

University philanthropy: The Lego Foundation

September 2021

Key findings

The Lego Foundation is headquartered in Billund, Denmark and is synonymous with the children's play product. With office locations in Boston, Mexico City, Johannesburg and Kiev it has global reach.

It funds three core areas: humanitarian relief; early childhood development (with a focus on play and creativity); and childhood education. Its focus geographies are the same as where their Foundation offices are located, although its activity and funding stretches well beyond these countries.

As with many European foundations, it has not provided full transparency about the grants that it awards. However, in 2020 Lego shared information about the €152m funding it awarded that year, including the recipients and the sums. For the first time, we have a fuller picture of Lego's university funding.

The main elements of its 2020 funding were:

- Covid-19 Response €47m
- Other Charter activities €23.6m
- Humanitarian Assistance €36.8m
- Global Programmes €18.2m
- Focus Geographies €9.1m
- Experiences €4.3m

Around 7% of its funding went to 14 universities (€9.9m). 94% of funding went to universities in the US and Europe. The top five University recipients were as follows:

- University College Copenhagen, Denmark €3.5m
- Harvard University, US €1.2m
- Boston College, US €1.1m
- M.I.T., US €959,000
- University of Oxford, UK €848,000

It funded just two universities outside Europe and the US:

- Tsinghua University, China €319,000
- Stellenbosch University, South Africa €249,000

