

The greatest threat to your long-term client relationships isn't market performance.

It's your connection to them.



Engage Your Next-Generation Clients Through Philanthropy

Resource Guide | September 2026

turn two⁹
In partnership with the Community
Foundation Awareness Initiative



When your client is ready to talk about giving.

A resource for advisors on starting the philanthropic conversation and turning charitable intent into a plan the whole family can carry forward.



What's Inside.

The Conversation You're Not Having.	4
Listening For It.	6
12 Signals of Interest.	7
Vision Before Vehicle.	8
Make It Fun.	9
Worksheet 1 — The Vision Conversation.	11
Getting It Down.	13
Worksheet 2 — Legacy Letter of Understanding.	15
Bringing in the Family.	17
Worksheet 3 — The First Family Meeting.	19
What Actually Gets in the Way.	20
Worksheet 4 — Barrier Check.	22
Matching the Tool to the Intent.	23
The Vehicle Signal.	24
You Don't Have to Do This Alone.	26
How Community Foundations Can Help.	27
Worksheet 5 — 10 Questions for Your Community Foundation.	28
Where to Start.	29
Contributing Experts.	30



The Conversation You're Not Having.

There's a moment when
an advisory client
mentions something that
sounds like small talk but
means much more.

It might be an offhand complaint

about what's happened to the neighborhood they grew up in. Or the second time in an hour they've mentioned the nurses who treated their mother. Or the afterschool instructor who connected with their teenage son. It usually passes. The meeting has an agenda, and there are documents to sign.

But that moment is the opening.

And an advisor who learns to catch it is investing in something far more valuable than a hot stock tip: a motivation to bring the next generation to the table.

An estimated **\$124 trillion** will change hands in the United States over the next two decades, and roughly \$18 trillion of it is expected to go to charity. In a 2025 Harris Poll, 43% of heirs said they intended to leave their parents' advisor when they inherit their wealth.

When asked why, more than a quarter of respondents said they simply didn't know the advisor personally.

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Source: The Harris Poll

Philanthropy is the most natural way for advisors to introduce themselves to clients' heirs. Families uncomfortable talking about death and inheritance will happily discuss what they want their money to do. Ask a client's adult children what they expect to inherit, and the conversation ends there. Ask what they'd like to fix in the world, then clear your calendar for future discussions.

The good news is that clients are far more ready for this than advisors believe. A study this spring by The Philanthropic Initiative found that 93% of high-net-worth clients who have discussed philanthropy with their advisors say they play an important role in their decisions.

This guidebook offers guidance to find a way into that discussion — and resources to continue the conversation. It provides worksheets, checklists, and other tools to help multigenerational families plan their philanthropic legacy.

It also highlights the fact that advisors aren't alone in this process. There is a community foundation in nearly every region of the country that does this work every day, at no cost to advisors, and without competing for the client relationship. The last section is about how to use them.





Listening For It.

Philanthropic conversations often start after triggering events — the sale of a business or a parent’s death, for instance.

That’s natural, but it’s better to begin the discussion earlier. Triggering events impose deadline pressures that can create confusion and resistance. A client overwhelmed by a major life event might make a more conservative decision — or one they’ll ultimately question — than they would have if they had more time to plan.

“Listen for openness to philanthropy as a family topic before a triggering event occurs,” said Julia T. Chang, Associate Director of Philanthropic Strategy at The New York Community Trust. “Take a step back and lead with conversations about values, family stories, and the family’s relationship with money and wealth rather than jumping straight to a solution.”

The triggering events matter, and it’s worth keeping a running list of what’s coming for each client: a business or property sale, a high-income year, retirement, an inheritance, adult children reaching their 30s, a grandchild’s graduation. Each one is a legitimate, non-awkward opening.

But listening for readiness before the trigger arrives is a skill worth developing. One tell is tension — the pull between wanting to leave something for the next generation to give away and wanting to fund the causes that matter to them right now. Clients often experience this as a problem they have to solve before they can act. It isn’t. They can do both. If you recognize the tension and begin that conversation, you can show them how.

