

**OPEN SOCIETY  
FOUNDATIONS**

# **Section 172 Report**

**Open Society Foundation London**

September 2022

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This is the Section 172 report of Open Society Foundation London.

Open Society Foundation London works in close alignment and collaboration with the Open Society Foundations global network to further its objective “to promote open society values worldwide.” The company’s sole member is Open Society Institute, based in the United States.

### **Key stakeholders**

As a grant-making foundation, our key stakeholders are our grantees and staff.

#### **Grantees**

The Open Society Foundation London awards grants, scholarships, and fellowships to organizations and individuals who share open society values, who have a vision, and whose efforts will lead to lasting social change. Building long-term relationships of trust with the organizations we support, and understanding their health, effectiveness, and resilience is a core element of our approach to organization-centered grant making. This understanding enables staff to make better decisions about if and how to provide funding to help organizations develop, achieve their aspirations, and contribute to our short- and long-term goals. We provide different types of grants, from project-level grants to general operating support covering the day-to-day costs of operations with an emphasis on maximizing flexible funding. Guided mostly by our program staff, the kind of grants any Open Society program makes depends on its strategy and its vision of how to use its budget most effectively.

The Open Society Foundation London works in collaboration with other grant-making entities within the network to promote open society values. The Open Society Foundation London’s own grant making has focused on facilitating our Economic Justice Program.

Information about the vast majority of Open Society grants awarded since 2016 is available on our [website](#). The database contains as complete a picture as possible of our grant making, although we do omit grants and modify descriptions under some circumstances, including where it is necessary to comply with personal data protection laws, and when disclosure may put at risk the safety or work of a grantee or the Open Society Foundations.

We expect that employees and others acting on our behalf operate in a manner that is fair, respectful, and cooperative with those we serve. The Open Society Foundations maintain ombudspersons to receive complaints about abuse of authority, including by Open Society programs and national or regional foundations, or by members of Open Society boards or staff. The principal responsibilities of ombudspersons involve investigating complaints, facilitating the resolution of disputes, identifying particular abuses or patterns of abuse that warrant attention by the president or Global Board, and making recommendations to the president and/or Global Board that are intended to stop or reduce abuses.

There is a guide and protocol that staff are required to follow when responding to allegations of discrimination, including sexual harassment, within grantee organizations. Our website makes available a [policy](#), setting out our expectations of organizational grantees in handling such allegations within their organizations, as well as providing information about how the Foundations approach these situations.

### **Staff**

A focus in 2021 was to keep staff safe amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. The office was reopened in the year with safety protocols to make the work environment safe. Measures remained in place throughout the year to support the health and mental well-being of staff, such as reduced hours on Fridays.

As part of the [change in strategic direction and global restructure](#) taking place across Open Society, a round of voluntary separations for program staff was held. A second round of voluntary separations for operations staff, to be completed in 2022, was started in the year. As workforce planning is completed it is expected there will be involuntary separations in 2022 and a comprehensive support package to help staff transition has been put in place.

## **Key decisions**

### STRATEGIC DIRECTION

We are rethinking Open Society’s strategic focus and priorities, to better equip us to address the challenges of a vastly changed landscape today. While our mission remains the same—to build vibrant and inclusive societies—we are making difficult choices on how we focus and structure our work for greater impact. This is resulting in continuing to work on certain portfolios while significantly decreasing or winding down work on others.

Open Society over the years has taken on a wide range of issues, and we believe a greater focus in fewer areas will help increase our impact. We plan to coordinate our global work around key areas with significantly larger commitments, a more integrated approach, and a strengthened ability to pivot quickly and take risks on cutting-edge issues. We have started to work with partners in developing short-term, high-impact campaigns and longer-term global initiatives. We also plan to set aside a greater portion of our budget in reserves to respond quickly to emerging circumstances.

Moving forward, we will reinforce George Soros’s original premise that the people closest to the problem are best suited to define the solution. We are shifting greater funding, control, and decision-making to our six regional offices to identify opportunities at the national and regional level. At the global level, we can be more effective if we focus on fewer key priorities at greater scale. We are consolidating a dozen separate thematic programs into a single global program. The work of these seven programmatic centers (six regions and global) will integrate the full range of the Open Society Foundations’ tools—grant making, advocacy, strategic litigation, and impact investment—in order to harness our full capabilities.