

GUIDE TO THE FORM 990-PF FOR 2020

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation files a Form 990-PF each year with the IRS. This is a public document that provides information about the Foundation's financial and charitable activities.

Information reported on the form is presented in accordance with the IRS reporting rules governing private foundations; the format is different from our audited financial statements.

To address the questions we are asked most frequently, we have organized the information into a table; to provide additional context, we then provide references to the location in the tax return where the information can be found. We also have posed and answered Frequently Asked Questions.

Summary from the 2020 990-PF Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Tax Return

Form 990-PF Topic	2020 Amount	Form 990-PF Reference	Comments
Grants Paid	\$531.9 million	Page 1, Part 1, line 25(d)	
Direct Charitable Activities	\$43.9 million	Page 7, Part IX-A	Reported as part of the operating and administrative expense total, Page 1, Part I, line 24(d)
Program-Related Investments	\$2.3 million	Page 7, Part IX-B	
Programmatic Distributions (including grants)	\$578.1 million	Not reported as a separate item on the return	Total of Grants Paid, Direct Charitable Activities, and Program-Related Investments
Administrative Expenses	\$69.1 million	Not reported as a separate item on the return	Administrative Expenses and Direct Charitable Activities are reported together as one number on Page 1, Part I, line 24(d)
Qualifying Distributions	\$649.9 million	Page 8, Part XII, line 4	This amount is the Foundation's total charitable spend (payout) for the year.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. How much was the Foundation required to distribute in 2020?

The Foundation was required to distribute \$570.2 million in 2020 as shown on page 8, Part XI, line 7 of the return. The required distribution often is referred to as the annual payout requirement, although the technical IRS term for the payout requirement is “distributable amount.”

2. How much did the Foundation distribute in 2020?

The Foundation paid out \$649.9 million in 2020. These distributions included grantmaking, direct charitable activities, administrative expenses, capital costs, and program-related investments. This amount is reported on page 8, Part XII, line 4 of our 990-PF return. After applying \$7.2 million to cover the undistributed income from the prior year, the Foundation was \$72.5 million above the \$570.2 million distributable amount for 2020.

3. What types of disbursements count toward the Foundation’s annual payout requirement?

All reasonable operating expenses count toward the payout requirement, provided they further the charitable work of the Foundation. Operating expenses include administrative expenses, grantmaking, and direct charitable activities, as well as capital costs such as internal software development. Program-related investments, such as low-interest loans made for charitable purposes, also count toward the payout requirement. The technical term for these expenses is “qualifying distributions.”

4. What are Direct Charitable Activities?

Direct charitable activities are charitable efforts undertaken by a foundation directly, rather than through grants awarded to other not-for-profit organizations. The expenses of the Foundation’s direct charitable activities are reported on page 7, Part IX-A, and detailed as an attachment to the return. These expenses also are included and reported as part of our administrative and operating expenses on Part I, line 24(d) of our 990-PF.

5. How much did the Foundation spend on administrative expenses in 2020?

The Foundation spent \$69.1 million on administrative expenses in 2020. This amount includes the costs of Foundation staff who directly award and administer our grants, but it does not include the Foundation’s direct charitable activities.

The 990-PF return does not report administrative expenses separately. The total reported on Page 1, Part I, line 24(d) as operating and administrative expenses includes both our administrative expenses and our direct charitable activities.

The Foundation’s administrative expenses are reported on lines 13 through 23 of Page 1, Part 1 of the return; in addition, \$43.9 million in direct charitable activities are included and reported on line 23. Subtracting our direct charitable activity expenses from the total reported on line 24(d) results in \$69.1 million of administrative expense costs.

6. What were the Foundation's administrative expenses in 2020 as a percentage of qualifying distributions?

The ratio of administrative expense (\$69.1 million) to total qualifying distributions (\$649.9 million) was 10.6 percent.

A tax return provides information on the financial health and expenditures of an organization, but it cannot assess the effectiveness of an organization with respect to meeting its objectives. However, some observers believe that one measure of a foundation's organizational efficiency is the percentage of its total outlay spent on administrative expenses. We believe the Foundation's administrative expense ratio of 10.6 percent compares favorably to other organizations of similar size, operational complexity, and programmatic approach.