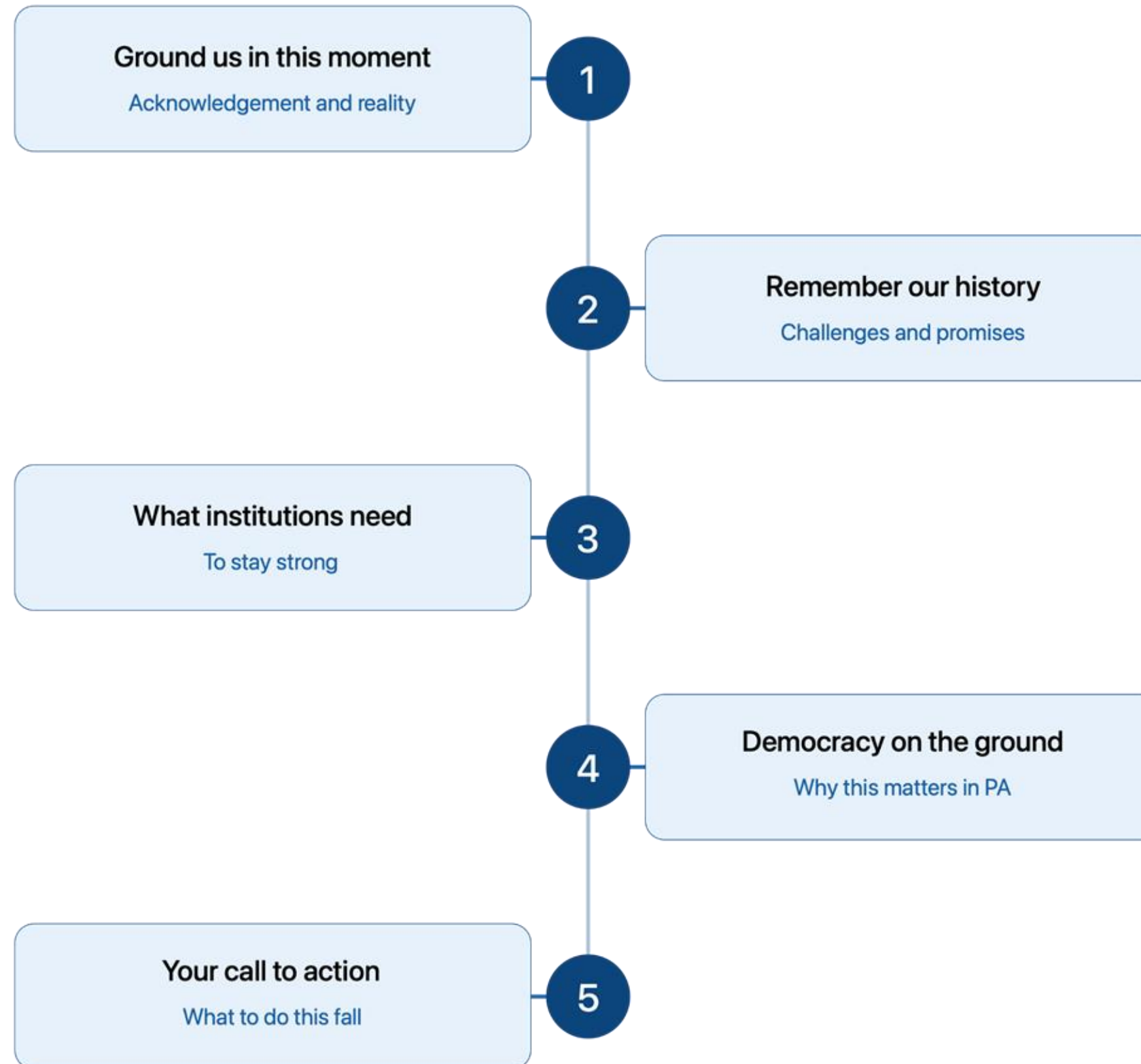




**Making Democracy Work:
Strengthening Institutions, Engaging Communities,
& Empowering Citizens**

*Millersville University
6th Annual Sustainable Development Goals Conference
September 15, 2026*

Democracy is Not a Spectator Sport



WE HOLD THESE TRUTHS TO BE
SELF-EVIDENT,
THAT ALL MEN ARE CREATED
EQUAL,
THAT THEY ARE ENDOWED
BY THEIR CREATOR WITH CERTAIN
UNALIENABLE
RIGHTS,
THAT AMONG THESE ARE
LIFE,
LIBERTY
AND THE PURSUIT OF
HAPPINESS

