

Comparing Approaches to Giving



Donor Advised Funds (DAFs) vs. Private Foundations

Donor Advised Funds and private foundations offer creative options that can meet charitable, tax, and estate planning goals. While both can offer valuable tools and opportunities, each option is unique. DAFs can be created through a community foundation such as the Community Foundation of Snohomish County (CFSC) or other charity, or through a commercial gift fund held at a financial institution. A private foundation is usually created via a single primary donation from an individual or a business, while funds and programs are managed by its own trustees or directors. Here are the ways these types of charitable giving compare.

Set Up & Ongoing Administration

	CFSC DAF	Private Foundation	DAF at Financial Institution
Minimum Contribution	\$5,000 (must reach \$25,000 in 5 years). If fund created through Independent Investment Manager Program, minimum to start fund is \$250,000)	\$1-2 million recommended	Varies
Set Up Costs	None	All legal, accounting & filing fees. Can exceed \$5,000.	None
Start Up Period	Can be established immediately	Generally takes 1-2 months	Can be established immediately
Admin and annual costs	2% annual fee covers all donor services, staffing, professional investment management. Reduced fee structure for funds over \$500,000.	Ongoing expenses include all legal, accounting, payroll, and audit costs. Typically ranges from 1%-8% depending on if foundation employs staff.	Fees vary, but typically range from 0.3% to 2%.

Tax Considerations

Tax Deductions for contributions:	CFSC DAF	Private Foundation	DAF at a Financial Institution
Cash	60% of AGI	30% of AGI	60% of AGI
Publicly Traded Securities	30% of AGI using Fair Market Value of asset	20% of AGI using Fair Market Value of asset	30% of AGI using Fair Market Value of asset
Real Estate and other appreciated assets	30% of AGI using Fair Market Value of asset	20% of AGI using Cost Basis Value of asset	30% of AGI using Fair Market Value of asset
Tax Status & Filings	Qualifies for 501 (c)(3) public charity status as a component part of the CFSC. CFSC files all necessary tax returns and conducts audit.	Must file for private foundation tax-exempt status annually. Not as favorable as public charity status. Tax return filing and audits responsibility of trustees and staff.	Covered under nonprofit status of charitable subsidiary.

Grantmaking Support & Requirements

	CFSC DAF	Private Foundation	DAF at Financial Institution
Payout Requirements	None	Required to grant out 5% of total assets annually. 15% penalty on undistributed income.	Varies. Many require annual minimum payout of certain percent of assets.
Grantmaking Support	CFSC staff provides local expertise and conducts required IRS due diligence review of all grantees recommended by Donors. Research on specific nonprofits provided upon request.	Donor must establish and oversee all evaluation, monitoring & reporting of grant recipients. Grant decisions subject to screening and approval by Board of Trustees.	Limited support for Donors. Corporate headquarters are not community based, which limits expertise of local needs. Offer minimum due diligence on grant recipients.

Donor Involvement & Privacy

	CFSC DAF	Private Foundation	DAF at Financial Institution
Donor Involvement	Donor recommends grants to qualified nonprofits. Grants are approved by CFSC Board of Directors comprised of community leaders.	Donor appoints Board, which controls all grantmaking and investments.	Donor recommends grants to qualified nonprofits. Grants are approved by trustees of the commercial gift fund.
Privacy & Confidentiality	Donor's fund may be named or anonymous. All contribution information can be kept confidential.	Required to file public tax returns on grants, investment fees, trustee fees, staff salaries, etc. These become public records and are compiled into grantseeker directories.	Must file detailed and public tax returns on grants, investment fees, trustee fees, staff salaries, etc.

Investment Management

	CFSC DAF	Private Foundation	DAF at Financial Institution
Investments	Fund assets professionally invested. Donor does not have control over investments once they are donated, but may recommend investment manager if participating in Independent Investment Manager Program.	Must secure and oversee own investments.	Fund offers approved investment choices.