CONTROL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Use these questions about the book ***CONTROL: Why Big Giving Falls Short*** by Glen Galaich in a group setting for discussion or individually for deeper reflection. We have designed these questions to help you unpack some of the book's concepts and challenges, apply these ideas to your life and setting, and make them actionable.

TIPS FOR A PRODUCTIVE DISCUSSION

- Model an open and respectful environment.
- You don't need to address every question—pick the ones that work best for your group.
- Encourage everyone's participation; it helps to call on introverts by name and invite them to share their thoughts.
- Robust discussions with respectful differences of opinion are healthy. Remember there isn't a single "right answer" to any question.
- Have fun and take action.

Visit stupski.org/control for information on bulk purchases and "buy one, give one" offers.

PREFACE, INTRODUCTION & CHAPTER 1

"'It's My Money, After All' and the Mindset of Control"

A1. The author Glen Galaich writes that this book is a critique of current American philanthropic practices "in the spirit of improvement" and with the goal to "progress Big Giving." Do you find tension in critiquing something voluntary and meant for good—or is it necessary? Do government incentives for major donors impact your sense of this need?

A2. What was your general perception and knowledge of private charitable foundations before reading this book?

A3. Do you agree or disagree with the prevalent donor mindset—intellectually or emotionally on their part—that the money held in private foundations and donor-advised funds is still the donor's? Why?

A4. Galaich writes that our giving system has enabled $2 trillion in publicly earmarked assets, for which big donors have already taken a tax exemption, to pile up in U.S. philanthropic accounts instead of moving quickly to charities. Is that fair? Unavoidable? Wasteful? Good stewardship?

A5. What do you think is at stake in this discussion of Big Giving and these trillions in assets?

CHAPTERS 2 & 3

"What Excessive Control Looks Like"

B1. What does "donor-centered" philanthropy mean to you?

B2. Galaich explains how the U.S. philanthropic system got to its current state of encouraging excessive donor control over the nation's charitable priorities and actions. How have you perceived, enabled, or challenged the silent permission structure that undergirds this?

B3. In the Vanessa story, Galaich describes an ever-present tension between the donor class's "privilege of choice" and "the urgency of social action." Is this problematic, and if so, how?

B4. Galaich calls out common controlling Big Giving practices, such as Designator clauses in foundation bylaws; centering foundation mission, vision, and focus areas on donor preferences; and spending foundation resources on the donor family. What examples of excessive control (or the opposite of it) have you experienced in or from this sector?

B5. What is gained or lost when foundation boards and decision-makers are mainly—or exclusively—donors, their friends and family, their closest advisors, and professionals working for their for-profit interests in family offices rather than representatives of the communities that foundations exist to serve?

CHAPTERS 4 & 5

"Why Being Walled In Isn't Working"

C1. What did you find most unusual about the foundation CEO's role described here?

C2. Who wins and who loses when donors with foundations and donor-advised funds are walled in from the working-class and perennially under-resourced communities' perspectives and needs?

C3. Galaich writes that "getting proximate in the philanthropic sector means that foundations need to develop new approaches for including the people whose lives are most affected by their grant decisions." Do you agree or disagree? When wielding such power over stewarded public resources, is this a moral obligation?

C4. What aspects of the Bea Cooper & Moneywell Foundation story did you find familiar or unfamiliar?

CHAPTERS 6 & 7

"Engaging Communities & Divesting From Harm"

D1. Galaich writes that emerging forms of community-engaged philanthropy are ironically far more aligned with American democratic values than the consolidated power of our current donor-centered system. Do you believe it's worth giving a chance to the more democratic approach of community engagement? What's to be lost or gained?

D2. Some big donors are authentically striving to be less controlling and more collaborative, and Galaich has provided examples. What other examples of "stepping back" from excessive control inspire you today and why?

D3. By far, most foundations grant 5% of their assets annually and invest the other 95%. Is this ideal?

D4. Do you agree or disagree with Galaich that certain investments of foundation assets or donor-advised funds can endanger or outright harm their supported communities and grantees?
How so?

D5. Should Big Giving go "all-in" on its mission by shifting philanthropic assets from Wall Street to investing in communities and grantees? Do foundations even need to make a profit on philanthropic assets? Why or why not?

CHAPTER 8 & CONCLUSION

"Prioritizing Humanity Over Perpetuity to Give What's Needed Now"

E1. Do you think U.S. foundations give at the rate that our communities need—or do these institutions reflexively prioritize sustaining their capital and own existence over their grantees' capacity? How and why?

E2. Galaich decries that each year foundations dribble out piddling grants in teaspoons, not tidal waves (in comparison to total assets), while social crises mount. What do you think of the alternative spend down model—pros and cons?

E3. Donor-advised funds are growing in popularity and lack any mandatory distribution requirements—tax-exempted contributions can (and often do) sit in these accounts indefinitely. Does this seem ethical? Authentically philanthropic? What should good stewardship require?

E4. See Figure C.1. in CONTROL. Whatever your role in or proximity to Big Giving, what is one step you might take to help move our system from excessive control toward community engagement?

Thanks! We hope you become leaders in dismantling the Mindset of Control and shifting to community engagement. And please review ***CONTROL: How Big Giving Falls Short*** on your favorite review site.