



Overview

Unlike other states, Oklahoma has kept the promise of the 1998 Master Settlement Agreement.

Oklahoma is the only state in the nation to have constitutionally protected the majority of the Master Settlement Agreement funds in an endowment to ensure a growing funding source dedicated to improving the health of Oklahomans for generations to come.

A 2000 constitutional amendment approved by voters by a 69% to 31% margin:

- Established the Oklahoma Tobacco Settlement Endowment Trust Fund (TSET) from which *only the earnings* may be spent on programs to improve the health of Oklahomans
- Allocated the MSA payments, directing 25% to the Oklahoma State Legislature for appropriation and 75% to the endowment
- Established a five member Board of Investors to oversee the fund's investments
- Established a seven member Board of Directors to strategically fund programs to improve the state's health

The Endowment is a long-term strategy to improve Oklahoma's health status. Earnings have gradually increased each year from a low of \$650,000 in FY 2002 to a high of \$18 million in FY 2010.

The Board of Directors is bipartisan with representation from each congressional district in the state. Additionally, each board member is appointed by a different appointing authority.

The Board engages in regular strategic planning processes involving a review of research and input from key stakeholders including elected officials, private funders, state agency leadership, voluntary organizations, and health advocates from across the state. Stakeholders have overwhelmingly agreed that the board is on track with its mission to **improve the health of every Oklahoman by reducing Oklahoma's leading causes of death.**

- Oklahoma ranks last among states in cardiovascular disease deaths.
- Cancer is the second leading cause of death, affecting one out of three Oklahomans.
- Tobacco use, physical inactivity, and poor nutrition are the leading causes of cardiovascular disease and cancer.
- These preventable causes of death cost the state billions of dollars each year.

TSET-funded programs are based on strong evidence of effectiveness and rigorously evaluated. In the early years of the endowment, program funding was focused solely on supporting the *Oklahoma State Plan for Tobacco Use Prevention and Cessation*. The current strategic plan maintains a primary focus on reducing tobacco use while initiating programs to help fulfill the *Oklahoma Physical Activity & Nutrition State Plan*. In each case a statewide, comprehensive program is required to stem the tide of preventable disease, disability, and death. In addition, the board has funded research in tobacco control and adult stem cell research in an effort to advance the prevention and treatment of cancer and other tobacco-related diseases. Unsolicited proposals are also accepted to respond to emerging opportunities to improve health in our state.

Early signs of progress are beginning to be realized. Oklahoma has moved up in rank from 41st to 11th in the nation in funding for tobacco prevention. Last year, data from the Oklahoma Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System showed that Oklahoma's adult smoking prevalence rate moved below 25% for the first time since the endowment was established. According to the Oklahoma Youth Tobacco Survey, smoking among high school youth has dropped from 23.4% in 2007 to 20.2% in 2009 and among middle school youth from 7.5% in 2007 to 6.5% in 2009.

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