

Healthy Schools Campaign

Grant Type: *Dollar*

Grant Amount: *\$280,000 for general support*

Organization: *Cedar Tree Foundation*



What was the objective of your grant or initiative?

The Illinois-based organization Healthy Schools Campaign works with Chicago Public Schools, the third largest school district in the country, to improve the overall health of its students, who primarily come from low-income communities of color. The district claims the highest asthma mortality rate in the nation and is settled among a number of distinct “food deserts,” which prevent access to local and healthy foods.

After realizing the need for funding in this region, Cedar Tree Foundation identified Healthy Schools Campaign as a strategic advocate in the geographic area and subsequently allocated a \$280,000 grant for general support.

What was your approach?

We made sure that our strategies for the program worked—leadership building, base building, use of collaborative opportunities, and multilevel efforts—and were in line with those of our grantee before we solidified our partnership. However, although we were very invested in the desired outcomes and impacts of Healthy Schools Campaign’s projects, we decided to take a step back and designate the grant as a general support one. Funding was eventually used for both program work and organizational capacity building, which did wonders for the grantee. It is important to highlight that we have heavily funded this grantee since 2003, which has helped to provide more stability for the organization and allowed it to focus on its work, rather than on fundraising.

During the grant period, Healthy Schools Campaign was able to triple their budget, double the level of individual support, and diversify their board. I wish to acknowledge as an approach or strategy our trust in our grantee, because we allowed them to apply funding where needed, which had wonderful results.

What were the outsized results?

Cedar Tree Foundation’s original 3-year grant to Healthy Schools Campaign had the following goals:

- To improve the environmental health of schools in Illinois through direct intervention on a range of issues
- To improve the organization’s effectiveness through organizational development

Because this was the second 3-year grant, Healthy Schools Campaign used the grant period to build on the organization’s previous work. In addition, the organization:

- Introduced and led a national campaign for green cleaning in schools, which led to partnerships with 21 different national organizations.
- Convened task forces and working groups on a gamut of environmental health issues, which introduced new voices into the state decision-making process around school issues.