

**Title:** Project Digital Civic Inquiry

**Project Background:** Project DCI addresses a critical gap between the heavily digital ways that secondary students experience and learn about the world and the largely analog approaches to teaching that still dominate secondary social studies classrooms. Students need more opportunities to learn to evaluate online information and to discuss and act on what they learn from credible digital sources. Project DCI will support eighth-grade teachers in Washington, DC, public and charter schools to adopt an innovative curricular approach that responds to this need: *digital civic inquiry*. Through digital civic inquiries (DCIs), students engage in scaffolded research about civic issues like access to affordable housing or minimum wage increases. They learn to evaluate a range of digital sources and use credible sources to inform their developing opinions, discuss what they learn about the issue and potential policy solutions, and take action to advocate for their preferred solutions. Project DCI harnesses an opportunity created by recently revised social studies standards in DC to fulfill a teacher learning need and generate findings and outputs for wide application in other states/districts.

**Project Description:** In collaboration with the Close Up Foundation and the DC Office of the State Superintendent of Education, the University of Maryland (IHE) will develop innovative curriculum and teacher education resources to engage teachers and students in DCIs through three iterative phases. Phase 1: Curriculum Development will create a curricular outline and develop six complete DCIs of four lessons each on topics aligned with the DC eighth-grade curriculum. In Phase 2: Professional Development, Project DCI will provide innovative professional development to 50 teachers over two cohort years via a one-week summer institute to help teachers learn DCIs themselves and plan for engaging students in them. During Phase 3: Implementation and Coaching, teachers will engage 2,500 students across DC in at least two full-scale DCIs and participate in regular coaching support.

**Priorities Addressed:** Absolute Priority; Competitive Preference 1a and 2; Invitational

**Project Goals and Expected Outcomes:** Project DCI will 1) provide free, innovative, and effective DCI curricular materials grounded in evidence-based design principles; 2) increase teachers' confidence in teaching components of DCIs, time spent teaching DCIs, knowledge of online evaluation strategies, and quality of instruction in DCI lessons; 3) improve students' civic knowledge, skills (e.g., evaluating online information), and attitudes (e.g., political efficacy, openness to diverse perspectives, and interest in following the news); and 4) build capacity in teachers throughout DC by developing Teacher Leaders who can support teachers in their schools and across the city to sustain DCI curricular innovations.

**Evaluation:** We will analyze formative data (e.g., teacher feedback on lessons, lesson videos, and coaching sessions) to revise project components throughout the project's three iterative phases. The Evaluation Team will conduct formative and summative evaluations of teacher ( $n=50$ ) and student ( $n=1,000$ ) growth in project outcome areas, including teachers' efficacy and lesson implementation and students' civic knowledge, skills, and attitudes.

**Project Partners:** Close Up Foundation, DC Office of the State Superintendent of Education