

Improving the Lives of Children and Families Through the Tax Code A Case Study

Every area of a child and family's life is impacted by the tax system. Investing in a more equitable tax system is a direct investment in improving outcomes for children and families across all domains. This case study is shares the story of a funder who invests in tax code and tax systems.

Supporting Family Health and Well-being through Tax Systems Funding

To enhance the health and well-being of families nationwide, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) incorporated tax systems funding into their initiatives, aiming to strengthen the structural support families receive to thrive, not just survive.

"You can't separate taxes from health and well-being," said Jennifer Ng'andu, Managing Director of Programs. "At the end of the day, our system of taxation is fundamentally tied to the resources we have, and the resources we have are about the choices we have to invest in our well-being. [Tax system issues are] already something that you're working on, even if you don't know that you're working on it."

In recent years, RWJF has prioritized funding initiatives that examine the redistributive role of corporate taxation, including a data analysis project undertaken by the Roosevelt Institute to spotlight how the tax system currently works. Research projects

like this directly influence the health and well-being of children and families over time, as corporate taxes provide essential revenue for investing in social programs and other family support mechanisms. Not only are these reexaminations intended to help the nation prioritize funding for social programs, but they also play into their support of advocacy efforts to create a new social contract and structures that target children and families.

For more than 50 years, through funding, convening, advocacy, and evidence-building alongside community members and practitioners, RWJF has been steadfastly committed to ensuring that every individual in America has an equitable opportunity to be at their healthiest. Central to their mission is a sustained effort to dismantle the pervasive structural racism embedded in society, in order to advance health equity for all. RWJF's strategic framework revolves around three overarching generational goals: promoting economic inclusion to enhance family well-being, fostering equitable and accountable public healthcare systems, and implementing healthy and equitable community conditions. Through targeted initiatives and collaborative efforts, RWJF continues to drive change toward a more just and equitable society, where shifts in the tax system are a cornerstone.

To create lasting change, Ng'andu noted that funders must reimagine the tax systems in a manner that makes the well-being of children and families is one priority, redistributes tax system revenues more equitably to promote health and advance the common good, and advances reparative and restorative measures that address a legacy of historic oppression to

"No matter what issue is your priority, the tax system is at the center of that conversation, because it's the way our government distributes our collective wealth. As an organization where health and well-being is core to mission, we understand that the tax system and how well it operates is central to our efforts. Whatever your Foundation's priority, it's important for us to ask the collective question about how we can make the tax system work better for us all. When RWJF asks itself this question, we believe there are some fundamental shifts to be made to improve health equity."



Jennifer Ng'andu

Managing Director- Program
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation