



VIRGINIA CIVICS STRATEGIC PLAN 2021 – 2023

PREAMBLE

Virginia Civics is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization established to promote constitutional literacy, critical thinking, and civic engagement. Our organization is dedicated to empowering the next generation of leaders in Virginia through effective programming for teachers and students.

We have many assets on which to build, including an exceptional staff, Operating Board, and Advisory Council dedicated to supporting the development of students into purposeful, talented, and productive members of their communities. Our critical thinking programs—We the People: the Citizen and the Constitution, and Project Citizen—provide measurable impact on students and teachers. We the People alumni outperform the national sample of high school students in the National Assessment of Educational Progress in every category of civic knowledge measured, outperform university students on political knowledge tests, exhibit less political cynicism, are more politically tolerant than the average American, and exercise their right to vote at a rate of 92 percent. Teachers who complete our professional development programs express more commitment to teaching principles of the U.S. Constitution and constitutional self-government to their students. Project Citizen is an active program that engages students in developing public policy for their community. This program spans subjects and has the additional benefit of having students put civic skills into action.

This three-year plan focuses on specific ways that Virginia Civics can broaden its impact, including increasing the number of teachers and students participating in the

programs supported by Virginia Civics, engaging in intentional partnerships, seeking speaking opportunities, developing a mentor corps, and creating new programming designed to enhance the Virginia Department of Education’s emphasis on project-based learning, among others. This plan and its corresponding action items will guide the Operating Board and staff, and an element of the plan will be reviewed at each Board meeting.

VISION STATEMENT

Virginia Civics will transform every student in Virginia into an informed, engaged, and active citizen.

MISSION STATEMENT

Virginia Civics promotes constitutional literacy, critical thinking, and civic engagement to empower the next generation of leaders in Virginia.

CORE VALUES

The staff and Board of Virginia Civics:

UNDERSTAND the needs of teachers and their challenges in the 21st century classroom

RESPECT the Constitution and the rule of law without partisan bias

ADVOCATE reasoned debate, civil discourse, and respect for the opinions of others

COMMIT to proven civic education programs and research on program efficacy and teaching methodologies

RESPOND quickly to current and emerging needs in curriculum development and teacher training to remain relevant and effective

PARTICIPATE with program partners through active engagement, ensuring mutually beneficial partnerships to increase the reach and impact of civic education programs statewide

STRATEGIC GOALS AND ACTION ITEMS

2021-2023

YEAR ONE

1. Enhance the Operating Board with the addition of Directors who will serve as a resource as the organization grows, with an intention to limit the board to ten members.
 - a. TIMELINE
 - Beginning May 2020 and ongoing
 - b. ACTION REQUIRED
 - Develop a deliberate traits matrix and process for cultivating new Directors.
 - Prioritize Board recruitment practices that take into account diversity of age, ethnicity, gender, and other identities.
 - Strive for broad geographic representation.
 - Develop an orientation program for new board members.
 - Establish strong working committees in governance, finance, development, marketing, and programs.
 - c. RESPONSIBILITY
 - Board Chair
 - Co-Executive Directors

2. Eliminate the Advisory Board, grow the Advisory Council, and then clarify its function.
 - a. TIMELINE
 - July – September 2020
 - b. ACTION REQUIRED
 - Revise the operating guidelines for the Advisory Council, including size, geographic representation, alumni representation, meeting schedule, and term limits.
 - Review and revise, as needed, the Advisory Council's primary function, including research and program content.
 - Designate Advisory Council members to serve on select Operating Board Standing Committees.

