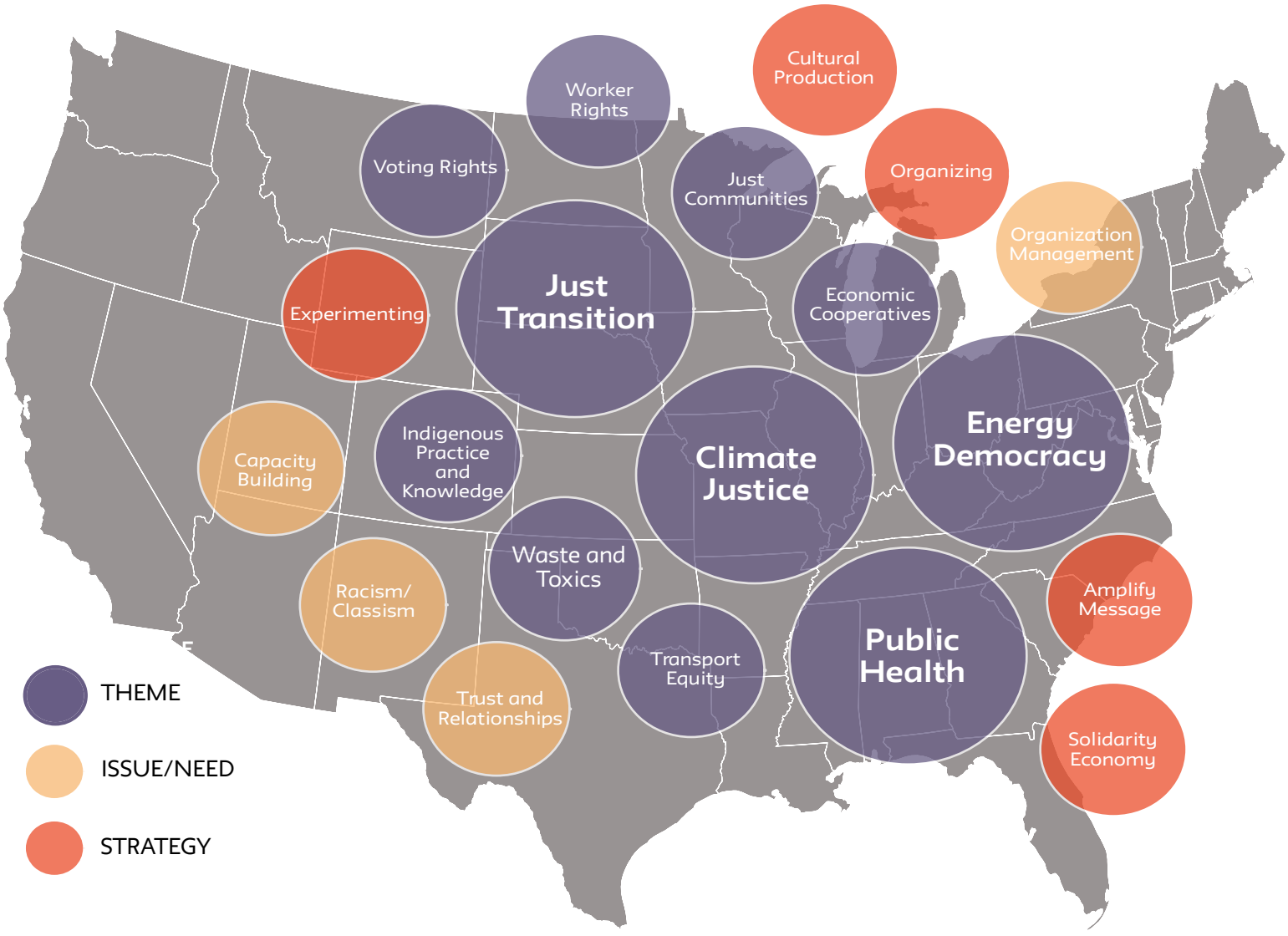
ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE MOVEMENT

PRIORITIES, STRATEGIES & JUST TRANSITION



LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT

Acknowledgements

This report was prepared by Dr. Ana Isabel Baptista, Dr. Sujatha Jesudason, and Adrienne Perovich, MPA, with assistance from Anna Yulsman, Molly Greenberg, and Zabe Bent, with support granted by NorthLight Foundation.

We would also like to show our gratitude to the Environmental Justice Networks, Organizations and Leaders for sharing their wisdom, participating in interviews, and responding to the survey.

For More Information:
Tishmancenter.org
Socialmovementsinnovation.org
Northlightfoundation.org

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Preface

Ana Isabel Baptista

Dr. Baptista is an Assistant Professor of Professional Practice & Chair of Environmental Policy and Sustainability Management Program. She is also an Associate Director of the Tishman Environment and Design Center. She has nearly two decades of work within the EJ movement and her research and professional practice focuses on environmental justice policies and community based strategies for tackling environmental injustice. Dr. Baptista's research extends to a wide range of issues; zero waste and anti-incineration, climate justice, urban air pollution mitigation policies, and the impacts of the global goods movement.

Sujatha Jesudason

Dr. Sujatha Jesudason is a Professor of Professional Practice in Management. For more than 25 years, Dr. Jesudason has worked as an activist, organizer, and scholar in a range of social justice movements and is a leading voice in movement building with a focus on race, gender, innovation, and human genetics. A serial start-up leader, she was the Executive Director of CoreAlign, a reproductive justice organization teaching innovation for social change to frontline activists, which she founded in 2012.

TISHMAN ENVIRONMENT AND DESIGN CENTER

Tishman Environment and Design Center

The Tishman Environment and Design Center integrates bold design, policy and social justice approaches to tackle the climate crisis and advance environmental justice. The Tishman Center is a university-wide research and action center and is a collaborative research effort partnering with a wide range of organizations including EJ organizations, community leaders, advocates, designers, and policy experts. The Center works directly with impacted communities to support the advancement of community led, critical and systemic alternatives to achieve environmental justice.

SOCIAL MOVEMENTS +INNOVATION

Social Movements + Innovation Lab

Social Movements + Innovation provides space and tools for social justice leaders to explore and experiment with new and innovative ways to address some of society's most entrenched problems of inequality and repression. Using creative and intersectional approaches to design and innovation, they support leaders with the space and tools to generate new ideas, approaches, tactics, and strategies to bring us closer to dismantling toxic and unequal systems and structures.

NORTHLIGHT Foundation

NorthLight Foundation

NorthLight Foundation is a private foundation established by Dan and Sheryl Tishman. They invest at the intersection of human and environmental landscapes and work with organizations to deliver high impact and systemic change. The foundation envisions a world where the Earth's environment is healthy, protected, and sustained for future generations.

Introduction

In 2018, the NorthLight Foundation reached out to The New School to undertake an exploration of leadership program models that could be well suited to support the environmental justice (EJ) movement in its efforts to tackle climate change and inequality. The NorthLight Foundation, established initially in 2011 as the Dan and Sheryl Tishman Foundation, is committed to supporting solutions that will bring about a healthy, just, and sustainable world. As part of this mission, the NorthLight Foundation expressed an interest in developing a new program that would amplify equitable, and meaningful actions to address the root causes of environmental destruction and climate change and to support the work of the EJ movement. They invited the Tishman Environment and Design Center and the Social Movements + Innovation Lab (SMI), at The New School, to conduct a needs assessment and develop potential program models that would serve the EJ movement.

The initial scope of the collaboration focused on understanding the landscape of existing leadership and fellowship programs in the United States, both inside and external to institutions of higher education. The project partners also explored the different models and theories of change that could inform leadership programs, as well as the scale of potential impact (i.e. individual, organizational, movement level) such a program could have on the environmental justice movement.

As part of this process, the Tishman Center and SMI initiated a landscape assessment. The landscape assessment set out to first understand the needs, priorities, and current state of the EJ movement. It was conducted in an effort to ground the development of a leadership program in a deeper understanding of the current priorities and future needs of movement activists. The assessment was designed to assess the priority issues and strategies prevalent among EJ movement organizations, the greatest challenges facing them, the transformational campaigns animating the movement currently, and the expressed needs and desires of movement leaders in relation to a future leadership program housed at The New School. The landscape assessment findings were compiled together with a literature review and synthesis of Social Movement and Just Transition frameworks, which were used to inform the design of a cohort-based leadership development program. The proposed program aims in part to respond to some of the expressed needs and aspirations articulated by EJ movement leaders in this landscape assessment. This report summarizes and highlights key findings of the landscape assessment of the EJ movement and describes the proposed program informed by these findings.

Environmental Justice Movement Background

The Environmental Justice Movement (EJM) is associated with local struggles in low income and communities of color throughout the United States. As a movement, it is centered on the communities most directly impacted by pollution and climate change. The EJ movement's grassroots approach to tackling environmental problems makes it a transformative force for change, at a time when the climate crisis is exacerbating inequalities and rapidly impacting vulnerable human and ecological systems around the world.

The EJM has historically diverged from the mainstream environmental movement in its

ideological and tactical approach to environmental problems. The EJM's rhetorical and tactical focus on systems change is based on a critical analysis of the capitalist political economy and the acknowledgment of multiple forms of oppression based on identity. "It is not simply that the justice of environmental justice in political practice includes equity, recognition, and participation: the broader argument here is that the movement represents an integration of these various claims into a broad call for justice."[1] EJ movement organizations rely on local organizing, deployment of direct action campaigns, and democratic decision making. David Pellow describes the approach that EJ groups use to tackle environmental injustice: "(1) by disrupting the social relations that produce environmental inequalities, (2) by producing new accountability vis-à-vis nation states and polluters, and (3) by articulating new visions of ecologically sustainable and socially just institutions and societies."[2]

The mainstream environmental movement on the other hand, often relies on expert driven, specialized policy and legislative approaches aimed at reforming environmental regulatory systems, using traditional special interest lobbying. This approach has failed to advance a large-scale response, both politically and culturally, to the climate crisis in the last three decades.