The Central New York Community Foundation borrowed a fun idea from a neighboring community foundation. It had a long-running blog series called “Popping the Question,” featuring advisors it works with explaining how they bring up the topic of charitable giving with their clients.

It’s not about offering a product such as a donor-advised fund or a charitable remainder trust, but rather asking clients about their interests, their earliest memories of giving, what’s important to them, said Pragya Murphy, MBA, CAP, Director of Philanthropy & Impact Investing at CNYCF. Such questions can strengthen advisors’ relationships with clients and organically lead to multigenerational discussions about philanthropic planning.

**You don’t always
need an invitation.
Adding one standing
line to your annual review
template — ‘charitable
and legacy goals’ — makes
it a standard part of the
discussion.**



12 Signals of Interest.

1. A proper noun.

A named coach, teacher, clinic, congregation, or neighborhood — not a category.

2. Repetition.

If a client mentions the same organization, person, or place more than once, point it out: “That’s the second time you’ve mentioned the school. Tell me more about what it means to you.”

3. Moral language.

When a client uses values statements such as “It isn’t right that...” or “Somebody should...,” let the agenda continue along that detour.

4. Gratitude.

Someone who talks about help they received or notes their appreciation and admiration for an organization might be inclined to talk about supporting it.

5. Hedged generosity.

Maybe a client is wrestling with a decision: “We’ve thought about doing something bigger, but...” What follows the “but” can start the discussion.

6. A worry about the kids.

Questions like “How much is too much?” or “What will they do with an inheritance?” are natural entry points to raise the idea of bringing families into philanthropic planning.

7. Board or volunteer service.

Clients who already donate their time are likely open to other ideas to support organizations or causes they care about.

8. Sufficiency talk.

If a client says “We have more than we need,” be direct: “Have you considered philanthropic giving?”

9. A stalled estate plan.

If it’s drafted, revised, but not signed, ask why.

10. An unprompted cause.

They raised the topic. Keep it going.

11. A story about how they were raised around money.

Ask where giving fits into that picture.

12. A shift in the room.

The voice changes, the pace slows, they look away. Stop talking and wait.



Vision Before Vehicle.

Whether a client expresses interest on their own or through prompting, the response dictates how the discussion will play out.

Wanting to be useful, an advisor might respond with options — here's how the deduction works with a donor-advised fund vs. a charitable remainder trust. It's competent and accurate, but it often kills the conversation. The client has not yet articulated what they're trying to accomplish, and you've just asked them to choose a vehicle for a destination they haven't begun to map out. That leads to decision fatigue followed by silence.

Anna Hargrave, Senior Philanthropic Advisor at the Greater Washington Community Foundation, starts the other way around: "Tell me the vision of what you want to create, and I'll build you a menu of easy, tax-smart giving vehicles," she said. "Then we'll work with your wealth advisor to determine which one will be the best fit."

Sometimes families are already clear on the vehicle, but they need help with the vision. Arthur Brewer, Senior Gift Planning Officer at Austin Community Foundation, recently worked with a family to establish a DAF. They knew the causes they wanted to support, but they were new to the region and weren't familiar with organizations in Central Texas. So he had the Austin Community Foundation's impact team compile a list of organizations with brief descriptions of what they do.

ACF often curates lists of organizations for clients and, taking it a step further, introduces them to nonprofit staff there so they can build relationships with the organizations they support, Brewer said.

Listening for vision isn't a soft skill. It's the difference between a plan that gets signed and one that sits in a drawer — or never gets started.

Sometimes the door opens from the technical side — a required minimum distribution, a capital gains problem, an estate plan review. Chang said she often works with advisors who raise it during an RMD conversation: *What if, instead of taking the distribution, you made a qualified charitable distribution?*

That's a perfectly good entry point. Just walk it back toward vision once you're through the door: *Before we decide, tell me what you want this to do.*

"Ask questions," Chang said. "This is where you can also have a deeper conversation about values, what's important to someone, how they want to document that charitable giving."

Tread cautiously, though. A conversation that demands too much at once — a cause, a vehicle, an amount, and a family governance structure — is likely to overwhelm a client. Don't try to accomplish everything in one session. Start by opening a fund or naming a charitable beneficiary on an IRA or adding a line to a will, and come back to the fuller conversation later.

