Engaging the Next Generation

A *Fundamentals of Family Philanthropy* webinar recorded on November 10, 2021.

NATIONAL CENTER FOR
FAMILY PHILANTHROPY

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Transcript of the *Fundamentals of Family Philanthropy* webinar, Engaging the Next Generation. Recorded on November 10, 2021.

Nick Tedesco:

Welcome everyone, happy Wednesday. My name is Nick Tedesco, and I'm the president and CEO of the National Center for Family Philanthropy. Thank you again for joining us today for our monthly *Fundamentals of Family Philanthropy* webinar. This series provides guidance on the core tenets of effective family philanthropy—from motivations and values, to governance, grantmaking, and succession. The series is designed to equip philanthropic families with the latest information on evergreen topics in the donor lifecycle through practical takeaways and diverse family stories that illustrate important practices.

Today we are going to reflect on multi-generational engagement. As we all know, families use a variety of techniques to engage the next generation in philanthropy, and successful participation depends on a number of considerations, including how to promote learning, how to empower next generation family members, and how to offer leadership positions. In today's webinar, we're going to explore three critical questions. The first is how do you define next-gen, and what are some considerations when involving additional generations in philanthropy? The second is what are some strategies for engaging the next generation in the family philanthropy, and what are methods to build engagement across the entire family system? And the third topic that we'll cover is why is it important to engage subsequent generations in the family philanthropy? And how does this impact the legacy, the culture, and the lifespan of the foundation?

Before we begin our conversation, I want to briefly share about our webinar technology. We want this webinar to be interactive, so please submit questions for the panelists. To ask a question, please use the question box as indicated on the current slide. And when sending in a question if you wish to remain anonymous, please indicate that. As a reminder, the webinar is being recorded and a replay will be made available to all attendees. If you experience any technical issues, please reconnect to the technology or email jen.crino@ncfp.org. And as always, you're welcome to chat with us on Twitter about today's webinar using the hashtag #ncfpweb.

So let's move into the discussion. Today, we're joined by three incredible speakers, and we're so grateful for their time and their experience. We're joined by Allison Hale, senior philanthropic services associate at the Greater Houston Community Foundation, Cadence Miller, program officer of the Laird Norton Family Foundation, and Sharmila Rao Thakkar, a consultant at SRT Advising & Consulting. Sharmila is going to begin the conversation with an opening presentation on engaging the next generation, and then we'll open it up to a full panel discussion. And again, we really encourage your thoughts, your comments, reflections along the way. And Sharmila, I will turn it over to you, and I will thank you in advance for being such a great partner, and also nod to a peer network that Sharmila is leading for us on emerging family leaders. So please, to continue this conversation, encourage your family members that are coming into the family system to engage in this peer network. So Sharmila, thank you so much for leading the conversation.

Sharmila Rao Thakkar:

Thank you very much, Nick, for having us and the lovely introduction. I'm really thrilled to be here with all of you and with Allison and Cadence for this hopefully inspiring discussion. We are going to start by defining the next-gen, which is one of the hopefully core areas we'll cover today. Some of you may have seen this before, but when we do our work with next-gen, we find that sometimes the values and the culture that we're bringing into our philanthropy is really impacted by the generation which we represent. And so a quick overview, and I know I saw in the chat—the slides can be shared if you need them, but otherwise they will be sent after the session. And the recording will also be available.

The Mature or Silent Generations are those that were born before 1945, and so they're in their 70s now. And for many foundations, you might find that this generation is the donor, the main giver. And so the multi-generational giving still has this person involved in the giving. Baby Boomers, those that were born from 1946 to 1964, they're in their early 50s to their early 70s. And this is at the moment the largest number of donors that we're seeing in the Baby Boomer category. Generation X, those born from 1965 to 1980, ages 41 to about 56. Millennials, Generation Y born 1981 to 1995—they're in their 20s and 30s. Generation Z—which are also called the Post-Millennials or iGen—born 1996 to 2010, and they're in their teens pretty much. So that's the age that we're going to be talking about mostly today, and some bit of Millennials. And then the Generation Alpha is 2011 to 2025, and they're under 11. I just learned myself that term Generation Alpha. There wasn't a lot out there yet, but we know that these are the children of Millennials and more than ever before influenced by technology.

And I've seen a couple of questions come in already about how we can use technology to better engage our next generations. Next slide, please. So some of the trends and opportunities. Data over the many years, but here you'll see some specific data from 21/64, US Trust, IU Lilly Family School of Philanthropy, Blackbaud, and NCFP. We know that the philanthropy of our next generation members is greatly influenced by parents and grandparents. After that, friends and their peers. So understanding that when you're bringing them into your philanthropy, into your family philanthropy, an awareness of that will affect the kinds of strategies and tools that you use.

We find that next generation members are interested in different causes versus the same organizations that previous generations were single issue areas. They want to be part of the change, they want to be involved and touch and feel it. And they're driven by strategy and impact. Not that previous generations aren't, but it looks different, and we'll get into that a little bit later. Addressing systemic change, root causes rather than a traditional role of philanthropy as charity. In addition to being donors and supporters, they like to be advocates and activists, and that relates to really being part of the change they wish to see in the world.

So the old paradigm on the left is being somewhat replaced with this new paradigm. And again, these are generalizations. But once upon a time where being involved in your family's philanthropy might've been a duty or responsibility or an obligation—and one fraught with guilt if you didn't show up or you didn't do something the way it had always been—we're finding newer generations coming to their philanthropy with a desire for ownership. They have their own set of passions and interests, and they really want to feel purpose and connection to the philanthropies that they're involved in and the work that they're involved in. The checkbook philanthropy, the model of charity of giving and walking away is being not replaced, but new generations are adding this vision and view of how they can really be involved in a hands-on way and be involved in making strategic decisions and having impact with their giving.

We might've seen in the past longevity in family philanthropy, so decades and generations of giving and families establishing their giving principles and documents and tools to give over a lifespan. Whereas newer generations are really interested in giving now, and they're okay with perhaps the idea of spend down, giving in their lifetime. And the old, again, this goes to the checkbook philanthropy model of being transactional. The new is really being more transformational with our giving.
So when we think about next-gen engagement, some of the themes that arise in families looking to bring in multiple generations sometimes not just one at a time, it's really understanding what is the purpose of that engagement. Is it to meet the needs of the foundation? Is it to meet the needs of the community? Is it to meet the needs of family members?

