

MacArthur Foundation *Grantmaking* Pattern Analysis

What three years of filings reveal about a foundation's demonstrated priorities.

ANALYSIS DATE	DATA SOURCE	TAX YEARS
2026 · 05 · 20	IRS 990-PF Schedule I	2022 - 2024
GRANT RECORDS	RECIPIENTS	TOTAL DOLLARS
4,038	~2,400 distinct	\$992.6M

A NOTE TO THE READER

Throughout this report, claims are tagged according to how directly they are supported by the underlying data. **DATA** marks figures and patterns drawn straight from IRS 990 filings. **INFERRED** marks interpretations that go beyond the raw counts, where analytical judgment is required and alternative explanations remain possible.

The portfolio described here is what MacArthur *did* fund, not what it set out to fund or what it considered. Selection criteria, declined applications, and the broader universe of eligible recipients are not visible in this data and should not be inferred from it.

The Portfolio at a Glance

This analysis examines every grant made by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation across tax years 2022 to 2024, drawn from IRS Form 990-PF Schedule I and resolved against the full U.S. 501(c)(3) population. The dataset captures 4,038 grants totaling \$992.6 million to approximately 2,400 distinct recipient organizations. The window is the three most recent complete annual returns available in the public IRS e-file extracts.

The analysis describes the demonstrated portfolio. It does not capture organizations that were considered and not funded, the universe of eligible applicants, or MacArthur's internal selection process for invited grants.

FIVE FINDINGS

01

MacArthur Fellows account for approximately 5% of grant dollars. A loose match on "fellow" in grant purpose text identifies \$55.9M (5.6%) of the \$992.6M three-year total. A tighter match counting only grants whose purpose mentions "fellow" and whose recipient is an individual identifies \$49.4M (5.0%), the more defensible Fellows-specific figure. Either way, the program most associated with MacArthur in public coverage receives a small minority of the foundation's grantmaking. The remaining 95% reflects a materially different grantmaking portfolio. DATA

02

The portfolio leans toward environmental organizations, civil rights organizations, and grantmaking intermediaries, and away from health and human services. Compared to the \$1M+ revenue U.S. nonprofit sector, MacArthur funds grantmaking intermediaries at roughly 5× the sector rate, environmental organizations at about 5×, and civil rights and social action at about 4×. Human services and health receive a much smaller share than their sector weight would suggest (0.11× and 0.05× respectively). DATA

03

Three jurisdictions capture the majority of dollars, with Chicago concentration tied to MacArthur's home base. New York leads at \$231.6M (23.3%), followed closely by Illinois at \$212.6M (21.4%) and Washington, DC at \$145.1M (14.6%); together these three account for 59% of all dollars. Much of this concentration is Chicago-related: \$206M (20.7%) carries Chicago-related purpose language or a Chicago address, indicating deep home-city concentration. The combined weighting toward NY, IL, and DC stands out alongside the foundation's global grantmaking. DATA INFERRED

04

The recipient base is highly concentrated: a small core captures most dollars. 198 recipients (8% of the base) received grants in all three years and captured 31% of dollars. The 732 recipients funded in two or more of the three years (30% of the base) captured 67% of all dollars. The remaining 1,694 recipients (70%) appear only once in the window. Recurring relationships, not one-time gifts, drive the portfolio. DATA

05

More than a fifth of resolved dollars flow through grantmaking intermediaries. \$132M (21.6% of resolved-recipient dollars) went to philanthropy and grantmaking organizations: community foundations, donor-advised fund sponsors, and pooled funds. Notable channels include The Miami Foundation as host of Press Forward (\$34M), Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors (\$19M, AI in the public interest), Chicago Community Foundation (\$18M), RF Catalytic Capital (\$15M), and U.S. Energy Foundation (\$12M). Separately, New Venture Fund, a major fiscal sponsor, received \$19.6M. DATA



