

Creating a Better World for Children

Deaconess Foundation



Since it began grantmaking in St. Louis in 1998, Deaconess Foundation has envisioned a community that places a high priority on the well-being and healthy development of children and youth—especially the most vulnerable and least well-served. “It’s an attainable ideal—but only if the allocation of resources, benefits, and opportunities is equitable and not determinable by race,” says President and CEO Rev. Starsky Wilson.

In 2004, the Foundation launched the Deaconess Impact Partnership, which would direct capacity-building funding and support to a select cohort of nonprofits serving low-income children and families throughout the St. Louis metropolitan area. “TCC Group has figured importantly as a consulting and evaluative partner since the early years of the program,” says Wilson. “They worked closely with us on the design of the Deaconess Impact Partnership and on evaluating and improving it as it proceeded.”

By 2016, the program had supported three four-year cohorts of organizations—22 in all. That Fall, TCC Group was tasked with conducting an in-depth retrospective evaluation of the Partnership’s first 12 years. “The study incorporated an extensive body of new and existing data, which we used to perform a rigorous analysis of the Partnership and its longitudinal impact,” says Jared Raynor, Director of Evaluation & Learning at TCC Group.

Capacity
Building

Evaluation &
Learning

Health

Children, Youth
& Families

The firm's findings aligned with a directional change Deaconess had already begun contemplating—a shift from organization-specific capacity building to advocacy support. As Wilson describes it:

“ The idea was to move away from helping organizations build capacity to deliver programs and to refocus on helping them build power to affect legislation, policy, and community engagement.

This next stage of Deaconess' effort has targeted four areas that critically impact child well-being—access to comprehensive healthcare, early childhood education, economic mobility for families, and justice and equity for youth. The Foundation also invests in advocacy organizations. TCC Group, Wilson says, continues to play a key role.

“The opportunity to work with Deaconess and continue our role in the Partnership's transition to an advocacy-driven model has been incredibly rewarding,” says TCC Group Partner and Director Julie Simpson, who oversees nonprofit strategy and capacity building.

From Wilson's perspective, both TCC Group's adaptability and collaborative culture have been invaluable. “TCC Group has been our partner in both thought and action,” he says. “Our work involves organizations whose strategies, orientations, and leadership may change over time. TCC has always been willing to reexamine and refine its efforts to ensure that each organization's needs are met.”