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**Driven to Discover<sup>SM</sup>**

# Civic Engagement

## The Good, the Bad and the Learning

University of Minnesota Extension  
Department of Community Development  
Leadership & Civic Engagement

**Jody Horntvedt**, Extension Educator  
**Abbey Guggisberg**, Extension Educator  
**Kathy Quick**, State Specialist



**MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN MINNESOTA: ENVIRONMENT + FOOD & AGRICULTURE + COMMUNITIES + FAMILIES + YOUTH**

# Today we invite you to:

- Consider ways in which your work aligns with the UMN Extension process model
- Clarify how your definition of “civic engagement” aligns with how others define it
- Deepen your perspective on important and challenging questions to enhance the way you approach civic engagement in your work



In chat

When I hear  
“**civic engagement**,”  
I think \_\_\_\_\_.



# Our Leadership & Civic Engagement Programming

**Facilitation**

**Leadership**

**Civic Engagement**

**Leadership**

Cohorts build knowledge, skills and abilities to people to take action

**Facilitation**

Courses for skill building around a multiple levels from basic meetings to process design

**Civic Engagement** Working with partners to create collaborative environments

**2009**

*prior to* **2004**

**2025** & beyond



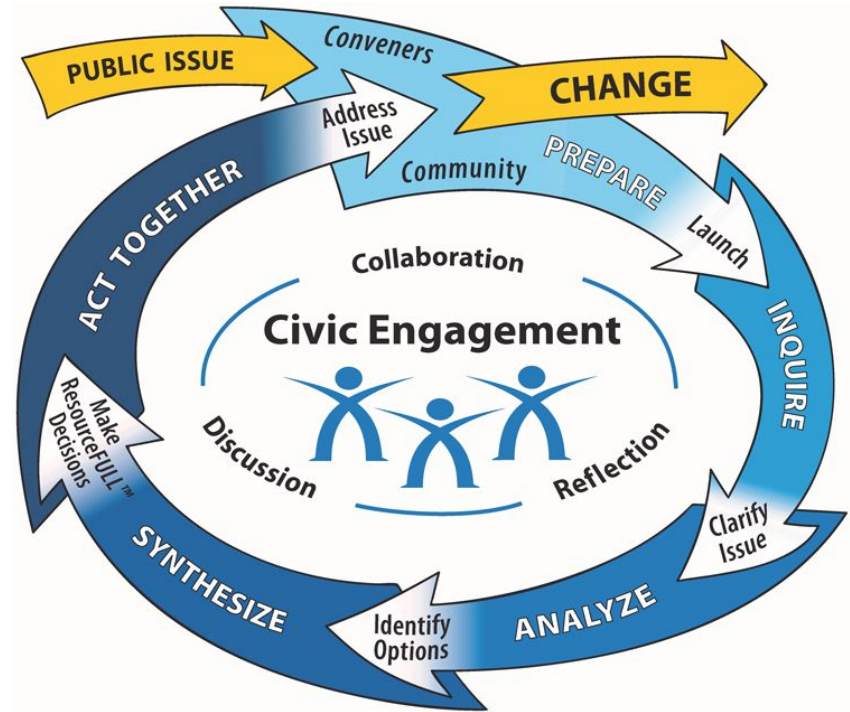
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# UMN Extension Civic Engagement model

