



**Michael &  
Suzanne  
Borrin  
Foundation**

**GRANTS AND SCHOLARSHIPS COMMITTEE  
MEETINGS**

# Policy and Practice Guide

Version 1.2  
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## Grants and Scholarships Committee Meetings: Policy and Practice Guide

### Effective meetings make for better decisions

A Grants and Scholarships Committee meeting is the forum for the decisions and resolutions required to discharge your responsibilities as GSC members. As per the Trust Deed, the GSC is responsible for recommending the scholarships and grants to be made from the Trust Fund (clause 7.1). The purpose of this practice guide is to facilitate good decision-making on such recommendations.

#### *Position/Policy statement:*

*The GSC operates by consensus decision making and collective responsibility. Recommendations from the GSC to the Trustee are recommendations from the GSC as a whole.*

This means that the GSC works towards a consensus on its recommendations about grants and scholarships to be funded. Unanimity is desirable, but not essential.

### Part 1: Meeting practice and behaviour

An effective GSC meeting requires three key things:

- Preparation: both the GSC members and the Philanthropic Advisor **prepare** well
- Procedure: appropriate **procedures** are followed
- Conduct: meeting behaviour and **conduct** supports robust debate and good decision making.

#### 1.1. Preparation

- Agenda and meeting papers should ideally be circulated seven days in advance of the meeting.
- It is the responsibility of each GSC member to ensure they read everything presented for discussion, and in the lead up to the meeting, to thoroughly consider the key issues behind the papers.
- If a GSC member has particularly strong views on an item for discussion, it is sometimes worth phoning the Chairperson before the meeting takes place to provide advance notice to ensure the issue can be effectively addressed at the meeting.
- 'No alarms or surprises' is a good rule of thumb.



- If possible, the GSC should agree to the following year's schedule of meetings to allow members to book meeting dates in their calendars.

### **1.2.Procedure**

- Frequency: GSC members can expect regular meetings to be held six times a year, on a two-monthly basis. In addition, a brainstorm meeting will take place annually.
- Quorum: The Trust Deed is silent on quorum, voting or majority decision making. The GSC can operate on the basis that there is no minimum attendance requirement, however this underscores the importance of setting meeting dates well in advance, as well as including non-attendees in decision-making via email or phone call.
- Informality: The GSC meetings are relatively informal.
- Meeting face-to-face: generally, the GSC will meet face to face, but video or phone conferencing is also an option. Meeting face-to-face generally facilitates better interaction, relationship building and growing a strong culture.
- All grant and scholarship recommendations will be recorded in the minutes.

### **1.3.Conduct**

An effective GSC meeting is strongly influenced by conduct, behaviour of members and the role of the Chair. The chair is central to ensuring all GSC members engage, contribute, are heard and that there is robust debate and respectful engagement.

- While the GSC proceeds by consensus and aims for unanimity, dissenting views may occur and can be recorded if the person requests this or if the Chair considers it is helpful to do so. A GSC member may differ from a decision taken, or agree to the decision taken but wish for their alternative views or reservations to be recorded.

## **Part 2: Meeting papers**

Three essential tools underpin effective GSC meetings:

- A focused agenda
- Well-constructed meeting papers that fit the GSC's purpose and needs
- Minutes that record decisions

### **2.1 Agendas**



A focused agenda is the roadmap for a meeting and the backbone of constructive discussion.

As with the use of any roadmap, we also need to allow for adjustments for 'current weather conditions'. It is a guide for discussions only.

Some points:

- The chair is the official owner of the GSC's agenda.
- Agendas will include indicative timing allocations for each agenda item.
- 'Meeting review' should also be an agenda item at the end. It is good practice for the GSC to quickly review the meeting and discuss if everything on the agenda was adequately covered, the meeting ran well and to time.

## **2.2 GSC Meeting Papers**

Meeting papers play an important part in stimulating discussion, however, in light of the GSC's relative informality, oral briefings and reports will also play a key role.

Meeting papers or oral reports/briefings, can be categorised in three ways:

- For information only
- For discussion
- For a decision to be made

Regarding meeting papers for the GSC, these should:

- Include the purpose upfront
- Be well-structured and clearly presented
- Remain consistent across reports
- Be succinct and concise, with plenty of thought in preparation.
- Be focussed on key issues.

The quality of meeting papers and briefings is related to a dynamic of trust and confidence between the Chair and Chief Philanthropic Officer (CPO). The Chair should expect the CPO to identify and prioritise the right topics for the GSC to discuss.

The GSC members and the CPO should maintain a dialogue about the information provided to the GSC, including feedback on areas that work well and need improvement. All involved are committed to the value of being a 'learning organisation' and



‘reflective practice’. This means that we reflect, learn and improve as we go.

### **2.3 Minutes of the GSC**

Minutes are designed to record matters considered at the meeting and decisions taken. Where a GSC meeting has been an ‘educational’ or professional development focussed meeting or session, minutes will not normally be recorded.

#### **Document owner and review period**

The Chairperson and Chief Philanthropic Officer are responsible for this policy and practice guide. It will be reviewed as required and at least every two years.

#### **Document history**

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#### **Acknowledgement**

Some of this material has been drawn from the New Zealand Institute of Directors Leaderships Centre’s Board Meeting Practice Guide, however, only relevant material to the GSC has been drawn from that. The GSC is not a board of directors.