The EJ movement is uniquely positioned to shift the public imagination and possibilities to tackle the climate crisis because its constituent organizations are deploying political organizing strategies across diverse communities. These organizations are willing to take risks to advance structural reforms underlying economic and social systems giving rise to the crisis. The ability of the EJ movement to advance an ambitious climate agenda is, in part, limited by its relatively small size and under-resourcing in relation to the mainstream environmental movement. The funding disparities between these two sectors are well documented, with environmental justice groups receiving less than 6% of all philanthropic support that goes to environmental organizations annually.[3] According to a 2012 study, "only 15 percent of environmental grant dollars were classified as benefitting marginalized communities, and only 11 percent were classified as advancing 'social justice' strategies....".[4] This same study pointed out that funding misalignment threatened the ability of the movement to realize significant changes via a grassroots strategy, "This report contends that environment and climate funders can be more effective and secure more environmental wins by investing heavily in grassroots communities that are disproportionately impacted by environment and climate harms."[5]

Despite this under-resourcing, the EJ movement has grown in terms of the total number of organizations self-identifying as environmental justice, and increasingly institutionalized into registered 501 (c)(3) nonprofit organizations. In the last twenty five years, "the number of people of color environmental groups has grown from 300 groups in 1992 to more than 3,000 groups and a dozen networks in 2014."[6] Comparatively, in the broader environmental sector, there are approximately 26,000 registered environmental organizations including conservation, natural, and human environment, with the largest organizations averaging budgets well over $100 million annually.[7] Although EJ groups represent a small share of the funding and organizations in the environmental sector, the movement's rhetorical, political, and cultural importance

among progressive social movements and policy making circles is growing. The need to catalyze and support the EJ movement at this moment is critical. As the climate crisis intensifies, opportunities arise that can further entrench patterns of inequality or reveal new possibilities for transformative change.

The literature on social movements also helps inform our understanding of the potential impact of the EJ movement in relation to the climate crisis.[8] According to Tarrow, social movements build power by: developing social networks created around solidarity and connections built on a shared identity; putting in place systems that mobilize these social networks; creating new/alternative frames and narratives to help people create meaning and sense; and employing repertoires of contention, which push for changes in the status quo. While social justice leaders have paid attention to the first three components necessary to provide power to social movements, there have been few resources invested in building repertoires of contention.

Leaders in the environmental justice movement are poised to build their capacity across all four elements of social movement mobilization. The EJ movement, with its radical analysis and direct action tactics, is particularly primed to deploy repertoires of contention as the climate crisis grows.

Methodology

The assessment began by first identifying the leaders and organizations that constitute the EJ movement broadly. While there is no single definition of an environmental justice organization, there are some key factors that indicate an organization identifies with the EJ movement.[9] These include organizations that: (1) are located in majority communities of color and low income communities; (2) have a place-based focus; (3) are led by impacted residents and people of color; and (4) have explicitly focused missions on environmental or climate justice. The initial list of EJ organizations developed for outreach was based on an assessment of EJ organizations that exhibit these criteria, as well as organizations who are members of national, regional, or statewide environmental justice or climate justice alliances, coalitions, or networks. Snowball sampling was also used in interviews to generate additional contacts and organizations in the EJ movement.[10]

The landscape assessment included in-depth, semi-structured interviews, a literature review, and an online survey. The goal was to compile information focused on the current tactics, needs, priorities, challenges, and future aspirations of movement leaders and their respective EJ organizations. The interviews and surveys also explored some of the key elements of social movement effectiveness, including (1) base-building, (2) narrative and culture change, and (3) collaborative work in the movement. The in-depth interviews explored the transformative and emergent frameworks and campaigns animating the movement today. These interviews were conducted with representatives from EJ organizations in each region of the country, and constitute organizations of different sizes and focus, including local, grassroots groups and regional and national alliances. Interview requests were sent to 124 individuals representing 71 organizations across the country. In total, 48 interviews were completed with representatives from 39 different organizations.

The online survey provided a representative snapshot of the constituent organizations within the movement as well as their priority issues, strategies, needs, and challenges. Survey requests were sent out through 17 national, state, and regional alliances as well as some movement adjacent allies.[11] These 17 alliances represent over 640 member organizations. Surveys were also sent to all those who were interviewed with a request for them to share amongst their networks. Some of the organizations are part of multiple alliances. The target was to receive 80 percent of responses from environmental justice organizations and the remaining 20 percent from mainstream environmental organizations. A small sampling of responses from mainstream environmental stakeholders was included for relative comparison.

Some of the limitations of this assessment include the ability to reach smaller, potentially less networked EJ organizations. While attempts were made to ensure that there was wide and representative survey dissemination and interview outreach, there are many organizations who may not have been reached or may not have been able to respond. Nevertheless, an attempt was made to reach representatives from organizations in multiple geographies, and particularly, those that showed up in multiple networks as they likely represent important hubs for activity in the EJ movement.

Organizations which are associated with multiple alliances were considered well-networked and potentially serve a special role as hubs for EJ movement activity. These organizations have the potential to leverage local work across multiple issues and geographies.

Landscape Assessment Findings

Baseline Data

Survey responses provided a snapshot of the structure of the EJ movement based on the geographic location, staff size, organizational structure, and funding of the organizations comprising the movement. While the literature review provided useful background information with respect to the relative size of "registered" nonprofits self-identifying as environmental justice organizations, these surveys helped paint a fuller picture of the groups that today constitute a well-networked set of largely community-based NGOs. [12]

In total, 167 surveys were completed. The majority of survey responses, 70 percent, identified as being part of the environmental justice movement, while 12 percent said they were not part of the movement, and 18 percent did not identify either way. This aligns with our survey target to reach a majority of respondents in the EJ movement. Comparisons with the mainstream environmental movement are limited by the relatively small sample size of the larger environmental sector.

Figure 1 shows the geographic location of survey respondents.[13] The distribution of respondents seems to match the widely held notion that there are more EJ movement organizations concentrated in dense metropolitan regions near the coasts. There is a particular concentration of groups in California and the Northeast, and some clusters in the Midwest. Fewer survey responses were received from the Mountain region of the U.S., where many Indigenous communities are leading crucial environmental, justice, and climate battles. Many of these activists come from organizations and communities that have historically

been less-resourced over long periods of time, and there are fewer of these groups relative to the coastal areas. In order to address this gap, survey dissemination was targeted to individuals and organizations who are part of Indigenous-led alliances.

The survey responses for each of the key landscape questions about the structure of the movement are listed on the next page. These data reflect responses from the EJ movement. To view responses from mainstream national organizations, please refer to Appendix A.

Responses show that a majority of EJ organizations are smaller in terms of staffing and funding than national environmental organizations and their geographic focus is primarily local, which aligns with the literature on characteristics of the EJ and mainstream environmental movements. The EJ organizations seem to have long-tenured staff and are relatively well established, with most operating for more than 2 decades.

Figure 1: Geographic Distribution of Survey Respondents

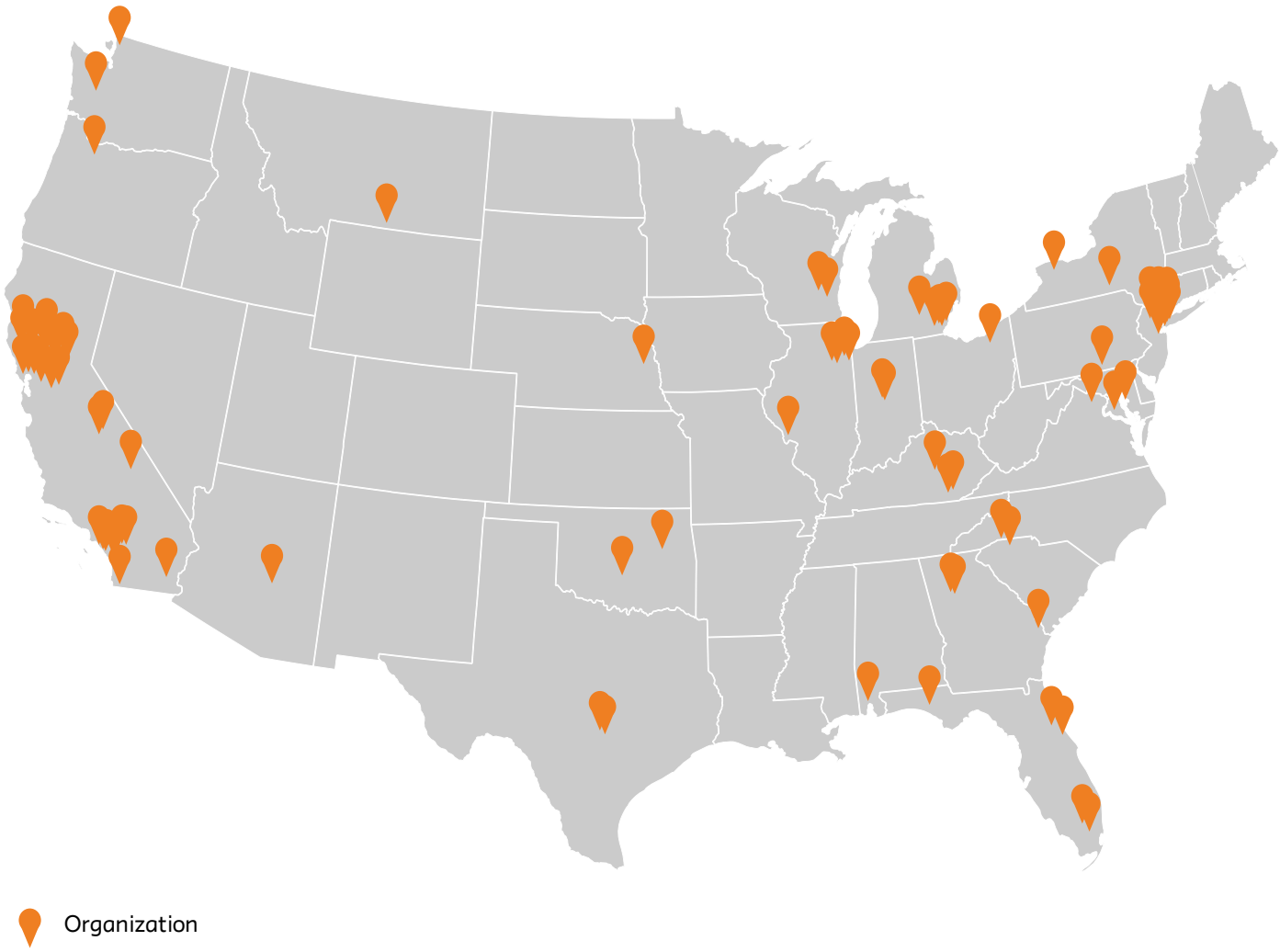


Figure 2-A: What is your position level at this organization? n=112

A majority (71%) of survey respondents identified as being senior staff in their organization.

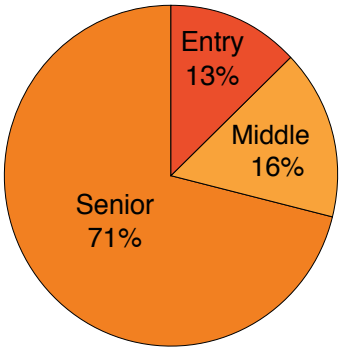


Figure 2-D: How long have you been working in the movement? n=114

A majority of survey respondents have been working in the EJ movement for more than 6 years and the largest share (42%) have been active in the movement for more than a decade.

