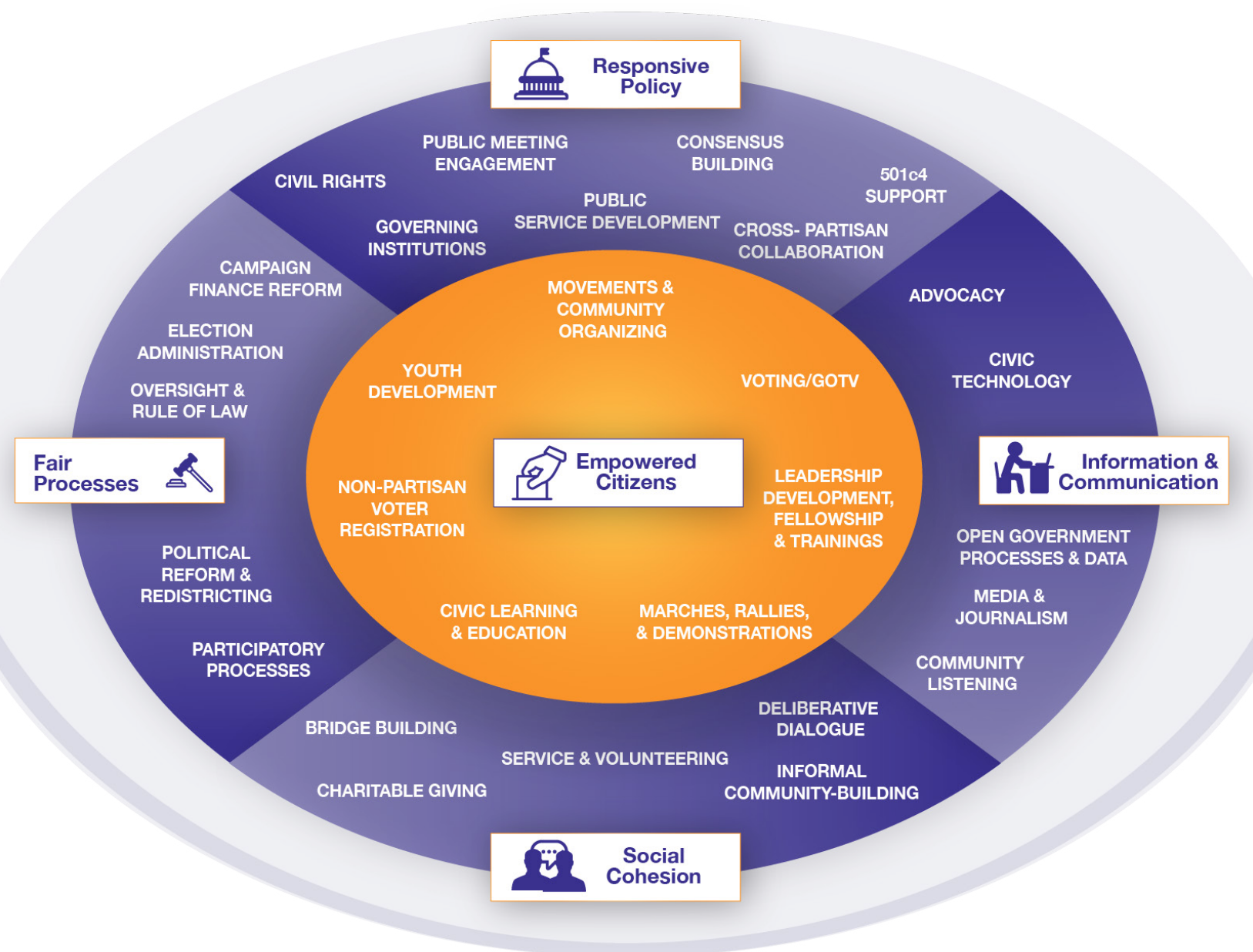


What is Democracy?

There are various ways to think about democracy. Taking many definitions together, we understand democracy as comprising two systems: a **system of representative government**, which includes the legislative, executive, and judicial branches at the federal, state, and local levels, and a **system of self-governance**, which includes how citizens choose to interact with each other and their political system through many forms of civic engagement. Both the formal structures of government and the informal associations of individuals knit together the fabric of democracy in our republic.

Democracy is made up of many values, concepts, and practices, but five elements have been identified as being necessary in strong and healthy democracies: empowered citizens, fair processes, responsive policy, information and communication, and social cohesion.¹

The visual below plots examples of civic practices² within the five democracy elements. While not exhaustive, these activities serve as a pragmatic list of ways to ensure elements of democracy are strong.



