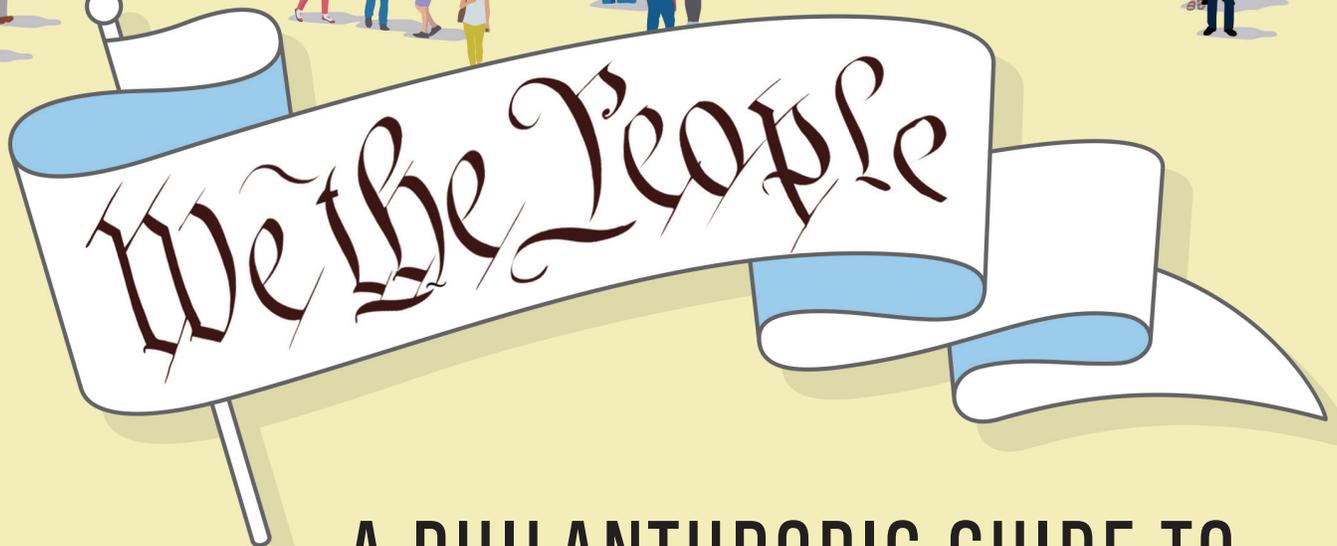
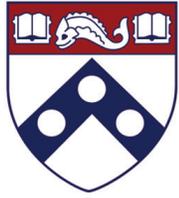


The Center for
High Impact Philanthropy
School of Social Policy & Practice
UNIVERSITY of PENNSYLVANIA



**A PHILANTHROPIC GUIDE TO
STRENGTHENING DEMOCRACY**



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The Center for High Impact Philanthropy is a trusted source of knowledge and education to help donors around the world do more good. Founded as a collaboration between the School of Social Policy & Practice and alumni of the Wharton School, it is the premier university-based center focused on philanthropy for social impact. To learn more, visit:

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We the People

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Democracy is government by the people.

While its most visible practice is the free and fair election of leaders, democracy comprises a broad array of institutions that vest power in citizens, including a free press, rule of law, individual rights, and others. Multiple surveys over the past decade have revealed a trend of declining confidence in democracy among Americans. In a 2018 survey jointly commissioned by Freedom House, the Penn Biden Center, and the George W. Bush Institute, 60% of respondents rated the importance of living in a democracy at 10 on a 1 to 10 scale. However, a majority (55%) characterized American democracy as “weak,” with 68% percent saying it is “getting weaker.”

While many factors contribute to this growing sense that democracy is weakening (e.g., declining trust in government and partisan gridlock), there are practical and thoughtful efforts underway to reverse these sentiments. The Center for High Impact Philanthropy’s mission is to use evidence-based analysis of social challenges to maximize the impact of philanthropic activity. With this guide, we do so by creating a framework for those looking to strengthen the democratic system. Our framework identifies five core dimensions that are essential to shoring up democracy and helps donors understand what types of efforts to fund.

While general elections tend to spotlight highly partisan politics, a democracy is more than ballots and polls. It involves the collective efforts of its citizens to solve social problems. When philanthropy strengthens the capacity of citizens to work collectively for the public good, philanthropy strengthens democracy.

