SAMPLE GROUNDRULES FOR FAMILY FOUNDATION BOARD MEETINGS

These groundrules have been compiled by Karie Brown based on her consulting work with a number of family foundations. These groundrules can be used as a starting point for individual foundations to develop and adopt their own agreed upon approach to their board meetings.

• Come to meetings prepared (each member should have their meeting materials at hand and bring their board binders for reference).

• Be mindful of the use of technology – turn phones off (or to vibrate) and only use computers to advance the purpose of the meeting.

• Maintain confidentiality in and out of meetings.

• Be respectful (let others speak and actively listen).

• Be open (as questions from a learning perspective).

• Ensure that only one person is speaking at a time.

• Don’t personalize things and don’t make personal attacks – stay on the business of the foundation.

• Don’t bring up family issues, either directly or indirectly, unless they relate directly to the business at hand.

• Speak candidly and constructively – often what is not said can lead to more problems than what is said.

• Assist the facilitator by participating effectively and efficiently. This means that each board member should:
  o Make sure to stay on point;
  o Add value with his or her comments; and,
  o Not take too much airtime.

• Hold ourselves accountable for keeping discussions and decisions at a “board-worthy” level.

• Ground discussions in information, data and knowledge.

• Show appreciation.