

are you called to collaborative giving?

INTRODUCTION

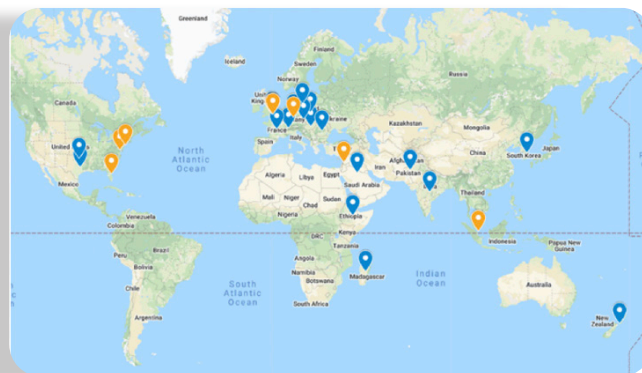
From the construction of Solomon's Temple, to the distribution of aid in the Acts Church, God has often called his people to be generous in community when a great task lay ahead. This story continues today, and we believe that God is animating collaborative generosity in friend groups throughout the world.

From Madagascar to the Czech Republic, givers like you are realizing the power and potential of collaborative giving. They are gathering to pray, share meals, learn, laugh... and give. It's not adding impact; it's **multiplying** impact!

Across Europe, multiple giving collaborations are fueled by a desire to see a reversal in the decline of the believing Church on the continent. Guided by the Holy Spirit, families have begun collaborating to fund evangelism and discipleship in their nations, mobilizing financial resources while building Christian fellowship in the process.

In the USA, a group of givers have the audacious goal of translating scripture into every language on planet Earth. They gather to share and learn about Bible poverty and the latest innovations in translation, and give to solve the problem of Bible poverty forever.

In Dallas, our Ambassadors Club group of young professionals gather to pray, learn about strategic giving, and collaborate in our generosity. We're 20- and 30-somethings, still early in our careers and



God has released nearing \$2 million for Kingdom causes in our community, all while building meaningful friendships and growing closer to Jesus Christ together.

There are a growing number of giving groups like ours, with God's fingerprints on them all.

We believe that God is calling generous leaders who would build communities that are generous together. Christians who gather to share life, stories, prayers, and strategies, and give to solve the pressing issues they see around them.

The document is adapted from resources compiled by generous together to clearly explain what is happening globally in Christian giving collaborations, and to help you discern if God might be calling you to launch a new giving community.

For those who desire to learn more, we provide contact information at the end of this document for you to follow up with Ambassadors Club if we can be of any assistance!

IS COLLABORATION FOR ME?

Those who choose to collaborate in giving tend to be busy people who nonetheless choose to make margin in their schedule for giving together. There is often a sense of calling. They possess a strong desire for impact, a heart to grow with and learn from peers, and a relatively high giving capacity.

In the right context, collaboration brings several advantages.

Fellowship

Faithful generosity, like any virtue, takes endurance and fortitude. The joyful fellowship of like-minded peers inspires new giving and brings joy to current giving. A joyful community also provides a wonderful on-ramp to new givers who are stepping into the biblical generosity journey.

Strategic Insight

Collaboration in giving allows great learning to occur. Just as a team of scientists will go further than a single researcher, a team of givers learns more rapidly than a giver acting alone.

Sustainability

A group of givers can work toward solving a problem for the long haul, without dependence upon the commitment level and financial status of one single donor.

Efficiency

The staff necessary to run a world-class giving operation is expensive. For most givers, the cost makes it unreasonable. But in a collaborative community, the group can collectively afford resources that any one giver could not, sharpening and strengthening the overall giving of the group.

Systemic Impact

Some large-scale issues are best solved by a coordinated, high-level approach.

Collaboration, like all good things, requires commitment and persistence for success. Talented administration is necessary (and can be staffed, as described in this document), and a catalytic leader will need to deploy social capital to gather and sustain the group. This paper is intended to help you consider these benefits and costs.

