

Nathan Cummings Foundation

Search for Independent Trustee

Committee Materials for Review

July 27, 2021

MEMORANDUM

TO: Independent Trustee Search Committee, Nathan Cummings Foundation

FROM: Katherine Jacobs and Paola Peacock-Villada, NPAG

RE: Search Process, Independent Trustee Search

DATE: July 27, 2021

We are grateful for the rich discussion and deep engagement in our meeting last week. As we agreed, we will invite conversations to begin the search for the new Independent Trustee immediately with a goal to have a more substantive review of those early conversations and choices in the network during our next meeting. We will seek the input of the incoming CEO once their contract is signed, and we will publicly announce the position once the ICIO and CEO announcements have been made.

Please find the following materials in this packet for your review and discussion in our August 2nd meeting.

- Search Schedule
- Independent Trustee Position Description
- Candidate Rubric

We look forward to engaging with you, inviting the incoming CEO's voice, and upholding the Foundation's values in each step of the process.

Search Schedule

Dates	NCF	NPAG
July 20	Independent Trustee Search Committee (ITSC) Kick Off Meeting - Completed	
August 2	ITSC Materials Review Meeting <i>Position Description, candidate rubric, and profile calibration with "early returns" feedback from leaders in the field</i>	
August 5		Finalize Position Description for Distribution to Early Interested Candidates
By August 14	Internal Posting	Ongoing Outreach Inviting Conversations
Week of August 30	Candidate Pool Check In Review and discussion of early prospective candidates	
Early September	Continued Networking and Candidate Cultivation	

Dates	NCF	NPAG
September 7 & 8	Rosh Hashanah	
September 13	Candidate Presentation Meeting <i>Selection of candidates for interview</i>	
September 16	Yom Kippur	
September 21-27 September 28-29	Sukkot Shmini Atzeret & Simchat Torah	
September 22 - 24	First Round Interviews and Debrief	Ongoing Conversations with Candidates Preliminary References as desired
October 5, 6, and 13	Second Round Interviews and Debrief	
October 14	Recommendation to Governance Committee for October Meeting	
Late September / Early October	Reference Checking on Finalist(s)	
November 14 & 15	November Board Meeting Vote Offer, & Negotiation Official Start and Onboarding	



Independent Trustee

Location - Flexible

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Nathan Cummings Foundation (NCF) is pleased to invite nominations and applications for an Independent Trustee of the Board of Directors. NCF is in the midst of a transformative and exciting time and is building upon the family's legacy of commitment to social, economic, and climate justice in the planning and decisions of a new strategic era that will demonstrate the family's values in an increasingly urgent national and global context. Rooted in Jewish tradition and the principle Tikkun Olam which positions justice as a pathway to repair the world, NCF is guided by its founding [values](#). The trustees and staff uphold the legacy of Nathan Cummings through a commitment to justice and equity, interdependence, listening and learning, courageous transformation, and integrity in all that they do.

The new Independent Trustee will join the board of 14, including 10 family members and 4 additional independent trustees ([recent announcement](#)) in realizing the full potential, power, and impact of a foundation to use its leadership, grantmaking, and endowment to support the Foundation's focus areas. With a new CEO incoming, a new Chief Investment Officer pending, and new trustee-level commitments to turn attention not only to next stage of grantmaking but also inward together with the staff, NCF is boldly and decisively answering the call for philanthropy to examine how its structures, systems, and practices support or hinder race equity and effective governance. The new trustee will bring their extensive professional and personal expertise to the Board to advise on governance, strategy, capacity building, and other Foundation priorities in this exciting time.

The ideal candidate for Independent Trustee will first and foremost share NCF's commitment to equity and justice and will complement and broaden the skills, experiences, and expertise currently reflected on the Board. The new trustee will commit the time and attention to fully participate in the work of the Board and will be a representative of the Foundation.

Success in this role will require someone who is:

- An exceptional relationship builder who nurtures positive rapport, trust, and transparency across a diverse Board and staff;
- A strong listener, public communicator, and bridge-builder who can articulate and amplify the Foundation's values, and who can elevate interconnection across generations of lived experience;
- An experienced leader, demonstrating humility and strength in change management, governance, and organizational leadership;
- A committed partner, willing to engage deeply during this dynamic time for the Foundation.

The Nathan Cummings Foundation is assisted in this search by Katherine Jacobs and Paola Peacock-Villada of the national talent strategy firm [NPAG](#). Please see application instructions at the end of this document.

