



Third Plateau

NEW PLURALISTS

**Early Insights into Strengthening
and Scaling Pluralism Work in America**

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INTRODUCTION



New Pluralists is a collaborative and pooled fund working to advance a culture of pluralism in the United States — one where people of different backgrounds, beliefs, and identities can come together to build a better future.

When it launched in April 2021, New Pluralists' primary partners were a cross-ideological, cross-disciplinary group of 10 funders and a network of 40 organizations and leaders called Field Builders, who represented an exemplary cross-section of the then-nascent pluralism ecosystem. Between 2021 and 2023, New Pluralists worked in deep partnership with this network of founding funders and Field Builders to jointly craft strategies, explore new collaborations, and learn together in the pursuit of advancing pluralism.

In 2022, New Pluralists launched The Network Fund, a set of funds designed to support Field Builders in strengthening and scaling the impact of their diverse strategies and approaches to pluralism work. In addition to the intention to directly support these pluralistic organizations, the application process served as a way for New Pluralists and the broader ecosystem to learn about the different ways practitioners and researchers were thinking about strengthening their diverse impact theories, scaling pluralistic practices, and aiming for transformative change. New Pluralists received 35 applications and recommended approval for 20, totaling \$6,033,400 in recommended grants.

New Pluralists partnered with Third Plateau to conduct a comprehensive review of Network Fund applications. This report contains findings from that review. We hope that it offers readers a glimpse into the different ways to understand, value, and describe the intention and impact of pluralism work that is deeply relational, often long-term, and is crucial for a multi-faith, multi-racial democracy to exist.

pluralism

/ˈploʊərəˌlɪz(ə)m/

worldview

1. A belief that the coexistence of diverse opinions, ways of life, and value systems enriches all members of a society and that all people deserve to be recognized, respected, accepted, and engaged based on their diversity.

practice

1. An invitation to work creatively and collaboratively with the diversity we encounter in life—across race, ethnicity, creed, religion, political affiliation, gender, sexual orientation, culture, socioeconomic status, individual experiences, beliefs, and actions.

Analysis Approach

Third Plateau qualitatively reviewed and coded 35 Network Fund applications. Additionally, we conducted qualitative interviews with two organizations who had not submitted applications. Findings in this report represent learnings from 37 Field Builders in total. In our analysis, we were guided by five priority learning questions, which form the structure for this report:

- **Defining Pluralism:** How do applicants define pluralism? How do they describe their pluralist outcomes of interest? (See Section II [*Defining Pluralism*](#))
- **Approaching Pluralism:** What patterns can we observe in how applicants are approaching pluralism? How are they articulating their approaches? What are the relationships between approaches? (See Section III [*Approaching Pluralism*](#))
- **Articulating Impact:** How do applicants articulate their impacts? How do these impacts relate to one another? (See Section IV [*Articulating Impact*](#))
- **Scaling Pluralism:** How are applicants hoping to scale their efforts and pluralism? What can be learned about scale across applicants? (See Section V [*Scaling Pluralism*](#))
- **Assessing Alignment:** In what ways do applicants' efforts align with New Pluralists' theory of change? In what ways do they diverge? What theories are not represented in New Pluralists' theory of change but are present for applicants? (See Section VI [*Assessing Alignment*](#))
- **Strengthening Impact:** How can New Pluralists strengthen the impact of pluralism? How are applicants strengthening the impact of their work? (See Section VII [*Strengthening Impact*](#))

To address these questions, which help us deepen our understanding of how organizations define, implement, and scale pluralism efforts, our methodology incorporated both inductive and deductive coding to thoroughly analyze the submitted applications and interview responses. We relied on several existing frameworks for thinking about impact and scale. The report is organized around our priority learning questions.

