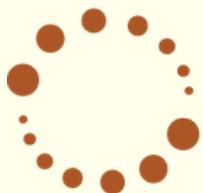




# UNLOCK THE FULL POWER OF COMMUNITY GIVING

ASIAN GIVING CIRCLE (AGC)  
STRATEGIC PLAN, 2026-2029



ASIAN GIVING CIRCLE  
AN INITIATIVE of



THE CHICAGO  
COMMUNITY TRUST®

EQUITY • OPPORTUNITY • PROSPERITY





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# A LETTER FROM AGC'S LEADERSHIP TEAM

Dear Friends of Asian Giving Circle,

Nearly 25 years ago, a group of visionary AAPI leaders in Chicago looked at the philanthropic landscape and saw a glaring gap: AAPI communities were thriving, growing, and contributing — yet less than half a percent of philanthropic funding was reaching them.<sup>1</sup> They decided not to wait for the system to change. Instead, they created something to start making that change.

What they created was the Asian Giving Circle (AGC), a way for individuals to come together to amplify collective giving as a community. Today, we as the AGC Leadership Team are proud to continue to steward that grassroots legacy. **AGC has now granted more than \$1.12 million to 62 AAPI-serving nonprofits, activated over 400 individuals as philanthropists, and helped inspire more than 50 AAPI-focused giving circles across the country.** We are deeply humbled by what this community has built together, and energized by what lies ahead.

We know the work is far from finished. AAPI communities across the Chicago region remain critically underfunded by philanthropy. The organizations doing the most important, community-rooted work are often the ones with the fewest resources. And in this current moment, when AAPI communities face renewed challenges and heightened visibility, the stakes feel higher than ever. AGC is ready to step into this moment.

We also know that we need to assess what will be sustainable. Through generous multi-year funding support awarded in 2023, we are able to take the long view in a strategic planning process that charts where we've been, where we are currently, where we want to go, and what it would take to get us there.

<sup>1</sup> “From the Archives: 2002 – Asian Giving Circle” (The Chicago Community Trust, 2002).

That is why we are proud to share AGC's 2026-2029 Strategic Plan.

This plan represents the collective wisdom of AGC members, grant partners, and community stakeholders who came together to ask: **what does it look like for AGC to fully unlock the power of community giving?** The answer was ambitious and grounding at the same time. By 2029, we aim to grow our membership threefold, increase our annual grantmaking to \$250,000, and deepen the ways we support the AAPI-serving organizations that are changing lives every day. It also means building our volunteer infrastructure.

Achieving this will require all of us – longtime members and first-time givers, institutional partners and community advocates, AAPI community members and committed allies – to be bold in our asks, intentional in our growth, and rooted in the values that have always defined AGC: bold action, collective learning, collaborative spirit, equitable power, and transformative giving.

We invite you to be part of what comes next. Whether you join as a member, deepen your giving, volunteer your time, or simply spread the word, your participation matters. AGC grows stronger every time someone joins.

Thank you for believing in the power of community. Thank you for believing in AGC.

In Community,  
**AGC Leadership Team**

Audrey Peiper

Eric Wu

LeMinh Hoang

Trang Truong-Hill



# WHY AGC

In the early 2000s, a group of leaders in the nonprofit and philanthropic sectors came together to create a new way to support AAPI communities in the Chicago region. At the time, less than 0.4 percent of national philanthropic funding reached AAPI communities, and Chicago-area AAPI organizations were similarly underfunded.<sup>2</sup> These leaders envisioned a collective giving model that would mobilize resources from AAPI Chicagoans of all backgrounds, along with allies committed to supporting AAPI communities.

In 2002, they partnered with The Chicago Community Trust to establish the Asian Giving Circle (AGC), the first giving circle comprised of AAPI donors supporting nonprofits serving AAPI individuals. As the region's community foundation, the Trust has united donors, nonprofits, and residents for over 100 years to ensure opportunity and prosperity are within reach for everyone. The institutional infrastructure, supplemental funding, and staff support provided by the Trust has been crucial to AGC's longevity and success.



