

PHILANTHROPY'S 500/1500 CHALLENGE

Invest in Our Future and What Works Plus

AUGUST 2024



Challenge Overview

In February 2024, Invest in Our Future and What Works Plus launched Philanthropy's 500/1500 Challenge **to further implementation of federal climate and clean energy investments.**

The Challenge, which concluded at the end of May 2024, galvanized philanthropy to raise awareness about projects, increase coordination among key entities, and support communities across the country to learn about, access, and implement funds.

The two-part Challenge was designed to track:

- **500 places:** Philanthropically-funded education and awareness activities in cities, counties, regions, states, and tribal nations.
- **1500 projects:** Philanthropically-funded efforts to help stand up and implement projects (e.g., technical assistance, gap/match funding, and workforce development). In response to a remarkable number of Project submissions from philanthropy, this goal was increased tenfold from its initial goal of 150 to 1500.

Activities Tracked in the Challenge

Expanding **education and awareness** of federal funding opportunities



Facilitating **earned media**

Promoting **technical assistance** opportunities

Holding **events** highlighting federal investments

Forming **partnerships** to support other eligible activities

Providing project- or community-focused technical assistance to **access federal funds**



Providing **matching or gap-filling funds** to support projects and investments in progress

Forming **partnerships** to support other eligible activities

Providing technical assistance to **agencies and awardees** to support implementation of federal investments in progress

Supporting **workforce development and training**

Challenge Impact By the Numbers

Philanthropy met and exceeded both Challenge goals by a wide margin. Based on the final count, participating funders' recent investments are estimated to impact 1,722 education and awareness activities in places across all 50 states, D.C., and Puerto Rico, and 1,979 efforts to stand up and implement projects (e.g., technical assistance, gap/match funding, and workforce development). **Ultimately, the Challenge tracked:**

>\$231M
in grantmaking

1722 Places
/ 500 goal

1979 Projects
/ 1500 goal



Key Communities Impacted by 'Places' Investments

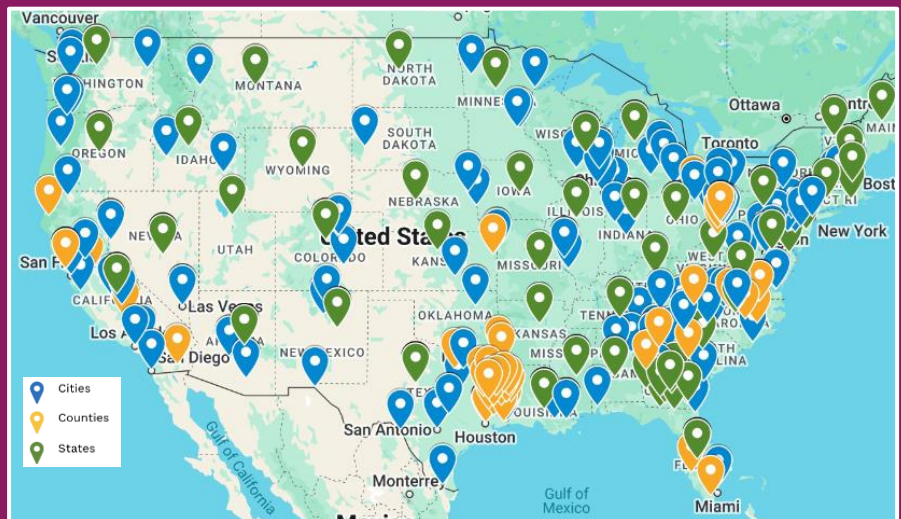
We received 196 eligible submissions representing 1,722 qualifying activities for the 'places' portion of the Challenge. These submissions included self-reported data regarding communities impacted by activities. Some activities were listed as impacting multiple types of communities.



Geographic Location of 'Places' Investments

This map represents submissions received through the Challenge for education and awareness activities – recently supported by philanthropy – in specific cities, counties, regions, states, and tribal nations. **Access the interactive version of the map at this link.**

Ultimately, the Challenge tracked **1,722 activities** spanning across all **50 states, DC, and Puerto Rico.**



Participating Funders

Invest in Our Future and What Works Plus would like to extend their sincere gratitude to the many funders, intermediaries, and grantees whose partnership made it possible to surpass the Challenge's ambitious goals. This collective achievement is a testament to the philanthropic community's strong commitment to the successful implementation of federal climate and clean energy investments.