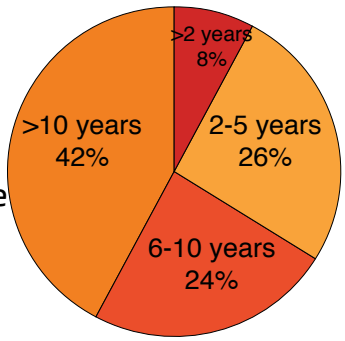


Figure 2-B: How long has your organization been operating? n=114

The survey respondents represent long-standing EJ organizations. Over 60% of the responding organizations are more than a decade old. More than a quarter of the organizations are more than 30 years old.

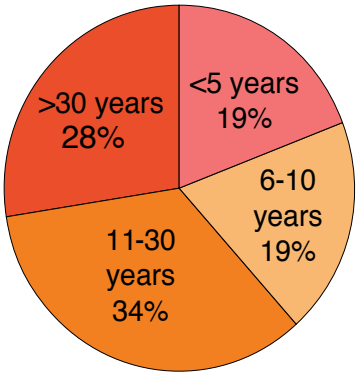


Figure 2-E: How many employees are part of your organization? n=110

The EJ organizations responding to this survey have relatively small staffs. More than half (51%) of the EJ organizations have less than 10 employees with the largest share of organizations having less than 5 employees.

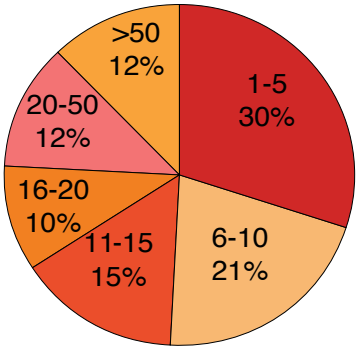


Figure 2-C: How would you describe your organization's geographic focus? n=114

A majority (74%) of the EJ organizations are either local or a combination of local, regional, and national.

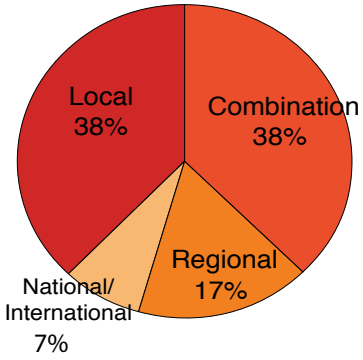
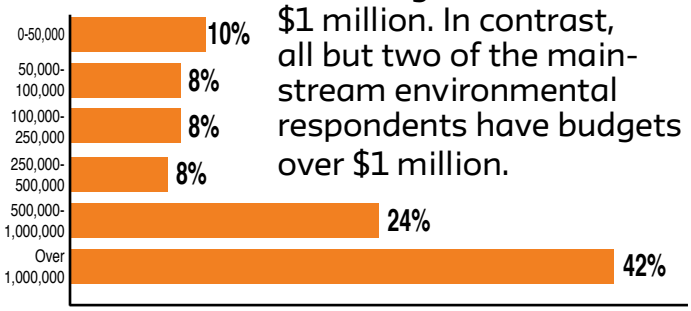


Figure 2-F: What is your organization's annual budget? n=106

A majority of the EJ organizations (58%) have annual budgets of less than $1 million. In contrast, all but two of the mainstream environmental respondents have budgets over $1 million.



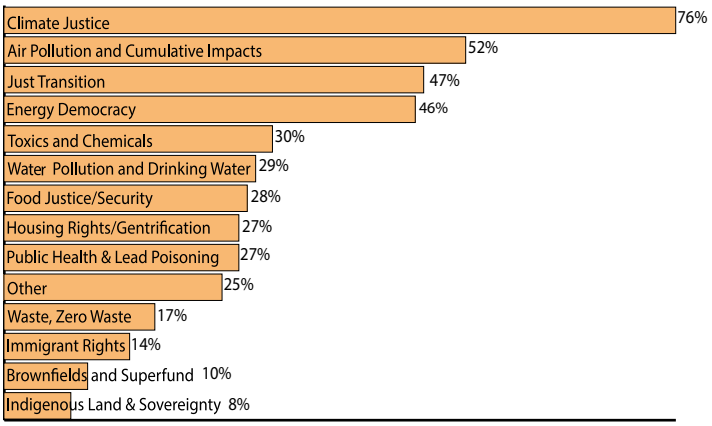
Priorities, Strategies, and Challenges

It is critical to understand the priorities, strategies, needs, and challenges that the EJ movement currently faces in order to develop a leadership program that can effectively support the movement. The landscape assessment provided important insights into these issues both through the surveys and interview responses of EJ movement leaders.

(a) Priorities

Understanding the priority issues that are at the forefront of a movement's efforts helps reveal the perceptions of the most urgent problems requiring attention by movement actors. Among EJ survey respondents, climate justice was ranked as the number one priority issue, followed by air pollution and cumulative impacts, just transition, energy democracy, and toxics and chemicals (**Figure 3-A**).

Figure 3-A: Priorities: Please identify the top priorities that your organization works on (choose 5). n=105



Responses from the mainstream environmental movement listed similar priorities, with some important differences. Their top issue area was air pollution and cumulative impacts, followed by toxics and chemicals, water pollution and drinking water, climate justice and just transition. Energy democracy did not appear in the mainstream movement's top five and water pollution/drinking water did not appear in the EJ movement's top five. EJ communities are often directly impacted by the fossil fuel industry since this infrastructure is disproportionately located in low income and communities of color. Thus the priority focus on climate, energy, and just transition aligns with the material conditions that these local groups are facing.

The EJ movement priorities span a wide range of issues from immigrant rights to environmental burdens and climate change. The interviews reflected this diverse range of issues and prioritization using the framing of climate justice or just transition.

"So we have done work on immigrant rights issues when it comes to the detention centers, and detention centers also being placed in toxic sites...We've done work on food justice issues because of the toxic contamination of land, water, and air that we face, on issues of education because our education systems, our public education, is pretty much controlled by an oil and gas interest." - *EJ Activist 28*

In the last decade, climate change and the Just Transition framework has increasingly animated and focused the work of EJ organizations across the country. While the issues of legacy pollution continue to be present and addressed as part of the EJ movement's work, the climate crisis has exacerbated many of these legacy pollution problems. Since climate impacts will be felt in EJ communities first and worst, this increased attention might be anticipated.

"So, seeing intersections and the need for alignment between the issues and the communities

and being able to put more of a just transition lens on the work that we do in addressing, not only, climate justice but the many harms that communities face." – *EJ Activist 3*

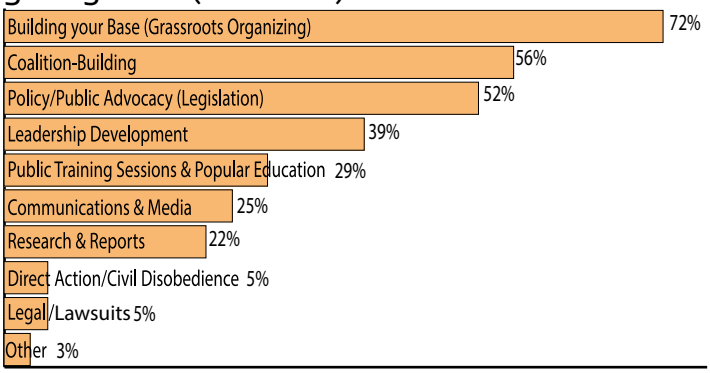
(b) Strategies & Tactical Approaches

The strategies and tactics employed by movements reveal the kind of framing and capacity needs required to support a more impactful movement. Successful social movements that employ grassroots strategies and organizing not only contribute to change at the local level but also to broader societal changes by galvanizing the public and building political pressure.[14]

"I think part of the movement is to approach the issue at multiple levels. You need to be prioritizing organizing, policy, and research. I feel like when you only focus on one, you're not necessarily achieving the fullest amount of change that your community requires." - *Genesis Abreu, Community Organizer*[15]

The most prevalent strategies mentioned by those in the EJ movement was base-building and grassroots organizing, followed by coalition-building, and policy or public advocacy (**Figure 3-B**).

Figure 3-B: Strategies and Tactical Approaches: What key tactical approaches (strategies) does your organization employ to achieve your goals? (choose 3) n=104



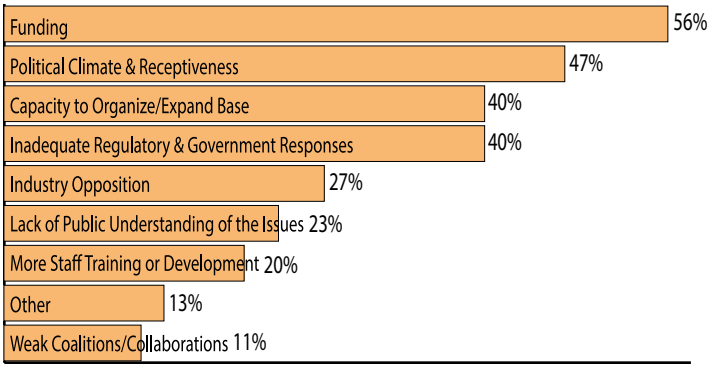
The survey found that the mainstream movement's top strategy was policy or public advocacy and communications/media followed by coalition-building. This difference in movement strategies highlights important ideological divisions where the EJ movement sees base-building as crucial to advancing priority issues like climate change. Whereas, the mainstream environmental movement is oriented to a more technical and legislative approach to their priority issues. This may also reflect differences in funding as larger environmental organizations have significantly more resources to utilize on communications and media tactics, whereas the EJ leaders noted their desire to grow their capacity to utilize communications.

(c) Challenges or Obstacles

The EJM's perceptions of challenges or obstacles to achieving their priority goals is an important marker for shaping a leadership program that can help overcome these challenges. The highest ranked challenge for EJ movement survey respondents was funding. Not surprisingly, funding was the second to last challenge ranked by mainstream respondents, illustrating that the mainstream movement does not seem to lack funding in its efforts to advance their priorities. EJ respondents, in both surveys and interviews, resoundingly echoed the concern about the under-resourcing of the movement as a critical challenge undermining their potential to advance urgent climate and environmental justice priorities. These funding concerns permeate the EJ movement's overall outlook on the potential to sustain and scale their impact as the environmental and climate crises deepen.