Since its founding, AGC has played a crucial role in building a thriving network of nonprofits serving Chicago's AAPI communities. Now, nearly 25 years later, AGC is still very needed:

## ● **AAPI Communities in the Chicago Region Are Growing and Vital**

**More than 764,000 AAPI residents** now call the Chicago region home.<sup>3</sup> These communities are a vital part of the region's social, cultural, and economic fabric and continue to shape its future.

## ● **AAPI Communities Are Diverse and Often Overlooked**

AAPI communities are not monolithic. In the Chicago region, many residents are first-generation immigrants from **a wide range of backgrounds**.<sup>4</sup> Despite this diversity, **AAPI communities are often misunderstood or underrepresented** in public discourse and systems of support.

## ● **AAPI Communities Remain Underfunded in Philanthropy**

Although Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander communities make up approximately 7% of the United States population, they receive just **0.34% of institutional philanthropic funding** nationwide.<sup>5</sup> This persistent underinvestment leaves critical needs unmet and limits the reach of community-led solutions.

<sup>3</sup> "Census Bureau estimates show fast-growing Asian population in metro Chicago" (WBEZ Chicago, June 2025)

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> "U.S. Institutional Giving for Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander Communities" (Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders in Philanthropy (AAPIP), July 2025)

# WHO IS AGC TODAY

## Our Vision:

We envision **thriving AAPI communities** in the Chicago region that are **fully resourced, boldly visible, and powerfully self-determined.**

## Our Mission:

Asian Giving Circle **mobilizes the collective power** of AAPI community members, allies, and supporters to **strengthen AAPI communities in the Chicago region.**

## Our Core Values:

### Bold Action

We challenge the status quo, take risks, and advance justice with creativity and courage

### Collaborative Spirit

We work in partnership with members, grant partners, and communities

### Equitable Power

We center underrepresented voices, honor the wisdom and diversity of AAPI

### Collective Learning

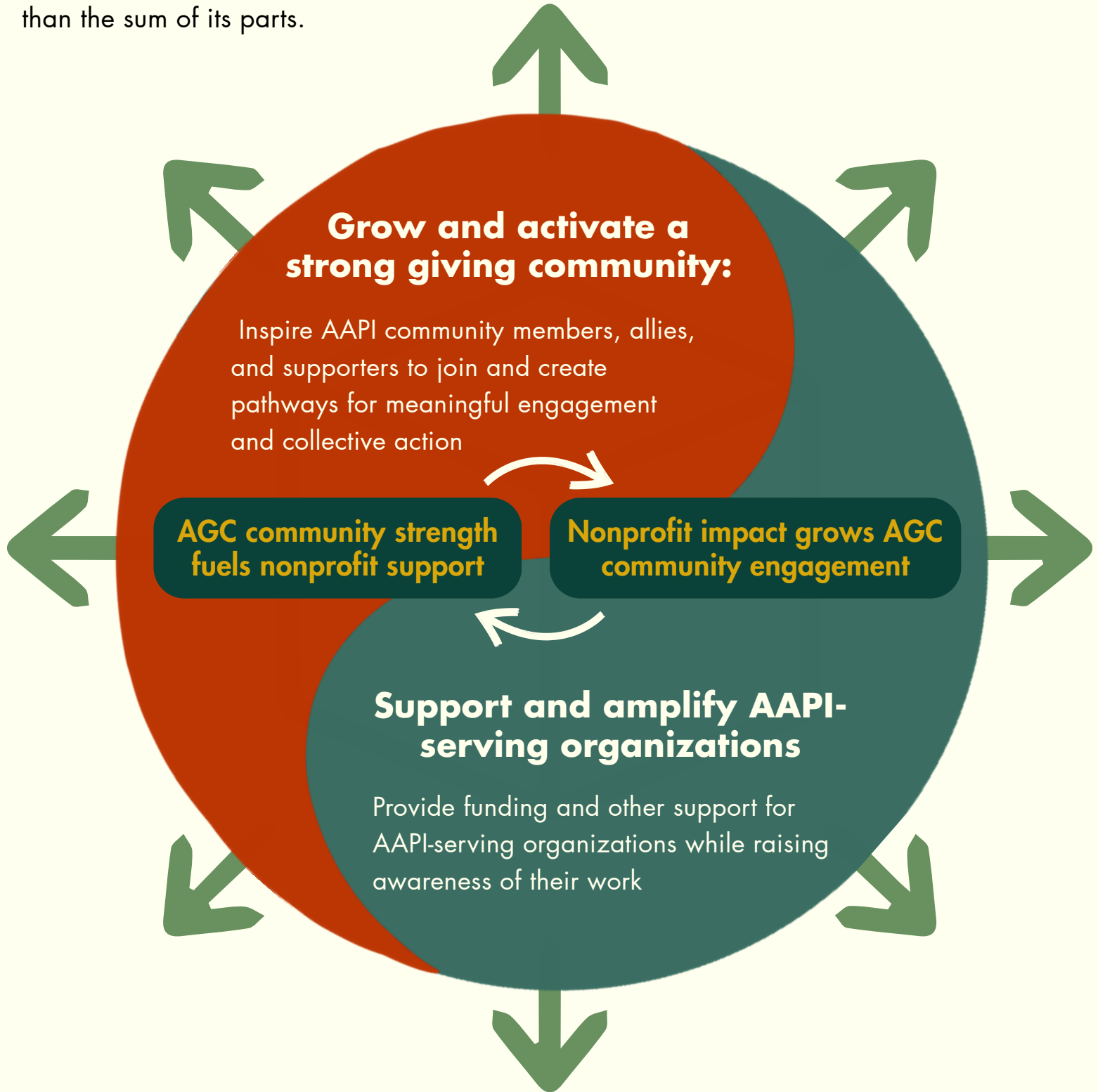
We embrace curiosity, reflection, and collective learning as pathways to individual and shared growth

