

A close-up photograph of a hand with dark skin moving a gold chess king piece on a black and white checkered board. Another silver chess king piece is visible in the foreground. The background is a blurred grey.

Impact Strategies and Tools

Translating Your
Philanthropic Objectives
Into Action

*How will you use your
resources to achieve your
philanthropic purpose?*



NATIONAL CENTER FOR
FAMILY PHILANTHROPY



About this Series



This primer is the fourth in a series of seven about the Family Giving Lifecycle. The Lifecycle framework is comprised of seven inflection points and orients donors toward effective outcomes at each stage.

The Lifecycle framework encompasses the breadth and inflection points of family philanthropy and orients donors to effectiveness for the purpose of promoting better outcomes. The Lifecycle framework applies to families at all stages of their philanthropy¹, whether they are a wealth creator just starting out or a multi-generational family foundation improving their work. It is important for donors and their families to revisit the seven inflection points over time as they evolve and learn.

In each primer you'll find: basic information to get started or refresh yourself on the topic, ways to improve when you have the time and will, tips for involving your family, worksheets to guide your thinking, and a few select resources to advance your practice.

The full series of primers and related resources are available [here](#). The National Center for Family Philanthropy (NCFP) also provides workshops related to the primers. To learn more, please [contact us](#).

¹ **Philanthropy** is “voluntary action for the public good.” It can be informal and/or formal and include giving, granting, volunteering, investing for social/environmental impact, building social enterprises, advocacy, and/or other actions. **Family philanthropy** is when multiple branches and/or generations of a family (self-defined) take those actions together.

Table of Contents

- Overview** 4
- I. The Fundamentals** 5
 - Goals and Aspirations 7
 - Content 8
 - Your Role 10
 - Your Process 11
 - Self-Improvement 11
- II. Extending the Fundamentals** 13
 - Being a Good Partner 13
 - Developing a Grantmaking Process 14
 - Expanding Your Toolkit 18
- III. Involving Your Family** 22
 - Dicussing the Primer with Your Family 24
- IV. Looking Ahead** 26
- Resources** 27
- Appendix A: Comparing Tools** 28
- Worksheets** 35
 - 1. Philanthropic Strategy 35
 - 2. Program Guidelines 43
 - 3. Applicant Review 44
- Credits** 45



Philanthropic Purpose
 Impact Vehicles & Structures
 Governance
Impact Strategies & Tools
 Assessment & Learning
 Operations & Management
 Succession & Legacy

Overview

Effective philanthropy is about ongoing learning and reflection. It is intentional and iterative. Philanthropic families often begin with a more informal approach but then meet a moment when a more purposeful direction is needed. Questions arise, such as:

*Is our philanthropy meeting a real need?
Are we seeing a measurable impact?
How do we ensure that we do no harm?*

These are among the questions that drive the desire to create a written strategy. Some donors simply hope to embrace better methods of deciding which funding requests to pursue. Others want a structured process to achieve a defined social impact. Regardless of the motivation, a strategy is an essential element of effective philanthropy.

We define **social impact** as the intentional net benefit to the public of your actions. Your impact may be small or big, help a few or many, or be tangible or hard to measure. Your **philanthropic strategy** is your roadmap for achieving **social impact**. Your toolkit for social impact often starts with gifts to 501(c)(3) public charities. It can include other uses of financial resources such as awarding scholarships, making impact investments, or offering programs and services. And it often includes using your time, skills, connections, and public voice.

There are no standard rules for how individuals and families ought to pursue philanthropy. But, there are reasonable steps and best practices to understand and adapt. This primer outlines the techniques for developing or improving your philanthropic strategy. In the primer, you will find:

I. The Fundamentals

An effective philanthropic strategy sets a direction, provides context for decisions, defines the tools you'll use, and outlines a process for implementing those tools.

To create a philanthropic strategy, see [pages 5–12](#) and [Worksheet 1](#).

II. Extending the Fundamentals

As families advance in their philanthropy, they learn to become better partners with the community. They also create more intentional grantmaking programs and explore a more extensive toolkit to influence others, leverage resources, and increase shared learning.

To strengthen your strategy, see [pages 13–21](#), [Appendix A](#), and [Worksheets 2 and 3](#).

III. Involving Your Family

Preferences for styles, strategies, and tools may diverge as families become more experienced in philanthropy and new members join. However, successful families repeatedly return to the ideas that most unite them.

For tips on creating a shared philanthropic strategy, see [pages 22–25](#).

IV. Looking Ahead

Your strategy must evolve with the changes in the communities and causes you support. Effective families and funders make time to revisit their strategies every few years.

For tips on looking ahead and helpful resources, see [page 26](#).

I. The Fundamentals

No one is born knowing how to be a smart and effective donor, and the availability of formal education is limited. Most social impact practitioners and philanthropists learn by doing, and you will too.

Your philanthropic strategy is the roadmap for being more intentional with your resources and impact. The strategy can be as simple or complicated as you desire. What's most important is to take a deliberate approach to your philanthropy, across all stages of your Family Giving Lifecycle.

As seen in the graphic below, your philanthropic strategy will have five parts:

1. Naming the aspirations or goals for social impact
2. Understanding the context in which you're operating
3. Defining the role you want to play within that context
4. Implementing processes for achieving your goals and role
5. Conducting ongoing monitoring, learning, and improvement

This strategy framework is meant to be flexible and iterative. You can create a short version based on what you know now and then revise and add details as you learn more later. This Fundamentals section and Worksheet 1 will help you outline your strategy. The Extending the Fundamentals section will provide ideas for strengthening your strategy as you have the time and experience.



Action Item: If you already have a philanthropic strategy and want to test it against this framework, jump ahead to [Worksheet 1](#).



Benefits of Intentional Family Philanthropy

Consultant and family foundation board member Ashley Snowdon Blanchard identifies five benefits of transitioning toward collaborative, strategic philanthropy and away from giving based on the disparate interests of family members²:

- Avoiding the **pet project trap** in which decisions are based on historic funding patterns or quid pro quo negotiations. This trap doesn't provide for a collaborative experience or measurable impact over time.
- Avoiding **dilution of the budget**. As new family members and generations join, the individual shares of a grant budget shrink quickly unless you have assets growing at incredible rates or generations of single children.
- More opportunities to **learn together** about issues and communities, encouraging curiosity and empathy about the world in younger generations and wealth inheritors.
- Strategy-focused board meetings which lift up from grant-by-grant decisions to **thinking big picture** about impact, going on site visits, and other purpose-led discussions.
- Increased **engagement of family members** as they transition from check writers to active stakeholders in the philanthropic strategy. Family members often become involved in volunteering, advocacy, convening, investing, and other activities that let their skills, passions, and connections shine.

² [*Strategic Philanthropy: Maximizing Family Engagement and Social Impact*](#), NCFP, 2008

Goals and Aspirations

To what vision of success do we hope to contribute?

An effective philanthropic strategy states a vision for success. Begin with the end in mind. Donors call these statements social impact goals or priority results or use the wording as part of a vision or mission statement. The statements have at least two components:

1. An identified priority—a specific population, place, issue, institution, and/or ideal. (You may have identified priorities using NCFP’s [Philanthropic Purpose Primer](#)).
2. The change you want to see or something you hope to preserve or protect.

Example statements include “freedom of speech will be protected on college campuses,” “ensure families in sub-Saharan Africa have easy access to nutritious food,” and “the Eastside neighborhood will be safe and prosperous.”

Writing a more aspirational statement provides a unifying vision for a family or business. It helps participants be part of something bigger than themselves. Some donors choose to be more specific because they have a narrowly targeted priority. However you define your social impact goal, consider these guidelines in creating it:

- Your values, interests, and values will often shape your initial choice of a priority. Priorities can also emerge from community assessment processes or identifying needs through conversations and research (see the Context section on [page 8](#)).
- If you’re early in the lifecycle of your philanthropy, it might be easier to be more specific about the issue, population, or place and be more general about how success is defined.
- Strategy is iterative. Take time to pause, reflect, and learn along the way. Be open to new possibilities and shifts in focus and approach



Think contribution, not causation. No matter the issue or the scale of your resources, it is extremely difficult to say your philanthropy directly caused a specific impact. The world is complex, and there are many other resources in the mix. However, with an effective strategy, you can be confident that you contributed to measurable progress.

Context

What are important trends and data? Which partners and approaches are important for success?

Success is rarely achieved in isolation. You create a more powerful philanthropic strategy when you understand the context in which you'll be working and get to know other people and organizations involved. Through ongoing conversations and online research, you can develop an informal field scan or issue assessment. Ask for a range of perspectives on the following questions about your vision or social impact goal:

1. What progress and success measures are most important to track? What are the trends in that data?
2. What are the stories behind those trends? Why is progress speeding up, slowing down, or stalled?
3. Who has a role in doing better in the social impact goal?
4. Which approaches or strategies are working or are promising? Which are not working?
5. How can I be most helpful, given my resources (time, talent, ties, testimony, and treasure)? What are the opportunities for me to make a difference?

The questions above can form an ongoing learning agenda. You can revisit them quarterly or annually to retest your assumptions and continually refine your philanthropic strategy.