When you return for a broader discussion, a handful of good questions goes further than a long list. Pick six or eight from the worksheet on page 11 and let the conversation follow wherever it goes. Try to listen instead of speaking. Count to five before filling a silence.



Make It Fun.

Families often get excited when thinking about giving back, so Stephanie Sessa, CAP, Director of Advisor and Donor Engagement at Austin Community Foundation, tries to embrace that energy in the planning process. She sometimes walks clients through a visual exercise modeled on a facilitation style from wealth management and philanthropy consultancy 21/64. She spreads out a deck of cards with photos of Austin that reflect different causes. For instance, a card with Lady Bird Lake on it might represent environment and green spaces. She asks family members to choose two or three cards that resonate with them.

“There can be something more visceral or emotive when you’re looking at imagery instead of the written word,” Sessa said. “Then there’s a series of prompts to help refine, codify what their values are, turn that into a family mission statement, and then identify their funding pillars and broader philanthropic strategy.”

Some families create games or events around their philanthropic planning. For instance, Brewer met with a couple who gets together with their adult children every Wednesday for wine nights. They log into the Austin Community Foundation fund portal, which lists nonprofits in the area, and they spend the evening discussing which organizations they want to support.

Austin Community Foundation sometimes takes families on site visits to different nonprofits so they can learn more about their work and feel more of a connection to their giving. “I’ve heard of families creating games around their giving,” Brewer said. “It’s exciting to look at it in that way.”

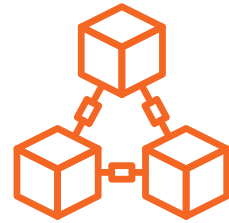


While the
client talks,
listen for
three things:



The Cause

What do they care about?



The Constraint

What's holding
them back?



The Person

Who has to be in the
room before anything
can happen?

Worksheet 1:

The Vision Conversation.

Choose six to eight questions. Ask your client, then listen.

Client: _____ Date: _____ Present: _____

Who taught you about giving, and what did they teach you?	Response:
Has anyone, or any organization, ever helped your family when you needed it?	Response:
What's the gift you feel best about? What made it different?	Response:
If you could fix one thing — in the world, or just in this county — what would it be?	Response:
What don't you want to disappear from this community?	Response:
Ignoring taxes entirely, what would you want your giving to accomplish?	Response:

How would you know a gift had worked?	Response:
Do you want to be involved with the organizations you support?	Response:
Do you want to give quietly (or anonymously) or publicly?	Response:
Would you rather give significantly now or steadily forever?	Response:
Do your children know what you give to and why?	Response:
What do you want your children to understand about money that you had to learn the hard way?	Response:
Who else should be in this conversation — your spouse, your attorney, your CPA, your children?	Response:



Getting It Down.

A fund agreement records the terms. It says how much, to what, under whose authority. What it does not record is the why — and that’s what a family, a successor advisor, or a foundation’s grantmaking staff will be trying to reconstruct in 30 years, when the person who could have explained it is gone.

Community foundations can support advisors as neutral third parties that help families capture and validate the intent behind a plan. Two strategies they use are worth considering.

The first, a tool that Hargrave recommends, is a legacy letter of understanding: a short document, kept alongside the fund agreement, in which the donor articulates the vision for their legacy. Some clients opt for clear instructions on which organizations they wish to support and the conditions for how their bequest should be put to work. Others prefer to leave it in the hands of the next generation with general guidance.

In either case, this document can empower a client to articulate motivation and vision in their own words around why a cause matters to them and what they hope future generations will do with their bequest. For future generations, it’s powerful to have this artifact in the client’s voice, preserved on paper, to remind them of the values the fund was built upon.

Julia Wood, Senior Vice President of Development & Donor Services at the Community Foundation of Central Georgia, likes to record the first meeting with new fundholders and keep it in the fund’s file. Wood recalled playing a grandmother’s recorded voice for her granddaughters after she passed away.

