MAY 2025

Healing Starts Here

GRANT PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT

NEW PLURALISTS

ORSIMPACT

Table of Contents

Introduction

New Pluralists is a collaborative and pooled fund working to advance a culture of pluralism in the United States, where people of different backgrounds, beliefs, and life experiences can come together to build a better future. **Pluralism is both a worldview and a practice.** As a worldview, pluralism is the belief that society is enriched by varied opinions, ways of life, and value systems and that all people deserve to be recognized, respected, accepted, and engaged based on that diversity. As a practice, pluralism invites us to work creatively and collaboratively with the differences we encounter in life.[1]

As New Pluralists' evaluation and learning partner, ORS Impact (ORS) works to evaluate their grantmaking to understand where progress has been made toward advancing pluralism in the United States and how grantees contribute to that goal.

This report focuses on New Pluralists' Healing Starts Here (HSH) portfolio, which supported locally led initiatives to create communities where all people belong and can contribute to public life.[2] This report summarizes the progress and learnings from the two-year HSH initiative. Evaluation findings are divided into three sections:

The ***what***	The ***so what***	The ***now what***
An overview of the strategic intent behind the grantmaking portfolio **1**	An exploration of how this investment in place-based projects made a difference in local communities **2**	Insights that can inform future pluralism work **3**

This report is meant to surface insights to those directly involved in the HSH program, including grantees and New Pluralists staff. We also hope our reflections and findings will be helpful to donors and funders seeking to improve pluralism, democracy, and civic life in America.

Methodology and Data Sources

The findings in this report are primarily based on two sets of interviews with grantee organizations. Previously, ORS evaluated the portfolio to understand progress halfway through the grant period, which we summarized in the *Insights from Year One* report. This report also integrates stories of impact gathered through data collection for the Year One report. The second round of interviews occurred at the end of the grant period, with 33 interviews with grantee organizations. Interviews with ORS for this evaluative effort served as the final report for grantees. ORS leveraged the data surfaced in these interviews and other materials grantees may have created during the grant life cycle to describe progress and evidence of change. This report is the summative evaluation report for the portfolio.

In alignment with the principles of trust-based philanthropy, New Pluralists allows grantees to determine the type of data collection processes best suited for their organization's capacity, resources, and individual learning needs (rather than setting standardized indicators or measurement practices).

1 These differences include race, ethnicity, creed, religion, political opinions, gender, sexual orientation, culture, socioeconomic status, individual experiences, beliefs, and more.

2 For a full list of projects and their descriptions, see Appendix B.

The *What* of Healing Starts Here

Portfolio Design

Through Healing Starts Here, New Pluralists invested $10 million in local, place-based solutions that foster pluralism. Grantees supported through the portfolio have deep relationships in their local communities. They are working to address forces of division to create communities where everyone can experience trust, respect, and belonging.[3] The investment in HSH was created to recognize that local communities are working in myriad ways to address social division and that bottom-up, community-centered approaches are critical for creating durable cultural change.

This grant portfolio was designed to address three observations raised by practitioners and researchers working on pluralism:

1. The concept of pluralism can feel abstract or overly intellectual to people outside this field. Local work is much easier to understand and shows how pluralism makes a difference in the quality of people's lives.

2. Changing culture is long-term, generational work, and norms and behaviors can be influenced during rupture, reversal, and reflection. HSH set out to support projects that are responding to something that is changing in their context in the here and now—such as worsening economic conditions, an influx of new residents, or a contentious school board meeting—and are using that event as an opportunity to transform the dynamics in their communities and create a deeper commitment to pluralism.

3. Creating a culture of belonging requires working across national, regional, and local strategies. When HSH launched in 2022, most philanthropic funding for pluralism flowed to national programs and networks. To balance this, New Pluralists were advised to support grassroots and locally led initiatives that center residents' vision, goals, and agency. In some cases, that might be a community inviting a national organization to adapt their program to their local context or co-creating a program together. In other cases, it might be a project that is led by a democratically governed community organization that is of, by, and for residents.

The portfolio is intentionally broad and diverse. The 32 grantees span 27 states, Puerto Rico, and Washington, DC. They use a variety of strategies and disciplines and work at various levels—from specific neighborhoods to multistate regions. Recognizing that particular perspectives are underrepresented in the professionalized pluralism ecosystem, New Pluralists emphasize selecting grantees working from right-of-center, Indigenous, and rural experiences and traditions. New Pluralists deliberately funded such a spread of organizations to showcase local pluralism efforts in practice across many different cultures, places, and contexts.

In addition, New Pluralists offered some additional programmatic support that responded to common needs raised by local pluralism leaders, including a desire for camaraderie and more validation of (and trust in) their relational approach to social

3 For more information on this investment, see Healing Starts Here RFP: New Pluralists' First Major Public Investment in the Field.

change. Grantees in the HSH portfolio were invited to participate in a learning cohort with one another. The cohort met eight times in 2023 and 2024 in two-hour Zoom meetings, plus a three-day in-person retreat in New Mexico in May 2024. New Pluralists offered regular meetings and opportunities to do the following:

- Build community and relationships with people who do similar work.
- Make sense of current trends, opportunities, and challenges for our shared mission of strengthening pluralism in the United States.
- Build momentum and strengthen the voices of people working on pluralism.

Previously, ORS evaluated the portfolio to understand progress halfway through the grant period, which we summarized in the Insights from Year One report. This report also integrates stories of impact gathered through data collection for the Year One report; it is the portfolio's summative evaluation report.

Expected Outcomes

Over the course of 10 years, New Pluralists is building a culture of belonging and respect in the United States—one where more individuals, communities, and institutions see pluralism as a legitimate and effective way of being and doing, treat each other with concern and care across difference, and are better able to solve problems that threaten their own and each other's value and safety. This program was designed to contribute to the following outcomes:

- **People have greater inspiration, skills, and capacity to practice pluralism.** Community members of all ages are aware of what a vibrant, functioning pluralistic community looks and feels like. They are equipped with the skills and practices to live alongside and create solutions across dimensions of difference. They experience increased connection and trust between individuals.
- **People adopt different, and importantly pluralistic, behaviors.** Diverse community members interact with increasing ease, fluency, and frequency, even in moments of conflict or scarcity. They share time and resources to help each other despite their differences. They see and act upon opportunities to work together toward shared goals.
- **People feel an increased sense of belonging and agency to shift community norms and perceptions.** Diverse groups of community members increasingly address community-level social issues with pluralistic practices. Community members feel increased confidence in their community and its capacity to resolve conflict, solve problems, and make decisions.

The goal is that more individuals, communities, and institutions see pluralism as a legitimate and effective way of being and doing, treat each other with concern and care across difference, and are better able to solve problems that threaten their own and each other's value and safety in the name of creating a culture of respect and belonging in the United States.

While all HSH projects aimed to make progress toward these outcomes, no two grantees went about these goals in the same way. In interviews for the Year One report, ORS asked grantees to describe the goals of their work funded through the HSH grant. Grantees' theories of change (TOCs) included the following:

- **Collective action on issues relevant to their community:** Positing that building relationships and social cohesion is possible when community members work toward a common purpose
- **Contact theory:** Positing that exposure to difference would increase empathy, undo stereotypes, and make it more likely that people would cooperate
- **Trauma-informed approach:** Positing that individual healing allows community members to move forward into healthy relationships with one another collectively
- **Participatory democracy and reform:** Positing that existing institutions have alienating constructs and that the more people can be brought into alternative spaces to work toward democracy, the more pluralistic those institutions and communities can become
- **Building pluralistic skill sets with community members:** Positing that living in diverse communities is a chosen state that runs counter to our cognitive or cultural wiring and that an intervention in the form of training in pluralistic practices can push us to a more pluralistic society
- **Coalition building:** Positing that community members need to work toward movements that promote democracy and affirm the fundamental humanity, dignity, and worth of all[4]

One of the assumptions for New Pluralists' TOC states: ***"The strategies that New Pluralists work on are mutually reinforcing. … The work to develop an ecosystem and influence philanthropy is both in service of the catalytic culture change work and informed by that work. The work to deepen mindsets and practice pluralism will provide proof points for ecosystem actors to better contextualize their work together. At the same time, ecosystem actors will provide support to the culture change work happening in communities, help surface learnings that others in the ecosystem might benefit from, and aggregate/share those learnings more broadly."***

- Grants in the HSH portfolio aligned with the "Support Pluralism in Practice" approach in the New Pluralists TOC. Through our interviews, we also saw alignment with the "Deepen Pluralist Mindsets" approach in the TOC.
- Pluralism work is not siloed, and a strong interplay exists between the different approaches outlined in the TOC. The projects that New Pluralists chooses to support show an understanding that this interplay is central to pluralism work. To strengthen outcomes from investments, New Pluralists may consider a co-funding approach to grantmaking in which the expected outcomes for grants include the three approaches in the TOC and are not siloed.

4 New Pluralists Healing Starts Here Round 2 Strategy and Learning Memo

The *So What* of Healing Starts Here

We uncovered valuable insights from our exploration of the HSH portfolio, revealing how grantees navigate the nuanced landscape of locally led pluralism work, including signals of progress, catalysts, and barriers to that progress. Through our analysis, we discovered significant progress across FSG's six conditions of systems change, revealing how grantees are creating meaningful community transformation. Nearly all grantees successfully challenged existing mental models, built cross-community relationships, and implemented innovative practices that shifted power dynamics. This section highlights key strategies and activities that led to organizations' impact and progress while implementing place-based pluralism initiatives. We offer a comprehensive picture of how building community across difference directly contributes to systems change.

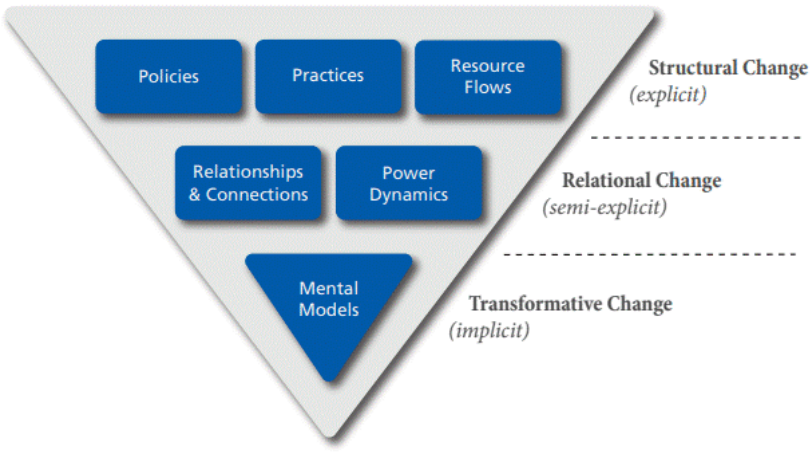
Signs of Progress

Understanding progress in pluralism work presents unique challenges. Unlike quantitative programs with clear metrics, the relational nature of pluralism—building bridges across difference, fostering empathy, and creating space for diverse perspectives—often eludes traditional measurement approaches. Yet these "soft" outcomes are foundational to meaningful systems change.

