

Alliance of Civic Technologists

Mission and Values Statement

Dated Summer 2023

Context:

This document is the initial draft of the Alliance of Civic Technologists mission and values. This draft is based on comments and feedback made to an [earlier document](#) that was approved by the Brigade Network in 2017.

Mission

The Alliance of Civic Technology (ACT) will support local volunteer civic technology groups by **providing opportunities to connect, support, and amplify.**

1. **Connect:** ACT is a decentralized network of civic tech volunteer organizations and will serve as the connective tissue between civic tech organizations helping to connect people, share lessons learned and convene the community.
2. **Support:** ACT will work to ensure member organizations are supported by providing training from paid professionals and facilitating peer groups to solve common problems and support the growth of local civic tech volunteer organizations. Our members use their skills to support efforts to ensure communities are healthy, inclusive, just, and that their governments are responsive and accountable to people.
3. **Amplify:** ACT will use its national audience to promote member stories. We advocate for changes in technology and policies that enable more effective and equitable delivery of services to the people who rely on them. We will champion solutions that support the civil rights of our neighbors, as well as to call out those that would endanger them.

Our values

What we are like as an organization

1. **Caring is Punk As Fuck / Caring is Punk Rock:** To do this work you have to actually care and empathize and meet people where they are and listen to them. We are in this space because we give a damn what happens to our neighbors *all of them* across our respective cities.

2. **Equality takes work:** It is not enough to simply state that the organization and its members believe in equal rights and that governments should provide the same level of service and access to everyone. It requires effort to make it so.
3. **Privacy is a human right and governments must be transparent:** In the projects we build, we take care to collect only the information that is needed and nothing more. In turn we advocate for policies that ensure people's right to privacy is protected. Governments, and those acting on its behalf, have a responsibility to be transparent in their conduct.
4. **We make the complex accessible:** Technology, policy, and the machinations of government can be complicated and esoteric. ACT and its members strive to demystify the process so that they can be understood by everyone. **The people impacted by government policy have the right to participate in a deliberative process that has a real weight on decision making.** As allies, we use our privilege to insist that those impacted have a seat at the table.

Our operating principles

The ideas that guide the decisions we make

- **Go where the work is:** Our members know their communities and know where they can do the most good taking on challenges that reduce harm in their communities either through direct action or in support of allied organizations.
- **Build with, not for the people we serve**.** We start with the people affected by the issue, and understand and respect their needs throughout the process. We also respect and support public servants, and when we are critical of government outcomes, we blame the system, not the people.*
- **We work holistically** with the understanding that the problems faced by our communities and their solutions are complex in nature. The problem may span across jurisdictional lines and need to involve people at all levels.
- **We move carefully and fix things:** We work iteratively to reduce harm as quickly as possible without causing harm ourselves.
- **We use the facts as they exist in the real world.** We utilize data to inform decision making and to show the world as it is and how it could be.
- **We work transparently:** As a membership organization, ACT conducts our business transparently with ample opportunities for members to provide feedback in the organization's decision making.

- **Non-partisan, but not neutral.** We are an alliance of non-partisan groups, but that non-partisanship does not imply neutrality. Our vision of government includes more services, with equitable access to those services for more people, those with the right to vote should be able to do so without inconvenience, and that democracy only works those impacted by government can participate easily and meaningfully.

*[Cuán McCann](#) is the originator of the phrase “build with, not for.” You can find his work at [buildwith.org](#)