



Accelerating
Philanthropy
through Women's
Collective Giving

ABOUT COLLECTIVE GIVING

Collective giving circles are an opportunity for women to join together to pool their financial resources collectively, decide how to distribute them in the form of grants to nonprofit organizations with the goal of strengthening their communities. All you need are members, a financial commitment and issues in your community that concern you.

Most giving circles are groups of women who are grounded in a tradition of volunteerism and sharing. These women bring a legacy of community engagement and welcome all who are interested in contributing. Giving circles can be small and informal – a neighborhood potluck, for instance – with a few people pooling their money and giving it to a chosen organization, or they can be highly organized and involve contributions of thousands of dollars and demonstrate a commitment of many years.

Time commitments vary depending on level of participation. The time commitment may range from as few as eight hours a year for meeting participation to up to 25 hours a month to organize and govern the giving group, which would include running meetings, vetting potential grantees and organizing community activities.

*"A woman is the full circle. Within her is the power to create, nurture and transform." —
Diane Mariechild*

HOW GIVING CIRCLES MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Nonprofit organizations are reeling from the day-to-day activities of doing the work they have as their mission. Another challenge is that some people want to give but don't believe they can make an impact with a small amount of money, so they remain on the sidelines.

Women from different backgrounds and professions can become change agents in their communities by pooling multiple contributions, through the giving circle, to select nonprofits. Members not only help to fund these organizations; they can also choose to offer their time and talent. In return, they build a new, social network and bolster community resources.

HOW TO SET UP A COLLECTIVE GIVING GROUP

Step 1: Determine if you want to join an existing giving circle or develop one of your own

Consult the directory of collective giving group networks (see below in resources) to see if there is an existing one in your community that fits your values and budget, or if you want to create your own.

Step 2: Determine the cause(s) and establish your mission

Since giving groups are democratically arranged, they provide donors with an equal voice in deciding where their contributions go. Think about the causes that stir your passion, and then chat with community organizers with direct experience for ideas on how the giving circle can make a positive change.

Start simply with a single charity or designate a general category, such as women-focused charities, inner city youth, seniors or organizations dealing with income disparities. Most small giving circles find worthy causes on

their own; some larger collective giving groups invite charities to apply for contributions. See the below *Questions to Ask Agencies Before Donating*, which may help you select a viable organization.

Step 3: Find members and create work groups

Select a group of your friends, co-workers, neighbors or family members who may share a common interest, explain the concept of a giving circle, and invite them to attend a first meeting to see if they'd like to participate. Set a date to host the meeting, so you can set up the circle's structure.

The group may be as informal or as organized as everyone likes; remember that everyone has an equal voice. And make sure there is time for socializing too! Giving circles are a fun way to meet new women as well as spending time with old friends.

Considerations might include:

- The kinds of nonprofits the group would like to support
- The financial and time commitments everyone is willing to make
- Meeting guidelines and schedule
- Group roles (leader, scribe, event organizer, liaison with grantees, treasurer, etc.)
- Name of the giving circle and how you want to represent it online (Facebook, website, etc.)

Step 4: Manage the money

The simplest way to manage the funds is for each member to write a personal check to the selected charity. Then you can present the set of checks together so the charity can track where the support came from. For larger organizations that you want to scale, you can organize as your own 501(c)3, organize under an existing foundation (that may charge you a management fee), or create an entity within one of the newer online organizing platforms (see resources below). This step is important for those who itemize their deductions, so that their donations are fully tax-deductible.

Step 5: Evaluate the Impact

Set milestones for your short-term and long-term goals on a regular basis. It is motivating to see exactly how your contributions can make a difference – in your community at large, and in the lives of individuals who participate. Don't be surprised when your group members fall in love with an organization that they have met through this process and want to become more involved.

Questions to Ask Agencies Before Donating, (based on questions from Charity Navigator)

1. Can the agency clearly communicate who it is and what it does?

If an agency struggles to articulate its mission and its programs, it may struggle to deliver those programs. If an agency can't explain who it is and what it does, and why it is needed, find one that can. The stakes are too high and too many good organizations exist that know exactly who they are, what they do and why they are needed.

2. Can the agency define its short-term and long-term goals?

Organizations without quantifiable goals have no way to measure success. Select an agency that knows what it is working toward. Determine if the organization is working toward its goals in a way that seems rational and productive to you.

3. Can the agency tell you the progress it has made (or is making) toward its goal?

Ask the organization what it has done to make the issue it confronts better. What are its results? Ask for real stories and real proof.

4. Do the agency's programs make sense to you?

If you support the mission of an organization, ask yourself if its programs also make sense. You believe in the

cause, and you hope for the best end result, but is the organization working toward that goal with a method that makes sense to you? Just because you support the ends doesn't mean you support the means.

5. Can you trust the agency?

Research from www.charitynavigator.org has shown that the majority of NPOs in the United States are responsible, honest and well-managed. You need to give with confidence. Use Charity Navigator, or another unbiased source, to gather data so you will be comfortable with the organization. If you have time, check with the IRS or your state attorney general's office. Ask for an annual report.

6. Are you willing to make a long-term commitment to this organization? Intelligent giving is motivated by altruism, knowledge and perspective, not a knee-jerk reaction to a television commercial. Is this agency the type of organization to which you're willing to make a long-term commitment?

Other Resources & Tools

Networks

www.philanos.org

www.amplifiorgiving.org

www.thecommunityinvestment.org

www.100whocarealliance.org

www.latinocf.org

www.jfunders.org/giving-circles

www.impact100council.org

www.aapip.org

www.philanthropytogether.org

Current Articles

[Evans Research Article on Philanos Website](#)

https://www.thenonproffitimes.com/npt_articles/women-led-giving-circles-rise/

<https://www.refinery29.com/en-us/2019/03/226479/giving-circles-philanthropy>

Other "How To" Sites

*AARP/Create the Good: <https://createthegood.aarp.org/volunteer-guides/womens-giving-circle.html>

United Philanthropy Forum: <https://www.unitedphilforum.org/resources/ten-basic-steps-starting-giving-circle>

GuideStar – www.guidestar.org offers comprehensive, up-to-date information available on more than 1.8 million nonprofits.

American Institute of Philanthropy – www.charitywatch.org AIP is a nonprofit charity watchdog and information service that provides donors with the information they need to make more informed giving decisions.

Giving Tuesday – www.givingtuesday.org

Online Platforms

www.mygrowfund.org

www.futurenow.org

www.grapevine.org – Also has information on "how to" create a giving circle.