

# InDEEP

INITIATIVE

Closing the Gap

## Closing the Gap

Insights from the Field to Close the \$2.7 Billion  
Funding Gap Between White-Led and BIPOC-Led  
Environmental and Conservation Organizations

**FINAL REPORT • SEPTEMBER 2021**

# Table of Contents

- INTRODUCTION** .....4
  - The Funding Gap: What It Is, What We Can Do About It. ....4
  - History of InDEEP .....6
  - Closing the Gap Theory of Change .....7
- KEY FINDINGS** .....8
  - Focus of BIPOC-Led Work in the Environmental and Conservation Field .....8
    - BIPOC-Led Organizations’ Impact and Issues .....9
      - Systemic Change .....9
      - BIPOC Leaders and Conservation .....9
      - Devastating Impacts .....10
      - Pivotal Influences on Climate Change, Climate Resilience, Environmental Justice, Food Systems, and Conservation .....11
        - Climate Change .....11
        - Climate Resilience .....13
        - Environmental Justice .....14
        - Food Systems .....14
        - Conservation .....16
    - BIPOC-Led Organizations’ Strategies for Change .....17
      - BIPOC-led Strategies Used to Positively Impact Climate Change, Climate Resilience, Environmental Justice, Food Systems, and Conservation Issues. ....17
      - Factors Influencing BIPOC-led Prioritized Strategies .....18
      - Funding Impact on Strategy Choice .....19
  - Funder Focus in the Environmental Field .....20
    - Funder Focus on Issues and Strategies .....21
      - BIPOC Leaders’ Perceptions of Funder Focus .....21
      - Funders’ Perception of Funder Focus .....24
    - Funder Engagement .....24
      - Funder Practices, Policies, and Priorities Influencing Funding to BIPOC-Led Work 25
      - Funder Policies and Practices Enabling Funding BIPOC-Led Work. ....26
      - Funder Policies and Practices Deterring Funding for BIPOC-Led Work. ....28
      - Funder Communication with BIPOC-Led Organizations. ....29
  - BIPOC-Led Organizations’ Maintenance of Self-Determination .....30
    - Funder Influence on BIPOC-Led Organizations’ Self-Determination .....30

Maintenance of Self-Determination by BIPOC Leaders and BIPOC-Led Organizations .....	31
Equity- and Justice-Oriented Indicators of Progress .....	32
BIPOC Leaders’ Criteria for Equity- and Justice-Oriented Indicators of Progress .....	32
Funders’ Criteria for Equity- and Justice-Oriented Indicators of Progress .....	34
<b>IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE</b> .....	35
Acknowledge Race .....	35
Understand How Climate Change’s Human Impacts Vary by Race .....	36
Expand Understanding of Issues and Strategies That Will Work .....	36
Rethink Relationships .....	37
Rethink Funding Practices .....	37
Rethink Progress .....	39
<b>THE RESEARCH</b> .....	40
Funding Gap Analysis .....	40
Virtual Learning Series .....	40
Interviews .....	41
Strengths and Limitations of Research .....	44
Strengths .....	44
Limitations .....	45
<b>CONCLUSION</b> .....	46
<b>APPENDICES</b>	
A: Quantifying the Funding Gap Between White-Led Organizations and BIPOC-Led Organizations .....	47
B: Closing the Gap’s Learning Questions .....	50
C: Interview Protocol for BIPOC Leaders .....	51
D: Interview Protocol for Funders .....	54

# Introduction

\$2.7 billion.

That is the gap between what philanthropists award to white-led environmental and conservation organizations and to organizations in the field led by Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC<sup>1</sup>). In the five-year period from 2014 through 2018, a total of \$3.7 billion was awarded in the environmental and conservation field, with \$3.2 billion going to white-led organizations and \$498,000 going to BIPOC-led organizations.

Although the existence of a funding gap was well known, this report presents data analysis that quantifies that gap. The size of the gap is staggering.

Sponsored by the [Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity in Environmental Philanthropy](#) (InDEEP) initiative, the research team for this report set out to learn more about the reasons for this gap and to uncover ways the field can begin to close this gap.

What follows are the key findings of this research, the implications for practice in the field of philanthropy, and a clear call to action for philanthropists to make greater investments that are racially equitable and that begin to close the \$2.7 billion funding gap.

## **THE FUNDING GAP: WHAT IT IS, WHAT WE CAN DO ABOUT IT**

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BIPOC-majority communities experience climate change and its harmful effects to a greater degree than other communities in the United States. Along with land use decisions that are detrimental to BIPOC communities, the knowledge and lived experience of this disproportionate impact of climate change is the basis of the modern environmental justice movement.

What is not as readily evident or celebrated is how effectively BIPOC communities and organizations within these communities address climate change through environmental solutions. Of particular importance is BIPOC-led organizations' focus on cross-movement efforts – organizational work that weaves environmental and conservation issues across themes such as civic participation, early childhood education, and economic development.

Despite the value of BIPOC-led work in this field, the research presented in this report confirms that white-led organizations are more resourced and better funded than BIPOC-led organizations. (See Figure 1.)

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<sup>1</sup> BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and people of color) is not a term that resonates with everyone – this is an evolving lexicon. InDEEP started this work using the term “people of color.” Some Indigenous people felt that this term did not reflect their experience. In this dynamic environment, InDEEP wants to convey that its initiatives speak to all people who are marginalized due to their degrees of non-proximity to whiteness. InDEEP’s intention is that the term “BIPOC” includes Asian and Latino/a/x people as well as other racially and ethnically under- and misrepresented groups.

## What Is “The Gap”?\*

**\$2,724,645,648 (\$2.7 billion)**

The funding gap between white-led organizations (n=787) and BIPOC-led organizations (n=167).

<p><b>\$3,222,897,276</b></p> <p>The total amount of grants awarded to white-led organizations.</p>	<p><b>\$498,251,628</b></p> <p>The total amount of grants awarded to BIPOC-led organizations.</p>	<p><b>\$11,298,300</b></p> <p>The difference in the maximum grant amount received by white-led (n=\$58,683,300) and BIPOC-led organizations (n=\$47,385,000).</p>
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\*For information about how these data were generated, see Appendix A.

**FIGURE 1. THE FUNDING GAP BETWEEN WHITE-LED ORGANIZATIONS AND BIPOC-LED ORGANIZATIONS IN THE ENVIRONMENTAL AND CONSERVATION FIELD**

Although BIPOC-led organizations were awarded grants for a longer duration (the difference was one month), white-led organizations were awarded 75.8% more grants than BIPOC-led organizations. White-led organizations received 78.2% more grants at the \$25,000 level and received 75.4% more grants above the \$25,000 grant level than BIPOC-led organizations. The difference in the maximum grant amount received by white-led and BIPOC-led organizations is approximately \$11.2 million. (For information on how the funding gap was calculated, see “The Research” later in this report as well as Appendix A.)

Building on the discovery of this funding gap, the research team for this report set out to learn more about the work BIPOC-led organizations are doing in the environmental and conservation fields. Based on interviews of key BIPOC thought leaders in the field, the report looks at the issues identified by BIPOC-led organizations as most relevant or challenging to their work, the strategies used to address those issues, and the systemic change generated using those strategies. The report reviews (mis)alignment of those strategies with those primarily funded by major environmental funders. Finally, it examines measures used to track progress of mitigating climate change equitably and makes the case for the necessity of equity- and justice-oriented measures to completely understand impact. The report focuses on work in five domains: climate change mitigation, climate resilience, environmental justice, food systems, and conservation.

In addition to these key findings, the report also offers six implications for practice. This report will inform a curriculum for a learning journey for funders, contribute to the background for an interdependent and cross-movement convening of environmental grantmakers, and broadly provide evidence supportive of funding BIPOC-led climate organizations.

**Taken together, these findings and implications for practice represent a call to action for environmental philanthropy: make greater investments that are racially equitable and begin to close the \$2.7 billion funding gap.**

### HISTORY OF INDEEP

InDEEP is a professional development series that engages a network of foundation staff, including senior leaders, committed to integrating racial equity and social justice throughout their environmental philanthropy. InDEEP provides racial equity and social justice training on how to get started, shift the portfolio, build pathways for more equitable funding and leadership development, and cultivate a peer learning network.

A collaboration between [Keecha Harris and Associates, Inc](#) (KHA), and its nonprofit partner, the [Institute for Strategic and Equitable Development](#) (ISED), InDEEP is now in its third phase. The initiative has engaged foundation and nonprofit professionals through in-person events, webinars, and communities of practice. For a timeline of InDEEP’s inception and development, see Figure 2.



FIGURE 2. TIMELINE OF INDEEP’S INCEPTION AND DEVELOPMENT



## CLOSING THE GAP THEORY OF CHANGE

One of the streams of work that has emerged from InDEEP's third phase is Closing the Gap (CTG). This body of work is intended to engage as many partners as needed to expedite closing the \$2.7 billion gap in funding so that BIPOC-led organizations working on climate change in the environmental and conservation movement are equally supported as white-led climate organizations.

This work has been guided by a theory of change (see Figure 3). Building on experience from previous InDEEP phases, Closing the Gap amplifies how BIPOC-led strategies and organizations have created systemic change, highlights the imbalance in funding of these groups, and provides a space for ready environmental funders to change the way they see, value, and fund BIPOC-led groups. InDEEP's funder learning action community and the conducted research are two critical components intended to accelerate funder practices and action towards closing the \$2.7 billion funding gap between white-led organizations and BIPOC-led organizations to ensure BIPOC communities are fully resourced to mitigate climate change and its adverse effects.

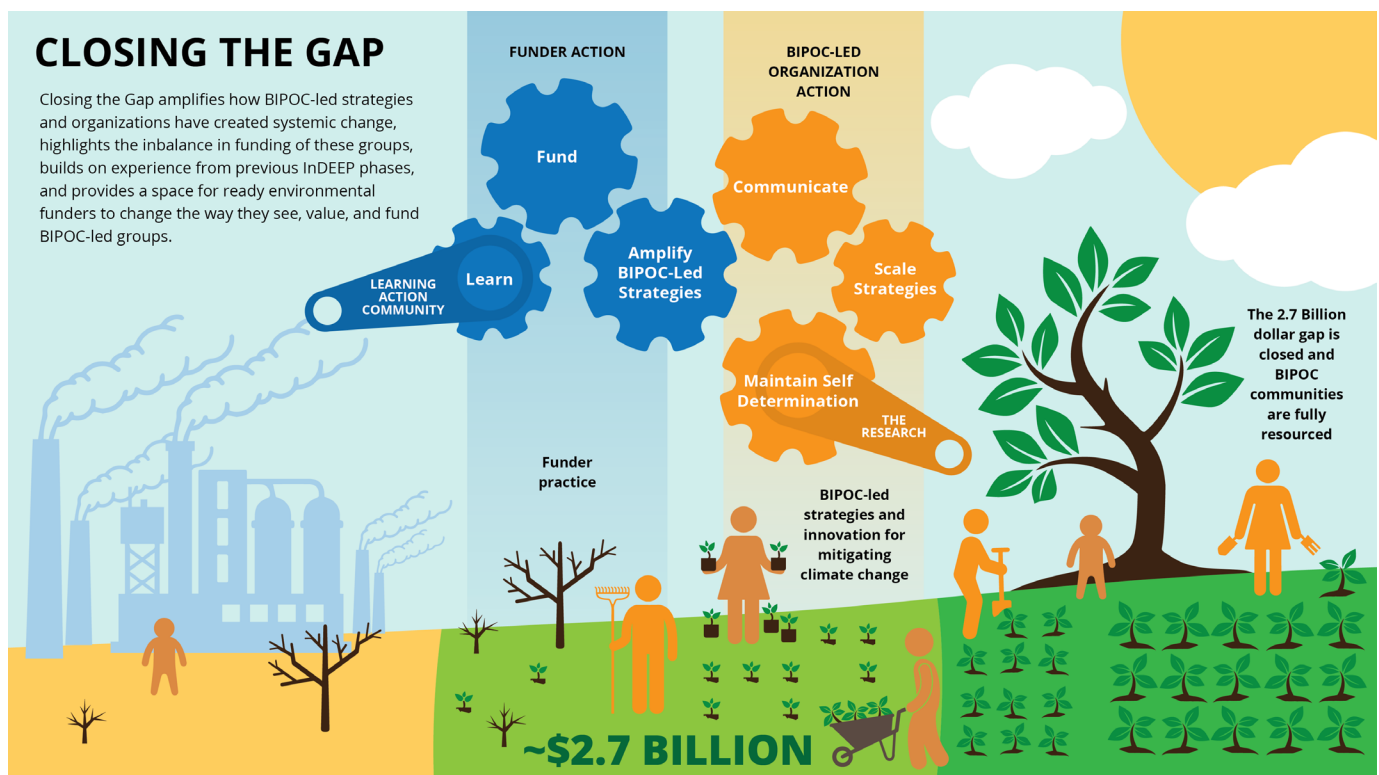


FIGURE 3. CLOSING THE GAP THEORY OF CHANGE

# Key Findings

The findings presented in this report were extrapolated from interviews conducted with BIPOC leaders, practitioners, activists, and scholars as well as funders. In addition, funder data from InDEEP's 2020 Fall Virtual Learning Series for environmental and conservation funders were included in the analysis. For more information on the report's methodology, see "The Research" later in the report.

