

Are Private Sector Foundations Contributing to Faith-Based Organizations? Analyzing Grants for Faith-Based Social Service

This is a summary of the report, [Private-Sector Contributions to Faith-Based Social Service](#), by Jason Scott, published by the Roundtable on Religion and Social Welfare Policy. Scott examined nearly 3,000 private foundations to learn about the extent and nature of their giving to faith-based organizations.

Multiple searches of the 2,740 private independent foundations and 230 community foundations with total annual giving of \$1,000,000 or more revealed 368 with an expressed interest in funding both social services and religious activities. Most of these entities – 351, or 95 percent – were independent foundations, while 17 were community foundations. The mean annual giving of these foundations was \$8,073,704. Because of large annual giving by the top foundations (such as \$652,091,000 by the Ford Foundation), this average is highly skewed. The median total annual giving of \$2,068,924 is more representative of the typical foundation on this list.

We next examined all the grants awarded by the 100 largest of these faith-friendly foundations, to determine the percentage of their giving that supports faith-based social services. While these foundations indicated an interest in funding both social service and religious activities, the criteria listed above eliminated a large proportion – if not all – of the grants of some foundations (Footnote 12). We focused the rest of our analysis on the 837 grants awarded for faith-based social service by the 50 foundations that ranked the highest in their total annual giving to faith-based social service.

We found that the majority of these foundations are independent; only three are classified as community foundations. Their median annual total philanthropic giving was \$8,605,504. In total, these 50 foundations awarded \$68,851,811 annually to support faith-based social services. These foundations award an average of 17 grants annually for faith-based social service, and vary substantially in the total amounts they devote to such grants, with median faith-based giving amounting to \$652,000 annually. To put this finding in perspective, we calculated faith-based giving as a percentage of each foundation's total annual giving. We found that the average foundation in this sample devoted 10 percent of its gifts to faith-based social service, while 32 percent (16) devoted more than 10 percent.

Because we coded each grant according to the categories in Table 2 (see below), we were able to analyze the distribution of these grants across social service areas (see Table 3). We found that the foundations awarded the largest amount in the "human services" category – not surprising given the breadth of this category. Many of the grants classified as human services supported multiple service domains. For example, a grant supporting a neighborhood center that contains a food pantry, a daycare center, a community health clinic, and an after-school program would be classified as a human services grant. (A large proportion of the grants awarded to the Salvation Army were classified as human services.) The totals for each category may therefore partly be a reflection of the breadth of activity it includes.

Table 2: Grant Subject Descriptions

GRANT SUBJECT	DESCRIPTION/EXAMPLES
AIDS Outreach	Education, medical care, housing and shelter
Child Care	Early childhood education, daycare center
Child Welfare	Foster care, residential/custodial care, abuse/neglect
Civil Rights/Advocacy	Legal services, immigration assistance
Community Development	Economic and neighborhood improvement
Community Organizing	Leadership development, labor advocacy
Community Health Care	Community health clinics, pharmacy, education
Crime/Violence Prevention	Education, youth programs, victim services
Disaster Relief	Financial aid, food, shelter and clothing
Emergency Food Assistance	Food pantry, holiday food assistance
Employment Assistance	Job training, welfare-to-work programs
Family Services	Family planning, pregnancy assistance, adoption
Homeless Services	Transitional housing, shelter, food and clothing
Housing Development	Housing construction, Habitat for Humanity
Human Services	Multiple subject human services, Salvation Army
Mental Health Services	Family counseling, drug and alcohol treatment
Offender/Ex-Offender Services	Prison programs, post-release re-entry services
Parish Nursing	Health education, nursing care, health clinics
Senior Citizen Services	Residential care, nursing services, home aid
Youth Development	After school programs, mentoring, scholarship fund

Table 3: Total Grant Amount By Subject Area

SUBJECT AREA TOTAL AMOUNT AWARDED

Human Services \$ 16,167,320

Community Health Care \$ 8,718,820

Youth Development \$ 6,673,921

Community Development \$ 6,668,538

Homeless Services \$ 5,658,789

Senior Citizen Services \$ 3,851,889

Child Welfare \$ 3,795,174

Parish Nursing \$ 2,850,895

Housing Development \$ 2,002,409

Offender/Ex-Offender Services \$ 1,963,196

Family Services \$ 1,869,827

Crime/Violence Prevention \$ 1,562,500

Mental Health Services \$ 1,470,224

Child Care \$ 1,438,698

Community Organizing \$ 1,156,383

AIDS Outreach \$ 1,067,528

Civil Rights/Advocacy \$ 752,500

Employment Assistance \$ 653,200

Disaster Relief \$ 325,000

Emergency Food Assistance \$ 205,000