

WHAT IS A GIVING CIRCLE AND WHY JOIN?

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A **giving circle** is a form of collaborative philanthropy where groups of individuals donate to a shared fund, and together decide where to give their money. Members share the goal of increasing their impact on the issues they care about and engagement with charities they choose to support.

The basic format of various giving circles range from social events where people gather and give funds for a chosen organization (such as [416Cares](#)) to more structured formats that involve meetings with members several times a year over multiple years, where there is a clear vision, mission, and area of focus (such as the Hamilton Community Foundation giving circle '[Women4Change](#)'). Giving circles can be as small as two to five people or can be as large as hundreds of people.

WHY JOIN ONE?

Giving circles are personally rewarding - they provide opportunities for you to:

- maximize your impact by pooling resources
- network with other committed Fundholders
- broaden your understanding of philanthropy
- engage with leaders and learn about issues in your community

Giving circles are about forming relationships and leveraging for impact. For example, members of giving circles generally give more resources than those who are not part of giving circles. Members also give more strategically, and give to a wider range and a greater number of organizations. In addition, giving circles have a strong history of resourcing smaller, local organizations, often with a focus on women and minority groups that may be overlooked by larger philanthropic institutions.

“Giving circles have a considerable impact on increasing members’ knowledge and awareness of philanthropy, non-profit organizations, and problems in the community” and as such, they “are just as or more important as tools for increasing this awareness, and enhancing giving strategy, as they may be for increasing giving” (Eikenberry, Bearman, Han, Brown & Jensen, 2009, p.51).

We are happy to act as a connector for those of you looking to join an existing circle or to help you get a new one off the ground with the help of the toolkit we have created. See our **Getting Started** section for more information starting a giving circle.