

Welcome – IAP2 Webinar

Getting Engaged / Staying Engaged - October 13, 2015

- ❖ **Blogging on Civic Engagement**
- ❖ **Citizen Academies**

Overview

- **Experiment: citizen-government-academic blogging on civic engagement**
- **Citizen academies: why, how, pros/cons, opportunities**

Civic Engagement Blogging

<http://cele.sog.unc.edu/>

Presenters

- Brian Bowman
- Stephen Hopkins
- Kevin Smith
- John Stephens




Civic Engagement Blogging

<http://cele.sog.unc.edu/>

Civic Engagement Learning
Exchange (CELE)



Civic Engagement Blogging

A photograph of the Madison County Courthouse, a large brick building with a classical portico supported by white columns. The words "MADISON COUNTY COURTHOUSE" are visible on the facade. The image is partially obscured by a semi-transparent grey box containing text.

Citizen voice not as active as government, academic in guiding models and evaluation of P2

Civic Engagement Blogging

Learning Exchange

Seek mutual education

- Citizen (4)
- Government officials (4)
- Academics (3)



Sample Blog Posts

Variety is the Spice of Government: Diversity & Inclusion

This entry was contributed by Jennifer Phillips on July 13, 2015 at 1:58 pm and is filed under Diversity.



Please note...

This site welcomes a variety of viewpoints and perspectives on community engagement. Ideas shared here should not be considered as being endorsed by the UNC School of Government in any way as the School is nonpartisan and policy-neutral.

<http://cele.sog.unc.edu/variety-is-the-spice-of-government-diversity-inclusion/>

Sample Blog Posts

Engaging Youth with Deliberative Problem-Solving

This entry was contributed by Sabrina Slagowski-Tipton on May 14, 2015 at 9:51 am and is filed under Capacity Building, Civic Education, Outreach Methods.



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<http://cele.sog.unc.edu/engaging-youth-with-deliberative-problem-solving/>

Sample Blog Posts

Translating academic research to results-oriented solutions

This entry was contributed by Shawn Colvin on March 30, 2015 at 9:44 am and is filed under Advisory Committees, Dialogue & Deliberation, Outreach Methods.



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<http://cele.sog.unc.edu/translating-academic-research-to-results-oriented-solutions/>

Sample Blog Posts

Staying Civically Engaged in Divisive Times: A Case for Anti-Racism Training

This entry was contributed by Cate Elander on January 29, 2015 at 3:44 pm and is filed under Capacity Building, Civic Education, Diversity.



Please note...

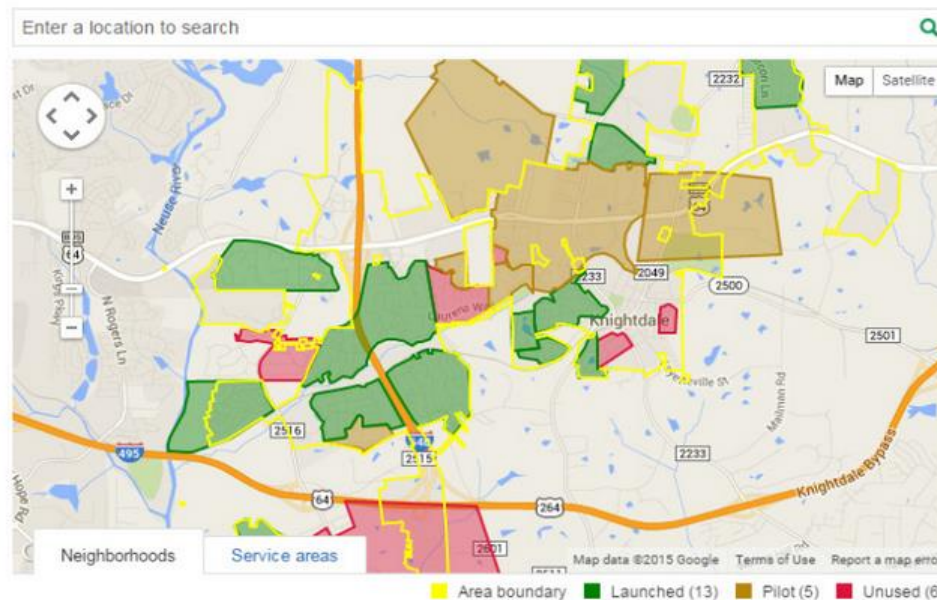
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Sample Blog Posts

