



Member Handbook

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Using the Handbook

This handbook is designed to guide the Kindling community through the process of grantmaking. Each year, members of the Kindling community will update the book to incorporate lessons learned and the latest thinking about the process.

The guide is broken down into the steps we go through every year and all the information needed to complete each step.

	Step	Date	Purpose	Responsibilities
1	Kickoff Meeting	Approx 4 th Sun in Jan	Welcome new members, choose Board, choose Gift Committee, choose theme, bestow the talisman, collect contact info	<i>Organize:</i> Last year's Board <i>Attend:</i> All Members <i>Facilitate:</i> Member chosen by Board.
2	Announce Theme	Approx 1 st Sun in February	Gift committee chooses and communicates theme for the year	<i>Execute:</i> Gifters <i>Comment:</i> Any Members
3	Midway Gift Meeting	April (TBD by Gift Committee)	Observe progress of Gift Committee, provide feedback	<i>Organize:</i> Gifters <i>Attend:</i> Any Members
4	Recipient Presented to the Board	Approx May 5	Gift committee presents choice for recipient	<i>Organize:</i> Board <i>Attend:</i> Gifters and Board

5	Board Approval	Approx May 15	Board makes sure recipient meets Kindling criteria	<i>Execute:</i> Board
6	Wrap Up Meeting & Party	Approx 3rd Sun in May	Presentation of the recipient, volunteer opportunities, lessons learned, celebrate!	<i>Organize:</i> Board <i>Attend:</i> All Members <i>Facilitate:</i> Member chosen by Board.
7	Volunteer, Engage and Donate	May – Dec	Volunteer with the recipient	<i>Organize:</i> Gifters <i>Attend:</i> Any Members
8	Donations Due	Dec 31	Members make annual donation	<i>Organize:</i> Board <i>Execute:</i> Any Members
9	Invite New Members and Provide them with Handbook	By 1st week of Jan	Recruit next crop of Kindling members, Re-read handbook Think about next year's theme	<i>Organize:</i> Board <i>Execute:</i> All Members

Key Approximate Dates at a Glance

January	February	March	April
4th: Deadline to invite new members 5th: Kickoff Invite goes out 4th Sun: Kickoff Meeting	1st Sun: Announce Theme	1st Sun: Suggested end of preliminary research phase for Gifters*	1st: Midway Meeting Announced 1st Sun: Suggested end of Deeper Research phase* By the 31st: Midway Meeting

May	June	July	December
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1st Sun: Suggested deadline for site visits* 5th: Committee chooses recipient 10th: Final Meeting location announcement 15th: Board approves recipient 3rd Sun: Wrap up and Party	10th: Check sent to recipient	1st: Midway Meeting Announced By the 31st: Midway Meeting	31st: Member donations due.
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* These items are optional dates to help guide the process for the Gift Committee. More details in the Advice for the Gift Committee section.

1. Kickoff Meeting

SET UP

Responsibilities for the all members:

- We have learned that our experience thrives on in-person connections. This is an in-person meeting mandatory for all Kindling members organized by *last year's* Board members. Invites must go out by **January 5**.

- Be prepared (if you like) to advocate for a theme for this year's gift. See the section on themes for more direction.

Responsibilities for last year's Board:

- Before the meeting, last year's Board members must speak with any members who cannot attend to see if they are interested in being on the Board or Gift Committee.

- Choose a facilitator and pre-assigned note taker from the confirmed attendees.

- Last year's Board members work to identify a Board Mentor. This is a member who have previously taken on Board or gifting roles and can guide next year's Gifters and Board.

Responsibilities for the Gift Committee:

- Design a ceremony for handing off the talisman.

AGENDA:

1. Welcome new members and explain the Kindling philosophy and strategy.

Draw from the following:

Kindling's Philosophy and Strategy

While each year brings an entirely new approach to achieving the vision of our community, there are some foundational principles that each member has agreed to in joining Kindling. It is the responsibility of the Gifters to choose a gift consistent with the Kindling Philosophy and Strategy.

Philosophy: We envision a humanity that recognizes and acts with respect for the interconnectedness of the world's inhabitants, and that lives in harmony with the natural environment. We believe that sustainable practices are the cornerstone of a well-balanced world community. We fund sustainable practices and efforts that support human rights.

