



CASE STUDY



Area Resources for Community
and Human Services (ARCHS)

Created by: **Social Solutions**

The Funder Perspective

Twenty years ago, the State of Missouri created a community partnership model with a central goal of collectively impacting and revitalizing the state's communities. Enter St. Louis-based **Area Resources for Community and Human Services (ARCHS)**, along with 19 other nonprofit organizations across the state, that are showing proven dedication to making meaningful impact in the lives of hundreds of thousands of vulnerable children and their family members.

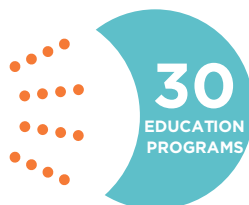
As a funder for direct service providers, **ARCHS** receives funding from the federal government, local businesses, private donors, and the State of Missouri. It is then the unique role of **ARCHS** to not only distribute these funds to local social service and education-based nonprofits but ensure that these funds are used towards the community partnership's goals.

Within their community, **ARCHS** has taken their responsibilities a step further, to ensure that their funding dollars are adding direct value to the participants served on the frontline.

In 2016, **ARCHS** distributed more than \$8 million in funds to support 30 programs focusing on early childhood, k-12, and adult learning. **ARCHS** also provided more than 23,000 hours of technical assistance to these programs.



ARCHS



ARCHS' dedication to its internal, data-influenced practices and mission has resulted in the leveraging of millions of dollars and a lasting positive impact on countless lives in the St. Louis area.

Becoming More Than a Funder



Wendell E. Kimbrough, Chief Executive Officer of **ARCHS**, has seen many changes during his 12 years with the organization. But two things have remained constants for **ARCHS**: their core community partnership model and their commitment to building their value in the community. Wendell describes **ARCHS**' key work as

“ helping organizations grow and be the best they can be, not just through funding, but support and assistance every day. ”

From the beginning, **ARCHS** dedicated itself to going beyond the traditional funder role and becoming a true advocate and ally for the communities it serves. **ARCHS** found that the best way of doing this was through direct interactions with grantees. **ARCHS**' team goes onsite each month and visits with the people that their funding dollars directly affect. Because **ARCHS** regularly meets with so many people, the organization understands the needs of the community firsthand and is able to allocate the appropriate funds where they are most needed.



ARCHS was able to see and feel the impact their grantees were having on the ground as a result of their funding, but they began to realize they needed a way to show to their stakeholders the collective impact they were having. The problem was, without a centralized data management system, **ARCHS** had no way of making that happen.

Building Intentionality:

Investing in a data management system

As **ARCHS** expanded its reach throughout the community, the amount of data being collected also expanded. But without a centralized system or set of processes, the data was fragmented and siloed making it difficult to manage. Like so many funders trying to manage a varied group of grantees, aggregating and understanding data was difficult, time consuming, and inaccurate.



ARCHS was juggling 30 programs, 360 program locations, and 200 service partners, with multiple processes for collecting data at every level. Wendell and his team were eager to find a way to more readily show how the organization was making a meaningful human and economic impact on the community.

ARCHS needed an easy-to-use system that could manage data in a variety of different ways, had the ability to track all program activity, and was flexible as their programs or processes evolved over time. Most importantly, the data needed to be accessible at all levels of the organization, from frontline staff to the CEO.

ARCHS knew that inconsistencies in data had a direct impact on their grantees and their ability to provide for those they served.

Answering the question: Are they better off?

When **ARCHS** was introduced to Apricot in 2015, Social Solutions' data management and reporting software, it seemed like an instant fit. Eric Monroe, Director of IT and Data Services of **ARCHS**, designed the organization's innovative use of Apricot.

- 1 Apricot manages both external program data and internal employee records such as vacation days, invoice processing, and purchasing requests.
- 2 Apricot quickly became an integral part of the organization's short and long term operations with more than 3,000 data elements being captured.
- 3 Program specific dashboards are tracking outputs and outcomes based on detailed logic models.

Over time, the organization has become more informed and more confident in the data it's collecting and analyzing.

On its journey to being more data-informed,

ARCHS has implemented extensive training programs, survey collection, and thorough data entry into their operations. **ARCHS'** 20 employees are excited about using Apricot because they can see firsthand how data directly influences their programs. Everyone within the organization now engages with the data as it's easily accessible via desktop, laptop and tablet computers.



The benefit of having a central data management software is apparent at all levels of the organization and within the community.

In every location and program, Wendell and his team constantly consider their return on investment. For example, **ARCHS** uses Apricot to track the value of their free after-school programs comparable to outside programs that require families to pay. They know that most children that attend these programs could not otherwise afford to attend a fee-based program.

The team calculates the average cost a parent would have to pay for their child to attend by tracking

- bus costs
- space rental fees
- donated services
- volunteer hours

to accurately determine their return on investment for each family that participates in the after-school program.

Apricot has also allowed **ARCHS** to create a common enrollment and attendance tracking system across its 30 after-school locations. Knowing the money that each family saves and the valuable services the children are receiving from the after-school program, **ARCHS** is confident that the children and their families are better off for having been part of this program.



ARCHS is built on a 20-year commitment to serving the St. Louis community.

They will continue that commitment -- as a data-influenced organization. The organization now manages data effectively to accurately see the value it's adding to its community. Wendell, Eric, and the entire **ARCHS** team are not only able to track the services their grantees are providing, but also see the lasting impact **ARCHS**' funding has had on those grantees and the 100,000 children and families they annually serve.