

LESC SEPTEMBER 2026

civics in New Mexico

A K-12 model for engaging students
in their schools and their communities



PARTNERSHIP FOR CIVIC LEARNING & DEMOCRACY



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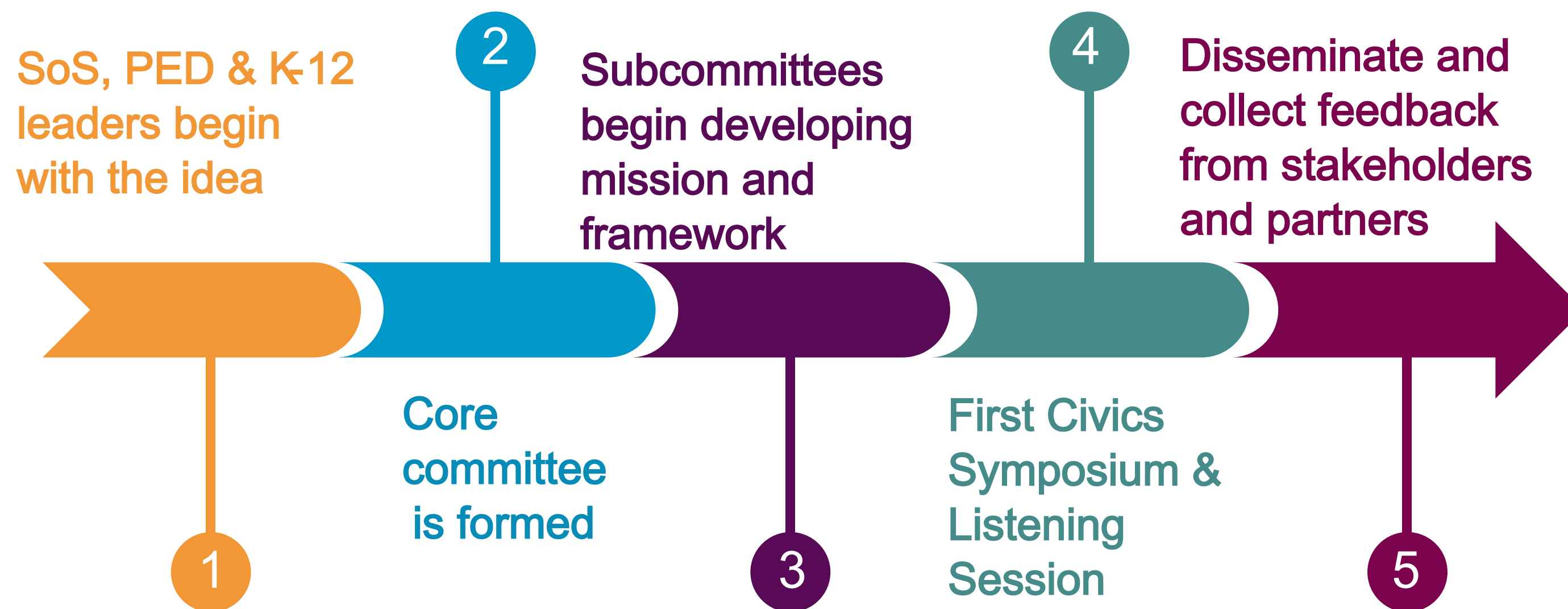
Student

Mayfield High School

CONCEPT AND DEVELOPMENT



*Strengthening New Mexico civics will **elevate** what so many of our students are already doing in a meaningful way that communicates their dedication to their communities and **encourage** and **expand** future generations of leaders.*



NATIONAL REPORT REFLECTS NM CIVICS



A MILE WIDE, AN INCH DEEP:

THE STATE OF CIVIC LEARNING IN U.S. SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Center on Reinventing Public Education 2026 Report

“Most districts offer something, but **fewer have created the conditions for students to practice the skills that democratic participation requires** .”

“Well-designed civic education can shape civic engagement, but this depends on a combination of **instruction, service learning, extracurricular activities, and a school’s ethos** , rather than on classroom instruction alone.”

