



Time to Act: How Philanthropy Must Address the Climate Crisis

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About FSG

FSG is a mission-driven consulting firm supporting leaders in creating large-scale, lasting social change. Through strategy, evaluation, and research, we help many types of actors—individually and collectively—make progress against the world’s toughest problems.

Our teams work across all sectors by partnering with leading foundations, businesses, nonprofits, and governments in every region of the globe. We seek to reimagine social change by identifying ways to maximize the impact of existing resources, amplifying the work of others to help advance knowledge and practice, and inspiring change agents around the world to achieve greater impact.

As part of our nonprofit mission, FSG also directly supports learning communities, such as the Collective Impact Forum, Shared Value Initiative, and Talent Rewire, to provide the tools and relationships that change agents need to be successful.

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AUTHORS' NOTE

For the past several years, FSG has been reckoning with its role advising foundations and corporate clients in ways that have not always acknowledged root causes and may have led to harm, particularly for communities of color and other marginalized people globally. Internally, we are changing our organizational culture, composition, norms, and practices to address this history and avoid further harm. In parallel, we have also changed how we advise our consulting clients to more deeply consider the root causes of the social and environmental issues we seek to address. This report builds on our evolving role in the philanthropic sector and our understanding of how deep, systemic, and effective social and environmental change happens.

We wrote this report during the hottest U.S. summer on record, when the impacts of the climate crisis were manifold and personal—two deadly heat waves in Washington state (Talia’s home), drought and threat of wildfire across the Western U.S. (Laura’s home), and a devastating hurricane in southeastern Louisiana (where part of Laura’s family lives). At the same time, we have been privileged to work from our homes during a deadly pandemic that continues to disproportionately affect the same groups on the front lines of the climate crisis—low-income people, Black people, Indigenous people, and other people of color, among others. We grieved the interconnected losses and threats to our respective communities. We also recognized that many regions globally have experienced acute impacts of the climate crisis for a long time. We wrote this report to recruit more people, institutions, and resources in the field of philanthropy to act, because every bit of progress on the climate crisis helps avert the most catastrophic consequences for the future.



Introduction

Deep breaths of clean, crisp air. Food in our bellies, reliably. The health of our children. The work we do each day, the jobs available in our community, and the economic well-being of our neighbors. The freedom and rights of women around the globe, especially those who cultivate the land to feed their families but may not have secure land rights. Shelter and protection for hundreds of millions of expected climate migrants displaced internally and across borders,¹ or for those living in informal settlements exposed to extreme weather like heat waves and floods. The survival of coastal communities around the world, in places like Louisiana and Dhaka, Bangladesh, where land is slipping into the rising sea. As the climate scientist Katherine Hayhoe reminds us, “It isn’t a matter of moving climate change further up our priority list. The reason we care about [climate] is because it already affects everything that’s at the top of our priority list.”²

Across the field of philanthropy, whatever a funder may care about, the growing climate crisis will stop them—directly or indirectly—from achieving their goals. Addressing the climate crisis can no longer be the work of a few foundations or donors. We have arrived at a moment of urgency when we need an “all-of-philanthropy” level of engagement, expertise, and resources. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change’s (IPCC) 2021 assessment, the gold standard summary of current climate science, tells us that the climate crisis is upon us *and also* that we can still avoid the worst-case scenarios if we boldly and quickly transform our society.³

What does it mean for philanthropists to address the climate crisis or to take climate action as we urge in this report? The climate crisis encompasses far more than increased greenhouse gas emissions and rising sea levels. It is also the health impacts of wildfire smoke on agricultural workers, low-income and low-wealth communities ravaged by flash floods, and climate migrants moving for safety and opportunity. Alongside government, business, and

civil society, the philanthropic sector must support the transformation of our society—phasing out the use of fossil fuels in energy and industry; supporting communities to rely on land, forests, and oceans in restorative and regenerative ways; and addressing the root causes of the climate crisis, including extractive, growth-at-all-costs capitalism. As philanthropy addresses these interconnected, systemic challenges, with attention to the injustices that have enabled the current climate crisis and the inequitable burden on front-line communities, there is an opportunity to imagine and build a healthier, more just future.⁴

Given the acute nature of the climate crisis, this report urges every funder to become a “climate funder” and to do so quickly, and we also invite a broader definition of what this means. For instance, a foundation dedicated to education may choose to overlay a climate lens on its work, adding or increasing support for girls’ education globally as a climate solution.⁵ Another funder may choose to begin supporting grassroots efforts dedicated to climate mitigation and justice because it dovetails with existing grants for civic engagement and voting rights. A place-based funder might choose to resource and convene front-line communities to adapt to the local realities of the climate crisis. Yet another funder might see the climate crisis as an existential threat, therefore creating a new program or even spending down foundation assets to address the climate crisis. As illustrated by these examples, there is a wide spectrum of potential action for those foundations or donors who wish to become climate funders.

This report provides a set of five recommendations for funders, especially those that may not have previously engaged in climate-related grantmaking or investing:

-  **1. Learn about climate and climate justice**
-  **2. Reckon with and change internal practices**
-  **3. Build political and economic power in front-line communities**
-  **4. Expand the funder toolbox**
-  **5. Utilize foundation investment and operations as levers for change**

To illustrate these recommendations and the many ways to be a climate funder, we highlight the journeys and experiences of a range of private foundations—including community foundations; large, multi-issue foundations; and family foundations. Some are relatively new to climate-related grantmaking and exploring how their stated mission intersects with the climate crisis. Others are evolving their strategy for dedicated climate programs. We hope readers will see themselves reflected in at least one of these categories of funders. And the greater lessons should resonate with *all* foundations.

This report focuses primarily on U.S.-based private foundations (making grants domestically and/or internationally) because of the specific political, social, and cultural context of philanthropy and the climate crisis in the U.S. These examples also reflect the current reality that most climate-related philanthropy comes from the Global North and supports work in the Global North. That said, the climate crisis is global, and some of the recommendations may be informative for funders in other geographies.

CLIMATE JUSTICE

Climate change and the resulting crisis are unjust in several specific ways. First, the root causes of the climate crisis include a list of oppressive systems: white supremacy, colonialism, patriarchy, and extractive capitalism. The global climate crisis is a result, or a symptom, of these root causes and the related power dynamics that privilege a few people at the expense of many others. Second, historically a small group of people in the Global North are responsible for most greenhouse gas emissions. While the context is changing today as countries such as India and China drive significant emissions, it remains true that the people and places (within countries, across countries, and over time) who will suffer the greatest impacts have done the least to cause the climate crisis. Future generations that will suffer the consequences have no responsibility for its cause.

