



Age Scan Research Findings

*Understanding and promoting civic
engagement at each life stage*

June 28, 2004



Executive Summary



This presentation includes:

- Information on the current state of engagement of Americans at different ages
- Insights from research on what causes people to become engaged and remain involved
- The research team's analysis of potential investment opportunities
- Examples of strong practices and programs (in appendix)



Research Process

- The Omidyar Foundation formed a research team to look at civic engagement at three life stages:
 - Children and Youth (0-24) – *Lorne Needle*
 - Adults (25-54) – *Stephanie Clohesy*
 - Older Adults (55 plus) – *Marc Freedman and Richard Adler*
- Research scope
 - *What we know.* The team reviewed available existing research to understand trends, drivers, and impacts of engagement, and elements of effective approaches.
 - *Strong practices.* The team identified organizations, programs and practices that exemplify the learnings from research.



Executive Summary

Viewing civic engagement through the lens of a ***long civic lifespan***, we see that:

1. There are compelling opportunities to engage people throughout their lives - rather than focusing on only one life stage.

2. Funders may be able to invest to support people to engage longer and more impact, through strategies that:
 - Enable people to get involved at each stage of life
 - Help people to maintain or deepen their engagement as they go through common life transitions.
 - Connect and bridge between excellent forms of engagement for different age groups.
 - Fill gaps in the spectrum of opportunities to engage.
 - Strengthen existing work.



Executive Summary continued...

3. People are more likely to engage/re-engage when opportunities are:

- Relevant, including meeting people's enlightened self-interest
- Accessible
- Effective

4. Different approaches are needed

- People in each life stage have distinct needs and potential.
- Marginalized and struggling communities require customized recruitment and strategies to engage.
- Identity beyond age – race, gender, class, etc. – matters in views of entitlement and for civic and political participation.



Who People are at Each Life Stage

| | <u>0-24</u> | <u>25-55</u> | <u>55+</u> |
|--|---|---|---|
| What's going on? | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Learning and growing- Emulating adults- Cares deeply- Relatively powerless | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Less time: working hard, raising a family- Peak of productivity and influence- Declining interest in politics | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Thinking about retirement or transition- Wondering if what they know still matters- What's my legacy? |
| Potential / what they can offer | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- High energy- Idealism- Time | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Largest numbers- Power and access | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Deep experience- The long view- More discretionary time |
| The 'story' | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- "Give me a stake in the future" | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- "Doing what I think I can, and I could do more" | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- "What's next – retire or redefine?" |



Strategies: How We Might Engage Each Life Stage

| | <u>0-24</u> | <u>25-55</u> | <u>55+</u> |
|---------------------------------------|--|---|---|
| Best ways to engage | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Extra-curriculars- Adult discussion and models- Facilitation by school and college | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Work-driven or related programs- Personal causes- Call to act by friends, leaders | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Roles that draw on accumulated know-how and experience- “Purposeful relationships” |
| Where to reach them | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- School- Through peers- Through needs | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Workplace- Through kids’ needs- Through needs | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Workplace (pre-retirement)- financial planning process/ind’y- Community Institutions. |
| Develop / build social capital | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Build civic character- Expose to possible roles- Relevant skills | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Networks – work, social, civic- Experience taking on civic roles, problems | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Discover new interests- Assume nurturing,, mentoring role |
| Key transitions | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- 6th and 9th grade- To adult life after HS, college | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Starting family- Career changes- Life events | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Leave career/work- Health issues |



Opportunities: Promising areas to invest

0-24

- Political engagement (youth organizing)
- Take proven strategies to scale
- Focus on support from adults & adult institutions
- Public policy
- Find a channel for youth voice within TOF

25-55

- Community organizing
- Encourage the workplace as a pipeline for engagement
- Mobilize parents as advocates for children
- Make service/engagement easy & efficient
- Democratize philanthropy

55+

- Increase public awareness – social marketing to define the ‘Third Agers’ as engaged
- Create an innovation fund
- Support bridgers— helping connect people to opportunities
- Public policy

Inter-generational

- Further research
- Widen array of programs by investing in creative new approaches, including joint service
- Older adults increase voting engagement of others
- Disseminate powerful stories, images of generational partnerships



Challenges

- Sporadic engagement has little long-term effect on the community and does little to spur future involvement
- Existing resources are doing a relatively better job at service / voluntary engagement than political or electoral -- counter people's distaste for and distance from political engagement
- Fueling people's desire for engagement does no good if the structures and supports for individuals to engage are not there or are not working well
- Do not view engagement as a separate activity or question, but as a thread within an individual's integrated life
- Past/previous efforts have underestimated the power of the 'ask', and the importance of targeting outreach to specific people/ groups with particular interests and needs