“The family heard, in her own words, what she hoped they’d learn from giving from the fund.” It was, she said, “a powerful moment for the family.”

Community foundations can also help capture families’ intent so that there’s no confusion in the future, said Brewer from Austin Community Foundation.

“I’ve run into many issues where an agreement was made in the ’90s and now the organization looks very different,” he said. Other times, support can be phrased vaguely, creating confusion about intent in the future. “It can be tough to narrow down what they were trying to get after,” Brewer said. “I think more often than not, having those meetings with the advisor, with the fundholder, with the community foundation all in a room together, you can make sure all those barriers are knocked down and get to the real goal of what they want to achieve.”

As people start to realize the complexity of their assets, they appreciate how flexible a community foundation can be, said Brewer. “We can create parameters, divide assets, set up multiple funds — whatever it takes to achieve all of their clients’ goals. That’s where we see advisors really perk up and say, ‘Oh, I didn’t know that you’d be able to handle all of that for me.’”



Is the intent documented?

You should be able to answer all of these from the file:

- The causes the client named in their own words.
- How they'd define a gift that worked.
- Their recognition and anonymity preferences.
- Whether the spouse is aligned and how you know.
- The origin story.
- Whether the adult children know, and what.
- Named successor advisors.
- Whether giving continues after their lifetime.
- Whether the attorney and CPA have seen any of it.

Worksheet 2:

Legacy Letter of Understanding.

Complete with the client, in the first person and in plain language.
Keep a signed copy with the estate documents and, if a fund exists,
with the fund agreement.

Prepared by: _____ Date: _____

What I want this to accomplish. In a sentence or two, what is this for?	Response:
Why this cause. What happened in my life that makes this matter to me?	Response:
What I hope the next generation does with it — and how free they should be to change it.	Response:
What I would consider a misuse or a disappointment.	Response:



Who should be involved, and when. Names, roles, and the life stage at which they take part.	Response:
How decisions get made if the people involved disagree.	Response:
What I want recognized publicly — my name, my family's name, anonymity.	Response:
A story I want my heirs to know. The one thing I'd tell them if I were in the room.	Response:

Reviewed with:

☐ Spouse/partner
☐ Adult children
☐ Attorney
☐ CPA
☐ Community foundation

Next review: _____



Bringing in the Family.

Everything above gets simultaneously harder and more valuable when a second generation enters the discussion.

When children are young, it can be straightforward: parents provide the money and let the kids run the discussion. For instance, Hargrave worked with one family that started a small giving circle around a daughter's bat mitzvah that grew into a multifamily effort. "The parents were surprised and delighted to hear how the kids asked sophisticated, thoughtful questions (in kid vocabulary) while deliberating how to give collectively," she said.

When the children are adults, it can get complicated due to siblings living in different time zones and deep tensions over decades of history. While a client may hope that their family will give together for generations, it's not always realistic. Not all families need consensus to give together. Splitting a fund or running more than one vehicle can relieve the pressure, giving everyone a voice without forcing consensus.

Wood recalled working with a family of several adult children living in different states across the U.S., all holding very different giving philosophies. The Community Foundation of Central Georgia created a system in which they could score organizations and their needs, then the foundation presented a slate of grant recommendations back to them. "They all feel like they have a voice in the process," Wood said, "and they can all see their input in the grants."

‘They all feel like they have a voice in the process, and they can all see their input in the grants.’

Bringing together family after a loss can be a value-add in itself. When a client of Hargrave's unexpectedly died of cancer, before she'd been able to pass down her family's giving traditions, the foundation helped her relatives schedule a visioning session around Thanksgiving, the one time of year everyone was in the same place. "It became a healing, joyful process rather than a stressful one," she said.

Before you convene anyone, though, make sure the principals are actually aligned. A family meeting that exposes a disagreement between spouses in front of their children is not the meeting anyone wanted.

Six things to confirm before you schedule anything:

1. Both spouses have discussed charitable intent with each other, not just with you.
2. They agree on approximate scale — a range, not a number.
3. They've decided whether this is their giving or the family's giving; those are different projects.
4. They've decided how much financial detail the children will see.
5. They're genuinely prepared to hear their children disagree.
6. There's no unresolved estate conflict that this meeting would ignite.