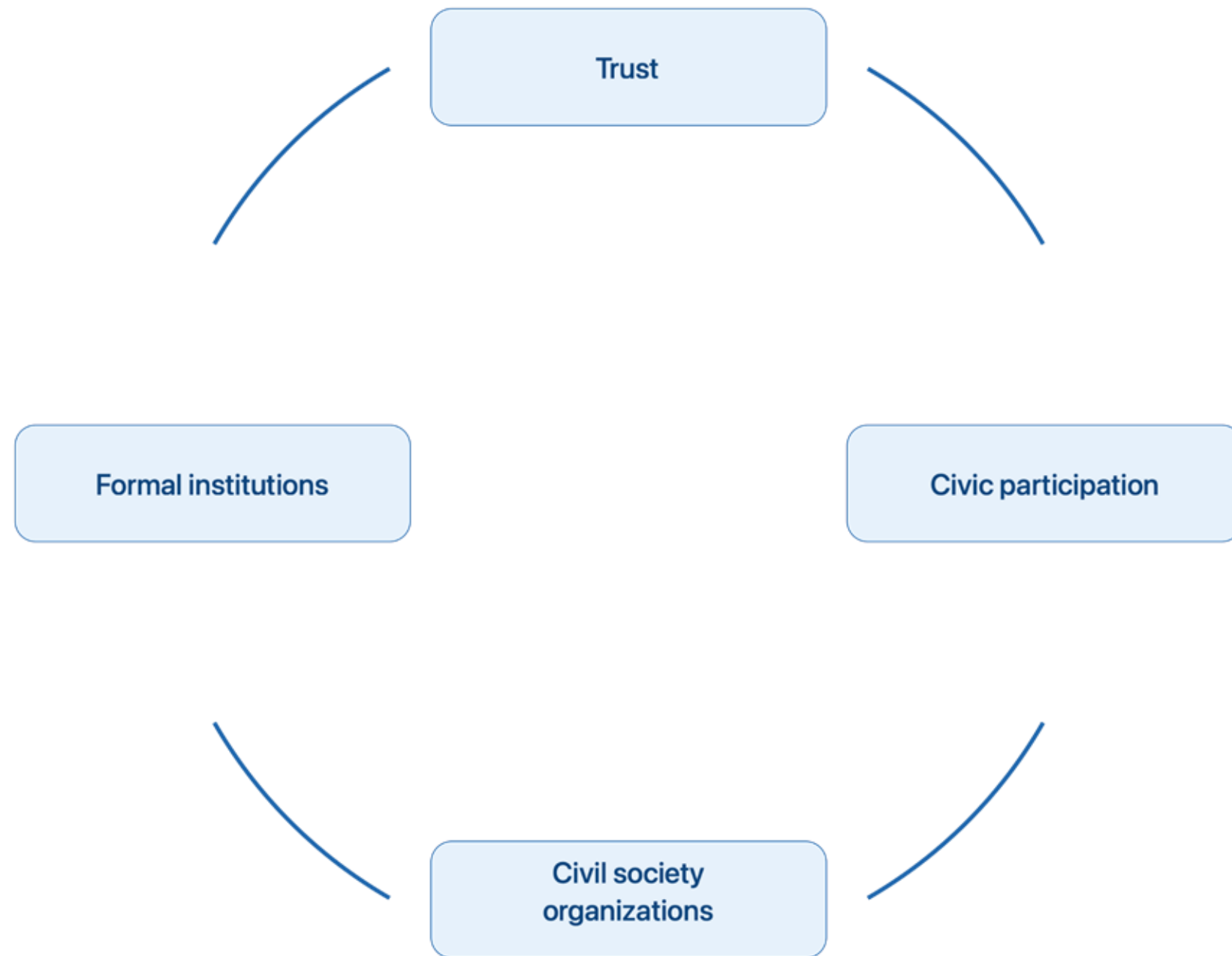
The American Experiment

- The Founding Documents & America's 250th Anniversary
- Who was left out
- How civil rights were won (and are being lost)
- The work continues....

A R T I C L E S
O F
CONFEDERATION
AND
PERPETUAL UNION
BETWEEN THE
S T A T E S

We the People of the United States
do hereby declare our independence, and that we are united as one People in the same Bonds of Union and Affection, and that we are entitled to the same Rights and Privileges.
All legislative Powers herein granted shall be vested in a Congress of the United States, which shall consist of a Senate and House of Representatives.
Representatives and direct Taxes shall be apportioned among the several States which may be included within this Union, according to their respective Numbers, which shall be determined by adding to the whole Number of free Persons, including those bound to Service for a Year, and the three fourths of all other Persons who shall not have attained to the Age of 18 Years, the Number of free Persons, including those bound to Service for a Year, and the three fourths of all other Persons who shall not have attained to the Age of 18 Years, in each State, as the Census shall determine.