It can be all of those things, but having a clear sense of purpose for why you're bringing in the generations, it'll help you establish of a vision and put you on a trajectory to keep that engagement along the way. We say that it's never too early to start, and you'll hear a little bit of that today. Early, often, and continuous learning makes for deep and meaningful contributions—deep and meaningful relationships to each other within the family but also to the work that's being done collectively and collaboratively. Thinking about how to build trust and connections between and among family members and the generations is something we'll touch on today.

We've learned that peer-to-peer learning and exchanging, creating opportunities to learn from each other really makes the experience more valuable. And we'll talk today about some of the ways that our two guest speakers will address that. I saw this come in, I don't know if it was in the registration question or in the chat. But one of the biggest challenges we find that families have is the life stages that the various generations we wish to work with are in. They're in college, they're in grad school, they're starting their careers, they're starting their families. Having different entry breaks and exit points and understanding that it's okay to come in and out of the work. And building in policies, procedures to accommodate that will not alienate anyone, and in fact create a door to continuous engagement.

Making space and taking space. So it's one thing for the elders to make space at the table for the future generations. On the flip side, we have to encourage and empower and create a comfort level. And part of that is learning and education for the next generations to take this space that we are offering. I saw someone mentioned technology especially now through COVID, through geographic dispersion. We're seeing more how technology can be used to engage our generations. Those families, those family foundations that commit time but also resources—so this is funding, this is creating opportunities—really see the success and the continuous engagement of multiple generations. I think it's important to document family history, and this relates to donor intent and legacy.

Oftentimes as next generation members come in, there isn't something that shares the why, the values, the traditions, the culture. It doesn't necessarily have to be a document, it can come in family stories being passed down through videos or through carved out time where multiple generations get to share with each other. We often find multiple branches of the same family have different experiences when they've grown up. The values, how they gave back in their own communities, what they learned of the foundation. And so we have seen that intentional efforts to document and share that makes it for more meaningful experience as next generation members come into the philanthropy.
Creating space for next generation members to develop their own passions and interests makes it, again, a more fulfilling experience and keeps them at the table with you. I'm a big fan of board members, family members, anyone that's doing charitable or philanthropic work to see the full scope of

their roles and responsibilities and opportunities to giving back. And for me, that is in the form of time, talent, treasure, and ties.

And so understanding that when we involve our next generations just like we would expect board members or any volunteer, they too have a gamut of ways that they can be seen as engaging in your philanthropy. We'll get into that a little bit later. This seems so simple—being flexible, open, and curious. But I cannot tell you the number of next generation family members that feel they haven't had that, and it's an immediate door close for them. And so I think when we think about ways to bring in family members, it's one thing to say that we are, but let's ... And we'll talk a little bit later today about how we actually show that we are flexible and open and curious to bring them into the work. And then lastly is it meaningful for them, and is it fun? I'm a big believer that the reason many of us are in philanthropy is because we have a deep passion for the work and we enjoy it. And so if we don't get joy out of it, we won't stay, we'll find something else to spend our time in. Next slide, please.

I'm not going to mention all of these, but I wanted to let you walk away with strategies. You're going to hear about several of these strategies for engaging next generation family members when we hear from our guest speakers today, but a couple I'm going to pick out. I mentioned earlier that starting early is critical. I know I've given this tip to a couple of family members. Giving a child a “Save, Spend, Donate, Invest” piggybank is some of the earliest lessons that children can have around the diversity of ways that money can be used. It sounds very simple, but it's starting point for a conversation. Those families that have established birthday giving programs through their philanthropy and book clubs to teach children about what it is to give back. Creating service projects and volunteer opportunities.

We mentioned earlier peer engagement. Many families have created a buddy program or a next-gen liaison who's responsible for being that trusted voice if next-gen members are interested and have a question but not sure where to go. I think trust building is a really big part of this work, but they need to know each other and they need to find spaces where they can just be amongst themselves even if it starts out as social time. I know because of geographic dispersion many families don't get to come together as often as they may have for family reunions, for social events. And so part of the family's philanthropy can be carving out these times during the philanthropic work that may happen once or twice a year or more.

Creating ways to keep each other connected through e-Communications, Facebook groups, listservs, newsletters, sharing news not only of the family but the work of the foundation, of the grantees. I think this is a pretty self-explanatory recommendation, but site visits. For kids, sometimes going on site visits seems like a really tough thing if they don't understand the giving. But for those families that bring those kids along, they are absorbing what you do by watching what you do. And then of course, junior boards, generational grant committees, establishing ways to give together through giving circles, you'll hear a little bit about this in the next couple of minutes.

So someone asked me to cover this, why is next generation engagement even important? I wish I could see you all because I would do a show of hands, and I would have you come off screen to share why you're all here because I think you know this. Next generation engagement is important because it helps us carry on the family legacy and the donor intent through multiple generations. And the ideal is to have that be informed by previous and current generations. That is the most fulfilling experience I think for many families. Of course, it provides an opportunity to give family members a chance to stay together or come together. It's an opportunity to build a culture of understanding, shared ownership, and collaborative giving. It allows new ideas to come into the philanthropy, new thought processes to really meet the needs of the communities that you serve.

I think that sometimes when we start to think about how future generations can be involved in our giving, we may not have before, but it prompts this intentional and thoughtful work on either expressing or clarifying our values, our principles, reaffirming our mission, our vision, and for some how we're going to strategize to achieve the goals we set out to. And it also makes space for change. For some of you, the foundations that were established decades ago need to come into the contemporary or a modern philanthropic environment. And so when you bring new voices to the table, you have an opportunity to explore what that looks like. And of course, for those foundations that want to stay and keep giving together, it prepares the next generation for the leadership roles you will need them to enter. Sometimes that happens sooner than when you anticipate. And so crafting opportunities for learning and leadership now with the current generations, again, makes that good for those that are joining the philanthropy, but also a positive to help chart the future of the foundation.

