

GENERATION CITIZEN
STRATEGIC PLAN 2017-2020

ABOUT GENERATION CITIZEN

Generation Citizen works to ensure that every student in the United States receives an effective Action Civics education, which provides them with the knowledge and skills necessary to participate in our democracy as active citizens.

We envision a country of young people working as active and effective citizens, collectively strengthening our American democracy. Generation Citizen partners directly with teachers and schools to help them implement a comprehensive Action Civics education program in their own classrooms.

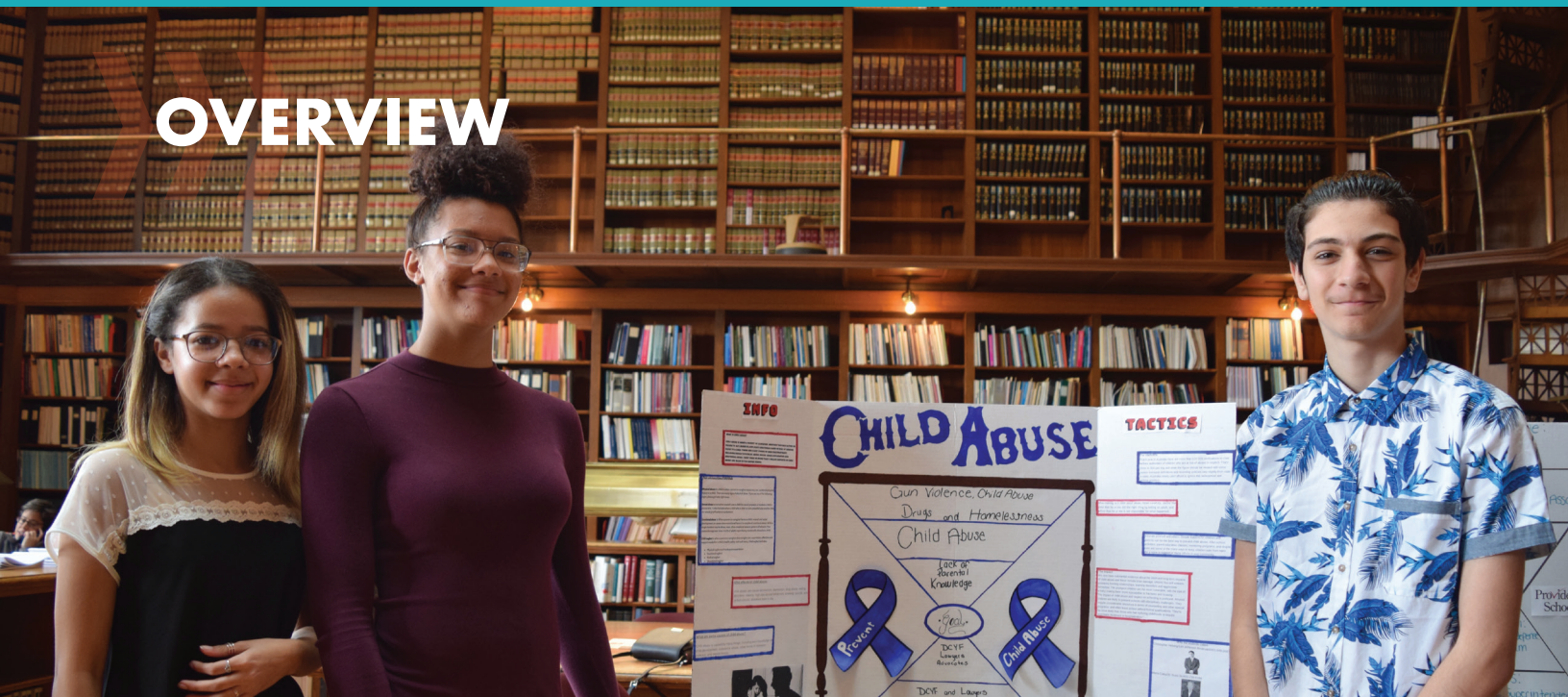
Our work began in 2008 when two Brown University students, both alarmed by young people's disengagement with the local political process, and buoyed by a belief in the power of youth voice, banded together to develop and teach an Action Civics curriculum to students in four Providence, RI, public school classrooms. Since then, the organization has delivered its comprehensive Action Civics curriculum to more than 40,000 students in six states, becoming one of the pre-eminent civics education organizations in the country.