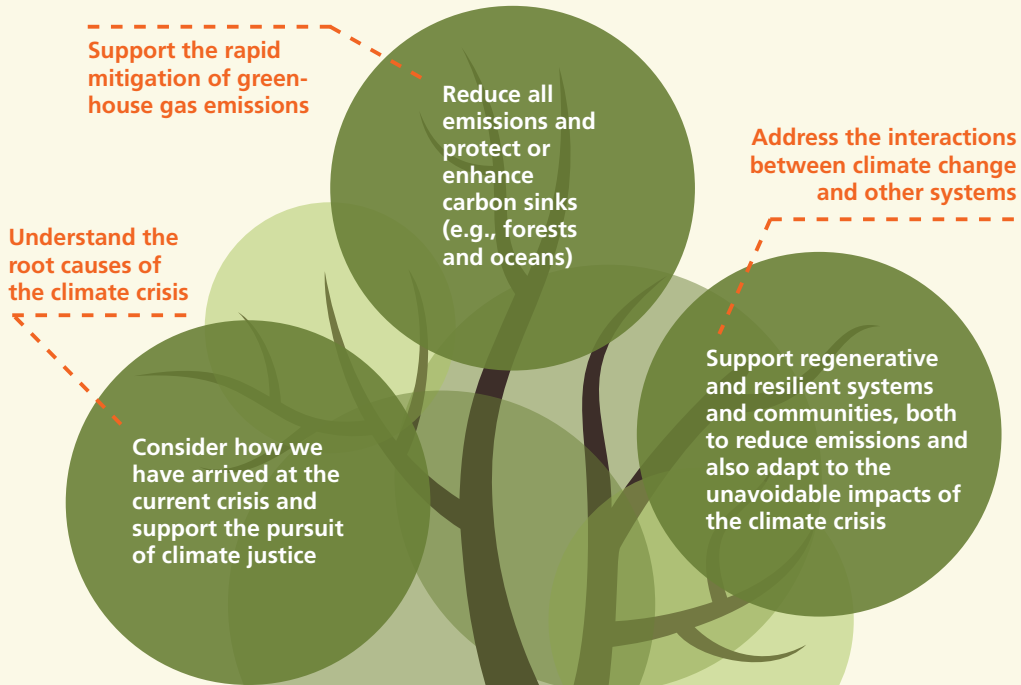
Climate justice is simultaneously a principle, a process, and an outcome. While there is no one definition of climate justice, we think it is useful to work from the definition offered by United Frontline Table, a climate justice effort in the U.S.:

“Climate justice focuses on the root causes of climate crisis through an intersectional lens of racism, classism, capitalism, economic injustice, and environmental harm. Climate justice supports a Just Transition for communities and workers away from a fossil fuel economy and focuses on making the necessary systemic changes to address unequal burdens to our communities and to realign our economy with our natural systems. As a form of environmental justice, climate justice means that all species have the right to access and obtain the resources needed to have an equal chance of survival and freedom from discrimination. As a movement, climate justice advocates are working from the grassroots up to create real solutions for climate mitigation and adaptation that ensure the right of all people to live, learn, work, play, and pray in safe, healthy, and clean environments.”⁶

Other climate justice resources, including related material about the term “Just Transition,” are included in Appendices A and B.

The Climate Crisis: Contributing Factors and Philanthropy's Role

THE ROLE OF PHILANTHROPY



CLIMATE CRISIS

Human-caused increase in greenhouse gas emissions, driving climate change at a catastrophic pace and scale

Interactions between changing climate and other systems, including food and agriculture, energy, economy, housing, democracy, and education

MECHANISMS

Fossil fuels

Economic growth-at-all-costs mentality

Extractive resource use

Extractive capitalism

White supremacy

Colonialism

Patriarchy

ROOT CAUSES

The Need: More Philanthropy at the Intersection of the Climate Crisis, Equity, and Justice

Currently, philanthropy's contribution to addressing the climate crisis is woefully inadequate on multiple levels. The climate crisis is a critical issue for philanthropy for at least four reasons:

- [A stable and livable planet undergirds progress on all the issues, regions, and people that philanthropy aims to serve.](#) Stated in the converse, a warming climate with severe weather threatens progress on poverty alleviation, health, human rights, food and water security, democracy, immigration, and more. If the current climate crisis is not addressed urgently and effectively, progress in all other areas will be more difficult, if not impossible.
- [Philanthropy can play a unique and important role in catalyzing the economic and socio-cultural transformation needed to limit the extent of the climate crisis—but only if the sector reckons with its own harmful practices and supports equitable systems change.](#) Philanthropy is experienced at partnering across sectors, de-risking innovation, and using its myriad resources in flexible and versatile ways. Philanthropy also has the freedom to operate outside the short-term time frames of election cycles and investor reports that often curtail progress in other sectors. Yet, to make the most of these assets, philanthropy must reckon with its own structures and incentives (e.g., short-term grant cycles, exclusion of people of color) that have limited progress on climate and climate justice to date.
- [As the philanthropic sector is increasingly committed to addressing racial equity and social justice, foundation leaders must consider the disproportionate impact of the climate crisis on historically marginalized and oppressed populations worldwide.](#) In keeping with the philanthropic sector's commitment to address racial equity and social justice, funders must consider climate as part of this agenda—supporting those most impacted, and acting in alignment and solidarity with social movements addressing climate justice.
- [Most philanthropic actors in the U.S. have at least an indirect responsibility for the current climate crisis, and therefore an ethical responsibility to be part of the solution.](#) Ninety-two percent of global greenhouse gas emissions between 1850 and 2015 originated in the Global North (40% specifically in the United States), and much of the money currently deployed and managed by private foundations owes its origins to fossil fuels or industries that significantly contributed to climate-warming emissions.⁷

Yet according to 2019 data, less than 2% of all philanthropy dollars focused on climate mitigation (and even less on climate adaptation and resilience).⁸ While a few major climate-focused commitments made headlines in 2020, most were not focused on the intersection of climate and justice, and the relative share of philanthropic resources dedicated to climate

remains small. For perspective on the scale of the need, recent calculations estimate that the total annual investment across all sectors must increase fivefold to enable the transition to a zero carbon society globally.⁹ One 2017 estimate called for \$6.9 trillion in total investment annually in order to meet the Paris Agreement goals—while this is sizable, it is only a fraction of the global annual gross domestic product (GDP), estimated to be \$90-plus trillion in 2021.¹⁰

In addition, most climate philanthropy over the last several decades lacked sufficient consideration of the root causes of the climate crisis and the need for climate justice. A 2020 analysis of leading environmental funders found that only 1% of funding went to justice-focused organizations that were rooted in, accountable to, and representative of the communities they serve.¹¹ We believe that funders' efforts have been insufficient in three related and important ways:

- [Philanthropy's dominant notions of scale, efficacy, and technical expertise have led to a narrow path for change](#), focused mostly on supporting a small group of well-resourced nonprofit organizations in the U.S. to drive mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions without substantive community input and control. This narrow definition of climate solutions has led to support for some policies and technologies, such as geo-engineering and carbon trading, which can reinforce the harmful root causes of the climate crisis.
- [Little funding has directly supported front-line communities](#)—those communities that experience the most impacts from the climate crisis in a given place or context. Often, these communities include historically marginalized and oppressed people—especially Black people, Indigenous people, other people of color, and poor women—who have survived the same root causes of the climate crisis.
- [The majority of climate philanthropy from the United States and Europe has been dedicated to efforts in the Global North](#). Yet, the history of economic extraction from the Global South has left many countries with insufficient resources to mitigate their emissions and adapt to the impacts of a rapidly changing climate. Philanthropic resources directed to front-line communities and grassroots efforts within the Global South have been limited. As Hugh Mehta, climate philanthropy and partnerships manager from the Children's Investment Fund Foundation, observed, "A lot of climate philanthropy comes from the U.S. and Europe, and a lot of the money is staying in the U.S and Europe. It's important that resources cross borders and help other regions with climate mitigation."

The philanthropic sector has an immediate and critically important opportunity and responsibility to provide significantly more resources to address the climate crisis, especially to front-line communities leading the way toward climate justice. Subsequent sections of this report suggest approaches and practical recommendations for how funders can lean into this opportunity.

Barriers to Philanthropic Engagement in the Climate Crisis

Although foundations may recognize the existential crisis of Earth's climate, there is a gap between recognition and action. What prevents philanthropists from addressing the climate crisis? In interviews with private foundations, regranteeing intermediaries (also sometimes called public foundations or pooled funds), and grantees, people were quick to point out the structural, cultural, and strategic barriers that often prevent U.S. funders from engaging with the climate crisis. These barriers create a strong headwind and are important to understand in order to persuade more funders to act.

