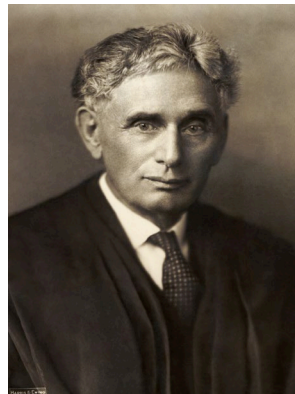


The National Civic League: A long history of innovation...

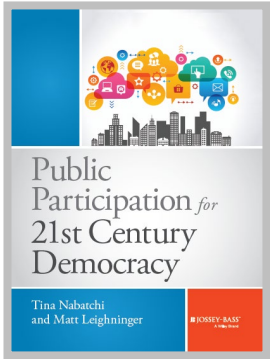


Founded in 1894 by Teddy Roosevelt, Louis Brandeis, Frederick Law Olmsted, and Mary Munford, NCL established the Model City Charter, city manager form of government, and other reforms to fight corruption, end patronage, and advance public health.

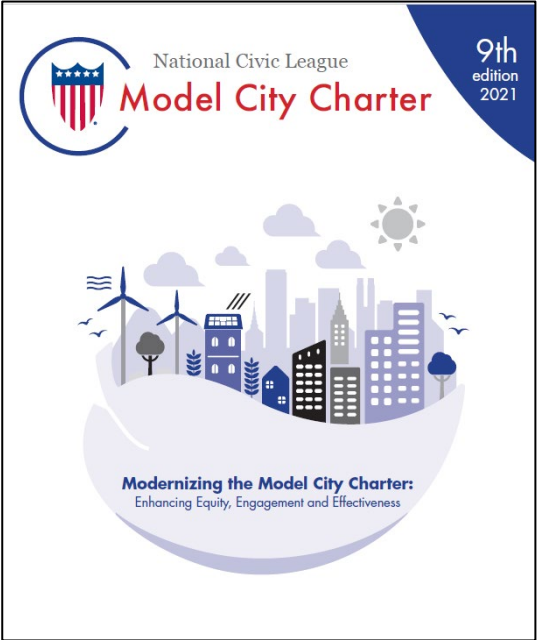
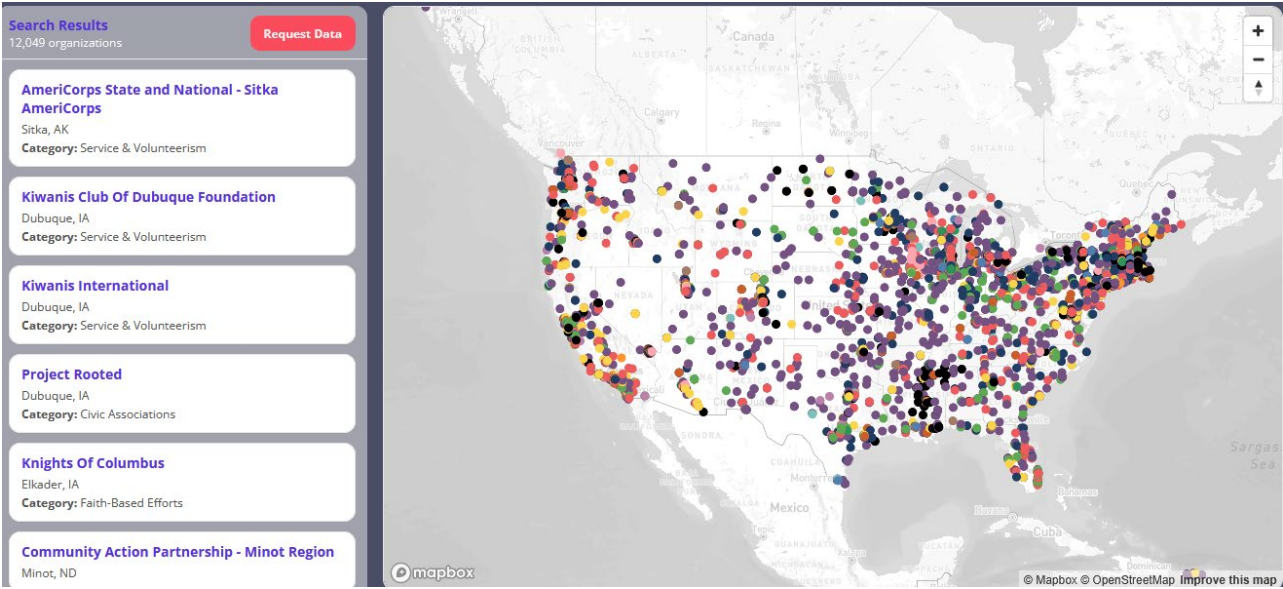
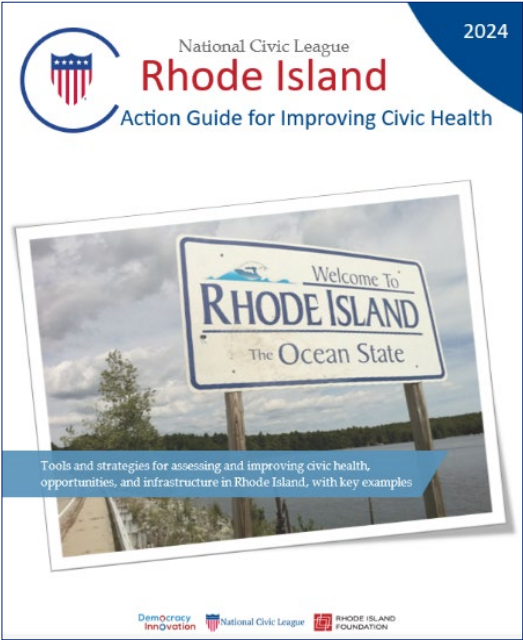