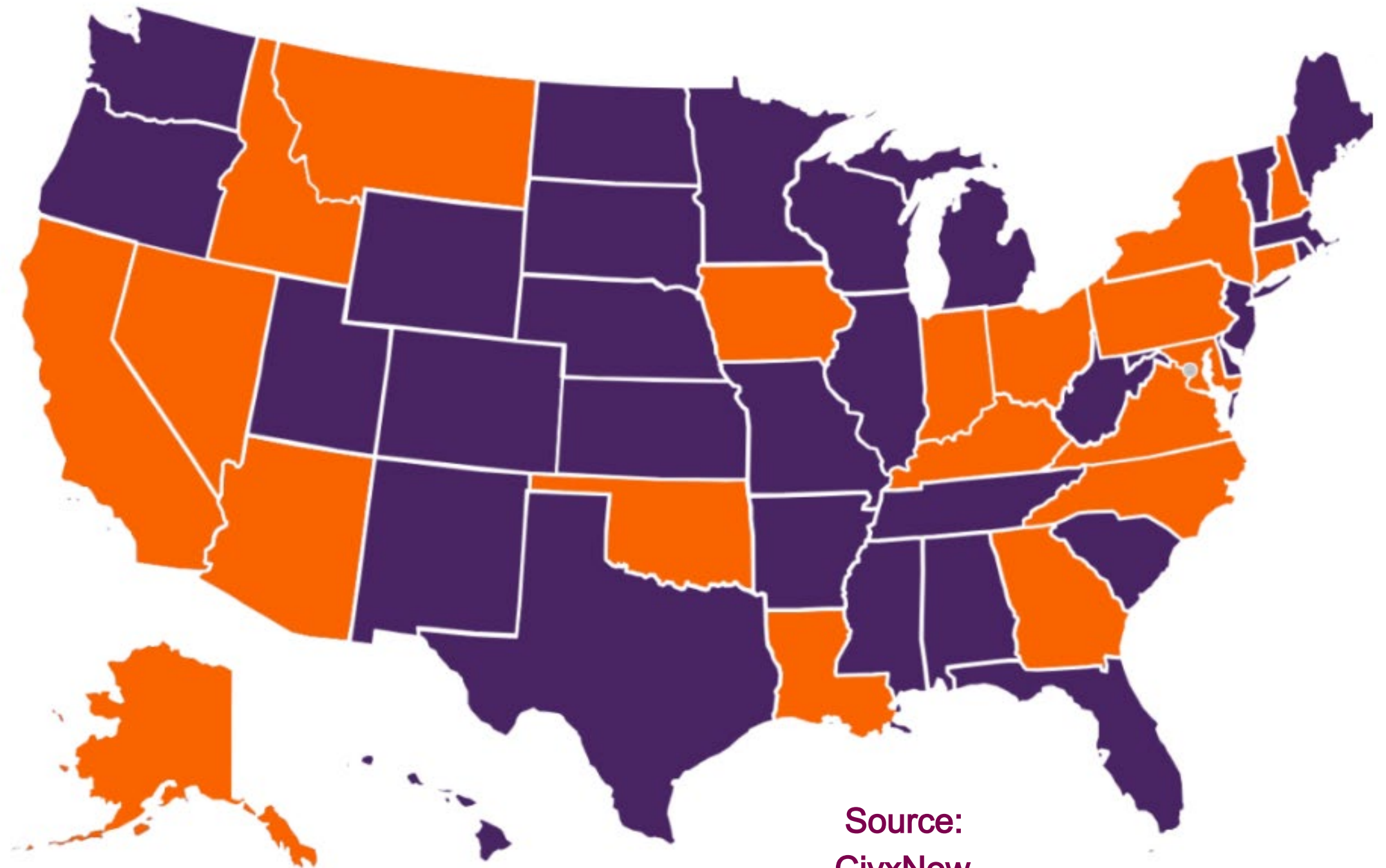
“The focus should be on making deeper civic learning possible by **providing clearer goals, stronger professional learning, shared instructional resources, and more consistent opportunities for students to practice civic skills.**”

NATIONAL CONTEXT

How is a Civics Seal different than completion of a civics course alone?

Twenty states (orange) have shifted to active civics education, including civics seals, to engage students in real-world, self-directed experiences rather than passive sit-and-get learning in a classroom.

Our goal is to work with schools and communities over the next year to build upon the strongest models from other states (Kentucky & Nevada) to **guarantee quality opportunities for all students**, while ensuring that districts and charters have the support and resources needed for both teachers and students.



Source:
CivxNow

MODEL STATES: K -12 Academics & Application



New Mexico can build an ideal model for our students

KENTUCKY

STRUCTURE

The Kentucky Civic Seal program recognizes elementary, middle, and high school students who demonstrate exceptional civic performance through exhibiting understanding, application, and reflection upon local, state, and national governance; commitment to democratic principles and promoting the common good; informed participation in civic spaces; and reflection upon their role in civic life.

