

## Setting Up a Grandfamily Council: 10 Tips

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A grandfamily council is a group created by an agency or organization to help implement practices and policies in a way that considers the unique strengths and challenges of grandfamilies. This type of advisory council prioritizes the expertise and insight of lived experts to ensure services are relevant, effective, and tailored to the needs of grandfamilies. Creating a robust, active grandfamily council ensures that your programming meets the needs of the kin caregivers you serve. Here are 10 tips to get started.

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### 1. Define expectations.

- What's the group's purpose? What may the group be able to change? What are its limits?
- Who will be included in the group? What role will council members play?
- How will you share information captured during a meeting? Will meetings be recorded? If so, who will have access to the recordings? Will ideas be presented anonymously, or will participants' names and images be used?
- When will the group meet? How long is the time commitment? (Ongoing? A year? On a rotating basis, with a certain percentage of people retiring each year?)
- What, if anything, will be required of participants between meetings?
- How and when will participants be compensated? (See below for more on this.)

### 2. Designate a staff member who will build and maintain relationships with participants.

This person might send out meeting reminders and agendas, provide updates on ongoing work, field questions, and/or distribute materials for participants' review. There should also be a plan for where to send people for help if they raise personal needs.

### 3. Determine a compensation strategy.

Kin caregivers bring a specific and necessary expertise that is best recognized through payment for their time and effort. To determine an appropriate stipend, honorarium, or hourly rate, think about the time commitment required, the number of activities expected in between meetings (such as reviewing documents or speaking at events), and whether kinship families need to secure childcare in order to participate in the council. Consider whether to include mileage and/or childcare vouchers. Determine whether the compensation could have implications for caregivers' taxes and/or benefits and, if so, explore the possibility of using e-gift cards or physical gift cards, instead.

### 4. Make a list of the groups you'd like to include on your council, so that participants represent the entire community.

For example, you might want to include grandparents, kin caregivers under 40, caregivers who work full-time, caregivers of children and youth of various ages, tribal representatives, Spanish speakers, etc. Think about other selection criteria.

### 5. Design recruitment materials.

For sample materials, see [Nava's toolkit](#), "How to build a participant advisory council." Identify community partners, such as cultural and faith-based organizations, that might help you recruit appropriate participants.

6. **Conduct intake calls, using a script or notes to make sure all participants receive key information.** Be sure to explain privacy and consent, and provide a written agreement. Be clear about the goals of the group and the time commitment needed. Answer any questions.
7. **Offer meeting times that accommodate work and childcare schedules.** You might also explore virtual meetings to make attendance easier or consider offering childcare onsite.
8. **Plan for participant drop-out.** Life happens. Participants may find that they have too much on their plates or that their priorities change as children age.
  - It's helpful to let participants know in advance what to do if they need to resign.
  - Inform participants that you will provide compensation in installments (for example, \$300 in three payments of \$100 each) so that you can stay on budget if you need to fill a vacancy.
  - Begin with one or two extra participants so you won't need to do additional recruiting if someone leaves. Also, maintain a list of applicants who weren't accepted in the initial round so you have a list of interested participants to return to if needed.
9. **Provide training and orientation.** This might include sharing the organization's history, mission, and values; a review of roles and responsibilities; and a discussion of expectations for honoring privacy and confidentiality. Cover practical details—a typical agenda, information on transportation and parking, technology training, and coaching on commonly used terms.
10. **Celebrate success and provide opportunities for feedback.** Define goals and note them as they're reached. Conduct a participant satisfaction survey once a year to gather information on what aspects of the council could be strengthened or improved. Use the final meeting of the year to reflect on lessons learned and brainstorm future activities.

For more information, check out our tip sheet, [Tips to Include Kinship/Grandfamilies in Programmatic Decision-Making](#).

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The Grandfamilies & Kinship Support Network: A National Technical Assistance Center (Network) helps government agencies and nonprofits in states, tribes, and territories work across jurisdictional and systemic boundaries to improve supports and services for families in which grandparents, other relatives, or close family friends are raising children whose parents are unable to do so. For more information, please visit [www.GKSNetwork.org](http://www.GKSNetwork.org).

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