Talking to Your Clients About Charitable Giving

An Interview Guide

The following sets of questions can help you and your client create a focused charitable giving plan. It may be used with or in place of the survey, Deciding to Give.

The **North Dakota Community Foundation** can help you and your client find the right type of gift to match his or her charitable giving interests and goals. NDCF administers a wide range of permanent charitable funds—including unrestricted endowments, advised endowments, scholarship endowments, and community endowments—as well as short-term funds that help charities meet their more immediate funding needs.

The **North Dakota Community Foundation** exists to help meet the needs of any individual or business wishing to make a contribution to a North Dakota charitable organization. We are happy to support your client's financial planning team to answer questions as they arise.

We invite you to contact us today.

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Initial Questions and Talking Points for Legal and Financial Advisors:
Raising and Pursuing the Philanthropic Question

Stage Setting

The role of a planner is, first, to assess the client's objectives, second, to inventory the assets (human, intellectual and financial capital) available to meet those objectives, and third, to create a plan to meet the objectives using the appropriate assets. Including the subject of philanthropy at all three states of your conversations is crucial. Charitable giving is an important component of most wealth plans—it serves the client's best interests, and it enriches and deepens the advisor-client relationship.

Conversations between advisors and their clients begin, as do most conversations, with stage setting. The advisor is typically the principal source of the questions, but if the conversation is to succeed, the client needs to know the basis for the questions, the context into which the answers will fit.

The first few questions an advisor asks a client in such conversations are intended both to elicit and provide context. **Frequently, these conversations are preceded by a questionnaire from the advisor to the client** that serves the purpose of preparing both advisor and client for the interview. Such questionnaires typically include questions on the client's philanthropic goals, interests, and history. Sample questions are:

- Do you currently contribute to any charitable organizations?
- Are you currently involved with any charitable organizations?
- Do you wish to include charitable giving in your financial or estate plan?
- What legacy do you wish to leave?

Getting Started

How do you, the advisor, initiate the interview? Some of the questions you may wish to consider include:

- I have reviewed your questionnaire and your file. Am I correct in saying that you are… (facts including personal data and financial snapshot)?
- Is there an upcoming event or deadline that has prompted you to begin this process at this point in time?
- What have you done to date in obtaining a wealth or business analysis? Do you have an estate plan?
- Who else is on your planning team?
- Is the process going as you would wish?
- Is there anything in the process you would like to change or do differently?

- Do you feel comfortable with everything that has taken place so far?
- "You would not hear this from most advisors, but in order to design the best plan for you I need to know some more about what your values are, what your goals are, what you want this all to mean. I'm not here to tell you what do do, but to find out what is important to you so that we can do our job well. An estate or financial plan shouldn't be just about taxes. I want to make sure that we meet your needs in the best possible way. There are some more questions I need to ask you, and that will be part of our planning process. They may seem personal, and they are, but I'm sure you would agree that an estate or financial plan is a very personal document."
- Does your current plan reflect your values? Your family's?

Financial Needs

- Do you have a sense of how much money you will need to feel financially secure?
- Do you have a sense of how much you will want to provide for your children?
- Do you have any concerns about your children and money?
- If your financial resources were unlimited, how would you spend your time and what would you do with your excess financial resources?
- Is health an issue you would like to discuss?

**Gifts given to North Dakota charitable organizations or government entities through NDCF are tax deductible to the fullest extent of state and federal laws. In addition to federal income tax deductions, your deferred gift or gift from a ND business may qualify for a generous ND income tax credit.*

Philanthropy or Giving in General

- I have found that people get a lot of fulfillment from thinking about what they want to leave to the community and how they want to sue their talents and resources for a cause. Designing an estate or financial plan gives them the opportunity to think about these issues. Would you be interested in having me help you explore the options?
- Are you interested in supporting organizations or causes while you are alive, or do you want to do so only after your death?
- There are three things you can do with your wealth: give it to the government, leave it to your heirs, or give it to charitable endeavors. If taxes were not an issue, how would you apportion your wealth?
- Are you interested in creating a plan that would support your community or other issues you are interested in, and still leave a substantial estate to your children?

Mission and Focus – Getting Started

- Are there any organizations to which you currently give?
- Are there any organizations that you are currently involved with or for which you serve on the board?
- Are there any community or charitable issues you really care about?
- Do you have a sense of obligation to any institutions, organizations, or causes?

- Do you give regularly to any organizations? Have any of your gifts been particularly fulfilling or gratifying?
- Is there something about the world that you would like to see changed?
- What do you read about in the paper that makes you angry?
- What issues and causes are you passionate and excited about?

**An Advised or Designated endowment fund with NDCF allows a donor to name specific organizations as the recipients of grants from the fund. A Field of Interest Endowment fund allows NDCF to make grants to organizations in a specific charitable giving sector named by the donor.*

Community, Giving Back

- Do you participate in any religious or civic group that is important to you?
- Do you have strong social or political views?
- When you were in college, what did you dream of doing? Have you done it? Can it still be done? Do you have other unfulfilled wishes about doing something that you have yet to do?
- Are there hobbies or activities in which you lose yourself?
- With whom do you identify? Who are your heroes?
- Are there skills that you would like to continue to use after you retire? Are there new skills that you would like to learn or develop further?
- How involved would you like to be in your giving? How much time would you like to give to organizations and causes?

**NDCF's Community Endowment Fund program allows a community of any size to establish a permanent fund and raise money to support projects or programs within the community. A group of local volunteers are responsible for both fundraising and grantmaking activities, with assistance from NDCF. Gifts to your community's endowment fund will ensure a steady resource to better your community far into the future.*

The Role and the Importance of the Family

- What are your values? Have you discussed them with your family? Do you wish to pass them on? Is philanthropy an appropriate vehicle for doing so?
- Do you, your wife or children volunteer on a regular basis? What organizations do you work with or for? Do you sit on the board of any organization?
- Do you want to be involved your family (or friends) in your giving?
- Do you want to involve the children?

Ways of Giving

- Do you want to give only money, or do you have particular skills you would like to offer?
- Are you interested in establishing a pro-social business, or investing in one? For example, a micro-lending institution for underprivileged borrowers, a factory employing the hard to employ, a company that creates environmentally friendly products?
- Can you think of any potential partners? For profit? Not for profit?
- How much time do you have to invest?

Strategic Philanthropy

- Do you have a vision of your philanthropy and what it can achieve?
- Do you want family members, friends, or future generations to continue your giving legacy?
- Do you have a mission statement, either in your mind or on paper? As part of this planning process, would you consider developing a family mission statement or a plan for your charitable enterprise?
- Are you focused in your giving? On what?
- Do you prefer to address symptoms or causes in your giving?
- Is it important that you exercise some control over organizations to which you give?
- Do you prefer to fund "start ups" or established charitable organizations?
- Would you give to enhance an organization's capacity?
- Are you comfortable just writing checks, or do you want to be more proactive and involved?
- Would you be interested in an educational program of any sort, either formal or informal, to help you develop and execute a giving plan?
- Or do you just want something simple?

Closing

- Are you excited about what you can achieve for you, your heirs, and charity with proper planning?
- Do you still feel comfortable with the questions I've asked and direction we are going?
- Is there anything in the process at this point you would like to change or do differently?
- At this point, how can I best help you achieve what is most important to you?