THE NATHAN CUMMINGS FOUNDATION STORY

The Nathan Cummings Foundation (NCF or ‘the Foundation’), is a multigenerational family foundation committed to creating a more just, vibrant, sustainable, and democratic society. The Foundation owes its existence and inspiration to Nathan Cummings who rose from impoverished beginnings to become the founder and guiding force of the Sara Lee Corporation. He inherited a spirit of sharing and a sense of community from his immigrant parents, and transmitted these values to his children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren who now contribute their time and energy to the Foundation.

Located in New York City, NCF holds assets of approximately \$450M, with an annual budget of about \$25M, and a current staff of 17. Rooted in the Jewish tradition, NCF’s mission has explicitly named a commitment to democratic values and social justice, by supporting the most vulnerable, respecting diversity, promoting understanding across cultures, and empowering communities. While NCF’s work is primarily concentrated in the United States, it also supports efforts of visionary leaders and work advancing a shared society, peace, and equality in Israel.

NCF believes it can support progress in repairing breaches in the social fabric and building bridges across differences by directing time, energy, and resources towards creative problem solving. NCF believes they can accomplish this by identifying the root causes of societal challenges, by advancing new paradigms and models of thinking, and by lifting up innovators with disruptive ideas rooted in and representative of diverse communities. NCF is proud of its spirit of innovation, and believes it is strongest when it collaborates with allies, grantees, and peer funders.

The active and deeply committed Board is comprised of third and fourth generation members of the Cummings family as well as five Independent Trustees including the President & CEO. Board members bring a deep commitment to social justice and diversity. The Board and staff actively work together to create a culture where openness, professional support, collaboration, and learning lay the foundations for innovative and impactful work.

PROGRAM FOCUS OF THE NATHAN CUMMINGS FOUNDATION

Guided by the belief that all life is interdependent, NCF aspires to shape a society that lives up to America’s promise and measures its success by how it treats those who have the least. Leveraging all its assets, knowledge, and tools to make change, NCF is focused on finding solutions to the two most challenging problems of our time – the climate crisis and growing inequality – and aims to transform the systems and mindsets that hinder progress toward a more sustainable and equitable future for all people, but particularly women and people of color. The Foundation has established a strong track record as a leader and innovator in the philanthropic community with a legacy of commitment to social justice philanthropy.

The Foundation invests in four integrated focus areas that, together, advance a vision of a healthy planet and a healthy democracy:

- Accelerate a just transition to a more **inclusive clean economy** where communities on the frontlines are creating solutions to the climate crisis, and where prosperity for all people is not at odds with a healthy environment.
- Advance **racial and economic justice** by working to reverse generations of concentrated wealth and racialized power to get to the root causes of inequality, standing with those who are marginalized and criminalized, and building the power of working people.
- Amplify **voice, creativity, and culture** to build radical empathy, nurture compassion, and shift

- narratives about race, class, gender, ethnicity, power, and how we care for the planet.
- Leverage NCF's influence as an investor and grant maker to increase **corporate and political accountability**, activating investors and businesses as allies, advocates, and leaders on climate and social justice.

In addition to grantmaking, NCF engages in a range of [Shareholder Activities](#), seeking to promote progress on climate change and inequality leveraging its role as an institutional investor with a substantial endowment. [The Nathan Cummings Foundation Fellowship](#) extends this impact by supporting three visionary leaders every year to pursue an innovative project to address a challenge related to climate change or inequality. For more information about the Foundation's mission, values, and principles, please visit the [NCF DNA](#) section of the website.

Going forward, the Foundation will take risks, and adopt unorthodox thinking to disrupt conventional definitions, close political divides, and generate new possibilities and alliances. To those ends, NCF is expanding organizational capacity and building a culture to support progress toward ambitious long-term goals while remaining flexible with regard to means and tactics.

THE OPPORTUNITY: INDEPENDENT TRUSTEES AT NCF

In this moment of growth and evolution, the incoming Independent Trustee will have an opportunity to participate in and contribute significantly to the examination and continued development of NCF's work and strategy both internally and externally. As full voting participants and strategic partners on the Board, Independent Trustees play an important role in supporting multiple generations of family members to joyfully engage and co-create strategy together in the spirit of Nathan Cummings' legacy.

NCF is deeply committed to inclusive leadership across the Board and staff. As a family foundation, the Board, leadership team, and staff interact often and collaborate to advance the Foundation's goals. Board members have strong relationships with the staff members and join conferences and site visits in the field to maintain firsthand engagement with the work. Collaboration between the staff and Board is core to NCF's work.

