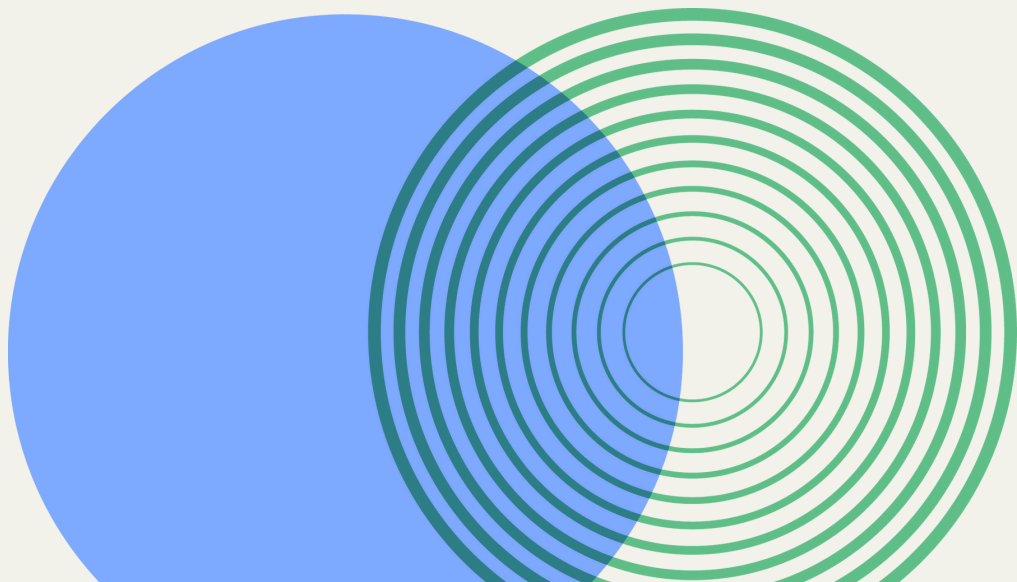




# **NEW PLURALISTS**

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**2024 Impact Report**



# INTRODUCTION

As we look back on 2024, we once again find ourselves in a moment of tectonic change in the external landscape. The United States is becoming increasingly diverse in terms of race and ethnicity, religion, culture, and age/generation. As Rachel Kleinfeld, senior fellow in the Democracy, Conflict, and Governance Program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, noted at the 2024 Democracy Forum hosted by the Obama Foundation, in many other countries across history, and in our own, democracies tend to have three options when faced with increasing diversity. They can choose dominance (creating structures based on hierarchies, where one is at the top and setting the rules for everyone else); they can choose repression (stamping out diversity through capping immigration, deportation, or violence); or they can choose pluralism (bringing different groups, belief systems, and ways of life into balance with each other). Our task, as actors in philanthropy dedicated to democratic renewal, is to help create the enabling conditions for more people to choose pluralism.

[A new report](#) from the Council on Foundations found that philanthropy significantly increased support of projects addressing the drivers of polarization over the last eight years and that foundations were increasingly investing in work to “connect across differences.” From 2016 to 2020, philanthropy doubled its investments in promoting democracy, spending \$9.4 billion across a range of pluralist practices. This investment nurtured hundreds of programs that now make up an emerging ecosystem.

As we enter what is likely to be a renewed phase of philanthropic interest in democracy and civil society, our work to align funding that can help reverse the tides of polarization and cultivate deeper understanding across differences feels ever more urgent. We spent 2024 working collaboratively with our network of field builders and funding partners to synthesize learning from our first three years into a [new framework](#) that can anchor our interventions in a rapidly changing ecosystem. Across a wide body of research, we crystallized three key blockers that prevent a culture of pluralism: dehumanization, disconnection, and distrust; and we landed a set of practice areas that can help us collectively achieve our north star that, amidst a year of change, remains the same — we are dedicated to building a culture of respect and belonging for all and we believe that changing norms, behaviors, and beliefs can help re-pattern American culture at scale.

I am excited to be leading the organization with a collaboratively developed guiding strategy and governing body of funders committed not just to investing in pluralism, but also to practicing it together as we make decisions and grow, as an organization and as an ecosystem.

With appreciation for the work we are doing together,



Liz Vogel  
Interim Executive Director

# 2024 Impact Report

For New Pluralists, 2024 was the culmination of our first phase of operations, marked by learning, capacity building, and thought leadership. Since launch, we invested \$33M into the field through grants; nurtured a strong network of funders, researchers, storytellers, and practitioners; and invested in research projects and other resources that have contributed to a baseline understanding of the pluralism ecosystem.