To create a well-rounded perspective, consider asking the above-named questions of the following groups of potential partners in social impact:

- People with first-hand experiences including those with any of the following characteristics:
 - Lived experiences with a problem (e.g., students in a low-performing school or people with a disease).
 - Customers who purchase goods or services from a nonprofit or social enterprise.
 - Frequently excluded perspectives such as people left out of public decision-making processes, left behind by the economy, or otherwise marginalized who can infuse a sense of justice, compassion, and equity.
 - Residents of a geography who can share local history and context, find good ideas to support, win over local skeptics, and build sustainable momentum for a giving strategy. Involving people of different races, ethnicities, or cultures helps bridge divides and ensures you don't have unintentional biases in a social impact strategy.
- Nonprofits, advocacy organizations, businesses, donors, and funders who are working on the same issue, population, or geography as you. You can start with organizations you already know and ask for references to the other groups in this list.
- Researchers and experts in universities, government agencies, policy organizations, and sometimes foundations who may already have conducted relevant assessments. They may have published needs assessments or evaluations of programs or may have relevant TED Talks or online videos.
- Close partners such as family members, board members, friends, employees, and advisors.

Strategic Approaches

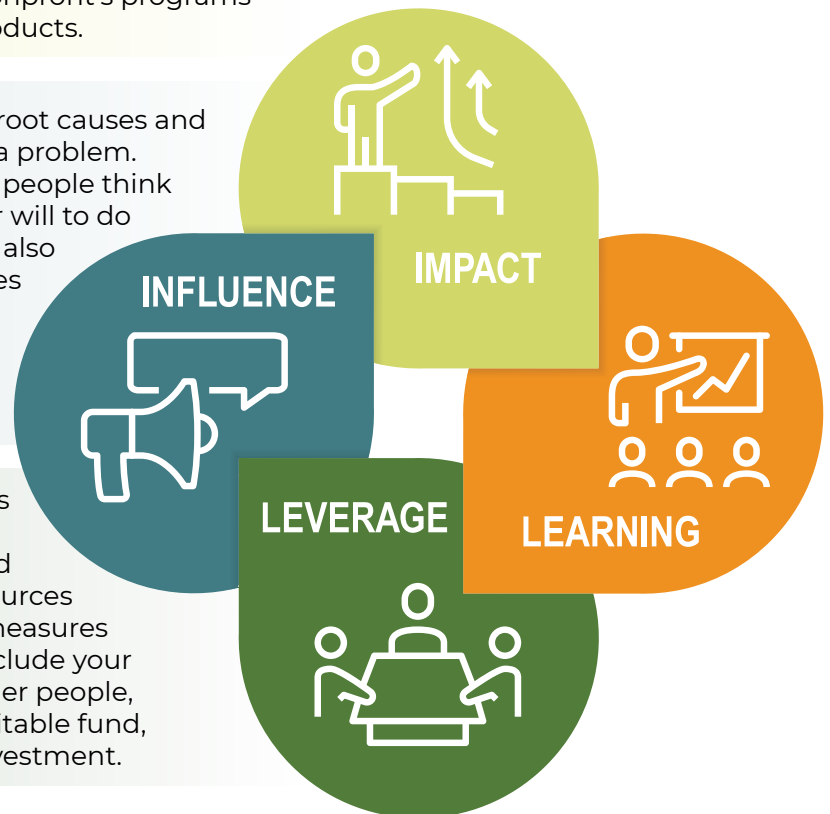
As you do your research and listen to others, you'll find that partners are using a variety of approaches to solve a problem. You can likely group the approaches into this I2L2 framework³ for long-term community preservation or change:

Impact: directly changing the lives of people or animals or making improvements in communities and ecosystems. The changes are often the result of a nonprofit's programs and activities or a social enterprise's products.

Influence: changing the system—the root causes and underlying conditions that perpetuate a problem. The approach includes changes in how people think about problems and solutions and their will to do something different about them. It can also include changes in practices and policies (nonprofit, business, or government), collaboration and alignment among organizations, and relationships across boundaries.

Leverage: changing the commitments of other individuals' and organizations' resources—money, people, facilities, and more—and the alignment of those resources toward a common goal and standard measures of success. This approach might also include your plans for attracting the resources of other people, businesses, and organizations to a charitable fund, collective giving program, or impact investment.

Learning: changing knowledge about how to approach problems and implement solutions more effectively. It is also the commitment to develop and share that knowledge broadly and collaboratively.



Most people and organizations see impact as their North Star, with the other approaches in service to achieving that impact. However, success in any approach improves the chances of success in the others.

³ [I2L2: A Formula for Change](#), ORS Impact and the Hawaii Community Foundation, 2015

Your Role

What will you do to contribute to progress in your social impact goal?

Once you understand the context, you can better define your role—how you and your resources might be most helpful and effective. You'll consider *what you have to offer* (resources, social impact vehicles, and social impact tools) and *how you'll interact with others* (relationships, niche, and style):

- 1. Choose your resources and social impact vehicles.** You'll want to create a budget for the resources you dedicate to social impact. Your resources are your "5 Ts"—time, talent, ties, testimony, and treasure. You'll use some or the resources in one or more social impact vehicles—a charitable vehicle such as a foundation and donor-advised fund, market-based vehicle such as impact investing or a corporate social responsibility program, public policy vehicle such as a 501(c)(4) organization, or peer-based vehicle such as a crowdfunding campaign and social movement. See NCFP's [Impact Vehicles and Structures Primer](#) to budget your resources and choose one or more vehicles.
- 2. Pick your tools.** Philanthropists have an extensive toolkit for social impact—programs and activities to deploy their resources personally and through their social impact vehicles. The toolkit is based on the I2L2 framework above. You'll likely start with an impact tool such as a grant or scholarship program. You'll then decide if you want to increase impact by using one or more influence, leverage, or learning tools. The Extending the Fundamentals section and Appendix A will guide you on the uses of popular tools.
- 3. Define your relationship style.** What type of relationships do you want to have with others working in your social impact goal? Your answers to these common decision points will depend on your values and the resources you have available:
 - Should the nature of relationships be an extension of your family's legacy or the company's brand?
 - Will you be highly collaborative with or highly independent from other donors and funders?
 - Will you be hands-off or high-touch with organizations seeking and receiving your support? Will the interactions be transactional and efficient or warm and personal?
 - What level of trust do you want to develop in collaborators and organizations you fund?

You'll find additional considerations for being a good partner in the Extending the Fundamentals section on [pages 13–21](#).

- 4. Create a niche.** Based on the context you've learned and the tools you wish to use, what niche might you fill to best support your partners and accelerate progress? Common niches are:
 - **Sustain good work.** The most powerful strategy is often ensuring effective organizations and approaches can continue and succeed. This can especially be true when many other funders are providing one-time support or changes in government funding.
 - **Fill gaps.** There may be aspects of an issue or a segment of a community that is overlooked or less popular but still critical to support. The gap may also be in timing. For instance, there is often a rush of funding early in an emergency but a lack of funding months later to recover and rebuild.
 - **Improve quality.** Some organizations show promise but lack the resources to be high-quality partners. They may need help improving their operational efficiency or technology, the effectiveness of their board or fundraising, or the quality of the products and programs. Improved quality and effectiveness can often inspire other funders and investors to then start or increase their support.

- **Import and expand best practices.** There may be no need to recreate the wheel but instead a need to borrow and adapt a method or practice that is well-researched and well-tested. Issues as diverse as youth violence prevention and arts education have sets of proven practices available to the public. They're often called evidence-based practices or research-based methods.
 - **Experiment and innovate.** The term innovation can be a vague buzzword in philanthropy. It is often a poor substitute for lack of research and awareness. However, sometimes partners have the talent and culture to support experimentation, testing, risk, and learning from failure.
- 5. Define a philanthropic style.** You'll see more opportunities to use your resources than you can manage. You need a way to screen and prioritize them. Your philanthropic style lists your preferences for the scope and timeframe of your impact and the ideal profile of the partners you want to support. It can be used internally by a family or committee to review requests for support and define a public set of grantmaking guidelines.

Your Processes

What's your plan for implementation? How will you get money and other resources into the hands of people and organizations who do great work?

The typical process in a philanthropic strategy includes four steps, covered in more detail in the Extending the Fundamentals section on [pages 13–21](#):

- 1. Pipeline:** How will you create a pipeline of qualified ideas and opportunities that meet your social impact goal? What help do you need to build a thoughtful pipeline?
- 2. Screening:** How will you evaluate the pipeline of ideas and opportunities based on your philanthropic purpose, niche, and philanthropic style? What assistance do you need?
- 3. Decision:** Who will make the final decision(s) on the use of resources, using what criteria? What process will they employ to make the decisions?
- 4. Implementation:** How will you communicate your decisions, distribute resources, monitor progress, and maintain relationships? What resources do you need to implement effectively?

Philanthropists most frequently use this process to make grants to nonprofits. It can be adapted to award scholarships, search for potential impact investments, find partners for advocacy, and other activities in your social impact toolkit.

Self-Improvement

Effective philanthropists and philanthropic families regularly make time to step back and reflect on their progress toward their vision or social impact goals. Your plan for self-improvement ideally has four parts:

1. Monitoring the progress and results of your grants and other social impact tools (part of the implementation process above).
2. Creating an ongoing learning agenda about the context in which you're working.
3. Creating a plan for regularly reviewing your philanthropic strategy, going around the circle in the diagram on [page 5](#).
4. Reflecting on your evolving role as a philanthropist, the work of boards and committees, and preparation of future decision-makers in your philanthropy.

The [Assessment and Learning Primer](#) will help you develop your plans for self-reflection and evaluation.



Action Items: Use [Worksheet 1](#) to outline your philanthropic strategy. Remember that you can start with basic answers and add more detail later. Use [Worksheet 2](#) to develop grant program guidelines and [Worksheet 3](#) to draft review criteria for organizations you're interested in supporting.



