Module 2: DC Then, DC Now, DC Next

Purpose: Participants explore how DC's history shaped today's systems and inequities, learn how local government and democracy work, examine how public budgets express priorities, and connect their vision for the District to civic participation and future advocacy.

Outcomes

- Connect selected historical decisions and community struggles to present-day conditions in DC
- Identify the major institutions involved in DC government and explain their different roles.
- Explain how DC Home Rule and federal authority shape local democracy.
- Describe the basic public budget process and identify opportunities for community participation.
- Connect youth priorities to the institutions, policies, and resources that can help create change.
- Develop a youth-centered vision for DC's future that serves as a bridge to advocacy and organizing.

Learning Journey

Past → Place → Structure → Resources → Vision → Civic Action

The module begins with the history beneath the places young people know. It then moves from historical context to the structure of local government, from government structure to public resources and budgets, and from those systems to a youth-created vision for the future. Participants do not yet complete a full power map or campaign plan. Instead, they build the civic foundation needed to use those tools meaningfully in later modules.





Curriculum Connections

Connection	How This Module Fits
Builds from	Builds on Module 1's Community Agreement and Youth-Adult Partnership Commitments so civic learning happens in a culture of belonging and shared power.
Reuses	Community agreements; shared-power expectations; youth expertise about neighborhood conditions.
Frameworks and tools	Past-Present-Future; DC government map; operating and capital budgets; DC Future Agenda.
Products to carry forward	Carry the DC Future Agenda and unanswered civic questions into Module 3 research and Module 4 policy analysis.

Module at a Glance

Lesson	Primary Focus	Suggested Run Time	Key Product
1. DC Then.	History, place, segregation, civil rights, democracy, and community change	60 minutes	Then-and-now history connections
2. Who Runs DC?	Local government structure, Home Rule, federal authority, and civic access points	60 minutes	Youth-friendly government structure guide
3. Follow the Money.	Operating and capital budgets, public priorities, hearings, and implementation	60 minutes	Youth budget priorities sheet
4. DC Next.	Future vision, responsible institutions, public decisions, and civic action	60 minutes	DC Future Agenda

Lesson 1: DC Then — The History Beneath Our Feet

Purpose: Participants explore selected moments in DC history and consider how decisions about land, freedom, housing, education, democracy, and neighborhood development continue to shape young people's lives.

Outcomes / Youth Learning Goals

- I can identify important events and community struggles in DC history.
- I can connect at least one historical decision to a condition I see in DC today.
- I can ask whose experiences are centered, missing, or contested in a historical account.
- I can explain that present-day inequities were shaped by choices, policies, institutions, and organizing.

Age Adaptations

- **Ages 11–14:** Use 6–8 timeline milestones, large visuals, neighborhood maps, and sentence starters.
- **Ages 15–17:** Find additional short primary source excerpts and ask youth to compare an official decision with a community response.
- **Ages 18–24:** Add questions about property, wealth, displacement, federal authority, and how historical narratives influence current policy debates.

Process

Before participants arrive, post the visual timeline and selected maps or photographs. Begin with a place-based check-in and a separate visual icebreaker. Youth then complete a timeline gallery walk, discuss whose stories are centered or missing, and create past-to-present connections. Close by identifying one historical question the group wants to carry into the rest of the module.

Suggested Run Time

60 minutes. Follow the exact agenda below. If the group needs more processing time, reduce examples or a practice round; protect the welcome, check-in, youth choice, core participant product, reflection, and closing.

Materials and Preparation

- DC History at a Glance visual timeline
    - See: https://dchistory.org/dc-history-timeline
- Printed timeline cards or station pages.
- Sticky notes in two or three colors.
- Historical and current neighborhood maps or photographs.
- Then-and-Now Connection worksheet.
- Markers, chart paper, optional fidgets, water, and snacks.
- Facilitator source notes from the appendix.

Agenda and Activity Guide

Activity	Suggested Run Time	Purpose	Materials	Facilitator Instructions / Suggested Language
Welcome and Purpose	5 minutes	Introduce the module and connect history to advocacy.	Posted module journey	Welcome participants. Say: "Before we learn how to change systems, we need to understand how DC became the city it is today. History is more than a list of dates. It helps us see how choices, policies, resistance, and community care shaped the opportunities and challenges we experience now."
Check-In: My DC Place	5 minutes	Connect identity and lived experience to place without requiring disclosure.	Optional map or index cards	Ask: "What is one place in DC that matters to you? A block, school, park, library, recreation center, business, or gathering place? What makes it meaningful?" Participants may share aloud, write, point to a map, or pass. Avoid asking youth to reveal a home address or other precise personal information.
Icebreaker: Old, New, or Not Sure?	10 minutes	Activate curiosity about the city and challenge assumptions.	Four Corners signs or hand signals	Name several DC places, traditions, or institutions. Participants guess whether each is older than 25 years, younger than 25 years, or unsure. Use examples appropriate to the group. After each guess, share one short fact and emphasize that "not sure" is a valuable starting point for research.
Visual Timeline Gallery Walk	15 minutes	Explore selected milestones through images and short text.	Visual timeline, station cards, sticky notes	Ask youth to rotate and leave notes using three prompts: "I knew this," "This surprised me," and "I think this still affects DC because...". Encourage participants to notice both government decisions and community organizing. An alternative would be a field trip to the MLK Library or DC History Center.