"What kind of resources? Big resources. I think folks are going to need money, so put that down as number one, friend. Number one, pay these people, lord have mercy. I mean no other group of people are asked to do this kind of work with no money." - *EJ Activist 32*

Figure 3-C: Challenges or Obstacles: What are the biggest challenges or obstacles to achieving your organization's goals? (choose 3) n=104



The EJ movement ranked "political climate and receptiveness" second most important and "capacity to organize/expand base" and "inadequate regulatory and government responses" were tied for the third greatest challenge they face (**Figure 3-C**).

Many EJ organizations face difficult political environments as they present oppositional or more systemic demands than the mainstream, reformist environmental movement. The ability to move equity based policy demands forward remains a significant challenge as many EJ organizations face well funded and organized private sector and industry opposition coupled with government inaction. These challenges are also exacerbated by a lack of funding to help build an effective base to apply public pressure on these systems. Mainstream environmental organizations on the other hand, ranked "weak coalition-building" among their top five challenges, instead of funding. These differences are important to note as the EJ sector seeks to increase their ability to shape the public narrative and public policy responses around climate change and make more radical demands relative to the environmental movement.

"A material difference between the environmental justice movement and other civil rights, or even human rights movements, is that we're regularly going against industries with very deep pockets and political influence. And the industries' power - the sheer financial and political weight, and the narratives they're able to craft and embed in society - will continue to be our main opposition to overcome, so it's a true David versus Goliath battle." - *EJ Activist 17*

Both sectors ranked "political climate and regulatory challenges" highly. This is likely due to the current hostility to environmentalism generally by the federal administration coupled with decades of inaction on the climate crisis. This is a perennial problem discussed by EJ respondents in interviews which revealed that there has been little government or regulatory alignment on environmental justice issues regardless of the political administration in power. Despite the institutionalization of EJ issues in official government policy over more than four decades, EJ movement leaders still perceive significant barriers to systemic and substantive policy changes reflecting priorities.

Base-building, Narrative/Culture Shifts, and Coalitions

A leadership program that aims to support the movement must understand the impediments faced by the EJ movement and the tactics currently used for base-building, narrative shifts, and coalition-building. How is the EJ movement deploying these approaches and in what way can these efforts be leveraged for greater impact? Interviews with EJ respondents provided insight into how organizations address these three elements of the movement.

(a) Base-Building and Organizing

Most interviewees discussed the importance of effective base-building and community organizing as central to their success, often referring to it as their "bread and butter". Base-building can be part of the normal membership process of local organizations or it can be part of a larger political organizing campaign to engage impacted residents. For some organizations, base-building is explicitly tied to building broader political power.

"We used to say we organized people who are directly affected by injustice to work on changing the conditions of their lives, and changing the balance of power. We absolutely still are that organization, and still do that. And, when we made this shift from being an organization of 2,000 to saying we really need to grow in power and scale, we made an intentional shift to think differently about who is directly affected by injustice in [our state], and invite all people who think that our communities would be better off if we built grassroots power across constituencies: geography, race, age, gender, income, educational background. We really invite people to join because of the commitment to a vision, not just to whatever issue is sort of the hot thing of the moment, that could be part of building a movement and building power at a scale that we need to see." - EJ Activist 33

The tactics used by EJ groups to carry out base-building and organizing include one on one, interpersonal engagement, and relationship building over long periods of time.

"It's old school, door to door, knocking on doors, doing one on ones with folks, maintaining communication with them, maintaining relationships with them. That's our priority, maintaining a relationship with the community...because we recognize the importance of base-building, and that's always a priority..." - EJ Activist 12

(b) Narrative and Culture Shifts

EJ leaders were asked to describe the strategies that have been most successful in changing narratives and to reflect on the role that narrative shifts play in broader cultural shifts. The narrative shifts implied in the work by EJ movement leaders are focused on centering social justice and racial equity in the approach to climate and environmental problems and solutions. In an open-ended question, many survey respondents discussed the importance of how issues were framed. For instance, this may include framing an issue to show its connectivity to other challenges and intersectionality of environmental, social, and racial justice. Respondents highlighted the impactfulness of providing platforms for communities to develop and amplify their own stories and story-based strategies. Respondents discussed the importance of cultivating champions and messengers for their campaigns.

Other popular strategies included community engagement and leadership development. In-

terview respondents noted the importance of diversity and representation in order to enact real, substantive change. They found success when people from frontline communities were in positions of power and decision making, either within organizations or government (**Table 1**).

Table 1: Examples of Survey Responses to Best Strategies for Shifting the Narrative
▪ Messaging
▪ Intersectionality
▪ Storytelling
▪ Public Awareness
▪ Community Engagement
▪ Diversity and Representation
▪ Leadership Development
▪ Education
▪ Advocacy
▪ Media
▪ Direct Action
▪ Research and Analysis

Some interviewees discussed the importance of ensuring communication strategies and storytelling reflect the work and values of the organization, rather than serve as a shallow form of public relations. Similar to survey responses, some EJ leaders said their first step in shifting the narrative is to engage their base in exercises to develop, share, and disseminate stories within the community and beyond. Some organizations mentioned using social media platforms to tell their story, however, others stated that their community members are not able to access these platforms due to the digital divide.

One challenge to narrative shifts raised by multiple interviewees was limited staff and resource capacity for investing in narrative change work. Interviewees also noted the challenge of securing funding and appropriate staffing to mount effective communications strategies. These barriers result in a feedback loop in which even successful EJ organizations are unable to leverage their wins for increased funding or public support due to limited communications.

"I do think that looking at [shifting] narratives has been so impactful for our history, both in developing a climate justice narrative, rooted in environmental justice, at a time where green national groups have been working on climate change and weren't even considering what justice meant in terms of climate change."[16] *- EJ Activist 3*

Some examples of this include limited access to mainstream news outlets, and limited capacity to write press releases or disseminate information broadly to external audiences, produce online or digital content, such as promotional materials. There is also a common frustration about the visibility of mainstream organizations relative to EJ organizations. Even when EJ groups lead efforts, mainstream groups are able to "capture" the media's limited attention because of their well-resourced communications infrastructure.

"As soon as the state energy legislation passed, every big green out there that worked on it was like, 'Look at us, we get equity. Look at us, we included EJ.' But how much did we have to fight with you to get that in there? They [Big Greens] cornered the market with webinars. They cornered the market with media releases, and funding briefings...we didn't have the time, the capacity, or the resources. We missed out on being able to take credit, if you will, when it came to that bill."[17] *- EJ Activist 12*

EJ respondents also reflected on the broader cultural shifts that result from successful changes in the narrative around climate and environmental justice. The cultural shifts implied in the EJ movement focus on a transformation of our economic and social structures. The EJ movement proposes a shift to a less capitalistic and consumptive society in which communities of color and low income communities are fully engaged in a liberatory project of self determination, deep democracy, and regenerative economic activities that promise well-being and a reversal of the climate crisis. This call to address the climate crisis by the EJ movement is grounded in a Just Transition model which ties their environmental justice efforts to broader social justice goals.

"At that point we kind of formally adopted - maybe four, five years ago - what we call the Just Transition framework, which is about transition from extractive energy, finance, food, water systems to more democratic community-controlled systems and thinking about what that takes from a material standpoint, a spiritual standpoint, an educational, leadership standpoint..." - *EJ Activist 47*

(c) Coalition-Building and Collaborations

Almost every interview respondent spoke to the critical importance of collaborations or coalition based work as part of their efforts to be a more impactful movement. The responses ranged from local or regional based collaborations to national coalitions or alliances with larger national scale organizations. The collaborations and coalitions described included both horizontal and vertical coalitions with either similarly situated groups across different geographies, or with aligned groups across different movements but focused on strategic goals.

The most successful collaborations noted by respondents were often ones that were initiated by the EJ organization with other local groups or trusted partners, or with other organizations operating under a guiding set of justice based principles like the Jemez Principles.[18] Respondents described ad hoc coalitions formed for targeted campaigns versus long term, sustained partnerships engaged in deeper movement building efforts.

"One of the things that has always helped us and I know that folks like you are very aware of, is developing collaboratives, mutual collaboratives with science folks, and community folks, and researchers ... where everybody has a stake at the table or everybody can contribute, and where things can be put in place that guarantees that somebody's not going to become the expert on somebody else's harm." - *EJ Activist 19*

Many locally-based EJ organizations included in the interviews are members of multiple coalitions and alliances, including regional, state, and national coalitions of EJ groups. Many of these EJ or climate justice networks have formed in the last decade as the EJ movement has continued to expand their issue scope and formalize their networks across the country. While collaborations are often necessary in order to reach organizational and movement goals, these alliances require precious resources and capacity to sustain over time. The majority of grassroots EJ organizations have less staff capacity to dedicate to engagement in multiple networked coalitions, alliances, and collaborations and therefore have to be strategic about how to prioritize their involvement.

"We need spaces where EJ and CJ folks nationally, if they want to, or regionally, if they want to, have spaces to network, coordinate, and work together to become more powerful for their local work. But in order for the EJ and CJ [movement] to continue and not die, it's so important to continue the model of grassroots work too..." - *EJ Activist 6*

The importance of coalition-building across movements and sectors was also raised by some interview respondents, with some reflecting on the difficulty of forming trusting relationships or strategic relationships with sectors that have not been traditional partners to the EJ movement.

"I think that if people understood strategy and balance of forces, then you would understand at a certain moment, that yes, there are certain sectors of the movement that will betray you because of their philosophical and political allegiance to the issue only goes up to a certain point. But if you know that from the very beginining, you can say, 'Oh, okay, this union can only go so far. But then we need a plan to peel off and push the left of labor." - *EJ Activist 1*

The relative power of the EJ movement to be an effective change agent, particularly with respect to climate justice, lies in part on the ability to form strategic alliances with other movements like progressive labor, environment, immigrant rights, Black Lives Matter, and reproductive justice. The interviews reveal both the tensions and possibilities for forging powerful alliances capable of broader political, social, and economic transformations.

"In this kind of emerging new political moment, we don't have the luxury to choose our comfortable partners, but have to hold uncomfortable partnerships....I think there's been so much harm done historically between sectors that often times we make a strategic decision not to interact with other groups and then fall short on being able to deliver on some wins that we might have been able to, had we engaged in some of these uncomfortable relationships. I think that's one of the challenges." - *EJ Activist 3*

Leadership and Program Needs

One of the final interview questions asked EJ leaders to discuss the characteristics of a leadership program they believe would make a profound impact on the movement. This question generated a wide range of responses from the very practical skills-based set of offerings to more overarching program design and goals.