I'm now very excited to welcome Allison and Cadence to our discussion. And I know I see it in the chat. Now, that I'm stopped talking, I'll check the chat out. But please, if you've got questions, comments, please include them in the Q&A or chat and we will get them once we've had some moments for Allison and Cadence to share a little bit about the work that they have been doing. Thank you both for being here. Why don't we start, Allison, with you sharing a little bit about your work at the Greater Houston Community Foundation.

Allison Hale:

Great. Thank you. Well, hello everyone, it's so great to be here today. I appreciate everyone's time in advance. So yes, my name is Allison Hale, I am a senior associate at Greater Houston Community Foundation. If you all will please pardon the fact that I'm going to use abbreviations because that's very long, so GHCF is how you'll hear me refer to it. I have been with GHCF for six years, and I am a second generation native Houstonian. Obviously, I'm very passionate about our community. I lead the grantmaking efforts carried out by the Family Giving Circle, and most importantly, I get to mentor 20 youth leaders who are part of the Family Giving Circle.

So just a little bit about GHCF for those of you who don't know. We are one of the younger community foundations, we actually just celebrated our 25th year in 2020. We currently have 41 full-time employees, and we represent various departments, including donor services, donor advancement, and relations, community scholarships, community development, and disaster relief. In addition, we have Understanding Houston, which is a large indicators project. And our strategic research partner with that is Rice University's Kinder Institute for Urban Research. Our donors are currently multi-generational, and they use a multitude of our giving vehicles.

So even with the uncertainty of COVID last year, our donors still had a very generous year in 2020 and helped to support the community with their grantmaking. Through the vision and generosity of our donors, we are one of the largest grantmakers in the region. So GHCF offers a number of ways to support Houston, including donor-advised funds, community impact funds, supporting organizations, and legacy funds. We also have various affinity groups, including the youth-led Asian-American Giving Circle, which I can talk a little bit about later on in the program. I help to support these efforts. As far as the affinity groups, they are mostly self-organizing, but they do receive support from our staff. So we also encourage their giving goals and help to adjust urgent topics or acute community needs or trends based on whatever they think is important to them. Next slide.

So the bulk of it. The way that we engage donors with families is through our dedicated Center for Family Philanthropy. We really like to say that we have programming for ages 5 to 95, so we're hitting families at every stage of their lives. The Center for Family Philanthropy launched in 2015 in partnership with nine of our founding families, and it offers next-gen and family programming, peer-to-peer connections, and enhanced structure with expanded resources, and of course, access to the best practices for family philanthropy. Within the CFP, there are three full-time dedicated employees, myself included. And we provide donors with multi-generational services, including a dedicated relationship manager and access to both the Next Gen Donor Institute and Next Gen alumni network.

So first I'll talk about our Next Gen Donor Institute. That's actually run by my colleague Annie Hurwitz who is our senior manager of next gen engagement. And she runs not only the Donor Institute but also the Next Gen Giving Circle and the Gen Impact Fund, which we have kind of nicknamed Next Gen 2.0. The mission of Next Gen is to connect, cultivate, inspire and engage the next generation of philanthropic leaders in Houston. Upon completion of the institution, participants become members of the alumni network, and we currently have over 100 alumni. So it's definitely a program that's growing by leaps and bounds. In terms of participation, we used to have ages 25 through 45 on our marketing materials, but we have since removed the age requirement because we're finding more and more as we're working with younger donors, we're finding that really it's more about meeting people where they are in life. So it's not necessarily number-based but experience-based.

Something else exciting, we recently engaged the Dorothy A. Johnson Center for Philanthropy as part of the 10-year anniversary of our Next Gen Donor Institute. So they are going to provide an independent evaluation of our next-gen donor and youth engagement activities. It's an external review that will include impacts on the donors themselves, the impacts that they have had on their families, on GHCF as a whole, and then on individual nonprofits and the community as a whole that we work with. So following the rollout of the survey results, there will be a publication and case study available to you all. So hopefully you will be able to read through that and hopefully learn from our work. We're excited to dig into that in a little bit.

So next I'll talk about the Family Giving Circle, which really is where most of my time is spent with the CFP. What we think makes this program so unique is that the learning really is centered around strategic grantmaking. And the grantmaking efforts are actually carried out by our youth leadership team, those are ages 12 to 18. So middle school to high school. Most of them are high school, as a matter of fact, about half of them are graduating seniors. So we're in heavy recruitment for next year. But the youth leadership team, that's really a great opportunity for our youth to develop their values and independent thinking. And of course their baseline knowledge of the community including their leadership skills and critical decision-making. And of course, they get to learn more about the community and the nonprofit sector, which is amazing because a lot of them have already expressed an interest in wanting to go into philanthropy after they graduated from college. So it's a great tool not only for learning how to evaluate nonprofits but also learning the importance at this age of trust-based philanthropy and why that really matters.

Additionally, I have created an executive committee within the youth leadership team to further encourage participation and buy-in. So the executive committee helps to create and curate meeting content, communication with previous grantees, and then they report on how the grant dollars have been used. So really it's me going to them and saying, “What do you want to learn about? Why is it important, and how can I help you get there?” So in the past, the Family Giving Circle did one round of grantmaking per year. But the program has grown in popularity, and really it's doubled in size. So we now offer two grant cycles, one in the spring and one in the fall with three finalists and three site visits. So really we're marrying the school year calendar. Each grantmaking cycle is split between approximately 10 to 15 families who pull the resources to create a fund of approximately $10-15,000, which we grant out at the end of the semester again to three nonprofit finalists.

So the families are primarily donors at GHCF. However, in 2019, we actually did open up the program really to any family who is interested in learning about grantmaking as a family. Fortunately, we have strong buy-in and support from our board and have seven participating families who are connected in some form or fashion to our board. So either our governing board or a CFP advisory committee. In order to participate, we request at least 15 hours of service in a six-month period. So it really is a big time commitment on the part of the youth leaders, but they collectively decide the community issue. From there, they create a mission statement. They are soliciting and reviewing grant applications. They collectively perform site visits along with their family members, and then they ultimately select the three finalists to support.

