



- one > Resources to enhance your effectiveness.** We focus on helping foundations increase the effectiveness of their grantmaking and simplify their work. Members have ready access to an array of useful tools, publications, samples, best practices and other information — in print or online — to help maximize the impact of their grant dollars and the efficiency of their staff and/or volunteer board members.
- two > Networks to learn from others.** We serve as a vibrant hub for the community of family and other foundations who share a commitment to effective grantmaking in this region. Members have a variety of ongoing opportunities to connect and learn from other family foundations facing similar issues, experiences and challenges, and to be in touch with other types of philanthropic organizations working to make a difference here at home.
- three > Here for generations to come.** We help family members of all ages learn and practice effective philanthropy. You can count on us as an ongoing resource for your family's legacy of giving. Family members in other regions can also stay connected through our national network of regional grantmaking associations.
- four > A strong voice to represent your interests.** We provide a unified voice to strengthen and protect philanthropy, representing members' interests with elected officials, the media, nonprofits and the general public. We communicate the important role of foundations by supporting key legislation, gaining positive media coverage, building the skills of grantseekers and much more. You can lend your voice to this platform and benefit from our advocacy on behalf of all foundations.
- five > Regional information to keep you up-to-date.** We are your access point for information and knowledge related to our region's unique needs — information you'll find nowhere else. We keep our members updated on emerging local giving trends, new community developments, pending legislative action, local giving news and more, to help you make effective decisions and plan for the future.
- six > Great programs to expand your knowledge.** We deliver a wide variety of ongoing programs where members learn useful ideas and effective practices from regional and national experts in the field, and where family trustees get together to learn from each other. Family foundation members find offerings tailored to address their specific interests and needs.
- seven > A local presence to serve you close to home.** We offer you programs, services and events that are close-at-hand, and bring top national experts and expertise to the region. You can use a car instead of an airplane to participate in high quality skill-building and networking activities throughout the year.
- eight > Responsive, personalized service to meet your needs.** We get to know you, your foundation, and its distinct characteristics and goals. You receive personalized attention from staff people who live and work in this region — and who are committed to helping your organization excel in achieving your goals.
- nine > Professional help to support your work.** We have skilled staff who can connect you with expert technical assistance and consultant referrals in areas such as grantmaking, administration, accounting, technology, and governance, when you need them. You have ready access to the information and aid you need to support your operation.
- ten > Leadership to strengthen philanthropy.** Membership in the Council makes you part of a leadership organization dedicated to strengthening respectful, ethical philanthropy. The Council developed Principles for Minnesota Grantmakers; corresponding practices for family foundations that offer practical ways to implement the Principles; and many other leadership initiatives to help uphold the public trust of foundations.

Family Foundation Member Benefits

At the Minnesota Council on Foundations, we understand that family foundations are a wonderful way for people to be personally involved in giving back to community, to establish a family legacy and to pass on giving traditions and values to their children and grandchildren. We respect and understand that each family has its own values, experiences and charitable goals. Each foundation has its own challenges, too.

For new foundations, the central challenge is often about getting started: Defining a giving strategy that works, identifying roles and responsibilities for family members, building a philanthropic network, creating grantmaking guidelines and finding nonprofit organizations and programs to support that align with your goals and values. These activities take time, especially when coupled with the necessary operating activities of a foundation such as investment management, tax compliance and administrative issues.

For established foundations, engaging the next generation, fine-tuning the grantmaking plan and benchmarking against best practices in the field are typically of greater concern. And family foundations of all types share a desire to be as effective as possible with their grant dollars to make a positive impact in our communities.

No matter what stage of life your family foundation is in, the Minnesota Council on Foundations can help. We offer networking contacts, skill-building opportunities, information and resources designed to make your important work easier and your grantmaking more effective.

FAMILY FOUNDATION MEMBER TESTIMONIAL >>>

“As a small foundation, Council programs and services enhance the impact of our staff. We get up-to-date information about community and legal issues; a supportive network of colleagues — with skills ranging from program design to grants management — to call upon for help and advice; and Council programs that provide valuable education and networking opportunities for staff and trustees. The Minnesota Council on Foundations is often my first and last stop for timely information.

— *Becky Erdahl, Carolyn Foundation*



“The quality and impact of our grantmaking has improved greatly due to connections we’ve made through the Minnesota Council on Foundations. We wouldn’t be where we are today without the Council.”

Jim Frey
Executive Director, Frey Foundation



Jim Frey remembers the day when the Frey Foundation “worked out of a shoebox.” Established in 1985 by his parents, Gene and Mary, the Foundation was originally a vehicle to formalize the couple’s long tradition of giving back to the Twin Cities community they have long been a part of.

In the early years, the grantmaking process consisted of discussions at family get-togethers around a variety of grantmaking ideas and interests. Then family members started thinking bigger. They were interested in taking a more proactive approach to their giving. So in 1997, concurrent with the sale of the business owned by Gene, the family opened the Frey Foundation office.

It was about this same time that the Foundation decided to join the Minnesota Council on Foundations. “We didn’t want to go it alone,” states Jim. “There was a great deal of learning out there already, and we discovered that the Council provided an invaluable forum to be able to tap into. They exposed us to best practices of other family foundations, helped us understand legal pitfalls and reporting issues and how to avoid conflicts of interest.”

Today, the Foundation has a formal mission statement and a defined grantmaking process and priorities. Jim credits connections made through the Minnesota Council on Foundations for making this happen.

The Frey Foundation has proved to be a great way to involve extended family members in philanthropy. Jim notes, “We now have the third generation (ages 7 to 18 years old) involved. The Council understands the issues unique to family foundations and has been extremely valuable in helping us understand how to bring the younger generation in, sharing tips on what works best and what to expect along the way.”

Council seminars and meetings are a big hit with all family members. “We always walk away with good ideas we can use at our foundation. And it’s good to know we always have access to responsive, knowledgeable professionals at the Council.”

And, according to Jim, membership in the Council has been a truly rewarding experience. “We’ve been able to participate in family foundation-specific offerings and we’ve also had the opportunity to share what we’ve learned by helping newly established family foundations who are in the same place we were when we first started.”

This is one example of how the Minnesota Council on Foundations helps family foundations. Please contact us to find out more about how your family foundation can benefit from joining the Minnesota Council on Foundations.