



SIX Retreat Model

SIX Retreats

Our small, carefully curated retreats help unpack some of the big strategic questions facing trusts and foundations all over the world. They provide the necessary space for deeper future facing work.

SIX retreats draw on the latest global thinking and practice and provide opportunities for peers to support each other. We invite a small group of leaders from across the world to step away from their day to day operations and interactions; think critically about topics beyond the buzzwords; connect with global peers (beyond their usual networks) on questions keeping them awake at night; and develop strong, lasting relationships.

How do SIX retreats work?

Each SIX retreat is unique. We design everything around the people who come and the challenges that they face. Whilst our model is constantly evolving, there are important elements that ground us in our work and ensure that all organisations have impactful experiences.

1. Laying the groundwork (Pre retreat) - We put the groundwork in place months before the first invitations go out by:

- Contextualising and localising so we can work with core topics which are locally rooted and relevant to a place, and globally applicable.
- Building relationships across the local ecosystem and ensuring that retreats are co-owned by a group of local organisations.
- Building momentum by hosting online sessions before the retreat to start to explore the topics with potential participants.
- Identifying the right participants so we have a diverse mix of global and local participants from across sectors and foundation types.
- Making connections before arrival through online global dialogues.
- Making sure people arrive informed about each other and the local context.

2. Coming together - Everything from the moment the participants arrive is intentional and designed to make their experience easy. This means we are:

- Inviting participants to step away from their everyday environment at a venue that is rooted in the local character and context, whether this be a ranch in rural Montana or a winery in Australia
- Planning a diverse programme with time for collective learning, personal reflection and processing, as well as time for fun.
- Creating a non hierarchical space where everyone's view is valid and no one person is more expert than others.
- Building trust intentionally with ground rules and pre-retreat activities.

3. Embedding learning (Post retreat): This is the most important part as it is when funders start to embed their learning in their everyday work, and share their insights widely. We facilitate this process by:

- Making sure everyone stays connected and that relationships are sustained for several years after the retreat.
- Integrating learning back into participating organisations by remaining available to support participants and developing tools and sharing resources that funders may find useful
- Connecting to others in the SIX network and welcoming all retreat participants into a global community of innovators



Welcome Circle at West Creek Ranch, Montana, USA



What are examples of past retreat topics?

Systems change (2016): Creating real and lasting change takes more than just grants and endowments, so what can funders do to embrace systems change?

Aligning for impact (2017): Today's challenges are growing in scale and complexity, so how can philanthropy better align its efforts to increase its impact?

Strategic foresight (2018): In the face of new and increasingly complex challenges and emergent trends, how can foundations become future-responsive rather than past-driven?

The role of data to address complex challenges (2018): Foundations globally are grappling with their role in the emerging field of data and artificial intelligence, but despite the potential of using data for social good, philanthropy isn't engaging in this field fast enough, and is well behind other sectors. What does philanthropy need to build more capacity in this area?

Risk and systemic impact (2018): How can funders take, enable and manage risks to achieve greater systemic impact?

Philanthropy and the private sector (2019): As businesses engage with more purpose-led activities, how can philanthropy understand its role and partner better with the private sector to maximise social impact?

Risk and legitimacy and philanthropy (2019): In an era where the legitimacy and authenticity of foundations is being questioned, how can we encourage philanthropy to take more risks?

Social cohesion and philanthropy (2019): Whether it's political polarisation or widening inequality globally, society can feel more divided than ever. What is the role of philanthropy in helping bridge some of these divisions?

Civic engagement (2023): Whether it's political polarisation or widening inequality globally, society can feel more divided than ever. So, what is the role of philanthropy in helping bridge some of these divisions?

Hosting the first SIX retreat in Australia provided a deep engagement with people we would not usually connect with and a new understanding of international perspectives, new trends and practice. It was invaluable in allowing us to critically reflect and improve our own practice. There are areas in which we could be braver!"

- **Stacey Thomas, CEO, Fay Fuller Foundation, Australia (now at Wyatt Trust)**



FAQ

Who are retreats for and who do we work with?

We started hosting retreats for leaders for philanthropic foundations, but we can host a retreat for any organisation on any topic. Whether you are a foundation focussed on democracy in the US or a corporation looking for collaborations in supply chain management, we can help.

Why would I host a retreat?

Retreats are an opportunity to step out of your day to day and go deeper on an issue with a group of carefully selected peers from around the world. They are useful if you want to get people together who you know from your ecosystem, but would like to collaborate with more (our place based retreats), or dive into a specific issue together.

How long does it take?

The whole process, from our first conversations once a contract is agreed to the delivery of the follow up plan will take between 9 and 12 months.

How do we choose people to invite?

We will work with you to understand your preferences for the types of people to invite to best suit your needs and the goals of the retreat. Based on this, and our experience, we will leverage our expansive global network that we have developed over the last decade.

Who is in SIX's network?

Our network includes a diverse group of people from NGOs, governments, foundations, innovation agencies, universities, and the private sector. We know decision makers, academics, innovation experts working at a systems level, as well as practitioners who are working on innovative projects at a grassroots level. And we know people in a wide range of fields, from migration, sustainability and health to digital/technology and democracy.

What they have in common is they all think there is a better way of doing things. They are experimental, ready to try new things, ask brave questions, want to be challenged and are ready to learn! And if we don't know the right people, we will know someone else who does!

What is SIX's facilitation style?

We design our agendas around the people who are there. We can be flexible and adaptable. We are relaxed and fun. We recognise there will be many different styles of learning in one place, so we provide something for everyone. There may be moments that push you beyond your comfort zone.

Creating trusting and challenging environments is important. We draw on the latest global thinking and approaches, and involve participants to be contributors - no outside 'experts' are needed. We have what we need in the people who are there. And action is important too - we always drive towards practical actions, not just talking.

Where has SIX worked before?

All over the world! We have run retreats on an island in Canada, on a ranch in the US and on a winery in Australia. We recognise the retreat model might not suit all parts of the world, so we can adapt and reframe our model, and our facilitation style, to be more culturally relevant.

How many people can attend a retreat?

Between 22 - 26 people each time. In order to allow for participants to get to know each other deeply and be ready to explore new collaborations, we like to keep our retreats small.

Does SIX organise other events with more people?

Yes - the retreats are only one of the ways we bring people together. We design and host lots of different online and in person events and meetings. See our website for more details!



I believe that one of SIX's most incredible skills is the curation of a particular community of people, in unique settings. Having now participated in two SIX retreats, I have experienced the intimacy and connectedness that lead to bold and honest dialogue. They do this by bringing interesting and different people together and giving them the space to have difficult conversations.

– Sharon Avery, President & CEO of Toronto Foundation, Canada

To get in touch or learn more about our retreats, contact us via email at info@socialinnovationexchange.org or visit the [retreat section of our website](#).