

The Social Web Foundation

Annual Report 2025

With the generous support of Meta, Sovereign Tech Agency and Project Liberty Institute, the Social Web Foundation (SWF) continued for a second year to build alternative social spaces online. Launched at the end of 2024, at a critical inflection point for the global public sphere, SWF has continued to grow and thrive. As corporate social media platforms face declining trust and legitimacy, the open social web—rooted in federation, interoperability, and community governance—gained unprecedented momentum.

We leveraged that moment as millions of users and dozens of platforms migrated to decentralized systems built on open standards. Yet the infrastructure, governance, safety models, and public understanding remain underdeveloped as we move towards a more open social web ecosystem.

Donor support enables SWF to serve as the independent, public-interest institution this moment requires: one that ensures the next era of social media is safer, more equitable, and grounded in human rights. This is our report for the 2025 grantmaking period.

Our Mission and Vision

Our vision is to create a social web that is open, healthy, and sustainable, where users have control over their data and interactions. We aim to achieve this by:

- Educating the public about the benefits and possibilities of the social web.
- Informing policymakers about issues related to the social web.
- Enhancing and extending the ActivityPub protocol.

Developing tools and infrastructure to make the social web more engaging and user-friendly.

Achievements

Organizational launch and ecosystem building. SWF completed its public launch with a multidisciplinary leadership team and broad industry backing across the ActivityPub ecosystem—including Mastodon, Meta, Automattic, Flipboard, Ghost, and others—confirming the sector’s recognition of the need for a neutral steward of a safe and equitable social web. Our network of supporters continued to grow, with Pixelfed, Newsmast, and IFTAS joining over the course of the year. We also joined the Project Liberty Alliance, expanding our engagement with aligned initiatives working to advance an open, interoperable, and user-centric social web.

Privacy-preserving interoperability and policy influence. At the UN Internet Governance Forum, SWF convened a major workshop that produced concrete action points on encryption, metadata design, moderation portability, and consent. These outputs were submitted to the IGF Secretariat and the EC’s consultation on the Digital Markets Act and now inform both technical development and global digital-rights policy conversations.

Advancing standards through W3C and IETF. As a new civil-society member of the World Wide Web Consortium, SWF officially joined the W3C as a member in 2025. We contributed to the continued evolution of ActivityPub and its ecosystem, advancing work on end-to-end encrypted direct messaging (via the IETF’s Messaging Layer Security), groups, object discovery, and more robust portability mechanisms. We engaged directly in key standards venues, including IETF work on OAuth, MLS, and ATProto, and supported the re-establishment of ActivityPub standardization at W3C through both the Social Web Community Group and the newly chartered Social Web Working Group, leading to a new version of the ActivityPub standard in late 2026.

Alongside standards development, we delivered concrete technical contributions: two reference implementations for the W3C geosocial task force (places.pub, an ActivityPub vocabulary for place objects, and checkin.swf.pub, a geosocial check-in application), a read-only ActivityPub API implementation (acct.swf.pub), and a Web Components library for ActivityPub objects (ap-components). Through this combined strategy—standards engagement and implementation—we ensure that the social web evolves in ways that center interoperability, user agency, and human rights.

Public education and thought leadership. SWF expanded global understanding of interoperability, media pluralism, and rights-respecting design through podcasts, policy submissions, and expert commentary. We contributed guidance to the OSCE and the Forum on Information and Democracy, helping shape emerging regulatory approaches. We also convened high-impact discussions, including a session at RightsCon with industry, regulators, and civil society—featuring partners from Threads, Mastodon, and DSNP—and gatherings at MozFest that aligned implementers, activists, and researchers around a healthy, multipolar social web. In partnership with the Carnegie Endowment, we published *New Paradigms in Trust and Safety*, examining the uses and risks of defederation in decentralized social media.

Impact

We were everywhere. In 2025 SWF consolidated its role as the leading public-interest organization shaping the decentralized social web. Through sustained engagement across technical, policy, and community venues, we advanced a rights-respecting vision for social media—grounded in interoperability, safety, and user agency—into the mainstream of both standards development and regulatory discourse. Our work influenced implementers, regulators, journalists, and civil society, accelerating adoption of open standards and strengthening alignment between technical architecture and public-interest outcomes.

We translated this influence into coordinated action across the ecosystem. SWF organized and led key convenings for developers and practitioners—including the Social Web track at FOSDEM (for the second consecutive year), Fediverse House at SXSW, and the Fediverse Village at HOPE—while stewarding concrete technical progress, such as the long-form text workshop in Brussels and subsequent interoperability testing. Our leadership and technical contributions were further reflected through invited talks and convenings across major forums, including W3C, IETF, RightsCon, IGF, and community-led events worldwide.

Alongside FOSDEM, we coordinated and hosted a long-form text workshop with ActivityPub platform developers. In the workshop we documented the agreed-upon standard, and followed up by stewarding interoperability testing between all actors.