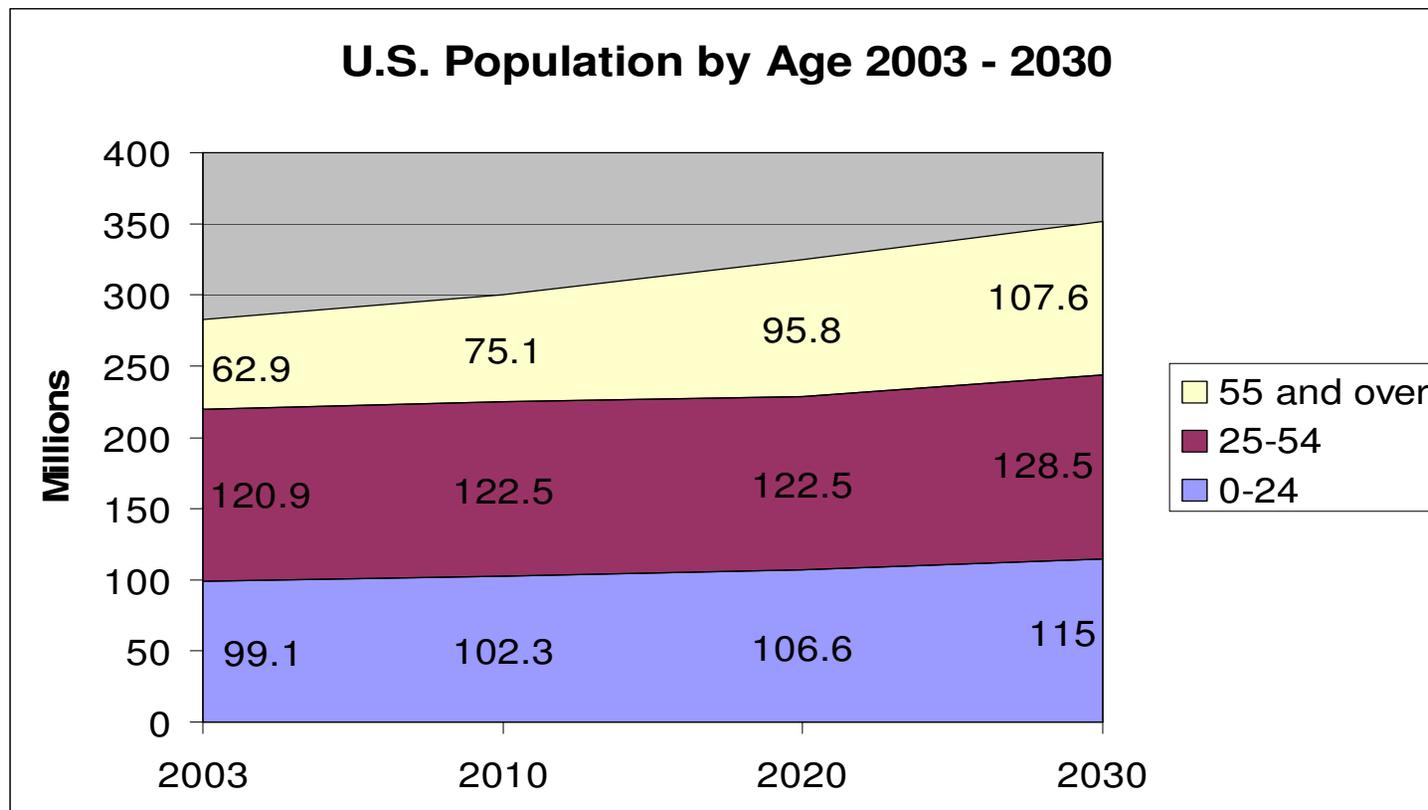


An Overview:

Civic engagement by the numbers

Civic Engagement by the Numbers

- **Over next 30 years the U.S. population will continue to grow:**
 - 55 plus population will skyrocket by 72%
 - Number of young people will grow by 16%
 - Number of adults will remain relatively constant

