



THE CIVIC TRUSTEE HANDBOOK

CIVIC TRUSTEES

1. WHAT IS A CIVIC TRUSTEE?

A Civic Trustee is a citizen who pledges to leave his/her city and country better than they found them by pursuing practical solutions instead of just pointing out problems and assigning blame.

2. WHAT ARE THE COMMITMENTS OF A CIVIC TRUSTEE?

A Civic Trustee commits to participate in monthly “solutions sessions” for a minimum of one year (except for August and December) where they work with fellow Trustees to address issues they prioritize, using the 10 Step “No Blame Problem Solving” process.

3. WHAT ARE THE PREREQUISITES OF BECOMING AND SERVING AS A CIVIC TRUSTEE?

- a) Trustees must take the 3 online, video classes on the 10 Step “No Blame Problem Solving” process found in the Power Civics curriculum (each video is approximately 6 minutes long);
- b) Trustees must be at least 18 years old, however Junior Civic Trustees may qualify to serve at 16 years of age with consent of a parent or guardian;
- c) Trustees may not be an elected official or chairperson of a political party or campaign committee or candidates for elected office. Spokespersons or chiefs of staff for these individuals are also prohibited from becoming a Trustee.

Furthermore, an existing Civic Trustee who announces his or her candidacy for any of the above described offices, must immediately resign their Trusteeship. Participation in political parties or on a government board or commission is not a disqualifier.

These above qualifications are intended to preserve the citizen driven agenda of Civic Trustees as described in the Civic Pledge.

- d) Civic Trustees must abide by the Civic Pledge and its No Blame requirement at all times and in all circumstances during their term of service.

THE CIVIC PLEDGE

I pledge to leave my community and country better than I found them by pursuing practical solutions instead of just pointing out problems and assigning blame.

4. WHAT DEFINES THE “PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS” COMMITTED TO BY TRUSTEES IN THE CIVIC PLEDGE?

Practical Solutions are those that are cost effective and based on policies with proven success. They are practical because when cost effective, i.e. budget neutral and evidence based, they avoid the ideological conflicts that so often preclude progress.

- a) Civic Trustees commit to serve a term of one year and are disqualified if they miss more than three of the monthly Solutions Sessions.
- b) Civic Trustees may not serve for more than three consecutive years, but may participate in non-voting matters in all Civic Trustee meetings and other activities, so long as they abide by the “no blame” provision of the Civic Pledge.

NOTE: All Civic Trustees who have served for a year or more shall be recognized by a Resolution of Service issued by The National Civic Trust and shall be entitled to all the benefits of participation in the Civic Trust Community.

5. WHAT ARE THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF A CIVIC TRUSTEE?

Civic Trustees:

- a) find practical solutions and adapt them for adoption in their own communities using the 10-Step No Blame Problem Solving Guide;
- b) host No Blame, Solutions Forums on issues of importance for decision makers in their communities;
- c) promote civic empowerment by seeking the adoption of Solutions Civics in their town’s high schools and Power Civics in their town’s community colleges;
- d) serve as guest speakers in high school and college civic classes, and Power Civics Community Forums;
- e) recruit new trustees

CIVIC TRUSTS

1. WHAT IS A CIVIC TRUST?

Civic Trusts are non-partisan, unincorporated associations of Civic Trustees. It is highly recommended that there be at least 12 Trustees in a Civic Trust of a town of less than 50,000 and 24 Trustees in a city of 50,000 or more. These minimums make it possible for Civic Trusts to work on multiple issues at a time and insure a constant stream of solutions. Civic Trusts are flat organizations, in that they have no chairpersons.

2. WHAT ROLES OF TRUSTEES, KEEP CIVIC TRUSTS VITAL?

Ideally, Civic Trusts should select two or more members of the Trust for each of the following roles: 1) to facilitate meetings; 2) lead recruitment drives to enlist new

trustees; 3) participate as guest speakers in Solution Civics and Power Civics classes; and 4) lead organizing efforts to host No Blame Solutions Forums.

3. HOW DO CIVIC TRUSTS SELECT THE ISSUES THEY WILL ADDRESS?

A Civic Trustee may raise an issue they wish to address at any monthly Solutions Session. This issue will move forward if at least three Trustees commit to work on it at that meeting. However, an Issue Committee of the Trust shall not be formed on the issue unless there are six Trustees who commit to serve on it by the next monthly Solutions Session.

These minimum numbers insure that there are sufficient Trustees to research, develop, present and pursue a solution and so that Issue Committees have a variety of skill sets and the continuity to proceed if a committee member withdraws or cannot proceed due to illness or personal circumstances.

4. WHEN CAN A SOLUTION BE PRESENTED FOR ADOPTION BY ANY GIVEN CIVIC TRUST?

Solutions must be evidence based, cost effective and beneficial to the community as a whole. They must also be able to be adopted at the local level; this includes the municipal, school district or county level. Also, a Solution must have the affirmative vote of the majority of the Civic Trustees at a meeting with a quorum of Civic Trustees before it can be publically presented as a Solution of the Civic Trust.

