



7 Sustaining Your Work and Making Change

Overview

The importance of being aware of our local civic issues is critical. Still, it can be easy for good projects like a local civic health analysis to sit on a shelf, given all the priorities we juggle professionally and in life. We know if you are doing all this work you don't want that to happen. Here are some suggestions we have for how to sustain civic health work over time and keep the momentum going by implementing substantive changes that improve your community's resilience and connectedness. After all, that is the heart of this work.

Tips for Sustaining Civic Health Work Over Time

- ▶ Create a tiered or phased approach to your work. Starting small and building your outreach and strategy over time can help lessen burdens on people who may already have lots of work to do.
- ▶ Elevate what is already happening in the community. Show the vibrancy that already exists and lead with what is already working.
- ▶ Establish a local civic health committee in your town or city that meets periodically throughout the year to have conversations focused on local civic issues and trends.
- ▶ After conducting a civic health project, hold a community forum to assign out action steps to different groups or individuals in the community, and then reconvene periodically to see how progress toward those actions is going.
- ▶ Create solutions that will have longevity, such as developing a new tradition that can be repeated. For example, Keene High School invites students to the office on their 18th birthday to register to vote.
- ▶ Create celebratory events to acknowledge progress in civic health, like annual awards for civic leaders.

Other Models and Resources

Connecticut created a statewide civic health advisory committee which includes the Secretary of State. Leaders from different sectors take action on different civic priorities that the civic health advisory committee has identified. Connecticut also has civic ambassadors from different communities and NGOs who work to publicize and take action specifically around civic health. You could take similar actions at the local level, or try to see if you can activate statewide action in New Hampshire related to civic health. Click [here](#) to learn more about Connecticut's work.

The National Conference on Citizenship and the YMCA have worked together to create a "civic health champions" program for youth. To learn more, visit <https://www.ymcayag.org/civic-health/>.

How New Hampshire Listens Can Help

New Hampshire Listens is a civic engagement program at the University of New Hampshire's Carsey School of Public Policy. NH Listens helps local cities and towns to build community and local democracy, all in the name of strong civic health. NH Listens can assist communities with the following:



- ▶ Designing and implementing community conversations
 - » [Hosting a local community conversation](#)
 - » Identifying strategies for recruiting local community members to conversations
 - » Analyzing and reporting on findings from conversations
 - » Planning steps to move from talk to action
- ▶ [Hosting facilitator training for community members](#). NH Listens offers in-person and online facilitating for public engagement training throughout the year. The staff can also tailor training for specific groups.
- ▶ Facilitating equity learning exchanges, where participants learn tools and undergo reflection exercises to explore diversity, equity, and inclusion
- ▶ Building and sustaining coalition groups
- ▶ NH Listens also published a previous guide on local civic health that is a summary of this guide called [Designing and Conducting a Community-Based Civic Health Index: A Primer for Local Leaders](#)

Additional Statewide Resources

There are a range of different organizations and projects in the state that are interested in civic health, including:

- ▶ [New Hampshire Center for Justice and Equity](#)
- ▶ [University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension](#)
- ▶ [New Hampshire Citizen's Count](#)
- ▶ [Community Engagement Resources, Campus Compact for New Hampshire](#)
- ▶ [New Futures](#)
- ▶ [New Hampshire Humanities](#)
- ▶ [New Hampshire Institute for Civics Education](#)
- ▶ [Welcoming New Hampshire](#)

Stay Connected

Podcasts, newsletters, and other media resources that platform and amplify events & opportunities around civic health and education throughout the state:

- ▶ [The Granite State News Collaborative](#)
- ▶ [New Hampshire Humanities Digital Resources](#)
- ▶ [NHPR, Ask Civics 101](#)

Keep in Touch

As you learn about your community's local civic health and take action to strengthen it, feel free to reach out to us at [New Hampshire Listens](#), Carsey School of Public Policy at the University of New Hampshire, nh.listens@unh.edu, 603-862-0692. We would love to hear about your journey!