

PREPARED EXCLUSIVELY
FOR FFI MEMBERS



FFI 40 YEARS

Educate. Connect. Inspire.

MARCH 20, 2026

An Original Idea



As most of our members and readers know, 2026 is the 40th anniversary of the founding of FFI. A milestone in so many ways, it will be celebrated in our GEN program, *FFI on Friday*, *FFI Practitioner*, and regional meetings, all culminating in the annual Global Conference in New York City in October.

In this issue, we bring you some thoughts on original ideas, some reflections from one of the founders of FFI, and...

An Original Idea

It's often said that "an original idea is a rare commodity." Mark Twain even claimed that "there is no original idea." Yet in the mid-1980s, a truly revolutionary concept emerged: merging multi-generational business practices with systems-thinking social science. What began as a novel perspective soon evolved into a legitimate academic discipline and professional field.

At the center of this development were the founders of the Family Firm Institute (FFI)—a visionary group drawn from business, the social sciences, and academia. Gathering in Pittsburgh and Philadelphia, they laid the groundwork for an interdisciplinary approach to understanding and advising family enterprises. Their work helped bring structure and legitimacy to a field that had long existed in practice but had rarely been studied in a formal way.

The oversight was surprising. Multi-generational family businesses account for as much as **50 percent of the global economy** and, in some countries, contribute **nearly 100 percent of GDP**. Yet until that time, the dynamics of family enterprise had remained largely unexplored and unformalized as an academic and professional discipline.

In 1986, the **Family Firm Institute (FFI)** was formally established, sparking transformative conversations across academia, government, allied professions, and among the many "trusted advisors" who support family enterprises. In the years that followed, FFI launched initiatives that would help define and advance the field worldwide.

In 1988, the first issue of *Family Business Review (FBR)* was published by Jossey-Bass, creating a scholarly platform dedicated to research on family enterprise. On April 5th we'll bring there will be an *FFI Practitioner* podcast with Ivan Lansberg, Kelin Gersick, and Joseph Astrachan, early editors for *Family Business Review*.

A Moment in Time

Of course, there's much more and we'll feature several initiatives that emerged in the 1990s in a late June issue. Yet, in the grand scheme of things, 40 years is still only a moment in time—a moment during which FFI reaffirms its mission:

To be the most influential global community of thought leaders in the field of family enterprise. We foster and publish research, offer educational programs, and share knowledge to develop a professional association of multi-generational family enterprise advisors, consultants, and educators.

As part of this milestone, FFI is launching a celebratory **40th anniversary fundraising campaign** to support new initiatives and strengthen our impact in the field. The FFI board approved the campaign in March 2025, and early outreach began in the months that followed. We are pleased to report that the campaign's **"quiet phase" has already raised more than \$200,000 from a group of early supporters**. However, the success of this campaign depends on broad participation from our entire community. Your support will help us continue to innovate in our online educational offerings, sponsor cutting-edge research, and increase public awareness of the family enterprise field.

If you would like to join FFI in celebrating its 40th year, please [go here](#). All gifts are tax deductible to the extent of the law. If you would like more details or have suggestions, please [email Judy Green](#).

If Not Now, When?

FFI's previous fundraising initiatives include the **Legacy Fund campaign in 2010** and the **2086 Society initiatives, launched in 2019 and continuing today**. A 40th anniversary campaign gives FFI an important opportunity to strengthen and expand its impact well before the organization reaches its 50th year.

Help us leave a transformative legacy—equipping the next generation of advisors and researchers to create a lasting global impact.

Sidebar



Listen to Kathy Wiseman's reflections on the founding, evolution, and importance of FFI.

PREVIOUS EDITION



As we approach the end of the first quarter, we extend our sincere appreciation to the dedicated faculty members teaching Q1 courses in the Global Education Network (GEN) program. Their expertise and commitment to advancing the field are at the heart of the world-class learning experience provided to GEN students and graduates. Please join us in thanking them for their outstanding contributions to FFI and the field.

[READ PREVIOUS EDITION](#)



DATES TO REMEMBER

April 1

FFI Academic Award Applications

[APPLY BY APRIL 1](#)

May 1

Applications for FFI GEN Scholarships

[APPLY BY MAY 1](#)

May 1

FFI Achievement Award Nominations

[SUBMIT BY MAY 1](#)

May 30

Enrollment Deadline for Q2 2026 GEN Certificate Programs

[ENROLL BY MAY 30](#)

June 2

Regional Reception in Boston

[LEARN MORE AND RSVP](#)