





# STRATEGIC FOCAL POINTS

## for Boards Committed to Trust-Based Philanthropy

As the key governing body, a foundation's board of trustees supports executive leadership and ensures that the organization delivers on its mission as a charitable entity. Beyond their core legal duties (duty of care, loyalty, and obedience), trust-based boards play a vital role in guiding the organization's overarching strategy and culture vis a vis their values. Below are four, non-mutually exclusive focal points in which foundation boards can direct their time and attention when stewarding a grantmaking organization committed to trust-based philanthropy:

FOCAL POINTS	OBJECTIVE	GUIDING QUESTIONS	ACTIVITIES
<b>LEARNING</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cultivate a practice of active learning around the complexity &amp; nuance of the work you support.</li> <li>• Reinforce a culture of learning &amp; reflection.</li> <li>• Focus accountability on how the foundation embodies its values &amp; intentions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do we orient our learning towards social transformation, rather than transaction?</li> <li>• Who must we listen to and learn from to better understand the ecosystem(s) we are part of?</li> <li>• How can we prioritize learning from one another, peers, staff, &amp; grantee partners?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage in dialogue to deepen understanding of context, partners, and potential impact.</li> <li>• Facilitate learning exchanges with funder peers &amp; grantee partners.</li> <li>• Review and discuss stories, reports, case studies, and grantee feedback.</li> </ul>
<b>STRATEGY</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clarify &amp; define foundation's values.</li> <li>• Iterate and evolve foundation's strategy to align with values.</li> <li>• Ensure that strategic plans are responsive to communities the foundation is accountable to.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What does our org stand for, and how can we reinforce a shared understanding among staff &amp; board?</li> <li>• What are we aiming to accomplish with our grantmaking, investment portfolio, and relationships?</li> <li>• What external &amp; internal factors do we track to understand our progress?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategic forecasting.</li> <li>• Seek out values-aligned investment strategies.</li> <li>• Regularly reflect on internal &amp; external learnings; adjust plans based on emergent contexts &amp; realities.</li> </ul>
<b>GRANTMAKING</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partner with staff to align overall grant strategy with mission, vision, and values.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How does our grantmaking embody our values?</li> <li>• How does our grantmaking deliver on our mission and advance our vision?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In partnership with staff, set, review, and approve strategic priorities and budgets for grantmaking.</li> <li>• Occasionally, approve larger grants and/or new investments that fall outside of overarching budget and strategy.</li> </ul>
<b>IMAGINATION</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cultivate aspirational, values-based collective imagination for a more just future.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the future we seek to live into?</li> <li>• How do we help create the conditions for such a future?</li> <li>• Who and what stretches our imaginations?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nurture and resource imagination &amp; spirit with nature, art, community, &amp; rest.</li> <li>• Value staff's heart &amp; intuition, alongside intellect.</li> </ul>