Operation Citizen Field Guide

A working companion to the Citizenship Kit

Use this guide when you have chosen an issue and need the next steps. The first seven sections match the seven levers in the short booklet. Each helps you prepare a specific work product, reach the right office, and preserve what follows.

You do not need all seven. A public records request may be the right first move. A live comment window may require immediate attention. A candidate question may draw on evidence already collected by others. Choose the route that fits the decision.

Contents

The **Worksheets** file provides forms to copy. **Sources and References** gives the source trail for this guide. References S01–S12 point to official sources; OC references identify Operation Citizen materials and methodology.

What this guide can do: help you make a clear, sourced request through a lawful civic channel.

What remains with the receiving office: jurisdiction, acceptance, investigation, enforcement, and the final decision. A citizen's requested response date does not create a legal duty to reply by that date.

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1 Public Comment Mechanism

Purpose: Put a specific concern into an agency's decision record while it is accepting input.

Prepare

Open the official notice. Save its title, agency, docket or file number, publication date, deadline, and accepted submission methods. Read the proposed change and the agency's stated reason. A request for information, proposed rule, and direct final rule are different stages; use the instructions for the stage in front of you. [S02]

Choose the provision you can address. Gather a source or a clearly described experience that bears on it. Do not imply that one experience represents every affected person.

Act

Lead with the change you request. Then explain the mechanism: what would change, who would feel it, and why the proposed approach may fail or could be improved. Address a serious trade-off. Offer a workable alternative when you can.

A short opening: "I am commenting on [docket and provision]. I ask the agency to [specific action]. The concern is [effect], supported by [record or experience]. Please explain how the final approach will address this issue."

Use your own facts. Do not copy another citizen's personal experience. File through a method listed in the notice. Review the preview and attachments before submitting. Begin early enough to handle a portal failure.

Record and follow through

Save the exact submission, attachments, timestamp, tracking number, and any public posting link. Check later notices and the final action. Record whether the agency addressed the issue, changed the provision, or retained its proposal. Do not infer that your comment alone caused a later change.

Limits and stopping points

The comment process is not a vote. An agency may address comments by issue rather than reply to every writer. A comment does not give the agency power beyond its law. If the window has closed, check for a later opportunity; do not treat an old submission form as open.

Related materials: Worksheet 3, Public Comment Period Card; the FTC and BLM examples below. CL-002, CL-003, CL-005, or CL-007 may lead to an issue, but the official notice controls the filing.

2 State Attorney General Referral

Purpose: Bring a documented harm to a state office that may have power to review it.

Prepare

Find your state attorney general through USA.gov, then read that office's complaint categories and instructions. The proper office may instead be a consumer agency, labor department, licensing board, insurance regulator, or another state body. Authority differs by state and subject. [S03]

Gather the entity's correct name, the affected location, dates, transaction or service records, your contact history, and the result you seek. For a pattern, identify each supporting record. Distinguish what happened to you from what others reported.

Act

Use the office's form when required. Keep the summary short enough for a reviewer to identify the issue before opening attachments.

A short request: "I request review of [practice] affecting [people or place in this state]. The attached records show [specific facts]. I contacted [entity] on [date] and received [response or no response]. Please assess whether this falls within your office's authority or refer me to the appropriate state office."

An ownership claim needs its own source. If you believe several facilities share an owner, cite a corporate, licensing, securities, or other reliable record. Do not convert a suspected link into a statement of fact.

Record and follow through

Save the final complaint, evidence list, receipt, and case number. Record any request for more information. Follow the office's status procedure. If it refers you elsewhere, preserve the referral and the new contact.

Limits and stopping points

The attorney general chooses which matters fall within its authority and priorities. A filing does not guarantee investigation, restitution, or private representation. Do not wait for an AG response if a separate appeal or legal deadline is running. The complaint may be shared with the business or become subject to disclosure; read the form's notice.

Related materials: Worksheets 1, 2, and 7. CL-005 may help identify a state issue; its narrative is a lead to verify, not proof that state law was violated.

3 Inspector General / Oversight Hotline

Purpose: Report a specific failure involving an agency's programs or operations to an oversight office.