Tip: Practices for Effective Philanthropy

The Center for Effective Philanthropy is a nonprofit organization that advises individual and institutional donors. In its definition of philanthropic effectiveness, it names four essential practices:

- Effectiveness must be grounded in the social, cultural, and historical context of the issues being addressed.
- Effectiveness requires an understanding that while a sense of urgency is crucial, results do not always come easily or quickly.
- Effectiveness necessitates understanding how disparities—including those brought about by discriminatory policies, approaches, and systems—have influenced societal outcomes.
- Finally, little is accomplished alone; individual and institutional givers should strive to be effective themselves and also in the way they work collaboratively with others.



Creating a philanthropic strategy, no matter how simple, is worth the time and effort. It will bring meaning and focus to the uses of your resources. It can help you ensure that your social impact goal and role drive your decision making rather than ad hoc interests and unsolicited requests. And it allows others involved in your philanthropy—family, volunteers, staff, advisors, partners, and others—to more successfully support you in your vision.

III. Extending the Fundamentals

Developing and implementing a philanthropic strategy takes time. You'll want to give your strategy a real chance to take root to see how it holds up to the opportunities for impact you find and the decisions you need to make. Implementation will also likely inspire you to ask new questions about purpose, results, and tools.

As you become more experienced and confident, you'll likely seek to strengthen their strategy your becoming better partners, improving your grantmaking programs, and adding impact, influence, leverage, and learning tools.

Being a Good Partner

“We value our grantees, and see our relationship with each organization as a two-way street. We always try to learn from grantees in terms of what is happening in their everyday work and trends that they are seeing in the field.”

– Paul and Debbi Brainerd, Founders, The Brainerd Foundation

“We view ourselves as much as we can as thought partners, yet we never tell our grantees what to do—because honestly, we don’t know what’s best for their organization. Yet we want to walk alongside them. If they have a challenge, we want them to feel comfortable coming to us, and we’ll work to the best of our ability to connect them to resources and tools.”

– Jenna Wachtmann, Vice President, Ball Brothers Foundation

Philanthropists often use the word partner to describe an ideal relationship with organizations or individuals that ask for and receive grants or investments. However, that funding relationship creates an inherent power and privilege imbalance that trips up even the friendliest relationships. For fear of being penalized by a funder, grantees and investees will hesitate to share challenges in their organizations or provide honest feedback on the philanthropist’s strategies, processes, and personnel.

Effective funders and philanthropists work to reduce harmful power dynamics in many ways, tailoring their approaches based on their values, resources, and philanthropic goals. You can use one or more of these steps to ensure you’re a welcomed partner in the community:

Create a policy or promise. How will you hold yourself and other volunteers and staff accountable? Some funders create an internal customer service policy built around the Golden Rule or another set of principles to guide relationships. Others publish their goals, such as the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation’s [Seven Habits of Excellent Work with Grantees](#) and Steelcase Foundation’s [Applicant Bill of Rights](#).

Employ trust-based philanthropy practices. The [Trust-Based Philanthropy Project](#) encourages giving centered on values of equity, humility, and transparency. The six [trust-based practices](#) will feel familiar if you, like most donors, annually give unrestricted donations to a set of organizations with little or no paperwork exchanged. Many donors carry that style of giving to their donor-advised funds or family foundations. The project’s website contains tools to guide board or family conversations about these practices and improve relationships with the community and nonprofit organizations.

Use inclusive, fair, and right-sized processes. Being a good partner means limiting the burdens of asking for your money or other resources. Funders have used [Project Streamline](#) to ensure grant processes are more manageable for themselves and the organizations applying and reporting. And more are using tools from [Arabella Advisors](#), [PEAK Grantmaking](#), and the [Disability and Philanthropy Forum](#) to minimize bias, reduce disparities, and become more inclusive.

Seek feedback. You can use simple tools such as a short electronic survey, website form, or facilitator to conduct focus groups or interviews to invite anonymous feedback. Some funders adopt practices outlined in the [Listening & Feedback: A Funder Action Menu](#) from the Fund for Shared Insight. Those who wish to spend more money on the feedback process use the [Grantee Perception Report](#) from the Center for Effective Philanthropy.

Philanthropy Trend: Sharing Decision Making

One of the core tenets of effective philanthropy is listening to the people donors ultimately seek to serve. Participatory grantmaking (or community-led grantmaking) takes listening one step further to engage community members in the decision-making process around grants.

Donors, businesses, and foundations are increasingly inviting community residents and people who have first-hand experiences with issues to:

- **Advise the development of philanthropic strategies and proposal review criteria,**
- **Help with building the pipeline of good ideas,**
- **Evaluate proposals and grant reports, and**
- **Join in the final awards decision.**

Many are creating decision-making opportunities that equally include people inside and outside the foundation or other social impact vehicle. A few are giving complete decision-making authority to the community members.

Philanthropists see these benefits of participatory grantmaking: more thoughtful choices, increased community involvement and ownership in results, increased equity and social justice, increased trust between the participants and funder, and increased excitement by younger generations of the family or business.

For more information about this practice, see NCFP's [Participatory Grantmaking Content Collection](#).

Developing a Grantmaking Process

Most of us start our philanthropic journeys by giving to and volunteering with charitable organizations and then awarding grants to them through a charitable vehicle.

It is easiest for most social impact vehicles to give money or other assets to nonprofit organizations designated as [public charities](#). The vehicles can legally award grants to public charities without asking for a proposal or any other paperwork. Donors, donor-advised funds, and family foundations frequently do so for organizations they already know well. You can check an organization's public charity status by searching the IRS's [Exempt Organization Search](#) website or the same function built into online grant application systems.

Social impact vehicles can sometimes award grants to other types of US-based nonprofits. However, those grants may not be tax-deductible and may require [expenditure responsibility](#), an extra layer of oversight and reporting. Grants to foreign organizations can require a procedure called equivalency determination and checking lists of organizations and individuals under [economic and trade sanctions](#). If you're interested in grants to organizations that aren't public charities, it is best to work with legal counsel, a highly experienced grantmaking staff member, or an intermediary organization such as [NGOsource](#) or [CAF America](#).

Following are tips for creating or strengthening your grantmaking process:

Developing a Pipeline of Ideas and Partners



People

It helps to have an informal scouting and referral network of people who know your interests and goals. Family members assigned to investigate organizations, experts in issues, trusted advisors and friends, other funders, or the staff of a donor-advised fund sponsor are common members of such a network.



Methods

Use one or more of these processes to build a pipeline of ideas:

Responsive open process: allow any charity to request money if they fit your defined philanthropic purpose and style. You can choose to accept requests on an ongoing basis or use periodic deadlines. This process is useful when you want to benefit a broad range of issues in a geography or respond to emerging needs and unanticipated opportunities.

Targeted open process: allow any charity to request money by telling you how they will meet one or more of your targeted priorities or social impact goals. You might accept requests on an ongoing basis or use periodic deadlines.

Request for Proposal (RFP) process: invite a pre-defined list of charities to send requests to meet an identified priority or social impact goal. This process typically produces more detailed requests and results in more in-depth relationships with the organizations.

Closed, invitation-only process: review information from organizations you invite to send requests. Donors use this process when they have a defined list of organizations they want to embrace as partners.

If you use an open process or RFP process, consider first asking for a one- or two-page *letter of intent* or *idea paper*. You can use this summary to quickly screen out ideas that don't fit and then invite a smaller number of full proposals. This ensures nonprofits and you aren't wasting your time on unnecessary work.



Materials

You may award grants based on simple activities such as a phone conversation, a visit to their office or program site, and a review of a website. And, you can choose to use a [common application form](#) shared by a group of funders or accept proposals nonprofits have submitted to other funders.

If you choose to ask for a proposal, we suggest you use the [Charting Impact](#) framework. Three respected resources for donors and nonprofits—Guidestar, the Independent Sector, and BBB Wise Giving Alliance—developed the framework to answer the five questions most asked by donors and funders:

1. What is your organization aiming to accomplish?
2. What are your strategies for making this happen?
3. What are your organization's capabilities for doing this?
4. How will your organization know if you are making progress?
5. What have and haven't you accomplished so far?

Screening Your Pipeline and Making Decisions



People

Some philanthropists use the same set of people to screen ideas, winnow down requests, and make final decisions.

Others ask a grant committee or staff to review proposals and make a set of recommendations to the final decision-makers. The committee approach allows for a broader range of perspectives. It can also serve as a training ground for rising generations of family members and future board members.

Many funders are now adding people with first-hand perspectives on issues to the review and decision-making process (see the Sharing Decision Making section on [page 14](#)).



Methods

Philanthropists use a variety of methods to assess funding requests and inform their decision making. This assessment process—sometimes called due diligence—includes any of these activities: a phone or video interview with the nonprofit, a visit to its office or site of programming, reference checks (funders, partners, clients, or customers), or a checklist of criteria to rate the organization and proposal.

If you have the time and you value personal relationships with nonprofits, you might choose to meet with them before inviting proposals. If you have less time, you'll likely only meet with or visit organizations whose proposals are close fits for your philanthropic strategy.

Whichever methods you use, and whenever you use them, consider these questions as you assess the organizations and prepare to make decisions:

- Is there a connection between the organization's values and our values?
- Does the organization or opportunity align with our vision, mission, or social impact goal?
- Does the organization's understanding of context and effective approaches match ours? Is it improving our understanding of context and effective approaches?
- Have we been a good partner, ensuring that we're being fair, responsive, and equitable in our decision making? If we had concerns, did we give the organization a chance to address them?
- Have we considered all the ways in which we can support the organization's mission?
- Is our "net grant" large enough? That is, will the size of the grant be worth the amount of time the organization and we spent on the process to get to this decision and the reporting expected later? (Ask a similar question for other uses of your resources listed in [Appendix A](#)).