Activity	Suggested Run Time	Purpose	Materials	Facilitator Instructions / Suggested Language
Whose Story Is Here?	8 minutes	Practice historical inquiry and identify missing perspectives.	Chart paper	Ask: “Whose experiences are easy to see on this timeline? Whose stories may be missing (people, communities, etc)? What would we need to research before claiming we understand the full story?” Record questions rather than rushing to fill every gap. Reinforce that responsible history uses multiple sources and distinguishes evidence from assumptions.
Past-to-Present Connections	12 minutes	Connect history to current systems and community conditions.	Then-and-Now worksheet	In pairs or small groups, select one milestone. Complete: What happened? Who made or influenced the decision? Who was affected or benefited? What community response or resistance occurred? Where might we see a connection today? Invite groups to share one connection and one question they still have.
Closing Reflection	5 minutes	Consolidate learning and bridge to government structure.	Exit slips	Ask: “What is one part of DC’s past that helps you understand the present differently?”

Facilitator Check

Listen to see whether youth can connect a historical choice or struggle to a present-day condition without treating the connection as automatic or overly simplistic. Youth should also understand that historical accounts can sometimes omit important voices.

Lesson 2: Who Runs DC? — Government, Home Rule, and Democracy

Purpose: Participants learn how DC government is structured, how local responsibilities are divided, how Home Rule differs from full state authority, and where young people and communities can engage public institutions.

Outcomes / Youth Learning Goals

- I can describe the basic roles of the Mayor, DC Council, Attorney General, courts, agencies, ANCs, State Board of Education, and Congress.
- I can explain what Home Rule means and name at least one limitation on DC self-government.
- I can match common community issues with the institutions most responsible for addressing them.
- I can identify at least two ways young people can participate in DC civic life.

Age Adaptations

- **Ages 11–14:** Use role cards, icons, and concrete scenarios such as a broken streetlight, school rule, recreation program, or bus concern.
- **Ages 15–17:** Add Council committees, agency oversight, public hearings, and student representation examples.
- **Ages 18–24:** Add independent agencies, courts, implementation gaps, federal review, and distinctions between formal authority and community influence.

Process

Post the DC government structure visual and prepare role cards. After the check-in and icebreaker, teach the major institutions in short sections. Youth complete a “Who Does What?” matching activity and apply the structure to community scenarios. Define power mapping as a later tool, but do not complete a power map in this lesson.

Suggested Run Time

60 minutes. Follow the exact agenda below. If the group needs more processing time, reduce examples or a practice round; protect the welcome, check-in, youth choice, core participant product, reflection, and closing.

Materials and Preparation

- DC Government Structure visual from Appendix B.
- Government role cards and scenario cards.
- “Who Does What?” matching worksheet.
- Chart paper and markers.
- Optional current DC organizational chart.
- Home Rule key-terms handout.
- Optional internet access for checking an agency or committee.

Agenda and Activity Guide

Activity	Suggested Run Time	Purpose	Materials	Facilitator Instructions / Suggested Language
Welcome and Purpose	5 minutes	Frame government structure as a tool for civic action.	Government structure visual	Say: “Knowing that something is unfair is important. Knowing which institution has the responsibility, authority, or resources to address it helps us decide where to speak, ask questions, testify, organize, or follow up.” Display the visual and preview the major parts of the lesson.
Check-In: A Decision That Affected Me	5 minutes	Connect government and institutional decisions to daily life.	Optional index cards	Ask: “What is one rule, program, service, or public decision that affects young people in DC?” Participants may name a general example rather than a personal story. Record themes such as schools, transit, housing, recreation, safety, jobs, health, or public space.
Icebreaker: Who Would You Call?	8 minutes	Surface existing knowledge about public institutions.	Scenario slips	Read a scenario such as a dangerous intersection, a missing recreation area, programming, a school lunch, or a neighborhood development proposal. Ask groups to guess whom they would contact first and why. Do not correct every answer immediately; use the guesses to introduce overlapping roles and the need to research responsibility.

Activity	Suggested Run Time	Purpose	Materials	Facilitator Instructions / Suggested Language
Mini-Lesson: DC Government Structure	12 minutes	Explain formal roles and the special context of DC governance.	Structure visual and role cards	Introduce each institution in plain language. Mayor/executive: proposes priorities and manages agencies. Council: makes laws, approves the budget, and oversees agencies. Agencies: implement programs and rules. The Office of the Attorney General (OAG) enforces the laws of the District, provides legal advice to the District's government agencies, and promotes the interests of the District's residents. ANCs: advise on neighborhood matters. State Board: approves certain state-level education regulations and advises on education policy. Courts: decide local legal matters. Congress: retains authority over DC under Home Rule. Pause after each role for one example.
Home Rule and Democracy	8 minutes	Explain local self-government and its limits.	Home Rule terms handout	Say: "Home Rule gives DC residents an elected Mayor and Council, but it is not the same as the authority held by a state." Explain that Congress reviews local legislation and retains significant constitutional authority over the District. Invite youth to name questions or tensions this creates. Keep the discussion factual and distinguish current law from political positions about statehood.

Activity	Suggested Run Time	Purpose	Materials	Facilitator Instructions / Suggested Language
Activity: Who Does What?	15 minutes	Apply the structure to realistic youth and community issues.	Role cards, scenarios, matching worksheet	In small groups, match each scenario with: the institution with primary responsibility, other institutions that may influence the outcome, and one public participation option. Remind groups that more than one institution may be involved. During the debrief, ask what evidence would confirm their answer, such as an agency mission page, Council committee assignment, law, regulation, or budget document. After identifying the institution, walk through who holds formal authority, who implements the decision, and what power affected people, youth, communities, and organized groups can build or use.
Closing Reflection	7 minutes	Check understanding and bridge to budgets.	Exit slips	Ask: “Which part of DC government feels clearer now?” and “Which institution do you still want to understand better?” Close: “Institutions show us where decisions happen. Budgets show us which priorities receive resources. That is where we go next.”