The learning questions that guided this research focused on five domains related to the environmental and conservation field: climate change, climate resilience, environmental justice, food systems, and conservation. Interviewees were asked to consider: what strategies BIPOC-led climate organizations have used to impact issues in these domains; how they have generated systemic change in each of these domains; and what strategies they would pursue if they could count on substantial, multiyear funding. In addition, interviewees were asked about: what issue areas and strategies climate funders have supported in the past seven years; how climate funders find out about, vet, and onboard new grantee organizations; and what practices, policies, and priorities influence funding to BIPOC-led organizations. Finally, interviewees were asked to discuss the degree to which BIPOC-led organizations maintain self-determination and to identify equity- and justice-oriented indicators of progress. For a full list of the learning questions, see Appendix B.

Key findings presented in this section include the following:

- the focus of BIPOC-led work in the environmental and conservation field, including BIPOC-led organizations' impact and issues and their strategies for change;
- funder focus and engagement in the environmental and conservation field;
- the maintenance of self-determination by BIPOC leaders and BIPOC-led organizations; and
- equity- and justice-oriented indicators of progress, from the perspectives of BIPOC leaders and funders, respectively.

## **FOCUS OF BIPOC-LED WORK IN THE ENVIRONMENTAL AND CONSERVATION FIELD**

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Considerable attention was given in the interviews to BIPOC-led organizations' impact on issues related to climate change, climate resilience, environmental justice, food systems, and conservation. Interviewees also discussed BIPOC-led organizations' strategies for change and how those strategies are shaped by factors outside the organizations, including the level of funding these organizations do or do not receive.



## BIPOC-Led Organizations' Impact and Issues

### *Systemic Change*

BIPOC leaders and funders<sup>2</sup> were asked, in the U.S. context, how have BIPOC-led organizations generated systemic change in each of the five domains – climate change, climate resilience, environmental justice, food systems, and conservation. Members of each group expressed an overall appreciation for the ways in which BIPOC leaders have generated systemic change through massive community organizing, mobilization of communities through advocacy, and mass education of the issues to generate systemic change within policy, funder focus, community awareness, and personal sustainability efforts. BIPOC leaders were viewed as change agents for redefining what each of the movements mean and reimagining focus areas and strategies to address issues within each domain.

### *BIPOC Leaders and Conservation*

It was difficult for BIPOC leaders and funders to verbalize the ways BIPOC-led work has generated systemic change in the field of conservation. Many BIPOC leaders mentioned conservation as being the most discriminatory sector in the environmental field because of its white supremacist and colonial underpinnings, which have yet to be acknowledged and reckoned with. One BIPOC leader expressed her difficulty in figuring out ways BIPOC leaders have generated systemic change within conservation because of traditional views and characteristics of the field. An underlying sentiment from interviewed BIPOC leaders is that white people want to conserve what already is, whereas BIPOC communities need to restore what has been damaged and destroyed in order to preserve the natural habitat. This BIPOC leader said:

*“Unfortunately, [in the traditional sense] with conservation, you’re conserving something that’s still intact. With BIPOC communities, there’s not really much nature still intact to conserve. [Conservation in these communities] deals more with restoration or regenerating something like urban farms.... It would be like restoring or making something regenerative that was a vacant lot before. You’re not conserving very much [based on] the ideas traditional conservation means, which means efforts have something natural with value. Thus, we’re going to conserve it. It still provides us benefits.” —BIPOC LEADER*

The same BIPOC leader provided the following example:

*“BIPOC organizations [working in conservation] mostly focus on how the environment and humans interact and how the environmental degradation has impacted people, BIPOC people – because BIPOC people usually live in urban centers and less so in rural areas or in undeveloped areas where nature still exists.” —BIPOC LEADER*

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<sup>2</sup>Two funders were interviewed as part of the Closing the Gap research. For more information on interviewees, see “The Research” (below).

Another BIPOC leader said, “BIPOC leaders and communities practice conservation by preserving, reserving, and protecting history and culture and restoring historical property (accruing land and buying land to put green spaces), gardens, etc.”

In recognition of the ways BIPOC-led work engages with conservation, one BIPOC leader challenged and raised the discrepancy in the willingness of funders to view and fund the preservation of Black culture and history with the same vigor used to preserve symbols of white supremacy in traditional conservation efforts. This leader provided the following example:

*“We were having a budget call a few weeks ago, and one of our partners ... said, ‘We want to allocate an additional \$2 million to preserving the battlegrounds.’ I said, ‘Well, they’re already getting \$2 million. What about preserving some of the African burial grounds that we are uncovering now, especially if those battlefields were used to fight to keep slavery in place?’ That created an uproar. Of course, what we often hear, ‘Well, now is not the time. We can talk about that offline.’ I’m like, ‘We can’t keep pushing that away. The window’s going to be the time. While you’re allocating \$2 million to a battleground, do we really, really need to preserve those Confederate battlegrounds? [Our BIPOC] communities have history. [Our BIPOC] cultures need to be preserved. [BIPOC communities] have generations that have lived in these communities.” —BIPOC LEADER*

### **Devastating Impacts**

BIPOC leaders and funders viewed the role of BIPOC-led priorities as being characterized by a commitment to offsetting the devastating impacts climate change and environmental issues have on BIPOC communities and to ensuring BIPOC futures within climate, environment, food systems, and conservation. One BIPOC leader mentioned the importance of BIPOC leadership in food systems to preserve cultural diets:

*“Climate change is changing how we can grow food, where we can grow, and the habitats that will be sacrificed in the changing landscape of food production. If you’re [a BIPOC person] living in the country that’s dealing with climate change and loss of traditional farm lands, and it’s really focused on global markets or selling to the U.S. and Western Europe or just a dominant white society..., you [BIPOC person] are going to end up in a situation where you live in the country and 90% of the food is grown in a warehouse. And most of their [white-dominant] green section is kale. There’s no collard greens [cultural food] there. [This preservation of cultural foods and diet is sparking practices of] seed saving and seed archives. I don’t know anything about that world. I was just listening to this knowledge sweeping over me. People are saving and archiving seeds for the future so that certain kinds of plants can exist in our [BIPOC communities]’ future.” —BIPOC LEADER*

The following quote is an example of the critical role BIPOC leaders assume in leading community-centered efforts and making information and campaigns involving climate change, climate resilience, environmental justice, and food systems more accessible and sustainable:

*“A lot of people do education, do organizing, and that sort of thing. But the community science in participatory research is really important because that is one of the ways that we make sure that we’re working hand in hand with community residents, with the residents who we serve. We co-design research initiatives. Community members are collecting data about different environmental challenges and the environmental conditions in our communities.”* —BIPOC LEADER

Ultimately, the shifting and combating of negative narratives of BIPOC communities’ disinterest in the environment was seen as extremely important to alleviating disparate climate, environmental, and conservation outcomes facing BIPOC communities. The observed lack of representation and amplification of BIPOC leadership and expertise in the field is tied to the white supremacist belief that BIPOC leaders and communities do not care about the environment. One BIPOC leader described an example of how the representation and the work led by BIPOC leaders in climate change, climate resilience, environmental justice, food systems, and conservation creates opportunities to directly protest this erasure of BIPOC communities from the field:

*“There’s this narrative that Black people don’t care about the environment. I remember when I started a Black global organization with some of my closest friends back in 2003. There was a white woman who remains a good friend of mine who said, ‘Black people don’t care about the environment.’ And I said, ‘How could you say something that stupid?’ And she said, ‘Because you all haven’t published anything.’”* —BIPOC LEADER

### ***Pivotal Influences on Climate Change, Climate Resilience, Environmental Justice, Food Systems, and Conservation***

Interviewees were asked, “What issues does your organization or you, if a researcher, see as pivotal to positively influencing climate change, climate resilience, environmental justice, food systems, and conservation?” Within each of these domains, mass education to promote individual sustainable habits and reframing of the ways in which BIPOC relate within each of these areas emerged as pivotal to accelerating change and sustainability.

**Climate change.** The top themes identified by BIPOC-led organizations as positively influencing efforts to mitigate climate change were:

- education;
- youth engagement; and
- accelerating racial equity in the sector.

Quotes that reflect these themes include the following:

*“We also try to lift up and be intentional about how we are lifting up young people of color in the conversation around climate change and their leadership.” —BIPOC LEADER*

*“[Before being onboarded as new executive director,] I said to them we have to be really committed to the intersection of racial justice and climate justice and open ourselves to redefining our sense of what it means to fight for climate justice. And the articulation of that is going to have to kind of come from BIPOC constituencies [in the local area]. They decided to hire me, and in order to make their determination of who to hire, they created a BIPOC caucus before I came in composed of BIPOC folks on staff and on the board. We have continued that BIPOC caucus and facilitated the evolution of the organization so that now our board is about 65% BIPOC and our staff is almost 50% BIPOC; if I include contractors, we’re about 60% BIPOC. So one, racial justice, isn’t a numbers game. Racial justice is a values orientation.” —BIPOC LEADER*

BIPOC leaders reported the leading topic as focusing on empowering communities to take individual action to mitigate climate change through mass education around the issues facing their communities. Connecting the extractive nature of white-led “Big Green” groups and its effects on BIPOC leaders and BIPOC communities to the sector’s and industries’ practices of extracting natural resources was viewed as another element of education needed. Additional identified focus areas to positively improve climate change were:

- amplification and centering of BIPOC lived experiences;
- creation of legislation supportive of reducing barriers faced by rural farmers;
- cross-movement engagement/intersectionality;
- support, elevation, and building of leadership of Indigenous women and youth;
- civic engagement;
- weatherizing homes in communities most impacted by climate change;
- improvement of air quality;
- reduction of noise pollution;
- effective waste management; and
- de-privatization of land and resources.

The following are examples provided by BIPOC leaders as areas of concern threatening the mitigation of climate change:

- desecration of ecological systems; and
- extractive nature of Big Greens

**Climate resilience.** The top themes identified by BIPOC-led organizations as positively influencing climate resilience were:

- personal preparedness;
- civic education;
- regulation of industries and multinational corporations; and
- empowerment of communities to understand, decide, and act on priorities.

Quotes that reflect these themes include the following:

*“Maybe the flip side to that, rather than just like, ‘What do I want to end?’ But ‘What do I want to build?’ It just kind of deepens democracy, beyond electoral democracy, but just greater ability for people to make collective decisions about where they live and like the world that we share.” —BIPOC LEADER*

*“Ensuring that the people in the communities and the resident leaders for those communities are not just consulted in decision-making but have positions of leadership in the decision-making of what climate resilience may mean or not mean to their community and neighborhood.” —BIPOC LEADER*

Across the issues of climate change and climate resilience, BIPOC leaders reported focusing on empowering communities to take individual actions to improve climate resilience through mass education of the issues facing their communities. Personal preparedness is the leading emergent theme and references the personal actions made in everyday life that contribute to improving a community’s ability to anticipate, prepare for, and respond to climate-related events. One leader said:

*“For our new campus, which is going to be net-zero positive energy, we are taking into consideration the landscape around us, the history of that land as well, and making sure that we’re building a building that is part of nature and kind of blends into the environment in such a way that we will hopefully be able to adapt to any sort of massive climate change.” —BIPOC LEADER*

Other focus areas mentioned to increase climate resilience in communities were:

- creation of local, communal mutual aid networks;
- decentralization of food production systems;
- implementation of eco-friendly urban planning;
- integration of a racial justice lens in strategies, policies, and procedures;
- creation of strategies that integrate and address “intersectional pain points;”
- integration and utilization of Indigenous sciences into Western science; and
- improvement of natural resources management.

**Environmental justice.** The top themes identified by BIPOC-led organizations as positively influencing environmental justice were:

- education;
- community capacity building; and
- codified environmental justice in governmental agencies.