ORS Impact's [Theory of Change Assessment](#), completed in November 2024, provides an external view of the value and impact that New Pluralists created in what we are coming to view as Phase One of our work. The report finds strong evidence to validate what we have accomplished thus far—New Pluralists has **raised the profile of pluralism** as a core investment strategy, **helped organize the ecosystem** of actors contributing to pluralism, **deepened collaboration**, and **invested in key pluralism practices** across the country.

With support from The Bridgespan Group in 2024, we co-developed a strategy across a diverse set of funders and staff that was, in itself, a practice of pluralism that surfaced healthy tensions and required stakeholders to make choices together despite differing views. This work crystallized our place in the pluralism ecosystem; namely, we will continue to operate as a pooled fund and re-grantor, fostering alignment among funders with diverse viewpoints and deploying funds in more targeted ways across an ecosystem that is still emerging. **We will move away from trying to hold the whole ecosystem—especially as new collaborations and networks develop—and instead invest in practices and strategies that are poised to break through to achieve durable, adaptable, and transformative change.** We will also invest in key assets (e.g., metrics and strategy tables) that will enable the pluralism ecosystem to scale its impact, and we will amplify learning to build the case for investment in pluralism.



2024 also became a year of organizational inflection and change. In October, our visionary inaugural Executive Director Uma Viswanathan left the organization, and Liz Vogel transitioned from the role of director of philanthropic engagement to interim executive director. Uma took an aspirational blueprint sketched by our founding funders and Field Builders and built a dynamic organization that created common cause among highly diverse stakeholders, elevated an ecosystem that needed visibility and legitimacy, and responded to a culture hungry for a new way forward. Liz is leading the organization through this moment of transition by collaborating deeply with governing funders to refine and implement New Pluralists' new strategy, which we will be ready to operationalize in early 2025.

Alongside these large strategic advances, our team continued to progress our research, network-weaving, grantmaking, and operations, bringing several large initiatives to fruition in 2024.

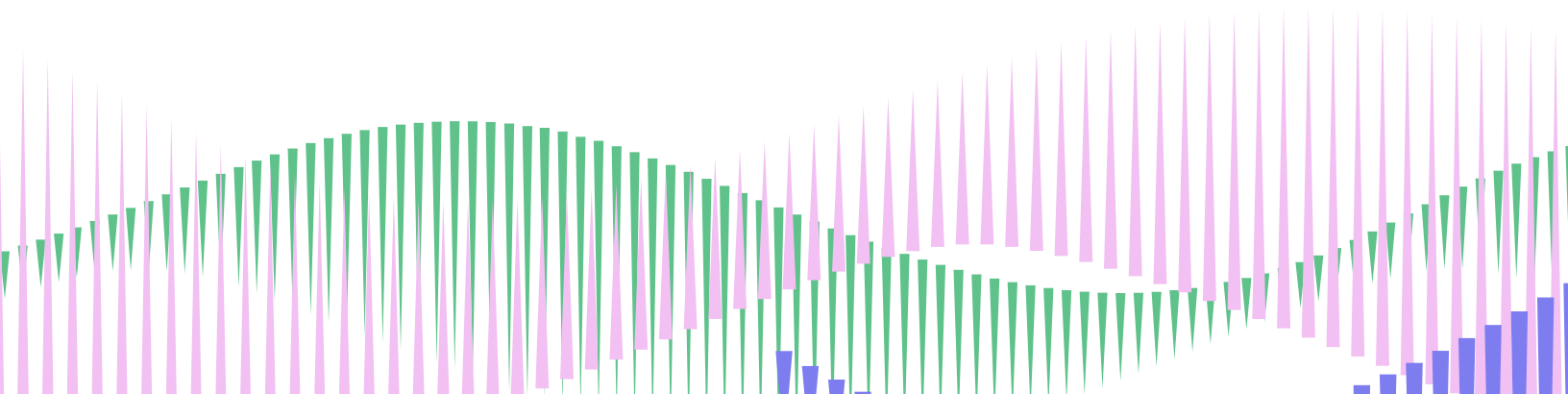
**This report reflects New Pluralists' impacts in the following areas:**

**Understanding Pluralism and How to Advance It** focuses on the impact of our sensemaking, research, and thought leadership to develop a shared understanding of the pluralism ecosystem and share resources across it.

