

The Project Citizen portfolio showcase is the culmination of an interactive civic education program designed to actively engage adolescents in the civic life of their communities. In Project Citizen, the group of participating young people identify and analyze issues and problems facing their community (school, neighborhood, town, city, or state). As a group, students select one of these issues or problems for detailed study. After students complete their research, they propose a public policy to deal with that issue or problem. Then, they develop an action plan detailing the steps to take to have their public policy proposal adopted by the appropriate governmental authorities. Finally, the class develops a portfolio based on their research.

To develop the Project Citizen portfolio, the students or members of a youth organization are subdivided into four groups, one group for each section of the portfolio. The primary responsibility of each group is shown below.

Portfolio Group 1	Explaining the problem
Portfolio Group 2	Examining alternative policies
Portfolio Group 3	Proposing a public policy
Portfolio Group 4	Developing an action plan

The following information has been prepared to assist you in evaluating each of the components of the portfolio. The portfolio has two components: display and documentation. The two components taken together constitute the portfolio you will evaluate. For this purpose, you will use the “Project Citizen Portfolio Evaluation Rating Sheet” (Appendix D, pages 57–58). The “Project Citizen Portfolio Evaluation Rating Sheet” has five parts: four parts list the evaluation criteria for each section of the portfolio and one part gives the criteria for an overall evaluation of the students’ work.

The following information corresponds to the four major sections that comprise the display component and the documentation binder.

Display section

The first display section should provide a detailed explanation of the issue or problem chosen and why the class selected it. A one- to two-page written summary should include a clear description of the issue or problem and what the class learned about it. Relevant graphs, photos, illustrations, or cartoons should be included. The students should cite all sources they used.

The written summary should be posted on the display and should include the following information:

- A clear statement of the nature of the issue or problem the students chose to research
- The degree of seriousness and scope of the issue or problem
- The levels of government or the government agencies that have responsibility for handling the issue or problem
- An indication of individuals or groups that might share responsibility for dealing with the issue or problem
- An indication of disagreements about the issue or problem in the community
- Whether there is an existing policy to deal with the problem
- If a policy exists, an explanation of its adequacy

Documentation binder

In the first section of the binder, the students must document their research, including a selection of the best supporting material. In addition to a table of contents, this section should include evidence that supports the group’s work. Examples might include the following items:

- A completed “Problem Identification and Analysis Form” (Appendix G, page 68)
- A summary of the completed interview forms (or representative examples)
- Relevant newspaper or magazine articles
- Completed radio, television, Internet, or printed source forms (if applicable)
- Other relevant supporting articles, reports, etc.

Display section

The second display section should provide a detailed explanation and evaluation of two or three alternative public policy proposals from various groups or individuals. If an existing policy is in place, it should be included with an explanation of its effectiveness. Relevant graphs, photos, illustrations, or cartoons should be included. The students should cite all sources they used.

The display should include a one-page written summary for each alternative public policy presented. Each summary should include the following information:

- An explanation of the current public policy, if one exists, and an evaluation of its effectiveness (advantages and disadvantages)
- A detailed explanation of an alternative public policy solution and its strengths and weaknesses (advantages and disadvantages) with supporting data
- Identification of the source of the proposed public policy (e.g., individual citizens, special interest groups, legislature, or city council)

Documentation binder

In the second section of the documentation binder, the students must document their research, including a selection of the best supporting material. In addition to a table of contents, this section should include evidence that supports the group's work. Examples might include the following items:

- A copy of the full text of the policy (if one is currently in place)
- Letters or memos from special interest groups or individuals
- Publicity material circulating in the community
- Other relevant supporting articles, reports, etc.

Display section

The third display section should clearly explain a specific public policy proposal to address the issue or problem and the reasons that the class has agreed to support it. The class may choose to support an existing policy, modify an existing policy, create a new policy, or support one of the alternative policies described in the second display panel. Graphs, photos, illustrations, or cartoons should be displayed. The students should cite all sources used.

The display should contain a one- to two-page written summary that includes the following:

- An explanation of the public policy the class is proposing and a justification for how that public policy will best deal with the issue or problem
- The advantages and disadvantages of the public policy, supported with current data, including identification of individuals or groups that may be affected by it and a description of its possible impact
- A rationale statement that also identifies the appropriate branch of government or agency that would be responsible for implementing the proposed public policy
- An opinion statement on why the proposed public policy does not violate the U.S. Constitution or state constitutions

Documentation binder

In the third section of the documentation binder, the students must document their research, including a selection of the best supporting material. In addition to a table of contents, this section should include evidence that supports the group's work. Examples might include the following items:

- A completed copy of the "Constitutional Opinion Form" (Appendix G, page 83–84)
- Any laws, regulations, or rules that may apply
- A copy of an existing policy or law, or models of new or modified policies or laws
- Other relevant supporting articles, reports, etc.

PORTFOLIO GROUP 4 Developing an Action Plan

Display section

The fourth display section of the portfolio should provide a detailed description of the process necessary to get the proposed public policy adopted and implemented by the appropriate government branch or agency. The plan should include steps for developing community support for the proposed policy. There should also be a detailed plan for overall implementation of the proposed public policy. Graphs, photos, illustrations, or cartoons should be displayed. The students should cite all sources they used.

The following information should be included in the written summary:

- A clear explanation of how the class would seek to gain support from government officials for the proposed public policy
- A clear explanation of how the class would seek to gain support from special interest groups, community groups, businesses, or influential individuals for the proposed public policy and action plan
- Identification of influential individuals, businesses, special interest groups, or government agencies that might speak out against the proposed public policy and action plan and an explanation of their opposition
- An explanation of the steps to be taken to implement the action plan and the plan's benefits
- Estimated costs and a timeline for implementation of the action plan, if possible

Documentation binder

In the fourth section of the documentation binder, the students must document their research, including a selection of the best supporting material. In addition to a table of contents, this section should include evidence that supports the group's work.

Examples might include the following items:

- Written statements of support or opposition
- Publicity material
- Letters from influential individuals or public officials
- Other relevant supporting articles, reports, etc.

REFLECTIONS

This component is included only in the documentation binder. The final step of the Project Citizen curriculum asks students to reflect on their learning experience.

The fifth section of the documentation binder should contain brief statements or letters from students describing what they learned from Project Citizen. This should include reflection on what they learned about public policy and the policymaking process. It should explain how Project Citizen helped them to better understand the role of government officials and citizens. Finally, the reflection should address how they would approach the project differently if they did it again.

If the students have had an opportunity to present their portfolio to an audience in a simulated public hearing, they should include this experience in the reflection.