DEFINING PLURALISM:
A SEARCH FOR BELONGING



Overview

On the frontlines of efforts to foster pluralism, applicants are confronting unprecedented levels of polarization and fragmentation. Applicants shared they are observing harmful narratives and disinformation take hold of public discourse. In recent years, they have seen our democracy slipping into extremism and ethnoreligious nationalism. Amidst these mounting crises, they say they are operating against a backdrop of unaffordability, isolation, and loneliness — on top of and in part driven by the COVID-19 pandemic. Sectarian violence feels more probable than not. Authoritarianism never seems more than one election away. And, in this election year, nearly a quarter of applicants specifically named the election as an active threat or challenge to their work. According to applicants, they are up against a swirling tornado of deeply entrenched challenges, yet they are doing their part to transport us and our culture into **the technicolor promise of *belonging*.**

The Promise of Belonging

While applicants were not asked to define “pluralism” explicitly, through inductive coding, we were able to assess their various ways of thinking about the concept. Woven into their narratives, applicants often referenced concepts like empathy, trust, equity, unity, dignity, inclusion, agency, cogeneration, and collaboration as antidotes to the challenges described above. However, one concept emerged above the rest as a focal point for pluralism work: belonging. After identifying this theme, we double-checked word frequencies across the 35 applications submitted. Indeed, “belonging” appeared in 66% (23) of applications, mentioned a total of 253 times. Interestingly, the term “belonging” was mentioned 281% more often than “polarization,” 301% more often than “divides,” and 140% more than “challenges.”

Belonging¹ is deeply interwoven into the fabric of pluralism, as defined by applicants. Through coding, we learned that belonging is seen as essential for creating inclusive, understanding, and equitable communities where every individual feels valued and an integral part of the collective. Applicants highlight belonging as key to combatting societal issues like polarization, extremism, and isolation, suggesting it fosters resilience, empathy, and unity across diverse groups. The concept transcends inclusion, aiming for a profound sense of connection and mutual respect that empowers individuals and communities to engage in constructive dialogue and collaborative problem-solving. Ultimately, belonging is positioned as the cornerstone for building a pluralistic society that celebrates diversity while promoting justice and equity. For most applicants, belonging is an important north star that shapes their approaches to pluralism (as discussed in the next section).

¹ Over Zero and The American Immigration Council (2024). The Belonging Barometer: The State of Belonging in America. Revised ed. <https://www.projectoverzero.org/media-and-publications/belongingbarometer>

APPROACHING PLURALISM:
THE ART OF TOGETHERNESS



Overview

“Togetherness” animated applicants and their approaches to pluralism. The proposals captured a vibrant spirit of collectivity. Across the board, applicants were bringing together their communities across divides, collaborating together to find shared purpose, learning together to build skills in pluralism, influencing together to shape narrative, and understanding *together* the nature of our problems and their solutions. The themes below were identified through inductive coding and emerged from the data upon review. Our aim was to understand the various approaches articulated by applicants. Based on our analysis, applicants’ most common approaches center around:

Learning Together (68%)

Learning was central to the approaches of applicants, reflecting a commitment to embed the skills and values of pluralism within the fabric of our communities and institutions. The majority of applicants are actively cultivating spaces where learning sparks transformation — where citizen leaders are equipped with tools for promoting belonging, empathy, collaboration, and action. Their approach integrates a blend of skill-building programming, civic education curricula, professional development initiatives, communities of practice, and collaborative learning experiences. Roughly 68% (25) of applicants described one or more aspects of their approach within this vein. These are the guides of pluralism who provide education and develop the knowledge and skills of individuals and communities.

Influencing Together (73%)

Applicants were heavily invested in influencing and shaping the landscape of pluralism through storytelling, narrative building, and strategic communications. Through various forms of media, these storytellers are intentionally crafting and disseminating messages designed to foster belonging, understanding, and collaborative action. Some applicants are creating and amplifying stories to help build a bigger “we,” while others are producing accessible multimedia resources to democratize knowledge on bridge-building. To influence the pluralism ecosystem and public, many others are working to develop various toolkits — packaging lessons learned, research, or communications strategies for others to apply. Of applicants, 73% (27) described one or more aspects of their approach in this manner.

Bringing Together (51%)

Bringing together people has been central to the development of the pluralism ecosystem. For many applicants, it remains an important component of their work. These weavers are building opportunities for contact through digitally-enabled chats, in-person dialogues, and intentional convenings. Weaving together people, leaders, organizations, and communities, several applicants are serving as vital anchor partners, expanding the relating capacity of the system. Connecting people, bringing them together to build trusting relationships, remains a priority for a large subset of applicants. Roughly 51% (19) of applicants described one or more aspects of their approach within this frame.

Collaborating Together (32%)

Applicants are nurturing deep collaboration in their work, from engaging the ecosystem to develop a nonpartisan policy agenda to advance pluralism, to co-designing shared digital infrastructure with community stewards, engaging in participatory action research, and facilitating collaborative projects between generations. Roughly 32% (12) of applicants expressed project elements within this sphere of collaborative activity.