Assessing Free Online Civic Engagement Tools – Three Examples

This entry was contributed by Brian Bowman on January 26, 2015 at 7:50 pm and is filed under Online Participation, Outreach Methods.



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<http://cele.sog.unc.edu/assessing-free-online-civic-engagement-tools-three-examples/>

Why I blog



- Stephen Hopkins
- Brian Bowman
- Kevin Smith

Why I blog – Survey: Positive, Rewarding



- Having a goal for thinking and writing about civic engagement
- Reading the posts of other bloggers
- Seeing my posts on the blog
- Getting positive feedback on my posts

Blogging: Challenges



- Kevin Smith
- Brian Bowman
- Stephen Hopkins

Blogging: Survey - Challenges



- Not having time to read the posts of other bloggers
- Not having comments on my blog posts. Are people reading what I write?

Things we are working on

- More Comments on blog posts
- Bloggers responding to each other, building on ideas
- Getting more viewers to get more comments

Summary Thoughts

Great project, just may take time.

This was my first time doing something like this and so far I like it and have had fun.

Request to IAP2

- Share blog
<http://cele.sog.unc.edu/>
- Consider guest blogging
- Expanding our group of contributors

Citizens Academies

*Building Capacity for Effective
Civic Engagement*

Rick Morse, UNC-CH School of
Government

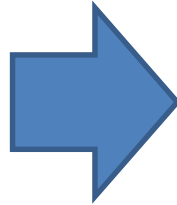
Jennifer Della Valle, Town of
Hillsborough

Civic Capacity

“Recent research shows that if we want to revitalize and sustain democratic citizenship, working to *raise levels of civic knowledge and information* would be one effective strategy, and a sensible place to begin.” (Bill Galston, Brookings Institution)

“In order to contribute in a meaningful way, *citizens need to be informed about the issues and understand how government functions*” (Callahan & Yang, 2005)

Civic Education



Increased Capacity
for
Civic Engagement



Citizens Academies



Educational programs conducted by cities and counties aiming to create better informed and engaged citizens.



Snapshot of North Carolina Citizens Academies

Typical Citizens Academy Program

Exceptions to the Norm

Started recently (less than 10 years).

Hickory's program launched in 1998.

Single local government, produced solely in-house.

The Durham Neighborhood College is a co-production of the City of Durham and Durham County.

Offered once annually, with an application process, a cohort group attending multiple sessions, and a graduation ceremony at the end.

Charlotte offers regular sessions throughout the year on a variety of topics; anyone can attend; no applications, cohorts, or graduation. A few offer the program twice annually.

Extensive curriculum covered over an average of eight, 2.5 hour sessions.

"Catawba County University" is offered in two, longer (4 hour) sessions.

Numbers of applicants close enough to target enrollment that usually everyone is accepted. Small waiting lists if necessary.

Some programs have much higher demand than available slots. Most of them report having waiting lists each year.

Cohort of 20-25 participants.

Some (mostly smaller) communities report cohorts of 8-12 participants.

Mean of reported program budgets is \$2,000 and median is \$1,600.

Three program budgets are \$6,000 while others report budgets in the \$200-400 range.

Purposes and Goals of Citizens Academies

(Basic)

(Advanced)

Knowledge

- Equip citizens with basic information about their local government.
- Help citizens that participate in local government become better informed.

- Help staff learn more about citizen perspectives on local government service.
- Citizens learn about key issues facing the community.

Involvement

- Encourage increased citizen involvement.
- Citizens learn how they can get more involved in local government.