COLLABORATIVE GIVING: LESSONS FROM THE FIELD

In 2019 the Maclellan Foundation embarked upon a study of the state of collaborative giving, seeking learnings that might equip and bless givers around the world. In total, over fifty interviews spanning several months led to significant learnings, including common success factors among collaborations worldwide.

Definition and Scope

The research focused on kingdom giving collaborations. Each word is intentional:

Kingdom

The group's members and purpose are explicitly and openly Christian.

Giving

The group consists of givers who are actively mobilizing financial resources

Collaboration

Multiple people give together (minimum group size: 3 // ideally: 8+).

Out of 37 prospective groups across the globe, 20 were identified that met all three criteria and were active, ongoing kingdom giving collaborations. Among these, commonalities and success factors were gathered. Also, stories of failed collaborations provided helpful lessons learned.

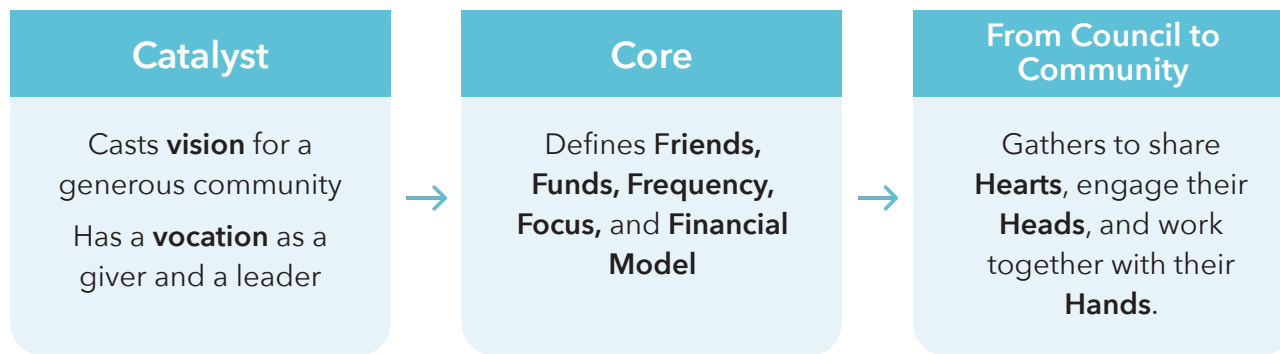
BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES

Upon a review of scripture, it was seen that modern giving collaborations share key commonalities with biblical collaborations.

- 1 Collaborative giving begins in response to a **clear need** that God has put on the hearts of key leaders.
- 2 Collaborative giving allows givers to freely make **individual giving decisions**.
- 3 Gifts flow through **trustworthy channels**.

BEST PRACTICES: LAUNCHING A COLLABORATION

The diagram on the next page demonstrates the way most collaborations launch. The **catalyst** is the prime mover for a group. This person has a vision for the group and the bandwidth to see it through, and a vocation as a giver and leader. They are a community leader, often with a successful business background, and are able to convene others. The catalyst, in some cases, walks in partnership with a trusted advisor who shapes the vision with them. The catalyst also designates someone who will focus on execution (more to come on this).



The **core** (3-8) is the initial conversational circle in the “pre-launch” phase. These leaders build the vision with the catalyst. The core – consisting of givers who are peers to the catalyst – comes together for a season to pray, strengthen relationships, and begin outlining a plan for the collaboration.

The **council** (8-15) represents the launch phase. Here, roughly a dozen individuals or families come together at the invitation of the core. Once launched, the collaboration often grows into a vibrant **community** (15-40+) that shares in the effort together. At these larger sizes, the group must remember to focus on the *heart* (spiritual/relational dynamics), even while engaging the heads and hands (the intellectual and practical dynamics of giving together).

Often, a **JOG** (Journey of Generosity retreat) plays a key role at one or more steps in this process – either inspiring the catalyst, or as a tool for the collaboration to invite and envision new prospective members.