Strategy: We are establishing a family-and friend-run foundation to fund endeavors in accordance with our philosophy. By giving together, we can make a larger impact. In addition, the foundation itself fosters a culture of philanthropy among us and brings us together through a shared sense of purpose.

Each year, a new Gift Committee will represent the community's goals by choosing a gift recipient that allows us to:

- Use our modest grant to make clear progress in creating a more just, sustainable and tolerant world;
- Connect interested Kindling members on a personal level to the work of the grantee; and
- Strengthen the enthusiasm of the Kindling community for philanthropic giving.

2. Choose Gift Committee

The Gift Committee consists of 2 members empowered to choose this year's recipient of the Kindling grant and an experienced mentor to help guide them. The Gift Committee is responsible both for choosing a worthy recipient and for inspiring the community with their choice. The style in which they choose to communicate with the community and the process by which they make their decision is largely up to them to decide, though this handbook offers guidance from previous years' experiences (See *Advice for the Gift Committee*).

Once everyone understands the role of the Gift Committee, all interested members put their names in a hat. The first two people drawn who have never before been on the Gift Committee will be appointed. If there are less than two new names in the hat, the first experienced names drawn will be appointed.

3. The Board

The Board ensures that the giving cycle proceeds smoothly. These responsibilities include:

- organizing meetings
- approving the year's recipient
- updating this handbook
- communicating with the Kindling accountant
- collecting funds from all members
- fostering a sense of inclusion of members throughout the giving cycle.

4. Choose a Theme

All members should be prepared before this Kickoff meeting with ideas for this year's theme. Themes may have a wide range, but must fit with the Kindling philosophy (see above). All members engage in a lively discussion about their choice for a theme (suggested time: 45 to 60 minutes). When all themes are laid out, all members vote to determine the top three themes. Ultimately, the Gift Committee will decide on the theme for the year but will consider the community's direction in this decision.

5. Bestow the Talisman

The Kindling community shares a talisman, an object passed to each new Gift Committee that symbolizes their commitment to, and representation of the entire group. For each cycle, last year's Gift Committee leads a ceremony to officially bestow the talisman on the new Gift Committee.

6. Collect Contact Information

Before ending the meeting, the Board should collect/update emails and phone numbers from each committee member.

FOLLOW UP:

The Board will contact those who missed the Kickoff Meeting, going over decisions made and making themselves available for feedback. The Board will also publish a list of contact information for all community members to the group.

2. Announce Theme

By the 1st Sunday in February, the Gift Committee will communicate to members via email and on the blog about which theme has been chosen for this giving cycle.

To sign in and modify the blog:
go to kindlingfoundation.org
click sign in
username: kindlingfoundation.org
pass: kindleme

3. Midway Gift Meeting

SET UP:

Responsibilities for the Gift Committee:

By **April 1**, a date, time and place must be announced for a Midway Meeting.

Responsibilities for the Board:

Ensure that by **April 1**, this announcement has been made.

AGENDA:

This is a chance for the Gift Committee to communicate in person about progress that they've made. Again, in-person meetings foster communication and a general connectedness among Kindling members. Further, this meeting will hopefully ensure that the Gift Committee is moving along in its job of finding a compelling gift recipient. At this meeting members are encouraged to provide feedback to the Gift Committee.

The Gift Committee may chose how they want the meeting to progress (slide show, general discussion, etc.). We recommend that a facilitator and a note taker be assigned.

4. Recipient presented to the Board

By **May 5**, the Gift Committee will have chosen a recipient and communicated with the Board about which organization will be receiving the year's gift.

5. Board Approval

By **May 15**, the Board will have done due diligence regarding the recipient. The Board's role is to ensure that the recipient's activities are in line with the philosophy and strategy of Kindling.

6. Wrap-Up Meeting and Party

On **the 3rd Sunday in May**, all members will gather. This meeting will be organized by the Board with agendas sent out in advance. Again, a facilitator and a note taker should be assigned, preferably from the general membership and not from the Board of Gift Committee.

SET UP:

Responsibilities for the Board:

-While the date is known in advance, the Board should arrange a time and place and send out invitations no later than **May 10**.

