



Investor Prospectus:

Bridging America's Divides
With Civic Health Project's
Philanthropic Funds

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America's deep political and social divisions *can* - and *must* - be repaired if our national experiment in self-governance is to endure.

Executive Summary

Civic Health Project's philanthropic funds empower individual donors, donor advised funds, family offices, and smaller foundations to help repair America's deep social and political divides.

When it comes to repairing America's deep political and social divisions, what *works*? And even more importantly, what *scales*?

With societal conflict, partisan gridlock, culture wars, and political violence on the rise, these questions are more urgent than ever. Repairing division is "the solution that unlocks all the other solutions," since problem-solving, policymaking, and philanthropic impact are all stymied when partisan animosity is so high - and social trust so low - between Americans.

It can feel daunting, however, to diagnose and remedy the complex factors that have given rise to this deeply divided moment in America.

Civic Health Project, a nonprofit, nonpartisan grantmaking organization, has dedicated the past four years to understanding how to reduce toxic political division, foster social cohesion, and promote healthier civil discourse in America. Along the way, our team has cultivated deep relationships - and earned a reputation for excellence - in the academic, nonprofit, media, and philanthropic sectors.

Through constant landscape analysis and intensive due diligence, we strive to ensure that the organizations and projects we fund are (1) grounded in social science theory, (2) rigorously evaluated in terms of societal impact, and (3) capable of scaling this impact rapidly.

Our team at Civic Health Project is proud to introduce four new philanthropic funds that invite others to join us in repairing America's divides:

- Bridge Builders Fund
- Culture Changers Fund
- Insight Seekers Fund
- Civic Health Partners Fund

Inspired to repair America's deep political and social divides? Invest with Civic Health Project to help solve one of the key problems of our time.

The Problem

America's strengths are being undermined by our extreme political divisions, eroding social fabric, and deteriorating civil discourse.

Regardless of your political leanings or level of political activism, chances are you worry about rising levels of division in America. This division tends to be characterized most often along political lines, i.e. are you a Republican or a Democrat, a conservative or a progressive, a "red" or a "blue?" However, our political identities are shaped by – and intertwined with – many other fault lines across which we express our differences, including but not limited to race, religion, gender, age, economic status, and geography.

Many factors explain Americans' recent, rising levels of partisan animosity. As humans, we have always been wired to be "groupish" or even "tribal" based on strong, innate needs to feel that we are right, moral, purposeful, and safely nested within one or more identifiable groups. Unfortunately, these human tendencies are being exploited and weaponized against us by bad faith actors in today's corrosive political, media, and social media landscapes. These actors -who enrage us to earn our votes, funds, likes, tweets, and shares - benefit most when we as Americans focus on what divides us, rather than what unites us.

At Civic Health Project, we describe this as a perverse supply and demand loop, in which supply-side "conflict entrepreneurs" act on strong political and economic incentives to exploit our differences, while we as individuals succumb to our internally-wired demand preferences for simplistic "us and them" thinking, in-group vs out-group identification, and strong tribal affiliation. Unless we can disrupt this loop, we face a wide array of risks and harms:

- At the most personal level, we lose relationships with family members, friends, colleagues, and neighbors who hold different values and beliefs from our own. In our communities, we witness or belong to school boards, city councils, civic clubs, or church congregations that can no longer function effectively.
- At the state and federal levels, we see elected officials and civil servants incapable of working together and solving problems across ever-widening partisan aisles. Legislative gridlock, interparty bickering, and intra-party "purity tests" make it impossible even to secure outcomes favored by broad majorities of voters.
- Beyond legislative paralysis lurks the greater threat of democratic backsliding, as diminished trust leads political opponents to embrace anti-democratic beliefs and behaviors, rationalizing this on the grounds that the other side poses an existential threat and must be kept from power by any means necessary.
- A number of surveys, scholars, and commentators have warned in increasingly strident terms that America could be on the brink of an even darker chapter, marked

by incidents of politically-motivated violence, secession movements, wider societal breakdown, or even some virtually unimaginable, 21st century version of civil war.

You might feel like the problem of deepening division across America is simply too big, complex, or inevitable to solve. Certainly, our extreme political divisions, eroding social fabric, and deteriorating civil discourse are interrelated challenges that social scientists might aptly describe as “wicked problems” lacking quick, simple solutions.

As complex as these problems may seem, however, there are very simple reasons why we *must* choose to focus on them. First, repairing our extreme divisions makes all of our other societal problems easier - and less costly - to solve. Furthermore, the benefits of repairing America's divisions are enduring and multi- generational, as we transform societal norms and incentives in ways that take deep root within younger and older Americans alike.

Finally, and more alarmingly, a *failure* to address and mitigate these divisions risks unraveling our fragile, beautiful “American experiment” in self-governance.