So this program really stresses the importance of consensus building as the youth leaders are in constant discussion about how and why it matters. Why does it matter? How do we address it? I also find it's really helpful to use teaching tools from 21/64 to engage them when they're thinking about these questions. In particular, our youth really love using picture your legacy and values cards. So the last thing I'll say is that to date, the family giving circle has granted out over $78,000 to 20 local nonprofits. And they have worked in the areas of youth literacy, youth homelessness, health and nutrition, mental health, veteran services. And their current topic is refugees coming into Houston.

Sharmila Rao Thakkar:

Thank you so much, Allison. I've got a lot of questions for you. Cadence, you're up next.

Cadence Miller:

Thank you Sharmila for the introduction. My name is Cadence, I use she/her pronouns, and I'm calling from the Seattle area on the ancestral land of the Duwamish people. A little background on the Laird Norton Family Foundation—Laird Norton family is a seventh generation family. There's currently 500 living family members all spread across the globe. They've maintained a family owned business through those generations to this day, and currently there's about upwards of 75 family members that are actively involved in the foundation in a given year. Our annual grantmaking is just under $2 million annually. The foundation was established 81 years ago and has gone through many different iterations during that time. Our current giving structure is focused on giving together and family involvement. It's reaching its 15th year of operations. In that structure, we have four advisory committees, Funded Advisory Committees or known as FACs, whose giving focus is largely determined by family involvement and participation of family members.

Our core focus areas you can see on the screen are human services, which is focusing right now on youth and young adult homelessness and those that are in systems of care. We have an arts and education priority focus on arts integration as a lever for the eliminating the educational opportunity gap. A climate change focus, which is working to hasten the demise of fossil fuels and bio-carbon solutions and watershed stewardship, which is focusing on current watersheds and those of historical significance to the Laird Norton family. We also have a matching gift fund for family members that's cleverly named the Taproot Fund. And in addition to my work with our youth, I support our human services in arts and education fund, but that's not exactly what we're here to talk about today. In addition with working with them, I support our youth philanthropy programming, which is known as our Sapling Fund. We can go to the next slide please. Thank you.

So our younger generation programming began as a movement within the family, a place where those in the sixth generation could have a voice. They wanted a place to engage in their interests and not necessarily what the company or family stated interests were at that time. At that time, the family that was mainly involved with the company and the foundation were mainly fifth and fourth gen family members. The group initially focused on environmental organizations and prioritized service learning and adopted a “by youth for youth” philosophy to their grantmaking. Eventually the group became known as the Sapling Fund, especially when there were more members than just the sixth generation in that group, and has grown to a staff and foundation supported programming aiming to provide a place for Laird Norton youth aged 14 to 20 to engage with each other and learn about and participate in collective giving.

Our process has modified a bit over the pandemic to be entirely via Zoom as our members are spread out across the country. Members identify a priority giving area each year, they identify values and interests of the current members as well as learning some philanthropy basics. And this next year we're going to be focused on disaster relief and prevention for future natural disasters and climate change, which is a major shift from our focusing in the past. We've been focusing on working with services for the past several years. The members research organizations and nominate ones that they think would be a good fit for the current priority area. We hold a proposal process. Prior to the pandemic, that was a written process. However, we tried something new, and in the last year we did info calls and Zoom proposals with organizations. And that was very well received with both our Sapling Fund members and the organizations to be able to sit in conversation with leaders of organizations and hear about their programming and then have Sapling Fund members ask questions.

And we do an annual grantmaking meeting where they determine grants, and this is led by our youth leadership team. And it is honestly one of my favorite meetings of the year. In addition to the giving, we've had opportunities for engagement and more learning at the request of this group. They were the first of all of our committees to ask for racial equity learning as well as planning and participating in service learning projects both for just their group and for the greater Laird Norton family. And they to engage with the NCFP peer-to-peer network. So learning from other philanthropists like them.

And I want to end by noting that this process while not originally being created as a space for developing future Laird Norton leaders, we have seen a large number of Sapling Fund participants go on to further engagement in the foundation or the family company. And those members have identified their participation as one of the ways in which they first felt committed and interested in further family engagement. And that's been through the foundation, and we have currently members on our board as well as members in our FACs that we mentioned before. And we have directors on our company board and associate directors, and it's been really lovely to see their evolution. And I included ... Next slide. You can see some pictures of how that has evolved throughout the last year. So it's 23 years ago—it started as Sixth Sense, which was the sixth generation family members. And then eventually they had to change that programming.

I love this slide because it shows you some 90s fashion, some of which is coming back right now. And then next slide you can see how Sapling Fund is today. So some of our service projects and then the ever-present Brady Bunch over Zoom. Thank you very much.

Sharmila Rao Thakkar:

Thank you very much Cadence. Allison, do you want to come back on? Great, thank you. I know that you alluded to it in your introductory remarks. Could you share a little bit more about the affinity-based giving circle? I think you mentioned the Asian Giving Circle and how that works. We do have some questions around that, so I thought if you gave an overview I could lead us into that.

Allison Hale:

Yeah, absolutely, happy to talk about that. So we have actually two, we have the Asian American Giving Circle and then there is a youth component. So they have their own Asian American Youth Giving Circle. It's comprised of about 10 to 12 families, and really they mirror the same model as our Family Giving Circles. They are practicing the lifecycle of a grant, so they are identifying the community need and they are evaluating nonprofits and making grants together. What is unique about their work versus ours obviously is that they do have more of a lens in the Asian community, which is a huge in Houston. We have a very big presence of Asian Americans within Houston. And within that giving circle alone, many of them are first generation or they're children of first generation. So they're really learning together, and not only about how to support the community, but about just nonprofits in general.

A lot of them are brand new to philanthropy, they just know that they have a cause that they care about and they have personal wealth that they want to put towards. It's been a nice journey helping them refocus their lens of thinking in not just I have money that I want to give towards, but how can you actually help this community that needs it? So their youth component, their ages are a little bit younger actually. They get their children involved as young as like eight, nine years old. I helped them with a meeting a couple months back. They had kiddos on there who were seven, eight years old asking these really hard hitting questions like, how are you going to use your grant dollars? Just getting to hear a seven or eight-year-old use the word grant and knowing what that word means is really, really unique and rewarding.

Sharmila Rao Thakkar:

So what are some ways that you teach them about philanthropy at that age? Is it led by you as staff or does the family have a role in those situations?

