Mechanics of School Finance: The Flow of Funds
This workshop series is designed to provide participants with a comprehensive understanding of how money flows through the state, local, and federal governments in order to fund Connecticut’s school districts. This is ideal for those who want a more detailed understanding of the budget process. The total anticipated time for this entire series is 4.5 hours.

School Finance 101: Understanding the State Education Budget
Recommended time: 1.5 hours
This workshop introduces participants to how the State contributes to education across school districts. We will begin by looking at “The State of the State,” and will continue by focusing on state education funding for the community we are working with, comparing funding for peer communities, and taking a look at demographic trends.

School Finance 102: Understanding the Local Education Budget
Recommended time: 1.5 hours
This workshop is designed to prepare you for budget season. It is meant to help community members better understand what “the budget” means. We will start by recapping the flow of state education dollars, understand the quantitative factors for local education budgets, and find local education budget documents.

We will answer frequently asked questions such as: Where do I find our budget? How long is the budget? How detailed? What can I easily take away from it? What is difficult to find in the budget? How do I ask questions about the budget and who do I ask?

We will also take a look at some of the documents that we can find online so participants can become comfortable participating in the local education budget discussion.

School Finance 103: Special Education Funding in Connecticut
Recommended time: 1.5 hours
In this workshop, we will explore federal law, as well as the state and local funding of special education. We will take a look at demographics and trends in order to better understand the obligations of a school district and understand exactly how special education is funded. Previous workshop attendance in School Finance 101 and 102 or Condensed: School Finance are necessary in order to benefit from this session.
Keys to Success: How to Talk About the Things You Care About

This workshop series is designed to equip its participants with the tools necessary to be civically engaged and active in their communities. We will go over specific communication strategies, how to build effective relationships with other community members and government officials, and work to get participants comfortable when engaging with their communities. This series is interactive and the total anticipated time for this series is 4-5.5 hours.

Building Your Personal Narrative
Recommended time: 1.5 hours

What is your story? What got you to the place of caring so much about something that you want to take action? We will utilize Marshall Ganz’s three aspects of storytelling (Story of Me, Story of Us, and Story of Now) to get participants comfortable telling their own personal stories in the most effective way. This is an interactive workshop and relies on the participation of those who attend.

Writing Your Story and Connecting Your Cause
Recommended time: 1 hour

What does an effective email or letter look like? What needs to be included and what should be excluded? Do you make your letters personal or are you a “just the facts” kind of person? In order to communicate effectively and ask decision-makers to support a particular point of view, you need to strike a balance of both. We will go over effective strategies to achieve this balance and review sample emails and letters. This workshop is interactive – please plan on sharing your passion and your story!

Public Speaking: Talking About the Things You Care About
Recommended time: 1–1.5 hours

Getting up in front of people and speaking, whether in person or through virtual platforms like Zoom, can be intimidating, especially when you’re trying to express your perspective on an issue in front of strangers. In this workshop, we will help you develop the skills to create a three-minute testimony to showcase your passion, knowledge, and determination in an effective way, no matter the platform you may need to use. This workshop is interactive and relies on the participation of those in attendance, so be prepared to share your passion and story!

Building Relationships
Recommended time: 1–1.5 hours

Does a legislative aide matter? Can you ask to speak with or meet with a local board of education member? How do you build relationships, and who do you build them with? Building relationships with other community members and elected officials is key to catalyzing change. This workshop is intended to get participants comfortable building relationships with decision-makers in the realm of school finance, on both a state and local level. We will talk about roles (not specific individuals), the function of different positions, strategies to reach out and connect to those in these positions, and how to maintain these relationships over time.
Current Affairs: The Economy
This is a two-part series about Connecticut’s economy. We will explore CT’s fiscal state, go in-depth about both the history and future of the State’s budget after the COVID-19 pandemic, and empower participants to add their voice to the conversation. This series is intended for those who wish to better understand and demystify the inner workings of state finance and will take approximately 2 hours.

The Economy, State Finance, and You
Recommended time: 1 hour

Wondering what the state of the State is? Curious as to how the headlines may impact your community? In this workshop, we will explore what “the economy” is, and delve into Connecticut’s fiscal state. Have you wondered why there can be surplus and yet people say we have a budget problem? Who budgets, and how can you tell them your thoughts? We will find out! This workshop is intended to demystify discussions of the economy or Connecticut’s fiscal state, and empower you to add your voice to the conversation. This workshop is general in nature, focused on the overall picture of Connecticut’s fiscal health, rather than the details of departmental or program budgets or even municipal funding.

The Economy in a Time of COVID
Recommended time: 1 hour

Since March 2020, the economy of Connecticut, the United States, and the world, has been uncertain. How has COVID already impacted our economy, and what may the future impact be? This presentation covers those questions and includes a specific focus on how everyday residents are financially impacted by the pandemic, and the impact of various forms of financial relief the federal and state government have offered.
The Path of Progress
This two-part series focuses on the past, present, and future of Connecticut’s education system. In this series, we will elaborate on the history of education in the state that has gotten us to the present, and focus on equipping participants with the tools needed to shape the future of education in Connecticut. This series, which will take approximately 2 hours, is designed for those who are less interested in the nuances of school finance specifically, and would rather approach education reform from a holistic perspective.

History of Education in Connecticut
Recommended Time: 1 hour
This workshop explores the path to where we are currently, using a timeline anchored in the history of education in Connecticut. We will trace back the origins of our current education funding system, examine the impact of redlining and housing segregation on our current education system, and explore different curricular changes that have happened throughout the state’s history and their impacts on students, families, and communities.

The Civics of Education
Recommended Time: 1 hour
How do you add your voice to the education conversation in your community and in the state? In this workshop we will examine the nature of education beyond the walls of a classroom. We will explore all of the roles and stakeholders that intersect with the education decision-making processes; whether it’s related to curriculum, budget, classroom environment, or even something as simple as menu offerings during lunch. This workshop will equip participants with the tools needed to effectively communicate with these stakeholders in order to enact change.
Single Workshops
The following are single, shortened workshops targeted toward those who do not have time for a full series but are still interested in the information. It is important to note that since these workshops are condensed, the depth of information will vary greatly from a longer workshop series, however, the important content and tools will still be conveyed.

Condensed: School Finance
Recommended time: 1 hour
This workshop blends elements from all workshops in the Mechanics of School Finance series, but devotes most of the time to understanding the flow of funding from the State, while including some information about local education funding, and generalized information about special education funding. It is designed for those who want to learn but have significant time constraints.

Condensed: Public Speaking
Recommended time: 1 hour
This workshop is designed to be a quick refresher for those who have taken part in some or all of the Keys to Success series. We will recap your personal narrative and practice issue-oriented public speaking. This is an interactive workshop.