

Evaluation of The Foundation for Delaware County's 2018-2023 Impact Grant Portfolio



THE
FOUNDATION FOR
DELAWARE
COUNTY

Executive Summary

Since its founding in 2016, The Foundation for Delaware County has taken on a role as a countywide connector, coordinating efforts and convening key stakeholders to shine a spotlight on our county's challenges and solutions. The Foundation partners with nonprofit organizations engaged in vital community work, businesses looking to make a positive impact, donors investing their resources, and community leaders lending a helping hand to their neighbors. The Foundation addresses unmet needs in the county with funding from its annual Impact Grant portfolio, restricted funds, scholarships, and other charitable care distributions, as well as its Community Health Programs¹. The Foundation has distributed more than \$14 million in grants, scholarships, and charitable care since 2016.

To learn about the impact of its grantmaking, the Foundation engaged Victoria Dougherty Consulting LLC to conduct an evaluation of the Impact Grant portfolio between 2018 and 2023 across its eight priority areas (see below). The portfolio evaluation included a review of the Foundation's grants database, and interviews with a subset of 16 grantee partners and ten community stakeholders.

About the Portfolio

Between 2018 and 2023, the Foundation made 204 Impact Grants to 93 grantee partners through an annual competitive process. During the Impact Grant portfolio's first five years, grantee partners were funded for an average of 2.8 years. Grants ranged from a yearly average of \$19,500 (Maternity and Pre/Postnatal Care) to \$59,900 (Preventive Health). Almost two-thirds of the grants went to the Foundation's youth-focused priority areas: Education (24%), Children's Health and Nutrition (23%), and Youth Development (16%). Almost all grants were for either programmatic support (66%) or general operating – “core” – support (25%). Eleven (5%) grants were for capacity building and six (3%) for advocacy. Over half (59%) of the grants served all of Delaware County.

IMPACT GRANTS BY PRIORITY AREA 2018-2023

PRIORITY AREA	NO. OF GRANTS	NO. OF GRANTEES
Maternity & Pre/Postnatal Care	7	5
Food Security	30	14
Children's Health & Nutrition	46	18
Preventive Health	3	1
Behavioral Health	14	6
Education	48	21
Youth Development	33	13
Community & Economic Development	23	15
Total	204	93

1. The Foundation's Community Health Programs are: Healthy Start; Nurse-Family Partnership; Women, Infants and Children (WIC); Housing Opportunities Program for Equity (HOPE); Center for Hispanic Resources - El Centro; Health Resource Center; Doula Program; Fatherhood Program; Health, Education and Legal Assistance Project - A Medical-Legal Partnership; Stork's Nest; Cribs for Kids; Moving Beyond Depression; and Parent Cafes.

Grantee Partner Outcomes

How the Foundation Contributed to Grantee Partner Outcomes

When asked how their Impact Grants contributed to their ability to achieve outcomes, grantee partners commended the Foundation for being:

- A flexible funding source: funding general operating costs enabled grantees to reach additional locations and populations, to remain operational during the pandemic, and allowed nonprofits to adapt quickly to other challenges
- A connector to new donors and other funding opportunities
- A trusted partner
- A resource for capacity building



Instead of pushing its own agenda, the Foundation asks, “How can we help?”

—GRANTEE PARTNER

As we reviewed grantee partners’ reported outcomes for the first five years of the Foundation’s existence,² we sought evidence of four types of outcomes: safety net, preventive, systems change, and organizational development. While these outcomes are based on grantee partners’ self-reported data and vary greatly, when analyzed thematically, they present a compelling picture of how the Foundation’s investments are beginning to move the needle on Delaware County’s social determinants of health.³



Safety net outcomes (providing aid to those facing acute hardship) most naturally emerged in Food Security and Preventive Health, where grantee partners supplied essential nutrition and emergency healthcare.

During the COVID-19 pandemic – the most severe disruption during the period under analysis – many grantee partners provided emergency assistance to their clients, so safety net outcomes appeared across priority areas.

Other safety net outcomes included:

- Newborns receiving vital nutrition through donated breast milk (Maternity and Pre/Postnatal Care).
- Seniors receiving essential nutrition via home-delivered meals (Food Security).
- Individuals facing financial hardships remaining in their homes thanks to emergency mortgage and utility assistance (Community and Economic Development).



Preventive outcomes (intervening before problems arise to enhance protective factors contributing to well-being) were the most common type in the portfolio.

Academic and health outcomes among youth – for example, improved grades, increased physical activity, and better social-emotional health – repeated across priority areas, which is not surprising considering the explicit youth focus of many of the Foundation’s grants.

Other preventive outcomes included:

- Teens increasing awareness of mental health needs (Behavioral Health).
- Babies born with healthy birth weights (Preventive Health).
- High School students applying to and enrolling in college and gaining career exposure (Education).
- First-time homebuyers purchasing homes (Community and Economic Development).

2. Analysis based on review of the Foundation’s 2018-2023 grants database (204 grants across 93 grantees) and in-depth interviews with 16 grantee partners, representing seven of eight grantmaking areas.

3. Definitions vary, but, as defined by HHS, they include economic stability, education, health care, neighborhood environment, and social and community context. Source: Healthy People 2030, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion.