- Explicitly prepare participants for service on boards and commissions.
- Cultivate community leadership in neighborhoods and community at large.

Community Relations

- Participants get to know—and improve lines of communication with—public officials.
- Participants can become informal ambassadors for the local government out in the community.

- Participants engage in dialogue with other citizens and local government officials.
- Community-building amongst participants themselves as well as with staff.

Testing Implicit Assumptions

H1: Increasing citizens' knowledge about local government will lead to increased civic engagement.

H2: Increasing citizens' knowledge about local government will lead to increased *interest and participation in local government affairs*.

H3: Increasing citizens' knowledge about local government will lead to qualitatively *“better” engagement*.



Methodology (2011 study)



- ✓ Alumni from twelve citizens academies
- ✓ 8 NC; 4 other VA, CA, FL
- ✓ 1102 valid emails (56% total alumni)
- ✓ N = 373 (34% response rate)
- ✓ Perceived level of engagement before and after participation in citizens academy

Hypothesis 1: Increased Local Government knowledge → increased civic engagement

How engaged were/are you in community affairs **before/since** attending this program?

4 – Very Engaged

3 – Somewhat Engaged

2 – Not Very Engaged

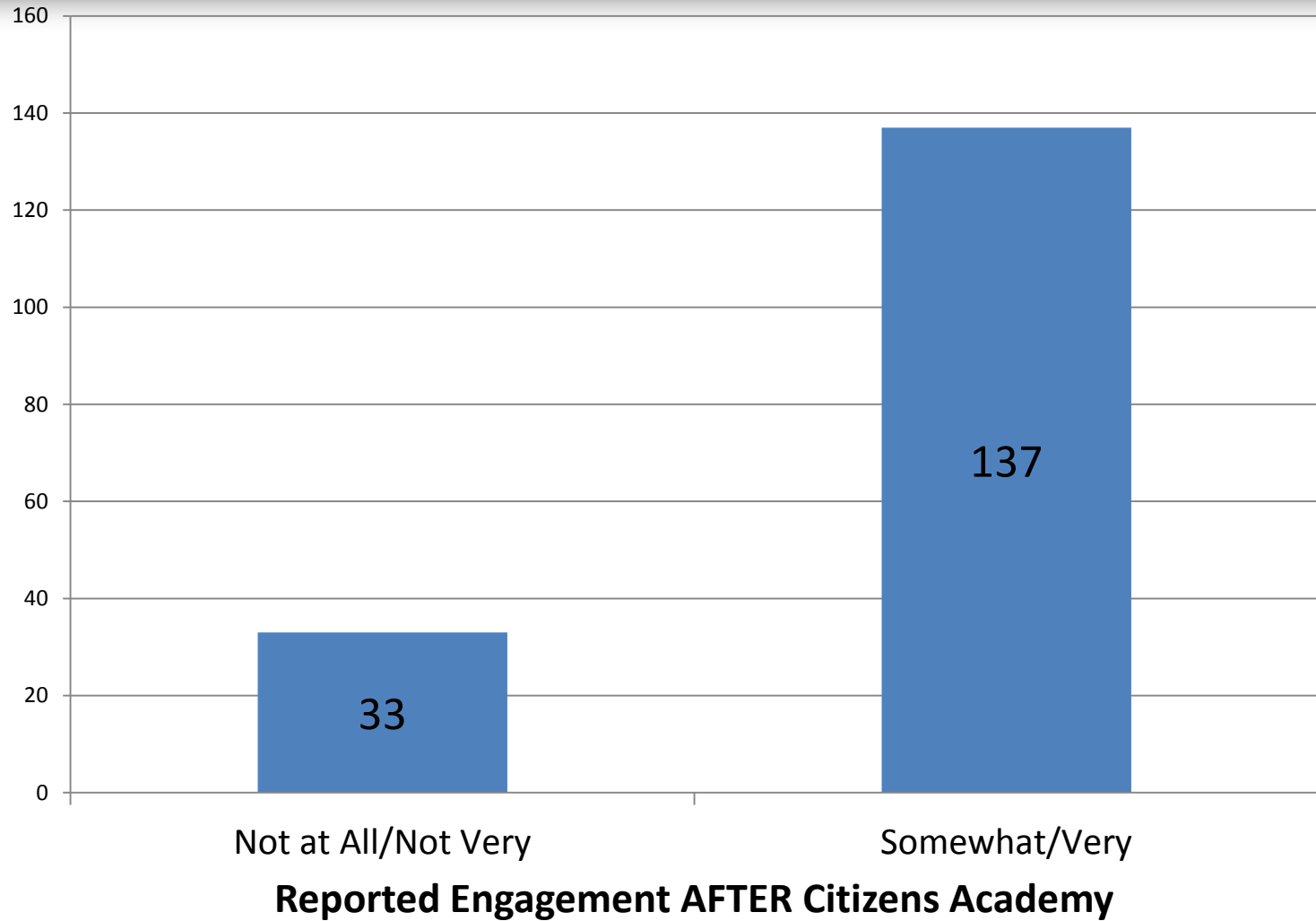
1 – Not at all Engaged

Mean **before**: 2.52 (StdDev .91)

Mean **after**: 3.20 (StdDev .68)

T-test Sig. at .000 level

Not at all or Not Very Engaged in Community Affairs
BEFORE Citizens Academy (N=170)



Hypothesis 2: Increased knowledge about local government → increased interest and participation in local government affairs

Survey Question

Since attending the citizens academy, has your participation in the following activities increased, decreased, or stayed about the same?

Five Categories of Engagement (22 total activities)

Participation with Local Government

Volunteering/Engagement

Political Participation

Staying Informed

Advocating for a Position

