



Independent Trustee

Location - Flexible

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Nathan Cummings Foundation (NCF) is pleased to invite nominations and applications for **Independent Trustees** of the Board of Trustees. NCF is in the midst of a transformative and exciting time. Building upon its work to [clarify its vision and values](#), the foundation just announced a new [strategic plan](#) centered around its pursuit of racial, economic, and environmental justice (REEJ).

The new Independent Trustees will join the board of 13, including 9 current family members and 4 additional independent trustees in realizing the foundation's full potential and power of its leadership, grantmaking, and endowment to advance its mission and REEJ goal. With the recent appointment of [Rey Ramsey](#) as President and CEO, an approved five-year strategic plan, and new board-level commitments to strengthen governance and practices that uphold its values, NCF is decisively answering the call for philanthropy to examine how its structures, systems, and practices support or hinder racial equity and justice. NCF is committed to leveraging all of its assets toward impact, including sector leading practices in mission-aligned investing, shareholder activism, and its decision to partner with BIPOC-owned and led investment partner for the management of its half-billion-dollar endowment. Incoming Trustees have the opportunity to advance effective governance, strategy, capacity building, and other Foundation priorities.

Ideal candidates for the Independent Trustees will first and foremost share NCF's commitment to equity and justice and will complement and broaden the skills, experiences, and expertise currently reflected on the Board. As part of the foundation's new strategy, it will invest in designated places in the U.S. South and refine its giving in Israel–Palestine in alignment with racial, economic, and environmental justice. Ideal candidates will bring an understanding of the role a board plays in supporting the activation and evolution of strategy in a philanthropic context, as well as professional and lived experiences to that work. History in the Deep South and/or professional experience in international contexts relevant to racial, economic, and environmental justice in the Israel–Palestine context is particularly welcome. The new Trustees will commit the time and attention needed to fully participate in the work of the Board.

Success in this role will require individuals who are:

- Exceptional relationship builders who nurture positive rapport, trust, and transparency across a diverse Board and staff.
- Curious learners with an appreciation for the Jewish heritage of the foundation and its evolution into a multi-racial, multi-ethnic organization committed to social movements.
- Hold an understanding for how racial, economic, and environmental justice show up not only in our U.S. national context, but also in a global context.
- Bold thinkers, effective communicators, and committed bridge-builders who can articulate and amplify the Foundation's values, and who can elevate interconnection across generations of lived experience.

- Experienced leaders who bring insights, humility, and strength to the work of change management, governance, and organizational leadership.
- Committed partners, with the time and capacity to engage deeply during this dynamic time for the Foundation.

THE NATHAN CUMMINGS FOUNDATION STORY

The Nathan Cummings Foundation (NCF or ‘the Foundation’), is a social justice foundation working toward a future where all people, in body and spirit, breathe freely, care for each other and flourish in just, regenerative, and loving communities.

As a family-led foundation, NCF is rooted in Jewish history and inspired by the traditions of *tzedek (justice) and tikkun olam (repair of the world)*, which call on us to dedicate ourselves to the pursuit of justice not just in Jewish communities but in the wider world. Acknowledging the foundation’s evolution into a multi-racial, multi-ethnic organization committed to social movements, it clarified institutional values of *justice and equity, courageous transformation, learning and listening, interdependence, and integrity*.

The Foundation owes its existence and inspiration to Nathan Cummings who rose from impoverished beginnings to become the founder and guiding force of the Sara Lee Corporation. He inherited a spirit of sharing and a sense of community from his immigrant parents, and transmitted these values to his children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren who now contribute their time and energy to the Foundation.

NCF is located in New York City and holds assets of approximately \$450M, with an annual budget of about \$25M, and a current staff of 18. The active and deeply committed Board is comprised of third and fourth generation members of the Cummings family as well as four independent Trustees including the President & CEO. Board members bring a deep commitment to social justice and diversity.