What will be our generation's legacy to the ones that follow: a country weakened by division or strengthened by diversity?

Explore further:

[Depolarizing America: promising paths forward](#)

[Why we must prioritize bridging our divides](#)

[Philanthropy must disrupt polarization](#)

The Solution

With keen insight and sustained investment, we can shift societal norms and incentives toward improved connection, cohesion, and civil discourse.

Shifting deeply entrenched societal norms and economic incentives – even when we know they might be harming us – isn't quick or easy work. Consider, for example, the decades-long, multi-faceted effort required to disrupt America's long love affair with smoking. Reducing our extreme divisions – and elevating norms of social cohesion and healthy civil discourse – will require similarly a long-term, integrated approach.

Effective, sustained, and well-resourced interventions are needed to address these questions at the *individual*, *interpersonal*, and *institutional* levels:

- As *individuals*, how do we soften - rather than further harden - our perceptions of others and their ideas? How do we cultivate norms of listening, empathy, open mindedness, intellectual humility, and critical thinking? How do we discern and reject divisive rhetoric and strategies?

- In our *interpersonal* relationships, how do we cultivate the skill and will to engage constructively across lines of difference? How do we leverage civil discourse, dialogue and deliberation to enlighten and connect, rather than enrage and divide?
- How do the *institutions* in which we participate - such as our schools, workplaces, clubs, churches, and self-governing spaces - develop the capacity and wherewithal to strengthen, rather than further erode, our social fabric? How do we strengthen the problem-solving capabilities of these institutions from the local to the national level?

Civic Health Project invests in innovative organizations, projects, and people dedicated to answering these critical societal questions.

Civic Health Project is uniquely positioned to accelerate America's shift towards norms of bridge-building, connection, cohesion, and civil discourse.

Our Approach

[Civic Health Project](#) is dedicated to repairing America's extreme political divisions, fostering bridge-building and social cohesion, and enabling healthier civil discourse and decision-making across our citizenry, politics, and media. We pursue this mission primarily by awarding grants and by incubating various strategic projects, while also inviting other funders to join us in accelerating our impact.

We approach our grantmaking and strategic investments with a venture capital mindset. We rigorously evaluate each organization's ability to scale its impact and achieve sustainable funding. We take a portfolio view, evaluating how different organizations within specific verticals contribute to the larger mission of improving civic health. By taking a wide landscape view and using venture due diligence rigor, we optimize our investments to achieve a "unicorn" outcome: a vibrant and healthy democracy.

Our work is steeped in leading-edge social science, informed by rigorous focus on measurement and evaluation, and grounded in the deep, hands-on relationships we have forged with academics, practitioners, peer funders, and many other experts. We have earned our reputation for working openly, humbly, curiously, and collaboratively across a highly dynamic – and increasingly impactful – ecosystem of changemakers concerned with repairing America's political and social fabric.

Broadly, Civic Health Project engages in four main areas of activity:

Grantmaking & Fundraising	Strategic Initiatives
We award grants to practitioners, creatives, and academics who are pursuing healthier discourse, bridge-building, collaboration, and problem-solving across our political and social divides. To augment our primary funding source (our co-founder Rob Romero's donor-advised fund), we raise external funding and also pursue collaborative co-funding arrangements.	Where we see important gaps or opportunities, we launch and incubate strategic initiatives until they can take root independently. America Talks , the Strengthening Democracy Challenge , and Bridge Entertainment Labs are three examples of large-scale, strategic initiatives launched with funding and / or incubation support from us..
Field Building & Advocacy	Measurement & Evaluation
We believe in the power of collective impact to help address society's most complex, intractable problems; through advisory roles and participation in working groups, we actively steer the bridge-building field's efforts towards collaborative action, best practice sharing, continuous learning, and rigorous self reflection.	We invest in academic research and practitioner programs that are specifically concerned with measuring the efficacy of bridge-building interventions, in order to increase rigor in our vetting of practitioner organizations and to deliver reliable accountability metrics to the broader bridging ecosystem.

We understand the path forward. We know what must be done, who is doing the best work, and how to measure progress. But the challenge and the opportunity are too vast for the small handful of philanthropic funders supporting the bridge builders, culture changers, and insight seekers who aim to strengthen America's political and social fabric.

To increase the speed and deepen the impact of this critical work, *more* and *faster* investment is needed. The individuals and organizations dedicated to reducing partisan animosity, fostering social cohesion, and improving civil discourse are, on the whole, sorely underfunded relative to the challenge. Today, billions of political, corporate, and even charitable dollars flow in ways that amplify rather than attenuate our differences. With so many people and organizations funding the "fight," who will fund the "peace?"

This is where you come in.

Explore further:

[A funder's guide to building social cohesion](#)

[Unleashing philanthropy's big bets for social change](#)

Join the movement to strengthen America's political and social fabric, by investing in one or more of our nonpartisan, nonprofit funds.

