



CNJG Council of
New Jersey
Grantmakers

2025 PRESIDENT'S REPORT

ABOUT CNJG

The Council of New Jersey Grantmakers (CNJG) is the center for philanthropy in New Jersey, serving the leading independent, corporate, family and community foundations, as well as public grantmakers of our state. We support our members by strengthening their capacity to address New Jersey and society's most difficult problems. We also access the resources of the philanthropic community - funding, expertise, leverage - to provide leadership on statewide issues.

2025 CNJG STAFF

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We offer a comprehensive suite of programs and services designed to enrich our members' philanthropic impact. These include workshops, funder briefings, affinity groups, advocacy and government relations, collaborative projects, and connections to regional and national philanthropy-infrastructure organizations. We amplify our members' ability to tackle some of society's most pressing challenges, thereby contributing to a more resilient and equitable New Jersey.

Mission Statement

Our mission is to support and elevate New Jersey's philanthropic community through shared learning, collaborative and trusting relationships, network building, and leadership.

Vision Statement

We envision a healthy, thriving, and civically engaged New Jersey where people of all places, racial identities, socio-economic backgrounds, abilities, and identity expressions are valued for their gifts and talents, and we can all reach our full potential and participate generously in the common good.

2025 PRESIDENT'S REPORT

In 2025, the Council of New Jersey Grantmakers strengthened New Jersey's philanthropic infrastructure through collaborative action. We expanded shared learning opportunities, built strategic partnerships across sectors, and developed new networks that elevated the capacity of grantmakers statewide. This report highlights the programs and initiatives that advanced our mission to support and unite New Jersey's philanthropic community.

CNJG HIGHLIGHTS

We delivered 110+ learning and networking opportunities from funder briefings and policy deep-dives to affinity group convenings and skill-building workshops, alongside three signature events.

SIGNATURE EVENTS

CNJG's 2025 Conference for the Social Sector — Stronger Together: Philanthropy & Civic Engagement brought together more than 350 funders and nonprofit changemakers for a full day dedicated to strengthening civic participation across New Jersey.

The morning Opening Spark — Civic Pulse session, set the tone for the day, and featured dynamic voices from across the state sharing how their organizations contribute to civic life, sparking ideas and inspiring action. Breakout sessions explored the many ways that funders and nonprofits are partnering to expand civic engagement through advocacy campaigns, local media sustainability, participatory budgeting, guaranteed income pilots, public-private partnerships, arts as civic infrastructure, and youth civic education.

Our keynote speaker, Dale Robinson Anglin, Director of Press Forward, delivered a compelling address titled "A New Story for Local News." Her core message? We are in a "time of transformation," where the demand for actionable news is paramount - people want information that directly impacts and makes a change in their community. She provided



concrete ways we can help strengthen local news, including partnering with local news organizations, advertising, becoming members, and advocating for Press Forward's state-level partner, the NJ Civic Information Consortium. Supported by a network of funders, Press Forward is a national effort to reimagine local news, expand resources, back proven models, and test new approaches.

The conference was made possible through generous support from PSEG, The Tepper Foundation, Sixers Youth Foundation, Wells Fargo, Maher Charitable Foundation, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Kearny Bank Foundation, Panasonic Foundation, Stone Foundation of New Jersey, PKF O'Connor Davies, and The Palace of Somerset Park.

In August, more than 150 philanthropic and nonprofit leaders gathered for the **Summer Joint Policy Forum: Nonprofit & Philanthropic Champions for New Jersey.**

With New Jersey's gubernatorial election on the horizon, the day-long convening explored how the sector could shape policy priorities, strengthen voter engagement, and partner with the incoming administration.

The Honorable New Jersey State Senator Britnee Timberlake kicked off the day with a call for courageous action and mutual support amid the challenges facing New Jersey communities. Other sessions included a primer from Kristoffer Shields, Director, Center for the American Governor, Eagleton Institute of Politics, about the key powers and role of the governor's office, followed by two panel discussions: Power in Participation: Voter Engagement for a Stronger New Jersey and Outlook 2026: Navigating What's Next. Across the two panel discussions, speakers examined barriers to civic participation, particularly for marginalized communities, strategies to expand voter engagement, and the economic realities facing ALICE (Assets Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) families.

The afternoon offered an "open space" session facilitated by partners at Gathering Ground, with participants tackling the critical question: *What priorities should the next governor focus on in the first 90 days, and how can nonprofits and philanthropy advocate and partner with the new administration on the advancement of those priorities?* The format encouraged collaborative dialogue and participant-driven strategy-building, moving from analysis to action.