Types of Decisions. You'll make one of five types of decisions on each request for funding: 1) yes as requested, 2) yes, with modifications you suggest to the amount or terms, 3) postpone pending receiving more information from the organization, 4) no, but the organization may re-apply with changes you suggest, or 5) no, don't re-apply.

If you decide to decline a proposal early in the process, notify the organization rather than wait until the end. Nonprofits appreciate a quick decline more than waiting for the decision.



Materials

[Worksheet 2](#) provides a template for developing grant guidelines and [Worksheet 3](#) provides an example checklist to assess organizations or proposals. Also see NCFP's [Policy Central Content Collection](#) for example grantmaking and impact investing policies and practices.

Implementation: Notifications, Payments, and Monitoring



People

Many donors and funders enjoy making personal calls to the organizations that receive money. The board, family, or grantmaking committee members make calls. Then, staff or a contracted administrator follow up with written or electronic notification.

Notification: You'll continue good relationship-building if you quickly notify all organizations of your decisions. A common practice is to send emails within two or three days of the decision noting that further information may be coming later. Some funders still choose to send a printed grant award letter.

Terms: Your award email or letter may include simple language that asks the grantee to use the money as proposed or with other modifications you request. There's no legal requirement for a formal grant or gift agreement. Tracking the extra layer of paperwork can be an unnecessary burden on your and the grantee's time. However, a formal agreement will be useful in these situations: the gift of a complex financial asset (e.g., using private equity stock or transferring real estate instead of cash), naming rights for a building or program, funding an endowment, or a grant that involves complex benchmarks and progress points.

Funding: Individual donors and some foundations still mail checks to grantees. Sponsors of donor-advised funds, intermediaries, and online grantmaking systems have made electronic ACH (automated clearing house) payments safe and easy for grantmakers and grantees.

The best practice is to send the total amount up-front so the nonprofit can quickly put the money to work. If you award a multi-year grant, you might choose to send annual payments pending a check-in with or report from the grantee.

Monitoring: You might choose to create an ongoing relationship with nonprofits to monitor their progress. There's no legal requirement for a grant report, and conversations frequently provide better information than a written or electronic document.

If you hope to fund an organization over time, you might combine a grant report on the previous year's work with the request for renewed support. If you do request a more formal grant report, you'll find additional advice in the [Assessment and Learning Primer](#).



Methods

At minimum, you'll want to save meeting minutes documenting the decisions made and accounting records of the financial transactions. Software for grant management or customer relationship management help track the contacts made and any expectations shared.

Any other paperwork—letters, agreements, or reports—can be optional, especially for grants to public charities.



Materials

Grantseeker's Bill of Rights

Joel J. Orosz, then a senior program officer at the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, offered an example "Grantseeker's Bill of Rights" in his book, *The Insider's Guide to Grantmaking*. He wrote that nonprofits should have the rights to:

1. Receive a clear statement of the foundation's funding interests
2. Have all communications answered
3. An explanation of and the timeline for the foundation's proposal review process
4. A prompt acknowledgment of receipt of a proposal
5. Have all proposals read in full and seriously considered
6. A timely and unambiguous funding decision
7. Receive an explanation of the reasoning behind funding decisions
8. Have all requirements for the grant relationship clearly spelled out in writing
9. Have all reports completely read and carefully considered
10. Be informed if continued funding is a possibility

Expanding Your Toolkit

Grantmaking may be the only tool you have the time or desire to use. However, many philanthropists and funders find that grantmaking alone doesn't lead to the impact they hope to see, so they add other tools for impact, influence, leverage, or learning (the I2L2 framework). Some philanthropists start with those tools and do little or no grantmaking.

Your choice of social impact vehicle can affect your choice of tools. The four types of vehicles are:

Charitable: public charities, private foundations, donor-advised funds, intermediaries, supporting organizations, private operating foundations, and charitable trusts.

Private sector: businesses with corporate social responsibility programs, mission-driven businesses such as social enterprises, LLCs, and family offices.

Public policy: 501(c)(4) nonprofits and 527 political organizations.

Peer-based: crowdfunding platforms, giving circles, mutual aid networks, and social movements.

Figure 1 rates the *appropriateness* of your vehicle implementing or managing each tool directly, presuming there's internal will and capacity. Philanthropists frequently give or grant money to nonprofits to implement the tools rather than do the work themselves.

The rest of this section provides an overview of the most frequently used tools for impact, influence, leverage, and learning. You'll find more detailed comparison charts and starter resources in [Appendix A](#).

Figure 1: How Appropriate is a Tool for my Social Impact Vehicle?

	Charitable Vehicles	Private Sector Vehicles	Public Policy Vehicles	Peer-based Vehicles
IMPACT TOOLS				
Grants to charities	High	High	Low	High
Awards to people & businesses	High*	High*	Low	High
Impact investments	High*	High	Low	Mixed
INFLUENCE TOOLS				
Convening	High	High	High	High
Capacity building	High	High	Low	Mixed
Strategic communications	High	High	High	Mixed
Nonpartisan advocacy	High	High	High	Mixed
Lobbying	Low*	High	High	Mixed
LEVERAGE TOOLS				
Expanding the base	High	High	High	High
Collaboration	High	High	High	Mixed
Responsible purchasing	Medium	High	Medium	Medium
CSR	Low	High	Low	Low
LEARNING TOOLS				
Data and research	High	High	Medium	Low
Reporting and media	High	High	High	Medium
Learning networks	High	High	Medium	Mixed
Evaluation capacity building	High	Medium	Low	Low

* There are specialized regulatory requirements involved and you should seek legal advice before deciding to use the tool



Tools for Impact

Definitions and details in [Appendix A, page 28](#).

In addition to awarding grants to nonprofit organizations, many donors choose to award money directly to individuals or businesses without expecting financial returns. *Scholarships* and *fellowships* benefit predefined groups of individuals. *Prize programs* reward the ideas and accomplishments of individuals, teams, and businesses. And, you can award money to individuals and companies in need through specialized *emergency assistance*, medical assistance, or disaster relief programs.

You can also make *impact investments*—investments in businesses, nonprofits, and funds with expectations of both financial returns and social or environmental impact. The financial returns include market rate (interest, dividends, or equity earned), 0% (all money is returned without interest), and only some money being returned. As with grants to nonprofits, the impact can range from more measurable to more diffuse.

All types of social impact vehicles can use these tools for impact, though they are infrequently the focus of public policy vehicles. NCFP recommends seeking the help of knowledgeable legal counsel or a third-party provider specializing in tax-exempt organizations.



Tools for Influence and System Change

Definitions and details in [Appendix A, page 29](#).

Achieving lasting impact means changing how people think about an issue and their desire and ability to work together toward better results. It might also require a change to the underlying conditions that perpetuate a problem or prevent progress on a solution. Donors call this type of work *system change*, *getting to the root cause*, or *going upstream on a problem*.

Influence tools include *convening*, *capacity building*, *strategic communications*, *nonpartisan advocacy*, and *lobbying*. You can support nonprofits and social movements to use those tools. Or you and your social impact vehicle can use the tools yourselves—adding your time, talent, ties, and testimony to your use of your treasure.

All types of social impact vehicles can implement convening, capacity building, strategic communications, and nonpartisan advocacy activities. Public policy and private sector vehicles are best suited to lobbying. The IRS highly restricts lobbying activities by charitable vehicles. NCFP recommends seeking the help of knowledgeable legal counsel if you're interested in tools for influence and systems change.



Tip: Are you ready for systems change?

*Influencing systems takes patience, continuous learning, and a willingness to collaborate and share power with disparate stakeholders. The online [Systems Change Self-Assessment](#) quiz from *Grantmakers for Effective Organizations* can help determine your readiness to integrate systems work into your philanthropic strategy. It is part of a more extensive resource guide on the issue.*



Tools for Leverage

Definitions and details in [Appendix A, page 31](#).

Many philanthropists take to heart the adage, “If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.” No matter the size of resources they can dedicate to philanthropy, they know that attracting and leveraging other resources will lead to a more lasting impact.

Two common tools for leverage are *expanding the base* and *collaboration*, both of which organize and align other partners’ resources. Two other tools, *responsible purchasing* and *corporate social responsibility (CSR)*, align resources within your social impact vehicle or company toward your goals. They also engage financial partners like suppliers and customers.

All types of social impact vehicles can use these tools, though CSR programs are most common in the private sector.



Tools for Learning

Definitions and details in [Appendix A, page 33](#).

“Data consist of words and numbers that in and of themselves hold no meaning. These words and numbers become information when given context and imbued with interpretation. Knowledge results when information is combined with experience, and transformed into actionable insight. In other words, knowledge holds value. Sharing that knowledge thus offers a rich possibility of improving results, influencing decisions, and otherwise effecting change.”

– Clare Nolan in [Open for Good: Knowledge Sharing to Strengthen Grantmaking](#)

Community needs and the data to understand them both evolve. Effective methods to solve problems emerge. Changes in policies, allies, and resources create new gaps in shared knowledge. Effective philanthropy is a never-ending learning journey and a journey best made collaboratively.

You can increase impact in your philanthropic priorities by supporting the development and smarter use of *research and data* and changing people’s knowledge and attitudes through *reporting and media coverage*. You can also support more intentional learning in your partners through *learning networks* and *evaluation capacity building*.