Allison Hale:

It's a little bit of both. So we really talk about the importance of volunteering together as a family unit. So we leave the grantmaking up to the youth because, again, I think that helps to encourage their buy-in. But as far as getting the entire family in it involved, volunteering is absolutely the most important. So obviously it's been a little bit challenging this past year as we're all virtual. And a lot of our smaller nonprofits have really taken a hit unfortunately, but we are still coming together. We figured out how to be a little bit creative in volunteering virtually. We have a really great partnership with an organization here in Houston called Generation Serve, and they actually fall under our umbrella. And they have volunteer opportunities for families with children as young as age three. So they are really starting at a really young age and teaching them the importance of giving back and offering your time, talent, treasure, and ties.

Sharmila Rao Thakkar:

So tied to that, we had a question come in about how you navigate family dynamics particularly when dealing with culture, language barriers perhaps between generations, cultural norms, when there's a feeling of respect or deference based on whatever that family is bringing into the giving. Has that come up, and how do you navigate that?

Allison Hale:

Absolutely. Those things are always coming up—uncomfortable or comfortable, regardless of how you view it. But really I feel it's my job to hear everyone out, we create an open space of ... Well, first of all, we start every meeting with our group agreements. And even if they have said it time and time again, we always go back to here's what we all agreed to, we want to respect everyone. And really just showing up with the fact that we acknowledge upfront that people are going to have different opinions, they're going to have different attitudes and mindsets, that's only natural being human.
So it's really my job to listen, keep an ear out for where I can be the most helpful but also not try to force an opinion or steer a conversation in one way or the other. What's so great about the site visits and why I really miss being able to do them in person is because a lot of those biases or whatever the preconceived notion might have been really come out in the site visit. And I think when they're able to come together as a family unit and see a nonprofit in action and be able to hear and listen and ask those questions, that's when a lot of that falls to the wayside.

Sharmila Rao Thakkar:

Excellent. So both of you have touched on site visits, and we have a great question that came in. So Cadence, maybe you can take it first. Reflecting on the experience of grant seekers when they're being asked to interact with individuals who are not yet adults, and I did see this in the chat earlier, how about that power dynamic? We're asking experienced professionals who've been probably leading their nonprofits and doing this work in communities for a long time to give their time to these young people who are in the learning phase and obviously have good questions, but how do you balance that?

Cadence Miller:

Sure, thanks. So a couple of ways. We look at this even with our site visits, with our committees that have adults in it too. There's definitely an inherent power dynamic there, and we want to be respectful of an organization's time. We do not typically go on site visits unless we feel that 1) that we can provide some compensation, and 2) we try not to overwhelm the organization for our time there. For our youth in the past, our grantmaking has been spread out geographically, and so we haven't been able to do site visits as much. We've done some onsite service projects, which again sometimes I think service projects can be more about those who are participating than the actual thing that we're doing for the organization. So we try to compensate organizations for that time as well.

We talk about power dynamics prior to going in there, we try to reiterate that we at least in our foundation, we are not the experts, we're there to learn. But at least for the info calls that we had this last year where that was probably the most interactions that we had from the younger generation with organizations specifically, we let them know ahead of time what our process was going to be like. And then they were able to select who came to spend that time with us. And so even though we have a proposal process, we also have a minimum grant amount, we call it a declination grant since we're invite only. So if we invite you to apply, then we're going to recognize and honor your time and you will get at least a certain amount of funding from us. I would like to think it helps balance some of their time because we're learning from them. Not only are staff learning, but the youth are learning as well.

Sharmila Rao Thakkar:

I love that, I love that idea. You're honoring their time and you're also creating a connection for the youth to understand how valuable nonprofits are. I really appreciate that model. Allison, do you have anything to add on that?

Allison Hale:

Sure. So we follow a similar model. As I mentioned earlier, so for the Family Giving Circle and the Asian American Giving Circle, they always have three finalists. And part of being a finalist is that they know ahead of time that they are going to receive some sort of funding. So again, doing a site visit, there is a grant that is ultimately involved. And really, it's just about us communicating ahead of time with the nonprofit finalists that we're going to have younger children there. We don't want to be too burdensome to them, we recognize that they are busy. Even just with our application process, we've tried to really cut down the application and not make it too lengthy or too burdensome. Because it's a closed application process and me, myself, and a few others on staff have already vetted these nonprofit organizations, we don't feel the need to make them jump through tons of hurdles in order to receive funding from us.

Sharmila Rao Thakkar:

Great. Thank you. Cadence, you mentioned this, and this has come up quite a bit as well. How do you work to build relationships, familiarity, and trust amongst generations through geographic dispersion? Do you have examples of exercises or tools or can you give us a story of how this has played out because I do know that you're dealing with that?

Cadence Miller:

Yes. So currently there are two generations that are represented in our Sapling Fund programming. But they're all the same age, that's just when branches of the family had more children or not. I would say that we are lucky in that we get to, at least prior to the pandemic, we were able to meet in person at least once annually. So there was an annual summit for the family members to get together, and we always were able to carve some of that time out for our Sapling Fund participants. And that I think really helped them bridge and make more connection with their cousins than they would maybe have been able to otherwise. With such a large family, it's often that they aren't having Thanksgiving or celebrating holidays with these people. It might be that they actually are just meeting them.

I will say one of my favorite examples of how this can work with different generations is, one of the last summits that we were able to have was in Chicago when we went into Chicago and we were doing some service project work out in a local park. And it was really hot out, and we were carrying wheelbarrows full of mulch and working in a park. And we had a member of our fifth generation that one of our seventh generation sought out and paired up with. And they had this discussion, and they were from polar opposites on the political structure among other things. Internally I think for staff and for otherwise, we were like, oh, this is so great, this is where they can have this. They can do something completely different, they're both working really hard, they both obviously care about family. Where can we look at where we have things in common and make those connections rather than focus on what we have that might have our support.

Sharmila Rao Thakkar:

I feel like that's easier said than done. Do either of you have experiences where viewpoints have differed either within the same cohort, same generation, or between generations? I know Allison you mentioned there's some new issue areas that they're bringing into the work. And Cadence, you had mentioned too that you're seeing a shift in perspectives, priorities, interest areas. How is that space being made or carved out for the next generation to bring that into the work? Who wants to go first? Allison, you want to take that?