§ 02 • FINDINGS BY DIMENSION

Geography

RECIPIENT LOCATION BY GRANT VOLUME AND DOLLARS

RECIPIENT LOCATION	GRANTS	DOLLARS (M)	% OF TOTAL
New York	425	\$231.6	23.3%
Illinois	1,574	\$212.6	21.4%
Washington, DC	443	\$145.1	14.6%
California	319	\$94.4	9.5%
Nigeria	246	\$55.4	5.6%
Florida	36	\$39.8	4.0%
Massachusetts	120	\$25.9	2.6%
India	51	\$13.5	1.4%
All other locations	824	\$174.3	17.6%

The four largest jurisdictions (NY, IL, DC, CA) account for 68.8% of all giving. Illinois receives more grants than any other state (1,574), consistent with deep Chicago-area engagement: \$206M (20.7% of total) carries a Chicago address or Chicago-related purpose language, including Chicago Community Foundation (\$18M), Chicago Sun-Times Media (\$10M for journalism over two years), The Field Foundation of Illinois (\$11M), and The Chicago Community Trust (\$5.5M).

Nigeria's \$55.4M position is driven by the foundation's **On Nigeria** program, which supports accountability, anti-corruption, and civic governance work. India contributes \$13.5M largely through human rights and democracy grantmaking. DATA

International Dimension

MacArthur's public materials describe the foundation as based in Chicago, with locations in India and Nigeria. The portfolio is consistent with this stated identity: roughly \$99M (about 10% of all dollars) flows to international recipients across approximately twenty countries.

INTERNATIONAL RECIPIENTS · BY COUNTRY

COUNTRY	GRANTS	DOLLARS (M)	% OF TOTAL
Nigeria	246	\$55.4	5.6%
India	51	\$13.5	1.4%
United Kingdom	24	\$6.4	0.6%
Mexico	4	\$6.1	0.6%
China	5	\$5.0	0.5%
All other (~15 countries)	~55	~\$12.4	1.3%

Nigeria and India account for the bulk of international grantmaking, consistent with MacArthur's program offices in both countries. The long tail covers fifteen-plus additional countries, each under \$3M, including Canada, the Netherlands, Belgium, Ghana, New Zealand, and Switzerland. [DATA](#)

Issue Area Concentration

Grant purpose text (and, for the Chicago cluster, recipient location) identifies six clusters:

ISSUE CLUSTERS · PURPOSES OVERLAP

CLUSTER	GRANTS	DOLLARS (M)	SHARE
Chicago-anchored (purpose or recipient city)	1,418	\$205.5	20.7%
Criminal justice / community safety / incarceration	293	\$128.9	13.0%
International democracy / accountability / Nigeria / India	437	\$124.8	12.6%
Local journalism / press / news	105	\$84.0	8.5%
Housing / homelessness	8	\$76.5	7.7%
Climate / clean energy / decarbonization	120	\$69.8	7.0%

Clusters overlap heavily (for example, a Chicago criminal-justice grant counts in both Chicago and criminal justice), so these shares describe distinct lenses on the portfolio and should not be summed. DATA

The housing and homelessness cluster is the most concentrated: 8 grants, \$76.5M, an average of \$9.6M per grant, almost entirely driven by Community Solutions International ("Built for Zero"), the 2021 MacArthur 100&Change winner, which received \$68M across 2022 to 2024.

Sector Comparison Against Base Rates

A common limitation of funder-portfolio analysis is the absence of a comparison population. With the full IRS Business Master File and 990 filings available, a base-rate comparison at the \$1M+ revenue tier becomes possible.

NTEE MAJOR CODE · MACARTHUR WEIGHTING VS SECTOR BASE RATE

CODE	DESCRIPTION	MACARTHUR %	SECTOR %		RATIO
T	Philanthropy / grantmaking intermediaries	21.6%	4.1%		5.27x
C	Environment	14.7%	2.8%		5.25x
R	Civil rights, social action	5.4%	1.3%		4.15x
A	Arts, culture, humanities	12.1%	6.4%		1.89x
Q	International / foreign affairs	3.3%	2.2%		1.50x
L	Housing	7.9%	5.4%		1.46x
S	Community improvement	3.7%	5.1%		0.73x
B	Education	11.3%	18.4%		0.61x
P	Human services	1.8%	16.4%		0.11x
E	Health	0.5%	10.7%		0.05x
N	Recreation, sports	0.4%	3.2%		0.13x

