

## Sample Step-by-Step Process for Developing and Implementing a State Civics Diploma Seal

### Step 1: Identify the Need for a Civics Diploma Seal

Identify the “why”: What is the purpose of offering a civics diploma seal in your state? What benefits will a civics diploma seal provide to your students?

The civics knowledge, skills, actions, and mindsets represented by a civics diploma seal leads students to be better informed citizens who are more likely to vote. When students learn to work together to define and address problems, they develop workplace skills and are more employable and productive. Students are making their voices heard around the country in many social movements. Educators can harness that energy to provide mentorship and training as part of a civics diploma seal program.

The Census Bureau provides data on how many citizens of voting age are registered, how many vote by age, sex, race, ethnicity, and more which can be viewed by state. Visit <https://www.census.gov/topics/public-sector/voting.html>

Low levels of civic knowledge, measured in a recent survey by the Annenberg Public Policy Center, available at <https://www.annenbergpublicpolicycenter.org/pandemic-protests-2020-civics-survey-americans-know-much-more-about-their-rights/>, and flat student performance on the Civics NAEP test are compelling arguments for incentivizing students to see higher levels of civic knowledge and participation. Results for the 2018 Civics NAEP are available at <https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/civics/>.

To learn more about diploma seals, consult the [FAQ Document](#). Our summary of civic education research can help you gather background research on youth engagement and voting patterns and effective civic education practices that you can use to support a civics diploma seal in your state or district:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/13Sk1ngfw0wfWzXFwc6MFJLfX8Zqs1QdP2WBo9ACdt4w/edit>.

The [states that currently offer civics diploma seals](#) demonstrate the variety of ways that students can earn civics diploma seals.



State Department of Education officials who set policy on graduation requirements? Learn more about how California and New York created a civics seal.

Your state’s governor? Learn more about Tennessee’s civics seal.

Your state legislature? Learn more about how Arizona and Virginia created a civics seal.

### Step 2: Identify Your Audience

Research how graduation requirements are established in your state. Where is this issue decided and debated? Identify your target audience.



### Step 3: Create an Advocacy Plan

To create an effective advocacy plan, you will need to answer the following questions:

- Who are the key players/influencers in your state?
- What are the key initiatives you can attach to in order to elevate your ask?
- When are the decisions made?
- Where are the decisions made?
- Why should this issue matter to your state?
- Who is your target audience? Customize the [letter](#) in the NCSS Civics Seal Toolkit.
- Is the proposal for a civics diploma seal a new idea in your state? Or, are you building on an already existing program?
- What is already in your statewide Social Studies framework? For example, California HSS Framework (2017) included an appendix on civic education and an appendix on service learning and civic engagement.

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### Step 4: Create Partnerships

Research whether other organizations in your state with similar goals can join in your advocacy efforts. California Task Force for K-12 Civic Learning (2014), a partnership between the State Superintendent of Education and the California Chief Justice, made several recommendations to improve civic learning. In New York, the New York Board of Regents identified civic readiness as a component of New York's ESSA plan and established a task force of stakeholders to define civic readiness and establish the criteria for a diploma seal. Partnerships with public university systems in your state could generate ideas for incentives to encourage students to advocate for a diploma seal. The Advocacy Plan Readiness Inventory in Module 3 of the [NCSS Advocacy Toolkit](#) is a helpful resource for organizations who want to advocate for a civics diploma seal.



### Step 5: Take Action

Conduct direct lobbying of elected officials. Mobilize grassroots support including students. In California, the student-led organization Generation Up was very effective in advocating for the seal and remains involved at the local level. Work with other organizations in a coalition or an informal alliance. Create media/social media advocacy. If graduation requirements are established by state education agencies, expect a public comment period. This is an opportunity to mobilize grassroots support using media/social media advocacy.