Organization for Responsible Governance

Beyond the Polls Institutional Platform

2026-2028 Strategic Framework

Institutional Positioning

Beyond the Polls is an institutional civic participation platform that brings together ORG's existing and planned work around a shared goal: strengthening year-round civic participation in The Bahamas.

It is not a standalone program with a separate program of activities. Instead, it provides an overarching strategic framework through which ORG's programs, campaigns, events, research, partnerships, and public engagement activities can contribute to a common institutional objective.

Beyond the Polls will have its own name, visual identity, logo, messaging, and public-facing campaign presence, while individual ORG programs will retain their own identities and operational structures.

The platform therefore operates at two levels:

- Institutional level: Beyond the Polls provides the overarching narrative, strategic direction, participation pathways, and measures of progress.
- Program level: ORG's existing programs and activities deliver the substantive work that advances those objectives.

Institutional Goal

Foster a culture of year-round civic participation by connecting Bahamians to governance, public policy, and practical opportunities to engage beyond elections.

Core Message

The election is over. Participation is not.

Supporting Message

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Elections are one moment in a democratic system. Participation continues between elections through learning about how government works, accessing information, engaging public institutions, contributing to consultations, shaping policy, strengthening communities, and holding decision-makers accountable.

Beyond the Polls seeks to make these opportunities more visible, practical, and accessible by connecting citizens to the people, information, tools, and spaces that allow them to participate throughout the democratic cycle.

Theory of Change

Inform → Involve → Strengthen → Reform → Trust & Opportunity

ORG's work supports civic participation by:

1. Informing citizens through accessible civic education, information, research, and public-interest content.
2. Involving citizens by creating practical opportunities to participate, consult, provide feedback, volunteer, and engage institutions.
3. Strengthening citizens, civil society, and community organizations through leadership development, skills-building, networks, and organizational capacity.
4. Reforming systems and institutions by supporting greater transparency, accountability, meaningful consultation, and improved governance.
5. Building trust and opportunity as the result of better-informed citizens, stronger institutions, and more meaningful opportunities for participation.

Trust is therefore treated as an outcome of better governance and meaningful participation, rather than a standalone communications objective.

Strategic Objectives

Objective	What this means
Increase civic knowledge	Improve citizens' understanding of government, public policy, public finance, rights, responsibilities, and how decisions are made.
Expand participation pathways	Make practical opportunities for participation more visible and accessible beyond voting and political parties.
Strengthen civic capacity	Equip young people, communities, and civil society organizations with the knowledge, skills, and networks needed to participate effectively.

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Improve representation and accountability	Create opportunities for citizens to understand, monitor, question, and engage with institutions and decision-makers.
Support better governance and reform	Use evidence, public engagement, partnerships, and policy work to strengthen transparency, consultation, accountability, and institutional performance.
Strengthen democratic resilience	Build a culture in which citizens remain informed, engaged, and connected to democratic institutions between elections.

Strategic Pillars

Pillar	Institutional Focus	Examples of ORG Work
Policy, Governance & Reform	Improve systems, transparency, accountability, consultation, and governance.	FOIA/Access to Information work, policy research, governance reform, institutional partnerships
Engagement & Civic Education	Inform citizens and create practical pathways for participation.	Be Clear Bahamas, Beyond the Polls campaign, public consultations, civic education, Youth in Parliament
Community Capacity Building	Strengthen people and organizations to participate and lead.	Active Citizens Bahamas, Map4Good, NPO capacity building, Governance Labs, advocacy training

Institutional Role of Beyond the Polls

Beyond the Polls will:

- Provide the shared narrative connecting ORG's civic participation work.
- Identify and communicate specific pathways for citizens to participate.
- Create a consistent framework for measuring ORG's contribution to year-round participation.
- Coordinate cross-program opportunities where appropriate.
- Provide a common platform for institutional campaigns and public engagement.
- Help demonstrate how individual ORG programs contribute to broader democratic outcomes.
- Strengthen ORG's positioning as an organization working on civic participation beyond elections.

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Participation Pathways

A central function of Beyond the Polls will be to move from simply telling citizens to "get involved" to showing them how they can get involved.

Participation pathways will include:

Learn

- Understand the national budget
- Learn how Parliament and government work
- Understand rights and responsibilities
- Access public information
- Learn about national and local issues

Engage

- Participate in focus groups
- Submit feedback
- Engage representatives
- Join civic events

Accountability

- Request information
- Analyze public spending
- Use transparency mechanisms
- Ask questions of public institutions

Lead

- Develop civic leadership skills
- Advocate for community issues
- Organize community action
- Participate in youth leadership opportunities
- Strengthen community organizations

Collaborate

- Join civil society networks
- Volunteer
- Connect with community organizations
- Work with others on public-interest issues

These pathways should become a consistent feature of Beyond the Polls communications and ORG programming.

