

Key Ideas & Concepts for Introduction to Philanthropy Module

Intentional giving:

Consider *what* you have to give and *how* you want to contribute to your community and world. There are different things you can give and different approaches to how people and groups make their communities and society better and solve social problems.

Philanthropy: Giving time, talent or treasure intended for the common good.

Giving time, whether informally for a neighbor or formally through a nonprofit, is a common way for young people to engage in philanthropic action.

Giving talent means using your expertise or abilities to better your community or address a cause about which you care.

Giving treasure means giving tangible items, including money and goods like food, clothing, books, furniture, artwork, and other valuables.

Four approaches to philanthropy:

The four traditions of philanthropy are different ways (approaches) to responding to, and addressing, needs and challenges in the world. This framework for thinking about philanthropy was identified by scholars Elizabeth Lynn and Susan Wisely to help people and grant-making institutions think more intentionally about their philanthropy.

The Four Traditions are (1) Relief, (2) Improvement, (3) Social Reform and (4) Civic Engagement.

Relief: Acts that work to address basic needs or alleviate human or animal suffering.

Improvement: Acts that strive to help people improve their lives, the environment or animals' living conditions.

Social Reform: Acts that work to create equitable access to resources for all people or to implement social reform by changing systems.

Civic Engagement: Acts that empower people to connect to one another and work collectively (together) to better their community or world.

Examples of organizations or programs for each of the Four Traditions:

Relief: American Red Cross and International Committee of the Red Cross respond to natural disasters by evacuating disaster areas and assist people in war-torn countries by providing water, food and shelter. This work is an example of philanthropic *relief*.

Improvement: Habitat for Humanity builds or repairs people's homes to help them achieve the stability and independence they need to build a better life for themselves and their families. This work is an example of philanthropic *improvement*.

Social Reform: The Smart Justice 50-State Blueprints, proposed by the American Civil Liberties Union and the Urban Institute are recommendations meant to substantially lower jail and prison incarceration in the United States through actionable public policy reform. This initiative is an example of philanthropic *social reform*.

Civic Engagement: AmeriCorps is a government program that engages thousands of Americans in jobs that address critical community needs including improving students' academic achievement, fighting poverty, mentoring youth, preparing for disasters, sustaining national parks, and more. This program is an example of philanthropic *civic engagement*.

The traditions are not exclusive:

A philanthropic action or organization can fit under more than one of the four traditions. For example, the Feeding America network supports food banks that provide canned goods for local food pantries that feed hungry Americans each week (this is **relief**). The network also works with farms, manufacturers and businesses to lower food waste by changing their practices to rescue safe, edible food that isn't harvested or sold (this is **reform**). The Feeding America network includes 200 food banks and 60,000 food pantries and their staffs (this is **civic engagement**).

What the four traditions have to do with you:

The reason the four traditions framework is important for you is that it gives you a way to think about how you want to be intentionally engaged in philanthropy. What kind of impact do you want to have? Do you want to meet an immediate human need or relieve animal suffering? Do you want to improve human life or the natural environment? Do you want to change societal injustices through legislation and public policy work? Do you want to take collective action with others to address a grassroots or global issue? Again, it doesn't mean that you would choose one philanthropic tradition to act under, but that you understand that there are different ways to make a difference.