We chose to apply FSG's six conditions of systems change framework (see **Figure 1**) to analyze grantee progress because it acknowledges both the visible and invisible dimensions of transformation. This framework helps illuminate how seemingly intangible work—shifting relationships, mental models, and power dynamics—creates the essential groundwork for more visible structural changes like policy reform or resource redistribution.

By mapping grantee accomplishments to this framework, we can better understand how building community across difference and sustaining diverse coalitions directly contributes to transformative, lasting results. The framework helps counter the common skepticism that relational, hearts-and-minds work is less impactful than more tangible interventions.

Figure 1. FSG's Six Conditions of Systems Change[5]



All grantees could identify progress across multiple conditions of systems change.[6] Their examples demonstrate both instances where pluralism was the ultimate goal (such as shifting mental models about the "other") and where pluralism served as the means to achieve broader societal objectives (such as policy change).

5 See Six Conditions of Systems Change.

6 Many grantees saw progress across multiple conditions and are included in all relevant counts.

Evaluator Observations

The six conditions are inextricably linked and reinforce one another. Often, progress in one condition leads to progress in another, and they each play a unique role in driving systemic change. Grantees frequently pointed to one condition that they saw as most important, describing that condition as the starting point or foundation for progress in others. The foundational condition varied from one project to another, showing that although the overall framework is consistent, how it is put into practice depends on local context, organizational values, and priorities. Some specific examples of the relationship between different conditions include the following:

- Creating and implementing new practices is closely linked to challenging existing mental models or introducing new ones. Together, they suggest that innovation in methods and a shift in underlying beliefs are essential to create new ways of being (more on this in the Opportunities for Pluralism section).
- Building relationships and connections is another important condition that supports both influencing policy and the evolution of mental models. Strong, quality connections among pluralist actors with diverse histories and viewpoints provide the foundation to influence policies responsive to community needs and desires. The development of these tighter relationships and networks not only facilitates the sharing of innovative ideas but also creates collective momentum to drive policy reform, bridging the gap between grassroots initiatives and institutional change.
- Additionally, projects that showed evidence of increasing or diversifying resource flows often also saw progress in shifting existing power dynamics. Restructuring traditional funding and resource revenues allows stakeholders to create and participate in a more equitable system.

All grants were aligned with at least one of the conditions in the FSG framework. Most projects clustered around work to challenge existing mental models or introduce new ones, building relationships and connections, and creating and implementing new practices. As mentioned earlier, the conditions are interlinked, so projects that showed progress on one condition, more often than not, saw progress in others as well.

The HSH grant portfolio successfully met its goals of promoting progress toward pluralism in local communities. The summarized evidence shows meaningful progress from individual HSH projects across all six conditions in FSG's framework, validating New Pluralists' selection of projects and confirming that the portfolio successfully advanced locally led pluralism work. This final assessment showed growing progress in each area compared to findings from the Year One report, supporting the idea that locally led pluralism work takes time to show results. This positive trend suggests that if grantees keep working on these projects, they could have an even greater impact, as many noted.

Ripple effects of progress from grantee projects cannot always be directly tied to New Pluralists' investments. ORS used strict criteria to assess progress based on FSG's framework. We looked for clear signs—what grantees heard, saw, or read—that showed change and asked grantees how the New Pluralists grant contributed. Only outcomes clearly linked to the funding were included in the summaries. While this method helped show the impact of New Pluralists' investments, it also had limits because systems change is complex, and progress does not always fit neatly into separate categories. Some additional signs of progress were left out to stay focused on understanding the specific role of philanthropic funding in locally led pluralism efforts.

Strategic support and collaborative frameworks can help grantees better measure and describe the impact of their work. In addition to understanding progress, ORS sought to understand how grantees measure and track progress. Appendix A provides more detail on grantees' areas of inquiry, methods for gathering data, and underlying frameworks, as well as what makes measuring impact difficult. Some grantees (n=4) explained that even with data in hand, making sense of and effectively translating the impact of their work was not easy. Given this, New Pluralists and other funders have the potential to provide strategic support to grantees in two key areas:

- Developing measurement approaches that align with individual organizational capacities
- Collaboratively defining what success and progress look like at both the project and field levels

Conversations with grantees indicate that frameworks like those from FSG offer valuable conceptual clarity. Tools such as the Social Cohesion Impact Measurement tool provide additional support in demystifying evidence collection. The goal would be to offer resources that help grantees articulate their impacts more comprehensively without creating undue administrative burden. New Pluralists is well-positioned to thoughtfully explore this balance, providing measurement support that enhances understanding while preserving the flexibility central to its philanthropic approach. The key will be creating supportive, non-prescriptive mechanisms that help grantees more robustly tell their impact stories.

Challenging Existing Mental Models or Introducing New Ones

Nearly all HSH grantees challenged people's existing mental models or introduced new ones to help people productively connect across lines of difference (n=30). According to FSG, mental models are *"habits of thought and deeply held beliefs and assumptions that influence how we think, what we do, and how we talk."* Changes in this condition looked like the following:

- Introducing new ways of going about pluralism work as a habit or a practice that honors every person's dignity, embraces the strength found in our differences, and encourages the negotiation required to solve shared problems. In other words, supporting trusted leaders to model new behaviors that honor every person's dignity to improve social cohesion and dilute mistrust of neighbors in community.
- Organizing community storytelling gatherings where everyone can share their personal experiences in full. Try to include often overlooked perspectives and treat each contribution with equal respect and attention so all voices become part of the community's shared story.
- Bringing in community members with an array of lived experience to step into leadership roles or sit on advisory groups to work toward community-level or organizational change and, thus, challenge the conception of who can qualify as a leader for an agent for change.
- Leveraging research and data to influence the philanthropic field.
- Celebrating and rewarding new thinking internally within an institution, organization, or project team, making innovation and critical inquiry a valued part of the culture.

Half the grantees with evidence toward this condition talked about forming leadership or advisory groups with community members with various life experiences, challenging traditional power structures, and disrupting the assumption that expertise only comes from professional credentials or formal education. By elevating diverse lived experiences as a form of knowledge, these groups created spaces where established mental models about who holds authority were fundamentally reconsidered and transformed. For example, The People project ran a citizen assembly in New Hampshire, which brought together a representative group of residents to build relationships, discuss the issues closest to them, and identify solutions to make their state's political process work better and be more responsive to the people who live there. People in the community with no previous political experience were tapped to drive the program. *"The volunteers have had a lot of buy-in and direct say in how [we] operate … We have an advisory board that's made up of organizational partners."* The grantee went on to explain that the partners saw this as an opportunity to collaborate, challenging traditional top-down decision-making by intentionally shifting power to those typically excluded from the strategic planning process. During the citizen assembly, volunteers co-created a list of priorities for a wide array of citizens in the state. They created a strategic plan for how to engage more organizations for collective organizing in local politics to effect change. Participants in this project, both leading up to and during the citizen assembly, shared how engagement with The People has reframed their preconceived notions about their individual power in local politics. They went from thinking that they were effectively powerless to recognizing that through community organizing and gaining a better understanding of the minutiae of policy change, they can make the local government work for them and their wants and needs.

A handful of the grantees talked about how they conducted pre- and post-engagement surveys to track shifting mindsets and ideas toward each other and the issue areas their projects were addressing, including relationships with law enforcement, perceptions toward unhoused community members, and perceptions of citizens across the political spectrum. One grantee, Healing to Action, shared how, through the process of doing the work, they had to embrace an emergent mindset and shift how the organization did things internally to be more effective in the community.

GRANTEE BRIGHT SPOT

Resetting the Table

BUFFALO, NEW YORK

Based in Buffalo, Resetting the Table's approach to challenging existing mental models was fundamentally rooted in creating opportunities for deep, structured dialogue across profound differences. The organization systematically disrupted preexisting assumptions and perceptual barriers by intentionally bringing together groups that would typically not engage, such as conservative evangelical leaders, Black and Brown community leaders, and individuals from varied political spectrums. The grantee explicitly noted that participants had *"enormous misperceptions of each other in ways that they weren't aware of."* The organization's methodology focused on helping people *"confront their own knowledge gaps and biases"* and develop the capacity to *"step into each other's lenses."*

The organization's transformative work went beyond dialogue, actively equipping participants with tools to reconstruct understanding across charged lines of difference. By creating a process where people could *"unearth what actually matters to each other"* and develop skills for engaging across ideological divides, Resetting the Table challenged deeply ingrained mental models about who can talk to whom, what conversations are possible, and how fundamental differences can be navigated. The outcome was a profound shift in participants' sense of possibility. They moved from a mindset of *"I can't do this"* to *"I have the tools"* and from despair to hope, fundamentally reshaping how individuals conceptualize conflict, difference, and collective problem-solving.

GRANTEE BRIGHT SPOT

The Red Door Project

PORTLAND, OREGON

Based in Oregon, the Red Door Project uses theater and storytelling experiences to shift how law enforcement and members of the criminal legal system interact with residents. The project also changes how those communities understand the institutions and individuals who have sworn to protect and serve them. They introduced pluralism as a habit by creating a framework, the Evolve Mindset,[7] that they introduced in their events to help participants engage from a place of self-awareness instead of self-protection. As the grantee said: *"It's about rewriting the narratives that shape how we see each other and see ourselves. It starts there, and I think that's what the work really focuses on, is asking people, as you're watching these or listening to these stories, noticing that you're having reactions or feelings or disagreements, get curious about yourself."* The grantee went on to say, *"we have a model […] it's agnostic in the sense that it doesn't represent any points of view, but it helps people consider how to use their self-awareness to be able to understand when they're open to taking in new information that contradicts their belief system and when they're not."* Using this framework in the Red Door Project's strategies and activities has increased people's willingness and ability to engage in constructive conversations about public safety. People who entered the space feeling closed off and resistant to having their minds changed ultimately became receptive to different viewpoints. They saw each other as full human beings with experiences worth understanding or changed their minds completely from their initial positions.

7 See The Evolve Mindset on the Red Door Project's YouTube channel for an introduction to the framework.

Building Relationships and Connections

Most HSH grantees saw progress through their work in building relationships and connections (n=28). This included changes in the quality of connections and communication among actors in the system, especially among those with differing histories and viewpoints. Changes in this condition included the following:

- Supporting collaborative projects where individuals or organizations must work together to support a common goal.
- Hosting events that bring people together across political divides, generations, education, geography, and ethnicities to tell stories, have fun, and make things together.
- Centering relationship building as a goal, where the relationship is not transactional and deep listening and empathy are prioritized. Transparency and authenticity are embraced, as is sharing credit and building goodwill.

