



Core Support Grants Evaluation

CORE SUPPORT GRANTS

are investments that support an organization's mission as a whole. Funds are not restricted to specific projects or programs, so organizations can use core support grants to build and enhance their organizational infrastructure.¹

Executive Summary

To advance its mission to *improve the health of all Kansans*, the Kansas Health Foundation (KHF) has provided core support funding to nine organizations with complementary missions (**Table ES-1**).

Table ES-1. Core Support Funding Awarded from 1994 to 2018, by Grant Status and Grantee

Status	Grantee	Funding Timeline	Total Funding
Active	Kansas Action for Children (KAC)	2003–present	\$5,510,000
	Kansas Association of Community Foundations (KACF)	2018–present	\$600,000
	Kansas Health Institute (KHI)	1995–present	\$53,861,521
	Kansas Leadership Center (KLC)	2005–present	\$38,100,000
	Kansas News Service (KNS)	2017–present	\$1,521,967
Ending	Kansas Association of Local Health Departments (KALHD)	2005–August 2019	\$730,000
Ended	Kansas Association for the Medically Underserved (KAMU)	2015–2018	\$300,000
	Oral Health Kansas (OHK)	2007–2017	\$300,000
	Tobacco Free Kansas Coalition (TFKC)	1994–2015	\$4,200,548
Core Support Grants Total			\$105,124,036

Evaluation Approach

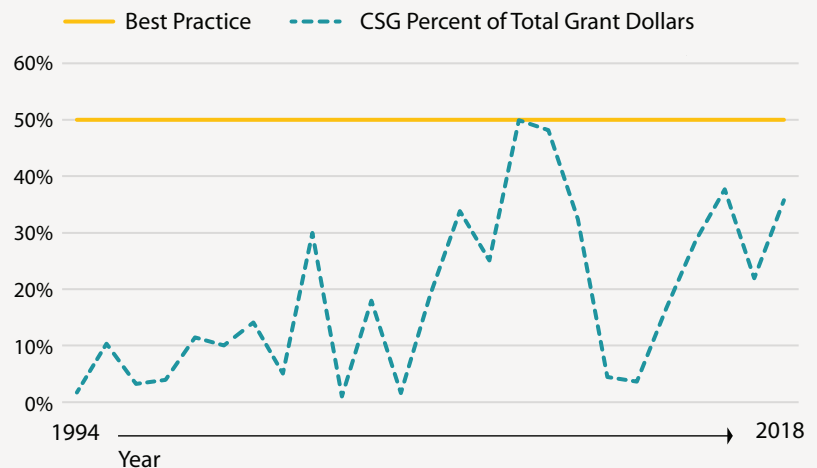
KHF sponsored an evaluation to assess the impact of its core support grants and to explore opportunities to improve core support grantmaking. A team of evaluators from RTI International and Wichita State University's Community Engagement Institute (RTI-CEI) conducted grantee interviews, document review, and a targeted literature review to address the following evaluation questions:

- What level of funding has KHF invested in core support grants?
- What is the impact of KHF's core support grants from grantees' perspectives?
- How do KHF's grantmaking, monitoring, and reporting protocols for core support grants align with philanthropy best practices?

KHF Investment

As shown in **Figure ES-1**, the percentage of KHF grant dollars paid out for core support during 1994–2018 ranged from 1% (2003) to 50% (2009). Fifty percent is the National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy's (NCRP's) core support funding benchmark for Philanthropy at Its Best. From 1994 through 2018, almost 20% of grant payments have been for core support.

Figure ES-1. Percentage of KHF Grant Dollars for Core Support, 1994–2018



Core Support Impact

During interviews, grantees described two paths through which core support funding **increased organizational capacity**: (1) by directly covering the cost of staff, training, or other resources required to advance the organization's mission; and (2) by "freeing up" grantees to build capacity in areas beyond those directly covered by KHF funding.

Additionally, although core support grants do not fund projects or programs, grantees described how core support funds contribute to **increased awareness of public health issues; support for policy, systems, and environmental (PSE) solutions; and PSE change (Table ES-2)**. In general, grantees explained that core support grants provided funding for resources that are necessary for outreach and advocacy work (e.g., staff and facilities). Additionally, the unrestricted nature of core support funding allowed grantees to focus on emerging issues.

Table ES-2. Example Reported Core Support Contributions to PSE Change

Level of PSE Change	Key PSE Achievements
State-level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developed a Medicaid Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) telehealth policy to permit health centers to bill for telehealth services as both an originating and a distant site. Reversed Medicaid's 340B policy change regarding discounted pharmaceutical drugs for health centers. Protected the Children's Initiative Fund. Increased tobacco tax.
Organizational-level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implemented depression screening in member clinics. Created a wellness team. Helped 11-member clinics to apply to become Presumptive Eligibility Sites. Increased the number of member clinics from 19 to 39.

Alignment with Core Support Grantmaking and Monitoring Best Practices

KHF core support grantmaking and monitoring approaches that align with best practices include providing flexible funding, setting goals consistent with the grantees' mission, gathering grantee feedback through program officer contacts and annual reporting, and sponsoring an evaluation of the core support grant portfolio to assess impact with a focus on capacity and key lessons learned.

Insights for Future Grantmaking

During evaluation interviews, grantees provided grantmaking and monitoring recommendations for KHF (Table ES-3).

Grantees' Reflections

"We've used some of this funding... to expand use of data to drive our decisions and measure the impact."

"Core support has given us the chance to have the staff available to work on government contracts, through other big national grants, or those sorts of things. Developing products that we can sell."

"...especially in the early years, it allowed us to dream and allow Kansans who engaged to dream. It allowed us to focus on, what's the right thing to do? Not necessarily, how are we going to meet payroll?"

Table ES-3. Selected Grantee Recommendations for KHF

Level of PSE Change	Key PSE Achievements
Grantmaking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make longer-term investments to ensure reliability of funding (one grantee suggested more than 3 years, another suggested 10 years). Maintain the flexibility in core support grants. Explicitly encourage grantees to use funding for becoming a nimble and flexible organization instead of doing the "same old same old." Ensure that grantees have a good understanding of reporting requirements so they can provide the most useful information for KHF decision making. Focus on vulnerable populations.
Grant Monitoring and Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take a "learning together" approach to grant monitoring. Continue macro-management approach. Ensure that grant and financial status reporting is designed to gather data at the organization, rather than project, level. Connect core support grantees with other larger grantees.

¹ Grantmakers for Effective Organizations. (2018). General Operating Support: A Guide for Trustees. Retrieved from <https://www.geofunders.org/resources/general-operating-support-a-guide-for-trustees-1043>