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FOR ADVISORS

The Funding Ceremony Playbook

How to run the meeting where the family meets the advisor who runs the plan. The agenda, the script, the touchpoints, the templates.

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This playbook is a meeting script for advisors offering estate planning to their clients. It assumes the household has signed a revocable living trust and is ready to begin the funding work. The framework was developed inside an active estate planning practice and refined across hundreds of household meetings. The playbook is general operational guidance, not legal or tax advice. Specific household situations should be discussed with counsel and the household tax preparer. For the platform mechanics that the playbook references (Asset Inventory, funding letter generation, Digital Safe vault, daily reminder cron), see the Bancroft documentation at usebancroft.com.

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The signing ceremony is the moment the estate plan exists on paper. The funding ceremony is the moment the family meets the advisor who runs it. Most advisors run the signing meeting and skip the funding meeting. This playbook is the script for the meeting most advisors are not running yet.

Why the Funding Ceremony Matters

Industry estimates put the first-generation breakage rate at roughly 70 percent of investment-management relationships at the moment of transfer. The figure varies by practice and by survey, but the directional answer is consistent: when the parents die, most surviving spouses and adult children call someone other than the parents' financial advisor for help with the trust administration. The phone call goes elsewhere because the next generation does not know the advisor's name.

The funding ceremony is the only moment in a typical advisor relationship where the advisor can introduce themselves to the entire successor team in a calm, planned setting before the death. The signing ceremony is too early; the next generation is rarely in the room. The annual review is too narrow; only the grantors are typically there. The first-generation event (the death itself) is too late; the family is calling someone for help, and if the advisor was never introduced, that someone is rarely the advisor.

The funding ceremony solves the introduction problem and finishes the funding work in the same meeting. It costs one extra meeting per household. It returns a multi-decade retention asset that compounds at the wealth-transfer moment.

> **The retention math.** Consider an advisor with $200 million under management whose typical household carries $2 million in advisor-managed assets. That is roughly 100 households. If 70 percent break the advisor relationship at transfer, the advisor loses $140 million across the wealth-transfer window. An advisor who runs the funding ceremony and shifts the breakage rate from 70 percent to 30 percent retains $80 million in additional assets that would otherwise leave. The arithmetic does not have to be perfect for the conclusion to hold.

The Four Wealth Transfer Moments

Every advisor relationship that includes estate planning produces four moments where the advisor is either introduced to the next generation or is not.

1. The signing ceremony

A legal event for the grantors. The room contains the grantors, the advisor leading the meeting, the witnesses, and the notary. The successor trustee, the named guardians, and the adult children are typically not in the room. Risk if the only meeting: the documents sign and the advisor is in the room with the grantors, but the successor team never enters the relationship. The introduction the family will eventually need has not happened yet.

2. The funding ceremony

An operational event that the advisor leads. The room contains the grantors, the designated successor trustee, the named guardians for any minor children, and (when there are adult children) the adult children. The advisor walks the funding packet, the household chart, and the workflow. Risk if skipped: the trust never funds completely, the family meets the workflow alone and remembers it as confusing rather than reassuring, and the advisor loses the credit for the plan.

3. The annual review

A standing meeting between the grantors and the advisor. The successor team is rarely there. Estate-plan reinforcement is often skipped in favor of investment review. Risk if the only ongoing touchpoint: the successor team forgets the plan exists between funding and death.

4. The first-generation event (the death)

The moment the trust administration starts. The room contains the surviving spouse, the adult children, the successor trustee, and estate counsel. If the advisor was never introduced earlier, this is the moment the advisor is replaced. If the advisor ran the funding ceremony, this is the moment the family already knows who to call.

Who Should Be in the Room

The funding ceremony is built around four roles. The advisor invites each one explicitly.

- The grantors. The current trustees of the revocable trust. The people who signed the documents.
- The designated successor trustee. The person named in the trust document to act if the grantors die or become incapacitated. Frequently an adult child, a sibling, or a trusted friend. Sometimes a corporate trustee. Always identifiable from the trust document.
- The named guardians for minor children. Where the household has minor children, the people named in the will or guardian designation to raise the children if both parents die.

- Adult children, when there are adult children. Especially when adult children are named as remainder beneficiaries or as alternate successor trustees. Their presence sets the introduction the advisor most needs to make.

For households where the successor trustee or named guardians live far away, video conference is acceptable and works well. The introduction happens over video the same way it happens in person; what matters is that the advisor and the successor team are on the same call together.

