

ENVIRONMENTAL GRANTMAKERS ASSOCIATION'S

Tracking the Field

Volume 8 Executive Summary

ANALYZING TRENDS IN ENVIRONMENTAL GRANTMAKING



ENVIRONMENTAL
GRANTMAKERS
ASSOCIATION

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Introduction

As generational transition is happening around the world, environmental philanthropy is mid-stride in its efforts to support communities organizing toward a habitable planet with equitable and sustainable ecosystems undergirded by economies. Inhumane extraction of the planet's resources through coal, oil, and gas exploration has engineered the trajectory of the global climate crisis. The racialized exploitation of people and tandem disinvestment in global Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities have produced well-documented disparities that will further entrench the harm of the environmental crisis in a degraded and destabilized politic. This, in turn, will directly impact the quality of stewardship of precious and fragile ecosystems and lessen the likelihood of thriving species. At Environmental Grantmakers Association (EGA), we have tracked shifting funding across the sector, naming and amplifying the structural roots of environmental inequity while noting a lackluster focus on network mechanisms, organizing tools, and relational infrastructure that could change outcomes. EGA member philanthropies have stepped up to address these challenges. For example, funding to environmental justice has categorically quadrupled from 2017 to 2021. Further, EGA members have increased funding to BIPOC groups, organizations, and leaders, who received at least \$278 million in environmental grants from EGA members in 2021. As this report explores, environmental grantmaking overall has grown even as pandemics, wars, and social unrest show us just how much more work is to be done.

In 2021, EGA members gave a record high of \$2.3 billion in funding to environmental issues. Given the incidence of climate catastrophe, we expect that this will only increase. The financial cost of the climate crisis in 2021 was partially reflected in more than \$145 billion in total damage from twenty so-called "billion-dollar weather and climate disasters" in the United States (NOAA).¹ The price of dramatic temperature extremes and climate shifts on our earth home are profound and far-reaching, which include: extinction-level biodiversity losses; extreme floods, fires, and weather; food and water insecurity; agricultural losses; air pollution; and infrastructure and transportation system failures.

This report will help you navigate past the headlines and answer the following questions about members' environmental funding:

- HOW does overall environmental funding compare with historical data and overall philanthropic giving?
- WHERE do EGA members fund domestically and internationally?
- WHAT environmental issues do EGA members fund?
- HOW do EGA members fund, based on grantmaking strategy?
- WHO do EGA members fund, specifically in terms of supporting marginalized communities and initiatives led by BIPOC and Women?

EGAers are investing more to meet the needs of this moment. Between 2020 and 2021, environmental giving showed the largest year-over-year increase since EGA began the *Tracking the Field* research in 2007. The trends in environmental grantmaking are an important marker of what is to come as governments, private equity, and public sentiment shift from potential change to externalities. As governments signal increased investment in climate tools and technology, philanthropy's support is needed more than ever to stand up accountability measures, and to help communities navigate a deluge of dollars to ensure that funds reach those that need them most. In fact, global climate-scale challenges will require a marked increase of resources in the form of capital, relationships, and information, all at once, and a sector focused on practicing what we call the just resource redistribution.

As an association of environmental grantmakers, EGA has created a Racial Equity POV that outlines our shared commitments to advancing racial equity and accelerating just resource redistribution to solve for species, biodiversity, and resource losses. To support the evolution of that thinking, we offer deep data on member practices, and this report is

a part of that set of resources.

Tracking the Field (TTF) now boasts more than ten years of data and covers more than 160,000 grants totaling \$20 billion in giving dollars. This eighth volume of EGA's *Tracking the Field* report dives deeply into the environmental grantmaking landscape as reported through 2021. This report provides unparalleled insights on funding priority shifts between 2017 and 2021 and pandemic-related changes surfacing since 2019. As the constellation of environmental grantmaking broadens, and with new players operating out of increasing urgency and new awareness, *Tracking the Field* supports that growth by identifying opportunities and highlighting gaps in environmental philanthropy.

Through EGA's collaboration with Candid, we are able to bring together demographic data and the context of the sector into our analysis to identify funding trends. Take a look at EGA member grants in relation to the populations they impact and serve **in a new section of the report, "Who Do**

EGA Members Fund?," which analyzes funding impacting socially and economically disadvantaged communities.

EGA Remains a Community of Action

This volume tracks swift adjustments of environmental grantmaking in response to compounding emergency conditions. EGA members proactively aligned their grantmaking to advance racial equity and climate resilience in concert with federal pandemic relief measures. Together, EGAers are driving a comprehensive approach that integrates environmental action, social justice, and economic revitalization to effectively redistribute resources to marginalized communities. We will need more of this kind of nimble and adaptive investment and collaboration to address the systemic misalignments that hasten poor planetary outcomes. We look forward to continuing to serve the sector as it rises to face challenges of people and planet.

Methodology

The environmental giving analyzed in the *Tracking the Field: Volume 8* report includes the environmental grants made by more than 200 EGA member foundations from 2007 to 2021, with a granular look at the new 2021 data.

