Meetings Matter

How to Plan Effective, Efficient, and Enjoyable Meetings

A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR PHILANTHROPIC FAMILIES

NATIONAL CENTER FOR
FAMILY PHILANTHROPY

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Why Good Meetings Matter

Meetings matter. In family philanthropy, meetings matter...a lot. Whether an annual grantmaking meeting or a special retreat to explore big questions of generational transition or shifting your giving focus, how we come together matters.

Done well, meetings are an opportunity to build shared meaning and deeper relationships within and beyond families. They are an opportunity to learn, to connect, to strategize, and to dream. They are an opportunity to get work done—effectively and efficiently.

Simply put, good meetings are a critical building block of effective, impactful, and not least of all, enjoyable family philanthropy.

But do you look forward to your family's meetings, or do they make your eyes roll a bit, or perhaps fill you with a tiny bit (or more) of dread?

We all know that running good meetings—whether small group conversations by phone, board meetings, or a once-in-a-generation decision-making retreat—is not simple. It is complicated and requires a nuanced mix of attending to logistics and timing and—oh yes, human beings, and ensuring clarity of communication and care in listening attentively.

Mary Phillips, founding principal and President of GMA Foundations, identifies some of the characteristics of great meetings.

> *They start and end on time. People are willing to follow the ground rules or guidelines for discussion—they are open to and respectful of them. People have fun! There is enjoyment in the satisfaction of a job well done. But not only do people walk away with a good feeling, they also have a clear plan for implementation and timeline of what's going to happen next.*

Great news: making meetings increasingly engaging, enjoyable, and effective can—and should—be done. In this paper, we'll explore strategies, tips, and tools used by giving families to ensure that their meetings are also gatherings that family members look forward to.

These approaches apply whether you meet in person, by phone, or via video conference. In fact, we've seen increasingly that Zoom and other video conferencing tools open up new and positive opportunities for family participation and engagement!

Why meet? What sorts of meetings are we talking about?

So what prompts giving families to meet? Philanthropic families engage in a wide range of meetings which may be more frequent and formal for those with more structured giving vehicles.

These include:

- **Committee meetings:** investment, governance, grantmaking, advisory, and other committees
- **Learning sessions:** presentations or discussions with experts, grantees, community stakeholders, and others
- **Site visits**: these may be in-person or virtual—to existing or prospective grantees
- **Special meetings:** sometimes done as a retreat, these meetings may address deeper questions and topics that require longer and more in-depth time and exploration, such as determining or shifting giving focus, leadership changes, generational transitions, learning about or articulating your family legacy, or reviewing your lifespan decision

Meetings may take place in person, over video conference, and by phone. Do your best to select the right mode for the purpose of the meeting, and to be sure the right people are at the table (whether virtual or not).

REASONS TO MEET

There are many reasons to schedule a family meeting. Below is a list of a some of the most common topics for holding a meeting connected to the family's philanthropy. NCFP has Content Collections and additional resources on nearly all of the topics below, including important questions to address related to each topic. If you are planning a meeting on one or more of these areas, feel free to contact NCFP for suggestions.

PHILANTHROPIC PURPOSE

- Creating a donor (or family) legacy statement
- Defining (or redefining) shared motivations and values
- Measuring how existing values are reflected in current grantmaking, governance, and management practices

GOVERNANCE

- Reviewing and/or defining roles and responsibilities of board members
- Creating a board member "job description"
- Reviewing board eligibility guidelines
- Reviewing or setting board terms
- Reviewing board committee structure and composition
- Reviewing the results of a board assessment
- Determining whether and what process to use for identifying and adding community board members or individuals not related to the donor for the first time

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT AND DYNAMICS

- Determining strategies for engaging younger family members
- Develop a succession plan
- Preparing young adults in the family for board service
- Navigating differences among family members (generational, political, geographic, etc.)
- Finding ways to make philanthropy and meetings fun
- Reviewing the use of discretionary grants to increase family engagement
- Learning together from written documents or expert speakers

SOCIAL IMPACT STRATEGY

- Deciding to narrow or expand geographic or other focus of giving
- Determining how to apply the practices of "trust-based philanthropy" to your grantmaking
- Determining how to apply an equity lens to your grantmaking
- Reviewing the results of a field scan or grantee feedback to refine your approach
- Reviewing the results of an evaluation of one or all of your existing program areas

INVESTMENT AND SPENDING

- Learning about strategies for aligning investments and endowment with grantmaking mission
- Reviewing asset allocation in relation to risk tolerance, grantmaking strategy, and mission
- Reviewing or developing a spending policy connected to your mission and current conditions
- Reviewing the decision of whether to be a perpetual or limited life foundation

POP: Purpose, Outcomes, Process

How to plan for and design a great meeting? POP it!

POP – Purpose, Outcomes, Process

POP is a simple but effective discipline that helps ensure we are intentional and clear in planning, designing, and facilitating meetings. Developed by Leslie Sholl Jaffe & Randal Alford, it is a tool that can be used for all sorts of meetings with ease and flexibility.

STEP 1

Start with PURPOSE: WHY are we holding this meeting, retreat, or convening?

Purpose can be relatively broad and provides our overall orientation to the why.

Examples of PURPOSE statements for giving family meetings include:

- **To approve** our spring grant docket
- **To gain knowledge** about our new program area
- **To explore** how we might engage our youngest family members in our giving

STEP 2

Then get clear about OUTCOMES: WHAT are the results we want to have coming out of this particular meeting that drive towards our purpose?

Outcomes should be more specific than purpose, and are an articulation of realistic goals for the meeting at hand. Any given meeting generally should have no more than 3-4 specific desired outcomes.

TIP: *Frame outcomes as "By the end of this meeting, we will have..."*

Taking the example of the 3rd purpose statement above, *To explore how we might engage our youngest family members in our giving,* some concrete outcomes from a meeting on the topic might include:

- New knowledge about how other giving families are effectively engaging their youth
- Agreement about next steps for our family

TIP: Virtual Meetings Are No Longer the Exception
Since the COVID-19 pandemic began in early 2020, boards have been forced to adjust quickly and find ways to meet without being in the same space. Using remote meeting technology: cameras, computers, phones; electronic board book technology; and shared information platforms, board members continue to get the work done. Many families are discovering silver linings to this new reality, from engaging geographically disparate family members to relative ease of virtual site visits. For more tips and tools on meeting virtually, see Best Practices for Virtual Foundation Board Meetings published on the Exponent Philanthropy blog.

STEP 3 **And only then move into PROCESS: How we will achieve the stated outcomes.**

Process can be well laid-out in a thoughtfully crafted agenda, where group size, interpersonal dynamics, meeting room, and details of timing all come together to craft a plan that will successfully drive towards your stated outcomes. It can be written out in even greater detail in a facilitator's guide. It can also be a quick outline of how to spend the time you have to drive towards the goals or outcomes you've identified. All are fair game—the important thing is to take the time to think it through.

TIP: Values and Legacy as Grounding in Family Meetings
To ground themselves in what their giving is really about at its core, some families open every meeting with a founder memory or quote, or by reviewing or exploring family values. For example, the General Service Foundation reads the Letter from the Founder at the beginning of each meeting.

Examples of **PROCESS** for the **PURPOSE** and **OUTCOMES** identified above:

- *Full group check-in, one minute per person*: How are you today, and what's bringing you joy lately?
- *Timed report-out on pre-meeting research:* each participant has five minutes to share what they learned from their research or interview about how others are successfully engaging their kids and teens in their giving endeavor
- *Synthesis*: group captures a bulleted brainstorm list of ideas that might work for our family
- *Narrowing*: each group member gets to vote on their favorite three ideas

- *Prioritizing and choice-making*: through discussion and further voting if necessary, the group builds agreement and decides together on one to three ideas to pursue further
- *Next steps*: Who's taking lead on each item, and what will they do, by when

POP can be as simple as taking five minutes at the outset of a meeting to clarify: "Let's take a moment to be sure we're all on the same page about our purpose and outcomes for today, so we can be thoughtful about how to best use our time."

It can also provide a clear simple structure to further a more rigorous planning process for high stakes meetings.

Why is it worth taking the time to POP?

- It creates clarity and alignment around the WHY behind the meeting
- It helps ensure the right people are in the room (or together virtually)
- It provides a reality-check to ensure you have the right amount of time
- It provides a shared shorthand around all of the above

> **FOUNDATION EXECUTIVE HANH LE SHARES:**
>
> *POP makes everything from planning internal staff and board meetings to major convenings with dozens or more people so intuitive.*
>
> *By the time I work through the purpose and outcomes, the process (agenda) pretty much plans itself, especially when combined with facilitation and teaching modalities from Liberating Structures, Reflective Practice, 4Mat session planning, etc.*
>
> *Plus, sharing a POP with meeting participants in advance also helps them understand the context, goals, and flow for the meeting, which is key to ensuring shared expectations and fulfilling a meeting for both you and your participants.*

People

Roles and Responsibilities, Family Dynamics, Facilitators, Experts, and Community Stakeholders

Of course, people are at the heart of meetings. So, what is the best way to engage all key players in meaningful ways?