¹ Center for High Impact Philanthropy, publication forthcoming 2019, at www.impact.upenn.edu

² PACE, Civic Engagement Primer, at www.PACEFunders.org/Primer

Glossary of Terms *(in alphabetical order)*

Like “democracy” itself, the terms below can be defined in multiple ways and merit full bodies of study on their own, but we have included brief, one-line descriptions to capture their spirit.

501c4 SUPPORT: Efforts to influence election or legislative outcomes and/or to conduct political lobbying.

ADVOCACY: Providing education and information to encourage public support for an issue or change.

BRIDGE BUILDING: People building relationships and a sense of community across lines of difference, which may include politics, religion, race/ethnicity, and other identities.

CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM: Efforts to limit outsized influence of money and interest groups in politics.

CHARITABLE GIVING: Individuals donating money to nonprofits or causes, whether on their own or through collective efforts such as giving circles or crowd-funding efforts.

CIVIC LEARNING & EDUCATION: Efforts that prepare people for informed participation in democratic processes.

CIVIC TECHNOLOGY: Developing or advancing technologies to enhance, change, or support engagement in the democratic process.

CIVIL RIGHTS: Guarantees of equal social opportunities and protection under the law, regardless of race, religion, and personal characteristics.

COMMUNITY LISTENING: Efforts by news organizations to better listen to, engage, and produce more relevant and differentiated content for the public they serve.

CONSENSUS BUILDING: Efforts to foster discussion and build agreement among citizens and elected officials with divergent viewpoints.

CROSS-PARTISAN COLLABORATION: Opportunities for officials from different political parties to work together on policy and leadership efforts.

DELIBERATIVE DIALOGUE: A method of public interaction in which citizens discuss, exchange, and weigh ideas.

ELECTION ADMINISTRATION: Ensuring fairness, accuracy, and efficiency of the rules and processes in which elections are implemented.

EMPOWERED CITIZENS: Citizens are the principal actors in a democracy. Citizens are empowered when their rights are protected, they are informed, and their community leaders proactively engage them in the democratic process.

FAIR PROCESSES: Processes are the mechanics of democracy. Fair processes respect the principal of one-person one-vote and hold policy-making institutions accountable through checks and balances.

GOVERNING INSTITUTIONS: Efforts that ensure healthy government bodies (such as congress, the judicial system, and the executive branch), as well as ethics, transparency, and integrity in their leadership.

INFORMAL COMMUNITY-BUILDING: Activities between individuals that organically build community, like neighboring or community picnics, without the involvement of institutions.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION: Elements that mediate the relationship between citizens, processes, and policy. Information and communication that is representative, accurate, and trusted ensures fair processes and enables citizens to hold policy makers accountable.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT, FELLOWSHIPS & TRAININGS:

Preparing individuals for public service and/or providing pathways to elected office and other positions of influence.

MARCHES, RALLIES & DEMONSTRATIONS: Organized efforts to raise awareness and/or assert public influence or pressure on an issue.

MEDIA & JOURNALISM: Supporting the press and ensuring free and independent media; combating misinformation, disinformation, and propaganda.

MOVEMENTS & COMMUNITY ORGANIZING: Sustained mobilization and organization of individuals around a particular issue, often self-organized.

NON-PARTISAN VOTER REGISTRATION: Efforts that get citizens signed up to participate in elections.

OPEN GOVERNMENT PROCESSES & DATA: Efforts that ensure transparency and citizen access to research, information, and operations concerning their government.

OVERSIGHT & RULE OF LAW: Ensuring adherence to Constitutional principles including the Rule of Law, checks and balances, good governance standards, and through watchdog groups.

PARTICIPATORY PROCESSES: A democratic practice in which institutions share decision-making power, especially related to resource allocation such as budgeting or grantmaking.

POLITICAL REFORM & REDISTRICTING: Efforts to advocate for structural changes to government and to ensure fair citizen representation and engagement.

PUBLIC MEETING ENGAGEMENT: Opportunities for citizens to communicate with elected officials and have their voices heard in service of more effective policy-making.

PUBLIC SERVICE DEVELOPMENT: Fellowships and programs that support public officials to be better stewards of their office and ensure ethics, integrity, and cooperation in leadership.

RESPONSIVE POLICY: Policy is an output of a democracy. Responsive policy reflects citizens' interests and values, provides for the common good, and establishes institutions that empower individuals to protect their rights.

SERVICE & VOLUNTEERING: Programs that create paths for people to serve their country and/or community, such as military service, service years, or days of service.

SOCIAL COHESION: A shared sense of identity and purpose implicit in the phrase “we the people.” In a democratic society, members recognize each other's right to a voice in the political process and are willing to collaborate for common ends.

VOTING/GOTV: Citizens casting ballots in elections; efforts to organize and mobilize citizens to exercise their right to vote.

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT: Programs that prepare young people for their futures and help them meet their full potential.

*Note: The five democracy elements are in **ORANGE** and the civic practices are in **PURPLE**.*

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