

Agency: UTAH STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

Program or Request Title: *Local Innovations in Civics Teaching and Learning*

Summary of Request: (briefly articulate the need for the policy change or funding request and the anticipated outcomes)

Utah schools need support in fulfilling the civic mission of schools: to prepare students for informed engagement in civic life and productive participation in the civil discussions that drive our democracy. Nationally we are seeing a declining morale and trust in American institutions; increasing polarization and alienation from democratic life; uninformed or anarchic forms of activism, and the rise of intentional misinformation across multiple media platforms.

The proposed initiative provides competitive grants to Local Education Agencies (LEAs) to promote innovative and effective approaches to civic and history teaching and learning. Much is known about proven and promising practices in the field of civics education; but teachers, if they can focus on civics at all, indicate that they need professional learning and support in order to fully enact these practices. This initiative would provide the mechanisms/structures/parameters, resources and curated professional development to target and configure their civic education efforts and also allow for a measurement of their results or impact on student civic competency and engagement over time.

What is the nature of your request?

Please select one:

- POLICY REQUEST – You are seeking changes to Utah State Code to improve your program/services.
- BUSINESS CASE - You are seeking new or additional financial resources to support a program/service for education.
- ★ BOTH POLICY and BUSINESS – You are proposing a new program or expansion of an existing program that will require new/amended state code and financial resources.

Questions? Please contact:

Angie Stallings for questions related to a policy request and

Dale Frost for questions related to a business case/funding request.

USBE Lead Point of Contact:

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USBE Section: K-12 Social Studies

Additional USBE points of contact (as needed):

Name:

Email Address:

Phone Number:

USBE Section:

If you are already working with a policymaker or member of USBE leadership on this request, please identify them below:

Rep. Dan Johnson

Rep. V. Lowry Snow

POLICY REQUEST

This section only needs to be completed if you are making a policy request (creating or changing existing Utah Code language).

1. Section(s) of State Code to be addressed (if none, insert “N/A”):

53G-10-204 (Civic and Character Education): Revise (c), (d), and Subsection (6); 631-2-253 Repeal dates.

2. Describe the issues or concerns the legislation will address:

Starting with voter turnout, 33.1% of Utah’s 18–24-year-olds voted in 2018. Seventeen states do better on this rudimentary measure of basic civic engagement. Utah is one of 14 states that allow 16- and 17-year-olds to pre-register to vote. Unfortunately, only 14% of Utah’s youth take up this option. But voting is only one measure of preparation for civic life.

Utah is in the top 10 states for youth volunteering. But is all that service tied to academic study of the issues that give rise to the need for service? Not necessarily, and that’s part of what the proposed policy and funding request will address.

Utah is one of 20 states that requires the citizenship exam to graduate. While a survey of school districts report passing rates above 90% among their students, the essential civic engagement skills and dispositions supported by academic research are not addressed by such measures.

In our approach to teaching about civic skills and responsibilities, voting is the bare minimum we should expect from youth. Today’s civic life, with increasing polarization and algorithm-driven echo chambers, demands attention to more complex competencies, including media literacy; respect for people from all backgrounds starting with an affirming school culture; the ability to dialogue and problem solve across partisan divides and discuss contentious topics; and more. The proposed pilot program will support innovative practices and measure outcomes in these critical areas.

3. Describe the history of the issues or concerns including relevant context and timelines:

In its **2004** General Session the Utah Legislature enacted requirements for civic and character education: Through an integrated curriculum students will learn how to participate in civic life and become part of an “upright and desirable” citizenry. Specifically students will learn:

- honesty, integrity, morality, civility, duty, honor, service, and obedience to law;
- respect for and an understanding of the Declaration of Independence and the constitutions of the United States and of the state of Utah;
- Utah history, including territorial and pre-territorial development to the present;
- the essentials and benefits of the free enterprise system;
- respect for parents, home, and family;
- the dignity and necessity of honest labor; and
- other skills, habits, and qualities of character which will promote an upright and desirable citizenry and better prepare students to recognize and accept responsibility for preserving and defending the blessings of liberty inherited from prior generations and secured by the Constitution.

With that framework as a guide and support and professional development from the USBE around its robust core curriculum standards for social studies, it was now up to each LEA to deliver on all of those lofty expectations. Only a handful of LEAs have their own social studies specialist to help orchestrate civic learning.