The Summer Joint Policy Forum is a partnership event between CNJG and the New Jersey Center for Nonprofits.

December's **CNJG 2025 Annual Meeting & Holiday Gathering: Catalyzing New Jersey Communities: Building Local Coalitions**

brought the year full circle with a focus on what makes collective impact possible. The day reinforced a central truth, the strength of New Jersey's philanthropic community lies in our willingness to collaborate, listen, and stay engaged even when progress is hard.

The morning began with a hands-on workshop exploring the New Jersey Philanthropy Hub, a partnership between CNJG and New Jersey Center for Nonprofits, powered by Impala. Members learned how to leverage this shared resource for collaboration and knowledge-sharing across the sector.

Following the annual "meeting of the members" to hear the state of the organization and elect trustees, the featured panel discussion, moderated by outgoing Board Chair Craig Drinkard, heard from Commissioner Christine Norbut Beyer, New Jersey Department of Children and Families, Atiya Weiss, The Burke Foundation, Edwin Ortiz, co-founder, Returning Citizens Support Group, and Alma García, Equity Ahora NJ. Panelists spoke candidly about what coalition building actually requires: trust, shared accountability, and the willingness to stay engaged when progress slows.



CNJG thanks our event sponsors: Prudential, Devils Youth Foundation, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Pincus Family Foundation, The Campbell's Company, Grunin Foundation, and WSFS CARES Foundation.

FUNDER BRIEFINGS

The year started with a funder briefing that met the moment: As federal policy shifts began reshaping the landscape, CNJG launched a multi-part series, **Making Sense of Federal Policy: Understanding What it Means for New Jersey** to help members make sense of changes coming from Washington, and what it means for the communities they serve.

The series brought leading experts into conversation with funders across seven critical issue areas: immigration, healthcare, environment, education, housing, media and journalism, and arts and culture. Each briefing cut through the noise to answer a fundamental question: How will national policy changes affect New Jersey nonprofits, the people they serve, and the systems funders support?

The roster of voices reflected the breadth of challenges ahead. Kevin Douglas, Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees, examined immigration policy implications for New Jersey's diverse communities. Heather Howard, Princeton University, traced how federal healthcare changes would ripple through the state's safety net. Dr. Barbara Blumenthal, New Jersey Conservation Foundation, analyzed environmental policy shifts affecting local ecosystems and climate resilience. Robert Kim, Education Law Center, explored education funding vulnerabilities. Adam Gordon, Fair Share Housing Center, connected federal housing decisions to New Jersey's affordability crisis.

Chris Daggett, New Jersey Civic Information Consortium, assessed threats to local journalism infrastructure. And Nadia Elokdah, Grantmakers in the Arts, discussed what federal arts and culture policy changes would mean for creative communities.

We provided written summaries after each briefing, creating an ongoing reference tool that helped funders understand emerging needs, adjust strategies, and make informed decisions as the federal landscape continued to evolve.

As federal uncertainties mounted, understanding New Jersey's fiscal position became critical. CNJG's funder briefing: **New Jersey State Budget: FY 2026** unpacked the newly enacted \$58.1 billion fiscal year 2026 budget and its \$6.3 billion surplus examining where the state was investing, where federal funding cuts posed risks, and what the transition to a new governor might mean for budget priorities ahead.



A collaborative and informed philanthropy sector is critical to sustainable change. A strong philanthropy-serving organization provides vital infrastructure for philanthropy to do its work. CNJG knits people and ideas together to help local philanthropy expand its impact and thoughtfully invest in New Jersey communities.

Sharnita C. Johnson
V.P. Strategy, Impact & Communications
Victoria Foundation

For funders navigating both federal retrenchment and state gubernatorial transition, the briefing clarified where opportunities and vulnerabilities lay, helping philanthropies align their strategies with state priorities while preparing for potential federal funding gaps.

AFFINITY GROUPS

CNJG's affinity and interest groups gave members something essential: space to connect with peers facing similar challenges, share strategies, and learn together. Whether focused on specific geographies, issue areas or practice, these self-organized groups convened regularly throughout the year, creating communities of learning within the larger philanthropic network. We highlight a few.

How can funders support environmental advocacy in New Jersey's suburban and rural communities — places where development pressures are intense but organizing capacity may be thin? **The Environmental Grantmakers Affinity Group** explored this question at Duke Farms with *Defending Local Environments: Advocacy in Suburban and Rural New Jersey*.