The Funds

By donating to Civic Health Project, you can play an outsized role in mending America's political and social fabric, for the benefit of current and future generations.

Each of our philanthropic investment funds, described below, supports a mix of grantmaking and strategic incubation activities that meet our criteria of (1) being grounded in social science theory, (2) having a rigorous impact evaluation approach, and (3) demonstrating clear potential to scale.

Because Civic Health Project covers all of our operational costs through the sustained financial support of our co-founder Rob Romero, 100% of investments in the philanthropic funds described below are redistributed as grants to nonpartisan, nonprofit organizations, typically within 6-12 months of receiving the funds.

Not sure which fund(s) to choose? No problem! Let us allocate your unrestricted contribution, routing investment on your behalf where and when it is needed most.

Bridge Builders Fund

By contributing to the Bridge Builders Fund, you are augmenting our ability to make seed grants to the most effective individual leaders and organizations in America's rapidly growing bridge-building field.

Civic Health Project funds, promotes, and connects the heroic work of nonprofit leaders and teams who are dedicated to reducing partisan animosity, fostering social cohesion, normalizing bridge-building, and improving civil discourse and decision-making across America. Individually and collectively, hundreds of these organizations are inspiring Americans to embrace less divisive, more cohesive norms, beliefs, and behaviors.

Our grants are sized and timed to support recipient organizations at critical inflection points, as they aim to scale, measure, or otherwise increase the impact of their work. In addition to funding individual nonprofits, the Bridge Builders Fund also incubates strategic projects that

are designed to amplify awareness, improve reach, encourage collaboration, and accelerate learning across the entire bridge-building field.

Projects and organizations supported by our Bridge Builders fund include [Meeting of America](#), [America Talks](#), [American Exchange Project](#), [One America Movement](#), [BridgeUSA](#), [Better Arguments Project](#), [Millennial Action Project](#), [More Perfect Union](#), [Resetting the Table](#), and many others. To learn more about the nonprofit organizations and strategic projects that have benefited from our funding, click [here](#).

Culture Changers Fund

By contributing to the Culture Changers Fund, you are helping us tap the magic of popular entertainment as a medium for transcending Americans' deepest divides and opening us up to one another's humanity and dignity.

Arguably, the fastest route to shifting American societal norms in healthier directions is by leveraging popular cultural pathways including film, TV, social media, and music. As the incubator of now-independent [Bridge Entertainment Labs](#), and through investments in pioneering entertainment research and compelling documentary films, Civic Health Project has been an innovator in reducing partisan animosity and fostering social cohesion through popular entertainment.

Projects and organizations supported by our Culture Changers fund include [Bridge Entertainment Labs](#), [The Reunited States](#) (documentary), [Abortion Talks](#) (documentary), and "Us vs. Them" (documentary, currently in production), among others. To learn more about the academic research, popular entertainment content, and strategic initiatives that have already benefited from our funding, click [here](#).

Insight Seekers Fund

By contributing to the Insight Seekers Fund, you are enabling us to sustain and nurture a dynamic, interconnected network of leading academics, research hubs, in-house experts, and engaged practitioners who are pushing the science forward quickly on how to measure and evaluate the efficacy of the bridge-building field and adjacent efforts.

Civic Health Project is deeply committed to evaluating - and helping our academic, practitioner, and philanthropic partners to evaluate - the return on investment (ROI) of bridge-building and social cohesion interventions. To accelerate learnings on behalf of ourselves and other stakeholders, we've invested heavily in research, programs, and

instrumentation designed to take the guesswork out of depolarization, social cohesion, and bridge-building.

Research and inquiry supported by our Insight Seekers fund includes the groundbreaking [Strengthening Democracy Challenge](#) (see coverage in [The Atlantic](#), [Fast Company](#), and [Washington Post](#)) as well as original research by widely cited academics such as David Broockman, Linda Tropp, Nick Rogers, and many others. We've also recently launched a due diligence process to explore how to reduce incentives for posting "toxic political content" (TPC) on social media. To learn more about the academic research, evaluative methods, and exploratory studies backed by our funding, click [here](#).

Civic Health Partners Fund

Feeling truly inspired to join Civic Health Project on our journey to reduce partisan animosity, foster social cohesion, and improve civil discourse in America? You might be a candidate to invest in our Civic Health Partners Fund.

We are recruiting a premier tier of investors to join us as limited partners and engaged decision-makers across all of our work. By investing in the Civic Health Partners Fund at a substantial and sustained level of commitment, you come alongside Civic Health Project's small inner circle of managing and operating partners, helping to shape and augment our team's impact. In essence, you are joining our team.