Thank you to the following participating funders:

- Barr Foundation
- Bloomberg Philanthropies
- Breakthrough Energy
- BuildUS
- Cleveland Foundation
- Climate and Clean Energy Equity Fund
- ClimateWorks Foundation
- David and Lucile Packard Foundation
- Energy Foundation
- Families and Workers Fund
- Ford Foundation
- George Gund Foundation
- Heinz Endowments
- Hive Fund for Climate and Gender Justice
- Invest in Our Future
- James Irvine Foundation
- John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation
- Kresge Foundation
- Lumina Foundation
- Marin Community Foundation
- McKnight Foundation
- New York Community Trust
- Open Society Foundations
- Pittsburgh Foundation
- Rockefeller Foundation
- Transit Center
- T.L.L. Temple Foundation
- U.S. Energy Foundation
- Walmart Foundation
- Waverley Street Foundation
- Wells Fargo
- William and Flora Hewlett Foundation
- Anonymous Funders

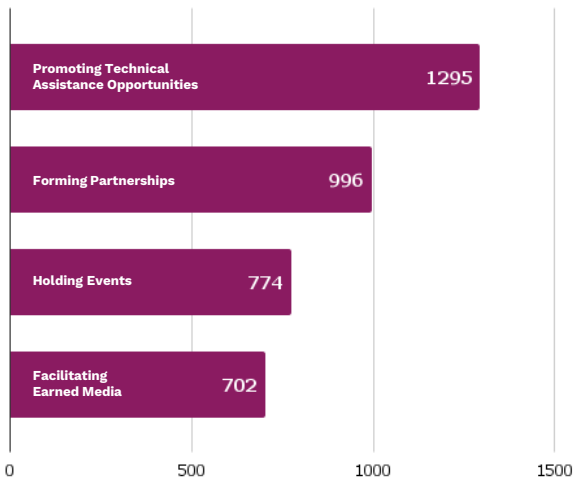


Gaps & Next Steps for Philanthropy

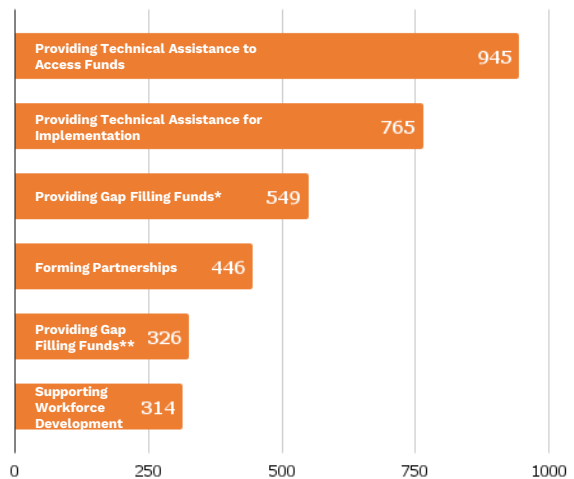
As of summer 2024, most federal climate and clean energy programs funded by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and Inflation Reduction Act have launched, and communities are starting to receive awards and execute tax credit transactions. In addition to exploring grantmaking for critical activities that currently appear underinvested in, philanthropy should consider adapting some of its strategies to meet the needs of this current phase of implementation.

The charts below represent the focus areas of activities captured through the Challenge. Please note some Challenge submissions attributed multiple focus areas to individual activities.

Number of Activities by Focus Area for "Places"



Number of Activities by Focus Area for "Projects"



*To support projects and investments in-progress.
**To access federal funds.

Philanthropy can respond to a new phase of implementation by investing in...



Workforce Development for Incoming Clean Energy Jobs

Philanthropy's Opportunity: Develop and support a specialized clean energy workforce that meets the needs of local industry and emerging job markets.

State of Play: Workforce development is critical to filling the millions of new jobs needed to realize our nation's clean energy transition. Yet only 16% of the activities captured as part of 'projects' portion of the Challenge had a workforce development component, with many those activities being a small part of a larger investment. Federal investments have already created good-paying jobs in communities, and philanthropy will need to support the increasingly skilled positions becoming available throughout the next decade.