HOW IS IT EARNED?

- Civic Engagement Project
- Knowledge of Governance & Democratic Principles
- Information Literacy
- Self-Reflection

NEVADA

STRUCTURE

The Nevada Seal of Civics is a recognition for Nevada high school students who go above and beyond in civic learning and engagement. The Nevada School of Civic Excellence designation recognizes schools that demonstrate a strong commitment to civics education. Being a designated school means students have access to robust civic learning experiences that equip them to participate thoughtfully in their communities and in democracy.

HOW IS IT EARNED?

- Earn at least a 3.25 grade point average
- Earn at least 3 credits in social studies
- Achieve a score of at least 90% on the Nevada Civics Exam (taken no more than 2 times)
- Earn a satisfactory score in citizenship (4 semesters in any social studies class with an average of 3.0 and above based on a citizenship rubric)
- Complete a service-learning project

WHY EMPHASIZE CIVICS FOR NM?

FOR STUDENTS

Encourages all students to go beyond basic standards and graduation requirements for **deeper, meaningful, enduring learning**



FOR SCHOOLS

Creates a **clear, statewide benchmark** for what equitable civic proficiency looks like for our unique communities



FOR COLLEGE & CAREER

Signals to colleges and employers that **a student possesses key durable skills** — such as project management, civil discourse, and collaborative problem solving



FOR NEW MEXICO

Strengthens democratic institutions with increased civic engagement in all locales and statewide



CIVICS FRAMEWORK: Academics & Practice



CIVIC KNOWLEDGE

- Structure and function of local, state, tribal, and national government
- Founding documents: Declaration of Independence, U.S. Constitution, Bill of Rights
- Foundational principles: justice, liberty, rule of law
- Rights and responsibilities
- Historical context
- Academic standards

ENDURING CIVIC SKILLS

- Critical thinking
- Evaluate credibility of information
- Distinguish fact from opinion
- Celebrate/strengthen community bonds
- Engage in constructive dialogue
- Problem solve local issues
- Collaborate with groups
- Participate in civic life
- Project management
- Informed voting

CIVIC DISPOSITIONS

- Promote the general welfare
- Civically responsible
- Civically engaged
- Understands personal/civic duty to family and community
- Upholds civic virtues
- Service oriented
- Endeavors to strengthen sense of community and school belonging

K-12 MODEL FOR CIVICS EDUCATION



Elementary K-5

EXPLORE

Elementary School Engagement: Certificate for participating classrooms and schools that elevate civic learning and participation

Middle School 6-8

PARTICIPATE

Middle School Engagement: School -level recognition of participation in classroom, school, and community civic initiatives

High School 9-12

DEMONSTRATE

Formal Civics Recognition: Individual students recognized for exemplary civic knowledge, disposition, and skill demonstration

WHY NOW?



As a diverse state with deep Indigenous, Hispanic, and rural roots, the state's young people carry profound civic inheritance, yet civic education opportunities remain unequal. Students in Albuquerque or Santa Fe may have access to debate programs, mock trials, and legislative internships, while students in rural areas do not. This inequity is not a gap to be tolerated – it is a failure of democratic stewardship.

-NM PARTNERSHIP FOR CIVIC LEARNING & DEMOCRACY

STUDENT CIVICS JOURNEY: Kindergarten To High School



New Mexico Social Studies Standards K-12 ANCHOR STANDARDS

Civic & Political Institutions

Processes, Rules & Laws

Civic Dispositions &
Democratic Principles

Roles & Responsibilities
of Civic Life

Suggested High School Activities

- Volunteer for a voter registration drive
- Intern for a political campaign
- Participate in an extracurricular, experiential learning program
- Tutor younger students
- Participate in acequia meetings and duties
- Participate in ceremonial & cultural responsibilities & preservation
- Join a youth advisory council
- Develop and manage a civics project
 - Propose a policy to a local school board
 - Lead an advocacy campaign for a local or global cause
 - Host a school -wide forum or debate

K-12 STUDENT ROADMAP & GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

12



Grades K-2

- Academic learning
- Classroom jobs
- Classroom rules
- Personal history project
- World holidays
- Feast Day field trip
- School cleanup project
- Invite school, local or tribal leaders to a classroom visit
- Classroom economy

