



DEMOCRATIC PRACTICE–UNITED STATES Revisions to the Program Guidelines

Keesha Gaskins

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In March 2015, the Rockefeller Brothers Fund’s board of trustees approved revisions to the Democratic Practice–United States portfolio’s program guidelines. This paper served as the foundation for the portfolio’s new framework and funding guidelines, and was the basis of discussion at the March 2015 board meeting.

Beginning in January 2013, the Fund’s Democratic Practice–United States staff engaged in a yearlong process to evaluate its existing grantmaking portfolio and the broader U.S. democracy field. Established in 2002, the Democratic Practice–U.S. portfolio has focused on fostering civic engagement and support for responsive and effective governance. The revisions to the guidelines reflect continued commitment to the core values of the Democratic Practice program and look forward to the specific challenges and opportunities facing democracy and democratic engagement in the United States in the 21st century.

The revised guidelines recognize that the goal of reforming U.S. democracy is both to improve democratic systems, and to allow citizens and residents of the United States to leverage these systems to achieve social, racial, and economic justice. Too often, attempts at changing democratic systems are based upon the assumption that all persons seeking to engage these systems are equally positioned and equally able to access the systems. In fact, structural racism and economic inequality create a context where stakeholders in U.S. democracy are often unable to access and leverage the process in equal measure. Democratic reform efforts should recognize the inherent inequality baked into the social, economic, and political context in which U.S. democracy is expected to function.

After extensive research and evaluation, the revised guidelines reflect the following conclusions about U.S. democracy:

- The relationship between money and politics remains a key problem in U.S. democracy.
- Voting is the primary way most U.S. citizens interact with political systems and leverage political power.
- Innovations related to contemporary democratic practice will shape the interactions among people, corporations, civil society, and government in the 21st century.

Consequently, the board has approved that the Fund’s Democratic Practice program guidelines for its U.S. portfolio be revised to the following:

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

In the United States, the Fund seeks 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.

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 select innovations, such as the application of new technologies and advances in organizing methods that strengthen advocacy or expand opportunities for underrepresented populations to influence policy outcomes.

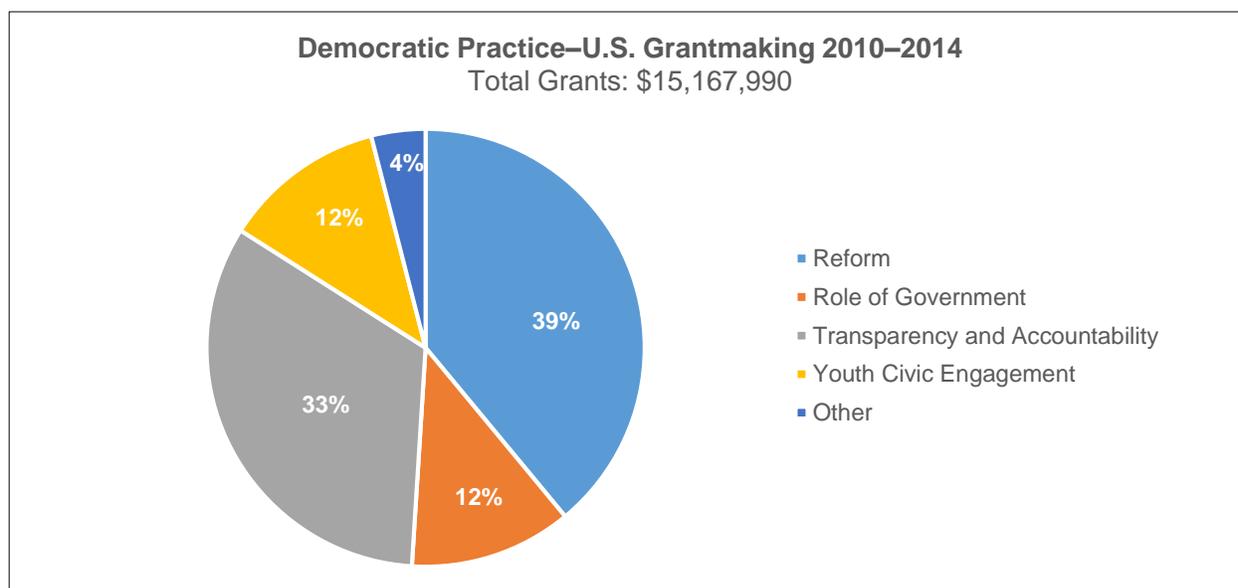
BACKGROUND: 2010 - 2014 PROGRAM GOAL AND STRATEGIES

With the goal of strengthening the vitality of democracy in the United States, the Fund's Democratic Practice—U.S. grantmaking portfolio from 2010–2014 was allocated across three substantive strategies:

1. Reform of systems and procedures within U.S. democracy, primarily focused on campaign finance reform through public financing and some support to improve voter participation.
2. Role of Government, through support for organizations working to improve the operations of government and the public perception of the role and value of government in society.
3. Transparency and Accountability, including support for organizations working to improve transparency and accountability in governance systems through investigative journalism, provision of data and information, and federal policymaking related to government obligations for transparency and data provision.

A fourth strategy, Youth Civic Engagement, was concluded in 2013.

Between 2010 and 2014, Democratic Practice—U.S. provided \$15,167,990 in grants as follows: 39 percent in Reform (\$5,936,467), 12 percent toward Role of Government (\$1,823,085), 33 percent toward Transparency and Accountability (\$5,064,573), 12 percent toward Youth Civic Engagement (\$1,771,800), and four percent toward other related activities (\$572,065).



During the history of the Democratic Practice—U.S. Program, and particularly since 2010, the Fund has taken on leadership roles in both the money-in-politics and transparency fields, demonstrating the kind of steady commitment that has been necessary for those areas to develop and grow in order to have an impact on U.S. democracy. The Fund also played a catalytic role in developing the coalition that is now the [Investigative News Network](#) and facilitated many other connections that have worked to bring together key actors across the program's strategies.