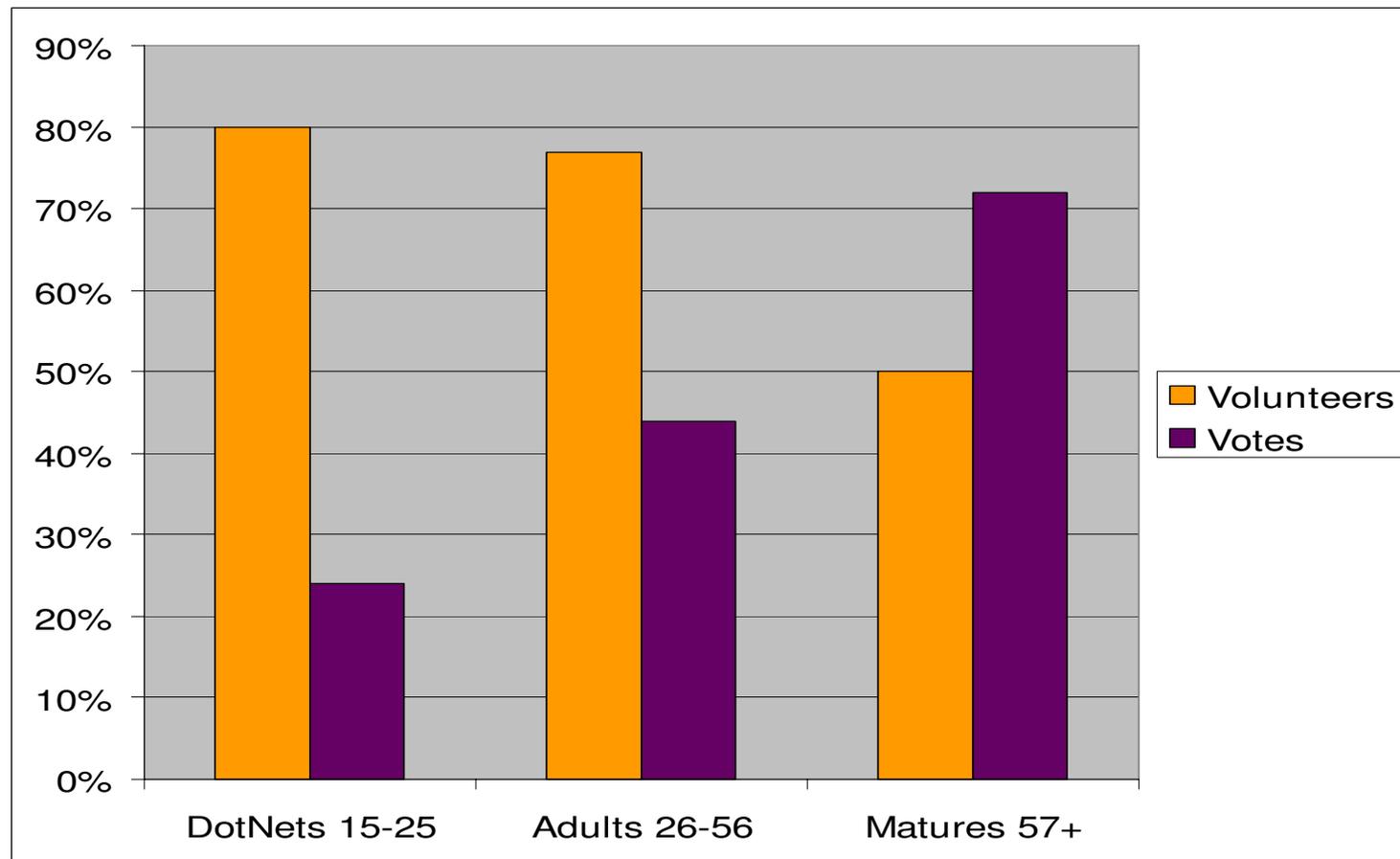


Sources: CIRCLE, Independent Sector.



Civic Engagement by the Numbers

People at each life stage make distinct and different choices about whether and how they engage.