With any meeting, think in advance about stakeholder engagement during—and before and after—the meeting.

TIP: *For one longtime family foundation executive director, taking the time in advance of her board meetings to speak with each of her trustees one-on-one was a game-changer. There were no longer surprises in the room, she could work out many potential challenges in advance, and meetings were suddenly swift and efficient, leaving time and energy for shared learning and reflecting.*

Family meetings are a great opportunity for multi-generational engagement and can offer a space for emerging next-gen leaders to play new and growing roles. Simple activities such as brief paired conversations with a prompt question can allow different family members to hear from one another in new ways, and also create a smaller scale environment for younger family members to begin to use their voice at the philanthropic table.

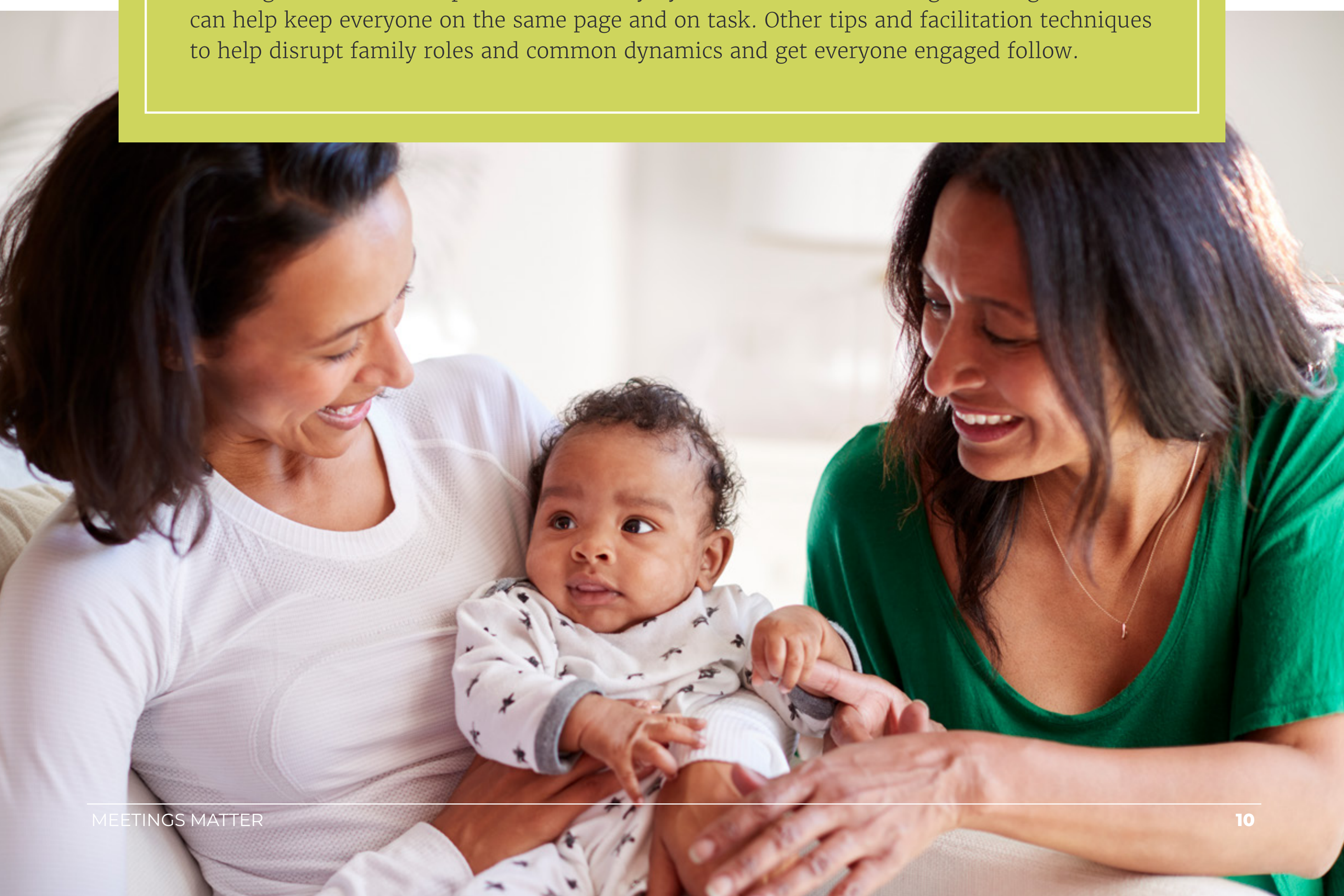
Consider allowing different family members to take the lead on facilitating different sections of a meeting—both to share the responsibility, and to allow everyone the chance to participate fully. This is a great way to build investment in achieving the goals of a given meeting. Often seeing a younger family member at the helm for a portion of a meeting can help the older generation gain newfound respect for the leadership and skills the younger generation brings.

WHO LEADS THE MEETING

The board chair doesn't have to lead every meeting, or all of it! Some families rotate leadership responsibilities. Some staffed foundations tap their CEO to chair the meeting so that all family members or trustees can engage fully in the conversation at hand. Unless your bylaws say otherwise (and it would be a rare occurrence for them to mandate such a detail), there are many options here. Feel free to experiment and get creative.

Even if not everyone wants to lead a portion of a meeting, there are other important roles that can be played, from overseer of logistics to time-keeper or note-taker.

Meetings are of course a place where family dynamics can be a challenge. Having a clear POP can help keep everyone on the same page and on task. Other tips and facilitation techniques to help disrupt family roles and common dynamics and get everyone engaged follow.



Tips for Engagement and Disruption of Common Family Dynamics

- **Check in one-on-one in advance of the meeting**. Whether you do so as the board chair, a family member tasked with planning the meeting, or with the assistance of an outside facilitator, speaking with each key stakeholder one-on-one in advance of a meeting is a time-saver and can leave you better prepared for the meeting.

- **Set expectations, meeting norms, and ground rules.** Although your family may be fairly relaxed and informal in its communications, it is useful to consider, discuss, and document your collective expectations for the meeting before it takes place. Some questions to think about include: What do you expect each person to do before, during, and after the meeting? How will communication take place? How can issues be raised in a respectful way? What are the "rules of engagement" on sensitive issues? How will decisions be made? By a single individual? By a democratic vote where majority rules? By consensus?

  If these expectations are made clear to everyone, anyone who fails to live up to them cannot claim to have been treated unfairly. Agreement about commonly held codes of conduct can reduce negative family dynamics. If these rules are understood—and applied equitably—past or current perceptions of family members as "the slacker," "the bully," or "the nay-sayer," lose their power to dictate the tenor and outcome of philanthropic discussions.

TIP: *Read more in Six Simple Steps to a Stress-Free Family Meeting.*

- **Utilize timed round-robin discussions.** Each individual at the table (virtual or in-person) gets a set, brief amount of time to comment on a topic, without interruption. This can be a great way to get quieter voices to feel more comfortable speaking up, and to manage dominant ones. It can also be a lovely and simple way to level the playing field across roles and generations and hear from everyone. This can be helpful as a simple opening to a meeting, or when there's a contentious issue on the table, or when you're looking for reflection or input.

- **Provide time for paired and small group conversations**. In a larger group, each individual has limited opportunity to share. In pairs, everyone engages actively. Pairs also create the opportunity to build individual relationships in new ways between cousins, aunts, siblings, and other less likely combinations. Pairs and small groups can also be highly effective building blocks towards greater group consensus. Start by asking the pair or small group to come to an agreement they are both satisfied with, then bring two pairs together and ask that group of four to come to agreement, and so on.

CLARIFY HOW DECISIONS WILL BE MADE

"One of the first questions I pose when asked to facilitate a meeting is: how will decisions be made and by whom? If the board is seeking consensus, they should be prepared to set aside the extra time that may be needed to find a decision everyone can support. If there is to be a vote of the board—either a majority or super-majority vote—that should be clear to all involved at the outset."

—MARY PHILLIPS, PRESIDENT, GMA FOUNDATIONS

Tapping Outside Resources: Engaging Facilitators, Experts, and Community Stakeholders

For some meetings, bringing in an outside facilitator can be tremendously helpful—they bring expertise in meeting design and facilitation, can be responsible for keeping everyone on task, and free up the family (and staff, if applicable) to be fully present and engaged in the work at hand. Asking your own staff members to serve as facilitators can be effective at times, but it can also put them in a tricky position having to navigate family dynamics and different roles.

Why bring in an outside facilitator? Sometimes families do so when issues are contentious or complex—and often when they simply need someone else to keep them on track. One family recently tapped a professional facilitator for a meeting with their two college-aged daughters saying, "we'd just dissolve into giggles without someone keeping us on task!" Another family, in the early stages of shifting into G3 leadership, simply found themselves overwhelmed with the many discussions that needed to take place and asked for help in the process of defining their shared values.