<i>Since attending the program, has your participation in the following increased, decreased, or stayed about the same?</i>	Percent Responded		
	Increased	About the Same	Decreased
contacting or visiting a public official to express your opinion	45.3%	53.4%	1.3%
contacting or visiting a public official to ask for assistance	40.2%	58.2%	1.3%
visiting local government websites, Facebook pages, or newsletters to stay informed	68.6%	30.6%	0.8%
attending formal local government meetings	41.8%	55.2%	2.9%
attending neighborhood meetings where community affairs are discussed	36.7%	60.3%	2.7%
attending information sessions or open houses hosted by a local government	42.6%	55.5%	1.9%
serving on local government volunteer board or committee	31.6%	65.1%	2.9%
working with others in your community to fix a problem or improve conditions	53.9%	44.8%	1.3%
donating to charitable or religious organizations	34.3%	64.1%	1.6%
serving on committees of community groups or organizations	41.3%	57.1%	1.6%
becoming an officer of community groups or organizations	30.0%	67.6%	2.1%
voting in local elections	23.1%	76.4%	0.0%
talking to people why they should vote for or against one of the parties or candidates	38.9%	60.1%	0.8%
wearing a campaign button, putting a sticker on your car, or placing a sign in front of your house	26.5%	72.1%	1.1%
contributing money to a candidate, a political party, etc.	20.4%	77.5%	1.6%
running for office	7.8%	89.5%	1.9%
reading magazines like Newsweek or Time, watching or listening to national news, etc.	27.6%	71.8%	0.5%
reading local newspapers or watching local news on television	39.9%	56.8%	2.7%
talking about current events with friends	58.7%	41.0%	0.3%
contacting newspaper, blog, etc. to express opinion on political issue	20.9%	78.0%	1.1%
taking part in a protest, march, or demonstration	6.7%	91.2%	2.1%
signing a petition about social or political issues	31.9%	66.5%	1.6%

Hypothesis 3: Increased knowledge about local government → qualitatively better engagement

Survey Question:

In what other ways has your civic engagement changed since attending the program?