Prepare

Use Oversight.gov's hotline finder to locate the responsible office. Read its scope. Inspectors general examine matters such as waste, fraud, abuse, and mismanagement; they are not a general appeal board for every disliked policy or service decision. [S04]

Write a dated sequence. Identify the agency, office, program, contract, or process. Separate direct observations from information received from someone else. Keep original records intact and identify where each came from.

Act

State the event before the accusation. "The office stopped accepting applications on [date], although its published notice said [text]" is more useful than a claim of deliberate sabotage without evidence.

A short request: "I request review of [event or practice] in [agency/program]. The records show [facts and dates]. The apparent failure is [access, control, use of funds, accuracy, or other issue]. Please assess jurisdiction and the appropriate oversight response."

Attach only relevant records you may lawfully provide. Use the office's designated secure route for sensitive material. A public webpage, ordinary email, and a protected reporting channel are not interchangeable.

Record and follow through

Keep the submitted text, evidence index, date, and acknowledgement. The office may not disclose investigation details. Record that limit rather than treating a lack of detail as proof of inaction. Send new facts when the office's instructions permit them.

Limits and stopping points

Do not promise a government worker anonymity, confidentiality, or protection from retaliation. Those questions depend on the person, disclosure, and channel. Use the office's instructions and the appropriate protected-disclosure process. Do not publish confidential records to prove that a submission occurred.

If the problem is an individual benefits denial, preserve the agency's appeal deadline while asking which oversight route, if any, also fits.

Related materials: Worksheets 1, 2, and 7. CL-008 is an evidence-development project, not a functioning public complaint portal or a source of final agency scores.

4 Public Records Request

Purpose: Obtain the existing record needed to check a public decision.

Prepare

Search the agency's website and public reading room first. Identify the office likely to hold the record. Federal FOIA applies to federal executive-branch agency records; Congress and federal courts are not covered by that statute. State and local bodies follow their own records laws. [S05]

Write a narrow description: subject, record type, date range, office, and any project or contract number. Avoid "all records about everything wrong with this program." A focused request can be easier to locate and process.

Act

A request you can adapt: "Under the Freedom of Information Act, I request electronic copies of [existing records], created or received by [office] between [dates], concerning [specific subject]. Please contact me before incurring fees above [amount I accept]. If part of a record is withheld, please identify the basis and release any reasonably separable portion."

Use the state law's proper name instead of FOIA for a state request. Read the office's rules for fees, identity verification, format, and submission. A fee waiver needs its own support; it is not automatic.

Record and follow through

Save the request and tracking number. Keep communications about scope, fees, searches, and delays. When records arrive, preserve both the files and the response letter. Mark redactions and missing periods; do not fill them with assumptions.

If denied, read the decision's appeal route and deadline. Use the agency's FOIA Public Liaison for assistance and consider the Office of Government Information Services for mediation services. Do not assume that an informal status inquiry replaces a required appeal. [S05]

Limits and stopping points

FOIA requires access to eligible existing records, subject to exemptions. It does not require new research or answers to questions. The usual statutory determination period is not a promise of delivery within that period. Review the agency's actual response and instructions.

Related materials: Worksheets 1, 2, and 7. No CL application is required. The record you obtain may later support a comment, referral, or oversight packet.

5 Congressional Oversight Packet

Purpose: Give a congressional office a usable question about federal administration, spending, or implementation.

Prepare

Use the House and Senate directories to find your elected offices. For committee contact, check the committee's current jurisdiction and contact instructions. A personal request for help with a federal agency is usually constituent casework; a pattern affecting a program may support oversight. [S06]

Prepare a one-page cover note and a short evidence index. Include the agency or program, the decision, who is affected, the dates, the strongest records, and any agency response. Label disputed facts and gaps.

Act

Ask for an act the office can undertake: a written inquiry, a request for records, a briefing, a question at a hearing, or consideration of a specific oversight proposal. Do not ask one member to guarantee a hearing or an investigation controlled by a committee.

A short request: "Please ask [agency] to explain [specific discrepancy] and provide [record or plan]. The attached records show [fact]. I ask your office to state what step it will take, who controls the next decision, and when I should check for a response."

