

Equitable Education Systems Grant: Application

I. Introduction

Recent legislation such as [Act 1](#), [Act 173](#) and [Act 77](#) are examples of Vermont's ongoing efforts to ensure Vermont education systems are accessible and equitable for all learners, value individual differences, and prepare all students for postsecondary success.

To support our schools and educators in this collective effort, the AOE is providing a competitive grant opportunity to encourage school systems to engage in activities that facilitate the development and implementation of policies, practices and strategies that support culturally-responsive and inclusive school communities. This can include developing hiring policies, drafting/refining inclusive coordinated curriculum, and outreach and community engagement or other related activities that support closing equity gaps for Vermont learners.

The competitive grant will be for FY22 (2021-2022 academic year). Applicants may apply for grants for up to \$50,000. Grant applications will be reviewed by the Agency of Education after the May 7, 2021 application deadline. Competitive awards will be granted to SU/SDs or consortia of SU/SDs that show the greatest promise for positive change. Approved grants may be fully or partially funded. The final award will be determined by the reviewers.

II. Background

It has been twenty years since the Vermont Advisory Committee report to the United States Commission on Civil Rights first described the state of racism within its public schools. Subsequent follow-up reports concluded that while some positive inroads had been made within Vermont public schools, "racial harassment," as well as the lack of administrative oversight of the issue, was still prevalent.

In [2017, the Racial Disparity in State Systems](#) report elucidated the continuing concerns over racial disparities within Vermont public schools. Three suggestions stemming from the Report were to:

1. *teach children from an integrated curriculum that fairly represents both the contributions of People of Color (as well as indigenous people, women, people with disabilities, etc.) while fairly and accurately representing our history of oppression of these groups;*
2. *educate state employees about implicit bias, White Privilege, White Fragility and White*

Contact Information:

If you have questions about this document or would like additional information please contact:

Jess DeCarolis, Student Pathways Division, at jess.decarolis@vermont.gov or (802) 595-9740

Supremacy; and

- 3. increase the representation of People of Color in the state and school labor forces by focusing on recruitment, hiring and retention, as well as promotion of People of Color into positions of authority and responsibility on boards, commissions, etc.*

In 2019, Governor Scott approved [Act 1\(H.3\)](#), an act relating to ethnic and social equity studies standards for public schools. Act 1 “creates the Ethnic and Social Equity Standards Advisory Working Group to review standards for student performance adopted by the State Board of Education and, on or before June 30, 2021, recommend to the State Board updates and additional standards to recognize fully the history, contributions, and perspectives of ethnic groups and social groups.” The act also asks the State Board of Education to report on the hazing, bullying and harassment of historically marginalized groups.

Also in 2019, the Agency of Education, as a member of the New England Secondary School Consortium (a consortium of the six New England State Education Agencies supported by the Great Schools Partnership), co-facilitated a six-state task force to develop a framework of principles and strategies for the purpose of diversifying the educator workforce. A report, [Increasing the Racial, Ethnic, and Linguistic Diversity of the Educator Workforce: A Call to Action for Leaders](#), was released in 2020 detailing strategies across the career phases of an educator and directed at all education stakeholders to diversify the educator workforce. As evidenced by recent stories both nationally and within our local news, there is important work to do in Vermont and schools can lead the way.

Schools and school boards need to actively engage in inclusive recruiting, hiring and educator support practices. Vermont learners will benefit from a diversified workforce that not only represents and reflects the diversity of the student population, but the diversity of Vermonters generally. School systems and educators need to represent diverse perspectives when creating curriculum, purchasing instructional materials, and designing learning environments that foster the skills and knowledge necessary for all students to become responsible global citizens. Our Vermont students need to understand the perspectives and cultures of others, communicate ideas effectively across diverse audiences, and learn to act as global citizens by:

- Recognizing that our world is an increasingly complex web of connections and inter-dependencies;
- Understanding and exercising their rights and responsibilities within a pluralistic democratic society; and
- Acknowledging the rights, responsibilities, and opportunities of an interconnected world.

The grant’s intent to diversify the educator workforce and bring a lens of inclusivity and cultural responsiveness to curriculums will support Vermont schools in guiding students,

staff, faculty and administrators to appreciate diversity, honor multiple perspectives, respect diverse backgrounds, and engender civic and equity literacy.