The retirement of longtime program director, Benjamin Shute, Jr., and the transition to new program leadership prompted both external and internal assessments of the status of the portfolio, the current political environment, and the broader national context to guide possible revisions to the program guidelines for the Democratic Practice—U.S. portfolio.

ASSESSMENT AND PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

In 2013, the Fund contracted with M+R Consulting to conduct an [external assessment](#) of the program's money-in-politics grantmaking. The assessment arrived at the following principal conclusions:

- Money in politics is a significant issue in U.S. democracy that affects advancement in nearly every progressive issue.
- The RBF's role has been crucial in establishing a core group of money-in-politics reformers that lead the field over time.
- Jurisprudential developments present ongoing challenges to reform strategies.
- There are new entrants to the field as both advocates and funders.
- State-based focus is important to the development of the field and advancement of specific campaign finance reforms.
- The RBF should stay its course in supporting money-in-politics reform efforts.

In January 2014, Democratic Practice—U.S. program staff began meeting with current grantees, experts, and other funders to consider the implications for the portfolio. Staff met with nearly all grantees in person or by phone to understand the approach and priorities of each, the relationship to the Fund's grantmaking strategies, and their views of developments and opportunities in the field.

In addition, staff attended conferences, meetings, and convenings to explore a wide range of perspectives on the state of the field. Staff met with affinity groups, formal and informal funder collaboratives, and experts in order to deepen knowledge of the field, create new connections, and build relationships essential to charting future directions for the Fund's grantmaking. As the process for proposing the guidelines began to take shape, staff engaged in an iterative process with RBF colleagues to flesh out ideas and obtain feedback.

Finally, in late January 2015, staff held a strategy meeting at [The Pocantico Center](#). The convening provided an opportunity to examine the assumptions and challenges that informed a preliminary draft of the proposed revised guidelines, and have those assumptions challenged by law professors, organizers, service-based nonprofit leadership, practitioners, women's rights leaders, millennial leadership, civil rights leaders, social entrepreneurs, conservative leaders, and others both inside and outside the democracy field. The convening helped ensure that the process for arriving at the proposed revised guidelines was not limited to an isolated funder perspective, but took into consideration the perspectives, knowledge, and attitudes of the people working in the field and whom the Fund seeks to influence.¹

The long process of evaluating the existing strategy, relationship building, field review, and assessment resulted in what the Fund hopes will be a landmark program that will assist in the creation of a vital and inclusive 21st-century democracy in the United States.

¹ A collection of background readings are found at Appendix A.

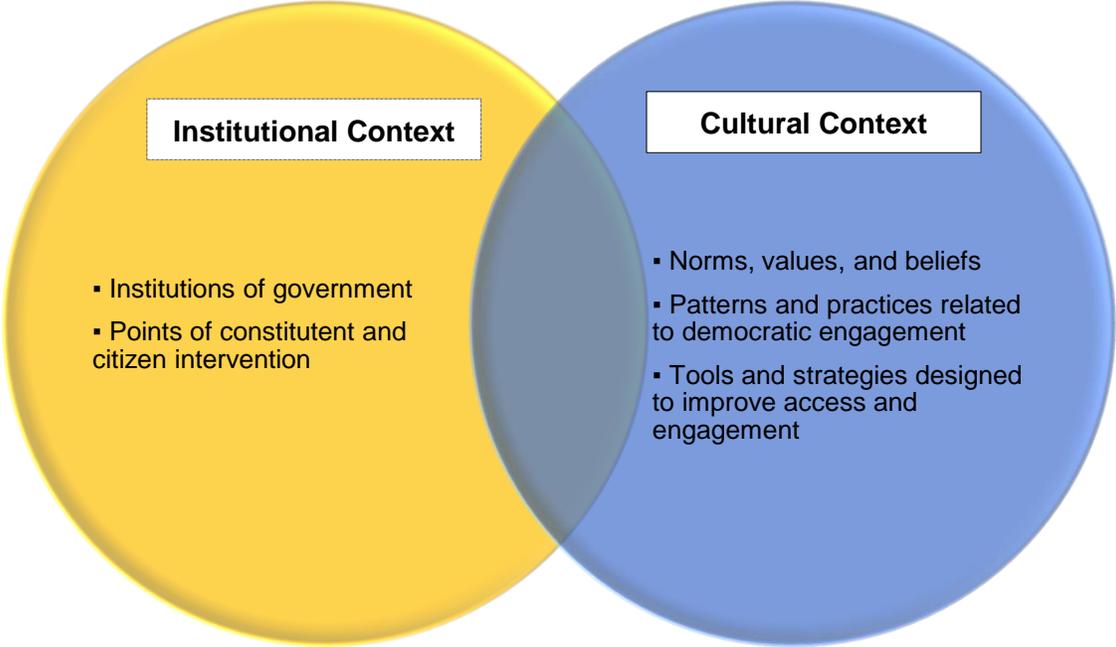
DEMOCRATIC PRACTICE—U.S. PORTFOLIO PARAMETERS, CONTEXTUAL ASSUMPTIONS REGARDING THE STATE OF DEMOCRACY, AND STRATEGIC CHALLENGES

Democratic Practice—U.S. Portfolio Parameters

In defining the purpose for the Democratic Practice—U.S. portfolio, the Fund recognizes both the institutional and cultural contexts needed to establish a thriving and inclusive democracy, as defined in the Democratic Practice guidelines preamble:

“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 proposed revised grantmaking strategy for the Democratic Practice—U.S. portfolio, seeks to create a balance between supporting institutional and cultural engagement approaches for reform and to stimulate participation in U.S. democratic systems. If the Fund were to strictly limit the Democratic Practice—U.S. funding strategy to improving governmental bodies and the formalized points of intervention for U.S. citizens and residents, it would fail to acknowledge that U.S. democracy is an active and flexible process that is often driven by forces beyond government institutions. Conversely, funding broadly across all areas of democratic influence could create strategies that would make it difficult for the Fund to have any focused, meaningful impact on improving democratic practice in the United States. Ultimately, the Fund strives to find the correct balance—the “sweet spot”—where its targeted grantmaking supports mutually reinforcing systems reform and cultural engagement strategies maximizes the impact of its contribution to the field.