Give the office a way to reach you. Supply personal case details only through its designated casework process and privacy-release form when needed. Do not post that form in a public group folder.

Record and follow through

Save what you sent and the office's reply. Distinguish a receipt, staff conversation, letter to an agency, committee request, hearing, appropriation, and enacted change. Each is a different result.

If the reply is generic, quote the unanswered question in a short follow-up. If another office has jurisdiction, ask for that office's name and route. Bring new evidence when it changes the request.

Limits and stopping points

A member's promise is not a chamber's decision. Oversight does not itself amend a statute, appropriate funds, or decide a court case. Preserve separate benefit, administrative, and legal deadlines.

Related materials: Worksheets 2, 4, and 7; Congressional Blueprint and Candidate Commitment Matrix in the authority reference pack. CL-007 and CL-009 can help trace procedure, with Congress.gov controlling the current bill record.

6 Campaign Finance / FEC Pattern

Purpose: Examine political money accurately and, when supported, use the proper complaint process for a possible federal violation.

Prepare

Start with the FEC's public data. Identify the committee, election cycle, reporting period, transaction type, and amended filings. Do not combine a campaign committee's receipts, a leadership PAC's receipts, lobbying spending, and independent expenditures into one total without a clear definition. A corporation and its employee-funded PAC are not the same donor category. [S07]

Save the actual filing or transaction record. A chart or CL score may help you find a question; the filing supplies the underlying evidence.

Choose the action

For a public accountability question: Describe the funding relationship and ask the office or candidate to explain its policy or safeguards. Do not call a donation proof of a bargain.

For a formal FEC complaint: Follow the current official instructions. A complaint must identify the complainant and respondents, describe facts within FEC jurisdiction, and meet signature, oath, and notarization requirements. An ordinary email alleging misconduct does not satisfy those requirements by itself. The official instructions list accepted delivery methods. [S07]

Current capacity limit

On September 5, 2026, the FEC's leadership page listed two commissioners and four vacancies. Four affirmative votes are required to proceed with enforcement action. Complaint submission and enforcement capacity must therefore be treated separately. Check the official status before filing. [S07]

Record and follow through

Keep the filing IDs, source dates, calculations, final submission, and receipt. Record the complaint's actual status. Follow FEC confidentiality rules and do not assume an unresolved matter will be publicly searchable.

Limits and stopping points

The FEC regulates federal campaign finance, not every election dispute, lobbying practice, stock trade, or suspected bribery offense. State election matters have state routes. If you cannot identify facts supporting a specific violation, keep the work as a research question or seek qualified review before making the allegation.

Related materials: Worksheets 1, 2, and 5. CL-001 and CL-003 help inspect patterns; their grades do not determine legal liability.

7 Election Timing / Challenger Accountability

Purpose: Make a public commitment specific enough to compare before an election and check afterward.

Prepare

Use Vote.gov to reach your state's official election information. Confirm registration, primary eligibility, election date, ballot-request rules, and applicable deadlines. A primary date is not the registration deadline. Rules for participating in a party primary vary by state. [S08]

Choose a question tied to the office sought. Read the candidate's published position and the relevant record before asking. Apply the same question, response date, and reporting rules to all candidates you include.

Act

A question you can use: "If elected to [office], will you take [lawful, specified action] by [date or milestone]? What can you do yourself, what needs another body's vote, and where will the public see the result?"

For an incumbent, ask for the record of action already taken. For a challenger, ask for a concrete undertaking within that office's authority. Distinguish a personal choice, such as a voluntary campaign funding policy, from a promise to enact a law.

You can ask at a public meeting or through the campaign's published contact route. A citizen circle can share the exact question and complete responses as an information resource. Agree in advance on who may speak for the group.

Record and follow through

Save the question, date sent, deadline, full reply, and source link. Use neutral statuses: **commitment received; qualified commitment; declined; no response as of [date].** Do not score silence as a specific policy position.

After the election, compare conduct with the promise. Record the vote, rule, filing, or other act. Identify what blocked a result and who controlled the next step. Keep promise performance separate from the policy's eventual effect.

