



Farm Foundation Round Table

Guidelines and Expectations for Appointment and Engagement of Round Table Fellows, Honorary Life Fellows, and Guests

About Farm Foundation

Farm Foundation is an accelerator of practical solutions for agriculture. Our mission is to build trust and understanding at the intersections of agriculture and society. We accomplish this by leveraging non-partisan objective dialogue, information and training, catalyzing solutions and creating multi-stakeholder collaboration. Our vision is to build a future for farmers, our communities and our world.

Since 1933, we have connected leaders across agricultural sectors—farming, business, academia, organizations and government.

About Farm Foundation Round Table

The Farm Foundation Round Table is the premiere program of the Farm Foundation. Round Table meetings, generally held in January and June each year, bring together thought leaders from across geographic, regional and value-chain sectors to explore issues that will impact the entire food and agriculture sectors. Attendance is limited to Round Table Fellows, invited guests and others as determined by the Farm Foundation board and executive leadership.

Twice a year, Round Table Fellows gather with invited government, academic, agribusiness and interest-group leaders to explore ideas, analyses and insights that participants may use in their individual work, business and communities. The exchange of perspectives expands understanding of different approaches to the issues and challenges facing agriculture, the food system and rural communities. To encourage frank and open conversations, all discussions are off-the-record.

For over 35 years, the Round Table has been a program of Farm Foundation. The Round Table's roots extend to the early 1950s, when Charles Dana Bennett was asked to bring together a diverse group of agricultural leaders to advise the Eisenhower Administration on agricultural policy. Once that task was complete, Bennett and his wife, Edith, continued to organize informal gatherings for the leaders, who recognized the value of exchanging ideas on timely policy issues impacting agriculture and rural America.

The Farm Foundation Board of Directors sets the policies and strategic priorities for Farm Foundation including for all programs of Farm Foundation. The Executive Committee and CEO will establish a Round Table Program Advisory Council of approximately 5-7 Round Table Fellows on an annual basis representing a variety of geographies, ages, gender, and sectors. Service on this advisory council will be tracked, reported, and be for an annual and renewable term, up to 3 years maximum, to ensure widespread opportunity for Fellows to serve. The Round

Table Advisory Council will have the primary purpose of the new Fellows and Honorary Life Fellows process outlines below, as well as other program input such as locations, themes and local event chairs of Round Table meetings.

Profile of a Round Table Fellow

The community of Round Table Fellows is composed of leaders across the agricultural value chain who are at the top of their sectors, are strong contributors to the industry, and through their high profiles and expertise are able to bring unique insights and a depth of experiences to the community. Each Fellow brings a diverse perspective to the table. While not necessarily sharing agreement across the issues facing agriculture, Fellows appreciate, foster, and contribute to the Round Table's values of maintaining civility, open discourse, and free debate, strongly believing that the exchange of a diversity of perspectives expands trust and understanding of different approaches to the issues and challenges facing agriculture and leads to improved outcomes for all stakeholders.

Pathways to Becoming a Round Table Fellow

The community of Round Table Fellows is limited to approximately 150 participants. Oversight for the Round Table program rests with the Farm Foundation Board and executive staff, which has delegated responsibility for selection of Fellows to the Round Table Advisory Council. The Farm Foundation Board sets priorities for the Round Table Program. As such, the process and rules for Round Table Fellows is at the discretion of the Board. At present, the Board has recommended a priority to enhance the diversity of the Round Table program in 6 key areas: age, ethnicity, geography, sector, gender, and thought.

In order to achieve the recommended diversification, 3 pathways to becoming a Round Table Fellow have been approved:

Pathway 1 – Advisory Council Recruitment

The Round Table Advisory Council identifies new potential candidates in line with the priorities set by the Board.

Pathway 2 – Fellow Recommendations

Existing Round Table Fellows recommend candidates based on priorities set by the Board.

Pathway 3 – Directors / Trustees

New Directors of the Farm Foundation Board and Trustees of the Legge Lowden Farm Foundation Trust, who are not already existing Round Table Fellows, are granted *ex officio* status as Round Table Fellows for at minimum the duration of their terms of service. As of October 2020, Board members will be invited to continue as Round Table Fellows after their terms of service.

Process for Appointment as a Round Table Fellow

At least twice per year, the Round Table Advisory Council will convene to discuss potential Fellows and decide whom to engage for an initial discussion and potential invitation to the next Round Table meeting as a guest. Those considered may be recommended via Pathways 1 or 2 (above). At this stage, discussions with the candidate would be aimed at discovering whether there is mutual fit and interest and would lay out the expectations for continued engagement.

