

KEY POINTS FROM YOUTH TOWN HALL ON CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Forms of Civic Engagement and Factors Affecting Participation

- Civic engagement is more than just politics. It can be any activity that strengthens the community and creates a common bond.
- Volunteering and becoming involved in grass roots initiatives are important for all ages in increasing engagement.
- The goal of civic engagement should be the organization of members of the community to educate themselves about issues.
- Individuals must take responsibility for informing themselves and exchanging viewpoints with each other.
- Civic engagement is the first step toward making an impact and driving change.
- Educational and income levels can impact civic engagement because they impact the access to information and the understanding of it.
- The involvement of parents in civic issues has the tendency to trickle down to their children.
- There should be more forums and discussion groups at the community level to help people get informed and have an opportunity to talk about issues together.

“Instead of worrying about how to solve a problem, we need to get personally involved.”

The Role of Social Media in Civic Engagement

- Social media helps raise awareness.
- The effectiveness of social media may be limited by access, author bias, and the demographics of those participating.
- Social media allows for instant distribution of information to a wide audience, and its full potential has yet to be reached.
- Discussions and in-person contact are still important in communicating ideas and viewpoints and engaging people in issues.
- With social media, people tend to forget quickly and move on to the next thing.
- Social media is effective for planting a seed and is an efficient way to enlarge the conversation.
- Social media can be a great organizational tool that supports civic engagement and maintains the passion behind the cause.

“The benefit of social media is that it gets people talking and makes people more aware of issues.”

Importance of Respect and Collaboration in Civic Engagement

- Respect is important because it prevents the exclusion of people or ideas that might be relevant.
- It is difficult to collaborate with another person or group without respecting their background and/or viewpoint.
- Mutual respect allows for a closer community and the ability to create better solutions.
- People have become discouraged from getting involved because there is so much negativity in politics.
- Without respect and collaboration, we cannot work together to create positive change.
- Attack the issue, not the person.

“Your children are going to look at what you do.”

Increasing Civic Engagement Among Youth

- The greatest challenge in increasing youth engagement is getting them to care and believe that every voice and vote counts.
- High school is the best place to start getting youth involved. High school students can be great leaders and can learn and teach civic engagement.
- Young people lack confidence in the political system and often lack knowledge of the issues. Expand the scope of information available through schools, families, social media, and community activities.
- Civics classes create a strong foundation for engagement.
- Role models can help youth realize that they can find and follow their passion and have a positive impact for themselves and others.

“Instill confidence at a young age that our actions count, our voice matters, and we can make a difference.”