

Step 1: Discover Your GIVING Mission



A personal reflection guide to focus your giving in Middle Tennessee

Before choosing where or how to give, take a moment to reflect on what matters most to you. This worksheet helps you define your unique giving mission, one that reflects your lived experiences, values, and the change you want to see in your local community. It's the first step in using [GivingMatters.com](https://givingmatters.com) with confidence and purpose.

What Inspires You to Give?

Your values, story, and perspective are powerful. Use these questions to explore what has shaped your view of the world:

- *What life experiences have influenced the issues or causes you deeply care about?*
- *Who in your life has modeled generosity, justice, or community impact?*
- *What are your top three values that guide your actions?*

Write a few notes here to capture what comes up for you.

Where Will You Focus Your Impact?

Now start translating those reflections into direction. [GivingMatters.com](https://givingmatters.com) can help you explore nonprofits that align with your focus.

- *What community challenges resonate with you the most?*
(e.g., Affordable Housing, Child Care Access, Parks and Green Spaces, Workforce Readiness, Food Security, Positive Youth Development, Mental Health Wellness, Arts, etc.)?
- *Are there specific populations you feel the greatest connection with?*
(e.g., youth, immigrants, rural families, seniors, individuals with disabilities)
- *Where do you want your giving to make an impact?*
(e.g., Nashville, Middle Tennessee, specific neighborhoods, statewide, etc.)



CONTINUE TO
NEXT PAGE





How would you like to support your focus area?

(Check all that apply)

- ☐ Programs that provide direct services
- ☐ Leadership capacity building (supporting nonprofit infrastructure)
- ☐ Policy and advocacy
- ☐ Scholarships or supporting individuals
- ☐ Community events
- ☐ Operating support
- ☐ Other: _____

Do you prefer to support smaller, promising organizations or larger, more established ones?

What kind of change do you hope to see as a result of your giving?

(e.g., Increased graduation rates, safer neighborhoods, more families in stable housing, etc.)

Use the [GivingMatters.com Impact Map](https://givingmatters.com/impact-map) to explore nonprofit profiles based on the communities that resonate with you.

Write Your GIVING Mission

Now, put it together. Based upon your answers, draft a one- to three-sentence focus statement that summarizes what matters to you and where you want to focus your giving.

Examples:

- *To support mental wellness in rural Tennessee by funding nonprofits that provide healing spaces for youth and families.*
- *Our family will focus our giving on increasing access to the arts for communities in Davidson County that have been historically excluded from cultural experiences.*
- *To honor my late father's legacy, I will invest in community-based programs serving veterans in Middle Tennessee.*

Reading to act on your mission?

Continue to **Step 2: Ask the Right Questions** to start connecting with nonprofits and learning more about their work in your focus area.

Step 2: Ask the Right Questions



Use [GivingMatters.com](https://givingmatters.com) to explore nonprofits, and go deeper when you're ready.

Once you've defined your giving mission, the next step is to explore how nonprofits in Middle Tennessee are making a difference. [GivingMatters.com](https://givingmatters.com) makes it easy to browse programs, funding needs, and impact stories, all without needing to reach out directly. That's the beauty of transparent, local data. *But if you're thinking about giving more significantly, volunteering, or forming a deeper connection, a conversation with a nonprofit leader can be incredibly insightful and rewarding for both sides.*

Where to begin

Click on the [Impact Map](#) to start exploring. You can use the search features to find nonprofits based on what matters to you.

Keyword Search – Enter terms like “housing,” “youth,” or “mental health”

Topics – Choose a focus area
(Ex: Arts & Humanities, Children/Youth, or Health & Safety)

Indicator – Once you've selected a topic, explore related community needs using data from the American Census Survey

Location – Look up a city or county

Geography Type – Adjust the map view by boundary type
(Ex: city, county, MSA, census tract, or zip code)

When something sparks your interest, click on an organization to visit their profile and begin your self-guided tour.

Where to Look on GivingMatters.com



As you review a nonprofit's profile, keep these core questions in mind:

What is the heart of their work?	About tab → Mission Statement and Current Programs tiles on right side of profile.
What's their most successful program and why?	Organization main page → Current Programs tiles on the right side of profile.
Where does most of their funding come from?	Financials → Includes revenue breakdown and funding sources.
How do they measure and share their outcomes?	About tab → Impact Statement fields (if completed) or on the Current Programs tiles on the right side
What impact are they making?	About tab → Impact Statement
What are their current needs or goals?	About tab → Needs Statement
How are they growing or evolving?	About tab → Impact; Strategies Statement (Impact Capabilities, Progress Indicators, Goals, & Progress So Far)
How can supporters stay involved?	Organization main page → or linked website/social media pages

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Tip: Profiles vary! Not every section will be filled out, and that's okay. Use what's available to guide your giving, and remember: some smaller or grassroots organizations may not have the same capacity to build out every section, but they're often doing powerful, community-rooted work. If something's missing and you're curious, it's always okay to reach out and learn more.

