



STARTER KIT

CONGRATULATIONS! You and your group of friends and family have decided to pool your money and make a difference in your community. How wonderful—both for you and your community.

AAPIP believes that it is in the long-term interest of Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders nationwide to build our own resources within our own communities. By investing in the issues that matter most to us, building leaders and lifting our voices in social and policy debates, we are powering the change and the future we want to see for our community and our world.

Below are a few pointers to help you get your Giving Circle on its path to creating a better world, starting with your own community.

At your first meeting remind everyone why Giving Circles are important for the AAPI community. **There are critical needs in our community that are not being met by traditional funding.** **Less than 0.4% of all foundation dollars go to our community.** Giving Circles help to fill that void. The work you are about to do is important but also remember to have fun. You can accomplish serious things in a joyful manner and that's the true power of a Giving Circle.

Now let's take the first step towards a better future!



MEET AND GREET

At your first meeting here are some questions you should answer:

- What should we name our group?
(Let your creativity shine! A few of our recent Circles are called Rainbow Dragon Fund or Red Envelope Giving Circle.)
- How often should we meet?
(Typically, most Circles meet from 2 to 4 times a year.)
- Should we recruit other people or keep it as a close group of friends?
- Where should we meet?
(We suggest getting out of the office and meeting at restaurants, homes, or even a park.)
- What financial contribution should we each make?
(This is important, so let's talk about that for a moment...
Many Circles choose one contribution level for everyone. Since no single vote on a potential grantee should outweigh another, many Circles find this arrangement the best. Other Circles find that a tiered giving structure meets their needs, especially as a way to attract younger donors. The contribution amount can vary. The group decides what is reasonable for their Circle. It is important for the group to agree on the final amount.)

NOTE: Other action items to address at your early meetings:

- Develop a sense of your group's timeline.
- Ensure that your decision-making process is transparent & democratic.



DECIDE ON A FOCUS AREA. WHERE SHOULD WE HELP?

Deciding on a focus area may take significant discussion but encourage the group to take the time to be as specific as possible.

A few questions to consider:

- What's our mission?
- Will the Circle focus on an issue area or keep it broad?



- Does the group want to give to general operating support or specific types of programs/projects within organizations?
- Will the Circle give to a specific geographic area or segment of the AAPI population?
- For what length of time will the focus remain?

You may also want to invite “experts” to talk to the group. Some Circles assign members to investigate particular issues to get a sense of what needs are the most pressing in the community.



WHERE SHOULD WE KEEP THE \$\$\$?

Each year, every member should make a donation to their Giving Circle. There are two options for where the collective pot of money can be held, and there are pros and cons with each option:

1. Have a host organization. Establish a Donor Advised Fund at a community or public foundation.

PRO: Transparency for all members & Accountability of 3rd party management.

CON: Usually involves a fee and can be more complex administratively.

(AAPIP can provide a list of common questions to ask a potential host.)

2. Write individual checks to the chosen nonprofit(s).

PRO: Simple & Direct to the organization you want to fund.

CON: May cause more work as the group will be responsible for ensuring that the organizations are in good standing.

NOTE: Currently almost all of our Giving Circles are working with host organizations, but it does not mean that it is your only option.



LEARN ABOUT YOUR COMMUNITY. WHO SHOULD WE HELP?

There are many ways to learn about organizations in your community. Some Giving Circles ask for a written application while others interview the leadership of an organization. We challenge your Circle to think outside of the box when it comes to learning about the organizations.

Some questions to consider as you determine your giving philosophy:

- How will we decide which organizations to support?
- What will our application process look like?
- What information do we need to gather in order to make decisions?
- How will we decide on which organization(s) will receive the money and how much?
- What are other ways that you can learn about an organization without causing unnecessary bureaucracy?
- Will there be a maximum dollar amount that the organization(s) can apply for?

Here are some ways to decide which organizations to support:

- Ask for video submissions and host a screening party.
- Schedule a visit to the organization and a chat with key leaders.
- Request a short written application.
- Invite organizations to give a brief presentation to the Giving Circle.
- Invite key leaders to dinner to chat over a meal.
- Ask Giving Circle members to nominate an organization by discussing why they appreciate the organization’s work.

We encourage you to take risks by giving to start-up nonprofits or by giving to nonprofits that may seem unconventional to traditional funders. Remember that you are not a foundation and you have the freedom to fund what you want.

NOTE: Remember to be mindful of both the nonprofits’ time and your members’ time. We encourage efficient ways to approach your decision-making, even if they are non-traditional.

STEP 5

DISTRIBUTE FUNDS. AND THE WINNER IS...

The group should set aside plenty of time to discuss the organizations. Remember to verify that all of the applicants fit your Giving Circle's mission and align with AAPIIP's mission to fund organizations that serve the AAPI community. Members may feel strongly about different organizations, so make sure you give yourselves enough time to come to a group decision.

Smaller Giving Circles often use a consensus model for decision-making. Larger Circles tend to use voting systems or committees that make recommendations to the entire group.

Once the Circle has come to a decision on which organization(s) to fund and the amount:

1. Contact AAPIIP at least one month in advance to begin the matching funds process. AAPIIP matches a percentage of all individual donations. AAPIIP will follow-up with your host and release the matching funds for your account.
2. Alert the recipient organization(s) and let them know when they can expect a check. If your Circle is hosting an awards event, work with the organization(s) to ensure that they will attend.
3. Let organizations who are not receiving funds from your Circle know of your decision, too. Encourage them to apply next year and give any feedback.

STEP 6

CELEBRATE!

This is the start of something amazing-- your group should recognize that. Celebrate your accomplishment by planning an event, dinner, drinks or outing. It's a great way to thank Giving Circle members and donors while highlighting the collective good that you have created. Invite organizations, potential members or anyone that is interested in the mission of your Giving Circle. AAPIIP would love to celebrate with you so don't forget to include us!

You've done a wonderful thing. **Be joyful. Be proud.** You've joined a growing movement made up of Giving Circles from all across the country who have decided to make their world a better place.