1. **The climate crisis is viewed as highly technical and overwhelming in scale, both of which make it seem inaccessible.** As Kathy Sessions, formerly of the Health and Environmental Funders Network, noted, "Climate change feels so big and global, and foundations may say they can't touch it. There has been a failure to outline the paths toward better outcomes and make them look as possible as they actually are." There is also a widespread notion that action on climate requires significant technical expertise, with a narrow definition of who may be an expert on the relevant issues. Another interviewee commented, "Many of the climate funders speak very technically, and that turns many people off."
2. **The issue silos within many foundations prevent recognition of and action on the interconnected, systemic nature of the climate crisis.** As Jeff Wise of Health and Environmental Funders Network stated, "Like anyone, funders specialize because it builds expertise and efficiencies. But it can cause them to miss game-changing investments that check multiple boxes." This division by issue also excludes more intersectional approaches, as Erik Stegman, CEO of Native Americans in Philanthropy, explained: "[Environmental] philanthropy is really siloed around climate, conservation, and the outdoor sector. They haven't invested in Native people because we don't see climate and conservation separately at all ... but those two sectors are working in parallel tracks." In addition, a scarcity mindset often exists, with the sense that entry into climate may divert resources from existing programs and grantmaking.
3. **Short-term grant cycles focused on outcomes and quantitative metrics are not a good match for a long-term, complex issue like climate change.** In interviews, all grantees and intermediaries expressed that short-term grant cycles and outcomes-focused funding tied to quantitative metrics reinforce a narrow view of climate action and a lack of trust in grantees. In addition, project-specific grants are limiting for organizations that may need the flexibility of general operating support to respond to their communities, unforeseen opportunities for impact, and necessary changes in strategy.

4. Many funders lack experience with, comfort with, or belief in grassroots efforts and initiatives led by front-line communities, especially by leaders who are Black, Indigenous, and people of color. Bias and traditional notions of scale, capacity, and impact limit many philanthropists' willingness to invest in grassroots efforts led by front-line communities. As Holly Baker, philanthropic partnerships director of the Climate Justice Alliance, shared, "Funders respond to what they recognize and to their own experience. At the same time, faith is not put in grassroots groups' ability to lead, manage money, and achieve results. They [grassroots efforts] are chronically underfunded and understaffed, even though they both lead the fights against the industries causing climate change, which are in close proximity to their communities, and simultaneously pay the price with compromised health of their bodies and local environments." Similar sentiments were echoed by major climate funders. One former foundation staff member reflected, "Eighty-five to 90% of our funding went to large nonprofits staffed, led, and governed predominantly by white people. We were missing out on a large swath of organizations led by and serving people of color and doing vitally important and effective work because they didn't have the same access and weren't seen as valuable, trusted partners in philanthropy."
5. In the United States, the issue of climate change is viewed as political, controversial, or uncertain, in large part because of the long-term misinformation campaigns funded by fossil fuel companies and perpetuated by political leaders and media. As a result, taking action on climate can seem risky, especially for philanthropic organizations based in or active in more politically conservative regions. For example, one foundation leader shared, "As a coastal community, people see the resilience side of [the climate crisis] but don't always believe in the science. It gets political and difficult." As an encouraging sign, public support for action on climate change is growing, as is awareness among foundation leaders and trustees.

For peer funders, philanthropy-serving organizations, consultants, grantees, and anyone else hoping to influence the climate agenda of philanthropists, we must understand and address these barriers if we hope to inspire and motivate effective climate action.



Seize the Opportunity for Climate Philanthropy

Climate disaster is upon us, and we need a bigger, broader, and better-resourced coalition to meet the moment. All funders can work to reduce the pace of climate change and mitigate the impacts of the climate crisis. While funders can pursue a wide range of ways to do this, *how* funders go about this work is as important as what they choose to support. Before we discuss the specific recommendations from our research, we want to share what we learned about how to approach this work, whether you are a new or established climate funder.

Take a Holistic, Justice-Focused Approach

At a high level, funders must look beyond greenhouse gas emissions and ask how humanity has arrived at this point of crisis. This deeper root-cause analysis highlights global drivers of the climate crisis, including extractive capitalism, colonialism, white supremacy, and patriarchy. While no one funder or sector can solve for these root causes, accounting for them in one's philanthropic practice requires centering justice both in process (e.g., sharing power with front-line communities) and in outcome (e.g., more just and regenerative systems). To be clear, we are not suggesting that solving complex root causes like colonialism is a prerequisite to engaging on the climate crisis. Rather, as part of any climate-focused action, we encourage funders to directly support climate justice and ensure that front-line communities in the Global North and the Global South are leading in the necessary economic, social, and environmental transitions. For many funders, this approach will be new, as the philanthropic sector has historically reinforced existing power dynamics and white-dominant norms that hurt the very communities that are often most impacted by the climate crisis.

In addition to considering root causes and supporting climate justice, climate funders must also work to shift systems¹²—in particular, moving away from extractive, harmful systems to healthy, regenerative systems. Front-line communities and a range of stakeholders need resources to imagine and achieve transformative change, as well as the power and flexibility to adapt along that journey. At the same time, economic and political power holders need pressure and guidance to move away from harmful, extractive systems, from food and agriculture to energy to finance.

Five Recommendations for Climate Funding

In conversations with funders, grantees, and climate leaders from 46 organizations, FSG identified five recommendations for foundations and donors who want to put this approach—a cross-cutting climate lens that centers equity, justice, and systems change—into practice. The recommendations and accompanying vignettes feature a range of funders, from those with dedicated climate programs to those who focus on health, economic opportunity, or a particular place. The breadth of foundation types, sizes, and contexts presents a diverse picture of how different funders have developed their respective strategies and roles in addressing the climate crisis, including funders who are early on their journey.



LEARN ABOUT CLIMATE AND CLIMATE JUSTICE

As funders consider how to address the climate crisis and support climate justice, they can both tap existing networks and expand their horizons by reaching out to new partners.

Funders can start by investigating the ways in which the climate crisis affects the issues, populations, and places that are central to their work. Questions to prompt this reflection might include:

- How does the climate crisis currently affect the issue, region, or population that is the focus of the foundation's mission?
- What are the predicted impacts of climate change on the issue, region, or population the foundation seeks to support over the course of the next 10 years? 30 years? 100 years?
- What resources, skills, relationships, and platforms can the foundation bring to the climate fight (e.g., relationships with policymakers, strong communications team, convening platform)?
- How might the foundation's current strategies unintentionally contribute to the climate crisis, or people's ability to adapt and be resilient in the face of climate change?

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) began by unearthing connections between its core health focus and climate. Senior Program Officer Sharon Roerty commented, “Equity, health, and climate—we saw the relationship between the three. As a foundation, we have been focused on health and healthy equity, so we had to get beyond traditional environmental concerns and think about the intersection between climate, health, and structural racism.” For staff at RWJF, reflection on the intersection of health and equity—particularly racial equity—revealed the importance of climate.

After internal reflection, conversations with existing grantees, peer funders, and other partners can help funders understand how the climate crisis is affecting their work. **Funders and grantees may be using different language or approaching climate from a wide range of perspectives, so taking a broad and inclusive lens to what constitutes climate-related work can be helpful.** By identifying shared values and a common cause, funders can invite “multisolvers” on the front lines who take intersectional and adaptive approaches to addressing social and environmental needs in their communities.¹³

For example, Collaboratory, a community foundation in southwest Florida, started exploring how the climate crisis affects its community through surveys and one-on-one conversations with policymakers, grantees, and others. The staff and community reported witnessing how a red tide affects the tourism economy, which then affects family livelihoods and, in turn, reduces local high school graduation and postsecondary enrollment rates.¹⁴ Collaboratory found that, in its politically conservative region, messaging from business leaders about climate-related economic impacts has been more effective than information from climate scientists.

PLACE-BASED CLIMATE FUNDERS

Whether you are a community foundation, a family foundation, or a healthcare conversion foundation, there are ample opportunities for place-based funders to engage in climate action. As MacArthur Foundation Program Officer Deborah Philbrick advised, “For new funders entering the space, climate is the most place-based issue out there. In your geography, it might show up in housing insecurity, energy cost burden, or health disparities. Start with your unit of geography, and it makes a daunting issue a bit easier to digest.”

