

June 2025

*The John Randolph Haynes and Dora*

# HAYNES FOUNDATION

## LA COUNTY GOVERNANCE REFORM INITIATIVE

### **REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS**



# About the Haynes Foundation

Established in 1926, the John Randolph Haynes and Dora Haynes Foundation supports research for the betterment of the people and communities of Greater Los Angeles. It is the oldest private foundation in Los Angeles. Each year, the Foundation awards approximately \$3 million in grants and fellowships to various public and private institutions.

## Background

### **Governance And Democracy in the L.A. Region**

In 2023, the Haynes Foundation launched an initiative focused on governance and democracy in the Los Angeles region, directing all of its major research grants toward enhancing democratic participation and improving governance in the five counties of Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, and Ventura. Beginning in 2024, the Foundation has funded 7 Governance and Democracy (G&D) projects for a total expenditure of \$1,378,112 (list below).

### **The LA County Governance Reform Initiative and the Haynes Foundation**

Within this G&D initiative, we are announcing the LA County Governance Reform initiative, which will encourage and fund research and community engagement proposals. Dramatic changes in Washington, D.C. are placing unprecedented pressure on local governments, organizations, and communities. Greater Los Angeles represents a significant opportunity for fresh thinking around our local governing institutions and for building and strengthening our democracy from the ground up.

In anticipation of this chance for better governance and wider democracy, the board of directors of the Haynes Foundation has determined to marshal considerable financial and civic resources to county governance. Through this Request for Proposals (RFP), we ask for your participation in developing focused, impactful projects and proposals.

The first grant under this initiative was awarded to Loyola Marymount University's Center for the Study of Los Angeles in May 2025. We expect to issue more grants under this initiative in the months and years to come.

The Haynes Foundation has a long-established commitment to good governance and expanded democracy at the county level.

A half-century ago, the Foundation funded the Public Commission on Los Angeles County Government, an independent blue-ribbon panel. The commission's landmark 1976 report, [\*To Serve Seven Million\*](#), recommended an elected executive and a nine-member board.

Forty-nine years later, on November 5, 2024, the voters of Los Angeles County approved Measure G, a transformational reform to restructure the county's governance system in a manner similar to the 1976 proposal. Voters will elect a county executive in 2028 and the board will be expanded from 5 to 9 members with legislative authority in 2032.

**This reform is historic**, given that 57 of the 58 counties in California have the same five-member system (with San Francisco's city-county model the sole exception). Since 1855, Los Angeles County has had five elected supervisors with both executive and legislative authority.

Voters will be watching to see if the new governance system can be designed and implemented in a manner that is both effective and responsive. How will the new county executive operate in a system of checks and balances? How will the new supervisors represent their smaller districts? A county task force on implementation of Measure G began its 3½ year journey on May 30, 2025, to address these and other questions. County reform in Los Angeles may also be closely watched by voters and leaders throughout the LA region, across the state and beyond.

## Research Grants and County Governance Reform

Here are some possible topics to spark your thinking, and to generate proposals under the county governance initiative. Please feel free to submit research approaches that are not on the list. Proposals from all fields of study are welcome.

- What would constitute success of the county governance reforms and based on what metrics?
- How can the reform structure affect specific departments of the county?
- How can the reform structure affect independently-elected heads of departments such as the sheriff and the auditor-controller?

- What relevance would the county reform have for counties in the foundation's service area but outside LA County (Ventura, San Bernardino, Riverside, and Orange)? Are there vehicles to explore governance reforms in those counties, which might or might not resemble the L.A. reform?
- How might the county reform affect specific areas in the county that are often overlooked or disenfranchised?
- What is the role of unincorporated territory in county governance reform and how would this reform affect those areas in terms of responsiveness and access?
- How would the relationship between L.A. City and L.A. County be specifically affected by county charter reform?
- What impact might the reforms have on the other 87 incorporated cities in LA County?
- What is the relationship among the state constitution, state law, and county reform?
- With new structures of county governance embedded in Measure G, are there election system reforms that should be considered?
- How could neighborhood participation be enhanced through county reforms?
- How is county reform likely to affect campaign finance rules and reforms?
- What is the projected fiscal impact of county governance reform, in near term and long term?
- How will county budgeting be affected by these reforms, and what policies and structures should be adopted to enhance transparency, the efficient use of county budget tools, and the equitable allocation of resources?

## **Incorporation of Community and Civic Education into Measure G Proposals**

The foundation expects research proposals to incorporate partnerships with certified 501c3 organizations that can provide community and civic education and engagement around issues of county governance.

These activities can include:

- Civic education around county reform
- Community convenings
- Written and digital materials including “explainers”
- Accessible guides to L.A. County government
- Media partnerships

# Submission Requirements

County governance reform applications follow the foundation's LOI and full proposal guidelines within the G&D program. The foundation accepts applications both for planning and for research-to-action grants.

Planning grants are best suited for projects that require further development, including expanding community and policymaker contacts and refining research questions and strategies. Research-to-action grants are largely ready to go, although there may still be planning left to complete.

The budget parameters for planning grants and research-to-action grants are as follows:

- Planning grants: One year up to a maximum of \$100,000
- Research-to-Action grants: Up to two years at up to \$250,000 per year

For either planning or research-to-action grants, the foundation requires a 2-page letter of interest (LOI) to gauge the possible fit with the overall grant program. LOIs may be advanced to a full proposal, and are considered on a quarterly basis.

Our guidelines emphasize the strength of the proposal, the project's potential impact on policy and for the community, links to policymakers and the community, and the strength of the project team. Specific guidelines for proposals can be found on the foundation website: [www.haynesfoundation.org](http://www.haynesfoundation.org)

The next quarterly deadline for LOIs is July 15, 2025, 11:59 pm to be considered in the summer quarter. Another round of LOIs will be accepted until October 13, 2025, 11:59 pm for consideration in the winter quarter.

To apply, please visit the [John Randolph Haynes and Dora Haynes Foundation's Online Portal](#) and use the access code Democracy.

## **For questions, please contact:**

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# Haynes Foundation Governance and Democracy Grants, 2024-25

- **LA County Reform Research**

Fernando Guerra, Ph.D., Loyola Marymount University  
\$314,863 Research-to-Action Grant

- **Developing Performance Metrics for Los Angeles County's Homelessness Response**

Till von Wachter, Ph.D., University of California, Los Angeles  
\$300,000 Research-to-Action Grant

- **Preventing Election Misinformation and Election Crises in Southern California**

R. Michael Alvarez, Ph.D., California Institute of Technology  
\$277,280 Research-to-Action Grant

- **The UCI OC Poll**

Jon B. Gould, Ph.D. University of California, Irvine  
\$100,000 Planning Grant

- **Statistical Study of Alternative Representational Systems for the LA City Council**

Sarah Cannon, Ph.D., and Evan Rosenman, Ph.D., Claremont McKenna College  
\$100,000 Planning Grant

- **Promoting Democracy through Local Engagement: Removing Barriers to Immigrants' Involvement in Civic Initiatives**

Susan Bibler Coutin, Ph.D., University of California, Irvine  
\$79,483 Planning Grant

- **Examining the City of Los Angeles's Matching Funds Program: A Comparative Analysis of the Matching Funds Program**

Mindy Romero, Ph.D., University of Southern California  
\$175,000 Research-to-Action Grant