The goal of reforming U.S. democracy is not merely to improve democratic systems but to allow those systems to operate in ways that achieve social, racial, and economic justice for Americans. People living and working within the United States should be able to leverage democratic systems to be self-determinative as individuals and as members of communities. The systems of U.S. democracy must allow people to fulfill their essential role as part of a representative democracy, holding elected officials and government policymakers accountable for their decisions and actions. Therefore, the Fund’s grantmaking should help ensure that people are empowered through fair and trustworthy elections, reasonable and equal access to influence policymakers, access to balanced and truthful information, and meaningful opportunities to participate in creating policy outcomes in order to support a vibrant and inclusive U.S. democracy.

Contextual Assumptions Regarding the State of Democracy in the United States

The early 21st century presents circumstances that must be considered as the Fund refines its Democratic Practice–U.S. funding strategy. Understanding how the economy, demographic changes, structural inequality, and many other factors impact the field creates the context for the proposed revised program guidelines.

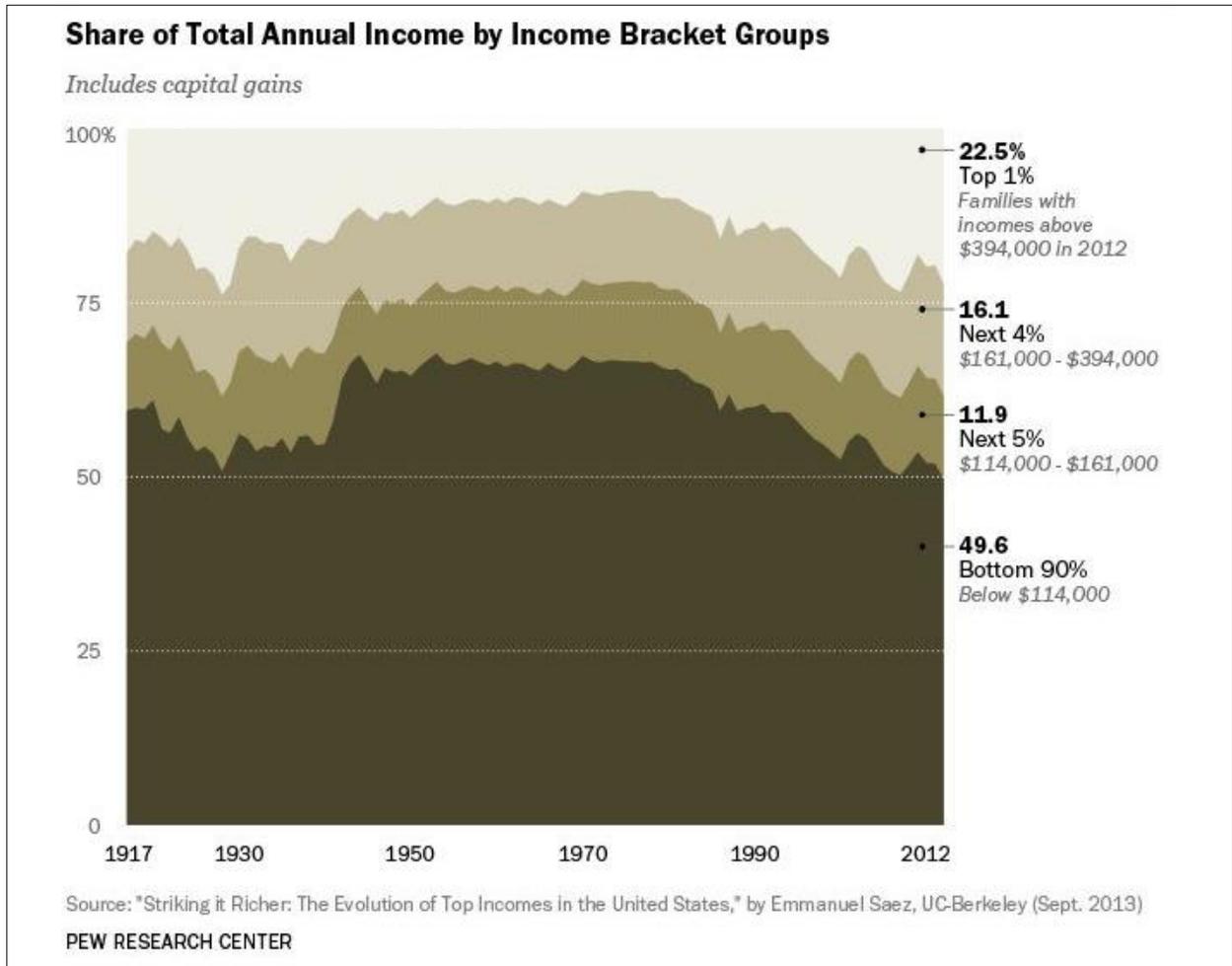
There are significant problems with U.S. democracy.

- Persistent racial, economic, and social inequality undermines political vitality.
- Inadequate racial, ethnic, and economic representation in government.
- Money spent on lobbying and political campaigns distorts representation and influence in the political system.
- Lack of confidence in government institutions.
- Redistricting processes undermine the ability of voters to hold elected officials accountable.
- Selection of election officials on a partisan basis undermines both the electoral process and public faith in elections.
- Deterioration of media discourse.
- Low voter participation.
- Hyper-partisanship undermines a political culture of productive and reasoned debate and bipartisan compromise.
- Partisan politics and influence of money in judicial elections undermine judicial impartiality and public perception of the courts.

