

Environmental Justice and Philanthropy: Challenges and Opportunities for Alignment

ALIGNMENT OF PRIORITY ISSUE AREAS

MAY 2020

The study found that while there is a great deal of diversity in the issues that environmental grantmakers and EJ leaders prioritize, there is significant overlap. Ten out of 24 (42%) priority issue areas were named by both sectors. Nevertheless, the relative priority, the understanding of and approaches to these issues can diverge significantly.

In 2020, the BEA-I collaborated with the Tishman Environment and Design Center at The New School to conduct an assessment of the misalignment between the environmental justice (EJ) and philanthropic sectors in the Gulf South and Midwest regions. The study also identified areas of opportunity to build greater alignment over time.

The study found important overlap between priority issue areas of environmental grant makers and environmental justice organizations in the Gulf South and Midwest. Approximately 10 out of 24 priority issue areas were named by both grant makers and EJ leaders:

- Civic Participation
- Youth Leadership
- Renewable Energy
- Indigenous Rights
- Coastal Resiliency & Climate Adaptation
- Movement Building/Community Organizing
- Water Initiatives
- Economic & Racial Justice/Workforce Development
- Food Justice
- Climate Change

Access the report at:

<https://bea4impact.org/work/landscape-assessment>

Building Equity and Alignment for Impact

BEA-I brings together dynamic grassroots organizing groups, effective national green organizations, and innovators in philanthropy to advance the progress of the environmental movement towards a just transition and directly confront powerful polluters. <https://bea4impact.org/>

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. <https://www.tishmancenter.org/>

In the Gulf South, both sectors discussed the importance of climate adaptation and coastal resilience. In the Midwest, both EJ organizations and grantmakers named economic justice or economic mobility as priority areas.

Each sector's underlying assumptions about the root cause of issues requiring attention or funding may diverge significantly even when the language used to identify these issues is similar. The two sectors may also define and address the same issues very differently. EJ respondents emphasized the intersectionality of priority issue areas, discussing the connections between economic empowerment, community engagement, social justice, and environmental priorities. Foundations, on the other hand, tended to focus on discrete environmental issue areas.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Environmental justice organizations and grantmakers can better align their efforts by increasing opportunities to share their perspectives on the key problems and strategies to tackle priority issues. This dialogue can build a shared understanding of the issues, and an explicit theory of change that better aligns the work and funding.



Tishman Environment and Design Center