This condition was where much of HSH's work was rooted and saw progress. About a third of the cohort hosted constructive dialogue sessions where they brought people together across fulcrums to recognize the humanity in each other and have difficult conversations (i.e., about a recent divisive event in the community). Other grantees sought to bring together communities to discuss the issues that matter most to the entire community (e.g., school board discussions or local infrastructure needs).

For example, one grantee, Bears Ears Partnership, leaned into a co-governance model and developed relationships between tribal nations in their area to honor Indigenous leadership and find solutions for protecting their landscape. This project recognized that despite the commonalities between the tribal groups, lines of division still needed to be addressed. The act of breaking bread and sharing their cultural traditions helped accelerate the process of working toward larger systemic changes.

Another grantee, the Village Square, discussed how centering relationship building as a goal of their work has allowed them to have greater influence in their region. They explained the grant from New Pluralists allowed them to subsidize the cost of attendance for their programming. Ultimately, this allowed more people from different parts of the city community to come together, expand the program's reach, and bring more city members together. The grantee posited that centering relationship building as a main goal of their programming enabled them to reach a variety of community members and gain legitimacy in the community to co-lead future neighborhood events.

Two grantees, Out in the Open and WV Can't Wait, highlighted the importance of bringing people together to get to know each other as a preliminary step to tackling significant challenges in their communities. In these cases, both grantees said that having a space where people were invited to show up as their whole selves fostered goodwill and a sense of shared ownership. After that, participants asked for opportunities to help engage in future social change work, such as attending town halls, working together on pieces of legislation, or doing advocacy work.

Out in the Open also explained that this approach to relationship building led to the leaders of the project being invited to join policy coalitions. Because of their relationship building, they are trusted members of the community who provide technical assistance and thought partnership on a variety of issues, not just representatives of the LGBTQ+ community.

Ultimately, all the projects that saw progress against this condition discussed how building relationships and connections creates a sense of ownership and agency.

GRANTEE BRIGHT SPOT

Oak Ridge Periodic Tables

OAK RIDGE, TENNESSEE

Based in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, Oak Ridge Periodic Tables provides a strong example of how cultivating deeper relationships and restoring connections among neighbors can transform the culture of a place.[8] Recognizing Oak Ridge's complex legacy—from its role in the Manhattan Project to its history of segregation—the initiative creates spaces for residents to engage in deep conversations about belonging, identity, and shared history. By bringing together individuals from diverse backgrounds, including those from historically marginalized communities like Scarboro, the program facilitates storytelling and dialogue that surface lived experiences and foster mutual understanding. These efforts acknowledge and honor the city's multifaceted history and actively work to bridge divides, build trust, and cultivate a more inclusive community fabric.

Through sustained engagement and a commitment to pluralism, Oak Ridge Periodic Tables demonstrates how intentional relationship building can catalyze systemic change and community healing. The organization works to equip community leaders with the skills and knowledge needed to convene and facilitate challenging conversations with honesty and transparency in relatively neutral community spaces, such as church fellowship halls, outdoor parks, and on public transportation. The grantee explained: *"Through our racial bridging series, we've just seen some incredible connections made, [that] just weren't there before. We had so many different aha moments that happened in those where it's like, 'I'm out of my bubble now, and so I can kind of hear these stories in a way that I was not able to hear them before.'"* Through community conversations, the community leaders were able to move through conflicts and leverage insights to identify solutions that promoted fair outcomes for residents. For example, Oak Ridge Periodic Tables has hosted events specifically for bringing the disability community and advocates together with members of the City Council to talk about accessibility solutions. One participant of Oak Ridge Periodic Tables created and sits on the Disability Advisory Board for the City of Oak Ridge and has successfully advocated for more sidewalk accessibility.

Creating or Implementing New Practices

Most of the cohort engaged in strategies and activities that created and implemented new practices (n=27). This work includes both the explicit activities of institutions, coalitions, networks, or individuals to achieve social and environmental progress and the internal procedures, guidelines, or informally shared habits that guide that work.

For approximately half the grantees (n=15), this looked like the following:

- Reimagining the social structures of community engagement work to center relationship building
- Centering the voices of people who are historically left out of conversations
- Making concerted efforts to garner feedback on sessions to inform future practice
- Reworking communication practices (e.g., using plain language or storytelling) to improve accessibility so more voices can inform events and future strategies

8 ORS previously created a case study of Oak Ridge Periodic Tables, which provides more detail on their approach and the outcomes of their work to date.

A few grant projects in the HSH portfolio make the case for art projects being a fertile ground for pluralism work. These projects and organizations use artmaking sessions or creative storytelling to bring people across difference to make things together, build relationships, care for one another, and ultimately work together to improve their community members' lives.

One of the grant projects explained how they had to deliberately spend time explaining how their work fits under the pluralism umbrella to both participants and funders. *"We really spent a lot of time on this part of the work, which is 'how do we create a shared language that articulates the importance of arts and cultural organizations as not just places where people create together but also [as] frontline organizations in often under-resourced Southern communities?'"* That work was imperative to their success in meeting with the city to advocate for budget line items to advance the community's needs because participants (and eventual organizers) had aligned their vision and understanding of their role in the ecosystem.

Another art-based project talked about the power of leading with art and the community-level impact: *"A lot of the people in the art and social practice fellowship were already engaged in some of that artwork, but they brought new levels of social practice and engagement. They were really exploring not only how am I doing this craft that I'm working on, or how do I engage in this art practice, but how am I engaging with the community aspect."* By translating pluralism concepts into everyday, welcoming conversations, rather than technical policy terms, these art initiatives saw a notable rise in civic participation. Community members who once felt excluded or intimidated by formal civic processes began attending public meetings, volunteering on local projects, and joining planning discussions, demonstrating that accessible language and creative engagement can lower barriers and bring more voices into the fold.

A few projects discussed how they had to change how their organizations worked, both internally and externally, to be better aligned with pluralistic practices, be more efficient, and ultimately see the impact of their work. This included shifting to stronger relationship building with other grassroots organizations in the area, setting norms and agreements before all internal meetings, and implementing grounding exercises for staff before programs.

The Bears Ears Partnership project leaned into Indigenous culture and practices when convening the tribal nations. They went on to create a co-governance structure to ensure that the voices of various Indigenous tribes were heard and accounted for in local politics.

Another project saw progress in the condition by having their organizers introduce innovative, inclusive formats, like ceremonial effigy burnings and youth-focused music festivals, that reactivated civic life, sparked intergenerational dialogue, and surfaced new pathways for community healing and participation.

GRANTEE BRIGHT SPOT

Reconstructing Reconstruction

NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA

Common Ground USA and the Plessy Ferguson Initiative collaborated on the Reconstructing Reconstruction project. This project was a series of community initiatives to support healing, reconciliation, and transformation in New Orleans. The goal was to help community members of New Orleans reclaim narratives from the Reconstruction era to help inform how the community could handle contemporary political, social, and economic dynamics. The project ran a series of workshops with diverse community members on collective memory, trust building, and healing. They also created a series of historical markers throughout the city to bring community members together to honor the city's complex history.

Reconstructing Reconstruction exemplifies the "Creating and Implementing New Practices" condition by developing and institutionalizing inclusive, community-led processes that center healing, historical reckoning, and civic agency. The method of progress against this condition was twofold. First, the project built capacity among diverse community leaders to facilitate workshops on memorialization. Second, it embedded democratic, co-creative practices into the design and placement of historical markers. These workshops did not just serve educational purposes—they were spaces of agency building where residents could reimagine the use of public memory as a tool for civic participation and community healing.

These new practices activated residents' collective agency and leadership. By democratizing the knowledge and process of memorialization, traditionally controlled by institutions, the project enabled community members to use historical markers as leverage points for broader organizing and action. This resulted in a shift toward more inclusive, participatory decision-making about public history and space. As noted in the reflections, the project inspired continued engagement because it demonstrated that people's lived experiences, knowledge, and creativity could actively shape community identity and democratic life.

GRANTEE BRIGHT SPOT

Community Cornerstones

CHAPEL HILL, NORTH CAROLINA

The Community Cornerstones project in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, exemplifies the power of reimagining community institutions to center relationship building.[9] Essential Partners partnered with the Dispute Settlement Center and Interfaith Photovoice to explore how to combine techniques like constructive dialogues, restorative healing, conflict mediation, and collaborative storytelling to build understanding and shared purpose. They trained people from various backgrounds (e.g., civic and faith groups, nonprofits, school representatives) to use these different methodologies and techniques, bring them back to their institutions, and integrate them into their everyday work.

By embedding these practices in local institutions, local residents had more opportunities to experience connection, healing, and collaboration as regular facets of community life. As a result of the programming, one participant shared how, previously, conversations in her faith community around sensitive topics would heighten preexisting rifts within the congregation. They felt more equipped to approach those conflicts and shift toward a more generative way of thinking that proposed a way forward, as opposed to being stuck. Ultimately, the project has built the capacity of more community members to change their local culture using the tenets of pluralism.

9 This grantee project is also an example of challenging existing mental models by introducing pluralism to a community as a viable way of addressing social community issues. Additionally, this is a strong example of building relationships and connections. The fact that this project strongly exemplifies three of the conditions and how they work together underlines the evaluator finding about the interconnected nature of the conditions in FSG's framework. Reflecting on this project's strategies and outcomes in the context of just one condition is difficult because of the strong interplay among them.

Influencing Policies

More than half of HSH grantees worked to influence policies, including governmental, institutional, and organizational rules, regulations, and priorities (n=20). This work included the following:

- Creating policy coalitions and suggesting proposed bill language
- Helping get a piece of legislation through a chamber or enacted
- Changing how organizations go about their work and formalizing processes to be more pluralistic

A few grantees changed internal policies and proliferated them among partner organizations and similar groups. Arrabon has successfully influenced organizational policies by helping institutions develop formal approaches to conflict management that recognize disagreement as a natural and valuable part of healthy interaction. Their work guides organizations to assess their conflict postures—avoidant or aggressive—and establish new policies that normalize and productively channel conflict rather than suppress it. Through this process, Arrabon creates lasting institutional change by directly embedding principles of healthy engagement into organizational policy frameworks, transforming how groups manage the inevitable tensions that arise when diverse perspectives come together.

A few grantees described how participation in programming equipped them to carry out nonpartisan public policy education and analysis. This includes helping residents understand proposed local policy changes and administrative actions and supporting residents in sharing stories and data to educate public officials on their community's diverse needs and goals. These efforts help introduce new ideas into governance discussions and broaden understanding of possible solutions to shared issues. Grantees also offered impartial guidance to community members about their rights and opportunities for civic engagement, such as how to submit public comments, attend hearings, or connect with elected officials, thereby fostering an informed and active constituency over the long term.

WV Can't Wait demonstrated significant policy influence by mobilizing community-driven housing solutions that adapted to local contexts, resulting in concrete governmental changes. They established a full-time Homeless Coordinator position in Wheeling and secured warming shelter funding in multiple cities. Their approach to policy change embodied true co-governance, where community members directly shaped solutions alongside elected officials, creating immediate relief through warming shelters and long-term structural reforms.