Reading the table: "MacArthur %" is the dollar share among grants resolved to a registered nonprofit (54% of all grants by count, about 62% of dollars; the higher dollar share reflects larger resolved grants). "Sector %" is the share of \$1M+ revenue 501(c)(3)s in each category by organization count, not by revenue. The ratio is therefore a rough

alignment indicator, not a strict like-for-like comparison. Where the ratio exceeds 1.0, MacArthur is weighted toward that category relative to the eligible-population base rate. The two largest sector categories, human services and education, are among the foundation's least-represented categories. Environment and grantmaking intermediaries are funded at roughly five times their sector frequency. DATA INFERRED

The pattern suggests an emphasis on leverage: more weight on advocacy, policy, intermediated regrating, and arts and culture, and less on direct service delivery.

Gift Sizing and Big Bets

Over the three-year window, the median grant size rose 2.7× while the annual grant count fell. The pattern is consistent with fewer but larger grants and a shift toward bigger bets. DATA INFERRED

ANNUAL GRANT STATISTICS · 2022 - 2024

YEAR	GRANTS	MEDIAN	MEAN	MINIMUM	MAXIMUM
2022	1,487	\$60,000	\$212,331	\$75	\$24.0M
2023	1,465	\$75,000	\$218,964	\$75	\$32.5M
2024	1,086	\$160,000	\$327,892	\$450	\$21.0M

The pooled median across all 4,038 grants is \$111,250. The mean exceeds the median in every year, reflecting the long right tail pulled up by the largest grants. The smallest grant in the window was \$75; the largest, \$32.5M to The Miami Foundation for Press Forward in 2023. [DATA](#)

GRANT SIZE DISTRIBUTION

GRANT SIZE BAND	COUNT	% OF GRANTS	DOLLARS (M)	% OF DOLLARS
Under \$25K	1,206	29.9%	\$5.4	0.5%
\$25K to \$100K	640	15.8%	\$33.7	3.4%
\$100K to \$500K	1,716	42.5%	\$341.9	34.4%
\$500K to \$1M	292	7.2%	\$168.0	16.9%
\$1M to \$5M	168	4.2%	\$259.3	26.1%
\$5M to \$10M	10	0.2%	\$56.5	5.7%
Over \$10M	6	0.1%	\$127.8	12.9%

The portfolio is dominated by mid-size institutional grants (\$100K to \$1M is 51% of dollars), with a thin tail of very large bets. **16 grants of \$5M or more carry 19% of all dollars.**

THE BIG-BET TAIL · GRANTS OF \$5M OR MORE, 2022 - 2024

YEAR	RECIPIENT	AMOUNT	PURPOSE
2023	Miami Foundation	\$32.5M	Press Forward (local journalism collaborative)
2022	Community Solutions International	\$24.0M	End homelessness in the U.S. to a tipping point
2023	Community Solutions International	\$23.0M	End homelessness in the U.S. to a tipping point
2024	Community Solutions International	\$21.0M	End homelessness in the U.S. to a tipping point
2022	Sesame Workshop	\$17.3M	Caregiver-child engagement
2024	Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors	\$10.0M	Governance of AI in the public interest
2024	RF Catalytic Capital	\$7.5M	Invest in Our Future
2023	RF Catalytic Capital	\$7.2M	Invest in Our Future
2024	CUNY Research Foundation	\$6.5M	Safety and Justice Challenge coordination
2023	Chicago Community Foundation	\$5.3M	Partnership for Safe and Peaceful Communities
2023	Chicago Sun-Times Media	\$5.0M	Deepen news coverage
2022	Barack Obama Foundation	\$5.0M	Obama Presidential Center
2022	Lever for Change	\$5.0M	New entity operations
2022	Howard University	\$5.0M	Center for Journalism and Democracy
2022	Chicago Sun-Times Media	\$5.0M	Deepen news coverage
2024	Windward Fund	\$5.0M	Methane Hub

Community Solutions International received \$68M across the three years, the single largest cumulative bet, all directed at a measurement-driven approach to ending homelessness. DATA