All types of social impact vehicles can use tools for learning, though peer-based vehicles infrequently have the capacity to do so. Philanthropists frequently combine these tools with tools for influence



Tip: Score your knowledge-sharing culture and capacity

As you consider sharing the knowledge gained in your philanthropic strategy, are you a knowledge novice, sleeping giant, well-intentioned wallflower, or advanced explorer? To find out, score yourself in the 18-question quiz in the [Open for Good: Knowledge Sharing to Strengthen Grantmaking](#) report from Candid or take their [online survey](#).

IV. Involving Your Family

It is natural for family members' interests in results, strategies, and preferred tools to differ. Age, personal experiences, professional journeys, and other factors influence how individual family members think philanthropic strategies and tools can improve the world.

Effective family philanthropy focuses on both the *why* and the *how*. Social impact vehicles that concentrate their resources and attention on shared values, priorities, and giving styles tend to bring more joy and sustained family involvement over time. Those families create collaborative philanthropic strategies and tools for the vehicle, and encourage family members to use their own resources and tools to augment the collaborative strategy and pursue their own interests.

Planning a blend of collaborative and individual action helps family members grow as individuals while staying connected to the family's shared purpose. Here are two examples:

Case Study 1: United Strategy, Many Tools. A three-generation family has created a shared priority to improve the environment in their home city. Most of the grants from their family foundation go to this priority and the foundation's executive director facilitates peer learning among grantees.

In addition, some family members spread the word about the nonprofits and environmental needs through social media and a couple of younger members have successfully crowdfunded for the cause. Two couples regularly speak with city council and economic development board members about increased spending on environmental improvement projects.

At the foundation board meetings, family members share their successes and challenges. The group discusses how all the work is moving their philanthropic strategy forward.

The foundation has also paid for a group to learn about impact investing in the environment. Family members will pursue that tool more quickly in their personal portfolios than the foundation will through its investments, as not all members support the idea yet.

Case Study 2: Similar Interests, Split Strategies. Mr. and Mrs. C sold their business, funding a non-endowed donor-advised fund as part of the exit plan. They invited their three adult children and their spouses to join them on the fund's advisory committee. The family found they shared two priorities—self-sufficiency and educational attainment. However, they had little common ground in their giving styles (see [Worksheet 2](#)) or the tools they thought most effective.

Mr. and Mrs. C decided to split the donor-advised fund into five equal budgets, one for each couple and one for collaborative grantmaking. One couple spent their entire budget to fund emergency financial aid at a trade school from which their child graduated. Another couple plans to award annual grants to three education advocacy coalitions. They're actively involved in the coalitions, but the grants are anonymous to protect the family's privacy. The other two couples jointly fund workforce development and youth employment programs and recruit other donors and volunteers for the programs.

Mr. and Mrs. C asked the community foundation managing the donor-advised fund to meet with the whole family twice a year. The staff discusses local trends, needs, and opportunities in the two priorities and the grant reports from everyone's grantees. They hope that ongoing education will spur interest in using the collaborative grantmaking budget.

Different Budgets for Different Purposes

Donors and philanthropic families often realize they want to achieve multiple purposes with their philanthropy. Many establish a separate budget or budget range for each purpose. Common purposes include:

Legacy: supporting one or more organizations that hold meaning to the family (e.g., a hospital unit or public park created by and named after the family or a congregation or community center where the family gathered). Organizations often are awarded this support annually or in multi-year grants and sometimes without a formal application process.

Responsive: responding to requests from the broader community or friends and advisors. This budget should be guided by preferences for organizations or projects you will support and a list of things you won't consider. You can use the budget to spot trends in needs, find unexpected new ideas, and for emergency grants and disaster relief.

Proactive or Strategic: funding to achieve one or more priorities. A priority might be related to a targeted population or issue (e.g., preserving wetlands in the Midwest), a style of funding (e.g., research fellowships in US history or innovation grants), and/or strengthening organizations (e.g., grants for strategic planning or evaluation). In NCFP's [Trends 2020](#) study, about three-fourths of family foundations reported having grantmaking guidelines for a specific program area or issue.

Discretionary: allowing board members or other family members to direct grants to organizations of their choice, with the entire board approving the grants by consent. Some families divide this budget by person, others by family branch, and some by home geography. According to [Trends 2020](#), about 64% of family foundations have such a budget, a number that has declined since 2015.

Next Generation: giving a group of younger family members a budget for grants as a means of learning about grantmaking processes, group decision making, and family history and values. About 31% of family foundations have such a budget, and 48% of them involve younger generations in the board's other grantmaking discussions (the numbers aren't mutually exclusive).

None of the budgets are inherently right or wrong, and the use and mix can evolve as experience with philanthropy and the number of family members change. Some families prefer strict rules for dividing a grants budget; others prefer more flexibility. The latter approach works if your family gets along well and knows how to compromise. The former is necessary if family members are naturally competitive or there are disagreements or rivalries.

“Discretionary grants can be a really good safety valve. They can help families stick to their focus by allowing individual board members’ interests to be handled another way. But they should be modest. If they take up a big piece of the budget, then you are not focusing your resources on what you said you wanted to be doing—grantmaking together as a family.”

– Alice Buhl, Lansberg, Gersick & Associates



Discussing the Primer with Your Family

Communication is an important tool to promote effective family philanthropy. Take time to review the primer with your family. You will likely develop shared answers to the worksheets if you're a couple, a family who shares many commonalities, or a family who is practiced in negotiating differences. A skilled facilitator will be important if you want to involve multiple family branches and generations, have a family with several differences of opinion or conflicts, or have multiple vehicles and strategies.

We'll presume you're starting with one of the more common impact tools—grants, scholarships, or awards—and working without a facilitator. Try one of the following steps to develop a shared philanthropic strategy:

ONE MEETING VERSION

If time is a limiting factor, the questions that outline a philanthropic strategy can be answered in one meeting, producing a quick draft that can launch further exploration. You can draft a strategy in 90 minutes or less if: your family has already defined one or more shared priorities (e.g., a community or an issue), you get along well, and you have someone who enjoys facilitating the group and helping them have fun with the process.

Before the meeting:

Ask family members to review the full primer but not complete the worksheets. Invite them to think ahead about each of these questions using the related pages of the primer:

1. What could success look like? ([page 7](#))
2. What are the trends? ([page 8](#))
3. Who are the partners who have a role to play in progress? ([page 8](#))
4. What strategies are important to achieve progress? ([page 9](#))
5. What are our roles for achieving progress? ([pages 10–11](#) and [Appendix A](#))
6. What processes will we use? ([page 11](#) and [pages 14–17](#))
7. What do we need to learn next?

At the meeting:

Give everyone sets of post-it notes and pens. For each question, ask them to write one answer large and legibly per post-it note. They'll likely have multiple answers for the questions. Have flipchart pages or blank walls on which you can post replies. Label one page "Learning agenda." You can conduct the process online through whiteboard functions of services such as Zoom or Jamboard or having people simultaneously type into a shared online document.

1. Note that the meeting has two purposes: 1) to create a quick, high-level draft of a strategy that won't have perfect language or agreement, and 2) to create a learning agenda that will add details or resolve questions that come up in the process. The brainstorming and discussion are more important than the development of final decisions.
2. First decide if all members will work on one priority or split into smaller groups for each of multiple priorities.
3. Pose the first of the seven questions and ask people to write and post their answers in five minutes. Then invite them to spend five minutes discussing commonalities in their answers and drafting a success statement or social impact goal statement.
4. Repeat the second of the questions and ask people to write and post their answers in five minutes. Then invite them to spend five minutes finding commonalities in their answers, grouping post-its as needed. If they're unsure of anything, or discover something they want to learn, have them add that to the Learning Agenda page.

5. Repeat step four for questions 3–6. While they’re working, the facilitator can group ideas that appear on the learning agenda or add ideas they hear in the discussions.
6. Spend the remaining time asking people to take assignments from the Learning Agenda for follow-up work before the group’s next meeting. The tools may require advice from legal or philanthropic advisors. Assign someone to synthesize all the information collected into a draft strategy for discussion.
7. Use future meetings to refine your answers and dive into the ideas in [Worksheet 1](#).

Your family can repeat this process annually. As you learn more, you can build out details or shift the priorities in lists.

MULTIPLE MEETING VERSION

Use Worksheet 1 to guide the conversations. Encourage everyone to read the full primer before the set of meetings start. Multiple meetings work well when your family has a vehicle such as a foundation or LLC, has one or more priorities, and is interested in a more detailed impact program and other activities.

AGENDA	MEETING 1	MEETING 2	MEETING 3	MEETING 4
Discuss learning agenda results and refine the draft		Section 1 and 2: Social Impact Goal and Context	Section 3: Impact Tool and Section 5: Expanded Toolkit	Section 3: Relationship Style, Niche and Philanthropic Style
Discuss individual answers, create drafts for ideas that have consensus	Section 1 and 2: Social Impact Goal and Context	Section 3: Impact Tool and Section 5: Expanded Toolkit	Section 3: Relationship Style, Niche and Philanthropic Style	Section 4: Impact Process
Create a learning agenda and assign people duties	Section 1 and 2: Social Impact Goal and Context	Section 3: Impact Tool and Section 5: Expanded Toolkit	Section 3: Relationship Style, Niche and Philanthropic Style	Section 4: Impact Process
Prepare individual answers for next meeting	Section 3: Impact Tool and Section 5: Expanded Toolkit	Section 3: Relationship Style, Niche and Philanthropic Style	Section 4: Impact Process	

Tips for the process:

- Know in advance that teasing out ideas is a process, one that takes patience. It helps to refer to your shared values and principles (see the [Philanthropic Purpose Primer](#)) and the decision-making rules you have in place (see the [Governance Primer](#)).
- Remember that family philanthropy is most successful when it focuses its resources and strategies on areas with the most consensus. If there are divergent or competing answers to questions, leave those out of your shared guidelines or move them to individual giving or separate budgets (see the *Different Budgets for Different Purposes* section on [page 23](#)).
- The learning agendas might include online research and leveraging the resources listed in the Trends portion of the Fundamentals section of this primer. The tools may require the advice of legal counsel or a philanthropic advisor.

