FAMILY OWNED BUSINESS INSTITUTE
GRAND VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY

STEP PROJECT GLOBAL CONSORTIUM
FOR FAMILY ENTERPRISING

FERC
Family Enterprise Research Conference

GLOBAL FAMILY BUSINESS SUMMIT

MAY 18-21, 2027

Grand Valley State University

GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN, USA

BEYOND THE HEADLINES

Family Business as a Driver of Regional and Global Prosperity

CALL FOR PAPERS
2027 SPGC–FERC GLOBAL FAMILY BUSINESS SUMMIT

A GROWING GLOBAL COMMUNITY — ONE SUMMIT

Once again, SPGC and FERC are joining forces to bring two leading global family business research communities together for one dynamic event. Participants will benefit from the combined strengths of both organizations, including diverse perspectives, cutting-edge research, and an international network spanning continents. In 2027, this global gathering comes to the heart of the American Midwest.

This edition is hosted by the Seidman College of Business' Family Owned Business Institute (FOBI) at Grand Valley State University (GVSU), one of the first centers in the United States dedicated to family business research and engagement, with more than 25 years of advancing the field through research, education, and community partnership.

DESCRIPTION

Beyond the headlines lies a quieter, more enduring story: one of family enterprises creating opportunity, investing for the long term, and helping the communities they call home prosper alongside them.

The **2027 SPGC-FERC Global Family Business Summit** brings together scholars, family business leaders, next generation members, and advisors to explore a premise too often overlooked in economic analysis: how family businesses deeply rooted in their communities shape economic opportunity, institutions, and collective well-being in ways that extend beyond jobs and tax revenue. These effects may be beneficial, uneven, or contested, depending on family, firm, community, and institutional conditions, making the relationship between family enterprises and regional prosperity an important subject for rigorous inquiry.

This Summit takes place in Grand Rapids, Michigan, a mid-sized Midwestern city where that premise is not theoretical but visible on every block. Generations of immigrant and homegrown families have built businesses here and have chosen, again and again, to reinvest not only in their businesses but in their city: funding the riverfront, seeding cultural institutions, sitting on the boards that decide what the city becomes next, and working alongside government and community to build what the market alone would not have produced. This pattern is what *Lumpkin and Bacq (2019)* call **civic wealth creation** — the kind of prosperity that shows up not just in economic output, but in a community's institutions, its public spaces, and its sense of shared possibility, built when business, government, and citizens row in the same direction. Grand Rapids did not happen to its family businesses. It was built, in significant part, with them at the table.

We invite contributions that examine the social, institutional, and economic dimensions of family business embeddedness, at any level of analysis — firm, family, individual, regional, or community — including work on the talent and opportunity family businesses help attract and the institutions they help sustain. Staying rooted and growing turn out not to be competing goals but the same one: family firms benefit more than non-family firms from local embeddedness, achieving higher growth as a result, with the effect even more pronounced outside major urban centers (Bau et al., 2019). That advantage runs in both directions. The quality of regional institutions shapes the likelihood and behavior of family firms in a given place (Ricotta & Basco, 2021), raising the question of what happens when family firms themselves reinforce, or even become a substitute for, those institutions — a question pushed further by evidence that higher family firm density predicts stronger regional innovation output, family enterprise working as a kind of infrastructure regions can build on for the long run (Block & Spiegel, 2013).

This is also a Summit about the Midwest as a research site in its own right — a region built, in no small part, by immigrant families and generations of hardworking owners who found in this country the freedom to start something, the room to grow it, and a community willing to grow alongside them. Long-term orientation, community stewardship, and a quiet insistence on shared prosperity are not folk descriptions here; they are testable constructs, and Grand Rapids offers fertile empirical ground for testing them. We welcome papers grounded in any regional or national context, but we particularly encourage submissions engaging **regional familiness**, rural and small-city embeddedness, and comparative study of family business ecosystems beyond major metropolitan capitals — places where opportunity, not headlines, determines who wins.

WHY THIS THEME MATTERS NOW

- Family businesses are among the most enduring economic and social actors in any region — yet their civic and institutional contributions remain largely unmeasured and undertheorized.
- Research consistently shows that regional context shapes family firm behavior — and that family firms, in turn, shape their regions — but the mechanisms and boundary conditions remain underexplored.
- Next generations of family business owners are redefining what it means to be embedded: from inherited civic roles to active co-investment in community resilience, sustainability, and inclusion.
- The Midwest and specifically West Michigan offers a living laboratory — a region where family business density, immigrant entrepreneurship, and long-term ownership have quietly produced prosperity that national narratives often overlook.
- What's needed now are new frameworks, new data, and new conversations that move the field beyond the firm and toward the full scope of what family business makes possible.