Facilitator Check

Listen for whether youth distinguish the roles of the Mayor, DC Council, agencies, courts, ANCs, and Congress and can name at least one realistic public-participation entry point.

Lesson 3: Follow the Money — Budgets, Priorities, and Public Decisions

Purpose: Participants learn how operating and capital budgets support public services and long-term investments, how DC's budget moves from proposal to approval and implementation, and how community members can influence and monitor public spending.

Outcomes / Youth Learning Goals

- I can explain the difference between an operating budget and a capital budget.
- I can describe the major stages of the DC budget process.
- I can connect a youth priority to the agencies, programs, or investments that may require funding.
- I can identify ways young people and communities can participate before, during, and after budget decisions.

Age Adaptations

- **Ages 11–14:** Use a small set of illustrated budget choices, round numbers, and familiar examples such as recreation, school supports, transit, libraries, and mental health.
- **Ages 15–17:** Add agency budgets, hearings, testimony, and the difference between funding a program and changing a law.
- **Ages 18–24:** Add revenue, recurring versus one-time funds, implementation, capital timelines, oversight, and questions about equity and distribution.

Process

Prepare the budget-process visual and a simplified version of the Youth Budget Choices activity. Begin with a values check-in and a quick resource-allocation icebreaker. Teach operating and capital budgets, walk through the DC budget cycle, and have groups make and defend limited-resource choices. The lesson ends with a youth budget priorities sheet and a reminder that adopted funding must still be implemented and monitored.

Suggested Run Time

60 minutes. Follow the exact agenda below. If the group needs more processing time, reduce examples or a practice round; protect the welcome, check-in, youth choice, core participant product, reflection, and closing.

Materials and Preparation

- DC Budget Process visual from Appendix E.
- Youth Budget Choices cards and allocation sheet.
- Tokens, play money, sticky dots, or a 100-point budget.
- Youth Budget Priorities worksheet.
- Operating-versus-capital examples.
- Current official budget webpages or selected agency pages.
- Calculators optional; chart paper and markers.

Agenda and Activity Guide

Activity	Suggested Run Time	Purpose	Materials	Facilitator Instructions / Suggested Language
Welcome and Purpose	5 minutes	Connect public money to public values and services.	Budget process visual	Say: “A budget is not only a spreadsheet. It is a plan for the collection and use of public resources. It can show what leaders choose to protect, expand, delay, or leave unfunded.” Clarify that the activity is a simplified learning exercise and not a complete representation of the District budget.
Check-In: What Should Every Young Person Have?	5 minutes	Connect budgeting to community needs and values.	Sticky notes	Ask participants to name one resource, service, or condition every young person in DC should be able to count on. Group similar responses without ranking them yet. Note that many priorities require both policy decisions and sustained funding.
Icebreaker: Spend Ten Points	8 minutes	Introduce budgeting tradeoffs in a low-stakes format.	Ten tokens per group; 3 fun categories	Give groups ten points to distribute among three playful event or community-building categories. Afterward, ask: “What made the choice difficult? What information did you wish you had?” Use their answers to introduce priorities, constraints, evidence, and tradeoffs.

Activity	Suggested Run Time	Purpose	Materials	Facilitator Instructions / Suggested Language
Mini-Lesson: Walk Through the Budget Cycle	12 minutes	Teach two foundational budget categories. Explain how proposals, hearings, votes, implementation, and oversight connect.	Examples handout; Budget process visual	Explain: “Operating funds support day-to-day services, staff, supplies, grants, and program operations. Capital funds support major long-term assets and improvements such as buildings, renovations, vehicles, and infrastructure.” Use paired examples and ask youth to classify each one. Note that some priorities may involve both. Use the visual to explain: agencies and the Mayor plan; the Mayor submits a proposal; Council committees review and hold public hearings; the Council revises and votes; agencies implement; the public tracks results and prepares for the next cycle. Emphasize that exact dates are subject to change and that facilitators should use the current official schedule.
Activity: Youth Budget Choices	15 minutes	Practice setting priorities and explaining tradeoffs.	Budget cards, allocation sheet, 100 points	Give each group the same limited total and several youth priorities. Require groups to fund more than one category and write one sentence explaining each decision. Then introduce one new condition, such as a reduction, an urgent need, or new evidence, and allow one revision. Debrief: Who benefited? Who may have been left out? What data, stories, or participation would improve the decision?
From Allocation to Advocacy	10 minutes	Connect budget choices to institutions and public participation.	Youth Budget Priorities worksheet	Each group selects one priority and identifies: the likely agency or institution, whether the need is operating, capital, policy, or mixed, what evidence is needed, and one way youth could participate. Possible methods include testimony, meetings, public comments, coalition outreach, monitoring, or storytelling.

Activity	Suggested Run Time	Purpose	Materials	Facilitator Instructions / Suggested Language
Closing Reflection	5 minutes	Reinforce that approval and implementation are different stages.	Exit slips	Ask: “What is one question you would ask before supporting a budget proposal?” and “How would you know whether an approved investment actually reached young people?” Close by explaining that Lesson 4 will turn learning into a future agenda.