**Connecting People and Ideas** sheds light on our work convening practitioners, funders, and other stakeholders to build trust, spark ideas, and practice pluralism together.

**Investing Resources** shares the impacts of our grantmaking this year.

**Organization Transition** provides more detail on our work setting a new strategy and navigating leadership change.



# UNDERSTANDING PLURALISM AND HOW TO ADVANCE IT

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*"There's momentum in the field of pluralism right now...and it's related to the work that New Pluralists ... is doing. It's an exciting field. I feel like three years ago... there was much less attention on the field. I think there's momentum. I think there's movement. I think just as a whole, [New Pluralists] has just helped to build the field or give shape to the field."*  
- New Pluralists Funder


The 2024 Theory of Change Assessment found that during New Pluralists' first two and a half years, **79% of founding Field Builders, 75% of funders, and 65% of grantees reported they learned more about pluralism and what it takes to advance it as a result of engaging with New Pluralists.** The 15+ ecosystem reports, case studies, how-to guides, and research papers we and our grantees published this year substantiate New Pluralists' approach, as well as provide guidance and frameworks for other actors in the ecosystem. We have collated a repository of reports on pluralism and evaluations of our work [here](#).

We have found, as co-founding member Sarah Cross stated recently, that “grantmakers crave rigor in this work and a sense of how to evaluate what success looks like. Pluralism can feel abstract to people, especially if they aren't already connected to grantees advancing it.” New Pluralists' substantial investment in a [baseline evaluation](#) for the ecosystem has helped clarify the current status, opportunities, and barriers to pluralism in culture. We found that a culture of pluralism in the US is under threat, but that the pluralism ecosystem is becoming more connected and cohesive. There is still a great need to strengthen the ecosystem's infrastructure, and, while funders have taken notice of pluralism, funding remains a challenge for most practitioners. In the words of one respondent in the baseline study, “Today, the ecosystem is at an important inflection point. While no longer a series of disparate initiatives responding to crises, the ecosystem is still in the early stage of cohering around a theory of change.”

## The Impact of a Shared Understanding

By moving from an abstract idea to a better shared understanding, New Pluralists is shining a light on promising practices and helping stakeholders collaborate more effectively, understand what their goals are, and strategize together about future work. Our research and publications have made tacit understandings about pluralism more explicit and developed a baseline and shared reference points that have helped the New Pluralists funding community strengthen their investment approach.

At the end of 2024, our newly expanded communications team began packaging this wide body of research and learning for broad dissemination so that more practitioners and funders can access and build on this foundation. Launched in early 2025, New Pluralists' refreshed website includes a resource hub that curates 30+ research papers, case studies, stories, and how-to guides developed by New Pluralists and our grantees, using a taxonomy refined with the field.



Insights from this research have also informed one of our signature initiatives, **Pluralism in Action** (previously called Research to Impact), which will take place in January 2025. New Pluralists is hosting and designing this event in partnership with long-term partners who operate at the intersection of evidence and practice: More in Common, Greater Good Science Center, the Center for the Science of Moral Understanding, and Over Zero. This event reflects the growing maturation of the field we have invested in for more than three years, bringing together a group of 175+ practitioners, researchers, communicators, and funders for rich discussion about how to find greater coherence and momentum for their work. Our goal is for the convening to lead to rigorous sensemaking, encourage cross-pollination between heterodox thinkers and doers, and build resolve to advance pluralism in culture, no matter what ruptures lie ahead. We are opening our doors, as well, to new prospective funders whom we have invited to attend the summit, with a special invitation to a pre-convening session for philanthropists seeking to bridge across differences.

## CONNECTING PEOPLE & IDEAS


Connection is at the heart of the pluralism we seek to nurture and practice. ORS Impact found, based on data collected in 2022 and 2023, that **86% of surveyed founding Field Builders, 100% of funders, and 50% of grantees reported that their organization is more connected to others in the ecosystem as a result of joining New Pluralists.** The report also found that convenings helped researchers' work get more exposure to the practitioner audience they've struggled to reach, as well as aided practitioners in sharing their work with researchers and funders.