But even for those meetings where an outside facilitator is not necessary, bringing in outside voices can mix things up, provide critical insights, and can help keep family dynamics at bay.

For instance, some giving families make sure that every one of their meetings incorporate some learning from an expert—whether an academic, a foundation or nonprofit leader, or a grantee. Bringing in outside voices—particularly those most impacted by the issues you care most about—is a meaningful and timely way to be equity-minded in your philanthropic work. Particularly by utilizing technology, it's not hard to get 15 minutes or an hour of time, and can be a great opportunity to learn together and connect more deeply with the work you are investing in, or the field more broadly.

Remember, though, if you ask nonprofit and community leaders to share their expertise with you, it's important to find an appropriate way to recognize and compensate them for their time.

HOW MUCH SHOULD YOU PAY?

PERSPECTIVES FROM THE FIELD

"How much should you pay? I don't know if there's a resource guide, but I would tell them to check the college of common decency and equity and ask the speaker what they require and then double that."

—LATONYA SLACK, J.D., SLACK GLOBAL CONSULTING

"We're thinking about compensation for expertise. Just as boards would not expect that an attorney or investment advisor would volunteer their expertise, they should consider proximity to community, and knowledge about community or issue areas as a type of expertise that they may or may not have on their board, and thus it's 100% worth paying for. It's an acknowledgement that time spent with a foundation board is drawing that nonprofit leader away from service delivery, community building, organizing work, etc. It's also an equity practice considering disparities that exist within the nonprofit sector. For instance, the executive director of a really large nonprofit is a lot more likely to be able to step away from their work and spend time with a foundation board with less impact on their organization than a smaller-staffed community organization with less resources."

– AKILAH MASSEY, GRANTMAKERS FOR EFFECTIVE ORGANIZATIONS

"This topic is often referred to by groups like Justice Funders and Trust-Based Philanthropy. Sadly, most funders would not blink when signing a several-thousand-dollar contract with a consultant for "thought leadership," but when the invitation is to an expert in the field, it's almost as if we should be "happy" to be asked to engage with a funder's board. All time is valuable, and all time is money."

—SATONYA FAIR, J.D., PEAK GRANTMAKING

LEARNING TOGETHER THROUGH MEETING

“Learning together becomes as ingrained in some family foundation cultures as giving together,” shares Mary Phillips. “Trustees’ strongest grant decisions are often grounded in curiosity. For one client, we led a 90-minute educational session following their annual board meeting and at one other time during the year. The foundation’s members explore new topics, learn skills, and find shared interest areas.”

The Roy A. Hunt Foundation has instituted an ongoing practice of reading books together on topics of interest to learn together as a family, especially when they are considering possibly expanding their grantmaking scope. One of the Hunt family board members wrote an interesting piece titled “Notes on an Effective Family Culture,” one example of the type of statement some families find helpful to develop to guide their family meetings.

Another family foundation recently set about refining their strategy in two grantmaking areas. As part of this endeavor—in addition to reading—they brought in panels of local experts, drawing from academia and local nonprofits, to speak with their trustees for 90 minutes during a board retreat. During a relatively short amount of time, they were able to gain a tremendous amount of insight and guidance which made their decision making far easier.

IT MAY BE TIME TO SHAKE THINGS UP!

Remember that the way you’ve always met needn’t (and, perhaps, shouldn’t) be the way you continue meeting, whether that means re-assessing why and how you meet, changing your meeting cadence, shifting to virtual, or thinking differently about who needs to be at the table, both within and beyond your family. It’s healthy to occasionally take a few giant steps back and truly take stock.

Writer and speaker Vu Le shared the following perspectives on his blog, Nonprofit AF:

> *Our work has gotten even more urgent lately. We must start challenging every philosophy, system, and practice that stand in our way of being effective. One of the biggest barriers to our sector’s ability to fulfill its potential has been our default board model, which is based on a white corporate way of doing things. Let’s stop using this model. Let’s stop trying to succeed in spite of it, like something we have no choice but to put up with. Let’s burn it down and experiment to create a model, or several models, that we can all be excited about.*
>
> He continues in a recent post offering advice to billionaires who want to make the world better:
>
> *Let go of the illusion of your own intelligence. Become untethered from the need to be philanthropically special. Trust and support instead the organizations and movements led by the people most harmed by injustice. Use your power and resources to restore voting and make our government more reflective of its people. Find funders already doing good work effectively and support them to allocate funds instead of doing your own thing. And pay your taxes.*

Planning and Facilitating Great Meetings

Building Agreement, Conflict, Logistics, and Facilitation Tips

Planning—and planning well—is truly half the battle. It takes time, thought, and care to plan a great meeting—and it's well worth it. The discipline of POP, described earlier, helps you to slow down and get clear on why you are coming together and what you hope to accomplish—and how to do so.

Be clear what sort of meeting this is

Much distress can come from simple lack of clarity about what sort of meeting is being had, and whether decisions are being made, or advised upon! For instance, a meeting might be for information-sharing, for input-gathering, or yes, for decision making. Transparency is always a gift in shared understanding about why you've come together. Make sure everyone understands the purpose. There's nothing worse than thinking you're being asked to make a decision when in fact you're just being informed of what decision has been made.

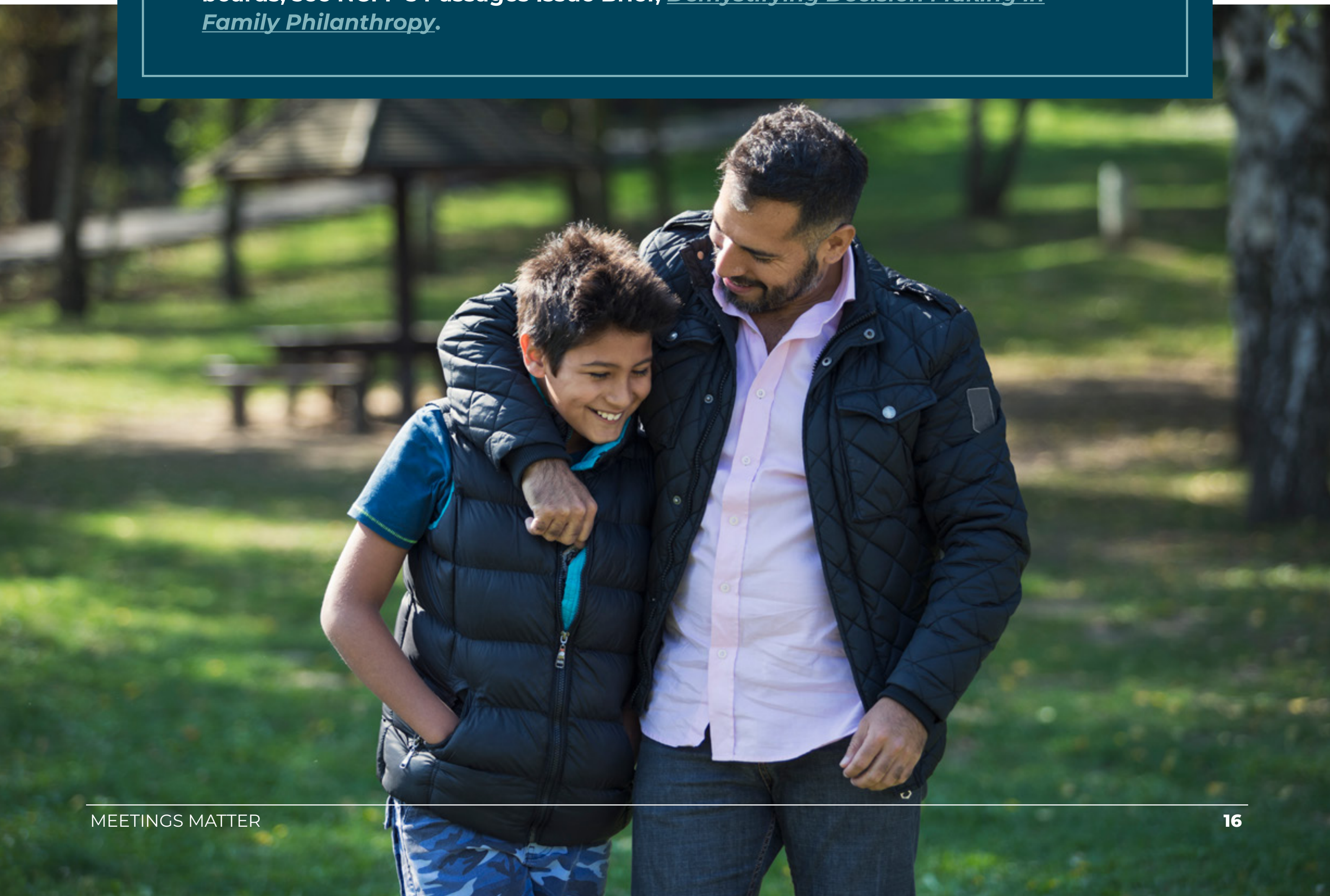
Decision Making: Building Agreement, Compromise, and Consensus

Decisions must be made in philanthropy. How do you help ensure that they happen as smoothly and effectively as possible? Thoughtful planning, engaging everyone in advance, and ensuring there is shared understanding about the POP all go a long way towards a smooth meeting. But decision making is where the rubber hits the road.