Many EJ leaders are looking for new ways to engage the next generation of activists and also to deepen the efficacy of their platforms by employing newer, potentially more contentious strategies. Leaders, in particular those who were executive directors or senior staff, spoke about wanting the program to address leadership succession:

"I'm starting to think about leadership succession and thinking about how to do this. But I've been really thinking a lot about strong plans for leadership succession, and I think especially in grassroots and EJ organizations...founder syndrome just gets in deep." - *EJ Activist 15*

One EJ leader expressed a desire to not only build on existing resources, but also have opportunities for participants to fail and learn from their failure, which allows for more experimental thinking. Another participant described the optimal program as one that would,

"It [the program] really should support the many experiments of what scaling up a true [Just] Transition looks like in frontline communities and supporting...the thinking and the acting and the practice of Just Transitions, the iterative nature of that deep-thinking design." - *EJ Activist 10*

The bulk of the responses about leadership program needs included opportunities for learning hard skills, accessing technical support, and space for reflecting, organizing, and developing campaign strategies.

"I think it's organizing. I wouldn't want the fellowship to be too policy [oriented]...We need some policy help, but I wouldn't want to send one of our organizers or grassroots leaders to go learn more about policy, honestly...What I think we would want is a program that really is about leadership development of emerging staff leaders." - *EJ Activist 33*

Along with campaign strategy support, EJ leaders also asked that the program give time for innovation and a chance to explore new strategies, broader political power analysis, and space to do real strategic movement alignment that often is lacking due to resource scarcity and time pressures.

"....[the opportunity to] dive into power and scale, into alignment around policy ... not the nitty gritty of policy language, but conceptually, what are we fighting for? What is our combined platform or agenda? How are we going to win?...So I think some actual power analysis, not for the sake of just learning how to do a power analysis, but for the sake of actually moving on something together. It doesn't have to be something where a cohort has to sign on the dotted line and agree that we're all going to work on projects together or something. It is, I think, a bigger, broader movement, approach." -*Miya Yoshitani, Executive Director of Asian Pacific Environmental Network*

A number of interview respondents asked for various types of technical support and hard-skills training to be offered in the leadership program. **Table 2** details some of the program components suggested by respondents including: business development, policy analysis, proposal writing, public speaking, social media, GIS, curriculum development, facilitation, writing, coalition-building, power analysis, and planning.

Table 2: Interview Responses for Suggested Leadership Program Components

- Strategic Planning
- Campaign Strategy
- Organizing for Alignment/Coalition-Building
- EJ History Curriculum
- Technical Resources
- Organizer Training
- Technical Skills
- Leadership Succession Strategy and Training
- Peer Mentorship
- Cohort
- Networking
- Transformative Justice Theory
- Strength Based Theory
- Time for Self-Care
- Space to Develop Innovative Strategies
- Tactical Tools
- Organizational Management & Support
- Coaching
- Power Analysis
- Research Science
- Legal Support

Interviewees discussed potential ways to structure the program that they believe would be ideal for movement leaders. Some of these suggestions included making it a cohort based program, while several spoke of the importance of being clear about the target audience for the program and the structures that would be put in place to ensure access. Several of the interviewees were senior leaders that remarked on the importance of young leaders being able to attend the program, meaning both as the target audience but also ensuring that there would be local or regional components.

"Well, I feel like leaders need to be taught how to create the next generation of leaders. They're not going to be around forever. And how do we bring up the up and coming younger folks that aren't necessarily in that position, and how do these leaders remember where they were 10, 20 years ago, and look at outreach to people that might not seem like they have the skill set yet, but they could, with time and practice?" -Kandi White, Lead Organizer at Indigenous Environmental Network

Transformative Movement Touchstones

The prompt to reflect on the most transformative or inspiring campaigns in recent memory was one of the pivotal points of many interviews. It was a moment for respondents to articulate their perceptions of the most inspirational aspects of the movement and an opportunity to pivot toward the possibilities for future movement impact.

Both survey respondents and interviewees overwhelmingly mentioned local campaigns and wins that gave them hope and represented transformative moments that resulted in material improvements in their communities. This is not surprising given the rootedness and place-based nature of grassroots, EJ organizations. Many of their efforts are focused on local responses to material injustices which tie resistance to deeper drivers of systemic injustice. These local wins reflect the direct improvement of conditions for frontline communities. For example, such initiatives included work on issues ranging from transportation access, worker justice, cooperative organizing, housing, clean water, and community energy investments.

EJ leaders also discussed the crucial importance of intersectionality which brings together advocates from different sectors working on issues such as transportation, housing, public spaces, and toxins.

"So I think the transformative strategy is the intersectionality of issues. Not just looking at EJ, but looking at racial justice and gender equity, and breaking down all the barriers and saying there's so much intersectionality between all of our work....and again looking at energy and transportation, and climate and air, and looking at breaking down all those barriers so we're not just focused on air. We're not just focused on land or water...I think breaking all of those down, and showing a larger umbrella of social and environmental justice have been more powerful and more transformative." EJ Activist 45

Beyond local efforts, nationally recognized campaigns like Standing Rock and the Dollar Store Campaign were mentioned by interviewees. Other inspiring campaigns mentioned by survey respondents included the Sunrise Movement, Just Transition, It Takes Roots, Green New Deal, Black Lives Matter, and key ballot initiatives. The Standing Rock (NO DAPL) campaign in particular was men-

tioned by approximately ten interview respondents as sparking a national conversation and capturing the public imagination in a way that many local EJ struggles rarely do. The values and tactics of the EJ movement were on full display during this prolonged campaign, including self determination, frontline resistance, direct action and intersectional coalitions. Standing Rock presented a systemic critique of economic and political forces which sided with fossil fuel interests, and offered an alternative narrative for a future tied to indigenous culture. While politically, the outcomes of Standing Rock were less definitive, the cultural and narrative impact were undeniable. "Water is Life" became a recognizable rallying cry for an alternative way to relate to the climate crisis. This campaign provides useful insights into potential transformative campaigns in the EJ movement.

"Standing Rock shifted the way that we talk about what needs to happen... Not saying that it was perfect, but it changed the way that everybody I know talks about pipelines, talks about oil, lobbyists, talks about collusion between government and corporate lobbyists in a microcosm. The American political system was laid bare when you had private security shooting at peaceful protestors for government officials as the Nation closed its eyes. And that, I think, for a generation of folks who have been looking for some sort of hope, some sort of political platform for climate justice, Standing Rock is the center of gravity for the way that people talk now." - *EJ Activist 16*

Summary of Landscape Findings

The key takeaways from the landscape assessment include some useful insights into the strategies, structure, and expression of the EJ movement as it rapidly adapts to the evolving nature of the climate crisis and resultant environmental justice problems. The following summarizes these takeaways:

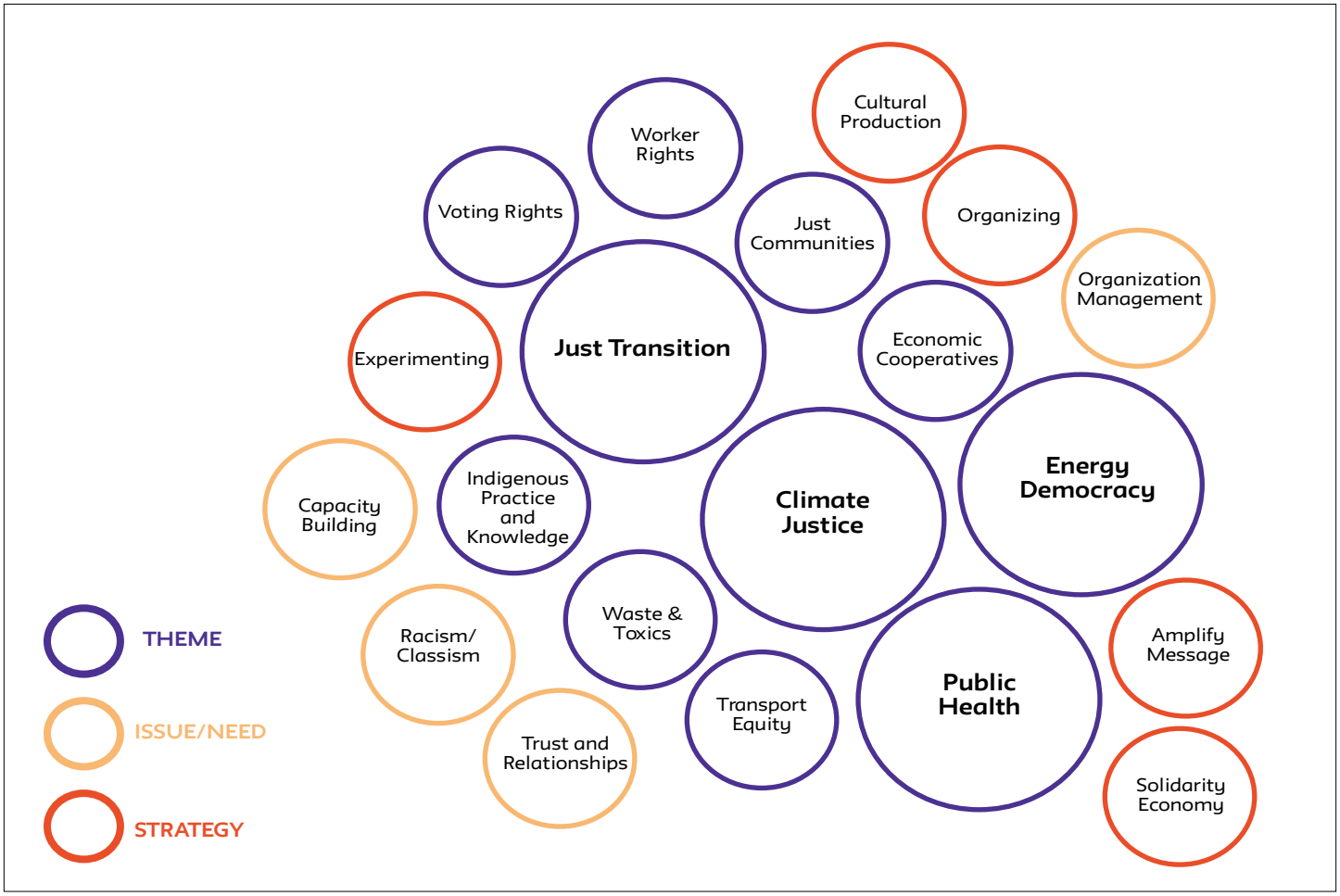
- EJ organizations, when compared to mainstream environmental organizations, have relatively smaller budgets and staffing capacity. Almost 60 percent of EJ organizations have budgets under $1 million and 66 percent have fifteen or less employees.
- Despite this small scale, EJ organizations and their leaders have long tenures in the movement, with 42 percent of EJ leaders working in the movement for more than a decade and more than 60 percent of organizations established for more than a decade. These groups and individuals are increasingly stretched to address the climate crisis alongside existing environmental inequalities.
- EJ movement organizations are well networked in regional, state, and national alliances and these alliances are seen by the movement as a central tactic for successful initiatives at multiple scales.
- Climate Justice is a top priority for the EJ movement. As the movement continues to contend with a broad array of local environmental issues, they are also forced to address the growing climate emergency exacerbating existing inequalities.
- The EJ movement prioritizes grassroots organizing, base-building, and coalition-building as central strategies to achieving their goals.
- The Just Transition framework is increasingly used to inform the intersectional work of EJ organizations.
- Local campaigns are the touchstones of transformative initiatives in the EJ movement as they result in material improvements and substantive examples of systemic alternatives to environmental and climate injustice.
- The ability of EJ organizations to shift popular narratives and, ultimately, shift cultural norms around climate and environmental justice is limited in part due to limited resources and capacity in communications.
- Standing Rock serves as an example of a successful narrative shift in the movement that could be catalyzed to lead to a larger cultural shift.