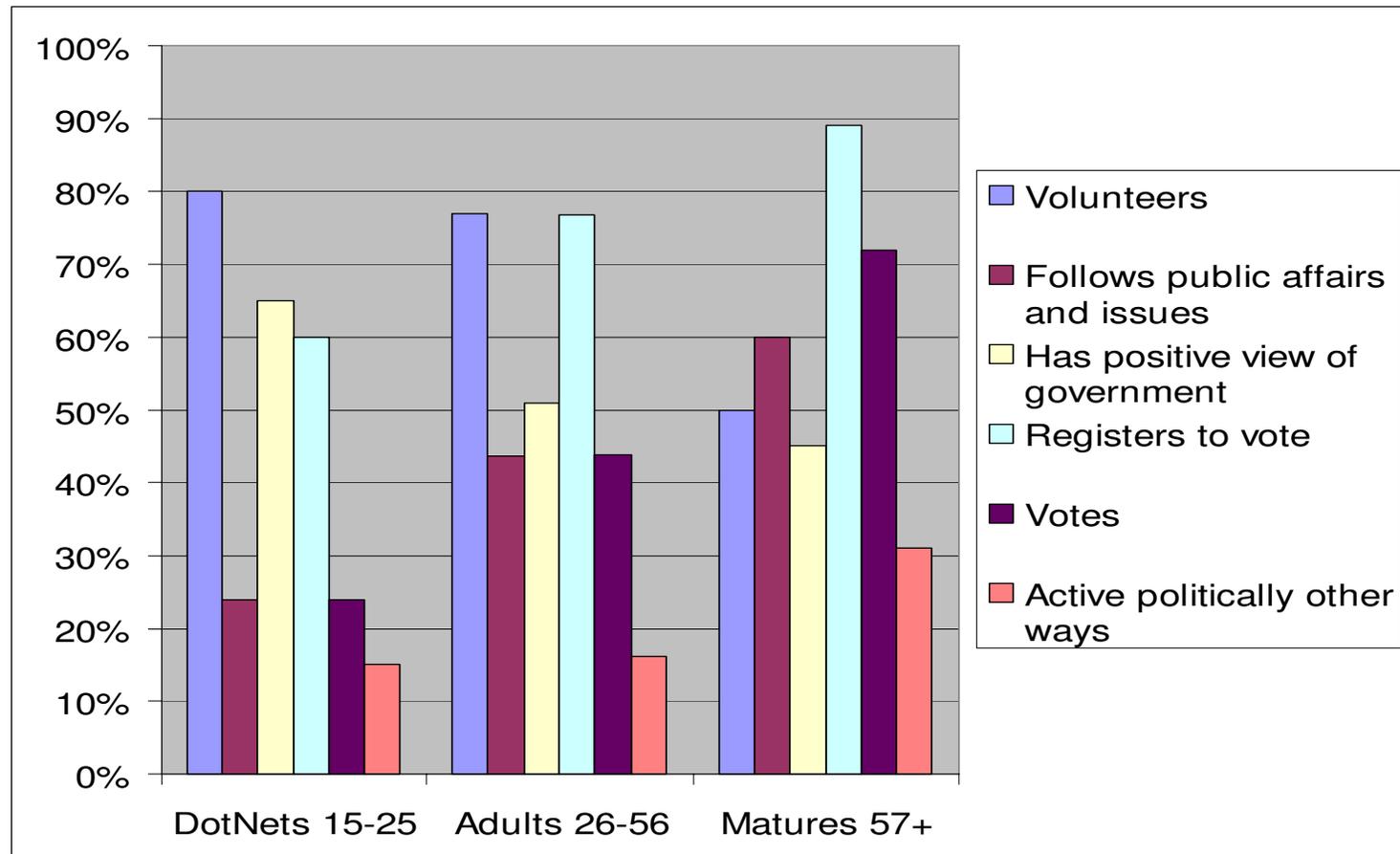


Sources: CIRCLE, Independent Sector.



Civic Engagement by the Numbers

Older generations are more politically active, while younger people are more likely to volunteer.



Sources: CIRCLE, Independent Sector.



What the Numbers Tell Us

- Good and bad news about America's engagement levels
 - Young people and midlife adults:
 - High rates of volunteering and community participation
 - Low voting and other political engagement
 - Older people are going to the polls, but not showing up as often to serve
 - A large portion engagement is sporadic or low-intensity, fewer people engage regularly and in demanding roles.
- People have decoupled service from political involvement
 - Many are satisfied with service and stop there
 - Political engagement other than voting is low overall
- The Third Age
 - A new life stage is emerging for people between 55 and 75



A Framework:

Fostering a ‘long civic lifespan’