Allison Hale:

Sure. So right now, one of the big discussions with our youth leadership team is they really want to see diversity within their cohort. And they really want the program to be more inclusive, which I think is great. It's very reflective of the times that we are in now. Where it's been a little bit tricky having that conversation and really wanting to help them achieve that goal is, first of all, because we do have families that have funds with us, they really like the fact that it's—by they, I mean the parents—like the fact that it is a peer-to-peer network for families that have a particular financial background. I think they recognize the importance of wanting it to be a diverse group, but they also hold it to themselves because they worry about money messaging and just having some of those topics come up that may make others feel uncomfortable or unwelcome.

One of the ways that I am hoping to get around that next year is the youth leaders are actually going to start fundraising for their grant dollars, so that takes that conversation off the table. It's not about how much money your family has and how much money your family is contributing, it's about how much are you able to put towards this particular cause?

Sharmila Rao Thakkar:

Allison, can you talk about have any ideas come up about how they would do that yet, the fundraising piece?

Allison Hale:

Absolutely. One of my youth leaders, he is a junior this year. He wants to start a scholarship program where some of the families that do have funds will create a scholarship for students who aren't necessarily able to participate but still want to come and learn about their community. So that's definitely one avenue that we will be exploring next year.

Sharmila Rao Thakkar:

Cadence?

Cadence Miller:

Sure. So yes, we do have I think ... In any large gathering, you're going to have this, and I think especially in families you can't avoid the family dynamics. And I think amongst generations we are seeing a difference in priorities. And there is a certain amount of literacy amongst this generation that the older generation maybe doesn't have, there's a lot of different terminology out there. There's a bunch of different things that we see that our youth are a little more hip to. I feel that one of the ways that we try to honor that is to have a specific youth-focused area where their grant funds are not dictated by the board or otherwise, they are really given autonomy over what they want to focus on.

And I will be frank on that occasionally bristles some of the parents or some of the older generation where they are just trying to make sure that their children are not being exposed to something that would be outside of what they might have brought up in their family. And I think most of the time our board when we have those discussions, it's that that's actually the world is introducing our youth to all of these processes. This is a safe space for us to have these discussions, and these are being brought up by the youth. So there no way is that an agenda on our part or otherwise. And I think that while that comes up every once in a while, that's part of the growing process of just having your children grow up, I think, is that they have different views than you. If you give them actual space for that, they can have really interesting conversations.

But even amongst our youth group, there's not necessarily a polarity, but a difference in their upbringing. I'll just touch back to going towards what you have in common rather than what you have apart and touching on the word that Allison used—inclusivity. We have been so much more interested in having more people participate in the programming. So there's got to be something that you all have in common that you can all get around—we've been able to find at least something every year.

Sharmila Rao Thakkar:

So in that, is it expected that if there are divergent issue areas of interest—conflict is a strong word, but just differences—that when they come into this work together they check that at the door, they leave that outside the work that they do collectively? Or is there space for them to be open about what they might value but recognize that maybe if they're doing this together it doesn't fit here. I don't know if that's clear?

Cadence Miller:

Sure, I think I understand. So our priority giving statements have been broad enough that a youth could suggest an organization that would be, for instance, a much more conservative-focused organization on that topic versus a much more liberal-focused organization. There is space for both of those things. The grants are determined by consensus methods, so occasionally there are some grants that are declined. I mean, there's always some grant funds that are going to those organizations to honor both the youth who brought that organization and sharing about their own personal interest and passion. But also as I mentioned before, to honor the organization's time. I think it can be a really interesting place for the youth to share about their personal values, and sometimes they are more open to bringing a more directed organization that also mirrors those values. And sometimes they don't often choose to do that.

I don't feel that it needs to be a place where I push that individuality, I think that youth bring that in their own. And we don't debate the merit of whether that's a good organization or not in terms of their mission statement. I've been actually really surprised at how open and how respectful youth are with their cousins in talking about difficult topics, maybe more so than sometimes we can be as adults.

Sharmila Rao Thakkar:

That's a good point. So a specific question just came in. I was going to go a different direction, but I think this relates. How do we handle situations where next-gen members are interested in being involved and being engaged, but older family members do not really want them involved in the foundation? And this could be a host of reasons. So other people have said this divergence of values, understanding the legacy, donor intent or the process is not set up. And that lack of clarity prevents them wanting to create the space. Have either of you seen that layout?

Cadence Miller:

I don't know if you want take that Allison.

Allison Hale:

I was going to say you take that since you handle more family dynamics.

Cadence Miller:

I guess the space for youth participation was, as I mentioned in my introduction, it was a movement. They seized that space themselves, they didn't feel like there was enough of a place for them to gather and for them to say what was important to them. I think that there is power in the congregation of people in those interests. There was not resistance by the fourth and fifth generation in the family at that time at all to that, they were supportive of it. It really depends on the structure of the foundation I believe. If there is a very specific goal for those philanthropic dollars, that I think can be much more difficult to engage younger generations. And I can understand why older generation that maybe donated those funds with the intent of them going towards one purpose might bristle at the idea of younger generations.

I guess my recommendation would be to look internally and think what is the actual purpose of the foundation. Is part of it to have your family structure continue to learn and give together? Then honestly you're going to have to let go of a lot of those restrictions or have honest conversations as to why that's important for your family legacy to give that way. And then be willing to have people opt out or I guess, as you're saying, have where they don't want the next generation to participate, I have not encountered that. I think that for the most part they are committed. I think once we've gotten through seven generations, they really want this to be, they see this as an avenue for families to participate. But because of that, the structure is where it's flexible. Even our giving or FACs that I mentioned, those are not concrete. Those are able to change based on family participation and interest because it's about family giving together. I would suggest to look at why it is a family foundation if you don't want to continue to integrate family.

Sharmila Rao Thakkar:

I think that was one of the first sort of considerations we started with is examine the purpose, why next-gen engagement before you start thinking about it because the why will help you figure out the how, the when and all the other strategies that you might use. So there's a couple of questions around financing and funding this work. And I know it looks different for every initiative, every effort. Clearly if a commitment's been made, the board, the executive committee, whatever decision maker there is at the head of that effort or a foundation will set aside clearly as staff they're investing in this work. I believe NCFP has resources on what can qualify to be covered. So I just want to answer some of those questions to those in the Q&A. Yes, the foundation can cover the expense for youth to come together for meetings to learn, to give back together, to be educated by staff and their peers.