First of all, be clear and honest with yourselves on how decisions will be made. Will one person make the decisions at the end of the day? A small executive committee? Or will you decide as a full family group, or board? If you decide as a full group, do you simply have a majority rule vote, will you aim for consensus, or something else entirely? Being clear and transparent about this is essential.

One fabulous technique for building towards alignment and consensus, Fist to Five Voting, is outlined below.

For many other great tips on decision-making structures for family foundation boards, see NCFP's Passages Issue Brief, *Demystifying Decision Making in Family Philanthropy*.



Fist to Five Voting[1]

Fist to Five voting is *quality voting*. It has the elements of consensus built in and can prepare groups to transition into consensus if they wish. Most people are accustomed to the simplicity of "yes" and "no" voting rather than the complex and more community-oriented consensus method of decision making. Fist to Five introduces the element of the quality of the "yes." A fist is a "no" and any number of fingers is a "yes," with an indication of how good a "yes" it is. This moves a group away from quantity voting to quality voting, which is considerably more informative. Fist to Five can also be used during consensus decision making as a way to check the "sense of the group," or to check the quality of the consensus.

Fist to Five is accomplished by raising hands as in voting, with the number of fingers raised that indicates level of agreement.

A FIST means, "I vote no." or in consensus it means, "I object and will block consensus (usually on moral grounds)."

1 FINGER means, "I'll just barely go along." or, "I don't like this but it's not quite a no." or, "I think there is lots more work to do on this proposal." In consensus this indicates standing aside, or not being in agreement but not blocking the consensus.

2 FINGERS means "I don't much like this but I'll go along."

3 FINGERS means, "I'm in the middle somewhere. Like some of it, but not all."

4 FINGERS means, "This is fine."

5 FINGERS means, "I like this a lot, I think it's the best possible decision."

Fist to Five Process

1. When a proposal has been brought before a group, it has been well discussed and refined as needed, a vote for passage is taken.
2. People raise their hands with the number of fingers that indicate their degree of agreement with the proposal. Hands are held VERY high and the room is scanned by all. That way everyone is checking the sense of the room and not individual opinions.
3. The vote can stand as taken, with all fists and fingers counted, the majority winning. Or, people with fists and one finger can be asked to speak to their objections and offer possible solutions to overcome their objections. This is attempted, and then a second and final vote is taken, which is the final vote.

[1]Adapted from NASCO's *'Fist to Five' Voting and Consensus.*

4. It is often wise to check early in the proposal dialogue, as sometimes a group is actually ready for consensus or a vote earlier than expected and a lot of time can be saved. An early check might find all 4 and 5 fingers except for two 1s, meaning the proposal would be voted in, or in the case of consensus, no one would block consensus and only two people have needs to be met. Only those people then speak and their objections are addressed which saves a lot of time.

5. A low quality vote (lots of 1s, 2s and 3s) tells you the decision is probably a stop gap measure and will need to be watched closely or revisited soon. It is generally wise to attach a date for review to a decision that is low in quality. Some groups find it saves time in the end to not accept a vote that is affirmative but primarily 1s and 2s as the proposal is generally troublesome and comes up again anyway.

6. If it is obvious that the vote is wildly split, with no real majority, despite a winning "yes," the group knows it has more work to do, and that the decision may not endure. They can expect more controversy and know a plan must be made to address the polarized views.

7. When Fist to Five has been used for a while, a transition to consensus, if desired, is quite easy.

BIG DECISIONS CAN TAKE TIME

Sometimes big decisions take multiple meetings over time and require patience with iteration, reflection, and slow but steady progress.

One small, unstaffed family foundation found themselves at a crossroads a few years ago. As their founder approached age 75, she was ready to pass the baton—or have great fun spending down the foundation's assets in her life. It was time for some soul-searching and honest dialogue across the generations. At a retreat, generations spoke together—and in generation-specific sessions—to explore the future.

By the end of the retreat, the next generation had decided they were ready and willing to take leadership, but they needed to find ways of meeting and administering the foundation that were more reasonable for their phase of life. They proceeded to meet and learn as a next-gen group and research options and bring proposals to the board. A few years later, the foundation has happily shifted to next-gen leadership. They now use a donor-advised fund as an easy way to lighten the paperwork load, and one grandchild in her early teens has even been joining in board meetings to listen, learn and contribute.

Another foundation took two years to resolve big questions around whether or not to divide up or keep the foundation whole—but there was consistency and a commitment to process, and they reached a solution.

Avoiding Avoidance and Managing Conflict

Conflict is normal in any family or organization. Yet, many of us avoid conflicts, even if that avoidance affects relationships or how the foundation operates.

Mary Phillips advises on navigating potential conflict around challenging topics:

> *Start before the meeting. Don't be surprised; know where the potholes are located. It can be helpful to simply ask 'what resolution do you seek?'—at times it's simpler than you'd expect. Educate folks. Get them to articulate their rationale on a topic. Be sensitive to the outlier, but also beware the pull to make a decision based on the lowest common denominator. Be prepared to move gradually.*

NCFP's Passages Issue Brief, *Avoiding Avoidance: Addressing and Managing Conflict in Family Philanthropy* shares an overview of the most common conflicts in family philanthropy, along with insights on the creative "tactics" some boards use to perpetuate conflict avoidance, and how you can use simple tools to address conflict in a healthy, productive way.

As founding president of NCFP Ginny Esposito writes, "Conflict will always occur in an organization that's growing, evolving, and changing. What makes it a positive or negative experience is if it's addressed, and how it's managed."

Simple preemptive strategies such as having agreed upon meeting norms or ground rules can help set shared expectations for all family members, and help ease the way when conflict does occur. Please see sample ground rules in the appendix for a great starting place.

The Importance of Reflection

While most giving families know it's important to meet around business matters—grantmaking dockets, investment performance reviews, succession planning—not all take the time to reflect. Allowing for this time to reflect on the meaning of the giving to individual family members, and to look at impact over the arc of time can be powerful and can strengthen the shared practice of giving. For those who don't generally gravitate towards this sort of less-concrete conversation topic, some simple prompts—telling a family story, the grant you're proudest of and why, your hopes for the future—can provide helpful scaffolding.

Consider Stylistic Preferences and Learning Styles

Along with a range of comfort with reflection, remember that most families have a variety of stylistic preferences and learning styles. Formality and informality. Extroverts and introverts. Numbers people and words people. Comfort levels with ambiguity. Short-term thinkers and big picture dreamers. All of these are terrific to have in a meeting—and will be more comfortable with a variety of topics and meeting modalities. As such, mix it up to make meetings work well for the greatest number of stakeholders.