Framework for a Long Civic Lifespan

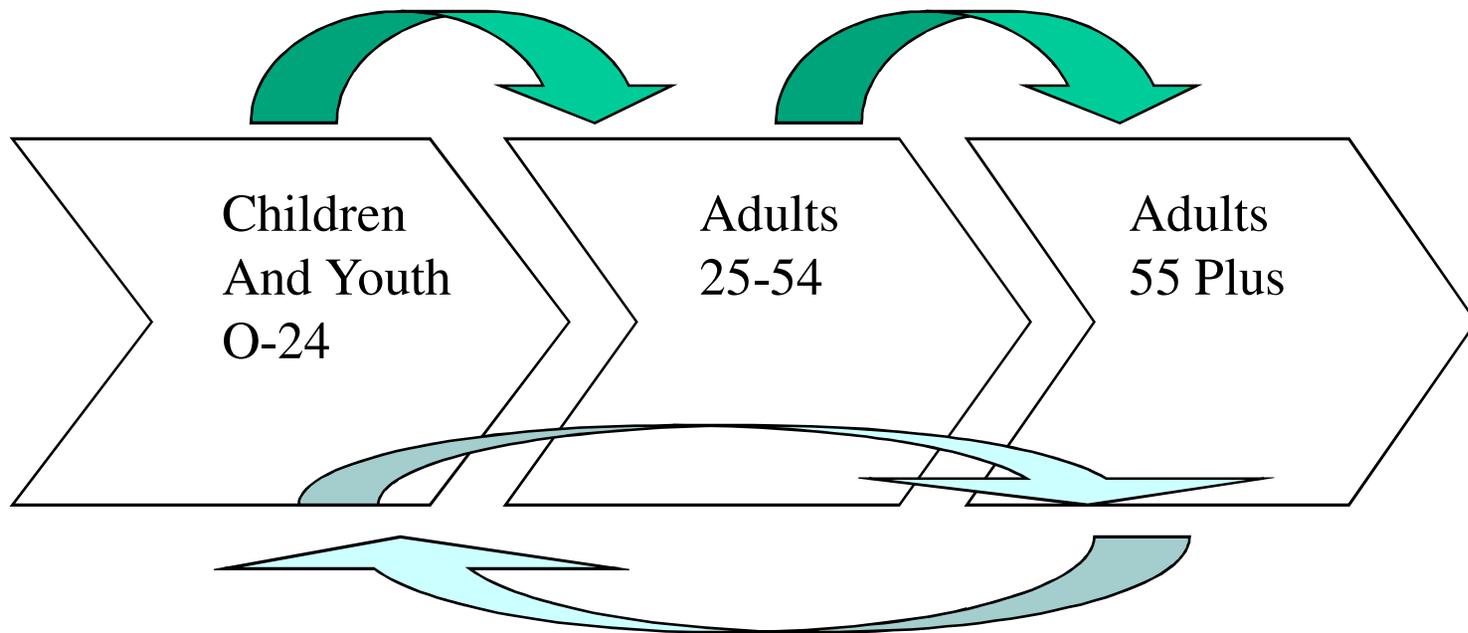
People can and should be encouraged to engage in a *Long Civic Lifespan*, including:

- Engagement is where self-interest meets community interest
- Becoming engaged or re-engaging at any point during one's life
 - Need good opportunities throughout the life stages
- Successful transitions between life stages are critical
- Continually developing oneself for life success through engagement
- Great opportunities for intergenerational connections
- Being involved in various and multiple ways at different life stages



Elements of a Long Civic Lifespan

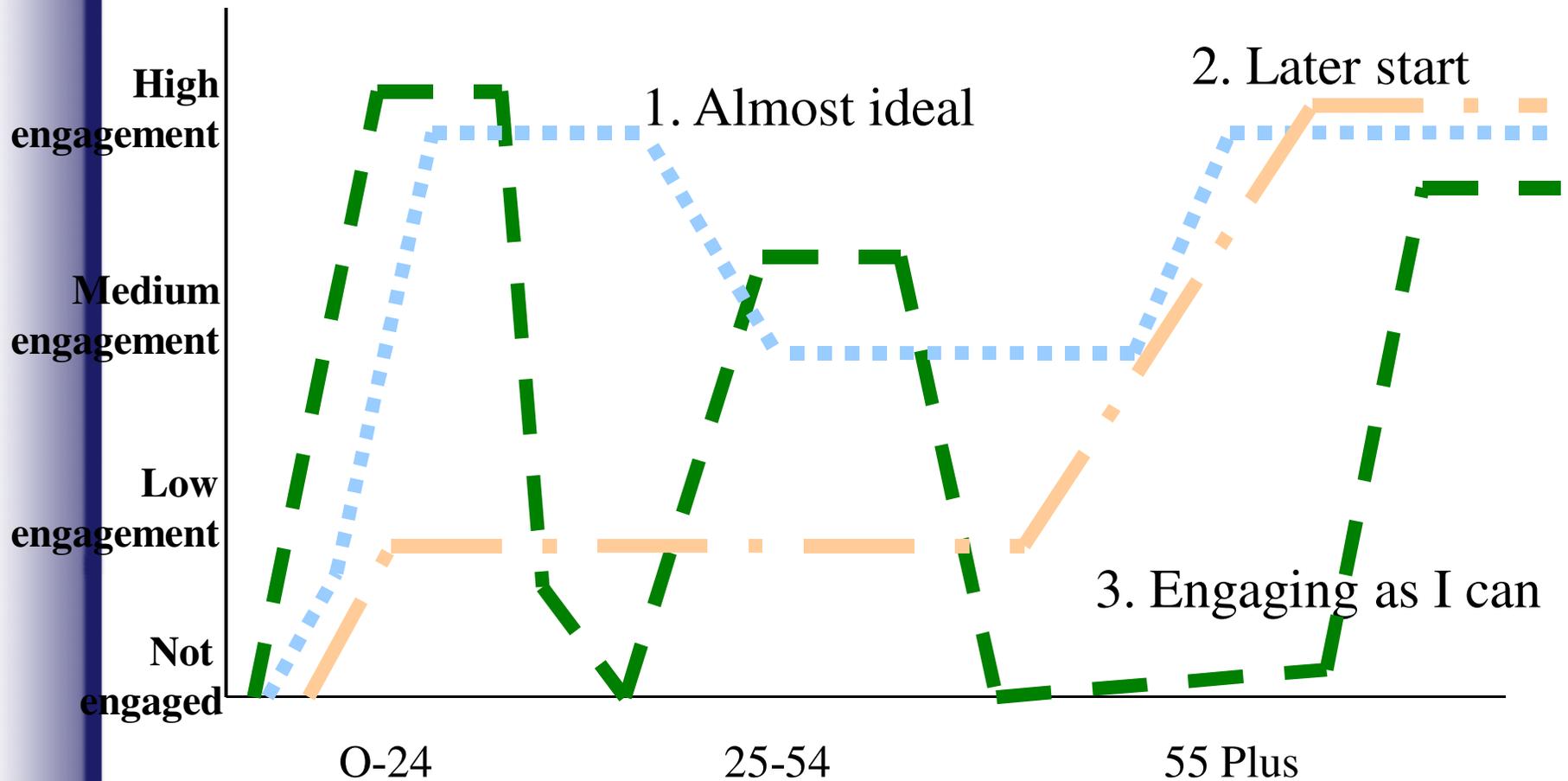
Help with smooth transitions with engagement
as life stage changes