“HELPING STUDENTS EMPATHIZE WITH OTHERS IS DIFFICULT TO ACHIEVE. THE GENERATION CITIZEN PROGRAM IS STRUCTURED TO ENABLE STUDENTS TO LOOK BEYOND THEIR COMFORT ZONES TO EXPLORE THE CHALLENGES THAT OTHERS IN THEIR COMMUNITY FACE ON A DAILY BASIS.”

— Lisa Goodnow, Austin Independent School District Executive Director of Academics and Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)

OVERVIEW



THE PROBLEM

There may not be a more powerful political sentiment than the notion that every person has the same say over the direction of the United States of America. But increasingly, this promise seems elusive.

8%

of 18-24 year olds voted in the 2014 midterm elections, the lowest young adult turnout ever measured

77%

of Americans 18-34 can't name one U.S. Senator representing their home state

33%

of Americans born after 1980 consider it "essential" to live in a democracy. 24% consider democracy a "bad" or "very bad" way to govern a country

There are many reasons for the lack of informed youth political engagement and belief in democracy. Perhaps most prominent has been the failure of our nation's schools to achieve one of their founding purposes: educating young people to be engaged, informed and responsible citizens.

» Until the 1960s, three courses on American government were common in U.S. high schools. Exposure of this breadth is rare today.

» Resources to help schools more effectively teach civics are not readily available in most parts of the U.S.

» Where civic education does still exist, it most often deals solely with rote historical and governmental knowledge.

» A civic empowerment gap has worsened, with low-income communities less likely to receive effective civics education experience.

THE SOLUTION: ACTION CIVICS

Democracy Coach (College Volunteer) program: As Generation Citizen's flagship program model from its founding, thousands of college volunteers have served as Democracy Coaches, supporting teachers in implementing Action Civics in the classroom. This program pairs volunteers with middle and high school teachers to lead the course using a peer-to-peer mentorship model. The volunteers offer energy, capacity, and research support to their classes.

Teacher-led program: In this model, Generation Citizen staff work directly with teachers to facilitate the Action Civics curriculum, an approach that includes intensive educator training and support. This approach eliminates barriers where geography, scheduling or school preference preclude a volunteer from being matched.

ACTION CIVICS WORKS

AT THE END OF THE 2015-16 SCHOOL YEAR:

72%

of students increased their civic knowledge, with more than half achieving standards-based proficiency

75%

of students believed they had the power to make a difference in the community

150%

increase in the number of students to have ever contacted or met with a public official

74%

increase in the number of students who had ever written a letter, article, or op-ed to a newspaper

80%

of students reported their intention to vote in the future

ABOUT ACTION CIVICS

Through Action Civics, students learn about democratic structures and processes by engaging with them, along with their classmates, to address an issue they care about in their local communities. The program guides students to research, analyze, propose, debate, and advocate for their identified solution and, in the process, instills these both academic and civic engagement skills for life.