A few structural habits, drawn from community foundation practice, keep multigenerational giving intact over time:

- Set the ground rules before the disagreement rather than after.
- Separate shared family values from individual preferences (a family can agree on education and still split over museums versus scholarships).
- Write down who leads next and at what age members join, and revisit it every three to five years.
- Start small and practice together; a modest annual grant the family has actually made teaches more than a governance document nobody reads.
- As for the first meeting itself — keep it short, make one real decision, and set the next date before anyone leaves.

Worksheet 3:

The First Family Meeting.

Plan for 90 minutes with 4-12 people plus the advisor and an outside facilitator.

Time	Segment	What Happens
0:00–0:05	Why we're here	The parents say, in their own words, why they called everyone together. Practice/coach this in advance, because it sets the tone for everything after. The advisor and/or facilitator follow up as needed with meeting goals and logistics.
0:05–0:20	The origin story	The parents tell one story about a gift that mattered to them. This is permission for everyone else to speak personally.
0:20–0:45	Values round	Each person answers one question aloud: “What would you want to fix, and why does it matter to you?” No interruptions, no cross-talk, no evaluation.
0:45–0:55	Break	Don't skip this. Some of the most important conversations happen here.
0:55–1:10	Find the overlap	The facilitator reflects back the themes. Name the differences out loud and normalize them.
1:10–1:25	One real decision	The family makes one commitment with real dollars, however small. Don't cut this for time — it determines whether there's a second meeting.
1:25–1:30	Next step and date	Who does what, by when. Set the next meeting before anyone leaves.



What Actually Gets in the Way.

When a family that wants to give doesn't, the reason is rarely willingness or money. It's time, confidence, and not knowing where to start.

The National Center for Family Philanthropy has catalogued the psychological barriers that stall giving, and reading the list is a revelation for most advisors who assume the objections are rooted in disinterest. Too many choices, tedious tasks, lack of time, or the worry that you need to do more research point to paralysis, not indifference.

Chang sometimes works with couples who are busy raising young children. Giving matters to them, but it doesn't always feel urgent enough to take precedence over their other priorities. They might struggle to find the time to narrow their choices or do research.

"Our role is to reframe," Chang said. "We might encourage them to view philanthropy as a learning journey rather than an expertise problem." Engaging the whole family can be a big part of that process. "People's desire to involve their children in conversations about values, money, and impact can create momentum to act now rather than someday."

Together, they can meet with nonprofits, ask questions, and make their first grants as opportunities to learn rather than permanent commitments. "Once families make that first grant, it becomes much easier to see themselves as philanthropists," Chang said.

'We might encourage them to view philanthropy as a learning journey rather than an expertise problem.'

The key is to get to know families and understand their circumstances, their goals, and what might be holding them back.

Advisors are often surprised by community foundations' level of engagement and discernment with their clients. "We really get to know them," said Murphy of the Central New York Community Foundation. They could spend months learning about a client's motivation and goals, then helping them establish a fund. "They appreciate the time we give to their clients."

A word of caution:

Just because family members are at the table doesn't mean they'll participate. Third-generation relatives often hold back. Maybe they don't want to overstep while a parent is still living. Maybe they're the only sibling or cousin who lives out of state. Wood adapted a simplified version of the NCFP barriers list into a quiz she shares before meetings to see where each family member is starting from. It also helps her find ways to bring people into the discussion even if they're not comfortable speaking up.

Worksheet 4:

Barrier Check.

Give this to each family member privately, before a family meeting.
Read them all before you convene. **Rate 1 (not true) to 5 (very true).**

Prepared by: _____ Date: _____

What's holding you back?	1	2	3	4	5
There are too many causes; I wouldn't know where to start.					
I'd want to understand an issue thoroughly before giving to it.					
I don't have the time this would take.					
I'd rather not discuss this in front of the whole family.					
I don't want my name attached to it.					
I'm not comfortable funding something that might not work.					
I'm not sure we have enough to be doing this.					
There's no urgency to fund this work, and I have more pressing priorities.					
I don't want to manage another entity or more paperwork.					