Grades 3-5

- Academic learning
- Student council
- School fundraising
- Legislature field trip
- Issue awareness
- Mock election
- Classroom congress
- Community service
- Interview school & local leaders
- Take part in cultural activities of a tribe, nation, or pueblo

Grades 6-8

- Academic learning
- Model legislature
- Model UN
- Mock trial
- Youth town hall
- Community service
- Public service announcement
- Guest panel
- Register high school students to vote
- Organize a neighborhood cleanup
- Class or school newsletter

Grades 9-12 Academics with Application

- Four units in social science to include:
- U.S. History and Geography with New Mexico History
 - World History and Geography
 - Economics with Personal Financial Literacy
 - Civics/U.S. Government
 - One core elective
 - Localized/personalized choices for application

LOCALIZED/APPLIED LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES



POSSIBLE MODEL

Academic course of study

Localized options

- 4-H & Future Farmers of America learning/competitions
- Acequia education & governance

Personalized options

- School government
- CTE/WBL in public service
- Regional/state/national civics bees
- ENLACE
- Black student unions
- ROTC

POSSIBLE MODEL

Academic course of study

Localized options

- Participate in ceremonial & cultural responsibilities & preservation
- Participate in tribal governance

Personalized options

- Take AP courses
- School government
- Participate in youth advisory groups
- Tutor younger students
- CTE/WBL (experience the possibilities for their futures)