Facilitator Check

Listen for whether youth distinguish operating from capital spending, understand that the Mayor proposes the budget, the Council reviews and approves it, and that implementation and oversight continue after a vote.

Lesson 4: DC Next — Building the Future We Deserve

Purpose: Participants bring together history, government structure, public resources, and community knowledge to create a youth-centered vision and a set of civic priorities for DC's future.

Outcomes / Youth Learning Goals

- I can describe a future condition I want young people in DC to experience.
- I can connect that future condition to a present system, institution, policy, program, or budget choice.
- I can identify the institution or public process to research next.
- I can develop a clear youth priority that can later become an advocacy goal or campaign issue.

Age Adaptations

- **Ages 11–14:** Use drawing, collage, neighborhood maps, and sentence starters such as "In DC, we deserve…".
- **Ages 15–17:** Require each vision statement to name a current barrier, responsible institution, and youth participation pathway.
- **Ages 18–24:** Add policy and budget distinctions, implementation questions, equity indicators, and tensions between short-term improvements and structural change.

Process

Display notes and products from the prior lessons. Begin with a future-focused check-in and a creative headlines icebreaker. Youth then use a Past–Present–Future worksheet to identify a desired condition, a current barrier, the relevant institution or process, and what to research next. Groups develop a short DC Future Agenda and present it. This is a civic foundation product, not yet a complete campaign plan.

Suggested Run Time

60 minutes. Follow the exact agenda below. If the group needs more processing time, reduce examples or a practice round; protect the welcome, check-in, youth choice, core participant product, reflection, and closing.

Materials and Preparation

- Past–Present–Future worksheet.
- DC Future Agenda template.
- Chart paper, markers, magazines or collage materials optional.
- Issue-area fact sheets optional.
- Government structure and budget visuals.
- Sticky dots for reflection but not binding campaign selection.

Agenda and Activity Guide

Activity	Suggested Run Time	Purpose	Materials	Facilitator Instructions / Suggested Language
Welcome and Purpose	5 minutes	Bring the module strands together.	Timeline, government, and budget visuals	Say: “We have been learning about DC, its history, who makes decisions, and how public resources are used. Today we are going to put those pieces together and think about what DC should look like for young people in the future.”
Check-In: A Future I Want to See	5 minutes	Invite hope and vision without requiring a polished solution.	Optional index cards	Ask: “Imagine a young person growing up in DC ten years from now. What is one thing you hope will be easier, safer, fairer, healthier, or more joyful for them?” Participants may share, write, draw, or pass. Capture a few themes.
Icebreaker: Future Headline	8 minutes	Help youth turn broad hopes into visible results.	Paper or headline template	In pairs or groups of three, ask youth to write a short future news headline or social media caption describing something positive that has changed for young people in DC Example: “Every DC Teen Has a Safe Place to Go After School.” Invite several groups to share. Ask: “What would have to be different for this headline to be true?”

Activity	Suggested Run Time	Purpose	Materials	Facilitator Instructions / Suggested Language
Learning and Discussion: Connect the Dots	8 minutes	Connect a youth issue to history, institutions, and public resources.	Chart paper or slide	Say: "Young people already know a lot about what is happening in their communities because you experience it. But knowing that something is happening is different from knowing why it is happening, who has responsibility, or what needs to change. Part of advocacy is learning how to turn what we experience into questions we can research." **Share a simple example:** **A young person says:** "There aren't enough safe places for teenagers to go after school or in the evening." **Ask the group:** What do we know? Young people are lacking safe, accessible spaces when they need them. What do we think might be connected? Recreation center hours, staffing, funding, transportation, programming, safety rules, or other decisions. What do we still need to research? Who decides recreation center hours? What funding is available? Are the hours the same across DC? Have young people asked for changes before? **Say:** "Notice that we did not guess the answer. We started with the experience, named what we think might be connected, and turned what we do not know into research questions."

Activity: Past–Present–Future Map	14 minutes	Connect vision to systems and civic responsibility.	Past–Present–Future worksheet	Divide participants into small groups. Ask each group to choose one issue or future headline raised earlier in the session. Have groups complete four connected prompts: **PAST — How might we have gotten here?** What past decisions, policies, community struggles, or changes might help explain the issue? **PRESENT — What do we know?** What is happening now? Who is affected? What do young people know from experience, observation, or what they have heard from their community? **FUTURE — What should be different?** What would a better experience or result look like for young people? **RESEARCH NEXT — What do we need to learn?** What questions do we have about: ● who makes the decision, ● which agency, institution, or process is responsible, ● what policy or rule may apply, ● what money or public resources may be involved, ● what has already been tried, ● what other young people or community members think, ● or what data could help us understand the issue?

Activity	Suggested Run Time	Purpose	Materials	Facilitator Instructions / Suggested Language
				Remind participants: "You do not need to know every answer. If you are unsure, write the question down. 'We need to research that' is a strong answer today." Ask each group to circle one research question they think is most important to answer next.
Create a DC Future Agenda	8 minutes	Translate vision into clear civic priorities.	Future Agenda template	For each selected priority, groups write: "We want...," "Because...," "The institution or process to research is...," "Young people should be involved by...," and "Our next research question is...". Explain that a priority is not yet a campaign demand; later modules will test feasibility, targets, base, strategy, and tactics.
Two-Minute Share and Feedback	7 minutes	Practice communicating priorities and receiving questions.	Agenda posters; feedback notes	Each group shares one priority. Listeners respond with: one strength, one question, and one source or person that may help. Do not use the activity as a binding vote unless the program has committed to act on the selected result.
Closing Reflection and Bridge	5 minutes	Connect civic foundation to advocacy and research.	Exit slips	Ask participants to complete: "One thing I want future generations of DC youth to say changed because people like us spoke up is..." Close: "Understanding the city helps us ask better questions. We will learn how to research those questions, understand public policy, organize people, and turn priorities into action."

