

## **GED Prep Videos**

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In the beginning of our project, in a time before the pandemic, we had different goals and objectives for our project. When we were first together, we were almost the Civic Engagement team of misfit CTEP's as our main preferences for the project were not chosen for continuation. As a result, when we first met, as opposed to other teams who had their groups based on a project they chose, we had to start all the way from scratch. The spark of life for our original idea came from two sources. The first was an interest in the intersection of arts and technology. The second was an art installation at the Minneapolis Central Library. The art installation was a collection of art pieces made through an organization designed to help people dealing with trauma express it through art. Seeing the different pieces on display, from poems to paintings, to sculptures and more gave us the final push to pursue this original idea.

After solidifying our idea, we began narrowing down what organizations with whom we wanted to work. Our first thought for an organization to partner with was Avivo. Avivo is an organization that works through art to aid people affected by homelessness. This organization was also in partnership with the art installation we saw at the Minneapolis Central Library. However, as we began reaching out to Avivo, we were met with certain additional volunteer requirements that would have been unsustainable with our working schedules.

As that fell through, we decided to rethink our partnership prospects by rethinking what populations with whom we wanted to work. We decided that since most of us worked with adult populations, that working with children would be a change of pace and be a creative challenge. We were also originally drawn to an idea that would find us teaching technology to people in nursing or assisted living facilities to help them stay connected to their friends and family. Split between the two options, we reconfigured the two ideas to work together. Our new goal was now to find an organization that would allow us to teach technology skills to youth who would then teach the skills they learned to people in nursing or assisted living facilities. It would be a way to both bridge the digital divide and the generational divides.

Abby and Oli both had previously existing ties to the Boys and Girls club due to previous civic engagement projects. They began reaching out to that organization to see what summer programming they had planned and how our group could fit into that plan. At the same time, Jack began researching and reaching out to nursing and assisted living facilities to see how our project plan could fit into their programming.

Then came the time to establish which technology skills and programs we wanted to teach. Oli, Jack, and Zamira all had previous experience with the Adobe film and photography

editing programs. Abby had experience with map making. Zamira had access and experience to virtual reality headsets and 3-D paint tools. Jack also had experience with garageband. We ultimately decided on utilizing the virtual reality and 3-D paint tools available to Zamira as that would be a fun activity that not many people have done before. We also decided on doing an activity where the students would learn how to scan and edit pictures or videos together so that the folks in the nursing home would be able to either be in the picture or video and explain the significance of it to their family or friends.

However, March arrived and threw many wrenches into our plans. As COVID-19 spread it became unsafe for the residents of the nursing homes to have guests enter. Soon after the Boys and Girls club ended their summer programming. This left us back at square one: without a partner and without an idea.

We decided to shift course again. We realized that while arts and technology are a very valuable and important resource for artistic and creative expression, with how the pandemic was spreading, we thought our skills and abilities could be better utilized by helping more directly those affected. We reached out to many social service organizations before Abby, through her connection at Minneapolis Central Library, reached out to the Franklin Learning Center. With the Franklin Learning Center we realized that as they made their move to operate remotely their GED and Citizenship Test prep courses for adults were in a disadvantaged spot. This was not just because of the instructional switches required to teach digitally, but also because there were language barriers and technological skills gap. Once we realized that our goals and skills aligned, our contact at the Franklin Learning Center, Milo, got us to work to create instructional videos to help support asynchronous learning.

The process we followed was close to this: our group met weekly. From there Milo would tell us how things were going at the Franklin Learning Center and what challenges were arising. From there we would be assigned different tasks revolving around their GED or Citizenship prep courses. Since many of us had a media production background, we would make videos to help support their students in completing tasks that would normally have the support of instructors or tutors in the Franklin Learning Center, but were no longer present as the students worked remotely. These videos would also be used by tutors to show them how to use tools they would have to use during their work with students. Then, once the tasks were assigned, Jack would normally go through whatever the task was and screen record their computer to show or demonstrate the skill, task, or tool. He would narrate slowly, giving all the necessary information and steps that students need to complete the task. This would include even basic information and mouse shape and scrolling information as many students were still new to this technology. From there, he would share his screen recordings to Oli and Zamira who would edit the video. They would edit away the down time of reality and then also add clarifying captions and graphics to

clearly emphasize the content. Finally, Abby would receive the edited video and add a new voice over if necessary.

After re-evaluating our project to better fit the needs of our community during a pandemic, we were able to establish a clear set of goals. These goals included finishing at least 10 instructional videos for the Franklin Learning Center. We exceeded this goal by making a total of 11 instructional videos that included everything from creating a gmail account to sending your GED practice test score to the Franklin Learning Center via email. We were also able to begin making instructional videos on the new Whiteboard App that the FLC is using to teach during tutor sessions. The Whiteboard App allows users to share a screen where they can paste photos, draw, and type out text to teach in a more visual, interactive way. Our point of contact at the FLC reported that he has already gotten positive feedback from students on our videos.

Overall, we wanted to do a project that fitted the needs of an organization struggling with the changes that the pandemic brought about. The Franklin Learning Center relied on in-person teaching and had not yet ventured into remote learning until March. They needed immediate assistance with online teaching materials, especially ones regarding taking and signing up for the GED/navigating the GED.com website, and we were able to satisfy those needs completely. Additional project files will be transferred via hard drive to our point of contact at the FLC so that, if desired, they can use footage that we made to create a new video on a related topic.