Strong Institutions: What This Means & What They Require



- Strength ≠ legal codification alone
- Requires: participation, engagement, accountability, & trust
- Relationship between trust, civic participation, civil society organizations, & institutions

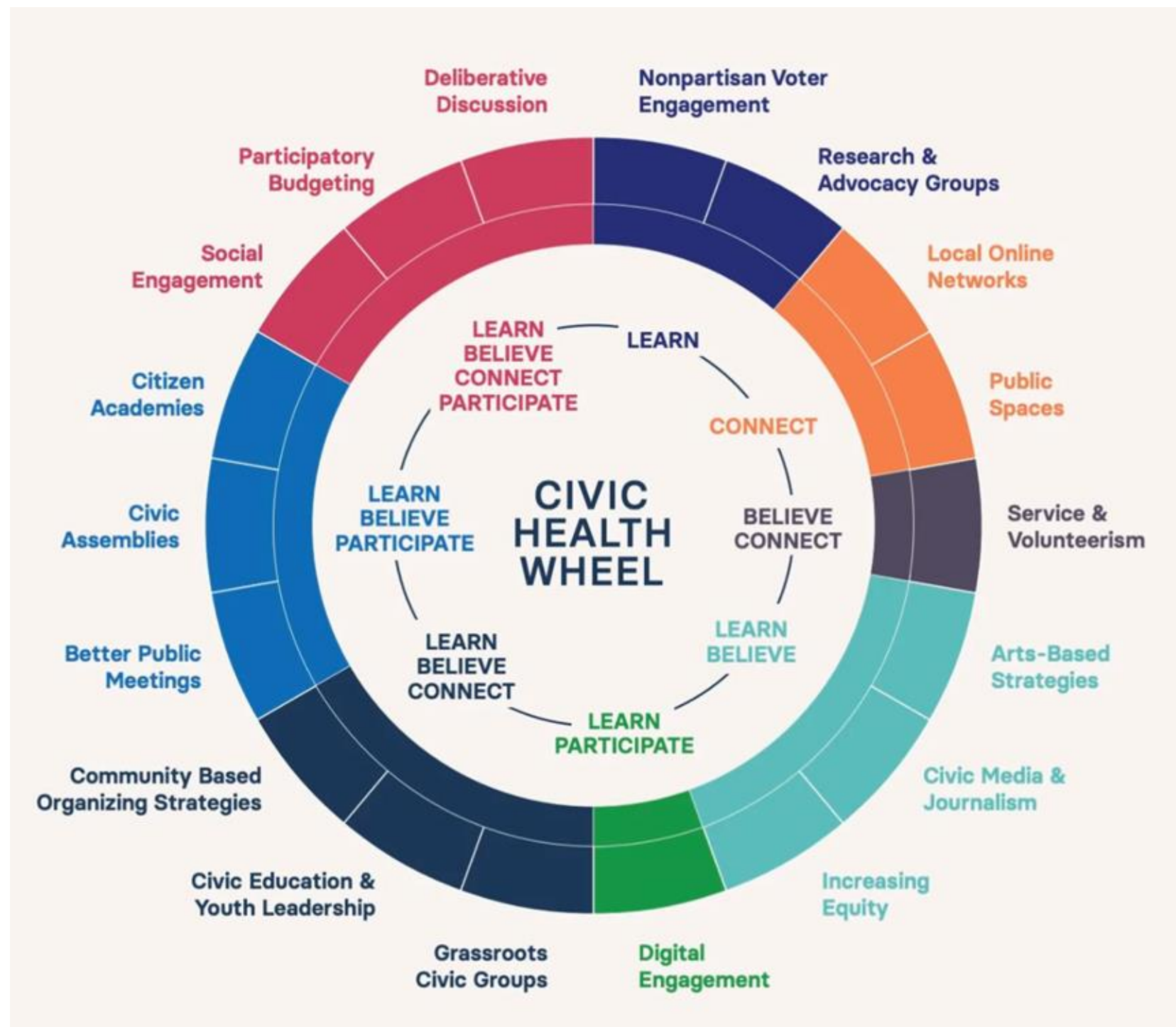
Engaging Communities or What Democracy Looks Like on the Ground

- 67 counties. 67 different Board of Elections. Where you live determines how your vote counts.
- Voter education is hard on a good day — confusion coming from the federal level and misinformation makes it exponentially harder
- Consequences fall hardest on voters who already face the most barriers
- In response – civic organizations to the rescue:
 - Poll workers & election protection volunteer, canvass and certification observation volunteers, Board of Elections volunteer monitors
- Voter registration and education — at campuses, libraries, naturalization ceremonies, festivals — without pause
- Building civic infrastructure that lasts through and beyond November



Empowering Citizens or What You Can Do

Civic Health Wheel



- **Educators** → use what you learn today, bring into your classrooms
- **Journalists** → share our stories
- **Elected officials** → transparency = trust
- **Community Leaders, Advocates, Activists** → show up & bring 3 friends; be a civic influencer
- **All Pennsylvanians**
 - We don't all have to do everything, we just need to do something
 - Vote...vote, vote, vote
 - Volunteer, start small if it feels scary
- **REMEMBER:** the League & other organizations are here to help!

Questions

