

Giving



What is a Giving Plan?

A Giving Plan is a road map that you create to focus your giving and magnify your impact.

By looking at how you want to invest your time and financial resources you will create a map that will help you impact the world. Your giving plan will go beyond just *who* you give to, to look at the questions of *why* you support organizations, *how* you support them, and what sort of *impact* you intend to have. Planning ahead helps you support organizations that are right for you and makes it easier for you to say no to fundraising requests that don't fit with your plan.

Giving Brain Dump

Start your giving plan process by making a list of all of the organizations that you have financially supported or have given your time to. Then ask yourself:

- Why did I support this organization? (It's mission, someone asked, wanted to learn something new, etc.)
- What difference did my time or financial support make?
- Did I feel good about my involvement?
- Is there a theme with the types of organizations that I have supported? (similar issues, geographic focus, they serve a certain type of person)

Create Your Giving Plan

“By aligning your giving with your values, you can more quickly and easily bring about the change that you want to create.”

What's Your Plan?

Values

Your values are the principles that consciously or subconsciously guide your decisions. Take some time alone, as a couple, or as a family to define your values. You can start by brainstorming a list of your top ten values and by process of elimination



narrow the list down to the top three. If you would like some food for thought before brainstorming, google “values list” and you will find hundreds of examples. Some to get you started are : access, diversity, faith, innovation, preservation, stability, tradition.

Mission Statement

Your mission statement should answer the question “why do I give?” Your mission statement should be shaped by the values that you have just brainstormed and clarify the world that you would like to create through your giving. Some examples:

- I believe that every child with working parents should have access to safe and caring daycare.
- Innovation and transparency are the keys to a successful green economy.
- Every senior citizen deserves a chance for adventure.

Issue Areas

Decide which issue areas you would like to focus on and what you would like to address or support in those areas.

Some examples:

- I give to charter schools to address racial disparities.
- I give to public radio to support commercial-free broadcasting.
- I support local artists to promote beauty and artistic expression as a career path.

Strategy

There are many ways to create change. You need to figure out which strategy works best for your values and interest areas. Some key questions:

- Do you want to support direct service to help individuals or are you interested in supporting policy and advocacy to impact many people?
- Do you want to support neighborhood, city, statewide, national, or global organizations?
- Do you want to give on your own, as a family, though a giving circle, or through a community foundation?
- What else do you need to know about the issue that you are interested in? Ways to learn more:

- Read books or websites.
- Interview experts through universities or nonprofits.
- Find foundations that fund that issue and check out the list of organizations that they have supported.

Giving Tips:

Pick a small number of groups to invest in

Develop relationships with 3-5 organizations that you really want to learn more about over time. This will allow you have a deeper connection, make larger gifts to these groups, and better track your impact.



Use your Discretion

Walk-a-thons, Girl Scout cookies, and requests from your friends aren't going to disappear

just because you have developed a giving plan. Giving yourself some flexibility by setting aside some discretionary funds. This lets you say yes to things that are outside of your plan and gives you a clear idea of how much of your giving you are ok with being outside of your focus areas.



Evaluate

No plan is set in stone. Every year or two look back on your giving and decide if you would like to make changes to increase your impact or in response to a change in your interests.

Resources

Giving Plan Resources

Minnesota Public Radio produced a series called Share the Wealth. The web resources include 5 steps for making charitable giving a part of your financial plan. It can be found at bit.ly/SharetheWealth

Wealthy and Wise: How You and America Can Get the Most Out of Your Giving, by Claude Rosenberg (Little, Brown and Company)
Wealthy and Wise gives calculations for basing philanthropy on wealth rather than income.

Don't Just Give It Away: How to Make the Most of your Charitable Giving, by Renata J. Rafferty (Chandler House Press, 800-642-6657)
Rafferty's book urges donors to investigate charities as carefully as they would companies in which they invest and offers advice on how to do it.

Robin Hood Was Right: A Guide to Giving Your Money for Social Change, by Chuck Collins (Norton, Inc) Collins gives step by step answers on how to create a more just world through your giving.

Tools to Choose Nonprofits

Guidestar is a database that tracks information about nonprofit organizations. On the site you can learn if an organization is a registered nonprofit and see their recent tax forms. More at www.Guidestar.org



About the Author

Trista Harris is your guide to doing good better. She is nationally known as a passionate advocate for strengthening the philanthropic and nonprofit sectors. Trista has been featured on CNN and her work has been covered by the Chronicle of Philanthropy, the New York Times, Minneapolis St. Paul Business Journal, Career Builder, and numerous social sector blogs. She writes about generational change in the foundation field in her blog, New Voices Of Philanthropy and is an international speaker on working across generations to create social change.

More at www.TristaHarris.org