Jennifer Coffey of ANJEC and Christopher Miller of Eastern Environmental Law Center walked members through the legal and political tools available to local advocates, nonprofits, and funders working outside urban centers. The session provided practical knowledge: what mechanisms exist for residents to challenge harmful development, how environmental law functions at the municipal level, and where philanthropic support can strengthen grassroots advocacy in communities that often lack the infrastructure of larger cities.

Then the learning shifted from conference room to landscape. Members experienced Duke Farms itself, a living example of environmental stewardship, through self-guided walks and bike rides during peak bloom season. The day concluded at the Farm Barn Café, which offered a chef-curated menu sourced entirely from local New Jersey ingredients that demonstrated what environmental sustainability looks like in practice.

What does Camden's future look like from the inside? The **Camden Funders Affinity Group** sat down with Mayor Victor Carstarphen to find out.

Mayor Carstarphen shared where Camden is gaining momentum: infrastructure investments, emerging economic opportunities, and collaborative initiatives reshaping the city's trajectory. His perspective was both candid and grounded — acknowledging challenges while highlighting the tangible progress being made through cross-sector partnerships.

In the second half of the meeting, members reflected on what they'd heard, sharing updates on their own Camden-focused initiatives, and identifying where coordination could strengthen collective impact. The session modeled what effective place-based funding requires including listening to local leadership, understanding on-the-ground realities, and aligning philanthropic strategies with community-driven priorities.

It's no longer a speculative question, we now know art can improve health outcomes. Globally, healthcare systems are integrating the arts as mitigation, intervention, and even preventative care.

States across the U.S. are building formal arts and health programs. And in New Jersey, cross-sector partnerships are already proving what's possible.

The **Culture Funders and Health Funders Affinity Groups** came together for The Arts – Leaders for a Healthier New Jersey to explore what the philanthropic community could learn from this emerging field and what it would take to scale the innovative work already happening across the state. The context matters: New Jersey already has vibrant models where arts organizations and health systems are collaborating to expand wellness access and redefine what "health" means beyond the clinical. These partnerships are breaking down traditional silos, using artistic engagement to address social isolation, chronic stress, trauma, and community well-being in ways that conventional healthcare alone cannot. The panel brought together leaders from both nonprofit and philanthropic sectors to examine what's working and imagine what's next. For attendees, the session reframed the arts not as a "nice to have" wellness add-on, but as essential health infrastructure, particularly for communities facing barriers to conventional healthcare.



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I leave every CNJG program even more impressed at how consistently thoughtful, relevant, and impactful they are. The CNJG team clearly has a deep understanding and care for our sector and region. They create and sponsor programs that not only address the most pressing and timely issues we face, but provide actionable insights and tools I use to strengthen my work - and they do so with grace, kindness, and hope.

Nora L. Jones, PhD (she/her)

Senior Program Associate
Pincus Family Foundation

PROGRAMS WITH PARTNERS

CNJG's strength has always been its partnerships — connections that bring specialized expertise, national perspective, and timely insight for New Jersey funders. We highlight a few.

The Supreme Court's affirmative action decisions and federal executive actions targeting diversity, equity, inclusion, belonging, and access initiatives, left many nonprofits vulnerable, legally uncertain about how to continue mission-critical work. **Beyond the Rulings: Strategies to Safeguard Nonprofits in a Shifting Landscape**, a three-part virtual series featuring Lloyd Freeman, Esq., Chief Diversity & Inclusion Officer at Buchanan Ingersoll, outlined practical strategies to navigate legal uncertainty while supporting nonprofits facing pressure to abandon equity commitments. The sessions weren't just about risk mitigation; they were about activating collective action to protect the progress that communities and organizations had built over decades. This program was co-presented by

CNJG, the New Jersey Center for Nonprofits, Nonprofit Professionals of Color Collective, Gathering Ground, Grunin Foundation, Pro Bono Partnership, the Support Center, and NonProfit Connect.

In partnership with the **National Center for Family Philanthropy**, CNJG offered monthly webinars designed to help family foundations sharpen their approach. Among the sessions, *Evolving Your Family Philanthropy: Staffing Structures* examined different staffing models. *Trends in Family Philanthropy* explored how evolving family dynamics, community accountability, and equity considerations are reshaping philanthropic decision-making. *Disability Inclusion in Family Philanthropy* provided practical guidance on embedding disability inclusion into operations, policies, and grantmaking, moving values into practice.

