



Giving Circle Startup Questions

To the Leader

➤ First, you need to decide for yourself why you are starting a giving circle, and how you can use your motivation(s) to motivate others to join. What is it about the idea of a giving circle that moves and inspires you: Supporting nonprofits? Getting together with friends? Creating a Jewish community of your own making? Learning new things? Having a conversation about values? If you spend some time figuring this out for yourself, it will be much easier to explain to others why you want them to be part of this fun and meaningful experiment.

PARAMETER 1

Membership

- ➔ Who will you invite to join the giving circle? Who will recruit them, and how?
- ➔ What's the minimum viable number for launching the group, and what's your ideal maximum size? (We suggest 5-20 for a startup giving circle, but it really comes down to what you hope to achieve, what your financial goals are, and how many different voices you can successfully include.)
- ➔ What will members be expected to contribute: money, time, professional expertise, leadership?

PARAMETER 2

Logistics

- ➔ Where will you convene for your first meeting? How often and where do you plan to convene the group after that?
 - ➔ What time of day and week is best for the people whom you want to recruit, and how long should the meetings last?
 - ➔ Will you only get together for grantmaking, or will you also hold events (speakers/educational events, social events, community service)?
 - ➔ Can you make the arduous task of coordinating calendars easier? ([MeetingWizard](#) and [Doodle](#) are two great group scheduling tools.)
 - ➔ Who is in charge of bringing snacks and any other materials you may need to the first meeting?
-

- How will decisions be made? Consensus? Voting? See [Making Decisions: Some Approaches](#) for a few decision-making options.
- Who will facilitate the meetings - or at least the first one?

PARAMETER 3

Financial Logistics

- How much money will each member give? Will you have one giving level for everyone, or tiered giving (based on ability or desire)? Who will know how much others give - is this public information, or does only the leader(s) know?
- Where will the group's grantmaking money be housed? Will your members want their contributions to be tax-deductible? Will members make contributions to the giving circle, which will then distribute the money to grant recipients; or will members write individual checks to the grant recipients?
- How will the circle cover its administrative expenses (e.g. food for meetings, materials, even staff)? If you anticipate significant expenses that members will want to cover with tax-deductible contributions, will you seek out a fiscal sponsor or host organization? (See our detailed discussion of these issues in [Giving Circle Essentials](#) and [Donor-Advised Funds and Fiscal Sponsors](#))

PARAMETER 4

Grants

- Do you already know what you want the group to give to? [Giving Circle Essentials](#) and our [Giving Circle Building Blocks](#) can offer suggestions for eliciting the group's philanthropic values and priorities; but if you are starting a circle focused on a specific cause/issue, geographic location, or even a particular institution, you should articulate that to potential members as you recruit them.
- Do you plan to make frequent grants based on publicly-available information? Or are you interested in a more in-depth review process that includes grant applications and due diligence - and that will extend over a few meetings? (In either case, Amplifier's web platform can help. It offers both an Organizational Directory and a bank of Common Grant Applications that all giving circles can use to learn more about potential grant recipients.)
- Do your members have something other than money that they can contribute to the grantees, such as professional skills, volunteer time, or connections to other funding sources? If so, how will you "account" for these contributions? Will they come alongside financial contributions or in lieu of them? How will you ensure that the grantees want and need what you have to offer? See the [Map Your Assets: The 3Ts / 3Ws](#) for more information.