La Maraña achieved structural change by actively challenging conventional policy development processes around natural resources, planning, and transportation in Puerto Rico. The organization positioned itself as a watchdog, demanding transparency and community involvement in decisions directly affecting local populations. Their approach transformed traditional top-down policy implementation by creating informed civic participation campaigns that equipped community members with agency documents and critical information previously inaccessible to the public. By bridging the information gap between government agencies and local communities, they ensured historically marginalized voices could participate *"from a very informed perspective"* rather than being passive recipients of decisions made without their input.

GRANTEE BRIGHT SPOT

All In Initiative

NAUGATUCK RIVER VALLEY, CONNECTICUT

Based in the Naugatuck River Valley in Connecticut, the All In Initiative demonstrated a nuanced and comprehensive approach to influencing policies. Rather than pushing for policy changes from the outside, they built a deep relational infrastructure that fundamentally transformed how local policies are conceived and implemented. The All In Initiative achieved policy shifts by intentionally demystifying policy processes through training, watch parties, and direct engagement, empowering residents who historically felt excluded from local governance.

The program rooted its approach in building relationships and connections to see outcomes in influencing policies. Instead of approaching policy change as a transactional process, they invested in creating spaces where diverse constituencies—including tenants, homeowners, landlords, and municipal leaders—could develop mutual understanding and shared interests.

The grantees explicitly noted how they bridged traditionally divided groups, creating new conceptual frameworks for collaborative policy development. Their method involved extensive one-on-one conversations, story circles, power mapping, and intentional cross-town gatherings that broke down political and social barriers, ultimately enabling policy changes that reflected genuine community consensus rather than top-down mandates. They said, *"The headline indicators of that regular output of people constantly showing up, is seeing real policy change, and seeing real change in practice, whether it's from specific to an area of housing supply, a legislative directive that we're trying to change at a local, or statewide level."*

Specific outcomes of the program include successfully introducing Accessory Dwelling Units in towns that previously rejected them, expanding Planning and Zoning Commission memberships, and establishing Fair Rent Commissions with real enforcement capabilities.

Success in this area often reflects months or years of informal groundwork, demonstrating that influencing policy is both a strategic and long-haul effort.

GRANTEE BRIGHT SPOT

Future Caucus

ARKANSAS AND OKLAHOMA

In their HSH project, Future Caucus supported the leadership of young state legislators in Arkansas and Oklahoma. They created state caucuses with representatives from both the Democratic and Republican parties. They provided these Millennial and Gen Z legislators with the tools and resources necessary to find common ground and turn their shared ideas into legislation.

For example, the Arkansas Future Caucus was focused on improving outcomes in maternal health care because the state has the highest numbers for infant and maternal mortality rates. These legislators learned from each other's experiences and understanding of their state contexts and benefited from being in the same space. Ultimately, representatives from the caucus passed a bill together to address some of the maternal health care issues that are a contributing factor to the mortality rates in the state.

Future Caucus's participants have reported that their networks have expanded. This has allowed them to become better legislators because they can connect with others who have faced similar challenges and can borrow best practices and strategies to use in their home state.

Increasing or Diversifying Resource Flows

More than half of grantees also saw evidence of increasing or diversifying resource flows (n=20), including how money, people, knowledge, information, and other assets, such as infrastructure, are allocated and distributed. When grantees talked about change in this condition, an overwhelming majority mentioned sharing knowledge and resources. Few talked about influencing the flow of money.

Grantees highlighted the importance of thinking of resources beyond money. A participant from Youth Reimagining Education said: *"Our teams have found across county sometimes resources to share like networks to plug into that they weren't aware of before just by kind of talking or maybe we have, we usually have a speaker come to each gathering who's from the community and like usually works for the city or might be a local representative. And there's always a lot of fruitful conversations and connections that come out of that."*

Some grantees did also discuss financial resource flows. A throughline of the cohort is the need for locally led pluralism work to be well-funded. To that end, Statewide Organizing Community eMpowerment (SOCM) talked about how they have diversified their funding to do their programmatic work. They explained that through their recent work, they are *"increasing the number of members that are engaged and see a reason why they should contribute, why they should pay dues, why they should actually donate above and beyond what their dues payments are."* This grantee just hired their first grassroots fundraising coordinator to dedicate time and attention to this work.

Another grantee discussed how they used research and data to influence the philanthropic field. The organization did a landscape analysis of funding in the South and when divestments happen. They then used this data to leverage major funders' investment in the region. Additionally, in those meetings with funders, the grantee organization specifically highlighted the need to invest in grassroots organizations because of their expertise and context-specific knowledge that larger groups may lack. *"It was a framing and a language shift from the idea of Southern and grassroots being deficits to really emphasizing and understanding the power of the grassroots. These are organizations that are conveners in the communities."* Ultimately, through this project, the grantee convinced a funder to have a more inclusive second round of relief funding open to organizations that had not previously received grants, contrary to the original inception of the second round of funding. This grantee provides a compelling story of how changing mindsets—using research and data—moved the Southern philanthropic ecosystem toward both a breadth and depth of systems change.

GRANTEE BRIGHT SPOT

Southern Arts & Culture Coalition and Studio Two Three

REGIONAL SOUTH

Southern Arts & Culture Coalition discussed how their assumptions about scaling pluralism were challenged once they got into local contexts: *"So [the project] became really infrastructural and brass tacks in a way that's been really powerful. And I think has really helped us to see that it's a huge part of pluralism is actually making sure that those third spaces function, that they are able to communicate broadly by just having their doors open, having people access their space in a meaningful way and having the support of their neighbors who might be with them in the same state or a state away. So we've really focused in on a commitment to more local organizing, making sure that those third spaces exist where people can come and diversifying those sources of funding so those spaces can say and do what they want without being dependent on somebody who might say, well, you—you stepped over the line politically or socially here, and we're going to retract your funding."* In this case, the shift in mental model occurred within the grantee organization itself. Initially, the grantee assumed that they would be able to copy and paste their program into different contexts, but they were confronted by the need to help local communities build the infrastructure necessary to sustain the work.

This condition had lower numbers of evidence of progress because the progress did not always have a direct link to New Pluralists' investments. (See the last evaluator observation at the beginning of "Signs of Progress" for more information.) Additionally, this condition is more easily applied to investments in the pluralism ecosystem designed to broaden the knowledge base of practitioners and researchers than investments made to support practitioners working locally.[10] However, the grantee bright spot in "Challenging Existing Mental Models or Introducing New Ones" demonstrates the conditions' interconnectedness. The bright spot highlights how a project used its tools to open the opportunity for more funding to Southern grassroots organizations. It is a compelling story of changing the philanthropic field in the South to think about the power of those groups. It also exemplifies increasing resource flows.

10 For more information on how resource flows can show up in ecosystem investments, see the report *Learnings from New Pluralists' Ecosystem Investments,* February 2025.

Shifting Existing Power Dynamics

Over half of HSH grantees saw evidence of progress toward shifting power dynamics, the lowest of any of the six conditions (n=17). Shifting power dynamics include the distribution of decision-making power, authority, and both formal and informal influence among individuals and organizations. Changes in this condition looked like the following:

- Inviting community members to step into leadership positions that previously felt inaccessible and express authority on relevant issues
- Creating spaces where people can be seen as their whole selves and disrupting any "othering" of people or groups
- Enabling people with different roles, influence, expertise, and experience in a community to engage on equal footing to shift interactions between community members and key community decision makers (e.g., public officials and legislators)
- Creating more opportunities for people to engage in and inform policies that affect their lives, including running for office and attending town halls to advocate effectively for themselves and their communities

A few grantees discussed how setting clear guidelines and norms at the beginning of their programming was imperative to effectively shift power dynamics between community members and those with authority. For example, one grantee said: *"Our events are explicitly student-led events, and it's always a majority of [high school] students in the room … it's explicitly named that, yes, your superintendent might be at your table, but in this setting, you are in charge, and you lead the conversation, and your superintendent is going to listen to you just as much as they talk to you, and it's just about shared power and hearing each other's perspectives and just gathering as much information and viewpoints in the room as you can. And so, we really try to break down the walls of everybody's roles and the power dynamic that exists in all of those roles to have the most fruitful conversation possible. And that's really empowering for young people."* The grantee posited that without clearly setting expectations from the start and stating that the goal of the conversation was to shift who has voice and leadership, the programming would not have been as successful in building cohesion and finding solutions for better school environments.

National Housing Trust discussed how they intentionally created more spaces for feedback throughout their project so that engagements felt less transactional and the community could feel a sense of leadership in the work being done. The grantee said, "We host a lot more […] community meetings to receive feedback." This shows an intentional feedback loop to sustain buy-in throughout the project. It often eliminates a power dynamic in national-local partnerships where the local community feels as if national groups are overly prescriptive and not interested in the nuances of where they are doing the work. These meetings and processes had a resident advisory council, leaned into structures that already existed in the community, and launched a participatory budget process. The experimentation with leadership structures reshaped how individuals in the community saw their ability to be catalysts for change. These individuals were tasked with being a voice for the people to ensure that the local community needs were prioritized and used as the basis of the program's work.

Shifting power dynamics also occurred in grantee projects where co-governance and organizing were the focus. Through interviews, some grantees said that equipping residents with pluralistic skill sets enabled individuals who were often excluded from formal processes to have a voice and influence decision-making within and beyond their communities. Examples of those skill sets

are deep listening, negotiating shared priorities, and collaborating to solve shared challenges. These grantees discussed how they had to introduce community members to a new way of thinking—one that moved away from in-group bias and embraced difference as a strength for promoting community solutions.

The program demonstrated significant efforts to shift power dynamics in affordable housing communities by transforming the traditionally transactional landlord-tenant relationship into shared decision-making and community leadership. These shifts were implemented through concrete mechanisms like participatory budgeting, resident-led programming, and peer-to-peer models that challenged established hierarchies. Organizations recognize that meaningful power redistribution requires structural changes and cultural or mindset shifts.

Another grantee discussed how, through their programming, they have seen an increase in LGBTQ+ members showing up and continuing to engage. This includes participation in their leadership development programming, where LGBTQ+ people are trained in how to co-create community goals and build their organizing skills. They also noted strong engagement in their Creating Belonging events, where community members—both within and outside the LGBTQ+ community—come together to get to know one another and break down preexisting divisions.

GRANTEE BRIGHT SPOT

Healing to Action

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

Healing to Action illustrates how inviting diverse community leaders—from varying economic, educational, and cultural backgrounds—into leadership positions can shift existing power dynamics for everyone. By supporting those directly affected by gender-based violence and positioning them as leaders in discussion spaces, those leaders created a trusted space that invited deeper storytelling and struck a chord with community members who were new to this issue.