Potential Fellows, if interested in continued engagement, would attend the next available Round Table meeting. After the meeting, members of the Round Table Advisory will follow up with the candidate to assess interest in continued engagement and formal appointment as a Round Table Fellow. In most circumstances, those recommended as Fellows will be asked to attend a second meeting prior to voting on full Fellow status. The Round Table Advisory Council will then vote to recommend the approval of new Fellows on a rolling basis.

Recommendations received under Pathway 2 will be asked to provide a strong justification for how the candidate contributes to the recommended diversification of Round Table and/or enhances the overall profile of the Round Table program. Nominators should not communicate or imply any commitment to full participation to their nominee(s).

Expectations for Continuation as a Round Table Fellow

The success of the Round Table depends on an active engagement, defined as attendance of at least one meeting within a two-year period and a minimum \$600 unrestricted cash contribution each year to Farm Foundation.

If a Fellow is deemed to be “inactive,” a member(s) of the staff (or Round Table Advisory Council) or their designee will contact the Fellow to assess the level of interest and potential for continued engagement with the Farm Foundation.

Round Table Fellows in Public Service

The Round Table has a long history of members who, based on their knowledge and experiences, are often selected to serve in leadership positions within various federal agencies. Federal ethics rules require these individuals to resign from their status as a Round Table Fellow. Once these individuals leave federal service, they may wish to rejoin the Farm Foundation Round Table. In order to be eligible to rejoin Round Table, the candidate must have been an active Fellow of the Round Table immediately prior to entering federal service, have retired or resigned from federal service within 12 months prior to rejoining, have a history of regular contributions to Farm Foundation as a Round Table Fellow, and have demonstrated a commitment to the Farm Foundation mission. Former Round Table Fellows who have completed federal service may proactively reach out to staff to reinstate their service or will be notified of the opportunity to rejoin the Round Table by staff and/or the Round Table Advisory Council Chair.

Round Table Fellowship Option for Farming Couples

Couples who are both actively engaged in their farm business may now choose to become Fellows together. Participating couples will make a single annual fund gift each year, and at least one member of the couple must attend one Round Table meeting every two years. All other Fellowship guidelines will continue to apply. This is an optional benefit—not a requirement. If you and your spouse or partner would like to opt in, please notify a member of the Farm Foundation staff.

Honorary Life Fellows

The Farm Foundation Round Table strives to maintain a body that reflects the full range and diversity of U.S. agriculture and the food system. Honorary Life Fellow (HLF) status (formerly HLM) is conferred on Round Table Fellows to recognize their service to the Round Table and their commitment to the mission of Farm Foundation.

Round Table Fellows are eligible for Honorary Life status if:

1. They have been an active Round Table Fellow for 10 or more years,
2. They have a history of regular contributions to Farm Foundation, and
3. They have demonstrated a commitment to the Farm Foundation mission.

All former U.S. Secretaries of Agriculture are also eligible for HLF status and will be nominated by the Farm Foundation Board or executive leadership.

Appointment Process

Eligible Round Table Fellows may be nominated for HLF status by other Round Table Fellows (Sponsor) or by recommendation of the Round Table Advisory Council. The Round Table Advisory Council will review the nomination and vote to recommend the approval of new HLFs on a rolling basis.

Temporary Inactive Round Table Fellow:

Round Table Fellows who, for personal or professional reasons, need to “take a break” from membership for no more than two years can request that the Round Table Advisory Council confer upon them Inactive Status. During this period Fellows would not need to meet the annual participation requirements but would still receive Round Table communications. After the inactive period ends the Fellow must notify the Round Table Advisory Council of their intention to either return to active status or maintain a permanent inactive status in Round Table.

Emeritus Round Table Fellow:

This new status level can be conferred upon Fellows who are retiring from their career but wish to remain active in Round Table may choose to move to permanent Emeritus status. These fellows must be in good standing with all Round Table requirements and will be welcome, but not required, to participate in Round Table programs. They will also not be required to give but may be asked for continued support of Farm Foundation. Emeritus Round Table Fellows still receive Round Table communications. This status will be recommended and conferred by the Round Table Advisory Council.

Removal of a Round Table Fellow or Honorary Life Fellow

In cases other than non-compliance in giving and attendance, Round Table Fellows and Honorary Life Fellows can be removed for cause upon the determination of the Farm Foundation Board of Directors Executive Committee.

Round Table Guests

Round Table Fellows may invite guests to attend Farm Foundation Round Table meetings. Attendance as a guest confers no expectation of appointment as a Round Table Fellow; there is no minimum attendance requirement for former guests to be considered as potential Fellows other than that described above. Additionally, Farm Foundation executive leadership may invite guests, including current and potential partners/donors, as a pathway for engagement with the Round Table community, separate from an ongoing appointment as Fellows.