Understanding Together (22%)

A dedicated cohort of applicants are blazing a path to collective understanding through research. These scholars, scientists, and researchers are using their tools to refine evaluation methodologies, develop new indexes to track dignity indicators or monitor the health of democracy, translate research into new interventions, listen to social media environments, or build research capacity within institutions. These applicants often play the role of experimenter within the pluralism ecosystem, developing new knowledge that informs new tactics and achieves new impacts for the system. Roughly 22% (8) of applicants named project elements falling within this frame.

Holding Together (3%)

A single proposal stands apart from the rest in its work of *holding together* the place-based network of pluralists it has helped germinate. In a previous phase of work, this applicant planted seeds of pluralism in Wilkes County, North Carolina. Moving beyond initial seeding and germinating, the applicant is working to scale deep within place and hold together the progress they've made while simultaneously building the skills, talent, and muscles for an eventual handover. By training hyperlocal leaders, identifying local anchor partner organizations, and transferring essential skills, they aim to ensure the sustainability of their efforts. The absence of this explicit focus among other applicants begs the question: *What is the impact of achieving ignition in communities if organizations fail to build the capacity of hyperlocal actors to sustain pluralism efforts in the long term?*

ARTICULATING IMPACT:
FROM THE ROOTS UP



Overview

Transformative culture change is the work — this is the major takeaway from our analysis of applicants' intended impacts. Applicants are prioritizing the reshaping of narratives, minds, and the foundational roots of society, eschewing traditional policy and regime shifts for deeper cultural transformation. In our analysis, we leveraged two existing frameworks, The Systems Sanctuary's *Power Shift Framework* and FSG's *Six Conditions of Systems Change*, to evaluate the impacts of applicants. Through these lenses, we sought to identify patterns, overlaps, and potential synergies among applicants' impacts. The following presents our findings using each framework.

The Power Shift Framework

The Power Shift Framework is a guiding tool to situate work within the broader ecosystem of change. It describes change across four levels:

- **Landscape:** Evolving through shifts in narrative, culture, and values to foster conditions for change.
- **Regime:** Formalizing new structures, policies, and institutions in support of change.
- **Niches of Innovation:** Experimenting with small-scale initiatives to test new approaches.
- **Deep Roots System:** Healing through the invisible yet critical work of personal change, empowerment, and relationship building.

NETWORK FUND APPLICATIONS BY LEVEL OF SYSTEMS STRATEGIES

78% LANDSCAPE
Narratives, Culture, Values

11% REGIME Systems, Structures, Policy

35% NICHES OF INNOVATION
Innovations, New Models, Local Networks

57% DEEP ROOTS SYSTEM
Healing, Grassroots, Movements, Personal Change

Overall, using the *The Power Shift Framework*, we found applicants articulating their impacts across all levels of systems, depicted in the visual on the previous page. The majority of organizations described at least one strategy around influencing the landscape of pluralism, while nearly half outlined at least one strategy around deep roots system. The least commonly articulated strategies were around regime change. Below are the findings by each level of *The Power Shift Framework*.

Landscape (78%)

The synthesis of findings across 29 applicants (78%) targeting landscape-level impacts highlights a collective endeavor to reframe the cultural narrative towards pluralism and interconnectedness. A shared strategy among these entities is the fusion of inclusive messaging with public storytelling to challenge prevailing misconceptions and promote a culture of belonging. Some applicants also highlighted their work in amplifying youth and marginalized voices in the process of shaping a new societal ethos that values diversity and collectivity. These organizations are deploying strategies to amplify the surround sound of pro-pluralism values and narratives.

Regime (11%)

Only 4 of 37 applicants (11%) reviewed articulated a strategy of shifting regimes. One applicant aims to shape institutions and move policies by developing leaders and training them on asset-framing. Another proposed a collaborative effort among members of the ecosystem to develop a policy agenda for pluralism. Given that only a handful of organizations have articulated strategies aimed at producing structural and policy change, we must ask: *Is this because New Pluralists and its partners have not sufficiently emphasized the importance of such strategies in their grantmaking? Are funders signaling a preference for different approaches? Or are applicants themselves not targeting change at this level—and if so, what are the deterrents? Are the challenges of implementing structural change within the pluralism ecosystem perceived as too daunting, or is the ecosystem still in the process of fully understanding what enables or hinders pluralism, making it difficult to organize around structural change?*

Niches of Innovation (35%)

Across 13 organizations (35%), we observed a collective embrace of innovation aimed at enhancing pluralism. These initiatives range from the development of digital platforms and spaces that foster civic engagement to deploying real-time dashboards for monitoring the democratic health of America. Collectively, these organizations are working on a variety of novel models, resources, and networks to find new pathways to pluralism that had been previously unexplored.