- ✓ 193 responses (71%)
- ✓ 92% comments overall positive
- ✓ Most common theme is benefit of being more informed on their perceptions and how they engage



The Already Engaged

“Engagement didn't change due to the program because it was already high, but my engagement is more informed now.”

“I have a more informed perspective that enables my participation to be more effective. I have not only continued citizen activism but have also become more involved in town organizations and boards as a volunteer.”



The Newly Engaged

“I have developed a much greater appreciation for our city and the individuals hired to perform various tasks. I now promote to others how great our city really is and why being involved with a program such [the citizens academy] can shed an entirely different light on your views about our wonderful city.”

“The experience of learning and meeting staff members and seeing firsthand how our Town operates made me more appreciative, more interested, more invested and ultimately - more involved and supportive.”

“While my participation has increased somewhat since my doing the ... class, my *inclination* to participate and my encouragement of others to participate has increased.”



Conclusions

- Four groups of respondents
 - Already **very engaged**, CA did not increase engagement, but for most improved it (10%)
 - Somewhat engaged (40%), for most *CA improved* engagement, and for some (a third) engagement also *increased*
 - The disengaged (45%), the vast majority (81%) **increased and improved** engagement after CA
 - The **cynics**, likely critical before and still critical after CA experience (5%)

So what?



One Community's Experience

Jennifer Della Valle
Town of Hillsborough



Hillsborough Citizens Academy

Jenifer Della Valle

Management Analyst/Assistant Public Information Officer

Jen.DellaValle@HillsboroughNC.org

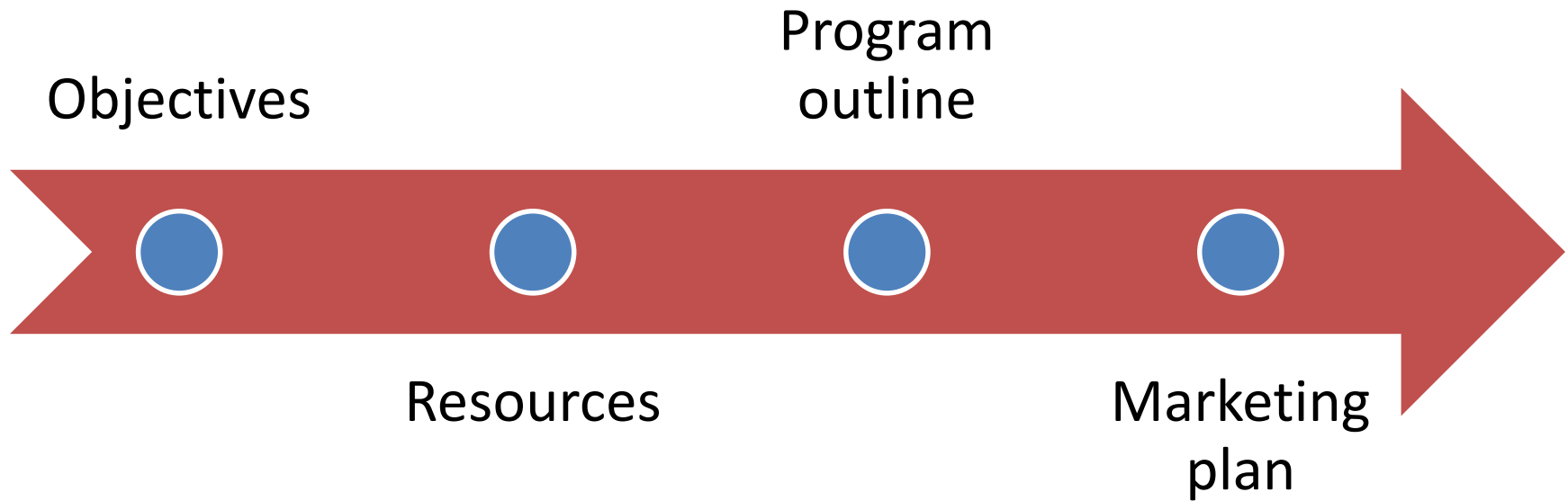


Getting Started

- History with Citizens Police Academy
- Evolved from original “Citizens Budget Academy” concept
- Board Support



