

# Activity 5.1 Identifying Your Civic Passion

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## Description

This activity provides an opportunity for participants to reflect on which civic issues are most important to them individually and how they might negotiate or advocate for these issues within a larger group. It uses a playful, competitive model to get groups thinking together.

## Learning Goal

- Participants will identify civic issues, reflect on their own priorities, and articulate their top civic passions.

## Instructions (50 minutes)

Set Up	Prepare for the Activity	
	<p>Optional: Prior to your group gathering, share a common document with participants and invite them to add at least 3-5 civic issues that matter most to them. It is best not to give any examples or prompts. Aim to collect more than 16 topics. Try to consolidate or combine topics where appropriate.</p> <p>Share printed copies of this blank <a href="#">Sweet Sixteen Civic Bracket</a> with participants as handouts. If doing this online, invite one participant in each group to be a notetaker prior to the session and ask them to print out a copy to fill in the brackets for their group during the activity.</p>	

<sup>1</sup> **Citation for this activity:** Jessica Friedrichs and Shannon Wheatley Hartman (2023). Identifying Your Civic Passion. In Hartman and Byrd (Eds), The Interactivity Foundation Collaborative Discussion Toolkit. Retrieved from <https://www.collaborativediscussionproject.com/activities/module-5>

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	<p>Organize participants into small groups (3-4 ppl).</p> <p>Begin by introducing the learning goals of this activity.</p>	
<b>Step One</b>	<p><b>Generate List of Civic Issues</b></p> <p>If a list of topics was collected prior to the session, share the list with the full group.</p> <p>If not done prior to the gathering, ask participants to each write down at least 3-5 civic issues that matter most to them. The aim is to generate more than 16 topics in total for the full group.</p> <p>Record and organize the issues on a board, flip chart or shared document. Try to consolidate or combine topics where appropriate.</p> <p><b>Facilitator Tip:</b> It's best not to give examples or prompts here in order to generate a diversity of authentic issues, such as public policy issues, social welfare issues, and social justice issues.</p>	<b>5 min</b>
<b>Step Two</b>	<p><b>Rank Civic Issues</b></p> <p>Using a rank choice voting method, invite participants to vote for their top issues. If doing this in-person, give each participant a marker or sticker and allow them to distribute 5 points across their top issues. Explain that they can give 1 point to 5 different topics or 5 points to a single topic. They can distribute their 5 points however they like.</p> <p>The goal is to determine the Top 16 Civic Issues that matter the most for the group.</p> <p><b>Online Adaptation:</b> Use <a href="http://rankvoted.co">rankvoted.co</a> to load all the topics and allow participants to rank their top 16 issues.</p>	<b>10 min</b>
<b>Step Three</b>	<p><b>Seed the Bracket</b></p> <p>Ask each group, or if doing this online the assigned notetaker for each group, to load or seed the empty Sweet Sixteen Bracket on the handout with the top 16 issues.</p> <p>Explain that they should follow the numbers shown on the empty bracket. So in the end, in true tournament fashion, they have the topic that ranks most important to the group (#1) to facing off against the topic that ranks #16, #2 vs. #15, #3 vs. #14, #4 vs. #13, and so on.</p> <p>If helpful, share the <a href="#">Sample Civic Sweet Sixteen Bracket</a>.</p>	<b>5 min</b>

<p><b>Step Four</b></p>	<p><b>Play the Civic Tournament</b></p> <p>In small groups, invite participants to play the Sweet Sixteen Civic Tournament. Ask them to discuss the various competitions or face-offs and, as a group, decide which topic will win in each face-off and continue in the tournament. Share the following prompts with participants to use as they play.</p> <p>Helpful prompts for group decision-making:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● If you had to devote your life (or the semester) to the issue, which one would you pick?</li> <li>● If you had to convince others to join you to make a change for this area, which one would you pick?</li> </ul> <p>Helpful questions to ask during the discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Why does this topic resonate with you?</li> <li>● Which values are helping to inform your choice?</li> </ul>	<p><b>20 min</b></p>
<p><b>Step Five</b></p>	<p><b>Debrief as a Full Group</b></p> <p>Invite each group to share their final “winning” civic issue. Discuss:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Was it hard for your group to reach this decision? Was it a tough competition? Which face-off was the hardest?</li> <li>● How did your group decide the winner if opinions differed?</li> <li>● What was the hardest aspect of this activity?</li> </ul>	<p><b>10 min</b></p>

## Reflection Journal

- When discussing which issues to select in each bracket within your small group, what motivated you to speak up for a particular issue area? Did anyone else speak up for an issue area and persuade you and if so, what was most persuasive about their approach?
- Were there issue areas that didn't generate much debate within the group and if so, why might that be?
- What was your winning issue and what ultimately motivated the group to pick that issue? What can you learn from this?

## Practice Journal

This week, reflect on civic issues and your passions. Now that you have a “winner” (individually or through group collaboration) – how will you move forward? Take one step this week and write about it.

## Dive Deeper: Additional Resources

- [Amanda Nguyen and the Sexual Assault Survivor's Rights Act TED Talk](#): Nguyen, Amanda. "Re-writing laws to help sexual assault survivors." *YouTube*, uploaded by TED Archive, 20 Dec. 2016, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=rBjBi8oyG18](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rBjBi8oyG18).  
Nguyen's personal experience led to involvement in a civic issue that ultimately resulted in passage of a new law. Her story provides a good example of how identifying one's civic passion can lead to action and eventually policy change.

## Activity Cluster

5.1 Identifying Your  
Civic Passion

[3.5 Seeking Divergent  
Thinking  
\(Surround the Topic\)](#)

[3.8 Mapping  
Complexity  
\(Fishbone Diagram\)](#)

[5.2 Developing an  
Awareness of  
Stakeholders](#)