



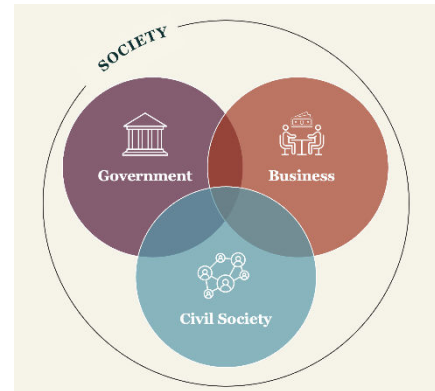
# Civil Society and Leadership Initiative Overview

Civil society is critical to achieving and maintaining progress toward a thriving natural world, healthy communities, and just societies. And the stronger civil society is, the further we can together advance positive change.

**The Civil Society and Leadership (CSL) Initiative accelerates positive change by investing in the strength of organizations and leaders, fostering connections across civil society, and protecting and defending civic space.** The initiative works in all countries where the Foundation funds, as well as globally.

CSL’s work is organized into four pathways, pursued in close partnership with the Foundation’s other initiatives:

1. **Invest in the strength of our civil society partners:** CSL provides organizational and leadership grants and programs to equip partners with the skills and capabilities to achieve their missions.
2. **Invest in the strength and resilience of civil society ecosystems:** CSL invests in strengthening civil society infrastructure, movements, and networks – toward increased coordination, collaboration, and sustained sector strength.
3. **Invest in safe and thriving civic space:** In a set of places and globally, CSL provides grants that monitor threats to civil society and protecting the ability of organizations and networks to operate safely.
4. **Influence donors to support the strength of civil society:** We seek partnerships and collaboration with other donors, understanding that we alone cannot achieve the goal of the CSL initiative.



**Civil society** is commonly defined as “non-governmental organizations, entities, and movements with a presence in public life.” Civil society is one of three core sectors in society, alongside government and the private sector.

These pathways are interdependent and particularly powerful when combined. All four work together toward the goal of the Civil Society and Leadership initiative.

**Goal Statement: Civil society actors are equipped to achieve their collective goals and to shape a just and thriving society.**

Growing threats (e.g., rising authoritarianism, concentration of corporate power, discriminatory application of anti-terrorism laws) are limiting civil society’s ability to work effectively. Investing in the strength of civil society, as well as protecting civic space, is a system-level approach to

tackle challenges at their roots. A strong civil society is better positioned to protect itself against these threats, as well as engage and hold accountable government and the private sector. And safe and thriving civic space enables civil society to advance mission work and flourish.

The following sections share more details about our approach. *While we may occasionally do open calls for grant proposals, we expect that most of the work that the Civil Society and Leadership Initiative funds will be by invitation.*

### *Pathway 1: Investing in the Strength of Our Civil Society Partners*

Through this pathway, CSL supports the Packard Foundation's grantee partners to develop the skills and resources they need to achieve their missions. Recognizing that historically under-resourced organizations have also received the least support for capacity and leadership, we prioritize these organizations to receive CSL grants. Our grantmaking in this pathway supports:

- ✓ **Investing in Leadership** through a variety of structures, including cohorts, mentorship programs, peer support spaces, and supporting leadership program alumni.
- ✓ **Organizational strengthening and leadership grants** for Packard grantees, focused on multi-year support.
- ✓ **Cross-issue cohorts** in geography that bring together leaders from different sectors and issues around shared interests and needs.
- ✓ **Resource hubs based in geography** that provide bite-sized, adaptive, and responsive training, coaching, and peer support on an ongoing basis to all grantees within that geography.

### *Pathway 2: Investing in the Strength and Resilience of Civil Society Ecosystems*

For civil society to be strong, leaders and organizations need access to ongoing support from trainers, coaches, and others that bring expertise, new skills, and contextual understanding to their work. In addition, civil society actors have the greatest potential for impact when they collaborate across sectors. This pathway is focused on:

- ✓ **Strong infrastructure.** Where the Foundation funds context-centered work, we invest in those who build the capacity of the civil society sector. This may include intermediaries, consultants, trainers, and associations.

- ✓ **Cross-issue networks and movements.** We invest in networks and movement infrastructure, acknowledging that they provide critical connections, bringing other civil society actors together to collaborate and share learning.

### *Pathway 3: Investing in Thriving Civic Space*

When civil society actors cannot operate safely, they cannot achieve their goals, maintain progress, or play their collective role of holding government accountable. We invest in civic space through two approaches:

1. **Defending and supporting civic space.** In a few places, we make targeted investments to protect and defend civic space, in partnership with Packard Foundation initiatives and other funders.
2. **Focused global civil society investments.** We share lessons with other funders and institutions and seek opportunities to influence multilateral efforts focused on civic space and threats to civil society.

### *Pathway 4: Influence Donors to Support the Strength of Civil Society*

We seek to influence and collaborate with other philanthropies and donors, including bilaterals and multilaterals. This work will primarily happen with global donors and in the US, as well as in other places where we are working deeply. This work will employ two approaches:

- ✓ **Investing in research, publications, and organizations that further best practices and emerging areas of practice.** We support research and dissemination of findings that could positively influence the field, as well as organizations focused on influencing donors on these topics.
- ✓ **Using Foundation voice, leadership, and convening power to influence donor practices.** Beyond our grant dollars, we seek opportunities to influence the field through communications, convening, and other field-level activities.

Around the world, people and communities are working to shape a future that is sustainable, just, and inclusive. We know that reaching this future requires strong civil society and leadership. This initiative seeks to equip civil society to advance progress in the places where we work, as well as globally. Together, we can achieve a more just and thriving society, vibrant communities, and a healthy planet.