Facilitator Check

Listen for whether youth connect a future vision to a present system or institution and identify what must be researched next. Avoid treating a brainstormed idea as a ready campaign demand without additional evidence, impacted community leadership input, and strategic analysis.

Module Appendix

This appendix contains facilitator references, printable tools, examples, and sources for further research. Materials may be adapted for age, access needs, session length, and the issue being studied.

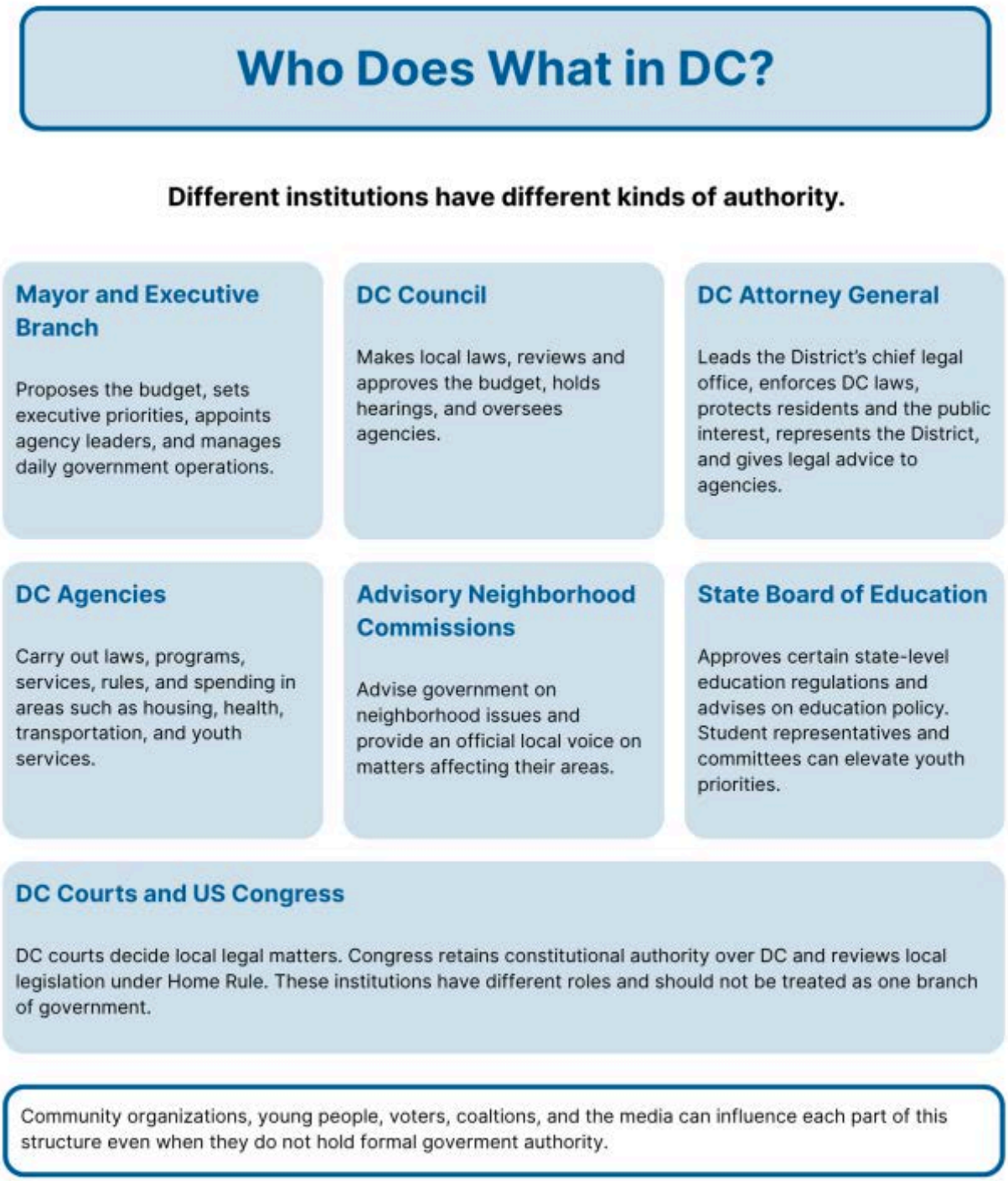
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- Appendix B: DC Government Structure Visual.
- Appendix C: Who Does What? Role and Scenario Cards.
- Appendix D: Home Rule and DC Democracy Key Terms.
- Appendix E: DC Budget Process Visual.
- Appendix F: Youth Budget Choices Activity.
- Appendix G: Youth Budget Priorities Worksheet.
- Appendix H: Past-Present-Future Worksheet.
- Appendix I: DC Future Agenda Template and Example.
- Appendix J: Sources and Further Research.

Appendix A: Then-and-Now Connection Worksheet

Selected historical event or decision	Response
What happened?	
Who held formal power?	
Who was affected or benefited?	
How did people organize, resist, adapt, or care for one another?	
What connection might we see today?	
What evidence or additional voices do we need?	