TRACKS

The following tracks reflect the thematic and methodological breadth of the Summit. Track chairs will be announced shortly. Submissions are welcome across all tracks, at any level of analysis.

1. **Community and Regional Embeddedness**
   Community and regional embeddedness, regional familiness, family firm influence and its local/regional effects
2. **Socioemotional Wealth, Governance, and Family Dynamics**
   Socioemotional wealth, family governance, board dynamics, family conflict, principal-principal agency, ownership structure
3. **Strategy, Innovation, and Competitive Advantage in Family Firms**
   Competitive strategy, innovation, digital transformation, family firm performance, dynamic capabilities, strategic renewal
4. **Identity, Succession, and Next Generation Leadership**
   Family business identity, successor development, next generation, leadership transition, role identity, incumbent-successor relationship
5. **Sustainability, Purpose, and Responsible Ownership**
   Sustainability, CSR, purpose-driven business, responsible ownership, stakeholder management, long-term orientation
6. **Internationalization and Cross-Cultural Perspectives**
   Internationalization, cross-cultural management, family firm internationalization, institutional context, cultural values
7. **Entrepreneurship and Innovation in Emerging and Developing Contexts**
   Entrepreneurship, innovation, emerging economies, institutional voids, family business ecosystems, regional development
8. **Teaching Family Business: Pedagogy, Cases and Practice**
   Experiential learning, co-creation, pedagogical innovation, impact, ethical challenges
9. **Diversity and Gender Equality in Family Firms**
   Gender equality, diversity, intersectionality, governance, inclusion, succession, competitive advantage, growth
10. **Corporate Finance, Accounting & ESG Investment in Family Firms**
    Corporate finance, ESG investment, ESG risks, sustainability reporting, green finance
11. **Open Track**
    High-quality papers, work-in-progress, and posters that do not fall into the above categories but speak to the broader summit theme
12. **Heritage, Branding, and Consumer Responses in Family Business**
    Heritage branding, family values, authenticity, storytelling, brand identity, consumer interpretation, family narratives, legacy, cultural meaning
13. **Case Studies and Teaching Cases**
    Family business embeddedness, succession, governance, or regional impact in practice; teaching innovations; practitioner-relevant insights
14. **Spanish Track / Línea en Español**
    Contribuciones en español sobre empresa familiar y emprendimiento transgeneracional o temas afines a la conferencia, o al SPGC

PROGRAM STRUCTURE OVERVIEW (TENTATIVE)

The Summit runs **May 18–21, 2027**, with an optional pre-conference day on May 17th dedicated to doctoral students and early career scholars. The full program will include:

Pre-conference day – May 17, 2027

- Doctoral & Early Career Consortium — mentoring, feedback, and peer exchange with senior researchers

Main conference days – May 18-21, 2027

- Competitive paper sessions
- Developmental paper sessions
- FERC Poster presentations
- Keynote panels with scholars and family business leaders
- Interactive practitioner panels & case-based workshops
- Company visits to leading West Michigan family businesses
- Special issues and journal roundtables
- Welcome reception and Gala Dinner in Grand Rapids (May 20, evening)

SPECIAL ISSUE OPPORTUNITIES & AWARDS

Papers presented at the Summit will be considered for submission to leading management and entrepreneurship journals. Details on special issue partnerships will be announced in early 2027.

Conference Awards (Tentative)

- Best Competitive Paper Award
- Best Developmental Paper Award
- Best FERC Poster Award
- Best Practitioner Contribution Award
- Next Generation Scholar Award

Contribution Awards

- Lifetime Impact Award (Grossman School of Business at University of Vermont)

Registration Fees

Fees include access to all SPGC-FERC conference activities, lunches, coffee breaks, the welcome reception, and the gala dinner. Doctoral student fees include the Doctoral & Early Career Consortium; attendance to the gala dinner requires a separate ticket for doctoral students and for any guests accompanying registered participants. **REGISTER HERE!**

Participant Type	***Early Bird*** *(until Feb 28, 2027)*	***Regular*** *(Mar 01 – Apr 27, 2027)*	***Late*** *(from Apr 28, 2027)*
SPGC Affiliate – Academic	€ 500	€ 600	€ 650
Non-SPGC Affiliate – Academic	€ 600	€ 700	€ 750
Family Business Owner / Practitioner	€ 650	€ 750	€ 800
Doctoral Student	€ 350	€ 450	-
Gala Dinner – Doctoral Student	€ 150	€ 200	€ 250
Gala Dinner – Accompanying Guest	€ 150	€ 200	-