### Connecting People Practicing Pluralism

In 2024, New Pluralists provided consistent opportunities for field leaders and funders to come together both virtually and in person. **Our Healing Starts Here (HSH)** cohort members gathered virtually every quarter, as they have since the program's launch in 2023, helping local practitioners build relationships, learn new skills, and share insights. In May 2024, we convened the HSH cohort in person for the first time, bringing together 60 representatives from 36 organizations for two-and-a-half days of reflection, discussion, and deep engagement. **Many practitioners had reported feeling like outliers in other spaces but said they felt validated and embraced by New Pluralists and their HSH peers when they gathered as a community.** Recognizing that HSH was designed as an exploratory investment, the convening wove threads between organizations poised to subsequently collaborate. Sessions asked questions ranging from "What does belonging mean to me?" to "What do I need to get where I want to go next?" Attendees lifted up bright spots together and identified shared challenges and strategies for moving forward.

By forging bonds of trust between pluralism actors across their different contexts, the convening inspired new partnerships, including site visits to learn from one another, explorations of each other's methods, and strong HSH grantee participation in a training on conflict resolution hosted by Essential Partners. Following the convening, several practitioners volunteered to lead a **Political Diversity Community of Practice**, which kicked off in January 2025 and offer a place-based look at how to harness our political differences for shared purpose. These projects will outlast the HSH grant terms as cohort members continue to practice pluralism together.





Other highlights of our network weaving include the **Narrative Change Community of Practice**, which brings together 12-15 practitioners monthly to build their knowledge and strengthen narrative projects that uplift pluralism in a divided society. New Pluralists has funded the community of practice through June 2025, allowing the group to acclimate to a new narrative landscape, share learnings with and influence other networks focused on narrative change, and curate a set of resources for the broader ecosystem.

Last, we continued to host our monthly **First Thursdays** meetings this year, which offered space for learning and coordination. We opened these spaces up to our wider grantee network for the first time, welcoming HSH grantees and other partners to these invitation-only conversations. We also adapted the format to meet timely needs across our diverse community. For example, the June First Thursday session identified immediate needs leading up to the 2024 election. While we went into that conversation ready to make some rapid response funding available (thanks to the encouragement of our funders), field leaders in the group prioritized longer term, forward-looking strategies to build toward the normalization of pluralism during and beyond a contentious election season. We saw this as an important learning moment—slowing down to listen to the priorities and needs of the ecosystem can help funders align to field leader direction.

## Connecting Ideas: “Together We Stand” Op-Ed Campaign

During that June First Thursday, when coordinating how to respond to a divisive election, members of our network discussed the importance of sharing stories of unity and showing that divisions among Americans are less substantial than the news media typically portrays. That led to [Together We Stand](#), a partnership between Interfaith America and New Pluralists to organize a decentralized op-ed writing campaign building support for connecting across differences. The first phase highlighted high-profile writers, followed by a second phase that featured emerging and local practitioners of pluralism, who received financial support and training to pitch stories to local media outlets. To date, we have engaged more than 45 writers, many of whom have published pieces in *Newsweek*, *Psychology Today*, *Seattle Times*, *America Magazine*, *Deseret*, *Christianity Today*, and *Medium*. This project is an example of the unique role that we can play in the pluralism ecosystem: to provoke needed conversation, identify places to take shared action, quickly deploy funding, and shape a public relations strategy.

## Engaging Funders to Champion Pluralism

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*"[New Pluralists has] allowed us to meet organizations across the country who are focusing on different approaches to building social cohesion and allowed us to meet funders and field leaders who have divergent views and that range the ideological spectrum and that have different strategies to building social cohesion. I would say, it has opened our eyes or widened our knowledge of the area."*  
- New Pluralists Funder

Funders are also eager for opportunities to engage with pluralism, even if they don't currently name it as such. Our Theory of Change Assessment found that funders' participation in the New Pluralists network resulted in

increased proximity to pluralism work happening among different populations, greater definitional clarity around pluralism, and a richer understanding of the different ways to engage. New Pluralists is learning what resonates with diverse supporters and simultaneously impacting the philanthropic landscape by sharing a pluralism lens and making the case for this work.

For instance, New Pluralists members co-chaired the Council on Foundations Building Together Conference in May. Uma's leadership helped shape the conference's overall focus on bridging and overcoming division. **The Council on Foundations shared that Building Together will be the convening's theme every other year moving forward, reflecting how strongly themes of pluralism resonated with both organizers and attendees.** New Pluralists also advised on the agenda for the Democracy Funders Network summit in June, where we designed and participated in two sessions on democratic engagement and democratic imagination.

