

HIDDEN IN PLAIN SIGHT:

Funding A Father-Inclusive Effort For Non-Governmental Organizations

Many non-governmental organizations (NGOs) struggle to identify funding sources for fatherhood initiatives and programs. After all, beyond the current federal funding of Responsible Fatherhood grants, implemented in 2006, and a handful of foundations that offered fatherhood-specific grants in the late 1990s and early 2000s, dedicated funding for such efforts has been extremely limited. But that's not the primary reason for the struggle. It's the lack of awareness about the many underutilized public and private funding sources that fuel father-inclusive efforts nationwide and can continue doing so. These sources are hidden in plain sight.

This document lists potential sources, starting with public funding at the federal and state levels. This is not an exhaustive list, but it includes the most common sources government agencies have used. Decision-makers in NGOs can monitor federal and state funding from these sources to fund father-inclusive efforts by applying for grants and contracts. Some select examples of how state and local governments have used these sources are included.

Private sources follow, which are ideal for use by NGOs. Combined with potential public sources, decision-makers have more options than many of them realize. This document concludes with a recommended funding approach for starting, scaling, and maintaining father-inclusive efforts.

FEDERAL SOURCES

Core Federal Block Grants (Flexible Use): These are the most widely used sources.

1. Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)
 - a. \$16.6B annual block grant to states
 - b. Can fund:
 - i. Employment programs for noncustodial fathers
 - ii. Parenting and family stability services

- c. Some states dedicate a portion to:
 - i. Fatherhood programs
 - ii. Two-parent family initiatives
- 2. TANF Maintenance of Effort (MOE)
 - a. Required state spending that can support fatherhood programming
- 3. Social Services Block Grant (SSBG – Title XX)
 - a. Flexible funding for family support services
 - b. Can include parenting, family reunification, and father engagement
- 4. Community Services Block Grant (CSBG)
 - a. Funds Community Action Agencies
 - b. Can support employment, case management, and family strengthening

**Child Support & Workforce-Related Funding:
These sources are increasingly being used.**

- 1. Child Support Enforcement (CSE) Funds
 - a. Can fund employment and parenting services for noncustodial parents
 - b. Federal flexibility allows partnerships with fatherhood programs
- 2. Access and Visitation (A&V) Mandatory Grants
 - a. Specifically designed to support noncustodial parents
 - b. Funds:
 - i. Parenting time/visitation services
 - ii. Mediation and conflict resolution
 - iii. Parenting education
 - c. Strong alignment with father engagement goals

**Family & Child-Focused Federal Programs (Indirect Support):
These are not fatherhood-specific but can fund components.**

- 1. Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG)
 - a. Supports childcare so parents (including fathers) can work
- 2. Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV)
 - a. Funds evidence-based home visiting programs
 - b. Increasing emphasis on father engagement within home visiting models
 - c. Can support:
 - i. Co-parenting education
 - ii. Father inclusion in early childhood development

3. Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP): Focuses on strengthening families and preventing child maltreatment
 - a. Can fund:
 - i. Parenting education
 - ii. Father engagement strategies
 - iii. Family support services
4. Child Welfare Funding (Title IV-B & Title IV-E): Supports prevention, reunification, and foster care services
 - a. Can fund:
 - i. Father involvement in case planning
 - ii. Reentry and reunification services
 - iii. Parenting programs for fathers involved in the system
5. Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC): Primarily nutrition-focused, but increasingly used to:
 - a. Engage fathers in prenatal and early childhood settings
 - b. Provide education and referrals to family services

Incarcerated and Reentering Fathers Funding

1. The U.S. Department of Justice's Second Chance Act (SCA) is primarily a reentry funding stream—but many of its allowable uses directly support fatherhood and responsible parenting, especially for incarcerated and reentering fathers.
 - a. SCA grants fund state, local, tribal, and nonprofit efforts to reduce recidivism and improve reentry outcomes for people leaving incarceration. A key pillar of this work is family strengthening, which creates a natural entry point for fatherhood programming.
 - b. SCA funds can explicitly support programs centered on fathers, including:
 - i. Responsible fatherhood & parenting skills
 - ii. Father-child relationship building
 - iii. Mentoring and peer support
 - c. Many standard SCA-funded services stabilize fathers so they can parent effectively:
 - i. Employment and job training
 - ii. Housing assistance
 - iii. Substance use and mental health treatment
 - iv. Case management and reentry planning
 - d. SCA includes several program tracks that explicitly support families:
 - i. Programs for incarcerated parents and their children
 - ii. Family-based treatment models

- e. SCA funding supports services across the full reentry continuum:
 - i. During incarceration: parenting classes, visitation programs, relationship-building
 - ii. At release: transition planning that includes family reunification
 - iii. Post-release: mentoring, employment, and continued parenting support
- f. Funds can also be used to improve how systems support fathers:
 - i. Training correctional staff in family engagement and trauma-informed practices
 - ii. Developing policies that support safe and meaningful family contact
 - iii. Building coordinated service systems focused on parents and children

Education Funding Streams

1. Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) – Title I: Supports schools serving low-income families
 - a. Can fund:
 - i. Family engagement initiatives
 - ii. Father involvement in education
 - iii. School-based parenting programs
 - b. Often used for:
 - i. “Dads in Schools” initiatives
 - ii. Literacy and engagement events involving fathers

STATE SOURCES

State agencies have combined federal funds with state funds to support father-inclusive efforts.