A few LEAs, including Alpine School District, Davis School District, and Jordan School District, and schools (Maeser Preparatory Academy, Salt Lake Center for Science Education, Noah Webster Academy, among others) have undertaken robust approaches to civic preparation, but implementation has not been consistent across the state.

Efforts to meet the Utah Legislature's expectations for civic and character education got a boost in December **2016** when the USBE adopted the current Core Standards for Secondary Social studies. These standards include specific references to civic preparation in *every* area of social studies--not just Government and Citizenship but also Utah studies, U.S. history, world history, geography, and more. It was one thing to outline the ample opportunities to build civic knowledge and skills and apply those skills to problem solving in many different practical contexts--but quite another for LEAs and individual educators to fulfill these expectations in the face of competing demands. Educators needed more direction and examples from promising practices.

In June **2018**, the USBE produced a civics and character education conference to provide further support to LEAs on civic and character education. Approximately 300 educators from across the state heard from 39 speakers, state and national leaders in civic and character education. The conference targeted 13 topic areas with 17 breakout sessions and keynote speeches addressing critical elements of civic and character education. That conference inspired an annual conference tradition (2019, 2020 and more to come, post-Covid 19) and led more recently to the formation of the Utah Civic Learning Collaborative,

(UCLC) an informal alliance of educators, academic partners, nonprofits, policymakers dedicated to preparing youth for civic life.

Educators at all levels, Pre-K through grade 12, have a continuing need and desire to learn more about strategies for teaching media literacy and digital citizenship; academic service learning and experiential civics; ways to build character and social-emotional skills needed for productive and meaningful engagement in civic life; ways to teach the foundations of democracy to rebuild faith in American institutions. Another important point from the conference was the strong desire to develop authentic and experience-oriented civics projects.

Too many educators still need support to enact significant changes in their pedagogy. There is much guidance from promising practices and emerging frameworks like the Educating for American Democracy partnership, but educators and social studies leaders need a “plan of attack,” a strategy for sorting through the resources and devising their own coherent approach to teaching civics and cultivating civic dispositions.

Given the many competing demands on educators, they need incentives to work through their own “theory of change”: a methodology for defining long-term goals and then working backwards to identify necessary preconditions for achieving the desired outcomes based on the area they want to focus on. The proposed initiative respects that each LEA is in a different starting place with a different context and their own approach to pursue the necessary changes in civics education.

More recent and ongoing discussions in the workgroup created by [HCR15 Concurrent Resolution Emphasizing the Importance of Civics Education](#) (Rep. V. Lowry Snow) in 2021 have helped to clarify areas of mutual interest, for educators seeking to strengthen their civics teaching and for policymakers hoping to align civics teaching with the vision for civic and character education set forth in statute. The proposed initiative is based on those categories of proven and promising practices.

4. What are the suggested legislative solutions? Please include code references and suggested language where possible:

Subject to appropriations by the Utah Legislature from the Utah Legislature, the Utah State Board of Education shall administer a three-year pilot, Local Innovations in Civics Teaching and Learning Program, designed to support LEAs or individual schools in comprehensive, results-driven initiatives based on promising and proven practices in civics education. Examples include:

1. **Foundations of Democracy:** Building Faith in American Institutions and Foundational Constitutional Concepts through Historical Inquiry and Civil Discussions. This area sees the related crisis of faith in American institutions and increasing polarization as an opportunity to teach the foundations of our republic in innovative ways. An LEA could use the grant to send teachers to intensive summer institutes like Freedoms Foundation of Valley Forge or the Huntsman Seminar at the University of Utah Hinckley Institute and then have those teachers mentor others, for example. Others might want to design professional development to help teachers facilitate civil and productive discussion of contentious historical topics or current events with confidence.
2. **Media Literacy and Digital Citizenship:** A [Pew Research Center study](#) finds that young people are less interested in news than earlier generations; and when they are looking for news, they are more likely to find it online or in social media spaces. This has obvious practical advantages. For example, in digital spaces consumers have unlimited, 24/7 access to a seemingly infinite number of sources, including traditional news outlets; they can easily share content with friends; comment on and re-frame whatever they find; and they can easily put news stories to use in any digital activism or civic engagement. But for every advantage there is a downside: fake news, information overload, distraction and bias from advertising, click bait mixed in with real news (ex: BuzzFeed), and more. Fortunately for social studies teachers, there are a number of quality pedagogical tools, lesson plans, and discussion groups devoted to cultivating news literacy in the information age. And, even better: this field is emerging rapidly. That's the problem: in this area more than any other, teachers are drinking from a fire hose. All of the tools and resources for media and digital literacy need to be carefully curated and organized into a coherent, interdisciplinary curriculum strategy.. There is no reason to limit media literacy education to social studies. This area calls for dedicated resources to facilitate innovation across curriculum areas.
3. **Academic Service Learning:** Evidence suggests that students learn more by "doing," but that doing also needs to be rigorously informed by knowledge about the foundations of democracy and how government works in the best of times. Under this category, LEAs or entire schools could design and implement a comprehensive academic service-learning program, identifying local nonprofits or governmental entities with which to partner, but continuously tying the service back to academic study of the issues that give rise to the need for service and the civic processes involved in addressing those issues at different levels of government or the private or charity sector. Academic service-learning activities can also be structured to