If you could change one thing about how our family gives, what would it be?

Response:

Prepare solutions to overcome barriers. For instance, if “too many causes” is a major issue, spend time presenting research and facilitating an exercise to narrow the list. If time is the main barrier, find ways to simplify the process or divide tasks so no one person is overburdened. If someone doesn't want to discuss this in front of relatives, schedule a one-on-one conversation first.

Adapted from the National Center for Family Philanthropy's “Overcoming Psychological Barriers to Giving.”



Matching the Tool to the Intent.

This is the time to focus on the vehicle question and begin to understand what might be a good fit for the client.

It's worth noting how much this part of the market has moved. The majority (78%) of high-net-worth clients use at least one structured giving vehicle, up from 43% in 2018, according to the 2026 TPI Study of the Philanthropic Conversation. That figure jumps to 84% among clients who've discussed philanthropy with an advisor.

About half use donor-advised funds (51%), charitable trusts (49%), or private foundations (48%) as vehicles, and 28% use giving circles or collaborative giving. Presenting these options doesn't require you to become a philanthropic specialist. You just need to know what exists and who to call.

78%

of HNW clients use at least one structured giving vehicle, up from 43% in 2018.

84%

That figure jumps to 84% among clients who've discussed philanthropy with an advisor.

Source: 2026 TPI Study of the Philanthropic Conversation



The Vehicle Signal.

Ask clients about their wishes, because a client who can describe what they want has effectively narrowed the field themselves.

When the client says...	Consider	What a community foundation adds
"I want flexibility — I'll decide later where it goes."	Donor-advised fund	Local due diligence, anonymous granting, family facilitation, successor advisors, one tax receipt for everything
"I know exactly which organizations to give to forever."	Designated fund	Monitors whether the named organization still exists and still does the work — and can redirect if it doesn't
"I care about the issue, not any one group."	Field-of-interest fund	The core competency: knowing who is actually effective in a defined issue area this year
"I want to help kids from my old high school."	Scholarship fund	Full administration — applications, selection committees, and compliance with the rules on donor involvement
"I want one nonprofit to be stable for the long term."	Agency endowment	Takes investment and administrative burden off a small organization
"I've got an appreciated asset I can't sell cleanly."	Gift of appreciated securities, real estate, closely held business interests, farmland, mineral rights, life insurance, crypto, or tangible property	Acceptance and liquidation capability, coordinated with the client's counsel and CPA in real time

When the client says...	Consider	What a community foundation adds
"I need income from this during my lifetime."	Charitable remainder trust	Can serve as remainder beneficiary and help design the charitable outcome
"I want to move wealth to my children and give at the same time."	Charitable lead trust	Administers the charitable payment stream
"I'd rather not take the full distribution from my IRA."	Qualified charitable distribution	Can receive QCDs into eligible fund types — note that donor-advised funds are not eligible; confirm current rules
"I have a private foundation and I'm tired."	Conversion, or a fund alongside it	Absorbs the entity while keeping the family name and mission; ends the filings, excise tax, and board burden
"I have a private foundation and I'm keeping it."	Administrative and grantmaking support	Back-office, due diligence, and site visits under contract
"I want to leave something in my will."	Bequest or beneficiary designation	Ready-made bequest language — and an institution that will still be there to receive it
"I want my kids to run this together."	Family fund with successor advisors	Facilitation, next-generation programming, and neutral ground

Rules and figures change. Deduction limits, QCD eligibility, and the rules governing donor involvement in scholarship selection are all subject to change and to individual circumstances. Fund minimums and fee schedules vary from one community foundation to the next. Treat this as a conversation guide and confirm the specifics locally.

A word of caution: A charitable component of a business or property sale generally has to be structured before a binding agreement of sale exists. After that, the client typically has an assignment-of-income problem and the opportunity is gone. This is the strongest practical argument for raising the subject on a schedule rather than in response to news.



You Don't Have to Do This Alone.

Eighty-three percent of advisors say they're willing to refer to a specialist, according to the TPI Study. Community foundations are the specialists.