Deep Roots System (57%)

Insights generated from 21 applications (57%) reveal a concerted effort to cultivate healing, grassroots movements, and personal transformation towards a more pluralistic culture. These applicants are training public sector leaders to change hearts, creating educational frameworks to shape minds, and bridging divides between people. From empowering students with civics education to engaging faith communities in bipartisan dialogue, these organizations focus on the roots systems that support a healthy pluralism movement.

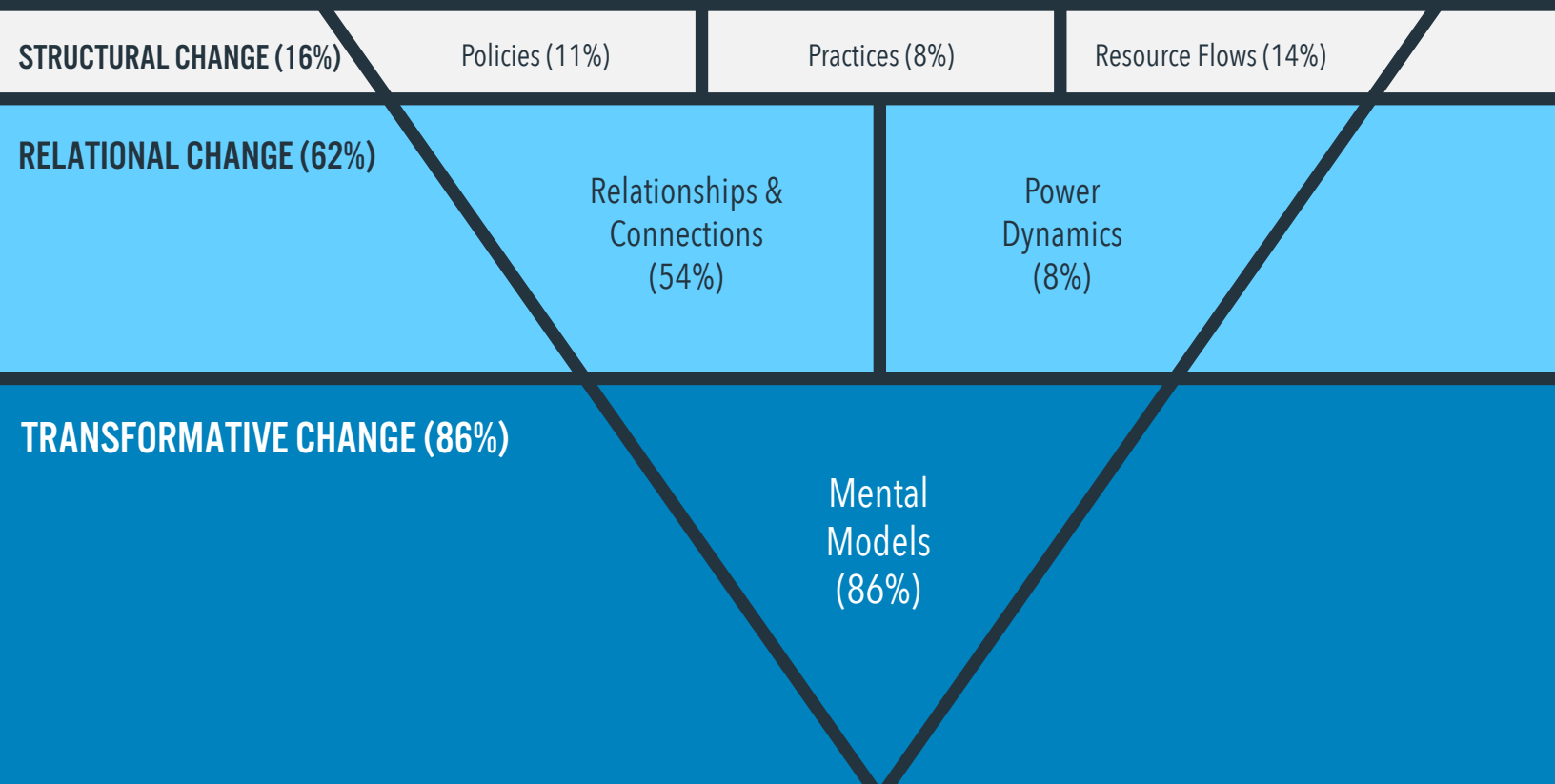
Six Conditions of Systems Change

We also analyzed applications using FSG's Six Conditions of Systems Change framework. This inverted-triangle framework is designed to provide a comprehensive approach to understanding and effecting lasting systemic change. While the Power Shift Framework situates work within broader ecosystem levels, the Six Conditions of Systems Change framework focuses on the specific factors that drive lasting change within these levels. It comprises six critical conditions:

- **Policies:** The guidelines and rules that shape behavior within a system.
- **Practices:** The specific actions and strategies employed to effect change.
- **Resource Flows:** The movement and distribution of assets and resources within a system.
- **Relationships & Connections:** The quality and nature of interactions among system participants.
- **Power Dynamics:** The distribution of influence and authority among individuals in a system.
- **Mental Models:** The underlying beliefs and assumptions that influence behaviors and decisions.

Overall, among reviewed applications, we observed the most focus on transformative change conditions (i.e., Mental Models) and relational change conditions (i.e., Relationships & Connections, Power Dynamics), depicted in the visual below. In our analysis, very few applicants shared a focus on structural change conditions (i.e., Policies, Practices, Resource Flows), with most applicants focused on shifting mental models, narrative systems, and relationships that underpin the status quo. Most applicants circled around two key conditions for systems change: Mental Models and Relationships & Connections.

NETWORK FUND APPLICATIONS BY TYPE OF SYSTEMS CHANGE CONDITIONS



Mental Models (86%)

Across 32 applicants (86%), there is a common recognition of the transformative power of narratives and storytelling in shifting public perceptions and fostering a more inclusive, pluralistic society. These initiatives emphasize the importance of voice — diverse voices — to challenge monocultural biases and elevate omnicultural perspectives. These organizations are working on narratives of belonging, deepening pluralist mindsets, defining American identity, and countering entrenched exclusionary attitudes. By focusing on knowledge production, narrative change, and democratic skills development, many applicants aim to shift mental models that enable transformative and other forms of change.