Limits and stopping points

Do not use an old tool roster to decide who currently holds office or appears on a ballot. Check official records. A civic group's educational work and an organization's regulated campaign activity may have different rules; obtain appropriate guidance before spending or acting as an organization in a campaign.

Related materials: Worksheet 4; A5/R8 pages below; CL-001 and CL-006 with current office and ballot records.

A5 turn the terms into assignments

The Accountability Five names reforms in public conduct. Its identifiers stay stable across the kit and authority research. The shorter chapbook labels fit within these broader research categories. A5-5's healthcare floor-access demand is an application of forced consideration and blocker accountability. [OC01–OC03]

A5-1 Congressional conflicts, trading, and pay-to-play

Ask a member for a clear personal conflicts policy and a public record of compliance. For institutional change, identify whether the proposal needs a chamber rule or statute. A disclosure requirement and a trading prohibition are different controls.

Proof: published policy, required disclosure, adopted rule text, and recorded vote. **Research:** A5 inventory, rows beginning A5-01.

A5-2 Term limits and anti-entrenchment

Separate constitutional limits on serving in Congress from rules about committee or leadership tenure. The authority research places binding congressional term limits on the constitutional-amendment path. Do not present a chamber resolution or state ballot rule as a substitute. [S10]

Proof: the exact commitment, proposed amendment, chamber rule, or leadership policy. **Research:** rows A5-02.

A5-3 Single-purpose and germaneness

Ask for enough time to read the bill and for a visible record of amendments, waivers, and procedural votes. A bill title does not establish that every provision serves one purpose.

Proof: bill text, rule, amendment, waiver, and vote. **Research:** rows A5-03.

A5-4 Constituent–Capital Parity

Ask who receives access, what funding relationships exist, and which safeguards the office will adopt. Name the proposed mechanism. Some reforms concern voluntary conduct; others face statutory or constitutional limits.

Proof: access policy, funding disclosure, adopted instrument, and measurable use. **Research:** rows A5-04.

A5-5 Forced consideration and blocker accountability

Choose a specific proposal, including a healthcare measure where relevant. Identify the person or body controlling the next procedural step. Ask for the step and its public record. Co-sponsorship is not a floor vote.

Proof: hearing, markup, discharge action, calendar placement, vote, or documented refusal. **Research:** rows A5-05. Use the Congressional Blueprint and adverse-authority notes for the limits.

R8 economic security and public capacity

Roosevelt's 1944 address named eight economic rights. Operation Citizen uses R8 as an implementation framework. It does not erase existing benefit laws or claim that a speech created enforceable entitlements. The research asks how current powers can serve each goal and what further law is needed. [S09; OC03]

R8-1 · Family-supporting work: The goal is useful work that supports a household. Start with the actual wage, work, training, or procurement issue and the office responsible.

R8-2 · Income security and benefit cliffs: The goal is enough income for daily life. A benefit cliff occurs when a small earnings increase causes a larger benefit loss. Identify the program and eligibility rule before requesting change.

R8-3 · Producer and farm viability: The goal is a fair opportunity for farms and independent producers to remain viable. Document the market, contract, or program at issue.

R8-4 · Competition and anti-concentration: The goal is freedom from unfair competition and monopoly domination. Identify the transaction or practice and the relevant enforcement or rulemaking authority.

R8-5 · Housing: The goal is a decent home. Distinguish financing, rental conditions, local land-use decisions, and federal or state programs; different actors control them.

R8-6 · Health care: The goal is adequate care and the opportunity for good health. Name the access, coverage, price, or service decision you can document.

R8-7 · Disability, unemployment, and benefit security: This research category includes the wider 1944 protection against economic fears of old age, sickness, accident, and unemployment. Keep the specific benefit, eligibility rule, and appeal path visible.

R8-8 · Education: The goal is a good education. Distinguish state and local responsibilities from federal grants, enforcement, and program rules.

The three questions for every right

What can the named actor lawfully do now? What needs a new statute or appropriation? What stronger protection would require constitutional change?

Use the matching R8 inventory rows and their source references. Green, Yellow, Orange, Red, and Black are research risk categories, not traffic-light permission for a citizen to make legal claims. Read the explanation and contrary authority before using a row.