Recipient Profile

Maturity. Among the 1,180 matched recipients with a known formation year, 41% were founded before 1990 and only 8% were founded in 2020 or later (most of those new entries are fiscal-sponsor intermediaries, not new operating organizations). The median formation year falls in the 1990s. DATA

Scale. Among the 1,094 matched recipients with a recent 990 filing, 57% have annual revenue of \$5M or more and 15% exceed \$100M. The portfolio is concentrated on established mid-to-large institutions. DATA

RECIPIENT DISTRIBUTION BY ANNUAL REVENUE TIER

RECIPIENT ANNUAL REVENUE TIER	COUNT	SHARE OF ALL MATCHED RECIPIENTS
Unknown (no recent 990 filing)	88	7.4%
Under \$1M	139	11.8%
\$1M to \$5M	330	27.9%
\$5M to \$25M	293	24.8%
\$25M to \$100M	166	14.0%
\$100M to \$500M	107	9.1%
Over \$500M	59	5.0%

Small-org giving is uncommon. Only 12% of matched recipients have under \$1M in revenue. The portfolio leans toward organizations that have already demonstrated operating maturity. DATA INFERRED

Repeat-Recipient Structure

FUNDING CONCENTRATION BY YEARS FUNDED • 2022 - 2024

YEARS FUNDED	RECIPIENTS	% OF RECIPIENTS	DOLLARS (M)	% OF DOLLARS
1 year	1,694	69.8%	\$324.6	32.7%
2 years	534	22.0%	\$362.8	36.5%
All 3 years	198	8.2%	\$305.3	30.8%

Interpretation. A three-year recipient receives, on average, \$1.54M per relationship. A one-year recipient averages \$192K, roughly an eighth as much. The 732 recipients funded in two or more of the three years (30% of the base) take 67% of all dollars. The pattern suggests a core-and-periphery structure: a relatively stable funded set with annual replacement at the edges. DATA INFERRED

The depth of repeat funding is the defining structural feature of the portfolio.

One caveat on the one-year cohort: the three-year window cuts off recipient histories at both edges. An organization funded in 2019 and again in 2024 would appear here as a single-year recipient because earlier grants fall outside the available filings. The 70% single-year share is therefore an upper bound on genuinely one-time giving; the concentration finding (small core, most dollars) is conservative, since a short window can only make repeat recipients look less frequent than they are.

Intermediary and Regrantor Channels

Philanthropy and grantmaking organizations, including community foundations, donor-advised fund sponsors, pooled funds, and grantmaking pass-throughs, received **\$132M (21.6% of resolved dollars)** across the window. The top channels are shown below.

TOP INTERMEDIARY CHANNELS

INTERMEDIARY	EIN	GRANTS	DOLLARS (M)	PURPOSE
The Miami Foundation	65-0350357	5	\$34.1	Press Forward host organization
Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors	13-3615533	18	\$19.1	AI in the public interest, others
Chicago Community Foundation	36-3432023	19	\$17.9	Partnership for Safe and Peaceful Communities
RF Catalytic Capital	85-2150251	2	\$14.7	Invest in Our Future
U.S. Energy Foundation	83-1740146	7	\$11.8	Climate
The Chicago Community Trust	36-2167000	6	\$5.5	Chicago civic
Forefront	23-7376023	6	\$2.9	Illinois philanthropy infrastructure
Lever for Change	83-3044655	2	\$1.5	MacArthur's competition platform

Separately, two fiscal-sponsor vehicles add to this picture: New Venture Fund (EIN 20-5806345) received \$19.6M across 40 grants, and Windward Fund (EIN 47-3522162) received \$13.8M, largely for the Methane Hub. Counting these alongside the philanthropy-classified channels, intermediated giving exceeds a quarter of all resolved dollars.

