

2026 SVCN Public Policy Agenda

Overview

SVCN advocates at all levels of government, with an emphasis on local systems change, to inform policymakers of the impact of nonprofits and to promote policies that enable nonprofits to advance their missions. SVCN advocates in partnership with nonprofit coalitions to advance the diverse and intersecting policies that they champion, focusing on advancing racial justice and equity and building thriving communities.

Nonprofits throughout Santa Clara County improve lives and strengthen communities. The sector is also a vital component of our regional economy.

Yearly, SVCN formally surveys the nonprofit community and works with its Policy Council, representing a cross-section of the local nonprofit community, for guidance in setting its Board-approved policy agenda for the calendar year. SVCN is committed to rigorously reviewing its policy priorities through the lens of diversity, equity, and inclusion, removing implicit bias, and identifying public policy solutions on behalf of the broad nonprofit community.

SVCN is proud to advocate for nonprofits using the following framework.

SVCN's Guiding Policy Principles

SVCN's 2026 Policy Agenda is built on these Guiding Policy Principles:

- **Racial Justice and Equity:** To end injustice and create true social transformation, SVCN conducts advocacy in a way that centers racial justice and equity in every aspect of the work.
- **Community Leadership:** Centering community means that those closest to harm determine the priorities for change and should be at the forefront of that change. Nonprofits should authentically seek to partner with, and center marginalized and underserved community members in their advocacy efforts.

- **Upstream Systems Change:** By supporting upstream solutions, nonprofit advocacy is an effective way to strengthen the nonprofit sector while also changing systemic inequities throughout our community.
- **Collective Action:** Solutions to complex community problems require collaboration. When nonprofits understand each other's work and policy environments, they can act in solidarity.
- **Shared Power:** Nonprofit and community alliances can benefit from leveraging SVCN's power, positionality, access, and staffing to amplify their voices and influence decision-makers.

Uphold and Advance the Role and Sustainability of the Nonprofit Sector

The nonprofit community makes extraordinary contributions to the well-being of individuals and the communities around them, particularly in times of crisis. Fair government contracting with nonprofits is essential to ensure nonprofit organizational stability, which in turn ensures robust, timely public services are delivered to our county's most vulnerable residents.

- **Sustaining and Stabilizing the Nonprofit Safety Net.** With federal rollbacks and budget cuts at the local, state, and federal levels threatening core services, nonprofits are working to maintain stability for the communities they serve and continue progress on effectively meeting community needs. SVCN will advocate to prevent erosion of the safety net, protect essential programs, continue forward progress, and uphold equity as governments make difficult fiscal decisions. We will champion inclusive, community-informed planning and advocate for investments that allow nonprofits to weather this period of contraction while preserving the capacity needed for long-term resilience.
- **Fair Contracting.** Support reforms to government contract policies and processes includes those that: streamline contracting, billing, and reporting to avoid duplication and waste; ensure that payments to nonprofits are made consistently, fairly, and in a timely manner; ensure full cost contracting and eliminate arbitrary caps on reimbursement of nonprofit indirect, administrative, or overhead costs; ensure that incentives to improve wages, leave, and/or health care coverage apply equally to nonprofit employers; ensure that legally mandated wage increases are

reflected in contract rates; improve pre-solicitation practices including industry engagement on solicitations; allow flexible scopes; and treat nonprofits as full partners in the contracting relationship. Oppose anti-contracting legislation.

- **Improve Contracting Systems.** Advocate for systemwide modernization of contracting systems, including uniformity across departments to reduce administrative burden and improve efficiency across government agencies.
- **Strong Workforce.** A strong workforce requires government investment in nonprofit workforce capacity (such as financial support of workforce pipelines, apprenticeships, customized approaches for hard-to-fill positions, and leadership development), alongside wage equity strategies such as aligning contract rates with livable wages and benefits.
- **Strong Nonprofit Employers.** Represent the nonprofit sector as desirable employers in policies that impact employers and/or wage and job quality standards, taking into consideration the unique financial and regulatory characteristics of nonprofit organizations while supporting the well-being of workers and communities with whom nonprofits partner.
- **Access to Funding.** Improve government systems to increase nonprofits' access to government funding, with particular focus on small, place-based, and BIPOC organizations and those working toward racial justice.
- **Nonprofit Voice.** Oppose unreasonable and/or unconstitutional burdens on nonprofits, such as speech and lobbying limitations that limit nonprofits' ability to fulfill their missions. Support the ability of nonprofits to engage in advocacy and lobbying to the fullest extent allowed by law.
- **Accurate and Fair Reporting.** Work with local media to ensure fair, accurate reporting on nonprofits that highlights their positive impact, maintains public trust, and fosters well-informed support so they can continue to serve their community effectively.
- **Philanthropy Reform.** Advance trust-based, transparent philanthropy that prioritizes local, community-based nonprofits. Urge foundations to mobilize dormant resources and endowments now to sustain critical work and build resilience and capacity during funding freezes, federal uncertainty, and sector-wide cost pressures.

Partner with Nonprofits to Advance Policies that Create a More Equitable Silicon Valley

SVCN will continue to provide a platform and advocacy support to advance recognition of and support for the diverse and intersecting issues addressed by our nonprofit community.

