Florida Civic Advance: Intergenerational Civic Engagement Brief

October 2017

INTRODUCTION

This briefing paper is concerned with Intergenerational Civic Engagement which is defined as opportunities for youth to support elders, elders to support youth, and multi-generational teams working together to address community issues. The brief has been commissioned by the Florida Civic Advance, an initiative to strengthen civic life in Florida, and guided by a Workgroup of the Florida Civic Advance. Its major purpose is to help to guide discussion and seek input at the Florida Civic Advance Summit in Orlando on November 6 and 7, 2017 and produce a framework paper in early 2018.

BACKGROUND

Americans have gained over thirty years in life expectancy over the past century. Increased longevity represents tremendous assets yet few U.S. communities have successfully capitalized on this largely untapped and growing resource. Identifying ways to effectively utilize the skills, abilities, and experiences of the additional years of life has the potential to be leveraged in ways that can address a range of challenges facing individuals in every generation.

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GENERATIONS BY POPULATION IN FLORIDA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generation</th>
<th>Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GI Generation (1901-1930)</td>
<td>521,965</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mature/Silents (1931-1945)</td>
<td>2,126,410</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baby Boomers (1946-1964)</td>
<td>4,895,541</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generation X (1965-1980)</td>
<td>3,893,789</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generation Y/Millennials (1981-2000)</td>
<td>5,010,355</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generation Z/Boomlets (2001+)</td>
<td>3,412,740</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Florida has the nation’s highest proportion of older adults (18%) statewide- with five county populations exceeding 30%. Older adults have time, interest (i.e. generativity/legacy), and receive multiple benefits to well-being from purposive engagement. With many communities experiencing decreasing millennial populations, identifying ways to enhance engagement among all of Florida’s citizens is needed now more than ever. Florida has six generations that all play important roles in our communities:

CHALLENGES

The Challenges facing Intergenerational Civic Practice include limitations to:

- **Awareness/ Recognition** of potential value to generational groups and society.
- **Leadership** in identifying a vision and mobilizing resources.
- **Limited evidence-base** of the impact of intergenerational work on individuals, organizations and communities”.
- **Knowledge** of how to plan and implement a successful intergenerational program.
- **Lack of coordination** among organizations representing different age groups. There is still a need for “silo-busting” in order to implement meaningful and sustainable intergenerational programming.
- **Funding** at the national, state and local level.

OUR VISION

We believe that Florida is an ideal environment to develop a laboratory of civic engagement within and across generations. Florida could identify, bolster, and create efforts to enhance intergenerational civic engagement throughout the state. Florida schools, colleges and universities serve a central role via a variety of activities and are a catalyst for engagement, a vehicle for civic opportunities, and have institutional support for connecting youth and seniors, conducting research, and evaluating the impact of intergenerational civic engagement.

STRATEGIES

We identify key strategic activities that will be critical to creating a culture of intergenerational civic engagement in Florida. Each of the proposed projects work in concert to build a foundation for the future of a civically-engaged Florida:

1. Develop Repository of Intergenerational Civic Practices across Florida
2. Integrate and Adapt School-based Intergenerational Models
3. Create Educational Resources to Foster Awareness and Adoption across Sectors
   (Government, non-profit organizations, media and community groups)
4. Conduct Research on Promising Intergenerational Civic Practices in Florida (see core research areas below)

RESEARCH

Research plays a particularly important role in building a culture of civic participation across generations in Florida. It is by building an evidence base and evaluating promising practices that can help ensure the success of each intergenerational program, that it will be possible to expand intergenerational programs throughout the state, and perhaps across the nation. We propose the following research topics and questions to guide our efforts in development of effective programs and policies:

