

# Southern Vermont Economy Project

November 4, 2023

# Agenda

Equity in Government Government and Local Representation My Unlikely Story Opportunities and Barriers	Rey Garofano	1:00 - 1:20
Polarities Presentation & Activity	Susan Clark	1:20 - 2:30
Small Group Discussion		2:30 - 2:50
Report Out and Warp Up		2:50 - 3:00

# AGREEMENTS

Embrace an abundance mindset

Step up, step back

Be fully present

Support each other's learning

# GOVERNMENT AND LOCAL REPRESENTATION

# Participatory Democracy

People coming together to govern themselves

Town meeting day

Legislators for a day

Holding equal power

Protecting and enhancing the voice of the minority

Helps remove the barriers that divide us

# Local Government

Voting

School Board

Select Board and City Councils

Committees

Town Clerk

Mayors

# State and Federal Government

## State Representatives and Senators

150 local Representatives

30 regional Senators

## Statewide Officials

Governor, Attorney General, Sec. of State, Treasurer, Auditor

## Federal

One U.S. House Representative

Two U.S. Senators

Always ask yourself

Who is making the decisions?

Who benefits from the  
decisions?

Who is missing from the  
decision making process?



# Representation

## For the people / by the people

Research finds that local governments do not reflect the demographic composition of their citizens.<sup>1</sup>

Racial minorities are underrepresented on city councils, and they are particularly underrepresented in low-turnout elections. [Hajnal & Trounstine \(2005\)](#)

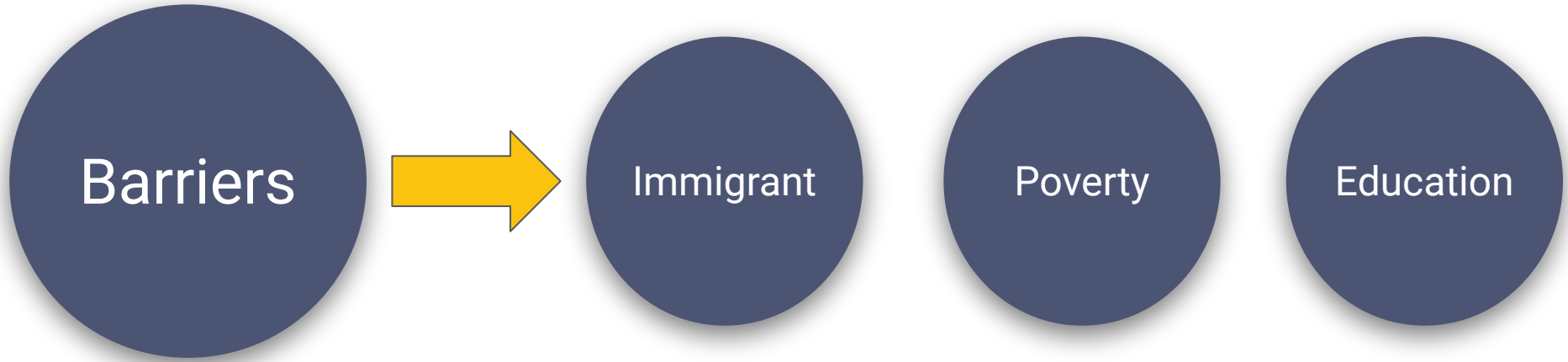
Women hold 19.3% of mayoral seats in cities with 30,000 or more residents ([Center for American Women and Politics](#)).

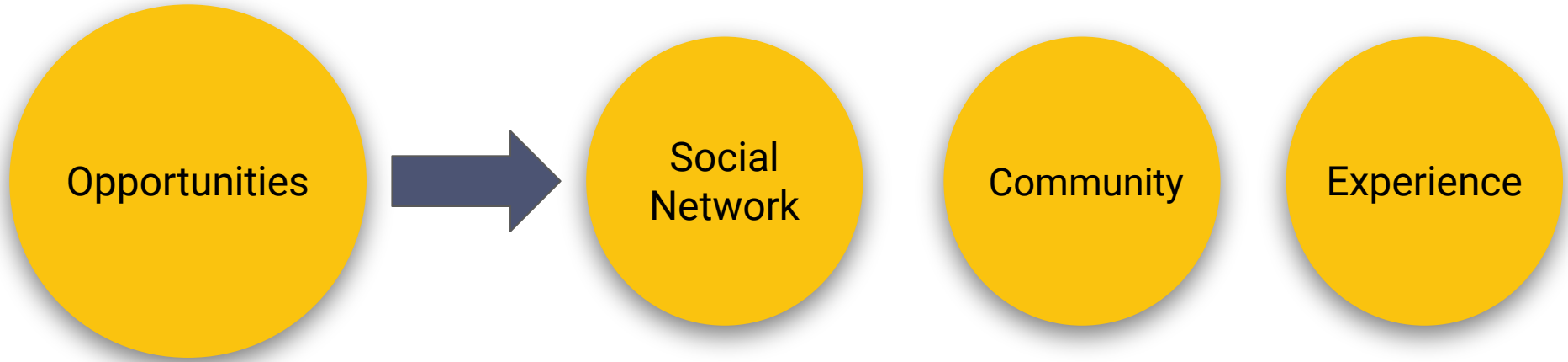
Women are a minority of Vermont's top municipal leaders. 34% municipal managers and 16% select board chairs. ([Change the Story, Advancing Women Powering the Economy](#))

