

Strategy to Defend The Charitable Sector

September 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.

Engaged and Broad Membership

Over 1,000 members of various types and sizes from all 50 states and around the world.

44% - Community Foundations

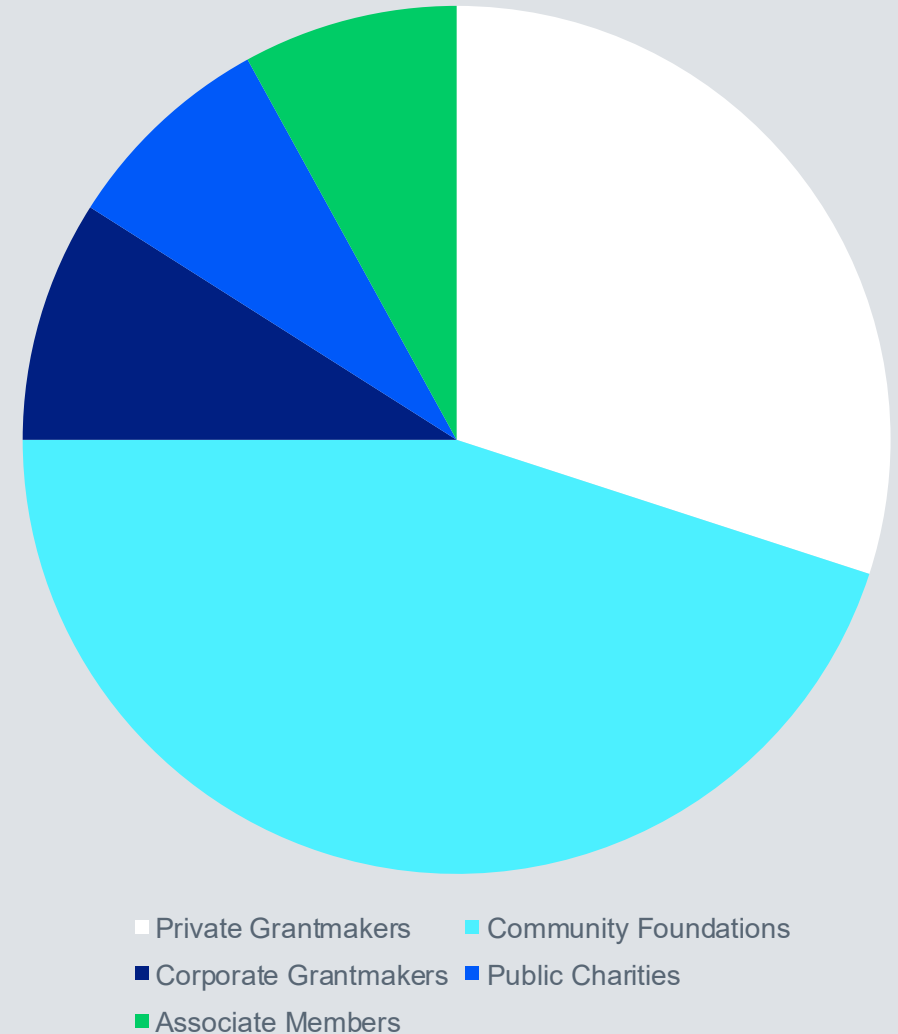
32% - Private Grantmakers

8% - Corporate Grantmakers

7% - Public Charities

8% - Associate Members

Council Membership By Type



Strategy Overview



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



Our Principles for Sector Advocacy

When finalizing advocacy and legal strategies, we:



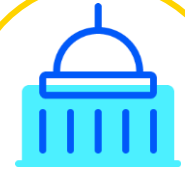
Build diverse, bipartisan coalitions that leverage complementary strengths of partners



Prioritize positions that are best for the full charitable sector

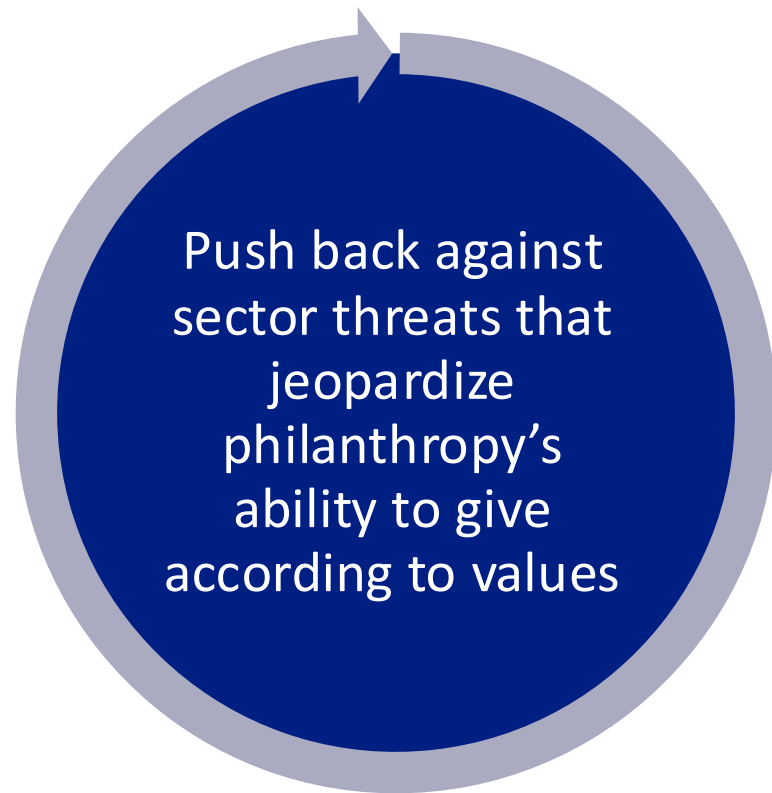


Focus on engaging the parts of our membership that are most affected



Strategically build relationships with policymakers so they better understand our sector

Right Now, Our Top Priority Is to:



Push back against
sector threats that
jeopardize
philanthropy's
ability to give
according to values

- **Prepare philanthropic institutions to defend themselves** and their freedom 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.

Current Threats and Strategy



Tactics: Prepare Philanthropic Institutions



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

Emerging Threats

- Closely monitor the national political and policy 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, including briefings, talking points, connections to other affected organizations, and referrals to expert support.

Legal

- Monitor court cases, share resources, and host a Community Foundation Legal Support Fund.
- A constellation of legal counsel and advisers to analyze actions and inform the field of the implications of actions by the Administration and Congress.
- 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 policy and 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.

Congress

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

Narrative

Strengthen storytelling and align communication strategies across the sector, and lead a national campaign to improve understanding of philanthropy's critical role in American society. For members: Lead communications briefings on current events and create new trainings and toolkits on research-backed narrative strategies.

Tactics: Unite Our Members and the Sector



United behind a shared belief that an independent charitable sector and the ability to give in line with 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.

Relationships

- Regularly convene specific 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, calls-to-action, and statements on issues impacting the sector, including a [public sign-on statement with over 720 signers](#) across philanthropy.
 - Move together with philanthropy infrastructure peers on united positioning, 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.

