

## **Summit for Democracy: Democracy Cohorts**

As part of the Summit for Democracy's Year of Action, the United States is launching multi-stakeholder platforms, called Democracy Cohorts, to take concerted action toward commitment implementation in areas of common interest. Each Democracy Cohort brings together governments and authorities that demonstrate political will toward progress on Summit commitments in a specific issue area with key non-governmental stakeholders invested in the outcome. Each cohort will be co-led by governments and authorities and civil society. The process provides opportunities for meaningful dialogue and collaboration among civil society representatives, private sector leaders, philanthropic partners, academics, and government decision-makers on issues vital to good governance and democratic renewal.

**Topics:** Issue-based cohorts may be formed around topics which will benefit from deeper discussion and assistance to shape future action on Summit commitments. Cohorts should be established on topics using the three thematic pillars of the Summit for Democracy as a starting point – defending against authoritarianism, promoting respect for human rights, and addressing and fighting corruption.

**Flexibility in Design:** While some cohorts may focus on sharing lessons learned or on country-level issues, others may focus on transnational topics where collective/coordinated action is crucial. Cohort leadership should establish themes and guide discussion, while allowing for collaboration among stakeholders on cohort objectives and desired outcomes.

The final number of cohorts will depend on the level of interest and demonstrated leadership to lead cohort processes. Cohorts should be created and composed mindful of the need to complement rather than duplicate existing multilateral processes and peer learning in these spaces. We recommend cohort participation be structured in a way to ensure coordination and dialogue are as effective and manageable as possible.

### **Illustrative examples of Outputs of a Cohort include:**

- Established milestones and specific plans for implementation of commitments made at the first Summit relating to the cohort theme;
- Publication of illustrative model commitments related to the issue that both cohort members and other countries may consider adopting;
- New/refined commitments from participating governments and authorities and other stakeholders to announce at the second Summit;
- Funding plan or initiatives to support the implementation of new commitments;
- Call to action, statement, or joint effort in a relevant/existing forum to promote shared priorities;
- Framework for tracking and reporting on progress after the second Summit; and/or
- Expanded network of nongovernmental stakeholders that pledges to support specific country commitments.

**Participation:** Cohorts should bring together interested governments and authorities, alongside issue experts, civil society, the private sector, members of the philanthropic community, and/or other relevant stakeholders, as one vehicle to address commitment gaps or refinements needed to

achieve Summit goals. **Each cohort should be led by at least one government or authority and supported by a facilitating NGO.** Cohorts may provide space to exchange ideas and good practices and could help countries create reform roadmaps – whether individually on domestic issues, or collectively on shared international commitments. Civil society, the private sector, and philanthropies should play an important role in this process. The United States can help connect governments and authorities and civil society organizations interested in establishing cohorts on topics of mutual interest.

## **Frequently Asked Questions About Democracy Cohorts:**

- **How will cohort participants be determined?**
  - Each cohort should have a government or authority and non-governmental co-lead. Non-governmental co-leads should be organizations with demonstrated expertise in the topic area, capacity to organize civil society stakeholders, and have existing networks to tap for expertise and cohort participation. Governments and authorities that have announced Summit commitments related to the theme of the cohort or who have expressed interest in the cohort's topic may be encouraged to participate in relevant cohorts. Civil society organizations will be invited to express interest in membership to the U.S. government's Summit team or other cohort leads, once established.
  
- **What is the Criteria for Establishing a Cohort?**
  - For any potential cohort theme, participating governments and authorities may consider:
    - Developing specific milestones, implementation plans, or providing expert input for commitments announced at the first Summit;
    - Committing to include other government and authority agencies as is relevant to the commitment/topic selected;
    - Developing refined or new commitments for the second Summit; and/or
    - Collectively addressing transnational dimensions - coming together to develop joint or complementary commitments recognizing the interdependence of actions, and discussing opportunities to link with existing forums.
  - There should be at least two to five country governments or authorities willing to actively participate in a cohort, including devoting time and resources towards an action-oriented outcome.
  - There should be academic and civil society experts and/or organizations willing to take a lead on facilitating and providing expertise and support within the cohorts.
  