1. **Intergenerational Civic Engagement among Florida Veterans**
   Per capita, Florida has the largest veteran population of any U.S. state. Recent studies have demonstrated a connection between military veterans and elevated levels of civic engagement, including intergenerational efforts. Preliminary review of practices in Florida indicate that veterans are currently engaged in intergenerational civic efforts.
   **Research Questions:**
   a. What forms of intergenerational civic engagement are Florida veterans currently engaged with?
      - Veteran to veteran? (For example, are Florida chapters of Vietnam Veterans of America aiding Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America?)
      - Veteran to civilian? (For example, the Orlando 1st Platoon of the Mission Continues, is focused on addressing issues impacting disadvantaged youth in Central Florida.)
      - Civilian to veteran? (Honor Flights, Gen Z school projects)
   b. What factors are associated with successful intergenerational veteran engagement?
   c. What barriers are experienced among veterans with intentions to volunteer in intergenerational activities?
   d. What are the comprehensive outcomes to participants of all ages- and communities-associated with veteran intergenerational civic engagement?

2. **Understanding and Promoting Older Adults’ Intergenerational Civic Engagement in Age-Friendly Communities**
   National efforts to promote and develop “age-friendly communities” is complementary to the goals of building intergenerational civic participation, with efforts to bolster interactions among individuals across various generations by ensuring that neighborhoods and communities offer accessible services and living opportunities to people across the age spectrum. There are currently 16 age-friendly communities in Florida (with more on the way). Identifying ways to enhance intergenerational engagement across the state more broadly requires a strategic focus on intergenerational interactions, and begins an assessment of the ways in which older citizens and communities are already engaged.
   **Research Questions:**
   a. What proportion of older adults are engaged in intergenerational activities in their communities?
   b. What factors are associated with successful intergenerational volunteering activities and community-building efforts?
c. What barriers are experienced among older adults with intentions to volunteer in intergenerational activities?

d. What are the comprehensive outcomes to participants of all ages- and communities-associated with intergenerational engagement activities?

e. What role can educational institutions play in facilitating intergenerational interactions?

3. **School-based Generation to Generation Programming**

Two model programs are already facilitating engagement across generations in Florida. National Encore’s Generation to Generation is a campaign to mobilize 1,000,000 older adults to help young people thrive and to change the cultural narrative by popularizing the notion of intergenerational interdependence. The campaign also focuses on a localized innovation on the ground “learning lab” where 5 local communities (Gen2Gen) and 10 organizations (Second Acts Initiative) across the country are developing and testing new approaches for effectively deploying experienced talent. These best practices and tools will be shared with other local nonprofits and agencies at the end of the initiative. The Gen2Gen initiatives have shown the value of building programs in partnership with educational institutions and community organizations with three of the 15 sites located in Florida (Tampa Bay, West Palm Beach and Jacksonville). We propose the need to introduce and assess a new program guided by these initiatives by looking to partner with an established group – the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) programs in public schools across the state. These programs provide an organizational structure to embed programming that can bring together multiple generations on behalf of the wellbeing of children. Research efforts will help identify potential opportunities for partnering with these programs

**Research Questions:**

a. Which PTA programs in the state currently involve multiple generations?

b. What kinds of activities have effectively utilized the volunteer power of older adults such as Guardian ad Litem’s representation of abused and neglected children in the dependency/foster care system?

c. What kinds of activities have effectively utilized the volunteer power of older adults?

d. For programs that utilize older adults, what kinds of benefits do youth and older adults participating experience?

e. What factors are associated with intergenerational volunteering among older adults?

**RESOURCES: CURRENT EXAMPLES FROM RESEARCH AND PRACTICE**

As we develop a clear initiative to advance intergenerational civic engagement across the state, we look to several recent examples that provide resources to guide our next steps. These resources offer guidelines for exceptional practices that effectively engage multiple generations for the benefit of community engagement and more just, cohesive communities:

- **Generations United** - repository for helpful resources and ideas ([http://www.gu.org/](http://www.gu.org/)).


- **Creating an Age-Advantaged Community** - tool kit to recognize, engage and support all ages.