



Tools for Improving Interaction at Family Foundation Meetings

What is Needed	How to Get There
Practicality and Planning	Avoid meeting times, locations, and seating that stress participants or undermine the process.
Leadership	Assign responsibility for facilitating the meeting, staying on task, and summarizing outcomes and next steps.
Healthy Rapport and Increasing Trust	Set aside time for socializing. Discuss the impact of grants all can be proud of. Discuss and agree on minor items first to achieve early success.
Full Participation	Invite sharing by asking an ice-breaking or catch-up question at start of meeting. Listen actively and understand all points of view; demonstrate openness and respect for different perspectives.
Collegiality	Treat each board member as a professional colleague not a parent/child/sibling/cousin.
Common Vision and Purposeful Practices	Know, reiterate and practice the mission and by-laws. Establish job descriptions with expectations. Develop and implement clear operating policies and procedures, such as a code of conduct.
Productive Meetings	Prepare and follow an agenda. Focus on meeting goals and necessary outcomes. Determine method(s) by which decisions will be made and authorized and at what point a vote may be taken.
Good Decisions	Seek consensus; acknowledge all points of view and be willing to compromise. Maintain focus on purpose of foundation and responsibility of board.

Conflict Management	<p>Embrace conflict as a group challenge.</p> <p>Disaggregate disagreement and resolve issues one step at a time, focusing on topics not personalities.</p> <p>Take a break to allow participants to regain composure, and reestablish positive tone when meeting reconvenes.</p> <p>Use rules to manage process; when appropriate, vote or employ previously agreed decision-making tool, and move on.</p>
Intervention	<p>Be flexible and consider ways to reframe processes and procedures; rotate board members or change board size.</p> <p>Set up discretionary grant pools.</p> <p>Engage professional facilitator or consultant to establish better board patterns and guide through difficult decisions.</p> <p>Consider alternate ways or vehicles to achieve your philanthropic goals.</p>