Relationships & Connections (54%)

Across 20 applicants (54%), there was a strong emphasis on fostering meaningful relationships and building robust connections within and across communities. Initiatives focus on collaborative community-building, where co-design processes and partnerships are key to creating inclusive spaces that reflect collective wisdom. These applicants prioritized leadership development, especially equipping leaders to drive community-focused change and fostering networks that encourage cross-group collaboration. Through efforts like these, a large subset of applicants are aiming to nurture a culture of pluralism through relationships and collective action towards common goals.

Policies (11%), Practices (8%), Resource Flows (14%), and Power Dynamics (8%)

While most applicants emphasized impacts on Mental Models (86%) and Relationships & Connections (54%), a smaller subset highlighted changes in other systemic conditions: Policies, Practices, Resource Flows, and Power Dynamics. These organizations described efforts to shift power dynamics in the pluralism field from top-down to bottom-up, develop asset-based campaigns to pass bipartisan voting rights legislation, and encourage organizations to adopt new institutional practices and operating principles. Although there was less emphasis on these outcomes, some applicants still expressed a desire to transform these conditions.

Discussion

This analysis using the *Six Conditions of Systems Change* aligns with the findings from the *Power Shift Framework*. Applicants have clearly bought into the importance of narrative change, landscape-shifting efforts. However, both frameworks reveal a potential gap: Regimes and Structural Change. The *Six Conditions of Systems Change* framework was initially developed based on the realization that policy changes were insufficient for generating positive long-term outcomes. These findings could suggest a need for a more balanced approach to targeting the conditions that stagnate problems such as toxic polarization, segregation, dehumanization, and political violence, among other issues. Transforming mental models and relationships *alone* is likely insufficient for generating positive long-term outcomes. It leaves us with a question: *What are the underlying factors for why this may be the case? Do regimes and structure change merit more attention from New Pluralists and others in the pluralism ecosystem?*