In fact, philanthropy and the strength of U.S. democracy have always been inextricably tied: Policies set by state, local, and federal governments influence neighborhoods, schools, health-care systems, the environment, and our economy. These, among

others, are the same issue areas that philanthropy targets for change. The two sectors often work in tandem; government grants and fees for service account for 32% of the nonprofit sector’s revenue.¹

For individual donors, foundation professionals, and other philanthropic players, this guide provides a framework for identifying high impact philanthropic opportunities to strengthen democracy. It outlines the key elements of a strong democracy, along with indicators of success and the determinants that drive that success. For those looking to apply our framework in support of ongoing efforts, we demonstrate how increasing civic engagement and reinvigorating local media are promising avenues to bolster democracy and reduce polarization in American society. We focus on increasing civic engagement because when citizens are more engaged with each other and working together, they find common ground, solve problems, and build stronger communities. We focus on reinvigorating local media because when media serves as an independent, trusted, and relevant source of critical information, citizens can better hold their representatives accountable, and democracy thrives.





ELEMENTS OF

schools, and supporting community projects at public parks and libraries are examples of the former. Advocating in support of specific legislation and voter mobilization around a specific cause are examples of the latter.

In identifying elements of a strong democracy, we incorporated the perspectives of foundations already active in the space, practitioners running democracy programs, and academics studying political and social behavior and institutions. We reviewed democratic theory, existing frameworks, foundation strategy documents, and grants to 150 nonprofit organizations in the democracy space.

Additionally, we analyzed eight widely used indices for measuring democratic health, which offer distinctive perspectives on the fundamental criteria of a democracy. (See Methodology, page 16) We also analyzed what large foundations are doing in this space (read online at impact.upenn.edu/democracy). Several funders, such as the Hewlett Foundation's Madison Initiative, the Charles Koch Institute, and Democracy Fund (the sponsor of this work), have published conceptual framings of democracy that inform their own grantmaking. Our contribution is to provide a framework broad enough to be applied by funders regardless of their current programmatic priorities.

Synthesizing all these various sources, and incorporating the feedback from a workshop of 20 funders, scholars, and practitioners, we arrived at the following five elements of a strong democracy. These elements characterize what an ideal democracy can look like. They reinforce each other and represent areas where philanthropy can help.

Philanthropic efforts to strengthen democracy come from across the ideological and political spectrum, and take one of two distinct forms: support for institutions that advance the intrinsic value of and faith in democracy, and the use of democratic institutions as instruments to affect specific policy changes. Facilitating cross-party dialogue, endowing journalism

These elements reinforce each other and act in concert toward creating a strong democracy. Philanthropic activities that support one or more of these elements serve to strengthen democracy.

A STRONG DEMOCRACY

EMPOWERED CITIZENS

The people are the principal actors in a democracy. Citizens are empowered when their rights are protected, they are informed, and fellow citizens and policymakers proactively engage them in the democratic process.

FAIR PROCESSES

As the mechanics of democracy, fair processes respect the principle of “one person, one vote” and hold policy-making institutions accountable through checks and balances.

RESPONSIVE POLICY

As an output of democracy, responsive policy weighs all citizens’ interests and values equally, provides for the common good, and establishes institutions that empower individuals to protect their rights.

INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION

These elements mediate the relationship between citizens, processes, and policy. Information and communication that are representative, accurate, and trusted ensure fair processes and enable citizens to hold policymakers accountable.

SOCIAL COHESION

A shared sense of purpose and identity is implicit in the enduring phrase “we the people.” A democratic society’s members recognize each other’s right to a voice in the political process and are willing to collaborate for common ends.



