Classification of the Healthy Democracy Ecosystem

AMERICA'S HEALTHY DEMOCRACY ECOSYSTEM
Working Draft | November 2023

Top-Down, Expert-Driven Categories of Healthy Democracy Work

Civic Associations

Deliberative, Participatory & Direct Democracy

Civic Education/Learning

Electoral Reform

Civic Media

Faith-Based Efforts

Civic Research

Organizing & Advocacy

Civic Technology

Service & Volunteerism

Connecting Across Differences

Voter Engagement

Bottom-Up, Organization-Centered Goals Tags

Bridging Divides

Bringing people together from different and/or conflicting groups and perspectives in order to establish relationships, improve communication, and build trust. This includes efforts that expressly pursue "bridge-building" or "conflict resolution" as a goal, as well as those groups who promote relationships, communication, and trust as a significant byproduct of their stated missions (e.g. service organizations, local civics clubs, etc.).

Campaign Finance Reform

Laws, policies, and strategies that reduce the influence of donations on campaigns and elected officials

Census Accuracy

Policies and strategies for ensuring a full and accurate U.S. Census.

Citizen Science

The practice of public participation and collaboration in scientific research to increase scientific knowledge. Through citizen science, people share and contribute to data monitoring and collection programs.

Civic Education

Civic education can be broadly defined as the provision of information and learning experiences to equip and empower citizens to participate in democratic processes. The education can take very different forms, including classroom-based learning, informal training, experiential learning, and informational campaigns, among others. "Civic knowledge" differs from "civic education" in that it focuses on instilling patriotic values by teaching American history through the use of primary documents, while "civic education" can include much broader topics ranging from social-emotional learning to social studies, etc. The term "civic education" is more likely to be used by progressives.

Civic Forums for Discussion of Public Issues

Public forums for discussion among officials, candidates, experts, and other leaders, about issues and policies, in forums that are civil, responsive, and open to the public - such as candidate debates or policy forums.

Civic Infrastructure Development

Civic infrastructure encompasses the laws, processes, institutions, and associations that support regular opportunities for people to connect with each other, solve problems, make decisions, and celebrate community. Civic infrastructure can include: parent-teacher associations, neighborhood online networks, volunteer fairs, crowdfunding programs, lending circles, voter registration drives, participatory budgeting processes, pothole-reporting apps, meetings and platforms that give people a chance to give input on policy.

Civic Innovation

Testing and scaling of new, creative, advanced, and/or original civic thoughts and ideas.

Civic Integration of immigrants

Fair, diverse, and vibrant democracy that welcomes and offers opportunities to all, regardless of national origin.

Civic Journalism

Civic journalism (also known as public journalism) is the idea of integrating journalism into the democratic process. The media not only informs the public, but it also works towards engaging citizens and creating public debate.

Civic Knowledge

Civic knowledge is a specific type/offshoot of civic education that focuses on instilling patriotic values by teaching American history through the use of primary documents. It does not include broader topics under the "civic education" umbrella like social-emotional learning and social studies. The term "civic knowledge" is more frequently used by conservative-leaning groups.

Civic Technology

Civic technology enhances the relationship between citizens and government with digital tools for communications, decision-making, service delivery, and political processes. It includes tools, apps, and platforms built by community-led teams of volunteers, nonprofits, consultants, and private companies as well as embedded tech teams working within government.

Civil and Political Rights

Civil and political rights are a class of rights that protect individuals' freedom from infringement by governments, social organizations, and private individuals. They ensure one's entitlement to participate in the civil and political life of society and the state.

Civil rights include the ensuring of peoples' physical and mental integrity, life, and safety; protection from discrimination on grounds such as sex, race, sexual orientation, national origin, color, age, political affiliation, ethnicity, social class, religion, and disability; and individual rights such as privacy and the freedom of thought, speech, religion, press, assembly, and movement. Political rights include natural justice (procedural fairness) in law, such as the rights of the accused, including the right to a fair trial; due process; the right to seek redress or a legal remedy; and rights of participation in civil society and politics such as freedom of association, the right to assemble, the right to petition, the right of self-defense, and the right to vote.

Civil and political rights form the original and main part of international human rights. (The term "civil rights" is used more by progressive groups, as opposed to "individual rights").

Community Engagement/Building

Communication and collaboration between an organization and a geographic community, or a community of people connected by a shared interest or affiliation, to improve public decision-making and problem-solving.

Community Organizing

Strategies and processes in which people who live near each other or share some common problem join together in an organization that acts in their shared self-interest. Community organizers generally assume that social change necessarily involves conflict and social struggle in order to generate collective power for the powerless. Community organizing has as a core goal the generation of durable power for an organization representing the community, allowing it to influence key decision-makers on a range of issues over time.

Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding

The methods and processes involved in facilitating the peaceful ending of conflicts and disputes. A wide range of methods and procedures for addressing conflict exist, including negotiation, mediation, mediation-arbitration, diplomacy, and creative peacebuilding.