The mission of the National Civic League is to advance inclusive civic engagement and promote innovations in democracy to make decision-making more participatory, equitable, and effective.

...now directed toward 21st C needs and goals



The Civic League works with communities to improve public meetings, measure civic engagement, and strengthen civic infrastructure. Nationally, we track and support democracy-building work, as illustrated on the Healthy Democracy Map.



Why does civic health matter? (part 1)

Stronger connections among residents,
and between citizens and institutions,
makes people:

- Physically healthier
- More successful economically
- Kids do better in school
- More prepared for natural disasters



Why does civic health matter?

(part 2)

When people have meaningful roles in public decision-making, they produce policies/decisions that:

- Represent what people want
- Are more informed by local experiences and conditions
- Enjoy broader public support
- In some cases, are accompanied by other changes made by citizens



Why does civic health matter? (part 3)

When people have meaningful roles in public problem-solving, they produce solutions that:

- Rely on volunteerism and citizen capacity
- Rely on volunteerism in collaboration with government
- Are creative
- Get people involved who don't want to participate in decision-making



What does it take for people to feel/be heard?

- When they are face-to-face in a small-group setting
- When they can see the input displayed somehow
- When they encounter different views and info
- When there is some sort of response from officials/institutions
- For more, see:
<https://www.nationalcivicleague.org/what-do-people-need-to-feel-heard/>



Better public meetings

Most official public meetings (city council, school board, etc.) are frustrating, inequitable, and inefficient. Public is angry or absent; less trust between residents, government.

Options for improving them:

- New procedures for advance notice and comment on agenda
- New procedures for bringing input from community organizations
- Changes in format from two-minutes-at-mic public comment period to small-group discussion, digital polling, conflict resolution avenues, etc.



What kinds of things can we do to increase trust?

The research suggests that bringing people together in various ways can increase all three kinds of trust – common ingredients include:

- Frequent, regular interactions
- Good facilitation
- People's personal experiences are honored
- Chances for people to discuss and dissect information
- Deliberative experiences that allow people to understand and assess a range of views
- Opportunities for people to plan for action (from policy recommendations to local volunteerism)
- Activities that include multiple generations are particularly effective

(Turner et al 2025, Balietti et al 2021, Kumagai and Iorio 2020, Grandvoinnet et al 2015, Pennycook et al 2020, Allstate 2025, Axelrod et al 2021, Levine 2024)

Why is this local work?