Emergent Themes

An analysis of interviews allowed several overarching themes to emerge. These themes were used to define a framework for the overall program design. **Figure 4** is a visual depiction of the themes identified from the interviews conducted with EJ movement leaders. The largest circles in the figure, Just Transition, Climate Justice, Energy Democracy, and Public Health, emerged as broad themes most often cited by interviewees. Just Transition was identified as an overarching framework that was referenced by respondents and that could be used to help inform a leadership development program.

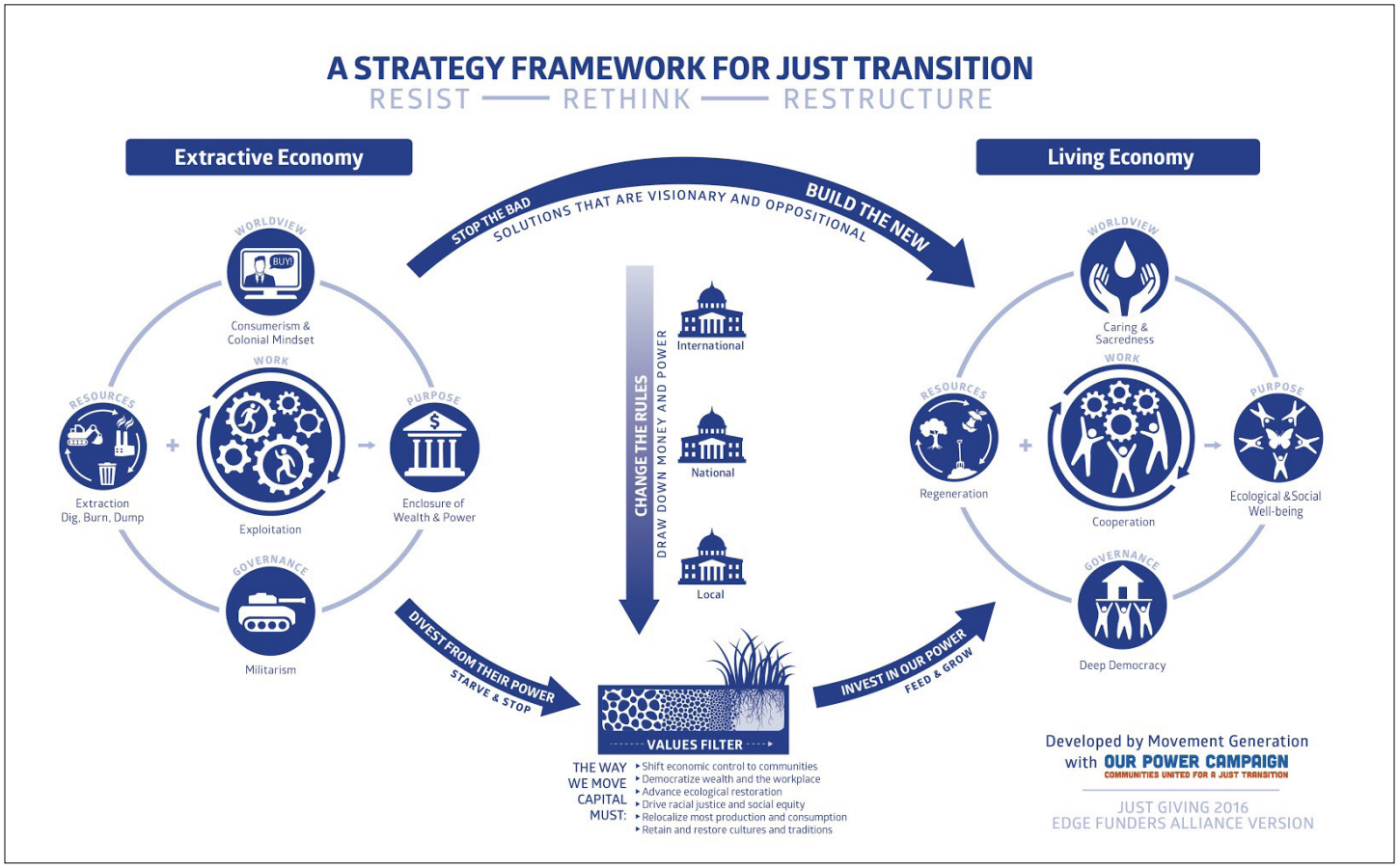
The Just Transition concept presented as a salient framework among movement leaders and it has built into it concepts and processes that can be useful for shaping social movement work. The version of Just Transition that many of the EJ movement respondents referenced originates from the framework developed by Movement Generation and the Our Power Campaign, whose members are also members of the Climate Justice Alliance. **Figure 5** depicts the Just Transition framing developed by these groups (Design by Micah Bazant).[19]

Figure 4: Emergent Themes from Interviews



Key: The yellow circles indicate issues or needs, red circles indicate strategies used by the field, and purple circles are overarching themes or frameworks. The size of the circles visually show the percentage of times these terms were used in interviews or survey responses.

Figure 5: A Strategy Framework For Just Transition



This framing is a holistic approach that addresses the shift from the current fossil fuel driven, capitalistic economy to what is named a "living" or regenerative economy. EJ respondents in interviews reflect on this approach in their framing of future-casting alternative visions.

"Just Transition to a new economy is our expression of a systemic alternative in the U.S. Inspiring people to build power, fight for governance, practice community control and think outside the constraints of what is possible." - *EJ Activist 1*

One of the first usages of the term Just Transition can be found in the labor movement. As the impacts of climate change on the economy became more clear, this led many to explore the potential impacts on jobs, workers, and industries that would inevitably occur. The transition implied in this term is a shift away from a fossil fuel intensive economy to a "greener" economy driven by a more sustainable energy sector. This vision of transitioning existing workers into new or different sectors of the economy keeps the notion squarely within a traditional framework of a capitalist model of production and labor. Steven Tufts suggests there are four versions of the Just Transition framing that have been articulated by different groups that include: (1) green capitalism, (2) state-centered approach (i.e. green new deal), (3) organic energy democracy, (4) just green capitalism.[20] Of these four options, the one most closely aligned with the Movement Generation's schematic may be the "Organic Energy Democracy" version which describes the transition away from a fossil fuel based economy to one in which, "...working people

are radicalized towards direct democracy, workers transition out of fossil fuel jobs at the expense of the industry, prioritizes EJ."[21] Environmental and climate justice activists have adopted a vision of a Just Transition which includes a radical reframing of our relationship to the modes of production through the direct control of those systems.

We understand that we have to shift our economy. The problem with climate change is not just emissions, it's what we need those extractive products for, right? So if we actually shifted our energy system, we would not need fossil fuels. Certainly not to the extent that we have them now. So our sustainable economy energy democracy work is around getting people to understand the concept of energy democracy, what it is to control your own energy, what it is for us to use and create a new economy around renewable energy. - EJ Activist 32

The Movement Generation version of the Just-Transition framework used by EJ leaders embodies the process by which communities can redefine their relationship to work and as a way to account for past injustices and reset the terms of prosperity and well being for communities that are suffering the worst burdens of economic and environmental exploitation. Climate and environmental justice activists are exploring the multiple ways in which this idea of Just Transition can be put into practice. In this process of engagement with the term Just Transition they are seeking ways to bridge the ideals of climate justice and the interventions necessary to implement such a vision.

"...there are a handful of places, including our community, where you can go and see the future, or what should be the future when it comes to next generation food systems, water infrastructure that the community builds, energy infrastructure that the community builds and owns, housing infrastructure that the community builds and owns, and the integration of those things can make environmental justice very real and very physical and tangible." EJ Activist 47

Many organizations and alliances that are part of the EJ movement are articulating some version of a Just Transition vision. These framings may have their unique expressions of how the vision is implemented on the ground in their own communities.

Being able to articulate that [Just Transition] and then put a plan to it and then find resourcing for that is a useful way of building the new and it is how we have used our narrative for looking at a Just Transition. – EJ Activist 3

One facet of this leadership development program will be to provide a platform for participants to generate, share, and test ideas around Just Transition frameworks and processes for building Just Transition initiatives at multiple scales.

Proposed Leadership Program

The inspiration for the creation of a leadership program came directly from the need for a significant shift in our collective responses to the twin crises of climate and inequality and the opportunity to invest in the EJ movement as a major force for driving this shift. The program focuses on investing at the organizational and movement level as a force for significant narrative and cultural shifts. The proposed program was informed by feedback, insights, and analyses from the landscape assessment and is intended to serve the needs of the EJ movement

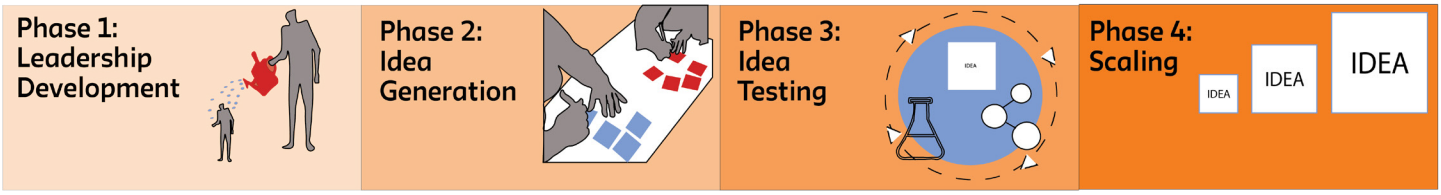
at a critical time of climate urgency and the emergence of the Just transition framework. It is designed to provide space for EJ leaders to generate and test innovative and contentious strategies within this framework response to the climate crisis.