An additional list of appearances:

- Evan spoke at WordCamp 2025 about WordPress and ActivityPub.
- Evan spoke at Berlin Fediday about cooperatives and the Fediverse.
- Mallory went on the Power Station podcast to talk about the new social media.
- Evan spoke at W3C Breakout day about ActivityPub interactions with Web browsers.
- Evan spoke at Fedicon in Vancouver about the history of ActivityPub.
- Evan spoke at SeaGL in Seattle about the Fediverse.
- Mallory and the Internet Exchange team hosted a series of events related to human rights and the social web at MozFest 2025 in Barcelona.
- Mallory went on the revolution.social podcast with Rabble.
- Evan led ActivityPub-related discussions at two Fediform unconference events.
- Evan presented ActivityPub at the Canadian Technical Law Conference at Dalhousie.

Our Team, Supporters and Advisors

Since our launch, we have received financial and in-kind support from various organizations making commitments to the open social web: Mastodon, Meta, Automattic, Ghost, Vivaldi, Write.as, Medium, Mammoth, Pixelfed, IFTAS and Fastly.

The SWF core team, Evan Prodromou and Mallory Knodel, benefit from the generous guidance of our volunteer advisors, including but not limited to the following individuals: Ethan

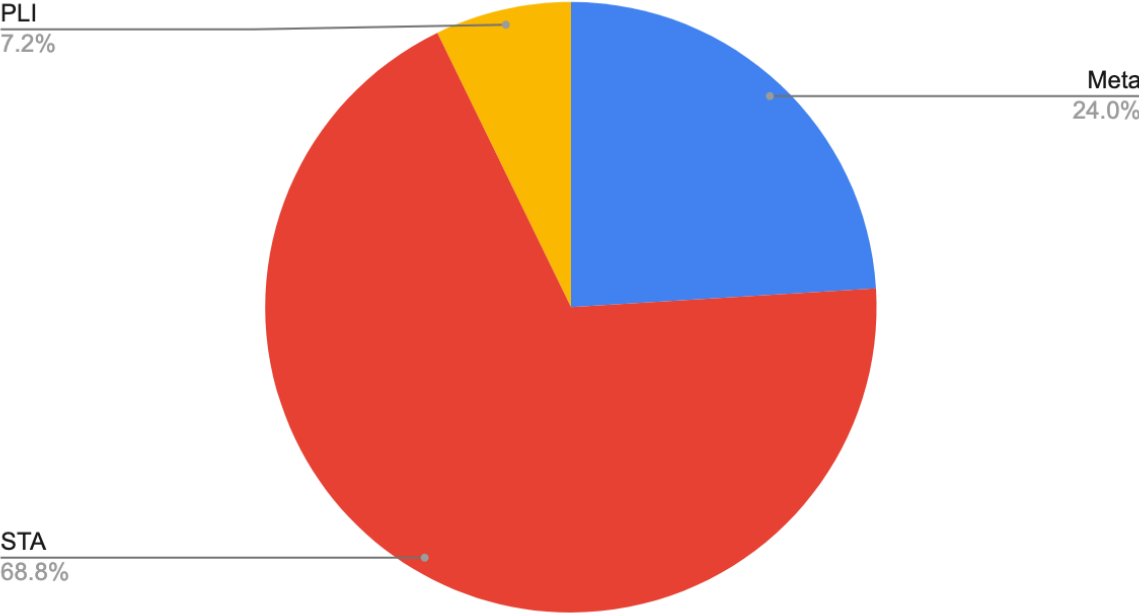
Zuckerman, Chris Messina, Karen Sandler, Samantha Lai, Tom Coates, Timothy Chambers, Leslie Hawthorn and Danny O'Brien. In 2025 we expanded our advisors to include Tim Bray and Freddy Johnson. These partnerships are instrumental in advancing our mission and expanding the reach and impact of the Social Web.

Financials

In 2025 SWF secured a total of \$416,316.00 in funding to support both core operations and programmatic work. This support reflects strong alignment across philanthropic and industry partners with our mission to advance an open, interoperable social web.

Our funding included core organizational support from Meta; project-based support from the Sovereign Tech Agency (STA) to advance tags.pub and end-to-end encryption in ActivityPub (via MLS); and support from the Project Liberty Institute (PLI) to explore the intersection of AI and the social web. SWF benefits from contributions from our broader network of supporters across the ActivityPub ecosystem, whose backing enables us to sustain standards development, implementation, and community engagement.

Financials 2025



Donor	Amount
Meta	\$100,000.00
Sovereign Tech Agency	\$286,316.00
Project Liberty Institute	\$30,000.00
Total	\$416,316.00

Future work

With our partner Digital Rights Foundation in Pakistan, we have secured a project from the Association for Progressive Communications to research the harms faced by social media as reported through feminist help-lines. SWF has received support from the Sovereign Tech Agency to build upon the open architecture for end-to-end encrypted messaging in ActivityPub through 2026. With support from Project Liberty we will advance interoperable governance and moderation portability frameworks with a special focus on AI and algorithms in the social web. With support from the Interledger Foundation we will develop user-centric privacy controls. In 2026 we anticipate a gift from the Interledger Foundation that will launch SWF as a subgrantor to social web implementers and the wider ecosystem.

We continue to seek funding that will support our core work, such as policy engagement around DMA/Digital Services Act-aligned interoperability mandates, remain engaged in global standards setting, and extend public-education resources.

For more information about our projects and how to get involved, please visit our website at socialwebfoundation.org.

Your donation to the SWF is tax free <https://socialwebfoundation.org/donate>.