While we do not have exact numbers, on a weekly basis Milo informed us that the completed videos we had already sent to him were being sent and used to their students. Even from sending the videos out to students, it allowed us to even redesign a few videos to even more specific tasks. For example, the video we made for how to send a score report to the FLC had about four steps, yet people still got stuck on step two. From there we made another video specifically for just step two, so that students could more easily comprehend the content. Between the students being enrolled in the program and the volunteers helping teach the content, we could have several dozen people viewing our content right now!

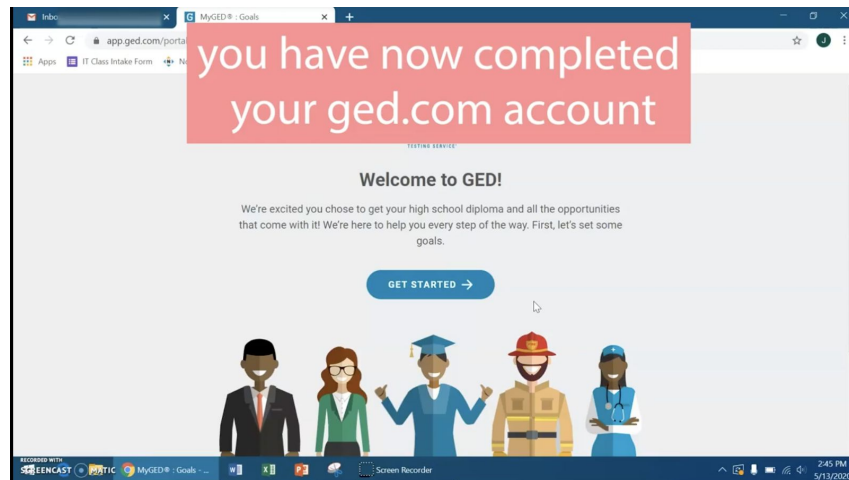
As stated earlier, our biggest problem was having to change course with our Civic Engagement project due to Covid-19. When we first got together as a group, we had a plan to tackle the digital divide in our community by helping youth and seniors to bond over learning new digital skills. More specifically, we had a plan to teach youth various creative digital skills (media production, virtual reality painting, using green-screen- all these mediums as a way to share stories with each other) and for those youth leaders to spend a day teaching these skills to seniors at a local community home. With the unexpected pandemic that arrived in March, we began to have difficulties finding a partnership with both a willing youth and senior organization. This makes sense, because covid-19 disproportionately affects seniors, who are at a high risk of

complications with the virus. We tried to find ways to work around meeting in person, for a while we speculated that we could possibly translate this idea into an online experience (a workshop or conference of some kind). We began to think about how accessible this would be to seniors, as we were unsure how much tech assistance the staff at the senior homes could provide to help seniors participate in online meetings. Since we were not able to secure a youth or senior organization partnership, we then shifted our focus to more current needs in the community- how could we do our part to help people during this pandemic? Abby came to us with a great idea and the prospect of working with the Franklin Learning Center, who were in need of help making their online learning experience accessible to all patrons who have had to continue their education from home. The Franklin Learning Center helps patrons study for their GED and citizenship exams, as well as other general ABE topics. We partnered with FLC to make a variety of videos that would help patrons better prepare themselves for their GED tests. The videos walk through the process of studying and taking practice tests, using email to communicate with FLC, and other helpful tips to make the online learning experience go smoothly. In the end- we overcame our struggles with our CE project by shifting our focus and persistently looking for opportunities to address the current needs of our communities.

We plan to give the videos to P2PU so that they can distribute them to their students as well. Other than that, I do think this project has been a valuable capacity building project for an organization that needed help, as well as a project that is safe to do during a pandemic, because it can be/was done completely remotely. So if the next cohort needs a CE project, especially as the pandemic continues, this could be one to further. Our point of contact at the FLC was also super helpful and responsive; we met with him once a week and he helped give guidance on our editing and helped give us direction when it came to what videos to edit, the pace they should be, and what digital literacy skills most of their students had. This was especially helpful when figuring out where to slow the videos down, or when to break up a video into smaller chunks that described how to perform a task such as zooming in on text while taking the GED.

Throughout our civic engagement experience, we learned that it is okay for things not to work out perfectly right away- everything is a process. Sometimes letting go of control is needed to let a new opportunity flow. It may have felt like we were not sure where to go when our original plan had to be scrapped due to the unexpected pandemic, but in the end, we got a really rewarding and important project done for the community that really directly helps patrons to continue their educational journeys. With our work, we were able to help ease the minds of patrons who were struggling to adapt to online learning- and our instructional videos helped act as a bridge between the challenge of online learning and patrons continuing to receive their GEDs amidst the pandemic. That is a big thing we should definitely be proud of! We directly helped patrons to earn their GEDs, which creates a positive and lasting impact on their lives and opens up patrons to new opportunities for socio-economical and career advancement.

We recognize that part of the value in our civic engagement project structure is to help us build skills in networking, organizing, and reaching out to people, but we think it would be useful to have a document or something of that sort with information about partners and contact people for past projects. It could really help future projects get off the ground, especially given the tight time restraints we have.



Screenshot from our instructional video about creating an account on ged.com, which is needed to take the practice exam



Group photo during a weekly Zoom meeting with our contact from the Franklin Learning Center, Milo

[How to Sign Up for a GED Account Video](#)

Link to our instructional video about creating an account on GED.com

[How to Create a Gmail Account Video](#)

Link to our instructional video about creating an email account with Google

[How to Send the GED Score Report to the FLC](#)

Link to our instructional video about how to send the GED Score Report