-In previous years, members have enjoyed having a representative from the recipient organization attend the gathering and make a brief presentation.

AGENDA:

1. Announce the recipient.

2. Explain volunteer opportunities.

3. Open up a discussion about lessons learned from this year's giving cycle.

Because Kindling and this document are a work-in-progress, we are always appraising how we can improve our organization. What worked and what needed improvement? Should we expand Kindling, and if so by how many people?

4. Celebrate the Board and Gift Committee's efforts. Reconnect.

FOLLOW UP:

The Board should receive notes from the meeting and incorporate lesson learned into this handbook.

7. Volunteer, Engage and Donate

Responsibilities for the Gift Committee:

- Discuss and record volunteer opportunities with recipient.
- Organize a group outing or communicate individual opportunities

Responsibilities for the Board:

- Make sure the check is sent to the recipient organization no later than **June 10**.

Currently, we do not have a set amount or formula for how much we donate. This is in process but as of now is negotiated between the Board and Kindling co-founders. The rough expectation is to give half of the current balance in the Kindling account each year.

8. Donations Due

Although the giving cycle officially ends in May, it is the responsibility of the Board to make sure all members have donated in that calendar year. There is no minimum donation, but all members are required to donate something each year.

9. Invite New Members and Provide them with Handbook

Responsibilities for all members:

-Based on the lessons learned in the wrap-up meeting, new members should be invited into Kindling by the 1st week in January. When inviting new members, please explain, at a minimum:

- The Kindling philosophy and strategy (see above)
- The structure and eventual commitment to serve as a Gifter and/or on the Board
- The donation policy (no minimum, yearly gift required)

-Old and new members alike should take a few minutes and re-read this handbook, in order to become familiar with Kindling's process.

-Before the Kick-Off meeting on the 4th Saturday in January, all members should give thought to what theme they would like to see be the focus of the upcoming year's giving cycle.

Advice for the Gift Committee

The most challenging and rewarding role in Kindling is that of a Gift Committee member. You are empowered to represent the entire community and make a sizeable gift to a cause that you are passionate about.

The advice below comes from the experience of past Gift Committees, though you may choose to decide on your grantee in any way you see fit.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR ROLES

There are two Regular Members of the Gift Committee. These members are ultimately the decision-makers for this year. They are joined by a Mentor Member who has been a Regular Member in the past. The Mentor provides support, advice and guidance in strategy. Regular Members may choose to empower the Mentor to join the decision making process or simply use the Mentor as an advisor. Regardless of your choice, the Mentor should be included in as many of your meetings as possible.

CHOOSING A THEME

The theme is really up to you. Be guided by your passion and your belief of what our community and our world is most in need of. Remember, however, that an important part of your job is to inspire the community. Choosing a theme in line with the expressed passions of the members can really help in this. Also, your theme must be guided by the Kindling Philosophy and Strategy.

BEFORE BEGINNING RESEARCH ON ORGANIZATIONS

It helps to further narrow down your focus before the real research begins. You may ask yourself:

- Will the focus of the research be on local, regional or state organizations?
- Do you want to support domestic or international charities?
- Do you only want to research charities that have opportunities for hands-on participation for Kindling members?

THE EARLY RESEARCH PHASE

Internet searches can be narrowed down and organizations vetted at these two very helpful web sites:

www.charitynavigator.org and www.guidestar.org

The goal of this phase is to choose two to three organizations for each member to research more thoroughly.

From the 2008 Gift Committee:

We decided to narrow the focus to local charities in the sustainable food arena. We limited our choices to charities that offered opportunities for volunteer work. The selections were made from a spreadsheet (available online at: <http://spreadsheets.google.com/ccc?key=pKOLsCD4SNSZGqXOk5mc9Mw&hl=en>) created by one of the Gift Committee members. The spreadsheet organized organizations working on sustainable food/farming issues by five pieces of information – the name of the organization, the mission of the organization, the city in which the organization exists, the state of the organization and the website for the organization. The spreadsheet included over 50 groups, organized geographically, which helped us narrow down the total number of possibilities to a manageable number. From that we each chose two non-profits to research. We found this to be an invaluable tool in the research process.