- **Protect Local Values and Community.** Ensure that local governments are furthering and protecting our community's values of equity and justice and our community's and sector's well-being by monitoring and responding as appropriate to potential overreach by the federal administration. Support the priorities of coalitions, associations, and nonprofit providers representing and serving threatened communities.
- **Racial Justice and Equity.** Advance racial justice and equity within government operations, policymaking, and budget decisions. Prioritize targeted investment in BIPOC communities and actively defend against rollbacks of government equity initiatives during fiscal constraints. Prioritize change that alleviates structures and intersecting systems of oppression that disadvantage indigenous people, immigrants and other people of color, women, people with disabilities, older adults, youth, and the LGBTQ+ community; recognizing that these structures and systems of oppression have compounded negative effects for Black lives. Work collaboratively to dismantle and address hate in the community.
- **Economic Empowerment and Stability.** Advance economic policies, that support individuals and families to be healthy, safe, and economically stable, with a priority on targeting the barriers to well-being faced by BIPOC community members, those with lower incomes, those who are immigrants, and others facing systemic and historical barriers to economic security.
- **Housing Justice.** Advocate for policies, programs, and funding sources that increase supply, improve conditions, and remove barriers to safe and stable affordable permanent housing, including expanding tenant protections. Focus housing advocacy efforts on the most historically disadvantaged communities, including those with the lowest incomes. Ensure that enhanced care management is implemented effectively locally so that providers can comprehensively support individuals experiencing housing

instability. Combat harmful stereotypes and misinformation about our unhoused community.

- **Health Equity.** As Medi-Cal changes threaten a substantial county and state funding shortfall, SVCN will safeguard the coverage, services, and affordability supports that communities rely on. Even in a constrained fiscal environment, we will continue advancing policies that expand access to affordable, high-quality health care in both the public and private sectors. We remain committed to improving access to healthy and affordable food, and we will advocate to ensure that the local implementation of CalAIM supports provider sustainability and maintains continuity of care rather than diminishes it. Support accountability and transparency in the use of Measure A funds. Support Community Health Partnership's work on coverage and access for all, a strong workforce, health center optimization, and empowering communities. Encourage Community Health Worker and Promotora approaches to engagement and service delivery.
- **Access to Behavioral Health.** Invest in mental health and substance use disorder services, particularly for uniquely vulnerable populations such as youth, older adults, people who are incarcerated, people with disabilities, immigrant communities, the LGBTQ+ community, and people who are unhoused; advocate for workforce solutions for behavioral health nonprofits. In addition, ensure that any changes to Medi-Cal continue to advance whole person care and address provider needs so behavioral health organizations can sustainably deliver integrated, person-centered services. Support Behavioral Health Community Association priorities.
- **Prioritize Prevention and Intervention.** Redirect funds currently spent on policing and carceral systems to invest in alternatives to incarceration, including behavioral health services, substance abuse treatment, housing, free community college, job training, health care access, re-entry services, and universal basic income. Increase coordinated, community-based, holistic care and services, including pretrial release and diversion programs and justice-oriented solutions like victim-centered restorative justice programs, rehabilitation and work-release programs, fines, and decriminalizing poverty. Advocate for centralized community-based prevention and intervention structures and leadership in local government.
- **Access to Early Child Care and Education.** Expand access to affordable child care and education through increasing funding to reach more families, reducing costs and barriers to families, increasing reimbursement rates

paid to providers, and improving wages and job quality for child care workers (who are disproportionately BIPOC folks and primarily women).

- **Older Adults.** Address the opportunities and challenges of an aging population, focusing on their needs at the intersection of key policy priorities, including housing, nutrition, health equity, and access to behavioral health services. Support the provider network in advocating at the County level for an Older Adult strategic plan.
- **Community Resiliency.** Support funding and planning for disaster, promotion of community resilience, and local VOAD infrastructure. Increase food access and food system resiliency. Advocate for access to enrichment assets such as green space and arts programming. Support CADRE priorities.
- **Artificial Intelligence (AI).** Track the fast-moving evolution of artificial intelligence technologies and AI-related policymaking to understand implications for nonprofit organizations and the communities they serve. SVCN will work with nonprofit partners and community stakeholders to evaluate risks and opportunities associated with AI, and to inform the development of an advocacy approach that promotes equity, transparency, accountability, and the protection of community rights and access to services.

Safeguarding Democracy and Strengthening Civic Participation

For the benefit and protection of our democracy, nonprofits and the communities they serve must be engaged in our civic processes. SVCN supports policies that empower nonprofits and the communities they serve to participate in civil society. SVCN supports engagement practices that center community voice, particularly the voices of those with lived experience of discrimination, poverty, and oppression.

- **Democratic Access and Participation.** Strengthen community participation in democratic processes by improving access to policymaking and major public initiatives, particularly for communities historically excluded from these decisions. Promote inclusive public dialogues that expand meaningful civic participation. Advocate for government investment in programs that complement and reinforce democratic systems—such as promotoras approaches that empower community members to engage and lead.

Advocate for inclusive and co-created budget engagement approaches—including participatory budgeting—to ensure that communities have meaningful influence over public spending decisions and that equity guides resource allocation.

- **Informed Community.** Educate the nonprofit community about their important nonpartisan role in civic engagement, public policy, and voter engagement.