Resources and References: Please see Appendix G

III. Vermont Agency of Education Priorities

This grant will support projects that address the priorities described below:

- A. Address one, some, or all of the following:
 - Develop and implement policies, practices and strategies that support culturally-responsive and inclusive school communities and/or;
 - Facilitate the development and implementation of culturally responsive and inclusive curriculum and/or;
 - Develop strategies focused on diversifying the educator workforce to address educational equity gaps within the state.
- B. Directly address topics of race, disability, economic disadvantage, gender/identity, sexuality, language, religion, cultural literacy, and/or immigrant and refugee status;
- C. Are led by an interdisciplinary K-12 or secondary school/CTE grant leadership team ideally composed of administrators, staff, and community members, if applicable;
- D. Use data such as free and reduced lunch, equity gaps, vulnerable populations, surveys, expulsion rates, etc. to inform the grant request; and
- E. Engage in or offer regional/collaborative solutions.

IV. Project Award and Timeline

Grant awards will be announced May 21, 2021, will begin on the date that final signatures are executed (some time on or after July 1, 2021), and will expire on June 30, 2022 with the expectation that program objectives are met and all reporting and monitoring requirements are successfully fulfilled. Grantees are expected to provide a plan, timeline, and budget request for the identified grant activity period.

Timeline:

Grant Application Released: April 5, 2021

Application Deadline: May 7, 2021

Anticipated Grant Duration: July 1, 2021 or after upon execution of signed grant agreement - June 30, 2022

Number of Awards: Multiple awards are anticipated and are contingent on available funding

V. Project Requirements

- A. **Contact Information:** Name, address, phone number, and e-mail information for Lead Grant Contact, Partners, and Business Manager.
- B. **Organizational Structure:** Provide a clear description and a plan for project structure to meet the grant expectations. Define roles and responsibilities for a leadership team that ideally includes representation by administrators, staff, and/or community members.
- C. **Communication System:** Identify intended strategies for communication with and among the school(s), AOE staff, and any stakeholders. Additionally, explain how the work from this project will be disseminated.
- D. **Project, Plan, Evidence, Timeline, and Benchmarks of Success:** Provide a clear description, an achievable plan, evidence basis, and timeline for this project, as well as specific indicators of quarterly project benchmarks. This plan and timeline must be developed for the time period between July 1, 2021 and June 30, 2022.
- E. **Budget and Budget Justification:** Include a cost-effective budget and justification for line items that reflect the goals and priorities of this project. This budget and budget justification must be for the time period between July 1, 2021 and June 30, 2022.

VI. Application Requirements

The narrative sections of the application must be double-spaced, and the font must not be smaller than 12-point and shall not exceed 10 pages. Each application must contain the following sections:

A. Grant Narrative: (Please see Appendix A)

Project Description and Justification:

A description of how the project will meet the Vermont Agency of Education Priorities:

- i. A description of the culturally relevant curriculum developed and/or;
 - ii. The outreach, community engagement or other related activities that support closing equity gaps and/or;
 - iii. The plan to diversify the educator workforce; and
- The rationale behind this project and how it will benefit their educational system; and
 - Data and/or research that establishes the evidence base; and

- An explanation of how this work will be integrated into school systems and sustained through on-going initiatives; and
- A process for allowing products developed to be shared with the AOE for possible posting/sharing; and
- Connections to Recovery or Continuous Improvement Plans.

Project Management:

- Clearly defined roles and responsibilities of participants as well as the Leadership Team/Steering Committee membership that demonstrate that the team has the capability of managing the project, organizing the work, and meeting deadlines; and,
- Intended strategies for communication with and among the school(s), community partners, AOE staff, and any stakeholders.

B. Project Timeline and Benchmarks: (Please See Appendix B)

- A detailed description of the project timeline and benchmarks that includes:
- A detailed description of goals, an achievable plan and timeline, and monthly project benchmarks. This scope and sequence must be developed for the projected time period between July 2021 and June 30, 2022. A project timeline with specific indicators of project success (benchmarks) at key points of the timeline; and,
- A description of the measurements that will be used to determine success including clearly defined goals, numeric objectives, and specific outcomes; and,
- A plan for sustaining this work at the end of the funding period must be included.