CHIP'S FRAMEWORK TO GUIDE PHILANTHROPIC ACTION

| ELEMENTS <i>What does success look like?</i> | INDICATORS <i>What is the current state and how can we measure progress?</i> | KEY DETERMINANTS <i>Which factors drive success and improve the indicators?</i> | WHAT DONORS FUND <i>What are real-world examples of what funders support?</i> |
|---|---|---|---|
|  <p>EMPOWERED CITIZENS</p> | <p>Measures of people's engagement with and rights within formal and informal political institutions (e.g., voter turnout, popular knowledge of political information, and self-reported levels of autonomy)</p> | <p>Legal rights that are protected by courts, sources of information and education on public affairs, and civil society organizations that facilitate citizens' engagement</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Civics education • Community foundations • Legal defense funds • Training candidates for public office |
|  <p>FAIR PROCESSES</p> | <p>Measures of equality of participation and representation, measures of people's faith in institutions and the rules that govern them</p> | <p>Accepted rules and norms that govern elections, legislatures, regulatory bodies, and courts; independence of election administration and judicial oversight, and transparency in government</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voting rights litigation and advocacy • Government watchdog organizations • Electoral reform |
|  <p>RESPONSIVE POLICY</p> | <p>Measures of the degree to which government produces effective policy that responds to the needs and voices of citizens (e.g., comparison of representatives' voting records to constituents' preferences)</p> | <p>Civil society organizations, procedures, and practices that allow interested citizens to influence policymaking (e.g., public comment periods for federal regulations, government transparency initiatives, and advocacy campaigns)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training to build capacity in government agencies • Policy research • Advocacy • Oversight and monitoring activities |
|  <p>INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION</p> | <p>Measures of the output of, access to, and trust in information about social and political life (e.g., number of news stories addressing local critical information needs, polling on trust in media outlets, measures of online news engagement)</p> | <p>News reporting and research organizations, opportunities for public discourse, and access to technology. Historically, local news outlets provided both reporting on issues relevant to a community as well as opportunities for public discourse (e.g., hosting debates).</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nonprofit journalism • Think tanks • Deliberative forums • Civic tech (e.g., online voter registration) |
|  <p>SOCIAL COHESION</p> | <p>Measures of diversity and inclusion, agreement on basic norms and values, and acceptance of outgroups (e.g., attitudes towards groups respondents don't identify with)</p> | <p>Diverse and inclusive communities, public spaces, principled leadership, and civility in discourse</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voluntary associations • Anti-bigotry organizations • Political bridge building |



HOW WE DESIGNED THIS FRAMEWORK

As a guide for social impact, the five elements for a strong democracy may seem broad or abstract, especially when compared to areas such as public health or education where donors might focus on more tangible outcomes like increasing lives saved or decreasing high school drop-out rates. The chart on the preceding page clarifies how these elements can inform funders' decisions. Each element represents an aspect of democracy for funders to consider when evaluating philanthropic opportunities. The Indicators provide ways to measure the strength of each element. The Key Determinants identify factors that have been shown to positively influence those measures; they serve as potential points of philanthropic intervention. Finally, the Examples of What Donors Fund show existing, philanthropically-funded efforts.

When considering a philanthropic opportunity, funders can start by first understanding how it addresses one or more of these five elements. Nonprofit programs can link to multiple elements. For example, investigative journalism enhances information and communication, but can also enable responsive policy by highlighting issues that elected officials might address.

The Indicators help donors establish a baseline of the current state of affairs and provide insight as to where help may be needed. For example, a big difference between a representative's voting record on an issue and the preferences of the majority of that person's constituency may indicate an environment where policy is no longer responding to citizens needs and interests.

Where Indicators reveal a weakness, Key Determinants offer potential opportunities for philanthropy to intervene. For instance, if policy is not responsive to public demands, donors might examine whether legislative procedures are open to public input, or whether civil society organizations exist to aggregate and amplify the voices of citizens.

Philanthropic funders are already supporting multiple efforts to strengthen democracy. Large foundations (such as Arnold Ventures,

Bloomberg Philanthropies, and Knight Foundation) are already funding efforts that reflect our framework's elements. Take Back Our Republic supports organizing efforts across the country that **empower citizens** to act. Protect Democracy mounts legal challenges to ensure **fair processes**. Partnership for Public Service supports **responsive policy** by training newly appointed government agency leaders so they can fulfill their public mission. Nonprofit news organization ProPublica produces investigative journalism, **information and communication** in the public interest. America Indivisible fosters greater **social cohesion** by supporting interfaith conversations to fight anti-Muslim bigotry.

When considering a philanthropic opportunity, funders can start by first understanding how it addresses one or more of these five elements.

In the following sections, we examine how two broad approaches—increasing civic engagement and reinvigorating local media—can address multiple elements of a strong democracy. These two areas illustrate how funders can apply our framework to their philanthropic decisions.

PITFALL TO AVOID

Research and advocacy organizations that rely exclusively on professional staffs may be disconnected from the broader public. When citizens with a stake in issues are engaged as volunteers in advocacy and involved in policy discussions, they will know their voices are included in the political process.