CL tools choose by the question

The Citizens' League tools are evidence instruments. Keep their identity, method, data period, and limitations attached to any output. The short names below preserve the CL identifiers. [OC04–OC05]

CL-001 Congressional Scorecard

Question: What does the member's record show under the tool's conduct and R8 lenses?

Open a member, identify the selected lens, and inspect the supporting records. Save the date and measure with your note. The deployed feed observed September 5 identifies method 12.0 and data as of July 28, 2026; the older Notion v10.7 label does not describe that feed.

Its conduct fields are Stock trading; Tenure / term limits; Single-subject; Capital mandate (PAC); and Health. The May guide's different M1–M5 order is retired for this kit. Conduct scores and the A5 reform demands are related, but a score is not proof that a candidate accepted a demand. The R8 voting lens is also distinct from whether households actually received the outcome.

Route: citizens-league.netlify.app. **Output:** one source-backed question about conduct; not an unsupported grade comparison.

CL-002 Federal Risk Map

Question: What federal changes and state responses does the tool record?

Start with a domain and state. Check the source and date for the event. The live HTML observed September 5 still identifies v5.1; the register describes v5.3 as not yet redeployed. Do not describe the v5.3 changes as live.

Route: federal-decoupling.netlify.app. **Output:** a specific policy or service question supported by its primary record.

CL-003 Capture Index

Question: What committee relationships and procedural patterns does the record show?

Inspect the committee's source material and four scoring criteria separately. The live v7.20 page states that new revolving-door evidence is not yet reflected in scores. It also contains residual conflicting explanations. Treat an unverified ranking as a research lead, not a settled comparative finding.

Route: capture-index.netlify.app. **Output:** a sourced committee question. A funding relationship or sequence does not prove a corrupt exchange.

CL tools finish with the source

CL-005 Decoupling Record

Use the state record to identify a local consequence of federal change. Do not assume a state narrative, posture label, and premium figure use the same definition as CL-002. The register contains a substantial reconciliation backlog; current labels need source checks.

Route: state-impact-federal-changes.netlify.app. **Output:** a state-specific question and the record needed to test it.

CL-006 Replacement Event Index

Inspect the record of a departure, what institutional capacity it concerns, and the source period. Historical scored coverage is partial. This instrument concerns replacement effects; its name does not make it a complete list of lobbying employment.

Route: revolving-door.netlify.app. **Output:** an evidence-based question about continuity or replacement. Check current office and ballot records separately.

CL-007 The Ledger

This is the selected bill register, not a census of all enacted law. Its recorded URL, “199th-bills-impact.netlify.app,” returned 404 on September 5. It is excluded as a working link in this edition. Use Congress.gov to find the bill, latest version, actions, amendments, and votes.

Output: a dated bill record. Record the Congress number as well as the bill number.

CL-009 Legislative Accountability Filter

Use its process view to identify a procedural question, then check the specific bill’s current actions. The guide’s April 2026 counts are a historical snapshot. They must not be presented as current totals or as proof that one funding pattern explains all outcomes.

Route: legislative-process-congress.netlify.app. **Output:** the next decision point and the actor who controls it.

CL-004 and CL-008

CL-004 is the Taxonomy Builder, a maintenance tool for consistent classification. CL-008 is in development; historical records describe both workforce capacity and a later operational evidence foundation. No public scoring or complaint workflow is promised here.

When a tool and its source disagree: save both with dates, use the primary record for the fact, and send a precise correction through quietcollapse.net/contact. Do not silently repair the number in a quotation.

FTC example make the information gap visible

The included historical text is **Citizen Comment on FTC-2026-0298: Premerger Notification Reporting Requirements**. It addresses the FTC and Department of Justice. Its job is to turn a technical reporting question into a question about what public enforcers need to see before a transaction changes a market. [OC06]

What the citizen does

The opening identifies the writer as a citizen and asks for stronger premerger reporting. The comment traces a mechanism: less information can leave regulators with less visibility into control and competitive effects before a deal closes. It then asks for information about workers, suppliers, consumers, ownership structures, and future competition.

The tone is direct. "The public should not find out about the harm only after the market has already been changed" connects the form to its public purpose. The comment states requested changes instead of ending with general disapproval.