Institutional Workplan

Phase	Timeframe	Institutional Focus	Key Activities / Contributions
Phase 1: Launch & Public Awareness	**Jul–Sep 2026**	Establish Beyond the Polls as ORG's overarching civic participation platform and introduce the concept of participation beyond elections.	Launch Beyond the Polls identity and campaign; national media and digital engagement; podcasts and explainer videos; Be Clear Bahamas: The Budget & You; National Virtual Roundtable; Access to Information Week; identify and communicate participation pathways.
Phase 2: Participation & Representation	**Oct–Dec 2026**	Move audiences from awareness toward active engagement with institutions and public processes.	Representation Check-In Campaign; FOIA & Transparency Campaign; Youth in Governance Workshop; Youth in Parliament Capacity Building Workshop; Integrity Week; Giving Campaign; Map4Good expansion; promote opportunities for consultation and institutional engagement.
Phase 3: Building Civic Capacity	**Jan–Jun 2027**	Strengthen the skills, networks, and organizational capacity needed for sustained participation.	Active Citizens Bahamas expansion; Community Governance Labs; advocacy workshops; public consultation training; Map4Good Civic Network expansion; NPO Governance & Roadmap Cohort; develop clearer participation pathways across ORG offerings.

Phase 4: Institutionalizing Participation	**Jul 2027–Jun 2028**	Strengthen the systems, tools, partnerships, and institutional mechanisms that support long-term civic participation.	Democracy Between Elections Forum; National Civic Participation Index; Citizen Budget Tool; Friends of ORG membership; biannual Governance Events; institutional partnerships; annual measurement and reporting of civic participation outcomes.

Program Alignment Model

Beyond the Polls will sit internally, rather than replace, ORG's existing programs and activities.

ORG Activity / Program	Primary Contribution to Beyond the Polls
Be Clear Bahamas	Inform: builds public understanding of public finances and the national budget.
FOIA / Transparency Work	Inform and Engage: gives citizens tools to access information and hold institutions accountable.
Map4Good	Involve + Collaborate: connects citizens with organizations, community initiatives, and opportunities to contribute.
Active Citizens Bahamas	Strengthen + Lead: develops civic leadership and advocacy skills.
Youth in Parliament	Inform + Strengthen: builds practical understanding of governance, parliamentary processes, leadership, and participation.
Community Governance Labs	Involve + Strengthen: creates spaces for communities to understand and engage governance issues.
Public Consultation Work	Involve + Reform: strengthens the ability of citizens and institutions to participate meaningfully in civic life
Beyond the Polls Campaign	Connect: makes these opportunities visible and gives the public a shared entry point into ORG's work.

The key principle is that ORG does not need to create a new Beyond the Polls activity every time it wants to demonstrate progress. Existing activities can be mapped to the platform's objectives and participation pathways.

Annual Institutional Calendar

The institutional calendar should therefore function as a **coordination calendar**, not a separate Beyond the Polls programme calendar.

Timing	Existing / Planned Activity	Beyond the Polls Contribution
Ongoing	Beyond the Polls Campaign	Public-facing narrative connecting citizens to year-round participation
Annual Budget Cycle	Be Clear Bahamas	Civic and fiscal literacy
Annual	National Virtual Roundtable	National dialogue and citizen engagement
September	Access to Information Week	Transparency and accountability
October	Youth in Parliament Capacity Building Workshop	Youth civic leadership and governance capacity
October	Youth in Governance Workshop	Youth participation
December	Integrity Week	Ethics, accountability, and public trust
Annual	Map4Good Mixer	Community and civil society connections
Ongoing	Active Citizens Bahamas	Civic leadership and advocacy
Nov–Jan	Giving Campaign	Public support and institutional sustainability
Annual	Governance Events	Institutional dialogue and public participation

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Monitoring and Evaluation

Instead of measuring Beyond the Polls only through campaign reach, ORG will measure whether the institutional portfolio is creating more informed, capable, and engaged citizens.

Proposed indicators

Inform

- Number of citizens reached through civic education activities
- Engagement with civic education content
- Change in civic knowledge/pre-post assessments
- Number of people accessing public information resources

Involve

- Number of citizens participating in focus groups, forums, and civic events
- Number of citizens connected to participation opportunities
- Number of new organizations/citizens engaged through Map4Good
- Number of citizens taking a documented action following ORG engagement

Strengthen

- Number of people completing leadership/capacity-building activities
- Number of organizations receiving capacity-building support
- Skills or confidence gained following training
- Number of participants progressing into further civic opportunities

Reform

- Number of institutions engaged
- Number of recommendations adopted or acted upon
- Number of transparency/accountability mechanisms utilized

Trust & Democratic Resilience

- Citizen perceptions of their ability to participate*
- Citizen confidence in understanding how governance works
- Perceived accessibility of participation opportunities
- Repeat participation in civic activities
- Diversity of participants across age, geography, and community

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Operating Principle

Beyond the Polls will be treated as an institutional umbrella, not an additional program competing for staff time, budget, and implementation capacity.

The platform will be implemented by aligning and connecting ORG's existing program schedule to a common institutional strategy.

This means:

Existing programs → contribute to strategic objectives → participation pathways are identified → Beyond the Polls provides the common narrative → institutional impact is measured collectively.

The value of Beyond the Polls is therefore in making ORG's existing work feel connected, intentional, and accessible as part of a broader effort to build year-round civic participation in The Bahamas.