## Five Stages

1. Prepare
2. Inquire
3. Analyze
4. Synthesize
5. Act Together

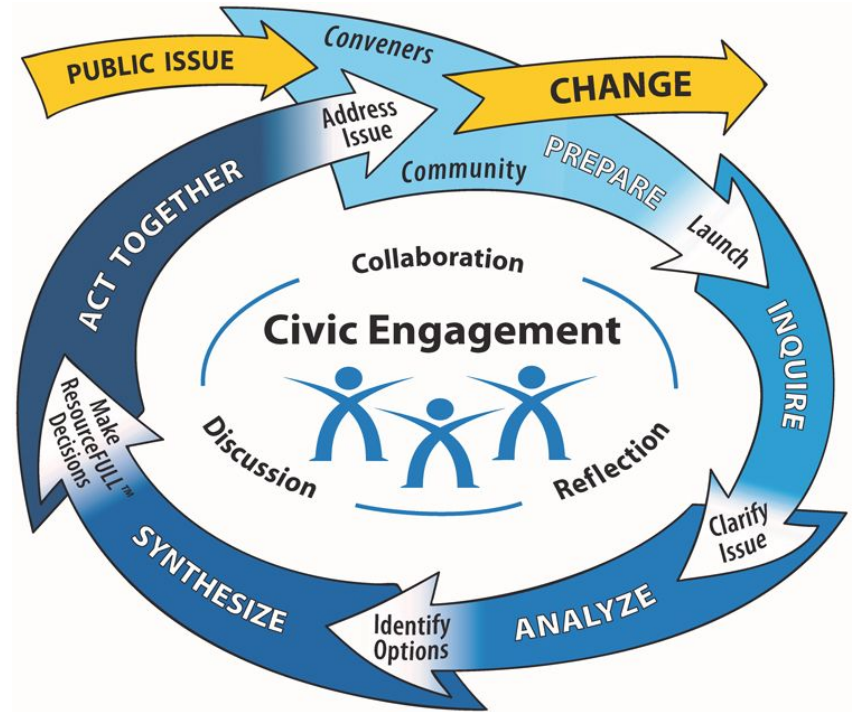
The Core = discussion,  
reflection and collaboration



# UMN Extension Civic Engagement model

Please share in the chat:

**What parts of this model connect to your own experiences working in communities?**



# Examples of our work

## **Prior to 2004**

Facilitating conversations around challenges in communities

## **In the middle**

Started civic engagement cohorts and provided process education to watersheds

## **Now**

We see a need for education and skill building in new ways



# MentiMeter



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What does civic  
engagement look like  
in **your** work?  
Share an **example**.



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A Google search on *civic engagement* finds some 383,000 citations for the term.<sup>1</sup>

Leighninger, 2014

What We're Talking About When We Talk About the "Civic Field" (And why we should clarify what we mean)

## What is Civic Engagement, Anyway?

### Abstract

The field of public engagement is experiencing a legitimacy crisis. While advocates of public participation may all agree that our work relates somehow to democracy, we have not established or articulated a common vision of what that really means.

Jacoby, 2009

Introduction

"Civic eng

their comm

limited to: formal volunteering and organizational membership, donating to

causes of interest, consuming materials to inform opinions on community issues

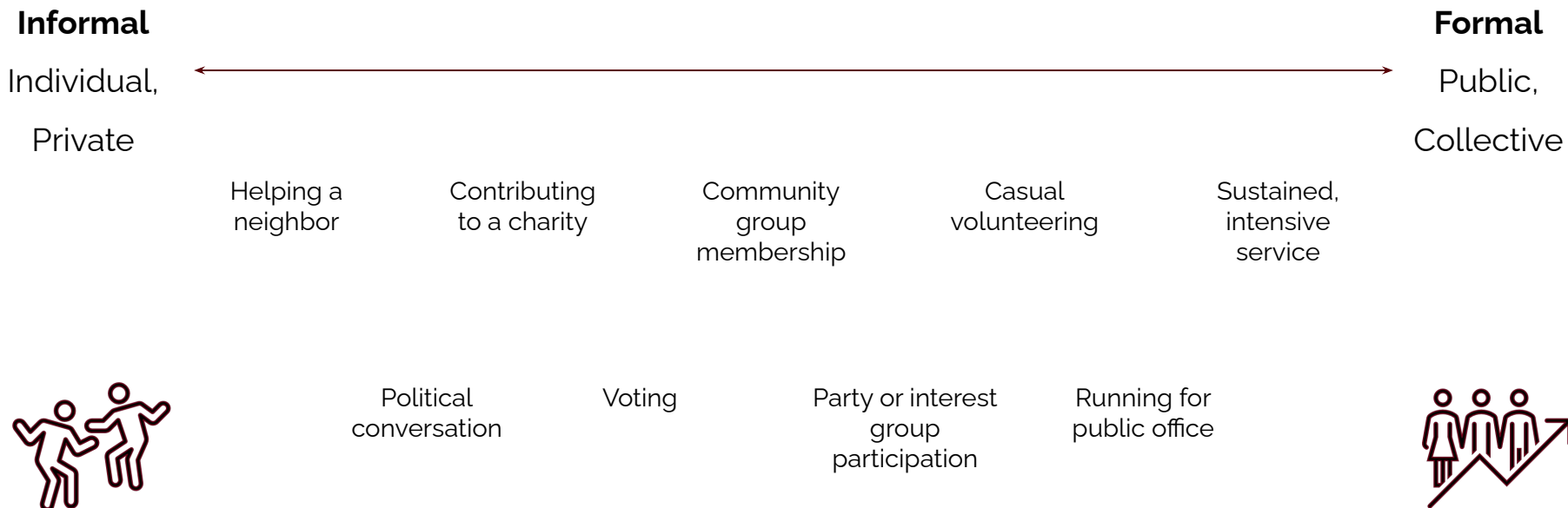
of interest, voting in local elections, and discussing community issues with friends,