facilitate development of civic dispositions and character traits envisioned in the USBE's Portrait of a Graduate such as empathy for others and inclusive dispositions.

No matter what promising or proven civics education practice the LEA or school decides to tackle, the successful applicant will need a credible plan for assessing progress in the given area over time. A cohort of students will need to be followed and assessments created to track changes in civic dispositions and engagement over the duration of the project.

This funding would support the piloting of these innovative approaches as well as the evaluation and administration of the pilot.

5. What data needs to be collected to support this potential legislation? Please include whether this data is currently collected and available:

Around the recent Place for All conferences, the UCLC and USBE has collected extensive feedback from teachers about what they need in order to dig deeper in the civic teaching proven practices. [Some of that data](#) has been used to prioritize UCLC efforts, but much of it has helped motivate this policy and business case.

Additional data and input will come from the UCLC's statewide listening tours starting this Fall of 2021 and continuing through the Spring of 2022. Those tours will cover 12-14 LEAs and involve face-to-face or digital meetings with LEA and school administrators, teachers, students, and potential nonprofit partners. Feedback from those discussions will be used to develop the RFP or Call for Proposals that we would hope to release in the summer or early fall of 2022. Thus the timing of our policy/business case would dovetail well with the outreach to the LEAs.

BUSINESS CASE

This section only needs to be completed if you are making a business case request (only if you are seeking new or additional funding).

1. Total Amount Requested:

Funding Source	Amount (\$)
FY 2022 one-time funding	\$250,000
FY 2023 one-time funding	\$250,000
FY 2023 ongoing funding	\$75,000
TOTAL funding requested	\$500,000

2. Describe how business case supports the goals and metrics of the [USBE Strategic Plan](#).

The proposed policy and funding request goes to the heart of many priorities in the USBE Strategic Plan. Examples include, by section:

- **OUR VISION:** Civic engagement figures prominently in USBE's strategic plan. The proposed initiative emphasizes both the knowledge and skills needed to engage civically.
- **MISSION:** Proven practices in civics education make a point of closing the notable gaps in civic participation based on race/ethnicity, national origin, ability, and more.
- **2022 TARGETS:** Civic learning outcomes are missing from this list. As LEAs articulate and measure outcomes from the proposed innovative approaches, they will discover ways to measure progress in civic learning.
- The proposed initiative addresses three out of four Strategic Plan goals as follows:

OUR VISION

Upon completion, all Utah students are prepared to succeed and lead by having the knowledge and skills to learn, **engage civically**, and lead meaningful lives.

MISSION

The Utah State Board of Education leads by creating **equitable** conditions for student success: advocating for necessary resources, developing policy, and providing effective oversight and support.

- Utah's new **Early Learning** Core Standards include robust civic angles in its Lifelong Learning Practices (pp. 32-55) and in Social Studies sections (pp. 78-88). But early learning specialists are asking for direction, professional development, and incentives to innovate in order to meet these standards. The proposed initiative will specify incentives and support partnerships to involve parents and families in civic teaching and learning, one of the high-level strategies under early learning.
- Safe and **Healthy Schools**: A healthy school is inclusive and respectful of different points of view and welcoming to students and families from all backgrounds. But educators need proven strategies and professional development to facilitate inclusiveness in a practical sense, starting with their own classrooms.
- **Effective Educators and Leaders**: The USBE K-12 Social Studies partners with local social studies leaders, academic partners, and community groups to identify and address needs for professional development. LEAs and/or schools participating in the proposed policy/funding initiative will make efficient use of PD for their areas of focus and share their results and models with *all* LEAs and/or schools in conjunction with USBE staff. Participating LEAs and schools will be encouraged to build peer-to-peer mentoring into their projects. The proposed initiative is also well aligned with teacher preparation programs as well as UVU's Center for Constitutional Studies, the BYU History Department, and the USBE civic teaching endorsement course, "Doing Civics."