1. State General Funds
 - a. Direct appropriations through:
 - i. Departments of Human Services
 - ii. Departments of Children & Families
 - iii. Departments of Education
 - iv. Departments of Public Health
 - b. Used to:
 - i. Match federal funds
 - ii. Sustain programs between grant cycles
2. Child Support Incentive Funds (State Use)
 - a. Performance-based (not operational) federal funds retained by states

- b. Can be reinvested in:
 - i. Employment programs
 - ii. Father engagement services
- 3. State Workforce & Reentry Funding
 - a. State workforce agencies and corrections departments often fund:
 - i. Job readiness for fathers
 - ii. Reentry fatherhood programs
 - b. Frequently braided with TANF or CSE funds
- 4. State-Specific Fatherhood Initiatives
 - a. Some states create dedicated initiatives (e.g., statewide fatherhood programs)
 - b. Typically funded through:
 - i. TANF transfers
 - ii. State appropriations
 - iii. Public-private partnerships

EXAMPLES OF GOVERNMENT AGENCY FUNDING

1. Oklahoma is using TANF dollars in a targeted, programmatic way to strengthen father involvement, primarily by funding statewide, evidence-based fatherhood initiatives that address parenting, relationships, and economic stability.
 - a. Core approach
 - i. Oklahoma has committed about \$9 million in TANF funding over three years to support fatherhood-specific services across the state.
 - ii. These funds are distributed through competitive grants to multiple providers, creating a network of 10 fatherhood programs operating in both rural and urban communities.
 - iii. TANF-funded fatherhood programs in Oklahoma focus on building “family capacity” by offering parenting education, relationship and co-parenting skills, economic stability support, case management, and coaching to address barriers.
 - iv. Many programs use structured, evidence-based curricula like 24:7 Dad® and On My Shoulders delivered through weekly group sessions and individualized coaching.
2. Alabama uses its TANF funds not just for cash assistance, but to support a network of fatherhood-focused programs aimed at strengthening families, improving employment outcomes, and preventing child neglect.
 - a. Core Approach
 - i. Alabama directs TANF dollars through the Alabama Department of Human Resources to the Children’s Trust Fund of Alabama, which then awards grants to community and faith-based organizations. These grants support dozens of fatherhood programs statewide, making father engagement a formal part of Alabama’s TANF strategy.

- ii. TANF-funded fatherhood programs offer parenting classes and fatherhood curricula, guidance on co-parenting and family relationships, job-readiness training, and individualized case management.
 - iii. Alabama explicitly links TANF fatherhood funding to child abuse and neglect prevention, family strengthening, and protective factors
3. Florida has made one of the most significant state-level investments in fatherhood in the U.S., using a mix of state appropriations, TANF-related funding, and competitive grants to community organizations to build a coordinated, statewide approach.
- a. Core Approach
 - i. In 2022, Florida passed House Bill 7065, creating a statewide Responsible Fatherhood Initiative. The Legislature committed over \$70 million to support fatherhood programs across the state.
 - ii. Funding is administered primarily through the Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF) and the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ). The funding supports parenting education and evidence-based fatherhood programs, mentorship and peer support, one-on-one coaching and case management, and public awareness campaigns promoting father involvement.
4. Ohio uses a multi-layered funding approach—combining federal TANF dollars, dedicated state funding, and grant programs—to support fatherhood initiatives statewide. The centerpiece of this strategy is the Ohio Commission on Fatherhood (OCF), which acts as the primary vehicle for distributing and coordinating funds.
- a. Core Approach
 - i. Ohio is one of the leading states using TANF funds specifically for fatherhood work. Through TANF, the state funds OCF to support community-based nonprofit and faith-based programs, provide parenting education, co-parenting support, and economic stability services, and deliver training in evidence-based fatherhood curricula.
 - ii. In FY2025, TANF-funded efforts reached fathers and families in 23 counties and supported multiple pilot programs targeting issues like father engagement in child welfare and pregnancy prevention.
 - iii. Ohio has significantly increased investment through its state budget: \$20 million allocated for a statewide Responsible Fatherhood Initiative, with an additional \$2.5 million for OCF. These funds are distributed as grants to organizations with proven fatherhood programs, including faith-based and community groups.
 - iv. Ohio leverages partnerships with nonprofits and faith-based organizations (primary service providers), networks like the Ohio Practitioners’ Network for Fathers and Families, and private sector contributors that expand reach and sustainability.
5. Texas is combining multiple sources for its Fatherhood EFFECT grant program, including TANF, CBCAP, and state PEI (prevention and early intervention) funds. It has also used Maternal and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) to evaluate the impact of father-inclusive efforts.
- a. Core Approach
 - i. Assisting fathers and father figures expecting a child or have at least one child, birth to 17 years old.

