

SAGE Citizen Project – Summary of 2022 Work

What is the SAGE Citizen Project?

SAGE is a nonprofit organization that inspires people over fifty to give forward with their time, money, and voice so that younger and future generations can thrive. Among our programs, we offer the Citizen Project to address challenging trends in America that indicate we are growing increasingly divided along political and other lines and more hostile toward people who hold different views. Through our initiatives, we collect and share examples of actions that bring people together across differences to solve public problems. We define public problems as problems that most people view as problems, most people believe something ought to be done, but they disagree what should be done. Because we work primarily with older adults, we focus on the leadership role older adults play to bring people together across differences. We also strongly support opportunities for generations to connect and work together.

SAGE is part of a network of organizations that intentionally bring people together across differences. Our work is also closely aligned with organizations that address political, racial, generational, and other differences. Like many other groups, we are concerned about long-term, community challenges that we have been unable to solve for many decades. We are also concerned that when serious challenges persist over time, our inability to solve them may contribute to growing distrust and lack of confidence in our democracy. We believe that when we invest time to build understanding between people who hold different views, it becomes easier to talk with one another, listen to each other's priorities, and to pursue enduring solutions. This work is important in Oregon (where SAGE is located) and nationwide.

Learn more about the SAGE Citizen Project at WeAreSage.org/bridge-divides.

What is the goal of the Citizen Project? What initiatives are we pursuing in 2022?

The goal of the Citizen Project is to inspire and support people to work across differences to solve public problems. This year, we aim to reach 500+ people through our events and to learn how our offerings influence people to identify shared goals in their local communities and to work across differences to pursue these goals. We are also working to collaborate with a growing network of groups who bring people together across differences to solve problems.

See below for a summary of these two initiatives. In addition to these initiatives, we plan to support the work of the [Classroom Law Project](#) to strengthen civics education in high schools.

Initiative 1. Host and co-host events that engage and support people to work across differences to solve public problems. Our events have two different formats – speakers and discussions. These events can take place online, in-person, or hybrid (online and in-person).

- **Speaker Events.** Present events that feature great speakers who offer an important perspective on issues underlying the Citizen Project.

- **Discussion Events.** Convene discussions that engage people with diverse views to share what they might hold in common and how they could work together to solve problems. We can tailor our discussions to each host's needs. See below examples of past SAGE offerings.

Initiative 2. Contribute to the larger movement in Oregon to bring people together across differences by leading or supporting shared initiatives with like-minded groups.

- Host our fourth state-wide convening for *groups* that work to bring people together across differences to solve public problems. This year's convening will focus on connections between groups, learning from and coordinating with each other, and considering a long-term learning network that could facilitate more specific action networks or campaigns.
- Continue to explore with other groups the value of regional summits for *individuals* or *groups* who are interested in learning about the skills, practices, and initiatives that bring people together across differences to solve public problems.

Examples of SAGE Event Offerings (we tailor events to host interests)

- **What can you do to bring people together across differences?**
Today's news can make us feel like our communities are more polarized and less able to bring people together to take on projects and solve problems. What do you think? Can we work across differences and lead good projects together? In this gathering, guests explore whether they share long-term goals in their community and, if so, what projects might come about to pursue these goals. Guests are encouraged to share their own ideas, insights, and actions. SAGE also highlights the work of organizations across Oregon that help communities address public problems or take advantage of new opportunities.
- **Bringing people together across differences: What is the leadership role of older adults?**
SAGE engages older adults as leaders to take on challenges facing younger and future generations. We're concerned about growing divides in our country, and we know older adults have energy, experience, and resources to make a difference. In this gathering, guests share ideas about how to promote better discussions that bring people together to solve problems. Young adults are very welcome to attend and share their views too.
- **What are our shared values? How can we listen to understand?**
There's plenty in the news about what divides us, but let's talk about what unites us. Turns out, that despite the rancor in the news and on social media, many of us share common values that unite us in service of a greater good. In this conversation, we discuss common values as a foundation for working across divides. We also practice listening to each other so we can better understand our concerns and how each of us can make a difference.
- **What would we have to give up to get the political system we want?**
Every American is affected by divisions that prevent us from making progress on public problems. We are finding it harder and harder to talk with one another, and it is damaging in many ways. In this forum, we rely on a guide published by the National Issues Forum called *A House Divided* to help participants discuss how we should approach this challenge.