For The Broad Foundation in Los Angeles, setting a geographic boundary and applying a climate lens to existing priorities such as economic mobility illuminated a wide range of strategies. Managing director Sue Chi reflected, “If it supports economic mobility, we are interested in exploring it, particularly if it can help leverage public funding to historically marginalized communities according to their priorities. We moved into this space because environmental equity, economic opportunity, and education are inseparable issues for communities in Los Angeles. A lot of our grants are at those connection points, such as STEM education related to environment or career pathways in clean energy.”

Like many other multi-issue community foundations, Collaboratory learned that understanding how its community thinks and talks about issues is key to making progress.

To break out of historical norms that favor large, white-dominant nonprofit organizations, funders must reach out to those outside of their immediate circle. **External partners, especially front-line communities, are critical to developing a holistic and equitable understanding of how the climate crisis affects people. Actively listening to front-line communities requires foundations to expand the definition of who is a “climate expert” to include those most affected.** Funders should honor the expertise of front-line community leaders like any other expert—with resources and with gravity. The Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation managing director Sue Chi reflected, “We are trying to redefine how we view leadership in this day and age. We want to create a new definition for ourselves of what proximate leadership looks like and what that can do.” This moment of crisis is an opportunity for funders to drastically increase their support for efforts led by and accountable to those most impacted, including Indigenous people, Black and brown communities, women, and low-income people.



RECKON WITH AND CHANGE INTERNAL PRACTICES

If the social sector is to help achieve the systemic shifts needed to prevent the worst of the climate crisis, funders must reconsider the practices and norms that inhibit action or cause harm. Changing practices and policies can also have a positive impact on relationship and power dynamics. Funders can start by assessing and remedying the gaps in capacity and expertise among staff and trustees, such as lived experience of systemic oppression or familiarity with community organizing. An honest assessment can help foundations augment key skills, networks, and lived experience with external partners, while also building their teams over time to incorporate more diversity and wide-ranging experiences.

Funders must also reflect internally to understand how their biases, assumptions, policies, practices, and cultural norms may have fostered competition among allies, reinforced patriarchal power dynamics, or inhibited folks on the front lines from doing what is best for their communities. Solomé Lemma, executive director of Thousand Currents, observed, “When a funder sets impact on their terms, we ask nonprofits to deliver change that is palatable to us and easy to consume. What we learned consistently is that social impact is a process and takes decades. We want to reexamine the barriers that get in the way of equity funding, like preconceived notions of capacity, impact, and scale.”

The Kresge Foundation

A large national funder focused on urban opportunity explores the intersections of climate, equity, and other social issues

The Kresge Foundation is a private foundation that aims to expand opportunities for people in hardship or poverty across the urban United States. Though the foundation had identified climate change as a priority in 2006, its 2012 institutional pivot to focus on urban opportunity led the Environment Program to a much more intersectional, equity-centered, and cross-issue approach.

The Kresge Foundation's Climate Resilience and Urban Opportunity (CRUO) Initiative from 2014 to 2019 resourced nonprofits representing low-wealth communities facing disproportionate environmental burdens to influence local and regional climate planning and policy development.¹⁵ Lois DeBacker, managing director of the Kresge Foundation's Environment Program, explained, "Working on climate change with an equity lens has required us to broaden what we frame as 'climate issues.' We view climate change as both a technical challenge and political-social challenge, and a broad array of issues fall within that frame." Kresge supported equity-centered groups to deepen their expertise on climate change (rather than funding traditional climate change organizations to develop their expertise on equity) and explicitly named racial equity as a core priority. CRUO supported multiple policy wins at the local and state level, such as strengthening climate policies' focus on

front-line communities and embedding an equity framework within policy, demonstrating the value of community-driven, equity-centered approaches to climate planning and policy.¹⁶

Since CRUO's completion, Kresge has continued its integrated climate and equity approach at the intersections of health and water. DeBacker emphasized the importance of reciprocity when working across issues, explaining, "For us to successfully work at the intersection of climate change and, for instance, human services, those of us who care about climate have a responsibility to articulate that relevance. There's an obligation to understand the other issues well enough to be able to identify those points of intersection."

The foundation sees climate change as a threat multiplier that affects everything and is adapting its approach accordingly. Last year Kresge joined the Donors of Color Network [Climate Funders Justice Pledge](#), committing at least 30% of its climate funding to power-building groups led by Black, Indigenous, and other people of color (BIPOC). The foundation recently reported that 33% of its 2019-2020 climate funding met this target.

For decades, grantees have called for shifts in grantmaking practices, such as those highlighted in *Grantmaking with a Racial Justice Lens*,¹⁷ that free up grantees' time from administration and reporting to focus on creating impact. **These shifts include granting multiyear general operating support, flexible applications, and minimal grant reporting.** Trust-based philanthropy is a related, growing movement to address power imbalances between funders and grantees.¹⁸

For funders who want to shift grantmaking practices but are still building relationships with front-line communities, grassroots-focused intermediary funds (sometimes called regrantors) offer a bridge to front-line communities, both in the U.S. and in the Global South. Vanessa Daniel, executive director of Groundswell Fund, explained, "Intermediaries partner with people of wealth, but we are primarily accountable to our communities. We are not extracting information on how to support them, we are flanking and partnering with them deeply, giving them leadership voice to set our strategy and make sure our giving is relevant. ... Our commitment is durable—it's not a shiny penny or a flash in the pan."

As more funders adopt a climate lens, it is important to recognize that ambiguity may be uncomfortable and is inherent to long-term, intersectional, systemic change. Wading into new territory and ceding power in setting strategy and evaluating impact requires individual and organizational bravery, as well as trust between partners. Many funders reported a more expansive understanding of their work when they focus on the process and remain flexible on outcomes.



BUILD POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC POWER IN FRONT-LINE COMMUNITIES

For funders to contribute to more just, systemic change, philanthropy must support political and economic power building in the front-line communities most impacted by climate change. Equipping communities with resources that support sovereignty and self-determination enables creative, adaptive solutions to the climate crisis. **Power building should be targeted at grassroots efforts, meaning efforts that are led by and accountable to the community and often address multiple social issues at once.**

Funders can support grassroots efforts directly where they have existing relationships; through networks, alliances, and intermediary funders; or through community-controlled capital, such as non-extractive loan funds.

It is particularly important that new and existing climate funders deepen their support for power building in the Global South. The examples cited in this report largely highlight U.S.-focused efforts because that is where a majority of climate funding is currently directed.

Pisces Foundation

A family foundation focused in the U.S. and internationally on climate, environmental education, and water has a vision for people and nature thriving together

The Pisces Foundation has focused on climate since its founding in 2012, supporting policies to mitigate the emission of short-lived greenhouse gases. Cutting short-lived climate pollutants like methane, black carbon, and refrigerants, alongside carbon dioxide, is the only way to get the world on track to keep temperature change at 1.5 degrees Celsius. Reducing these climate pollutants also delivers improved air quality, better public health—including in vulnerable communities—and greater food security. The foundation successfully supported international agreements and policies to limit emissions from diesel trucks, reduce the impact of coolants, and reduce methane emitted from fossil fuel extraction. To bolster the foundation's continued commitment to addressing short-lived greenhouse gas emissions, Senior Program Officer Fanta Kamakaté explained its ongoing evolution:

"We took stock of what's been accomplished and what challenges we still face. There had been a lot of meaningful progress, but the scale and pace of mitigation needed was not going to happen with current resources and the actions on the table. We needed to shift gears, with a deep understanding of the interconnectedness of this work with other priorities—human health, economic recovery. One of the things driving this evolution is our foundation's commitment to center people and especially impacted communities in how we prioritize the work that we do, where our resources go. Another is our emphasis on thinking about the whole system we are trying to change. As a result, our portfolio is growing. We will continue

supporting policy and advocacy organizations and think tanks, and include more resources for movement-building organizations that center the communities most impacted. Advocacy from those movements can generate the political will to take ambitious action. This also ensures the solutions on the table are durable and just, versus expedient. We're broadening our portfolio of grantees, thinking about systems a lot more."