Together, these sessions gave family foundations concrete tools to strengthen governance, align structure with mission, and deepen their equity commitments. Thank you to the F. M. Kirby Foundation for underwriting this partnership.

When democratic institutions face authoritarian pressure, philanthropy plays a critical role in safeguarding civic norms — a question CNJG explored in partnership with **Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees** through their Anti-Authoritarian Funder Learning Series, which convened advocates, democracy experts, and funders to examine emerging patterns of authoritarian governance in the United States and identify philanthropic strategies to reinforce democratic institutions.

Across all partner programs, a consistent theme emerged: CNJG bridged national expertise with New Jersey realities, offering members strategic guidance to navigate legal threats, strengthen governance, defend democracy, and secure funding.



MEMBER SERVICES

A membership organization is only as strong as the relationships within it. In 2025, CNJG grew both in numbers and in the intentional ways that members connected with each other, creating spaces for peer learning, mutual support, and the kind of informal relationship-building that strengthens collective work.

In addition to our programs, funder briefings, workshops, and affinity groups, CNJG created multiple touchpoints throughout the year for members to connect, each serving a different purpose.

First Fridays for Philanthropy is a monthly virtual gathering for open dialogue and collaborative problem-solving in an easy access way for members to stay connected and learn from peers without leaving their desks.

CEO to CEO Conversations offers a monthly forum where executive leaders can

connect with peers who truly understand the unique pressures of leading a philanthropic organization. These virtual convenings became a place for reflection, support, and honest exchange among colleagues navigating similar challenges.

Information is infrastructure. CNJG's suite of communications kept members connected to each other, to the field, and to the resources they needed.

CNJG News, the organization's flagship monthly publication for 20 years, delivered timely updates on member activities, CNJG programs, and job opportunities — keeping the pulse of the network visible.

Family Ties, launched in 2009, provided family foundation members with articles, best practices, and resources addressing the unique dynamics of family philanthropy. **Corporate Philanthropy Brief** did the same for corporate giving, offering insights and research to strengthen community engagement strategies.

CNJG collaborated with more than a dozen philanthropy-infrastructure organizations to curate both publications, ensuring members received the most relevant and practical content available nationally.

This year, CNJG relaunched **CNJG ...for the Field**, a refreshed resource keeping members current on trends, developments, and policy shaping the broader philanthropic landscape.

Whether welcoming new members, creating spaces for peer connection, or keeping the community informed, CNJG's work in 2025 reinforced a core belief, philanthropy is more

effective when practitioners learn together, support each other, and build relationships that transcend individual organizational missions. The infrastructure for connection, convenings, and communications is what transforms a membership list into a true community of practice.

LEADERSHIP

Some of CNJG's most significant work in 2025 happened at the intersections — between philanthropy and government, between funders and nonprofits, between local initiatives and national policy. These collaborations built infrastructure, strengthened advocacy, and created new pathways for resources to reach communities.

In Washington, D.C., a robust CNJG delegation joined the 22nd annual **Foundations on the Hill** to advocate for policies that strengthen charitable giving.



Over two days, CNJG members met with New Jersey's Congressional and Senate offices, including sitting down directly with Congressmen Josh Gottheimer and Herb Conaway, and Senator Andy Kim. The delegation connected with Senator Cory Booker during a photo meet-up.

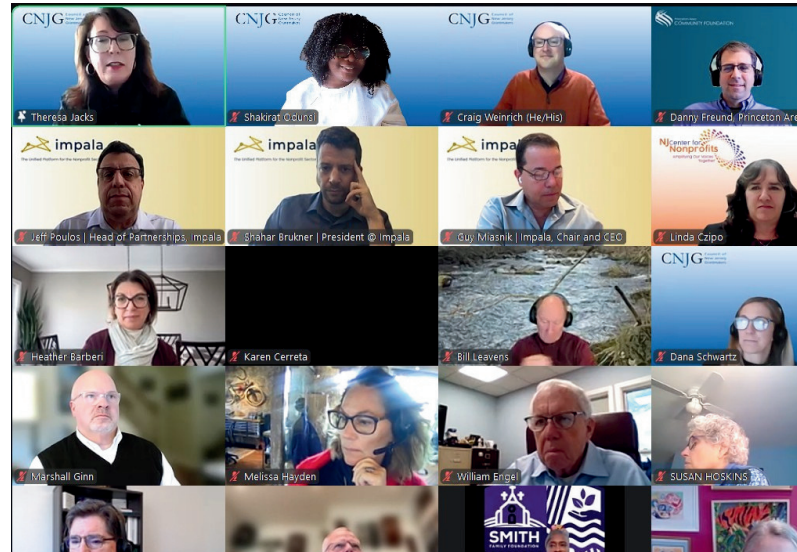
In each conversation, the delegation made the case for incentivizing giving and strengthening philanthropic support for nonprofits serving New Jersey communities.

