

Guidance for Funders

FADICA believes that philanthropy must boldly proclaim the priority of safeguarding. By working together, funders and grantee partners can educate their communities, normalize safeguarding best practices, and change culture.



“Safeguarding is rooted in interventions that prevent abuse and harm, and protect people. This is only possible when all stakeholders share a common language for safety and understand best practices, power dynamics, and healthy boundaries.”

Now more than ever, leaders in philanthropy and the nonprofit sector have the opportunity and the ability to lead by example. You can be part of the solution to change norms so that safeguarding best practices and policies to protect people are as expected and common as the best practices for finances that protect funding.”

– Alexia Kelley

President and CEO

FADICA Catholic Philanthropy Network

5 Steps Toward Building a Safer Environment

- 1 Raise awareness.**
Educate staff, volunteers, and board members on the definitions and statistics of abuse. Engage in training opportunities, and consider trends that affect your sector.
- 2 Normalize safeguarding conversations.**
Break down barriers and reduce stigma by making safeguarding a regular topic of conversation, not something that is discussed once during a new employee’s orientation. Define the bandwidth of appropriate behavior for your organization, and talk about challenges within that spectrum. Regularly discussing safeguarding helps individuals be motivated to observe and feel empowered to intervene when boundary violations occur.
- 3 Publicize a “zero-tolerance” statement.**
Share a public statement affirming your organization’s zero tolerance for abuse on your website, in a newsletter or bulletin, and in handbooks for staff, board members, and clients. If you don’t have a formal safeguarding policy, a zero tolerance statement is a good place to start. If you do have a safeguarding policy, communicate this value publicly.
- 4 Consult an expert.**
Expert third parties are an excellent resource for helping your organization identify potential vulnerabilities and understand risk of abuse. Expert advice can also help your organization develop best practices and adapt to changing trends, not just tick a compliance box.
- 5 Connect to your values.**
Your organization is likely united by a shared mission of service, ministry, education, faith, or some collective benefit. Safeguarding is an extension of these values. By working to prevent abuse and support healing efforts, organizations honor the dignity of every individual and help keep vulnerable persons safe.

Visit safeguarding.fadica.org for informational videos on these topics.

The Role of Funders in Safeguarding Practices

How can funders lead the effort to normalize safeguarding practices and expectations? Here are some actions to consider:

Show commitment to safeguarding through learning and active engagement in safeguarding practices.

Seek to understand the challenges that a grantee partner may face in implementing best practices for safeguarding.

Share resources that grantees critically need to build capacity for the development and management of safeguarding practices.

Safeguarding Considerations for Funders

What internal reflection is helpful as foundations and funders begin to formalize their safeguarding values?

Here are some criteria to consider:



Scope of Access

What positions or roles within the foundation (grants managers, administrators, board members, trustees, family members, etc.) directly interact with children or vulnerable adults?



Frequency and Location

How frequent are interactions with children/vulnerable adults, and where do these interactions typically occur (e.g., site visits, fundraisers, networking events, community service opportunities, immersion experiences, etc.)?



Power Dynamics

Does the foundation address power imbalances between funder and partner? Do certain roles come with power (institutional, financial) that could be leveraged over vulnerable persons or within/over a community?



Partner Accompaniment

What does a common language for safeguarding communicate about a foundation's values? How does formalizing your safeguarding approach enhance communication and trust within the funder/partner relationship?

Communicating with Grantee Partners

How should funders discuss safeguarding with grantee partners in order to foster trust? Here are some recommendations:

Anticipate concerns and welcome dialogue

- Provide a clear definition for “safeguarding” since the term may be unfamiliar to some organizations.
- Initiate a verbal conversation on safeguarding with a grantee partner to provide a valuable opportunity for dialogue and questions from the grantee partner. A conversation within or following the first round of contact helps manage grantee expectations and address misunderstandings and concerns.
- Clearly communicate the funder’s rationale for prioritizing this work, and the nature of their interest in safeguarding practices.
- Recognize the potential burden that safeguarding may demand, and communicate expectations associated with the “ask” – including whether it is formalized and binding, or encouraged and invitational.
- Provide information on how the funder will support capacity building for the development of safeguarding practices.
- Clearly explain how information and data regarding a partner’s safeguarding practices will be used by the funder. Grantee and prospective partners may be intimidated by questions related to “abuse prevention,” or reluctant to disclose information to a funder unless they understand how a funder will use the data.

Publicly share statement on safeguarding

Include a brief statement on the foundation’s website and/or grant application materials, such as:

[Foundation Name] is committed to promoting a culture of safe environments and prioritizing the well-being of all individuals, especially children and vulnerable adults, in its grantmaking.

As part of this effort, [the foundation] has pledged to support grantee partners in developing capacity for abuse prevention and organizational safeguards.

The above example for the values statement is intentionally broad so funders may set unique expectations for grantee partners. Consider how safeguarding intersects with your grantmaking values, and articulate how you will use raw data to resource the partner. Know the “why,” as well as the “who” and the “what.”



TIP

Create a “common language”

Safeguarding is defined as:

- measures and interventions that protect people from abuse, harm, exploitation, or violence.
- a commitment to best practices that prevent abuse, reduce risk, and keep all persons safe, especially children and vulnerable adults.
- promotes action that assures justice and supports healing for victims and survivors of abuse.

TIP

Extend Safeguarding Beyond “Child Protection”

“Vulnerable adult,” though diversely defined, frequently refers to an individual who is eighteen years of age or older, and who is unable to protect themselves from abuse, harm, or exploitation, which may be by reason of illness, age, chronic health condition, disability, or other types of physical or mental impairment.

In the support and care for vulnerable adults, a power differential is inherent, according to the relationship or situation of trust, influence, or dependency.

Communicating with Grantee Partners (continued)

Gather information from partners through grant applications or funding requests.

In order to assist with building safeguarding capacity, an understanding of the grantee's existing protocols and policies for safeguarding is needed.

Sample language for funding requests / grant applications may include:

The following questions will help [the foundation] to [determine next steps/provide resources to partners].

All answers are confidential and will be used for [specific purpose]. (Examples of how the data may be used could be: to resource grantee partners with cost-free materials, or providing additional funding for trainings, modules, templates, expert consultation, etc.)

Sample questions:

Does your organization provide direct services to children or vulnerable adults? (Y/N) (If desired, the "No" responses could be softened with a "Not at this time" or a comparable sentiment.)

If the answer to #1 is yes, please confirm:

Does your organization have a written policy that defines appropriate boundaries and interactions between staff and vulnerable clients/beneficiaries of service, and offers a clear system of reporting for violations or concerns? (Y/N)

Does your organization require staff to participate in abuse prevention trainings/programs before interacting with children or vulnerable adults? (Y/N)

Are you interested in receiving free resources and/or expert consultation to build capacity for abuse prevention and safe environments? (Y/N)

Funders should communicate how responses to safeguarding questions may or may not affect funding decisions, how the data will be used, and a timeline for the use of collected data.



Additional considerations:

- Are partners struggling with the term "safeguarding"? Frame it more simply: What do you do (or need to do) to keep people safe at your organization?
- Will grantees be required to engage in safeguarding training, or will it be optional? If optional, will training be a requirement in the future?
- As safeguarding best practices are adopted and integrated, to what extent will the foundation consider additional infrastructure needs for the partner?



Visit safeguarding.fadica.org for additional resources.



FADICA is the leading philanthropic peer network serving as a catalyst for a vital Catholic Church, Catholic ministries, and the common good. Learn more at www.fadica.org