ACTION CIVICS IS DEFINED BY



Student-led projects



Real-world personal issues



Political action towards lasting change



Reflection on impact and approach

ACTION CIVICS PROJECTS MUST



Examine community



Identify issues



Research



Strategize

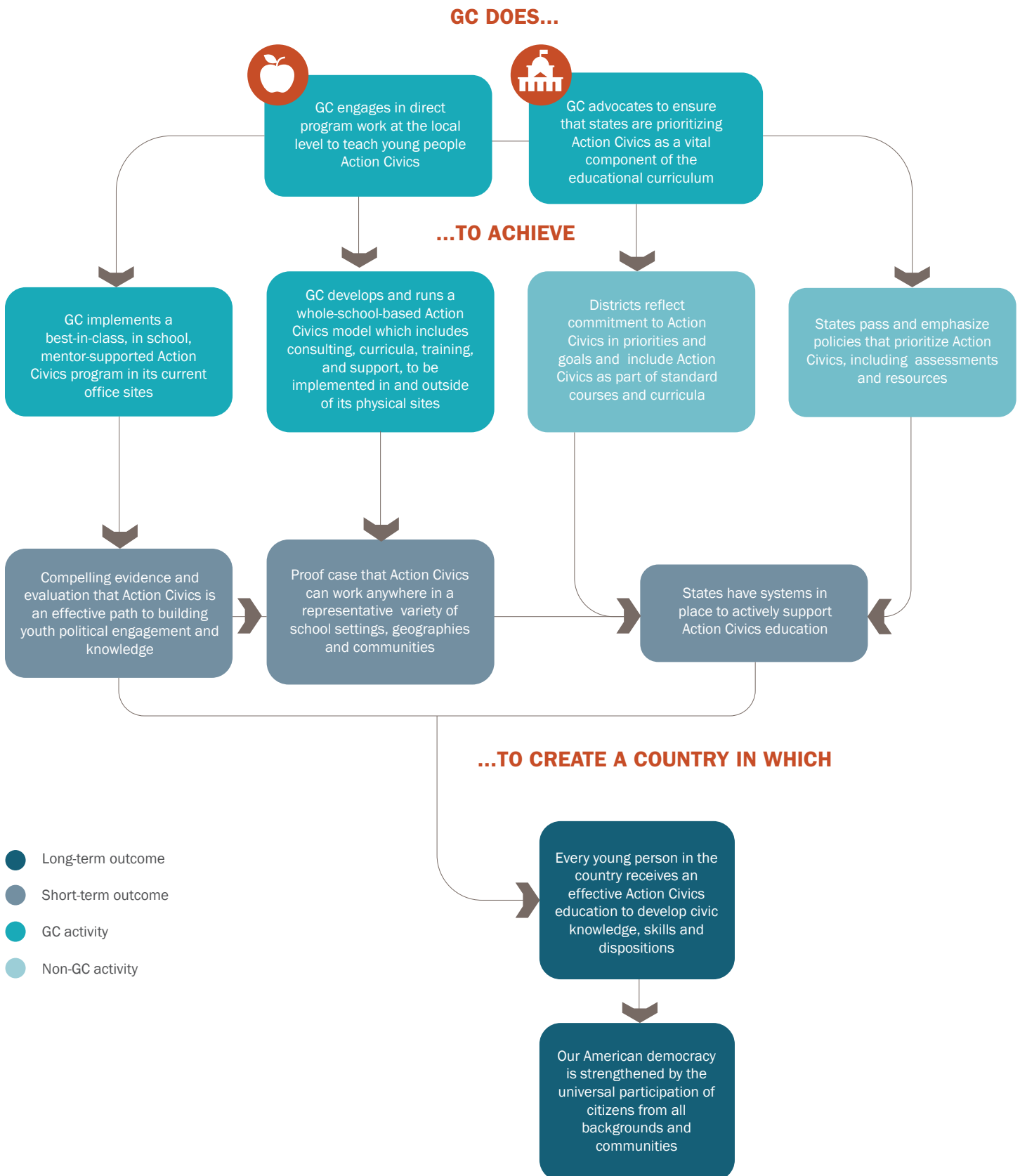


Take action



Reflect

THEORY OF CHANGE



THREE-YEAR PLAN

Generation Citizen is poised to achieve a dramatic expansion in its reach and national impact. Through this three-year strategic plan, we will create the conditions for a broad national revival of civics education nationwide, using Action Civics as the centerpiece.

LONG-TERM STRATEGIES

1 FOSTER DEMAND FOR ACTION CIVICS EDUCATION ACROSS THE COUNTRY.

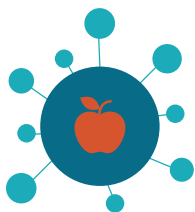
We seek to create powerful new demand for Action Civics education in every state, by continuing to demonstrate its efficacy and advocating for its inclusion in state-level educational policies, standards, and programming.

2 MAKE ACTION CIVICS RESOURCES AND PROGRAMMING ACCESSIBLE TO ALL.

We will develop the conditions to make Action Civics more accessible to educators and students by promoting scalable new models and approaches, while maintaining the high program quality that has always been a hallmark of Generation Citizen's approach.

THREE-YEAR INITIATIVES

We will pursue both strategies through three broad-based tactical initiatives.



STRENGTHEN

Program Portfolio

We will iterate our current college volunteer Democracy Coach model and build out a Teacher-led model focused on educator professional development and support. Recognizing existing research on the efficacy of school-wide interventions, through both models we will aim to work with every student in a grade level and shift away from individual classroom partnerships. This will ensure that Action Civics becomes integral to a school culture.