There are some guidelines, and I know that NCFP has some checklists and documents about this. So absolutely. I don't know Cadence if you have a certain formula or a certain budget amount, does it shift year to year that you might want to share for how the concept of-

Cadence Miller:

Budgeting for the actual programming rather than the grant's dollars?

Sharmila Rao Thakkar:

Yes, yes. Support the engagement, the strategies, the work, the learning.

Cadence Miller:

Right. So we have been lucky in the past, as I mentioned, that we've been able to have our Sapling Fund or our next generation philanthropy tacked onto an annual summit. And so the budget is already there for the annual summit. However, we have been able to bring in, we've budgeted some funds for—I mentioned that they've asked for racial equity learning—we were able to bring in a facilitator for that, and we had a budget for that. And that actually prompted a family wide discussion. So even people that were not actively participating in the foundation at that time, we talked as a family about racial equity learning and really assessing our own privilege.

So I don't know the exact, I think it varies year to year as to what we would budget for that week. Because our youth are in the 14 to 20 year old range, we've honestly been a little shy of having them travel without their parents or otherwise. We may consider doing that in the future to gather together if there's a family member that's able to host, and I think it's really going to be specific. But we do have that budget otherwise for our other committees, so we offer the same for our youth in terms of gathering and learning.

Sharmila Rao Thakkar:

Allison, do you have any thoughts on this question?

Allison Hale:

Sure. So we're really fortunate actually, we have our Center for Family Philanthropy that has its own operating budget. As I mentioned at the beginning of the call, it was formed by nine of our founding families. And it was formed because these families had children of varying ages. The parents were already involved in our Next Gen Donor Institute, and they were recognizing the importance of getting the entire family unit together. So they're the ones who suggested let's create this Center for Family Philanthropy. It was a five-year commitment, each of the families contributed to that five-year commitment. And that in turn went into our overall operating budget. As far as our grant dollars are concerned, as I mentioned, the families do pull their funds together. If they do not have a fund with GHCF, then we do have just a minimal administrative fee. And that just goes toward the cost of the program and really paying for my time to steward the program as well.

Sharmila Rao Thakkar:

So I have some logistical questions. I know we're at the top of the hour. This came in in the registration process. So we've all experienced this shift in participation as we've gone virtual through COVID for nearly 20 months now. Certainly Cadence I know that you're bringing family members, next-gen members from all over together, and it's allowed probably more engagement and deeper work together, perhaps more opportunities for learning. How do you engage members that might not be comfortable participating virtually? We tend to think that this is generational on the flip side, but there are youth that may not feel comfortable coming on camera or speaking up. It feels different when you're sitting next to someone. Have either of you experienced this, and what kinds of strategies or tools might you use? Cadence, do you want to take that first?

Cadence Miller:

Sure. So for the video cameras on and off, we did actually experience that a little bit with our youth group earlier in the pandemic. And I was honestly a little surprised by it. But then also I've learned from some of our grantees that I think our youth were pretty Zoomed out at that moment. And I think that that is a way to be, if you are feeling shy or just if you don't know those others. So what we've done since then, and then we've had much less issue with it, I think that modeling works best. I think also stating your expectations upfront. If you expect that cameras will be on, then give them a heads up that the cameras are going to be on.

We use the circle method through a lot of our committee meetings. So that is a way where especially... Sometimes it can feel clunky, sometimes it can feel awkward to make sure that you go around in a specific order and everybody gets to say their piece. However, it's one of the only ways that I've found that we actually do get participation from those who would be the quietest. And also it's a way to temper those voices who might be the loudest of that conversation.

Sharmila Rao Thakkar:

I like that. Allison?

Allison Hale:

So my experience actually is a little bit different. I'm surprised at how much our youth leaders are still wanting to be on Zoom. I think at this point they've just gotten used to it. We were virtual for all of 2020 obviously, and it's only been within the last three or four months that I've started doing hybrid meetings. We have the office open if they're comfortable doing so. When I started offering hybrid meetings, I had probably about 15 coming in-person and maybe three or four online. And it's definitely flip-flopped. Just being able to turn your camera on five minutes before a meeting is appealing to them.

But some ways that I try to move engagement along is we always start with an icebreaker. It's usually a Kahoot! quiz or a Menti quiz or just something goofy.

And also because I have my wonderful executive officers in the youth leadership team, I let them run the meetings. So I think the fact that they are calling on their peers instead of me doing it, that helps to create engagement a lot as well. I'm obviously very high energy, and I think sometimes these kids are like, oh my gosh, calm down. Especially since our meetings are usually Sunday evenings at four o'clock, and I think by that point they're just done, it's one more thing. But just having them lead the meetings really helps with engagement, especially the online portion.

Sharmila Rao Thakkar:

I love that, you're teaching them life skills too. And I know earlier you talked a little bit about professional career development and some of them exploring philanthropy, so I love that. So I have two last questions as you close. I know, I can't believe it went so fast. So two questions, and then you could pair them together if you'd like. Are there any unexpected results/findings from this work that you've been doing with the next generation—with different ages, because you've both worked with different ages? And then finally, what advice would you leave our participants, whether they be families, donor advisors or staff who are working to start or establish or in some cases probably strengthen the next generation programming or engagement that they're pursuing? So anything that you've been surprised by, anything unexpected from your work and then words of wisdom to leave with our participants?

Allison Hale:

I think for me the surprising aspect is really just how brave these young men and women are. These issues that they're tackling are important, and they're big. I think about the evolution of our program where three or four years ago we were looking at animal welfare, and we were going to tour shelters and help clean. I mean, that's important too. I'm an animal lover, I have four cats. But now we're looking at refugees coming into Houston and wanting to address basic needs, I thought it was so interesting. Our three finalists, two of them are asking for support for long-term programs and really building a continuum of care and setting up these people for long-term success. And only one of them was actually asking for immediate tangible needs like gift cards, things of that nature.