Economic, social, and racial inequality are baked into our social and political fabric.

- Structural racism: Current public policies, institutional practices, cultural representations, and other norms work in various, reinforcing ways to perpetuate racial group inequity. Dimensions of U.S. history and culture have allowed privileges associated with “whiteness” and disadvantages associated with “color” to endure and adapt over time in ways that persistently distort our political processes governing institutions, and, in turn, public policy development.

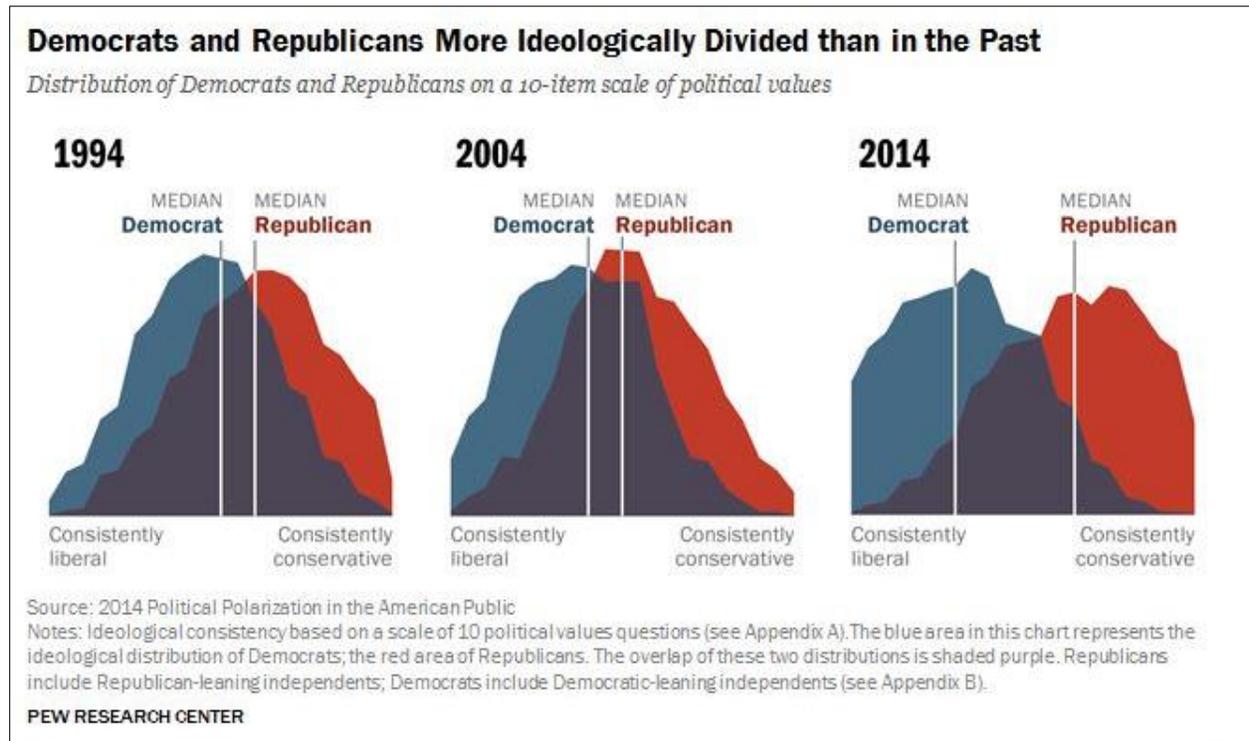
- Economic inequality:** Accumulated wealth is presently growing faster than the economy, and there are limited regulatory forces that effectively counteract the disproportionate growth of accumulated wealth. Historically, when the United States faced similar problems, the political response limited the disposable income at the top of the wealth structure through taxation, while government programs and collective bargaining expanded disposable income and wealth building for the middle class. Today, there are few broadly available public mechanisms for social mobility or lower- and middle-class wealth development as historical mechanisms are unlikely to gain sufficient support in the current Congress.



Courtesy of the Pew Research Center, December 2013, ["The many ways to measure economic inequality."](#)

Partisan rancor and extreme partisanship that have plagued the U.S. Congress are increasingly infecting state legislatures.

- Partisan rancor and extreme partisanship have rendered Congress nearly inoperable.
- Many of the same behaviors and attitudes that have undermined the ability for bipartisan cooperation in the U.S. Congress are increasingly present in state legislatures.



