Internet Society Common Good Cyber Fund Strategy

This document guided the design and implementation of the pilot grant program in late 2025 and outlined the path towards the first open call for proposals in 2026.

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Common Good Cyber Fund: Purpose and Strategy Overview

The Common Good Cyber Fund (CGCF) is being launched by the Internet Society Foundation in 2025 in close collaboration with the Common Good Cyber (CGC) Initiative with the objective of aligning and maximizing the efficacy of fundraising efforts among nonprofits across the globe whose work supports the:

- Maintenance of critical cybersecurity infrastructure.
- Delivery of scalable support to secure Internet users from digital harm, including state-directed cyber and digital transnational repression.
- Advancement of a safer Internet for vulnerable groups and high-risk communities, including civil society and journalists.

The CGCF will consist of pooled donations from a mix of donors. The Internet Society will create, maintain, and operate the Fund, define the program strategy using strategic advice provided by the Strategic Advisory Committee (SAC), solicit and receive gifts, grants, and contributions to the Fund, select grantees, and approve grants from the Fund.

The Internet Society Foundation will develop grant programs in furtherance of the purposes of the Fund, subject to approval by ISOC, create and manage grant applications for grants from the Fund, review grant applications and prospective grantees, make recommendations to ISOC for grants from the Fund, oversee grant reporting from grantees, manage grants, and provide reports to ISOC.

The Global Cyber Alliance (GCA), as the representative of the community or organizations participating in Common Good Cyber activities, will lead a Strategic Advisory Committee (SAC) for the Fund, consisting of technical and policy experts and donor representatives who will provide strategic advice and guidance to ISOC to ensure that the Fund remains responsive to emerging cybersecurity threats and needs over time.

The ISOC Foundation's responsibility for managing CGCF is driven by its strong technical and administrative capacity, its connections within the global ecosystem of actors concerned with cybersecurity issues, and the Fund's strong alignment with its organizational goal of ensuring that "people everywhere have an Internet experience that is safe, secure, and protects them online". The Fund will serve as a key contributor to meeting Internet Society's strategic goals under its Online Trust and Safety and Open and Trustworthy Internet programs, which support the realization of this goal. Through targeted support of organizations working in the field, CGCF will directly contribute to combating the global challenge of a lack of trust in the Internet and empower communities to safely and confidently use the Internet as a resource to improve their lives.

This document serves as a high-level outline of the Foundation's strategy for launching the Fund with an iterative approach to ensure alignment with Internet Society's Programs and 2030 Visions and the needs of the global cybersecurity civil society ecosystem while maximizing its impact for the community. A phased approach is proposed here, with outlines of the granting strategy for a pilot program in 2025 and an open call for proposals in 2026 which will then run annually through 2030.

Pilot Program: September–December 2025

The CGCF will launch by October 2025, with the target of finalizing the pilot grants by December 2025. At present, the Internet Society awaits finalized versions of an evaluation framework and key grant agreements which outline some of the Fund's grantmaking requirements. The pilot program is therefore conceived as a time-bound, proof-of-concept pilot round, designed to seed the Fund quickly and support its operating model while the full governance, evaluation framework, and open application processes are finalized.

Awarding an initial slate of grants to organizations within ISOC and CGCF's target communities, along with support for the Fund's SAC, will demonstrate ISOC's commitment to strengthening the global cybersecurity ecosystem, emphasize that we are taking concrete action towards meeting its 2030 organizational goals, and position CGCF as an exciting and impactful initiative for both prospective grantees and donors.

Pilot grants will be invitation-only, 12-month unrestricted grants to established nonprofit organizations that deliver essential cybersecurity services for high-risk actors and the Internet as a whole, with USD $1.9 million disbursed before the end of 2025.

Pilot grants will center on strengthening the organizational capacity of well-established organizations in the field whose work strongly aligns with the values of both ISOC and the CGCF. The organizations invited to the pilot program were selected from among nonprofit entities identified through the Common Good Cyber ecosystem design process, including the mappings, consultations, and recommendations provided by the CGC's Ecosystem Committee. The pre-selected organizations combine strong alignment with the Fund's three focus areas, sound organizational and financial management and a demonstrated commitment to collaboration across the ecosystem. Notably, the Internet Society invited organizations that:

1. Maintain 501(c)(3) status or equivalent, with objectives aligned with the ISOC Foundation.
2. Have globally dispersed staffing structures and international programming to ensure its funds support initiatives serving the global majority.
3. Have a proven track record of managing programs that support at least one of the CGCF's three focus areas with data-driven results.
4. Present prospects for strong collaboration with the CGCF team to support scaling of the program, developing new partnerships, and providing critical feedback.

Supporting organizations that meet these criteria will be strong first steps in working towards achieving the Internet Society and CGCF's overarching objectives in a manner that allows for an adaptive approach to evaluation and data collection while Internet Society finalizes the programmatic structure and evaluation metrics. Grant applications and reporting for the pilot grants will be lightweight and adaptable, emphasizing relationship building with the grantee organizations and enabling them to move quickly and at scale to support the functioning of the SAC and in response to fast-evolving digital threats.

Open Call for Proposals: June–November 2026

In June 2026, with the finalized evaluation framework and hiring for newly established roles within the Internet Society and ISOC Foundation completed, development of the comprehensive granting strategy for the launch of the open call for proposals will proceed. During this time, the CGCF strategy will be developed and refined in coordination with the Strategic Advisory Committee (SAC) and leadership of ISOC's relevant programs to ensure clear alignment of objectives and targets for evaluation metrics.

By **February 2026**, we anticipate publishing a dedicated page on the Foundation's website and promoting the launch date for the open call application window. In addition to the Foundation's website and social media accounts, announcements can be shared via the CGC mailing list. We will develop eligibility criteria and evaluation frameworks for the Fund, ensuring that we are targeting organizations capable of ecosystem building, especially those based in the global majority or who have capacity to regrant to smaller organizations working in the global majority.

During this time, report forms for the 2026 cohort will also be generated and the reporting framework for the pilot cohort will be refined to ensure consistency in data collected from grantees in the program. An independent application review committee will also be convened by ISOC and ISOC Foundation staff in preparation for the review process. Reviewers are expected to come from a diverse set of backgrounds and geographies and will include cybersecurity experts and cross-sector professionals (civil society, journalism, policy experts, and researchers).

The open call for proposals will officially launch by June 2026, with an application window remaining open for at least 6 weeks. By late July, application screening will begin, and the strongest proposals will move on to review by the external, independent review committee members. The target for completing reviews, soliciting any necessary revisions from leading grant proposals, and finalizing the grantee cohort will be **November 2026**.

CGCF Strategy Iteration in 2027 and Beyond

CGCF will continue to run iteratively until at least 2030, when the Internet Society will evaluate its programming and achievement of its 2030 Strategy. The Internet Society will determine the annual disbursement amount, based on the size of the Fund, during the budgeting cycle. We expect disbursement to be made in the form of multi-year grants, made for 1–3 years. Evaluation and alignment meetings will be held with the Strategic Advisory Committee (SAC) biannually, with remote calls held in early Q2 and Q4 of each year.

Introductory calls will be held for each new cohort of CGCF grantees within the first two months of grants being awarded, which can include training on monitoring and evaluation methodology and reporting. An in-person retreat will be organized in Q3 of 2027 during which CGCF grantees can liaise with the Strategic Advisory Committee (SAC) and ISOC Foundation staff to review outcomes, lessons learned and contribute to strategy evaluation and refinement.