



## FACT SHEET

# Open Diplomacy *Playbook*

How business, science, cities, and culture are shaping American influence abroad

### Scan the QR code

or visit [opendiplomacy.meridian.org](https://opendiplomacy.meridian.org) for the full Playbook, case studies, and sector-by-sector best practices.



## Overview

**Open Diplomacy** is a framework for helping leaders beyond government — across business, science, technology, sports, culture, and civic life — understand the diplomatic significance of their international engagement, and connect them to the networks through which trust, partnership, and influence are built. Drawing on Meridian International Center's 65-year track record convening diplomats, the private sector, and civic leaders, this Playbook turns real-world lessons into practical guidance for a new generation of American leaders.

“Rival governments increasingly use companies, universities, cultural institutions, and media platforms to advance national goals. The window for setting the rules of AI, digital trade, and space is closing — those who arrive late negotiate from behind.”

## American Influence

### By the Numbers

**\$7.14T**

U.S. FDI abroad, 2025

**\$5.86T**

FDI into the U.S., 2025

**\$940B**

U.S. firms' total R&D investment, 2023 —43% of the world's top 2,000 R&D spenders

**\$151B**

FDI into U.S. states and cities, 2024 —supporting 204,200+ new jobs

**\$1.2T**

Arts and cultural industries' contribution to U.S. GDP, 2023 —4.2% of GDP

### The Four Pillars

#### Private Sector

##### Building Bridges through Business

American companies operate at a scale traditional diplomacy can't reach. Boeing, Citi, and United Airlines show how commercial strategy and diplomatic purpose reinforce each other.

#### Science & Tech

##### Architects of Global Standards and Trust

Researchers and technologists set the norms that travel globally. The OECD AI Principles and the NASA–Russia ISS partnership show how expertise builds trust politics alone cannot.

#### Cities & States

##### Subnational Leaders as Diplomatic Actors

Mayors and governors build direct international relationships. California's investment diplomacy with Japan and Great Lakes–Canada coordination show local leadership at global scale.

#### Sports & Culture

##### Authentic Engagement as Foundation

From Dizzy Gillespie's 1956 jazz tour to today's "Pinning Dreams" wrestling program in Jordan, athletes and artists build trust official messaging cannot replicate.

## What's Inside

1

Data-driven context and metrics for each sector

2

13 in-depth case studies from Boeing to Jazz Ambassadors

3

Sector-specific best practices and embassy integration points

4

"Do's and Don'ts" for navigating risk in international engagement

Meridian International Center is grateful to the following individuals who shared their perspectives through interviews, written responses, or prior contributions to Meridian products:

Rob Atkinson, Founder and President, Information Technology and Innovation Foundation (ITIF) | T.H. Rena Bitter, U.S. Ambassador to Laos (2016-2020); Assistant Secretary of State for Consular Affairs (2021-2025) | T.H. Charles F. Bolden Jr., Major General, U.S. Marine Corps (Ret.); 12th NASA Administrator; Founder & CEO Emeritus, The Charles F. Bolden Group | T.H. David Cohen, U.S. Ambassador to Canada (2021-2025) | Cindy Parlow Cone, President, U.S. Soccer Federation; Former Member, USA Women's National Soccer Team | Jane Fraser, Chair and CEO, Citi | Jim Golsen, Vice President, Center for Corporate Diplomacy, Meridian International Center | T.H. Nina Hachigian, CEO, Alliance for Local Leaders International; U.S. Special Representative for Subnational Diplomacy (2022-2025) | Sarah Heck, Head of External Affairs, Anthropic | Chad Holliday, Board Member, Mission Possible Partners; Former Chair of the Board of Directors, Royal Dutch Shell (2025-2021); Former Chairman, Bank of America (2010-2014) | T.H. David Holt, Mayor of Oklahoma City, OK | Andre Huynh, International Basketball Player | Danita Johnson, President, Business Operations, D.C. United | T.H. Tim Kelly, Mayor of the City of Chattanooga, TN | Jeff Koons, cultureXchanges podcast | Tom Monahan, CEO, Heidrick & Struggles | Benjamin Moore, Chief Global Affairs Officer, Office of Mayor Todd Garcia, City of San Diego | Steve Morrissey, Vice President, Regulatory and Policy, United Airlines | Sally Roberts, Co-Founder and CEO, Wrestle Like A Girl; Two-Time Olympic Bronze Medalist | Aviva Rosenthal, Director, Office of Global Affairs, Smithsonian Institution | T.H. Lee Satterfield, Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs (2024-2025); Assistant Secretary of State for Educational and Cultural Affairs of the United States (2021-2025) | Chris Sharrock, Vice President, United Nations and International Organizations, Microsoft | T.H. Kevin Stitt, Governor of Oklahoma | T.H. William Stevens, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for West Africa, U.S. Department of State | Isaac Tawil, City Manager, City of McAllen, TX | Hank Willis Thomas, cultureXchanges podcast