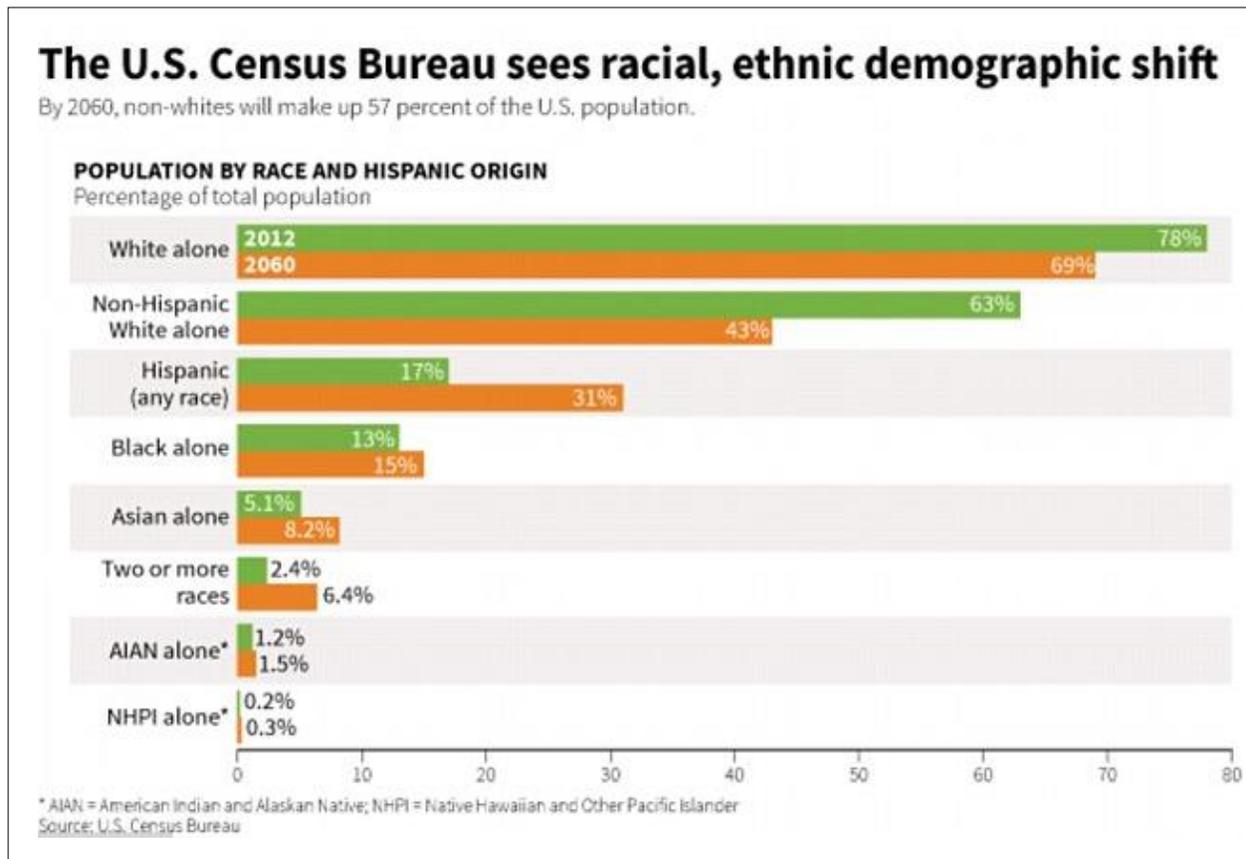
Courtesy of the Pew Research Center, June 2014, [“Political Polarization in the American Public.”](#)

Democracy in the United States is not entirely broken; there are several positive attributes to build upon.

- Large investments in electoral campaigns do not always result in victory.
- Americans accept election outcomes despite low turnout.
- Media polarization does not stop free dissemination of information.
- Democratization of the digital space has expanded access to information.
- Poll access is under attack, but most people who wish to vote can vote.

The United States is experiencing broad demographic changes presenting new challenges and opportunities for U.S. democracy.

- Latino populations are the largest growing ethnic population.
- Asian/Asian Pacific Islanders (APIs) are the fastest growing ethnic population.
- African American and White population growth is flat, but both contain relative high-percentages of performing eligible voters (65 and 66 percent, respectively).
- The United States is estimated to be a majority-minority country by 2050.
- Some individual states with high majority populations like Montana, Utah, Wisconsin, and Nebraska will see significant demographic changes, but may not reflect overall national demographic changes. Other states like California, Florida, New Mexico, and New York are currently ahead of the national curve with respect to increases in minority population.
- The “rising American electorate” or “new American majority” consists of the following demographic categories: Latino, API, single women, and millennials. This population includes high percentages of nonvoting eligible voters.



Courtesy of Reuters.

Federal and state political climates are shifting focus and resources for reform from federal to state and local levels.

- For the current biennium, federal reform of key democratic systems is unlikely; greater opportunities exist at state and municipal levels. Increasingly, national civic organizations are reorienting their focus to identify and promote state-based strategies.
- There is tension between reform efforts driven by national actors versus those led by state actors. Nationally driven, state-based strategy is opportunistic in nature and temporally limited. State-based organizations take a long view, are extremely strategic, and are consistent over time regardless of political opportunity. The ability to leverage national resources is important, but state and community funders should be part of conversations to understand how to provide resources to support long-term success.

Cities and municipalities present unique political opportunities and challenges.

- Governance and economic structures often make cities and urban centers hubs of innovation and strong laboratories to test ideas and solutions.
- Cities often have the ability to use multiple mechanisms to raise revenue.
- According to the U.S. Conference of Mayors, total metropolitan area populations will grow by 32 percent from 2012 to 2042.
- Cities are a locus of economic inequality, with many of the most populous cities in the United States, like New York and San Francisco, consistently ranked among the most “unequal” cities in the world.

STRATEGIC CHALLENGES

Staff identified four broad challenges that grantmaking strategies must consider in determining which organizations, activities, and leaders to support.

1. Facilitating a 21st-century model for change.

The progressive community has clear 20th-century political models for movements and structural change. The historical political movements (e.g., civil rights, women, LGBT, and environmental) were primarily counter-majoritarian, organized around specific goals where numerical minority populations were seeking concessions from the larger power structure without truly threatening the overall power structure. It is important to note that many of the issues related to racial and economic inequality remain unaddressed today. Current political and populist energy is focused toward elevating the “99 percent,” a very different majoritarian base. For many Americans, identity politics does not resonate in the same way as it did in the 20th century. As the Fund considers its Democratic Practice–U.S. grantmaking strategy, simply importing or elevating historical models may be insufficient to affect contemporary change. A new organizing model for engaging a significant majority who share an economic self-interest, but are often politically and culturally divided, is needed.