POSSIBLE MODEL

Academic course of study

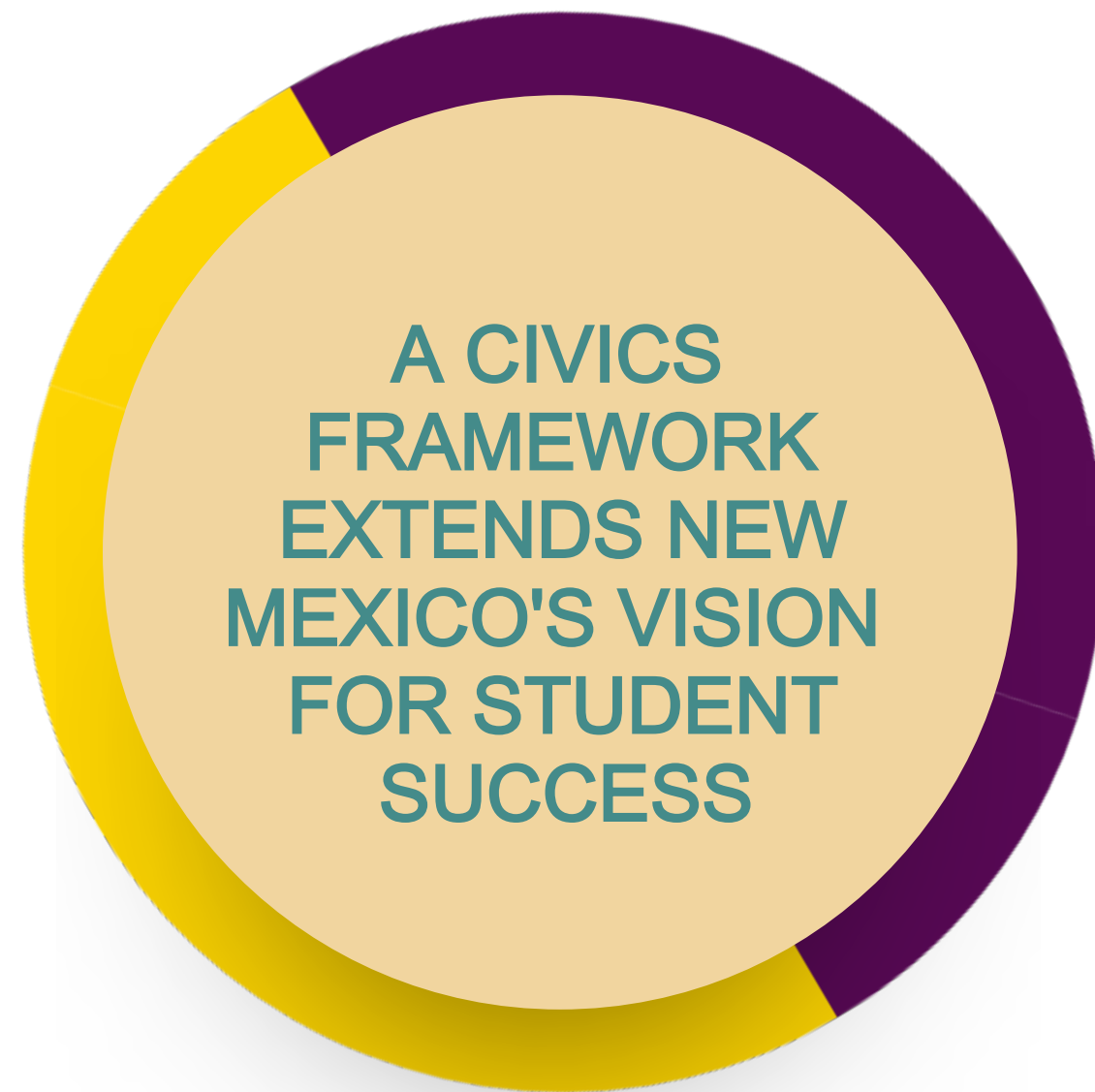
Localized options

- Clean up a local city park
- Attend city council meetings
- Advocate for bills at NM Legislature

Personalized options

- Participate in Youth & Government
- Mock trial
- Debate team
- Service learning

ELEVATING CIVICS ELEVATES STUDENT OUTCOMES



STUDENT OUTCOMES

- Increased student engagement, attendance & graduation
- Stronger self & cultural identity
- Academic & cognitive development
- College & career readiness/ durable soft skills
- Leadership & collaboration
- Critical thinking & media literacy skills
- Project management
- Life -long civic involvement