Corporate Responsibility for Democracy

Encouraging and supporting private corporations to act in ways that support democracy.

Defending Democracy from Authoritarianism

Efforts to analyze, raise awareness of, and counteract people, organizations, and political parties trying to achieve unchecked power and repress individual rights and freedoms.

Deliberative Democracy

Processes and forms of government in which citizens and their representatives make decisions together on the basis of values and reasons that are mutually acceptable and generally accessible.

Direct Democracy

Processes and forms of government in which voters make policy decisions directly, without elected representatives as proxies.

Diversity & Inclusion

Activities and processes that celebrate diversity in race, age, gender, religion, and other demographic categories, and work to engage people across those categories in public decision-making, problem-solving, and community-building.

Economic Advocacy/Justice/Reform

Viewing economic justice and fairness as essential to democracy and working toward those goals in some way.

Economic Democracy

Also known as "community wealth-building," economic democracy gives employees, consumers, and communities more powerful decision-making roles, and in some cases a greater share in ownership and profits, within corporations and other workplaces.

Election Protection

Work to help citizens navigate the voting process and cast their votes without obstruction, confusion, or intimidation.

Electoral Reform

Changes in electoral systems which alter how public desires are expressed in election results.

Environmental Protection through Stakeholder and Citizen Engagement

Work to protect the environment and advance climate change adaptation, mitigation, and resilience by engaging citizens in organizing, volunteerism, advocacy, and other activities.

Faith-Based Organizing/Engagement/Advocacy

Work within faith communities to engage people in public decision-making, problem-solving, and advocacy.

Free Markets and Economic Growth

Work to support and promote the view that free markets and economic growth are essential to democracy.

General Democracy/Good Governance/Civil Society

General promotion of all or most of the goals on this list.

Healing Justice

Prioritizing individual health and wellbeing by taking seriously the effect of intergenerational societal trauma, oppression, and violence, particularly against historically disenfranchised, marginalized, and/or oppressed populations.

Indigenous Governance

Strengthening governance of Native American tribal areas and advancing learning about those forms of governance.

Individual Rights

Advancing, upholding, protecting the rights of individuals(, especially when they conflict with 'group rights' of trade unions, corporations, and political parties (the term "individual rights" is used more by conservative groups, as opposed to "civil rights").

Interfaith Organizing/Engagement

Bringing people of different faith traditions together to build understanding and work toward shared goals.

Judicial Integrity/Neutrality/Reform

Advocating for complete or partial political reform of the American judicial system, typically to improve quality, increase speed and/or access, fight corruption, and/or implement integrity training and monitoring of judges and court officials.

Leadership Development for Healthy Democracy

Giving current and potential leaders the skills, knowledge, and connections that can help them work in more effective, collaborative, democratic ways.

Participatory Democracy

A form of governance in which citizens participate individually and directly in political decisions and policies that affect their lives, in addition to electing representatives.

Patriotic Values

Instilling and nourishing a sense of loyalty and devotion to country,

Policy Development

Improve federal and state policies regarding immigrant integration and civic engagement.

Public Health

Work to advance the health of Americans through education and democracy related engagement that involves citizens in organizing, volunteerism, advocacy, voting, and other activities.

Public Opinion

Understanding the public attitudes, preferences, and values of Americans.

Racial Equity

The process of eliminating racial disparities and improving outcomes for everyone. It is the intentional and continual practice of changing policies, practices, systems, and structures by prioritizing measurable change in the lives of people of color.

Responsive Governance

Supporting increased interaction between citizens and government, and accountability of public officials and staff to the individuals and organized groups of citizens in their jurisdictions.

Science and Technology Policy for Democracy

Ensuring that science serves democracy and that science is used effectively in making policy that serves the common good.

Service & Volunteerism

Encouraging and supporting people to devote their time and labor to activities that solve public problems, improve their communities, and help other people.

Social Isolation

Overcoming loneliness and disconnection, particularly among older residents.

Social Justice

Working toward equity and fairness in the distribution of wealth, opportunities, and privileges.

Social Mobility

Movement of individuals, families, or groups through a system of social hierarchy or stratification.

Spiritual Development

Spiritual organizing, engagement, or community-building that is not specifically attached to a single faith.

Transparency and Addressing Mis/Disinformation

Ensuring that citizens get the information they need to understand public issues and policies, and counteracting the intentional spread of false information by people who are are trying to disrupt policymaking and elections.

Voter Engagement/Registration/Education

Helping citizens understand how to vote and get the information they need to make good decisions in the ballot box.

Voting Research

Assessing voter behavior, turnout, and elections.

Voting Rights and Voter Participation

Supporting the theory that engaged citizens — those who care about and work to preserve our democracy — help ensure that government policies reflect the concerns of constituents. A democracy, by definition, gives eligible citizens the right to vote for their elected representatives.

Youth Engagement and Leadership

Supporting young people to get involved in public decision-making, problem-solving, and community-building, and helping them gain the skills, knowledge, and connections they need to be effective leaders.