

Continuity and Change

The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Strategic Plan for Programs

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since 1969, The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation has demonstrated an abiding commitment to the humanities and the arts. Our steadfastness of purpose has always been balanced with flexibility of approach. Through an 18 month strategic planning process, the Foundation has clarified the vision that in the coming years will guide our support of humanistic scholarship, liberal arts and doctoral education, and the performing and visual arts.

Our Mission

The Foundation endeavors to strengthen, promote, and, where necessary, defend the contributions of the humanities and the arts to human flourishing and to the well-being of diverse and democratic societies. To this end, we support exemplary institutions of higher education and culture as they renew and provide access to an invaluable heritage of ambitious, path-breaking work.

Our Goals

The Foundation has established four overarching goals that will shape our program areas as well as guide specific grantmaking decisions. We will pursue:

1. A bold and creative approach to grantmaking, responsive to promising new organizations as well as to established institutions, and attentive to both short- and long-term issues in the humanities, the arts, and higher education.
2. Deep and broad public understanding of and support for the humanities, arts, diversity, and education, in the U.S. and internationally.
3. Wide participation of previously underrepresented communities in the humanities, the arts, and higher education.
4. Strong collaboration in the philanthropic sector in support of the humanities and the arts as well as among institutions supported by the Foundation.

Evolution of Core Programs and Practices

In pursuit of such ends, the Foundation will modify its framing structure and practices. In particular, we will:

1. **Recalibrate our approach to philanthropy.** We will continue *philanthropic investment* that strengthens institutions while increasing *strategic philanthropy* that spurs grantees to test theories of change in response to longer-term issues in the humanities, the arts, and higher education.

2. **Reconfigure our program structure**

(Figure 1). We are merging and re-naming program areas to enable the Foundation to: a) consider critical challenges and opportunities across the entire system of higher education; b) respond more actively to significant new developments and concerns for artists and institutions of art and culture;

c) continue the development of scholarly tools, resources, communities, and networks in the digital age; d) reinforce the interactions of the *Diversity* and *Scholarly Communications* programs with all areas of Foundation grantmaking; and e) extend beyond South Africa our targeted grantmaking to international arts, humanities, and educational institutions whose work can help stabilize fragile democracies.

3. **Broaden eligibility for grants.** We seek a larger family of grantees to underscore the potential contribution of the humanities and arts to social mobility.

4. **Promote cross-cutting foci across programs.** We seek collaboration among our program areas around the following foci: a) Diversity and inclusion, b) Digital media, c) Public humanities and arts, and d) International collaboration.

FIGURE 1 – PROGRAM AREAS

1. *Higher Education and Scholarship in the Humanities*
2. *Arts and Cultural Heritage*
3. *Diversity*
4. *Scholarly Communications*
5. *International Higher Education and Strategic Projects*

Program Area Plans

Our balance of continuity and change is visible in the Foundation’s five program areas. These will continue much of their current work, discontinue past projects that have run their course, and embark on new or strengthened areas of emphasis.

1. **Higher Education and Scholarship in the Humanities**

Leading colleges and universities are custodians of knowledge; they produce, preserve, and transmit it for the good of culture and society. Support for the humanities in these institutions can bolster their commitments to liberal education, their capacities for innovative research, and their ability to contribute substantially to debate about contemporary challenges. *Through the program in Higher Education and Scholarship in the Humanities (HESH), the Foundation will continue to assist select colleges, universities, and research institutes in the work of training scholars and producing scholarship in the humanities broadly conceived, and thereby contributing to culture and society.* New areas and strengthened emphases include:

- Programs that scale up training for humanistic engagement with the digital.
- Reforms of doctoral education that broaden the intellectual and professional preparation of students.
- Programs that introduce faculty and graduate students to the science of cognition and to scholarship on student learning.
- Assistance to less well-endowed liberal arts colleges in planning for their intellectual and financial futures.
- Research on broad structural questions in higher education.

- Initiatives that involve humanities scholars in grand challenge questions that require interdisciplinary collaboration.
- Collaborations among research universities, liberal arts colleges, and other cultural and educational institutions in their communities.
- Support for faculty and student work in the public humanities.

