

# Tyler Fisher

## Biography, Consulting Competencies & Resume



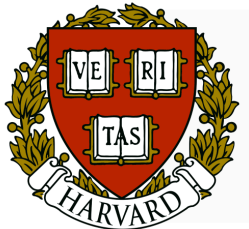
**Tyler Fisher** is an experienced leader in the nonprofit, philanthropic, and advocacy sectors. With over a decade of experience as a jack-of-all-trades in the U.S. election reform movement, he is finding new ways to contribute to the democracy field — focused on directing philanthropy to high-impact places and catalyzing action on neglected but impactful ideas. Meanwhile, he is building relationships and new expertise within the mental health, housing, and immigration reform fields; Tyler’s work on these issues spans policy, politics, philanthropy, and programs.



Tyler is currently doing his work as the Principal of **Trailmark Strategies**. [Trailmark](#)’s clients include philanthropists, advocacy organizations, and early stage startups. Trailmark’s name recognizes that any social change actor — whether they be a philanthropist, advocacy professional, elected official, entrepreneur, civil servant, or somebody else — is on a journey. That journey must be marked by signs you are on the right track, benchmarks to know how far you have gone, and maps to guide your future trek.



Tyler is also a Senior Advisor to [Dalberg](#), a global consulting firm that collaborates with local communities and global networks of change makers. Dalberg provides strategic advising, data insights, design thinking, implementation capacity, media expertise, and research capabilities to governments, nonprofits, philanthropists, and companies.



During the 2025-2026 academic year, Tyler Fisher will be a Fellow at Harvard University. He will be writing a series of essays on “Neglected Ideas in Democracy Reform.” His fellowship is at the [Allen Lab for Democracy](#) Renovation within the Harvard Kennedy Center.

Prior to founding Trailmark, Tyler spent 7.5 years building **Unite America**, a philanthropic pooled fund advancing nonpartisan election reforms in the United States, including open primaries, independent redistricting commissions, vote by mail, and ranked choice voting. He was the second employee when the organization’s budget was < \$500k. By the time Tyler founded Trailmark in 2025, [Unite America](#) was a philanthropic pooled fund with 150+ investors, 50+ grantees, and a \$60M+/yr budget.

Tyler is diagnosed with **Bipolar Disorder**, a serious mental illness that leaves 80%+ of patients out of the workforce. He is passionate about using his lived experience to destigmatize conversations about mental wellness, inspire philanthropists to invest in the issue, and scale impactful policy and program interventions to stem the crisis we face in the United States and around the globe. Tyler is also focused on adding neurodivergence to important conversations employers are having about Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging. He volunteers with Mental Health Colorado and the National Alliance on Mental Illness and writes a Substack: “**Bipolar and Bipartisan**.” He has written about [his horrifying in-patient hospitalizations](#) and the [most important contributing factors](#) to the macro crisis we face, for example.

Tyler graduated with degrees in government and economics from **George Mason University**. He also studied international development and British/EU relations at **Oxford University**. Tyler lives in Edgewater, Colorado just outside **Denver** with his wife Stephannie and son Theodore. He advises his city’s elected leaders on mental health, housing, policing, and democracy issues — over coffees and periodic comments at sparsely attended city council meetings. He is an outdoor enthusiast who loves to ski, bike, golf, camp, and run.

**Philanthropy | Advocacy | Strategy | Research**

# My Consulting Practice

Some cliff notes on how I aspire to help philanthropists, entrepreneurs, and advocates:

- **Consulting Competencies** | I am a track of all trades that have seen the good, the bad, and the ugly in how nonprofits and philanthropists operate. I am finding I can have a major impact when I am helping a CEO or senior program leader on a strategy problem – often related to how the organization is raising money. I can conduct strategic planning, facilitate important conversations, do program evaluation, source grantees, and more (see next page).
- **Issue Advocacy** | I have worked on countless legislative and ballot measure campaigns at the state-level – primarily as a funder of, and advisor to, local activists and campaign managers. I am also familiar with litigation strategies and charter review processes. I have advised clients on federal advocacy strategy under the Trump administration and am also working at the local level in my small town and large county. I have interest in international work, though I have never done it professionally; I did study international development and British/EU relations at Oxford University.
- **Clients** | I have experience advising and working for foundations, family offices, philanthropists, pooled funds, nonprofits, ballot measure committees, and early stage startups.
- **Issue Areas:** I am most well versed in the U.S. democracy reform landscape. I have lived experience with mental health that has motivated me to learn and work on the issue. I am also passionate about, and have a track record of supporting organizations working on: housing, immigration, and economic opportunity.
- **Work Style** | I can advise and coach clients on a recurring and one-off basis. I relish asynchronous work and enjoy putting together a pithy memo or simple deck. I believe in offering concurrent recommendations to solve short-term problems my clients face while thinking about the big picture.
- **Research** | I have managed a five person research team and commissioned research from think tanks and university scholars. I have also authored a considerable amount of applied research that blends rigorous methods, literature reviews, case studies, and persuasive advocacy. I have written white papers, blogs, op-eds, and explainers. For example:
  - White Papers: [“The Case for Political Philanthropy”](#) and [“The Primary Problem”](#) were widely cited and catalyzed action by philanthropists and activists in the US Election Reform community. The latter attracted considerable media attention (e.g., *Atlantic* [essay](#); *Washington Post* [coverage](#)) and became the foundation for [a book](#).
  - Explainers: [“Democracy and Mental Health are Linked”](#) and [“The Department of Education Isn’t Just Bureaucracy – It’s a Lifeline”](#)
  - Op-Eds: [“Stay at Home. Vote at Home”](#) and [“Coloradans deserve access to quality mental health care”](#)
- **Example Work Product** | Tyler has developed a landscape of the democracy reform movement in the United States to help guide philanthropists in crafting strategy and sourcing grantees. A copy is available for prospective clients as an example of the type of work Tyler can do.
  - [“Democracy Philanthropy Guide”](#) (password: Trailmark)

## Philanthropic Advising

I have experience working with philanthropists, family offices, foundations, and pooled funds.

### Competencies

**Strategy** — I help define grant-making strategies;

**Diligence** — I assess grantees and make funding recommendations;

**Evaluation** — I evaluate the impact of grantees' programs;

**Operations** — I advise philanthropies on how to operationalize their giving with systems and structure;

**Collaboration** — I identify ways for philanthropists to Work together, including in leveraging pooled funds.

### Relevant Experience

- Diligencing and evaluating hundreds of grant proposals;
- Granting \$150M+ to a large ecosystem of democracy reformers;
- Serving as a Program Officer for more than 100 grantees;
- Standing up a Planning, Measurement, Evaluation, and Learning (PMEL) function and framework
- Training colleagues on grant-making philanthropists;
- Advising principals and foundations on new strategies;
- Summarizing the impact of grant portfolios;
- Creating strategies to guide investment decisions;
- Serving on two nonprofit boards, including as Board Chair;
- Supporting 501(c)(3), 501(c)(4), and PAC organizations;
- Retaining outside expertise to evaluate impact;
- Coordinating and convening grantees;
- Researching the power and structure of various pooled funds.
- Helping three family foundations begin operations;

## Operational Excellence

I have experience working with founders, CEOs, Senior Teams, Fundraisers, and Program Leaders

### Competencies

**Strategy** — I help executives think through the big picture;

**Partnerships** — I help organizations forge new synergies;

**Fundraising** — I support development professionals;

**Facilitation** — I convene and facilitate important conversations;

**Operations** — I advise organizations on how they operate

### Relevant Experience

- Scaling a 2-person, \$500k/yr org to a 35 person \$60M+ enterprise;
- Leading and participating in multiple strategic planning processes;
- Coaching and advising hundreds of CEOs and Program Leaders;
- Crafting donor collateral including pitch decks, grant proposals & memos;
- Standing up and running countless advocacy and nonprofit programs;
- Convening coalition tables to drive alignment and boost trust;
- Briefing elected officials, donors, partners, media, and civic leaders
- Recruiting, hiring, and managing 20+ staff members and vendors;
- Acting as Board Secretary working closely with an Executive Director
- Serving on two nonprofit boards, including as Board Chair of one and Development Chair of the other
- Commissioning research from university-based scholars and think tanks;

# Tyler Fisher

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**B.S. in Economics; B.A. in Government, George Mason University**  
**Tutorials in International Development and British/EU Relations, Oxford University**

GPA: 4.00  
Fall 2015

**Sr. Director, Policy & Partnerships, Unite America**

June 2017 to Present

Unite America is a philanthropic pooled fund in the U.S. democracy reform movement. I was the organization's second employee, initially serving in a Deputy Director role in which I helped drive rapid growth and transition the organization from a small and scrappy nonprofit with < \$1M/year budget into a sustainable organization with a mandate to increase philanthropic investment and win policy changes. In 2024, our 40 person team granted \$70M+ to a growing field of reform campaigns and movement partners.

