Rockefeller Brothers Fund
Philanthropy for an Interdependent World

Mission and Program Statement

The Rockefeller Brothers Fund advances social change that contributes to a more just, sustainable, and peaceful world.

Through its grantmaking, the Fund supports efforts to expand knowledge, clarify values and critical choices, nurture creative expression, and shape public policy. The Fund's programs are intended to develop leaders, strengthen institutions, engage citizens, build community, and foster partnerships that include government, business, and civil society. Respect for cultural diversity and ecological integrity pervades the Fund's activities.

As an institutional citizen of an interdependent world, the Fund is active globally, nationally, and locally in its home city of New York. Grant programs are organized around three themes: Democratic Practice; Peacebuilding; and Sustainable Development. The Fund recognizes that achievement of progress in each of these program areas is often interconnected with developments in the others. As a private foundation, the Fund strives to promote philanthropic excellence and to enhance the effectiveness of the nonprofit sector.

As specified in the guidelines for each grant program, the Fund supports activities in a variety of geographic contexts. It also has identified several specific locations on which to concentrate cross-programmatic attention. The Fund refers to these as "RBF pivotal places": sub-national areas, nation-states, or cross-border regions which have special importance with regard to the Fund's substantive concerns and whose future will have disproportionate significance for the future of a surrounding region, an ecosystem, or the world. The Fund currently works in two pivotal places, Southern China and the Western Balkans. The Charles E. Culpeper Arts & Culture program, focused on New York, nurtures a vibrant and inclusive arts community in the Fund’s home city.

The Pocantico Center of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund is located at the heart of the Rockefeller estate outside New York City and was created when the Fund leased the area from the National Trust for Historic Preservation in 1991. The conference center provides a unique setting where the RBF and other nonprofit organizations and public sector institutions can bring together people of diverse backgrounds and perspectives to engage critical issues, reach new levels of understanding, and develop creative solutions to pressing problems. The Pocantico Center also serves as a community resource and offers public access through a visitation program, lectures, and cultural events, as well as support to artists and arts organizations in the greater New York City area.

In the years since its founding in 1940, the Fund has developed a distinctive style of grantmaking that is reflected in the following characteristics:

- **Long View.** Grantmaking is primarily concerned with fundamental problems and is designed to contribute to the achievement of long-term goals and to make a lasting impact.
- **Commitment.** Extended commitments are frequently made to specific issues and geographic regions and even to particular grantees.

- **Synergy.** Rather than considering opportunities on a stand-alone basis, the Fund looks for connections among the activities it supports and the themes it pursues, both within and across program areas and in specific geographic locations.
- **Initiative.** The Fund initiates or participates in the development of many of the projects that it supports.
- **Engagement.** In addition to providing financial support, the Fund often works closely with grantee organizations to help strengthen their capacity and advance their work.
- **Collaboration.** The Fund actively seeks opportunities to collaborate with other funders.
- **Convening.** The Fund devotes time and resources, including the use of its Pocantico Center, to convening groups of diverse stakeholders and encouraging collaboration among government agencies, corporations, and nongovernmental organizations.

The goals and strategies in each of our programs are implemented through a variety of approaches to grantmaking. In some programs, as is noted in the guidelines, the Fund proactively identifies grantee partners and thus has limited ability to respond to unsolicited proposals. Grantseekers are encouraged to study the guidelines closely.

Rockefeller Brothers Fund
Philanthropy for an Interdependent World

DEMOCRATIC PRACTICE PROGRAM GUIDELINES

For democracy to flourish and deliver on its promises—including political participation, human rights, access to justice, a good education, an improved quality of life, a healthy environment, and personal security—its citizens must be informed, engaged, empowered, and assertive. Similarly, institutions of governance must be inclusive, transparent, accountable, and responsive.

The frequent failure of both new and established democracies to deliver on their promises undermines the commitment to democratic practices. Wealthy and powerful actors exercise undue influence, and voices that historically have been excluded remain unheard in decision-making processes.