2. Arts and Cultural Heritage

The arts constitute fields of inquiry and production that are distinct from other forms of thought and expression. Accumulated over millennia, our global artistic heritage is a resource for cultural renewal as well as historical understanding. Through performances, objects, and images, artists have long provoked insight and pleasure, and enriched and reflected on human experience. In contemporary society, they stimulate innovation, reinvent media, articulate cultural critique, and work with communities to effect change. *Through the Arts and Cultural Heritage program (ACH), the Foundation nurtures, studies, and preserves exceptional creative accomplishment, while seeking to promote a diverse and sustainable ecosystem for the arts.* The program will continue its efforts to support the work of outstanding artists, curators, conservators, and scholars, and to strengthen performing arts organizations, art museums, and conservation centers. New areas and strengthened emphases include:

- Programs that strengthen the creation and preservation of, as well as scholarship about, new media and multidisciplinary arts.
- Initiatives that broaden public access to and understanding of the arts.
- Research and programs that enhance diversity and inclusion in arts organizations.
- Collaborations between institutions of higher education and the arts.
- Support for measures that would address vulnerabilities distinctive to artists and cultural heritage preservation:
 - Financial health of small arts organizations.
 - Networks for emergency preparedness and response.

3. Diversity

Building just and durable democracies in the 21st century depends on extending the benefits of higher education to all, and enabling students of all social, ethnic, and economic backgrounds to experience and value diversity and inclusiveness in their pursuit of learning. *The Diversity program seeks to help diversify the next generation of college and university faculty through the Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship (MMUF) and other pipeline programs, and it aims to strengthen institutions that improve educational attainment of historically underrepresented groups.* More generally, the Diversity grantmaking area supports projects or research on the relationship between diversity and learning. New areas and strengthened emphases include:

- An initiative to increase representation of the Latino/a population in PhD programs and the professoriate.
- Programs to increase the percentage of MMUF fellows who enroll in PhD programs.
- Partnerships between strongly performing HBCUs and neighboring institutions capable of contributing to curricular enhancement.

- Support for organizations that employ traditional and non-traditional means to help colleges and universities diversify their student population.
- Research to increase understanding of diversity and efforts at diversification and inclusion.
- Support or co-sponsorship across program areas of projects that promote diversification or seek to advance evolving understandings of diversity's role in democratic societies.

4. Scholarly Communications

Digital technologies have transformed how knowledge is embodied, organized, disseminated, and preserved. Use of these technologies has the potential to expand and equalize access to cultural and scholarly resources across sectors of society. *The Scholarly Communications program assists research libraries, archives, museums, universities, presses, and arts organizations that seek to realize this potential, and thereby to further our collective understanding of societies and cultures around the world. The Scholarly Communications program promotes the common good by supporting the creation, dissemination, use, and preservation of original sources, interpretive scholarship in the humanities, and other scholarly and artistic materials.* The program aims to develop the sustainable tools, organizations, and networks of scholars and other professionals needed for these purposes. New areas and strengthened emphases include:

- A multi-pronged plan to assist the evolution of academic publishing in the Internet age.
- Preservation of digital scholarship and collections, with a special emphasis on born-digital publications.
- Support for digitizing Hidden Collections and making them broadly accessible.
- A global collections initiative to provide access to non-English language resources.

5. International Higher Education and Strategic Projects

Strong systems of higher education and cultural institutions are essential to building and sustaining viable polities and societies in emerging as well as more established regions of the globe. *The Foundation's promising experience in South Africa justifies targeted extension of that work to other countries or regions where the Foundation's commitment to the humanities, the arts, and higher education could contribute to stabilizing fragile democracies.* New areas and strengthened emphases will include:

- Programs that engage scholars in all academic disciplines in the joint study of core problems affecting their own societies.
- Initiatives that mobilize humanistic scholars and artists to participate in interdisciplinary and international collaboration on grand challenge questions.
- Projects that share the benefits of teaching, learning, and research in the humanities and the arts with the public.
- Coordination of international grantmaking across all program areas in order to heighten the salience of global contexts to all our grantmaking.

Presidential Initiatives

The five program areas will be supplemented by presidential initiatives, which will be pursued Foundation-wide. The first two are *Advancing the Public Understanding of the Arts and Humanities*, which focuses on communicating the value of the arts and humanities to the public at large; and *Our Compelling Interests*, which sponsors and publicizes research on the value of diversity in a wide range of social, economic, cultural, and educational contexts.

Conclusion

The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation's Strategic Plan for Programs sets forth the Foundation's vision, broad goals, and grantmaking directions. Implementation will require a phased approach that builds on the Foundation's past, ensures continuity with recent priorities, and carefully develops new initiatives. While the strategic plan will guide program staff as they pursue the Foundation's mission, it will also require refinement as the humanities and the arts evolve. Yet with this starting point we anticipate creative exchanges and collaborations with other philanthropies in the years to come. We also believe that this strategic plan will help us better support the institutions and organizations that we so admire to secure the humanities, arts, and higher education for the future.
