

FUNDAMENTALS OF FAMILY PHILANTHROPY WEBINAR

# Demystifying Decision-Making

May 13, 2021 | 12-1:15 PM ET

## Featuring:

**Ashley Blanchard**, Hill-Snowdon Foundation

**Laura Donnelley**, Gaylord and Dorothy Donnelley Foundation

**Colleen Ritzau Leth**, Tauck Family Foundation

**Ann Shulman**, Philanthropy Associates

# Fundamentals of Family Philanthropy

The monthly *Fundamentals of Family Philanthropy* webinar series provides guidance on the core tenets of effective family philanthropy—from motivations and values to governance, grantmaking, and succession. The series equips giving families with the latest information on evergreen topics in the donor lifecycle through practical takeaways and diverse family stories that illustrate important practices. Designed for seasoned practitioners and newcomers alike, the series is available to our Friends of the Family and Partner Subscriber organizations.



**Demystifying Decision Making**  
May 13 | 12-1:15pm ET



**Building a Social Impact Strategy and Approach**  
June 10 | 12-1:15pm ET



**Grantee Relationships and Power Dynamics**  
July 8 | 12-1:15pm ET

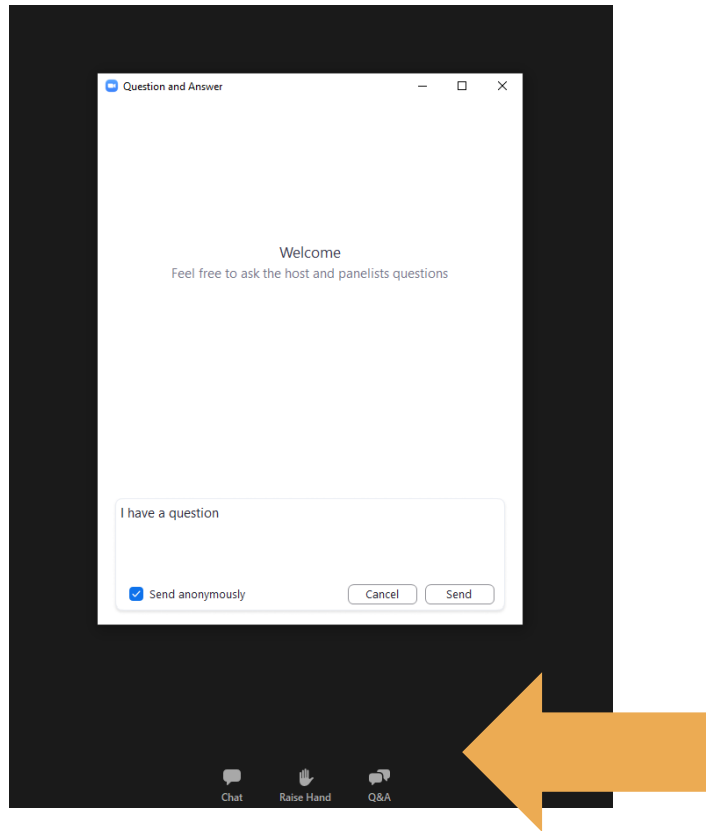


**Impact, Measurement, and Evaluation**  
August 12 | 12-1:15pm ET

# Today's Conversation

- What are the most important **decision-making options** for family foundation boards to know?
- How do you determine **which decision-making method is best**, and how do you **translate it into action**?
- **Why is it important** to build effective decision-making practices for family giving efforts and **foundation culture**?

# Submit Your Questions



Submit your questions into the Q&A box on your control panel at the bottom of the screen or use the chat.

# Webinar Logistics

- If you have sound problems listening through your computer, try switching to a landline telephone or cell phone
- To ask a question, type it into the Q&A box on your control panel at the bottom of your screen or use the chat.
- If you experience technical problems, please use the question box or email [jen.crino@ncfp.org](mailto:jen.crino@ncfp.org). Should there be a broader technical issue, we will send an email and share a message on screen
- This webinar is recorded and a replay will be made available to the field
- You may chat with us on twitter during or after the webinar using the hashtag #ncfpweb
- Keep an eye out for our post-webinar survey. We rely on your feedback!

# Today's Speakers



**Ashley Blanchard**

Trustee  
Hill-Snowdon  
Foundation



**Laura Donnelley**

Board Chair  
Gaylord and Dorothy  
Donnelley Foundation



**Colleen Ritzau Leth**

Board President  
Tauck Family  
Foundation



**Ann Shulman**

Executive Director  
Philanthropy  
Associates

# Foundation Decision-Making: Why Does it Matter?



# Foundation Decision-Making is Important Because...

- Unclear decision-making practices can lead to conflict and misunderstanding
- This is true in all organizations – and particularly important to preserve family relationships
- Strong decision-making practices help family philanthropies ensure greater diversity, equity and inclusion in their giving
- Board members are much more likely to support and implement a decision when their views are factored into a discussion
- Your board's decision-making process can influence the outcome of the decision itself – as well as relationships among board members.

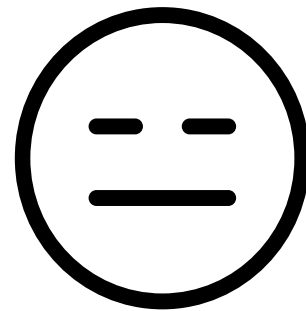
# 3 Key Steps to Strengthen Decision-Making

**Step 1:** Know Your Decision-Making Options

**Step 2:** Decide How to Decide

**Step 3:** Name it Up Front

# Don't go into a “decision-making coma...”



# ...Because...You've Got Options!



# Common Reasons for Decision-Making Coma

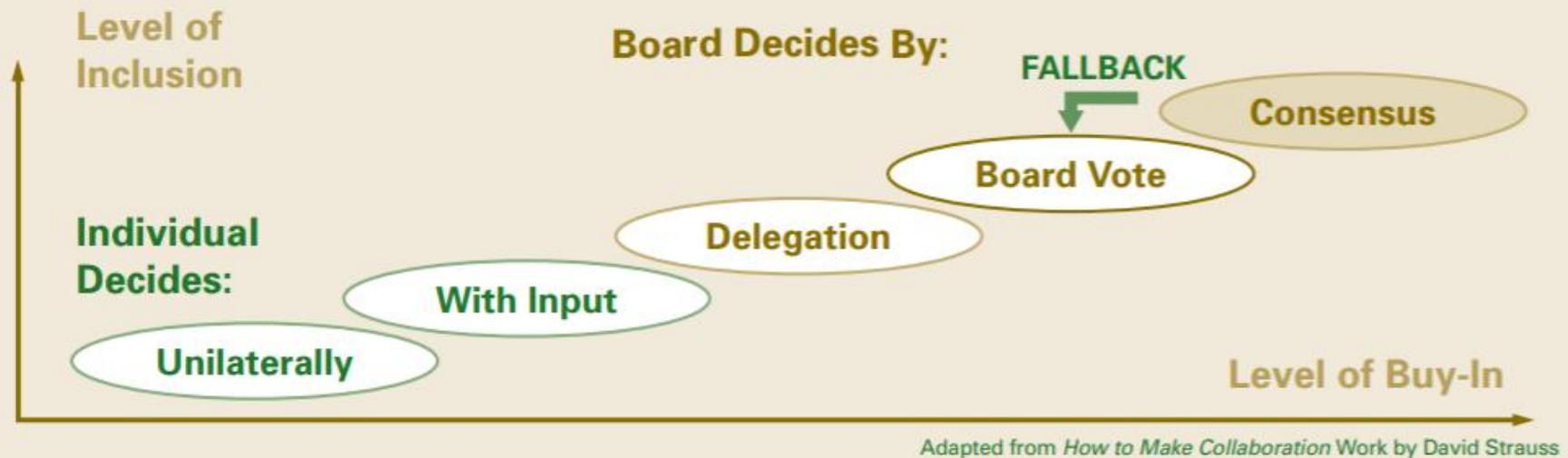
- **“Mom and Dad always did it this way”**
- **“The Bylaws made me do it”**
- **“You-Know-Who won’t like it”**
- **“Let’s not rock the boat”**

# Step 1: Know Your Decision-Making Options

- Philanthropy is a set of deliberate choices the board must make time and time again
- To ensure the board's decision-making method is appropriate for the choice at hand, get to know a range of decision-making options

# Range of Potential Decision-Making Options

FIGURE 1: DECISION-MAKING METHODS



# The Special Case of Consensus

- Definition of Consensus
- Time limit
- Fallback decision-making method

## Step 2: Decide How to Decide – The “Meta” Decision

- Once your board understands the range of decision-making options it has, who selects the most appropriate method?
- Typically, this falls to the Board Chair – but anyone can do it, as long as the board is in agreement.

# Key Considerations

- Are Founders present?
- Has the board adopted one or more lenses, such as DEI or gender equity?
- Does the board filter its grant-making decisions through a particular set of values?

# Decision-Making Checklist

1. Are there categories of decisions that can be treated similarly, or should each decision be assessed independently?
2. What is/are the decisions to be made?
3. Who are key stakeholders, and is the definition of success different or the same for each of them?
4. How much should key stakeholders be involved?
5. Does the board prioritize any particular lens, filter or set of criteria?
6. How much time can be spent making the decision?
7. How significant is this issue, both inside and outside the foundation?
8. Who has the information or expertise needed?
9. How capable and experienced are decision-makers working together?
10. How much baggage, tension or emotional charge surround this decision?

# “IT FITS” Model for Decision-Making

I: Importance of the decision

T: Time Available

F: Family/board dynamics

I: Information needed

T: Tradition

S: Stakeholder buy-in needed

# If it's Complex – Get Help

- If your board faces one or more complex decisions, a neutral facilitator can help guide the process so that board members are free to focus on content
- What matters most is that board members feel their views are respected and the process is handled fairly and transparently

## Step 3: Name It Up Front

A crucial and oft forgotten step is to put time on the agenda to communicate the decision-making method clearly and build board agreement on it, so that everyone has the same understanding **BEFORE** deliberations begin.

# A Few Tools of the Trade

Decision  
Matrix

SWOT  
Diagram

Values-  
based  
Analysis

The  
Negative  
Question

Fist to  
Five



# Process Affects Content

Remember: your board's decision-making process can influence the outcome of the decision itself – as well as relationships among board members.



# Discussion

# Next *Fundamentals of Family Philanthropy* Webinar

**JUNE  
10**

## **Building a Social Impact Strategy and Approach**

The practice of grantmaking actualizes the motivations of a donor, advances their values, and accomplishes their aims and objectives. However, it requires careful planning and consideration. Learn practical guidance for how to build or refresh your grantmaking strategy and approach.

**Register at [ncfp.org/events](https://ncfp.org/events)**

# Join a Peer Network

Peer networks are for those interested in connecting to family philanthropy colleagues with similar objectives, challenges, and shared experiences.


**Engaging Youth | Non-family Staff |  
Strategic Lifespan | Board Chairs**

Email [Katie.Scott@ncfp.org](mailto:Katie.Scott@ncfp.org) to learn more and join

# Connect with NCFP

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