EXAMPLES OF HOW TO INCORPORATE OUR FRAMEWORK

Why focus on increasing civic engagement and reinvigorating local media

Philanthropic support for civic engagement and local media emerged as especially promising avenues for multiple reasons. In our interviews with scholars, the declines of civic engagement and local media were the most-cited drivers of the distrust and polarization that characterize contemporary politics. Reviews of academic literature confirmed the importance of civic engagement and local media to all five elements of a well-functioning democracy in addition to highlighting their connection to each other. Interviews with funders also revealed significant philanthropic interest in these topics.

A decades-long decline in both participation in voluntary associations and local news readership has weakened citizens' attachment to their local communities. Stronger local communities engender trust, facilitate information flows, and

moderate extreme voices, greasing the wheels for effective governance. Daniel Hopkins's 2018 book "The Increasingly United States" demonstrates how political behavior has nationalized in the absence of local institutions.² Municipal and congressional elections, once contested on the candidates' abilities to deliver tangible benefits to local communities, have become referenda on national issues, injecting the partisan tone of Washington politics into other facets of civic life.

Increasing civic engagement and filling the information gaps left by traditional local media offer two ways to boost democracy. Citizen-led initiatives have won meaningful reforms at the state and local level, and partisan distrust of media is substantially lower when it comes to local news outlets.^{3 4} To be sure, refocusing civic life on the local level may not solve all of society's problems. But it allows for citizens to be more engaged with one another, making politics less a spectator sport and more of a common project that allows for greater understanding between people with diverse backgrounds and sensibilities.

In this section, we discuss how philanthropy can increase civic engagement and reinvigorate local media. For funders interested in more information on specific nonprofit organizations doing exemplary work to boost civic engagement and local media, see "We the People: Nonprofits Making an Impact" at www.impact.upenn.edu/democracy.

PITFALL TO AVOID

Philanthropists interested in strengthening democracy can support both 501c3 "charities," the focus of this guide, and 501c4 "public welfare organizations," but should understand the distinctions between the two. Contributions to 501c3 organizations are tax deductible, but their advocacy and voter outreach work may not endorse a specific party, candidate, or piece of legislation. 501c4 organizations are permitted to undertake "partisan" political activity as long as it represents less than 50% of their programming, but donations to 501c4s are not tax deductible. Additional guidance on legal issues related to funding advocacy and lobbying are provided by Learn Foundation Law and Bolder Advocacy.

INCREASING CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Civic engagement encompasses a broad range of activities related to democracy, from donating to charity to running for political office. It includes the work of long standing membership nonprofits, faith-based efforts, as well as new, technology-supported initiatives.

While there is a breadth and diversity of civic engagement efforts that donors can fund, we focus on three related forms of civic engagement. Each affect the five elements of a strong democracy and tie into our overall funder framework.

- **Civic Membership:** Joining voluntary associations fosters social cohesion and empowers citizens by aggregating individual voices. Community members are most effective in solving problems and

holding institutions accountable when they act collectively.

- **Deliberative Participation:** Forums for public discourse lead to more informed citizens and richer communication between elected officials and their constituents, resulting in more responsive policy. Such forums have also been found to decrease partisanship.

- **Voting:** Sustained, broad-based participation in elections—local, state, federal, and primaries—enforces policymakers’ accountability to citizens and is the centerpiece of a democratic political system.

Together, these three forms constitute a vision of how citizens can participate in the democratic process.

However, while increased participation is a boon to democracy, there is a link between participation and partisanship. The more ideologically polarized people are, the more likely they are to participate by voting, donating to campaigns, or writing to their member of Congress.⁵ Modern political campaigning has been likened to a prisoner’s dilemma: the two parties engage in partisan rhetoric knowing it erodes trust and legitimacy because the stakes of elections are so high and partisan attacks are so effective at persuading and mobilizing voters.⁶ Since social cohesion is a key element in our framework for strengthening democracy, our guidance focuses on how civic organizations can offer an alternative, less polarizing pathway to political engagement.

