

Applicant: National Constitution Center, 525 Arch Street, Philadelphia, PA, 19106

Program Contact: Christine Donnelly, 215-409-6739, donnelly@constitutioncenter.org

Summary Project Statement: The National Constitution Center seeks to develop a middle school version of our *Constitution 101* online full-semester core civics curriculum, designed to provide students in grades 5-8 with a basic understanding of constitutional text, history, structure, and interpretation over time. The course is grounded in the study of primary source documents and landmark Supreme Court cases from our online *Founders' Library*, which is curated by teams of experts representing a range of diverse perspectives. As students read and explore through guided discovery, practice, and discussion, teachers will be provided with tools to check for understanding and allow for reflection, along with guides to help align the curriculum with state and district learning standards. We will support educators through a robust professional development program incorporating the curriculum, providing teachers with the grounding and confidence to incorporate civic education and civil dialogue into their classroom instruction. Continuous improvement will be built into the program through a rigorously designed formal evaluation plan, including a pilot program that will include students and teachers from underserved districts. We will also collaborate with instructors through our Teacher Advisory Board, Teacher Advisory Council, and Constitutional Fellows programs, allowing educators serving students across all backgrounds and learning environments to draw on each other's experience and build networks that will strengthen their pedagogical practice.

Objectives: In evaluating the effectiveness of the curriculum, we will measure student gains in knowledge and understanding of the U.S. Constitution, ability to apply and extend content they have learned in *Constitution 101*, understanding of the importance of engaging in civil dialogue and the role it plays in the process of deliberation and decision-making, and growth in understanding of the overarching goals of the U.S. Constitution. Ultimately, we seek to ensure that middle school students will have the knowledge and comfort to talk about civics and share their voice and perspective, improving the health of our democracy at all levels of society.

Competitive Preference Priorities: The NCC's approach to civic education and civil dialogue addresses this funding opportunity's absolute priority of innovative instruction or professional development in American history, civics and government in every aspect of its design and intent. Our nonpartisan approach provides a strong foundation in the founding stories, ongoing debates, and judicial interpretations of the Constitution, including the Bill of Rights, thereby addressing competitive preference priority 1 of innovative activities for civic engagement. We also guide learners and encourage their active participation and practice of civil dialogue as they cultivate the skills necessary to analyze all sides of constitutional questions by exposing them to a range of diverse voices, addressing the invitational priority of fostering critical thinking and promoting student engagement in civics education. As we develop and roll out the middle school curriculum and supporting professional development activities, we will address competitive preference priority 2 of promoting equity in student access to educational resources and opportunities by seeking to reach a mix of districts and school settings that reflect the diversity of America's student body, in keeping with our belief that learners of all backgrounds and perspectives can benefit from a firm grounding in civic knowledge and civil dialogue.