- In-person interactions are more effective for building trust
- Living in the same place gives people at least one thing in common/one shared interest
- Local institutions more responsive than state/national ones
- Opportunities to volunteer, solve problems, influence policy more doable at local level

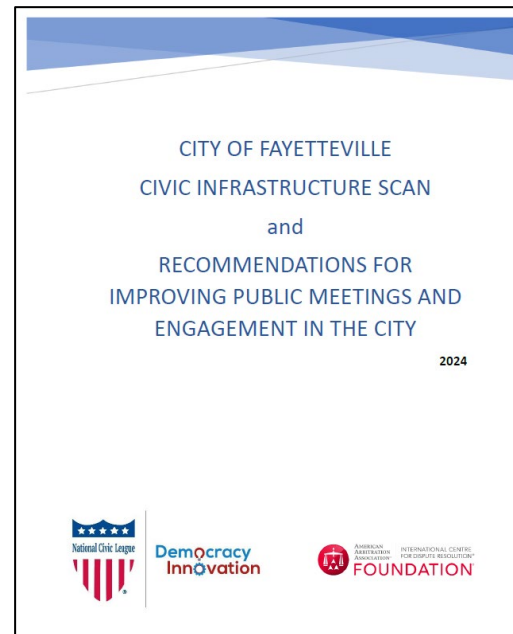
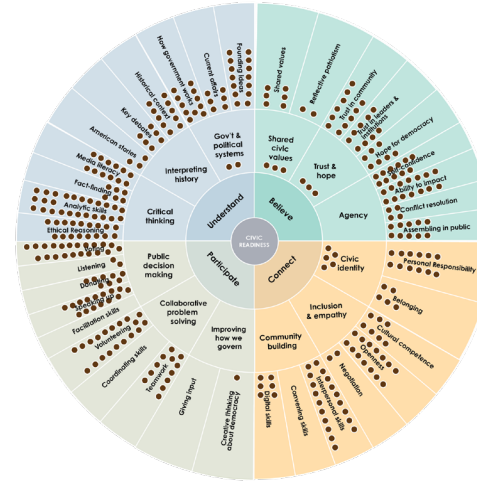
People who “worked with others to deal with an issue facing your community,” are far less likely to have hostile attitudes toward news media, the schools, and democratic institutions (Levine 2024)



How are you going to measure civic health?

Some options:

- Ratings systems
- Survey panels
- Interviews and focus groups
- Storytelling
- Annual reports produced by a commission or institution



We want to hear from you!

Please rate your experience at this evening's session

An easy online scorecard is available for all meetings from Sept. 7 through Dec. 7, 2023 for you to share your feedback. You may complete the form once for each meeting you attend (whether in-person or online) over the next three months.



Use the QR code above or this link to access the scorecard:
<http://bldr.fyi/better-meetings>