3. Identify how the business case aligns with specific action steps within Strategic Priority #2 (Education innovation and investment) of the [One Utah Roadmap](#).

The Roadmap prioritizes increased funding to support effective teachers. The proposed initiative will do just that in a woefully underfunded area of education: civics teaching and learning. Further, the Roadmap ensures that funding is linked to rigorous assessment and measurable improvement in student civic learning outcomes. Those priorities are a given for the proposed initiative. Connections to early learning, the Roadmap's #2 priority, were outlined above.

Under C. Teachers, i. Improve teacher compensation. Right now, teachers can go "above and beyond" current minimal expectations for civics teaching and learning and many do, but they generally do so at their own expense or in their free time. The proposed initiative should be used by LEAs or schools to support teachers with dedicated funding to support their projects. So for example, if a teacher needed to collaborate with others to work on

building an academic service learning program, funding for substitutes or off-contract work would be available.

In terms of D. Equity: To compete in each of the proposed initiative categories an LEA or school will need to demonstrate how their project will engage all types of students--not just the privileged students who are not having to work part-time jobs (those students are more likely to succeed in civic life no matter what they pick up in school) but all students during the school day or in after school contexts. Moreover, the proven practices of civics education can be linked to better learning outcomes in core academic subjects and development of "21st century skills" needed for success in post-secondary education and the workforce, another priority in Gov. Cox's Roadmap.

4. Explain how the business case advances the Board's mission of "creating equitable conditions for student success: advocating for necessary resources, developing policy, and providing effective oversight and support."

Most of this question is addressed above. As one critical purpose of the proposed initiative, participating LEAs and schools will form a learning network with other grantees. Successful projects will be "spotlighted" so all LEAs and schools can learn from their efforts and possibly compete in future years of the grant program. The USBE Social Studies specialists will oversee and support the program by ensuring rigorous standards for assessment and evaluation and providing any needed professional development--not just for the grantees but for other LEAs and schools.

5. Which populations or geographic areas will benefit most from this request? What safeguards will be implemented to prevent inequities or other unintended distributional consequences as it relates to this request?

In the selection of grantees the USBE will seek to ensure balance between geographies and populations. Priority will be given for rural LEAs and schools and Title 1 schools, for example. Once funded, project participants will need to reflect the diversity of the overall school or LEA population. Wherever possible, LEAs and schools should take a "whole school" approach to the given project, thereby sidestepping one of the common pitfalls of civics preparation programs: that they can be out of reach for students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

6. Which stakeholders have you engaged and coordinated with during the development of this request?

As noted above, the proposed initiative has been conceived in discussions with the HCR15 Workgroup as well as workgroups of the UCLC. We have also consulted several academic

partners at BYU and UVU. All are prepared to support the project. LEA social studies leaders have also indicated a desire for support of their civics education efforts.

7. Summarize the current budget for the project or program that is being funded. If this is a new project or program, summarize resources that are available for like-objectives within USBE.

We propose a new program that would complement and augment current Pre-K-12 Social Studies activities. The program or initiative is designed to complement a recent U-Serve Civic Engagement grant (\$10,000 to be matched with \$10,000 in USBE funds) that the USBE received in July of 2021 to support the listening tours and year 2 efforts of the Utah Civic Learning Collaborative. The USBE Humanities Coordinator will oversee the project, contracting out expertise to implement the project.

8. What problems would be solved with the additional funding? The field of civics education is rapidly evolving, to the point where 2 FTEs dedicated to all K-12 social studies cannot possibly keep up with emerging opportunities from the field. It is not enough for the current FTEs to send out an email with announcements about upcoming PD opportunities and hope for the best. LEAs and/or schools need to build a structure and coherent strategy for civic teaching and learning so they can know what to look for in those opportunities.