While we do not *require* a specific level of active engagement from our limited partners, we will *invite* and *encourage* you to advise on our grantmaking decisions, to support our fundraising and networking endeavors, and to participate in exclusive quarterly updates and other partner-only gatherings. We may also seek to pair you with inspiring leaders and organizations in our grant portfolio on an informal, advisory basis, commensurate with your skills, experience, and capacity.

To help Civic Health Project achieve our growth and continuity goals, we request a recurring funding pledge of at least three years from investors in the Civic Health Partners Fund. To learn more and to inquire, click [here](#).

About Civic Health Project

Team

[Kristin Hansen](#), **Co-Founder and Executive Director**, is dedicated to accelerating the efforts of academics and practitioners who seek to reduce polarization, foster social cohesion, and improve civil discourse in our citizenry, politics, and media. In addition to her role at Civic Health Project, Kristin Serves as a Co-Chair for the Partnership for American Democracy, and as an advisory board member for AllSides, Listen First Project, and Business for America. She also serves as a lecturer and coach in strategic communications at the Stanford Graduate School of Business. Prior to her current work in civil discourse, Kristin held senior executive roles at IBM, Intel, and multiple start-up software companies. She holds a BA in Political Science and an MA in International Policy Studies from Stanford University, and an MBA from the Stanford Graduate School of Business.

[Rob Romero](#), **Co-Founder and Managing Partner**, launched and funded Civic Health Project in recognition of the fact that acrimony and incredulity towards opposing views (and the people who hold these views) has deepened in recent years, especially in the wake of the 2016 presidential election. Rob is a passionate advocate for research, insights, and tools that help human behavior, social media, and democracy to "play better" together, reducing the corrosive forces of polarization. Prior to founding Civic Health, Rob supported multiple projects and initiatives to enhance media literacy and civic reasoning. Rob is currently CEO of Connective Capital, an investor in emerging growth companies. Prior to launching Connective, Rob held leadership roles in marketing and engineering at Cisco and various tech startups. Rob earned his BA in Economics, BS in Electrical Engineering, and MS in Engineering Economic Systems from Stanford University.

Additional team members include:

- [Ann Reidy](#), PhD, Director of Strategic Initiatives
- [Julia Kamin](#), PhD, Director of Research and Evaluation
- [Bob Quinn](#), PhD, General Partner
- [Cambria Findley-Grubb](#), Marketing and Social Media Manager
- [Sofia Politi](#), Operations Manager
- [Kylan Rutherford](#), Research Fellow

Financials

Founded in 2019, Civic Health Project is a fiscally sponsored project of Mediators Foundation, a 501c3 charitable organization (Tax ID 04-3002588). As a nonpartisan, nonprofit philanthropy, we raise money from multiple sources, which we then redistribute as grants to eligible nonprofit organizations.

Civic Health Project's primary source of funding is an annual gift from the donor-advised fund (DAF) of our co-founder Rob Romero. This gift covers all of Civic Health Project's operational costs, as well as a sizable portion of our grantmaking and strategic initiatives.

Since 2019, we've amplified our grantmaking by raising money from individual and institutional donors. Because our operations are fully covered by our primary funding source, we redistribute 100% of externally-raised funds in the form of grants, typically within 6-12 months of receiving the funds.

Through these combined sources of funding, since 2019 Civic Health Project has awarded more than \$1M, in the form of 35 grants of varying sizes to academic, creative, and practitioner recipients. Our *typical* grants to academics and practitioners are in the range of \$10,000 to \$25,000, while our strategic initiatives typically entail larger and more sustained levels of grantmaking.

Our direct grantmaking since 2019 has been further leveraged by the advisory relationships we've forged with large philanthropic and corporate funders. To date, Civic Health Project has directly influenced more than \$1.5M in grants and gifts made directly to recipient organizations. *These funds flow outside of Civic Health Project and are not counted as part of our direct grantmaking activity.*

A more detailed financial overview is available to current and prospective donors on request.

Measurement

Just like us, other individual and institutional philanthropists investing in social cohesion understandably want to understand what level of "return" is being generated. This is why Civic Health Project has invested directly in multiple research projects, field experiments, evaluative frameworks, and practitioner programs that aim squarely at the question, "*If we are trying to repair America's deep political and social divisions, how do we know if we are succeeding?*"

While social cohesion is a somewhat abstract concept – one that can't easily be reduced to a single outcome metric – funders, academics, and practitioners must nonetheless strive together to define measurable goals and apply effective measurement tools to ascertain the impact of interventions. Aided by support from Civic Health Project and other funders, many evaluative approaches are being deployed and yielding insights across the academic and practitioner realms, including collaborations *between* academics and practitioners.

For a more comprehensive exploration of the challenges faced – and progress made – to evaluate and quantify the impact of interventions including those in our grantee portfolio, we invite you to review a companion piece to this Investor Prospectus, entitled *Measuring and Evaluating the Impact of Bridge-Building Work in the U.S.* ***[to be published 11/28/22]***



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