

JOHN REX ENDOWMENT FIVE-YEAR FUNDING COMMITMENT

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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FIVE-YEAR COMMITMENT AND FUNDING AREA ASSESSMENT

1. Why are you creating this five-year plan now?

Over the course of our 10-year history of grantmaking, the John Rex Endowment has continuously examined how to fulfill our mission and best serve the community -- to improve the health and well-being of children and youth in Wake County, North Carolina.

We always seek to identify opportunities for change and improvement when it comes to the lives of children. The five-year plan is an intentional progression toward creating a deeper impact on our mission. Throughout our early years, we identified funding priorities in response to identified community needs, as well as community perspectives on the best way to ensure child health and well-being.

Over time we became more specific about our funding interests, and in 2007, instituted a Request for Proposal process to announce funding strategies. Since then we have identified overarching strategies of focus based on ensuring sustained impact and value, namely organizational capacity, community policies and environment, and system improvement. Now, we will hone our strategic focus even further by conducting a funding area assessment that will result in a five-year commitment to four specific funding areas, two of which have been determined: Nonprofit Capacity Building and Healthy Weight.

2. How did you come up with the first two areas of decided focus?

We have observed positive impact as a result of nonprofit capacity building and its contribution to strengthening organizations, and we believe there is great potential to do more in this area in the future. Regarding Healthy Weight, a long-term commitment already had been made by the John Rex Endowment to fund projects focused on preventing childhood overweight and obesity. We also have seen strong momentum being gained in this area, yet we recognize there is still critical work to be done, given the continuing seriousness of the issue in Wake County.

3. What are the funding areas being assessed?

The comprehensive and strategic assessment will examine four funding areas, as well as determine goals, strategies, indicators for monitoring impact, and a plan for continuous improvement. The four funding areas to be assessed are:

- Access to Care
- Healthy Infants and Early Childhood Development
- Injury Prevention
- Mental Health, Social and Emotional Well-being.

Two of these four funding areas will join Nonprofit Capacity Building and Healthy Weight to complete the slate of four funding areas for the five-year plan beginning in 2013.

4. How did you come up with the four areas to be assessed?

We looked at research that indicated areas most likely to have the greatest impact on overall child health and well-being. We have funded these four areas in the past and are aware of the broader opportunities for improvement in Wake County.

5. Who will conduct these assessments?

This activity we are undertaking is of the utmost importance to the John Rex Endowment. We are setting the direction of our funding and our organization for the next five years, and we are taking this endeavor seriously. As such, we are partnering in the assessment process with TCC Group, a national management consulting firm with a thirty-year history of working specifically with foundations, nonprofit organizations, and corporate community involvement programs, and government agencies.

6. How will you assess each area?

We have always valued the thoughts and opinions of grantee agencies with whom we work and other leaders in the area of child health and well-being. We are a learning organization, and we learn by listening. We will engage our community in this process, applying a consistent assessment approach for each of the four areas.

For each area being considered, we will assess and document:

- the landscape in Wake County, including assets and resources; identified gaps, needs and disparities; community successes or failures that contribute to the current situation; and stakeholder knowledge, skills, and attitudes
- lessons learned nationally and in other communities as to effective and promising practices
- goals and strategies within each funding area for grantmaking as well as other activities that support the mission or complement current funding interests
- measurement indicators that will help us monitor the impact of our investments in the selected funding areas
- a plan for refining strategies along the way to build on successes and the changing landscape.

7. Those are four fairly broad areas of funding focus. How do you expect to create deeper impact in such broad areas?

The assessment process will drill down within each area to identify where the greatest opportunities for change and improvement exists. For example, the funding area of Injury Prevention includes intentional injury (e.g., child abuse) and unintentional injury (e.g., bicycle accidents). To further the example, the John Rex Endowment could determine, as a result of the assessment, we would fund only unintentional injuries, and could drill down even further to state specifically that we would fund work targeting only the most prevalent unintentional injuries; i.e., “focused funding is going to reduce the number of children killed or injured while riding bicycles.”

Of course, this is just an example to illustrate how we can create deeper impact within a broad funding area. Only after the assessment is completed, however, will we have the information needed to make a decision about the specific funding areas.

8. What are the criteria by which you will decide on the two of four funding areas being assessed?

We have not yet determined those criteria; however, we will be giving careful thought to deciding the factors by which the John Rex Endowment's Board of Directors will make this important decision.

9. What is the timeline for your assessment and determining the two remaining funding areas?

The assessment will be conducted over a six-month period, and our intent is to announce the funding area decisions in November 2012. The first Request for Proposal based on the selected funding areas will be released in May 2013 with award decisions in October 2013.