C. Budget and Budget Justification: (Please see Appendix C)

- A detailed description of the budget as well as the budget justification that includes:
- A project budget for anticipated funding up to \$50,000; and
- A budget justification that is clearly tied to the scope and requirements of the project.

D. Contact Information: (Please see Appendix D)

- Name, address, phone number, and e-mail information for Superintendent, Lead Grant Contact and Business Manager.

VII. Application Submission and Review

A. Submission: Applicants must submit an electronic copy signed by an authorized institutional official to Rose Wheeler at rose.wheeler@vermont.gov at the Vermont Agency of Education. Electronic signatures will be accepted.

Any questions regarding this grant opportunity should be directed to Jess DeCarolis via email (jess.decarolis@vermont.gov).

To be considered for funding, original signed applications must be received at the Vermont Agency of Education **by 4:00 PM on May 7, 2021**. Applications should be submitted via e-mail to Rose Wheeler at rose.wheeler@vermont.gov.

Note: Applications without e-signatures: The completed cover page, Appendix E, of this application will be converted into a OneSpan document which will then be routed to the current superintendent for signature to be maintained on file. Signatures indicate understanding and approval of the grant application submission.

B. Review Process: A review panel will evaluate the eligible applications in accordance with the required application components. (For support, please see Appendix F)

Criteria:

Criteria	Points
Grant Narrative <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Project Description and Justification (20)• Project Management (20)	40
Project Timeline and Benchmarks	40
Budget and Budget Justifications	20

The Agency reserves the right to award in full or in part, to reject any and all applications in whole or in part, and to waive technical defects, irregularities or omissions if, in its judgement, the best interest of students would be served. After receiving the application, the Agency reserves the right not to award a grant, to negotiate specific grant amounts and to select certain grantees regardless of points awarded as part of the process to meet federal requirements or State Board of Education priorities.

Applicants may be asked to clarify or rewrite certain aspects of their applications. Finalists may be asked to participate in an interview before funds are awarded. Applicants will be contacted if such information or actions are necessary.

VIII. Award Administration

- A. Notification of the Award:** The SU/SD designee will be notified of the status of their application within one week of the application deadline.

- B. Reporting Requirements:** The Steering/Leadership Committee and/or SU/SD designee will provide quarterly updates on progress to a designated staff person at the Agency of Education.

- C. Final Report to be submitted by July 15, 2022:** Project Evidence and Final Evaluation Plan: A detailed description of how the project goals were met, as well as any challenges that were encountered. Additionally, the final evaluation will include:
 - An explanation of how partnerships functioned including strengths and challenges, if applicable; and
 - An explanation for how this work will be sustained.

Appendix A: Grant Narrative

Project Description and Justification
Project Management

Appendix B: Project Timeline/ Benchmarks

Timeline	Goal/Purpose	Description of Activity and Participants	Deliverable/Product	Measurement, Benchmark of Success

Appendix C: Budget

Functions	Salaries (100)	Employees Benefits (200)	Professional and Technical Services (300) Consultants Contracts	Other Purchased Services (500) Travel Printing	Supplies (600) Food Books Periodicals	Miscellaneous Expenditures (800) Subgrants, Dues, and Fees	Total
2212- Instruction and Curriculum Development							
2213 - Instructional Staff Training							
2219 - Other Improvement of Instruction Services							
2230- Instruction-Related Technology							
2240- Academic Student Assessment							
2290 - Other Support Services - Instructional Staff							
2715- Field Trips (Education related)							
2901-Other Support Services							
Total							

Appendix D: Applicant Contact Information

Superintendent

Institution or Organization	
Name	
Title	
Address	
Telephone	
Email	
Fax	
Signature	

Lead Grant Contact

Institution or Organization	
Name	
Title	
Address	
Telephone	
Email	
Fax	

Business Manager

Institution or Organization	
Name	
Title	
Address	
Telephone	
Email	
Fax	

Appendix E: Proposal Cover Page

Equitable Education Systems Grant

Supervisory Union/District [LEAD]	
Contact Person	
Business Manager	
Phone	
E-mail	
Superintendent Name	
Superintendent Email	
Superintendent Signature (this signature will be obtained through AOE's OneSpan e-signature process via ADS E-Signature)	
Date	

