

Citizen Connect Overview and Next Steps

Mission: Get millions of additional Americans right, left and center participating in nonpartisan efforts to address political polarization and gridlock by making it dramatically easier for them to find and act on engagement opportunities that are aligned with their interests and priorities.

Approach: Offer an online platform that puts all the organizations working to heal our divisions and fix our political system in one place. This will dramatically streamline the process for citizens interested in learning about, supporting and joining these important initiatives. There is an incredibly innovative, diverse and welcoming group of Americans already taking on these challenges, but they need more mainstream citizens to lean in to successfully change our toxic political dynamic. We will also make our organization and events database and filtering capabilities available to nonpartisan strategic partners and the media to ensure they reach the broadest possible audience.

Where We Stand Now: Citizen Connect has made enormous strides since it launched in early June. By coordinating our first release with the landmark America Talks/National Week of Conversation initiative, we were able to sign up hundreds of organizations, display hundreds of events and host thousands of users right out of the gate. Citizen Connect currently has over 400 member organizations and more than 300 active events on our platform. These organizations and events span the full range of civic renewal categories from electoral reform to civic education to interpersonal bridging to public policy.

What's Next: We're off to a strong start but recognize the urgent need to build on that momentum. Below are our plans for the remainder of 2021:

1. **Citizen Connect 1.1 Release.** We have already learned a lot from our users and partners about how to make our platform more effective and rewarding. This new version will include significant search enhancements, streamlined navigation and integrate compelling video content. We are in the final stages of this upgrade and will launch it by the end of July.
2. **Enrich Our Member Community.** We have an excellent group of members in place but will continue to make our community richer and more diverse. This effort will include proactive outreach to organizations led by conservatives, persons of color and people from rural communities. We are also pursuing additional members from the faith-based community, think tanks, universities and foundations. We are making a big recruitment push this summer.
3. **Audience Development.** Realizing our mission necessitates building a large and engaged audience that reflects America's citizens as a whole. This is inherently a multi-faceted effort that will leverage all the approaches outlined below:
 - a. **Communications and PR** – We are honored to be working with Nevins and Associates on this aspect of our audience development strategy. They have an amazing track record and a deep set of relationships in the media space. We have a comprehensive plan in place here that we can walk through with any interested stakeholder.
 - b. **Social Media** – This is the cornerstone of any effort to reach scale and we're blessed to have extremely experienced and talented people supporting us. In addition to Nevins and Associates, we're drawing on world class expertise at RebelMouse, the high performing social media team for the Aspen Institute's #WeavingCommunity and

America Talks plus formidable in house capabilities at the Bridge Alliance. We all feel that the depth and breadth of the Citizen Connect database paired with a structured micro-targeting program provides an amazing opportunity to reach and engage Americans at scale. This program will kick off over the summer and build momentum in the fall once we confirm the messaging that generates the most traction.

- c. **Events** – We successfully launched Citizen Connect by supporting a major national event (America Talks/National Week of Conversation) and see that approach being part of our engagement model going forward. By combining customized landing pages on Citizen Connect with the ability to filter and host our content on their own homepage, we give national events the tools they need to maximize reach without having to reinvent the wheel. In addition to follow on events related to America Talks and the National Week of Conversation, there are a number of ambitious large-scale events in the planning stage for which Citizen Connect is ready to play an important role.
4. **News Integration Strategy.** This capability will be the cornerstone of Citizen Connect’s transformative 2.0 release. We’re very confident that our audience development efforts above will gain traction through a combination of earned, owned and paid media plus support for signature events. However, we see these initiatives as necessary but not sufficient to reach our ambitious 2021/22 growth goals. That’s why this program and the strategic media partners we’re working with to bring it to life – AllSides and The Fulcrum - are so critical. What this initiative is all about is matching our member’s events with relevant news content on third party sites. This will allow citizens to sign up for events that are directly related to what they are reading about or viewing in real time. The core business model for all online market leaders is based on putting contextually relevant content at a user’s fingertips - and this is a powerful way to get the civic renewal community in on the action. Between them, AllSides and The Fulcrum reach millions of Americans every month and many of them have a demonstrated interest in finding common ground and working across differences. We intend to have this program up and running by the end of the summer and will then begin bringing on additional media partners.
5. **Longer Term Vision:** Over the next 12-24 months we intend to solidify Citizen Connect’s role as the universally recognized “front door” for citizens seeking to explore the civic renewal movement. For our members, we will become an invaluable and indispensable partner in their efforts to engage mainstream citizens as supporters, donors and volunteers. We also see significantly advancing knowledge about what it takes to get American citizens excited about and participating in our collective work. These best practices will be shared with the entire community and should play a major role in bringing citizen engagement to critical mass.

What We Need To Realize This Opportunity: We have a great core team, a strong membership network, a scalable technology platform, and world class audience development expertise. What we need to secure now is the funding necessary to bring Citizen Connect to scale. For 2021 we will be focused on refining our audience development model, building out our technology and expanding strategic partnerships. 2022 will be all about ramping up citizen engagement for our members. Meeting these goals will require an incremental \$100k for the remainder of 2021 and \$250k for 2022. We can’t think of a better philanthropic opportunity for individuals and institutions committed to addressing polarization and political dysfunction. Please contact us today to learn more about how you can join in.