Go Beyond the Profile

If you're considering a larger gift, ongoing partnership, or deeper involvement (like volunteering or board service), you might choose to reach out directly. Below are conversation-ready questions to help guide a 15-20 minute phone call or email exchange.

Questions to Ask:

(in conversations or email)

Start with context:

"Hi, I've been exploring local nonprofits on [GivingMatters.com](https://givingmatters.com), and your organization stood out to me. I'd love to learn more about your work and how I might be able to support it. Could I speak to someone on your team for a few minutes?"

Learn about goals and successes:

1. What's your most successful program and why?
2. What are you most proud of as an organization right now?
3. Can you share an example of your work making a real difference?
4. What are some areas where you're growing or improving?
5. What are your top goals for the year ahead, and how did you decide on them?
6. What do you wish more people understood about your work?

Understanding resourcing and needs:

1. What are your most urgent needs this year?
2. What would help you grow your impact in the next year or two?
3. How can I get involved beyond a financial gift?

Go deeper

(for major donors or long-term partners)

1. What barriers make your work harder?
2. What would you do with a large surprise donation?
3. What's your staff especially good at, and what gaps are you working to fill?
4. How do you collaborate with others in your field?

Wrap Up with Gratitude

Whether you read a profile or have a conversation, every connection matters. If you do reach out, thank them for their time and for the impact they're making in our community.

Ready to Take Action?

Head to Step 3:

Create Your Giving Plan to map out how you'll give, connect, and grow your impact this year.



Step 3: Create Your GIVING Plan



Turn your reflections into action and build upon a plan that fits your life.

You've defined your giving mission and explored local organizations that align with your values. Now it's time to turn your intentions into action. Whether you're planning to give a little, a lot, or simply become more informed and involved, this worksheet helps you take the next steps in a way that feels achievable and grounded in your personal goals.

Learn More About the Issues You Care About

[GivingMatters.com](https://givingmatters.com) is a great place to start, but you don't have to stop there. Here are ways to deepen your knowledge and build your confidence as a giver.

Choose what fits your style:

- ☐ Explore nonprofit profiles on [GivingMatters.com](https://givingmatters.com)
- ☐ Use the Impact Map to learn what's happening near you
- ☐ Read stories, blogs, or reports from organizations working in your interest area
- ☐ Follow a few nonprofits on social media or sign up for their emails
- ☐ Attend a public event, community conversation, or local fundraiser
- ☐ Talk to someone directly impacted by the issue you care about
- ☐ Join a donor learning group or giving circle
- ☐ Other: _____

Decide How You Want to Help

Philanthropy isn't just about money. Your time, skills, and relationships are valuable.

How might you support nonprofits in ways that are meaningful to you?

Consider:

- ☐ Share a nonprofit's story with your network
- ☐ Join a board or advisory committee
- ☐ Invite a friend to learn more about an issue together
- ☐ Offer professional skills (e.g., marketing, finance, design, legal help)
- ☐ Help fundraise or host an awareness event
- ☐ Talk with friends or coworkers about the causes you care about
- ☐ Other: _____

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Allocate Your Financial Resources

Your giving doesn't have to be large to be intentional. Set a goal that works for your life, and revisit it when your circumstances or priorities shift.

Ways to start:

- ☐ Set a monthly or annual giving amount
- ☐ Choose 1-3 nonprofits that align with your mission and plan to give regularly or set up recurring gifts
- ☐ Revisit your past giving and consider shifting to align with your goals
- ☐ Talk with your partner or family about shared giving priorities
- ☐ Check for workplace matching gifts or employer-sponsored giving programs
- ☐ Explore giving through your estate plan, retirement accounts, or a donor-advised fund.
- ☐ Other: _____

Commit to Your Plan

Now pick the actions that feel right for you, big or small.

This year, I will...

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

In the next 3 months, I will...

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Tip: Add these to your calendar or planner now. Revisit your plan in a few months and celebrate your progress!

Want More Guidance?

- Talk to a staff member at CFMT at <mailto:givingback@cfmt.org>
- Explore donor resources on GivingMatters.com
- Follow GivingMatters.com on  