supports like childcare and transportation can help make it easier to attend meetings.
- Vermont's culture of volunteerism can limit participation from individuals with stretched financial resources, and often results in a homogenization of leadership. Meaningful compensation for leadership positions may help to attract a broader candidate pool.
- Youth voices are critical in our democracy, and have been leading on a number of issues in the past couple years. Providing platforms for youth participation, engagement, and safe spaces to cultivate ideas from young leaders can help inform local decision-making in positive ways.
- Our educational institutions have a large role to play. Supporting curricula and school-community partnerships can get students out of the classroom and working on solving "real-world" problems.
- Intermediary entities and partnerships can help develop new and diverse leaders if supported.
- Leadership hierarchies can be a bottleneck when waiting for established leaders to step aside. A buddy system that pairs older more experienced leaders with new ones in a mentorship role could be a good way to encourage a generational power shift.
- Student debt relief could be a major lever to attract and retain younger Vermonters.
- There are historic inequities built into many of our leadership structures. Official statements and overt messaging can help create a culture of inclusion that brings in new voices and perspectives.

## Speakers, Panelists, and Moderators

- **Benjamin Akande**, *President*, Champlain College
- **John Antonucci**, *Director*, LaunchVT
- **Wichie Artu**, *Community organizer*, Magnetic Fields Farm
- **Beth Awhaitey**, *Community Member*, Burlington VT
- **Becca Balint**, *President Pro Tempore*, Vermont Senate
- **Will Belongia**, *Executive Director*, VT Community Loan Fund
- **Michael Birnbaum**, *Founder & Owner*, Kingdom Fiber
- **Betsy Bishop**, *President*, Vermont Chamber of Commerce
- **Chris Blanchard**, *Co-Owner*, Bristol Electronics
- **Tiff Bluemle**, *Representative*, Vermont House of Representatives
- **Janette Bombardier**, *Chief Technology Officer / Chief Operating Officer*, Chroma Technology
- **Ted Brady**, *Executive Director*, Vermont League of Cities & Towns
- **Randy Brock**, *Sen. Minority Leader*, Vermont Senate
- **Erica Campbell**, *Outreach Representative*, Office of Senator Sanders
- **Marita Canedo**, *Program Coordinator*, Migrant Justice
- **Jennifer Carlo**, *Executive Director*, NEK Collaborative
- **Kristin Carlson**, *VP of Strategic and External Affairs*, Green Mountain Power
- **Paul Cillo**, *President & Executive Director*, Public Assets Institute
- **Susan Clark**, *Author*, Slow Democracy, All Those in Favor
- **Sara Coffey**, *State Representative*, Windham-1, Vermont House of Representatives
- **Hal Colston**, *State Representative*, General Assembly
- **Jon Copans**, *Model Communities Program Director*, Vermont Council on Rural Development
- **Paul Costello**, *Executive Director*, Vermont Council on Rural Development
- **Jameson Davis**, *JD Candidate*, Vermont Law School
- **Xusana Davis**, *Executive Director of Racial Equity*, State of Vermont
- **LG Davitian**, *Executive Director*, CCTV Center for Media and Democracy
- **Chol Dhoor**, *Executive Director*, Sudanese Foundation of Vermont Inc

- **Ben Doyle**, *President*, Preservation Trust of Vermont
- **Matt Dunne**, *Founder*, Center on Rural Innovation
- **Will Eberle**, *Field Director*, Agency of Human Services
- **Emily Eckert**, *Energy Transformation Representative*, Green Mountain Power
- **Rebecca Ellis**, *State Director*, Office of Congressman Welch
- **Jody Fried**, *Executive Director*, Catamount Arts
- **Anne Galloway**, *CEO*, VT Digger
- **Mary Gannon**, *Equity Consultant*, Strategies for Creating Just and Equitable Organizations & Communities
- **Jean Giard**, *President & CEO*, VT Federal Credit Union
- **Colleen Goodridge**, *President*, Goodridge Lumber, Cedar Mill
- **Lt Governor Molly Gray**, *Lieutenant Governor*, State of Vermont
- **Adam Grinold**, *Executive Director*, Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation
- **Holly Groschner**, *Former CEO*, Vermont PBS, Equal Access to Broadband Inc.
- **Alana Harte**
- **Calley Hastings**, *Co-owner*, Fat Toad Farm
- **Paul Hines**, *Co-Founder, CEO*, Packetized Energy
- **Beth Humstone**, *Urban Planner, retired*
- **Mohamed Jafar**, *New American Advisory Council*
- **Alyssa Johnson**, *Community Projects Associate*, Vermont Council on Rural Development
- **Justin Johnson**, *Partner*, MMR, LLC
- **Al Johnson-Kurts**, *Communications Director*, Change the Story VT
- **Ellen Kahler**, *Executive Director*, VT Sustainable Jobs Fund
- **Christopher Kaufman Ilstrup**, *Executive Director*, Vermont Humanities
- **Andy Kehler**, *Founder*, Cellars at Jasper Hill
- **Mateo Kehler**, *Founder*, Cellars at Jasper Hill
- **Stephen Kiernan**, *Writer*, Vermont to the 10th Power
- **Charlie Kimbell**, *Representative*, State of Vermont
- **Jen Kimmich**, *General Manager*, The Alchemist
- **Chris Koliba**, *Professor, Director*, UVM Office of Engagement
- **Jenna Koloski**, *Community and Policy Manager*, Vermont Council on Rural Development
- **Nick Kramer**, *Community & Policy Associate*, Vermont Council on Rural Development
- **Jill Krowinski**, *Speaker of the House*, Vermont House of Representatives
- **Lindsay Kurrle**, *Secretary*, VT Agency of Commerce & Community Development
- **Sarah Lauderdale**, *Executive Director*, VT Center for Independent Living
- **Thomas Leavitt**, *President & CEO*, Northfield Savings Bank
- **Sara Leblanc**, *Founder*, Next Generation, VT (5 children's Campuses)
- **Sam Lincoln**, *Lincoln Farm*
- **Donna Macomber**, *Legal Justice Project Coordinator*, Women's Freedom Center
- **Erin Maile O'Keefe**, *Director*, The Human Connection Project
- **Jon "Max" Muise**, *Area Director*, USDA Rural Development
- **Mari McClure**, *President & CEO*, Green Mountain Power
- **Marina McCoy**, *CEO & Co-Founder*, Waste Free Earth
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