

GIVING CIRCLE BEST PRACTICES

The Giving Circle Best Practices are for giving circle members by giving circle members. The data was collected through facilitated table discussions with giving circle members at AAPIP's National Giving Circle Convening in Los Angeles, California, in October 2015. Giving circle members shared their insights based on their diverse experiences with their giving circles. Topics ranged from growth and change in their giving circle, to best practices and challenges for their giving circle, to the impact on community or the individual member through the giving circle. The 18 different table discussions included a sample of members from AAPIP giving circles present at the convening and represent a simplification of a mix of viewpoints.

FLEXIBILITY

One of the unique aspects of AAPIP's Giving Circle Model is its flexibility. AAPIP does not require a certain number of members, length of membership, nor length of time a giving circle exists. Giving circles have autonomy to structure and manage their own giving circles, which results in very diverse circles. Maintaining this flexibility within the giving circle allows members to assess what's best for themselves.

"I don't think there's a formula; you do whatever's best for you."

KEEPING IT SIMPLE

Many members recommend keeping the giving circle simple. Since members typically have full-time jobs and the giving circle is a positive contribution to their lives through "one of many commitments," members find it important for their giving circle to be "less work and more fun." Many giving circles also like to keep their giving processes simple as well, to make funding more accessible to all organizations.

"The beauty of our giving circle is keeping it simple and having a meeting every quarter. We don't want to have too many activities; we have full time jobs, so let's keep it simple."

HAVING A CLEAR MISSION

Deciding on a mission for the giving circle can help direct funding priorities as it can provide direction for funding by helping giving circles decide more easily who to fund. The mission also unites all members with the main goal to help fund a specific cause.

"When we were starting off, we really sat down and fine-tuned our mission and what our purpose is and really narrowed it down."

HOSTING DONOR ENGAGEMENT EVENTS

Social events are a key way to engage members and also one of the most enjoyable aspects of giving circles. These events are also one of the ways in which giving circles can exercise creativity. Circles have held a variety of events such as raffles, fashion shows, sporting events, and performances. Not only do these events help giving circles reach their fundraising goals, they also provide a fun, interactive way for members to maintain engagement with their circles.

KEEPING IT PERSONAL

Some members find value in their giving circles because of the relationships within the group. Many giving circles are groups of friends who get together for dinner and/or family who want to pool their finances to fund the same cause. These giving circles find it unnecessary to expand and enjoy keeping their giving circle intimate and personal. This personal aspect of giving circles can bring cohesion for the group and more personal satisfaction for the individual member.

“The idea of knowing everyone in the group is what keeps it tight and together.”

“ I very much treasure the group I’m with because not only do we do good work but we enjoy being together. It’s not just another meeting after work; I get personal satisfaction from being in that group. It sustains me and energizes me. ”

USING SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is a versatile tool that has made a great impact on the functioning of current giving circles. Facebook specifically is one of the main sources of consistent communication for members throughout the year and a great way for them to keep contact outside of meetings. Social media has also been used to advertise giving circles, recruit members, and spread awareness; and it can also be used for fundraising purposes.

“We have 5 members and now we’re thinking of expanding the network through social media and using it to show causes and the impact of the work.”

KEEPING IN TOUCH WITH COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Staying in touch with the organizations the giving circle has funded can be beneficial. Many giving circles invite their community partners to events where members are able to learn about the impact that their funding has brought to the organization and the community. The impact can be used to re-energize and motivate current giving circle members who may feel burned out, as well as build interest for new recruits.

“The impact is seen in the stories of the groups we granted money to and how it makes a difference in the community. ”