The pilot program would also provide much-needed data regarding the efficacy of innovative civics education approaches and opportunities for replication of those with the highest degree of success.

9. Provide an itemized budget, including revenue and expenditure sources, for how the funding will be utilized.

Funding Source(s): General Fund

<i>Local Innovations in Civic Teaching and Learning</i>		
Cost Category	FY 2022	FY 2023
Personnel Services	\$25,000	\$25,000
Travel/In State	\$2,000	\$2,000

Travel/Out State	\$3,000	\$3,000
Current Expenses	\$	\$
Data Processing Current Expenses	\$	\$
Data Processing Capital Outlay	\$	\$
Capital Outlay	\$	\$
Other Charges/Pass Through	\$205,000	\$205,000
Transfers	\$	\$
Other: Pilot Evaluation	\$15,000	\$15,000
Total	\$250,000	\$250,000

USBE FTEs	FY 2022	FY 2023
USBE FTEs	.25	.25

10. To what extent is this request scalable? Articulate the impacts if lower funding amounts were provided for this request.

The proposed initiative is eminently scalable. As noted above, grantees would be part of a learning network so they can “compare notes” and possibly share assessment strategies. Results from one year could be instructive for applicants in subsequent grant years.

Lower funding would limit the number of LEAs and/or schools that could participate, reducing the impact on students' civic competency. The requested amount will go further in terms of facilitating comparison of results across a diverse range of LEAs and/or schools.

11. What has been done or considered to address this problem with existing resources, instead of requesting additional state funding? Can any of the costs in the business case be covered with federal funds? Do any of the requested funds fall under one or more of the federal allowable use cases for [ARP ESSER](#)?

Existing resources have been stretched as far as they can go to support activities like the annual Place for All conferences and the UCLC. What we haven't had to date are resources to support local innovation--where the rubber meets the road and projects tied to measurable outcomes.

Title IVa funds are a possible source for support of programs like this, but it is not a likely source for a consistent and more comprehensive set of approaches that could be piloted and assessed, when faced with the competitive nature and multiple needs that can be met with title IVa funds.

Federal legislation ([H.R. 400 Civics Learning Act of 2021](#)) to create a somewhat similar grants program has been introduced, but without bipartisan support, it probably won't get very far. If it does muster support, the proposed initiative could be used to help leverage that funding and thus sustain the investment or possibly reduce the state's investment down the road. The program builds an institutional base for innovative approaches to civic teaching and learning. From that base, we can engage support from the private sector.

12. Are there any future funding obligations (operations and maintenance, multi-year scale up, etc.) created by this request? What are the long-term funding or policy needs for this project or program outside the current budget window of two years? How should the state prepare to address these longer-term needs?

If successful, the proposed initiative will amplify expectations for innovation in civic teaching and learning. With a body of results and lessons from participating LEAs and schools, we will come to understand what LEAs and schools need to take civic teaching and learning closer to the next level/to expectations set forth in Utah Statute. That may drive expectations or introduce a need for ongoing funding obligations--but we say: This is a worthy investment in Utah's democratic life. By dedicating resources to effectively launching the proposed initiative, we will be in a better position to diversify funding to sustain the efforts.

Each LEA and/or school will be required to demonstrate how they will sustain their efforts beyond the grant year. In this way, the program will become more sustainable over time.

If the pilots are successful, then the case will be made for continuing and ongoing support of civics education initiatives in Utah schools.

13. What value will these additional resources create for Utah and how will this value be measured? List the performance measure(s) that will be used to track outcomes for this business case.

The proposed initiative will show us what LEAs and schools need to truly prepare students for civic life and to do so in ways that restore faith in American institutions. We truly cannot think of anything more worthwhile for the long term health of our democracy.

The participating LEAs and/or schools will need to assess their own progress, though each will also participate in a more uniform measure of civic competency. Over time, we will be in position to develop assessments of progress for each of the program categories.

14. Is this request related to an effort to streamline, modernize, or innovate processes or systems within USBE? If so, describe how this request furthers those efforts.

15. Please create a quad chart for your business case and send to Dale Frost (dale.frost@schools.utah.gov) when you submit your request. You can find examples of quad charts and a template [here](#).

SUBMISSION:

Once you have completed this document, please [upload your application here](#) for USBE leadership review and consideration.