

RIPPLE: Vermont Community Foundation Values & Belief Statement

Race, Inequity, Power, Privilege, Learning and Engagement

The Vermont Community Foundation believes that systemic racism and institutionalized oppression exist in Vermont and drive economic inequity, erode community, and perpetuate social injustice. This looks like disproportionate rates of home ownership, leadership in organizations and businesses, wealth creation through land ownership and succession, and access to capital for entrepreneurs. These disparities result in unequal opportunities for members of the global majority/Black, Indigenous, and People of Color in Vermont.

Addressing the structures that drive these systemic inequities is a moral, civic, and economic imperative that is fundamental to the impact the Foundation seeks to achieve in closing the Opportunity Gap. Doing so requires understanding how historic legal, economic, and social systems of oppression (from slavery to Jim Crow laws, voter suppression, and redlining, among others) have shaped our culture and contributed to the concentration of wealth, power, and privilege, enabling dominant populations and institutions to exert control over others.

The Foundation takes as a starting point an awareness that privilege is inherent to the work of philanthropy. The accrual of wealth makes the work of philanthropy possible, and the concentration of wealth is also a condition that makes the work of philanthropy necessary. In managing a shared platform for giving focused on Vermont communities, the Foundation aims to understand and unlock philanthropy's potential to redistribute power and resources so that all Vermonters have equitable access to opportunity and agency over their economic and social wellbeing. This is the underlying premise of the Foundation's efforts to close the Opportunity Gap.

The Foundation commits to the following priorities, which it believes are necessary conditions for advancing equity and justice:

- Learning and evaluation relative to issues of power and privilege, systemic racism, economic inequality, and social justice.
- Ongoing inquiry into the ways the Foundation perpetuates inequity in Vermont communities and the ways we can transform our work to support equity.
- Incorporating our learning into the organization's work at all levels, including strategic planning initiatives, impact objectives, operations, and grantmaking.
- Seeking feedback and input on our commitments, plans, and impacts, especially from communities most impacted by inequities, and shifting our work accordingly.
- Growing a workplace with a diverse staff, board, and an inclusive and just culture.

With gratitude and hope for the work ahead, we lift up the following initiatives, programs, and grants as examples of relationship building, collaboration, and storytelling with fundholders, donors, staff, board

members, grantees and community partners to advance toward a more racially and economically equitable Vermont. We will continue to advance this work across all fund types – donor-advised, discretionary, and nonprofit – and all Opportunity Gap strategies.

- Engaging the [Center for Whole Communities](#) to facilitate and consult on staff training, retreats, and other RIPPLE work
- Core Partnership with the [Vermont Professionals of Color Network](#)
- [Economic Stimulus for Equity Partnership](#) with Vermont Legislature
- [Equitable and Inclusive Communities](#) grant program
- [Health Equity partnership with the Vermont Department of Health](#)
- [IDEAL Vermont Partnership with Vermont Department of Racial Equity](#)
- More and larger grants by fundholders for BIPOC-led organizations and initiatives, often at the recommendation of their philanthropic advisor
- Increased collective giving by fundholders for equity-focused programs and organizations
- A growing number of fundholders discuss with their philanthropic advisors how to have equity and [trust-based philanthropy](#) inform their grantmaking.
- [Samara Fund](#) – supporting Vermont’s LGBTQ+ communities
- [Vermont Changemakers Table](#) grant program
- Vermont Community Foundation Policy Prohibiting All Grants and Distribution of Resources to Hate Groups
- [Welcoming, Equitable, and Anti-Racist Communities](#) initiative – VT COVID-19 Fund Recovery Initiative
- [Climate & Environmental Justice](#) grant program
- [Vermont Women’s Fund](#) – driving change for Vermont women and girls
- Elevating Diverse Voices
 - [Vermont Women’s Fund Annual Event 2022](#), Akshata Nayak and Alex Hillard
 - [Vermont Women’s Fund Annual Event 2021](#), Theresa Yunger
 - [Vermont Women’s Fund Annual Event 2018](#), Reshma Saujani