Appendix B: DC Government Structure Visual



Appendix C: Who Does What? Role and Scenario Cards

Purpose: Use these charts to help participants identify which DC institutions, public officials, and community groups have formal authority or influence over public decisions. More than one role may be involved in the same issue.

Role	Description
DC Council	Serves as DC's local legislative body. The Council passes local laws, reviews and approves the budget, holds public hearings, confirms certain appointments, and oversees government agencies and programs.
Mayor and Executive Branch	Leads the executive branch of DC government. The Mayor proposes the budget, sets executive priorities, appoints agency leaders, signs or vetoes Council legislation, and directs government operations.
DC Attorney General and Office of the Attorney General	Leads the Office of the Attorney General, the District's chief legal office. The office enforces DC laws, protects the public interest and residents, represents the District in legal matters, and provides independent legal advice to District agencies. It also prosecutes cases involving youth and certain adult misdemeanor offenses. The Attorney General does not pass laws or approve the city budget.
DC Government Agency	Carries out laws and manages public programs and services. Agencies spend approved funds, collect information, administer programs, and may write or enforce regulations.
Advisory Neighborhood Commission	Represents neighborhood concerns and advises DC government on matters such as planning, transportation, public safety, recreation, development, and community services. ANCs do not pass DC laws, but agencies must give their recommendations "great weight."
State Board of Education	Approves certain statewide education policies and regulations, advises the State Superintendent of Education, holds public meetings, and represents community perspectives on education. It does not directly operate DC public schools.

Role	Description
DC Courts	Hear local legal cases, interpret laws, resolve disputes, and review whether laws and government actions are being applied legally. Courts do not approve the city budget or operate government programs.
DC Delegate to the U.S. House	Represents DC residents in the U.S. House. The Delegate can introduce bills, serve and vote on committees, participate in debate, offer amendments, question federal officials, and assist residents with federal agencies. The Delegate cannot vote on final passage of legislation on the House floor.
DC Shadow Senators and Shadow Representative	DC voters elect two Shadow Senators and one Shadow Representative to advocate for statehood and full voting representation in Congress. They educate the public, meet with lawmakers, and build support for statehood, but they are not seated as voting members of Congress.
U.S. Congress	Makes federal laws and has constitutional authority over DC Congress reviews certain DC legislation, can pass laws that change or overturn local decisions, and may restrict how DC uses locally raised funds.
Community Organizations and Coalitions	Research issues, organize residents, provide services, develop recommendations, testify, build public support, and pressure decision-makers. They usually cannot pass laws or approve public funding directly, but they can influence those who do.
Young People and Youth Leaders	Contribute lived expertise, organize peers, conduct research, develop recommendations, testify, create media, communicate with decision-makers, and hold institutions accountable. Youth may not always hold formal authority, but they can build collective power and influence decisions.

