Boston Foundation Donor Advised Funds vs. National Provider's Donor Advised Funds

A Quick Comparison for Professional Advisors and Their Clients

Choosing the right donor advised fund (DAF) is an important decision for clients who want to give strategically, efficiently, and with confidence. While national DAF providers offer accessible online experiences, a DAF at the Boston Foundation gives donors something more: personalized philanthropic guidance, deep knowledge of Greater Boston's nonprofit landscape, and flexible support for complex charitable gifts. The chart outlines key differences to help advisors and clients determine which option best aligns with their charitable goals and preferred level of support.

	Boston Foundation DAF	National Provider DAF
Personalized Support	Pairs every fundholder with a dedicated team and the necessary support to turn intent into impact.	Typically supports fundholders through call centers or online channels; personalization varies.
Local Grantmaking Expertise	Offers deep, research-based knowledge of Greater Boston nonprofits and community needs, grounded in more than a century of local engagement.	At a certain fund balance, can provide national-level guidance but generally lacks region-specific expertise.
Grantmaking Flexibility	Donors can recommend grants to qualified nonprofits locally, nationally, and internationally, supported by TBF's due diligence and philanthropic advising.	Enables broad grantmaking reach, though without localized guidance or individualized support.
Legacy & Succession Planning	Offers easy successor advisor designations to support multigenerational giving, plus an array of flexible options to craft a legacy gift that supports donor interests and values.	Successor options are available but vary in structure and customization.
Acceptance of Non-Cash Assets	Accepts cash, marketable securities, real estate, and other complex non-cash assets; donors may avoid capital gains on appreciated assets.	Primarily accepts cash and publicly traded securities; acceptance of complex assets varies and may involve limitations.
Mission Driven Fee Structure	Fees directly support TBF's civic leadership, research, and community support, reinvesting for local impact.	Fees support corporate or institutional operating revenue rather than community initiatives.

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	Boston Foundation DAF	National Provider DAF
Investment Management	Professionally managed investment pools align with long term philanthropic goals and mission. Invests in a mix of equities, private equities, and other investments to realize strong performance. Ability to utilize donor's investment manager through our Advisor Managed Fund program.	Offers standard index and balanced funds; mission-aligned or community-focused strategies vary by provider. Ability to utilize donor's investment manager varies by provider.
Impact-First Investment Options	Offers a range of options from TBF's Mission First Pool to Custom Impact Investments, enabling fund holders to both meet social impact goals and get return of capital.	Offers standard investment pools that may include ESG options, but impact first or community-specific investments are less common.
Online Donor Portal	Provides a user-friendly portal for real-time balances, grant recommendations, and giving history.	Provides digital tools and mobile friendly giving platforms.

This chart is simplified for clarity. The Boston Foundation does not provide legal, tax or financial advice.

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The Boston Foundation