

## A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY:

# National Philanthropic Support for Human Services and Human Services Leadership Development

## Introduction

Ongoing work by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation has sought to better understand the human services sector and its relationship to healthcare and public health in addressing overall population health and improving the lives of millions of Americans. Work underway at Northeastern University and the Urban Institute focuses on the uniquely critical role that state and local governments play in facilitating — or impeding — the alignment and effective delivery of human services.

This paper describes the contributions of national philanthropy to the human services sector in general and to sector leadership development in particular. It provides descriptive answers to three questions:

Based on interviews with key leaders in the human services field, this paper additionally identifies a series of recommendations. Supporting information is contained in the appendices.

1

Which national foundations support public and private human services?

2

How do leading human services funders support or invest in human services?

3

To what extent and in what ways do these foundations support the human services sector through leadership development investments?

## About this project

This project is part of a larger research grant funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) and led by Jean McGuire at Northeastern University entitled *Advancing Alignment through State Government Practices: Studying public-sector administrative, regulatory, and procurement practices to help achieve successful alignment of health care and human services*.

Faculty at Northeastern University and collaborators at the Urban Institute investigated state government structures and practices related to human services delivery and management as well as the intersection with human service-related community-based organizations and their statewide networks. Several reports are forthcoming. Analytic work by the investigators and input from the grant's advisory board identified the need to better understand the role of national philanthropy in shaping the wellbeing of this sector, particularly in the leadership arena.

# Background on US Private Foundation Investment in Human Services

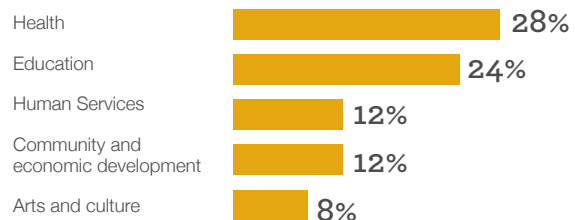
Philanthropic organizations provide various kinds of much-needed support to the human services sector: financing and capital development; operations and program implementation; research, evaluation, and learning; collaboration development and support; fiscal and management capacity development; and policy, advocacy, and systems change. This paper focuses on national foundations that support the primarily nonprofit organizations providing the human services. A snapshot of Key Facts on U. S. Nonprofits and Foundations, from candid.org in April 2020:

- Foundation giving represents 18% of all giving (individual gifts total 68%).
- 120,000 U.S. foundations hold \$1.2 trillion in assets and distribute \$82 B in grants annually.
- Human services is the primary focus of about 27% of the 1.7 M U.S. nonprofit charities; three-quarters of all nonprofits are small, with less than \$100K in annual revenue.
- Independent grantmaking foundations — which include most of the largest national foundations — make up about 70% of all annual giving. Operating foundations — which run their own programs and may also make grants — and corporate foundations make up the balance.
- Human services represent the third largest area of investment by all U.S. foundations, at 12% of total dollar amount, following health (28%) and education (24%).
- One-third of all foundation funding — including that going to human services — is focused on economically disadvantaged people, followed by children and youth (23%), women and girls (7%), ethnic and racial groups (7%), and people with disabilities (3%).
- 41% of all funding supported program development as a strategy, followed by general support (20%), research and evaluation (15%), policy, advocacy, and systems reform (10%) and capacity-building and technical assistance (8%).

Taken together, U.S. private foundations invest about \$10B annually in Human Services, with about \$7B coming from large independent national foundations.

## What do foundations fund most?

### Top 5 subject areas by dollar amount



### Top 5 populations by dollar amount

