



## JUST FOR KIDS ANCHOR INSTITUTION PROGRAM

### THE OPPORTUNITY

Deaconess Foundation seeks to partner with organizations to ground and champion systems change, policy development and advocacy efforts in alignment with the Foundation's policy priorities. Our Just for Kids funding strategy advances our belief that significant gaps in civic infrastructure, resources and power will persist and further inhibit the health and well-being of children and families in the St. Louis region unless the region, system, and community's capability to achieve positive outcomes through collaborative engagement and investment with diverse partners is strengthened.

To do so, in January 2018 Deaconess will launch its inaugural Anchor Institution Program, investing with central, policy, organizing and advocacy actors striving to advance child well-being. By strengthening organizations core to the child well-being infrastructure, Deaconess aims to ensure Anchor Institutions have the stability it takes to drive change over the long-term and in turn, achieve greater impact.

Anchor institutions will be afforded access to:

- ✓ executive leadership coaching,
- ✓ peer learning and networking,
- ✓ customized capacity building activities,
- ✓ professional development opportunities,
- ✓ an annual Executive Directors' retreat,
- ✓ ongoing learning and assessment, in addition to
- ✓ four-year, capacity building support awards.



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### LEARNING TO DATE

From 2004 to 2016, Deaconess Foundation supported a multi-year, intensive capacity building initiative focused on increasing the organizational capacity of St. Louis metropolitan nonprofits serving children. Going far beyond simply providing funds for consultants or projects, Deaconess also committed foundation staff involvement in implementation, peer learning among the cohort, and leadership development at the executive and board level. In 2016, Deaconess engaged TCC Group, the formative evaluators for the program, to conduct a comprehensive retrospective assessment to at a most basic level document what had changed and been sustained through the Deaconess Impact Partnership. We learned much about what was most impactful

We learned that our investments work best when:

- ✓ **Partner organizations leverage their own capacity.**  
A baseline level of infrastructure, leadership, enthusiasm and success is necessary. Partners must start the program demonstrating capacities in areas where improvement, not their acquisition is sought.
- ✓ **Commitment to the partnership is sustained for the duration of the program.**  
For certain Executive Directors, but also Boards of Trustees, and staff must be both “bought-in” to the program AND accepting of change, for entire four years.
- ✓ **The right intervention is delivered at the right time.**  
Capacity-building plans must be tailored to, and informed by organizational needs. Activities cannot exceed nor outpace the priorities and bandwidth of the organizations they are designed to benefit.
- ✓ **Organizations focus on building technical, adaptive and/or leadership capacities.**  
The largest, sustainable improvements were witnessed here. Efforts to build these particular capacities provide the best and most direct potential for success. Early and repeated gains in technical skills build buy-in and provide scaffolding for additional improvements.



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As such, we also learned to support and prioritize investments in:

1. **Technical Capacity:** the ability to implement key organizational and programmatic functions. In alignment with the order of magnitude of improvements observed by Impact Partners, the Anchor Institution program will prioritize investments in: fundraising, legal knowledge and support, marketing, financial management, outreach, program evaluation, technology, facilities and equipment, and strengthening skills needed to do the specific type of advocacy-related work, or policy change, on which organizations are focused.
2. **Leadership Capacity:** the ability to create and sustain vision, inspire, model, prioritize, make decisions, provide direction and innovate, all in an effort to achieve the organizational mission. Most readily supported through executive coaching for executive leaders and training for specific staff members, successful leadership investments also included efforts focused on board development and functioning with respect to accountability, community outreach and fiscal oversight.
3. **Adaptive Capacity:** the ability to monitor, assess and respond to and create internal and external changes. The most successful investments in this domain supported efforts designed to support and protect programming in light of resource changes, including training focused on preserving resource flexibility through fund and staff development, sustaining partnerships, and monitoring and measuring progress.
4. **Relational Capacity:** the ability to operate effectively within an ecosystem to engage with multiple stakeholders and best position to advocate for and advance policy goals. Deaconess plans to expand investments in relational capacity to include efforts like: employing a racial equity lens, strategic alignment, fundraising focused on broadening resource bases,



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### ANCHOR INSTITUTION PROGRAM DESIGN

Given Deaconess’ Just for Kids funding strategy, and informed by our learnings from previous investments in youth organizing, policy, advocacy together with the findings from retrospective study of the Impact Partnership, we have chosen to focus the Anchor Institution Program in areas demonstrated to prove the most successful in enhancing and sustaining organizational impact.

### CORE PROGRAM ELEMENTS

<b>Grant Award &amp; Covenant</b>	4 year annual capacity building support
	Partnership agreement provides overview of commitments, roles and responsibilities of both partners, signed by both executive director and board chair of organization and Deaconess
<b>Evaluation and Learning</b>	Annual capacity assessment and external evaluation (continuing 1 year after completion of program)
	Continuous feedback and improvement
<b>Capacity Building Plan</b>	Details goals and activities, informed by results of organizational capacity assessment and calibrated by needs/priorities/readiness
	Developed, finalized and implemented during first year of program
	Quarterly review and annual update
<b>Peer Exchange &amp; Networking</b>	Bi-monthly Executive Director Roundtables
	Annual Executive Directors’ Retreat
<b>Consultation and Coaching</b>	Executive Coaching
	Professional development for other key positions (e.g. deputy director, development staff, Board of Trustees, etc.) as determined by ED needs/interests/priorities
	Issue-specific consultant engaged based on need(s) identified in capacity building plan
	DF Staff Engagement (Role as consultant/partner)
	Other trainings as identified by needs/interests of EDs