### Transformative Giving

We believe that giving, whether through time, talent, or treasure, is a powerful act that uplifts communities and transforms each of us

## Our Model for Change:

We advance this vision through a two-pronged approach in which each element reinforces the other. Together, they reflect the power of collective giving where the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.



Thriving AAPI communities in the Chicago region that are fully resourced, boldly visible, and powerfully self-determined

# OUR JOURNEY TO DATE

Since its founding in 2002, AGC has granted more than **\$1.12 million to 62 AAPI-serving nonprofits**.<sup>6</sup> These investments have supported community-identified needs across the rich diversity of AAPI communities, and have addressed issues ranging from immigrant rights and environmental justice to youth mental health and counseling and health care for seniors.

For many of these organizations, an AGC grant was the **first grant they ever received** or served as **seed funding for a new program**. This early support enabled organizations to grow sustainably and become part of a thriving ecosystem of nonprofits serving AAPI communities across the greater Chicago area.

## How AGC's grants have served as critical catalysts for our grant partners' work:

### Launching new program

In 2004, at a formative stage in the volunteer-run group's development, **CIRCA Pintig** received a grant to create a 12-week youth heritage curriculum, which continues to be used today and has sparked collaborations with other organizations.

### Strengthening infrastructure

Through the support of their first AGC grant in 2023, **Nepalese Aid** secured their first office space in Edgewater, allowing them to formalize services, increase community visibility, and engage in many community-based activities. AGC support also allowed them to hire a part-time employee, which has been critical in supporting their expansion efforts.

### Investing in training and systems

"When every other funder wanted to invest in programs that had direct impact on clients, AGC provided us an important seed grant that helped us strengthen our ability to do more through volunteer training and the establishment of a volunteer management system," said Irene Jisun Sohn, Deputy Executive Director of **Hanul Family Alliance**, demonstrating the continued impact of AGC's 2009 capacity building grant.

### Bridging funding gaps

AGC's capacity building grant to **Japanese American Service Committee (JASC)** came at a crucial time, when cuts to social service programs made it difficult to find funding for culturally appropriate counseling and health care services. AGC's grant supported JASC in increasing its client service hours by 30%, and bridged a gap in funding so that JASC could secure over \$20,000 from a new revenue source.

<sup>6</sup> Data as of 12/31/2025.

Most importantly, these grants carry deep meaning because they represent support from the community itself. Kompha Seth, former Executive Director of the Cambodian Association, which received one of AGC's first grants in 2004, shared that while AGC's grant may have been smaller than others, it meant more because it came from the community.