A quote that reflects these themes is:

*“There’s a lot of focus in environmental justice conversations about capacity building in communities. And what we’re trying to get out is giving communities the ability to self-identify issues or to learn how to organize around them, put campaign plans together, find out who the decision-maker is, and pressure that decision-maker to do something. And so I think more funding around that that’s less explicitly tied to some funder’s goals. I think that would be really helpful. People want us to make progress on clean energy. But if the community comes to me and tells me what they really want to do is fight this intersection coming into their community, I should be able to support that. I should be able to pivot and support them organizing around that self-identified environmental issue.”* —BIPOC LEADER

The areas of focus for positively improving environmental justice addressed disparities in accessible knowledge about whom to engage with in local governments to address environmental concerns and how to engage with local officials to address concerns. Many of the BIPOC leaders expressed the need for mass education in civics to empower communities to engage in their local civic duties to advocate on behalf of their communities. Other mentioned areas of focus to positively improve environmental justice were:

- recognition and utilization of Black and Indigenous ancestral knowledge of land stewardship;
- provision of reparations to historically marginalized and impacted communities;
- redistribution of wealth and power to frontline communities;
- creation of green spaces in urban areas;
- creation of access to alternative, communal energy sources;
- coordination and development of statewide collaborative to advance environmental justice;
- empowerment of women of color in STEM; and
- de-privatization of land and resources.

**Food systems.** The top themes identified by BIPOC-led organizations as positively influencing food systems were:



- education and awareness;
- decentralization of food systems and increased access to food systems;
- legislation improving the implementation and operation of food systems;
- removal of the stigma associated in the relationship between the land and legacy of slavery;
- elimination of food deserts; and
- corporate and social accountability and responsibility.

Quotes that reflect these themes include the following:

*“I had mentioned the integration of Indigenous and Western science, but before I think we’ve been doing all of that, it needs to be some serious education that needs to take place. And it can’t always rest on our [Indigenous peoples] backs. And so there needs to be an interest to learn and to relinquish power, control, and resources from all stakeholders. Because it’s not just the corporation say, or it’s not just the development company, it’s not just like Tyson Food that’s the issue. It’s the bank that’s financing them. It’s the private seller who’s selling that land to them.” —BIPOC LEADER*

*“Big ag controls most of the food system, and we’re trapped in a cycle of high chemical inputs, which degrades the soil, which means you need more chemicals, which degrades the soil. Decentralizing means helping people grow food in pots in the kitchen if they don’t have a backyard, urban gardens, community gardens. We have to figure out how to get food that doesn’t transport so much and cut down on chemicals, energy used for refrigeration.” —BIPOC LEADER*

When considering areas of focus for improving food systems, education was the leading emergent theme. As with the other domains, BIPOC leaders expressed the need for mass education. Leaders felt communities need to be aware and reminded of the historic, intimate relationship between BIPOC communities and the environment to shift perceptions that hinder progress toward equity within food systems. The improvement of food systems characterized the de-privatization of the industry to increase access to high-quality food and move the needle toward the attainment of food justice that ensures the livelihood and survival of BIPOC communities.

Three BIPOC leaders referenced the negative impact the legacy of U.S. slavery and sharecropping “to grow food for white people and build wealth for white people” has had on the Black community’s connections to food systems and land. One BIPOC leader credited the food justice movement led by BIPOC leaders to healing the violent history involving Black bodies and agriculture:

*“A generation ago, you would hear ‘I don’t want to be a farmer. I don’t want to be on the land.’ And we’re really working on having more and more African Americans who come*

*from a tradition of having farming in their family lineage to educate up the existing generations of Black folks to get back on the land and to recognize that we have to have land and grow our own food and grow our own medicines in order to begin to restore our own culture. So food justice is a way of saying Black life is here to stay in the United States of America. So this is really important work to do.” —BIPOC LEADER*

Additionally, other issues – including education about how to grow food, regenerative agriculture and permaculture practices, nutrition, and increasing capacity (e.g., knowledge, skills, and resources) for job creation of a BIPOC workforce within food systems – were raised as sub-focus areas within education to improve food systems. One BIPOC leader mentioned the connection between resolving issues in food systems with an economic lens by saying, “We’re talking about access to education that creates jobs within food sectors, whether that’s in distribution, consumer food business, or home base but all the different things.”

**Conservation.** The top themes identified by BIPOC-led organizations as positively influencing conservation were:

- education;
- increased BIPOC presence in green, open spaces; and
- acknowledgment and centering of Indigenous people’s leadership regarding the determination of successful land management techniques.

Quotes that reflect these themes include the following:

*“I think...there’s a conservation issue around the access to green spaces and access to outdoor recreation. And that’s a racism issue that we see in national parks where people of color have been berated or seen as not welcome. And so I do want to make that point around conservation and who are we conserving for and how are we...allowing access so that people feel public spaces belong to them just as much as they do anybody else.”*

—BIPOC LEADER

*“I’ve been in conversation with native groups to lead with a co-management lens. It centers native people’s leadership in being a large determining factor of what successful land management looks like. Forests under native management are our best forests – more successful than the Forest Service. The most important thing we can do is authorize these native people to manage the land.” —BIPOC LEADER*

Referencing BIPOC leaders’ experience with the exclusive, discriminatory nature of traditional conservation, many of the focus areas to improve the field were centered on amplifying the representation, leadership, and visibility of BIPOC communities. BIPOC leaders mentioned the following as additional areas of focus:

- development of a pipeline for BIPOC leaders to pursue careers in conservation;
- elimination of fracking and extraction operations on federally protected lands;
- promotion of conservation policy;
- reduction of waste; and
- leasing back land to Indigenous communities.

Additionally, BIPOC leaders provided the following examples of current practices to avoid:

- overdevelopment in city planning and
- underinvestment in communities of color based on the condition of the community's environment.

### **BIPOC-Led Organizations' Strategies for Change**

To address the above issue areas, BIPOC-led organizations develop strategies for change. Factors outside the organizations – from specific, place-based needs of impacted BIPOC communities to the lack of substantial, multiyear funding from philanthropic organizations – have a direct impact on choices BIPOC-led organizations can make as they seek to address climate change, climate resilience, environmental justice, food systems, and conservation issues.

#### ***BIPOC-Led Strategies Used to Positively Impact Climate Change, Climate Resilience, Environmental Justice, Food Systems, and Conservation Issues***

BIPOC leaders were asked “What strategies does your organization employ to impact issues to positively influence efforts to mitigate climate change, climate resilience, environmental justice, food systems, and conservation?” Employed strategies are not reported by domain. Participants frequently provided strategies in a general sense that can be applicable to each domain. Overall, each strategy is rooted in empowering communities to be their own change agents and advocate for their environmental needs. The strategies BIPOC-led organizations are employing to influence change in the five domains were:

- education, advocacy, and awareness;
- research and evaluation;
- partnerships and collaborations;
- capacity building;
- eco-friendly urban planning and development; and
- economic development.

Education, advocacy, and awareness emerged as the most salient method to create change. Interviewees provided examples within this category that involved the following:

increasing foundational knowledge of personal sustainability habits (e.g., how to grow food in a continuously changing climate); raising awareness and creating tailored education programs to mitigate environmental issues faced by communities; and mobilizing communities, leaders, and governments to address environmental issues.

Research and evaluation emerged as the second largest method employed to positively impact environmental issues. As one BIPOC leader mentioned, BIPOC leaders have helped drive systemic change by leading research in their communities to help quantify the experiences with issues faced by BIPOC communities as they relate to climate change, climate resilience, environmental justice, food systems, and conservation. Engaging in “community science” in a participatory manner emerged as a leading research and evaluation strategy to empower and autonomize communities. One leader said:

*“Community science in participatory research is really important because that is one of the ways that we make sure that we’re working hand in hand with community residents. We co-design research initiatives with community members who are collecting data about different environmental challenges and the environmental conditions in our communities.”* —BIPOC LEADER

Leading the work in a participatory manner is viewed as critical because it approaches the work from an asset-based lens versus one rooted in deficiencies. One BIPOC leader mentioned preferring to engage in participatory research because it acknowledges the expertise of the community and extends trust to and shares power with community members to identify their own priorities. One BIPOC leader said:

*“We [practitioners] know that the residents of our communities are the ones who have local knowledge and lived experience that can help us to shape the questions that we are pursuing. But they also are key to implementing the solutions and in so many different instances. People come in, whether it be governments or other entities, and they want to solve the problems so to speak. But they want to do it on their own and in their way. They [practitioners] might sort of just let the community know what this is [engagement or project in community], what we’re [practitioners] doing. Do you have any thoughts about this? Do you have any feedback? But it’s not a genuine kind of approach to engaging the community.”* —BIPOC LEADER

Within this category, interviewees mentioned the following as the least frequently employed strategies: conservation of culture through the preservation of traditional diets; community-building methods; use of media communications to make information accessible; grant-making; and regenerative agricultural practices.

### ***Factors Influencing BIPOC-Led Prioritized Strategies***

BIPOC leaders were asked, “What factors influence how your organization [or you] prioritize[s] its strategies?” The specific, place-based needs of impacted BIPOC communities

emerged as the most significant factor. Throughout the interviews, BIPOC leaders' reflections on the looming devastation of BIPOC communities by environmental issues and the complicity of philanthropy in operating in a non-intersectional manner were implicitly referenced as the motivating forces for the development of BIPOC-led organizations' missions, visions, goals, and targeted beneficiaries of the work. Within this question, the challenge emerged of prioritizing holistic, timely, and sustainable strategies because of organizational capacity tied to underfunding. Referencing the influence of substantial financial support on priorities, one BIPOC leader mentioned,

*"There's a lot of funders and people talking about DEI. But when it comes to moving money, it just is not happening. And remaining with that funding, remaining trendy, because funders are very trendy. They're like, 'Oh, well, this is the thing now.' We got a lot of funding last year and a lot of interest last year but just curious if that will trickle away. We've already seen it trickle away. Funding is huge [in prioritizing strategies]."* —BIPOC LEADER

### ***Funding Impact on Strategy Choice***

BIPOC leaders provided examples of strategies that their BIPOC-led organizations would pursue if they could count on substantial, multiyear funding. BIPOC leaders defined receiving a median of \$600,000 as substantial funding. When asked to define multiyear funding in terms of conditions, the defining characteristics of ideal multiyear funding provided by BIPOC leaders were grants with no restrictions and flexibility to be used at will to build organizational autonomy and capacity to respond to current events impacting beneficiaries. Multiyear funding was most frequently cited as receiving between \$150,000 to \$3.5 million annually for three to seven years.

BIPOC leaders believe, as one leader said, that "funders need to have more flexibility and give people room to fail and invest more as people learn from their failure. We need funders to commit to fund us [BIPOC leaders] and [our] ecosystem at the rate of tens of millions of dollars."

Additionally, BIPOC leaders desire minimal grant requirements as experienced with funding awarded for COVID-19. A BIPOC leader mentioned, "the conditions [should] be similar to all these foundations who under COVID were like, 'Oh, we don't need reports. We can do a phone call.' Yeah. So less reports and less proposals.... Yeah. Now that I know what's possible, I have to.... I always thought these rules around funding were IRS-related or tax-related. But last year, people were like, 'Oh, we can get you your money in a week.' I'm like, 'Wait. What? You never said you could do that.'"

The strategies BIPOC leaders would pursue with substantial unrestricted, flexible, multiyear funding were as follows:

- expand work, programs, impact, and capacity;
- focus on producing research, publications, and reports;
- increase sustainability of partnerships;
- implement a nontraditional organizational structure;
- focus less on how to finance the work;
- meet communications and marketing needs;
- address emotional labor faced by BIPOC leaders; and
- create green jobs.

Quotes that reflect these strategies include the following:

*“[Without substantial funding,] the thing that gets cut out is research. A lot of orgs are not doing that because they don’t have the staffing to do it. But should we have funding specific to support our leveraging and data and research strategy, we would hire a research and data analyst. We might commission our own studies.”* —BIPOC LEADER

*“And so with more money, more things that, I can’t tell you how it would change, I mean, I guess I could, I envision more employees. I envision more people doing more things. I envision an organization structure that is not traditional. I envision the way that we make money not being traditional, not based off of consumerism, not based off of capitalism, not based off of individualism. It’s a new systemic way of doing business. That’s what I envision. I certainly believe that we have a component of reparations in it. And a component of philanthropy in it that gives money back to the people I’m intending on serving.”* —BIPOC LEADER

The most frequently cited thematic examples of strategies BIPOC leaders would pursue with substantial unrestricted, flexible, multiyear funding were: 1) expanding and scaling up organizational work, programs, impact, and capacity and 2) producing research, publications, and reports. One BIPOC leader said:

*“So to have multiyear secured funding would allow us...and substantial, I would say, would be anything from \$250K and above...would really give us the green light to go ahead and hire more staff, hire the local contractors, and really create this new campus while ensuring that our teachers and our other staff members are being properly trained and prepared for this massive transition as well.”* —BIPOC LEADER

## **FUNDER FOCUS IN THE ENVIRONMENTAL FIELD**

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The data presented in this section are a combination of data from the interviews with BIPOC leaders and funders and from InDEEP’s 2020 Fall Virtual Learning Series (VLS). The VLS explored opportunities, challenges, and best practices to educate environmental



and conservation funders on the state of the field as related to BIPOC leaders, BIPOC-led organizations, and BIPOC communities.