V. Looking Ahead

This primer provides tips and strategies for taking an intentional approach to your family's philanthropic strategy—one that is rooted in your motivations, values, and mission. The ideas in the primer will help you create an experience that is meaningful and satisfying for you, your family, and your partners in the community.

Keep in mind, your philanthropic strategy and toolkit will evolve over time, and decisions you put into place today are not forever. Experiment, learn, build respectful relationships with the organizations you support, and most of all, have fun!

What's Next?

You've seen throughout the primer how your decisions in other primers in the series influence your philanthropic style, strategy, and toolkit. Your interest in some tools may cause you to revisit the resources and social impact vehicles you want to use. And your philanthropic strategy and goals of being a better partner may inspire you to change your near-term or long-term outlook on governance issues. Lastly, the choices you make in this primer will directly affect your choices in the [Assessment and Learning Primer](#) and [Operations and Management Primer](#).



Resources

Need help?

See the resources below and feel free to contact NCFP to talk through your ideas, meet other donor families, or get in touch with a philanthropy advisor who can guide you and your family membersthrough this important process.

Essential Resources

- [Building a Social Impact Strategy and Approach webinar recording](#)
- [Due Diligence: Vetting and Evaluating Organizations, Stanford PACS](#)
- [Fast Forward to Greater Impact: The Power of Field Scans](#)
- [Expanding Your Comfort Zone: A Window Into Risk in Family Philanthropy](#)
- [How Aggravating is Your Grantmaking Process? Use this Checklist to Find Out by Vu Le](#)
- [Grantmaking and Communications Policies and Practices, NCFP's Splendid Legacy Online](#)

Further Exploration: National Center for Family Philanthropy Content Collections

- [Participatory Grantmaking](#)
- [Policy Central: Grantmaking & Strategy](#)
- [Capacity Building and General Operating Support](#)
- [Funding Resiliency: Building Capacity for Sustained Success](#)

Appendix A: Comparing Tools

Philanthropists and their social impact vehicles use a wide-ranging toolkit of activities and programs to make progress on their philanthropic strategy. The charts in this appendix list commonly used tools, tips for why and how they're used, and essential resources to explore.



Tools for Impact

Use these tools to help improve populations, places, issues, and institutions.

Note see the [Extending the Fundamentals](#) section for information on grants to nonprofits.

AWARDS TO INDIVIDUALS AND BUSINESSES

IMPACT INVESTMENTS

PRACTICES

It can be emotionally rewarding to directly support individuals or businesses in need or those with a track record of outstanding accomplishments. Choices include:

- **Scholarship and fellowship programs:** Scholarship programs benefit students applying for K-12 private education, trade school, post-secondary credentials and certificates, college and graduate degrees, study abroad, post-grad fellowships, or adult learning. Effective practices include making the scholarship renewable until degree completion, ensuring awards don't displace other financial aid, and augmenting the scholarship program with gifts to related college preparatory and retention programs.
- **Prizes and awards:** Prize philanthropy programs award money, and sometimes other resources like office space and consulting, to individuals, teams, or businesses. Donors use prizes and awards for various purposes, including rewarding excellence, identifying new talent and innovations, building prototypes and launching pilots, creating problem-solving communities, raising awareness about an issue, and stimulating new markets.
- **Emergency and hardship assistance:** These grants help individuals, businesses, and employees that have experienced a disaster, violent crime, job loss, or medical distress.

The [Global Impact Investing Network](#) defines impact investing as “investments made into companies, organizations, and funds with the intention to generate measurable social and environmental impact alongside a financial return.” You can use impact investments across ranges of goals:

- **Motivations:** including aligning your money with your values, leveraging the expertise of the private sector, changing practices within companies, and increasing the amount of money you have for social impact.
- **Priorities:** the issues, populations, and geographies you support.
- **Assets used:** both the types of accounts (banking, retirement, personal investment portfolios, balance sheets and portfolios of a social impact vehicle) and the *asset classes* within those accounts.
- **Investees:** including nonprofits, start-ups, B Corps, funds, and private and public companies.
- **Financial returns:** the repayment of some money, repayment of all the money (e.g., a 0% loan), or returns *on* the money (e.g., interest paid on a loan or bond, or dividends and capital gains paid by companies).
- **Measurable impact:** from generally avoiding harm to using targeted metrics set by the investee to using in-depth reporting by third-party analysts.

TIPS	<p>The process can be more labor-intensive. IRS regulations for your social impact vehicle and tax consequences for the recipient differ depending on the type of social impact vehicle and type of program.</p> <p>If you are using a charitable vehicle or seeking a tax deduction, you cannot establish a program to help a pre-selected person or earmark donations for one or more people.</p>	<p>Families who use investment advisors, family offices, and family businesses to manage their philanthropy have the most flexibility in impact investing options.</p> <p>Private foundations can access the full range of options but must follow IRS rules for how impact investments count toward their required minimum distribution and family, board, and staff relationships with investees.</p> <p>Families using donor-advised funds and charitable trusts are limited by the organizations' capabilities, policies, and interests managing those tools.</p>
START HERE	<p>Scholarships: Scholarship Program Toolkit and other resources from the National Scholarship Provider Association</p> <p>Prizes: Prize Philanthropy by Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors</p> <p>Emergency Assistance: IRS publication 3833 and the Center for Disaster Philanthropy.</p>	<p>Easy introduction: A Short Guide to Impact Investing by the Case Foundation</p> <p>Detailed help: Impact Investing Handbook by Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors</p> <p>Examples: Impact Investing Content Collection by NCFP</p>



Tools for Influence

Use these tools to improve systems: people's perspectives and will, nonprofit practices, government policies and practices, and collaboration and alignment among organizations.

	CONVENING	CAPACITY BUILDING
PRACTICES	<p>Customary goals for convening include building trust, developing shared knowledge, influencing attitudes, creating new approaches, forecasting opportunities and challenges, and laying the groundwork for better collaboration.</p>	<p>Capacity building is helping others acquire the knowledge, abilities, systems, and other resources necessary to make better decisions and be more effective. At the individual level, it commonly takes the form of training programs, coaching, and leadership development.</p> <p>For organizations, it means improving policies, practices, and capabilities around governance, finance, evaluation, human resources, advocacy, and product or service quality. For groups of organizations, it means improving the effectiveness of their collaboration and their ability to understand and change systems and root causes.</p>
TIPS	<p>To be an effective convener, you'll want to: a) ensure everyone is on the same page on which goal(s) are being pursued, b) decide if participants will be more honest and productive if you attend or not, c) be sensitive to context and timing (e.g., progress could halt if participants are dealing with a busy season), and d) be prepared for the participants to expect you to provide resources for solutions.</p>	<p>Some companies, LLCs, and foundations use employees to design and lead capacity-building services, sometimes as pro bono services. Managing the program can be an effective way to involve employees or family members with specialized skills.</p> <p>However, they often learn that customers of those services aren't candid about their shortcomings and challenges because they fear being penalized in grant applications or investment rounds. So, they either give money to the customers to make their own choices of consultants or trainers (sometimes through pre-qualified lists) or pay consultants and trainers directly.</p>

START HERE	<p>Gather: The Art and Science of Effective Convening by the Rockefeller Foundation</p> <p>Great Power, Great Responsibility: Grantmakers' Role as Conveners by Grantmakers for Effective Organizations</p>	<p>Strengthening Nonprofit Capacity by Grantmakers for Effective Organizations</p> <p>Beyond Investment: The Power of Capacity-Building Support by the Global Impact Investing Network.</p> <p>Examples: Capacity Building Content Collection by NCFP</p>
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		STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS	ADVOCACY & PUBLIC POLICY
PRACTICES		<p>Strategic communications is more than annual reports and public relations about your goals and grants. It is about thoughtfully using communications tools to advance your philanthropic priorities.</p> <p>Simple activities include: proactively sharing information about needs and opportunities with your network, helping nonprofits tell more compelling stories, writing letters to the editor, or creating shareable videos about how people can make a difference.</p> <p>More in-depth activities include: influencing how the media portrays issues and solutions, commissioning public opinion polls, leading print or digital communications campaigns that seek to change individual behaviors, and producing documentaries and investigative reports.</p>	<p>Philanthropists influence public policies as both a <i>defense</i> strategy—helping protect the nonprofits and causes important to them—and an <i>offense</i> strategy—shifting government policies and practices toward a set of values and philanthropic priorities. In brief, there are three options:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General advocacy: Creating research for or educating the general public or government officials about an issue; organizing people and engaging media around the issue; and meeting with public agencies about the impact of existing laws and regulations. The communications must be nonpartisan and cannot include calls to action on specific legislation, candidates, or campaigns. • Direct lobbying: Communications with elected officials or their staff members that express a view about specific legislation. • Grassroots lobbying: Communications with any segment of the general public that express views on legislation and include a call to action (e.g. “call your Congressperson at this number...”).
	TIPS	<p>The Communications Network notes organizational culture is a critical component of successful communications strategies. Your influence will go farther if your culture favors transparency, inclusiveness, self-awareness of power dynamics, and respect for divergent opinions.</p>	<p>As an individual, business, or LLC, you have great freedom in advocating for changes in public policies. You build relationships with elected officials and agency staff or, as an individual, go a step further and register as a lobbyist.</p> <p>If you’re using a charitable vehicle, you’ll need to pay close attention to IRS rules that differ for public charities (including those managing donor-advised funds) and private foundations. Public charities may lobby, but private foundations cannot except in instances of self-defense.</p>
START HERE		<p>Communications Matters and other resources by the Communications Network</p> <p>SmartChart planning tool by Spitfire Strategies</p> <p>Philanthropist’s Field Guide to Social Impact Entertainment and Impact Campaign by the Milken Institute</p>	<p>Advocacy Strategy Framework by the Center for Evaluation Innovation</p> <p>Philanthropy Advocacy Playbook and other resources by Bolder Advocacy</p> <p>Examples: Advocacy and Lobbying Content Collection by NCFP and Agenda Setting by Philanthropy Roundtable</p>



Tools for Leverage

Use these tools to change the commitments of other individuals' and organizations' resources—money, people, facilities, and more—and align those resources toward a common goal and standard measures of success.

