



IMPACT SUMMARY

Connection Grants 2024

A FIRST STEP TOWARD COLLECTIVE IMPACT:

In September 2024, the Kinship Fund awarded its very first round of Connection Grants—more than \$100,000 invested in 24 community-based nonprofits. These mini-grants were designed to spark possibility, strengthen organizations, and open doors for the families and communities they serve.



IMPACT IN ACTION:

Across the board, organizations described these grants as catalysts for growth and stability.

Ten organizations shared their ability to expand programming or extend services

to new participants. There was also a ripple effect into the community as participants gained access to supportive services, experienced stability, and increased continuity in care (11 mentions).

"This grant allowed us to continue aftercare support, giving survivors continuity and stability."

"The moms supported by the Kinship Fund grant have been able to continue their education and parenting programs."

"The grant had a direct impact on Title 1 schools, providing kids with enrichment opportunities they would otherwise miss."

STRENGTHENING FROM WITHIN:

Organizations shared an increased ability to fortify their operational structures, such as using the funding as leverage to raise additional dollars and signal credibility to other partners (11 mentions). Multiple teams reported growth in leadership capacity, increased confidence to take on new initiatives, and a clearer sense of alignment across staff and board (8 mentions). For nonprofits operating with thin margins, even small infusions of flexible funding made meaningful operational improvements possible.

"The funding was a tremendous help. We had a generous donor match because of the Kinship Fund grant."

"This funding contributed to our leadership development and gave staff confidence to carry out new initiatives."



SYSTEMIC CHALLENGES FACING NONPROFITS

While the grants generated momentum, nonprofits were honest about the broader realities they face. Funding shortages remain the most significant barrier (15 mentions). Community needs also continue to rise faster than organizations can respond (13 mentions), and staffing limitations lead to burnout and constrained capacity (10 mentions). Many noted that the deepest, most relational work they do cannot be measured through short-term metrics—and that meaningful change requires time, stability, and long-term investment.

"We measure through guidelines and benchmarks, but wish funders understood how much unseen relational work goes into transformation."

"Our biggest challenge continues to be the demand from schools and the lack of adequate resources."



BEYOND DOLLARS:

WHAT NONPROFITS VALUE MOST

The survey made one message clear: nonprofits want partners, not just funders. Nonprofits clearly expressed a desire for partnerships, visibility, advocacy, and flexible support. They emphasized the power of funders who make introductions (12 mentions), open doors, elevate visibility, and champion their work (9 mentions). They also underscored the value of flexible dollars: general operating support, multi-year commitments, and funding that adapts to real-time needs (11 mentions). These forms of support build resilience and make impact sustainable.

"Beyond funding, your support in helping us raise awareness and connect with other funders would be invaluable."

"Continued support through connections to like-minded organizations will help us thrive."

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Connection Grants sparked growth in different forms for every organization. Nearly half of the organizations were able to expand their programming, demonstrating that the grants enabled organizational growth. We also found a strong ripple effect in the community through increased access to services for youth and families. Nonprofits also used the grants to strengthen fundraising, deepen leadership capacity, and stabilize operations, signaling the value of operational strength.

At the same time, structural challenges—especially funding scarcity and capacity constraints—continue to limit their ability to meet rising community needs. Above all, organizations are calling for funders who act as connectors, collaborators, and champions. The impact of these grants demonstrates that when partnership and flexibility combine with community expertise, transformation begins to take root.