

An aerial photograph of a rural landscape. The foreground shows a dirt road winding through a field of dry, brown grass. In the middle ground, there are scattered trees and a paved road. The background features a vast, flat expanse of land under a clear sky, with some distant structures and more trees visible on the horizon.

Demystifying Donor Advised Funds and Tapping into Them to Support Trails

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Investing in People and Places for a Healthier Kansas

ABOUT SUNFLOWER FOUNDATION



Sunflower Foundation



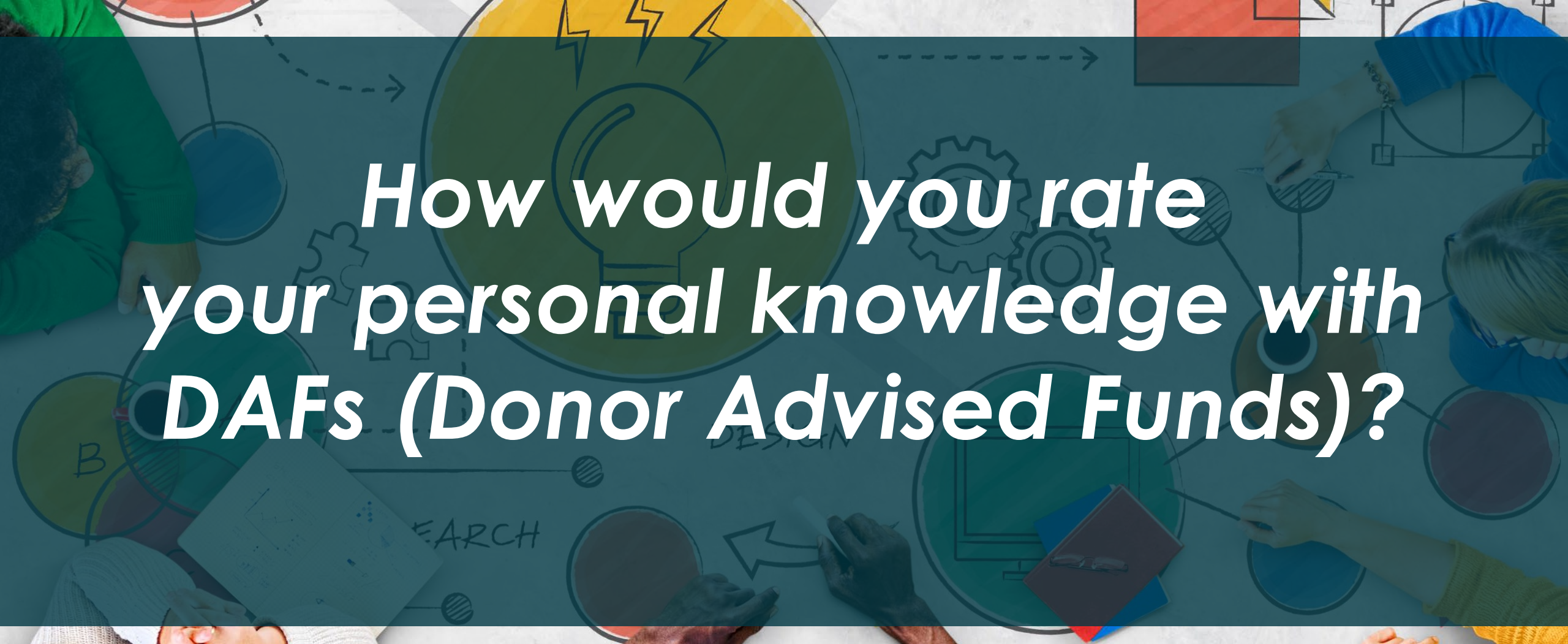


Public Trails = Cost Effective & Equitable Public Health Strategy




Building and sustaining high-quality trails requires one set of tools.
Building and sustaining high-quality trail organizations requires an entirely different set.
One critical tool: donor engagement and stewardship via DAFs.