- ii. Focus is on preventing child abuse and neglect by building five protective factors in families.
 - iii. Currently funding eight organizations that provide evidence-based home visiting and fatherhood programs.
6. The City of Baytown, Texas, is also using opioid settlement funds to build a community-wide fatherhood initiative that treats father engagement as a prevention strategy for substance misuse and related social issues.
- a. Core approach
 - i. Baytown is redirecting opioid settlement dollars upstream—not just into treatment, but into family-strengthening efforts aimed at reducing the conditions that lead to drug use.
 - ii. The city explicitly links father absence to outcomes like youth drug use, crime, truancy, and homelessness, and is investing in fathers to interrupt those patterns.
 - b. How the initiative works
 - i. Baytown itself is the convener, bringing together local stakeholders, nonprofits, and residents to create a Community Action Plan focused on father engagement.
 - ii. The city first partnered with National Fatherhood Initiative⁵ to conduct research and design a strategy tailored to local needs.
 - iii. It then selected CoolxDad as the lead implementation partner to deliver programming and community engagement.
 - iv. Activities include mentorship, peer groups, skills-building sessions, family-centered events, and community gatherings that help fathers learn, connect, and stay engaged with their children.
 - v. The initiative targets a wide range of dads—not only those experiencing addiction or crisis but also working fathers who need support balancing employment and parenting—making it a universal, not niche, intervention.
7. Other examples of funding used by local governments for father-inclusive efforts include:
- a. Property tax revenue by Hamilton County, Ohio
 - b. Children’s services tax levy revenue by Cuyahoga County, Ohio
 - c. CDBG and municipal general funds by the City of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Private Funding

1. National Foundations: Large philanthropic organizations often fund family stability, workforce development, and child well-being initiatives that align with fatherhood work.
 - a. Examples include:
 - i. Foundations focused on economic mobility and workforce development
 - ii. Funders prioritizing early childhood, education, or family engagement
 - iii. National initiatives supporting responsible fatherhood and healthy relationships

- b. These funders typically support:
 - i. Pilot programs and innovation
 - ii. Program evaluation and research
 - iii. Scaling evidence-based models
- 2. Regional and Community Foundations: Local and regional foundations are often more accessible and aligned with community-specific needs.
 - a. They commonly fund:
 - i. Family strengthening programs
 - ii. Parenting education and support services
 - iii. Community-based father engagement initiatives
 - b. These funders are especially valuable for:
 - i. Seed funding
 - ii. Filling gaps between public funding cycles
 - iii. Supporting culturally responsive, locally driven programs
- 3. Corporate Giving and Employer Partnerships: Private-sector partners—especially those invested in workforce development
 - a. Can support fatherhood programs through:
 - i. Grants from corporate foundations
 - ii. Sponsorship of workforce readiness programs for fathers
 - iii. In-kind contributions (technology, meeting space, marketing support)
 - b. Employers may also partner directly to:
 - i. Provide job placement pipelines
 - ii. Support reentry employment programs
 - iii. Invest in employee family well-being initiatives
- 4. Faith-Based and Nonprofit Partnerships: Faith-based organizations and nonprofit networks often have access to private donors and philanthropic resources.
 - a. These partners can:
 - i. Co-fund fatherhood initiatives
 - ii. Provide program space and outreach
 - iii. Support community trust and engagement
- 5. Individual Donors and Giving Campaigns
 - a. Agencies and partner organizations may also tap into:
 - i. Individual philanthropy
 - ii. Donor-advised funds
 - iii. Community fundraising campaigns

- b. These sources are particularly useful for:
 - i. Supporting program enhancements
 - ii. Covering non-reimbursable costs
 - iii. Building community ownership of fatherhood efforts

A SOUND APPROACH: PART 1

NGOs should emphasize acquiring and maintaining multiple funding streams for their father-inclusive efforts. Those with a track record of sustainability and scalability have avoided the shaky foundation of relying on one funding source.

This blended approach is sound because:

- Dedicated fatherhood funding is limited
- Flexible public and private sources allow customization
- Different funding streams cover different service components (e.g., parenting, employment, education, and prevention)

A SOUND APPROACH: PART 2

NGOs can succeed in starting, maintaining, and scaling father-inclusive efforts by using the funding approach argued for above. But that's only half the picture. It requires diligence in finding a match between the outcomes funding sources care about and the many positive impacts of father involvement in children's lives. But that diligence will pay off when you convince funders that their financial support will have a positive return on their investment, which is the key to winning applications and proposals.