IMPACT FOCUS OF THE NATHAN CUMMINGS FOUNDATION

NCF is focused on supporting solutions to the two most challenging issues of our time – the climate crisis and growing inequality. It believes these dual crises cannot be addressed without first addressing their root causes, so we invest in systemic solutions that advance racial, economic, and environmental justice (REEJ). NCF prioritizes partnerships with organizations that are led by and serve those most impacted by and most capable of dismantling systems of oppression – particularly communities of color. The Foundation is committed to leveraging 100 percent of the foundation’s assets – from its relationships to its grants to its investments – in pursuit of people-centric impact.

NCF is modifying its grantmaking focus areas to bring them into alignment with its recent strategic decision to focus solely on REEJ. Specifically, it will be reducing the number of grantmaking focus areas and moving toward a more integrated grantmaking portfolio that supports REEJ-aligned work. It will also modify grantmaking strategies in line with its belief that advancing REEJ requires organized people and allied institutions, disruptive ideas and innovative approaches centering equity and justice, equitable capital investments, repaired relationships, and restored humanity to all people.

In addition to grantmaking, NCF has doubled down on its commitment to align 100 percent of the Foundation’s half a billion endowment with its mission – an endowment that is managed by the Black owned and BIPOC led investment firm Bivium-Westfuller. Additionally, its ramping up its [Shareholder Activities](#), seeking to use its role as an institutional investor to push companies to address REEJ-related issues.

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

THE OPPORTUNITY: INDEPENDENT TRUSTEES AT NCF

Growing global climate and public health crises as well as deepening social divides over the last several years have presented significant challenges to organizations in the social sector. NCF has joined a growing movement of philanthropies explicitly examining values, craft, practices, and governance in support of more impactful grantmaking to carry out next stage planning and bring clarity and focus to NCF's next level operations, program strategy, and governance. The board's successes include recent commitments to NCF's new strategic plan, ongoing staff-board collaborations and trainings toward more effective governance and operations, and the launch of a search for two new Independent Trustees. In this period of evolution, the incoming Independent Trustees will have an opportunity to participate in and contribute significantly to the continued development of NCF's work and strategy both internally and externally. As full voting participants and strategic partners on the Board, Independent Trustees have always and continue to play an important role as peers alongside multiple generations of family members to joyfully engage in philanthropic work together in the spirit of Nathan Cummings' legacy.

NCF is deeply committed to inclusive leadership across the Board and staff. In fact, the Board, leadership team, and staff interact often and collaborate to advance the Foundation's goals.

Specific Information on Independent Trusteeship:

- Being an active, engaged Trustee of NCF requires the commitment of time relative to the season of work for the board and is occasionally in person. Membership requires a total commitment the equivalent of approximately up to 10 days annually (yet only occasionally in full-day commitments). Board activities include three board meetings per year plus relevant meetings for committee service, Foundation funded travel, and other staff-board activities as appropriate. Many meetings can be attended via Zoom, although in person time and travel, as it is safe to do so, has resumed this year.
- Independent Trustees are full voting members of the board and are expected to attend and participate in all NCF Board meetings and Board Retreats.
- The NCF Board meets three times annually (one meeting alternates yearly as a retreat). Meetings involve two-day blocks of time (on both weekends and weekdays) and advance preparation.
- Trustees serve on Board and Foundation Committees, as appointed. Independent Trustees chair the Governance and Nominating Committees and may chair other committees during their term. Committees meet regularly by video.
- Trustees are supported to participate in conferences, forums, conference calls, and other activities that deepen their knowledge of the Foundation's work and opportunities, and where they may engage as foundation trustees in other contexts of service to the foundation's goals.
- The majority of travel is domestic but has historically included international travel.
- Foundation-related expenses are reimbursed to Trustees.