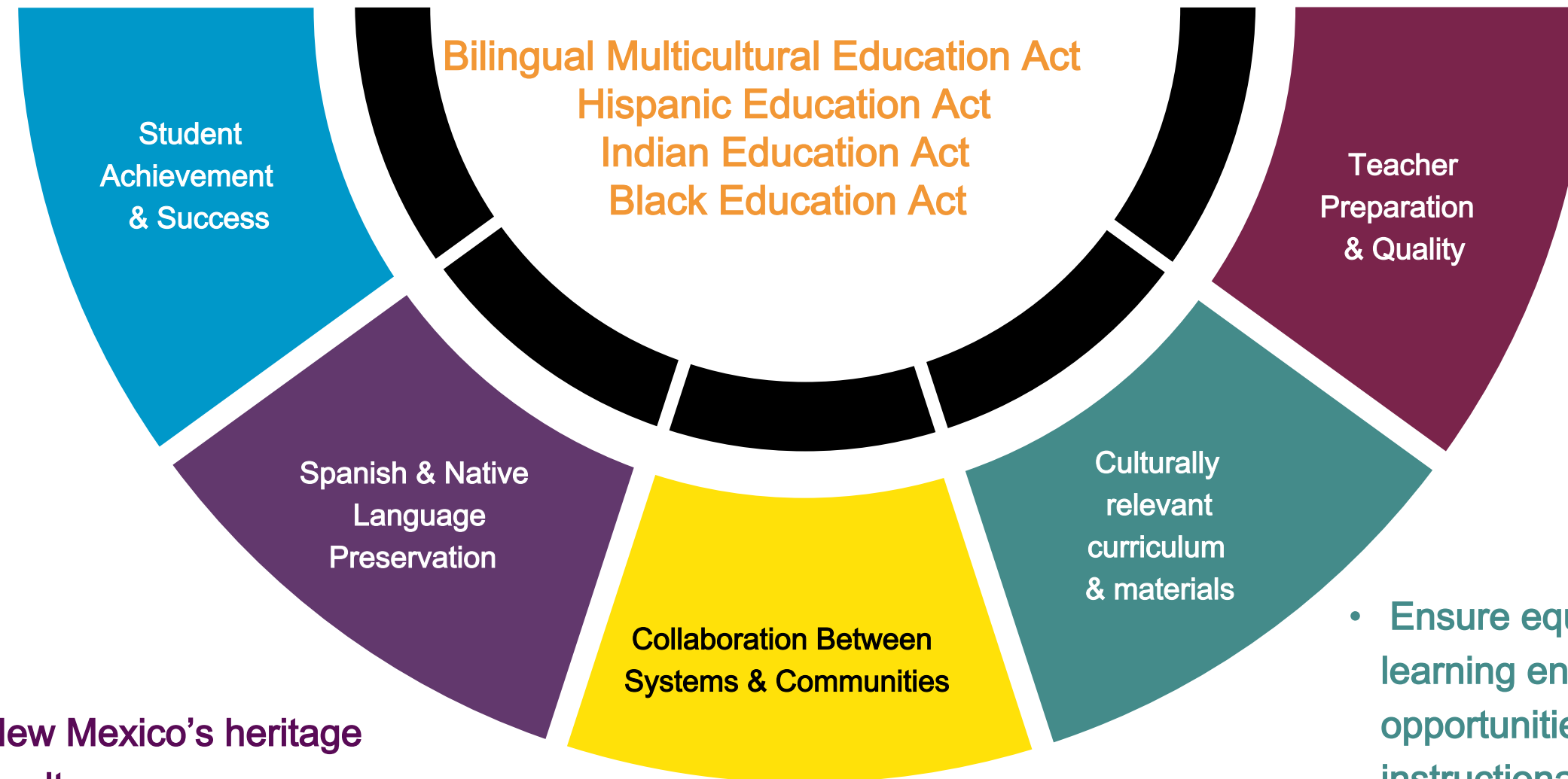
EDUCATION ACTS: Strengthened by Civics



- Substantially improve graduation rates, college or career readiness and higher education completion rates
- Address the student achievement gap in a holistic, systemic manner
- Combat discrimination and racism in the public school system

- Protect and preserve New Mexico's heritage Spanish language and culture
- Ensure maintenance of Native languages

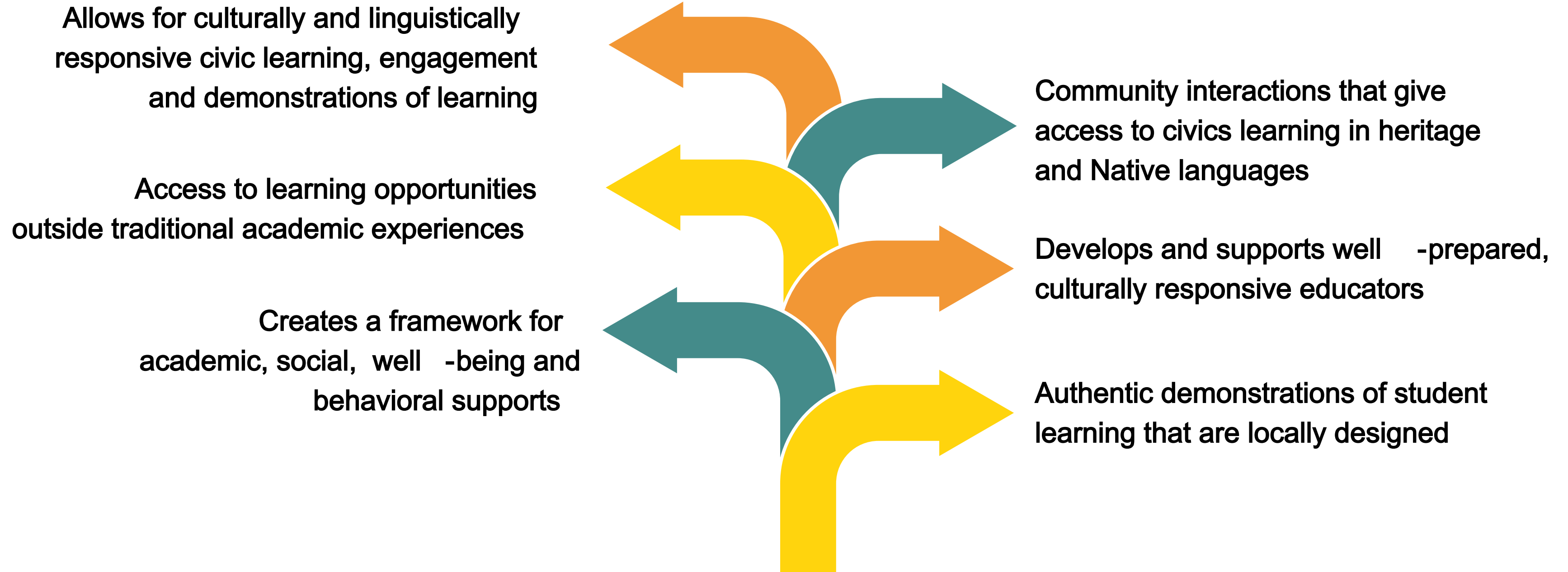
- Provide mechanisms for collaboration
- Establish a formal cooperative relationship with HED and public post -secondary educational institutions
- Ensure that the PED partners with tribes



