



# Supporting Rural School Districts

The Community Foundation of the Ozarks assists rural school districts through the Rural Schools Partnership. School partners are districts or school foundations that establish charitable funds at the CFO. School partners have peace of mind knowing their charitable resources are responsibly managed by an experienced advisory board, as well as a dedicated staff and board of directors committed to strengthening our rural schools.



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PARTNERSHIP

## SERVICES

- Investment management
- Board development for school foundations
- Professional development and educational seminars on pertinent topics
- Access to the CFO's charitable gift annuity program
- Online access to fund information via Fund Manager
- Automatic delivery of gift acknowledgement letters to donors
- Acceptance of a wide variety of donor gifts
- Advice on planned giving
- Information on grant opportunities

## TYPES OF FUNDS

### Capacity Funds

**\$2,500 to open; \$1,000 minimum to maintain.** These non-endowed funds allow the school district or foundation flexibility in distributions. Capacity funds are completely liquid and can be withdrawn at any time. Primarily considered for:

- **Capital campaigns:** Money raised in a campaign can be invested in a money market account or in the diversified fund and can be withdrawn incrementally or in total, when the campaign's purpose is completed.
- **Reserves:** Schools may establish reserve funds that they do not need in the foreseeable future. Letting these funds grow in a capacity fund while having access to all or part of the money at any time, is a plus.
- **Earning:** Capacity funds have two primary investment options—the Cash Pool or the Diversified/Growth Pool. The Cash Pool is FDIC insured and has a smaller return; the Diversified/Growth Pool is subject to market risk, but the historic average return is about 7% annually.
- **Accessibility:** Capacity funds keep assets fluid rather than tying them up in an endowed fund.

### Endowments

**\$10,000 to open; principal is restricted.** This type of fund provides long-term support, invested and intended to support a school in perpetuity. The historical average return on the Diversified/Growth Pool option is about 7% annually. The CFO's Investment Advisory Board sets an annual policy that determines how much of the fund may be withdrawn in a given fiscal year. Currently, these funds pay out 4% of the fund balance; a \$100,000 endowment provides about \$4,000 of support each year. All funds with the CFO are subject to our administrative fee—currently 1% based on the fund's balance. Funds established with the CFO's affiliate foundations may have additional fees that could increase total fee to 1.15%.

- **Why is an endowment important?** As a permanent source of funding, an endowment provides stability. It facilitates strategic budgeting, a fact appreciated by board members and donors.
- **What is a named fund?** A named fund honors an individual or family.
- **What form can an endowment gift take?** The CFO provides gift-planning assistance and facilitates gifts of all types, including cash, non-cash assets like stock and real estate, gifts through wills or trusts, retirement plan assets and life insurance.
- **What is a bequest?** A gift made in a will or a trust; the most common type of planned gift from a donor.
- **Are endowments restricted in purpose?** Typically these funds offer unrestricted support for a school district, but it is also possible to establish a fund to support a specific purpose or program for a school.
- **How do scholarships differ from endowments?** Scholarship funds are endowments, but benefit select individuals and not an entire district. Scholarships require \$25,000 to establish.

For more information, contact: Beth Hughs, Rural Schools Partnership coordinator, [bhughs@cfozarks.org](mailto:bhughs@cfozarks.org); Tiffany Frey director of philanthropic services, [tfrey@cfozarks.org](mailto:tfrey@cfozarks.org); or call 417-864-6199.



# Options for School Partnership

Because school districts and the communities they serve vary in size and needs, establishing either charitable funds or a school foundation can help close some funding gaps. Beyond these recommendations, those considering either a school foundation or a school fund should educate themselves on which system will best serve their needs.



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## ESTABLISHING CHARITABLE FUNDS

Charitable funds established by a school district or its supporters can support any appropriate aspect of the school's programming. For example, a donor might wish to support arts programming beyond the school's budget. Endowment funds can provide stable funding for a school over generations. If the charitable funds supporting a district continue to grow in value, a formal school foundation can be established later.