### **Funder Focus on Issues and Strategies**

Both sets of data reveal that BIPOC leaders and funders view the issues of upholding status quo philanthropy, investing in and appeasing whiteness in the sector, and prioritizing Big Green groups as the priorities for funder focus. Status quo philanthropy was defined by one funder as “[a version of] philanthropy [that] tends to be investing in white-led, already well-funded organizations, places in spaces, whether that’s white leadership working in communities of color on behalf of communities of color. Yeah. And a lot of underinvesting in BIPOC leadership.” In both sets of data, the lack of an intersectional lens through which to look at environmental and conservation movements emerged as a significant funder blind spot hindering the achievement of environmental justice.

### ***BIPOC Leaders’ Perceptions of Funder Focus***

BIPOC leaders perceived climate funders to be the most focused on Big Green (white-led) environmental groups, “white experimentation,” and carbon emissions over the past seven years. The least perceived prioritized areas of funder focus mentioned were:

- water access and justice;
- organizational development and strategic succession planning;
- intersectional work;
- land protections;
- green building/infrastructure;
- prevention of fracking;
- environmental work with a social work/social justice lens;
- creating green spaces/green belts;
- climate crisis strategic communications and research;
- civic engagement;
- agriculture;
- affordable housing; and
- advocacy.

Although these areas are perceived to be the least prioritized by funders, they are extremely important to BIPOC leaders and the work they lead in their communities to offset devastating impacts. It should be noted that the issue areas that BIPOC leaders perceived to be the most prioritized by funders are the least prioritized in their own work. For example, the archaic concept and narrative of climate change privileging the

environment over people is not comprehensible, cohesive, and relevant as a working definition for BIPOC leaders and communities. One BIPOC leader mentioned the inclusion of humanity and lived experiences with climate change narratives as pivotal and more effective in sustaining the movement. One BIPOC leader said:

*“I think it is critical for people to understand the impact of climate change on themselves. And that they don’t think about polar bears or trees when they think about climate and environmental protection. I know, when I was younger, the polar bear thing was big. ‘The polar is going to disappear.’ I mean, who cares? Let’s be real. Have you seen a polar bear? No, nobody cares. And that was a battle that we had to fight. We lost so much time because of that. Because people did not understand how environmental threats, how climate change was going to impact them. And so when people start to understand climate as an issue that’s going to disrupt their lives, it’s going to disrupt where you get your food from and how reliable. It’s going to disrupt your water sources. People who are telling stories about the impact of climate on them do a lot more to move public opinion than any advertisement about protecting polar bears. So let’s stop ranting about polar bears.” —BIPOC LEADER*

In a similar fashion, when referencing the second highest perceived funder focus issue area – marine conservation and ecological preservation – one BIPOC leader said:

*“Not to say conservation and ecology is not important, but people are dying. There is heat exhaustion, the pandemic, and other things we wouldn’t associate with climate change. [Not to mention] there [are] lots of urban heat events that are taxing to people facing homelessness.” —BIPOC LEADER*

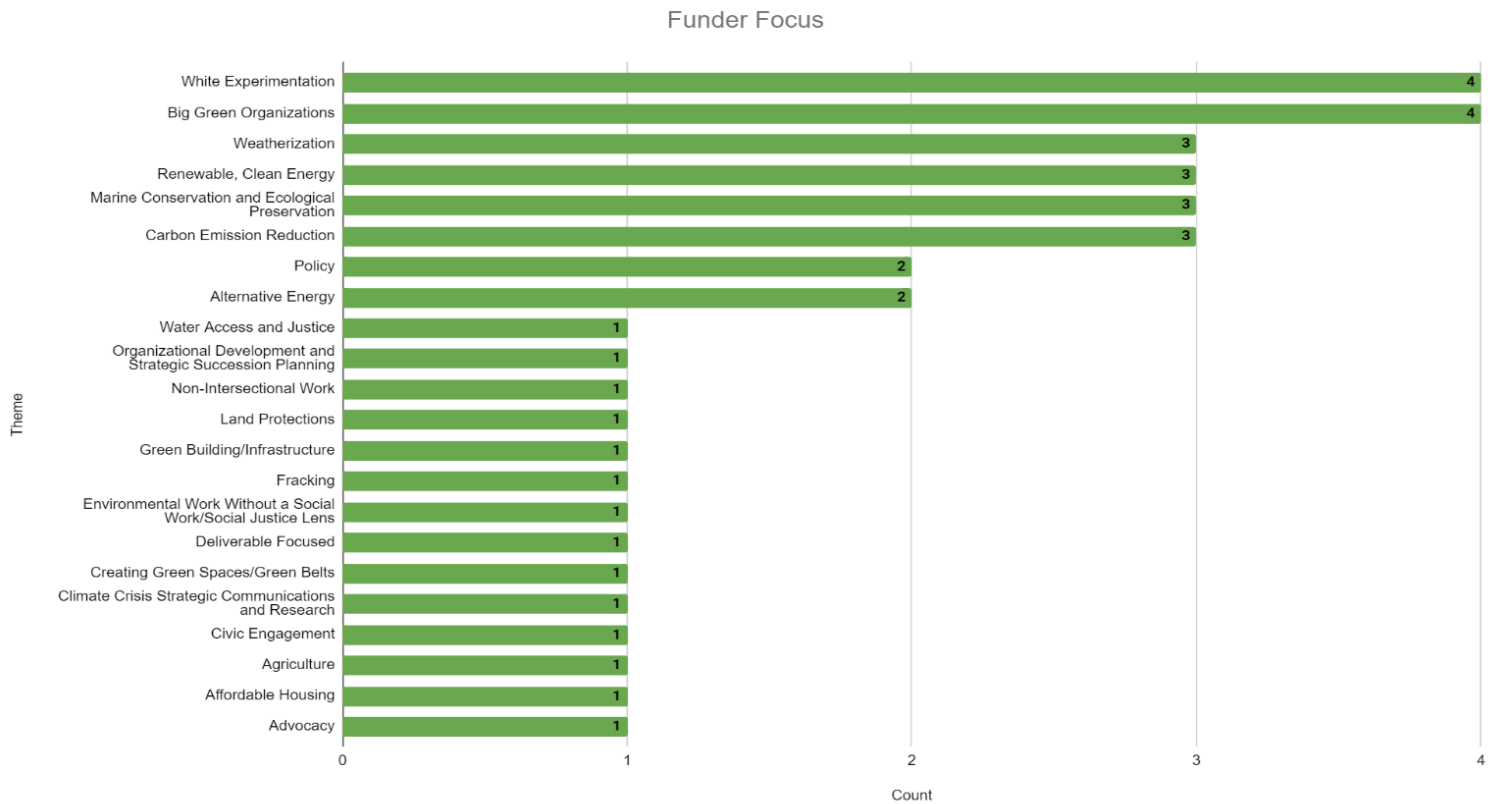
The focus on Big Green groups is perceived to be extremely problematic and a force perpetuating the cyclical exploitative nature of and distrust in philanthropy as it highlights funders’ lack of prioritization of relationship building with BIPOC leaders and communities. In reference to the overutilization of Big Green groups, one BIPOC leader mentioned the following:

*“So you have some foundations that are out there, and they’re learning from their other Black-led or historically disinvested communities of color-led grantees. But most of them are learning about it from other white folks. I mean, they’re learning from the Big Greens, they’re learning from the people who they’re in communication with. And that’s problematic in itself because they’re giving them a lot of power to decide who should get funded in the Black community and who should not. But you do have some foundations that are going beyond the call of duty. But a lot of it still is relational. And because these funders are not out there in the field or in the community or taking the initiative to get to know these frontline organizations, they’re depending upon the Big Greens to tell them who are the best people to find and that are doing the work. When the Big Greens are the ones that are exploiting these people, it’s crazy.” —BIPOC LEADER*

White experimentation emerged as another problematic perceived funder focus area widening the gap and barriers to BIPOC-led innovation and thought leadership in the sector. One BIPOC leader said:

*“I think it’s been a lot of white experimentation. I think funders are very eager to fund things that they see as innovative, which I think is defined in a very white way. Instead of funding the people who have the lived experience, who have been living in the communities, they’re like, ‘Oh, we’ll fund this clean tech dude.’ It’s been also, I think, very individual. Not individual in the money’s going to one person, but it’s like a particular influencer with an organization. I think they’ve been funding a lot of white individual innovative work. Innovative isn’t actually what I would use, but it’s a word that’s coming to mind.” —BIPOC LEADER*

Figure 4 presents BIPOC leaders’ perceptions of funder focus over the past seven years.



**FIGURE 4. BIPOC LEADERS’ PERCEPTIONS OF FUNDER FOCUS**

### **Funders' Perception of Funder Focus**

Interviewed funders were asked about the issue areas and strategies they have prioritized (bolded items represent the issue areas and strategies funders anticipate prioritizing over the next five years):

- incorporating a racial equity justice framework;
- changing narratives, creative inclusive space within grantmaking;
- revising regional grantmaking strategies;
- adopting systems change approach within grantmaking; and
- investing more funds in community-driven programs.

Quotes that reflect these issue areas and strategies included:

*"I'm excited about that, because what I learned is a lot of times BIPOC-led organizations don't identify as environmental organizations. That's okay. They just have elements of environmental work. We still want to be able to support that." —FUNDER*

*"Well, I'll have a new strategy for one, a new grantmaking strategy. Recruiting new grantees that really reflect the full scope of conservation, environmental, and environmental justice work. I think that it will be a balance between white-led organizations and BIPOC-led organizations. I currently have no BIPOC-led organizations in my grant program. They're all white-led organizations. That is like something that's really important." —FUNDER*

Although BIPOC leaders perceived funders to focus less on water as a topical area in Figure 4 (above) when asked "What percentage of their dollars do funders anticipate being available to new organizations?," one funder responded:

*"I mean, one of the things that we're really learning, through just talking to a lot of organizations, is that water is really important. Maybe a very significant investment needs to go toward organizations that are working on water. Some organizations are working on it from an equity perspective, from an affordability perspective, but also a quality. That's also aligned with some state priorities but also federal priorities, which is driving the work on the ground." —FUNDER*

### **Funder Engagement**

In addition to focusing on specific issues (as noted above), funders are also to greater – or lesser – degrees engaged with the work of BIPOC-led organizations. The recent momentum of the movement work for Black lives seems to have accelerated funder interest in BIPOC-led organizations. Interviewees identified funder practices that enable funding to BIPOC-led organizations and that deter funding to these organizations. Interviewees also noted the

ways in which funders are improving and can continue to improve their communication with BIPOC-led organizations.

### ***Funder Practices, Policies, and Priorities Influencing Funding to BIPOC-led Work***

Funders expressed similar concerns to a sentiment shared by an interviewed BIPOC leader in InDEEP's Fall Virtual Learning Series regarding the shifting of funding priorities to align, respond, and support movement work for Black lives. Consequently, the urgent response from funders to do so was perceived by this BIPOC leader as an act of "sensationalism" following the murder of George Floyd. One funder mentioned skepticism of the field's intention in increasing investments into BIPOC-led work by saying:

*"I think we're in a very unique moment for all the reasons that we know of what's been going down with the murders of Black people and corporations and philanthropy and everyone trying to say the right thing on paper and their statements and such, and there's some pots of money that are being moved around and developed for Black people right now. And it's still not enough. When you look at the historic underinvestment and disinvestment of our people in communities in our places and spaces, I'm grateful that people are jumping up to the task in this moment. But I'm also well aware of the capriciousness of philanthropy." —FUNDER*

Anchored in this sentiment of sensationalism, when asked "What practices, policies, and priorities are influencing funding to BIPOC-led organizations in climate change?," funders identified the increased focus on racial equity and justice attributed to the most recent demonstrations of anti-Blackness as the main influence of increased funding to BIPOC-led work.

The emerging practices, policies, and priorities influencing funding to BIPOC-led work were:

- increased focus on racial justice;
- increased BIPOC representation in leadership within the sector;
- misalignment between grassroots work and metrics for measuring return on investment (ROI);
- compensation of BIPOC organizations for their time; and
- increased interest in intersectional funding opportunities.