BEST PRACTICES: OPERATING A COLLABORATION

Two Necessary Roles

The most common mistake when becoming generous together is thinking that no administrative help is needed. In other words,

the thinking goes, “We are givers... let’s find some ministries and start giving!” Very quickly, successful collaborations recognize the need to fill two key roles, the Manager and the Expert, which can be paid or filled with volunteers.



The Collaboration **Manager** sits between the givers and the ministries, serving as the logistical hub for the collaboration. A talented administrator keeps the collaboration running, making the group’s vision a reality.

While the catalyst provides the convening power, the manager plans events, engages ministries, writes grant reports, coordinates with givers, etc.

Ambassadors Club has a proven volunteer-led model -- additional resources available on request.

The **Expert** advisor is relied upon for guidance in evaluating projects. Givers usually do not have the bandwidth or expertise to evaluate ministry strategies and proposals well, so this role is critical for the success of the group. Subject-matter expertise is the key qualifier for this role. In the Ambassadors Club model, AC Dallas can help resource a new giving group with expertise and we typically encourage building your own council of experts ("Review Committee") to serve in this role collectively. In our earlier years, the AC-Dallas manager also served as the expert -- then "member" contributions to the collaborative's leadership grew over time.

The Charter

The core group usually agrees on five following key facets of a giving collaboration. Putting these down in writing anchors the group and brings clarity as they launch.

1 Focus - What big vision is the Holy Spirit calling us to, for God's glory? What Kingdom purpose will anchor this group? The group's faith goals may drive a geographic focus and/or a sector focus. i.e. "Homelessness in our city" or "Strategic church planting in our region" or "Great Commission projects in the 10/40 window".

2 Friends - Groups are usually givers-only. Any ministry professionals present are there as trusted advisors to the givers and do not advocate for one specific ministry.

3 Funds - Since the purpose of the group is to give, is there a minimum annual gift level? Also - will we take a marketplace approach, or a mutual fund approach?

Marketplace - The most common approach. Great projects are brought before the group, and then givers choose which projects they individually want to contribute toward.

Mutual Fund - The group pools financial resources, and giving decisions are handled by a central decision-making body. This can work well for funding projects where information is hard to come by (i.e. in closed countries, etc).

4 Frequency - When will we gather? Most meet at least annually for an overnight retreat, with shorter and/or virtual meetings in between. Some groups have already held online gatherings and have developed learnings on how to do so successfully.

5 Financial Model - How will operational costs be funded? Givers often cover their own lodging and meal costs, but what about paid staff time, and the core operational budget? A key donor (often the catalyst, at least initially) can cover the hard costs so the group's contributions can go 100% to ministry. Alternatively, groups either assess a percentage fee on overall group giving, or charge a flat membership fee.

next steps

Ambassadors Club can provide you the roadmap and resources to launch and operate a giving collaborative along the guidelines discussed in this primer. We've walked the road that is ahead of you and are eager to share our learnings and equip you for your own journey of generosity!

However, we invite you start with the issue of highest importance: what does the Lord have for you in this? Jeffrey D. Imbach wrote that "*Prayer is essentially the expression of our heart longing for love. It is not so much the listing of our requests but the breathing of our one deepest request, to be united with God as fully as possible.*"

Ambassadors Club wants that **full unity with God**—for us and for you—and if after praying you are eager to dig deeper, please reach out to us so we can share more resources to help you launch your giving collaboration, or join a group nearby.

So, first, we invite you to more deeply and prayerfully consider whether collaborative giving is for you. And then, second, if you feel ready to start the process, we'd love to brainstorm with you and help provide a road map for getting started.

The resources to launch a giving group are provided generously and free of charge. Ambassadors Club and other organizations like our friends at Generous Together (who helped us with these materials) have like-minded missions to serve the courageous givers who launch and run new giving collaborations, for God's glory.

So there are numerous ways to begin your collaborative giving journey, and if Ambassadors Club can help you get started, please send an email to the address below or contact us through our website. We would be delighted to serve you as you begin to figure out how God is leading YOU to become collaboratively and collectively generous in your community!

Learn more at www.ambassadorsclub.info

Or send us an email at
ambassadors.dallas@gmail.com