2. Elevating the issues of racial and economic justice as essential to a functioning democracy.

Racial and economic inequality have broad implications beyond the moral imperative to advance policies where all persons are treated equally. As the United States experiences marked growth in communities of color, inequality of opportunity is rising as a significant problem that is limiting economic growth and undermining the position of the U.S. as a member of important international political and economic communities. The political environment is also constrained from advancing policies that address inequality of opportunity. Indeed, efforts to improve government and governance systems should strive to achieve equality in every sense, but the goal of establishing a fully functioning democracy cannot wait until an ideal measure of equality is achieved. It is democracy that provides meaningful access to all persons regardless of economic status or racial designation that will, in turn, provide the opportunity to achieve a greater measure of justice and equality in public policy outcomes.

3. Understanding how to develop opportunities for policy reform in a time where activism is increasingly decentralized.

In our highly mobile and digital society, there are increasing opportunities to elevate issues organically. Various opportunities for digital media and traditional offline organizing spaces do not rely upon singular leadership for movement or action, but in fact take on a multi-nodal models of leadership with no single leader or lead organization. Indeed, organizationally branded ideas are often less trusted than those that appear to arise out of organic collective action. Today, organizing people either online or in person is far less limited by geographic or temporal constraints. Moreover, because leadership is less coordinated, it has become difficult to define leadership or to have people self-identify as leaders. Conversely, policy reform and political infrastructure remain geographically based and temporal in nature. It is not entirely clear how new styles of organizing and leadership relate to identifying and advocating for specific policy reforms. Nor is it clear how effective organizational structure can be created from decentralized spaces—or whether it is appropriate to do so. At the same time, new organizing and activism models have been particularly effective in moving corporate actors toward specific action. Furthermore, today's emerging leaders frequently see corporate and business arenas as a key driver for social change in many cases, often more so than traditional government institutions.

4. Boomer versus millennial intergenerational communications and transitions of knowledge and power.

Boomer generation (born 1946–1964) leadership is transitioning to millennial (those born after 1980) leadership. The sandwiched Generation X (born 1965–1980) is not likely to broadly take on leadership roles, but has an essential role in bridging communication gaps. There are real differences in communication styles and mechanisms between boomers and millennials, as well as mutually reinforced ageism, which often results in misperceptions that undermine the ability to effectively exchange information, experience, and knowledge between generations. Like so many other areas, civil society is affected by the generational changes, and it is important that knowledge is not lost, abandoned, or excluded in attempts to hold onto or assume power that does not serve the overall advancement of improving U.S. democracy.

PRINCIPAL CONCLUSIONS SUPPORTING THE PROPOSED DEMOCRATIC PRACTICE—U.S. GUIDELINES

Given all the aforementioned assumptions and challenges, staff have carefully considered the available opportunities to influence and create a vibrant and inclusive democracy and arrived at the following conclusions:

1. The relationship between money and politics remains a key problem in U.S. democracy.

The current relationship between money and quality of representation is a key structural problem that, if unresolved, limits the ability of the U.S. government and people from fully addressing any number of economic and social problems including climate change, economic inequality, and peace. Staff recommend that the Fund expand its approach to supporting reforms to shape how money and politics impact policymaking. First, the Fund should continue to support mechanisms to limit how money enters political systems (e.g., constitutional amendment and jurisprudential development). Second, although matching programs, tax credits and other public financing systems are essential to reforming campaign financing in the United States, the Fund should consider increasing grantmaking toward anti-corruption and anti-coordination reforms at both state and federal level. Third, the Fund should support nongovernment opportunities to limit the influence of money by supporting innovations to reduce the amount of money necessary for political campaigns to be successful. Given the current jurisprudence related to money and the First Amendment, the ability to limit money in politics at the federal level will be nearly impossible in the short term. There remain, however, market-driven opportunities to support the development of tools and strategies that provide the opportunities for candidates from any party to win campaigns with less money, thereby leaving candidates less beholden to large donors. Finally, the Fund should continue its grantmaking that supports the development of economic and business cases for reforming the relationship between large donors and policymaking.

2. Voting is the primary way most U.S. citizens interact with political systems and leverage political power.

Voting is the principal way that most U.S. citizens engage with systems of governance and fulfill their role to hold elected officials accountable. For U.S. democracy to function effectively, all voters who wish to register must be able to register quickly, seamlessly, and without error. Those who are registered must be able to vote, and all properly cast votes should be counted without fear that votes will be discarded by an inefficient or ineffective counting process or nullified by voter fraud. To that end, staff recommend that the portfolio focus on improving election administration and the preservation and expansion of voting rights. This strategy should also explore support for reform of redistricting processes.

3. Innovations related to contemporary democratic practice will shape the interactions of people, corporations, civil society, and government in the 21st century.

Innovation certainly includes, but is not limited to, technological advancements. The opportunity to support advocates, organizers, emerging political leaders, and practitioners to think differently about how to improve U.S. democracy is both relational and technical. This strategy provides the space to support new ideas and approaches to democratic reform and contemplates support for organizations using technology, building new relationships, and interacting across disciplines and fields. Although less defined than the other strategies, the year-long evaluation of the field reveals that this is an important strategy to pursue. In order to ensure that this strategy does not

become too unwieldy or undefined, funding should be limited to proposals that envision changes to policy outcomes or specific forms of engagement that are designed to influence or change policy related to dysfunctional democratic systems.

PROPOSED RBF DEMOCRATIC PRACTICE—U.S. PROGRAM GOAL AND STRATEGIES

The proposed overall goal of the Democratic Practice—U.S. Program is **to advance a vital and inclusive democracy in the United States**. In doing so, the Fund seeks to strengthen and broaden participation in the practices and institutions of democratic governance by fostering greater transparency, accountability, and responsiveness of government institutions to achieve social, economic, and racial justice through the following strategies:

Strategy #1 – Money in Politics

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.

Funding in this area will include long-term approaches to reduce the influence and amount of money in political life such as support for jurisprudential development around changing the legal relationship between money and speech. It will also include nearer term efforts to limit the impact of money in politics, including promoting public financing of elections at both the state and federal levels, promoting anticorruption lobbying reform efforts, and supporting efforts to enforce existing state legislation. Finally, this area will include efforts to change the relationship between political and economic actors including efforts to decrease the costs of campaigns in order to reduce or eliminate the need to raise money from large donors.