Quotes that illustrated these emerging practices, policies, and priorities included:

*"Folks are accountable to boards that tend to be corporate boards. Then the way we're thinking about evaluating our impact is our metrics that may not be aligned with the grass roots. They're corporate metrics, our return on investment. What's the ROI? What should we be expecting in one year with our \$50,000? How are they going to change the world with it? Just unreasonable expectations for often miniscule amounts of dollars that*

*folks end up taking a lot of credit for, even though they're not on the ground doing the work and not even funding the work to the extent that it needs to be resourced, especially if they're a foundation that has the ability to resource it at the need, that it needs to be resourced."* —FUNDER

*"We got to be talking about a regenerative economy and a reparative economy. And I'm thinking about land and jobs and food and water. And originally we were again doing energy and funding BIPOC leadership at 40-something percent. And now we have moved to upwards of 95 percent-plus of our resources move to the ground quickly to BIPOC and women of color-led leadership. So we have done a whole 180 with how we invest in a very small amount of time. And we're a different type of intermediary [funder] where we are accountable to the grass roots, but we're also an intermediary that wasn't birthed, and I hate to use that metaphor. I feel like it's not right to say but didn't stem from a foundation where a bunch of foundations put some money together and said, 'Let's create this intermediary to fund some of the stuff we want to fund.'" —FUNDER*

### ***Funder Policies and Practices Enabling Funding BIPOC-Led Work***

BIPOC leaders as well as funders were asked to identify the enabling strategies that support funding BIPOC-led work in the climate space. BIPOC leaders mentioned the following grantmaking enabling practices, policies, and strategies influencing funding to BIPOC-led work:

- collaborative working/funding models;
- funding for movement-building efforts;
- amplification of and more investment in BIPOC-led work;
- investment in the mental health of groups working on climate change by integrating a moment of pause and reflection into grants;
- funding for research that impacts policy;
- opportunities to engage in community-based work;
- multiyear grants;
- substantial general operating support grants;
- capacity building grants;
- opportunities to address environmental and climate issues from an intergenerational approach;
- streamlined grant application processes and practices; and
- facilitated outreach to BIPOC-led organizations working on the front lines.



BIPOC leaders as well as funders identified the increase in collaborative work/funding models among BIPOC grantees as an enabling factor. One funder expressed a sense of gratitude and appreciation for the coordination and collaboration seen within BIPOC-led work to organize around environmental and climate issues. The funder said:

*“I think a lot of them [BIPOC-led organizations] are more coordinated. They’re collaborating collectively. Issues are not neighborhood by neighborhood. I think that changes the conversation at least from a funder perspective. We’re always thinking ‘does that mean we have to support some things community by community, or can we do something regionally and statewide?’ What we know is, they’re collaborating. They’re learning. They’re organizing together. They’re even pulling funding together. I think that’s also something that’s very different and huge.” —FUNDER*

Data collected through the Fall 2020 Virtual Learning Series illustrated a number of existing practices, policies, and strategies employed by participating funders that enable funding to BIPOC leadership and BIPOC communities. Funders identified the following current grantmaking strategies and internal organizational change processes underway within their organizations to advance and center BIPOC-led efforts in the field:

- establishing, expanding, and utilizing networks for Black and Brown conservation professionals;
- establishing funding goals and priorities specific to BIPOC-led organizations and communities;
- prioritizing DEI efforts in strategic plans and action plans;
- collecting grantee demographic data;
- diversifying the demographics of final decision-makers within philanthropic organizations;
- supporting funding requests for DEI training for internal staff and grantees; and
- shifting to community-based decision-making.

A quote that illustrates these existing funder strategies to center BIPOC leadership and communities follows:

*“[We’ve] integrated DEI in hiring practices including recruiting via networks for Black and Brown conservation professionals; funded initiatives led by Black, Indigenous, and people of color; funded nonprofits with a mission or specific initiatives or programs focused on integrating diversity, equity, and inclusion into the conservation movement.” —FUNDER*

## ***Funder Policies and Practices Deterring Funding for BIPOC-Led Work***

BIPOC leaders as well as funders were asked to identify deterring funder practices, policies, and strategies for funding BIPOC-led climate organizations. These deterring funder practices, policies, and strategies included the following:

- perceptions of organizational capacity;
- funder inflexibility; and
- distrust.

Quotes illustrating these deterring funder practices, policies, and strategies included:

*“I feel a lot of funders want an oppression parade of how many poor Black people are you serving? They really want to dive into those numbers in a really gross way. If I was clear on what they wanted the information for and how they were going to use it, it would be different. But often, people just ask really flippantly, and it seems as if they want to use it in a report of their own, to use it on a brochure or something. So if I was clear on how the information is being used, I think that would be one step towards not feeling so icky. Yeah. I just don’t know, and it just feels like they’re just asking to make a brochure.”* —BIPOC LEADER

*“We had a training today with a bunch of other funders. We’re talking about racial equity, and I think we’re also addressing white supremacy that exists in philanthropy and how we exorcise that. A lot of times, we’re thinking about what type of barriers do we put on grantees. That’s a lot of times what we’ve heard from BIPOC-led organizations is like, ‘Just give us the money and trust us that we’ll be able to get the work done like you trusted these other organizations.’”* —FUNDER

Archived in historic InDEEP data, perceptions of organizational capacity, funder inflexibility, and distrust are reported as contributing factors to the observed disparities faced by BIPOC leaders and organizations in access to funding and other resources as well as relationship and partnership development. In InDEEP’s Fall Virtual Learning Series, BIPOC leaders shared feelings of distrust and hesitancy about believing and trusting that funders will provide flexible, unrestricted grants, funding for cross-movement work, and sustained investments in the success of their organizations. Quotes from archived data include:

*“I feel like it will be ridiculous for a company to have to pitch to 15 different investors and write 15 different annual reports. Why do we do that for organizations that are trying to change communities?”* —BIPOC LEADER

*“There’s no funding for capacity building for the infrastructure. So it’s like we’re receiving too little. And again, it’s only for very specific projects. It almost feels like we are being tested in terms of what is our real capacity, as opposed to really investing in helping us develop the possibilities.”* —BIPOC LEADER

Additionally, BIPOC leaders provided a substantial list of deterrents within communications and outreach (e.g., closed solicitation, micromanagement), sectoral culture (e.g., racism in philanthropy), grantmaking practices, and perceptions of organizational health (e.g., budget size, capacity, age of organization) that influence funding to BIPOC-led organizations. Issues regarding grantmaking practices and perceptions of organizational capacity and health are consistent with identified barriers to the amplification of BIPOC leadership within the field from interviewed BIPOC leaders in InDEEP's Fall Virtual Learning Series.

Current grantmaking practices defined by funder rigidity in application processes, use of coded language implying bias toward white-led organizations, and the overreliance on Big Green groups were the most frequently cited deterrents by BIPOC leaders within this category. Although communications and outreach were cited the least frequently, BIPOC leaders identified the funder practice of relying on Big Green groups' advice on "who" to fund and what to fund as a deterring factor in influencing the funding of BIPOC-led work.

### ***Funder Communication with BIPOC-Led Organizations***

When asked "How do they [funders] find out about, vet, and onboard new organizations into their portfolios?," BIPOC leaders noted that the recently observed attempt of funders to diversify their networks was seen as a positive enabling strategy. One BIPOC leader noted,

*"I think mostly it has been just trying to diversify their networks, whether that's sincere or it's just out of guilt, just wanting to have more people of color that they could say that they are actually funding people of color. Which I don't know. I don't know if funding organizations have always...I assume they've been keeping track of the diversity of people, but maybe they haven't, I don't know. But I think because diversity is becoming such an important part of everyone's work, I think that's how funding organizations have started to expand their networks and expand the groups that they're giving funding to."*

—BIPOC LEADER

Funders mentioned the following communications and outreach strategies to BIPOC-led organizations that positively influence funding toward their work:

- hiring and utilizing community organizers as staff members to understand and learn about BIPOC-led organizations working on the front lines;
- utilizing grantee networks to aid in organizational learning around BIPOC-led efforts;
- creating and utilizing a philanthropic trustee body consisting of practitioners in philanthropy and grantee organizations to improve strategies and investments; and
- utilizing personal networks to connect with leaders and up-and-coming BIPOC leaders in the field.

## BIPOC-LED ORGANIZATIONS' MAINTENANCE OF SELF-DETERMINATION

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The interviews with BIPOC leaders and with funders sought to answer if BIPOC-led climate movements maintained self-determination or if their missions and work adapted in response to funder priorities as opposed to needs identified by the organizations themselves.

### Funder Influence on BIPOC-Led Organizations' Self-Determination

Funders were asked, "Do you collaborate with grantees on determining appropriate measures for programming your organization is funding?" Both of the interviewed funders mentioned engaging with their grantees and having conversations about grant expectations and goals to ensure that they are attainable and sustainable. One funder mentioned the importance of understanding the long arc of change and trusting organizations as being the "best equipped to articulate what will happen in a year [with granted money] while also recognizing the mutual investment in sharing along with grantees and trusting their grantees' ability to articulate the incremental milestones that'll get them towards that longer-term goal."

In recognition of the power dynamic existing in the grantee-funder relationship, one funder mentioned having to extend grace and having to use language consistent with the grantee's organization to describe the work being done. The consistency in language was seen to not alter the grantee organization's strategies and was seen as allowing them to maintain a sense of self-determination. One funder said:

*"The other thing that I'm really good at is not saying that organizations are doing racial equity work if they say diversity, equity, and inclusion. I use the language that they use. I think that's really, really important. It's something I've had to work on because sometimes I'm like, 'Oh, they're doing racial equity work. Wait, they're not. They're just doing DEI work,' like really calling it out to what they're doing. I would say, like, using their language helps them stay accountable because then they don't feel pressure that the Foundation is making them do something that they're not ready to do." —FUNDER*

Funders were asked the following questions to measure the degree of funder influence on the actualization of self-determination among BIPOC leaders:

- How do you determine if your investment in programming is key to the grantee's mission?
- How do you detect if a grantee's mission and work are adapted in response to your priorities as opposed to needs identified by the grantee organization?

In response to the question asking how funders determine if investment in programming is key to the grantee's mission, one funder said:

*“You have to ask these simple questions: ‘Is the mission aligned to the program? Is the programming aligned to the problems you [funder] are trying to solve in the community? Why are you working on this particular issue? Why is this important? Who are you serving? What are you trying to address?’ Those are the conversations that I have during my field assessment, or site visit, to really understand if they [potential grantees] have the capacity to execute their mission or if their programming shifts [toward what is trendy].”*

—FUNDER

Within the response to this question, the funder answered the question of how funders detect shifts in a grantee’s priorities to accommodate funding priorities. The funder described the misalignment of a grantee organization’s mission in proposed programming:

*“These organizations that have very conservation-focused missions want to do EJ [environmental justice] work. I’m like, that is a big difference. That’s really different from your mission and programming. Do you have the capacity to do that?”* —FUNDER

### **Maintenance of Self-Determination by BIPOC Leaders and BIPOC-Led Organizations**

The answers to the question “Do BIPOC-led climate movements maintain self-determination?” were very nuanced. Some BIPOC leaders felt that BIPOC-led climate organizations maintain self-determination and are uncompromising to funder priorities (4 out of 11), but a majority (6 out of 11) felt that BIPOC leaders maintain an essence of self-determination while adapting to the “double-edged sword” of foundation priorities to receive funding. The quotes below describe the nuanced experiences of self-determination faced by BIPOC leaders and BIPOC-led organizations who are beholden to community and to survival in the nonprofit world:

*“I think underneath it all, it is super challenging to maintain 100% integrity in what you are doing as an organization when you’re first starting out as a nonprofit and not have that influence of funders eventually somewhere in the work that you do. That is the pressure. That is the double-edged sword of foundations still kind of holding all this pool of money, and we’re just asking for it. And so oftentimes, we don’t always have to, but we have to do something that appeases their donors, that appeases their board, or what their board or their donors think conservation or climate change or the solutions look like.”* —BIPOC LEADER

*“Even though it may be tempting sometimes to just go after the money, to chase after this or that...we just don’t have time for that. We’ve got to focus in and double down on our priorities and the needs of our communities. That’s why I do think that it’s so important that funders hear from the communities that they want to help and support because sometimes I think they’re off base in terms of some of their priorities meeting the true needs. I do think that BIPOC-led organizations maintain that self-determination, but*

*sometimes it's very tempting to stray away from that, just to keep resources in the door to be able to function.” —BIPOC LEADER*

One BIPOC leader did not feel that BIPOC-led organizations maintain self-determination because “[t]oo many BIPOC-led organizations began with co-opting. They did not begin with the idea of service to the community as shaped by those communities.”

## **EQUITY- AND JUSTICE-ORIENTED INDICATORS OF PROGRESS**

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A goal of this research is to augment the field by identifying a set of equity- and justice-oriented indicators of progress for climate change mitigation. The presented data highlight emergent themes of BIPOC leaders’ and funders’ measures and criteria for equity- and justice-oriented indicators of progress.

### **BIPOC Leaders’ Criteria for Equity- and Justice-Oriented Indicators of Progress**

BIPOC leaders were asked to provide the indicators used to describe their contributions to climate change mitigation and characteristics of equity- and justice-oriented indicators of progress indicative of the achievement of climate justice. Overall, BIPOC leaders described indicators associated with making equitable the sector, power, accountability, representation of BIPOC leadership, empowerment, and community.