	EXPANDING THE BASE	COLLABORATION
PRACTICES	<p>The simple goal is “more resources from more sources” for a philanthropic priority. Donors expand and diversify resources through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Actively soliciting others to contribute to a cause, purchase tickets or products, or make investments Recruiting people and businesses willing to volunteer and advocate for a cause Creating or funding ways to make it easier and more attractive for individuals to get involved and lead problem-solving Awarding matching grants or supporting organizations’ fundraising and grantwriting capacity. 	<p>Philanthropists collaborate with other individuals and organizations to leverage and share resources. Types of collaboration include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coalitions whose members commit to an agreed-on purpose and shared decision making toward a goal Public-private partnerships in which government, business, and philanthropic organizations create agreements to deliver services or benefits Co-funding initiatives in which members align grants or other resources toward common goals Collective impact initiatives which are long-term, intensive means of solving complex problems Strategic alliances and joint ventures that consolidate administrative, program, advocacy, or other functions.
TIPS	<p>Some donors are energized by actively reaching out to and involving their peers in a cause.</p> <p>Other donors prefer to work alongside a grantee or investee to chart its existing resources and the resources it needs next. They then decide how they can best help.</p>	<p>Grantmakers for Effective Organizations suggests four principles for effective donor collaboration: 1) focus on mission, not organization; 2) exercise trust, not control; 3) lead with humility, not brand; and 4) think like a node, not a hub. In addition, several philanthropic organizations created a list of seven ethical principles for collaboration.</p>
START HERE	<p>Beyond Fundraising from the Evelyn & Walter Haas, Jr. Fund</p> <p>Funders Guide to Investing in Volunteer Engagement from The Leighty Foundation</p> <p>Examples: Leveraging Small Grants for Big Impact Content Collection from NCFP</p>	<p>Donor Collaboration: Power in Numbers from The Philanthropic Initiative</p> <p>Funder Collaboratives: Why and How Funders Work Together from GrantCraft</p> <p>List of donor peer networks from Stanford PACS</p>

	RESPONSIBLE PURCHASING	CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY
PRACTICES	<p>Responsible purchasing is also known as ethical or socially responsible buying. It leverages your operating budget toward your values and social and environmental impact.</p> <p>You might have personally taken part in “Buy Black” or “Buy Local” campaigns or ensured products you buy minimize harm to the environment or human rights.</p> <p>Businesses, foundations, and other organizations can create <i>responsible procurement policies</i> that positively impact environmental, diversity and inclusion, ethics, human rights, and other issues.</p> <p>Companies develop responsible or <i>sustainable supply chains</i> which integrate environmental, social, or governance factors into decisions about design, materials used, manufacturing, packaging, distribution, and more.</p>	<p>Businesses, nonprofits, and public agencies of all sizes can practice forms of corporate social responsibility (CSR). CSR strategies purposefully leverage all the company’s tools and resources toward a positive environmental and social impact.</p> <p>CSR programs often have four elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reducing environmental harms • Fair, ethical, and equitable treatment of employees and contractors • Support of the local economies in which the business or organization operates • Philanthropic programs. <p>Effective CSR programs assign progress measures to each of those elements and report on progress internally and externally.</p>
TIPS	<p>NCFP’s Operations and Management Primer has examples of families using their offices, hiring practices, and purchasing policies to meet goals ranging from environmental sustainability to racial equity.</p>	<p>Effectiveness increases when a business involves employees, customers, and key business partners in the planning and implementation of the CSR strategy. That involvement increases employee and customer loyalty and public trust.</p>
START HERE	<p>Best Practice Guides from B Labs (applicable to any organization)</p> <p>Responsible Purchasing Network</p> <p>For family companies: Getting Started from the Sustainable Purchasing Leadership Council</p>	<p>Simplifying Strategy and Advancing Strategy from FSG and Chief Executives for Corporate Purpose®</p> <p>Social Impact in Hundred-Year Family Businesses from Wise Counsel Research</p>



Tools for Learning

Use these tools to improve the availability and use of shared data, information, and knowledge in your organization, in your partners, and in communities.

	DATA AND RESEARCH	REPORTING AND MEDIA
PRACTICES	<p>One of philanthropy’s historic roles is producing, funding, and disseminating new data and research. In addition to awarding grants and fellowships for research, you can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage research programs through a private operating foundation or LLC • Become a thought leader, combining influence and learning activities to share research with nonprofits, funders, donors, and government agencies • Support a free “community data platform” to help nonprofits, government agencies, and the public work from the same information and measure progress in the same way • Share data (subject to safeguards) or insights produced by your company with nonprofits or researchers. 	<p>The landscape of how people seek out information and which news sources they trust is changing rapidly. In addition to grantmaking to fill gaps created by those changes, you can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proactively share and discuss story ideas with media outlets, especially the insights from grantees and the people they serve • Start a blog, podcast, or video series to share what you and others are learning about a philanthropic priority • Support solutions journalism and investigative reporting • Make impact investments in for-profit news outlets or create a consortium of donors and investors to convert a for-profit newspaper or radio station to a nonprofit.
TIPS	<p>Gaps in skills, lack of time, language and technology barriers, learning disabilities, and more prevent people from making good use of data and research. Effective donors fund the availability of experts who can help others pick, understand, and use the data for social good. These experts often are housed at libraries and community centers.</p>	<p>News sources, journalists, and their audiences are cautious about donors’ intentions, biases, and influences.</p> <p>Effective donors respect the integrity and independence of their partners. They also work to ensure that the reporters and voices featured fully represent the populations served by the media.</p>
START HERE	<p>Funding Basic Science by the Science Philanthropy Alliance</p> <p>Assessing Community Information Needs from the Knight Foundation</p> <p>Why Am I Always Being Researched guide book for more equitable research techniques from Chicago Beyond</p>	<p>Funding Guides for media from Media Impact Funders</p> <p>Guiding Principles for Funders of Nonprofit Media from the American Press Institute</p> <p>How Philanthropy Can Sustain Local News from Giving Compass</p>

	LEARNING NETWORKS AND COMMUNITIES	EVALUATION CAPACITY BUILDING
PRACTICES	<p>Learning networks, also known as communities of practice, are an advanced form of convening. They are groups of practitioners who meet over months or years. They seek to deepen their understanding of a given topic and apply the new knowledge to their individual and collaborative work.</p> <p>Philanthropists support these groups to catalyze more informed action by donors, nonprofits, experts, and communities. Philanthropists can serve as a funder, convener, facilitator, capacity builder, or participant in these networks.</p>	<p>This specialized form of capacity building helps organizations or people in two ways. It first increases their skills and practices needed to evaluate their work. It then strengthens their ability to integrate the results of evaluation into their decision making.</p> <p>Typical activities include coaching and training, using consultants, implementing new processes and practices, and implementing new technologies. Philanthropists often simultaneously support a learning network and the capacity building of the organizations in the network.</p>
TIPS	<p>Critical success factors for these groups include 1) organizational cultures that support transparency and learning, 2) participants with diverse perspectives and experiences on the topics, 3) participants who can take big-picture views on the topics, 4) group agreements about shared beliefs and behaviors; and 5) staff and technology capacity to document and share knowledge and best practices.</p>	<p>This activity can lead to leverage and influence results. For example, organizations with better evaluation capabilities can show better evidence of effectiveness, which in turns attracts new donors and partners. And they can use evidence of effective practices to influence public policy ranging from how schools operate to the types of arts funding available from a state agency.</p>
START HERE	<p>Facilitating Intentional Group Learning from FSG</p> <p>Learning Together: Actionable Approaches for Grantmakers from Grantmakers for Effective Organizations</p> <p>Community of Practice from the National Council of Nonprofits</p>	<p>Building Evaluation Capacity within a Nonprofit – How Funders Can Help (and Not Cause Trouble) from Venture Philanthropy Partners</p> <p>Readiness for Evaluation and Learning: Assessing Grantmaker and Grantee Capacity from the Innovation Network</p>

Worksheet 1: *Philanthropic Strategy*

Use this worksheet to develop your philanthropic strategy—your roadmap for being more intentional with your resources and impact. Most donors will use it to outline a grantmaking program, but the ideas can be adapted for scholarship or prize programs or for finding impact investments. Take time to reflect on these questions about your philanthropic strategy, using these tips:

- It is OK to skip questions that don't feel applicable or to mark them for future research and discussion.
- Create a different worksheet for each Social Impact Goal or philanthropic priority.
- You may need to refer to NCFP's [Philanthropic Purpose Primer](#) for the values and priorities you've established, [Governance Primer](#) for the decision-makers you want to involve, and [Impact Vehicles and Structures Primer](#) for the resources and vehicles you plan to use.
- Consider the worksheet an internal document that you can share with other decision-makers and advisors in your philanthropy.