## **These grants would not have been possible without the individuals who make up the giving circle.**

Since 2002, AGC has activated **over 400 unique individuals** to support AAPI communities. Nearly **50% of all dollars granted** have come directly from individual contributions, demonstrating the power of collective giving to shape philanthropy and move resources where they are most needed.<sup>7</sup>

Beyond its local impact in Chicago, AGC has helped catalyze a broader shift in philanthropy nationwide. Modeled after AGC's success, **more than 50 AAPI-focused giving circles** were formed across the country between 2011 and 2015 with the support of Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders in Philanthropy (AAPIP), a justice-minded national philanthropic affinity organization, contributing to a growing national movement for AAPI-led collective giving.<sup>8</sup>

We are deeply proud of this journey, made possible by community members who not only give financially but also volunteer their time to lead the organization, review grants, and steward AGC's mission. This work is truly by the community and for the community.

As we step back to plan for our next quarter century, we recognize that there remains significant untapped potential for deeper impact. To meet this moment, AGC engaged in a strategic planning process to position the organization to **unlock the full power of community giving** in the years ahead.

<sup>7</sup> Data as of 6/15/2025.

<sup>8</sup> "From the Archives: 2002 – Asian Giving Circle" (The Chicago Community Trust, 2002).

# WHERE WE ARE HEADING

Our north star is thriving **AAPI communities in the Chicago region** that are fully resourced, boldly visible, and powerfully self-determined.

To contribute to this vision, we have set a bold goal:

**By 2029, AGC will increase its annual giving by 1.5x, distributing \$250,000 annually to AAPI-serving nonprofits, while maintaining a community of at least 400 active AGC members, three times our current size.**



What we aim to do is ambitious. How we do it is equally important:

## Grantmaking

AGC will continue prioritizing funding for smaller, grassroots AAPI-serving nonprofits, aim to support more intersectional efforts, and strengthen the ways we support our grant partners.

Our goal is for grant partners to experience **greater capacity, increased visibility, stronger autonomy, and expanded follow-on support** in part due to AGC's partnership.