Historically, civil society organizations such as parent-teacher associations, neighborhood associations, and unions provided a means for private





citizens to band together to influence policy. As participation in civic organizations has declined and become more unequal, marginalized groups have seen their voice in the political process diminish. When examining rates of civic membership, use of political voice, and voting, there is pronounced inequality along lines of race and class.⁷ These discrepancies are reflected in the underrepresentation of these groups in political leadership and the degree to which their preferred policies are enacted.^{8,9} Several of the nonprofits we feature in “We the People: Nonprofits Making an Impact” pay particular attention to elevating the voices of those from underrepresented communities.

Civic Membership

Civic membership has multiple benefits. In “Making Democracy Work,” Robert Putnam shows that higher civic membership predicts better government performance, even across geographies with identical political institutions.¹⁰ But Americans are far less likely to join a civic group, or even have friends over for dinner than they were during the middle of the 20th

century.¹¹ The percentage of people reporting that they were a member of at least one group (church, sports, professional, etc.) has steadily declined from 75% in 1974 to 62% by 2004.¹² As voters increasingly engage with public affairs in isolation, the often partisan messages conveyed via mass media are more influential, fueling polarization and disengagement.

The League of Women Voters (LWV) offers a longstanding example of a nonprofit supporting civic membership. Founded in 1920, LWV has over 700 local chapters and 50,000 dues paying members. LWV’s autonomous local chapters offer citizens a platform for self-directed citizen engagement, while its state and national affiliates sponsor debates and advocate face to face with policymakers. (For more examples of organizations working to boost citizen participation, visit our website, www.impact.upenn.edu/democracy for our guide, “We the People: Nonprofits Making an Impact.”)

Joining organizations that participate in civic life is a habit that many Americans in recent generations have never developed, partially due to de-

clining commitment to civics in public education.¹³ Service learning programs have proven effective in encouraging students’ civic engagement later in life.¹⁴ For example, Generation Citizen provides middle and high school teachers with the curriculum, training, and support for a semester-long civics course that embeds civic participation into the classroom through actions such as contacting lawmakers and circulating petitions. Such early educational experiences empower citizens to become lifelong participants in the democratic process.¹⁵

Deliberative Participation

Deliberative participation gives citizens an opportunity to express their views, moderates extreme voices, and exposes people to opposing viewpoints. For example, when members of a group are provided with balanced information and observe discussion rules that encourage self-reflection, participants become less extreme in their views and factual misconceptions are corrected, even in like-minded groups.¹⁶

A number of barriers to widespread deliberation have emerged in recent



years, such as scarcer face time with elected officials due to more populous districts and the sensationalizing and polarizing tendencies of web-based discourse. Nonprofits have employed a variety of strategies to encourage deliberation in this new context. Online congressional town halls, for instance, independently hosted and moderated by the Institute for Democratic Engagement and Accountability and the National Issues Forum lower barriers for participation, thereby attracting a more representative sample of constituents for healthier political discussion that can lead to responsive policy.¹⁷

The Orton Family Foundation has developed a model for resident-driven town planning through its Community Heart & Soul program. The program has provided a way to reengage residents of towns and small cities that have been destabilized either by rapid growth or development or the loss of industry and population decline.

The Committee of Seventy's Draw the Lines PA project shows how technology can be used in tandem with in-person engagement to foster broad, deliberative participation. Its statewide initiative has engaged teams from high schools, colleges, and various civic organizations to give citizens a voice in Pennsylvania's redistricting process.

Voting

Social networks are critical to voter turnout. As Meredith Rolfe writes, "campaign activity sets off a chain reaction among civic-minded citizens whose decisions are largely conditional on the decisions of those around them."¹⁸ Voter engagement efforts that build relationships between an organization and its constituency develop long-term capacity to influence political outcomes.¹⁹

Too often, voter engagement funding goes to last-minute efforts of volunteers during election years. Such volunteers "parachute in" to knock doors in the weeks before an election. More sustained engagement efforts can engage voters across and between multiple election cycles, and do so in a less partisan context than during the final days of a presidential campaign. Civic membership and deliberative participation are two ways voters stay engaged outside of elections.

Technology can also increase voter engagement, especially when embedded in a social context. For example, the TurboVote Challenge encourages companies to register their employees and customers via the TurboVote app, which informs voters about registration deadlines, election days, and polling locations.