Finally, at the Next Narrative Summit, convened by BMe, Uma spoke about pluralism as an asset frame. The summit showcased replicable ways that peer philanthropies are raising funds for equitable causes using inspiring and empowering narratives, rather than fear and stigma. Uma emphasized pluralism as a throughline among all the content areas of BMe's field builders, confirming that a pluralism lens is a crucial tool for solving intractable problems; indeed it is "baked into" the asset-based approaches that are working. By leading conversations in spaces where philanthropy already gathers, New Pluralists cross-pollinates ideas and lifts up pluralism as a throughline and principle in well established fields.

## Inspiring Local Philanthropy

**August 2024:** Minnesota's Duluth Superior Area Community Foundation [issued an RFP for its Belonging Fund](#), citing New Pluralists as a key influence.

**September 2024:** Belonging Colorado, co-founded by a New Pluralists funder, launched a cohort of 15 organizations who will collaborate to bring belonging and pluralism to their state. Early feedback from the New Pluralists funder community, including collaborators like the Greater Good Science Center and the National Immigration Council, helped shape the initiative.





# INVESTING RESOURCES

## New investments

After a major round of investment through 2023, New Pluralists' investment activities became more focused in 2024. We invested \$1 million to strengthen the ecosystem, including fully sponsoring [Pluralism in Action](#), funding select Communities of Practice, providing emergency support to organizations experiencing acute financial hardship, and offering travel funds for network members to connect.

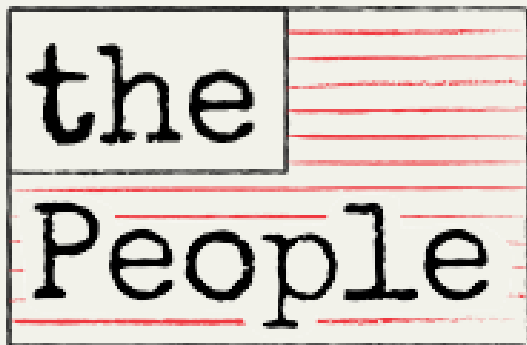
We also invested \$1 million in the “See No Stranger, See No Enemy” [Accelerator Fund](#), developed by Einhorn Collaborative and Stand Together in the aftermath of October 7th, the subsequent war in the Middle East, and the upheavals on American college campuses. The fund distributed nearly \$7 million to 11 projects taking place on college campuses and high schools to help students, faculty, and administrators foster relationships across differences, facilitate difficult discussions, transform conflict, and navigate heated issues of the day.

## Ongoing investments

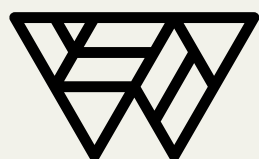
Additionally, recently released evaluation data including the [assessment of the Experimentation and Collaboration Fund](#) (Year 2), as well as the [midpoint evaluation of Healing Starts Here](#), is helping us get a view of the impact of our investments to date.

After interviewing the 32 HSH grantees halfway through their grants, ORS Impact concluded that “the system-level changes outlined in New Pluralists’ theory of change are not only possible but achievable.” Most of the 32 HSH grants had two-year timelines, ending in December 2024. The HSH portfolio was intentionally broad and diverse, representing geographies from neighborhoods to multi-state regions, with an emphasis on right-of-center, Indigenous, and rural traditions. HSH grantees landed on common lessons learned: that strong pluralism work in local communities begins with relationships, is community-led, and requires hosting and holding space. Across the board, grantees reported that, because of the relationships they have established through HSH, more financial resources have been committed to mutually identified priorities and resources are flowing more flexibly. Grantees surfaced key principles of effective local pluralism work: **begin with relationships, follow residents’ lead** in deciding the content and logistics of the work, and **create ample space for community members to build trust through shared experiences**.

Across our grant portfolios, our partners have reported exciting and tangible successes, thanks to our funding. These include:



In New Hampshire, The People hosted a [representative citizen assembly](#), which brought together residents of all stripes to craft recommendations for electoral reform. They crafted 25 proposals for the 2025 legislative session, resulting in four proposals that received wide support. Delegates, volunteers, and legislative representatives are now working together to craft policies that fulfill the spirit of those recommendations.



