

# **Evanston Community Foundation**

## **Public Policy and Advocacy Guidelines**

*Approved by Evanston Community Foundation Board of Directors on February 21, 2018*

Mission: Helping Evanston thrive now and forever as a vibrant, inclusive, and just community, the Evanston Community Foundation builds, connects, and distributes resources and knowledge through local organizations for the common good.

### **INTRODUCTION**

The Evanston Community Foundation (ECF) intends to make broad-based and long-term impact on the community. As such ECF may become involved in particular public policy issues as they emerge and act in a variety of leadership roles; from signing on to an effort, funding organizing work around issues, communicating potential impact to the community and acting proactively as a convener or leader.

### **PURPOSE OF GUIDELINES**

These guidelines provide Evanston Community Foundation with a framework for considering, evaluating, and acting in leadership capacities within the community. This document is intended to define:

- How ECF exercises its leadership role on issues of community interest and concern
- The process for
  - determining which issues to consider and
  - how to prioritize those issues, as well as
  - determining ECF's level of engagement in different cases
- The parameters or scope of ECF's involvement and leadership on issues of community concern
- A protocol which allows the Board to make fully informed decisions based on ECF's mission and ensures ECF remains in compliance with National Standards for Community Foundation Accreditation and IRS regulations for nonprofit organizations.

### **PRIORITY ISSUES**

ECF may take leadership in areas related to our mission or in areas related to foundation sustainability, concerning ongoing preservation of our funds or operations or our existence as a charitable institution. Through its mission and its grantmaking activities, ECF has established values that can be further supported through leadership and advocacy activities.

Based on current funding priorities and the climate for non-profit, charitable institutions, issues on which ECF may have an interest in acting in a leadership or advocacy role include the following. Current funding priorities will change over time and the Executive Committee will review these issues on an annual basis:

#### **Mission-related issues**

- Promoting equitable access to resources made available through government entities
- Promoting access to quality early childhood education and family support.
- Sustaining and building capacity in the non-profit community.
- Promoting workforce training and development.
- Promoting access to and sustainability of arts and culture programs.
- Promoting positive development for boys and young men.
- Promoting positive development and equal access for girls and women.
- Promoting civic engagement and community leadership.
- Improving access to affordable housing.

- Supporting climate action efforts.
- Other issues that could potentially impact the community in an adverse manner.

### **Foundation sustainability issues**

- Protecting rights of charitable donors and institutions to create long-term income from invested capital.
- Promoting tax incentives for charitable giving.
- Encouraging legitimate charitable activity.
- Protecting the tax status of legitimate non-profit organizations.
- Supporting legislation to improve management of charitable institutions' investment management and spending guidelines, such as UPMIFA (Uniform Prudent Management of Institutional Funds Act)

### **MAKING THE DECISION TO ADVOCATE**

While each issue must be considered on its own merits, there are some critical elements to determine the relevance of a particular issue and the proposed action or engagement the Foundation should take. This recommendation should include consideration of our stakeholders, including donors, grantees, partners and legislators. The recommendation may include a budget for leadership activities supported within the parameters of the organizations operating budget. Other parameters include:

#### **Relevance to ECF goals**

- The issue directly or indirectly affects ECF's constituents or ECF itself.
- The issue and action align with ECF's mission.
- The issue and action complement ECF's strategic goals.

#### **Access to resources**

- ECF has, or can acquire, adequate resources to implement the necessary strategies to affect the issue and action, including staff, funding and/or partnerships.
- ECF can identify and involve probable partners (individuals or organizations) who are willing to work with ECF and have the capacity to make a difference.

#### **ECF role and impact: Leader, Communicator, Convener**

- ECF should be a **leader** if there is an opportunity to take a proactive, rather than reactive, position on the issue.
- ECF's should use **communication** if the Foundation voice could help shape the outcome of the issue.
- ECF should **convening partners** to gauge if there is a ramification of taking or not taking a position on this issue. The outcome or impact outweighs the potential risk.

### **LEVELS OF ENGAGEMENT AND PROCESS FOR ENGAGEMENT**

Each of these levels of engagement will require an appropriate level of evaluation by staff and board. At all of the levels of engagement below, the staff will ensure the Foundation has adequate recordkeeping to comply with all relevant state and federal laws.

#### **Level 1: Signatory**

##### *Type of engagement*

ECF is periodically asked to co-sponsor events in the community, to sign on to advocacy positions, and to sign on to petitions. These types of requests often require a relatively quick turn-around on a decision.

### *Decision-making process*

Staff will evaluate initial requests and make a decision, based on an evaluation of the elements listed above and the relevance to mission-related or foundation sustainability issues defined below. This decision may include expenditures for event co-sponsorship.

The Executive Committee will be informed of this decision in their bimonthly meetings.

## **Level 2: Participant**

### *Type of engagement*

ECF may be asked to become part of a coalition to develop strategies toward a solution of a community or foundation sustainability issue. These strategies may include creating communications in support of an issue, facilitating discussions or educating partners.

### *Decision-making process*

Staff or board members may propose ECF involvement in such coalitions or organizing groups. Staff will research the issue and its current status in the community and will propose a role for ECF. This recommendation may include a budget for these leadership activities. This recommendation will be reviewed by the President & CEO. If approved, the Executive Committee will be informed at their bimonthly meeting. The action will then be included in the board member update.

## **Level 3: Catalyst**

### *Type of engagement*

In some cases, ECF will appropriately be the proactive leader on an issue. Issues which may affect our present or future grantmaking and/or leadership activities, in which no other even-handed and appropriate leader has emerged, and which significantly impact the lives of Evanston's residents are potentially ripe for ECF's leadership in bringing people and organizations together to craft solutions.

These issues will arise out of areas where ECF has developed significant expertise and has had significant experience.

### *Decision-making process*

Staff or board members may propose such issues for consideration, along with potential strategies. Staff will work with necessary committee members to research the issue and its current status in the community and will propose a strategic leadership role for ECF. This recommendation may include a budget for these leadership activities. This recommendation will be reviewed and approved by a majority of the Executive Committee. When ECF does act in a leadership or advocacy role, those acting on behalf of ECF will report back to the Board as a whole, as well as to relevant Foundation committees and staff to further inform future grantmaking, leadership and asset development.