The Project Citizen Simulated Hearing is the culmination of an interactive civic education program designed to engage adolescents in the civic life of their communities. In Project Citizen, a group of participating young people identify and analyze issues and problems facing their community (school, neighborhood, town/city, state). They select one of these issues or problems for detailed study. After they complete their research, they propose a public policy to deal with that issue or problem. Finally, they develop an action plan detailing the steps to take to have their public policy proposal adopted by the appropriate government authorities.

The purpose of the simulated hearing (the oral presentation component) is to teach students to present and defend reasoned opinions related to influencing public policy decision-making in their communities.

For the simulated hearing, students or youth organization members are subdivided into four groups, one group for each section of the portfolio. Each group has the following primary responsibility:

Portfolio Group One	Explaining the problem
Portfolio Group Two	Examining alternative policies
Portfolio Group Three	Proposing a public policy
Portfolio Group Four	Developing an action plan

Each group makes a prepared four-minute presentation. The group then responds for six minutes to follow-up questions posed by you and the other members of the evaluator panel. Each of the four groups addresses your panel for a total of ten minutes. At the conclusion of each presentation, you and the other panel members should provide constructive feedback.

The following information has been prepared to assist you in asking follow-up questions to each of the four groups who make presentations. Please remember that these questions are suggested only as a guide to help you elicit additional information or elaborate on information presented in the testimony.

The goals of the follow-up period and guiding questions are to help you determine how much the students have learned about the problem they have investigated and the information-gathering and problem-solving process they used. The more you learn about what the students have studied and proposed, the better you will be able to evaluate their presentation.

The following information has been prepared to assist you in evaluating each of the four portfolio groups that will make a presentation. The entire class developed a portfolio based on their research. The portfolio has two components: a display component and a documentation component. The two components taken together constitute the portfolio. The prepared statements and answers to your follow-up questions should be based on the portfolio. You should evaluate the student presentation using the five parts of the "Hearing Evaluation Rating Sheet" Appendix F, one for each of the four display and binder sections, and one that is an overall evaluation of the students' presentations.

GROUP ONE   Explaining the Problem

Group One should provide a detailed explanation of the issue/problem chosen by the class and why that particular issue/problem was selected. During the prepared testimony phase, the group should be able to provide a detailed description of the problem including its scope and impact on the community.

Possible follow-up questions might include:

- How widespread is this issue/problem in your community?

- Is this an issue/problem that people in your community think is important? How do you know?

- What has public reaction to the issue/problem been?

- What sources of information did you use to research the issue/problem?

- What more did you learn about the issue/problem as a result of your research?

- What branch of government do you think should be dealing with the issue/problem and why?

- Are there policies, regulations, ordinances, or rules in place now that address the issue/problem? Do you believe they are adequate to deal with the problem? Why or why not?

GROUP TWO   Examining Alternative Policies

Group Two should focus on explaining present and/or alternative policies designed to solve the problem or address the issue. In some instances, there is no existing policy so students are expected to develop public policy alternatives to address the problem.

Testimony should include strengths and weaknesses of existing or proposed policies. Where no policy exists, students should explain what alternative policy proposals may be pending or are being recommended by their classmates, community groups, special interest groups, formal boards, the legislature, and/or city councils. Advantages and disadvantages of each policy or proposal should be presented and discussed.

Possible follow-up questions might include:

- What sources did you use to locate existing or proposed policies?

- What more did you learn about the issue/problem after you examined alternative policies?

- If a public policy currently exists, why does it need to be changed?

- Which groups or individuals support the existing policy or proposed new policy and why?

- Which groups or individuals oppose changing the policy or propose new policy and why?

- Are there other policies or solutions that you did not include in your portfolio or in your presentation? What are they? Why did you exclude them?

GROUP THREE   Proposing a Public Policy

Group Three should focus on the policy or solution being proposed by the class. Their explanation should include a clear rationale for making changes to existing policy, eliminating existing policy, or implementing new policy. If appropriate, the students should present a cost analysis. The group must include an explanation of why their proposed policy does not violate the federal or state constitution.

Possible follow-up questions might include:

- What branch or agency of government is the proposed policy directed toward? Why is it directed toward this branch or agency?

- Have you considered the total cost of implementing your policy? Why or why not? If you have, what is the total cost and what is included in the cost?

- Where would the funds come from? What resources besides money might be needed?