The proposed leadership program will be housed at The New School as part of the Tishman Environment and Design Center, in collaboration with the Social Movements + Innovation Lab. The program will be guided by environmental justice principles and social movement theories and will be structured around a Just Transition framework. The program will focus, in particular, on the mindsets and capacities needed to create novel, creative and disruptive forms for challenging the current system of environmental exploitation for greater social movement impact. The program would leverage the practices of innovation and collaboration towards strategies that can disrupt the status quo and break open opportunities for social movement action.

The proposed program will begin as a pilot and will be structured as a two-year, modular, cohort-based program with four 6-month phases. The aims of the program include: 1) build the capacity of EJ leaders and organizations, 2) provide opportunities and safe space to generate, test, and scale innovative ideas, and 3) provide networking and movement building opportunities. **Figure 6** shows the four phases of the program and the corresponding time scale.

In this initial pilot, the program will invite a cohort of 16 EJ movement leaders to co-design the program's curriculum, allowing for the testing, evaluation, and iteration of the substantive components of all four phases. Participants will recieve multiple layers of support, including retreats, coaching, webinar trainings, and access to potential seed and project funding. Coaches will support participants as they develop, test, and scale their ideas and also in breaking through any barriers they encounter in working the program at the individual, interpersonal, organizational, or movement level. The initial cohort may also be connected directly to potential pools of funding that will allow for testing and scaling of innovative project ideas generated as part of the program. The hope is to provide a foundation and resources for EJ leaders to develop and test new ideas around ways to use repertoires of contention with the potential for greater movement impact.

Figure 6: Phases of the Program



The climate crisis is accelerating and deepening existing inequalities, making the movement for climate justice increasingly urgent. EJ leaders are poised to advance a vision of climate justice grounded in a Just Transition framework that can challenge the status quo of exploitative and polluting economic systems. In order to advance this ambitious and more radical vision, significant investments will need to be made in the EJ movement to leverage and grow their impact. The hope is to build a leadership program that can help scale the impact of this powerful movement for climate and environmental justice.

Endnotes

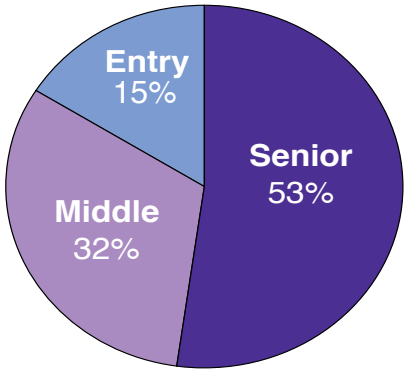
1 Schlosberg, David. "Reconceiving Environmental Justice: Global Movements and Political Theories." Environmental Politics 13, 3(2014): 517-540. P 527
2 Pellow, D. Politics by other Greens: The Importance of Transnational Environmental Justice Movement Networks. "In Environmental Inequalities Beyond Borders: Local Perspectives on Global Injustices, edited by Carmin, Joanne and Julian Aygeman, 247-266, 2011. P. 248
3 Environmental Grantmakers Association. "Tracking the Field, Volume 5: Exploring Environmental Grantmaking." 2011.
4 Hansen, Sarah, "Cultivating the Grassroots: A Winning Approach for Environment and Climate Funders" National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy, https://www.ncrp.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Cultivating_the_grassroots_final_lowres.pdf
5 ibid
6 Robert Bullard, Glenn Johnson, Denae King, and Angel Torres. (2014). "Environmental Justice Milestones and Accomplishments: 1964-2014" p 12
7 The numbers of environmental organizations came from 2005 990s.
Baird Straughan and Tom Pollak. (2008). "The broader movement: nonprofit environmental and conservation organizations, 1989–2005
8 Tarrow, Sydney G. 1998. Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics. Cambridge, England; Cambridge University Press. In his book Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics, Sidney Tarrow outlines the four elements necessary for social movements to move forward: (1) political opportunities, (2) social networks, (3) alternative frames and narratives, and (4) repertoires of contention. Political opportunities state that social movements require vulnerability and division in the current status quo and a critical mass of people supporting alternatives to the status quo
9 Research from studies such as "Evolution of the environmental justice movement: activism, fomalization and differentiation" by Alejandro Colsa Perez, Bernadette Grafton, Paul Mohai, Rebecca Hardin, Katy Hintzen and Sara Orvis framed environmental justice groups as, "as registered
environmental justice organizations (REJOs), and define them as a registered non-profit organization (with 501c3 status) whose core mission involves protecting people of color, low-income communities
and indigenous organizations from environmental and health hazards and advocating for equal access to the decision-making process." (p.2)
10 Interviews and surveys were conducted using confidentiality agreements per the Institutional Review Board protocol approved by The New School.
11 In order to send the survey to a representative sample of EJ organizations, lists of existing membership organizations was used for national, state or regional EJ or Climate justice organizations, such as Climate Justice Alliance, MFN, GAIA, GGJA, Indigenous Environmental Network, EJCF, CEJA. Organizations that showed up in multiple lists were considered "well" networked or hubs for EJ movement work.
12 The scope of EJ organizations can be found through 990s, registered 501c3 or literature such as Alejandro Colsa Perez, Bernadette Grafton, Paul Mohai1, Rebecca Hardin, Katy Hintzen and Sara Orvis
.2015. "Evolution of the environmental justice movement: activism, formalization and differentiation". IOP publishing, Environmental Research Letters (10)
13 This map was created using zip code data collected from a survey question. Out of the 167 survey responses, 131 respondents answered the zip code survey question, therefore 36 respondents are not represented on the map. Because zip code data was the only geographic data collected, the mapped location is not exact.
14 Sarah Hansen. 2011. "Cultivating the grassroots, a winning approach for environment and climate funders." National Committee for Responsible Philanthropy.
15 Participants names were recorded when given permission and remained anonymous when not.
16 "An organization" was added to the quote to ensure the confidentiality of the respondent.
17 There were some slight changes to this quotation in order to maintain confidentiality.
18 In December, 1996, forty people of color and European-American representatives met in Jemez, New Mexico, for the "Working Group Meeting on Globalization and Trade". The Jemez meeting was hosted by the Southwest Network for Environmental and Economic Justice with the intention of hammering out common understanding between participants from different cultures, politics, and organizations. The meeting resulted in six principles known as the "Jemez Principles" for democratic organizing. https://www.ejnet.org/ej/jemez.pdf
19 Movement Generation https://movementgeneration.org/movement-generation-just-transition-framework-resources/
20 Tufts, Steven. 2011. Will the Right turn Green? Climate and Capitalism.
21 Ibid [graphic]

Appendix A: Mainstream Environmental Movement Survey Responses

Survey Responses
Mainstream Organizations Only

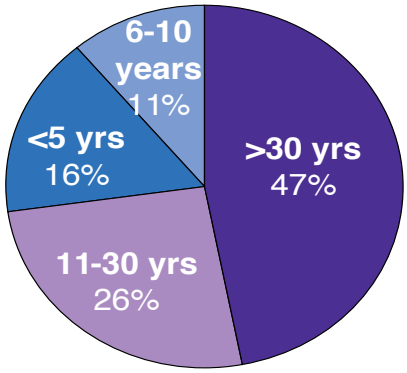
1

What is your position level at this organization? n=19



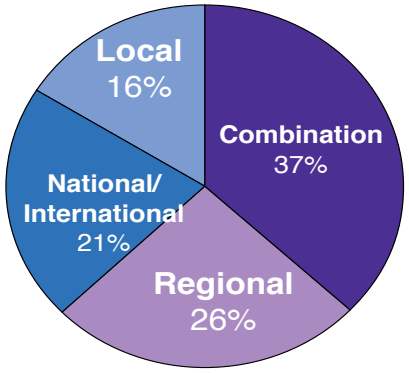
2

How long has your organization been operating? n=19



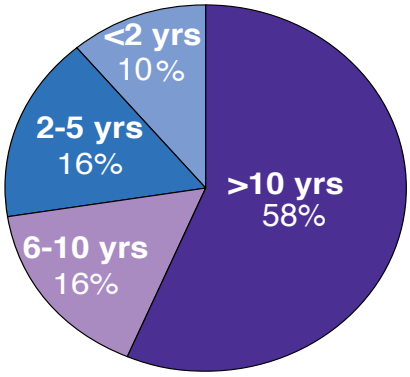
3

How would you describe your organization's geographic focus? n=19



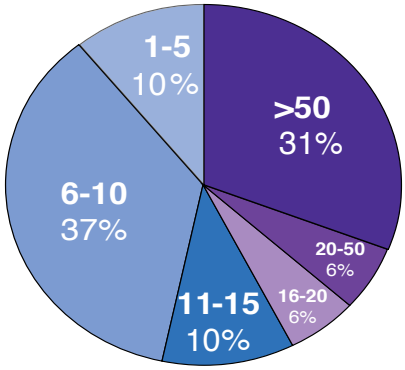
4

How long have you been working in the movement? n=19



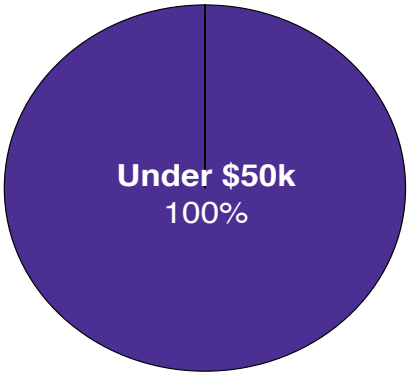
5

How many employees are part of your organization? n=19



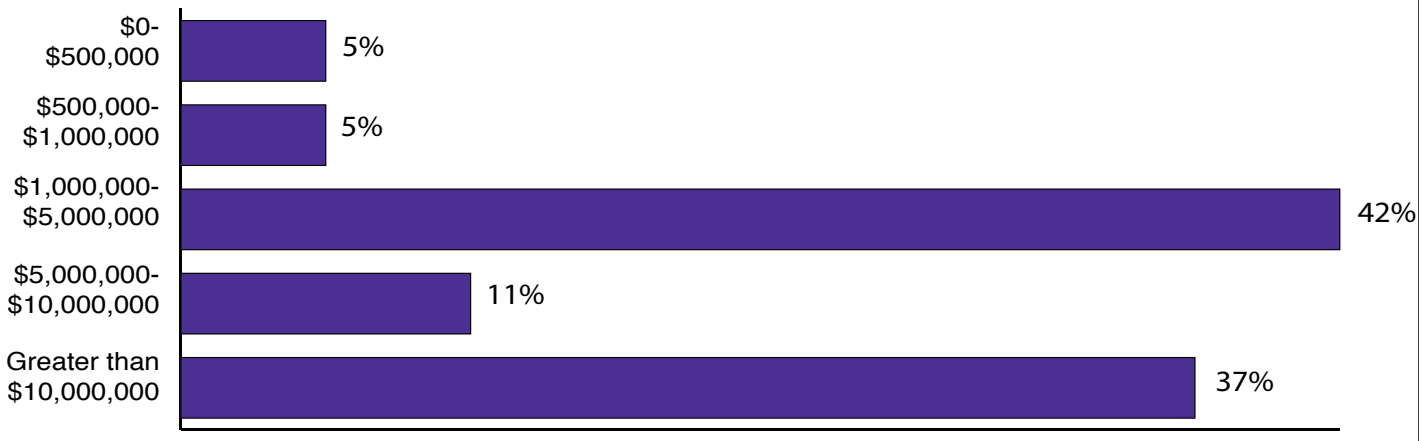
6

How much annual grant support does your organization recieve from local or regional funders? n=2