> **Two-meeting structure for complex households.** Some households are too large or too geographically spread for a single meeting. A common pattern: a primary funding ceremony with the grantors and the successor trustee in person, followed by a separate video introduction with the adult children and the named guardians. Both meetings together still cost less advisor time than re-establishing the relationship after the parents die.

Logistics Before the Meeting

The meeting itself is 60 to 90 minutes. The preparation runs in the week before.

Materials to prepare

- A bound copy of the trust document for each principal (grantors, successor trustee). Paperback bindings are ideal; the document should look like a finished artifact, not a stapled sheaf.
- The funding packet, generated through the platform from the household Asset Inventory. The packet contains the funding letters for each asset class, the Certificate of Trust, the assignments, and the recording instructions.
- A printed household chart (one page) showing the trust at the center, the grantors as current trustees, the successor trustee, the named guardians, and the remainder beneficiaries. See "The Household Chart" section for the template.
- A one-page operational summary listing the household's assets, where the documents live (digital and physical), the advisor's contact information, the household tax preparer, and any other professional contacts the household has engaged (estate counsel for complex situations, accountant, insurance broker).
- A meeting agenda, distributed to attendees in advance with the meeting invitation.

The invitation

The invitation goes from the advisor, not from the household. This is the first visible signal that the advisor owns the workflow. The invitation explains who is invited, what the meeting will cover, and what each attendee should bring (just themselves, in most cases). A sample invitation email is in the Appendix.

The Meeting Agenda

A 75-minute meeting fits this agenda. Adjust by 15 minutes in either direction depending on household complexity.

1. Welcome and introductions (5 minutes). Each attendee introduces themselves. The advisor introduces the structure of the meeting.
2. The household chart (10 minutes). Walk the chart. Every person in the room finds themselves on the chart.
3. Why we are here (5 minutes). The advisor frames the meeting as the operational handoff: the documents are signed, the funding work begins now, and the meeting is where everyone learns who does what.
4. The funding packet, asset by asset (25 minutes). Walk the funding letters. Each asset class gets a brief explanation. Questions surface here, not three weeks later by phone.
5. Successor trustee handoff (10 minutes). Hand the successor trustee their bound copy of the trust and the operational summary. Walk them through where the documents live and how to reach the advisor.
6. Incapacity workflow (10 minutes). Walk the financial and health-care POAs and the HIPAA release. Incapacity is more likely than death over a 20-year window.
7. Schedule the follow-ups (5 minutes). The 30-day status check, the 90-day proof review, the 12-month annual review. Calendars open. Dates set in the meeting.
8. Close (5 minutes). Confirm next steps. Confirm that everyone has the advisor's contact information.

The agenda does not include investment philosophy, product offering, or any other content from the advisor's typical client meetings. The funding ceremony is the operational handoff. Mixing in investment-management content collapses the meeting into a sales call and the family registers it as one. Investment conversations belong at the annual review.

The Five-Step Meeting Script

The script below is a refined version of the meeting cadence that works across most household types. Adapt the language to your voice; keep the structure.

Step 1: Open with the household chart

The chart is a one-page diagram with the trust at the center. Around the trust: the grantors as current trustees (top), the successor trustee (right), the named guardians for minor children if applicable (bottom), and the remainder beneficiaries (left). Lines connect each role to the trust. Names are real; the chart is the household's.

Hand a copy to every person in the room. Walk the chart out loud:

> *"The trust is in the middle. While [grantors] are alive and well, they run it. If something happens to either of them, [successor trustee] steps in. If something happens to both [grantors], [successor trustee] becomes the trustee permanently and the kids inherit through the trust. [Named guardians], if both [grantors] are gone, you are the people raising [minor children] and the trust pays for that. Everyone in the room is on this chart for a reason."*

The chart is the operating model. Every other piece of the meeting refers back to it.

Step 2: Frame the meeting

Before walking the funding packet, frame why the meeting exists.

> *"The signing meeting was the legal event. Today is the operational event. The plan only works if the assets are actually in the trust, and that work happens over the next 90 days. We are going to walk through every asset on the household balance sheet, what needs to happen for each one, and who handles what. By the end of the meeting, [successor trustee] will know exactly what to do if [grantors] cannot, and everyone here will know who to call."*

The frame matters. The household needs to hear that this meeting is a planned step, not an emergency response. The successor trustee needs to hear that the meeting is for them, not just for the grantors.