EXPAND

Program Footprint

We will focus on expanding in both lesser-resourced urban and rural areas to demonstrate that Action Civics is a discipline that can be relevant in all school settings. We will learn from our expansion and develop the methods to serve partners remotely.



ADVOCATE

for Action Civics

As we attempt to demonstrate that Action Civics works and that it can work anywhere, we will advocate for its implementation nationwide. We will increase our advocacy efforts at the state level by working with state Departments of Education and advocating for appropriate state legislation, policies, and regulations to promote Action Civics.



GENERATION CITIZEN IN ACTION

A Generation Citizen class at Lowell High School, the second largest high school in Massachusetts, decided to take on the issue of gun violence in their community. Students organized a city-wide gun buyback program in partnership with their local government and leaders from the community. “Working with the police and with all of these partners taught us that we young immigrants can help make effective change in our community,” shared Phuc Nguyen, student at Lowell High School. Their teacher, Jessica Lander, added, “The students really transformed over this whole process. The confidence they showed was really stunning.” Lowell is an example of a teacher-led, whole-school partnership. Action Civics is offered in all twenty 10th grade U.S. History classes including English-language-learner classrooms (ELL).



INITIATIVE 1: STRENGTHEN PROGRAM PORTFOLIO

3-YEAR GOAL:

Improve and expand our Action Civics program portfolio to reach many more students than Generation Citizen can effectively serve today.

OBJECTIVES

1 Strengthen Democracy Coach Model: We will iterate and improve our time-tested Democracy Coach model in our existing urban markets. This includes testing new training approaches and incentives for volunteer retention.

- » Provides a peer-to-near-peer college mentor as a motivator for students
- » Added capacity to support teachers in resource-constrained schools
- » Professional development for college students, providing exposure to careers in education and public service

2 Rapidly Expand Teacher-Led Model: We will develop the teacher-led model in our existing markets and expand the approach into new markets.

- » Designed for systemic, long-term diffusion in schools
- » Flexibility to align with school calendars and district priorities
- » Introductory and ongoing professional development for teachers to facilitate local advocacy and Generation Citizen's curriculum independently in their classrooms

3 Pursue School-wide Partnerships: We will pursue school-wide partnerships, shifting away from individual classrooms as our unit of focus, to ensure that Action Civics becomes a part of all students' academic experience.

- » Equitably reach students by serving entire grade levels
- » Pathway to sustainable and effective integration so that it is not dependent on individual teachers
- » Creates the conditions for longitudinal learning

MEASURABLE OUTCOMES TO BE ACHIEVED

- » **Democracy Coach Model:** 80% of GC students who go through the DC model will demonstrate increased civic knowledge, skills and dispositions, an increase from approximately 70% in all categories currently.
- » **Teacher-led Model:** 80% of GC teachers will show growth in comfort, expertise and commitment to teaching Action Civics, using democratic pedagogies and guiding students to engage in local action; collaborating with peers; and effectively using the Action Civics curriculum.
- » **School-wide Partnerships:** 90% of partnerships will be schoolwide, an increase from 35% of current partnerships.



Researchers from The Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning & Engagement (CIRCLE) coined the term “civic deserts” to refer to communities where residents have less access to their political representatives and civic role models, and less robust career opportunities. They frequently have weaker access to higher education, after-school programming, early childhood resources and churches.

As a result, these communities demonstrate lower rates of voting and civic participation alongside higher levels of distrust for institutions and government, and lower overall measures of post-secondary success. Research suggests that 60% of residents live in civic deserts, compared with 30% for urban and suburban residents.

MEASURABLE OUTCOMES TO BE ACHIEVED

- » **Grow Reach:** from 13,000 students to 30,000 students, with a presence in at least 8 states
- » **Rural Presence:** At least 3,000 of the students served will be from rural districts by the 2020 academic year, representing 10% of all students.
- » **Commit To Our Existing Markets:** 75% of growth will occur in existing markets



INITIATIVE 2: EXPAND PROGRAM FOOTPRINT

3-YEAR GOAL:

We will expand into new regions, including rural districts, and diversify our footprint in our existing regions. We will develop new evidence for the efficacy of Action Civics to foster new demand across the country.