CORE COMPETENCIES OF THE NEW INDEPENDENT TRUSTEE

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

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

Passion for the Mission and Values of the Nathan Cummings Foundation

The new Independent Trustees will be fierce believers in social justice and will be energized by the mission and values of NCF. They will approach the work with strong values of open-mindedness and service with a commitment to integrity. As bold thinkers, they will embrace ideas that challenge the status quo and draw on creative problem solving, engaging other board members and staff in a constructive, collaborative fashion. They will find inspiration in NCF's dedication to learning and will actively seek opportunities to increase their knowledge. Committed to serving NCF, they will be active contributors and engage fully in Board meetings, Board Retreats, and conferences. Effective Trustees will also engage enthusiastically with the organization's multi-generational culture of collaboration, values-driven decision-making, transparency, creativity and entrepreneurship, and respect for a wide range of voices and perspectives.

Relevant Expertise and Experience

As active contributors, the new Independent Trustees will bring diversity of creative acumen, experience, and humanity to conversations. They will demonstrate a deep appreciation of, and respect for, the privilege of serving as a steward of resources for the greater good. Governance and change management experience and demonstrated problem-solving abilities will be highly prioritized. The new Independent Trustees will ideally bring experience as leaders and experts in one or more of the Foundation's focus areas, with the ability to engage networks on behalf of the Foundation.

Emotional Intelligence and Cultural Competency

The new Independent Trustees will embody humility, practical wisdom, objectivity and partiality, and good judgment in difficult decisions. As effective listeners, they will bring high intellect, a good sense of humor, and a wide-ranging curiosity to their work as a Trustee. Embracing NCF's multigenerational philanthropic family organizational culture and philosophy as a learning organization, they will demonstrate sensitivity to the dynamics of a multigenerational family philanthropy and have the ability to partner successfully with other Trustees and staff. This includes the ability to interact with a diverse range of stakeholders effectively and authentically, give and receive critical feedback, and work well in teams. They will enjoy the prospect of bridge-building as they become increasingly engaged in the Foundation's activities.

Leading Through Influence

Collaborative in nature, the new Independent Trustees will exhibit a thoughtful approach to working across the organization through their board and committee service. They will develop strong relationships and will partner with Board members and staff and enjoy serving and working with people from diverse cultural, social, and ethnic backgrounds in furtherance of the Foundation's mission. They will respectfully push the

boundaries of NCF's work and challenge the perspective of others to encourage mindful risk-taking, innovation, and proactivity.

QUALIFICATIONS OF THE IDEAL CANDIDATE

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

- The ability to approach work with joy and with deep attention to, and consideration of, all dimensions of intersectional racial equity and how it aligns with philanthropic strategy and governance.
- A strategic contributor who balances wisdom with empathy and humility when building and maintaining relationships with new and existing staff, Trustees, and partners in the field.
- Lived experience that promotes knowledge of and sensitivity to the challenges underrepresented communities face, including appreciation for historical context, discernment of relationship nuances and power dynamics, and understanding of social, racial, and ethnic realities.
- Strong relationship building and exemplary communication skills to support the ability to have authentic dialogue around sensitive issues including strategic priorities and ecosystem partner concerns.
- Broad knowledge of best practices and emerging trends in philanthropy with appreciation for the opportunities specific to family philanthropy.
- Successful experience working effectively with persons from diverse cultural, social, and ethnic backgrounds; willingness to set aside a personal agenda in favor of organizational and/or community goals and objectives.
- Highly developed emotional intelligence and active listening skills, and the ability to use interpersonal and political skills in collaborative ways.
- Excellent analytical and communication skills including the ability to collect, review, synthesize, and present information in small and larger group settings.
- Demonstrated resourcefulness in setting priorities; strong organizational skills and exceptional change management insights.
- An optimistic outlook and the humor, integrity, kindness, and patience necessary to work within a transformative environment.
- An appreciation for fun, joy, learning, and respect that philanthropic work can inspire.

TO APPLY

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

The Nathan Cummings Foundation is assisted in this search by [Katherine Jacobs](#), [Julian Jackson](#) and [Sharon Gerstman](#) of the national talent strategy firm [NPAG](#). Due to the pace of this search, candidates are strongly encouraged to apply as soon as possible. Candidates may submit their cover letter, outlining their interest and qualifications, along with their resume via NPAG's [website](#).

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