- Devise a respectful plan for notifying Advisory Board members of elimination of the Advisory Board and strategy for keeping them engaged in the organization.
- c. **RESPONSIBILITY**
- Co-Executive Directors
- 3. Develop an ideal staffing plan in line with the organization’s growth plan.**
- a. **TIMELINE**
- June – September 2020
- b. **ACTION REQUIRED**
- Develop job descriptions for a Director of Development and a Public Relations Manager.
 - Determine expertise and qualifications required for the positions.
 - Research and determine compensation.
 - Include staff positions in budget forecasts.
- c. **RESPONSIBILITY**
- Co-Executive Directors
- 4. Implement a newly developed fundraising plan to reinvigorate the current donor base, to cultivate new donors, to increase grant-funding opportunities, and to develop a sponsorship program.**
- a. **TIMELINE**
- April 2020 and ongoing
- b. **ACTION REQUIRED**
- Focus on strategies to increase the annual fund and unrestricted gifts from a broad donor base.
 - Cultivate major donor relationships.
 - Identify and pursue grant-funding opportunities including foundations and state government.
 - Prepare a 3-year financial plan.
- c. **RESPONSIBILITY**
- Co-Executive Directors
 - Operating Board, led by the Chair, to assist with major donor cultivation
 - Director of Development
 - Development Committee
- 5. Establish partnerships and seek collaborative relationships with organizations whose missions align with Virginia Civics.**
- a. **TIMELINE**

- Life of the strategic plan and ongoing

b. ACTION REQUIRED

- Conduct an audit of current partnerships to assess their effectiveness and strategic purpose.
- Define characteristics of value for potential partnerships.
- Develop a strategic list of organizations with whom Virginia Civics might partner.
- Begin developing relationships with representatives for those organizations.
- Determine financial and actionable responsibilities required of each organization.
- Determine benefit to each organization within the partnership.

c. RESPONSIBILITY

- Co-Executive Directors
- Operating Board
- Advisory Council

6. Develop a comprehensive communications strategy.

a. TIMELINE

- Life of the strategic plan and ongoing

b. ACTION REQUIRED

- Evaluate contracting with an experienced public relations professional to assist with enhancing the VA Civics.org site and improving social media content and management of postings.
- Develop a speaking program and strive to address Rotary chapters, community service clubs, supporting education foundations, and more.
- Use electronic public relations efforts as a way to cultivate and communicate with teachers, volunteers, and program alumni.
- Identify opportunities for media exposure.

a. RESPONSIBILITY

- Board Chair
- Co-Executive Directors
- Operating Board members
- Marketing Committee
- Advisory Council members

7. Develop a plan for growth of both We the People and Project Citizen.

a. TIMELINE

- Third quarter of fiscal 2021 and ongoing

b. ACTION REQUIRED

- Develop an operating plan for program retention and expansion.
- Develop a deliberate engagement strategy for public schools, private schools, and adult civic clubs in targeted regions.

c. RESPONSIBILITY

- Co-Executive Directors
- Program Committee
- Advisory Council

YEARS TWO AND THREE

8. Develop curriculum about Virginia state and local government, in order to support the State Department of Education in its shift toward Project-Based Learning and as it begins to move away from SOL testing.

a. TIMELINE

- To be determined during fiscal 2021

b. ACTION REQUIRED

- Determine if curriculum should be a digital resource, printed lesson plans, or a combination.
- Ensure curriculum is project-based.
- Determine need for curriculum and what other similar materials may exist.
- Consider developing or contributing to a curriculum that can be both a stand-alone and a companion curriculum for Project Citizen.
- Determine appropriate program staff and/or consultants to develop such a curriculum.

c. RESPONSIBILITY

- Program Committee
- Operating Board
- Advisory Council
- Co-Executive Directors

9. Shore up the corps of mentors.

a. TIMELINE

- First quarter fiscal 2022 and ongoing

b. ACTION REQUIRED

- Deliberately determine mentoring needs for Virginia Civics.
- Establish a regional program of active educators to serve as mentors.

- Establish training programs and materials for mentors to maximize efficiency and for consistent messaging.
- c. RESPONSIBILITY
- Designated committee comprised of Advisory Council, co-Executive Directors, and outside stakeholders