



GIVING CIRCLES

WHAT IS A GIVING CIRCLE?

- Giving Circles are groups of people who pool their money and give it to a charity they choose together. In the process, donors connect with one another and with their communities.
- A Giving Circle can be small and informal, something like a neighborly potluck, with a few members. Alternatively, it can be highly organized, require contributions of thousands of dollars and a commitment of many years. The design of each Giving Circle is entirely up to its members. Each group decides on amounts, how often they meet, focus of their grants, etc.
- By pooling their contributions, individuals can achieve a greater impact. Also, researching organizations and figuring out where donations can make the biggest impact is easier when shared with others.
- Modeling the democratic process, Giving Circles give members equal voice in deciding where their charitable contributions go.
- According to estimates by The Collective Giving Research Group, Giving Circles in the U.S. have, in total, given \$1.29 billion from 150,000 donors over recent years.

GIVING CIRCLES IN JEFFERSON COUNTY

- There have been seven Giving Circles in Jefferson County since 2011.
- Most of them started with 10 people each making a commitment of \$1,000 per year for three years, plus an additional \$150 per person each year for JCF's Giving Circle activities.

JEFFERSON COMMUNITY FOUNDATION PROVIDES SUPPORT BY:

- Providing orientation materials and information about Giving Circles generally
- Sharing information on specific nonprofits and community issues
- Helping identify needs within interest areas
- Providing grant management tools, grantee reporting forms, etc.
- Distributing Requests for Proposal as well as receiving and organizing proposals
- Providing support in vetting nonprofit organizations (budgets, other funders, etc.)
- Sharing process models from previous Giving Circles
- Assisting with money management and grant administration

GIVING CIRCLES

FEEDBACK FROM JEFFERSON COUNTY GIVING CIRCLE MEMBERS

What Members Got Out of Their Giving Circles

- Getting to know each other
- Getting to know community needs
- Getting to know local nonprofits
- A better understanding of philanthropy
- A contribution to their own legacy
- Great new relationships
- Respect for local nonprofits
- A feeling of real investment in community
- Seeing real impact result from grants (new programs, etc.)
- Volunteer opportunities (if so inclined)
- A sense of the diverse issues the community cares about

Lessons Learned About Gathering People for Your Circle

- It can be helpful to hold an initial information session for people who are interested.
- Consider geographic diversity.
- Do you want full-time residents only or also week-enders? Giving Circles might encourage bonding of part-timers.
- It is a wonderful way to bring in people who are new to the community.
- Consider how you will include couples — one donation or two? One vote per person or a shared vote?
- Giving Circles remain flexible to changing needs of the group. If someone drops out, they can be replaced by the remaining members or not, depending on what the group decides.

Lessons Learned About Start-up

- It will take some time to settle the dynamics of the group.
- Work together to determine the goal of the group. What issue will you focus on?
- Consider sharing leadership within the group.
- Where will you meet? Having meetings in people's homes offers a personal connection while meetings at local nonprofits or community spaces (libraries, rec centers, etc.) offer more of a connection to community activities.

Lessons Learned Through the Grant Process

- Does your group want to grant for operations, programs, capital projects or a combination?
- How does the group feel about immediate impact vs. long term impact of the grants the group will make?
- The group should assess the commitment of the nonprofit's leadership to the project under consideration.
- What criteria are important to you when evaluating proposals?
- What community data is available for you to review when thinking about where the most impact can be made?
- What reporting would your Giving Circle want from the grantee?
- Tools that JCF Giving Circles have used in the grant process include requesting a Letter of Interest; sending out a Request for Proposals; and doing site visits.



Jefferson Community Foundation connects diverse people, ideas and resources to build a future of opportunity for all in Jefferson County.

WE SERVE AS HUB FOR OUR COMMUNITY TO:

- GIVE** donations informed with local knowledge & strategy,
- BUILD** strong and collaborative nonprofits, and
- SOLVE** regional issues by working together on solutions.

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