★ In Vermont, women regularly comprise a majority of the participants in town meetings.

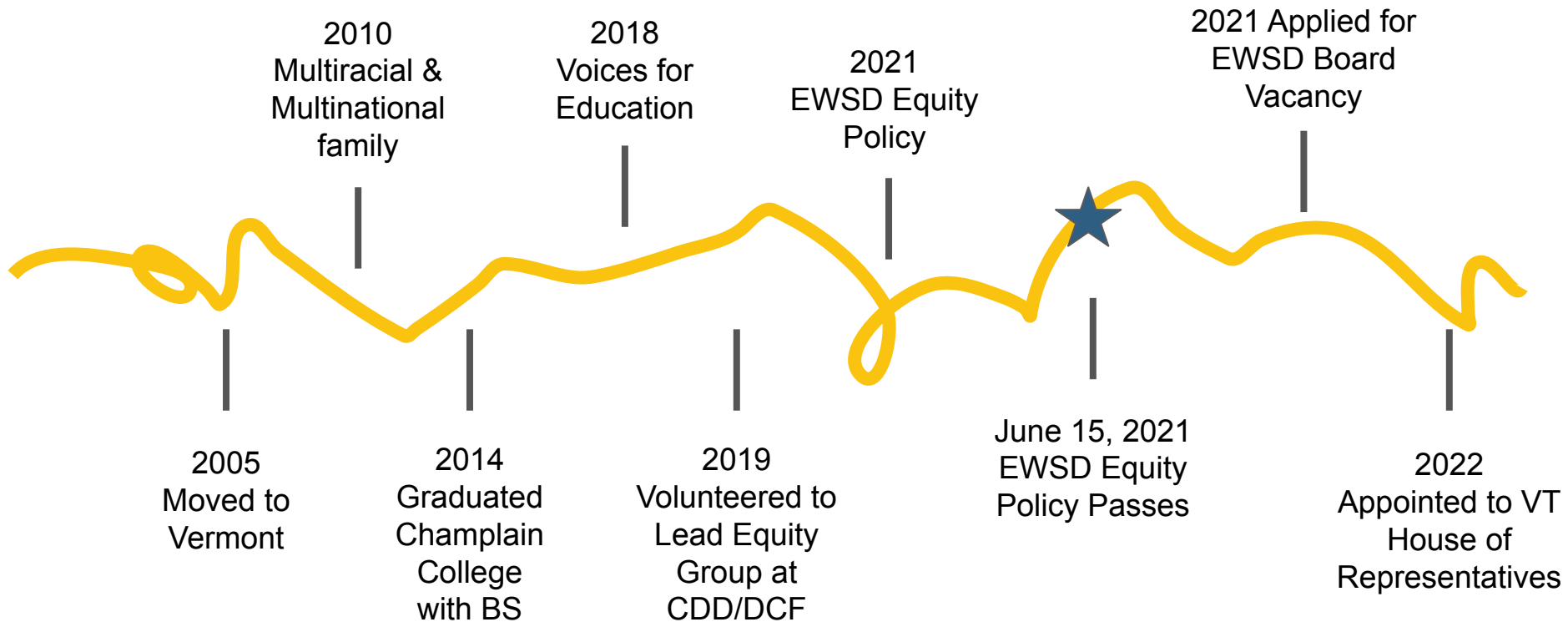
<sup>1</sup>It is important to note that there are severe data limitations on knowledge regarding the demographic composition of local officials.

# MY UNLIKELY STORY





# Squiggly Path to Community Service



**OPPORTUNITIES  
AND BARRIERS**

# Opportunities

Increased supports for diverse participation

[Bright Leadership Institute](#)

[Emerge Vermont](#)

Immigration and resettlement

Youth involvement

[The Youth Services Advisory Council](#)

Aging population

Town Meeting

Town meeting stacks up well on socioeconomic indicators

# Barriers

## Access

- Time and location of meetings

- Transportation

## Language access

## Lack of support to engage with local politics

## Imposter syndrome