Strategic Storytelling by Trusted Messengers

Philanthropy's Opportunity: Uplift the local impact of federal investments to inspire new and broader audiences to take advantage of available opportunities.

State of Play: Challenge participants are leading tremendous communications work. However, there remains a significant need for communities and policymakers to understand the economic, equity, and environmental transformations occurring in real time. A large majority of Americans are unaware of the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) and its benefits. Philanthropy can strategically uplift stories to help new audiences understand the incredible opportunities available to them.

Gaps and Next Steps for Philanthropy Continued



Effective GGRF Deployment and Project Pipeline Development

Philanthropy's Opportunity: Support Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund (GGRF) Awardees to effectively deploy funds and strengthen eligible entities to draw down funds.

State of Play: As organizations receive unprecedented levels of funding from the IRA's \$27 billion GGRF, philanthropy can support recipients to ensure smart operational practices that emphasize continued learning and equitable lending practices. Philanthropy can also support eligible entities to engage with GGRF selectees, developing sound and community-centered proposals that are ripe for investment. 756 'project' activities tracked through the Challenge included the provision of TA to support implementation, but the number of projects needing this support could go into the thousands as GGRF awardees begin distributing their awards.



Technical Assistance and Bridge Funding for Direct Pay

Philanthropy's Opportunity: Support eligible entities to access Direct Pay and provide gap financing.

State of Play: While the IRA's Direct Pay provision offers tax-exempt entities building and operating clean energy projects a unique opportunity to receive tax credits, too few qualifying entities are aware of this mechanism or have the on-hand resources to support Direct Pay transactions. Philanthropy can support additional efforts like gap financing or revolving funds to help qualifying entities take advantage of Direct Pay. Yet, only 28% of the activities captured as part of 'projects' portion of the Challenge reported a gap-filling fund component to support in-progress projects. As eligible entities will only receive funds from Direct Pay after the transaction is completed, philanthropy can support back pay and bridge funding to enable more tax-exempt entities to initiate projects.



Continued Research and Sharing of Best Practices

Philanthropy's Opportunity: Uplift best practices and learnings from on-the-ground implementation to catalyze smoother and more effective deployment.

State of Play: As projects break ground in communities across the country, local implementation stakeholders are developing invaluable learnings. Philanthropy can help develop resources and convene organizations to share best practices, ultimately facilitating greater program applications, Direct Pay transactions, GGRF investments, and more. While 45% of 'places' activities captured in the Challenge included events focused on highlighting federal investment opportunities, philanthropy can expand support for events aimed specifically at sharing best practices and learnings from ongoing implementation efforts.



Local Funding, Intermediaries, and Community Foundations

Philanthropy's Opportunity: Strengthen community foundations, intermediaries, and other place-based funders to resource and organize their respective communities.

State of Play: To best support place-based activities in response to evolving implementation needs, national philanthropies could benefit from increasing their giving to and coordination with community foundations and other local intermediaries. National philanthropies can support more community foundations and intermediaries with deep, local relationships and organizing abilities.

Submission Spotlights

Expanding education and awareness of federal funding opportunities

Cleveland Foundation | Action for the Climate Emergency: Places

With funding from the Cleveland Foundation, [Action for the Climate Emergency](#) (ACE) launched programs to mobilize youth networks across Cleveland and the state of Ohio to provide education and awareness of Inflation Reduction Act incentives and resources to community members.

Community Foundation Climate Collaborative: Places

The Community Foundation Climate Collaborative (CFCC)'s network of community foundations across the country has hosted a series of learning sessions on federal funding topics including time-sensitive climate funding opportunities, Direct Pay, and federal application readiness. Through its 5 Regional Action Networks, CFCC has also held regional meetings to provide education on federal funding opportunities and promote technical assistance opportunities.