**SCALING PLURALISM:
BUILDING UP AND OUT**

Overview

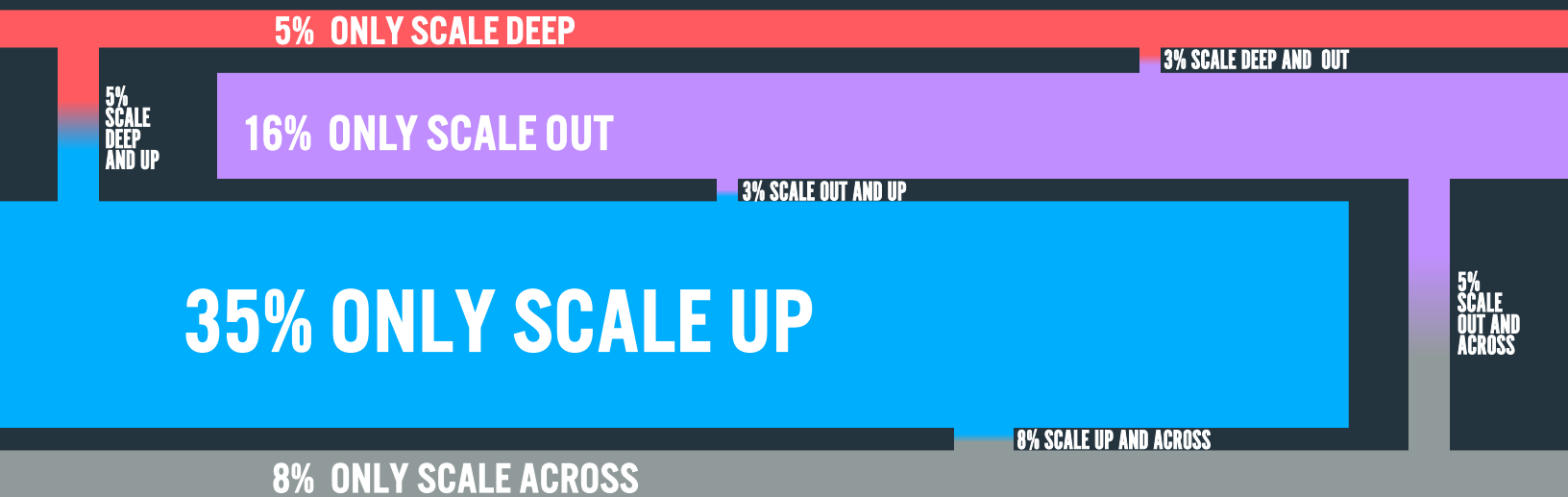
Our analysis uncovers a rich tapestry of scaling strategies among applicants, with a notable lean towards scaling up (35%) as the predominant model. This focus on geographic and demographic expansion underscores a traditional approach to scaling impact. However, the diversity in strategies – ranging from scaling out (16%) to more collaborative scaling across (8%) and the depth-oriented scaling deep (5%) – highlights a critical insight: While the drive remains strong to scale up, there's an emerging recognition of the value in diversifying approaches to scale and deepening impacts. Leveraging a broader spectrum of scaling models could enrich the ecosystem, potentially leading to more nuanced and transformative social impact.

Models of Scaling Impact

To evaluate models of scale, we relied on a framework of scaling social impact developed by Thierry Sibieude and Jérôme Schatzman in 2022. The framework consists of four types of scale:

- **Scale Up:** Expanding a project by spreading it to new areas or reaching more people where it already exists. Involves the original organization expanding its reach and operation to serve more people directly. *Example: An organization expands its dialogue program into a new county.*
- **Scale Out:** Adding different kinds of activities, services or programs. *Example: An organization launches a new learning community that they steward within their networks.*
- **Scale Deep:** Improving how well a project serves its current users by making operations more impactful. *Example: A program enhances its existing offerings by incorporating immersive retreats, interactive webinars, and personal support sessions to deepen participant engagement.*
- **Scale Across:** Sharing what works with other groups or organizations who possess the operations and infrastructure to apply and adapt in their contexts. Distinguished from *Scaling Up* by its reliance on *other organizations* to take the successful model and apply it in their own context. *Example: An organization with a developed design framework shares with other organizations who can adopt within their offerings and contexts.*

NETWORK FUND APPLICATIONS BY MODELS OF SCALE



Overall, applicants articulated a diverse, often dual-pronged approach to scaling, as depicted in the diagram on the previous page. While it is common for organizations to scale up their efforts across more geographies or constituencies, applicants are pursuing alternatives. Below is a summary of findings for each model of scale.