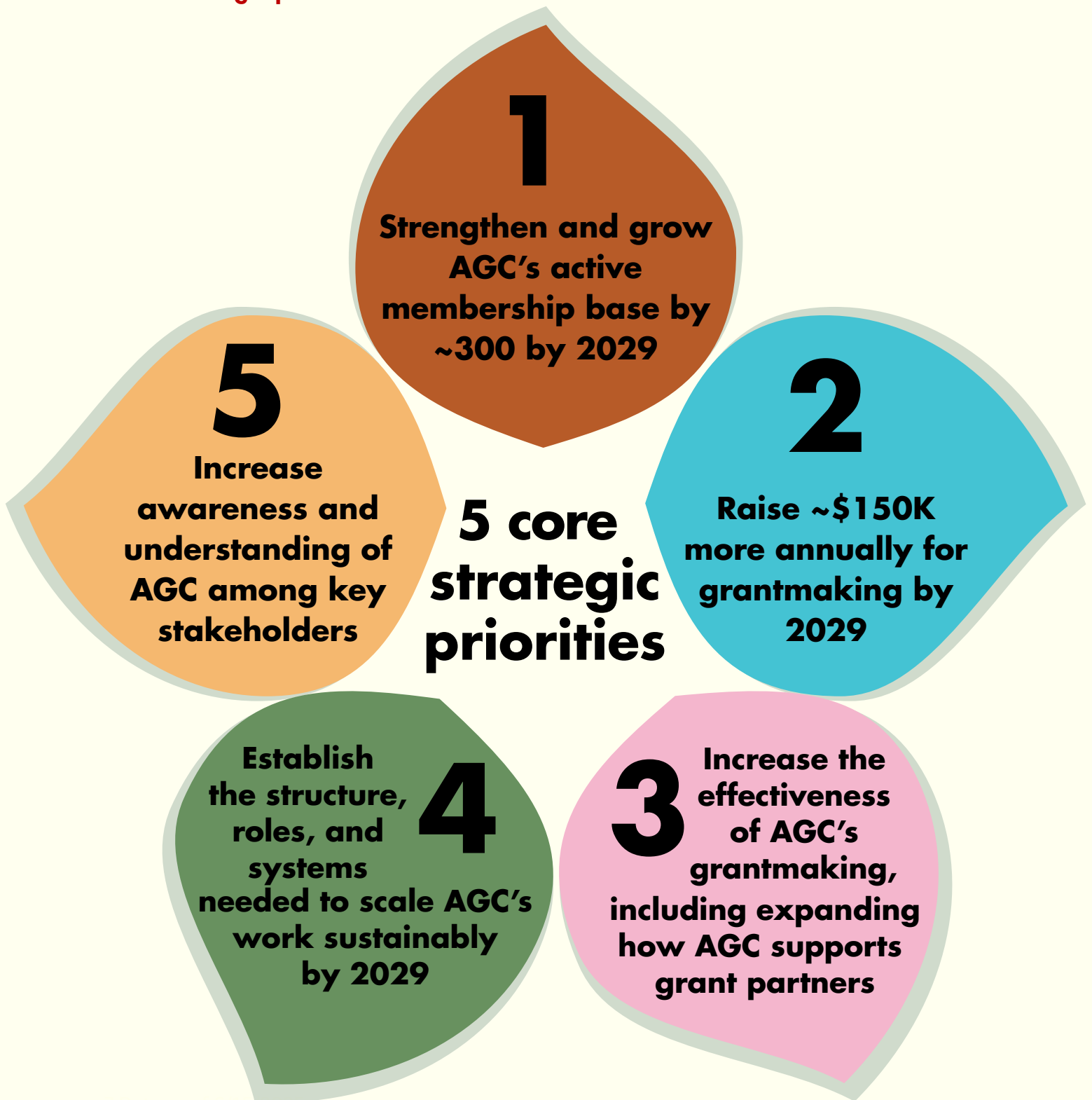
## Membership

AGC will aim to grow a diverse, cross-sector membership that includes individuals from corporate and nonprofit sectors, across generations. We will work to increase individual giving levels and diversify types of contributions, including legacy gifts.

Through AGC, members will **increasingly identify themselves as philanthropists, champion AAPI causes, deepen their understanding of philanthropy and AAPI communities, and increase their giving to AAPI-serving organizations.**

# HOW WE ARE GETTING THERE

To move from where we are today to where we want to go, AGC has identified **five core strategic priorities**.



# 1 Strengthen and grow AGC's active membership base by ~300 by 2029

## Why this matters:

AGC is, at its core, its members. The organization would not exist without them. While AGC has grown organically since its founding, we believe that with more intentional effort, we can significantly **expand and diversify our membership** and emerge as one of the largest AAPI-serving philanthropic communities in the Chicago region.

## This looks like:

- Establishing **clear pathways for member engagement**
- Developing **intentional recruitment strategies**
- Improving member **onboarding and strengthening the full member lifecycle**
- Launching a **lapsed member re-engagement campaign**
- Creating a regular **feedback mechanism** for members
- Strengthening **member community-building**
- Formalizing **learning opportunities** for members

# 2 Raise ~\$150K more annually for grantmaking by 2029

## Why this matters:

National philanthropy continues to underinvest in AAPI-serving nonprofits, particularly smaller, community-based organizations responding directly to community needs.<sup>9</sup> One of the most powerful ways to counter this gap is for AGC to **mobilize more resources** and direct them where they are most needed.

## This looks like:

- Establishing an **annual fundraising planning process**
- Building **systems for donor cultivation, retention, and stewardship**
- Expanding AGC's donor base by **cultivating institutional funders**
- Developing a compelling and cohesive **case for support**
- Equipping **members to be effective fundraisers and ambassadors for AGC**
- Creating a **3-year fundraising plan** with strategies across individual and institutional giving

9 "U.S. Institutional Giving for Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander Communities" (Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders in Philanthropy (AAPIP), July 2025)

# 3

## Increase the effectiveness of AGC's grantmaking, including expanding how AGC supports grant partners

### Why this matters:

AGC understands the importance of being an early funder for nonprofits. At the same time, we recognize that grant partners often need more than financial support to achieve their long-term goals. Strengthening AGC's grantmaking approach is essential to **maximizing impact for AAPI communities**.