The grantee described how people with direct experience with gender-based violence led sessions to teach Chicago residents from all walks of life about how to create settings free from violence. They explained: *"Most of the time, when you have people coming to talk about gender-based violence, it's an outreach worker. It's someone who's a professionalized anti-violence person. And these were people from the community who sometimes spoke a different language than their audience, who sometimes had a different level of education […] I think that was a huge strength of the model. People were really receptive to it. […] There was a huge level of recognition of, like, 'These are people that are really fighting for their community. That's why they're here, and we're here too for that purpose.'"*

Because of Healing to Action's project, leaders and participants connected to their own agency and recognized that all people have the power to transform themselves and the community around them. By giving survivors leadership roles in their programs, the organization was able to connect with more community members and reach new communities. The project expanded beyond the original conception, brought more people into their programming, and was able to teach more people than planned about how to address gender-based violence.

The Interplay Between Enabling Conditions and Barriers: Highlighting Promising Practices for Advancing Local Pluralism Work

What It Takes to Support Locally Led Pluralism Work

Throughout our evaluation, we discovered that successful, locally led pluralism work fundamentally depends on community leadership and expertise. Grantees consistently demonstrated that their most effective work prioritized three areas. It must (1) be rooted in local contexts, (2) move at the pace of the community, and (3) address issues that community members themselves identify as priorities.

Many grantees elevated conditions that are unique to pluralism and core to why pluralism is needed in the first place, exemplifying how conditions can be enabling or barriers.

About one-third of the grantees described challenges related to local residents' skepticism or suspicion about pluralism or their work, which affected participation (n=11). For many grantees, a core goal of their pluralism work is to enable people with various worldviews to connect and talk with each other. However, when communities heard about the work itself, grantees witnessed hesitations among the communities they were trying to reach. One grantee shared: *"There is just such a lack of trust in many directions right now […] Who is the funder? What's the agenda they're actually pushing and trying to convince me of?"*

Promising Practice

One grantee found that **forming relationships with trusted messengers** in the community (e.g., local leaders) often helped them reach skeptical audiences, specifically engaging more conservative audiences. The same grantee explained: *"Trusted validators are critical […] to say this is not folks coming in with some agenda […] But this is a genuine, authentic, well-meaning effort that is truly inclusive and desires you, American, to be at the table and to be seen."* While several grantees successfully reached some more skeptical audiences, they all shared how this will be an ongoing challenge for pluralism work more broadly. Many connected this to ongoing threats to pluralism, such as the increasingly divisive political and cultural climate.

Grantees also shared challenges connected to participation across the spectrum of difference (n=12), including political affiliation, religion, age, race, gender, citizenship status, geographic location (e.g., urban and rural), and other social identities or ideological perspectives. While a few shared that they successfully engaged a *"representative"* spread of participants, over one-third of grantees spoke about representation as an ongoing challenge in their work (n=12).

Promising Practice

Nearly half the grantees (n=14) took the time to highlight that to effectively build a community's muscles to practice pluralism, the community itself must lead the work. Among these grantees, a few noted how their organizations made necessary shifts in their strategies, including communications about their work, geographic location of events, and recruitment tactics. When describing the challenge of engaging across the spectrum, grantees pointed to identifying champions across demographic groups targeted for the community as a key part of their strategic process. One grantee detailed, *"Where we need to start is […] We want to work with local stakeholders who are doing meaningful community work in an ongoing way."*

A few conditions and challenges elevated by grantees are partly why pluralism work is necessary.

Grantees described the inherent difficulty of pluralism work (n=8). Many noted that people are generally less motivated to change, seek out or lean into difficult conversations or conflict, or be vulnerable. They also cited how people are steeped in their own viewpoints and beliefs and are not motivated to change their own views. To address this, one grantee described the importance of residents and organizations wanting to participate in pluralism work: *"We're not going to be able to go in and shift existing power dynamics. It really does take people on the ground who are already willing to do that."* This same grantee further illustrated the necessary motivation needed for this kind of work: *"If the people … don't necessarily even want to do the work themselves, how do we still get people into a learning space who are actually serious about collaboration, and empowering, and sharing resources, and being generative? […] We're trying to stoke the fires of new imagination; otherwise, it's intractable, so there's no point."* Another facet inherent to the difficulty of pluralism work is that it requires long-term support in communities. While several organizations put on events that catalyze short-term action, they spoke about the long-term support needed for communities to continue engagement. One grantee described, *"How do we make sure we're going from those low-level actions and actually giving people the support they need to do the deeper local work on a long-term basis?"*

Promising Practice

These grantees explained how they have to provide direct, intentional support to see continued engagement in deeper work among the communities they serve.

Grantees shared challenges with effectively communicating with local residents and potential collaborators about what pluralism is (n=4). They reported that positioning themselves within pluralism (e.g., marketing) can be challenging.

Promising Practice

Grantees shared ways they made ongoing changes in communication about their work and events. They actively interrogated internal staff, community leaders, and organizational partners about particular terminology and shifted the language they used to describe their work. They also explained how effective communication is an ongoing challenge in their work.

Some grantees described distrust as a core challenge to organizational and individual buy-in, hence a reason pluralism is needed in the first place (n=6). As previously discussed, engagement across difference can be fueled by distrust within local contexts. One grantee outlined how existing distrust was an ongoing challenge that they found to be a bedrock for their success in their work: *"People started out distrusting each other and us […] The way that we build trust is by supporting people with skills that help them to unearth what actually matters to each other […] but there's a lot of swimming upstream and the ability to be able to do that across charged lines of difference."* As evidenced by this example, distrust can exist across different levels of the work. Widespread distrust not only indicates a broader need for pluralism work but also can influence the pace of that work.

Grantees also grappled with and adapted to organizational, structural, and operational challenges.

Over half of the grantees shared challenges and lessons learned about building authentic relationships across their work (n=17). These ranged from engaging with collaborative partners and consultants to the very specific demographic groups they were trying to bring together. Grantees described the arc of building brand new relationships, naming the intention and time it takes. One grantee shared: *"Recruiting and forming new relationships before […] programming, or show people what you do and how it benefits them, and it benefits you. Just try to build that trust and get people in the door."* Some grantees noted how finding the right partners was difficult. Overall, grantees elevated the importance of trust and deepening relationships as a core piece of what made their work successful. One grantee illustrated: *"To actually get things done, we need to know one another. We need to trust one another. And we need to deepen our relationships and share really boring stuff, too."* These examples demonstrate the difficulty, time investment, and strategic intentions required to build new relationships and maintain relationships in pluralism work.

Many grantees shared different challenges connected with their scope of work and organizational capacity (n=13). A few grantees specifically named the necessity of scaling back the scope they had initially written in their grant application to fit what was possible within their organization's capacity (n=3). These included areas such as managing volunteers and providing adequate training for them (n=2), proper follow-ups with participants (n=2), and scaling up their programming (n=1). Other grantees elevated challenges associated with the extent of their collaborations with others (n=2). Challenges included meeting emergent circumstances, such as supporting evolving community needs or internal changes, like staff or leadership turnover or changes in status (e.g., becoming a 501c3 organization). Notably, grantees managed most of these challenges with sufficient pivots and framed them as lessons learned during the grant period.

Grantees also shared challenges related to measuring or quantifying the success or impact of their work (n=4). These grantees discussed specific challenges with measurement in the quantitative sense. They shared how the effects of their work reverberate beyond numbers and the written word. One grantee described, *"Quantifying all of this, there are the numbers, which I think can be impressive, but beyond the numbers, and beyond what we can say, we like to show, and we just feel like what we're capturing in these video recaps in a lot of our events, it shows a lot more than we could tell or anything we could write down to try to convince anybody that this matters."* Grantees continued to express that measuring their impact was even more challenging with the different audiences in mind: *"How do you translate that into data, into metrics that other funders and other partners or other governments or cultural makers can glean something helpful from? And that continues to be a challenge."* In this way, challenges related to measuring and quantifying success are linked to effective communication.

A couple of grantees shared challenges related to the lack of funding available for their work (n=2). These grantees noted that the funding swings in philanthropy are challenging their organizational stability. Additionally, grantees noted how federal funding and ongoing federal freezes have created significant challenges in their ability to support their work.

Grantees highlighted the need for longer timelines for project work (n=10) **and increased funding** (n=6). Much of the work in this cohort is about building relationships, and it takes time to build the trust needed to see long-term, sustainable outcomes from this work. Local pluralism work is an underfunded field, and relationship building work cannot be done without more investment. As one grantee put it: *"Conversations are expensive. And people that have the ability to navigate those conversations are important. This doesn't happen just because we're in the same place and we have the same project in mind. It's very complex and it's very difficult and time consuming."*

Evaluator Observations

» Through conversations about what enables good pluralism work and any barriers to that work, we discovered that many of these conditions are symbiotic. The same factors that serve as enabling conditions when present often become barriers when absent, creating a dynamic interplay that shapes how pluralism work unfolds in communities. Some examples of enabling conditions that can also present as challenges include:

- Finding the right language to discuss how their work fits under the umbrella of pluralism work and is part of the larger ecosystem
- Building relationships and the time required to build trust and rapport to move on to specific actions as one
- Navigating the ever-changing landscape of local and national politics and any threats and catalysts that may exist at a given moment

» Identifying how to strategically adapt approaches to address challenges in pluralism work is inherently difficult, and this is part of why the pluralism ecosystem is continuing to grow and develop. Pinning down promising practices that can be replicable becomes even more difficult when thinking about locally based pluralism work, where context and dynamics are specific and ever-changing.

The *Now What*: Reflections on Pluralism in the Current Moment

Throughout this evaluation, grantees identified key opportunities and essential supports that could advance pluralism work in our current polarized landscape. In this final section, we explore both emerging opportunities that could expand pluralism's reach and the critical supports required for practitioners to succeed. Our findings reveal promising directions for normalizing pluralistic practices in everyday settings, engaging communities at the grassroots level, and broadening participation across difference. We also examine the essential foundations practitioners need—from sustainable funding and stronger networks to unified approaches and more compelling narratives about the value of pluralism. These insights offer a roadmap for funders, practitioners, and communities seeking to nurture pluralism work.

Opportunities for Pluralism

Grantees identified several promising opportunities to advance pluralism. Our conversations revealed that normalizing pluralistic practices in everyday settings represents the most significant opportunity, highlighting how these approaches can be integrated into spaces where people naturally gather. We discovered a strong appetite for hyperlocal community engagement, including potential in expanding participation, particularly among younger generations. Additionally, grantees expressed the need to broaden our understanding of what constitutes pluralism work, recognizing that both dialogue-focused and power-building approaches are vital to creating a more cohesive society. This section explores these emerging opportunities and how they might be leveraged to strengthen pluralism work.