Make use of rich intergenerational opportunities



Examples of a Long Civic Lifespan





The critical importance of transitions.

- The research suggests that major transitions – leaving school, having children, retiring from work – affect an individual’s engagement just as they do other aspects of life.
- A form of engagement that works well in one life stage (e.g. school-based volunteering) may not be available or work well in the next.
- Many people will cease being engaged or reduce their involvement unless there are clear transition paths and opportunities to make community involvement fit with their new life circumstances.



Understanding Engagement at each life stage

Children and Youth
Adults
Older Adults



The Story: Children and Youth

“Give me a stake in the future”

- Who are these people
- State of their engagement



Key Points: Children and Youth

- Young people are busy trying to have decent lives in the present and learning what they need for successful futures as adults; engagement offers a natural means to help with both goals
- The “field” of youth engagement has done relatively better at promoting service than anything else
 - There has been limited good attention to ‘civic education’ and even less meaningful exposure to electoral and political involvement
 - Growing interest in the field and among funders
- While a significant proportion of foundation dollars flow to youth development, only a small portion of that money goes to civic engagement; meanwhile, almost no attention in public funds or other policy to engagement
- Barriers and roadblocks include legal limits on young people’s roles and real-life lack of decision-making opportunities, political and institutional power, and control of financial and other resources



Promising Opportunities

Children and Youth (0-24)

- Build the path to engagement early
 - Engage children and youth early with multiple meaningful roles and exciting work/activities; for young children, focus on character and moral development, and a positive experience of community
 - Bring to bear the range of influences that we know work for engaging youth
- Open doors and facilitate
 - Bring to bear the range of influences that we know work for engaging youth
 - Adults and adult-run institutions can either support or block young peoples engagement; adults' influence and modeling powerfully affect's young people's choices
- Expand the possibilities
 - To catalyze political / electoral engagement: enable young people's access and skills, provide support, and offer alternative means like community organizing
 - Marginalized or struggling communities require customized recruitment and roles to engage young people



The Story: Adults

*“Doing what I think I can,
and I could do more”*

- Who are these people
- State of their engagement



Key Points: Adults 25-54

- Decades of investment in volunteerism have paid off with most Americans claiming to serve others
- The gap between high service and low political engagement is a barrier to true community problem solving
- Community organizing is a distinct practice of engagement, works in all communities and can particularly create opportunities for marginalized and poor communities
- Online innovations for giving and serving may help expand the scale of engagement, but motivation to engage will continue to emerge from the basic human instinct to care for ourselves and others



Promising Opportunities

Adults (25-54)

- Engage people where they are and through specific interests
 - *Work place*
 - *Family*
- Make engagement convenient and easy
 - *Workplace*
 - *Fit with social and networking opportunities*
- Make political action a part of the solution
 - *Organizing*
 - *Voting*



The Story: Older Adults

“What’s next – retire or redefine?”

