

# Measuring Civic Participation Indicators to Guide Action

Thursday afternoon 1:15 – 2:30 p.m.

Partners have expressed interest in measuring civic participation for many reasons. The presence of engaged residents represents an important asset for neighborhoods that is difficult to capture. Active communities are more able to weather challenges, advocate for themselves, and positively impact their social and environmental conditions. Civic participation is also connected to other individual outcomes. Participation in the electoral process is one indicator of social cohesion in a community and studies have found that social cohesion is linked to higher self-ratings of health and lower rates of mental illness. In addition, residents who volunteer in a community have been found to have lower mortality rates, greater functional ability and better mental health compared to those who do not volunteer.

***The purpose of this session is to explore the usefulness and meaning of civic participation measures and to discuss ways these indicators could be linked to local organizing and action.***

Each of the presenters will speak for 10 to 15 minutes, followed by plenary discussion moderated by Kathy Pettit from the Urban Institute.

- *Jason Jurjevich* from Portland State University will describe his Knight Foundation-funded project collecting and analyzing voting data in local elections in 45 cities around the country.
- *Kim Pierson* from DataSpark RI will describe their recent analysis resulting from their participation in the NNIP cross-site project on Integrated Data Systems, funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. Using AmeriCorps data, they looked at the residence of high-intensity volunteers, their post-AmeriCorps outcomes, and their impact on the state.
- *Jeff Matson* from the University of Minnesota will describe how CURA is using social media, community-collected data, and open source web-mapping to track the success of an organization called Neighborhoods Organizing for Change in passing progressive ballot measures during the state's primary caucus.

**Discussion:** (30 to 45 minutes)

- Who are the groups interested in variation and trends in civic participation measures for community organizing? What are ways to engage with them?
- Are there other measures than voting and volunteerism that can be captured without a community survey?
- How can qualitative data or community knowledge be used to learn more about different types of civic participation?
- How can the lessons learned in collecting and analyzing civic participation data be translated to mobilize residents around other issues of community concern?

**Resources from Speakers:**

- Portland: *Who Votes for America's Mayors?* (Powerpoint)  
[https://www.pdx.edu/prc/sites/www.pdx.edu.prc/files/Who\\_Votes\\_ppt\\_summary\\_sept\\_2015.pdf](https://www.pdx.edu/prc/sites/www.pdx.edu.prc/files/Who_Votes_ppt_summary_sept_2015.pdf)
- Portland: *Who Votes for America's Mayors?* (Report)  
[https://www.pdx.edu/prc/sites/www.pdx.edu.prc/files/Who\\_Votes\\_for\\_Mayor\\_Sept\\_2015.pdf](https://www.pdx.edu/prc/sites/www.pdx.edu.prc/files/Who_Votes_for_Mayor_Sept_2015.pdf)
- Providence: Neighborhood Young Voter Participation in Providence brief  
[http://www.neighborhoodindicators.org/sites/default/files/publications/Issue\\_Brief\\_11\\_30\\_2015.pdf](http://www.neighborhoodindicators.org/sites/default/files/publications/Issue_Brief_11_30_2015.pdf)
- Providence: Voting Habits of Rhode Island's Young Adults (Quiz)  
<http://www.neighborhoodindicators.org/sites/default/files/publications/Young-Voter-Fact-or-Fiction-Quiz-Final.pdf>
- Providence: Voting Habits of Rhode Island's Young Adults Data Story  
<http://ridatahub.org/datastories/young-voters/1/>
- Providence: Volunteerism Data Story, <http://ridatahub.org/datastories/52/1/>
- Twin Cities: Minnesota Caucus Results, <http://maps.umn.edu/cura/noc/>

**Other Resources:**

- National: National Conference on Citizenship (NCoC), <http://www.ncoc.net/>
- Austin: Civic Engagement in Austin: Views on the "10-1" System  
<http://moody.utexas.edu/strauss/civic-engagement-in-austin>
- Charlotte: Take Ten: Knight funded project where city employees take 10 minutes each week to engage a resident about how to make Charlotte better  
<http://charmec.org/city/charlotte/CivicInnovation/Pages/Take10.aspx>
- New Haven: 2016 Connecticut Civic Health Index (with NCoC)  
<http://ctdatahaven.org/reports/2016-connecticut-civic-health-index>