

Choosing the Right Trustee

One of the most important decisions you'll face when establishing a trust is the selection of a trustee. So what is a trustee exactly? A trustee is responsible person or institution legally appointed and authorized to manage assets in trust for another person.

A trustee is not an honorary designation. When considering who to appoint as your trustee, we recommend that you first assess whether or not the person has enough time, expertise, interest and patience to successfully carry out your wishes. Trusteeship actually involves a range of duties that can be surprisingly complex, including:

- Asset and investment management
- Tax planning and legal compliance
- A thorough understanding of trust laws and practices
- Trust accounting
- Adherence to legally required notifications and reporting

In addition to the expertise that might be required, a knack for handling people is just as important. Being able to diffuse a heated dispute or discreetly investigate the nature of an unusual request for funds should be part of the fiduciary job description. On a final note, you should consider the potential liability you may be exposing someone to and that they know about this risk before they make a decision. Many people choose to elect a corporate (i.e. professional) trustee for this reason alone, but there are a variety of other reasons why this is a good idea:

Corporate Trustee

PROS

- Experience
- Internal advisory committees
- Continuity, transfer of knowledge
- Integrated experts and team support
- Unbiased
- Professional relationship
- Aware of changing laws, best practices

CONS

- Possibly more expensive
- May not know grantors personally if administration is transferred to new trustee

Individual Trustee

CONS

- Less Experience
- Individual decision-making
- No backup if trustee no longer able to serve
- May need to hire outside experts
- Possible influence by beneficiary/others
- Could stress or damage personal relationships
- Could expose individual to personal liability

PROS

- Possibly less expensive
- Familiarity with you and possibly your beneficiaries

Why Laird Norton Wealth Management is the Right Trustee

As both a trust company and a registered investment advisor (RIA), we see your entire financial picture and manage your finances during our lifetime and beyond. In addition to acting as the corporate trustee and administering your trust, we also have the expertise to provide strategic investment management for your trust assets:

- Operating in the Pacific Northwest since 1967, our trust company (Laird Norton Trust Co.) has deep experience in multi-generational wealth transfer and trust and estate planning.
- We have no proprietary investment products, ensuring our independence when selecting the best investment options for your trust assets.
- Our investment solution provides access to leading market opportunities.
- Our size and single location helps us make quick decisions about your trust, avoiding delays caused by layers of decision makers spread across the country.
- We carry out the values, goals and objectives established by the grantor of the trust and provide continuity of administration.
- Family harmony is preserved by placing us in the tough position of saying no when needed.
- Our professional expertise ensures proper trust administration and accounting in compliance with federal and state requirements.