For the last four years, I have led three organizational functions: (i) effective philanthropy (ii) movement building (iii) research. In that capacity I have managed, coached, and developed a team of four full time staff and four part-time, core consultants.

- **Effective Philanthropy** | Make the organization the most effective grantmaker possible, including to:
  - Facilitate quarterly grant cycles to evaluate 100+ grantee requests per year; run internal standing meetings and semi-regular deep dives to build consensus among staff on grant recommendations;
  - Collaborate with internal stakeholders to set annual grantmaking budgets (e.g., 2024 = \$50M);
  - Coach other staff members on how to be effective Program Officers and develop resources for them;
  - Stood up a v1 Planning, Measurement, Evaluation, and Learning function to evaluate grantee impact.
- **Movement Building** | Coordinate the election reform movement in the United States, including to:
  - Manage a \$8M/yr grantmaking budget to 25+ movement building grantees;
  - Conduct due diligence on grants, advise grantees on strategy, provide in-kind value, set benchmarks;
  - Host convenings, coalition calls, and trainings to facilitate collaboration and shared learning;
  - Develop shared resources for campaigns across the country (e.g., template RFPs, budgets, job descriptions)
  - Build and run programs for our organization and movement, including: a right-of-center research initiative; a fellowship program; aggregated messaging insights; a job board; and a resource library.
- **Research** | Run a small think tank that conducts and commissions research on the impact of election reforms:
  - Authored countless piece of commentary and six white papers full of original research and syntheses of other scholars' findings — each of which has been used to attract media attention, educate donors, and lobby policymakers; my research has been cited in *The Washington Post*, *The Atlantic*, *CNN*, *MSNBC*, *Chicago Tribune*, and many more;
  - Approve new research products; help direct reports formulate arguments; review and edit work products;
  - Commissioned 25+ individual papers and provided grant support to 10+ think tanks;
  - Built a research community of 50+ university scholars and think tankers who regularly meet & collaborate;
  - Do outreach to distribute research findings via media, donor briefings, and legislator education.
- **Deputy Director** | Hired as second employee and partnered with Executive Director on strategy and operations;
  - Drove growth from 2 to 20 employees and from \$500k budget to a \$15M annual budget within three years;
  - Oversaw a diverse portfolio of work streams and departments, including: grassroots organizing; political data; operations and compliance; finance and budgeting; digital content; and key stakeholder engagement;
  - Served as Board Secretary, working closely with the Executive Director to prepare quarterly board materials;
  - Led hiring processes and contributed to 20+ hires, including recruiting, interviewing, and onboarding candidates.

**Business Transformation Consultant, IBM**

February 2017 to June 2017

- Drove multiple weekly internal and client meetings, ensuring projects remained on schedule;
- Integrated a global team of 150+ team members working across six different time zones;
- Developed and tracked staffing plans, weekly reports, program budgets, quarterly goals.

**Policy and Political Contractor, Self Employed**

January 2015 to February 2017

- Identified and recruited 200+ millennial candidates to run for office and engage civically for Action for America;
- Published a 10 page white paper and a website on municipal short-term rental policy for the R Street Institute;
- Researched all 50 states and thousands of political districts to focus The Centrist Project's 2018 strategy;
- Drafted 30+ rapid response memos on fiscal and financial policy research for a presidential campaign;
- Prepared outreach strategy to engage influential leaders for Change.Org's endorsement platform.

## CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

**Publisher, Bipolar and Bipartisan** | Write a newsletter sharing my mental health story and public policy analysis;

**Participant, Impact Denver** | Improved leadership skills and awareness of Colorado issues through a local program;

**Board Member, Alaskans for Better Elections** | Oversight of a leading organization in the democracy reform space;

**Fundraiser, The Ability Experience** | Raised \$10k+ from personal networks and served people with disabilities through athletics.