

TEACHER GUIDE

MODULE 2 – LOCAL LEADER: BUILDING COMMUNITY



PRESENTED BY  

Civics Matters Arizona

Civic Learning Hub

Grade Band: 6th-12th

Estimated Module Completion Time: 3 hours

May be completed across multiple sessions or
asynchronously

OVERVIEW

Module 2: Local Leader – Building Community

This module moves students from individual civic participation to shared leadership. Students experience how collaboration, compromise, and collective responsibility are essential to democratic communities.

Students learn:

- How local governments make decisions collaboratively
- Why democratic leadership requires listening and compromise
- How limited resources create real tradeoffs
- How community decisions affect different groups in different ways

ARIZONA CONTENT STANDARDS ALIGNMENT

Below are the standards this module addresses within the Arizona History & Social Science Standards.

Civics Standards (Grades 6–8)

Standard	Module Connection
6.C4.1 & 7.C4.4– Explain challenges and opportunities people and groups face when solving local, regional, and/or global problems.	Students experience the challenges of solving community problems through the Town Council budgeting simulation, where limited resources and competing stakeholder priorities require them to weigh tradeoffs and work toward a solution. Historical examples in the module further illustrate how communities have navigated conflict, resistance, and competing interests to create change.
6.C4.2 & 7.C4.4 – Describe and apply civic virtues, including deliberative processes that contribute to the common good and democratic principles in school, community, and government.	Through the Town Council budgeting simulation, discussions, and group activities, students practice collaboration, compromise, respectful dialogue, and consideration of different perspectives while working toward decisions that serve the common good.

ARIZONA CONTENT STANDARDS ALIGNMENT

Standard	Module Connection
8.C1.2 – Demonstrate civic virtues that contribute to the common good and democratic principles within a variety of deliberative processes and settings.	Students practice civic virtues such as responsibility, collaboration, compromise, and respect for differing viewpoints across the Town Council simulation, historical case studies, and School Participatory Budgeting reflection activity.
8.C4.1 – Compare historical and contemporary means of changing societies to promote the common good.	Students compare historical approaches such as petitioning, protest, organizing, coalition-building, and legal action with contemporary approaches such as participatory budgeting and local civic engagement to evaluate how different strategies can create community change.

Inquiry Standards (6–8)

- SP1: Developing questions and planning inquiries
- SP3: Gathering and evaluating sources
- SP7: Civic participation and decision-making

ARIZONA CONTENT STANDARDS ALIGNMENT

High School – Government (Grades 9–12)

Standard	Module Connection
HS.C1.3: Evaluate the relationship between rights, responsibilities, and civic participation	Students evaluate how civic rights, such as the right to petition, enable participation in government and consider the responsibilities of citizens and leaders to engage respectfully, collaborate across differences, and contribute to the common good.
HS.C3.1: Explain how citizens influence public policy decisions.	Students examine historical and contemporary examples of citizens influencing public decisions through petitions, protest, advocacy, organizing, coalition-building, and participatory decision-making.

ARIZONA CONTENT STANDARDS ALIGNMENT

Standard	Module Connection
HS.C4.1 – Evaluate multiple procedures for making governmental decisions at local, state, tribal, national, and international levels in terms of the civic purpose achieved.	The city council simulation gives students a firsthand experience with local governmental decision-making. Students evaluate how a city council balances competing priorities, considers community input, and allocates limited public resources. The module then allows students to compare this process with other forms of decision-making, including constitutional compromise, community organizing, and participatory budgeting, and consider which processes best achieve different civic purposes.

Inquiry Practices (9–12)

- Evaluate evidence,
- Develop claims,
- Communicate conclusions aligned with democratic engagement.

ARIZONA CONTENT STANDARDS ALIGNMENT

C. Arizona State-Specific Civics Standards

Arizona Constitution & State Government (HS.C2.AZ):

- Students understand how the Arizona Constitution supports civic participation and shared responsibility in government decision-making.

Civics Test Items (required):

- Roles of government, responsibilities of citizens, civic participation.
- This module supports mastery of Arizona's Civics Test content related to citizen involvement in local governance.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of module 2, students will be able to:

Civic Knowledge

- Explain how local governments make decisions with limited resources.
- Describe why compromise is necessary in democratic communities.
- Identify how public decisions impact different community members.

Civic Skills

- Analyze competing stakeholder perspectives.
- Evaluate tradeoffs in shared decision-making.
- Recommend solutions that reflect democratic values

Civic Dispositions

- Recognize leadership as a shared civic responsibility.
- Develop empathy for diverse community needs.
- Value collaboration and compromise as essential to democracy.

HISTORICAL CONNECTIONS

Use these to anchor classroom discussion:

Founding Era Connections

- Local town meetings as early forms of democratic decision-making
- Shared responsibility for community welfare
- Negotiation and compromise as democratic tools

Arizona-Specific Connections

- Arizona's tradition of local governance and community input
- The role of compromise in Arizona's path to statehood
- Community decision-making in frontier towns and growing cities

HOW TO USE MODULE 2 IN THE CLASSROOM

Before the module (5–10 minutes)

Pre-Module Discussion Questions:

- Why can't communities always fund everything they want?
- What makes a decision feel fair or unfair?
- How is leadership different from simply sharing an opinion?

Teacher Tip: Connect the Town Council simulation to real examples of local budgeting or school resource decisions students may recognize.

During the 'Engage' section

- Encourage students to pause and reflect at decision points.
- Allow students to take different leadership approaches and compare outcomes.
- Use partner or small-group discussion to explore tradeoffs.

HOW TO USE MODULE 2 IN THE CLASSROOM

After the 'Engage' Section (10–20 minutes)

Post-Engage Discussion Questions:

1. What leadership approach did you choose and why?
2. Who benefited most from your decision? Who may have felt left out?
3. How did compromise shape the outcome?
4. Why is local leadership important in a democracy?

During the Module (30–60 minutes)

1. Students watch/read/listen to the resource.
2. Students complete the short-answer reflection questions immediately after.
3. Do a fast share-out:
 - One takeaway
 - One question you still have

HOW TO USE MODULE 2 IN THE CLASSROOM

After the Module (15–20 minutes)

Post-Module Discussion Questions:

1. Is a leader more effective when they prioritize getting things done or getting people to agree? Explain.
2. Is changing your position after hearing other perspectives a sign of strength or weakness in a leader?
3. What are some ways ordinary people can influence decisions in their communities?
4. What similarities did you see across the different historical examples in this module?
5. What does it mean to be a responsible civic leader in your own community?

Optional Written Reflection

1. Referencing at least one historical example from the module, ask students to revisit their original definition of what makes a strong local leader from the beginning of the module.
 - a. Ask: How has your definition of local leadership changed?

HOW TO USE MODULE 2 IN THE CLASSROOM

Module Extension activities

A. Community Budget Simulation

Students allocate a mock budget across multiple proposals and defend their choices.

B. Local Government Meeting

Have students research an upcoming city council, school board, county board, or other public meeting.

Students identify:

- What issues are being discussed.
- Who has decision-making authority.
- Who is affected.
- What different perspectives exist.
- How members of the public can participate.