

# An Introduction to Family Philanthropy

By Coastal Community Foundation

## FAMILY GIVING

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### *Starting the Tradition*

Choosing to make charitable giving decisions as a family and sharing your giving philosophy can be a rewarding experience that helps establish your philanthropic and moral legacy. As you gather with your loved ones throughout this year to create cherished memories and take part in shared traditions, consider starting a new ritual and invite your family to take part in the joy of giving back, together.

Coastal Community Foundation wants to help you and your family think about your charitable giving and take your giving to the next level. We have put together this short discussion guide to lead you through exercises that help you think about your core values, reflect on your giving traditions, craft a giving statement, talk about philanthropy with your family, and take action together. By using these tools, you and others in your family will look at your giving in a new, more thoughtful, and hopefully, more meaningful way.

## CORE VALUES

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First, identify the values that guide your decision-making. Values are the characteristics we hold in highest esteem, what we hold of greatest personal importance and worth. They reflect our core principles and how we live our lives.

Are your core values primarily *social values*, like peace, justice, equity, or bettering our community? Are they *civic values* or *religious values*? Are work values such as always doing your best work, working in a team, making education a priority particularly meaningful to you?

*Moral values* can include being courageous or patient, taking personal responsibilities, or being honest and trustworthy. Finally, you could have *recreational values*, such as taking vacations together as a family, spending time outside, having family game nights.

Values to consider: *Acceptance, Beauty, Commitment, Compassion, Courage, Creativity, Democracy, Discipline, Dignity, Diversity, Empathy, Equality, Faith, Freedom, Free enterprise, Generosity, Harmony, Healing, Honesty, Integrity, Innovation, Justice, Joy, Knowledge, Leadership, Love, Opportunity, Patriotism, Peace, Preservation, Respect, Responsibility, Service, Simplicity, Work ethic.*

**What are your core values?**

## VALUES-BASED GIVING TRADITIONS

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Your values inform your giving and how you choose to give plays a significant role in *how* your philanthropy makes a positive impact in the community. We call these giving styles “traditions of philanthropy.” Do you prefer to give outright *charitable* support to those in need or does your giving focus on ways that others can *improve* their personal situation?

Philanthropy can be used to fund policy issues that encourage *reform* or even underwrite convenings that bring people together and encourage *civic engagement* and *reconciliation*. As a family, choosing how you’d like to use a combination of traditions in your giving can deepen your commitment and proximity to the issues you care about most.

As you think about your values and traditions, take the time to have meaningful conversations with your family and learn what has guided their past giving decisions and motivations for the future.

Some possible conversation starters:

- What was your most meaningful gift?
- How was philanthropy discussed in your family growing up?
- One hundred years from now, what do you want people to remember about your family?
- What is your first memory of being charitable?
- Who in your life has outwardly expressed generosity at a high level?

## CREATE A STATEMENT

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Consider writing a family giving statement that addresses your core values. You can choose to write this individually or invite family members to join you around the table and compile a family list. Maybe you type these up as a reminder when giving requests come throughout the year, to help ensure your giving choices align with your stated goals and reasons for giving back.

Sample Giving Statements:

*Our goal is to support and inspire creativity in the communities in which we live.*

*Our family believes that education is the key to helping individuals achieve independence, personal growth, and financial security. We will support initiatives that help those in underserved communities gain access to quality educational opportunities.*

*We are dedicated to helping create and sustain a vibrant and healthy community where all residents have equal opportunity to live, work and be enriched. To accomplish that, we invest in strong community-based organizations that promote self-reliance and economic independence, and positively contribute to the quality of life for economically, physically and emotionally challenged individuals.*

## TALK ABOUT IT

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A study done by the Women's Philanthropy Institute at the Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy found that children whose parents talk to them about giving are 20 percent more likely to give to charity than children whose parents don't discuss giving with them.

Remember that giving isn't something that comes naturally to everyone; giving is something that can be taught. For some family members, sharing that we all have different forms of capital and influence at our disposal – *social, moral, intellectual, reputational, and financial* – underscores that we have many ways to give in addition to financial.

We encourage you to talk to your family members about giving back. When you make a donation or volunteer, explain to your family what you are doing and whom it helps? Let them understand how you are using your *intellectual* capital as a volunteer, *social* capital as an influencer to bring others to the table, and *financial* generosity to assist an organization you support. The more you talk about giving back, the more your family will understand its importance.

*Note: it's never too early (or too late) to start these conversations!*

## TAKE ACTION

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Once you're decided on a reason for giving, it's time to act! Whether you are volunteering together as a family or sitting around the dining room table deciding where to make your charitable gifts, find a way to make philanthropy a family activity. Remember to tailor the activities based on your family member's age and interests. Here are a few ideas to get you started.

### Young Children:

- Divide allowance between Spend, Save, and Share jars
- Donate their first toys after they no longer use them
- Make cards for first responders

### Elementary Age Children:

- Organize a neighborhood food drive
- Bake a special treat for an elderly neighbor
- Make cards and letters for troops overseas
- Adopt a family during the holidays or buy toys for an organization like Toys for Tots

### Middle School Children/Teenagers:

- Host a birthday celebration at a nonprofit where everyone volunteers
- Help younger students with homework after school
- Volunteer to help teach technology classes at a Senior Center

### Young Adults:

- Organize a family fundraiser
- Get your hands dirty in a community garden
- Coach youth sports

## NEW TRADITIONS

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Inspire a spirit of generosity by starting a new tradition this year.

- Distribute a check to each child with the payee left blank and let them decide who receives it.
- Make a gift in memory of a loved one who recently passed away.
- At a restaurant with friends or family, leave an extra generous tip and see if you can leave before getting noticed!
- Decorate a pumpkin by writing all of the things you are grateful for with a Sharpie. Use this as your holiday table's centerpiece!
- Keep a log of your philanthropic activities and lessons learned. Review it together at the end of the year.

*We would love to hear from you to know how this publication has been useful. If you have comments, questions or suggestions, please be in touch with Helen Wolfe at [helen@coastalcommunityfoundation.org](mailto:helen@coastalcommunityfoundation.org).*



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