One unexpected benefit is more fluid collaboration within the foundation. Program Associate Gavi Reiter commented, "The systems approach and movement building gives more opportunity to work across program areas. ... Now that we're talking about the intersections, there is a lot more opportunity for us to collaborate, and that's really exciting." The expanded, more intersectional approach enables the team to consider not just passing policy but also implementing it. Reiter continued, "By directing investments to communities, it is building a base on the ground to make sure the policies that are passed are implemented, and communities are resourced to show up." For example, Pisces supports organizations in the U.S. such as the Moving Forward Network focused on communities impacted by diesel freight transportation and GreenLatinos working to make sure the voices of millions of Latinos in the U.S. living within half a mile of oil and gas facilities are part of decisions on how to regulate their methane emissions. In India, Pisces supports organizations such as Jhatkaa that is educating citizens and engaging with decision-makers on air pollution.

Yet the Global South is disproportionately affected by the climate crisis, despite contributing less to its root causes and emissions, and the Global South boasts effective community-led movements that merit more support.¹⁹

Building grassroots political power is critical to fighting climate change because when communities have self-determination they can respond nimbly to climate impacts, control their future, and build the public support needed to enact policy changes. In the U.S., political will plays an important role in elections and climate policies. The 2016 presidential election—and the four years that followed—was a turning point for many funders in their journey to support political power building at the grassroots level. Program Associate Trevor Thompson of NorthLight Foundation explained:

“Our formalization and focus on movement building were catalyzed by the [2016 presidential] election and the recognition that providing funding to the same, well-resourced, white-led organizations at the national level was not yielding the results we desired or needed. There was not a groundswell, no robust movement to coherently stop attacks on environmental and climate policies that had been taken for granted for decades. The idea [now] is that supporting the grassroots and those closest to the problems will strengthen the movement and yield the best solutions.”

The MacArthur Foundation has also evolved its “Big Bet” climate program to focus more on equity and power building. The evolution has changed how program staff approach grant-making, as Program Officer Deborah Philbrick commented: “For instance, we’re funding an organization in Houston that does citizen science and equips local folks to do air monitoring. That’s a bit more public health than something we would have thought about before, but that community is making the connection with climate. ... We will also spend less money with ‘big greens,’ spreading funds across more organizations. When we don’t have the bandwidth to develop on-the-ground relationships, we will be working with others who do, like intermediaries.”

Power building should also include attention to economic power, so that front-line communities are in control of and benefit from the economic transition needed to slow climate change. In the U.S., the Just Transition movement integrates the economic, political, and social dynamics of the transition to a regenerative and sustainable model and recommends asking who benefits, who is in power, and who is able to thrive in this new model.²⁰ Funders supporting this economic transition must ensure that the benefits are justly and equitably distributed. The “winners” in this new economy must include low-income, low-wealth, and racially diverse urban and rural communities, as well as Indigenous communities. This can be achieved through mechanisms like employee ownership models, energy cooperatives, and community-directed funds. Though such mechanisms may be

new to many funders, they have a strong precedent and can be important levers for sharing and building economic power. For instance, research shows that models for community-ownership of energy infrastructure have benefits beyond increased grid resilience and lower energy costs—they empower communities, connect people to place, create wealth, and increase support for and understanding of renewable energy.²¹

The Cleveland Foundation, a community foundation that has focused its climate work on economic opportunity, has adapted its policy-driven approach to include more political and economic power building. One example of this work in action is the foundation’s seed investment in the Ohio Climate Justice Fund, which provides grants to BIPOC groups working at the intersection of racial justice and climate action. The Cleveland Foundation also provided catalytic investment capital for Evergreen Cooperatives, a group of sustainability-oriented, worker-owned businesses that aim to build economic inclusion from the ground up.

Supporting grassroots efforts requires foundations to expand their preconceived notions of capacity, scale, and impact. Grassroots movements may be perceived as small or slow relative to the scale and speed of large environmental nonprofits, but they are often small because they have been funded small. As Ash-Lee Henderson, co-executive director of the Highlander Research and Education Center and one of the leaders of the Movement for Black Lives, says, “Fund the grassroots like you want them to win.” If your foundation has not yet adopted movement-building strategies, you may need to revisit how you define risk, why you perceive grassroots efforts as lower capacity, and how scale can be achieved through depth, breadth, and influence. This also requires respecting the sovereignty of movements and ceding funder control.



EXPAND THE FUNDER TOOLBOX

A funder’s power and influence extend beyond grantmaking, and any approach to integrating climate should utilize the full range of tools at their disposal. **Convening, advocacy, and narrative change are three important tools for climate action that funders can support with staff time, expertise, or partnerships.** As more funders engage these tools, it is important to do so in a way that is allied with, accountable to, and supportive of front-line communities.

Supporting convening and collaboration at the local, regional, and global levels can facilitate shared learning across similar efforts in different areas (i.e., issues or geographies), alignment on a shared vision within a specific issue or place, or collective capacity building. As one funder shared, “Greater change over time [happens] when there’s strong networks.” Grantees shared that funders often resource larger groups to convene others or decide who should be convened, which can both reinforce harmful power dynamics

and exclude those who are most impacted and closest to the solutions. **Supporting local front-line groups to convene, create linkages, and collaborate with those who they choose can lead to new solutions and scale.** One interviewee explained, “As a funder, I funded the small organizations to contract with the larger organizations rather than the other way around. That shifted power, added capacity, and ensured the power and benefit was in the right place.”

One example of how convening can support learning is the Strong, Prosperous, And Resilient Communities Challenge (SPARCC), which helps regions utilize infrastructure investments for climate resilience, health, and racial equity.²² In addition to grant funding and technical assistance, SPARCC includes a learning network that supports shared learning across the six sites, as well as other cities and regions hoping to achieve similar goals.

Another example of how convening can support alignment is Building Equity and Alignment for Environmental Justice (BEA). This group brings together leaders from grassroots environmental justice organizations, “big green” nonprofit organizations, and philanthropy to work on strategy, policy, and movement alignment. Guided by the Jemez Principles of Democratic Organizing, BEA aims to shift power and resources to grassroots leadership.²³

Another tool for funders to leverage in the climate fight is their voice. **Funders can be powerful advocates that use their platforms and relationships to shift public perception, influence policy, and engage peer funders in climate action.** Funders can utilize their access to and relationships with policymakers, journalists, and/or companies to take a stand on the climate crisis and encourage action. Though there are legal limitations to how funders can engage in policy and advocacy, there is much room for action.

In particular, foundations can help amplify the voice and influence of front-line communities, and especially Black, brown, and Indigenous communities in the U.S. and across the globe. Funders should be intentional about when, where, and how they choose to use their own voice and when they need to make space for historically marginalized voices, emphasizing the latter as much as possible. For example, if a funder is asked to speak on a panel about climate, they can instead suggest a grantee partner as a panelist to bring the front-line perspective.

As the Stolte Family Foundation has deepened its climate focus, it has expanded beyond its initial focus on green energy policy to include awareness, messaging, and narrative change through investments with groups like the environmentally focused media outlet Grist. This work expanded how the foundation thinks about impact metrics to include more qualitative measures and storytelling. The foundation has also been exploring impact investing, and using its relationships with other donors and foundations to garner more resources for climate action.

