



Interested in starting a New Colossus group?

Read below to learn more: why we started New Colossus Donors, how it works, and answers to frequently asked questions. At the end of this document, we include sample agendas and a timeline.

Why we started New Colossus Donors

After the November election, like many other Americans, we thought a lot about our country's future. We wanted to do something -- to take action -- to support the basic tenets of our democracy.

The six of us who started the first New Colossus Donors group in Philadelphia had experience with a women's collective giving organization. That experience was deeply gratifying. We learned so much from other women and also learned a great deal about the nonprofit organizations we funded. Combining our donations and directing them to one purpose magnified the individual contributions into something significant. Those characteristics of collective giving were part of the inspiration behind New Colossus Donors.

Our name is taken from Emma Lazarus's 1883 sonnet inscribed on the Statue of Liberty:



The New Colossus

*Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame,
With conquering limbs astride from land to land;
Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand
A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame
Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name
Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand
Glowes world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command
The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame.
"Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp!" cries she
With silent lips. "Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"*



Beyond its famous excerpt, the sonnet has many lines that resonate strongly. The symbolism of the Statue of Liberty -- a mighty woman with a torch, offering a world-wide welcome and a golden door to freedom -- is breath-taking. In one simple but powerful gesture, she conveys strength, inclusion, light.

New Colossus Donors, through the powerful learning and decision-making of collective giving, provide funding for nonpartisan issues that are integral to our American democracy.

How New Colossus Donors works

New Colossus Donors is intended to be a loosely connected network of small giving circles. The concept is deliberately simple, with minimal emphasis on process, and a heavy focus on learning and finding the most effective ways to support fundamental American values.

Here are the basic recommendations:

1. **A group of women** gather to form a New Colossus giving circle. We feel the best size for engagement and conversation is a group of about 6 to 8 members.
2. Each member pledges to donate an amount that is significant to her. Every woman decides the amount for herself, and donation amounts in a group may differ. For a young woman in college, \$25 or \$50 each might be the appropriate amount; for someone older, perhaps \$500 or \$1,000 or more.
3. **The group holds three meetings** over the course of 2-3 months.
 - At the first meeting, select 2-4 issue areas that the group wants to research.
 - At the second meeting, review members' research on the critical problems in those areas, possible solutions, and organizations that are addressing the issues. Identify 3-6 organizations that will be the group's focus for further research.
 - At the third meeting, review and discuss the additional research and findings, and determine the nonprofit organization(s) to support.
4. **Each member, at the third meeting, makes her donation decision(s) and donates** either by check or online directly to the organization(s) chosen by the group.
5. **The group sends a letter or email** to the nonprofit recipient(s), explaining why each organization was chosen.
6. **The group can stay in touch with other New Colossus Donors** during and after the giving cycle. This can be a remarkable way to learn from people all over the country who are invested in the same exploration.



The first New Colossus Donors group in Philadelphia

Our Philadelphia group launched with a first meeting in early January 2017. During that meeting, we selected four issue areas to pursue: fake news, climate change, immigration, combatting hate. We convened three weeks later, at the end of January, and shared our research on the four areas. After discussion, we decided not to eliminate any of them from further consideration; we wanted to know more about all four. But we needed to narrow our focus to stay on track and reach a funding decision at the third meeting, so we homed in on six nonprofit organizations to study further.

At our third meeting in late February, we discussed those nonprofits in detail. We had anticipated funding only one or two of the organizations, but after discussion, we chose to fund all four because of the quality of their work and the urgency of the needs they address. Individually, we decided the amount we would give to each organization, and we mailed a letter along with our checks to the nonprofit recipients.

In 2018, we repeated this process with three meetings in January, February and early March. We discussed and selected issue areas that seemed most important in the current moment, and decided on gun violence prevention, immigration, voting/fair representation, and women's health. At our third meeting, we decided to fund one nonprofit organization in each of those areas, and donated online. We then sought to spread the word about the powerful work of those organizations through Twitter and word of mouth. We recognize that our donations are only a modest sum, but we can contribute in other ways by helping to spread the good word about these organizations' accomplishments.