The most commonly shared opportunity by grantees is to promote the socialization of pluralistic norms (n=18), with many interviewees noting an increase in using pluralistic practices in everyday life. To this end, interviewees highlighted the importance of leveraging media and communications to talk about pluralism work that is already happening (n=9). They said communications and messaging are critical tools for reinforcing pluralistic values as a viable and sustainable approach to social cohesion. In those same discussions, interviewees called for an increased focus on implementing pluralistic practices in places where people convene (n=7). Examples include taking a relational approach before getting into heavy conversations; having deliberative dialogue where a diversity of viewpoints can be safely expressed; using conflict solution practices that focus on healing, accountability, and engagement; and creating flat hierarchy environments so leaders from different backgrounds can guide discussions and be seen as leaders.

Grantees see a need, desire, and hunger for deep, hyperlocal community engagement (n=13), suggesting that pluralism is most effectively cultivated at the grassroots level. One grantee explained how hyperlocal work is where we can see the most difference because humans want to embrace their community and have ease where they live. Grantees also discussed wanting to see pluralistic practices embedded in more neutral spaces (e.g., schools, churches, community centers), providing regular exposure to pluralism as a legitimate way of being and structuring our society. Given this, one-quarter of grantees were adamant that the funding ecosystem should invest heavily in hyperlocal pluralism projects (n=8).

Grantees see opportunities to bring more people into pluralism work (n=8), including voices from across the political and issue area-based spectrums. Additionally, interviewees mentioned that Gen Z and younger generations are critical in moving the United States to a more pluralistic future (n=5). One interviewee explained how Millennials have become disengaged and disgruntled with our societal norms, leading them to disengage. Gen Z, however, seems to have more optimism and drive in creating different ways of being and doing that embody pluralistic values.

Other opportunities focused on the ecosystem of pluralism practitioners and researchers. For example, interviewees expressed a desire for more structured spaces, such as cohorts and meeting venues for practitioners to practice and fine-tune their pluralism work (n=9). Another opportunity emerged around how the pluralism ecosystem should consider expanding the definition of what pluralism work looks like in practice (n=6). One interviewee reflected that the HSH cohort had two approaches to pluralism. One approach brought people together across difference to discuss issues. The other approached empowered people who had been systemically left out of those conversations to harness their political and societal power to lead the work. The grantee explained that both approaches to pluralism work are equally valid and need to be in conversation with each other to actualize a pluralistic society. Finally, some interviewees want to de-academicize or depoliticize the term (n=5), making the concept more accessible and less constrained by traditional or partisan interpretations.

Threats to Pluralism in the Current Moment

Through our conversations with grantees, we identified three distinct categories of threats:

1. Threats *unique* to our current political climate
2. Threats *inherent* to pluralism work itself
3. Threats that exist *regardless of context*

Our findings reveal how the heightened polarization in today's political landscape directly affects and undermines local pluralism efforts. We found organizations facing direct targeting for their bridge-building work, widespread community anxiety reducing willingness to engage across difference, and immediate funding cuts threatening program continuity. It is important to note that these interviews took place in the first few weeks of President Trump's second term. As such, grantee responses were influenced by the new political landscape and Executive Orders.

When discussing threats, many grantees broadly pointed to the United States' current political and cultural climate. While these threats did not start during the 2025 Trump administration, several grantees pointed to changes in the federal government as a threat to their work specifically and the pluralism ecosystem more broadly (n=7). They noted how the *"shifting sands in this new administration"* will be an ongoing dynamic regarding their ability to do this work and their communities' ability to engage and be willing to participate actively in pluralism work.

Several grantees specifically noted that rising polarization (n=8), active segregation (n=3), threats and acts of political violence (n=2), Christian nationalism (n=1), and mis- or disinformation (n=1) have become more visible and palpable in the public sphere and actively work against creating a culture of pluralism. One grantee described how they are actively witnessing *"a movement to close the civic space."* By counteracting pluralism on a broader scale, the political and cultural conditions threaten the hyperlocal work of grantees.

Grantees described how increased anxieties about the state of the world threaten pluralism (n=5). One grantee outlined how a divisive, challenging, and rapidly changing political and social environment creates *"an overwhelming sense of fatigue."* No matter what beliefs or priorities people hold, grantees spoke to how the anxieties about what is happening in the world affect everyone. A few other grantees emphasized that the targeting of specific groups, such as

immigrants or LGBTQ+ people, affects their ability to build spaces of trust and safety that are essential for bridging. As one grantee explained, *"Getting folks to want to engage and participate is going to be especially difficult, because people are just going to want to hunker down and keep themselves safe and their loved ones safe, and really protect their time and their sanity and their mental health, and maybe not be as willing to give of their time and themselves too much outside of their very immediate community."* The ripple effects of the cultural and political climate are actively working against creating the conditions for pluralism to thrive. Additionally, four grantees spoke about the lack of spaces and places to bring people together as a threat to pluralism. They named the continued decrease in *"places where different people from different cross sections of life come together and have discussions."*

Relatedly, grantees raised concerns about the threats that pauses and cuts to federal funding pose to pluralism (n=8). At the time of our interviews, a few grantees were in active strategic conversations about the drastic cuts to their budgets, including halting projects that were set to begin in 2025. These grantees also emphasized how the pauses and cuts at the federal level may trickle down into philanthropy more broadly. They described how the funding pendulum in private philanthropy might swing in the same direction as public federal funds: *"All these federal funds are put on pause, changing the way that public money is spent. But also changing ways in which private foundations are thinking about distributing their funds, that is, of course, related to the realities of what happens at the federal administrative level."* These grantees also spoke about the greater uncertainty that comes with the substantial changes at the federal level. They expressed the continued need to track such an unpredictable landscape. This more active threat to funding exists on top of the lack of funding more broadly for hyperlocal pluralism work altogether. One grantee noted that philanthropy tends to be more willing to fund *"quick wins"* rather than advocacy and work that generally requires you to move at the speed of trust.

One grantee elevated safety concerns related to community participation, especially related to ongoing Presidential Executive Orders targeting immigrants set in motion in January 2025. In this case, the grantee was able to mitigate some of those concerns by making their events virtual to ensure they could meet the needs of community members who felt hesitant to meet in person in the current political and cultural climate.

Supports Needed for Pluralism to Thrive

We have identified four critical supports that grantees identified would strengthen locally led pluralism work:

1. **Funding and investment for local pluralism work:** Our conversations with grantees revealed that sustainable funding with longer timelines remains essential, allowing for deeper community transformation.

2. **Increased networking in the ecosystem:** We discovered a strong desire for increased ecosystem networking to reduce isolation among practitioners

3. **A shared agenda:** Grantees want unified practices and a shared agenda to amplify collective impact.

4. **Support for pluralism as a viable way forward:** Grantees emphasized the need for more effective communication strategies to persuasively demonstrate pluralism's viability as a practical solution to today's polarization.

This section details how these strategic supports could fundamentally strengthen pluralism work in an increasingly divided society.

Evaluator Observations

- The future of local investment in pluralism remains uncertain, even as many grantees emphasized the need for sustained funding and longer timelines to achieve meaningful and long-standing impact. Grantees repeatedly called for continued commitments to locally led pluralism work to ensure that their efforts and projects can continue to deepen over time. Without continued investment, the progress made to date could stall, limiting the ability to create lasting systemic change.

  Beyond the impact on individual organizations, funding uncertainty threatens the nascent pluralism ecosystem. The connections, shared learning, and collaborative infrastructure developed through the cohort model are at risk of fragmentation without continued support. The accumulated social capital and collaborative networks cultivated through these initiatives represent substantial ecosystem-building achievements that could dissipate if momentum is lost, potentially setting back broader ecosystem development efforts.

- Looking ahead, an opportunity exists to continue embracing the interconnectedness of pluralist strategies. These evaluation findings validate a core assumption of New Pluralists' TOC: the strategies are indeed mutually reinforcing and interconnected rather than operating in isolation. While the HSH portfolio was primarily aligned with the "Support Pluralism in Practice" approach, grantees consistently demonstrated how their work naturally integrated with and depended upon the other two strategies. Grantees' emphasis on media and communications as crucial to their success was particularly noteworthy—a clear connection to the "Deepen Pluralist Mindsets" approach. When discussing future opportunities, grantees frequently pointed to strategies that align with the "Strengthen and Grow the Pluralism Ecosystem" approach, illustrating the organic integration across the three core approaches.

  As New Pluralists and other funders consider their path forward, this evaluation suggests maintaining cognizance of how research, mindsets or storytelling, and practice work together to achieve the organization's north star. HSH grantees' work demonstrates an understanding that this interplay is not merely beneficial but central to pluralism work. The evidence from the HSH portfolio indicates that grantees intuitively recognize and incorporate multiple approaches even when their primary focus aligns with one specific strategy. This holistic integration creates a virtuous cycle: practice informs and generates content for mindset work, ecosystem development provides infrastructure for practice, and research enhances both. Embracing this interconnectedness in future grantmaking strategies could further amplify impact across all dimensions of pluralism work.

Funding and investment for local pluralism work (n=14): Grantees see a need for continued and increased investment in pluralism work happening directly in communities. As part of this, they see a need for funding longer timelines (n=6) and work to scale deep (n=5). Grantees explained that these supports ensure that pluralism initiatives have the time and resources necessary to evolve and achieve meaningful, lasting outcomes.

Increased networking in the ecosystem (n=11): Grantees explained that networking creates spaces for practitioners to share their experiences, engage in peer learning, and feel validated in their efforts. These networks can enhance professional support and build a sense of solidarity across diverse and often isolated community contexts. One interviewee mentioned how this type of space is essential for practitioners in the pluralism ecosystem to help address and potentially prevent burnout. Related, some interviewees see an opportunity for more leadership development within the pluralism ecosystem (n=5). This can look like training and workshop opportunities to build up pluralism practitioners who can be leaders in the ecosystem.

A shared agenda (n=5) **and shared practices** (n=9): Grantees are seeking a unified approach to pluralism that would require coordination on the array of strategies practitioners are using and aligning around shared goals.

Support for pluralism as a viable way forward (n=5): Grantees see a need for increased trust and belief in pluralism's potential to address increased polarization by promoting social cohesion and a sense of belonging. Related, grantees recognize media and communications (n=8) as a strategic avenue for reinforcing pluralism's viability. Grantees see a need to develop a compelling narrative that explains the core work of pluralism in strengthening democracy and social connections. Specifically, they highlighted the importance of crafting messaging that effectively communicates pluralism's value to diverse audiences and legitimizes the approach to outside or diverse voices (n=6).

Conclusion

This evaluation of the HSH portfolio reveals a body of work that has made meaningful contributions to pluralism in practice while generating valuable insights for the ecosystem. The three dimensions of this assessment—portfolio learnings, grantee reflections on the current pluralism landscape, and feedback for New Pluralists—collectively paint a picture of both achievement and opportunity.