The United States continues to face a number of democratic deficits: a decline in many traditional forms of civic engagement; reduced participation in the formal institutions of democracy, including but not limited to voting; and declining trust in all institutions, especially institutions of government. These deficits are being exacerbated by deeply rooted economic inequality, and American society is becoming increasingly polarized, socially, economically, and politically.

At the same time, the process of globalization has similarly produced democratic deficits in global governance. Global power and wealth inequities have deepened, while the significance of decisions made by transnational institutions such as multilateral organizations, multinational corporations, and international financial institutions has increased. In this patchwork of institutions and practices, global governance decisions are made with inadequate inclusiveness, accountability, and transparency, often pre-empting or distorting legitimate national and local decision-making processes.

The Fund's Democratic Practice program has two parts: advancing a vibrant and inclusive democracy in the United States and strengthening democratic practice in global governance. Based on a careful assessment of local needs and priorities, the Fund also pursues one or more of the democratic principles underlying the program in its "pivotal places." Recognizing that there is no single model of effective democratic practice, the Fund emphasizes flexibility and adaptability to different contexts in these pivotal places.

DEMOCRACY IN THE UNITED STATES

Democracy in the United States is facing myriad challenges as persistent and deep divisions continue to undermine the nation's social, economic, and political vitality. The current U.S. political system suffers from outsized influence of money in politics, extreme partisanship, retrenchment of voting rights, issues with outdated and inefficient election administration, and concentrations of power in narrow segments of society not reflective of the larger population. Alternatively, new opportunities for systemic reform are developing and gaining traction. The nation is seeing a resurgence of grassroots political activism, protest, and a democratization of both traditional and social media. Digital resources are fueling different kinds of engagement and activism that are reaching people in entirely new ways. Further, the ability to leverage creative investigative and solution-based journalism and broadly available government and election data to improve both democratic systems and grassroots civic engagement provides exciting opportunities to build a vital and inclusive 21st-century democracy.

The Fund recognizes that the gaps between rich and poor, and white and non-white, are widening, while the diversity of elected officials remains misaligned with the electorate, fundamentally undermining the quality of representative democracy. Exorbitant amounts of private money spent on political campaigns and lobbying by a very small percentage of the electorate profoundly distort the political system. Others without the financial resources to influence public policy are further marginalized, undermining the ability of voters and constituents to hold elected officials accountable and fostering public cynicism and distrust of elected officials and public institutions.

The quality of our political culture continues to deteriorate. Consequently, there are fewer and fewer examples of true bipartisanship and constructive compromise in state and federal legislatures. Additionally, partisan actors, with a goal of achieving partisan supremacy rather than ensuring democratic fairness, exert disproportionate control over voting rights, poll access, and redistricting. Participation in national elections remains below that of most advanced democracies, and turnout for local elections is persistently low. Moreover, fair, efficient, and effective election administration is undermined by inaccurate voter rolls and outdated processes and technology. In addition, eligible voters have been kept from the polls by restrictive voting laws, or worse, by overt voter-suppression efforts.

Meaningful and informed public participation in all phases of democracy in the United States provides the foundation for a truly vibrant democracy. The Fund believes that innovation in traditional grassroots organizing strategies, development of opportunities for underrepresented populations in civic leadership, and effective integration of digital media and communications into civic life are promising ways to improve public participation in governance. Authentic public participation in democracy lays the groundwork for substantive policy reforms that are a true reflection of our representative democracy.

Goal: Advance a Vital and Inclusive Democracy in the United States

In the United States, the Fund supports innovative strategies to strengthen and broaden participation in the practices and institutions of democratic governance, foster greater transparency, accountability, and responsiveness of government institutions, and promote social, economic, and racial justice in our democratic systems.

Strategies:

- Combating the corrupting influence of money in politics by supporting the adoption of public financing of electoral campaigns, including judicial elections, and selected other reforms to enhance the integrity of representative democracy.
- Increasing opportunities for meaningful citizen participation in democratic systems through election and voting reforms, including improvements in voting rights, election laws, redistricting processes, and election administration.
- Supporting movement-building strategies for systemic reform of democratic institutions to advance economic and racial justice.

The Democratic Practice–U.S. program works to enhance the quality of American democracy through support for high leverage opportunities at the federal, state, and local levels (including New York City as the Fund's home).

GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

Globalization—the dramatic increase in cross-border flows of capital, goods, and people and their values and ideas—is producing deeper interdependencies and changes in power relations. It is a defining process of the 21st century, offering both challenges and opportunities.

Global governance is an incomplete patchwork of institutions, rules, and processes that transcends the authority of individual nations. The elements of global governance are many, including formal agreements among nations; the architecture and practices of international and intergovernmental institutions and international courts; the policies, behaviors, and actions of states and multinational corporations; and the work and influence of civil society organizations.

Economic interests have largely overshadowed democratic practices, social equity, and environmental concerns in the evolution of global governance institutions and processes. Powerful international trade and financial institutions remain opaque and exclusive, while the power and reach of multinational corporations often escape oversight or effective regulation. Thus, while the impact of global governance on peoples' lives is growing, democracy in global governance faces acute deficits. Transparency and accountability in global decision making are often critically deficient. Representation in global governance processes remains limited; underrepresented populations and weaker states have restricted voice and standing, curtailing their access and participation. Injustices persist, as rights are unevenly recognized and ad hoc coordination often substitutes for meaningful democratic processes. Together, these deficits challenge the ability of nations and groups to protect their commonwealth, ensure necessary social and environmental protections, and promote ethical and effective stewardship of common resources.

At the same time, globalization has opened up new opportunities for building cross-border coalitions that are finding innovative ways to address and resolve global problems. Novel combinations of public, private, intergovernmental, and nongovernmental organizations are asserting their concerns, forging new democratic practices, and advancing systemic changes in global processes, rules, and institutions.

Goal: Strengthen the Vitality of Democracy in Global Governance

In its work to strengthen democracy in global governance, the Fund focuses on the areas of climate change, development finance, and trade. The Fund is particularly interested in civil society organizations that represent and advance developing country concerns as they seek to increase equity and foster sustainability.

Strategies:

- Enhancing transparency and accountability of global governance institutions and decision-making processes.
- Expanding access to and participation in global governance institutions and decision-making processes. Priority is given to initiatives led by or in support of constituencies underrepresented in global governance.
- Advancing new ideas, advocacy approaches, and institutional arrangements aimed at more effective and democratic decision making in global governance and more just and sustainable outcomes.

Rockefeller Brothers Fund
Philanthropy for an Interdependent World

PEACEBUILDING PROGRAM GUIDELINES

Numerous and diverse factors drive contemporary conflicts, from strained relations between governments and groups of people to threats that transcend borders such as environmental crises, the flow of weapons, and violent extremism. In today's interdependent world, regional or local conflicts often have consequences that undermine the security and well-being of distant communities. Transforming conflict to build just and durable peace requires the global community to think differently about how it responds to the complex nature of 21st century challenges. Governments, multilateral organizations, and civil society must work in concert to develop a new framework for conflict prevention and peacebuilding that engages international, regional, state, and local actors in addressing the human security challenges of local populations.

As the world evolves rapidly toward a multipolar reality in which a growing array of nations pursue their national interests from positions of shifting political and economic power, the United States continues to play an important role in global efforts to create a more just, sustainable, and peaceful world. U.S. policies and behaviors that demonstrate respect for the competencies and perspectives of both traditional allies and emerging powers can help create a greater sense of shared responsibility and advance collective problem-solving to prevent, manage, and resolve conflicts. Civil society organizations have a significant role to play in promoting non-violent responses to conflict and cultivating the political climate necessary for official peacebuilding and diplomatic negotiations to succeed. They also are important advocates for a more robust multilateral system that is effective at brokering peace agreements.

The Fund's Peacebuilding program aspires to strengthen grassroots constituencies for peace and to connect them with policymaking on the regional and international levels. It aims to understand the conditions that lead to violence and the processes that support durable peace in order to identify innovative solutions to the most pressing drivers of insecurity. The program's grantmaking focuses on conflicts that have a disproportionate influence on international peace and security. It works closely with the Fund's Pivotal Place programs, especially in the Western Balkans, and with the Global Governance portfolio of the Democratic Practice program. The Fund places particular importance on elevating the role of women and young leaders in international peacebuilding and conflict transformation efforts.