Laughing Gull Foundation

A regional family foundation prioritizes racial equity and community organizing in its work against the climate crisis

Laughing Gull Foundation is a family foundation based in the U.S. South focused on climate and environment, higher education in prisons, and LGBTQ equality. From the beginning, the founders were clear on their issue priorities and the centrality of racial justice in their approach.

The foundation's climate and environment program has four key levers: regranting, policy and advocacy, community organizing, and land conservation, which prioritizes heirs' property preservation for Black farmers. When developing this program strategy, the foundation evolved to prioritizing a minimum of 75% of their grantmaking for BIPOC-led groups based in the South.

The foundation provides multiyear general operating support, allowing partners to adapt and channel resources where most needed. The foundation also uses impact investing and socially responsible investing to catalyze change in these same issue areas.

To arrive at the current strategy, the family and their advisers went through a process of education about global climate issues,

climate challenges specific to the South, and the constellation of Southern climate funding and gaps. As Senior Program Consultant Cynthia Renfro shared, "How do you curb [greenhouse gas] emissions? We find groups that have multi-issue approaches. People who are most impacted are seeing health impacts, or they need jobs. You have to find people working on economic justice, environmental justice, air quality, water quality, job training, and renewable resources."

Laughing Gull Foundation's strategy is to look for multisolvers and to support impacted communities, almost especially Black, Indigenous, and people of color. At its inception, the foundation also made the important decision to spend down their resources over 20 years—intentionally redistributing wealth out of the family and into the community, acknowledging the unjust economic system and racist history that made the wealth accumulation possible.

As reflected in research, peer influence is a powerful force within the field of philanthropy.²⁴ **By naming the climate crisis as a priority and sharing learning along the way, foundations can shift the narrative about who is a climate funder, what solutions to the climate crisis look like, and the importance of equity and justice.** Funders have an opportunity to send a clear message to their peers that this is everyone's issue and connect them with front-line communities that are leading the way. (See Appendix B for more information on relevant peer funder groups.)



UTILIZE FOUNDATION INVESTMENT AND OPERATIONS AS LEVERS FOR CHANGE

Investment and operations are also important levers for change. This includes tools like non-extractive loans, impact investing, endowment investments, and operational practices. **Though a single organization's operational footprint is miniscule relative to global greenhouse gas emissions, it can be a powerful signal to align operations with sustainable values.** This could include office practices (e.g., LEED certification, recycling, composting) or policies around business travel and commuting. For Collaboratory, a community foundation in Florida, the sustainability of its office building and investment portfolio was an approachable first step in its politically conservative region. Collaboratory focused on LEED certification for its new headquarters and then piloted investing portions of its endowment in alignment with environmental, social, and governance (ESG) metrics. Leadership advocated these changes for fiscal responsibility and to align with the foundation's goals and mission.

Some foundations, such as the Gulf Coast Community Foundation, have taken operational sustainability a step further to help grantees think about their operations (e.g., energy efficiency), which can help with cost savings and emissions reduction. Gulf Coast Community Foundation Senior Vice President for Community Investment Jon Thaxton explained, "We noted that the families who require SNAP [Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program] or other public assistance were living in spaces that were energy inefficient. Disproportionate levels of income were going to utilities, and we saw this utility cost burden the families in a particular way, like inhibiting families from purchasing quality food." Through discussions with nonprofits, other funders, and local government, the foundation established Partners for Green Places in 2018 to support energy-efficient upgrades for nonprofit organizations that operate local low-income housing.

Seattle Foundation

A community foundation taps into convening and narrative change as levers for climate justice

The Seattle Foundation is a community foundation that recently reoriented its strategy to a “Blueprint for Impact” focused on supporting a just democracy, an equitable economy, and a resilient environment.²⁵ Under former President and CEO Tony Mestres, the foundation coalesced around civic leadership, organizing, and movement building. The Climate Justice Initiative, launched in 2019, sought community input and vetted its strategic framework with 15 partner organizations before finalizing. The framework includes mitigation and adaptation as key levers, as well as resilience and leadership. The foundation funds two climate coalitions, one with large “big green” nonprofit groups and another BIPOC-led group focused on climate justice. Grantees also include groups working on storytelling and narrative change, policy and advocacy, community organizing, and capacity-building efforts.

Internally, the foundation has been building its capacity to link climate to other issues. As it funds more grassroots groups, seeing the linkages on the ground and opportunities for multisolving has opened it up to new possibilities. In addition, the foundation has also aligned around a “positions matrix” for making decisions on policies and other perspectives where it may want to have a voice. This allows them to respond quickly to emerging opportunities and needs.

With endowments or other investments, the philanthropic sector has increasingly realized that investment practices can undermine or even outweigh the intended social and environmental impact. Funders can begin to address this by revisiting their investment practices with a climate lens or ESG principles. Some questions to get funders started, in partnership with values-aligned investment professionals, could include:

- Is your endowment being invested in industries that contribute to the climate crisis? If so, are you doing anything as a shareholder to influence how those companies or industries operate?²⁶
- Is your investment portfolio supporting companies that your grantees and partners see as their opposition?
- What low-carbon or sustainability-focused investments might align better with the foundation's mission and values?

One family foundation urged its peers, "Align your endowment with your values. Your endowment is a tool, and it can work for or against your interests." For foundations with questions about what this might look like or how it might affect financial returns, funders like the Nathan Cummings Foundation²⁷ and NorthLight Foundation²⁸ have publicly shared their own journeys.

In the context of the climate crisis, the urgency of the situation has led some funders to increase their payout or spend down over a set time frame. If funders believe that significant change is needed in the next decade to avoid the worst impacts of climate change, then increased funding is one rational choice.

Anonymous Family Foundation

A newly staffed family foundation embeds equity in its strategic approach, staff expertise, operations, and investments

The family foundation has operated for over a decade but has recently recognized the limitations of traditional, top-down philanthropy and become more focused on social justice. As one staff member reflected, “The challenge was that environmental funders had put money into top-down approaches and policy, and not folks on the ground.” As part of the foundation’s shift, it hired its first staff and selected people who have lived experience with climate justice and the impacts of the climate crisis on front-line communities.

In addition, rather than determining its strategy and asking partners to execute, the foundation asks partners on the ground what is needed. The foundation evaluates itself rather than its grantees, and it focuses on storytelling as a means for conveying impact.

The foundation also turned its climate justice lens internally to look at its operations and investments. The foundation divested from fossil fuels and then shifted investment away from companies with poor track records on gender equity and racial equity. In addition, the foundation started paying the indigenous land tax in its region, a concept that has been gaining support over the last few years.²⁹



Conclusion

As wildfires burn, temperatures climb, and the world endures a pandemic, it is imperative for philanthropy to play a much bigger role in addressing the climate crisis. Regardless of a foundation's mission or goals, the climate crisis is already affecting the health of ecosystems, communities, and economies worldwide. If society is to avoid the worst impacts of the climate crisis, funders must put more resources into supporting front-line communities.

Philanthropy must play an active role ensuring that solutions to the climate crisis and the accompanying social, economic, and political transitions build toward a more just, regenerative, and healthy world. This journey starts with an honest examination of organizational responsibility, accountability, and the root causes of this crisis.

As funders embark on this journey to address the climate crisis, program staff, executives, and trustees can reflect on these questions to get started:

- **In what ways does the climate crisis threaten the social impact your foundation seeks to have at a local, regional, national, or global scale? How severely and how fast will those threats occur?**
- **What is at stake for you as an individual, as a fiduciary, as an organization, and as a community in the climate crisis? What are the consequences of *inaction*?**
- **In terms of responsibility and accountability, what does your organization owe to those it seeks to serve?**
- **After listening to the most impacted communities, what do you and your colleagues believe are the root causes of the climate crisis? How might your foundation address these root causes directly, indirectly, and/or in partnership with others?**
- **Based on your foundation's resources, expertise, and relationships, which tools should you use in facing the climate crisis?**

This resource is a point of departure, and we invite every philanthropic funder or donor to step up to the challenge of creating a livable future.

