

# Worksheet: Strategies to Join a Funder Collaboration



## Funder Groups

In this lesson you will learn about the different types of funder groups that exist and how you can access them in your own giving.

Sometimes you can find these donors just by happenstance because you meet at an outing or a meeting. However, often you need to be enterprising and seek out your peers. Sometimes you even need to create a funder group from scratch if one does not yet exist, to serve as a point of contact, to meet new people, and to compare notes on similar nonprofits and causes you collectively care about.

There are many different flavors of funder groups. They range from very informal, information-sharing groups to intensive donor circles. Some host webinars with nonprofits about issues of general interest. Others pool funds to donate together for issues that they prioritize and vet. And there are many other alternatives in between.

### **All funder groups share three things in common:**

- It is a group made up principally of donors and/or foundations and not nonprofits.
- The donors and/or foundations all have a similar interest in a particular issue or issues.
- Many of the donors and/or foundations give grants to a similar group of nonprofits all working in common cause on a particular issue.

## Funder groups can be divided up into three general categories:

### 1. Informal

A group of donors and/or foundations gather informally on a regular basis to talk about issues. It is purely voluntary. The group usually rotates leadership roles and one or two funders volunteer to help organize and host meetings and conversations about topics of mutual interest. Any funder or donor that is interested in the conversation is invited to participate as much or as little as they desire. These are not public meetings and they almost never have a website or other public-facing access point.

### 2. Information Sharing

A group of donors and/or foundations come together and fund an administrator to create a more formal mechanism for information sharing. The group has membership dues and a front-facing website. It has public conferences where funders develop the agenda and they invite nonprofits to come to present on issues of common interest during the conferences, or via webinars. There is no expectation that funders pool funding together and there is no pitching of projects at these meetings; it is still mainly focused on learning, networking, and meeting like-minded donors.

### 3. Expert Power Building

This is a different type of funder collaboration where the group of donors is very targeted, focused, and motivated by one particular aspiration, usually to really move the needle on a specific issue. It is full of the campaigner and launcher type of funders rather than sustainer-funders (although there are sometimes exceptions). They pool funding, pay for an administrator, often have a public website, and ask nonprofits to proactively pitch their ideas. There is usually a threshold for membership. For example, the prospective member must be knowledgeable in the focus issue or already give away a significant portion of their personal or foundation portfolio to the focus issue. They must be ready and willing to give more in a pooled fund with other donors.

There are lots of ways to mix and match funder groups but these are the three main types.

Numbers 1 and 2 are good for all types of funders—sustainer, campaigner and launcher. Number 3 is good for campaigner/launcher-funders, but not as compatible with sustainer funders.

## Homework

1. What type of giving circle do you think you'd like to participate in?

2. How do you think you'd go about finding a giving circle that is right for you?

*If you would like my direct feedback, please fill out the online assessment provided in this lesson.*