Goal: Advance Just and Durable Peace

The Fund will pursue the following interrelated strategies with respect to select conflicts.

Strategies:

- Supporting innovative and collaborative approaches and policies for conflict prevention, management, and transformation at the multilateral, regional, and national levels.
- Strengthening constituencies and political will for conflict transformation and durable peace.

The program is currently focusing a significant portion of its grantmaking on the wider Middle East.

Rockefeller Brothers Fund
Philanthropy for an Interdependent World

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM GUIDELINES

Human activity is causing climate change, rapid loss of biodiversity, and accelerating degradation of Earth's life support systems. These developments threaten the livelihoods, health, and security of people in all nations and cultures as well as the well-being of the greater community of life. The RBF's sustainable development grantmaking endeavors to address these challenges by supporting development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The program supports global stewardship that is ecologically based, economically sound, socially just, culturally appropriate, and consistent with intergenerational equity. The Fund encourages government, business, and civil society to work collaboratively on climate change, to acknowledge the moral and ethical consequences of inaction, and to make it an integral part of all development planning and activity. Recognizing the global nature of many environmental problems, the Fund also promotes international cooperation in addressing these challenges.

The Sustainable Development program maintains a significant focus on the United States in light of its disproportionate impact on the global economy, politics, and the environment. The program's work is also advanced in collaboration with the Fund's "pivotal place" programs—New York City, Southern China, and the Western Balkans—and with the Democratic Practice program's Global Governance portfolio. Pivotal place programs support work in specific countries or regions to build the knowledge, policies, organizational capacity, and leadership needed to advance sustainable development in locally appropriate ways. The Fund's Global Governance portfolio supports broad participation in forging the international agreements and institutional arrangements needed to encourage investment in sustainable development. Fund staff work to ensure that global developments inform work in specific places and that locally grounded efforts generate lessons and innovations needed for global impact.

With the recognition that the impact of unchecked climate change threatens all other conservation efforts, the Sustainable Development program focuses its U.S. grantmaking on building a green economy at the federal, state, and local levels.

Goal: Advance Solutions to Climate Change

Strategies:

- Building public and policymaker understanding and support for a range of actions to address the threat of climate change.
- Supporting implementation efforts to build a clean energy economy at the federal, state, and local levels.
- Supporting efforts to reduce reliance on carbon-intensive energy sources.
- Supporting targeted efforts to advance international progress on climate change.

The Sustainable Development program is focused on efforts to promote effective climate policies in the United States through support for high-leverage opportunities at the federal, state, and municipal levels (including New York City as the Fund's home). In addition, the program provides support for select international efforts to advance global climate negotiations.

Rockefeller Brothers Fund
Philanthropy for an Interdependent World

PIVOTAL PLACE: SOUTHERN CHINA PROGRAM GUIDELINES

The Rockefeller Brothers Fund established its China-focused grantmaking program in 2005 with an emphasis on southern China, one of the fastest growing and most dynamic regions of the world. This focus builds on the Fund's history of philanthropy in East and Southeast Asia and continues more than a century of Rockefeller family philanthropy in China, which includes the founding of the Peking Union Medical College in 1917.

The Fund's geographic area of interest encompasses the nine diverse and interconnected provinces of the Pan Pearl River Delta—Guangdong, Guangxi, Hunan, Yunnan, Sichuan, Guizhou, Fujian, Hainan, and Jiangxi—as well as the municipality of Chongqing and, to a lesser extent, Hong Kong and Macau. This region accounts for more than one-third of China's population and 33 percent of its GDP. It has played a pivotal role in China's extraordinary progress over the last 35 years, progress which includes, among many achievements, the elevation of hundreds of millions of people out of extreme poverty and the growth of China's economy into the second largest in the world. In practice, RBF grantmaking also connects work in southern China with Beijing-based and international institutions and stakeholders because of their importance in addressing regional, national, and global sustainable development challenges.