Step 3: Walk the funding packet, asset by asset

Open the funding packet. For each asset class, name the asset, name the funding action, name the institution, and answer questions. Common assets and their typical funding actions:

- Bank accounts: retitled into the trust, or designated TOD/POD to the trust. The funding letter to the bank requests the change.
- Brokerage accounts: same as bank accounts. Most brokerages want a Certificate of Trust plus the funding letter. The platform produces both.
- Retirement accounts: beneficiary designation updated to name the trust as primary or contingent beneficiary, depending on the household's post-SECURE-Act analysis. The funding letter is the change-of-beneficiary form.
- Life insurance: same as retirement accounts. Beneficiary designation update.
- Business interests: assignment of the interest into the trust. The funding letter handles the assignment and identifies the buy-sell agreement and any consents required.
- Real property: deed transfer into the trust. The platform generates the deed from the attorney-reviewed state template and coordinates recording.
- Safe deposit box: the bank updates the box rental agreement to name the trust as holder.

Each asset takes two to four minutes. Questions surface during the walkthrough rather than after. The grantors and the successor trustee both watch the same answer; the household leaves with shared understanding.

Step 4: Hand the successor trustee their copy

The successor trustee leaves the meeting with their own bound copy of the trust, a complete copy of the funding packet, and the one-page operational summary. The advisor walks the successor through where the documents live.

> *"This is your copy. The trust is the long document; you do not need to read every page today, but you should know it is here. The funding packet is what we just walked through; this is your reference for what is in the trust and what is still being moved. The operational summary has my contact information, the household tax preparer, any attorney we have engaged for complex pieces, and the location of the originals. If anything happens to [grantors], you call me first. I will help you sequence everything else."*

The handoff is symbolic and operational at once. The successor trustee learns that the role is real and that the advisor is the first call.

Step 5: Cover incapacity, then schedule the follow-ups

Walk the financial and health-care powers of attorney and the HIPAA release. Frame incapacity as the more likely scenario over a 20-year window. The named agents are usually in the room (often the same people as the successor trustee and the named guardians); each one learns what their role looks like operationally.

Then schedule the follow-up touchpoints in the meeting. Calendars open. Dates set. The Day 30 status check, the Day 90 proof review, and the next annual review all get on the calendar before anyone leaves the room.

The meeting closes with confirmation that everyone has the advisor's contact information and that the next touchpoint is on the calendar.

The Household Chart

A one-page diagram. Print it on letter-size paper. The chart has six elements:

1. The trust at the center. Named in full ("The Smith Family Revocable Trust dated January 15, 2026").
2. The grantors as current trustees, positioned above the trust. Names plus the role label "Grantors / Current Trustees."
3. The successor trustee, positioned to the right of the trust. Name plus the role label "Successor Trustee."
4. The named guardians, positioned below the trust if the household has minor children. Names plus the role label "Named Guardians."
5. The remainder beneficiaries, positioned to the left of the trust. Names plus the role label "Remainder Beneficiaries."
6. A simple line connecting each role to the trust. The trust is the hub; the people are the spokes.

The chart is the household's operational summary in one page. It does not need to be elaborate. A clean diagram on plain paper with names typed in 14-point sans-serif font reads as professional. The platform assembles the chart from the Asset Inventory; the household person records (HouseholdPerson) supply the names and roles, and the advisor prints the chart for the meeting.

> **Why the chart works.** Estate plans become abstract for households the moment they leave the signing meeting. The household chart restores the concrete picture. Every person in the room sees themselves on a single page and understands their role. The chart is the artifact the household will look at again in five years to remember how the plan was structured.

The Four 90-Day Touchpoints

The funding ceremony is the front door. Four operational touchpoints inside the first 90 days convert the meeting into the durable relationship. None requires more than 30 minutes of advisor time. Each one is the moment the successor trustee watches the advisor proactively own the workflow.

Day 30: funding-letter status check

Email the household and the successor trustee. Confirm which funding letters have landed at which institutions. The platform's funding dashboard shows the status; the email summarizes it in plain language. Identify any institution that has not responded and confirm the next step.

> *"Quick check-in on funding progress 30 days after our meeting. The bank accounts and the brokerage are confirmed retitled. The retirement beneficiary update at [custodian] is still in process; I am in touch with their service team and expect confirmation by [date]. The deed is recorded; we have the recording number on file. Will check back at the 90-day proof review."*

Day 45: assist with the first institutional rejection

A funding letter typically gets rejected by at least one institution for a formatting, signature, or documentation reason. The household gets frustrated. The advisor coordinates the rework. The successor trustee learns that frustration with the bank goes through the advisor.