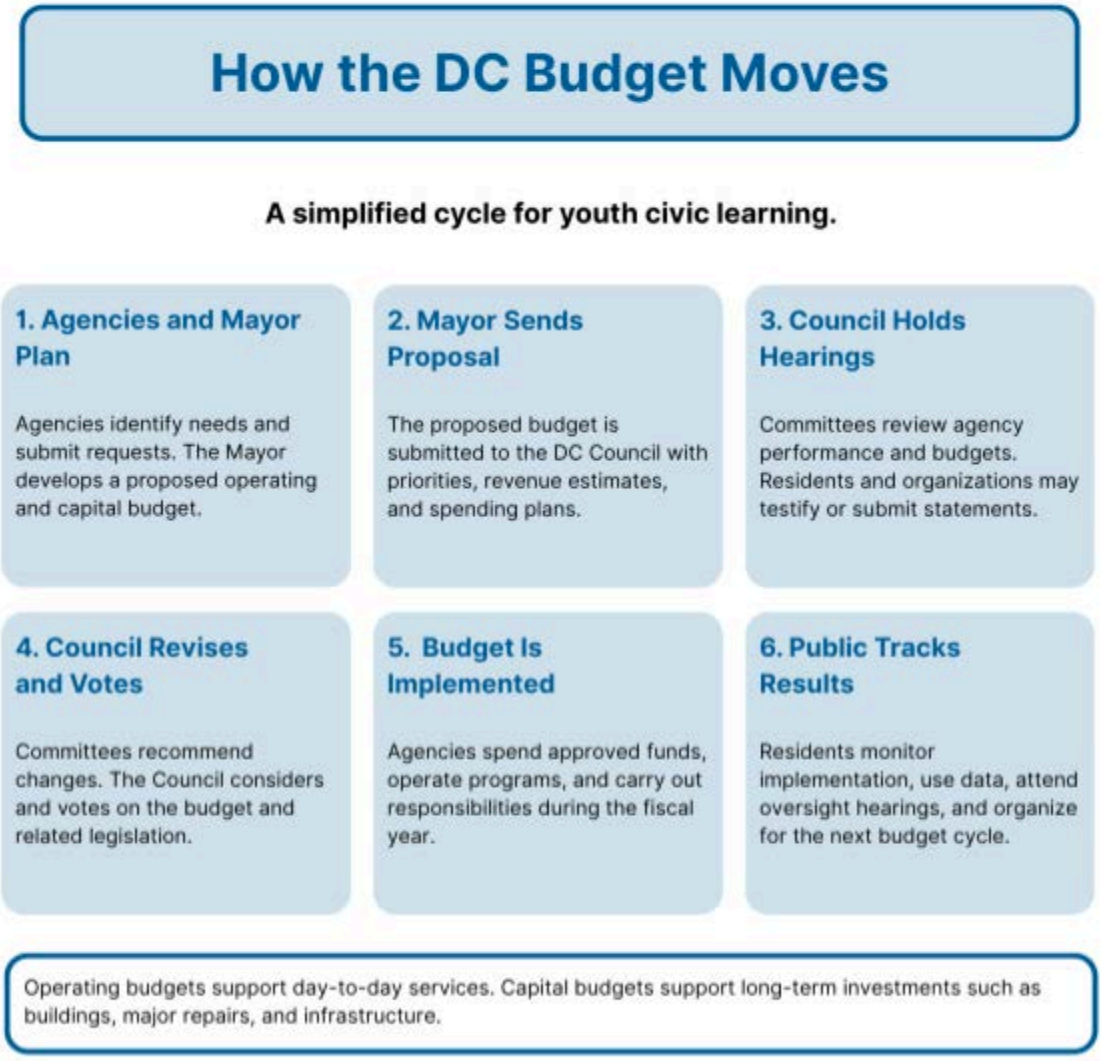
Scenario Cards

Scenario	Situation	Possible Roles Involved
Recreation Center Hours	Young people want a neighborhood recreation center to remain open later during the summer.	Agency; Mayor and Executive Branch; DC Council; ANC; community organizations; youth leaders
Mental Health Funding	Young people want DC to increase funding for school-based behavioral health services.	Mayor and Executive Branch; DC Council; agencies; State Board of Education; community organizations; youth leaders
Education Regulation	A proposed regulation would change statewide graduation requirements.	State Board of Education; education agency; Mayor and Executive Branch; DC Council when applicable; youth leaders
Neighborhood Development	A proposed development may remove an important community gathering space.	ANC; agencies; Mayor and Executive Branch; DC Council; community organizations; youth leaders
Federal Restriction on a DC Law	Congress is considering a proposal that would block or change a law approved by DC's elected government.	U.S. Congress; DC Delegate; Shadow Congressional Delegation; Mayor; DC Council; community organizations; youth leaders
Statehood and Voting Representation	DC residents want full representation in Congress and greater control over local decisions.	U.S. Congress; DC Delegate; Shadow Senators and Shadow Representative; Mayor; DC Council; community organizations; youth leaders

Appendix D: Home Rule and DC Democracy Key Terms

Term	Definition
Home Rule	Limited local self-government established by federal law. DC residents elect a Mayor and Council, while Congress retains significant authority.
District Clause	The part of the U.S. Constitution that gives Congress authority over the federal district.
Council review and oversight	The Council examines legislation, budgets, agency performance, and public concerns through committees, hearings, questions, and votes.
Congressional review	A period during which Congress may review DC legislation before it becomes law.
Statehood	A proposal to admit most of residential DC as a state, which supporters argue would provide full voting representation and greater self-government.
Formal power and influence	Formal power is legal authority to make or carry out a decision. Influence is the ability to shape what decision-makers consider or do.

Appendix E: DC Budget Process Visual



Appendix F: Youth Budget Choices Activity

Suggested setup: Give each group 100 points. Require groups to distribute all points among at least four priorities. Replace or revise categories based on the cohort and current issues. Make clear that real budgets contain legal requirements, revenue constraints, existing commitments, and far more detail.

Priority	Examples	Points
Youth mental health access	Counseling, peer support, crisis response, culturally responsive providers	
Housing stability	Prevention, emergency support, youth housing, tenant services	
Out-of-school-time and recreation	Afterschool, summer, sports, arts, safe evening spaces	
Education supports	Academic support, special education, school climate, student leadership	
Jobs and economic opportunity	Paid internships, career pathways, entrepreneurship, workforce supports	
Transportation and safe mobility	Transit access, safe streets, reliable routes, late-night options	
Libraries, culture, and community spaces	Libraries, arts, go-go and cultural preservation, community gathering spaces	

Appendix G: Youth Budget Priorities Worksheet

Our priority	Response
What should be funded, protected, changed, or monitored?	
Likely agency or institution	
Operating, capital, policy, or mixed?	
Who is most affected?	
What evidence and community knowledge are needed?	
How can young people participate?	
How will we know implementation happened?	

Completed Example: Youth Budget Priorities Worksheet

Our priority	Completed example
What should the city fund?	Reliable evening and weekend transportation for youth.
Why does it matter?	Young people miss jobs, programs, and safe rides home when service is limited or unaffordable.
Who benefits?	Students, working youth, youth in wards with fewer nearby programs, and families with limited transportation options.
Which part of government is involved?	Mayor, DC Council, transportation agencies, and youth-serving agencies.
What evidence is needed?	Youth travel surveys, missed-program data, fare and route information, and stories from affected youth.
What is our public ask?	Include dedicated funding for youth fare support and safe late-evening routes in the next budget.

Appendix H: Past-Present-Future Worksheet

Past	Present	Future	Research Next

Prompts: Past—what history or prior decisions may help explain the issue? Present—what is happening now and which institution is involved? Future—what should young people experience instead? Research Next—what facts, laws, budgets, data, and affected voices are needed?

Completed Example: Past, Present, Future Worksheet

Past	Present	Future	Research Next
Past transportation and land-use decisions prioritized some commuters while displacing or isolating Black communities.	Some youth face long, expensive, or unsafe trips to school, work, and programs.	Young people can access opportunities safely and affordably when they need them.	Current route and fare data; youth travel experiences; agency authority; budget costs; existing pilot programs.