- Who are these people
- State of their engagement



Key Points: Adults 55+

- Older adults traditionally vote in large numbers, but have been less involved with service. Society has failed to fully engage their time, talent and experience in addressing community needs.
- The nature of later life in America is in the midst of a transformation—one occurring at the intersection of demographics, longevity, and generation. Though the older population is growing rapidly and is changing dramatically, social perceptions of aging, opportunities for service and public policies have not evolved to keep pace.
- The result is “structural lag” – a mismatch between older adults’ interest in staying meaningfully engaged and the alternatives available to them for engagement.
- Hopeful signs of progress include a growing number of innovative initiatives and wider recognition of the significance of the emerging “third stage” of life.
- Private philanthropy and public policy have so far largely overlooked the opportunity to mobilize older adults as a positive social force.



Promising Opportunities

Older Adults (55 plus)

- Creative social marketing:
 - Use the best methods of Madison Avenue to develop campaigns to engage so-called Third Agers and avoid the “senior citizen” stigma
 - Increase public awareness of the value of older adults as volunteers and/or public service workers through media campaigns, documentary story telling, and high visibility awards
- New service opportunities:
 - Incorporate the structure and genuine importance of work environments, including “purposeful relationships”.
 - Many seniors will need service to meet their needs for living. Make use of a full spectrum of compensation options, ranging from unpaid volunteering, to pay to stipends to ‘benefits only’ to national service
- New pathways to engagement:
 - Help Third Agers with key transition from midlife careers to next chapter; help not only with finding *direction*, but also with making a *connection* to opportunities
 - Work with major existing institutions—public libraries, community colleges, churches, etc.—to help individuals navigate the transition into the Third Age



The Story: Intergenerational

“Keep natural connections, support new creative ones”

- Where can the generations mesh best for service?
- Take advantage of natural opportunities.



Promising Opportunities

Intergenerational

- While the midlife adult generation interacts frequently with young and old, there is less connection and more age segregation between young and old
- Civic engagement is a natural arena for encouraging connections between life stages
 - Young people need nurturing and mentoring
 - Older people need to nurture and pass on what they know in a generative role
- Beyond familiar activities like tutoring and mentoring, creative new forms of programming are emerging
 - One promising and underdeveloped area involves different generations serving side by side (Delta Service Corps)
 - Hope Meadows, Legal Services for Children, NRTA Teacher/Mentor Pgm.



Intergenerational strategies: There are a number of potential high-impact opportunities.

| Best / promising practices (themes) | Examples |
|---|--|
| Find opportunities where the needs and abilities of people in each life stage match to enable each other to engage effectively | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• One-to-one mentoring and tutoring – Citizen Schools, RSVP• Adults expose younger people to political involvement – Kids Voting USA• Arrange communities where older adults receive care and provide support, nurturing to young people in need – Hope Meadows• More research needed to further understand and identify most promising practices |



Appendix

Examples of promising practices



Promising practices for...

Children / Young People Ages 0-24



Promising practices and examples

| Best / promising practices (themes) | Examples from outstanding organizations |
|--|--|
| For young children: Focus on character and a good experience of community | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Teach explicit skills and perspectives for being a good and valuable community member – Child Development Program (CDP)/DSC- Mix character and civics education with academics, and work on it separate of academics -- CDP/DSC, Citizen Schools. |
| Engage children and youth early with multiple meaningful roles and exciting work/ activities | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Youth see voting and help get their parents to vote and discuss issues -- Kids Voting USA- Youth try out a range of forms of engagement and solve problems they care about personally -- Citizen Schools- Teach kids to care and take responsibility early -- Soulshoppe |
| To catalyze political / electoral engagement: Give young people access, skills, support, successful experiences | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Show young people how policy-making truly happens -- We the People- Have young people try forms of power that involve working inside, outside, alongside systems -- Philadelphia Students Union, Students Commission, Missouri Youth Cabinet- Support youth to address issues they care about -- El Pomar Fund for Community Service, Students Commission, Common Cents, peer programs |

Promising practices and examples

page 2...

| Best / promising practices (themes) | Examples from outstanding organizations |
|--|---|
| Bring to bear multiple influences for engaging youth | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Learn from and help peers and community -- Peer programs, Citizen Schools - Offer different ways to be involved depending on young people's needs -- YouthBuild, We the People |
| Personal touch and direct contact more powerful than mass efforts – both at involving and having impact | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The power of the ask, and of the personal connection to the result of the work and to others during the work is huge - Grass-roots and person to person outreach and recruitment tend to be better at engaging youth -- Haas Center, Peer programs, Youth Vote Coalition - Youth tend to do more and deeper work via programs that allow them to address deeply felt needs and opportunities -- El Pomar, City Scan, Philadelphia Students Union - Mass campaigns and efforts seem to have small or no sustained effect – failure experienced by Youth Service America |
| Marginalized or struggling communities are producing programs and practices that work for them and maybe similar places | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - YouthBuild emerged in Harlem, has resonated and worked in a number of urban communities - Citizen Schools has succeeded at involving young people of color from one-parent homes in Boston - DSC's Child Development Program is designed for large urban schools |



Promising practices for...