- **What are Primary Expectations for Participation in a Cohort?**
  - Civil society, private sector, and philanthropy cohort members serve as representatives to others in their sector, i.e., speak on behalf of their networks and report out to them on cohort progress as necessary;
  - Cohorts members participate in periodic, collective meetings to share experiences on the cohort theme (calendar and timing of meetings set by each cohort);
  - Cohort members consider recommendations from expert facilitators while developing actions and plans for Summit, and rely on civil society/technical expert group assistance where useful in refining commitments;
  - Host meetings with domestic stakeholders in each participating country to discuss how best to adapt recommendations to the national context;
  - Announce outcomes at Summit.
  
- **How are cohorts resourced?**

- Participants in cohorts commit their own time and resources, as needed, to the process.
  - Government, authority and philanthropic partners may support costs related to convening, design, and/or codifying outputs for specific cohorts aligned to their strategic priorities.
  - The U.S. government may provide coordination across cohorts, as appropriate when needed and where feasible.
- **Can a country propose a cohort?**
    - Yes, any Summit country can propose a cohort theme and may lead coordination of such a cohort.
- **Can a cohort evolve around an existing initiative?**
    - Yes. Flexibility is key and it depends on the needs and interests of the initiative. If there is an existing framework around which to push implementation and new commitments, partners should consider whether there is a need for parallel structures.
- **How are cohorts different from civil society consultations?**
    - The U.S. Department of State and U.S. Agency for International Development are inviting civil society groups to participate in direct consultations with the U.S. government on specific topics. These consultations are an opportunity for civil society to feed into the U.S. policy discussions, and we encourage other countries to hold such consultations. By contrast, cohorts involve groups of governments and authorities and other stakeholders focused on Summit commitments in specific issue areas.
- **What Are the Expectations for Civil Society Co-Leads?**
    - Civil society co-leads may provide operational and substantive support for cohort members, to include: co-convening cohort meetings, providing summary documents, co-developing workplans and follow-up actions, and co-developing participation on themes, and design and disseminate agendas for each cohort meeting;
    - Civil Society co-leads may oversee processes for civil society groups to participate in cohort;
    - Civil Society co-leads may coordinate non-governmental input/review of existing commitments (implementation advice) and design of potential new commitments;
    - In partnership, government/authority and civil society co-leads may provide progress updates to U.S. government's Summit team and the Focal Group; and
    - Civil Society co-leads may advise on integrating cohort outputs into design/delivery of the Summit.
- **What Are the Expectations for Government or Authority Co-Leads?**
    - Government or authority co-leads may determine cohort priority themes and general structure;

- Government or authority co-leads may provide substantive support for cohort members, to include bringing whole-of-government feedback and policy contributions to cohort discussions and activities;
  - Government or authority co-leads may coordinate governmental input/review of existing commitments (implementation advice) and design of potential new commitments;
  - In partnership, government or authority and civil society co-leads may provide progress updates to U.S. government's Summit team and the Focal Group; and
  - Government or authority co-leads may advise, through the Focal Group, on integrating cohort outputs into design/delivery of the Summit.
- **Will there be a secretariat to facilitate coordination or information sharing of cohorts?**
    - There is no secretariat for the cohorts. The U.S. government encourages interested governments and authorities to establish cohorts on topics of interest and recruit appropriate membership. Where appropriate, the U.S. government may provide guidance on design, including from technical experts, and share information across cohorts, such as outcomes and progress. The U.S. government will also work to ensure appropriate connectivity between cohorts and Summit planning in the lead up to the second Summit.

For further information please contact the U.S. Department of State Summit Team:  
[DemocracySummit@state.gov](mailto:DemocracySummit@state.gov).

## **SAMPLE DEMOCRACY COHORT TEMPLATE:**

### **Broad Topic:**

- Priority Areas (Please pick 3-5 specific sub-topics that will then be negotiated with CSO leads, and others.)

### **Cohort Objectives:**

- Possible objectives include:

### **Membership:**

- Co-leads:
  - Champion Government or Authority Representatives (1-2):
  - Facilitating NGOs (1-2):
- Membership/Participants (Core Group)
  - Participating Governments and/or Authorities:
  - Civil Society and Technical Experts:
  - Private Sector Partners:
  - Foundations Partners:

### **Potential Outcomes:**

- Examples of possible collaboration with existing platforms (e.g. within the OECD, other multilateral fora, etc).
- Examples of initiatives that might be helpful to support the cohort or vice versa.