So I thought for sure our youth leaders would want to fund like, oh, let's just give them something that will fix the problem now. And really their discussion was, okay, but that's now, how are we going to help them in the long run? So just watching their evolution and their thought process has been definitely the most surprising and rewarding.

Sharmila Rao Thakkar:

Any final words of wisdom, advice?

Allison Hale:

Absolutely. I think that the main lesson that I've learned over time is to let the youth leadership actually lead. My role really has transformed into more of a mentor position and really giving them the space to voice their opinions and feel heard as well. There are certain meetings where I need to lean in and take the reins a little bit more, for example, the grant review meetings when we're reviewing the applications and financial documents and learning about the nonprofits. I'll take on a little bit more, that heavy lifting. But then there's times like during a site visit when I'm comfortable with leaning out and really letting them lead. And so I think by putting that empowerment back to them it really helps them to not only stay engaged but re-engaged. Some of my youth leaders started when they were in eighth grade, and now they're seniors in high school. So just being able to work with those family units this entire time, again, has really just been incredible.

Sharmila Rao Thakkar:

Cadence?

Cadence Miller:

Sure. So I guess I think a lot of my surprise and words of wisdom are actually quite similar to Allison's. For me where I've been surprised I think is where we've seen a little bit of a decline of participation in the last year in terms of numbers of youth that are gathering. The youth that are gathering are deeply involved, and they are asking to meet more often via Zoom and through the pandemic. And I have been also surprised at their capacity to recognize what's happening in the world around them and doing their own learning and thinking around that.

One of the recent surprises in the last year or a couple of years that I've had was during my tenure at Laird Norton Family Foundation. I've seen the first person that has gone from the Sapling Fund programming to one of our committees. And to see that person then participate on the committee and the level of—and they're young, they're in their mid-20s now—but the level of just respect that they give. They are really poised, they feel, I think, that they have something to contribute, and they really do. So they're able to seamlessly work within that committee, which is many generations. I mean, there's people that are in their 70s on that committee and then also 25. So that has been a nice surprise to see how it actually plays out.

For words of wisdom, I'll echo Allison. I really see the most opportunity for engaging youth in programming is if they are truly able to be a part of the construction and administration of that programming. I think it is so much harder to engage youth in something if it's something they have to do. And it doesn't feel that they have a lot of autonomy or there's choices in what they can make. So I think giving youth funds and allowing and seeing what they do with it—I think that people would be surprised. I think for the most part, it's going to be a learning experience. If you're talking about risk in philanthropy—which I don't actually personally think there's a lot of risk in philanthropy—but I think that if you're going to look for it, you should do it and give it to the youth because realistically they might fail, but there's learning in that. And they're going to something in their own learning and something good out there.

Sharmila Rao Thakkar:

Thank you both so much. Beautiful, lovely stories and lots to learn from your work. I'm going to ask Jen if you could just put up the closing thoughts slide, and then I'm going to hand it over to NCFP. You'll get these slides, but you've heard all of what you're going to see on this slide here. Just closing thoughts on engaging the next-gen. Intentionally creating space at the table for those who may or may not be engaged in the foundation, valuing the interests of all of those that you're trying to ask them and invite them. And really mean it when we ask them to be part of the work. Establishing learning goals and crafting activities in collaboration. Making sure they have a space to be honest and candid and inviting them into that exploration that they probably really are seeking.

Seeding sponsoring relationships, so this is the idea of peers, family liaison, buddy programs to build that trust and accountability early. Doing things together, we've seen that getting to know each other and building trust, that's a critical piece of that. We've talked a little bit already about time, talent, treasure, and ties. So thinking about all the different ways that next-gen family members can be engaged in your philanthropy. And nurturing relationships are important. A couple of you have asked, can we budget? And absolutely this is going to take resources and time. And being patient with ourselves, with each other, with family members to really problem solve together. I think we talked a little bit earlier on in our discussion around core values. So embedding the work in how the foundation sees its vision and its strategic thinking, and obviously its operations by allotting staff and budget to it. And lastly, something we started with, it's never too early, start now. And now I'm going to pass it over to Katie to talk about some exciting NCFP work in the next few weeks.

Katie Scott:

Thanks Sharmila, Cadence, and Allison for all of the wisdom you've shared today, and these important points and guidance on this topic. As we get ready to sign off, we have a few very quick announcements about our upcoming programs. We're excited to offer a new peer connection event for emerging leaders in family philanthropy on November 18th. NCFP is hosting an Emerging Family Leaders in Philanthropy salon for current and emerging family leaders between the ages of 21 and 45 to hear from our speakers, exchange ideas, experiences, and challenge with peers. We will have two fantastic speakers lead a conversation around the common opportunities, challenges, and learning experiences for family leaders who are growing into their roles. So we hope you can join us in. See the link in the chat to learn more and register. If you have any issues registering, please just email our staff team.

Next month, we will have our final 2021 *Fundamentals of Family Philanthropy* webinar, Succession Planning and Family Transitions, to be held on Thursday, December 9th from 12 to 1:15 PM Eastern. In this webinar, learn how families have managed succession planning and explore the necessary steps to prepare the family philanthropy for inevitable change.

NCFP is also hosting our Racial Justice and Family Philanthropy Symposium on December 13th and 14th. This Symposium is a two-day virtual learning opportunity for family foundation board members, CEOs, senior staff, and next-gen family members seeking to deepen their knowledge around racial equity frameworks and practices. Day one, we'll introduce fundamental topics and provide necessary grounding for conversations and discuss foundational strategies. On day two, attendees will workshop their challenges, consider case studies, and determine next steps for their personal and professional journeys in pursuit of racial justice. See more information on how to register for that event on our website at ncfp.org.

Finally, NCFP is pleased to offer peer networks for those interested in connecting to family philanthropy colleagues with similar objectives, challenges, or shared experience. If you're interested in learning more, please email me Katie Scott at katie.scott@ncfp.org for more information. My email is up on the screen. Thank you everyone for learning more and joining us today for this wide-ranging discussion. And thank you again to our panelists for this amazing conversation. Please, don't forget to fill out the feedback survey and join us on December 9th for our webinar on Succession Planning and Family Transitions. Everyone have a great day, thank you so much.