Appendix I: DC Future Agenda Template and Example

We want...	Response
Because...	
The current barrier or condition is...	
The institution or public process to research is...	
Young people should be involved by...	
Our next research question is...	

Completed Example

We want...	Reliable, affordable transportation so young people can reach school, work, programs, and safe spaces.
Because...	Access to transportation affects our participation
The current barrier or condition is...	Some routes, schedules, costs, or safety conditions may not match young people's needs.
The institution or public process to research is...	WMATA, District transportation agencies, the Mayor's proposed budget, relevant Council committees, and regional agreements.
Young people should be involved by...	Documenting experiences, reviewing data, meeting decision-makers, participating in hearings, and helping shape solutions.
Our next research question is...	Which specific routes, times, costs, or safety conditions create the greatest barriers, and which institution can change each one?

Appendix J: Sources and Further Research

Last reviewed: September 10, 2026. Recheck time-sensitive laws, budgets, procedures, officeholders, program eligibility, and application deadlines before facilitation.

Core and Official Sources

- DC History Center. (n.d.). *DC History Timeline*. Provides an interactive chronology of Washington, DC, from Indigenous history through 2019. The timeline includes milestones related to community life, civil rights, political representation, and social justice. Open resource.
- Prologue DC (n.d.). *Mapping Segregation in Washington, DC*. Uses historical maps, property records, and neighborhood research to document how racially restrictive covenants, real-estate practices, federal policies, and zoning contributed to residential segregation and the displacement of Black residents in Washington, DC Open resource.
- Picone, L. (2012, April 16). *The District of Columbia 1862 Emancipation Law*. In Custodia Legis, Law Library of Congress. Explains the federal law signed on April 16, 1862, that abolished slavery in the District of Columbia through a compensated-emancipation program. The article provides historical context and links to related legal and primary-source materials. Open resource.
- DeSimone, B. (2020, September 11). *From the Serial Set: Residency, Race, and Suffrage*. In Custodia Legis, Law Library of Congress. Examines the 1867 District of Columbia franchise law, which extended voting rights to male residents without distinction based on color or race. The article connects the law to congressional records and other primary sources. Open resource.
- National Archives and Records Administration. (2020, June 17). *Unratified Amendments: DC Voting Rights*. Pieces of History. Provides historical context on DC residents' struggle for national representation. It explains how ratification of the Twenty-third Amendment in 1961 allowed DC residents to participate in presidential elections through the Electoral College while limiting the District to the same number of electors as the least populous state. Open resource.
- Office of the City Administrator, Government of the District of Columbia. (n.d.). *DC Government Organization*. Explains the structure of the District government's executive branch, including the elected Mayor, appointed City Administrator, executive agencies, operational responsibilities, and implementation of policies adopted by the Mayor and DC Council. Open resource.
- Council of the District of Columbia. (n.d.). *About the Council*. Explains the Council's

responsibilities for passing legislation, reviewing and approving the Mayor's proposed budget, conducting agency oversight, holding public hearings, and providing constituent services. Open resource.

- Council of the District of Columbia. (n.d.). *D.C. Home Rule*. Provides a history of the District's local government and explains the authority granted through the Home Rule Act. It also describes the continuing role of Congress in reviewing District legislation and exercising authority over DC Open resource.
- Office of Advisory Neighborhood Commissions. (n.d.). *About the OANC*. Explains how the Office of Advisory Neighborhood Commissions provides technical, administrative, training, and financial-reporting support to DC's Advisory Neighborhood Commissions. ANCs are locally elected bodies that advise the District government on policies and programs affecting their neighborhoods. Open resource.
- District of Columbia State Board of Education. (n.d.). *Roles and Responsibilities*. Explains the State Board's authority to approve certain state-level education standards, policies, regulations, accountability measures, and graduation requirements. It also describes the Board's responsibility to advise the State Superintendent of Education on educational matters. Open resource.
- District of Columbia Courts. (n.d.). *D.C. Courts*. Introduces the two principal courts in the District's local judicial system. The Superior Court handles nearly all local criminal, civil, family, juvenile, landlord-tenant, probate, small-claims, and tax matters. The DC Court of Appeals reviews decisions from the Superior Court and certain District agencies and serves as DC's highest local court. Open resource.
- Office of the Chief Financial Officer, Government of the District of Columbia. (n.d.). *Overview of the Budget Formulation Process*. Explains how the District develops its operating and capital budgets. The resource describes how the budgets identify funded programs, expected revenue, agency operations, capital investments, and the District's multiyear financial plan. Open resource.
- Council of the District of Columbia. (2015, March 11). *Council 101: Understanding the Budget Process*. Provides a step-by-step overview of DC's annual budget process, including executive-branch preparation, the Mayor's proposed budget, Council committee review, public hearings, Council changes and votes, and final budget action. Open resource.

Source-Use Guidance for Facilitators

- Check current agency names, committee assignments, budget schedules, and public-hearing procedures before each delivery.
- Distinguish primary sources, official government explanations, community histories, journalism, and advocacy materials. Each can be useful, but they answer different questions.
- Do not treat a single timeline or government webpage as a complete account. Add neighborhood histories and voices connected to the cohort.
- When a historical claim is disputed or complex, name the uncertainty and model how to compare multiple credible sources.
- Avoid presenting current budget numbers without a fiscal year and source date.