Staff and grantees are currently working to identify states where support for campaign finance reform and other related initiatives could help build national momentum. Staff are also attentive to the need to broaden the constituencies and lead voices on these issues. Additionally, the Fund will continue to support efforts to expand public disclosure and anti-corruption laws. There are a number of states with existing disclosure and anti-collusion laws that, due to weak regulation, are allowing the groups unleashed by the Citizen's United decision to have an outsized, and possibly illegal, influence over elections. Staff propose to explore opportunities to support relevant enforcement efforts or civil litigation. Finally, as referenced above, the ability to reduce the cost of campaigns has the potential to weaken the influence of money in elections altogether. Exploration and experimentation in new political or technological strategies, particularly as relates to elevating the economic and pro-business cases for limiting the influence of large donors over policy making, give the Fund the opportunity to help fundamentally change the dependence of campaigns on large donations.

Strategy #2 – Elections and Voting Rights

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.

Funding in this area would support efforts to improve election administration, modernize voter registration systems, promote expansion of the franchise, support litigation efforts to prevent erosion of existing voting rights, and reform redistricting processes. Support for efforts to improve ballot access may include voter registration modernization, National Voter Registration Act compliance,

leveraging the recommendations from the President’s Commission on Election Administration, universal voter registration, same day registration, preregistration for 16- and 17-year-olds, and online voter registration. Approaches to protecting the vote and improving poll access will very likely focus on litigation. Additionally, the Fund may consider opportunities to elevate the need for new funding for voting technology. As the bipartisan Presidential Commission on Election Administration noted in 2014, the United States is in a crisis with respect to voting technology. Many voting machines across the country are broken, outdated, and suffer from poor design quality, among other problems. Unfortunately, many machines with problems often end up in polling locations in low-income communities or communities of color. This particular issue is an opportunity for the Fund to work with its funding partners to address a serious national problem that has a potentially noncomplex remedy.

Strategy #3 – Innovation

Supporting select innovations such as the application of new technologies and advances in organizing methods that strengthen advocacy or expand opportunities for underrepresented populations to influence policy outcomes.

This strategy is about new thinking for the 21st century. Innovation in this context means more than technological developments, involving new ways of approaching organizing and advocacy to improve U.S. democracy. It is very exciting to think about the opportunity for the Fund to support advocates, organizers, emerging political leaders, and practitioners thinking differently about how to address the relational, systemic, and technological challenges to U.S. democracy. Funding in this area may include opportunities for experimental proof-of-concept programs as well as general support for organizations taking new approaches to solve problems within U.S. democracy.

Funding in this area would include exploratory efforts to support public-private partnerships to improve government relationships with constituents, civic engagement technology focused on new digital mechanisms, and organizing efforts in underrepresented geographic or online communities that result in meaningful civic engagement. Programs connecting multi-nodal models of engagement for geographically-based policy reform or new infrastructure for power development offer intriguing opportunities to support innovation to improve civic life and improve policy outcomes.

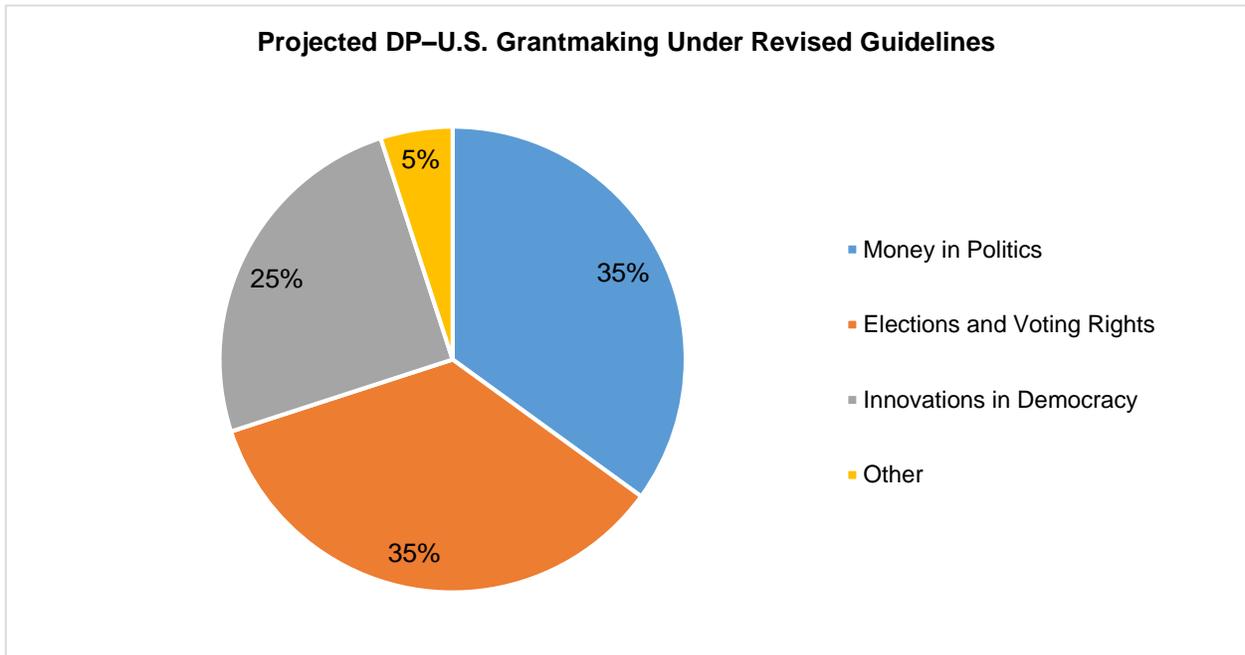
The proposed revised guidelines narrative is found at Appendix B.