# WORMFARM INSTITUTE

In Sauk County, Wisconsin, Wormfarm Institute hosted its annual public art-and-enterprise spectacle that attracted thousands and received major [media coverage](#). This was the fruition of a year-long collaboration between local farmers and visiting artists, who hold vastly different worldviews and work in different mediums, but who found fellowship and common ground by celebrating the land and making something beautiful together. The festival set out to surprise and delight (mostly urban) visitors, challenging their assumptions about rural life and reminding them about the ways in which our communities are connected. This project has led to new income streams for farmers, lasting relationships between participants, and a more complex story about rural areas.



# RESETTING *the* TABLE

In Buffalo, New York, Resetting the Table supported an extraordinary group of citizens who came together for a press conference before the election to speak out against political violence. This work launched in the wake of a hate-based grocery store massacre and a lesser-known firebombing of a pro-life pregnancy clinic and has gradually brought together White conservative evangelical and Black progressive leaders impacted by these acts of violence, along with a diverse group of faith and community leaders. A year ago, they weren't open to being in a room together. But after months of skill-building, dialogue, and training, they stood together to call for building a cohesive community across ideological, religious, and racial divides. Melissa Weintraub, executive director of Resetting the Table, shared with us: "They are the most diverse group—ideologically and racially—we've come across in the pluralism ecosystem, and they have come to truly love each other, challenge each other, and work together to build a flourishing community for all."



FUTURE CAUCUS

In Arkansas and Oklahoma, Future Caucus' young lawmakers proposed 38 pieces of bipartisan legislation in 2023 alone. Among the laws enacted was [this policy](#) to eliminate discrimination based on hairstyle or texture. As a result of Future Caucus' work, the largest newspaper in Arkansas published an editorial about how they've seen a culture change toward collaborative lawmaking, indicating that policymakers are shifting their mental models about working across the aisle.

# ORGANIZATION TRANSITION

## Strategic Shifts

As we orient toward our 2030 Strategy, New Pluralists' approach to operations, staffing, and governance is evolving. We are moving from a broad mandate to a focused one—from being responsible for the whole pluralism ecosystem to becoming a catalyst for promising practices to get the support they need to become more durable, adaptable, and scalable. We are shifting from a closed network model, limited to our founding Field Builders, to grantee networks that will be convened in the future around targeted areas. Based on our [strategic framework](#), we will develop targeted RFPs that will serve as the basis of breakthrough campaigns. These campaigns will enable us to influence philanthropy more strategically, bringing funders in through learning experiences and connection to a particular aspect of pluralism. This strategy widens the net and meets people where they are, regardless of their prior exposure to or understanding of pluralism. Finally, we are shifting our governance structure to distribute leadership through committees, and distribute decision-making power among all funders who make multi-year commitments, rather than giving more authority to funders who have committed greater financial resources.

These strategic shifts are the result of a direct practice of pluralism, an opportunity for the team to “walk the walk” of pluralism. One funder told us, “There is real value in... trying to engage in some practices and forums that enable us to actually experience the divergence and debate and shared decision-making amidst disagreement that are hallmarks of pluralism.” As our governing funders come together to make decisions and discuss challenges, they are charged with having difficult conversations across not only political and ideological differences, but also a range of viewpoints and experiences regarding theories of change, grassroots vs. grassroots organizing, evidence-based approaches vs. big bets on new ideas, and the right balance of long-term vs. short-term solutions. New Pluralists is unique in its deliberate heterodoxy; in most philanthropic groups, people in complete or near-complete alignment come together to advance their shared goals and vision. New Pluralists invites people to make progress together towards cohesion and belonging, even across different ideological starting points.

## Plans for 2025

In the final quarter of 2024, following Uma Viswanathan's transition, Interim Executive Director Liz Vogel provided strategic leadership and management to drive towards refinement and approval of the 2030 Strategy. With her experience building relationships in philanthropy, Liz continued expanding the circle of funders who are curious about pluralism and seeking spaces where they can collaborate with others. New Pluralists also began annual planning for 2025, launched system overhauls that can support an expanding set of philanthropic partners, and finalized details for the Pluralism in Action summit and a launch of our refreshed website, both in early 2025.



# Thank You

*Thank you for being part of the New Pluralists community and the pluralism ecosystem.*

*As we meet a national context of rupture and division with a deep belief in the power of pluralism, carried forward by the momentum we've built so far, we are grateful for our partners and their dedication to this work.*

*We look forward to working with you, across our differences, toward a better future.*