*How would you rate
your personal knowledge with
DAFs (Donor Advised Funds)?*

Polling Question



*How would you rate
your trail organization's
experience with DAFs?*

Polling Question



DAFs: Don't get left behind!

DAF 101

the basics to
get you started

Supporting the Arts
Education & Community



William Barstow,
founder of the first
donor advised fund

**CHOOSE YOUR CAUSE
LEAVE YOUR LEGACY**

1ST DONOR ADVISED FUND 1931

What are DAFs?

- Charitable savings account
- No distribution requirements
- Provides philanthropic advising
- Accessible

HOW DONOR ADVISED FUNDS WORK



DONORSEARCH

What are DAFs?

- \$326B invested in DAFs
- \$64B in grants from DAFs
- 3.5M DAF accounts
- \$91,000 average account

FIGURE 3.1D
Total Assets in DAFs (\$ in billions)



TABLE 3.2B**DAFs and Private Foundations' Grants and Assets (\$ in billions)**

Metric		DAFs (FY)	Private Foundations (CY)
Total Grants	2024	\$64.89	\$118.50
	2023	\$54.54	\$112.44
Total Assets	2024	\$326.45	\$1,625.33
	2023	\$255.99	\$1,455.11
Payout Rate		25.3%	8.1%

Note: The numbers presented in this table use FYs for contributions from DAFs (from this report) and CYs for private foundation giving (from FoundationMark, 2025). All are current dollars. The payout rate is calculated using the report's primary calculation method.

Who Sponsors DAFS?

- 1,485 DAF sponsors
- National sponsors: standard (National Philanthropic Trust) or donation processor (Fidelity)
- Community foundations: defined geographic region
- Single-issue charities: universities, healthcare, religion, other specialty causes

Who Uses DAFs?

- Individuals and families (97%)
- Private foundations
- Companies
- New to philanthropy
- Immediate tax benefit
- Planned giving prospects

What are specific things that trail nonprofits should do so that they are best positioned for and accept DAF contributions?

- Be prepared: GuideStar and Charity Navigator profiles
- Consider tools to streamline the DAF donation process
 - [Blue Ridge Parkway](#)
 - [National Park Foundation](#)
- Train staff to talk about DAFs

How can trail nonprofits start communicating to current and potential DAF donors that they are “open for business” when it comes to accepting DAF contributions?

- Include DAFs in “Ways to Give”
 - [Appalachian Trail Conservancy](#)
- Reference DAFs in all donor communications

How do you recommend that trail groups manage donor relations with DAF givers vs. people who give in other ways like writing checks?

- Maintain an open line of communication with donors
- Train staff to follow up on DAF gifts to learn more
- Reference DAFs in conversations with current DAF donors
- Consider reporting and data entry

What are some of the mistakes to avoid when it comes to soliciting and accepting DAF contributions?

- Gift entry (hard credit vs. soft credit)
- Proper gift acknowledgement
- Understand what DAFs can and cannot do

There's a perception that only the uber-wealthy have DAFs, not the regular Joe Schmo couple that walks on the trail every day. Based on the data and your experience, what do you say?

- Absolutely not!
- DAFs are accessible and flexible
- Varying thresholds to open a DAF account

What do you think is the most important take-away on DAFs for this trail loving audience?

- Donor recognition
- Treat your local community foundation as the donor and build a relationship with them
 - Brief overview of your organization
 - Provide relevant updates (every 6-12 months)

Resources

- [CFRE My Education Finder](#)
- [FreeWill](#)
- [Council on Foundations Community Foundation Locator](#)
- [2025 National Study on Donor Advised Funds](#)
- [Fidelity Charitable 2025 Giving Report](#)
- [DAF Research Collaborative Annual DAF Report 2025](#)
- [DAF Day](#)
- [DAFpay](#), [DAF Widget](#), [DAF Direct](#)

An aerial photograph of a dry, cracked landscape. A dirt road or path winds through the center of the frame, leading towards a distant horizon. The ground is brown and parched, with numerous cracks visible. The sky is filled with large, grey, overcast clouds, with some light breaking through near the horizon. The overall mood is somber and contemplative.

