



CASE STUDY

ARCHS: A funder's perspective





Area Resources for Community and Human Services (ARCHS) provides funding, resources, and expertise to enhance designated education and social service initiatives that focus on early childhood, K-12, and family and community programs.

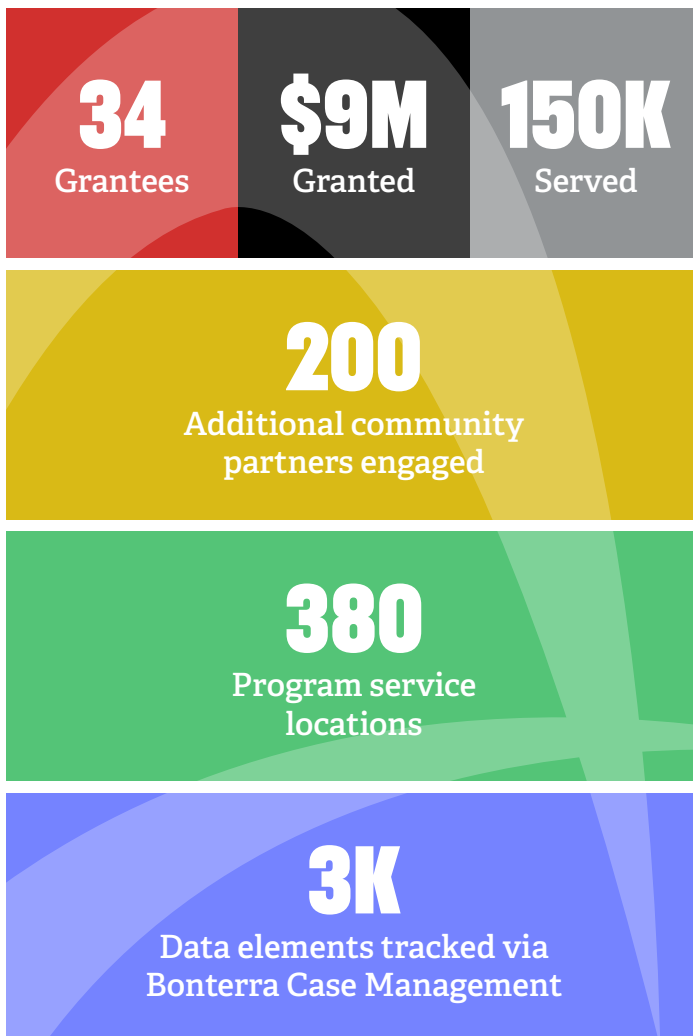
ARCHS was developed 20 years ago with the purpose of bridging federal/state funding with local resources to improve the lives of vulnerable children and families in St. Louis, Missouri. From its humble beginnings as an intermediary funder, the leaders of ARCHS knew they wanted to not only provide dollars to fund services but also be active participants in the service delivery process. As the organization has grown and developed over time, so has its funding vision.

In this case study by Bonterra Program Management (formerly Social Solutions), we partnered with ARCHS to break down what funders want to see from grantees—from a funder’s perspective—including the essentialness of data, progress, and partnerships.

Direct interaction with grantees allows ARCHS to be a true advocate and ally for the communities it funds.



ARCHS at-a-glance



FY2017 data

In FY2017 alone, ARCHS distributed more than \$9 million in funds to support 34 grantees across the metro area, serving 150,000 of St. Louis's most vulnerable residents. But ARCHS' role today, as a funder, goes beyond grants and dollar signs. In addition to the \$9 million in grants, ARCHS' team has provided more than 30,000 hours in technical assistance and direct interaction with its grantees. This direct interaction allows ARCHS to be a true advocate and ally for the communities it funds.

ARCHS has worked diligently over two decades to establish the positive relationship it now has with its grantees. This success has been driven by a dedication to three key pillars: **data**, **progress**, and **partnership**. ARCHS further advances this work by serving as one of 20 "Missouri Community Partnership" organizations that provide funding, resources, and expertise to meet local community needs across the state.



What funders want:

DATA

Data is at the core of ARCHS' relationship with its grantees. As with most funders, ARCHS receives information about the work that its grantees are doing, which informs ARCHS' future grant-making. ARCHS has come a long way when it comes to its relationship with data. In the past, ARCHS had a lot of data, from both internal sources and grantees, which was being collected without a cohesive means to an end. Like so many funders trying to interact with a varied group of grantees and internal staff, aggregating and understanding this information was difficult, time-consuming, and, at times, inaccurate.

Wendell E. Kimbrough, Chief Executive Officer of ARCHS, knows that inconsistencies in data have a direct impact on the organization's grantees and their ability to provide for those they serve. Funder requirements can be burdensome for grantees and take away time spent in the field. That's why ARCHS' Director of IT and Data Services Eric Monroe customized Bonterra Program Management's Case Management's centralized data management system, to manage both external grantees' program data and internal employee records. With a centralized system and set of processes, the data is no longer fragmented and siloed, making it easier for grantees to input and easier for ARCHS to manage. ARCHS' staff at every level now engages with the data as it's easily accessible from the office or in the field at more than 380 service locations.

Over time, ARCHS and its grantees have become more informed and more confident in the data it's collecting and analyzing. ARCHS can see and feel the impact its grantees are having on the ground because of the funding, and grantees are able to speak directly to the outcomes of their work.

What funders want:

PROGRESS

Wendell and the ARCHS' team are not only able to track the services that grantees are providing, but also see the lasting impact its funding has had on those grantees and the more than 150,000 children and family members they serve annually. ARCHS' 25 employees are excited about using Bonterra Case Management because they can see firsthand how data directly influences its programs and how data can be managed within ARCHS' own employee records. ARCHS now manages data effectively to accurately see the value it is adding to the community.

Are the people you serve better off?

When it comes to the specific outputs and outcomes data its grantees collect, ARCHS, similarly to other funders, wants grantees to answer the question: "Are the people you serve better off?" It is the funder's responsibility to ensure that funds are not only distributed, but that the funds work towards and ideally meet a goal. ARCHS has taken its responsibilities to these goals a step further to ensure that the funding dollars to grantees are adding direct value to the participants they serve on the front line.





What funders want:

PARTNERSHIP

ARCHS describes its key work as helping grantees grow and be the best they can be through funding support and be the best they can be through funding, support, and daily assistance. ARCHS' team goes onsite each month and visits with the people that the funding dollars directly affect.

Because ARCHS regularly meets with so many people, it better understands the needs of the community firsthand and can allocate the appropriate funds where they are most needed. Since 2015, ARCHS also interacts with grantees 24/7 through Case Management at all levels of the organization, from frontline staff to the CEO.

ARCHS' funder perspective may seem unique to some nonprofits. It is actively engaged and in the fields with its grantees—but not all funders are the same.



So, what can a nonprofit do to increase its level of engagement with its funders?

Wendell says it starts with open dialogue. One great way to promote partnership with funders is through social media and other marketing materials. Using photos, videos, and stories highlight your successes while giving credit to the funders that helped make those successes possible.



Partnerships for the future

ARCHS encourages its grantees to come to the ARCHS' team with questions, problems, and ideas of ways to improve their programs. Aligning efforts in a way that fits the funder's mission and your own organization's that fits the funder's mission, and your own organizations mission can go a long way to build up a relationship beyond the traditional funder/grantee towards a true partnership. As Wendell puts it, "We are better collectively than we are independently."

Is your small organization looking for integrated fundraising support? Visit bonterratech.com to contact us or request a demo.