

Legacy Module 2.

Storytelling and Lesson-Learning: A Cross-Generational Exploration

Purpose:

Ask and listen across the generations to bridge shared understanding and notions of legacy.

Outcomes:

- Time for informal, one-on-one, thoughtful question-asking and careful listening
- Cross-generational connections, especially in larger families
- Sharing of stories of motivation, pride, success, learning from failure, and questions

Process:

Individual reflection on questions, one-on-one speed networking, full group discussion

Materials:

Notepads and pens

Activity:

Open by sharing the POP above. Then give everyone 5-10 minutes to write down questions they have for other members of the family, particularly those of other generations. Some questions we've seen emerge in other families are:

Questions for founding or older generation:

- Why did you start this giving enterprise in the first place? What was your motivation and hope?
- What are a few grants you're particularly proud of, and why?
- What are a few mistakes you've made?
- What have you learned along the way? Who have you learned from?
- What useful gifts, skills, and perspectives do you bring to the work?
- What makes you excited about getting other generations involved? What makes you nervous?
- What are some of your biggest hopes for the future?
- What haven't I asked that's important to you that I hear?

Questions for younger/emerging generation:

- Why do you choose or seek to be involved in our shared family giving?
- What are a few grants the philanthropy has made that you're particularly proud of, and why?
- What have you learned so far? Who have you learned from? Who do you hope to learn from?
- What useful gifts, skills, and perspectives do you bring to the work?
- What is hard for you about being involved? What is easy? What brings you joy?
- What are some of your biggest hopes for the future?
- Are there ways you think we might want to consider changing how we work, or what we give to?
- What haven't I asked that's important to you that I hear?

Hold paired conversations and be sure each person gets to ask the other one a few questions that are important to them. Change partners after 10-15 minutes, speed networking style. Depending on how many members of your group and how much time you dedicate to this conversation, you may have the chance for everyone to speak in a second pair. It is important to note that this is not a “learn from the elders” conversation—rather, it’s “learn from each other.”

After these paired conversations, it can be beneficial to talk in generational groups—or simply return to the full group.

Discussion:

What was striking about the conversations? What surprised you? What did you learn? What will you take with you moving forward?

Sharing stories in this way allows a group to share and meld experiences across individuals and generations as you build a cohesive sense of narrative, purpose, and legacy.