- Include curricula in teacher training that demonstrate cultural awareness and sensitivity to matters of race and promote anti - racism
- Identify best practices for strengthening educational outcomes

- Ensure equitable and culturally relevant learning environments, educational opportunities and culturally relevant instructional materials
- Ensure that tribes are notified of curricula development

Civics supports equitable access to high - quality instruction



CIVICS DEEPLY ROOTED IN NM



For New Mexico's Indigenous communities, civic education extends beyond traditional understandings of government and democracy. Pueblo, Tribal, and Native Nations have maintained sophisticated systems of governance, leadership, community responsibility, and civic participation since time immemorial. These traditions are foundational to New Mexico's history and identity and must be recognized as essential components of civic learning. The Civics Seal intentionally acknowledges that civic engagement for Native students may occur through tribal councils, cultural responsibilities, community service, traditional leadership structures, and participation in tribal governance.

-Edward Gurrola, Santa Ana Dept of Ed

CIVICS Framework: College & Career Readiness Alignment



Key Cognitive Strategies (THINK)

Students need to do more than retain or apply information ; they have to process and manipulate it, assemble and reassemble it, examine it, question it, look for patterns in it, organize it, and present it.

Key Content Knowledge (KNOW)

Students need strong foundational knowledge in core academic subjects , and they also need to have an understanding of the structure of knowledge (the big ideas and how those ideas frame the study of the subject).

Key Learning Skills and Techniques (ACT)

Students need skills and techniques to take ownership and successfully manage their learning in educational and career opportunities after high school. In the absence of these important skills, students remain dependent learners who struggle when expected to work independently because they lack the needed tools.

Key Transition Knowledge and Skills (GO)

Students preparing for a career or to further their education beyond high school must navigate potential pitfalls if they wish to make a successful transition. They must cope with issues ranging from correctly submitting postsecondary applications to **knowing when to seek help or advocate for their best interests**.

Next Steps...



Step 1

Recruit districts/charters through application process to pilot program for juniors and seniors and work with stakeholders to finalize framework

Step 2

Launch content and structure for high school students and deliver resources to teachers for further expansion of civics opportunities