OBJECTIVES

- 1 Grow Our Reach:** Our expansion will focus on areas with the least resources to establish the proof points that Action Civics can work in a variety of contexts.
 - » Expand our footprint dramatically in existing markets
 - » Prioritize growth to reach under-performing and under-resourced schools to address the civic engagement gap
 - » Open offices in at least two new sites. Criteria for new market selection:
 - » **Political Affiliation:** Diverse states (Red, Blue, Purple)
 - » **Geography:** Urban and rural areas
 - » **Regions:** Representation across all major U.S. regions
 - » **Demographics:** Focus on low-income schools
- 2 Focus on Rural Areas:** We will expand our efforts into under-resourced rural districts.
 - » Rural expansion will begin in our Texas and Oklahoma locations
 - » Pilot an Urban-Rural exchange partnership, bringing young people together from both geographies to interact and share action projects
 - » By the end of this plan, 10% of Generation Citizen’s school partners will be rural based
- 3 Serve Markets Remotely:** We will expand into schools located outside our existing office locations to inform the design of an Action Civics program that can be administered and supported remotely.
 - » Build technology components to administer the training and curriculum remotely
 - » Pilot the approach to train and support schools in remote new markets
 - » Lessons learned from the pilots will allow for boundless growth of the remote model in the future



INITIATIVE 3: ADVOCATE FOR ACTION CIVICS

3-YEAR GOAL:

We will establish state-level support for policies, standards, programming and funding that bring Action Civics education to every student.

OBJECTIVES

1

Influence State Policy: We will work with legislatures and departments of education to ensure that states are adequately prioritizing Action Civics funding and assessment requirements.

- » Work with legislators to propose and advocate for new laws and funding to expand Action Civics education
- » Advocate for the development of State Standards and Frameworks that support Action Civics
- » Monitor and evaluate relevant education policy across the country

2

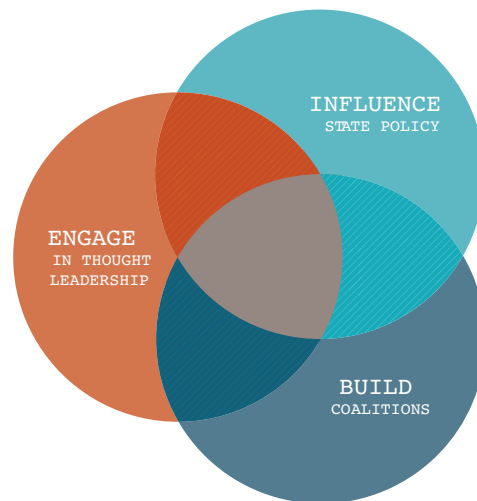
Build Coalitions: We will build local coalitions and civics education networks in all of our program sites that allow us to successfully advocate for the policy changes needed to prioritize Action Civics education.

- » Build coalitions to include school district leaders, policymakers, allied practitioners, funders, teachers and young people.
- » Engage and equip youth-oriented community organizations to be champions of Action Civics
- » Develop youth voice by leading and participating in Vote16 coalitions to expand the electorate

3

Engage in Thought Leadership: We will share widely the lessons learned and impact findings of our programs to influence the wider civics and education conversation.

- » Publish research reports promoting our programmatic impact and help to establish the universal standards of practice and evaluation for Action Civics
- » Create a nonpartisan Advisory Council of diverse public officials and educators advocating for the importance of Action Civics
- » Develop a pipeline of youth advocates and ambassadors for Action Civics through Generation Citizen alumni programming, including our Community Change Fellowships and Student Leadership Board



MEASURABLE OUTCOMES TO BE ACHIEVED BY 2020

- » **Influence State Policy:** Catalyze the introduction of state standards or policies that support Action Civics education in at least 10 states.
- » **Build Coalitions:** Establish coalitions and advocacy networks in 100% of GC's regions to position GC as a leading Action Civics convener and state-level advocate in our operating areas.
- » **Exercise Thought Leadership:** Increase national media coverage and commission multiple reports on the impact of Action Civics on academic success, civic participation and wider community outcomes.

