

NEWS RELEASE

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The WW Foundation is in the process of changing its name. Learn more [here](#).

SIX PROGRAMS FUNDED THROUGH THE CIVIC SPRING PROJECT

LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS AND YOUTH PARTNERSHIPS WILL PROVIDE SUMMER CIVIC LEARNING EXPERIENCES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE TO HELP TACKLE URGENT COVID-19 RELATED ISSUES

PRINCETON, NJ (July 6, 2020) – The Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation (WW) today announced six grantees in its Civic Spring Project. The grantees represent an array of organizations that will work creatively over the summer to engage young people building civic knowledge while strengthening their community’s civic infrastructure during a significant moment in our country’s history.

Each organization will receive a grant in the range of \$50,000 to \$100,000 to support youth civic engagement initiatives aimed at meeting acute local needs in responding to COVID-19 and/or building civic capacities for the 2020 election cycle. While each grantee program is unique and specific to its local community, all six were designed to be civic-minded, youth-oriented, nonpartisan, nimble, measurement-minded, and generative.

The inaugural class of Civic Spring Project Grantees include Groundwork Elizabeth (Elizabeth, NJ); Institute for Engagement (Houston, TX); Kinston Teens (Kinston, NC); Newark Youth One Stop and Career Center (Newark, NJ); Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence (Lexington, KY); and Youthprise (Minneapolis, MN). More information about each of the organizations and their programs can be found [here](#).

“As we continue adjusting to new realities from COVID-19 and seeing citizens across our nation calling for massive and much-needed change, there is tremendous opportunity for our young people to learn what it means to be an informed and effective citizen,” said WW Foundation President Rajiv Vinnakota. “To truly grapple with the issues facing our society, we must make a broad commitment to civic learning.”

Each project will facilitate hands-on learning opportunities to build the civic knowledge, dispositions, and skills young people need to flourish as effective and committed citizens. Some of the projects include gathering data on COVID-19’s effect on student learning to inform action and policy change around local educational access, coalition building for effective voter registration, and using storytelling to capture and better understand the health disparities of COVID-19.

“I am looking forward to making an even greater impact in the community,” said Julie Ramirez, 17, of Groundwork Elizabeth. “I and the other youth in the program are looking to take what we learned by studying our community and the people in it and will be able to now lend our voice to affect the health-related pandemic and other disease related policies where we live.”

The Civic Spring Project was announced by WW in mid-May and, in a short time, generated more than 1,100 eligibility inquiries. The program received 147 applications from 30 states and the District of Columbia. Winning proposals were decided upon by a selection committee of both youth and adults who participated in the [Civic Spring Project task force](#). Young people will also help develop and co-lead a community of practice that will bring the grantee programs together to learn from each other.

“Students are the experts on what learning during COVID-19 looks like and feels like,” said Emanuelle Sippy, the Student Director of the Prichard Committee Student Voice Team. “Our goal is to help educators, policymakers, and advocates see students as partners in getting through this crisis and in improving schools beyond it.”

The Civic Spring Project was led by WW and collaboratively developed by nearly 40 cross-partisan, subject-matter experts [with input from youth](#). It was developed to catalyze organizations from across the political spectrum to increase civic learning opportunities for young people and challenge the current paradigm of traditional civic education. The experience is intended to increase understanding and social cohesion while individuals expand networks, especially those from marginalized populations.

“The Civic Spring Project will enrich civic learning for our young people,” said Stefanie Sanford, Chief of Global Policy & External Relations at the College Board, and a member of both the Civic Spring Task Force and the Foundation’s Board of Trustees. “These summer projects will expand the ways in which civic knowledge is built, giving a new generation the chance to learn how our system of government functions while engaging in bettering their communities.”

Programs funded through the Civic Spring Project will be independently evaluated by the Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE), part of Tufts University’s Tisch College of Civic Life. CIRCLE is a nonpartisan, transdisciplinary research institute that focuses on the civic engagement of young people. CIRCLE has extensive experience evaluating a wide range of youth programs, civic education initiatives, and other efforts at the intersection of community impact and young people’s civic development.

Since fall 2019, WW has served as convenor for an effort to engage a cross section of stakeholders in expanding the definition of civic learning. This civic learning initiative has generated a white paper and the Civic Spring Project. The Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation funded the New Jersey-based initiatives through this national project.

To learn more about the Civic Spring Project and receive updates on local grantee programs, visit [civic-spring.org](#).

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About the WW Foundation

Founded in 1945, the WW Foundation identifies and develops the nation’s best minds to meet its most critical challenges. The Foundation supports its Fellows as the next generation of leaders shaping American society. In June 2020, the Foundation’s Board of Trustees voted unanimously to rename the organization and to remove Woodrow Wilson from its name; a new name will be announced by early fall. Rajiv Vinnakota became president of the Foundation in July 2019, after serving as Executive Vice President of the Youth & Engagement division at the Aspen Institute and as co-founder and CEO of The SEED Foundation. He also founded Red and Blue Works, a civic learning initiative, in spring 2019.

Civic Spring Project Selection Committee

Peter Levine, Associate Dean of Academic Affairs and Lincoln Filene Professor of Citizenship & Public Affairs in Tufts University’s Jonathan Tisch College of Civic Life

Debi Ghate

Audrey Hutchinson, Director, Education and Expanded Learning, Institute for Youth, Education, and Families, National League of Cities

Adam Zalisk, SVP Corporate Strategy, Amplify

Andrew Brennen, National Geographic Education Fellow

Daniel Hart, Professor of Childhood Studies and Psychology, and Faculty Director of the Institute for Effective Education, at Rutgers University

Sarah Harris, Vice President of Social Impact, Entercom