For a small operating nonprofit working on methane reduction, the data suggests one plausible path is through Windward Fund rather than direct support. In that example, the intermediary functions as portfolio aggregator, due-diligence layer, and grant-operations infrastructure. DATA INFERRED

Mission Language Patterns

Top substantive words in grant purpose text (excluding generic terms such as "support," "operating," and "general"):

MOST FREQUENT SUBSTANTIVE WORDS IN GRANT PURPOSES

WORD	GRANT COUNT	DOLLARS (M)
<i>justice</i>	431	\$170.3
<i>safety</i>	258	\$117.1
<i>challenge</i>	235	\$112.5
<i>nigeria</i>	177	\$49.1
<i>accountability</i>	157	\$42.4
<i>chicago</i>	149	\$43.0
<i>public</i>	136	\$45.7
<i>initiative</i>	120	\$54.1
<i>criminal</i>	116	\$37.7
<i>incarceration</i>	113	\$47.5
<i>local</i>	104	\$50.5
<i>reform</i>	97	\$38.6
<i>jail</i>	94	\$45.3
<i>racial</i>	91	\$43.0
<i>media</i>	91	\$27.8

Notable absences among the top words: *innovation*, *scale*, *platform*, *disruption*, *venture*, *AI*, and *entrepreneur*. The vocabulary is institutional and reform-oriented: justice, safety, accountability, reform, racial, criminal. DATA

One forward signal worth noting: AI-related grants in this window total roughly \$19M, under 2% of dollars, while MacArthur's public materials identify **AI Opportunity** as one of its Big Bets. The 2022 to 2024 data window may predate the full effect of this program; subsequent cycles may show different weighting. DATA INFERRED



§ 03 · PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

Positioning Considerations for Nonprofit Leaders

This analysis identifies portfolio composition, not selection criteria. The following considerations describe alignment with the demonstrated portfolio.

Strongly Represented Profiles

- Established environmental and climate organizations (over 5× sector base rate)
- Civil rights, criminal justice reform, community safety
- Local journalism and press infrastructure
- Chicago and Illinois-anchored institutions
- International democracy and accountability work (especially Nigeria and India)
- Arts and culture organizations with a civic or community mission
- Grantmaking intermediaries, community foundations, fiscal sponsors

Underrepresented Profiles

- Direct human-services delivery (food, family services, basic needs)
- Healthcare delivery and clinical research
- Education at K-12 and youth-development levels
- Religious organizations
- Small organizations under \$1M in revenue (only 12% of recipient base)
- Organizations founded after 2020 with no fiscal-sponsor connection

The data is consistent with one practical entry path: building visibility through pooled funds, fiscal sponsors, and grantmaking intermediaries the foundation already funds. Vehicles like New Venture Fund, Windward Fund, RF Catalytic Capital, and large community foundations aggregate small-organization work into larger funded portfolios and account for more than a quarter of resolved dollars. Direct relationships with MacArthur program teams may be harder to establish for organizations outside the foundation's existing network and demonstrated areas of weighting.

What This Analysis Cannot Support

Selection criteria. MacArthur publishes program-area guidelines, but much of its grantmaking appears to be invitation-driven. Portfolio composition reflects both deliberate strategy and existing program-team relationships and networks.

Probability of selection. A nonprofit working on, for example, journalism cannot infer odds of MacArthur funding from this analysis. The portfolio captures roughly 2,400 distinct funded organizations against an eligible universe in the hundreds of thousands.

Causation. Correlation between organizational characteristics and selection is not evidence that MacArthur prefers them. The concentration in grantmaking intermediaries may reflect a deliberate strategy of leveraging existing infrastructure, or it may reflect that program teams' networks run through community foundations and pooled funds.

Counterfactuals. This analysis describes who was funded. It does not describe who was rejected, who never applied, or who would have done well with funding but did not get it.

Notes on Method and Source

Source data. Grants extracted from MacArthur's IRS Form 990-PF Schedule I filings for tax years 2022 to 2024, accessed via the **SciRise Funding Intelligence dataset**. Extracted totals reconcile to the official Part I grants-paid figures across all three years. Analytic dataset: 4,038 grants totaling \$992.6M.

DATA Claim directly supported by counts or figures derived from the underlying filings.

INFERRED Pattern interpreted from data requiring analytical judgment. Alternative explanations exist.

About the Foundation

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This is an independent analysis. Findings reflect public 990 filings only and do not represent any communication from the MacArthur Foundation. Errors and interpretations are the author's.