DIGGING DEEPER

Once you have identified the organization's you'd like to look into more deeply, the following questionnaire will be useful. We highly recommend that you set up an in-person meeting or a phone call with a leader at the non-profit you're seeking to investigate. A live conversation will be far more informative than simply sending out this questionnaire:

1. What is your operating budget?
 - a. What % goes to salary
 - b. What goes to running your programs
2. What is your organization trying to accomplish?

3. Where are you trying to go in your own words/what are your goals?
4. How long have you been in your position?
5. Can we visit your organization?
 - a. Can someone come to one of our meetings and give a presentation
6. What would you use our donation for?
7. Is there someone who can update us on progress into the future?
8. Is there a volunteer component?
9. Is there an educational component?
10. How many full time staff – how many volunteers? Give us the history of your organization
 - a. Who founded it?
 - b. Age of organization?
 - c. Backgrounds of founding members?
11. What are your other funding sources?
12. What population and geographic area do you serve?

The 2008 committee uncovered a number of red flags at this stage: *The red flags included grantees that were not available to answer questions or provide tours for the Committee, grantees with questionable reputations and histories and frequent leadership changes.*

MIDWAY CHECK IN

See the main part of this handbook for more details, but this is your time to reach out to the community. It is a time to seek inspiration and assistance in sorting through tough questions. The community's input does not bind you to any decisions, but it can offer guidance and create more excitement as you get closer to your final choice.

SITE VISITS

Once you have decided on 3-5 finalists, arrange to visit their operations and meet their staff and the people they serve. You may choose to split these visits among the Committee or do some of them

together.

FINAL DECISION

Get together. Lay out all of the remaining choices. Take a turn advocating for your favorite, then try advocating for another member's favorite. You may choose a consensus model or choose to vote with the Mentor casting a third vote.

Make sure to have a strong runner-up candidate as well in case the Board finds reason to not accept your first choice.

In 2009, the Gift Committee had the following experience:

We had three finalists that everyone loved. We began by eliminating the one that was most political and had the least direct service. We felt that one had the chance to do the most good but was also by far the riskiest because if their political campaign was not successful our donation would not feel tangible. Of the final two, we ultimately chose the one that we felt the most members could visit, touch and be involved with. For us, consensus was very important and we reached it after about two hours. Getting there gave us a ton of confidence in the choice we made and helped us communicate more passionately about our choice at the Wrap Up meeting.

From the 2008 Committee:

In the first gifting cycle, it became apparent that some of the original choices were poor ones after making site visits to the charities and getting little or no information about their work. It was surprising how disorganized small start-up groups can be and how hard it was to reach key people to get financial and historical information. It was easy to eliminate groups that did not get back to us! But then we were faced with either coming up with new organizations altogether or settling on the larger, time-tested groups. Due to deadlines that had been established, we eventually decided to do the latter. In hindsight, this felt more like resignation than the right decision.

PRESENTATION TO THE BOARD

Present your choice, along with a filled out questionnaire about your chosen group, to the Board. Include a half-page write up about why you feel it fits the Kindling Philosophy.

FINAL THOUGHTS FROM THE 2010 GIFT COMMITTEE

1. *Pick a theme that really resonates with your interests and values so you can be passionate about choosing the organization.*
2. *It is difficult to please everyone so go with what your committee feels is the best choice. That said, we would have liked if after a theme is announced that other Kindling members offer suggestions about specific organizations. There is an endless sea of possibilities and so specific leads are helpful.*
3. *Visit organizations early so you aren't rushing decision at the end.*
4. *We didn't find any particular websites that were real "gems" for searching organization databases. I think it would be good for members to assist gifting committee in the beginning with ideas regarding this at the first initial meeting.*
5. *It would have been helpful to get together more with the gifting committee members. Maybe realistic expectations should be set up at initially among members and planned out ahead of time.*
6. *It is easier to get development officers' attention at organizations if you have a gift amount to tell them.*
7. *Geographically separated committees have a harder time finding time to get together than geographically proximate committees.*
8. *The date deadlines and reminders from the board were very helpful.*
9. *The midway gift committee check in was a helpful step to refocus efforts.*
10. *We were challenged with what to say to development staff regarding what Kindling expects from them.*