Online:

Nonprofits Making an Impact

Throughout this section, we mentioned nonprofits whose work illustrate how philanthropy can support increased civic engagement to address one or more elements of a strong democracy. Refer to "We the People: Nonprofits Making an Impact" at www.impact.upenn.edu/democracy to read detailed profiles on the following organizations:

- **League of Women Voters** shows how membership organizations can bridge the gap between private citizens and government institutions. These types of organizations are less prevalent than before, due in part to resources shifting to professional advocacy groups.
- **Generation Citizen**, part of a growing movement of civics education organizations, works to restore Americans' civic habits by connecting a new generation of citizens to civic life.
- **Orton Family Foundation's** Heart & Soul model guides community leaders through the process of engaging their neighbors in collective problem solving.
- **Draw the Lines** offers an online tool for Pennsylvanians to contribute to the debate on political redistricting and gerrymandering. It is a project of Committee of Seventy, a Philadelphia-based good government advocate.
- **Faith in Action** integrates voter engagement into the work of faith-based organizations to empower communities often marginalized from civic life.

PITFALLS TO AVOID

While get-out-the-vote efforts can increase participation during election cycles, sustained civic engagement requires sustained funding. Mobilization efforts that end after election day can undermine trust by giving the impression that politicians only engage citizens when their votes can swing an election. Support long-term efforts to lift civic participation across all elections, and not just in presidential years.²⁰

Avoid funding efforts that mobilize voters with messages that foment anger or distrust toward another group. Negative messages motivate participation in the political process but at the expense of social cohesion.

REINVIGORATING LOCAL MEDIA

Traditionally local media referred primarily to commercial print news, radio, and TV outlets that served a geographically local market. Our definition of local media includes the full collection of communication outlets, newspapers, radio stations, and hyperlocal websites, among others, that tell the stories of a specific community. Healthy local media ecosystems are at the heart of all five elements of a well-functioning democracy. Journalists provide transparency into elections and legislative processes to ensure their fairness, in addition to elevating the viewpoints of citizens so policymakers can be responsive. When local media outlets reflect a community's stories back to them, they help build social cohesion. Local news can empower citizens to act on the information they receive and hold elected officials accountable. "People must know before they can act," as pioneering investigative journalist and civil rights activist Ida B. Wells wrote, "and there is no educator to compare with the press."²¹

Here's what funders can support to ensure local media are serving their community in ways that strengthen democracy:

- **Quality Coverage:** Professional, representative journalism is informed by communities' perspectives and meets their critical information needs.
- **Engagement:** When reporting invites citizen's participation by every possible means—contributing to stories, reading and sharing articles, joining public debate—those citizens are better informed and more active in their communities.

- **Sustainability:** News organizations need reliable revenue streams and strategies to reach their audience as news consumption habits evolve.

Below we discuss how philanthropy can increase quality coverage and engagement. Because the need for quality, engaged journalism is perpetual and resource intensive, we end with a discussion of ways nonprofits

are working to ensure financial sustainability of local media.

Quality Coverage

While technology has made possible a single global market for information, people's news and communication needs are still determined in large part by where they live. Quality coverage provided by local outlets alerts the public to new employers coming to a region, public health risks, and the performance of local schools. Access to local news enables people to learn





PITFALL TO AVOID

The credibility of news reporting depends on editorial independence. The American Press Institute collaborated with a team of 18 funders, nonprofit media executives, and scholars to issue guidelines on the ethics of supporting nonprofit journalism. To avoid actual or perceived conflict of interest, follow best practices on transparency, independence, and grantee communication when funding news media.

about cultural events in their community, comply with the law, and participate in the political process.

Communities that lack access to such information are likely to be systematically disadvantaged in economic and political life.²² Newspaper closures have been found to lead to both declining civic participation and increased polarization.^{23 24} There are pronounced geographic inequalities in local media coverage. The News Measures Research Project has catalogued the stories produced by outlets in 100 randomly sampled communities in the U.S. and found 20 communities without a single local story in the course of a week.²⁵

Engagement

When it comes to engagement, local news organizations have distinct advantages over national outlets. National news by default makes more general claims (for example, “unemployment is down nationwide”) that may not reflect the reality of a particular community.²⁶ Since local news organizations are physically close to their audience, local journalists can meet citizens face to face, and local news organizations can partner with other community institutions to engage citizens in public discourse.

