



COMMUNITY DISCUSSION SUMMARY STATEMENTS From Community Outreach Programs following the 101st Arizona Town Hall

In programs held around the state to follow up on the fall 2013 Town Hall titled “Civic Leadership for Arizona’s Future”, audience members were asked to participate in a Town Hall-style discussion on priorities and action items. Statements prepared from the discussions at the Outreach Programs are set forth below.

TUCSON (March 13, 2013)

There is a gulf that exists between the data and information available about Arizona’s issues and the use of this information by our state legislators. Our elected leaders have good information and metrics to guide their deliberations but they are not taking advantage of the resources available. We need to consider how to better inform our state legislators so that they are not as reliant on lobbyists or sources outside Arizona.

With respect to our elected state leaders, we need to be mindful of the burdens imposed on them. They are overwhelmed during the legislative session and the focus of much adversity and negativity. We should consider how we can better support them, perhaps with additional staff or by providing them with nonpartisan research on the issues.

Training for local elected leaders, such as school board members would also be useful.

We need to support businesses and other organization who support civic leadership. We recognize young leaders with the 40 under 40 awards. Perhaps we should also consider an award for 65 over 65.

We need to also consider how to connect people to leadership opportunities. A collaborative effort that serves as a resource for opportunities would make a big difference. We can also foster civic leadership by taking leadership presentations into the businesses themselves so that we can reach people at their place of business.

SIERRA VISTA (March 14, 2013)

Government/Elected Officials - To promote civic leadership among government and elected leaders we need to start early with training programs for our future leaders. We should have a trinity leadership program that combines training for government and elected officials with educational institutions and the involvement of civic organizations.

Educational Institutions - The leaders in education need to take steps to inculcate civic leadership principles into the classroom curriculum. Its critical to begin early with early childhood education.

Business Organizations - Businesses play a key role in civic leadership. Sierra Vista has a rich history of community engagement from its business community. We could improve civic leadership by continuing to expose business leaders to different professional and civic aspects of the community. Time is one of the biggest challenges that business leaders face when trying to increase their involvement in civic leadership.

Nonprofit Community Based Organizations - The Sierra Vista Chambers Leadership Academy is a model program that we should try to expand to other chambers around the county and to our Youth. The Center for Lifelong learning could also work to develop a program to provide leadership training to the community. Finally, we should use technology to provide programs to other groups around the county.

Individuals - We should give priority to encouraging engagement in civic leadership among all members of our community. We can do this by setting the example and serving as a role model. We can each help others grow to become civic leaders by officially and even unofficially acting as mentors..

DOUGLAS (March 14, 2013)

Educational Institutions - To improve civic leadership in our community, we need to increase our outreach to high schools and better engage our students. One method for accomplishing this might be to approach the parent organizations to help bridge the gap and encourage students to become more engaged in civic leadership.

Business - We can improve civic leadership through business partnerships by recognizing businesses who encourage their employees to be civic leaders. We should also continue to support efforts that have worked in Douglas to encourage and build both civic engagement and civic leadership. We also need to locate funding for civic leadership programs, perhaps through partnerships with economic groups. A strong economic development and chamber of commerce initiative would help us better develop civic leadership in our community.

Elected Leaders/Government - When someone runs for public office in a small town, they often lose the ability to have a personal life and they must deal with the negative stigma that can come with holding public office. These factors can prevent people from choosing to run for office and we need to counter these negative influences by better supporting such efforts. We can also encourage more people to run for office if we have programs in schools that allow students to interact with elected leaders and thereby expose them to the opportunities available and to our elected leaders.

It would also help to have written materials from a group like the Flinn Foundation that shows the steps of running for or holding an office and an organized group of civic leaders who will disseminate the materials and provide related information. All of these factors would help remove barriers to those who may want to run for office but who do not have the knowledge of how to do so.

PHOENIX SOROPTIMIST (March 21, 2013)

Government - Arizonans should encourage collaboration by and among elected officials by fighting the tendency to pigeonhole voters based on their association with a single issue. Not all pro-choice voters are Democrats. Not all fiscal conservatives are Republicans. As voters we should promote nonpartisan collaboration by giving financial and other support to politicians on both sides of the aisle based on their honesty, integrity, and reasonableness--and mention our views on the issues when we do.

Education - Arizona should integrate civics education into the state's mandatory core educational curriculum and adequately fund the implementation of the civics program.

Personal - Mentoring is an extremely powerful tool that may promote civic engagement. Programs such as Soroptimist International of Phoenix's GED Plus program--that mentor people to help them obtain the skills and resources they need to become successful in life--also may help them to become civically engaged and will go a long way to promote better civic leadership.

WEST VALLEY - AVONDALE (April 3, 2013)

When it comes to leadership, everyone counts. It is critical that individuals become engaged as leaders in their own communities by running for office and participating in community leadership development initiatives.

A statewide clearinghouse for sharing of credible information relevant to leadership, including information about leadership resources and substantive issues of concern to leaders, should be established and promoted.

Collaborative leadership should include greater participation by businesses and other non-governmental entities, instead of defaulting to the assumption that government will do everything. Businesses of all sizes and non-profits should be encouraged to act as partners, taking a greater role in and providing financial support for, community leadership development. For example, brown bag roundtables and other engagement and outreach efforts can be used to inform and encourage greater participation by the business sector. The "doers"—business leaders already involved in community leadership—should be asked to mentor other business people to expand business involvement.

Civics education should be infused into the school curriculum. This could be done in innovative ways, such as deliberately selecting civics issues as the focus for classroom assignments, encouraging civics-related community service, and organizing civics-oriented field trips.

Arizona should strive to overcome the tendency for the “same old faces” to dominate community leadership. New residents should be encouraged to participate in Arizona leadership activities, and smaller businesses that may not be able to write a big check should be included and encouraged to participate and support leadership development in other ways, as they can.