Scaling Up (51%)

Most commonly, we observed applicants scaling up their work. Many plan to expand into more geographies, replicate their own work with more participants, or modify existing programming for sectors or markets that have previously been untapped. This remains the most popular model for scaling impact among applicants. Among applicants, 19 applicants (51%) articulated at least one strategy tied to scaling up; 13 applicants (35%) are relying solely on the scale up model.

Scaling Out (27%)

We also observed many applicants scaling out their work. Many applicants shared that their organizations were creating new content formats, new resources, new courses, and new tools. For many, scaling out is enabling them to offer more types of things to their constituents, broadening the scope of what they are able to offer their respective communities and the pluralism ecosystem, more broadly. We found that 10 applicants (27%) articulated at least one strategy tied to scaling out; 6 applicants (16%) are relying solely on the scale out model.

Scaling Across (22%)

Nearly a quarter of applicants are working to scale across organizations. Applicants described embedding their design patterns and tools across multiple external digital platforms, developing shared leadership curriculum with other organizations with similar expertise, or integrating bridging infrastructure so two organizations could achieve greater impacts together than what could be achieved individually. Overall, scaling across was common among applicants. Of applicants, 22% (8) articulated at least one strategy tied to scaling across; 8% (3) are relying solely on the scale across model.

Scaling Deep (14%)

To a lesser degree, applicants named an interest in scaling *deep*, deepening engagement within existing initiatives and activities. We found that 5 applicants (14%) articulated at least one strategy tied to scaling deep; just 2 applicants (5%) are relying solely on the scale deep model. While many applicants are engaged in impacting the deep roots system, this finding raises the question: *How do we ensure those deep roots grow deep enough?*

ASSESSING ALIGNMENT:
OUR THEORY OF CHANGE



Overview

In 2022, New Pluralists co-created a [theory of change](#) with its broader network of Field Builders, funders, and ORS Impact (ORS), its learning and evaluation partner. The theory of change outlines the ultimate impact that New Pluralists — along with other actors in the ecosystem — is working toward through three approaches: 1) strengthening and growing the pluralism ecosystem, 2) supporting pluralism in practice, and 3) deepening pluralist mindsets. It serves as a foundation for New Pluralists to evaluate its impact and reflect on its strategy and role within the broader ecosystem. Nearly all applicants (97%) demonstrated alignment with at least one facet of New Pluralists' theory of change. Applicants were asked which outcomes in this theory of change their work contributes to. Our analysis extended beyond direct responses to include a thorough review and coding of each application, ensuring a deeper validation of alignment with New Pluralists' outcomes. Overall, a supermajority of applicants were aligned with New Pluralists' approaches of deepening pluralist mindsets and supporting pluralism in practice. Just under a majority indicated that their efforts might strengthen and grow the pluralism ecosystem. Deconstructing New Pluralists' theory of change by approach, below is a breakdown of applicant alignment.

NETWORK FUND APPLICATIONS BY NEW PLURALISTS' THEORY OF CHANGE APPROACHES



Deepen Pluralist Mindsets (68%)

Advancing stories and narrative frames nurtures pluralism within the public imagination and institutions. This approach relies on the transformative power of storytelling to change hearts and minds. Our findings reveal that many applicants, in their own ways, are pursuing similar tactics. Just over two-third of applicants (68%, or 25) indicated that they were working in ways or pursuing outcomes that would fit within this approach.

Applicants are working to equip frontline democracy practitioners with tools to challenge monocultural narratives, designing narrative circles to share and produce new ways of knowing pluralism, and building on their storytelling initiatives to reshape perceptions of American identity. Efforts like these highlight the strategic and collective push towards narrative change, which many applicants demonstrate in their proposals. Many applicants articulated alignment with the short-term outcome around strengthening skills and capacity. Fewer articulated alignment with the mid- and short-term outcomes around building muscles within narrative systems and greater salience of pluralism frames.