family, or neighbors (AmeriCorps 2023). Participation in these activities has been

ition that defining civic engagement  
nges. In fact, there are probably as  
engagement as there are scholars and  
practitioners who are concerned with it. Civic engagement is a

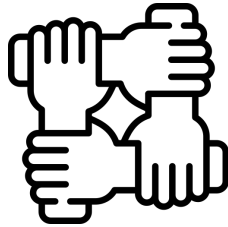


# A Continuum of Civic Engagement

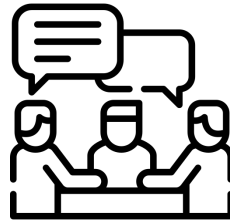


**COMMON GOAL:**  
Improve conditions; shape future

**Community  
members**



**Leaders and  
Organizations**



**Researchers**



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# Our working definition:



Civic engagement describes how people act in a community to improve conditions and shape the community's future.

UMN Extension CD Vision:  
**Thriving Minnesota communities where people flourish.**



# MentiMeter



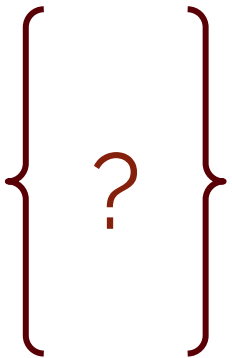
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## How do **you** define civic engagement?



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# How do frameworks shape our work?

- Values, expectations, and beliefs about:
    - Your role
    - Community roles
- 
- Initiating
  - Participating
  - Facilitating
  - Mediating
  - Other?



# If your view tends to the more informal....

## Informal

Individual,

Private

Helping a  
neighbor

Contributing  
to a charity

Volunteering



- Building systems to effectively identify individual needs, encouraging community care, and creating networks and resources to address needs
- Not performing “politicized” analyses of the issues, less interested in exploring options for policy or community change



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If your view tends to traditional civics...

## Informal

Individual,

Private

## Formal

Public,

## Collective

- Helping people to understand how government, policies, and parties work and their rights and responsibilities.
- Less focused on other civic institutions and staying clear of being too “political.”

## Political conversation

## Voting

Party or interest  
group  
participation





# If your view tends to leadership development...

## Informal

Individual,

Private

- Creating leadership self-image and self-awareness, skill building around a multiple levels (running basic meetings, to addressing organizational problems, community-level process design).
- Not so oriented to working with partners to create collaborative environments

## Formal

Public,  
Collective

Sustained,  
intensive  
service

Running for  
public office



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How and when might promoting civic engagement not be advisable?

The good, the bad, and the learning



# How and when might promoting civic engagement not be advisable?

- Tensions of being neutral and responsive, not activators
- Getting into the mess of power relations
- Inauthentic processes, whether we anticipate that or not
- General pressures around “civic engagement” in general

Being clear about our civic engagement frameworks and roles can help us navigate these dilemmas.



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## University of Minnesota Extension Department of Community Development

**Our vision: Thriving Minnesota communities where people flourish.**

# Thank you!

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**Abbey Guggisberg**, Extension Educator, Leadership & Civic Engagement

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