1. Social Impact Goal

To what vision of progress or success do we hope to contribute?

(e.g., the improvement or preservation of a priority population, place, issue, or ideal)

How does this goal connect with our values and principles or documentation of donor intent

2. Context

What are the most important trends and data to monitor in this goal?

What stories and experiences influenced our choice of this goal?

Who are the most important partners to help us improve our understanding?
(e.g., certain groups with first-hand experience, experts, grantees, funders, or civic leaders)

What approaches to progress in our goal seem most important to support?

2. Role

Impact Tools: What impact tool(s) will we use to achieve our goal?

- **Vehicle** = name of a donor-advised fund, family office, 501(c)(4), or other vehicle. It could also be your personal checkbook or time. The same vehicle might house multiple tools.
- **Impact Tool** = grant program for nonprofits, award program for individuals or businesses, or impact investment program
- **Uses of Treasure** = a budget range in dollars and/or a percentage of a budget as best as you can determine.

Vehicle	Tool	Uses of Treasure	Other Notes

Relationship Style: Along each continuum below, place a dot or asterisk that best represents your view of your ideal relationships?

Our values, legacy, and/or donor intent call us to:

←—————→

Remain anonymous or very private about our strategy Tell only close partners our strategy Be public about our strategy and impact

No preference

With organizations or individuals requesting support, we should have:

←—————→

Hands-off relationships; just the basics needed to get them the money Close relationships; we want to get to know them well and stay in touch

No preference

With other donors, funders, and resource providers, we should:

←—————→

Stay independent Listen and learn but not collaborate on funding or projects Be highly collaborative, willing to pool resources or co-fund opportunities

No preference

Other Notes: For how we'll describe our ideal style of relationships or how our values and principles will show up in our relationships.

Philanthropic Niche and Style: What do our partners need most from us to achieve the social impact goal? How will we prioritize our limited resources as we look at opportunities or requests for support?

Our ideal niche in the mix of partners (check all that apply):

- Sustain good work
- Improve quality
- Fill gaps
- Import and expand best practices
- Innovate
- Other _____

Along each continuum below, place a dot or asterisk that best represents how you will prioritize the opportunities for funding you'll review. Check "no preference" if you don't have one yet.

Timeframe:

←-----→

Make a bigger impact now Spread impact over time Make a bigger impact in the future

No preference

Scale of impact:

←-----→

Make a significant difference in the lives of a few people Help a large number of people, but less impact per person

No preference

Stage of funding:

←-----→

We're first money in to help leverage other donors We're part of a group of donors We're backing a proven partner, closing the final gap

No preference

Type of funding:

←-----→

General support; trust the partner to do what is right with the money Restricted funding; trust my ability to define the right uses of money

No preference

Risk:

←-----→

Low-risk funding; safe choices and assurance all money will be used as planned Smart-risk funding; take chances on promising ideas and people even if things might go awry

No preference

Amount of funding:

←-----→

Small amount; ensure recipient uses a diverse set of revenues even if it slows or diminishes success Large or 100% of the budget; ensure quick and successful implementation

No preference

Length of funding:

←-----→

One year or less commitment; give ourselves flexibility Multi-year commitment; give the partner flexibility

No preference

4. Impact Process

Use this section for the impact tool(s) you described in Section 2 above. The tips in the Extending the Fundamentals section can provide clues. Also See [Worksheet 2](#) if you wish to draft shareable guidelines for your impact program and [Worksheet 3](#) to create assessment criteria for organizations seeking support.

Pipeline Building:

The people who help find ideas or partners that potentially fit our social impact goal:
(e.g., board members, trusted advisors or friends, community advisors, staff)

The methods we'll use to find qualified ideas or applicants:
(e.g., asking other funders for suggestions, open application process, invitation-only process, a blend of methods)

The materials we'll use:
(e.g., no applications, accepting materials sent to other funders, the Charting Impact questions, or a more customized application)

The frequency of accepting and reviewing materials (if any):
(e.g., ongoing, quarterly, annually)

Screening:

The people who will evaluate the ideas or applications for fit with our philanthropic niche and style:
(e.g., board members, trusted advisors or friends, community advisors, staff)

The methods they'll use for evaluation:

(e.g., phone calls or video meetings, in-person visit to a facility or program, scoring checklist based on philanthropic style or application questions, or a financial health analysis)

Decision Making:

The people who will make the final funding decisions:

(e.g., board members, trusted advisors or friends, community advisors, staff)

The criteria they'll use to make the final funding decisions:

Note: if different from the philanthropic style decisions

The decision-making method they'll use:

(e.g. consensus or majority vote; open discussion or numerical scoring)

Implementation:

Who will communicate our decisions and how?

(e.g., phone call or email first, just send a letter with a check; will we communicate why we've declined a request and how)

The monitoring process we'll use:

(e.g. ongoing conversations with the grantee, reading their social media or e-newsletter, being involved personally, asking for a short report)

5. Our Expanded Toolkit

How will we augment our impact tool(s) with influence, leverage, or learning tools? How else can we use our resources to benefit our partners and achieve our vision for success? (Do your best to estimate the uses of your resources and refine the numbers as you learn more.)

Impact Tools:

(e.g. convening, capacity building, strategic communications, and advocacy and public policy)

Vehicle	Tool	Estimate Uses of Treasure	Use Now, Soon, or Later?

Notes on how we'll use our time, talent, ties, and testimony:

Leverage Tools:

(e.g. expanding the base, facilitating collaboration, responsible purchasing, and corporate social responsibility)

Vehicle	Tool	Estimate Uses of Treasure	Use Now, Soon, or Later?

Notes on how we'll use our time, talent, ties, and testimony:

Learning Tools:

(e.g. new research and data, reporting and media coverage, learning networks, and evaluation capacity building)

Vehicle	Tool	Estimate Uses of Treasure	Use Now, Soon, or Later?

Notes on how we'll use our time, talent, ties, and testimony:

Worksheet 2: Program Guidelines

Use this worksheet to draft a set of grant program guidelines that you're willing to share with organizations interested in your support and the people helping build your pipeline. Your answers to Worksheet 1 will inform your answers in this worksheet. You can adapt it for a program that makes awards to individuals or impact investing criteria.

The boxes represent the information funders most often share and organizations most often want to know. However, only complete the information you're willing to share. You could also add a note that this is a draft subject to revision as you learn more about the issues and/or that you reserve the right to make awards that don't fit the criteria listed.

Vision statement	
Mission statement	
Values, principles, and/or donor intent language	
Social impact goals or funding priorities (populations, places, issues, ideals)	
Preferred approach(es) or funding niche	
Preferred attributes of applicants	
Other important criteria or screening factors	
Typical grant size and duration ranges	
How and when to request support (methods, materials, timeframes)	
Who will be making a decision and when to expect a response	
What we won't support	
Contact for more information	

Worksheet 3: Applicant Review

You and other decision-makers will need a set of criteria to discuss as you meet with an organization and/or review materials it has sent you. Based on the five Charting Impact questions on [page 15](#), the list below provides a few common questions to ask yourself. Use the list to create your checklist or rating system. Feel free to delete any that aren't important to you. And, add others that help you assess fit with your philanthropic niche and style.

Goals

- Are the organization's overall mission and goals clear?
- How clearly does it describe progress and success?
- Does the applicant seem to understand the context in which it is working, its role with a complex issue?

Strategies

- Is its approach to the issue sound? Is it appropriate given the scale or complexity of the issue?
- Does the nonprofit's plan of action make sense and logically support a path to progress and success?
- Does it base strategies and activities on customer/client feedback? On the needs of the communities or populations it serves?

Capabilities

- Does the organization have the board and volunteer talent needed to achieve its goals?
- Does it have the staff capacity and qualifications needed to achieve its goals?
- Is the organization financially stable (has net income, has reserves?)
- Does it have the backing and trust of the community or population it serves?
- Does the nonprofit collaborate well with other groups?

Evaluation and Improvement

- Does it have the capabilities and systems to measure quality and customer/client feedback?
- Does the nonprofit have the capabilities and systems to assess progress and success?
- Does it have plans to address internal gaps or challenges in its strategies or capabilities?

Accomplishments

- What track record does the organization have in the issue and with the strategy?
- What track record does it have in attracting resources needed to succeed?
- Does the applicant know how to identify risks and appropriately manage them?



Tip: Remember that no organization is perfect or has all the capabilities and resources it desires. Stay genuinely curious about the successes they've had, the challenges they face, and the ever-evolving context in which they and you work. Effective donors keep listening for how their resources can most help organizations maintain or accelerate progress.

Credits

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 Authors

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Tony Macklin, a Chartered Advisor in Philanthropy®, consults with donor families, grantmakers, and their advisors about purpose, use of resources, action planning, and learning. As executive director of the Roy A. Hunt Foundation, he facilitated changes in visioning, impact investing, grantmaking, trustee education, and back-office management. In twelve years at the Central Indiana Community Foundation, he led grantmaking initiatives, advised wealthy donors, attracted \$39 million, and launched a social enterprise. Tony also serves as senior program consultant for NCFP, senior consultant with Ekstrom Alley Clontz & Associates, senior advisor to the Impact Finance Center, and peer reviewer for *The Foundation Review*.

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