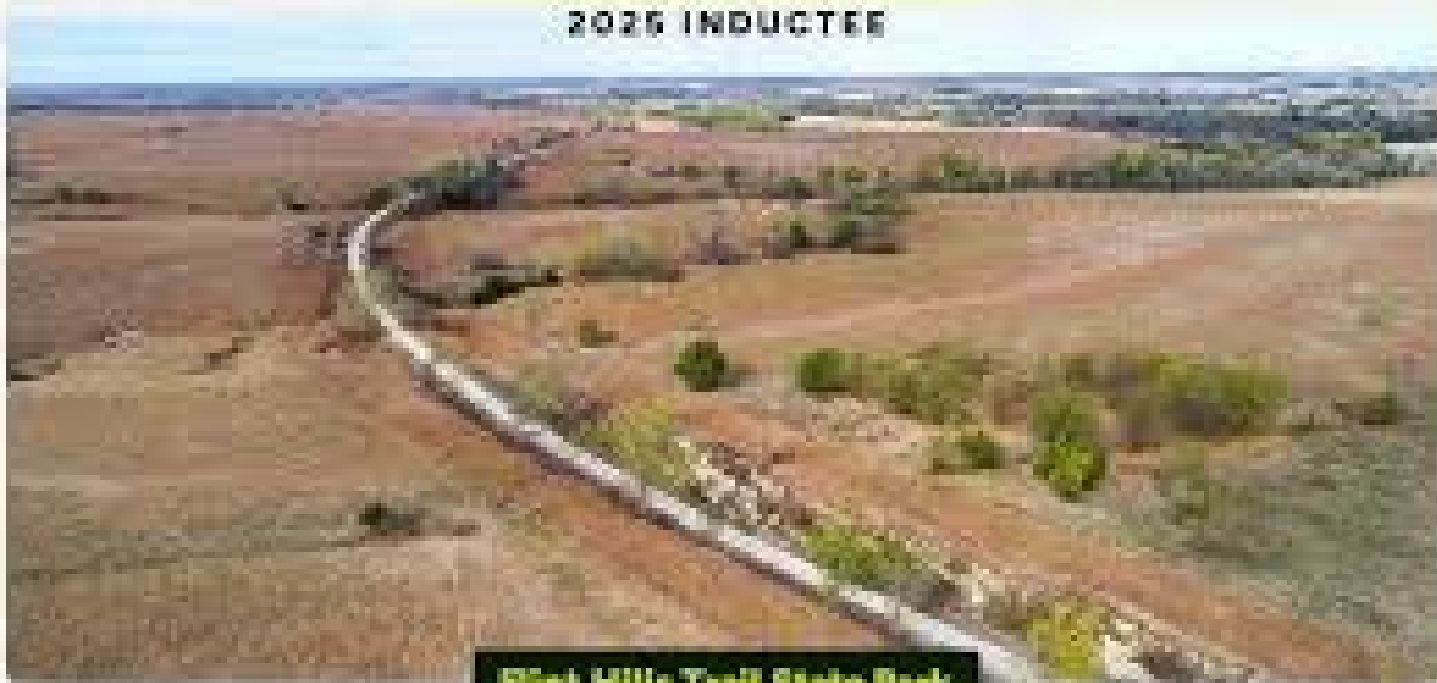
FINAL THOUGHT

Trails can mean so many things to so many people. Regardless of the financial vehicle used, trails provide a phenomenal opportunity to connect with the personal values and passions that matter to givers.

rails to trails conservancy

Hall of Fame

2025 INDUCTEE



Flint Hills Trail State Park

KANSAS

Photo courtesy Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks

Come visit
us in
Kansas...
Our trails
are
waiting!



Follow us on Facebook to find out when Donor Development Learning Series registration opens.

Coming next month...
FREE Donor Development
Virtual Learning Series
taught by Vickie Mathews.
Sunflower Foundation is
proud to offer this series
for the benefit of
nonprofits working hard to
improve their communities
and the world.



Thank You

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