Midlife adults 25-54



Promising practices and examples

| Best / promising practices (themes) | Examples from outstanding organizations |
|--|---|
| Reach people in the workplace where they are | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Outreach to and support of corporate programs that enable and reward employees for voluntary service, community leadership (e.g. board service), and philanthropy -- Business for Social Responsibility, BoardnetUSA, Volunteer Match, Aid Matrix, National Chamber of Commerce |
| Engage people through issues they care about as parents | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Re-engage parents as activists for children and schools; encourages parents to volunteer and give on behalf of children and youth -- Family Matters, After School Alliance, National Parenting Association, First Day Foundation, Americas Promise |
| Community organizing and action | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Engaging people and enabling action for improved economic opportunities, political participation, quality of life, social justice -- United for a Fair Economy, Center for Community Change, Habitat for Humanity, ACORN |



Promising practices and examples

page 2...

| Best / promising practices (themes) | Examples from outstanding organizations |
|--|--|
| Online | - Using online services to do things that are not possible in the “hands-on” nonprofit world, e.g. large scale “matching” of service, leadership and giving opportunities; encouraging and coordinating political voice and action -- MoveOn, Volunteer Match, BoardnetUSA, We the People |
| Voting | - Meeting people where they are culturally and socially and making the case for the power of voting -- MTV/Rock the Vote Education Fund, Rap the Vote, and Community Street Teams; Southwest Voter Education Project; Vote for America, Project Vote Smart |
| Philanthropy | - “Democratization of philanthropy”—Intermediaries that inspire and support new donors to use their money in pooled, facilitated, participatory and strategic philanthropic entities -- Women’s Funding Network, Acumen Fund, Community Foundations of America, Hispanics in Philanthropy, The Foundation Incubator, Social Venture Partners |



Promising practices for...

55 Plus

Promising practices and examples

| Best / promising practices (themes) | Examples from outstanding organizations |
|---|---|
| Creative social marketing | |
| <p>Use sophisticated Madison Avenue techniques to develop campaigns to recruit Third Agers, avoid “senior citizen” stigma.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Integrated, sustained community-wide campaign to change perceptions of aging and encourage greater engagement -- Cleveland Successful Aging Initiative - National messages and “branding” elements for local volunteer recruitment campaigns – Yonkers RSVP, Experience Corps |
| <p>Increase awareness of value of older adults through media campaigns, documentary stories and awards</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recruiting veteran journalists to write stories profiling contributions of older volunteers – National Council for the Aging Civic Engagement Project - High-visibility national awards for older volunteers -- MetLife/ National Assn of Area Agencies on Aging Older Volunteers Enrich America Awards, AARP Andrus Awards - Storytelling and photography to profile key innovations in engaging older adults, to use them as inspiration and role models for others -- Civic Ventures “Innovations” |

Promising practices and examples

page 2...

| Best / promising practices (themes) | Examples from outstanding organizations |
|---|--|
| New service opportunities | |
| <p>Incorporate structure and rewards of ‘work’ – including “relationships with a purpose” – in service</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recruit a critical mass of seniors to collaborate on addressing significant social problems -- Legal Services for Children, Rainbow Intergenerational Child Care Program, Cape Cod Senior Environmental Corps, RV Care-A-Vanners - Make innovative use of stipends, health benefits, and other enablers in creating unpaid, stipended, salaried opportunities for significant service |
| <p>Build intergenerational links by mobilizing Third Agers to work with and support young people</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Go beyond mentoring/tutoring to creative opportunities for intergenerational programming—Legal Services for Children, NRTA Teacher-Mentor Program, Rainbow IG Childcare, and Samaritan House Clinic - Bring stability and support to at-risk children through consistent, caring adult connections -- Experience Corps |



| Best / promising practices (themes) | Examples from outstanding organizations |
|--|---|
| New pathways to engagement | |
| <p>Reach Third Ager at a key “life stage transition” point—moving from midlife careers to next chapter -- with help in finding <i>direction and connection.</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Work with major age-neutral institutions—public libraries, community colleges, universities, churches—to enable them to play a role in the Third Age transition -- Life Options Phoenix and Cleveland - Provide information about and connections to engagement as part of a process of self-assessment and life planning -- The Transition Network, Minnesota Vital Aging Network - Build workplace-based mechanisms to support continued or expanded engagement in retirement -- Troops to Teachers, GE Elfun Society |