We hope you join us!

New Colossus Donors is on Twitter as [@NewColossusDnrs](https://twitter.com/NewColossusDnrs). We also email updates occasionally; if you'd like to join our email list, let us know at newcolossusdonors@gmail.com.



Frequently asked questions

1. **What is your goal – to get more members?** No, we are not looking for more members for our Philadelphia group, and we're not asking you to donate to the nonprofits we funded (though they are terrific, and we'd love to see more funds go their way). When we first formed, we knew of friends around the country who were looking for ways to respond to the election. It seemed to make sense to document our process and create an easy, informal roadmap of sorts for others who might start their own circle. Using the New Colossus name means that groups can find each other online and share what we learn.
2. **Are you looking to form one big giving circle?** No, not at all - we envision a loose network of small, independent circles. Our group in Philadelphia is six people. Others can form a group of any size they like, and each New Colossus group will all make its giving decisions independently. The most powerful thing will be New Colossus groups sharing ideas on Facebook and Twitter, and through email updates. From each other, we'll learn about organizations we might want to support.
3. **Is this "one and done"? Three meetings and that's it?** This is also up to each group. Our Philadelphia group decided to do a three-meeting cycle annually in January-February, and meet each fall to review the organizations we funded earlier that year. Other groups might choose to have more than three meetings in their giving cycle, or to do multiple cycles per year. Above all else, the goal is for this giving model to be flexible. The point is for all of us to have a way to take action and be effective.
4. **How did you start so quickly after the election?** There's not much preparation required. Our Philly group selected three meeting dates by email, and agreed to come to the first meeting with ideas for issue areas we might want to support. The process rolled forward from there. The emphasis is not on creating a perfect process, but on research, discussion, learning, and doing something -- making a donation to a good cause. And then communicating about what we learn and where we donate.
5. **If I start a group, I'm not sure I can give a big donation at this time. What amount do you recommend?** There's no recommendation; you should give the amount that feels right to you. This is entirely personal, and it's your participation that matters. The common ground is that donors commit to attending three meetings and participate in learning and decision-making together.
6. **You say this is a women's giving circle. What about men?** Women's collective giving is a wonderful format, and that is why we chose it for the Philadelphia model. But New Colossus Donors is a flexible concept and men who are interested are welcome to participate. The more the merrier, truly, as more participation will lead to greater support for important causes.
7. **May I tell others about this idea?** Yes, absolutely. Feel free to forward this.



Sample Agendas & Timeline

First Meeting

- Confirm dates for 2nd and 3rd meetings
- Talk about the group's process for final donations (support only one or more than one organization; decide independently on amounts to give, or collectively; etc.)
- Share ideas for issues to focus on and consider funding
- Select issue areas to focus on (recommend 2-4)
- Brainstorm ways to research those areas before 2nd meeting
- Bring notes, names of organizations to next meeting for discussion

Second Meeting *[about 3 weeks after first meeting]*

- Confirm date for 3rd meeting
- Share research on topics chosen at 1st meeting
- Narrow the focus to specific nonprofit organizations to research further
- Brainstorm ways to research those areas before 3rd meeting
- Bring notes, names of organizations to next meeting for discussion
- Be prepared to donate at the end of the 3rd meeting

Third Meeting *[about 4 weeks after first meeting]*

- Share research on nonprofit organizations chosen at 2nd meeting
- Deliberate to determine where New Colossus funds will make the most difference
- Select the organization(s) to support, make donations, send New Colossus email/cover letter
- Discuss next steps for the group, if/when you will continue

Review Session *[8-10 months after donating]*

- Share research/updates regarding the issue areas selected at the 1st meeting
- Share research/updates regarding the nonprofits funded at the 3rd meeting