Making Boulder City Council Meetings Better

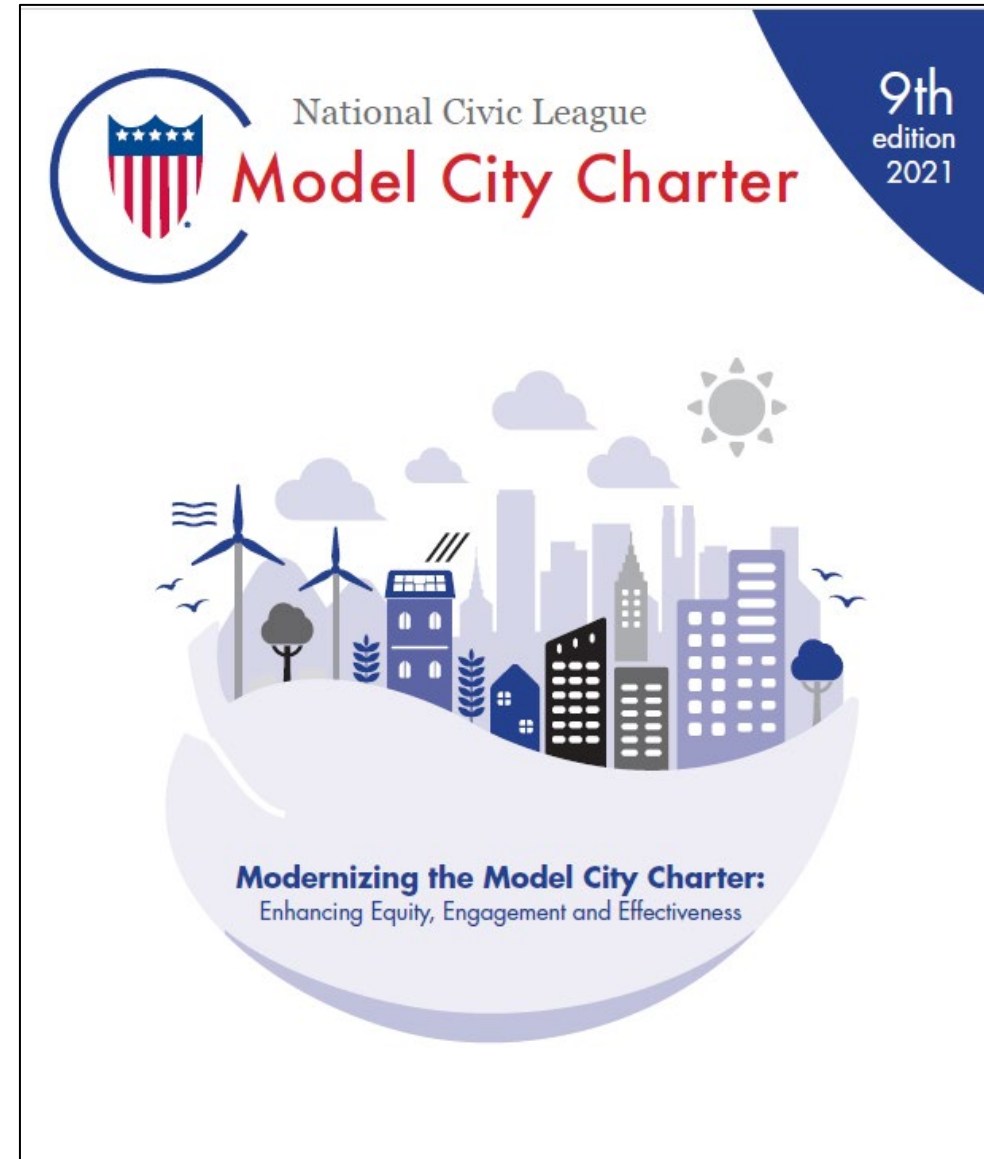
The City of Boulder is teaming with the Democracy Innovations for Better Public Meetings Project, in partnership with the National Civic League, to try ways that could make City Council meetings more engaging and satisfying for all.

How to incorporate civic health in a city charter?

Questions to tackle:

- Who should be in charge of public engagement and civic health?
- How to build in engagement on the biggest issues?
- How to support engagement by neighborhood, youth, community groups?
- How should official public meetings work?
- How are you going to measure success?

Some answers go in charter – some shouldn't



A pyramid of democracy innovations

mini-publics

- citizen assemblies
- citizen juries
- deliberative polls

participatory structures

- deliberative forums
- participatory budgeting
- commissions that engage
- neighborhood councils
- youth councils

good governance opportunities

- survey panels
- reporting systems
- co-creation of public services
- volunteer mobilization
- mini-grant programs
- scenario mapping

civic tech opportunities

- ideation
- crowdfunding
- e-petitions
- serious games
- texting-based engagement

social and community networks

- hyperlocal online networks
- neighborhood groups
- On the Table/Meet and Eat