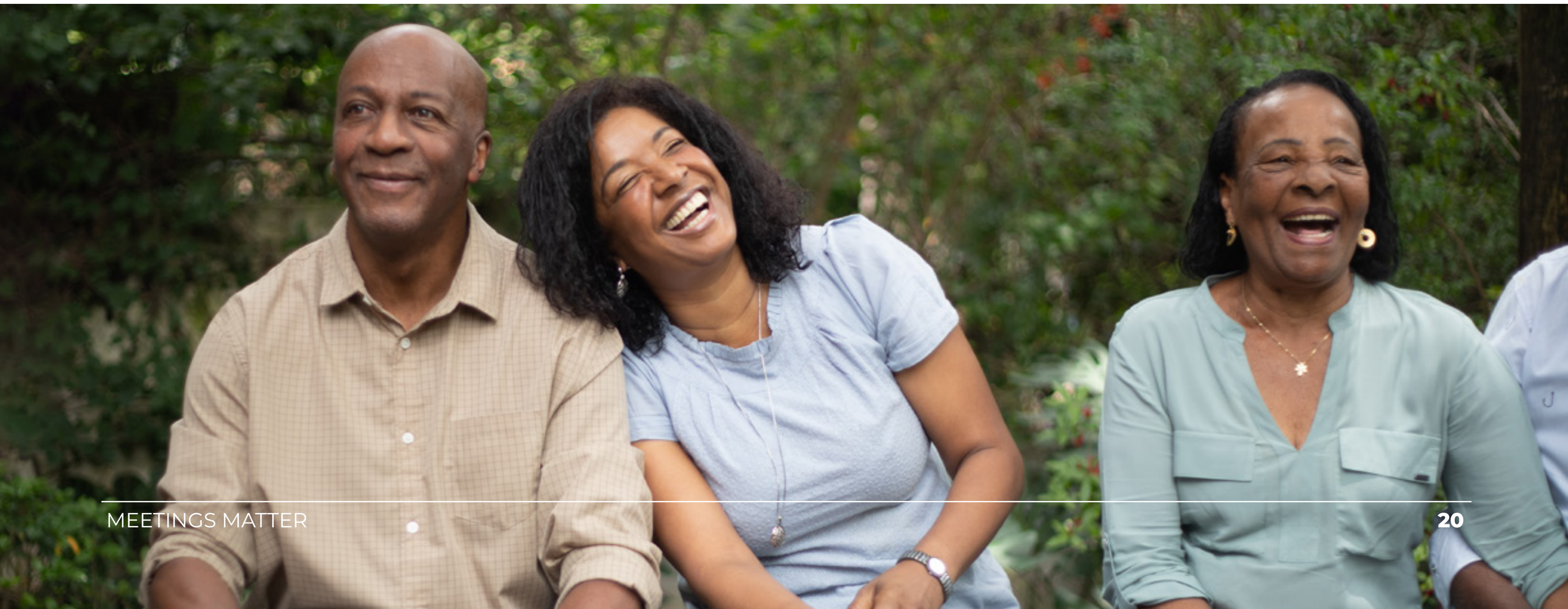
Logistics

The importance of the nitty-gritty details—what a room is set up like, whether there are windows, what will be served for breakfast—matter mightily in making for a successful meeting! A few key pieces of logistics to be mindful of are:

- **Accessibility:** Ensure that everyone is able to comfortably reach and be in the designated space and engage in the meeting, whether a geographic location or on the computer. If you're using new technology, it's sometimes worth the time to offer a brief one-on-one trial with each attendee to ensure everyone is comfortable and able to start the meeting on time.

  Virtual and hybrid meetings are no longer the exception—they are increasingly the norm if not an occasional part of most giving families' meetings. There's much that can be done online, but it also needn't be fancy. Whether a conference call for a small group or a Zoom session for a larger one, be sure that everyone is comfortable with the technology, and be extra-attuned to engagement & mixing up modalities—e.g. some time in presentation, some in paired conversations, and some in full-group dialogue.

- **Timing:** Consider carefully whether the hour(s) you're gathering are doable and convenient for your attendees. Consider different and important needs of working people, young parents, the elderly, and those in wildly different time zones. For example, one G3 member of a family's annual meeting was scheduled for 3am where he lives, which did not leave him feeling that his attendance was valued.
- **Breaks:** Plan for breaks realistically—and provide enough down time (but not too much!) to keep people focused for the given meeting time.
- **Food:** Offer protein to help people stay energized and engaged; a heavy pasta lunch only reinforces the mid-afternoon snooze. Plan accordingly, and be sure to have plenty of snacks, water, and caffeine. For virtual meetings, create time for participants to grab a bite to eat—or send meals to everyone for a fun touch.



Top Tips for Facilitating Skillfully

Once you've done all of your thoughtful preparation, spoken to your stakeholders, designed a great POP and dynamic agenda that mixes modalities and appeals to different learning types, tested the technology, and made sure logistics are all in place… it's time to meet! If you are facilitating all or part of the meeting, here are some simple, tried-and-true pointers to keep you steady.

- **Slow down and breathe.** Facilitators can serve as a model for all meeting participants, by helping to create a calm and steady pace for the meeting.
- **Balance rigor and flexibility.** Yes, keep an eye on the time and your agenda, mindful of when to move folks along to the next topic. At the same time, you may need to adjust on the fly, allowing more time for one topic and tabling another until a future meeting.
- **Echo back what you hear from others.** Echoing is a simple and effective way of helping people know they've been heard, and synthesizing in the moment. If you're not sure you understood what someone said, ask for them to offer the "bumper sticker"—e.g. the very short synopsis of their perspective.
- **Be gracious and appreciative.** Be sure to start and end on time and thank everyone for their contributions, sincerely. These small moves go a long way.

Documentation

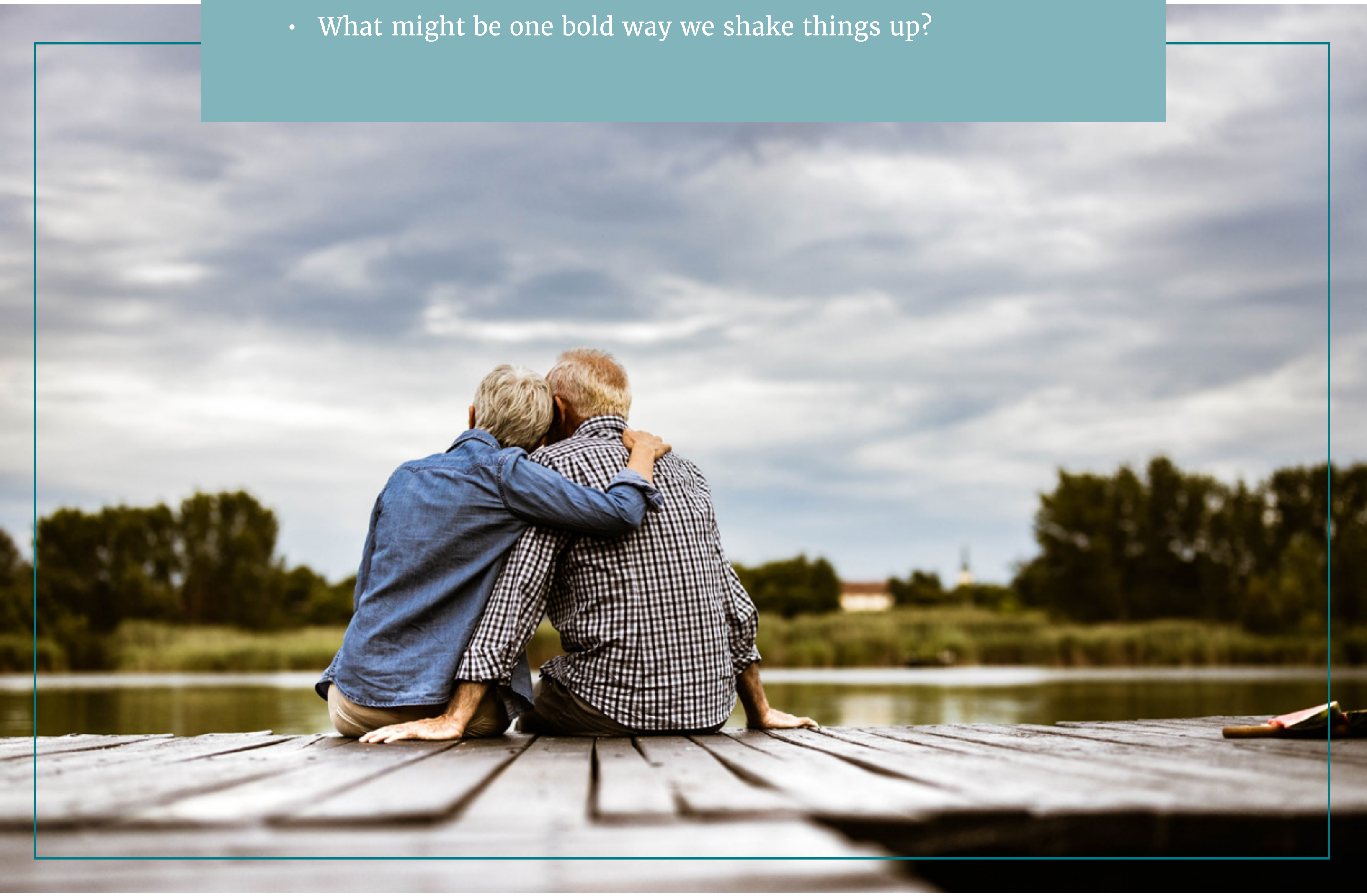
Be sure you have someone assigned to take notes to whatever degree is needed in your family giving. For foundations, your bylaws may mandate exactly what needs to be written down and retained. For more informal giving endeavors, while perhaps not required, keeping basic notes all in one place is helpful for simplicity—and posterity's sake. Whether formal meeting minutes or informal summaries, remember to capture key decisions and votes. To learn more, check out NCFP's video on the topic with attorney Andras Kosaras and former NCFP Vice President Karen Green.

TIME FOR REFLECTION AND FUN

Shawn Escoffery from the Roy and Patricia Disney Family Foundation spoke at an NCFP Engaging Youth Peer Network event about the creative hands-on experiences they've built into their family meetings, such as creating pottery, visiting food trucks in the neighborhoods they support, and other fun meeting components, particularly for next-gen members. The foundation's board concentrates on being proximate or within the community, but virtual family engagement on board meetings has also been a useful practice.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

- What sorts of meetings does our giving family have? Which are the most useful and enjoyable, and why?
- What meeting(s) should we really be having, and aren't yet?
- How might we strengthen our meetings? What's one easy step, one mid-range, and one lofty goal?
- What might be one bold way we shake things up?