China's rapid development, however, has been accompanied by profound challenges, including severe environmental degradation with adverse human health and economic impacts. As the Chinese government and people take significant steps to address environmental pollution, climate change, and their impact on public health in an increasingly integrated way, the Fund will assist these efforts by engaging with and fostering collaborations between the government, business, civil society, and academia. The Fund will encourage solutions that take into account social, economic, and cultural considerations and emphasize capacity building at all levels. At the core of the RBF's work in southern China is a fundamental belief in the wisdom, creativity, and resourcefulness of the Chinese people. With innovative government policy, a vibrant marketplace, and growing public participation, China has the potential to lead the world in sustainable approaches to development.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
Goal: Advance Healthy and Low-Carbon Development
Strategies:

- Supporting evidence-based policies that mitigate environmental pollution, climate change, and risks to human health.
- Strengthening public participation in environmental governance by promoting accountability, transparency, and access to information.
- Engaging the private sector and catalyzing market forces to advance sustainable practices.
- Encouraging the development of indigenous philanthropy in support of a healthy and low-carbon future.

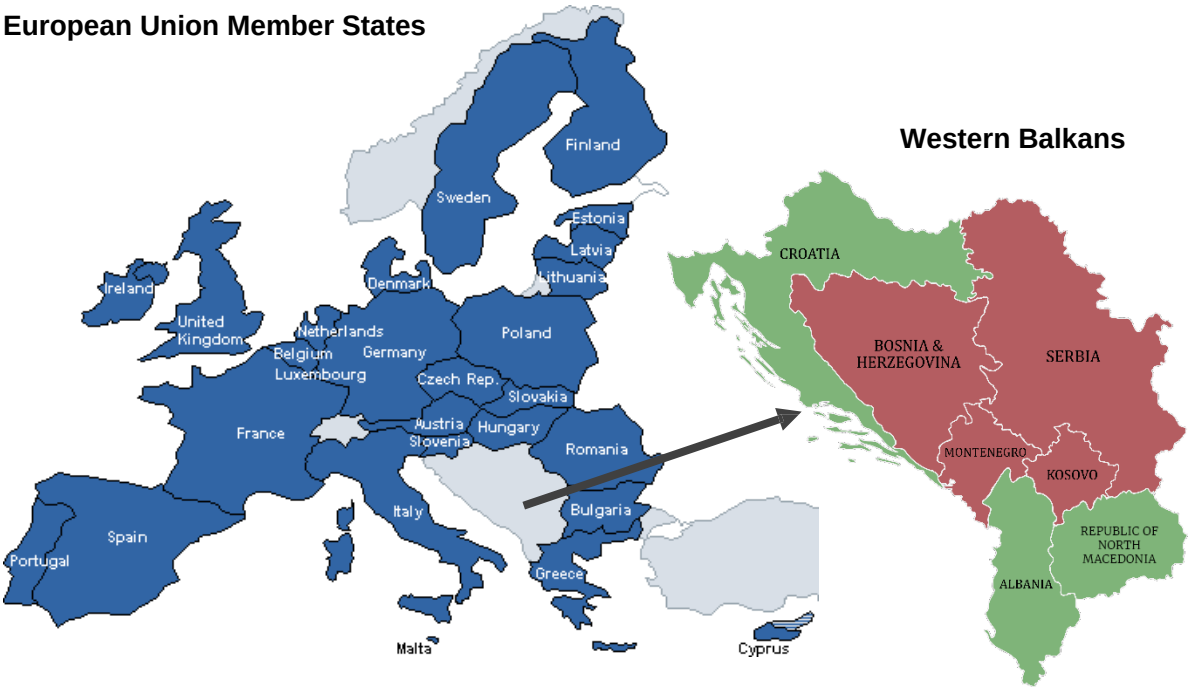
The Fund's grantmaking in China focuses on southern China; it also connects work in southern China with Beijing-based and international institutions and stakeholders because of their importance in addressing regional, national, and global sustainable development challenges.