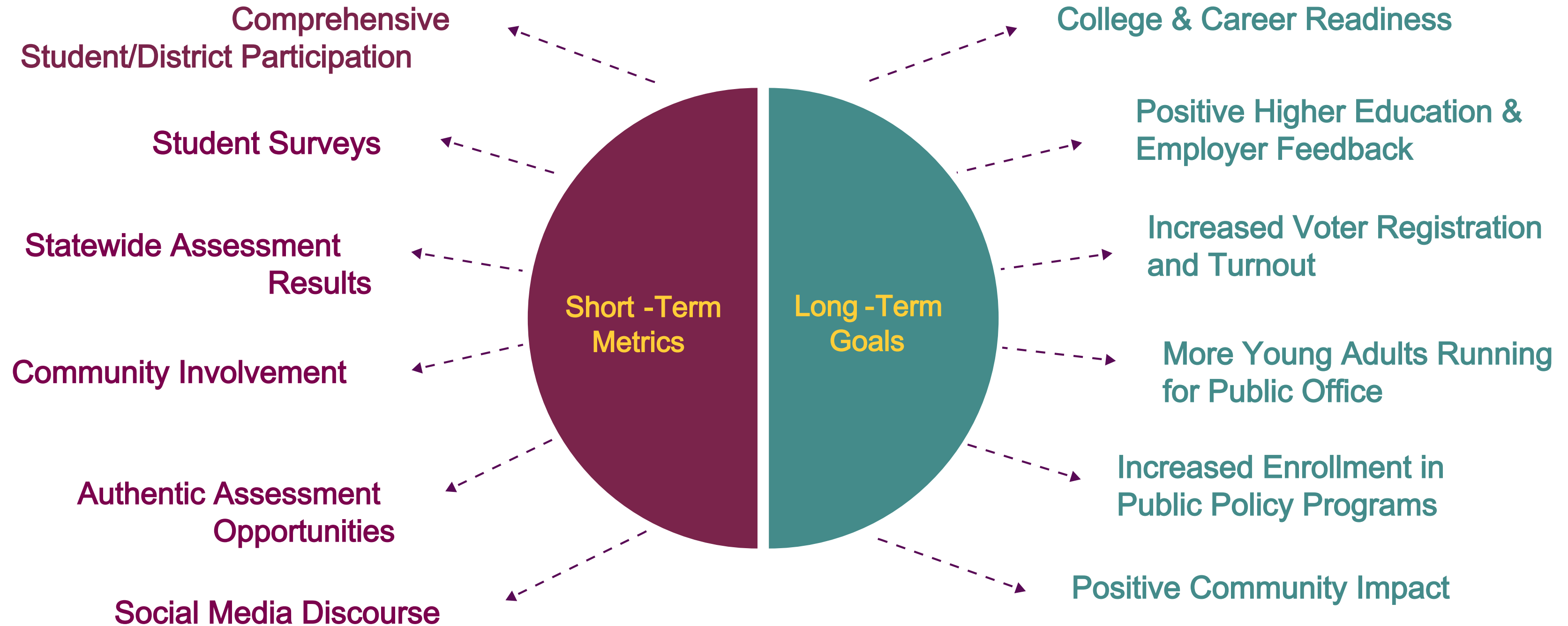
Step 3

Launch middle school and elementary school content with districts choosing to participate in the pilot program

Step 4

Roll out civics programming and support statewide for all K - 12 schools in New Mexico

MEASURING SUCCESS

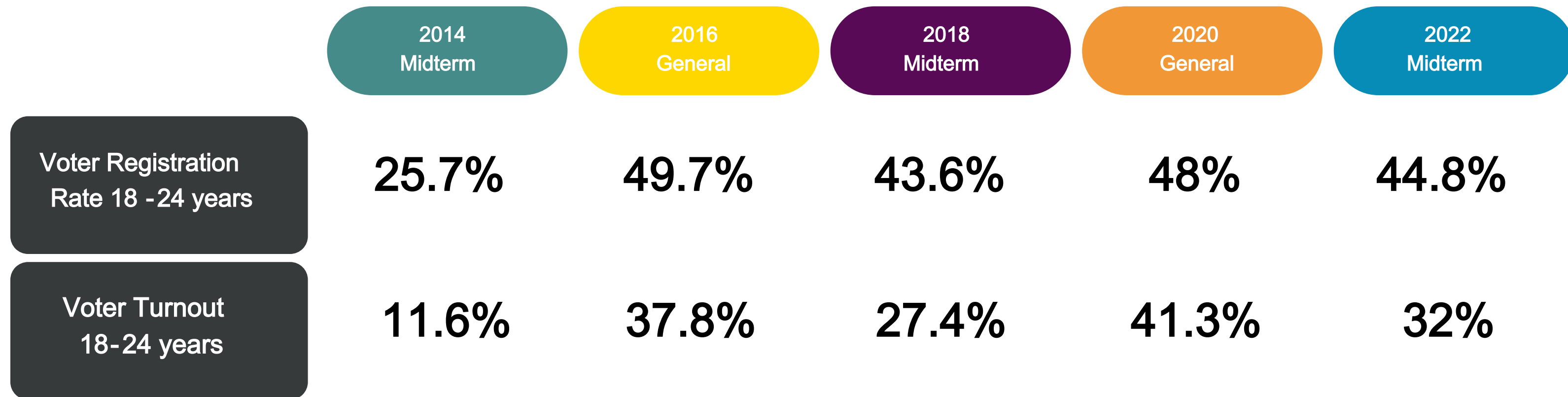


Appendix

OUR NEED FOR CIVICS



Assessments have narrowed the focus to reading, writing, mathematics, and science. Yet, there is a clear need for increasing civic learning in our schools.



Source: U.S. Census

STUDENT & PROGRAM SUCCESS



EXAM EXAMPLES

- What are the three branches of government?
- How many constitutional amendments are there?
- What are the key principles of the Declaration of Independence?
- What freedoms are guaranteed under the First Amendment?
- What is the New Mexico State Tribal Collaboration Act?

INTERVIEW EXAMPLES

- If you read two conflicting news reports about a proposed local policy, how do you determine which source is reliable?
- What is an issue in your school or city that you believe needs to be addressed and who has the authority to solve it?
- How would you build support around an issue with people who might not agree with you?

SURVEY EXAMPLES

- To what extent do you believe young people have the ability to positively impact their school or community?
- How confident do you feel in your ability to contact a school, tribal or local official to express your opinion about a school or community issue?
- In the past year, which of the following civic activities have you participated in?
(Volunteer, attend a public meeting, student government or other club, sign a petition, organize an event or project, etc.)

NATIONAL RESEARCH