Appendix F: Scoring Criteria

Score	Scoring Guide: Each criterion is awarded a score of 1 to 20 with 20 being the highest. We offer the following as a guide to assist you.
16-20 = Excellent	The proposal demonstrates the highest level of thinking, capacity, or impact. The content of the responses is exemplary in this particular criteria area and could be an example to others.
11-15 = Good	Exhibits ideas that will affect positive change. While the criteria are not fully addressed, the responses are thoughtful and striving for effectiveness.
6-10 = Fair	Gaps are apparent. Criteria are not addressed fully. Responses lack detail.
0-5 = Poor	Weaknesses are apparent in the criteria; the question is not addressed or the logic is faulty.

<p>Project Timeline and Benchmarks</p> <p>40 Points</p>	<p>A detailed description of the Project Timeline and Benchmarks that include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> A detailed description of goals, an achievable plan and timeline, and monthly project benchmarks. This scope and sequence must be developed for the projected time period between July 2021 and June 30, 2022. A project timeline with specific indicators of project success (benchmarks) at key points of the timeline. <input type="checkbox"/> A description of the measurements that will be used to determine success including clearly defined goals, numeric objectives, and specific outcomes. <input type="checkbox"/> A plan for sustaining this work at the end of the funding period must be included. 		
<p>Budget and Budget Justification</p> <p>20 Points</p>	<p>A detailed description of the Budget as well as a Budget Justification that includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> A project budget for anticipated funding up to \$50,000; <input type="checkbox"/> A budget justification that is clearly tied to the scope and requirements of the project. (Please see Appendix C for Budget Template); and <input type="checkbox"/> A fiscal agent with the capacity and experience to manage the financial requirements of the grant; 		
	<p>Total score:</p>	<p>/100</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> I recommend as a recipient of this grant. <input type="checkbox"/> I do not recommend as a recipient of this grant.

Appendix G: Resources and References

2017 [Equity Lens Tool](#) - This tool is used to provide a common vocabulary and protocol for evaluating policies, programs, practices and decisions for equity; and to produce policies, programs, practices and decisions that result in equitable outcomes. (Adapted from Portland Public Schools Racial Equity Lens)

2018 [Supporting School Equity \(SEE\) project](#) - The following question, “What classroom-level and systemic improvements would need to happen to fully leverage the equity-related changes described in Vermont’s State Plan?”, drove the multiple SEE-group recommendations for classrooms, LEAs, and the AOE to consider for eliminating inequities.

2019 [VT Flexible Pathways Tool: Considerations for Student Participation in a Flexible Pathway](#)- This tool can be used to support a consistent process for students and their advisors to determine how a flexible pathway opportunity fits within a student’s short and long-term goals, how they can prepare for those learning experiences and identify the supports they may need to be successful.

2019/2020 [AOE Equity Literacy Grant](#)- Two rounds of competitive grants were offered for the purpose of encouraging school systems to engage in professional learning opportunities to lay the foundation for educators to develop and implement strategies to improve equity literacy in their systems. [Spring](#) and [Fall](#) resource documents were included to assist the field.

2019/2020 [Increasing the Racial, Ethnic, and Linguistic Diversity of the Educator Workforce: A Call to Action for Leaders](#)- A report developed by the New England Secondary School Consortium (NESSC) Diversifying the Educator Workforce Task Force education leaders and policy makers.

2019/2020 [Vermont Portrait of a Graduate](#)- A Vermont Portrait of a Graduate (PoG) clarifies the expectations for College and Career Readiness as described in the Vermont Education Quality Standards. It specifies the cognitive, personal, and interpersonal skills and abilities that students should be able to demonstrate upon graduation.

2020/2021 [VT DEW Task Force Resources](#)-PD webinar recordings, job board suggestions and resources to support recruiting, hiring, supporting and retaining a diverse educator workforce.

2021 [Spotlight on Equity: Financial Literacy K-12 Proficiency-Based Graduation Requirements](#) (PBGRs) - A “Spotlight on Equity” has been included on the AOE-developed K-12 (PBGRs) to provide a list of considerations for the purpose of providing an equity literate and socially conscious lens to the teaching and learning of personal finance. This Spotlight also serves to recognize the historic economic exclusion and marginalization of minority groups and communities; annotated supplementary [equity resources](#) are provided.