- Does the civil community or private sector (business) have any responsibility to correct the problem or assist in carrying out the proposed public policy?

GROUP FOUR   Developing an Action Plan

Group Four should focus on giving a detailed explanation of the steps needed to have their proposed policy adopted by the appropriate government officials. Testimony should include a statement on how long it might realistically take to get the proposed policy adopted and implemented.

Possible follow-up questions might include:

- How could the groups or individuals who support your proposal help to influence or convince government officials to adopt your proposal?

- Are there other individuals or groups who might support your recommended solution or policy? Why would they?

- What individuals or groups oppose your recommended solution or policy? Why do they oppose it?

- How would you respond to the arguments of the individuals or groups that are opposed to your policy?

- How long would it take to implement the proposal?

- What results would you expect if you carried out your action plan?

- What do you think might happen if your proposal were not adopted?

GENERAL QUESTIONS

If appropriate, these generic questions might be asked of any of the four groups.

- If the group cites a specific law or legal case in their testimony, ask for an explanation of how this particular law or case supports their position.

- What did you learn from participating in Project Citizen about the role of government officials?

- What did you learn from participating in Project Citizen about the issues/problems facing your community?

FEEDBACK

The simulated hearing component of Project Citizen is an extension of classroom learning. As such, it presents another opportunity for you to help students understand the complexity of the public policymaking process. After each group makes its presentation, you are expected to provide those students with feedback. These remarks should be short but constructive. You should commend the students for their work and help them learn from the process.

Always begin with positive remarks adding helpful examples of how the students might improve their presentation, e.g., "I liked the way in which you explained the problem statement. I would like to suggest that you include more data on the number of people affected by this serious problem."

Adolescent students will undoubtedly make errors in their presentation. During the feedback session, please make the correction in a tactful, sensitive, and diplomatic manner. For example, "Your presentation included an important reference to the Supreme Court's ruling in *New Jersey v. T.L.O.* That case relates to the Fourth Amendment on unlawful 'search and seizure.' Because your presentation focused on 'free speech,' you might think about using the *Tinker v. Des Moines* case instead."

A Project Citizen hearing provides an opportunity for students to share in a public forum what they have learned about a community problem and how they are proposing to solve it through the public policymaking process. The presentation will be made by four different groups of students each presenting a different aspect of the entire group's research and their recommendation for a public policy. When evaluating each group, consider the Criteria for Evaluation, on the next page, for that group of students and then use the rating scale. Give only one whole numeric rating (1–10) for each of the five sections of the Criteria for Evaluation.

Level of Achievement	Average Rating
Excellent	9 – 10
Above Average	7 – 8
Average	5 – 6
Below Average	3 – 4
Insufficient	1 – 2

GROUP	CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION	RATING	COMMENTS
	EVALUATOR		
	SCHOOL NAME/ TEACHER		
1	**Understanding of the Problem** • States and explains the problem and its causes and presents evidence that there is a problem • Demonstrates an understanding of issue(s) involved in the problem • Demonstrates an understanding of existing or proposed public policies • Explains disagreements about the problem that may exist in the community • Explains why government should be involved in the solution		
2	**Analysis of Alternative Policies** • Presents two or three alternative public policies to address the problem • Explains advantages and disadvantages of each alternative policy presented • Identifies controversies and conflicts that need to be addressed for each alternative		
3	**Public Policy Development and Persuasiveness** • States a public policy that addresses the problem and identifies the government branch or agency responsible for enacting their proposed public policy • Supports their proposed public policy with reasoning and evidence • Identifies and explains advantages and disadvantages of their proposed public policy • Explains and gives supporting information for why their proposed public policy is constitutional		
4	**Implementation of an Action Plan** • Identifies individuals and groups, both supporters and opponents, who will need to be influenced • Identifies government officials, both supporters and opponents, who will need to be influenced • Outlines and explains an action process for getting their proposed public policy enacted • Proposes action that builds and expands on evidence presented in previous panels		
OVERALL HEARING	**Extent to Which the Entire Presentation** • Constructs a clear and convincing sequence from one group to the next • Uses and documents research from multiple sources and makes reference to sources and research evidence they used • References relevant and appropriate graphics and written information • Uses relevant and appropriate graphics and written information • Uses standards of good oral presentation (pace, projection, articulation, poise, eye contact) • Shares speaking responsibility while making the presentation • Includes evidence of reflection that states what the students learned		
	TOTAL POINTS AWARDED		