McKnight Foundation | Clean Energy Resource Teams: Places and Projects

Minnesota's Clean Energy Resource Teams (CERTs) is written into state statute as a unique government/ university/ nonprofit partnership that provides technical assistance to clean energy projects, including but not limited to farmers, businesses, schools, local governments and residents. With \$530,000 in support from the McKnight Foundation, CERTs has been providing free educational tools to Minnesotans about the IRA's opportunities, including short videos, PowerPoints, and handouts with information about heat pumps, weatherization, how to access tax credits & rebates, and more. With an additional focus on working with BIPOC and underserved communities, CERTs has over 900 "ambassadors" across Minnesota sharing IRA and other resources with their local communities.

Open Society Foundations, William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, & Energy Foundation | WorkMoney: Places and Projects

WorkMoney officially launched its Resource Center – an online, bilingual one-stop-shop for consumers navigating government programs, including existing federal tax credits for clean vehicles, solar, and home energy audits, as well as upcoming state rebates. WorkMoney is scaling their digital, radio, mail, and earned media efforts across the country – starting in Arizona, Georgia, Michigan, Montana, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin – to get the word out about the Resource Center to the organization's 6 million members and beyond.

William and Flora Hewlett Foundation | UndauntedK12: Places and Projects

The Hewlett Foundation is funding UndauntedK12 to support public schools making an equitable transition to zero carbon emissions. They are expanding awareness to federal funding opportunities, including (1) driving a Wisconsin state-wide education campaign about the IRA, (2) providing technical assistance and education to a Maryland interagency commission on school construction, and (3) engaging California school facilities leaders on IRA guidelines and direct pay. UndauntedK12 is supporting project implementation by engaging the Massachusetts Climate Office and CA Infrastructure Bank on school decarbonization and convening "America's School Decarbonizers," a knowledge sharing and coordination hub that recently educated and prompted the IRS and White House to allow schools to claim clean energy tax credits for early 2024 projects.

Providing technical assistance to access federal funds or support implementation

Heinz Endowments | Southwest PA Municipal Project Hub: Places and Projects

The Heinz Endowments provided \$1.25 million in seed funding to launch the [Southwest PA Municipal Project Hub](#) in February 2024. The Hub helps local governments, schools, and nonprofit organizations across Southwestern Pennsylvania access historic federal infrastructure and clean energy funding by connecting them with the resources, hands-on technical assistance, and other support they need to conceptualize, fund, and implement high-impact, sustainable community development projects. The Hub offers a suite of tailored services including grantwriting, engineering and design, project management, compliance, and others free of cost. The Hub serves the 10-county Southwestern Pennsylvania region, including Allegheny, Armstrong, Beaver, Butler, Fayette, Greene, Indiana, Lawrence, Washington, and Westmoreland Counties with a priority on serving J40 communities.

Hive Fund & Invest in Our Future | Texas Climate Jobs: Places and Projects

With support from Invest In Our Future and the Hive Fund, Texas Climate Jobs is working closely with labor unions, governments, impacted communities, and industry across Texas to support a pro-worker, pro-climate agenda for projects supported by IRA funding. The initiative recently helped two Solar for All awardees integrate good-paying union jobs into their projects: (1) the Texas Clean Energy Fund and the Bullard Center for Environmental Justice's \$156 million project to solarize minority-serving institutions and their local communities, and (2) Harris County's \$249 million project to build grid resilience and provide single- and multi-family solar power and storage.

Marin Community Foundation | Marin Center for Independent Living, Multicultural Center of Marin, & North Marin Community Services: Projects

The Marin Community Foundation's [Climate Justice Catalyst Fund](#) helps local organizations access federal and state climate funding, including funding grant writers and funding navigators for organizations like: (1) The Marin Center for Independent Living to develop their downtown San Rafael facility into an accessible resilience hub, (2) The Multicultural Center of Marin to establish a trauma-informed climate justice resilience and learning hub for Canal residents, and (3) North Marin Community Services to support the Clean Air for All Initiative in Novato, CA alongside partner organizations.

McKnight Foundation | Chisholm Legacy Project, CALSTART, & Minnesota Technical Assistance Collaboration: Projects

The McKnight Foundation is funding a number of technical assistance initiatives, including the Chisholm Legacy Project – to support Black-led cities across the Midwest to apply for federal funding and access Inflation Reduction Act incentives; CALSTART – to help municipalities across the Midwest leverage federal resources to adopt zero-emissions vehicle technologies; and a Minnesota Technical Assistance Collaboration – a statewide network of technical assistance providers to facilitate deep coordination in the field, share resources, and align strategies to prioritize and maximize their support of BIPOC communities, rural local governments, and low-wealth communities.