### This looks like:

- Creating **feedback mechanisms** with grant partners
- Exploring more **sustainable support models for grant partners**
- Leveraging members and/or partnerships to **expand grant partner support**
- Deepening **community listening** to inform grantmaking priorities

# 4

## Establish the structure, roles, and systems needed to scale AGC's work sustainably by 2029

### Why this matters:

AGC has long been a volunteer-led organization housed at The Chicago Community Trust. To fully step into this next phase of growth, AGC must **strengthen its infrastructure, clarify roles, and build systems** that allow the organization to scale while remaining sustainable as volunteer leadership and membership evolve.

### This looks like:

- Standing up and operationalizing a **more robust Advisory Board**
- Exploring ways to **leverage the Trust's relationships**
- Strengthening **succession planning**
- Developing **member renewal cycle infrastructure**
- Establishing a **Fundraising and Membership Committee, expanding the Grantmaking Committee, and building the Board Governance function**

# 5

## Increase awareness and understanding of AGC among key stakeholders

### Why this matters:

AGC's growth has largely occurred through word of mouth and organic networks. **There is an opportunity to more clearly articulate who AGC is, what it does, and the value it brings.** Strengthening AGC's visibility will better position the organization to amplify AAPI issues, uplift grant partners, attract resources, and support the broader AAPI-serving ecosystem.

### This looks like:

- Developing a clear and feasible **communications plan**
- Refreshing **AGC's brand identity** and storytelling to clearly articulate AGC's identity and value



# JOIN AGC

A thriving AAPI community is built through collective action. AGC mobilizes the collective power of AAPI community members, allies, and supporters to strengthen AAPI communities in the Chicago region.

AGC members contribute a **minimum of \$250 annually**, pooling resources to support AAPI-serving nonprofits.

## Why Join AGC?



### **Amplify Your Impact:**

Pool your resources with others to support AAPI-serving nonprofits driving meaningful change.



### **Harness Community Wisdom:**

Tap into lived experience to ensure funding reaches those who need it most.



### **Build Meaningful Connections:**

Join a community of values-aligned members who care about equity and collective action.



### **Grow Your Perspective:**

Deepen your understanding of philanthropy and the diverse needs within AAPI communities.



### **Be a Philanthropist:**

Whether you're new to philanthropy or an experienced donor, AGC offers an approachable path to meaningful impact.

Members have the opportunity to join the Advisory Board, serve on committees, and actively shape AGC's work. Learn more here: <https://www.cct.org/asian-giving-circle/>

## Giving More

For new and current members who are able, we encourage deeper levels of giving to help AGC expand its grantmaking.

- **Bridge – \$500+**  
Deepen your commitment by helping grow AGC's reach and strengthening AAPI-serving organizations.
- **Partner – \$1,000+**  
Strengthen the collective's capacity to make larger, more sustained investments in AAPI communities across Chicago.
- **Leader – \$2,500+**  
Provide leadership-level support that strengthens AGC's grantmaking, learning, and long-term sustainability.
- **Champion – \$5,000+**  
Shape the future of AAPI philanthropy in Chicago through bold, visionary investment.

**Donate here:** <https://www.cct.org/asian-giving-circle/>

## Get Involved

Members are also invited to deepen their engagement by joining one of AGC's committees and helping shape the organization's work. E-mail [agc@cct.org](mailto:agc@cct.org) for more information.


## Corporate and Institutional Funders


If you are a corporate or institutional funder, we welcome opportunities to partner with you to strengthen AAPI-serving nonprofits and advance collective impact. E-mail [agc@cct.org](mailto:agc@cct.org) for more information.

# THANK YOU

AGC's impact would not be possible without the generosity, leadership, and care of its community. We extend our sincere gratitude to all those who have supported AGC and contributed to this strategic planning process.

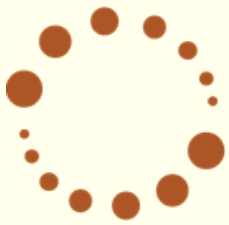
## Learn more about Asian Giving Circle:

 <https://www.cct.org/asian-giving-circle/>

 <https://www.linkedin.com/company/asian-giving-circle>

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