



NCRP was founded in 1976 by The Donee Group, a coalition of nonprofit leaders across the nation who recognized that traditional philanthropy was falling short of addressing critical public needs. The group was composed of organizations involved in minority rights, urban affairs, tax reform, environmental action, public interest law, housing, women's rights, community organizing, service to the handicapped, children's rights, consumer rights and citizen participation activities, in addition to scholars and observers of the funding community.

With the philanthropic sector's limited resources, The Donee Group proposed that the most effective use of those resources was not to replace, even in part, the government's or corporate sector's essential public services role in providing the permanent funding needed to address society's toughest problems. Instead, the Donee Group encouraged foundations to support nonprofit organizations that monitored institutions of power and those that advocated for change and nurtured innovative solutions to the root causes of societal problems. In this respect, foundations were encouraged to provide the resources and opportunities necessary to help equalize the uneven playing field which decades of economic inequality and various forms of pervasive discrimination had created.

More than a quarter century later, the Donee Group's analysis and recommendations gain greater significance. The government and the corporate sector have become further removed from the public, as evidenced by the growing role of money in politics; the decline of political parties as the chief vehicles through which public interests are summarized and citizens mobilized; declining levels of public trust in politicians, the media, and corporations; and the continuing devolutionary thrust passing the role of financing, designing and delivering critical social and human services from the federal government to the states to inadequately equipped and already strained nonprofits.