PRIORITY NEEDS

TOTAL: \$7.45M

PRIORITY INVESTMENTS FOR STRATEGIC GROWTH

#1

STRENGTHEN PROGRAM

\$1.9M



- » Refine existing curriculum and build tools to strengthen impact
- » Develop new resources and recruit new talent to lead teacher professional development
- » Engage consultants to design technology solutions that support greater cost efficiencies and remote programming
- » Evaluate impact of each model and document program's impact to build case for greater adoption

#2

EXPAND FOOTPRINT

\$1.8M



- » Open two new sites in new regions of the country
- » Build centralized shared services to support scale and remote support
- » Pilot our model in rural schools and build revised materials and systems to support
- » Add program capacity in existing markets poised for rapid growth

#3

ADVOCATE

\$1.05M

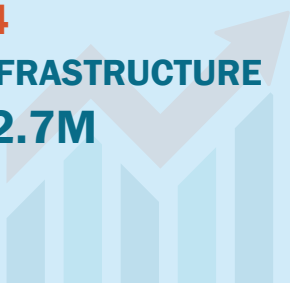


- » Launch state-level campaigns to implement policies promoting access to, and resources for Action Civics
- » Hire staff and consultants with local expertise to lead campaign efforts, build brand and establish partnerships
- » Commission a report to demonstrate the benefits and impact of Action Civics
- » Invest in marketing to amplify our work, engage local stakeholders and advise policies
- » Host conferences, coalitions and distributed research

#4

INFRASTRUCTURE

\$2.7M



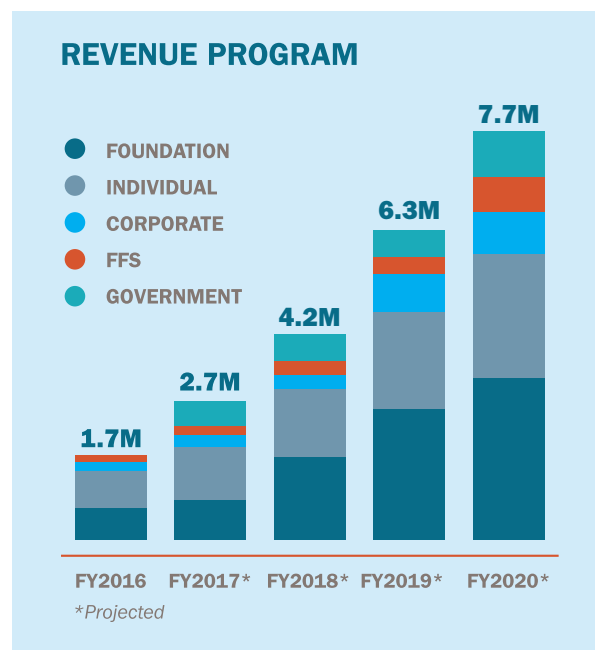
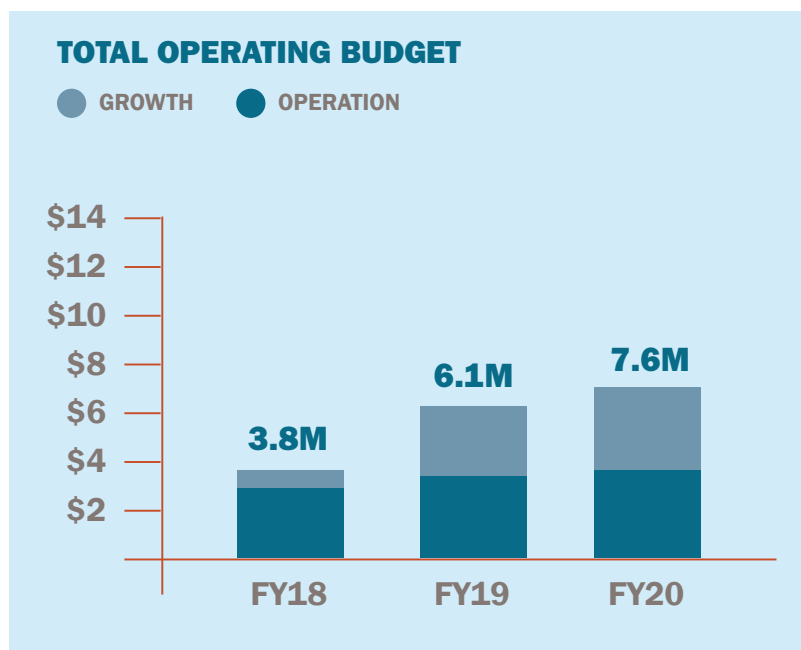
- » Double staff from 35 to 70, adding experienced educators, policy experts, administrative support, marketing and operations and critical management capacity
- » Build talent pipelines to recruit stakeholder and practitioner expertise and build diversity of workforce
- » Strengthen revenue capabilities through direct sales and fundraising capacity
- » Build our financial reserves for stability and to enable continued growth

