



*Inspiring and Connecting Thoughtful Giving*

## Toledo Community Foundation

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### About Your Foundation

Since 1973, **Toledo Community Foundation** has provided individuals, families and businesses interested in the well-being of our community with an *efficient, effective, low-cost, professionally managed* mechanism to achieve their charitable goals.

For philanthropists wishing to maximize the impact and life of their charitable gifts, the Foundation provides *resources for thoughtful giving*. Using its expertise and personalized services, **Toledo Community Foundation** helps donors transform their philanthropic impulse to measurable community impact. Beyond the gifting of assets, the Foundation helps donors identify issues of importance to them and *inspires engagement* with community organizations addressing these issues, thereby maximizing the impact of charitable gifts and creating a greater sense of fulfillment.

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## Finding Common Ground

Most wealthy individuals don't see their good fortune from the perspective of isolation. Whether inherited or self-created, the riches they have nurtured belong to their family. Along with a strong sense of preserving that wealth for future generations, many also seek to build charitable legacies in the family name. While this is a noble undertaking, it is also a difficult one, since divergent interests and life experiences can make consensus a slippery prize.

As a vice president at Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors, Walter Sweet advises families to ease the process of giving by meeting face to face to discuss their goals. "The holidays are a perfect time to begin the discussion," he notes. "Families are coming together, and the spirit of giving is in the air." Sweet draws from RPA's considerable expertise in this area: The New York-based nonprofit advises on and manages more than \$200 million in annual giving.

### Set the Tone

Since family members invariably have differing philanthropic objectives, Sweet never comes to a meeting he's leading with a boilerplate agenda. In some cases, members of the older generation are experienced donors who are holding the meeting to involve younger generations. For other families, this may be the kickoff to their first foray into charitable giving.

In any meeting, Sweet says that the goal is to first establish each member's motivations for giving. He then determines how the group can find common ground. "The family members should develop shared objectives," he notes.

To do that, Sweet asks family members a series of questions, ranging from general queries about personal and philosophical beliefs to specifics concerning the size of organization they might like to fund. "It's important to get

everyone's take," he says. "You don't want one person to dominate the meeting." The key to accomplishing these tasks—and avoiding family friction—is keeping people focused on the bigger questions of why and how they want to give. Sweet says that as an outsider with specific technical knowledge, your presence automatically redirects the focus away from differences of opinion and onto strategies of how to accomplish multiple goals.

### **Find Out What Motivates Them**

Sweet also helps family members understand how they can express their core beliefs through philanthropy. He starts the process by asking family members about their broader motivations for giving. What are their core values? Which causes and issues do they feel strongly about? He'll also ask whether—and why—they're involved in any charitable work, such as volunteering at the local art museum or animal shelter.

This process gives Sweet information—and lets family members express their beliefs to one another. The process itself can help families begin to build consensus, Sweet says.

He'll next ask them about how they might want to make contributions. Do they want to fund local or national organizations? Do they want to support advocacy organizations or groups that provide a direct service? Do they want to make anonymous gifts or take a hands-on approach and serve on a board?

If family members answer these questions differently, Sweet discusses possible blended approaches. For example, if one family member wants to fund advocacy work for the homeless and another wants to give to a shelter that provides direct service, Sweet recommends selecting an organization that incorporates both tactics. One of the challenges of the meeting, Sweet says, is showing family members that "there are valid and different approaches to these things."

Once the initial meeting and consensus building is done, it's time to bring in the outside experts and put a plan to work that can make a difference for a worthy cause. To do this, Sweet identifies organizations and professionals that are knowledgeable about the family's area of interest and makes the introductions. That's when the actual process of philanthropy begins—and, at least for this stage, where Sweet's work is done.

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