When BIPOC leaders were asked what indicators BIPOC-led organizations are using to describe their contributions to climate change mitigation, the most frequently cited indicator was the achievement of programmatic objectives and impact goals. Additionally, BIPOC leaders described tracking their indicators of progress in terms of increasing levels of engagement with programmatic work; influencing the number of legislators and policymakers advocating for inclusive, positive climate efforts targeting and centering BIPOC communities and their lived experiences; increasing representation of the most vulnerable in decision-making; and utilizing strategic communications to shift the narrative that has disconnected BIPOC communities from the environment. Moreover, an underlying sentiment was that the most significant equity- and justice-oriented indicators of progress would be achieved once the “intersectional pain points” and gaps involving health, education, housing, and income start to close.

One BIPOC leader mentioned using climate finance practices and models to alleviate the social determinants of environmental impact in the following quote:

*“I think we really need to be talking about climate finance and how we can eliminate all of the racially connected problems that emanate [from] economic, environmental, social, health, and use those monies to address all of those things at the neighborhood level, at the regional level, at the state level. I mean, there’s trillions and trillions and trillions of dollars involved in energy retrofits, renewable energy, other economic pathways that can help correct the economic underpinning, right, of all of this. I think economics is the*



*core theme across all of this stuff that marginalized peoples are dealing with. We've got to tie this [climate work] to economic strategies. We [BIPOC communities] have got to tie it. Because there's trillions of dollars, and we [BIPOC communities] need to be in line to get some. Jobs and businesses, contracting, everything. And access to capital so we can participate."* —BIPOC LEADER

BIPOC leaders identified the following equity- and justice-oriented indicators of progress:

- closing of the funding, resource, and access gap between white communities and BIPOC communities;
- economic health;
- increased access, education, and empowerment for BIPOC communities;
- human health; and
- reduction in social unrest.

A quote that illustrates these indicators of progress is:

*"How many thriving-wage jobs or green business-related opportunities were created by a climate- or energy-related project? Is it generating economic development in a neighborhood suffering under disinvestment like the legacy of redlining?"* —BIPOC LEADER

BIPOC leaders identified the closing of the funding, resource, and access gap within BIPOC communities as the most tangible characteristic for equity- and justice-oriented indicators of progress. Additionally, BIPOC leaders noted the improvement of BIPOC communities' economic health as an indicator. Within the arena of improving the economic health of BIPOC communities, BIPOC leaders expressed the importance of adequately training and increasing capacity of BIPOC communities to integrate into the "green" job (environmental and climate) workforce. Other areas relating to equity- and justice-oriented indicators of progress mentioned by BIPOC leaders were:

- accountability for multi-corporation industries;
- amplification of BIPOC-led organizations in the field;
- legislation focused on issues plaguing frontline communities;
- indicators tracking at various levels of outcomes (community, individual, regional);
- strategic, inclusive, proactive, and accessible climate change preparedness plans;
- increase of BIPOC leaders in policy decision-making;
- reductions in emissions;
- redevelopment and improvement of BIPOC communities' built environment infrastructure to withstand extreme weather events; and
- redistribution of power that centers people and not corporate entities.

## Funders' Criteria for Equity- and Justice-Oriented Indicators of Progress

Within the data, an overarching sentiment shared by both BIPOC leaders and funders is that there needs to be a narrative shift in what climate change is and who it affects and a reimagining of who can be involved in positively influencing it and how nonconventional/nontraditional involvement, leadership, and strategies can contribute to climate change mitigation. Shifting the narrative to destabilize the conventional ideology of environment and conservation so as to privilege people over land and animals in conversations about climate change was seen as a huge indicator of success by one participating funder. Another funder mentioned the importance of shifting the narrative to center people and noted that localizing environmental issues and lived experiences with climate change will help reconnect people to the environment and promote a sense of personal accountability to mitigate climate change. The funder said:

*"I think when people hear about climate change, it seems so distant. People automatically think polar bears, Antarctica, right? Fires in California, that was climate change. All of the storms we keep seeing, that's climate change. Now how do you siphon that back to impact the people? People have to go somewhere and migrate somewhere. We know that the sea level is rising. I think that's going to be the indicator of like, we just need to shift the narrative. People need to understand that. They only understand that if it's like important to them." —FUNDER*

# Implications for Practice

The key findings of this report have implications for practice that are generally applicable to environmental and conservation funders. The following implications for practice are summarized in this section:

- Acknowledge race.
- Understand how climate change's human impacts vary by race.
- Expand understanding of issues and strategies that will work.
- Rethink relationships.
- Rethink funding practices.
- Rethink progress.

## ACKNOWLEDGE RACE

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Philanthropy's literal meaning is "love of mankind." Its definitions in the *Merriam-Webster* dictionary are: "goodwill to fellow members of the human race," "an act or gift done or made for humanitarian purposes," and "an organization distributing or supported by funds set aside for humanitarian purposes."<sup>3</sup> Philanthropic organizations seek to solve problems impacting humankind, but historically, philanthropy has attempted to resolve societal issues without much regard to how race impacts the severity of societal issues. While race is more of a construct than a scientific fact, in a U.S. context, it is almost impossible to divorce most societal ills from race.<sup>4</sup> Research has also shown that even when controlling for other factors like gender, geography, education, and socioeconomic standing, race is still a determinant of outcomes. A philanthropic organization cannot hope to address a societal ill without acknowledging the impact of race on the outcomes associated with that societal ill.

BIPOC leaders and funders all hesitated when asked to discuss impacts of organizations led by BIPOC people in the area of conservation. As one BIPOC leader noted, the "colonial underpinnings" of the field are very much still dominating funding culture as related to philanthropy's strategies, and these underpinnings cause funders to ignore the fact that

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<sup>3</sup> "Philanthropy," *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*, Merriam-Webster, accessed May 23, 2021, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/philanthropy>.

<sup>4</sup> According to Merriam-Webster, "This use of race dates to the late 18th century and was for many years applied in scientific fields such as physical anthropology, with race differentiation being based on such qualities as skin color, hair form, head shape, and particular sets of cranial dimensions. Advances in the field of genetics in the late 20th century determined no biological basis for races in this sense of the word, as all humans alive today share 99.99% of their genetic material. For this reason, the concept of distinct human races today has little scientific standing and is instead understood as primarily a sociological designation, identifying a group sharing some outward physical characteristics and some commonalities of culture and history." - "Race," *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*, Merriam-Webster, accessed May 23, 2021, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/race>.

conservation has traditionally been about preserving what still exists. Conversely, often in BIPOC communities the goal is to regenerate what has been damaged. If a philanthropic organization funds conservation, that organization must acknowledge the role of race in the history and current strategies of the field. If an organization truly seeks to support conservation as it has traditionally been defined – as natural resource management and protection – that organization must address the fullness of the natural resources, both those that currently exist and those that must be regenerated from years of degradation.

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## **UNDERSTAND HOW CLIMATE CHANGE'S HUMAN IMPACTS VARY BY RACE**

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The 2020 World Meteorological Organization's *State of the Global Climate Report*<sup>5</sup> reflects no positive change in climate change mitigation. Greenhouse gas concentrations continue to increase, global temperatures continue to increase, sea levels are rising at a higher rate, historical flooding is impacting large parts of Africa and Asia, and record numbers of major weather events are occurring. There are entire latitudes of the world that used to support human occupation that do not do so anymore. As a result, people, primarily BIPOC people, who live in warmer climates are moving to more habitable and workable areas, contributing to a growing population of climate refugees. As climate change increasingly contributes to ecological collapse and resource scarcity, BIPOC people face greater uncertainty in relocating and adapting.

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## **EXPAND UNDERSTANDING OF ISSUES AND STRATEGIES THAT WILL WORK**

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When asked about systemic change generated by BIPOC-led organizations, interviewees noted that BIPOC-led organizations have generated systemic change within policy, funder focus, community awareness, and personal sustainability efforts. The primary strategies used have been massive community organizing, mobilization of communities through advocacy, and mass education about issues. The list of issues and strategies noted to be pivotal to influencing climate change, climate resilience, environmental justice, food systems, and conservation is lengthy and populated by issues that span subject areas – cross-movement work. They are the issues that impact people's everyday lives. For instance, the strategy to implement alternative forms of energy in a BIPOC community could be simply selling the environmental impacts and the long-term cost savings. BIPOC-led groups would note that for the strategy to be successful, it needs to be more nuanced. Environmental impacts are a moonshot goal. How does use of alternative energy sources affect a person's daily life?

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<sup>5</sup>"The State of the Global Climate 2020," World Meteorological Organization, accessed August 17, 2021, <https://public.wmo.int/en/our-mandate/climate/wmo-statement-state-of-global-climate>.

## RETHINK RELATIONSHIPS

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Closed solicitations are a hallmark of some funder organizations. Interviewees – both BIPOC leaders and funders – noted how much of a deterrent that is to entry. Funders must continue to rethink how they build relationships with potential grantees and then how they use those relationships. A potential grantee with a relationship with a funder can enjoy a smoother entry into a funding relationship.

Personal and professional relationships carry an impact. Program officers with a variety of touchpoints with an organization’s executive director gain rapport and trust. However, because much of the United States still lives, worships, and plays in largely racially homogeneous settings, the likelihood of a BIPOC executive director developing a personal relationship with a program officer in environmental philanthropy’s largely white ranks is low. Interviewees noted several steps funders are taking in the right direction – hiring and utilizing community organizers as staff, thus expanding the pool of personal networks to exploit; utilizing grantee networks to aid in organizational learning about BIPOC-led efforts; and utilizing personal networks to connect with BIPOC leaders. If relationship is to continue to play a large role in getting into the door, funders must rethink current relationships and mechanisms used to initiate and maintain communication with potential grantees. As observed by a few interviewed BIPOC leaders, funders’ overreliance on preexisting relationships with Big Green groups to provide referrals for solicitation poses a significant threat to closing the gap in funding between BIPOC-led organizations and white-led organizations.

Once a relationship is built, it must be nurtured. The basic funder/grantee relationship is based on a funder providing resources to an organization that can implement strategies to accomplish the funder’s larger goal in a particular area. There are other elements of the relationship, including learning and growth. However, there is a line that funders must be aware of as far as how much to expect a grantee to contribute to the funding organization’s learning and growth – the relationship cannot become extractive. That simply means that the award of a \$50,000 grant does not create an expectation that an organization’s executive director will appear on every panel a funder holds for the next year or that the organization’s network can just be co-opted by the funder.

## RETHINK FUNDING PRACTICES

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A funding relationship is not to be entered into lightly: both funders and potential grantees have a responsibility to ensure a good fit. However, the burden on already under-resourced groups can be reduced. Interviewees noted funding tactics that are a hallmark of Trust-Based Philanthropy<sup>6</sup> as helpful in actually continuing to do the work:

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<sup>6</sup>“Trust-Based Philanthropy: An Overview,” Trust-Based Philanthropy Project, 2021, <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5c12acc8af209676c74c9961/t/603d2dcae06ce403c2cd9b13/1614622154834/TBP-Overview-final.pdf>.

- **Give multiyear, unrestricted funding:** Multiyear, unrestricted funding gives grantees the flexibility to assess and determine where grant dollars are most needed and allows for innovation, emergent action, and sustainability.

BIPOC leaders noted the importance of receiving multiyear unrestricted funding. An additional element was adequacy of the funding. When asked what their organizations could do with adequate, multiyear funding, many organizational leaders highlighted taking some strategies to scale, investing in research that proves the efficacy of their strategies, and increasing the sustainability of their partnerships.

- **Simplify and streamline paperwork:** Nonprofits spend an inordinate amount of time on funder-imposed paperwork. Streamlined approaches free up staff time and pave the way for deeper relationships and mutual accountability.

BIPOC leaders noted the amount of time needed to be responsive to documentation requests. They understood the purpose behind some requests but noted the increasing requests for data without an explanation of use of the data. For example, as funders attempt to measure the impacts of their funding on various racial and ethnic groups, they are requesting demographic data from grantees. If an organization is not already collecting this information, it is a significant lift to build the system to collect the information while protecting the identities of their staff and served communities. BIPOC leaders noted that this information is being collected without any communication of how it is to be used. This is not just perception; funder leaders have repeatedly noted an inability to understand how to use collected demographic data. Funders should be intentional about each bit of information requested and have a known purpose for collecting that information.

- **Be transparent and responsive:** Open communication helps build relationships rooted in trust and mutual accountability. When funders model transparency, power awareness, and vulnerability, it signals to grantees that they can show up more fully.

BIPOC leaders noted the lack of response when submitting a proposal as a deterrent for continuing to seek funding. When asked about reasons provided for not funding a proposal, BIPOC leaders noted that in the rare case a reason is given, it is generally a stock response about the number of excellent proposals. More often than not, no response is provided at all. This makes it impossible for grantee organizations to understand what could be attractive for funders.