Such direct and ongoing engagement helps build trust in the news and connects people to public affairs in ways that can counteract the widespread distrust that has made audi-

ences susceptible to fake news and misinformation. In a 2018 Poynter Institute survey, 76% of Americans indicated they have a “great deal” or a “fair amount” of trust in their local television news and 73% do so for local newspapers. By comparison, 59% of Americans have a “great deal” or a “fair amount” of trust in national papers, 55% for network news, and 47% for online news. Diverse and representative staffs are key to these engagement efforts as outlets seek to develop new audiences in communities that are underrepresented in media.²⁷ Growing the audience for local media can also restore confidence in journalism more broadly.

Resolve Philadelphia is one example of how philanthropy can help. Started as a project of the Solutions Journalism Network, Resolve Philadelphia develops and advances journalism “built on equity, collaboration, and the elevation of community voices and solutions.” Its Reentry Project, a collaborative reporting project engaging 15 newsrooms and organizations, focused on the experiences of citizens returning from prison. The series informed citizens on issues of criminal justice reform ahead of Philadelphia’s 2016 District Attorney election and won the Associated Press Media Editors’ Community Engagement award.

Sustainability

Many of the challenges local outlets face stem from a lack of a sustain-

able economic model. Ad revenues—which previously amounted to nearly \$50 billion in the early 2000s and accounted for as much as 80% of the newspaper revenues—have fallen to less than \$20 billion, migrating to targeted online advertising via Google and Facebook.²⁸ As audience attention has shifted online, outlets were required to invest in new content delivery models at the same time their revenues were collapsing. By 2017, newsroom employment at newspapers had declined by 45% to under 40,000 from a high of nearly 75,000 jobs in 2006.²⁹

While Google and Facebook have eaten into newspapers’ ad revenue, news aggregators and social media platforms have made information free, weakening the incentive for consumers to pay for their information needs. Online ad revenues may cover the costs of easily accessible information like sports scores, weather reports, and movie showtimes, but investigative public interest reporting is often too expensive for cash-strapped outlets to provide. This has prompted some nonprofits to find creative solutions. The Knight-Lenfest Newsroom Initiative subsidizes innovation and sharing of best practices among news organizations to generate revenue that can be reinvested in civic reporting for their communities.

American Journalism Project is an initiative to advance a more financially sustainable, mission-based local media. Its strategy is three-fold: fund existing nonprofit newsrooms through grantmaking, provide intensive support to develop grantees’ revenue-generating capacity, and build a movement of support for mission-based nonprofit news organizations with sufficient resources to cover local issues that communities depend on.



Online:
Nonprofits Making an Impact

Without robust local media, individuals lack the kind of relevant, accurate information to support a strong and healthy democracy. Refer to “We the People: Nonprofits Making an Impact” at www.impact.upenn.edu/democracy to read detailed profiles of the following organizations:

- **Resolve Philadelphia** is an example of solutions journalism, reporting that empowers citizens and policymakers to affect change by focusing on how social problems can be solved. In Philadelphia, where poverty rates remain stubbornly high, journalists are highlighting efforts to increase economic mobility and break the cycle of poverty.³⁰
- **City Bureau**, a community-based news organization on the South Side of Chicago, emphasizes diversity both in staff and in sources of stories. City Bureau creates more representative journalism through events and programs that embed community voice into the reporting process.
- **American Journalism Project** builds sustainable revenue models for nonprofit newsrooms by offering grants and expert support. It advances an alternative to the for-profit newspaper model where mission-based reporting is sustained by philanthropy and earned revenue, including subscriptions, live events, and advertising.

METHODOLOGY

As with all of our work, we iteratively rely on three circles of evidence: academic research, informed opinion, and field experience to understand philanthropic opportunities that are both evidence based and actionable. For this guide, our research began with an extensive literature review of democratic theory, founding documents, and related analyses. In total, we reviewed roughly 130 documents.

We ensured our framing of democracy aligned with current academic inquiry and philanthropic efforts through interviews with academics and funders that grounded insights from theory in a modern context. To identify components of a healthy democracy, we reviewed 10 frameworks produced by foundations and other civil society organizations as well as eight of the most commonly referenced indices for measuring democratic health. (See www.impact.upenn.edu/democracy for additional detail.) We also used Candid data on foundation funding for U.S. democracy to analyze and categorize grants to roughly 150 nonprofit organizations. Our analysis and emerging guidance was refined in

response to feedback collected via an in-person workshop in October 2018 attended by 20 scholars, funders, and practitioners.

