



A Framework of Philanthropy's Role in Strengthening Democracy December 2004

Revised December 16, 2004

PACE & the Purpose of This Framework

PACE – Philanthropy for Active Civic Engagement is an emerging association of philanthropy comprised of donors and grantmakers who share concern about the condition of democracy in the United States and a belief that philanthropy has the power to improve that condition by supporting pathways to participation. The members of the board of **PACE** believe that broad and informed public participation is the bedrock of a free, democratic and civil society. The **PACE** mission is to inspire interest, understanding and investment in civic engagement.

PACE's goals are to:

- ✓ build a community within philanthropy of donors and grantmakers who are committed to debate and action that results in increased civic participation within the communities they are funding;
- ✓ inspire and incubate strategy circles within philanthropy and between philanthropy, policy makers, nonprofit leaders to support active citizenship; and,
- ✓ to increase the quantity and quality of philanthropic investment in civic engagement strategies.

PACE supports and nurtures collective reflection among donors and grantmakers and encourages vigorous debate and knowledge-development about effective methods for strengthening democratic practice in communities across the nation.

This framework offers donors and grantmakers a starting point for assessing how their funding supports or relates to the goal of cultivating active citizenship. Over time **PACE** expects this framework to evolve as we build knowledge about the many ways in which philanthropy defines active citizenship and funds its development. With this framework as a platform, donors and grantmakers who share the common goal of active civic engagement but rely on different strategies will be able to relate to one another, understand one another, and explore opportunities to work together.

A Closer Look at Investments to Strengthen Democracy

What is special about democracy? The dictionary tells us that democracy means the following:

1. Government by the people, exercised either directly or through elected representatives.
2. The common people, considered as the primary source of political power.
3. The principles of social equality and respect for the individual within a community.

In a healthy democracy, people feel not only able to influence government, but responsible to do so. Our democracy is at risk when it is narrowly understood to be the sum of electoral campaigns that are competitive in nature, geographically based, influenced by money and grounded in personal interests rather than public values.

In order to broaden our vision of what democracy is and to encourage the involvement of donors and grantmakers across a broad spectrum of interest and investment areas, **PACE** is proposing two lenses through which to reflect on the condition of democracy in America and philanthropy's role in strengthening democratic practice:

- ✓ Individual Participation and Democratic Practice
- ✓ Forces and Institutions Shaping Pathways of Participation

Two Lenses for Looking at Democracy & Philanthropic Investments

I. INDIVIDUAL PARTICIPATION AND DEMOCRATIC PRACTICE

A. Individual Participation

First and foremost, democracy depends on participation of the people. Active civic engagement—financial giving, volunteering, voting, and organizing—is the foundation of our political system. The work of Westheimer and Kahne¹ gives us three forms of citizenship to consider:

- The **responsible citizen** obeys laws, votes, volunteers, and works and pays taxes.
- The **participatory citizen** is informed about issues and knows how government. In addition participatory citizens have a commitment to giving back through service.
- The **justice oriented citizen** seeks out and addresses areas of injustice, has a critical analysis of what causes social problems, and is willing to have social structures change in order to address underlying issues.

PACE embraces donors and grantmakers who are developing citizenship by funding in such areas as:

- ✓ Character education;
- ✓ Civics education;
- ✓ Community organizing;
- ✓ National (and public) service;
- ✓ Faith-based community organizing;
- ✓ Volunteering;
- ✓ Service-learning; and,
- ✓ Youth organizing.

Other examples of relevant grantmaking that addresses individual participation are support for media projects and leadership development.

¹ Westheimer, J. and Kahne, J. (2003). "What Kind of Citizen? Political Choices and Educational Goals." *Campus Compact Reader*. Winter. 1-13.

B. Democratic Practice

Political life can take many forms. People can participate as individuals or as members of an organization or association. They can represent their own interests or advocate on behalf of the interests of others. Each of the following is a different approach to citizen involvement in the process of public decision-making:

1. Direct Democracy

Citizens directly participate in the decision-making process (ballot initiatives, referenda). This form of democracy is used as an alternative to representative democracy.

PACE embraces donors and grantmakers who are supporting direct democracy by funding issue organizing, citizen commissions, public policy education campaigns, communication and advocacy efforts.

2. Representative Democracy

Citizens appoint or elect delegates to represent their interests in governing bodies and policy making institutions. For most of us, this is how we think about democracy—the ongoing campaigns to elect leaders as well as the lobbying, advocacy and issue organizing to influence them once they are in office.

PACE embraces donors and grantmakers who are supporting representative democracy by funding in such areas as voter registration, campaign finance and election reform, policy analysis, public education campaigns, and organizing efforts that target public officials and elected leaders.

3. Deliberation

According to Aristotle, politics is the dialogue among citizens which took place around the town center on a daily basis. Deliberation is the process by which people with different perspectives come together to learn about one another's interests and work together to address and resolve complex community problems. Deliberation builds on what Robert Putnam refers to as "bridging social capital", the sense of connection of people across differences.

PACE embraces donors and grantmakers who are supporting deliberation by funding such activities as town hall meetings, listening circles, community-wide planning, all of which are designed to promote quality public discourse and problem-solving.

II. FORCES AND INSTITUTIONS SHAPING PATHWAYS OF PARTICIPATION

The following have direct effect on the condition of American democracy:

A. Civil Rights and Liberties

The parameters of our participation in democracy are established by the Constitution, the Bill of Rights and the myriad court decisions and government actions that have extended those rights and liberties and protections. These are core elements of American democracy and determine the degree to which we as citizens can and do participate in civic and public life. Any discussion

of strengthening democracy must take into account the ways in which civil rights and liberties have changed over time and the degree to which some members of society are disenfranchised from full participation.

PACE embraces donors and grantmakers who are attending to the protection and preservation of civil rights and liberties by funding in such areas as equal access, voter education, religious freedom, immigration reform, and judicial reform.

B. Government and Governance and Accountability

The structure and operations of government and their nonprofit partners are also determining factors in the ability of citizens to effectively participate.

PACE embraces donors and grantmakers who are supporting effective governance by funding relevant research and analysis and structural reforms designed to reduce the barriers to citizen participation in government and the nonprofit sector.

C. Immigration and New Citizens

The arrival of new immigrants generates opportunities and challenges related to integrating different cultures and beliefs into American society while still fostering commitment to the principles of American democracy.

PACE embraces donors and grantmakers who are supporting efforts to integrate immigrants and new citizens into civic and community life, including immigrant outreach, cross-cultural dialogues and citizenship education.

D. Religion and Democracy

In a free, democratic and pluralistic society there will always be a need for discussion about the relationship between religion and government. The relation of church and state requires an ongoing balancing between the right to freely practice religion with the need to protect against the imposition of religious beliefs. The leadership and critical role that faith-based institutions play in our communities shapes the way we prioritize concerns and values.

PACE embraces donors and grantmakers who are supporting exploration of this area by funding discussions and research on faith-based initiatives, faith-based community organizing, and efforts that address the general topic of religion and democracy.

E. Media and Telecommunications

Media plays a significant role in creating an informed and engaged citizenry, the advent of broad access to electronic media and telecommunications offers new opportunities and challenges for creating informed citizens. Examples of current media developments influencing civic engagement include ethnic-based media, electronic communications networks (such as meetup.com and moveon.org), participatory media (blogs), the wider range of options for both broadcasting and narrow-casting information, and the increased speed with which individuals can broadcast and respond to news.

PACE embraces donors and grantmakers who are investing in electronic engagement strategies, telecommunications capacity building for civic engagement, and media skill development for population groups that are under-represented in civic and political decision-making.