## ESTABLISHING A FORMAL SCHOOL FOUNDATION

Establishing a school foundation can have far-reaching effects and can help provide a conduit for securing donations and funds to support schools. If a district has community members that are passionate about education but not serving on the school board, a formal school foundation with bylaws and a board of directors could be the answer. A successful school foundation is primarily focused on success and opportunities for all students. Its leadership is rooted in the community, supports the foundation financially and advocates for planned giving and endowed funding.

## ACTION STEPS FOR ESTABLISHING A SCHOOL FOUNDATION

- 1** Establish a small, working group to explore the feasibility of establishing a school foundation as an independent 501(c)3 or under the umbrella of a community foundation's charitable status.
- 2** Keep administrators and school board members in the loop and garner their support before moving forward.
- 3** Establish a formal board or advisory board, depending on the legal structure of the school "foundation."
- 4** Clearly articulate the foundation's mission statement.
- 5** Develop a launch plan that focuses heavily on community education/communication.
- 6** Determine short-term goals to build momentum and launch the foundation.
- 7** Determine long-range objectives and consider existing assets that eventually could be included in the school foundation's portfolio.

For more information, contact: Beth Hughs, Rural Schools Partnership coordinator, [bhughs@cfozarks.org](mailto:bhughs@cfozarks.org); Tiffany Frey, director of philanthropic services, [tfrey@cfozarks.org](mailto:tfrey@cfozarks.org); or call 417-864-6199.



# Guidelines for School Partner Funds

The Community Foundation of the Ozarks welcomes funds established by school districts and foundations in central and southern Missouri. To ensure that such funds comply with both the mission of the CFO and the requirements of the IRS, the following guidelines have been established.



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## ADDING ASSETS INTO FUNDS

There are a few ways to add assets to your fund:

- Checks written out to the school district or foundation, to the name of your fund or to “Community Foundation of the Ozarks.” Please include the fund name or fund ID that will receive the gift either in the memo line of the check or in a note mailed with it. Do not endorse the check. Mail to Community Foundation of the Ozarks, Attn: Finance Department, P.O. Box 8960 · Springfield, MO 65801
- Credit card gifts may be made at [cfozarks.org/donate](http://cfozarks.org/donate). Donors indicate the fund name in the credit card donation process online. We can create a direct link to your fund’s page upon request.
- A wire transfer or stock gifts may be made into your fund. For stock or wire transfer instructions, please contact Holly Beadle, Director of Philanthropic Services, at [hbeadle@cfozarks.org](mailto:hbeadle@cfozarks.org) or 417-864-6199.

With all gifts that are made directly from a donor into a fund at the CFO, a gift acknowledgement will be sent to the donor. Credit card gift acknowledgements are provided via email immediately after the gift; all other gift acknowledgements are made by mail.

## DISTRIBUTIONS FROM FUNDS

As a school district or, in the case of a school foundation, a verified 501(c)3 nonprofit organization, you may choose to make distributions from your CFO-held funds as you see fit. Your district or foundation is fiscally responsible for distributions from your fund. Distribution requests can be made online through Fund Manager or by email, fax or written request. Distributions must be made by the approved contact for the school or foundation.

**Email requests:** [hbeadle@cfozarks.org](mailto:hbeadle@cfozarks.org)

**Fax:** 417-864-8344

**Written request:** Community Foundation of the Ozarks, Attn: Holly Beadle, P.O. Box 8960 · Springfield, MO 65801

Note that capacity funds are not meant to be used as checking accounts. A district or foundation should maintain a separate checking account for operating expenses, day-to-day transactions and frequent needs. A capacity fund is meant to help a school work toward a specific goal, raise capital and build interest on reserve funds.

To view the fund activity, use Fund Manager to view the gifts and distributions from your funds.

## ACCESSING FUND MANAGER

Fund Manager is a web-based service for fund advisors, nonprofit agency partners and affiliate community foundations. With information updated daily, it enables you to view your fund balances, gifts to your funds, and completed and pending grants from your funds. Fund advisors can make grant recommendations online at any time. Log on at [cfozarks.org/fundmanager](http://cfozarks.org/fundmanager) or through the link on the CFO’s website.