SUMMIT CHAIRS

Prof. Ana González (Grand Valley State University, USA)
Prof. Hanqing ‘Chevy’ Fang (TBC)
Prof. Alexandra Dawson (Concordia University, Canada)
Prof. Evelyn Micelotta (University of Vermont, USA)
Prof. Rodrigo Basco (American University of Sharjah, UAE)
Prof. James Davis (Utah State University, USA)

ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

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Christopher Cruz (Grand Valley State University)
Albert James (Dalhousie University)
Francesco Barbera (Toronto Metropolitan University)

IMPORTANT DATES

- Submission Deadline: **February 8th, 2027**
- Registration Opens: **July 30th, 2026**
- Summit Dates: **May 18–21, 2027 (Pre-conference: May 17, 2027)**

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Please note that all submissions must be made through the online submission portal (**https://spgc2027.exordo.com/**) and must be anonymous to ensure the blind review process. An author may be associated with a maximum of three submissions but may present only one paper at the Summit. If more than one of your submissions is accepted, you may present one paper only, while the remaining papers must be presented by your coauthors. If none of your coauthors will attend the Summit, you may present only one paper. We welcome submissions in the following formats. Please select the format most appropriate to the stage and nature of your work:

Competitive Paper Sessions (Full Papers)

These sessions are designed for high-quality, fully developed research papers that are ready for peer review and potential journal submission. Submission requirements:

- Full paper (maximum 10,000 words including references, tables, and figures)
- Anonymous document
- Include a short abstract (max 150 words) at the beginning of the paper.

Developmental Paper Sessions (Work-in-Progress)

This track is ideal for early-stage or mid-stage research that would benefit from feedback and discussion with peers and senior scholars. Submission requirements:

- Extended abstract (1,000–2,000 words) clearly outlining the research question, theoretical framework, methodology, and intended contribution
- Anonymous document
- Clearly indicate “Developmental Paper” in your submission

FERC Poster Presentations (Abstract-Based)

The poster session provides an opportunity to showcase exploratory projects, teaching innovations, case studies, or early-stage ideas in a visual format. Submission requirements:

- Abstract (maximum 1,000 words)
- Anonymous document

- Clearly indicate “FERC Poster” in your submission

Doctoral Colloquium & Early career consortium

The Doctoral Colloquium is open to PhD students at any stage of their doctoral journey, working on family business-related topics. Selected participants will receive feedback from leading scholars and engage in peer-to-peer exchange. Submission requirements:

- A research proposal or extended abstract (max 2,000 words)
- Clearly indicate “Doctoral Colloquium” in your submission.

ABOUT SPGC

The **STEP Project Global Consortium (SPGC)** is a worldwide network of academic institutions dedicated to advancing knowledge on transgenerational entrepreneurship and family business. By connecting scholars and business families across regions and cultures, SPGC co creates impactful research, produces global and regional reports, develops educational resources, and hosts international academic family business summits. Its work generates insights that help family businesses innovate, grow, and sustain success across generations.

ABOUT FERC

The **Family Enterprise Research Conference (FERC)** is a leading academic platform dedicated to family business scholarship. It brings together a global community of researchers to exchange ideas, present cutting edge studies, and foster collaboration that advances the field. FERC is especially recognized for supporting emerging scholars and for promoting rigorous, relevant research that deepens understanding of family enterprises and their role in society.

REFERENCES

Bau, M., Chirico, F., Pittino, D., Backman, M., & Klaesson, J. (2019). Roots to grow: Family firms and local embeddedness in rural and urban contexts. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice, 43*(2), 360–385.

Block, J. H., & Spiegel, F. (2013). Family firm density and regional innovation output: An exploratory analysis. *Journal of Family Business Strategy,* 4(4), 270–280.

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Lumpkin, G. T., & Bacq, S. (2022). Family business, community embeddedness, and civic wealth creation. *Journal of Family Business Strategy, 13*(1), 100469.

Ricotta, F., & Basco, R. (2021). Family firms in European regions: The role of regional institutions. *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development, 33*(7–8), 532–554.

SUBMIT YOUR PAPER REGISTER NOW!

https://spgc2027.exordo.com/

ORGANIZERS

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