



# EDUCATION FOUNDATION GUIDING PRINCIPLES

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Emerge | Develop | Excel

January 2020



## Collective Experiences

### Putting what we've learned into action.

Across the United States, millions of students in thousands of school districts experience significantly greater educational opportunities through the work of their local education foundations.

Our public/private partnerships strengthen public schools and require ethics, solid principles, and a clear vision to balance the diverse needs of a school community. Partnering with our school districts and communities to secure resources maximizes the impact of a student's P-12 public education.

While standards and guidelines are established for nonprofits and their leaders, each nonprofit sector is unique. Therefore, it's up to us to collectively establish and model principles so our professional colleagues across the education foundation continuum can thrive in a rapidly changing world. We, in turn, can help districts, educators, administrators, students, parents, and communities thrive together.

This document is a synthesis of our collaborative proven experiences, vision, and approaches to provide our country's public education foundations with a clear pathway to success.



**Implementing achievable standards will elevate our profession and align education foundations with a shared vision of excellence.**

## Strengthening public education foundations.

An expert task force assembled in September 2018 developed and drafted national guiding principles and proven practices to help public education foundations navigate continuous development—meeting organizations where they are and helping them achieve their next level.

These efforts were refined over the course of a year, and the initial National School Foundation Association (NSFA) Guiding Principles & Proven Practices draft was presented to the Industry Leadership Council at the 2019 National Conference to garner valuable insights and feedback.

The NSFA Guiding Principles & Proven Practices focus on the unique relationship between education foundations and public schools and do not duplicate principles included in other nationally recognized nonprofit guidelines.

Assisting education foundations to become conveners of important conversations and to strengthen partnerships with P-12 education in their communities was also a special focus of this project.

The NSFA Guiding Principles & Proven Practices challenge education foundations to keep their focus squarely on students' unique needs and to protect students from any undue pressures resulting from occasional political concerns that can arise as communities make public education decisions.

Transparency, fidelity, and accountability are also built into the guiding principles and proven practices to help foundations earn and maintain public trust, especially in times of crisis.

# The Fundamentals: Meet the Fantastic Four

The NSFA Guiding Principles & Proven Practices are connected to four fundamental areas that will help education foundation leaders as they guide their foundations along the continuum from emerging and developing foundations to fully excelling education foundations.



## Transparency & Purpose

- Stakeholder Identification
- Advocacy
- Accountability



## Fund Development & Gift Stewardship

- Financial Responsibility
- Roles & Responsibilities
- Endowment Management



## Legal Governance & Organizational Development

- District Relationships
- Foundation Grantmaking
- Professional Staff & Resources



## Programs

- Purpose
- Research-Based Allocations
- Community Responsiveness

# Principles & Practices by Focus Area

## Guidelines for excellence.

It's imperative that our school districts and communities set students and teachers up for success by leveraging an education foundations' capacity for growth and achievement. Adopting these guiding principles and proven practices will establish professional benchmarks for the public education foundation community. Using a variety of communication tools, each principle will be accompanied by researched and field-tested practices that foundations can identify with and tailor to their own organizational needs.

An education foundation's success points—emerging, developing, and excelling—will vary from principle to principle and examples of what the principle looks like at each stage, from emerging to excelling, will be spelled out. These guiding principles and proven practices will continue to evolve as the public education foundation industry evolves. To foster excellence, we must meet foundations where they are now to help them reach a new level of excellence in the future.

These concepts can be used to inform new board members, school district leadership, and donors about how to strengthen their community's public school support. In the future, they may be used by NSFA to help establish national accreditation standards for public education foundations.

Transparency & Purpose	
Focus	Principle
<b>Stakeholder Identification</b>	1. View students as your primary stakeholders and your district, parents, alumni, donors, and other community members as your secondary stakeholders.
	2. Serve as a conduit leveraging public and private school district investments and as the convener of stakeholders—moving education discussions to the forefront and maximizing the collective impact of public and private partnerships.
<b>Advocacy</b>	3. Advocate for students, educators, and public education systems' continued strength.
	4. Build relationships with public and private decision-makers in your community.
<b>Accountability</b>	5. Hold yourself to the highest standards of financial accountability, programmatic outcomes, and strategic goal achievement.

Fund Development & Gift Stewardship	
Focus	Principle
<b>Financial Responsibility</b>	6. Deliver program outcomes and maintain operations during stable and lean times.
	7. Implement a planned giving/legacy program to support your long-term financial health and ability to fulfill your mission.
<b>Roles &amp; Responsibilities</b>	8. Act as the district's primary charitable partner for district-wide initiatives.
	9. Establish resource development and relationship management as your core competencies.
<b>Endowment Management</b>	10. Manage endowments responsibly and strategically to enhance your foundation's long-term health and growth of available funds.

Legal Governance & Organizational Development	
Focus	Principle
<b>District Relationships</b>	<p>11. Define roles and processes clearly to protect the integrity of the foundation and the school system(s) it serves—this is a shared responsibility between the district and your foundation leadership.</p> <hr/> <p>12. Establish clearly defined collaborative planning practices between your foundation’s board and local school board to establish and achieve shared goals.</p>
<b>Foundation Grantmaking</b>	<p>13. Be a partner with your district in all major funding priority decisions.</p> <hr/> <p>14. Establish outcome reporting expectations from your districts that align with other public and private funder requirements.</p>
<b>Professional Staff &amp; Resources</b>	<p>15. Hire a professional staff and engage and train a volunteer board of directors to ensure your continued growth, financial sustainability, and maximized impact.</p> <hr/> <p>16. Utilize professional resources and practices to successfully and ethically steward donors, attract contributions, and securely manage finances, volunteers, and donor data.</p>



Programs	
Focus	Principle
<b>Purpose</b>	17. Consider student population needs and what community resources are available to meet those needs when making decisions about funding and organizational purpose.
	18. Consider identified gaps in educators' professional development when making funding decisions because supporting the development of high-quality teachers leads to improved student outcomes.
<b>Community Responsiveness</b>	19. Be proactive in your investments, anticipating and seeking funding for strategic and responsive initiatives that advance your mission.
	20. Advocate for students and protect their interests from political or social pressure to ensure every effort is made to maintain focus on the whole child and the integrity of the education system.
<b>Research-Based Allocations</b>	21. Invest in research-based solutions and address data-informed community needs to provide students with the greatest return.

# Resources for Growth

## Our recommendations.

The NSFA Education Foundation Guiding Principles and Proven Practices are specifically tailored to address unique opportunities and the important ethical decisions facing our profession. An education foundation may be emerging in some areas while developing and excelling in other areas. It's important for individual foundations to evaluate where they are currently in the developmental process, so they can make thoughtful decisions to support their growth and improvement.

The NSFA Board of Directors adopted these Education Foundation Guiding Principles, the Association of Fundraising Professionals Code of Ethical Standards and the Independent Sector's 33 Principles for Good Governance and Ethical Practice as guidance for achieving excellence in P-12 education foundations in the in the United States.

### Appendix 1

<https://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/Documents/Summary-of-Principles-for-Good-Governance-and-Ethical-Practice.pdf>

### Appendix 2

<https://afpglobal.org/sites/default/files/attachments/2019-03/CodeofEthics.pdf>

## A special thanks to our 2018–2020 National Task Force.

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