Retreats: A Special Sort of Meeting

Some families hold retreats on a regular basis, whether annually or every three or five years. Others have only had one or two in their history—and some haven't yet had one. There's no rule of thumb here, but retreats can create the time and space for deeper conversations, longer and more complex explorations, and especially time for building & enriching relationships within a giving family.

Topics for a Family Retreat

Agenda items for these retreats typically include one or more of the following, along with more informal time for personal connecting:

- Reviewing mission, purpose, and grantmaking focus
- Reviewing board composition, roles and responsibilities, and terms
- Determining strategies for applying a racial equity lens to your grantmaking, governance, and management practices
- Reviewing or determining/reaffirming the strategic lifespan of the foundation or other giving vehicle (i.e., whether to exist in perpetuity or will the family choose a limited time span in which to grant out the funds)
- Exploring strategies and practices for aligning investment assets with mission
- Reviewing the history of the donor and reflecting on the impact of the donor's legacy on future giving
- Determining strategies for engaging the next generation and preparing teens and young adults in the family for future board service
- Reflecting on the strategy and theory of change for the foundation and engaging in formal strategic planning (every three to five years)

Often, families will hold a retreat somewhere relaxing and inspiring to cultivate a different sort of meeting feeling, and will build in time for outdoors gatherings, site visits, or hands-on multi-generational volunteering, and great conversations over meals.

Carrie Avery, president of the Durfee Foundation and former NCFP board chair, brings many of these ideas to life in the story of her family's first ever all-family retreat. At their first full-family retreat some years ago, the Durfee Foundation created time for board business, next-gen-only sessions, and time to connect across the generations, learning about the legacy of their founders through informal dialogue with two of their children. They also built in time to do hands-on volunteering with a longtime grantee, harvesting dozens of crates of oranges destined for those in need.

Here's an excerpt on lessons learned:

1. **Allocate a lot of time for planning.** We had to set the retreat date almost a year in advance because it's so hard to coordinate so many schedules. We started working on the retreat agenda more than six months in advance and spent many, many hours on it. Durfee Foundation Executive Director Claire Peeps and I had individual conversations with each of the trustees about their hopes and expectations for the retreat and incorporated those conversations into the agenda.
2. **Engage a skilled facilitator.** Our retreat was so much better because Robin Kramer facilitated it. Robin, Claire, and I had several conference calls where we discussed our goals, drew up draft agendas, talked more, revised the agenda, and finally came up with a plan that worked. Her expert facilitation allowed everyone to participate fully.
3. **Have your board set goals for the retreat.** We had big issues to discuss, and it would have taken a week-long retreat to address all of them. We had to choose which ones were the most important.
4. **Be very clear about expectations.** The reason that we came together was to accomplish important board business and to begin to engage with the next generation. Although there was time during the weekend for fun, we were very clear about who needed to be in meetings at what times, and provided a color-coded schedule. Don't send a message that this is just a family gathering and that the meetings are optional when convenient.

5. **Find ways to get everyone to participate.** In most endeavors, there are a couple of people who take the lead and speak the most. We wanted to make sure we heard from everyone, so we gave responsibility for certain parts of the agenda to different trustees.
6. **Look back.** Set aside time to reflect on the history of your foundation. If you are fortunate enough to have trustees or friends who know that history and can share it, ask them. Some foundations have a video of the founder speaking about his/her vision. If those options aren't possible, then find other ways to bring history alive, such as tracing a history of the grantmaking.
7. **Show the Next Gen what you're about,** but also listen to what they are thinking. It can be a challenge to strike the right balance between the two.
8. **Bring the work to life!** We were fortunate to provide an example of our grantmaking by picking fruit and talking to the founder of Food Forward. Incorporate a site visit or conversations with grantees into your retreat, and make it interactive.
9. **Who's taking care of the kids?** We didn't pay enough attention to the child care burden placed on the families with young children where one parent was in meetings all the time. This is something we will address the next time.
10. **Have fun!** Important work is being accomplished at your retreat, but it's equally important to have fun. Joy is a key ingredient in family philanthropy.

Additional Resources

You'll find great additional resources in these related NCFP Content Collections, a few excerpts of which can be found in this publication. There is much more to explore!

Family Meetings and Retreats: Creating a Culture of Dialogue and Learning

Family Dynamics: Avoiding Avoidance in Family Philanthropy

Policy Central: Board Meetings, Board Job Descriptions, and Rotation Policies

Other terrific and accessible resources full of practical ideas for meeting design can be found at:

Liberating Structures

Scaling Intimacy

Interaction Institute for Social Change

Appendices

On the following pages you'll find the following resources from the author, NCFP, and beyond:

1. Meeting Design and Planning Template *by Janice Simsohn Shaw*
2. Six Simple Steps to a Stress-free Family Meeting *by Sarah Trzepacz, NCFP*
3. Meeting Makeovers *by Nancy Murphy, CSR Communications*
4. Sample Ground Rules *by Karie Brown, KB Consulting*
5. Sample Family Meeting Agenda, *courtesy of The Russell Family Foundation*
6. Retreat Agenda, *courtesy of GMA Foundations*
7. Four Ways to Reenergize your Foundation Board *by Mary Phillips, GMA Foundations*

APPENDIX 1

Meeting Design and Facilitation Planning Template: A Starting Place

This model should help you think through key nuts and bolts of designing and running a great meeting. By all means, tweak it and make it your own! Download a fillable version of the Meeting Design and Facilitation Planning Template here.

—JANICE SIMSOHN SHAW

BEGIN WITH A SIMPLE POP

Purpose

____

____

____

Outcomes

1. ____

____

____

2. ____

____

____

3. ____

____

____

Process (High Level)

____

____

____

Key Stakeholders (Who will be in attendance—or should be involved in some way)

____

____

____

What type of meeting is this? Learning, idea-generating, alignment-building, decision making?

____

____

In person or remote (and if remote, using what interface)?______________________

____

How much time do you have allotted (overall)? ______________________

____

Create your agenda using the grid on the following page

What topics will you cover?

How will you address this topic?

How much time does each need?

Who will facilitate—and play supporting roles—for each piece?

AGENDA TEMPLATE

What/Topic	How*	Time	Who
Open strong!			
Allow time to wrap up thoughtfully			

***Be sure to mix up modalities—a healthy variety of presentation, full group conversation, individual reflection, and lots of paired and small group conversations adds up to a fruitful meeting. Get people moving physically whenever possible—even on a virtual meeting! Stand up, stretch, give a wave.**

Logistics

- Pre-work
- Pre-work meeting materials needed
- One-on-one tech checks, if helpful, in advance of virtual meetings
- Room set if in-person
- Breaks
- Meals
- Etc.

Roles & Responsibilities: Who's doing what vis-a-vis planning and facilitating this meeting?

- Facilitating
- Note-taking
- Time-keeping
- Tech-master
- Etc.

Remember to plan for post-meeting follow up, from an informal sharing of notes or follow-up items to an evaluation for a retreat.

TIP: *Pull all of this together into a facilitator's guide—your key logistics, timing, and talking points for the meeting. This can be simple or complex—but it's worth it!*

Questions to consider as you plan

Goals
Are your outcomes clear and realistic? Have you oriented your process & meeting design around them?

Time
Do you have a realistic amount of time for what you hope to accomplish? Revisit POP and/or time allotted if they are misaligned. Flag points in the agenda you could expand or contract if timing doesn't go exactly as expected.

Meeting Flow
Think about order, flow, time of day, and energy levels (remember that the "after-lunch slump" is real!), healthy breaks, etc. Walk yourself through the agenda and imagine being a participant.

People
Are the most critical stakeholders involved in this meeting? Are there tricky dynamics likely to be at play? What is the overall quality of relationship and trust among participants? Given all of this, how will you engage the group in meaningful ways?

Intuition
What worries you in your gut, whether a challenging participant or interpersonal dynamic, a format that's challenging, or a massive amount to cover? Pay attention to your intuition—it is wise—and trouble shoot in advance to preempt trouble in the room.

If you find yourself stuck or stumped, don't go it alone. Reach out to a family member or a colleague to brainstorm or troubleshoot, or call NCFP or a professional facilitator.

NOTE: This planning template was designed by Janice Simsohn Shaw Consulting LLC for use by readers of this guide. Please credit Janice if you adapt this guide for your own use, and feel free to contact her with feedback and to let her know it is being used.

APPENDIX 2

Six Simple Steps to a Stress-free Family Meeting

By Sarah Trzepacz, former manager, NCFP

Like so many other things, preparation for a family meeting is vital to its success. With a little planning you can orchestrate and carry off a family meeting that accomplishes your philanthropic goals, strengthens your family's commitment to effective governance of your giving vehicle, and is more enjoyable than you thought possible. By taking time to think through why, when, where, and how your family will conduct its discussions and decisions about your giving, you can identify and address potential areas of discord and conflict, and feel confident in your ability to address them.

