

Citizen Advocate Network Pilot Project Proposal

Project Description/Goal

The United States (US) is experiencing widespread polarization and discontent with the government. Confidence in our democratic system is eroding. Despite the fact that the majority of the population is negatively impacted by this, there is little being done to effectively bring about consistent change. While some citizens may take on the role of activist, efforts are fragmented, with numerous obstacles presenting hurdles to policy change.

To remedy this, the proposed pilot project provides a strategy in which a citizen advocate will organize and facilitate a collaborative network in one congressional district to develop effective ways to identify citizen priorities and translate those into strategic calls to action. Ultimately, the goal is to replicate that model in all 435 US congressional districts to unite citizens and amplify their voices to catalyze meaningful change. Active, informed, and engaged community members, when coming together to find common ground can be a powerful force for good.

Problem Solution

A citizen advocate (CA) will catalyze the active participation of community members in meaningful ways -- raising awareness and stimulating action on issues of public significance. The CA will organize and facilitate a network of stakeholders by developing a pilot project in one congressional district in (a selected state). The CA will develop organizational and training materials that can be utilized by a CA working out of a state-level organization, such as Common Cause North Carolina or Citizen Advocacy Center in Illinois. Then, each state CA could recruit and train district citizen advocates to reproduce the model in each congressional district within

their state, ultimately facilitating citizen advocacy efforts in each of the 435 congressional districts in the US -- catalyzing collaborative and coordinated national advocacy action.

Purpose: Plan and implement a pilot project to establish a congressional district citizen advocacy network.

Goals: Facilitate collaboration among community members in order to provide them with the knowledge, democratic tools and skills to solve community problems through government channels . By doing so, the desired outcome will be a meaningful contribution to reducing polarization and restoring healthy democracy.

Objectives: Develop an outreach strategy to mobilize community members, as well as relevant advocacy organizations, facilitating a broader national network of citizen advocacy.

Action Plan:

- Develop organizational and training materials for citizen advocates.
- Plan and implement outreach and media relations strategies within one congressional district [the second congressional district in North Carolina].
- Recruit and train volunteers to lead citizen advocacy efforts in the congressional district.
- Plan and facilitate meetings of the citizen advocate network, including those with congressional staff and legislators.
- Develop a plan for national replication and dissemination of project information, which would include the development of positions at the district, state, and national levels.

Project Evaluation

The CA will conduct a project evaluation, including the following activities:

- Maintain detailed documentation of the time spent, expenses incurred, and milestones achieved in relation to project objectives.
- Issue these reports monthly and meet with grantor staff quarterly.
- Write a final report summarizing the project, including lessons learned.
- Provide written guidelines to foster replication in every congressional district, creating a national network of citizen advocates.

Reach

This pilot project aims to establish a network of community members to foster effective citizen participation at every level of government -- local, state, and federal. This will have a positive impact not only on the participants but also on every member of their congressional districts, i.e., the entire population of the US.

Project Engagement and Collaboration

This project will ultimately engage citizen advocates in a collaborative process to bring about needed change by addressing every level of the democratic process -- local, state, and national. To more effectively address the breakdown of the democratic process, this advocate initiative will develop a model of community advocacy that could be replicated in each of the 435 congressional districts to foster collaboration among community members, citizen advocacy organizations, and government entities.

Project Management

The CA will manage all aspects of the project, including recruiting, training, and supervising volunteers, as well as collaborating with citizen advocacy organizations to develop meaningful and effective communication strategies with government entities, advancing local, state, and national citizen advocacy initiatives.