SOURCES AND TIMING OF SUPPORT

We will invest in an ambitious revenue strategy to broaden our base of support, diversify our revenue, generate multi-year investments, grow our reserves and effectively sustain our expanded operations for years to come.

Our main revenue strategy for growth will include:

- » **Public Funding:** Focusing on fee-for-service and local government funding to cover 30% of individual site budgets and 20% of our overall organizational budget by 2020
- » **Foundations:** Expanding the number of private and community foundations supporting Generation Citizen to support our growth and other new activities
- » **Individuals:** Increasing the number of individual major donors making multi-year gifts



RISKS AND MITIGATION STRATEGIES

RISK

MITIGATION STRATEGY

#1 SCHOOL ADOPTION

- » It will be challenging to saturate school grade-levels
- » Schools may not want to pay for Action Civics
- » Educators may be worried we cannot adapt our model to individual school needs

- » Engage educators as partners in the continuing development of our programming
- » Pilot and evaluate our models extensively, including testing for price-point, before rolling out broadly
- » Identify and work with other community stakeholders to secure local buy-in

#2 ADVOCACY

- » Policy successes are slow to come by
- » In an increasingly heated political environment, we may be seen as a partisan entity
- » Our policy efforts might detract from our programming goals

- » Identify quick policy wins to show the promise of our broader advocacy strategy
- » Work in red, blue and purple states alike, and form an Advisory Board with diverse political representation
- » Ensure that our program and advocacy activities align

#3 CAPACITY CONSTRAINTS

- » Sites may not be able to raise their increased operating budgets
- » Expansion capital may be difficult to attract
- » We may not find the talent we need to be successful

- » Build a larger revenue team and intensify all our fund development activity
- » Create contingency budgets in case we are not fully successful
- » Invest in developing our talent, and in creating an effective pipeline

SUMMARY OF IMPACT

Over the past eight years, Generation Citizen has grown from a dorm-room idea into a robust national organization. We have now worked with more than 40,000 middle and high school students in six regions, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, New York, the California Bay Area, Central Texas, and Oklahoma, and become a respected thought leader in the field.


AS A RESULT OF IMPLEMENTING THIS PLAN, GENERATION CITIZEN WILL:

- 1 Triple the number of students who receive Action Civics education** through Generation Citizen from 10,000 to 30,000 a year by 2020 – nearly the same number we have served in our entire history to date.
- 2 Foster adoption and use of Action Civics by new and diverse stakeholders representing all the country's regions.** We will work to make Action Civics accessible and effective in every kind of community.
- 3 Promote the conditions to realize much more expansive growth in our programs and impact in subsequent years.** As a result of implementing this plan, Generation Citizen will be poised to achieve even larger impacts in subsequent years, including the achievement of our most ambitious goal: the establishment of high-quality Action Civics education in every school in the country.

This strategic plan is focused on a road to this effective, transformative, national scale. We want to demonstrate that Action Civics can and should work in every classroom in this country. We will expand Generation Citizen's reach through new and innovative programming models, and advocate for Action Civics education across the country.

We invite you to join us.

For more information, please contact swarren@generationcitizen.org.



“GENERATION CITIZEN COMING TO OKLAHOMA HAS BEEN BEYOND INFLUENTIAL. I HAVE DREAMS FOR WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS FOR OUR STATE, AND THAT IS WHAT KEEPS ME GOING. IT IS WHAT KEEPS ME IN THE CLASSROOM, AND MOST IMPORTANTLY, WHAT KEEPS ME PASSIONATE ABOUT LEADING THE NEXT GENERATION TO BE A GENERATION OF ACTIVE CITIZENS.”

— Tamah Minnis, Democracy Coach from University of Oklahoma, was among the first Democracy Coaches to help bring Generation Citizen to Oklahoma City classrooms in its pilot semester.



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