What to borrow

Borrow the sequence: **name the decision; identify the missing information; explain who could be affected; ask for a specific safeguard.** Give an agency a question it can answer within the proceeding.

Do not copy the comment's market examples as verified facts about another case. Its industry table is an illustration in an advocacy document, not a substitute for market definition, current data, or a finding that any listed company violated the law.

What the official record establishes

The FTC's March 2026 request sought input on the effectiveness of HSR premerger reporting requirements. That establishes the decision context. It does not establish the truth of every assertion in the citizen comment or prove that the agencies adopted its requests. [S11]

Your practice task

Take one disclosure question from an actual open notice. Write two sentences: what information would become visible, and what decision it would help the public actor make. Add the official provision and the change you request.

Example status: The original Regulations.gov emails confirm FTC and BLM submissions on May 23, 2026 and name the preserved files. They establish receipt, not agency agreement or policy impact. See the filing evidence record in Examples for tracking numbers and remaining checks.

BLM example name the public interest

The included historical text is **Comment Submitted in Opposition to Direct Final Rule**, dated May 23, 2026. It identifies BLM-2025-0138, RIN 1004-AF41, and Federal Register document 2026-08280. [OC07]

What the citizen does

The comment asks BLM to withdraw the direct final rule or issue a new final rule after considering significant adverse comments. It explains public-resource leasing in terms of use, depletion, public return, and future generations. Its recurring question is who receives the benefit and who retains the cost or risk.

The line “Revenue is not automatically stewardship” names a standard the agency can be asked to address. The comment turns that standard into questions about compensation, cleanup, resource loss, and future options.

What needs careful handling

The official April 29 notice described a direct final rule implementing statutory changes. It said the rule would take effect June 29 unless significant adverse comments arrived by May 29, and described withdrawal or a new final rule as possible responses. It also stated the agency’s view that the change implemented a statutory mandate. [S12]

A stronger submission must meet that explanation directly. Identify the precise provision, explain the claimed discretion or procedural defect, and support it. A stewardship argument does not by itself give an agency power to disregard a statute. The Preamble’s reference to posterity is a civic standard here, not a stand-alone cause of action. [S01]

What to borrow

Borrow the public-owner perspective and the questions about costs left behind. Tie each objection to the actual scope of the notice. A broad concern about land or water should explain how the specific rule affects it.

Your practice task

Write one paragraph with four parts: the provision; the public interest affected; the evidence; the remedy the named agency can lawfully consider. Then add one sentence stating what the agency says limits its choice.

Example status: Historical comment text. Its May 29 deadline has passed. The original notice does not establish the current rule status, that Thom’s comment was accepted, or that it caused a later action. Preserve those as separate outcome questions.

From a request to an outcome

A completed submission is one result. A repaired public process is another. Keep both visible so that participation does not disappear into a receipt number.

Preserve one small action file

Keep the primary records, a one-page evidence index, the final text sent, the official receipt, the reply, and your next check date. Store later versions alongside the earlier ones. A correction should make the history clearer, not erase it.

Use Worksheet 7 to record the action. When an office answers, ask whether it addressed the request, supplied a new fact, referred the issue, or changed the underlying decision. Save the supporting document for the status you assign.

Use the three card types for different jobs

A **CL-xxx Finding Card** records what a measurement shows, the method, period, change, evidence, and limits. A **Public Comment Period Card** records a specific government opportunity, its deadline, submission route, and later action. A **Daily Brief Action Card** points to something timely that a citizen can do now.

Do not turn an old finding into a new deadline. Do not treat an open comment period as proof that Operation Citizen has filed. Do not call an outcome a success before the record supports it. [OC02]

Make the next handoff easy

When another person or institution can help, send a short summary with the best sources and one request. Explain what has already been done. State what is unknown. Ask what contribution fits that institution's role.

Keep the repair in view

Record the instrument that produced the change: a practice, rule, budget decision, statute, court order, or other action. Identify who can reverse it. Set a later check against the same standard.

Operation Citizen's role is to connect evidence, authority, citizen action, and public accountability. It does not have to own every organization or perform every specialized task for the record to hold together.

Publication record

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