Looking ahead, the field of pluralism stands at a pivotal juncture. As polarization continues to challenge democratic institutions and community cohesion, building bridges across difference becomes even more essential. Grantees' experiences documented in this evaluation demonstrate what is possible and illuminate promising pathways toward a more inclusive, connected, and resilient society where difference becomes a source of strength rather than division.

Appendix A: How Grantees Understand Progress

ORS Impact (ORS) sought to understand how grantees measure and track progress, knowing that standardized data collection was not a grant requirement.

All grantees shared at least one approach for measuring progress during the grant period. The primary area of inquiry was adaptive programmatic feedback to inform real-time changes to their approach and offerings. Other areas of inquiry included tracking attitudinal changes, such as comfort with engaging people with different faiths or political views. Additionally, grantees sought to understand participants' willingness to participate in their programming again or to use a given tool or framework in their own lives or communities. Among grantees who named the explicit focus to better understand how they could improve their programming (n=7), a few shared how community input was a core value of their work. One grantee, in particular, noted how these feedback mechanisms *"were always intended, but really ramped up in terms of the high level of decision-making that the project brought to the participants."* They went on to share how participants emphasized the organization's responsiveness to their feedback, feeling *"very empowering."* About one-third of grantees took opportunities to gather insights at each event they hosted (n=11), whereas others reviewed feedback and insights on a yearly (n=1), quarterly (n=2), or per-cohort basis (n=2).

Many grantees used surveys to gather this feedback and track the impact of their work (n=17). These included pre- and post-surveys and real-time snap polling during events to track shifts and progress in the moment. Grantees also measured their progress through participant counts during events and views on websites or content on various social media platforms (n=9). Although these counts provided quantitative proof that community members were being reached, they did not reveal the qualitative impacts of grantees' work. Several grantees shared how they knew the impact of their work through anecdotal evidence, meaning talking to community members informally or hearing through word of mouth (n=9). This was especially true for organizations that were testing new models or did not have the capacity for measurement and evaluation.

Almost one-third of the grantees used notetaking or recordings of events to track progress in real time (n=10). This included graphic notetakers, videographers, photographers, and notetakers writing summaries of events or conversations. For many grantees, these records served as evidence to look back and reflect on after the fact. These records, alongside other methods of understanding progress (e.g., surveys), helped provide a fuller picture of their impact and gave them evidence that they could use in their reporting (n=5). Other grantees regularly used one-on-one interviews with their participants (n=6) or conversations with community partner organizations (n=2) to debrief, document progress made, and obtain participant feedback. These included both intake and pre- and post-event conversations.

Grantees also used evaluation or impact frameworks created independently or adopted from other organizations, such as the Aesthetic Perspectives framework and the Social Cohesion Impact Measure (SCIM) tool (n=7). Several grantees measured progress around their theories of change or strategic plans (n=4). A few grantees partnered with an evaluation consultant to support efforts to understand their impact (n=4). These frameworks helped provide needed boundaries to better inform and tailor their methods for understanding progress, further supporting grantees in any realignment on strategic or programmatic changes across the grant period.

A few grantees emphasized how measuring and communicating impact can be difficult, considering the diverse scope of pluralism work (n=4). Knowing what kinds of data to collect can feel vague and endless. One grantee explained, *"I struggle with how do we provide the kind of data that this particular industry needs to make a positive, confident decision to work with us?"* Another grantee explained: *"There were plenty of numbers to look at, as far as how many participated, and I even had some survey data, what's your opinion, pre and post, on whatever issue we were discussing. But that's not the stuff that I measure success by, necessarily."* Put another way, even with data in hand, making sense of and effectively translating the impact of the grantee's work is not easy.

Evaluator Observations

When embarking on an outcomes evaluation, we look for two things. First, we aim to clarify the changes that grantees seek to contribute to. Second, we seek evidence that those changes have occurred. The systems change framework in this evaluation allowed us to clarify the outcomes that grantees expected to achieve through their work, and grantees could easily classify their work into the categories we presented. When we moved to explore the evidence of having achieved those outcomes, all grantees were able to point to concrete evidence that was either quantitative, anecdotal, or both. However, not all grantees had a systematized method for collecting, let alone analyzing, data. The difficulty of measuring the progress of pluralism work was a throughline throughout interviews, especially because their work is about changing hearts and minds, which can be trickier to quantify.

This lack of systematic evidence across the grants points to an opportunity for improved measurement practices among grantees. As a funder, New Pluralists cannot understand the full impact of the grants without systematic, concrete evidence across grantees and evaluators. As mentioned in past memos, to have a more comprehensive understanding, New Pluralists might consider investing in resources to support grantees' ability to measure and track their efforts. Resources could be financial, but opportunities also exist to enhance grantees' understanding of outcomes and measurement techniques through resources like the Bridging Movement Alignment Council's SCIM tool. In our conversations with grantees and during the cohort sessions, the Bridgespan and FSG frameworks provided a clearer set of outcomes to which they could more easily relate their work. The clarity from the frameworks and demystification of what we mean by evidence (things we see, hear, or read around us), coupled with concrete tools for measurement and tracking, could go a long way in supporting grantees' measurement efforts.

Finally, New Pluralists should continue to consider whether having more structured data collection and measurement requirements and the financial resources to implement them would be worthwhile. These requirements could be more onerous for grantees, drifting away from New Pluralists' trust-based philanthropy approach. Navigating the tension between flexible reporting and the appetite for outcome data brings up an important decision point for New Pluralists.

Appendix B: List of HSH Project Descriptions

1. **The After Party**—*Ohio*

The After Party brought evangelicals a key biblically grounded message: the *how* of political engagement matters more to God than the *what* of policy outcomes. The After Party provided evangelical pastors and small group leaders in Ohio with the resources to transition the conversation away from the polarizing topics at the national stage to the local context of loving one's neighbor. Project partners included evangelical churches, multiple Christian colleges, and other key local networks.

2. **All In Initiative**—*Naugatuck River Valley, Connecticut*

In one of the most politically diverse and economically unequal areas of Connecticut, the Naugatuck Valley Project and TEAM, Inc., are encouraging residents to share their stories, build relationships, and take collective action to revitalize community life. During HSH, All In Initiative resident leaders across 10 different towns worked closely to address urgent issues facing their communities, including economic inequality, shrinking job opportunities, a childcare crisis, and a lack of affordable housing.

3. **Arrabon**—*Richmond, Virginia, and Birmingham, Alabama*

Arrabon provides skills building, coaching, and mentorship to evangelical congregations that wish to become cross-cultural communities. They use Christian theology to inform their curriculum and create space for lesson sharing, lament, and celebration as part of a process of reconciliation, racial healing, and inclusion. In their HSH project, they worked in two cities in the Bible Belt.

4. **Bears Ears Partnership**—*Bears Ears Cultural Landscape (region crossing Utah, Colorado, and New Mexico)*

Bears Ears National Monument covers more than 1.3 million acres of ancestral lands held sacred by multiple Indigenous nations and descendant communities. This partnership represents a model of collaborative land management, demonstrating how to bridge divides among tribal nations and local residents, find common ground, and protect the landscape for the future.

5. **Collective Justice**—*South King, Pierce, and Thurston counties, Washington*

Survivors of violence and people who experienced incarceration cofounded Collective Justice to seek solutions to violence that center the dignity of all people and build practices that lead to healing and repair, not shame and isolation. Collective Justice supports the following programs:

- Healing circles for people on all sides of serious harm to process grief and come to resolution
- Dialogue and accountability processes, where people who have experienced loss or harm can speak face-to-face with those who have caused harm
- An organizing academy for survivors of violence to identify community solutions to harm
- Trainings and public education for individuals and agencies, so that these practices become part of local institutions

6. Community Renewal International—*Shreveport, Louisiana*

Founded by a pastor who grew up in Shreveport, Community Renewal International sets out to prove that positive relationships are our most valuable (and value-creating) resource. Over the past 28 years, they have built a network, block by block, neighborhood by neighborhood, where people across the city are connected in friendship and care. This network has begun to act together to address shared challenges and co-create a common future, grounded in the goals and needs of residents across Shreveport. Their HSH project focused on two community-driven initiatives: one focused on improving schools and the other on ensuring residents had a voice in community development.

7. Covenant of Nations—*Great Lakes Region*

The Covenant of Nations is revitalizing an ancient relationship between the Haudenosaunee Confederacy (representing six nations across what is now upstate New York) and the Anishinaabe Nation (representing six nations across the Great Lakes region). They host Sacred Wampum gatherings to create spaces for dialogue across two traditional peoples and across generations, acknowledging the many ruptures that exist within these nations as well as between them. These gatherings aim to instill unity between these groups to heal Mother Earth and to revive sacred knowledge based on Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe ceremonies and traditional governance processes.

8. Community Cornerstones—*Chapel Hill, North Carolina*

Essential Partners is partnering with Interfaith Photovoice and Dispute Settlement to support local civic and faith groups, nonprofits, schools, law enforcement, and municipalities in Chapel Hill who feel moved to heal and sustain an entire region. These partners are training residents and sharing a range of techniques: structured dialogues and deliberation across divides, healing and restorative justice circles, collaborative storytelling and arts, and collective action. The goal of their HSH project is to embed these practices within a range of community institutions. By doing so, they seek to create a shift in local culture where residents experience connection, healing, and collaboration as regular facets of public life.

9. Fairbanks Climate Action Coalition (FCAC)—*Fairbanks and Interior Alaska*

Over the past several years, the Interfaith Working Group of FCAC has connected over 20 different spiritual communities. These communities span a broad spectrum of faith, spirituality, and political beliefs. The group takes civic action on climate change, grounded in the belief that faith carries enormous potential for cross-cultural healing. FCAC facilitates conversations about what unites us—rather than the political issues that might divide us—and provides space and tools for faith communities to undertake their own initiatives. In doing so, FCAC is supporting a diverse coalition of faith groups to forestall and adapt to the effects of climate change.

10. Future Caucus—*Arkansas and Oklahoma*

The Future Caucus is the largest cross-partisan network of young lawmakers in the United States, who are working together to build bridges and tackle policy solutions for big problems. However, young lawmakers have shared that they are experiencing significant barriers to maintaining this cross-cultural leadership, including greater need for leadership development and training, especially while working in toxic, polarized environments. In their HSH project, Future Caucus piloted a 10-month fellowship program in two states to invest in the leadership and well-being of these legislators and created a storytelling campaign to highlight these young leaders' positive community impacts.

11. Healing to Action—*Chicago, Illinois*

Healing to Action is working to address gender-based violence and support the leadership of low-income survivors of violence in Chicago. Healing to Action is building a powerful, incredibly diverse network of survivors through cross-cultural dialogue and grassroots organizing. Many of their survivor-leaders serve as lifelines in their communities, connecting and supporting isolated survivors (and helping them recognize their resilience). In this project, they developed a partnership strategy and a series of community dialogues that explored the root causes of gender-based violence and created opportunities for collective solutions to create a world free from violence.