Rockefeller Brothers Fund
Philanthropy for an Interdependent World

PIVOTAL PLACE: WESTERN BALKANS PROGRAM GUIDELINES

The Rockefeller Brothers Fund (RBF) has been engaged in grantmaking in the Western Balkans since 2001, following 20 years of experience supporting transition processes and EU accession in Central and Eastern Europe. The Fund's work has been predicated on the belief that long-term peace and prosperity in Europe can only be achieved with successful post-communist and post-conflict transitions of the countries of the Balkans. RBF grantmaking in the Western Balkans has aimed to nurture healthy democratic processes, support regional initiatives to debunk persistent myths and prejudices, and encourage development of indigenous philanthropy and a vibrant civil society.

European Union Member States



The countries of the Western Balkans are still in a process of transformation to truly democratic societies where institutions of governance are transparent, accountable, and responsive, and citizens are informed and assertive. Although some reforms have been achieved, many challenges remain. Some of the obstacles reflect the legacy of conflict and unresolved tensions among countries and communities, and these must be addressed to realize justice, equality, and peace for all people in the region.

The Fund supports efforts of civil society groups, governmental institutions, and other partners to strengthen democratic practice, advance reconciliation and durable peace, enable sustainable development, and promote a European future for the region. The Fund values and highlights the richness of the region's ethnic, gender, age, cultural, and racial diversity and promotes pluralistic and inclusive societies. Efforts at the regional, national, and local levels, including grassroots engagement and movement building, are supported.

The Fund focuses on Serbia, Montenegro, Kosovo, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, with Albania and North Macedonia also included in regional initiatives. The interdependence among the countries, the common challenges they face, and the potential they share as a subregion within Europe present a unique opportunity for successful transformation, integration, and long-term stability.

The RBF is pursuing the following goal and strategies across the Western Balkans region:

Goal: Advance a peaceful, democratic, and European Western Balkans

Strategies:

- Supporting efforts to improve transparency and accountability in governance.
- Strengthening constituencies for reconciliation and enduring peace.
- Advancing sustainable development, focusing on renewable energy and healthy environments.
- Supporting the development of indigenous philanthropy to advance social transformation.

The Fund prioritizes support for organizations in the Western Balkans.

Rockefeller Brothers Fund
Philanthropy for an Interdependent World

CHARLES E. CULPEPER ARTS & CULTURE PROGRAM GUIDELINES

The Charles E. Culpeper Arts & Culture grants honor the legacy of Charles E. Culpeper by supporting the artists and arts and cultural organizations that make New York City one of the world's most dynamic creative capitals. The Fund is inspired by the conviction that arts and culture promote free expression, foster a deeper understanding of human experience and diverse communities, and provide a fresh lens on persistent problems and emerging challenges. The Fund aims to strengthen the cultural environment of the city by supporting its rich artistic community and the diversity of the city's population. Special interests of the Fund are to sustain and advance small and mid-size cultural organizations, particularly those that are community-based and/or culturally specific, and to provide opportunities for artists of color and other underrepresented artists to contribute to the cultural vitality of New York City. The Fund also seeks to encourage mainstream, larger institutions to present underrepresented artists and to find innovative ways to engage new and diverse audiences.

The Pocantico Center, located in Tarrytown, New York, is an important resource in the Fund's efforts to support artists and the creative process, advance cultural awareness, and foster artistic collaborations. The center provides time and space for aesthetic exploration and opportunities for nurturing artistic imagination.

Grants support the creative process and build the capacity of small and mid-size arts and cultural institutions across all arts disciplines, and promote diversity in the city's creative life. Capacity-building grants support strategic planning, technology enhancements, board and staff development, marketing, and outreach initiatives.

Goal: Nurture a Vibrant and Inclusive Arts Community in New York City

Strategies:

- Supporting organizations that assist individual artists and the creative process with an emphasis on providing opportunities for artists of color and other underrepresented artists.
- Providing artist residencies, in partnership with grantee organizations, at The Pocantico Center.
- Building capacity in small and mid-size cultural organizations, particularly those that are community-based and/or reflect the city's diversity.

The Fund prioritizes support for organizations with annual budgets under $4 million. Given limited resources and to enable the Fund to be responsive to a wider range of applicants, grantee organizations must wait a minimum of three years from their grant final payment before reapplying. The Fund does not make grants to individuals.