

# Strategy to Defend The Charitable Sector

2025



**The independence of the philanthropic sector and our ability to give according to our values are not just critical components of American philanthropy — they are core tenets of civil society that we are committed to protecting.**

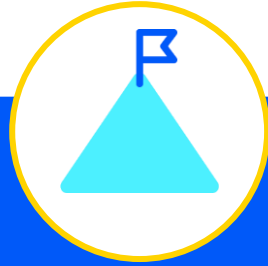
# Our Principles for Sector Advocacy



When developing policy positions and finalizing advocacy strategies, we:



Build diverse, bipartisan coalitions that leverage complementary strengths of partners



Prioritize policy solutions and positions that are best for the full charitable sector



Focus on engaging the parts of our membership that are most affected



Strategically build relationships with key Congressional actors who can most impact our sector

# Our Capitol Hill Reputation and Relationships



The Council's name is long respected by both Democratic and Republican leaders on Capitol Hill. Over 75 years, we have studiously built a reputation for bipartisanship.

- The Council **contracts external advocacy and legal support** to ensure that we're reaching policymakers and providing our members with the most up-to-date guidance on developing sector threats.
- We'll continue to **educate policymakers about the crucial role that philanthropy plays in everyday life** and create a supportive policy environment needed to expand opportunities to give, for institutions and individuals.
- We will also continue to **stand against proposals that would create overly burdensome requirements or limit the freedom and flexibility** of the charitable sector.

## Sector Advocacy Partners



# Engaged and Broad Membership

**954 members, including different types of members of different sizes from all 50 states and around the world.**

**45% - Community Foundations**

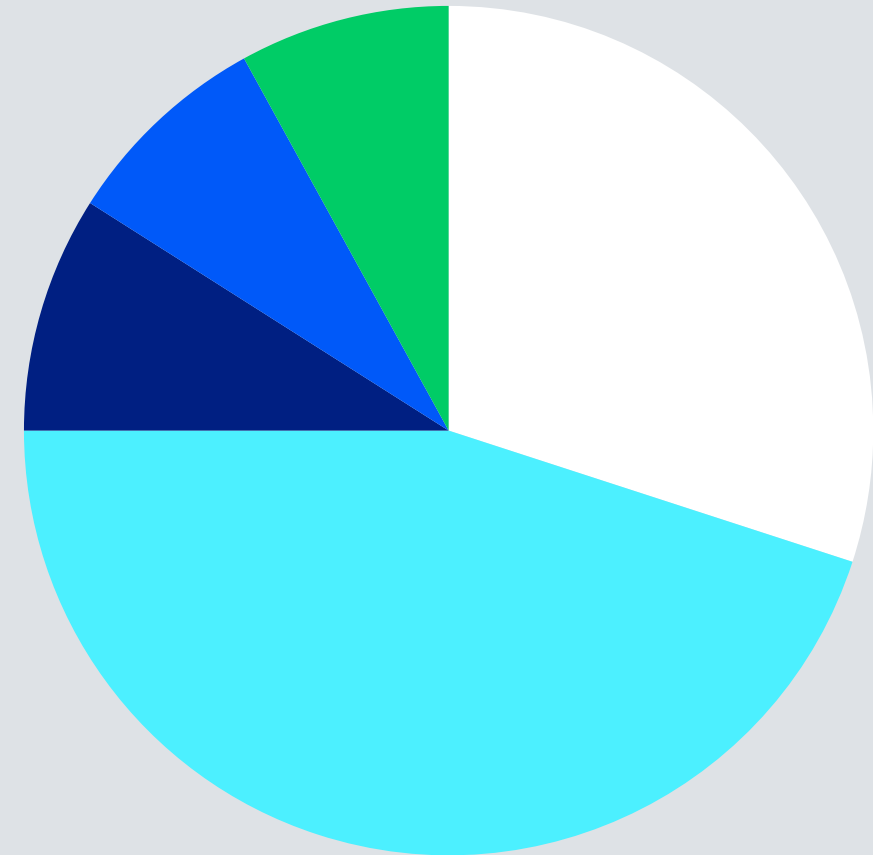
**30% - Private Grantmakers**

**9% - Corporate Grantmakers**

**8% - Public Charities**

**8% - Associate Members**

Council Membership By Type



Private Grantmakers    Community Foundations  
Corporate Grantmakers    Public Charities  
Associate Members