10. How will you evaluate these new areas of focused funding?

Part of the assessment process will include identifying and developing meaningful evaluation metrics for the two funding areas to be selected. Our intention is that we will use these metrics to develop an ongoing evaluation process for each funding area throughout the life of the five-year plan.

11. Will the two funding areas already determined – Nonprofit Capacity Building and Healthy Weight -- be assessed along the same lines as the other funding areas being looked at?

The foundation will carry out an assessment in the future on Healthy Weight to determine goals, strategies, and indicators for measuring impact, and is considering doing the same for Nonprofit Capacity Building.

12. How can I get involved in the assessment?

We appreciate and respect the vast amount of expertise held by members of our community on the subject of health and well-being for children in Wake County. The needs of the assessment will determine with whom our team will need to speak. Current and past grantees, as well as others in the community focused on child health and well-being, will be among those asked to participate in the assessment process.

13. With how many organizations have you worked – active and past?

Over the past 10 years, the John Rex Endowment has funded projects with 58 organizations.

14. With how many active grantees are you currently working?

We currently have 42 active grants with 32 organizations.

15. Will some agencies be left out of funding for their projects as a result of the assessment and funding area decisions? What happens to grantees currently receiving funding as the result of a previously funded grant?

All projects currently funded or those awarded in 2012 will continue to receive funding for the full term of the grant. Until the assessment process is complete, we will not know what agencies might or might not be doing work that is a fit for our funding interests under the five-year plan.

16. How much funding are you talking about in the five-year focus?

We expect to invest \$15-\$20 million over the course of the next five years, in the range of \$3-\$4 million per year. That amount is in keeping with our current average annual funding.

17. Will the annual funding amount be divided evenly among the four areas of focus?

The assessment process will help the John Rex Endowment prioritize where the funding will do the most good, and funding decisions will be made accordingly. Ultimately, the foundation will identify clear goals around the desired impact and how to best achieve it, and then funds work and projects that support those goals.

18. Since Nonprofit Capacity Building has already been determined as one of the four funding areas, does that mean that regardless of an agency's focus, all agencies will be eligible to respond to Requests for Proposals in this area?

Part of the assessment and decision process will include determining if agencies applying for Nonprofit Capacity Building will need to also be aligned with one of the other three decided areas of focused funding. That determination will be made following the assessment process.

19. When will agencies be able to apply for grants based on the four funding areas in the five-year plan?

The first Request for Proposal based on our five-year plan will be released in May 2013, and award decisions will be announced in October 2013.

20. Will the John Rex Endowment continue its normal funding cycles during this time, prior to the start of the new five-year plan?

Yes. We have three award cycles in each year. In 2012, our Summer Award Cycle is underway with a focus on Healthy Weight. The two remaining grant cycles—Injury Prevention, and Mental Health, Social and Emotional Well-being—will be the focus of our Fall and Winter Award Cycles, respectively.

We also plan to release a Request for Proposal in January 2013 for next year's Summer Award Cycle. The funding area of focus for that cycle will not be determined until the end of 2012. Although this grant cycle will announce award decisions in 2013, it is not part of the five-year plan.

21. Are the grants you fund in 2012 going to be an indication of your five-year focused funding?

The funding areas for 2012 were decided independently of the areas of focus for the assessment for the five-year plan. All current grants as well as new grants funded throughout 2012 and in the 2013 Summer Award Cycle will be honored and will receive funding according to the terms of the grant award.

22. Will other activities undertaken by the John Rex Endowment (e.g., funding non-grantmaking activities, service on community committees, etc.) be affected by the new focus on four specific funding areas?

We need to await the recommendations resulting from the assessment process before we will know how those decisions impact other activity areas.

23. Does the Board of Directors support this new five-year commitment?

Yes. The Board was involved in the decision to move forward with a focus on four funding areas over a five-year term, and is fully committed to this assessment process. Their involvement is critical as the Board will hold the ultimate responsibility for the decision on which two areas will be selected for the five-year plan.

24. Will Board or staff turnover at the John Rex Endowment impact the funding areas of focus?

No. The John Rex Endowment is committed to its mission and its funding direction. We are engaged in the community on an ongoing basis to maintain a sense of what is happening in child health and well-being, and how our grantmaking contributes to moving the dial toward improvement. It is a continuous feedback process, the outcome of which positively impacts the health of children in our community. This is the kind of organization we want to be for much longer than any of the current staff or Board will be with the organization.

25. What happens after the five-year commitment is up? Is this a rolling five-year plan?

We have committed to a five-year funding focus, and our intent will be to reach our goals during that five-year period by being strategic and making an impact in child health and well-being in specific ways. We will have specific goals, determined and established as part of the assessment process, to which we will remain committed. And we will have a plan. But like any good plan, it will be evaluated continuously, and it will need to be flexible and reflective of the real world. So, we'll be looking at that plan throughout the five years and modifying it as needed.