

# Civic Health Ambassador Program

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## Purpose

The greatest assets to a community are the invested people who live there. Similarly, community members have the most to gain from strong civic health. Civic health is divided into indicators of social connectedness, confidence in institutions, community engagement, and political involvement. Communities with strong civic health enjoy many benefits like resilient economies, accountable and representative governments, and high social capital.

**You are an expert on the communities to which you belong, making you especially equipped to examine civic health, take action to capitalize on strengths and address weaknesses, and create stronger communities.**

The Civic Health Ambassador program has five goals: 1) Learn about civic health throughout Nebraska and in your community. 2) Share your knowledge in a meaningful and community-specific way. Start meaningful discussions about civic health in your community. 3) Cultivate partnerships. Civic health is something we all own together. Who can help you turn the dial on civic health in your community? 4) Move forward with an action plan to strengthen civic health. Make civic health a priority in your community in a meaningful and action-focused way. 5) Share successes and collaborate with civic health ambassadors across the state.

## Civic Health in Nebraska

Just as doctors can check-up on a person's physical health, it is important to check-up on the health of civic life. We are healthier when more people are engaging in civic activities like voting, volunteering, connecting with family and friends, and trusting in public institutions. The 2015 Nebraska Civic Health Index uses data on these indicators and others to provide a civic check-up. Even more importantly, the report posits 5 data-based, attainable, and meaningful action steps to use our strengths and address our weaknesses in order to become healthier together. The following action steps can provide a framework to develop community-specific steps:

1. Continue to grow the strong tradition of connecting all Nebraskans.
2. Create and promote accessible networks for community engagement. Use online social media to connect community members and projects.
3. Activate Nebraskans to register and vote by modernizing the process.
4. Increase interaction between elected representatives and constituents.
5. Prioritize civic education that fosters civic action for all students in Nebraska.

## Ambassador Roles

Civic health is something we all own together. In creating a network of ambassadors who understand civic data as a jumping-off point for meaningful action, we all become more empowered to strengthen civic health. Ambassadors will come together for training on the current state of civic health in Nebraska, and will then work in their own communities or groups to use the index as a catalyst to identify strengths, issues, and ultimately opportunities for civic action. Ambassador roles include:

- Participate in a community conversation hosted by the Nebraska Civic Health Partnership to learn about current civic data and action steps for Nebraska.
- Bring civic health information back to your community in a meaningful way, through a group you belong to, in a presentation to a community institution, at a family picnic, however makes sense! The Nebraska Civic Health Partnership has a Civic Health Toolkit to use in hosting community conversations and moving from conversation to action. Bring partners into this conversation. Who can help strengthen your community?
- Make an action-plan. We can strengthen civic health together. What does improving civic health look like in your community? Let's do it! The Civic Health Toolkit includes a feedback form – we want to know what you're up to and how we can help.
- Document the ways that civic health is becoming a priority in your community. Are actions incorporated in community planning? Has an organization fit civic health into its work? Are schools getting engaged? What's happening to improve civic health?
- Meet twice each year with other ambassadors to learn more about civic health and share about successes or obstacles to stronger civic engagement.

## Nebraska Civic Health Partnership

The Nebraska Civic Health Partnership is a group of nonprofit organizations, educational institutions, foundations, and others committed to strengthening civic health throughout Nebraska. With the National Conference on Citizenship, the partnership commissioned the first-ever civic health index for Nebraska. The report, executive summary, and toolkit can be found online at [www.nereform.org/nebraska-civic-health](http://www.nereform.org/nebraska-civic-health).

Check in with the partnership. We are excited about your investment in stronger Nebraska communities! Contact NCHP manager Kelsey Arends at [kelsey.arends@nereform.org](mailto:kelsey.arends@nereform.org) or (402) 904-5191. The Nebraska Civic Health Partnership is led by Nebraskans for Civic Reform and includes the University of Nebraska Public Policy Center, the Nebraska Community Foundation, University of Nebraska-Lincoln Center for Civic Engagement, the University of Nebraska at Omaha Service Learning Academy, and the Nebraska State Bar Foundation.