5. WHO RUNS THE CIVIC TRUST MEETING?

Each Trust should select at least two meeting facilitators. The facilitator runs the meeting in accordance with a set agenda (see agenda below). It is helpful to rotate facilitators if possible so that the Civic Trust is led by its Trustees and not any one individual.

6. WHAT IS THE SUGGESTED AGENDA AND TIMEFRAME FOR A SOLUTIONS SESSION?

- a) 6:00 pm - Dinner and Welcome of guests and new Trustees, with existing Trustees and prospective Trustees introducing themselves.
- b) 6:30 pm – Progress Reports by Issue Committees and requests for new issues.
- c) 7:00 pm – Breakout session for Issues Committees to work on their respective solutions and completion of Get Results Forms.
- d) 8:00 pm – Submission to facilitators of GET RESULTS FORMS.

7. WHAT IS A GET RESULTS FORM?

This is a form that lists the membership and attendance of the Issue Committee members and the commitments each member made to develop and advance this Solution by the time of the next Solution Session.

GET RESULTS FORM

Trustee Reporting: _____

Date: _____

Issue Committee Name: _____

1. Issue Committee Members and Attendance

Members:
(please print names)

Attendance:
(please check box for members in attendance)

_____	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. Priorities (List solutions being pursued in priority order)

A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

3. List action to be taken before next trust meeting; the trustees agreeing to take the specified actions; and examples include specific research assignment or government records request; meeting(s) with public officials; contacting Law & Policy Task Force; etc.)

Specific Action

Person Responsible

Step for Action

(In the 10-Step No Blame Problem Solving Guide)

1. _____	_____	_____
2. _____	_____	_____
3. _____	_____	_____

8. WHAT IS THE RELATION OF A LOCAL CIVIC TRUST TO THE NATIONAL CIVIC TRUST?

The National Civic Trust assists local Trusts with the expert support of its Law & Policy Task Force after the local Trust provides a memo with the contents set forth in Step 7 of the No Blame Problem Solving process. The National Civic Trust offers all the benefits to Trustees of the Civic Trust community.

9. THE NATIONAL CIVIC TRUST MAY CEASE ITS SUPPORT AND RECOGNITION OF A LOCAL CIVIC TRUST IF:

- a) The number of Civics Trustees of the local is less than amount recommended above;
- b) When one or more local Civic Trustees engages in personal attacks on public officials, they may be removed by a vote of their fellow Trustees after appropriate notice to cease. It is ok to debate policies, but there should be no personal attacks on the person or criticism of people’s motives. If a local Trust has multiple incidents of blame, it will cease to be recognized and supported by the National Civic Trust.

DEFINITIONS

1. WHAT IS NO BLAME?

This is the strategy adhered to by Civic Trustees in order to keep the focus on their solutions in Trust meetings, in public efforts to advance their solutions, and in all other public venues.

2. WHAT IS EVIDENCE BASED?

Solutions are evidence based when they are based on policies with proven success in towns or cities of similar demographics. When solutions are success based, they avoid ideological conflict. Evidence based solutions do not invite debates about “my idea versus your idea.” They are about facts and proof of what has worked. Solutions may be based on a combination of evidence based policies.

3. WHAT IS COST EFFECTIVE?

Cost effective means that implementation of the solution will, in short order, be budget neutral or, even better, will save money. If initial costs are involved or budget savings are not sufficient to pay the cost of the solutions, alternative funding sources must be obtained. For example, crowd funding, grants, or other outside fundraising resources may be pursued in order that the solution, if it has any start-up costs, is budget neutral. Another way to make a solution budget neutral is to find waste in the current budget and eliminate it to offset the new costs associated with the solution.

4. WHAT IS SOLUTIONS CIVICS?

Solutions Civics is a 10-hour teaching tool that introduces high school students to the information and skills they need to be effective citizens and emerging leaders in their own community – to learn how to leave their city better than they found it. For interested students, it provides accessible entry level public service opportunities – ones that they can immediately seize without having to run for public office – ones that prepare them to participate in politics and government at the state and national level in the future. It is designed to fit into mandatory high school History/Social Studies courses.

5. WHAT IS POWER CIVICS?

Power Civics combines the basic elements of Solutions Civics with more advanced guidance on how to devise and successfully implement a solution to a city issue. Power Civics is available to residents through community forums as well as online.

6. WHAT IS A NO BLAME SOLUTIONS FORUM?

No Blame Solutions Forums are community-based forums hosted by a Civic Trust exclusively for Civic Trustees (including potential recruits) and for decision makers related to an issue which the trust is working on. Decision makers may include elected and appointed officials, as well as town or school district employees and experts who might be involved in the adoption or implementation of a solution.

No Blame Solutions Forums include a panel of experts on the subject issue recruited from universities, professional associations and similar sources. Importantly, all participants are invited to participate in a constructive dialogue with a No Blame approach with the goal of identifying evidence based, cost effective solutions.