APPENDIX A:

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Adaptation, in the context of the climate crisis, refers to strategies that adjust socioeconomic and physical infrastructure systems to reduce vulnerability in a changing climate.

“Big green” is a term in the climate and environment field that refers to the national and international nonprofit organizations and think tanks with the most significant resources (budget and staff).

Climate justice “focuses on the root causes of climate crisis through an intersectional lens of racism, classism, capitalism, economic injustice, and environmental harm. Climate justice supports a Just Transition for communities and workers away from a fossil fuel economy and focuses on making the necessary systemic changes to address unequal burdens to our communities and to realign our economy with our natural systems.”³⁰

Equity is the “just and fair inclusion into a society in which all can participate, prosper, and reach their full potential.”³¹

Front-line communities are those that experience the most immediate and severe consequences of the climate crisis.³² These are often low-income, low-wealth, Black, brown, or Indigenous communities due to systemic exploitation and oppression.

Grassroots groups, movements, or organizations are led by and accountable to the communities that are directly impacted by social issues and often operate at the local level.

Just Transition is a “set of principles, processes, and practices that build economic and political power to shift from an extractive economy to a regenerative economy.”³³

Mitigation of greenhouse gases refers to strategies that aim to “reduce emissions of and stabilize the levels of heat-trapping greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.”³⁴

Multisolving, in the context of climate change, refers to “finding solutions rooted in justice that reduce fossil fuel use and produce co-benefits in health, resilience, and well-being.”³⁵

Racial equity is “the condition that would be achieved if one’s racial identity no longer predicted, in a statistical sense, how one fares ... addressing root causes of inequities, not just their manifestation. This includes elimination of policies, practices, attitudes, and cultural messages that reinforce differential outcomes by race or that fail to eliminate them.”³⁶

Regenerative systems are “based on ecological restoration, community protection, equitable partnerships, justice, and full and fair participatory processes.” They value the health and well-being of the planet by “producing, consuming, and redistributing resources in harmony with the planet.”³⁷

Social justice is “the equal access to wealth, opportunities, and social privileges within a society.”³⁸

Sovereignty refers to the power and rights of a group to make decisions, govern, and make laws. In the context of climate justice, it often refers to the rights of Indigenous communities over natural resources and ability to implement culturally specific approaches to the climate crisis.

Systems change is the challenging and changing of practices, resource flows, power, and beliefs of a given system.³⁹

APPENDIX B:

LEARNING RESOURCES AND ACTION STEPS

Learning Resources

As funders begin or dive deeper on their climate journey, learning is critical. The resources below seek to provide further education on topics such as climate change, climate justice, and movement building.

Topic	Summary	Resources
Climate Change 101	These resources can help build a foundational understanding of the underlying science behind climate change and potential solutions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Drawdown Framework and Solutions • All We Can Save: Truth, Courage, and Solutions for the Climate Crisis • AR6 Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis—Summary for Policymakers • Soil to Sky: Climate Solutions that Work
Climate Justice and the Just Transition	Climate justice and the Just Transition are two schools of thought that sit at the intersection of climate change and justice for harmed communities. These resources explain the concepts and frameworks, and how philanthropy can best support these movements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate Justice Alliance: Just Transition Principles • People’s Just Transition: Community-Centered, Community-Led [1st Funder Briefing] • Justice Funder’s Resonance Framework • Seattle Foundation Webinar, “Climate Justice: Ensuring Resiliency” • Climate Leadership Initiative Webinar, “Funding at the Intersection of Climate and Racial Justice”
Movement Building	Supporting grassroots movements is a critical lever for philanthropy to address the climate crisis as well as other related issues, though many foundations struggle to understand how to do it well. These resources can build funder capacity to support movements without unintentionally causing harm.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy (NCRP), “Cultivating the Grassroots” • NCRP, “Power Moves” • Building Movement Project: Move the Money • Inside Philanthropy, “Environmental Funders: The Problem Isn’t Just Diversity. It’s Access to Money”
Investment Practices	Philanthropic institutions are increasingly seeking to align their investment practices with their mission and values through divestment and shareholder activism. DivestInvest Philanthropy is the most prominent pledge, and it tracks data on investment returns. The resources here also include two examples of foundation investment policies to highlight this in practice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DivestInvest • How to DivestInvest: A Guide for Institutional Investors • DivestInvest Philanthropy: Five Years after Launch • DivestInvest Philanthropy Briefing and Case Studies • Nathan Cummings Foundation investment policies • NorthLight Foundation investment policy
Case Studies and Other Resources	In our research, we came across many other resources to support philanthropic engagement in climate. These resources include case studies and tool kits targeted at philanthropy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investing at the Frontlines of Climate Change: A Funder Toolkit on Climate, Health and Equity • Active Philanthropy—Funding the Future: How the Climate Crisis Intersects with Your Giving • Acting on the Climate Crisis: Why, How and the Role of Philanthropy • <i>Alliance Magazine</i>, “Funding through a Climate lens: How Can Funders Strategically Respond to Climate Change?” • Australian Environmental Grantmakers Network (AEGN): Climate Lens

Action Steps

For funders that want to plug into the climate philanthropy space, there are many eager partners out there. We are sharing a sample of topical funder groups, intermediary funds, and philanthropic commitments to consult and/or join for solidarity, learning, accountability, and inspiration.

Topic	Summary	Resources
Topical Funder Groups	Peer funder groups with a focus on the climate crisis provide opportunities to share learning and advance philanthropic practice. In addition to these topical groups, funders can connect with local regional associations of grantmakers to identify learning and collaboration opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate and Energy Funders Group • EDGE Funders Alliance • Environmental Grantmakers Association • The Funders Network • Grantmakers in Health • Health and Environmental Funders Network • International Funders for Indigenous Peoples • Justice Funders • Neighborhood Funders Group • Sustainable Agriculture and Food System Funders
Intermediary Funds	Intermediaries pool and regrant philanthropic resources. Within climate philanthropy, many intermediaries focus specifically on supporting grassroots movements. Intermediaries are often led by and accountable to front-line communities, and have deep relationships that enable them to get money to the grassroots effectively. Intermediaries can help mitigate funding power dynamics and some provide funder education. For large funders and those new to climate work, intermediaries are an effective way to act quickly and support power building.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CLIMA Fund • Climate and Clean Energy Equity Fund • Climate Justice Resilience Fund • Global Greengrants Fund • Groundswell Fund • Hive Fund for Climate and Gender Justice • Just Transition Fund • Seventh Generation Fund for Indigenous Peoples • The Solutions Project • Thousand Currents
Philanthropic Commitments	There are national, regional, and international pledges that support funder organizing, transparency, and learning. The Donors of Color Network Climate Funders Justice Pledge in particular asks funders to direct at least 30% of their grantmaking to organizations run by, serving, and building power for communities of color.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Donors of Color Network Climate Funders Justice Pledge • European Philanthropy Coalition for Climate • Funder Commitment on Climate Change (U.K.) • International Philanthropy Commitment on Climate Change

APPENDIX C:

ISSUE INTERSECTIONS WITH CLIMATE

While we do not recommend operating in topical silos for an issue as cross-cutting and complex as the climate crisis, we understand that many funders will approach climate from other interrelated or adjacent issues. As a bridge for funders making connections between climate and their mission, we offer very brief summaries of the intersection between climate and key issues commonly supported by philanthropy. We also recommend a brief selection of further reading for those interested in learning more.