Program Design



Challenges

- **Time Constraints**
 - Designing program
 - Staff, speakers, etc.
 - Sessions
 - Number of sessions
 - Hours



Results



Lessons Learned

- Evaluation
- Interactive exercises/sessions
- “Cohort” environment

Citizens Academy Evaluation Form
Final Evaluation

1. Please rate each of the 7 sessions based on overall quality:

	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good	Excellent
Foundation of Government					
Advisory Boards					
Planning					
Utilities System Tour					
Police & Fire					
Town Operations					
Budget Management					

2. How satisfied were you with the following logistical aspects of the program:


	Satisfied	Neutral	Dissatisfied
Session Locations			
Durham Tech			
Orange County Public Library			
Orange Rural Fire Department			
Session Time			
Most sessions — 7 to 9 p.m.			
Police & Fire — 7 to 9:30 p.m.			
Utilities Tour — 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.			
Session Duration			
Most sessions — 2 hours			
Police & Fire — 2 hours			
Utilities Tour — 5 hours			
Number of Sessions (7 total sessions)			
Course Pack			
Refreshments			

Please provide any comments you have:

3. How likely would you be to recommend this program to a friend?

_____ Very Likely _____

Citizens Academy
Presenter Evaluation Form



1. Please rate the following logistical aspects of the program:

	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good	Excellent
Session Time					
Session Location					
Session Duration					
Refreshments					

2. Please provide any comments you have related to program logistics:

3. How satisfied were you with the amount of time that you were given to present?

_____ Satisfied _____ Neutral _____ Dissatisfied

4. How satisfied were you with the amount of direction that you were given regarding your role as presenter?

_____ Satisfied _____ Neutral _____ Dissatisfied

5. How satisfied were you with the amount of time you were given to prepare for your session?

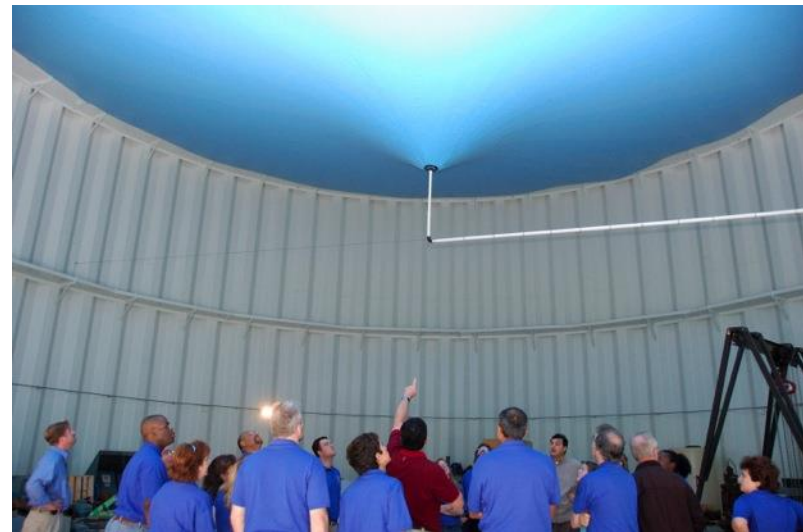
_____ Satisfied _____ Neutral _____ Dissatisfied



Identifying Promising Practices

- *Teaching*

- Experiential learning
- Field trips
- Dynamic presenters
- Learning from each other



Identifying Promising Practices

- *Leveraging*

- Diverse participants (expanding population of engaged citizens)
- Citizen-led program (Rockingham County)
- Pipeline to advisory boards (Cary)
- Focus groups (Durham)
- Next-step programs (Raleigh)



Identifying Promising Practices

- *Partnering*

- “Hybrid” programs (public/private partnerships)
- Joint city/county programs



Citizen Academy Resources

<http://www.sog.unc.edu/resources/microsites/citizens-academies>