

PRINCIPLED PLANNING

*A Guide for
Family
Foundation
Retreats*

Elaine Gast



COUNCIL *on* FOUNDATIONS

VISION

The Council's vision for the field is of

A vibrant, growing and responsible philanthropic sector that advances the common good.

We see ourselves as part of a broad philanthropic community that will contribute to this vision. We aim to be an important leader in reaching the vision.

MISSION

The Council on Foundations provides the opportunity, leadership and tools needed by philanthropic organizations to expand, enhance and sustain their ability to advance the common good.

To carry out this mission, we will be a membership organization with effective and diverse leadership that helps the field be larger, more effective, more responsible and more cooperative.

By “*common good*,” we mean the sum total of conditions that enable community members to thrive. These achievements have a shared nature that goes beyond individual benefits.

By “*philanthropic organizations*,” we mean any vehicle that brings people together to enhance the effectiveness, impact and leverage of their philanthropy. This includes private and community foundations, corporate foundations and giving programs, operating foundations and public foundations, as well as emerging giving and grantmaking mechanisms involving collective participation.

STATEMENT OF INCLUSIVENESS

The Council on Foundations was formed to promote responsible and effective philanthropy. The mission requires a commitment to inclusiveness as a fundamental operating principle and calls for an active and ongoing process that affirms human diversity in its many forms, encompassing but not limited to ethnicity, race, gender, sexual orientation, economic circumstance, disability and philosophy. We seek diversity in order to ensure that a range of perspectives, opinions and experiences are recognized and acted upon in achieving the Council's mission. The Council also asks members to make a similar commitment to inclusiveness in order to better enhance their abilities to contribute to the common good of our changing society.

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Board Member Assessment Questions

Excerpted from Principled Giving: An Introduction to Family Foundation Stewardship

Questions to Ask	Yes	Needs Improvement	Importance (1 lowest, 5 highest)
Am I an active, knowledgeable trustee?			
Do I understand my foundation's mission, programs and strategic plan?			
Am I, and is the foundation, devoting enough time and resources to help the foundation achieve its mission?			
Does the board think through decisions jointly, or does one person lead and the rest follow?			
Do my fellow board members and I have the necessary skills to meet our organizations' mission?			
Do I stay current with best practices?			
Do my fellow board members and I understand our fiduciary responsibility to the foundation?			
How well does our foundation prepare new board members to serve?			
Does my foundation set term limits and other guidelines to define appropriate parameters for board service?			
Are we making too many grants outside of our mission?			
What tools and resources beyond grants could we use?			
What opportunities exist to align and ally with similar organizations?			
What are my fiduciary responsibilities as required by federal and state law?			

Board Member Assessment Questions (continued)

Questions to Ask	Yes	Needs Improvement	Importance (1 lowest, 5 highest)
Does my foundation comply with all IRS regulations?			
Do my fellow board members and I understand and comply with the self-dealing laws?			
How does my foundation identify and deal with possible conflicts of interest?			
What do grantees and other nonprofits think about our foundation's grants management process?			
Would I be able to fill out my foundation's grant application quickly and easily?			
How quickly do we respond to grantseeker inquiries and submissions?			
Do we make the organizations' mission and who, what and how we fund easily and publicly available?			
How prepared are we to respond to inquiries from the media, grantseekers, public officials and other audiences?			
How do we interpret donor intent in light of current needs of our family, community or grantees?			
Do we have a succession plan that serves the foundation's current leadership while also engaging younger family members?			
What do we do to teach young family members about the foundation and philanthropy in general?			