IMPLICATIONS FOR EXISTING PORTFOLIO

The proposed revised guidelines envision concluding support for some existing lines of work, in some cases realigning current grantees with proposed new strategies. Concluding strategies include general support for transparency and accountability organizations, including investigative journalism. Projects that specifically address money in politics, elections, voting rights or innovations in democracy would still be considered. The current strategy to “foster greater understanding and appreciation for the role of government,” a strategy under which relatively few grants have been made, would also be eliminated. Staff have developed a plan to provide final grants to a number of grantees during 2015.

CONCLUSION

With the new guidelines, the Fund expects over the coming years, to see grantmaking approaching approximately 35 percent in “Money in Politics,” 35 percent in “Elections and Voting Rights,” and 25 percent in “Innovation in Democracy,” with the remaining five percent in “other related activities” over the coming years. Within strategies, staff will continue to work closely with grantees and other partners to identify the most promising opportunities to advance the work at the federal, state, and local levels.



APPENDIX A: BACKGROUND READING

Racial and Economic Inequality

“What the U.S. Economy Would Look Like if Racial Inequality Didn’t Exist” by Emily Badger

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/wonkblog/wp/2014/10/28/what-the-u-s-economy-would-look-like-if-racial-inequality-didnt-exist/>

The Equity Solution: Racial Inclusion is Key to Growing Strong New Economy by Sarah Treuhaff, Justin Scoggins, and Jennifer Tran

<https://policylink.app.box.com/equity-brief>

Stacked Deck by David Calahan and J. Mijin Cha

<http://www.demos.org/sites/default/files/publications/Demos-Stacked-Deck.pdf>

“Most of America’s Rich Think the Poor Have It Easy” by Roberto A. Ferdman

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/wonkblog/wp/2015/01/08/most-of-americas-rich-think-the-poor-have-it-easy/>

Perspectives on Inequality and Opportunity from the Survey of Consumer Finances by Chair Janet L. Yellen

<http://www.federalreserve.gov/newsevents/speech/yellen20141017a.pdf>

“Overstating the Costs of Inequality” by Scott Winship

<http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/articles/2013/03/overstating%20inequality%20costs%20winship/overstating%20inequality%20costs%20winship.pdf>

“The Great Divide”—a multi-author series on inequality in *The New York Times*

<http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/category/the-great-divide/>

“Five Facts About Economic Inequality” by Drew DeSilver

<http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/01/07/5-facts-about-economic-inequality/>

“Piketty’s Inequality Story in Six Charts” by John Cassidy

<http://www.newyorker.com/news/john-cassidy/pikettrys-inequality-story-in-six-charts>

“Drowning in a Rising Tide” by Nathan Pippenger

<http://www.democracyjournal.org/arguments/2014/10/drowning-in-a-rising-tide.php>

“The Mobility Myth” by Timothy Noah

<http://www.newrepublic.com/article/politics/magazine/100516/inequality-mobility-economy-america-recession-divergence>

Problems with Democracy

“Testing Theories of American Politics: Elites, Interest Groups, and Average Citizens” by Martin Gilens and Benjamin I. Page

http://scholar.princeton.edu/sites/default/files/mgilens/files/gilens_and_page_2014_-_testing_theories_of_american_politics.doc.pdf

Electoral Integrity: A Confidence Game by Justin Levitt

http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2502655

The Partisanship Spectrum by Justin Levitt

http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2239491

Democracy Divided: Campaign Finance Regulation and the Right to Vote by Yasmin Dawood

http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2511416

“Making Federal Data More Useful and Accessible To Fuel Media and Democracy” by John Wihbey

<http://journalistsresource.org/skills/research/federal-data>

“The Politics of Financial Insecurity: A Democratic Tilt, Undercut by Low Participation”

<http://www.people-press.org/2015/01/08/the-politics-of-financial-insecurity-a-democratic-tilt-undercut-by-low-participation/>

Civic Participation and Technology

“Technology and Civic Engagement: Friend or Foe?” by Tiago Peixoto

<http://democracyspot.net/2014/08/06/technology-and-citizen-engagement-friend-or-foe/>

“A Brilliant Story of Participation, Technology, and Development Outcomes” by Tiago Peixoto

<http://democracyspot.net/2014/08/19/a-brilliant-story-of-participation-technology-and-development-outcomes/>

Other

“Facing Challenges, Pollsters Broaden Experiments with New Methodologies” by Drew Desilver

<http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/11/24/facing-challenges-pollsters-broaden-experiments-with-new-methodologies-2/>

“Q/A: What *The New York Times*’ Polling Decision Means” by Drew Desilver

<http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/07/28/qa-what-the-new-york-times-polling-decision-means/>

“Democracy and the Donor Class” by Gara LaMarche

<http://www.democracyjournal.org/34/democracy-and-the-donor-class.php>

“Is Equality the New Coconut Water?” by Vu Le

<http://nonprofitwithballs.com/2014/09/is-equity-the-new-coconut-water/>

“The Frustration with Innovation: Bright Shiny Object Syndrome and Its Effect on the Nonprofit Sector” by Vu Le

<http://nonprofitwithballs.com/2014/08/the-frustration-with-innovation-bright-shiny-object-syndrome-and-its-effect-on-the-nonprofit-sector/>

APPENDIX B: PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE PROGRAM GUIDELINES

DEMOCRATIC PRACTICE PROGRAM GUIDELINES

Proposed amendments for March 2015

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 preempting 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 seeks to strengthen and broaden participation in the practices and institutions of democratic governance by fostering greater transparency, accountability, and responsiveness of government institutions to achieve social, economic, and racial justice through the following strategies:

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 select innovations, such as the application of new technologies and advances in organizing methods that strengthen advocacy or expand opportunities for underrepresented populations to influence policy outcomes.