This article looks at six simple things you can do to make sure your next family meeting is a success:

- establish a purpose
- get everyone's buy-in
- think about logistics
- set ground rules and expectations
- consider the role of non-family board members
- spend time not discussing business

1. Establish a Purpose

Although it may seem obvious, the first thing you and your family should consider when planning a family meeting is what you intend to accomplish by gathering. Are there particular issues regarding your family philanthropy that need to be discussed? Or is your meeting just a periodic check-in to keep everyone in the family abreast of developments in your philanthropy?

Make sure you and your family members discuss exactly what you hope to accomplish during the time that you spend together, and remember not to be too ambitious. Trying to tackle too many issues in a short period of time can leave everyone feeling harried, unheard, and unsatisfied with the experience. Make sure you leave enough time for everyone to be heard and for all valid points of discussion to be explored. You may never reach consensus, but at least everyone will feel as though they have had the opportunity to make themselves understood.

Ann Shulman, J.D., facilitator and mediator for Philanthropy Associates, recommends writing down your goals for the family meeting:

> *"Though it may seem formal, if you write your goals down–what you want to get done and why—and distribute them to the family members involved, you can begin your meeting with an agreement about something, and potentially spot areas of conflict ahead of time so there are no surprises."*

If you are having difficulty articulating your goals for the meeting, you may want to consider whether it is necessary or worthwhile to have one right now. The idea of encouraging participation by members of your family might be appealing; but if the reality is that the founding donor or donors are currently making the decisions, and that a family meeting to discuss those decisions would be pro-forma, other family members may wind up feeling like their time and effort have been wasted.

2. Get Everyone's "Buy-in"

It's also important, according to Shulman, that you get your family members invested in the idea of your meeting and its purpose: "If you don't get everyone's buy-in, then people may check out or feel resistant to the process from the start." A good way to garner family support for a meeting is to involve people – both the old guard and the new—in the planning stages. "Divide up the labor of preparing for the meeting. Not everyone has to be, or should be, involved, but make sure that you have different voices and interests represented in the planning process."

NCFP Founding President Ginny Esposito agrees that the planning phase is a good place to start a practice of inclusiveness:

> *"If you give people a stake in the process, give them ownership and opportunities for leadership, they become more engaged. Often there is one dominant person in the family to whom the burden–or power, depending on who you ask–of planning and running the meeting falls. By involving multiple family members in the planning process and later the implementation, you avoid having any one person cast as the 'hero' or 'villain.'"*

3. Think About Logistics

When preparing for a family meeting, some may consider the logistics to be incidental and inconsequential. They might feel as though they have much "bigger fish to fry" in setting the agenda, cajoling busy or reluctant family members to participate, or preparing to referee heated debates between Cousin Paul and Uncle Albert over investment strategy. In reality though, how, when, and where you hold your family meeting can profoundly influence what takes place and how members of your family feel about the event as a whole. The location you choose for your meeting–whether it's the boardroom of the family business office after-hours or a family vacation home—establishes a tone, and can influence how people will dress, speak, and interact with one another.

If you have a customary location for such meetings, but past gatherings have been met with little enthusiasm, consider a new venue this year. Sometimes the most obvious place is not the most convenient or the most conducive to free and open communication. Ginny Esposito recounts the story of a New York City-based family with whom she worked that increased and improved their foundation participation simply by changing the location of their board meetings:

> *"Both the founder of the family foundation and his grandson worked on Wall Street, and it became customary for family board meetings to be held at the end of the day in their Manhattan offices. The founder was disappointed by sparse attendance by other family members, despite their professed interest in participating in the family philanthropy. After some conversation, it became clear that 80% of his family members—many of whom had young families of their own—lived in the suburbs outside of New York City. This made it inconvenient, if not impossible for them to attend the family meetings on a regular basis, even if they sincerely wanted to do so. The result was frustration on both sides: on the part of the founder for the family's perceived lack of interest, and on the part of the rest of the family for his perceived lack of consideration for the demands of their lives. It had never occurred to the donor that the location of the meetings was the largest impediment to achieving the full and enthusiastic participation he was hoping for.*

The relatively simple solution was to hold their meetings at different family members' homes on a rotating basis. They had a buffet dinner catered, to lessen the organizational burden of hosting the event, and even brought in babysitters to allow parents of young children to participate without distraction. Once the logistical hurdles were eliminated, the result was an immediate increase in family attendance and a renewed sense of excitement about the foundation's work.

4. Set Ground Rules and Expectations

Although your family may be fairly relaxed and informal in its communications, it is useful to consider, discuss, and document your collective expectations for the meeting before it takes place. Some questions to think about include:

- What do you expect each person to do before, during, and after the meeting?
- How will communication take place?
- How can issues be raised in a respectful way?
- What are the “rules of engagement” on sensitive issues?
- How will decisions be made? By a single individual? By a democratic vote where majority rules? By consensus?

If these expectations are made clear to everyone, anyone who fails to live up to them cannot claim to have been treated unfairly. Agreement about commonly held codes of conduct, can, according to Esposito, “take the burden off family dynamics.” If these rules are understood and applied equitably past or current perceptions of family members as “the slacker,” “the bully,” or “the nay-sayer,” lose their power to dictate the tenor and outcome of philanthropic discussions. Grandpa Wayne, whom everyone considers to be a tyrant, is compelled by expectations to listen to the concerns of his nephew Ted, whom Wayne believes to be a hippie, tree-hugger, because the rules stipulate that all voting members have a chance to speak their piece. No one is put in the position of defending either Ted or Wayne, or advocating his right to be heard because the rule is being applied indiscriminately to all parties, preventing a squabble, which might overshadow the important issue at hand.

Shulman shares the story of a philanthropic family that created a shared understanding of what it means to participate in the family’s philanthropy, thereby improving communication, and helping to resolve a frustrating situation:

> *“I once worked with a family in which one sibling did the lion’s share of the planning for the family meetings—organizing, making sure all the proper documents got to all the right people. Each time they had a family meeting, in which she had invested so much time and energy, one brother routinely arrived without having read the preparatory materials, but still expecting his voice to be heard on matters. Invariably, the sister was infuriated by what she saw as his lack of commitment and laziness, and he would be irritated by her insistence on taking things so seriously. While I could empathize with her frustration, and thought that reading the materials seemed like common sense I couldn’t endorse her right to criticize her brother. Since they had never actually agreed upon what constituted participation in their philanthropy, she couldn’t really say that he was in violation of any particular rule. His definition of ‘being involved’ and hers were simply different.*
>
> *As a result of our work, that family established a list of rules and expectations for participation and behavior at meetings. And, of course, the rules include: “If you want to be heard, you must read the packet before the meeting.”*

5. Consider the Role of Non-family Board Members

Whether your family philanthropy is large or small, has a staff member or two, or no paid staff, you may have several important people on your board or as fund advisors that you might not find also seated around your Thanksgiving table. They may be trusted advisors, friends, community leaders, or business associates, but regardless they bring valuable insight and expertise into your board meetings. Consider how these non-family board members will be included in your meeting. While their outside perspective and position “above the fray” of family interaction may make them enticing candidates as moderators or facilitators, be wary of placing them in a burdensome or difficult position.

6. Plan to Spend Time *Not* Discussing Business

To improve communication in your family to increase the level of overall satisfaction with the meeting outcomes, Esposito recommends that families set aside some time to spend discussing things other than philanthropic business. Whether it's just a few minutes devoted to discussing what has happened in your lives in the time since your last meeting or time spent sharing photos of a recent vacation, graduation, or other special family event, it's a good idea to take some time to establish a rapport with one another outside "business." It's a good time to reflect on what your philanthropy means to you, your reasons for becoming engaged, and your hopes for the future.

Looking Ahead to Next Year: Consider a Family Retreat

The time that families set aside to reflect on the personal impact of their philanthropy during their board meetings often gives rise to the idea for a family retreat. A successful family retreat is not simply a family meeting with a nicer venue, by a stream, at the beach or in the woods. According to Esposito, a retreat should be a departure from a standard family board meeting as much as possible: "A retreat involves a change in structure and activities. It's a time to kick back and think about your philanthropy beyond the day to day business. It's very much about reflection on your commitment to giving."

APPENDIX 3

Meeting Makeovers: *How to Reflect & Evaluate Your Meetings to Continually Improve Them*

Adapted from the "Meeting Makeovers" series by Nancy Murphy, Founder and President, CSR Communications

For many boards, the end of a meeting looks like this: people rushing out the door to catch flights or dropping off the call a few minutes early for another meeting; tired faces staring at the board chair with that "can-we-please-end-this" look; or congratulatory, "nice meeting" comments to each other for having completed another convening.

Problem is, in each scenario above, the meeting ends without a proper "look in the mirror."