State Funding Readiness Project (SFRP): Places and Projects

SFRP provides free, fast, and flexible assistance to help state, local, territorial, tribal governments, and community-based organizations access Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) and Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) funding and realize ambitious and equitable climate projects. For example, SFRP recently assisted the County of Hawai'i to develop and submit their 2024 Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grant application to the U.S. DOT for a multi-modal infrastructure project with significant community support and local benefits. SFRP also provided templates, strategic guidance, and evaluation of merit criteria to the City of Birmingham, Alabama's Office of Resilience and Sustainability for their U.S. EPA Climate Pollution Reduction Implementation Grant (CPRG) application.

Providing workforce development training for green economy jobs

Breakthrough Energy | Center for Energy Workforce Development: Places and Projects
With support from Breakthrough Energy for their Urban Energy Jobs Program, the Center for Energy Workforce Development (CEWD) and the National Urban League (NUL) will connect hundreds of highly-trained workers from underrepresented communities to jobs in solar, wind, nuclear, electric, natural gas, and other sectors. Through this initiative, initially enabled through Department of Labor funding, participants in select cities will participate in six to eight weeks of job training and receive stipends and wraparound services to support their participation. To date, 205 people have completed the training and 92 of these individuals have already been hired by energy employers.

Lumina Foundation | National Council for Workforce Education: Places
National Council for Workforce Education (NCWE) has been developing and facilitating the processes and technical assistance necessary to build the skilled and inclusive workforce supporting federal infrastructure investments and the green economy. These efforts have required coordination of state and regional entities including employers, community colleges, recruiters and hiring managers, program designers, and funders. The design of this initiative has focused on equitable outcomes for BIPOC individuals and women participating in short-term training programs that lead to high paying careers in the emerging green economy. NCWE has documented their learnings in training materials and curriculum that community colleges can use to recruit more BIPOC students and women into green jobs training programs, as well as support them in working with employer partners to create more equitable hiring practices.

Investing philanthropic funds to support federal investments

Rockefeller Foundation, Waverley Street Foundation, & David and Lucile Packard Foundation | Elemental Excelerator: Projects

With support from the Rockefeller Foundation and the Waverley Street Foundation, Elemental Excelerator is readying the first phase of their 300+ projects to scale across the country, especially the 70% of their project pipeline that operate in rural and disadvantaged neighborhoods. Layering their concerted philanthropic investment with new federal ones – particularly the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA)-funded \$27 billion Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund – Elemental is preparing these climate companies to access additional 10x in private and public financing, coming closer to commercialization and delivering on the promise of cleaner energy, healthier food, zero-emission transportation, and safer buildings across the country. Elemental Excelerator also received support from the Packard Foundation for their partnership with Finance NOLA to support the City of New Orleans in sourcing innovative technologies for new climate-resilient affordable housing projects, which will serve as a case study for the African American Mayors Association and how their member cities can build their project pipeline for federal funding.

About the Challenge Leads



Invest in Our Future

Invest in Our Future supports philanthropic organizations to mobilize funds to ensure that unprecedented federal clean energy investments strengthen communities across the country, reduce pollution and transform our economy.

Invest in Our Future is bridging the gap between federal investments and communities so everyone – no matter who they are or where they come from – benefits.

Partners include Breakthrough Energy, the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, Hightide Foundation, John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Rockefeller Foundation, William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Philanthropies, and Zegar Family Foundation.



What Works Plus

The What Works Plus (WW+) collaborative is a coordination and learning hub for philanthropic funders interested in ensuring effective and equitable implementation of historic federal infrastructure, climate, and economic development funding.

WW+ is supported by a diverse group of philanthropic organizations, including but not limited to the Family and Workers Fund, William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, James Irvine Foundation, Kresge Foundation, David and Lucile Packard Foundation, and more.

WW+ is a project of Freedman Consulting, LLC, which provides strategic consulting services to foundations and nonprofit organizations.

Questions? Get in touch!

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