12. La Maraña—*Puerto Rico*

La Maraña joins Puerto Rican communities in the codesign and construction of the spaces residents need to stay and thrive in Puerto Rico. Using participatory design methodologies, La Maraña facilitates dialogue and consensus building between community members, government representatives, and other stakeholders. They collectively dream—and build—the projects these communities envision for a dignified life in Puerto Rico. During their HSH project, they ran participatory design processes with community-based organizations across the island.

13. Meeting of America—*Lexington, Kentucky, and New Hampshire*

In 2022 and 2023, Listen First incubated Meeting of America in eastern Kentucky, centering the perspectives of conservatives and rural people. They brought Kentuckians together for a series of conversations to connect around their shared humanity, commit to shared values, and agree to fix things that they broadly agree are broken. Building on the learnings of that project, Meeting of America then partnered with The People on their project in New Hampshire, bringing its bridge-building methodology and expertise to a project focused on political reform.

14. National Housing Trust—*Washington, DC*

Two organizations, National Housing Trust and the Neighborhood Associates Corporation, partnered to address pressing issues affecting residents' sense of safety and belonging in neighborhoods in Washington, DC, that are undergoing rapid gentrification. Actions to push renters out of the neighborhood have created an us-versus-them mentality, resulting in high tensions between neighbors. This project is investing in the leadership of affordable housing residents by giving them tools to address stress and trauma. The project also supports those residents to advocate for their goals, engage constructively with neighbors, and educate building owners on how neighborhood change is affecting the lives of residents.

15. Neighborly Faith—*Chicago, Illinois*

In 2022, an evangelical campus group at a Christian college in Chicago became concerned that their programs were not meeting the moment—either for their faith or their city. The group wanted to begin partnering across faith traditions. At their invitation, Neighborly Faith convened and trained more than 20 local staff to lead change in their campus groups. These student leaders are building cross-faith partnerships and planning events that help students to question the allure of Christian nationalism and instead imagine their faith and citizenship through a lens of spirited pluralism.

16. Oak Ridge Periodic Tables—*Oak Ridge, Tennessee*

Oak Ridge Periodic Tables is a locally led initiative to bridge difference, reclaim hidden stories, and offer healing spaces for their community. With support from The People's Supper, they are training a team of skilled "Conversation Resourcers" to bring together diverse civic and cultural leaders within Oak Ridge for a series of arts-based events and meals. The purpose of these gatherings is to deepen interpersonal connections and spark collective action. Together, they are amplifying local partners' existing efforts to celebrate the hidden stories of Oak Ridge and those who call it home. These efforts include reclaiming the city's untold history of being the first school system in Tennessee (and the Southeast) to desegregate.

17. Out in the Open—*Waldo and Southern Penobscot counties, Maine*

Although national narratives tell stories of division among residents in rural places, Out in the Open members' experiences in their rural home communities tell a very different story. Their story is one of interdependence and reliance on neighbors, who hold many of their same values despite different worldviews. Their HSH project had two components. The first was to invest in the leadership of rural LGBTQ+ people to develop relationships, co-create goals, and build rural organizing skills. The second was to host a series of Creating Belonging events, which will convene the larger local community to meet as neighbors, and then co-create strategies to build communities where everyone is better off.

18. The People—*New Hampshire*

The People gathers and enables everyday Americans to find common ground and act together to create a government that is truly of, by, and for the people. For their HSH project, in deep partnership with New Hampshire residents, The People facilitated a democratic process to create an action plan to reform the state's political system. They began with small group deliberations to identify key issues that matter to a diverse range of New Hampshire residents. They then organized a statewide assembly for residents to prioritize top concerns and solutions, resulting in an action plan to make the political system more responsive to the will of the people.

19. Reconstructing Reconstruction—*New Orleans, Louisiana*

Common Ground USA partnered with the Plessy & Ferguson Initiative to support healing, reconciliation, and transformation in New Orleans. Together, they built the capacity of diverse community leaders to facilitate workshops on collective memory, trust building, and healing. These resident leaders then worked with diverse groups of neighbors to design historical markers that honor the complex history of the Reconstruction era. Through this project, New Orleanian communities are gaining tools to navigate the political, social, and economic dynamics they face today and to create spaces for healing, trust building, and collaboration.

20. Red Door Project—*Portland, Oregon*

The Red Door Project uses the power of stories to highlight our differences, illuminate our shared humanity, and create opportunities for new thinking. Their project used theater-based storytelling to shift how criminal justice professionals interact with community members, as well as how those communities understand the institutions and individuals who have sworn to protect and serve them. This project shifts hearts and minds through art, following each performance with curriculum, conversation, and reflection exercises to catalyze change.

21. Resetting the Table—*Buffalo, New York*

Following a year of tragedy and hate-fueled violence in Buffalo, local faith and community leaders spoke with Resetting the Table about their desire to transform this painful moment into one of connection, collaboration, and repair. Resetting the Table started by training local practitioners to disarm tension and fear and open much-needed lines of communication. They are building and supporting a network of local norm-shapers, who can reinforce narratives of empathy and hope. The norm-shapers will support a series of community-led forums for Buffalo residents to connect and solve problems across difference.

22. Statewide Organizing Community eMpowerment (SOCM)—*10 counties in Tennessee*

SOCM is a democratically controlled, member-based organization in the coal fields of East Tennessee. SOCM members engage residents from all walks of life in conversation about their experiences, identify shared challenges and opportunities, and create resident-led plans for action. Campaigns during HSH included a multicounty transpartisan campaign to strengthen public schools for every student. They also supported tenants who were experiencing huge rent hikes and unlawful evictions and repurposed abandoned land mines to serve the interests of community members.

23. Southern Arts & Culture Coalition—*Regional South*

The Southern Arts & Culture Coalition was founded in 2020 by a broad group of grassroots arts and cultural organizations based in the regional South. These organizations have a shared goal of creating enduring bonds within and between diverse communities. They unite politically, religiously, and economically varied communities through creative traditions, community story sharing, hands-on artmaking, collective action, and frontline cultural work. These organizations come in many shapes and sizes, including a warehouse-turned-local art studio, a school-turned-community center, and a group of neighbors gathered around a kitchen table. Because these organizations do not always fit the traditional mold, they often struggle to gain the resources they need to survive. This HSH project invested in this grassroots-to-grassroots coalition to build economic and organizational power for arts and cultural organizations across the South.

24. Urban Rural Action—*Oregon*

Tensions across ideological and cultural divides have fueled a secessionist movement in Oregon, where many rural counties voted for a proposal to secede and join conservative neighbors further east in Idaho. In their HSH project, Urban Rural Action supported intergroup collaboration on local economic issues to address partisan divisiveness and hostility. They brought together an ideologically, racially, generationally, and geographically diverse cohort of residents in four rural counties to build relationships, strengthen collaboration skills, and address local economic challenges.

25. The Village Square—*Tallahassee, Florida*

The Village Square has been building trusting and consequential relationships between citizens of different colors, creeds, and political ideologies inside Tallahassee for 17 years. In this project, The Village Square set out to engage siloed groups that were less likely to participate in their model of hometown pluralism—particularly ideological conservatives, people of color, and younger citizens. The team built a core group of community leaders spanning these targeted groups that met regularly to build relationships with each other, establish trust, and inform the Village Square's strategy.

26. Violence Prevention Network—*Pittsburgh and Southwestern Pennsylvania*

This part of Southwestern Pennsylvania is home to 28 armed militia organizations. Created by the Violence Prevention Network, the RESTORE project aims to prevent violent extremism by harnessing the powerful role of trusted community leaders (e.g., social workers, school counselors, health care professionals, faith leaders, therapists). The RESTORE project trained these community leaders in evidence-based tools and methodologies. The RESTORE project supported the community leaders in identifying individuals motivated by ideological extremism, helping those individuals to abandon violence, reject hate, and embrace new ways of thinking and acting.

27. Warm Cookies of the Revolution—*Denver suburbs and the San Luis Valley, Colorado*

Warm Cookies of the Revolution uses art and cultural organizing to engage diverse sets of people throughout the state, bridge cultural divides, and become more democratically involved. For example, they have organized events like an Intergenerational Show-and-Tell Mixtape to share stories and songs while addressing crucial community issues. They also have a Civic Stitch n' Bitch that invites woodcarvers, whittlers, quilters, finger painters, and others to get together and discuss hot topics in their community. HSH supported them to deepen their work and refine their cultural organizing model with rural residents across the San Luis Valley and with residents in the Denver suburbs.

28. WV Can't Wait—*West Virginia*

WV Can't Wait invests in the leadership of elected officials and community leaders through one-on-one support and participatory governance (joint town halls, public workshops, and collaborative constituent service models). They provide lasting infrastructure for this work, including an active support community among elected officials across the state and the creation of a new fund to support experiments in co-governance. Their goal is to realize a new way of governing, where public officials are truly governing alongside all of their constituents.

29. Working Together Mississippi—*Mississippi*

Working Together Mississippi is an emerging statewide coalition of religious congregations and nonprofits united by the belief that Mississippi can do better. In their HSH project, they increased the capacity for coordinated action on local and state issues. They did so by building a network of community organizations and leaders representing Mississippi's full racial, religious, socioeconomic, political, and geographic diversity. They also sought to address the state's out-migration of young people by supporting, connecting, and creating belonging for young leaders who are committed to creating a brighter future for Mississippi.

30. Wormfarm Institute—*Southwest Wisconsin*

The Wormfarm Institute has been working for more than 20 years to bridge the rural-urban divide through programming at the intersection of culture and agriculture. Their programs include a farm-based artist residency, seasonal festivals, and Roadside Culture Stands across south central Wisconsin. They have built a network of artists, farmers, small business owners, conservationists, and organizers. This network works to honor the heritage of this area and create meaningful economic opportunities while responsibly stewarding the land upon which their livelihood depends.

31. Wisconsin Institute for Public Policy and Service (WIPPS)—*Marathon County, Wisconsin*

Two years ago, conflict erupted when Marathon County's Diversity Commission issued a nonbinding resolution supporting values of diversity and inclusion. Since then, more issues have continued to pile up, including debates about what books are taught in schools, a series of youth suicides, disagreement over vaccine policies, and PFA contamination of their water supply. In their HSH project, WIPPS trained moderators and hosted a regular series of representative citizen panels, inviting intergenerational participants who are equally representing urban and rural central Wisconsin communities.

32. Youth Reimagining Education—*Twin Cities, Minnesota*

World Savvy, Bridgemakers, and Youthprise are three youth-serving organizations based in the Twin Cities, with deep connections with communities across the state. They are investing in the leadership of students who want to collaborate across differences and improve education for all. In their HSH project, these partners co-created a set of youth-led, intergenerational listening sessions to understand what young people and other community leaders want to see in their schools. Then, teams of students and community members participated in a human-centered design process to generate actionable solutions that can be brought to local and state leaders.

NEW PLURALISTS