Interviews with academics and funders helped us identify elements of our democracy where philanthropic intervention would be most promising. A more targeted literature review of contemporary academic scholarship on those subjects allowed us to identify the two focal strategies of civic engagement and local media that we highlight in this guide. Through the course of our research we compiled a list of 37 organizations whose missions aligned with our focus on the two deep dive areas of strengthening local media and civic engagement. These organizations were contacted to request interviews. Twenty-five interviews with these practitioners gave us insight on how these strategies can be applied most effectively, as well as referrals to exemplary organizations which were then analyzed for evidence of impact or potential for impact and cost-effectiveness.

To learn more about this project, visit www.impact.upenn.edu/democracy.





ADDITIONAL RESOURCES TO HELP FUNDERS STRENGTHEN DEMOCRACY

The organizations profiled in this guide and in “We the People: Nonprofits Making an Impact” provide a sampling of ways philanthropic funders and the nonprofits they support are working to strengthen democracy. For those interested in identifying philanthropic opportunities beyond what we provided as examples, the following resources can help. Find links to these and more resources at www.impact.upenn.edu/democracy.

National Funders and Affinity Groups

- **Democracy Fund** is a private foundation created by eBay founder and philanthropist Pierre Omidyar to help ensure our political system can withstand new challenges and deliver on its promise to the American people. Democracy Fund has invested more than \$100 million in support of a healthy democracy, including for modern elections, effective governance, and a vibrant public square.
- **Philanthropy for Active Civic Engagement (PACE)** is a membership network of foundations and funders that invest in civic engagement and democracy. PACE’s mission is to inspire interest, understanding, and investment in civic engagement within philanthropy and to be a voice for philanthropy in larger conversations about civic engagement, service, and democratic practice.
- **The Funders Committee for Civic Participation (FCCP)** is a network of funders supporting non-partisan efforts to engage voters, eliminate structural barriers to voting, advance reforms to improve government and electoral systems, and inspire public involvement in civic life. The State In-

frastructure Funders Table is a group based at FCCP dedicated to supporting state-based civic engagement efforts. FCCP also has active working groups on the Census, Money in Politics, as well as research and experimentation.

- **Media Impact Funders** is a member-supported network of funders who seek to improve society through media and technology. In addition to its Media Grants Data Map, it provides information for grantmakers interested in using media to further their missions, convenes and connects funders and allies, and supports the ever-growing field of media that informs and engages.

Catalogues of Existing Grants and Funders

- **Foundation Funding for U.S. Democracy** is a free resource provided by Candid (formerly Guidestar and the Foundation Center) to catalog and visualize democracy grantmaking in the United States. With data available since 2011, grants are sortable by strategy (advocacy, organizing, etc.), population served, and geography.
- **Media Grants Data Map**, a product of Media Impact Funders, provides a platform for finding foundations, recipients, and grants focused on media grantmaking.
- **The Council on Foundations Community Foundation Locator** can identify community foundations—grantmaking public charities that are dedicated to improving the lives of people in a defined local geographic area. As such, some may be effective partners or sources of information on related initiatives in your area.

Measuring Progress

- **The National Conference on Citizenship** works with partners in government and civil society to help at multiple levels, including local, state, and national, to develop a Civic Health Index that can guide philanthropic efforts.

Integrating Civic Engagement into Existing Efforts

- **Nonprofit Vote** provides resources for nonprofits to incorporate nonpartisan voter engagement into their ongoing programs and services.
- **GrantCraft’s** guide on participatory grantmaking helps funders shift decision-making power to communities that funders aim to serve.
- **Grantmakers in Health** provides information on how funders can formalize community input through a community advisory committee, which also provides the benefits of civic membership to those who serve on it.

Supporting Newsrooms

- **NewsMatch** is a national matching-gift campaign that offers a simple, turn-key platform for all types of funders to support quality news. The 2018 campaign raised \$7.6 million for 154 nonprofit news organizations. The organization also provides expert training and individualized coaching to help newsrooms develop their fundraising capacity.

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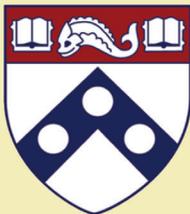
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Additional Resources on the Web

 Visit CHIP's microsite to dive deeper and find more resources, including our companion guide, "We the People: Nonprofits Making an Impact to Strengthen Democracy."
www.impact.upenn.edu/democracy



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