The Foundation is a trailblazer in trust-based philanthropy.”

—GRANTEE PARTNER



Systems change outcomes (targeting the root cause of social issues by changing structures, policies, or regulations) commonly focused on the formation of collaborative partnerships across sectors to address complex problems.

Collaborative partnerships typically focused on raising awareness among community members and policymakers on critical issues.

Other systems change outcomes included:

- Hospitalizations for behavioral health decreased due to case management and outpatient treatment (Behavioral Health).
- The Delaware County Lead Poisoning Prevention Coalition increased the number of children screened for lead exposure and helped secure \$1 million in federal funding for lead paint remediation (Children’s Health and Nutrition).
- Advocates pushed a local school district to abide by state education rules, ensuring school stability for students in foster care (Education).
- Chester City received new, unexpected private investment, leading to increased tax revenue (Community and Economic Development).



Organizational development outcomes (strengthening organizational effectiveness and capacity through planned changes) were similar across priority areas. They often included strengthening staff capacity by recruiting, training, and retaining staff – particularly noteworthy given the challenges posed by the tight labor market that characterized much of the period.

Grantee partners also reported advancing their strategic and action planning and improving operational effectiveness through enhanced IT capabilities, marketing, infrastructure upgrades, and acquiring necessary equipment and materials. The Foundation’s funding and capacity building offerings have helped some smaller nonprofits to survive, and others grow into more effective organizations. Additionally, grantee partners improved their ability to deliver and sustain services by expanding fundraising, establishing partnerships, and developing program resources and materials.

The Foundation’s Role in Delaware County’s Nonprofit Sector



The role that the Foundation has in trying to strengthen the nonprofit community and raise awareness and resources around it has been sorely lacking for many years.”

—GRANTEE PARTNER

Community stakeholders echoed grantee partners’ descriptions of the Foundation as a trusted partner, advocate, and connector. They described how the Foundation brings together individuals across sectors to share information and develop programmatic and systemic solutions to address the county’s needs, citing the Foundation’s leadership and participation in steering committees, caucuses, and community events. Both community stakeholders and grantee partners highlighted the Foundation’s role in raising awareness of systemic issues and advocating for policy solutions. They pointed to the Foundation’s funding of coalition-building and education efforts, such as funding for lead poisoning prevention and remediation. Community stakeholders also spoke of the Foundation’s work to elevate lessons learned from programs to inform policy, such as their advocacy to expand doula services in the maternal health space.



The Foundation has struck a nice balance between funding direct service work and trying to aggregate the learnings from that work for systems change.”

—COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDER

Grantee partners and community stakeholders lauded the Foundation as an anchor that strengthens and unifies a historically siloed nonprofit sector. They described a nonprofit sector traditionally low on cooperation and resources. They attributed progress on these fronts to the Foundation’s work to foster collaboration, build capacity, and help nonprofits leverage funding from private and public sources. While acknowledging progress, community stakeholders and grantee partners pointed to continued challenges in the nonprofit sector, including recruiting and retaining staff and skills gaps (e.g., board development and grant writing).

Grantee partners and community stakeholders also emphasized the Foundation’s vital role as a provider of social services. In the face of closures in the county’s healthcare system, the Foundation’s Community Health Programs have helped mitigate the loss of services. Community stakeholders and grantee partners also spoke of the Foundation’s support for and partnership with other health providers and advocates in the county.

Recommendations

Leverage Leadership in Delaware County

1. Convene regional stakeholders to address Delaware County’s needs.
2. Advocate for philanthropic giving, programs, and policies to benefit the county.
3. Foster greater collaboration among Delaware County nonprofits.
4. Strengthen and promote the CNEEx and other capacity-building support.
5. Develop an information clearinghouse for the nonprofit sector.

Adjust Grantmaking Strategy

1. Combine grantmaking categories to reflect:
 - Health (i.e., Behavioral Health, Children’s Health and Nutrition, Food Security, Maternity and Pre/Postnatal Care, Preventive Health)
 - Youth Development (i.e., Education, Youth Development)
 - Community and Economic Development
2. Focus greater attention and funding on housing and behavioral health.
3. Adjust grantmaking parameters.
 - Structure grants around types of outcomes (see Grantee Partner Outcomes).
 - Where appropriate, increase multiyear grantmaking.
 - Continue to offer grants for core operating functions.
 - Structure grants to foster more collaboration.

Conclusion

The Foundation is well-poised to leverage its reputation as a convener, advocate, and anchor to strengthen the nonprofit sector and continue to advance well-being in the county. As a regional leader, the Foundation is uniquely positioned to convene people across sectors to discuss Delaware County’s challenges and to develop solutions. The Foundation has an opportunity to foster more philanthropy and advocacy efforts to address the county’s needs, as well as continue to raise the visibility of the nonprofit sector. As an anchor for, and capacity provider to the nonprofit sector, the Foundation is in a strong position to further bolster nonprofit effectiveness and promote collaboration for greater collective impact in the county.

For more information about the Foundation’s Impact Grants and Center for Nonprofit Excellence, contact Mischico Warren, Vice President for Nonprofit Services: mwarren@delcofoundation.org.