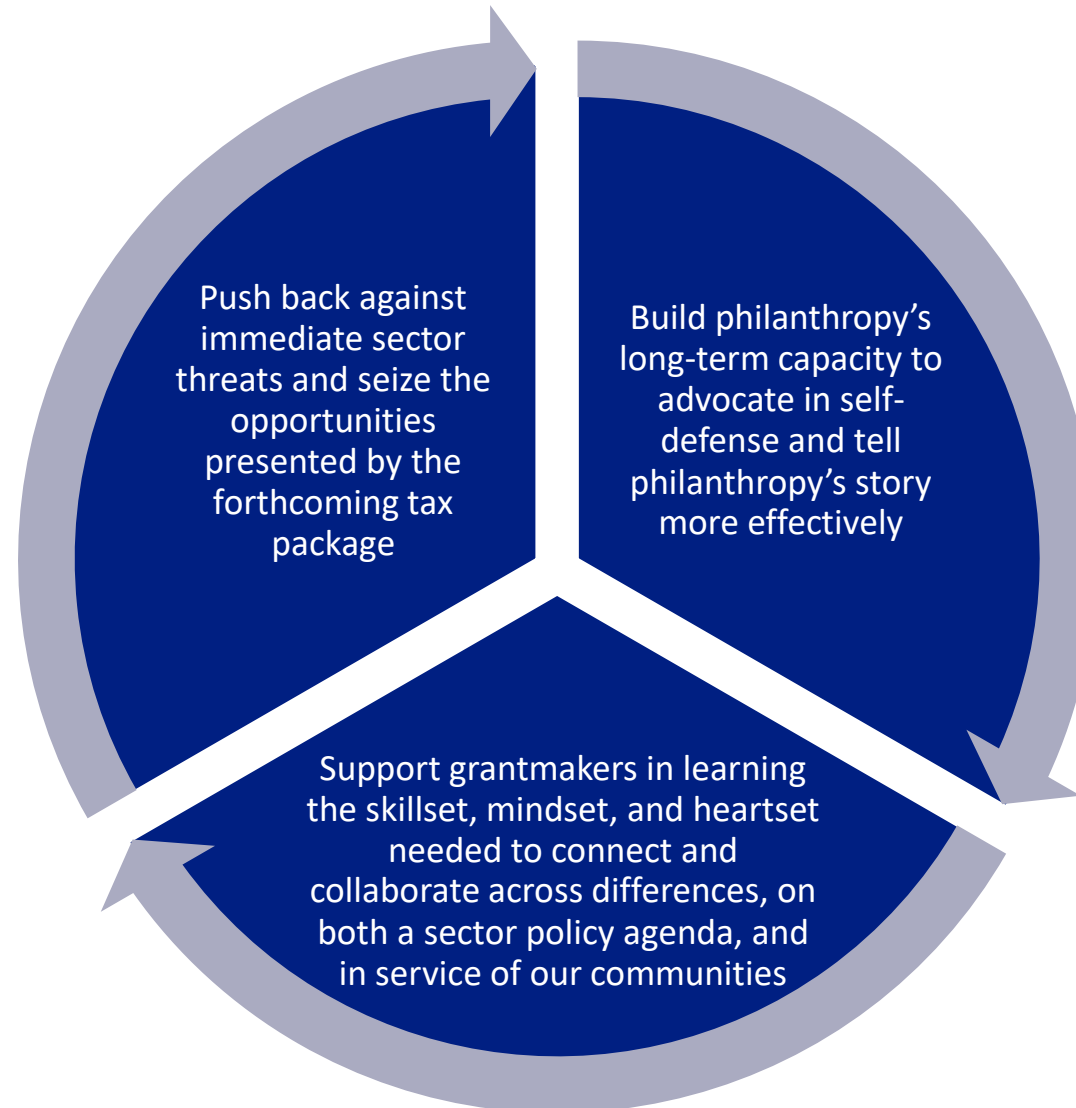
# Current Threats and Strategy



# Strategy Overview



To protect and strengthen civil society and philanthropy's role in it, the Council will:



## Right now, our focus is to:



- **Prepare philanthropic institutions to defend themselves** and their right to give according to their values.
- **Tell the story of philanthropy** as core to American life.
- **Unite our members and the sector** to stand up for the charitable sector's independence.



# Tactics: Prepare Philanthropic Institutions



Our team connects with lawmakers and their staff to advocate for you and the sector, and we're working with legal counsel and our lobbyists to analyze and respond to executive orders and policy changes in real time.

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## Emerging Threats

- Closely monitor the national political landscape and notify members immediately of direct threats to the charitable sector.
- Provide analysis, updates, guidance, and member support to address regulatory impacts on philanthropy, as well as engage federal agencies to influence sector regulation.
- Offer support for members called for Congressional hearings or at risk of investigation, including general guidance, board briefings, talking points, legal guidance memos, connections to other affected organizations, referrals to expert support, and continually monitor the threat of investigations (Congressional or Executive).

## Legal

- Monitor court cases, share resources and convene foundations, guide foundations in how to comply, and host a Legal Defense Fund for community foundations and public charities.
- Prepare to engage in litigation, as necessary.

# Tactics: Tell the Story of Philanthropy



Our work defends the philanthropic sector from immediate threats while also seeking to improve the regulatory environment for the long term. As part of this work, our members serve as vital messengers, demonstrating the impact of charitable giving across the United States.

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## **Congress**

Regularly engage members of Congress in key states and districts, leveraging existing relationships and increasing congressional understanding of philanthropy.

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## **Culture**

Strengthen storytelling, align communication strategies, create new tools for foundations, and lead a national campaign to improve perceptions of philanthropy.

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# Tactics: Unite Our Members and the Sector



United behind a shared belief that an independent charitable sector and the ability to give philanthropically according to your own values is core to American life, we bring Council members together to build the relationships that support philanthropy now and into the future.

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## Relationships

- Regularly convene multiple segments of our members to offer policy briefings, discuss implications for philanthropic work, and build unity.
  - Create tools to help individuals and organizations in philanthropy build the skills to connect and collaborate across differences, both to support their missions and to work in coalition to protect philanthropy's role in civil society.
  - Lead joint initiatives, call-to-actions, and statements on issues impacting the sector, including a [public sign-on statement with over 590 signers](#) across philanthropy.
  - Move together with philanthropy infrastructure peers on joint statements, amicus briefs, webinars, trainings, and more.
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# Stronger Together

This work is supported by our membership,  
and by funding from foundations who can  
provide additional support to the Council.

If your foundation would like to support this  
work, contact Tara Cox: [tara.cox@cof.org](mailto:tara.cox@cof.org).