The message was clear: policy matters to communities on the ground, and New Jersey's philanthropic leaders were willing to show up and make that case in person.

How can philanthropy work in true solidarity with nonprofits — not just funding them, but genuinely partnering with them? CNJG and the New Jersey Center for Nonprofits explored this question through **Philanthropy and Nonprofits for Greater Impact: The "Doing Good Better" Blueprint** webinar.

The session examined the current landscape and walked funders through practical steps they could take immediately to strengthen impact and advance meaningful change. But the webinar didn't stop at inspiration, it gave members a tool to act, the **Self-Assessment and Reflection Tool for Funders**. The tool prompted reflection on grantmaking policies, decision-making processes, community relationships, and accountability structures, offering a practical pathway to deepen trust, strengthen nonprofit partnerships, and build more effective and equitable philanthropy.

CNJG and the New Jersey Center for Nonprofits launched the **New Jersey Philanthropy Hub**, a free, open-access platform powered by Impala that brings the state's giving ecosystem into clear focus. The Hub enables funders to identify partners, leverage grants, and understand New Jersey's philanthropic landscape with unprecedented clarity.



For nonprofits, it opens doors to funding relationships and research opportunities they may never have discovered. For the sector as a whole, it creates transparency that can drive coordination, reduce duplication, and strengthen collective impact.

All New Jersey-based funders and nonprofits received complimentary access to the Hub at Impala's core-level through October 2028. CNJG extends deep appreciation to The Campbell's Company, Community Foundation of New Jersey, Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, F. M. Kirby Foundation, Grunin Foundation, Princeton Area Community Foundation, PSEG Foundation, and Robert Wood Johnson Foundation for making this infrastructure investment possible.

As federal funding was cut, nonprofits needed practical strategies. Senator Andy Kim's office partnered with CNJG, the New Jersey State Library, and the New Jersey Center for Nonprofits to host Non-Federal Funding Streams for Nonprofits in November.

The webinar opened with a message from Senator Kim, then shifted to actionable guidance, including how nonprofits can strengthen funder relationships for long-term support, a demonstration of the New Jersey Philanthropy Hub, an overview of the Doing Good Better framework, and an introduction of the grant resources available through the New Jersey State Library system.

The presentations gave nonprofit leaders clear pathways to explore new funding streams and partnerships when federal support could no longer be counted on.

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As co-chair of the Camden Funders Affinity Group, I'm grateful that CNJG provides a space for us to come together and connect on the opportunities and issues impacting our community. The chance to share best practices, coordinate our funding strategies, and learn from each other is invaluable. CNJG's support allows us to amplify our collective efforts and work more effectively towards supporting positive change in Camden."

Erik Estrada

Community Manager

Community Foundation of South Jersey



The **Office of the Newark Philanthropic Liaison (NPL)** an innovative partnership between the City of Newark and CNJG demonstrated what's possible when philanthropy, government, and community organizations work in genuine coordination.

In 2025, the NPL's work touched a full range of economic opportunity and community well-being initiatives with several major projects coming into fruition. Among them the release of research on Newark's guaranteed income pilot, the Newark Movement for Economic Equity; publication of a municipal financial empowerment blueprint supported by the Cities for Financial Empowerment Fund; historic funding for Newark's Summer Youth Employment Program; a \$750,000 Film Works grant from the New Jersey Economic Development Authority; and the establishment of a new grant relationship with Living Cities, a national collaborative committed to closing income and wealth gaps. The Liaison also coordinated funder conversations on Black maternal health, economic security, public safety, and public-private collaboration to expand housing affordability.

In 2025, the Newark Philanthropic Liaison was supported by Bank of America, The Burke Foundation, Community Foundation of New Jersey, Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, Maher Charitable Foundation, MCJ Amelior Foundation, Prudential, Schumann Fund for New Jersey, Turrell Fund, and Victoria Foundation.



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