Specific Information on Independent Trusteeship:

- Being an active, engaged Trustee of NCF requires the commitment of time relative to the season of work for the board. This commitment of at least 20 days annually includes relevant committee service, board meetings, and other activities as appropriate. Many of these meetings can be attended via zoom although in person time- as it is safe to do so- will resume at least in part in the future.
- Independent Trustees are full voting members of the board and are expected to attend and participate in all NCF Board meetings, Education Days, and Board Retreats.
- The NCF Board meets three times annually (one meeting alternates yearly as a retreat). Meetings involve two-day blocks of time (on both weekends and weekdays) and advance preparation.
- Trustees serve on Board and Foundation Committees, as appointed. Independent Trustees chair the Governance and Nominating Committees and may chair other committees during their term. Committees meet regularly by conference call and occasionally in person.
- Trustees make site visits and/or participate in conferences, forums, conference calls, and other activities that deepen their knowledge of the Foundation's grantmaking priorities and opportunities, and where they may engage as informed representatives of the Foundation.
- These learning experiences are in addition to Foundation-organized activities such as annual

retreats, annual education days, or site visits made in the company of a Program Director or other member of the Foundation staff.

- The majority of travel is domestic; however, Board meetings or trips can take place in Israel or other international locations; travel and meetings may also be on evenings and weekends.
- NCF Trustees may participate in the Board Recommended Grants Program, through which they can allocate up to \$50K¹ in grants that fall within the Foundation's guidelines.
- Foundation-related expenses are reimbursed to Trustees. There is no direct compensation for serving on the NCF Board.

CORE COMPETENCIES OF THE NEW INDEPENDENT TRUSTEE

NCF welcomes Independent Trustee candidates who have a knowledge of and passion for social and economic justice and addressing climate change. As an organization deeply committed to diversity of experience and ideas, NCF values the wide range of personal and professional backgrounds and perspectives that are represented on its Board. Ideal candidates will have a diverse range of experiences in their background, combining work in the private, public, philanthropic, and/or nonprofit sectors.

The Board places significant importance on demonstrated skills to function as a Trustee and fiduciary in decision-making, collaboration, goal setting, communication, and board governance. These skills include the following professional and personal qualities and characteristics:

Passion for the Mission and Values of the Nathan Cummings Foundation

The Independent Trustee will be a fierce believer in social justice and will be energized by the mission and values of NCF. They will approach the work with strong values of open-mindedness and service with a commitment to integrity. A bold thinker, they will embrace ideas that challenge the status quo, and draw on creative problem solving, engaging the Board and staff in a constructive, collaborative fashion. They will find inspiration in NCF's dedication to learning and will actively seek opportunities to increase their knowledge. Fully committed to serving NCF, they will be an active Trustee and engage fully in Board meetings, Board Retreats, Education Days, and other site visits and conferences. An effective Trustee will also offer a strong fit with the Board's culture of collaboration, values-driven decision-making, transparency, creativity and entrepreneurship, and respect for a wide range of voices and perspectives.

Relevant Expertise and Experience

As an active contributor to the Board and NCF staff, the Independent Trustee will bring a diversity of expertise, experience, and ideas to conversations. They will demonstrate a deep appreciation of, and respect for, the privilege of serving as a steward of resources for the greater good. Financial acumen, internal governance and change management experience, and demonstrated problem-solving abilities will be highly prioritized. The new Independent Trustee will ideally bring experience as a leader and expert in one or more of the Foundation's focus areas, with the ability to engage networks on behalf of the Foundation. Areas of expertise that would be attractive include governance, finance and/or impact investing, climate change mitigation, community and economic development, philanthropy, and racial justice.

Emotional Intelligence and Cultural Competency

The new Independent Trustee will embody humility, practical wisdom, objectivity and partiality, and good judgment in difficult decisions. As an effective listener, they will bring high intellect, a good sense of humor,

¹ Amount may vary.

and a wide-ranging curiosity to their work as a Trustee. Embracing NCF's family-like organizational culture and philosophy as a learning organization, they will demonstrate sensitivity to the dynamics of a multigenerational family philanthropy and have the ability to partner successfully with other Trustees and staff. This includes the ability to effectively and authentically interact with a diverse range of stakeholders, give and receive critical feedback, and work well in teams. They will enjoy the prospect of mentoring family members as they become increasingly engaged in the Foundation's activities.

Leading Through Influence

Collaborative in nature, the new Independent Trustee will exhibit a thoughtful approach to working with fellow Trustees and NCF staff. They will develop strong relationships and partner with Board members and staff and enjoy serving and working with people from diverse cultural, social, and ethnic backgrounds in furtherance of the Foundation's mission. They will respectfully push the boundaries of NCF's work and challenge the perspective of others to encourage mindful risk-taking, innovation, and proactivity in NCF's grantmaking and shareholder activism. The new Independent Trustee will have a comfort level with the Jewish heritage of NCF and an appreciation for the importance of these issues to the Foundation and the family.