When we skip that reflection step, we miss the opportunity to learn what's working and what isn't. We might even overlook a significant problem (Shirt on backwards?!) or something we meant to do but didn't (Forgot to brush my hair?!).

Without a consistent way to capture feedback in each meeting, we're likely to repeat the same mistakes or forget to repeat what contributes to success. The board chair and staff are left with guesses and assumptions to inform planning for the next meeting.

The fix: make time each meeting for review and reflection. This can be a formal meeting evaluation or survey submitted anonymously, or a short, informal feedback discussion at the end of the meeting, depending on the norms and culture of your organization.

A few years ago, JF Maddox Foundation added a formal evaluation to the end of their board meetings. Using a paper form, directors share reflections on their own participation (using board norms and operating agreements as the benchmark—see more on that below), the board's collective performance, the quality and usefulness of pre-meeting materials, and satisfaction with the meeting outcomes. They also suggest topics for future meetings and offer feedback on the meeting overall.

Ann Maddox Utterback, JF Maddox Foundation board chair, describes the meeting evaluation as "my most effective tool for improving our meetings." "In fact," she says, "it's the number one way I learn what my board needs more of and what's not working for them. Since we started using the evaluation form, I understand better where our processes get stuck and how to avoid that, what helps people feel like they contributed to the meeting, what gets in the way of full participation, and how to help everyone prepare effectively for the next meeting."

The JF Maddox Foundation has created and leans on norms—read more about that process here.
The Maddox Foundation board norms are:

1. Respect time
2. Ditto/Don't repeat
3. Good enough is perfect
4. Questions over answers
5. Shared responsibility for outcomes
6. Everyone's respected

From these norms flow specific operating agreements. For example, splitting and rotating responsibility for facilitation, timekeeping and note taking across agenda items is one practice tied to “shared responsibility for outcomes.” This takes the burden off the board chair for managing all three for the entire meeting.

The board reinforces these norms by displaying large printouts on the wall during meetings, including them at the top of every board and committee meeting agenda, and evaluating ourselves against them at the end of each meeting.

Board meetings are now less frustrating, more effective and more enjoyable, thanks to these common expectations and agreements.

Many kids just take what’s handed down to them from their parents, which often is a good thing, but it’s important to make that decision explicit. Boards need the occasional gut check—a pause—to step back and review what to keep and what’s ready for a refresh.

APPENDIX 4

Sample Ground Rules for Family Foundation Board Meetings

Developed by Karie Brown, Principal, KB Consulting

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

- Come to meetings prepared (each member should have their meeting materials at hand and bring their board binders for reference).
- Be mindful of the use of technology—turn phones off (or to vibrate) and only use computers to advance the purpose of the meeting.
- Maintain confidentiality in and out of meetings.
- Be respectful (let others speak and actively listen).
- Be open (ask questions from a learning perspective).
- Ensure that only one person is speaking at a time.
- Don't personalize things and don't make personal attacks—stay on the business of the foundation.
- Don't bring up family issues, either directly or indirectly, unless they relate directly to the business at hand.
- Speak candidly and constructively—often what is not said can lead to more problems than what is said.
- Assist the facilitator by participating effectively and efficiently. This means that each board member should:
    - Make sure to stay on point;
    - Add value with his or her comments; and,
    - Not take too much airtime.
- Hold ourselves accountable for keeping discussions and decisions at a "board-worthy" level.
- Ground discussions in information, data and knowledge.
- Show appreciation.

APPENDIX 5

Sample Family Meeting Agenda

Developed by Sarah Jane Cavanaugh, Board Member, The Russell Family Foundation

Opening Reading | 5 minutes
A story that reflects one of the values of your foundation (serious or humorous). Focuses trustees and sets the tone for the meeting.

Executive Session | 15–30 minutes
What keeps the executive director up at night? Trustees are active listeners, building a trusting relationship with the executive director.

Plenary Session | 1–3 hours
Educational session on a topic determined by a board survey, trustees have compelling interest. Might also be a visit and story by a constituent who has benefited by a grant from your foundation.

Joke | 5 minutes
Insert humor whenever possible. This assignment can be given to a quiet trustee to encourage participation.

Grantmaking Session | 1–3 hours

Consent Agenda & Parking Lot | 15 minutes
Reports are mailed to trustees in advance, they approve all in one motion. Put issues to be discussed at future meetings on the Parking Lot.

Celebrate | 15–60 minutes
Allocate time to share stories, historical family pictures, build on family heritage and history. Treat this time as sacred.

Executive Session | 30 minutes
Pass a Sacred Object: give a quiet trustee the assignment of bringing a meaningful object to pass around the Board table. The Trustee explains why this object is sacred and why it relates to the family and/or the foundation.

Rules:

1) No interruption or rebuttal

2) May pass without speaking

(Note: This agenda does not allow for breaks or lunch which can be scheduled as necessary)

APPENDIX 6

Family Foundation Planning Retreat Agenda (GMA Foundations)

Purpose of Meeting: Achieve consensus around ways to increase giving while maintaining manageable family/staff work-load in the near term.

Discussion Agenda | Date

TIME	DESCRIPTION	PROCESS	NOTES
10:00	**Mission, Values, Code of Conduct**	Remembering our Founding Principles	
	Donor Legacy Update	Opening Remarks – Reflections from Mom and Dad	
	Agenda Review	Review purpose of meeting and discussion plan	
10:30	**General Grantmaking Portfolio: Current Grants** A) Assessing long-time/multi-year grantee impact B) Lifetime cap on giving and exit strategy C) Special funding opportunities	Brainstorm and Discussion, see Options Worksheet for best practices and examples, and bring your own ideas	
11:45	**Fifteen-minute break**		
12:00	**General Grantmaking Portfolio: New Grants** D) Geography: same or different E) Budget size of organization: go bigger or smaller F) Focus: Exploring advocacy and policy funding	Brainstorm and Discussion, see Options Worksheet for best practices and examples, and bring your own ideas	
1:00	**Lunch Break**		
1:45	**Other Grantmaking Programs** • Discretionary Designations • Legacy Grants	Discussion: What should we consider changing, doing differently, adding?	
2:30	**Family Involvement** All family members are responsible for volunteering to carry out the work of the foundation. Foundation meetings take place during winter and summer holidays. Is this approach still working?	Discussion: What are our goals for broad family involvement? What do we do really well in terms of involving family? How might we do things differently? Where does the foundation fit in terms of family social gatherings?	
3:15	**Final Questions, and Next Steps**	Recap: Preferred Options and New Ideas	
4:00	**Adjourn**		

APPENDIX 7

Four Ways to Reenergize your Foundation Board

By Mary Phillips, Co-founder & President, GMA Foundations

Your board is good at what it does. You have experienced trustees and good infrastructure, but you would like to try fresh approaches, reenergize your foundation board, and experience your giving more fully. This outline may be your springboard to action.

Revisit your mission

Assess whether the focus of your activities aligns with your mission, your goals, and changing community needs. If there is a lack of synergy, seize this as an opportunity to reaffirm your mission and assess the possibilities for greater impact. It may be time to:

- Engage in strategic planning
- Reconsider your definition of impact
- Convene your grantees for first-hand feedback
- Launch a new program initiative

Consider a fresh approach

Maximize the results of your foundation's current operations and board efforts. Board tasks and meetings may have become rote and uninspiring. Discuss whether to:

- Implement a program of board education and holistic discussion
- Shift investment strategy to align with programs, mission or impact
- Adopt a new meeting format that sparks creativity, energy, and participation
- Rotate officers to build depth and share responsibilities

Strengthen relationships

Bring stakeholders closer together for effective decision making and teamwork. The successful board is essentially a team working together toward common goals. Take time to:

- Socialize with board and staff members
- Learn together by attending a conference or watching a webinar and discussing key concepts
- Get to know each other in fun ways, a foundation trivia tournament or trustee bake-off (!)
- Engage community advisors to build deeper relationships with constituents

Plan for foundation board renewal

Take time to look ahead to ensure board continuity and succession. Whether your foundation will exist in perpetuity or for another 25 years, a plan for board development is essential. Consider these next steps:

- Create a profile of how the board should evolve
- Develop a pipeline for identifying and process for selecting future board members
- Appoint apprentice board members or committees to prepare future leaders

About the National Center for Family Philanthropy

NCFP is a network of philanthropic families committed to a world that is vibrant, equitable, and resilient. We share proven practices, work through common challenges, and learn together to strengthen our ability to effect meaningful change. Our range of programs and services support family philanthropy at its many points of inflection and help families embrace proven practices and advance momentum. Explore our resources, all rooted in a Family Giving Lifecycle, by visiting www.ncfp.org.

About the Author

Janice Simsohn Shaw is an adept, high-energy facilitator with nearly 25 years of experience helping philanthropic and social change leaders to be better partners, listeners, and givers. She is a passionate and vocal advocate for the power of communal learning and action, proudly serving a diverse range of inspiring groups in helping move their work forward in meaningful ways.

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