- **Offer support beyond the check:** Responsive, adaptive, nonmonetary support bolsters leadership, capacity, and organizational health.



## **RETHINK PROGRESS**

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One of the primary goals of this research was to identify a set of equity- and justice-oriented indicators of progress in climate change mitigation. Interviewees, both those who are BIPOC leaders and those who are funders, were asked to describe the indicators they use and also provide criteria or descriptors of these indicators as a whole. These indicators are not intended to replace traditional measures of climate change mitigation (e.g., those used by the World Meteorological Organization mentioned above) but to help users understand how much movement in health, housing, education, and income indicators is related to climate change.

Funders should incorporate and value both types of measures and understand a portfolio as a whole. There are grantees that might only report on greenhouse gases and sea level rise, and there are organizations that might only report on increased educational attainment in an area full of oil refineries. Both will provide the funder with information about the future of life in a city such as Houston, Texas.

# The Research

The research approach is three-pronged – funding gap analysis, data gathered from InDEEP’s Virtual Learning Series, and interviews with BIPOC leaders as well as funders. These three strategies are intended to answer the learning questions outlined in Appendix B.

## FUNDING GAP ANALYSIS

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To quantify a gap between environmental funding provided to BIPOC-led and white-led environmental and conservation organizations, KHA licensed data from Candid.<sup>7</sup> Candid was selected as a data source because it aligns information that the Foundation Center collects on grants to nonprofits with demographics of staff and board members of nonprofit organizations on GuideStar.

Through the custom data service, KHA identified 14,196 grants to 954 organizations that fit within the parameters. Those parameters included grants classified to any type of organization as environmental justice, climate change, and natural resources (e.g., air quality, solid waste management, hazardous waste management, water resources, land resources, energy resources); biodiversity (e.g., wildlife biodiversity, plant biodiversity, forest preservation); environmental education (e.g., environmental studies, nature education, and outdoor education); and social rights (e.g., environmental and resource rights). The lower threshold was \$25,000, and grants information was requested from 2014 through 2018. For comparison’s sake, 897 organizations received these types of grants above this threshold.

Following receipt of the licensed data, KHA staff used Microsoft Excel to determine a funding gap between white-led and BIPOC-led organizations.

See Appendix A for additional calculations describing the funding gap between white-led and BIPOC-led organizations.

## VIRTUAL LEARNING SERIES

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In Fall 2020, InDEEP led a Virtual Learning Series (VLS). The VLS workshops explored opportunities, challenges, and best practices to educate environmental and conservation funders on the state of the field as related to BIPOC leaders, BIPOC-led organizations, and BIPOC communities. All of the VLS workshops were attended by funders, and funder data were collected from chat logs, polls, small-group discussion notes, and session evaluations. One VLS workshop also included BIPOC leaders; data from that workshop, for both funders and BIPOC leaders, were collected from chat logs, polls, and session evaluations.

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<sup>7</sup> “Our Story,” Candid, 2021, <https://candid.org/about/our-story>.

# INTERVIEWS

Interviews of BIPOC leaders, practitioners, scholars, and funders were conducted to provide data to assist in recruiting funders to support the Closing the Gap initiative and inform the development of a learning action community curriculum. Some interview transcripts were used to develop organizational profiles for publication as part of the InDEEP initiative’s blog.

After answering a set of opening questions about their organization, interviewees further unpacked the cross-movement work their organizations engage in. All interviews were divided into three main sections: BIPOC-led organization focus, funder focus, and equity- and justice-oriented indicators. Full interview protocols for each type of interviewee can be found in Appendices J and K.

A total of 95 people were invited to be interviewed: 39 expressed interest, 30 were interviewed, and 25 were BIPOC leaders. Two interviewees were funders, and three were scholars; scholar interviews were included in the BIPOC leader category. Some of the BIPOC leaders who were interviewed were identified through their participation in the VLS workshop; others were identified through the research team’s search of the field.

Figure 5 provides the fields of those who expressed interest in being interviewed.

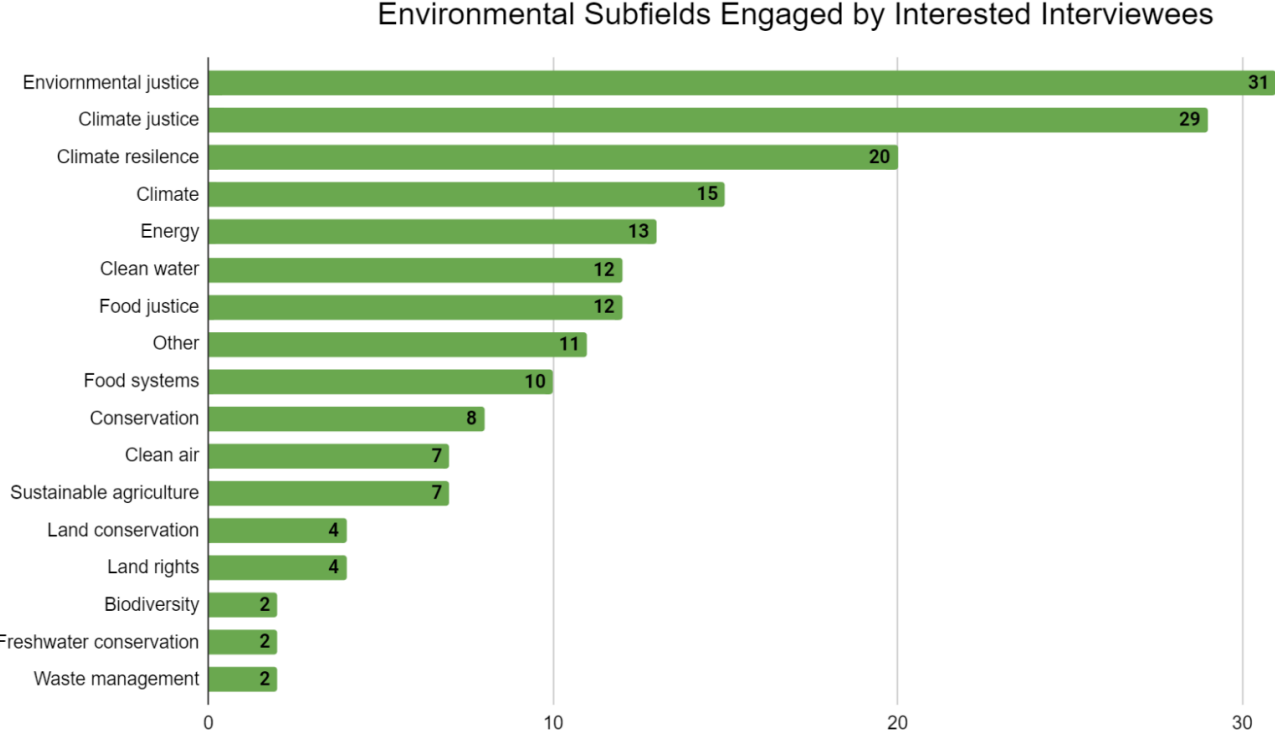


FIGURE 5. ENVIRONMENTAL SUBFIELDS OF THOSE WHO WERE INTERESTED IN BEING INTERVIEWED

During screening, potential interviewees were also asked to describe any of their cross-movement work. On the screening form, cross-movement work was defined as organizational work that weaves environmental and conservation issues across themes such as civic participation, early childhood education, and economic development. Of the 39 people who expressed interest in being interviewed, 36 respondents provided answers (see Table 1). To show the combination of subject matters intersecting with environmental and cross-movement work, these responses are not condensed into themes. Note that text appears exactly as respondents typed it into the form. Some text may present categorical areas of organizational intersectional work, and others are descriptive quotes explaining the intersectional work potential interviewees engage within their strategies.

**TABLE 1. ORGANIZATIONAL WORK THAT INTERSECTS WITH ENVIRONMENTAL AND CONSERVATION ISSUES**

Racial Justice
Equity, public health, social determinants of health and health disparities
Healing + racial justice as well as joy.
My non-profit has been working in Belize to create more sustainable waste management practices using waste-to-energy strategies. We work to engage the community in designing and building the technologies used. We also use this project as a way to show women of color the different opportunities within STEM fields and encourage them to pursue a STEM profession.
Civic participation/democracy
racial equity
I do environmental education and try to bring awareness to multiple intersecting areas – climate and migration; climate justice; sustainable agriculture and intersecting issues, etc.
I consider environmental justice as inclusive of ALL the issues on your list – and consider climate justice in the same way
My work covers a spectrum of environmental justice issues including lead poisoning. As the founder of [name of organization that combats lead poison] and mother of a lead poisoned son, my work primarily focuses on prevention, access to medical/health care, lead-safe affordable housing and access to education. We engage elected officials and aid in drafting bills to protect children from lead and other environmental hazards. We are concerned with the conservation of lives, culture and historical components of communities that have been divested and marginalized.
Cross-movement work

Enviro/social justice, education, equity, resiliency, and engagement

civic engagement, STEM education, equitable development, and workforce development

Economic injustice, social inequities, youth engagement, coalition-building

Early childhood education, workforce development, STEM, behavioral health, culturally-responsive approaches in research and evaluation

Development of Black + brown community leadership in building a local food system in West Philadelphia

Environmental Justice, Watershed Management, Climate Justice

Indigenous Peoples rights, land rights, human rights violations, advocacy, corporate accountability, media and technology, awareness building and public campaign, capacity building, networking, movement building and technical assistance to Indigenous communities

Economic Justice, economic opportunity, equitable development, political education, voting rights

Racial equity, community leadership, coalition building, community organizing, leveraging research & data

Green jobs, access to clean water

environmental justice and environmental policy

Job training and Education in urban agriculture at all ages and skill levels for economic development, curriculum enrichment, and violence interventions. Food access as education and community engagement. Arts, spiritual and ancestral knowledge for healing work and expressions of creativity

Racial Justice

Housing, community development, urban planning

K-8 Education, Economic Development

Youth Leadership Development (age 16-25)

Education, evaluation, DEI

Civic engagement, economic development, workforce development

We are deeply concerned with various factories that moved in people of color neighborhoods. They usually affect air, water, land because of flash flooding and food through gardens. All of this because they never tell them the effects it has on the children or those with child. All three intertwine together.

Civic participation, we engage latinx communities in civic participation through an environmental justice lens. We also connect to other issue areas such as health and immigration.

community economic development; equitable/green/just transition; urban systems; water; sustainable manufacturing

food production, immigration, climate refugees, food access, globalization, just energy policies

Social Justice and Mental Health

Environmental racism, environmental racism

Economic justice, public health, k-12 education.

environmental justice and climate change

Abolition, racial justice, energy transition, rural economic development, anti-capitalism

KHA staff used QSR International's NVivo software to analyze qualitative data collected during the interviews. Emergent thematic coding was used to identify themes in the interviews, listening session notes, and open-ended survey responses with probing questions used as a guide. Codebooks were established across data sources and compared for final analysis.

## **STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS OF RESEARCH**

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### **Strengths**

Our study expands on the widely disseminated research findings done by two organizations – Building Equity and Alignment for Impact and Thisman Environment and Design Center – by including grantee data from more than just the 12 national environmental grantmakers. In the study done by these two entities, it was found that 1.3% (\$18 million) of philanthropic dollars were awarded to organizations identifying as an environmental justice organization within the tax years 2016 and 2017. The gap data for



the current study are much more expansive and include grants from 954 organizations for the five tax years from 2014 through 2018.

Another unique feature is the broad scope of this study's inclusion criteria. This study included organizations that do not identify as environmental organizations but received environmental and conservation grants. By having these criteria, this study ensures that organizations doing cross-movement work are included. For example, a church could receive a solarization grant, but this would not be captured under environmental justice and the church would not be considered an environmental group. Reviewing the data by grant helps this study capture this information and highlight the ways in which BIPOC leaders engage in cross-movement work.

### Limitations

The limitations of this research are as follows:

- There is a small sample size of data available to Candid from grantees that report demographic data for the race of their organization's leader. Because of this small number, there is a need for a landscape analysis to identify the total number of environmental justice organizations in the United States to serve as an adequate baseline comparison.
- The data for this study are only inclusive of environmental and conservation organizations receiving a minimum of \$25K per grant. Those organizations receiving smaller grants were not included. The \$25K threshold as a minimum was informed by historical InDEEP data of interviewed BIPOC leaders. The interviewed leaders noted \$25K as a substantial minimum amount of funding.

# Conclusion

With the rapidly increasing threat of climate change and its impacts in particular on BIPOC communities, philanthropists – and other organizations that seek to mitigate the disastrous effects of climate change – must change how they are doing their work. White-led environmental and conservation organizations, including the “Big Greens,” have a powerful contribution to make – but so do BIPOC-led organizations working in BIPOC-majority communities.