QUALIFICATIONS OF THE IDEAL CANDIDATE

While no one person will embody all of the qualities enumerated below, the ideal candidate will possess many of the following professional and personal abilities, attributes and experiences:

- The ability to approach work with joy and with deep attention to, and consideration of, all dimensions of intersectional racial equity.
- A hands-on strategic leader who balances a sense of urgency with empathy and humility when building and maintaining relationships with new and existing funding partners and with leaders and power builders in the field.
- Lived experience that promotes knowledge of and sensitivity to the challenges vulnerable communities face including appreciation for historical context, discernment of relationship nuances and power dynamics, and understanding of social, racial and ethnic realities.
- Strong relationship building and exemplary communication skills with the ability to have authentic dialogue around sensitive issues including strategic priorities, and ecosystem partner concerns.
- Broad knowledge of best practices and emerging trends in the field of family philanthropy.
- Successful experience working effectively with persons from diverse cultural, social and ethnic backgrounds; willingness to set aside a personal agenda in favor of organizational and/or community goals and objectives.
- Highly developed emotional intelligence and active listening skills, and the ability to use interpersonal and political skills in collaborative ways.
- Excellent writing, editing, analytical and oral communication skills including the ability to collect, review, synthesize and present information and findings.
- Ability to multitask and meet deadlines within designated timeframes as well as demonstrated resourcefulness in setting priorities; strong organizational skills and exceptional attention to detail with the ability to work both independently, as well as take the initiative and contribute ideas for enhancing processes in team settings.
- An optimistic outlook and the humor, integrity, kindness, and patience necessary to work within a transformative environment.

TO APPLY

For more information on **The Nathan Cummings Foundation**, please visit www.nathancummings.org.

This search is being led by [Katherine Jacobs](#) and [Paola Peacock-Villada](#) of [NPAG](#). Due to the pace of this search, candidates are strongly encouraged to apply as soon as possible. Candidates may submit their cover letter, outlining their interest and qualifications, along with their resume via NPAG's [website](#).

All nominations, inquiries, and discussions will be considered strictly confidential.

The Nathan Cummings Foundation is an equal opportunity employer and strongly encourages applications from people of color, persons with disabilities, women, and LGBTQ+, and other underrepresented applicants.

Independent Trustee Candidate Rubric

Key characteristics of an NCF Independent Trustee

NCF Values & Culture	Governance & Related Skills	Leading Through Humility & Influence	Communication & Relationship-Building
- A fierce believer in social justice and will be energized by the mission and values of NCF.	- Will bring strong financial acumen , internal governance and change management experience, and demonstrated problem-solving abilities will be highly prioritized.	- Will embody humility , practical wisdom, objectivity and partiality, and good judgment in difficult decisions.	- An exceptional relationship builder , increasing rapport, trust, and transparency across a diverse Board and staff.
- Will approach the work with strong values of open-mindedness and service with a commitment to integrity.	- Will bring expertise in one or more of the Foundation's focus areas , with the ability to engage networks on behalf of the Foundation. <i>e.g. governance, finance and/or impact investing, climate change mitigation, community and economic development, philanthropy, and racial justice.</i>	- Will enjoy the prospect of mentoring family members as they become increasingly engaged in the Foundation's activities.	- A strong listener , public communicator, and bridge-builder who can articulate and amplify the Foundation's values, and who can elevate interconnection across generations of lived experience.
- Will demonstrate a comfort level with the Jewish heritage of NCF and an appreciation for the importance of these issues to the Foundation and the family.	- Fully committed to serving NCF , they will be an active Trustee and engage fully in Board meetings, Board Retreats, Education Days, and other site visits and conferences.	- A bold thinker , they will embrace ideas that challenge the status quo, and draw on creative problem solving, engaging the Board and staff in a constructive, collaborative fashion.	- Will bring a wide-ranging curiosity , high intellect, and a good sense of humor to their work as a Trustee.
- Embracing NCF's family-like organizational culture and philosophy as a learning organization, they will	- An effective Trustee will also offer a strong fit with the Board's culture of collaboration, values-driven decision-making ,	- They will find inspiration in NCF's dedication to learning and will actively seek	- Successful experience working effectively with persons from diverse cultural, social and ethnic backgrounds ; willingness

NCF Values & Culture	Governance & Related Skills	Leading Through Humility & Influence	Communication & Relationship-Building
demonstrate sensitivity to the dynamics of a multigenerational family philanthropy and have the ability to partner successfully with other Trustees and staff.	transparency, creativity and entrepreneurship, and respect for a wide range of voices and perspectives.	opportunities to increase their knowledge.	to set aside a personal agenda in favor of organizational and/or community goals and objectives.