Need access to Fund Manager? Contact Tiffany Frey, director of philanthropic services, at [tfrey@cfozarks.org](mailto:tfrey@cfozarks.org) or 417-864-6199.



# Youth Empowerment Project

The Youth Empowerment Project (YEP) is an initiative throughout central and southern Missouri encouraging middle school and high school students to find their philanthropic focus while gaining valuable leadership skills through education on volunteerism, grantmaking and fundraising.



## GETTING STARTED

Getting administrative approval and determining who is going to be the primary sponsor(s) is the first step in starting a new YEP chapter; gaining club status at school and gathering student interest should follow. Emails, school flyers, morning announcements, mentions at school assemblies, etc. can help create additional interest and excitement for students to sign up. The minimum number of students wanting to participate can vary from school to school.

## SETTING A MEETING SCHEDULE

The group should meet at least once a month, but can meet as frequently as once a week or once every two weeks. The length of meetings may differ week to week or month to month depending on the content and schedules of students and sponsors. Chapters can aim to have roughly 30–60-minute meetings.

## FIRST YEP MEETING

During the club's first meeting, the students and sponsors should focus on building rapport before addressing any other business items. The group can play an icebreaker game, such as "Find Someone Who," "Two Truths and a Lie," "Find Your Pair," etc. After the icebreaker, discuss with the group what YEP is and what kinds of activities the group might expect to engage in throughout the program year. You might also discuss different leadership opportunities (i.e. president, vice president, secretary, treasurer, etc.) that students can run for. By the second or third YEP meeting, leadership positions should be filled and roles should be defined.

## MEETING TOPICS AND ACTIVITIES

Each club meeting can start off with an icebreaker activity to help students and sponsors get to know one another better and to create rapport within the group. During the first couple of meetings, the group should determine what its philanthropic focus is and ideas on how to support this.

Here are some examples from other YEP chapters:

- Beautification projects to revitalize a downtown area;
- A backpack supply program to help students who experience financial struggles; and
- Purchasing playground equipment for a local park so kids have a place to hang out.

During each meeting, students can engage in educational activities, such as hosting speakers, watching a movie, engaging in fundraising or grantmaking, etc. The group can also choose to participate in volunteer projects around the school or in the community. Each chapter should aim to complete one or more volunteer activities per year and attendance at the annual YEP conference is highly encouraged.

For more information, contact Beth Hughs, Rural Schools Partnership coordinator, at [bhughs@cfozarks.org](mailto:bhughs@cfozarks.org) or 417-864-6199.



# Ozarks Teacher Corps FAQ

The Ozarks Teacher Corps encourages extremely capable and passionate education students to return to their rural hometowns as teacher-leaders. The program was launched as a component of the Rural Schools Partnership in 2010, with an initial cohort of 16 teaching candidates. The Corps has grown to include more than 160 teachers who serve as a network of educator-activists that recognize the importance of rural education to a sustainable society.



## WHAT IS THE RURAL SCHOOLS PARTNERSHIP?

The Rural Schools Partnership is a program established by the Community Foundation of the Ozarks in 2009. The RSP holds these fundamental beliefs:

- Education is a linchpin issue in rural economic development.
- Schools are critical to the well-being of small communities by serving as hubs and providing a focal point of activity, a sense of civic pride and a reason for families to stay in place.
- Schools are an integral thread in the community fabric — they provide a sense of purpose.

## WHAT IS THE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION OF THE OZARKS?

The CFO is a public foundation that provides philanthropic resources to donors, nonprofits and communities in central and southern Missouri. Founded in 1973, the CFO has grown to include 55 regional affiliate foundations and about 700 nonprofit and school partners. As of June 30, 2025, the CFO holds more than 3,700 charitable funds with assets of 549 million.

