



THE DAVID & LUCILE

Packard Foundation

Democracy, Rights, and Governance

Initiative Overview

The David and Lucile Packard Foundation works with people and communities to create enduring solutions for just societies and a healthy, resilient natural world. We believe that a strong U.S. democratic system is essential to drive the long-lasting, positive change needed to create a more just and equitable world.



THE CHALLENGE

Today, democratic dysfunction is stifling progress for communities across the country. The U.S. government is struggling to meet people's needs, trust in institutions and each other is declining, and support for undemocratic solutions is growing. Public trust is exceedingly low while polarization is exceptionally high, driven in part by an underlying democratic system that was never properly equipped to live up to its full promise and has not evolved to meet the needs of a dramatically different era.

OUR GOAL

We envision a thriving, resilient, pro-equity democracy that effectively meets the needs of a politically, racially, and religiously diverse America.

Working with our grantee partners, we aim to reimagine our democracy so that it protects everyone's fundamental rights, fosters equity and justice, and encourages positive engagement across divides – and a democratic government that effectively, efficiently, and equitably serves the public good.

OUR STRATEGY

The Democracy, Rights, and Governance initiative takes a long-term approach, providing funding to address the underlying causes of America's democratic challenges and the issues that will persist regardless of the outcomes of any one election.



We believe that proactive, longer-term thinking and a willingness to work across divides can propel progress toward a truly inclusive, effective democracy that can endure well into the future.

Our work is organized into three strategic objectives:

1. Build support for democratic norms, values, and culture.

We fund efforts to increase broad support for the fundamental principles of democracy that allow us to solve our differences peacefully and inclusively. Once support for democratic norms and values is more robust, it becomes more possible to achieve reforms to electoral structures, media, and government institutions that will enable democracy to endure well into the future.

Our work is focused on communities most at risk of political violence, election denialism, or support for authoritarianism. This includes support for:

- Organizers working on the ground in key communities to build the broadest possible coalitions of local leaders from across the political spectrum in support for democracy.
- Leaders in faith, veteran, and business communities to foster democratic values with their constituencies.

2. Protect, defend, and reform our government institutions.

We fund efforts to make government institutions more effective, efficient, and capable of meeting the needs of a rapidly changing world. When institutions consistently deliver results – like repairing bridges and roads, responding to natural disasters, and regulating emerging technologies – it strengthens people’s trust and faith in democracy.

This objective is currently in development and may include support to improve the capacities, rules, norms, and processes that determine our government’s ability to deliver for the people. We look forward to sharing more about this work as it unfolds.

3. Advance a proactive, forward-looking vision for the future of U.S. democracy.

We fund efforts to help ensure that democracy will be equipped to deliver in a rapidly changing world. This includes:

- **Harnessing Technology:** Efforts to ensure that new technologies play a positive role in shaping the future of democracy. This includes work to mitigate the risks associated with emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence, while harnessing their benefits to enhance government capacity and effectiveness.
- **Developing a Positive Future Vision:** Efforts to develop a long-term vision for a more resilient democracy in the face of a rapidly changing world. We fund efforts to develop a vision for democracy institutions and culture that are capable of grappling with changing racial demographics, evolving gender and religious norms, shifting economic paradigms, growing climate threats, rapidly changing technologies, and more, so that American democracy can deliver effectively now and well into the future.



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WHAT THE DEMOCRACY, RIGHTS, AND GOVERNANCE INITIATIVE DOESN'T FUND

While we recognize that many organizations are doing critical work to ensure free and fair elections in the U.S., we invest in finding solutions to the underlying causes of the challenges to our democracy and do not fund elections-related work.

LEARN MORE

For more information about the Packard Foundation's Democracy, Rights, and Government program, visit www.packard.org/democracy.