Most of what's described in this guidebook — facilitating a family meeting, vetting nonprofits in a specific issue area, accepting a closely held business interest, keeping a recorded conversation on file for 30 years — is not what a wealth advisor is built to do, and there's no reason it should be.

Community foundations are permanent, locally governed public charities that hold charitable funds for individuals, families, businesses, and nonprofits. They make grants and maintain genuine professional knowledge of the nonprofit landscape in their regions. For your purposes, the useful translation is simpler: it's a philanthropic back office and research department you can access at no cost, staffed by people who will sit in your client meeting at your invitation.

Community foundations pride themselves on being creative, flexible, and willing to partner with advisors in ways that are best for them and their clients, said Sessa at the Austin Community Foundation. "We have situations where everything flows through the advisor, and they speak on behalf of the client. Other times, advisors introduce us and say, 'You guys can take it from here.' And then there's the middle, where we're all seated at the table, all in partnership together."

They can also be resources for professional advisors looking to build their skills in

philanthropic planning. For more than 25 years, the Central New York Community Foundation has hosted an annual seminar on a topic related to charitable planning. It's a free event, and attendees can earn two hours of CE credits.

Past events have explored the changes in charitable planning strategies since the 1950s, market and legislation impacts on planning, and behavioral science research on ways to motivate your clients, said Murphy. This year's event, on Oct. 20, features an attorney and an expert in gift planning discussing top charitable planning ideas in the current economy.



How Community Foundations Can Help.

- 1. Technically**, they accept and liquidate complex assets, establish funds quickly, and handle all administration, receipts, and compliance — including private foundation conversions and trust structuring support.
- 2. Relationally**, they facilitate family meetings, run values and legacy conversations, and operate next-generation programming, youth philanthropy councils, and site visits.
- 3. In terms of knowledge**, they can tell you which organizations working on a given issue in your region are effective, which are struggling, and which duplicate one another — a question no national platform can answer.
- 4. For your practice**, they offer continuing education that often carries CE, CLE, or CPE credit, professional advisor councils, co-branded client seminars, and referral flow in the other direction, since they routinely meet donors who need an advisor.

Which leads to the question most advisors wonder about:

No, they are not going to take your client. Community foundations are not investment managers competing for households; their model depends on advisor referrals, and most have explicit policies protecting that relationship. Many also allow the referring advisor to continue managing the fund's assets above a stated threshold — thresholds, fee schedules, and policies vary from one foundation to the next, which is precisely why the next worksheet exists.

Two other assumptions worth retiring. Community foundations are not only for small local grants — they administer eight- and nine-figure funds and absorb private foundations routinely. And a client whose interests are national or international is not a mismatch: community foundations grant anywhere.



Community foundations are not going to take your client. They are not investment managers competing for households; their model depends on advisor referrals, and most have explicit policies protecting that relationship.

Worksheet 5:

10 Questions for Your Community Foundation.

Foundation: _____ Contact: _____ Date: _____

1. Can I continue to manage the assets for my client? At what threshold, and under what agreement?

2. What are your fees, at what tiers, and what do they cover?

3. What complex assets have you accepted in the last two years, and what have you declined?

4. How quickly can a fund be opened?

5. Will you come to a client meeting, and will you let me lead it?

6. What's your policy on contacting my client directly?

7. Who on your staff facilitates family meetings, and what's their background?

8. Do you document donor intent beyond the fund agreement — a legacy letter, a recorded conversation?

9. If my client cares about [issue], who is doing that work well in this region?

10. What continuing education do you offer, and who is my single point of contact?

Where to Start.

You don't need to redesign your practice this quarter.
Three things, in order...



Add one line to your annual review template.

Charitable and legacy goals. This is the highest-leverage change available and it takes about a minute.



Pick three clients.

One who already gives, one with a transaction on the horizon, and one whose adult children you've never met. Use Worksheet 1 with each of them and see what comes back. Some of it will surprise you.



Call your community foundation.

Take Worksheet 5 to the first meeting. Then bring your contact into one of those three client conversations and let them handle the part you'd rather not do alone.

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