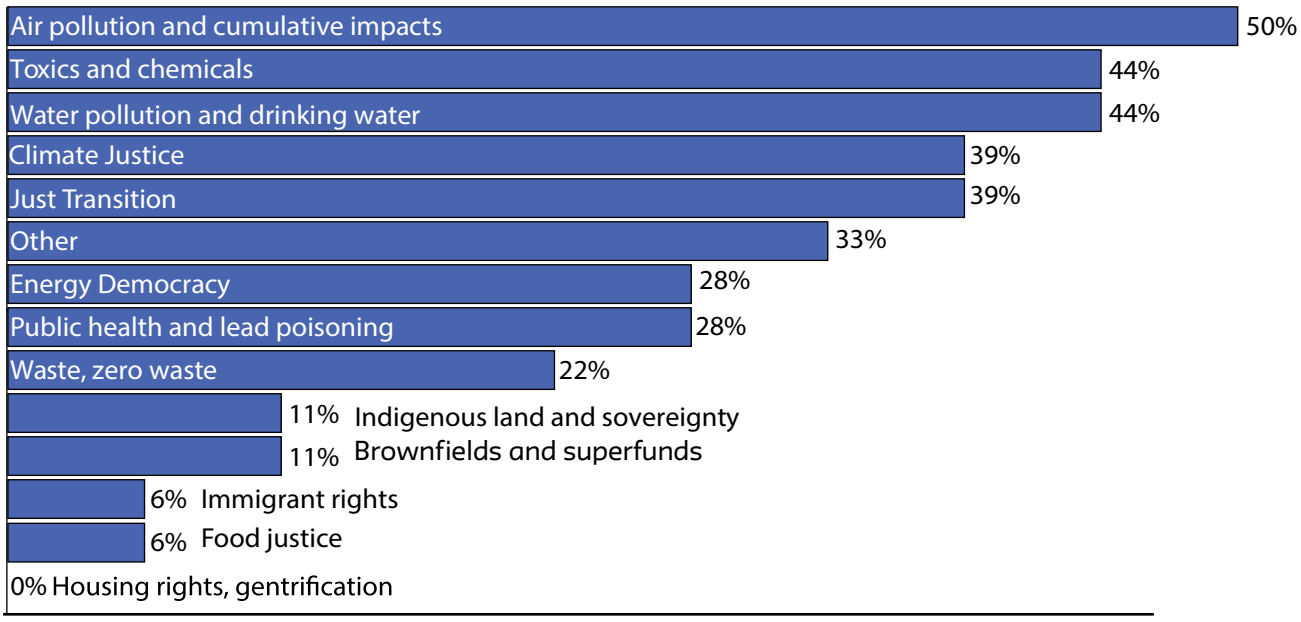
7

What is your organization's annual budget?
n=19

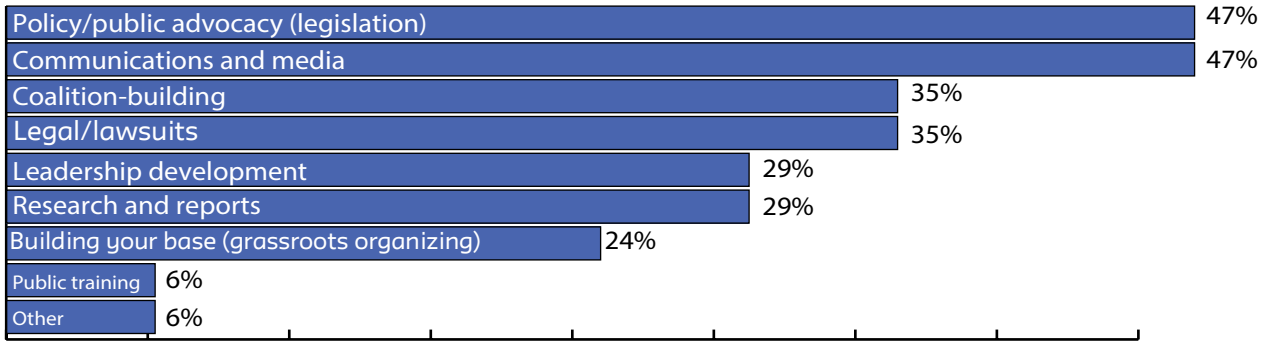


Survey Responses **Mainstream Organizations Only**

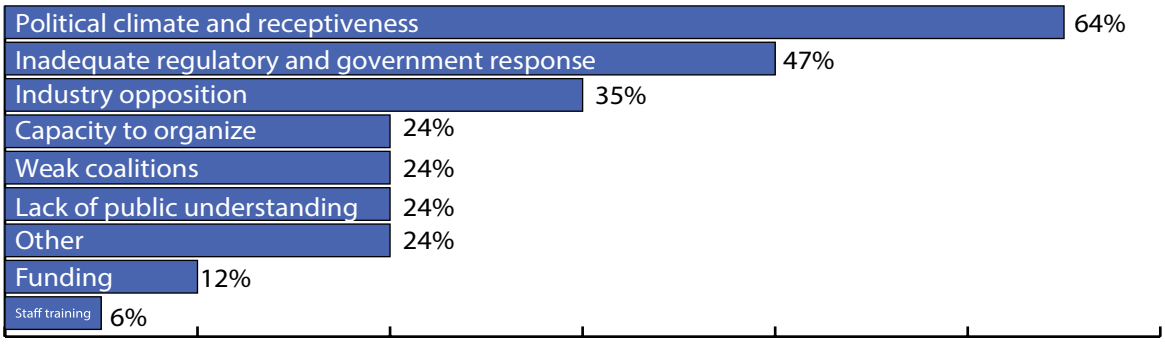
Please identify the top priorities that your organization works on (choose 5). n=18



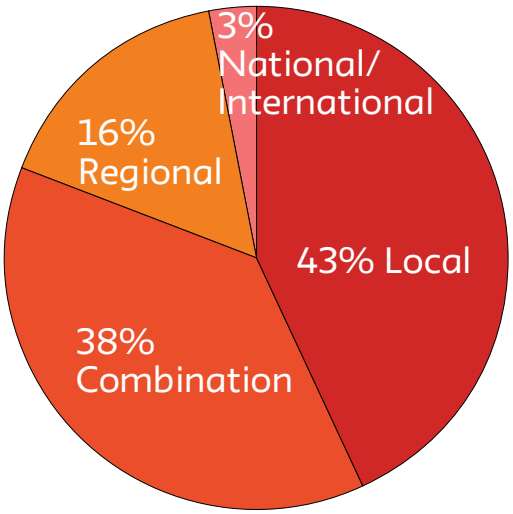
What key tactical approaches (strategies) does your organization employ to achieve your goals? (choose 3) n=17



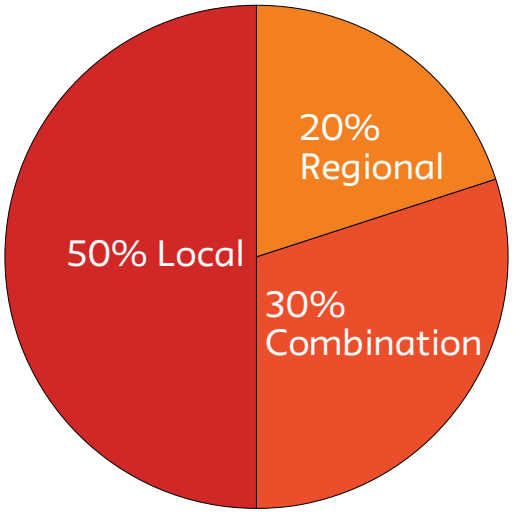
What are the biggest challenges or obstacles to achieving your organization's goals? (choose 3) n=17



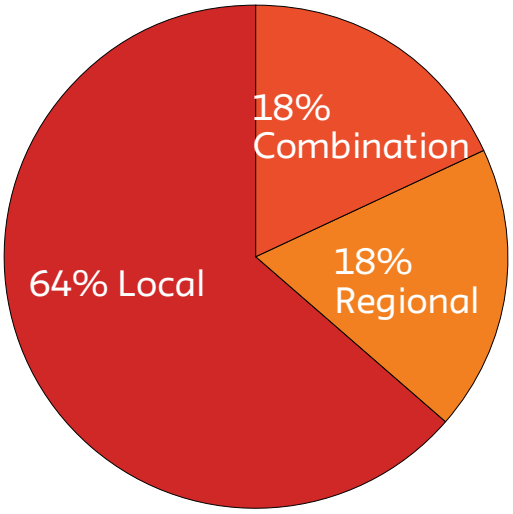
Appendix B: EJ Organizations Geographic Focus Breakdown by Budget Size



Budgets lower than $500k
n=37



Budgets lower than $100k
n=20



Budgets lower than $50k
n=11

Appendix C: Geographic Breakdown of Interview Participants

Region*	# of Participants	Organizations Represented
National	10	8
Midwest	6	5
Northwest/West	9	9
Southwest	5	3
South	4	4
East	14	10
Total	**48**	**39**

* Interview requests were sent to representatives from national organizations and individuals representing organizations in 21 states. 13 states are represented in the regional data: Illinois and Michigan (categorized as Midwest); California, Alaska, Oregon, and Washington (categorized as Northwest/West); Texas (categorized as Southwest); Georgia, Kentucky, and Mississippi (categorized as South); and Massachusetts, New Jersey, and New York (categorized as East).

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