Issue Summary	Illustrative Examples	More Reading
<p>Democracy: Democracy and related topics such as voting rights and civic engagement are critical to the climate crisis, and climate is key to engaging many voter groups such as youth and BIPOC communities. Climate-related policies have been stalled by lobbying from industry, and significant civic power is needed to pass supportive legislation. The support of democracy-focused funders at the grassroots levels can build power and engagement on climate-related topics and policies.</p>	<p>The funder group Democracy Alliance runs a Climate Equity Action Fund that supports organizations that educate and mobilize voters of color to elect climate champions and hold them accountable.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beyond the Dual Crisis: From Climate Change to Democratic Change • Why the Climate Crisis Demands Democracy Reform • Voting Rights Are Fundamental to Democracy and Climate Justice
<p>Economic Development: Climate change presents both challenges and opportunities for economic development. Fundamentally, society must reduce human consumption and curtail growth-at-all-costs economic development. Yet, development can potentially build resilience and reduce emissions, and climate considerations should be integrated into community development processes. Climate change offers opportunities for “green” jobs and wealth creation in the transformation of energy, transportation, and other key sectors. Democratizing wealth-building opportunities benefits front-line communities. As jobs and workers migrate, workforce demands change, and conditions for many outdoor jobs worsen, integrating climate change considerations will be necessary.</p>	<p>The Cleveland Foundation focuses on regional economic development opportunities in the climate crisis, including advocating for clean energy policies that create jobs and support local business, such as offshore wind farming.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategies to Address Climate Change Risk in Low- and Moderate-Income Communities • Ten Facts about the Economics of Climate Change and Climate Policy • Workforce Recommendations in the Climate Crisis Report

Issue Summary	Illustrative Examples	More Reading
<p>Education: Climate change has a negative impact on students’ ability to access and reap the benefits of education, by destroying educational infrastructure, disrupting students’ access, affecting familial livelihoods in ways that interrupt education pathways, and creating physical and mental health challenges that impede learning. Education systems (public and private) can prepare their infrastructure, policies and practices, faculty, and students for such shocks. With the COVID-19 pandemic, we have seen that online education is not accessible for many, and must prepare for similar shocks and interruptions due to the climate crisis. Additionally, funders can support the integration of climate science and civic opportunities to engage in climate action into existing curricula.</p>	<p>Collaboratory in southwest Florida saw that climate-driven events like hurricanes and red tides negatively affect Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) rates, high school graduation rates, and postsecondary enrollment rates for years due to household instability and economic impacts.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building Resilience in Education to the Impact of Climate Change • Climate Change and Educational Attainment in the Global Tropics • Climate Change Affects Students’ Well-Being: Case Study of Extreme Heat in San Joaquin Valley and Need for Climate-Smart Schools
<p>Food and Agriculture: Climate-driven changes in weather patterns and increases in extreme weather events threaten our ability to grow, distribute, and access food. At the same time, global food systems, especially industrial agriculture, are a major contributor to greenhouse gas emissions. The impacts of climate change are particularly acute in the Global South, where a majority of food is grown by women and low-income people who have less access to capital and technology to adapt to climate change. Global food systems also include fisheries and aquaculture, which are significantly impacted by changing ocean temperatures and pollution. More than 3 billion people rely on the ocean for their livelihoods.</p>	<p>Natural Resources Defense Council’s (NRDC) Food Matters Project connects local farmers to regional markets, which reduces greenhouse gas emissions from transportation costs, supports smallholder farmer incomes, and breaks up large agricultural monopolies that have historically ignored communities of color.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soil to Sky: Climate Solutions that Work, 18–24 • Food Sovereignty Now and beyond COVID-19 • How Climate Change Threatens Food Security—and Why We’re All at Risk • Climate Change and Food Security: Risks and Responses
<p>Health: Through the direct impacts of climate-warming industrial pollution, the effect of rising temperatures, or danger to people from increasingly frequent wildfire smoke, the negative impacts of the climate crisis threaten human health around the world. The disproportionate impacts of climate on low-income and historically marginalized groups also make climate critical to health equity. The impacts of the climate crisis—uncertainty, displacement, loss, and more—also negatively affect mental health, and this will undoubtedly worsen as the impacts of the climate crisis increase.</p>	<p>RWJF is a leading U.S. health funder that has begun integrating climate into its existing health equity work, particularly related to the built environment and water.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investing at the Frontlines of Climate Change: A Funder Toolkit on Climate, Health and Equity • Climate Change, Health, and Equity: Action Steps for Health Philanthropy • Health Risks Due to Climate Change: Inequity in Causes and Consequences

Issue Summary	Illustrative Examples	More Reading
<p>Human Rights: As society addresses the climate crisis, a focus on human rights is critical. The impacts of the climate crisis will likely undermine people's human rights, especially for those populations that have been historically marginalized or oppressed and are most vulnerable. For instance, people pushed to migrate due to climate change may find themselves exposed to violations of labor rights, gender-based violence, or exclusion from education and health services during the experience of displacement and resettlement. In response to the climate crisis, society must redesign many systems and policies related to the economy, law, education, health, and more. This is an opportunity for human rights advocates to ensure that these transformations improve human rights protections and do not cause unintended harm.</p>	<p>The Mary Robinson Foundation has been working with human rights and climate change groups to improve linkages and encourage the exchange of experience and good practices, for example by supporting the Geneva Pledge on Human Rights in Climate Action.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding Human Rights and Climate Change • Incorporating Human Rights into Climate Action • Rights for Action: Putting People at the Centre of Action on Climate Change
<p>Youth: Climate change poses a critical threat to children and adolescents' futures, and the climate crisis is one of the most prominent concerns for many youth. Climate change directly threatens the physical and mental health of youth through such impacts as air and water pollution and extreme weather events. By integrating climate considerations, youth-focused funders can more holistically understand the challenges ahead and connect with youth that they seek to serve.</p>	<p>Children's Investment Fund Foundation (CIFF) supports the mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions—specifically phasing out coal and working to increase the uptake of renewable energy—to improve the future of children in the Global South.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responding to the Impacts of the Climate Crisis on Children and Youth • A Future for the World's Children? A WHO–UNICEF–Lancet Commission

APPENDIX D: CONSULTED ORGANIZATIONS

The following organizations provided input for the development of this resource:

- Another Gulf Is Possible
- Ariadne: European Funders for Social Change and Human Rights
- Biodiversity Funders Group/Climate and Energy Funders Group
- Candid
- CEA Consulting
- CFLeads
- Children's Investment Fund Foundation (CIFF)
- Cleveland Foundation
- CLIMA Fund
- Climate Justice Alliance
- Climate Leadership Initiative
- ClimateWorks Foundation
- Collaboratory (formerly Southwest Florida Community Foundation)
- The Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation
- Environmental Grantmakers Association (EGA)
- The Funders Network (formerly Funders' Network for Smart Growth and Livable Communities)
- Grantmakers for Effective Organizations (GEO)
- Grantmakers in Health
- Groundswell Fund
- Gulf Coast Community Foundation
- Health and Environmental Funders Network
- Hive Fund for Climate and Gender Justice
- Houston Endowment
- Indigenous Climate Action
- Indigenous Environmental Network
- Just Transition Fund
- Justice Funders
- The Kresge Foundation
- Laughing Gull Foundation
- Leaven Partners LLC
- The Libra Foundation
- MacArthur Foundation
- National Center for Family Philanthropy
- Native Americans in Philanthropy
- Natural Resources Defense Council
- Northern California Grantmakers
- NorthLight Foundation
- Pisces Foundation
- PolicyLink
- Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
- Seattle Foundation
- Stolte Family Foundation
- Thousand Currents
- William and Flora Hewlett Foundation
- WorldFish

ENDNOTES

- 1 The World Bank estimates that 143 million people will be internally displaced in three key regions—Latin America, sub-Saharan Africa, and Southeast Asia—by 2030 as a result of climate-driven decreases in crop productivity, water shortages, and rising sea level. Other estimates are higher, such as the Institute for Economics and Peace report predicting that global climate-driven migration could include over 1 billion people by 2050.
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