Support Pluralism in Practice (68%)

Supporting Pluralism in Practice embodies the collective commitment to not just envision but actualize a pluralistic society at the grassroots level. This strategic pillar is vividly brought to life as applicants employ a myriad of tactics to foster environments where pluralistic values are actively practiced. From our analysis, a substantial portion of applicants (68%, or 25) prioritize actions aimed at embedding these practices within communities. These efforts highlight a robust push towards empowering individuals and communities to embrace and enact pluralism, focusing on enhancing awareness, skills, and the capacity for collaborative problem-solving across diverse groups.

The applications also reveal a dynamic approach to nurturing pluralism, from equipping community members with the understanding and tools to engage across differences, to facilitating dialogue that bridges divides and fosters mutual respect. The initiatives underscore a theory of hands-on pluralism, where creating and participating in pluralistic practices catalyzes shifts in both individual behaviors and community norms. Through efforts like these, applicants are laying the ground strategy for pluralism, building inspiration, skills, and a collective capacity for it within place.

Strengthen and Grow the Pluralism Ecosystem (49%)

Strengthening and growing the pluralism ecosystem appears to be a priority among many applicants, aligning with New Pluralists' theory of change. This work emphasizes the cultivation of a credible, diverse, and well-connected ecosystem. Close to half of applicants (49%, or 18) embraced this approach, reflecting a shared commitment to building knowledge, alignment, and collaborative pathways among ecosystem actors.

Applicants detailed various approaches to ecosystem building. Some applicants are working to share research frameworks or best practices across the ecosystem, while others are bringing new organizations in adjacent spaces into the pluralism fold or energizing existing ecosystems (e.g., faith organizing).

STRENGTHENING IMPACT:
SUPPORT AND CAPACITY



Overview

To strengthen the impact of pluralism, applicants identified several critical areas that, when resourced, have the potential to enhance their initiatives and the work of the ecosystem. Applicants expressed a need for increased funding and resources for staffing, measurement and evaluation, communications and marketing, and collaboration and relationship-building. In making these investments, New Pluralists has an opportunity to bolster the capacity and efficacy of the ecosystem.

Staffing

Staffing is consistently a limiting factor for nonprofits to realize their desired impacts. Applicants articulated a clear need for expanded staffing as a means to deepen their impact — many proposing to use the funds from Network Fund grants to do so. They recognize that scaling their initiatives, maintaining robust programs, and pursuing new opportunities depend on securing sustainable financial resources to invest in dedicated personnel.

Measurement and Evaluation

Many applicants are thinking very critically about the importance of measurement, evaluation, and research capacity in their efforts. By developing monitoring and evaluation capabilities, investing in internal goal tracking, and/or capturing more data that might inform strategy, applicants are suggesting that they will be able to have more impact. Strengthening this aspect of work is crucial for demonstrating efficacy, optimizing strategies, and ensuring fidelity — as well as for making a case for ongoing funding.

Communications and Narrative Capacity

To increase the reach and resonance of the ecosystem, many applicants are looking to strengthen their communications, marketing, and narrative capacities. This involves not only the expansion of their teams to include marketing experts but also the development of marketing plans and brands that align with their strategic goals. Many applicants named this as a focus for strengthening their reach and impact.

Weaving and Relating Capacity

Applicants underscore the importance of fostering a collaborative network that connects more individuals and organizations that are engaged in pluralism. They note that when strong networks share best practices, learn from each other, and foster deep trust, the ecosystem can be more collaborative and influential. Encouraging radical cooperation, identifying opportunities for collective learning, and building collaboration capacity are strategic imperatives, according to applicants.

CONCLUSION



In this report, we have explored the strategies, approaches, and impacts of Network Fund applicants, highlighting their deep commitments to pluralism. The findings showcase a clear dedication to building a society and culture that value diversity and collaboration and that honor human dignity. However, this exploration raises critical questions that merit further discussion by New Pluralists and its partners:

- How should the pluralism ecosystem think about and honor the dialectical relationship between culture and structure?
- What conditions might be holding the problems the ecosystem aims to disrupt in place? Do any of these conditions merit more attention?
- Amidst a clear effort among applicants to broaden the scope and visibility of their work, what role should New Pluralists play in ensuring the same level of intentionality is applied to sustaining and deepening these initiatives?
- How can the field adopt a more expansive approach to scaling?