The rejection email or letter from the institution comes to the household. The household forwards to the advisor. The advisor diagnoses the rejection (usually a missing Certificate of Trust page, a signature mismatch, or a request for additional documentation), provides the missing piece through the platform, and resends. Total advisor time: 15 to 30 minutes.

Day 75: proof-of-filing review

By Day 75, the household has uploaded recording confirmations for any deeds and acceptance letters from any custodians to the encrypted Digital Safe vault. The advisor reviews the packet, confirms what is complete, and surfaces any open items. The successor trustee receives a copy of the completed file.

Day 90: written close-out

The advisor sends a written summary to every member of the successor team confirming the trust is funded, listing what is in the trust, naming the dates of the next annual review, and reaffirming the advisor's contact information.

> *"This confirms the funding work is complete. The trust holds [list of assets]. The next annual review is scheduled for [date]. As a reminder, if anything happens to [grantors], the first call should come to me at [contact information]. I will sequence the rest. The full file lives in the Digital Safe vault and is accessible to the trustee and the alternates."*

This summary is the artifact the family will read again ten years later when something happens. The advisors who skip this step do not lose the household at funding; they lose the household twenty years later, on the phone call from the surviving spouse, when the surviving spouse cannot remember whom to call first.

Common Mistakes to Avoid

- Letting the meeting drift into investment review. The funding ceremony is the operational handoff. Mixing investment philosophy collapses the meeting into a sales call.
- Inviting only the grantors. The whole point is the introduction to the successor team. If only the grantors are in the room, you have run a second signing meeting.
- Letting the household send the meeting invitation. The invitation must come from the advisor. The first signal of advisor ownership is whose name is in the From field.
- Skipping the household chart. Without the chart, the meeting becomes an abstract document review. The chart is what makes everyone's role concrete.
- Ending the meeting at the meeting. The four 90-day touchpoints are what convert the introduction into a durable relationship. A funding ceremony without follow-up is a one-time meeting that fades.

- Treating the successor trustee as a passive observer. The successor trustee should leave the meeting with their own copy of the documents and a clear understanding that they are the first call. The handoff is symbolic and operational at once.

Email Templates

Use the templates as starting points; adapt to your voice and your household.

Meeting invitation email

> *Subject: Funding meeting for [Household Name] estate plan [Successor trustee, named guardians, adult children if applicable], [Grantor names] recently completed the signing of their estate plan. The next step is the funding work, which moves the household assets into the trust. We are scheduling a 75-minute meeting to walk through the plan with everyone who has a role in it. Date / Time: [date and time] Location: [office address or video link] The meeting will cover the household structure, walk through every asset that needs to move into the trust, and clarify who does what at the moment of incapacity or death. You should leave the meeting with a clear understanding of your role and the materials you would need to act on it. Nothing to bring; we will provide all materials. Please confirm attendance by [date]. If you cannot attend in person, video conference works equally well. [Advisor name and contact]*

Day 30 status email

> *Subject: 30-day funding status check, [Household Name] [Grantor names], with [successor trustee] copied, Quick update on funding progress 30 days after our meeting on [date]: [Bullet list of completed items] [Bullet list of in-process items with expected completion dates] [Any items requiring household action] No action needed from you on the in-process items; I am in direct contact with the institutions. Will check in again at the 90-day mark with the proof-of-filing review. [Advisor name]*

Day 90 close-out email

> *Subject: Funding work complete for [Household Name] [Grantor names], [successor trustee], [named guardians], [adult children if applicable], This confirms the funding work for the [Household Name] estate plan is complete. The trust now holds [summary list of assets]. All recording confirmations and institutional acceptance letters are on file in the Digital Safe vault and accessible to [successor trustee] and the alternates. The next scheduled touchpoint is the annual review on [date]. A reminder for [successor trustee], [named guardians], and the family: if anything happens to [grantors], the first call should come to me at [phone] or [email]. I will sequence the rest of the workflow with the household tax preparer and any attorney we have engaged for complex pieces. [Advisor name and contact]*

The funding ceremony is the most important meeting in the advisor relationship that nobody thinks of as a meeting. Run it, and the family knows the advisor. Skip it, and the family meets the advisor for the first time at the worst possible moment.

Funding is where the family meets you.