DEVELOPING CONCEPTS
LESSON 4: HABITS AND SKILLS OF CIVIC PROFESSIONALS

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

💡 *Develop a learning plan for areas of growth as a civic professional.*

💡 *Learn democratic habits and skills for making change.*

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LESSON OVERVIEW

The goal of this lesson is to help participants articulate the democratic habits and skills they might obtain in their practice as civic professionals. This lesson involves a mixture of self-reflection and co-creative learning, while introducing important concepts and practices.

SUGGESTED PLAN [⏱ 75 minutes]

LESSON PREPARATION

1. Choose a space with a chalkboard or whiteboard, or set up a flip chart, to record responses from this lesson's "Think/Pair/Share" activity.

2. Make copies of the "Habits and Skills of Civic Professionals" handout (provided at the end of this lesson), or prepare to share it electronically with all participants.

THINK/PAIR/SHARE [⏱ 25 minutes]

Begin by asking participants to brainstorm individually a list of skills needed to be effective as a leader involved in public engagement. Ask them to be specific, with the promise that there are no wrong answers.

After participants have time to reflect individually, ask them to pair up and share their responses with their partners. Ask the pairs to ask questions of one another and begin to curate a list together.

Bring the teams back to the large group and ask them to share their responses with the class. As the pairs are sharing their skills, record the curated list of the competencies that civic professionals need to be effective. Post responses from the entire group on the board or flip chart. The entire class should review and discuss the responses.

HANDOUT AND SMALL GROUPS [⏱ 15 minutes]

Distribute the "Habits and Skills of Civic Professionals" handout. The handout lists skills associated with each of four habits civic professionals use to engage communities: Working Reflectively, Working Publicly, Working Inclusively, and Working Collaboratively.

Break the class into four groups (you might try to keep the pairs together). Assign each of the groups to explore in depth one of the four habits from the handout, along with its corresponding set of skills. In reviewing skills, students should discuss practical application, asking questions such as:

- Can you share a story/example of when you used one of these skills?

- What other skills would you add to the list?

- How can you develop these skills, in the coming months and longer term? (Try to be as specific as possible.)

LARGE-GROUP DEBRIEF AND HARVESTING [⏱ 20 minutes]

With the full class, ask each group to teach the other groups about the civic habit they explored with their team, along with the sets of skills associated with the habit. Small groups should be invited to share at least one story from their discussions.

After each group presents, ask participants to add any missing habits or skills from the distributed list. Spend time comparing the distributed list with the skills/competencies from the opening brainstorm activity.

FUTURE PLANNING [⏱ 15 minutes]

Ask participants to return to their initial pairs from the Think/Pair/Share activity. Invite the partners to come up with individual growth plans for the coming months, and then for the longer term. Ask the pairs to first work individually, and then together.

Participants can draw upon the final question from their small-group conversations, but with their individual plans the pairs should focus on the civic habits they would like to develop as areas for personal growth. Questions for planning and reflection might include:

- What habit and corresponding skills would you most like to develop over the coming months? over the next 5 years? Why?

- What steps can you take to cultivate these habits? (Be specific.)

- How can you measure progress toward meeting your goals?

HABITS AND SKILLS
OF CIVIC PROFESSIONALS

WORKING REFLECTIVELY

- Listening eloquently
- Engaging in critical self-reflection
- Seeing interrelationships and systems
- Seeking sustainable solutions

WORKING PUBLICLY

- Cultivating public narratives and storytelling
- Analyzing stakeholder interests and power
- Naming and framing problems to promote deliberation
- Making conversations public

WORKING INCLUSIVELY

- Adopting an asset-based approach
- Practicing cultural humility
- Building diverse coalitions
- Developing leadership in others

WORKING COLLABORATIVELY

- Building reciprocal, trusting relationships
- Facilitating dialogue with people affected by a problem
- Finding common ground
- Sharing responsibility for solving a problem