Given the urgency of the problem, maintaining the status quo – a \$2.7 billion funding gap – is simply not acceptable. The changes in funder practice suggested in this report will help move the field so that BIPOC-led organizations doing cross-movement work can address climate change in BIPOC communities. Funders need to acknowledge race; understand how climate change’s human impacts vary by race; expand their understanding of issues and strategies that will work; rethink relationships with their grantees; rethink their funding practices; and rethink what it means to make progress.

Only when all of us – environmental and conservation funders, the Big Greens, and BIPOC-led organizations – work together can we move the needle on climate change.

# APPENDIX A:

## Quantifying the Funding Gap Between BIPOC-Led Organizations and White-Led Organizations



### BACKGROUND

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With support from a custom data service, Keecha Harris and Associates, Inc (KHA), identified a total of 14,196 grants awarded to a total of 2,715 organizations between 2014 and 2018. Of those, 13,959 grants associated with 954 organizations met the parameters outlined for this research study. Environmental and conservation grants meeting the selection criteria included those identified by any type of organization as:

- environmental justice, climate change, and/or natural resources (e.g., air quality, solid waste management, hazardous waste management, water resources, land resources, energy resources);
- biodiversity (e.g., wildlife biodiversity, plant biodiversity, forest preservation);
- environmental education (e.g., environmental studies, nature education, and outdoor education); and
- social rights (e.g., environmental and resource rights).

Historic data from Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity in Environmental Philanthropy (InDEEP) show that Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) leaders approach environmental, conservation, and climate issues with an intersectional, cross-movement lens. The inclusion of non-environmental groups in this data sample amplifies BIPOC leadership and efforts within the sector to mitigate climate change and associated harm. Thus, grants received by environmental groups (e.g., small NGOs and “Big Green” groups) and non-environmental groups were reviewed in calculating the funding gap between white- and BIPOC-led organizations (e.g., in the case of a church recipient of a solarization grant, the church is not classified as an environmental group or captured in grants associated with environmental justice).

To quantify the funding gap between funding provided to white- and BIPOC-led organizations, the same organizations were examined to disaggregate the race of the organization’s chief executive officer or president. The total amount of funding provided by grants for the white-led and BIPOC-led organizations was totaled to calculate “The Gap” between the two populations.

## WHAT IS “THE GAP”?

**\$2,724,645,648 (\$2.7 billion)**

The funding gap between white-led organizations (n=787) and BIPOC-led organizations (n=167).

<p><b>\$3,222,897,276</b></p> <p>The total amount of grants awarded to white- led organizations.</p>	<p><b>\$498,251,628</b></p> <p>The total amount of grants awarded to BIPOC- led organizations.</p>	<p><b>\$11,298,300</b></p> <p>The difference in the maximum grant amount received by white-led (n=\$58,683,300) and BIPOC-led organizations (n=\$47,385,000).</p>
<p><b>75.8%</b></p> <p>White-led organizations were awarded 75.8% more grants than BIPOC-led organizations.</p>	<p><b>78.2%</b></p> <p>White-led organizations received 78.2% more grants for \$25,000 than BIPOC-led organizations.</p>	<p><b>75.5%</b></p> <p>White-led organizations received 75.5% more grants above \$25,000 than BIPOC-led organizations.</p>

## DATA SAMPLE INCLUSION CRITERIA

- Environmental and conservation grants classified to any type of organization (environmental and non-environmental groups)
- Environmental and conservation grants classified to an organization totaling a minimum of \$25,000 and received between 2014 and 2018
- Environmental and conservation grants associated with reported demographic information of the race of the organization’s leader

## ADDITIONAL DATA SAMPLE INFORMATION

<p><b>954</b></p> <p>Total number of organizations in calculation</p>	<p><b>787</b></p> <p>Total number of white-led organizations</p>	<p><b>167</b></p> <p>Total number of BIPOC-led organizations</p>	<p><b>13,959</b></p> <p>Total number of grants meeting inclusion criteria</p>
<p><b>12,273</b></p> <p>Total number of grants awarded to white-led organizations</p>	<p><b>1,791</b></p> <p>Total number of grants at minimum of \$25,000 received by white-led organizations</p>	<p><b>10,482</b></p> <p>Total number of grants received by white-led organizations over \$25,000</p>	<p><b>1,686</b></p> <p>Total number of grants awarded to BIPOC-led organizations</p>
<p><b>218</b></p> <p>Total number of grants received by BIPOC-led organizations at minimum of \$25,000</p>	<p><b>1,468</b></p> <p>Total number of grants received by BIPOC-led organizations over \$25,000</p>	<p><b>\$3,721,148,904</b></p> <p>Total grant amount of data sample</p>	<p><b>\$266,577</b></p> <p>Average grant amount in data sample</p>
	<p><b>18 months</b></p> <p>Average grant duration for white-led organizations</p>	<p><b>19 months</b></p> <p>Average grant duration for BIPOC-led organizations</p>	
<p><b>\$3,222,897,276</b></p> <p>Total grant amount received for white-led organizations</p>		<p><b>\$498,251,628</b></p> <p>Total grant amount received for BIPOC-led organizations</p>	

## APPENDIX B:

# Closing the Gap's Learning Questions

The learning questions informing the research:

1. What issues do BIPOC-led organizations see as pivotal to the following movements:
  - a. climate change,
  - b. climate resilience,
  - c. environmental justice,
  - d. food systems, and
  - e. conservation?
2. What strategies are used to impact issues that BIPOC-led climate organizations have determined to be pivotal?
3. In the U.S. context, how have BIPOC-led organizations generated systemic change in each of the areas above?
4. What factors have most prominently influenced how BIPOC-led environmental organizations prioritize their strategies?
5. What strategies would BIPOC-led organizations pursue if they could count on substantial, multiyear funding?
6. What issue areas have climate funders focused on in the past seven years?
7. What strategies have climate funders supported over the past seven years?
8. What do climate funders anticipate prioritizing over the next five years?
9. What percentage of their dollars do climate funders anticipate being available to new organizations?
10. How do climate funders find out about, vet, and onboard new organizations they are adding to their portfolios?
11. What practices, policies, and priorities are influencing funding to BIPOC-led organizations in climate change?
  - a. What are the enabling factors?
  - b. What are the deterrents?
12. Do BIPOC-led environmental movements maintain self-determination?



# APPENDIX C: Interview Protocol for BIPOC Leaders



## INTRODUCTION

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Let's begin with some questions that focus on your background and your organization's relationship to the fields of conservation and environmentalism.

1. If we met on an elevator in a rather tall building and I asked you to tell me about [organization name]'s work, what would you tell me before we reached the spinning restaurant at the top of the building?
2. During our initial communication regarding this interview, you indicated that you have been working in the environmental field for [number] years and that your work touches [clean water, environmental justice, subfields]. Does your work touch other environmental areas? Which ones? (2 minutes)

For the purpose of our conversation, cross-movement work is defined as organizational work that weaves conservation and environmental issues across themes such as civic participation, early childhood education, economic development, etc.

3. You also indicated that [name topical areas] intersect with conservation and environmental issues in your work. Tell me about how they intersect.
4. Are you willing to be highlighted in a short organizational profile?

## FOCUS AND PRACTICE OF BIPOC-LED ORGANIZATIONS

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Now we will spend some time unpacking the work of BIPOC-led organizations in the environmental field.

5. What issues does your organization [or *do you*, if a researcher or other individual not within an organization] see as pivotal to positively influencing:

- a. climate change?
  - b. climate resilience?
  - c. environmental justice?
  - d. food systems?
  - e. conservation?
6. What strategies does your organization employ to impact the issues just mentioned [list the issues]?
7. In the U.S. context, how have BIPOC-led organizations generated systemic change in:
- a. climate change?
  - b. climate resilience?
  - c. environmental justice?
  - d. food systems?
  - e. conservation?
8. What factors have most prominently influenced how your organization prioritizes its strategies? *If the interviewee is a researcher or other individual not within an organization: What factors have most prominently influenced how you prioritize strategies?*
9. Would your strategies change if your organization [or you] could count on substantial, multiyear funding? In providing your answer, please describe what “substantial, multiyear funding” means to you in terms of dollars and conditions.

## FOCUS AND PRACTICE OF FUNDERS

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This section of questions focuses on climate funder focus and practice.

10. From your vantage point, what issue areas and strategies have climate funders focused on in the past seven years? How do they find out about, vet, and onboard new organizations into their portfolios?
11. Have you identified funder practices, policies, or priorities supportive of funding BIPOC-led climate organizations? If so, what are they? *Probe specific funders if not offered.*
12. Have you identified funder practices, policies, or priorities that deter funding BIPOC-led climate organizations? If so, what are they? *Probe specific funders if not offered.*

13. *For nonprofit leaders and activists, not academics:* Over the past three years, how many applications for funding have you submitted to environmental foundations? How many were funded? When not funded, what reasons were provided?
  - a. If you are aware of total dollar amounts sought and awarded, what are they?
14. Do BIPOC-led climate movements maintain self-determination? *If more needed:* Are their missions and work adapted in response to funder priorities as opposed to needs identified by the organizations?

## INDICATORS

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A goal of this research is to augment the field by identifying a set of justice-oriented indicators of progress. This set of questions focuses on what you measure and characteristics of justice-oriented measures.

15. What indicators does your organization [or do you] track to describe your contribution to climate change mitigation? What are the characteristics of equity- and justice-oriented indicators of progress in the climate change context?

## CLOSING

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16. We are speaking with advocates, researchers, and funders. Is there anyone we shouldn't miss?
17. What scholarly research would you suggest we highlight in our reporting?
18. How many people are in your organization?
19. What is the organization's operating budget?
20. *If the person you are speaking with is not the head of the organization:* We do not like to assume based on pictures. Does your chief executive or executive director identify as BIPOC?
21. Is there anything else you would like to share with me today?

# APPENDIX D: Interview Protocol for Funders



## INTRODUCTION

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1. During our initial communication regarding this interview, you indicated that you have been working in the environmental field for [fill in number] years and that your work touches [fill in subfields]. Does your work touch other environmental areas? Which ones?
2. For the purpose of our conversation, cross-movement work is defined as organizational work that weaves conservation and environmental issues across themes such as civic participation, early childhood education, economic development, etc.
3. You also indicated that [name topical areas] intersect with conservation and environmental issues in your work. Tell me about how they intersect.
4. Are you willing to be highlighted in a short organizational profile?

## FOCUS AND PRACTICE OF BIPOC-LED ORGANIZATIONS (15 MINUTES)

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Now we will spend some time unpacking the work of BIPOC-led organizations in the environmental field.

5. From your vantage point, what issue areas and strategies have BIPOC-led climate organizations focused on in the past seven years?
6. In the U.S. context, how have BIPOC-led organizations generated systemic change in
  - a. climate change?
  - b. climate resilience?
  - c. environmental justice?
  - d. food systems?
  - e. conservation? *Ask each letter individually.*

## FOCUS AND PRACTICE OF FUNDERS

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This section of questions focuses on climate funder focus and practice.

7. What issues does your organization see as pivotal to positively influencing
  - a. climate change?
  - b. climate resilience?
  - c. environmental justice?
  - d. food systems?
  - e. conservation? *Ask each letter individually. Probe why these are pivotal if not offered.*
8. What strategies does your organization employ to impact the issues just mentioned [list the issues]?
9. What issue areas and strategies has your organization focused on in the past seven years? What do you anticipate prioritizing over the next five years?
10. What percentage of your climate-related investments do you anticipate being available to new organizations? How do you find out about, vet, and onboard new organizations into their portfolios?
11. What practices, policies, and priorities are influencing funding to BIPOC-led organizations in climate change?
  - a. What are the enabling factors?
  - b. What are the deterrents?
12. Has your organization identified the funding gap between dollars invested in white-led climate institutions and BIPOC-led climate institutions? *If yes:* What is it, and how did you measure this? *If no:* Why not? Is this knowledge important to your organization?
  - a. How do you determine if your investment in programming is key to the grantee's mission?
13. How do you detect if a grantee's mission and work are adapted in response to your priorities as opposed to needs identified by the grantee organization?
14. Do you collaborate with grantees on determining appropriate measures for the programming your organization is funding?

## INDICATORS

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A goal of this research is to augment the field by identifying a set of justice-oriented indicators of progress. This set of questions focuses on what you measure and characteristics of justice-oriented measures.

15. What indicators does your organization [or do you] track to describe your contribution to climate change mitigation? What are the characteristics of justice-oriented indicators for progress in the climate change context?

## **CLOSING**

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16. We are speaking with activists, scholars, business leaders, practitioners, and funders. Is there anyone we shouldn't miss?
17. Is there anything else you would like to share with me today?