## WHO PROVIDES THE FUNDING FOR THE OZARKS TEACHER CORPS?

The Corps is made possible by the Chesley and Flora Lea Wallis Trust, a \$2 million endowment held by the CFO.

## WHO QUALIFIES FOR THE OZARKS TEACHER CORPS?

The program is open to students attending Missouri State University, Drury University, Southeast Missouri State University and Missouri Southern State University. Applicants must have graduated from a high school in a rural district, preferably in the Missouri Ozarks.

## WHAT ARE THE COMMITMENTS?

Those selected to the Ozarks Teacher Corps must commit to teaching in a rural school, typically their hometown, for at least three years. Corps members must also attend and participate in two rural education workshops. If recipients do not complete their teaching certification or program or honor their commitment to teach in a rural school, the scholarship will be revoked.

To learn more about the Ozarks Teacher Corps, contact Beth Hersh, director of scholarships, at [bhersh@cfozarks.org](mailto:bhersh@cfozarks.org) or 417-864-6199.

# What is the CFO?



COMMUNITY  
FOUNDATION  
*of the* OZARKS

*Connecting passion to purpose.*

You might think of the CFO as a nonprofit bank for good — managing charitable assets for schools, donors and nonprofits, and providing grants that help rural schools, teachers and communities thrive. Since 1973, the CFO has:

- Grown to more than \$500 million in assets
- Distributed more than \$650 million in grants
- Expanded to serve 63 counties in Missouri through 55 affiliate foundations

Through endowments, grants, special programs and other resources, the CFO supports long-term and immediate needs in education.

## THE CFO'S RURAL SCHOOLS PARTNERSHIP

With the belief that strengthening rural schools strengthens rural communities, the CFO founded the Rural Schools Partnership in 2009. About 100 rural school districts and



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school foundations have established funds with the CFO — your school may already be a partner. Through the RSP, schools can:

- **Start or grow a charitable fund or permanent endowment**
- **Access exclusive grant opportunities**
- **Find resources and best practices for place-based education**
- **Receive support in building a culture of giving**

## FINANCIAL SUPPORT

The CFO offers two key funding options for schools:

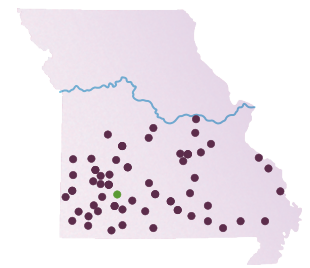
- **Grant opportunities:** Throughout the year, the CFO and its affiliates offer general and targeted grant programs for which schools are eligible to apply. The grant programs may provide funding for place-based education projects, field trips, STEM education, mental health, classroom tools, educational software and more.
- **Endowments:** Schools and school foundations can establish permanent funds with the CFO that provide steady support year after year — like a fund for classroom grants or a scholarship for graduating seniors. An endowment at the CFO is also a great tool for alumni who want to make a complex or planned gift that supports the school forever.

## AFFILIATE FOUNDATION NETWORK

The CFO has 55 affiliate foundations across central and southern Missouri.

**Your school district's community is likely served by one of these affiliates.**

These local “branches” of philanthropy understand and help meet the community's needs through annual grantmaking. Creating a relationship with your local CFO affiliate can mean support for students and district initiatives.



## YOUTH EMPOWERMENT PROJECT

The CFO's Youth Empowerment Project promotes **student-led philanthropy and leadership in area schools**. YEP chapters organize and carry out initiatives to help both their school and community, giving students hands-on experience in philanthropy.

The CFO supports these chapters through:

- Start-up grants
- Fund management
- Annual conference for students and sponsors



## YOUR NEXT STEPS

- **Explore Our Website:** Learn more about the CFO and the RSP, search for grant opportunities and read stories of impact at [cfozarks.org/educators](http://cfozarks.org/educators).
- **Schedule a “CFO 101” meeting:** Contact Beth Hughs, RSP Coordinator, at [bhughs@cfozarks.org](mailto:bhughs@cfozarks.org) or 417-864-6199.