The research team referred to members' websites to obtain a list of grants or a copy of IRS Form 990 to identify members' grants awarded in 2021. If a funder's grant data were not available online, researchers contacted the funder directly to obtain their 2021 grants list. To ensure data consistency, we kept a record of which data source was used for each funder every year and used the same data source from year to year, whenever possible.

Each grant was manually reviewed, tagged, and inputted into an online CiviCRM database. Before inputting a grant, a profile for the grantor and grantee was created (if not already existing) in the database, with information such as the organization's employer identification number (EIN), website, address, and mission statement recorded under each profile. Upon entering each grant, information such as the grant year, the grant amount, the grantee's name, and the grant's description was inputted. Each grant was then tagged with a primary and secondary issue area, a grant strategy, and the geographic region where the grant initiatives were to take place (possibly different from where the grantee is located). When tagging the grants, the researchers used information from the description in the grants list, as well as additional research. In cases when the grant description did not contain enough information to identify the issue area, geographic region, strategy, or communities impacted, the researcher would go to the grantee's website and look up the grantee's mission statement, program areas, and any specific projects mentioned in the grant to help categorize the grant. Researchers also referred to the grantor's mission statement and program areas to help identify the general focus of a grant.

Over the years, we used a consistent taxonomy that evolved slightly in response to members' interests. Beginning in grant year 2017, we implemented a change to the "Advocacy / Organizing / Movement Building" strategy by splitting it into two strategies: "Advocacy" and "Grassroots Organizing." Starting in the grant year 2019, we added the "Communities Impacted" field to identify grants impacting BIPOC communities, Women, and other

marginalized groups. Please refer to the Taxonomy in the Appendices for detailed definitions for these fields.

Demographic Data

The demographic data used in this report is data reported voluntarily by nonprofits in their profiles on Candid (<https://candid.org>). The main dataset used in this section includes 1,636 EGA members' environmental grantees from the 2021 grantmaking cycle. Demographic data are not available for all EGA members' environmental grantees. The data in this report represent 24% of all EGA members' 2021 grantees and 32% of EGA members' domestic grantees from 2021. Since an employer identification number (EIN) is required to submit this data to Candid, this demographic information is available only from domestic nonprofits and nonprofits that have formally incorporated as tax-exempt entities in the United States. The comparative analysis in this report, comparing EGA members' grantees with nonprofits in general, includes demographic data from 58,365 nonprofits that submitted this data to Candid as of August 1, 2023.

Data Accuracy & Validation

The EGA research team applied considerable effort to the coding of data for 2021 in order to achieve consistency when categorizing each grant. By leveraging the features offered by CiviCRM, any grantor entered into the system is automatically checked against grantors already in the system to avoid duplicate entries. This also ensures that all grants are correctly assigned to a specific organization. During the data-reviewing and data-cleaning process, researchers referred to grant tagging from past years and made sure certain types of grants (e.g., grants with certain issue focus, grants given to certain major grantees, major types of grants given by certain funders, etc.) were tagged consistently. A draft run of 2021 grantmaking data was compared to previous years' data using various parameters, and any significant shifts were flagged and validated from the source before finalizing the data. Each grant sized at more than \$1 million was also triple-checked to ensure that the grant amount and grant's focus were reflected correctly. Keyword searches within the grant descriptions were also conducted to ensure that grants with certain keywords were successfully captured for certain tags.

Snapshot

THE FUNDING POOL

\$2.3B

\$2.3 billion total environmental grants were given by EGA members in 2021, a 21% increase from 2020.

13,766

13,766 individual grants were awarded.

WHERE



40% of funding was international, a record high.



A greater share of international funding given to Global / Multi-region and a greater share of domestic funding given to Federal Level / Multi-region programs.



The U.S. Southeast had a 56% increase in funding from 2017 to 2021.



Asia, South America, and Africa had the greatest increase in funding among all international regions from 2017 to 2021.



The Pacific Coast (~14%) and Northeast (~11%) saw decreased funding from 2017 to 2021.

WHAT



"Energy & Climate" received nearly one-third of all environmental funding (\$700M).



"Health & Justice" funding tripled from 2017 to 2021.



Funding to "Environmental Justice" nearly quadrupled (387%) from 2017 to 2021.



"Water" funding decreased by 25% since 2017.



Funding to "Biodiversity" has been leveling off since peaking in 2014.

HOW



"Advocacy / Organizing / Movement Building" continues to be the top-funded strategy, receiving 35% of total funds granted.



"General Operating" support surged after the pandemic, making up 21% of 2021 funding.



Funding for "Grassroots Organizing" & "Public Policy" both doubled compared to 2020.



2021 saw the largest median grant size at \$48,628, a 30% increase from 2017.

WHO



From 2019 to 2021, funding impacting "Communities of Color" more than doubled.



There was an increase in BIPOC representation among every organizational role, yet BIPOC are still underrepresented in the leadership of environmental grantees compared to their share in the U.S. population (24.9 vs. 41.9%).



BIPOC-led grantees received a total of \$278 million, more than double the funding given in 2020.



BIPOC-led and female-led grantees tend to receive fewer grant dollars on average per grantee compared to their counterparts.

Overall Grantmaking

Total Environmental Funding

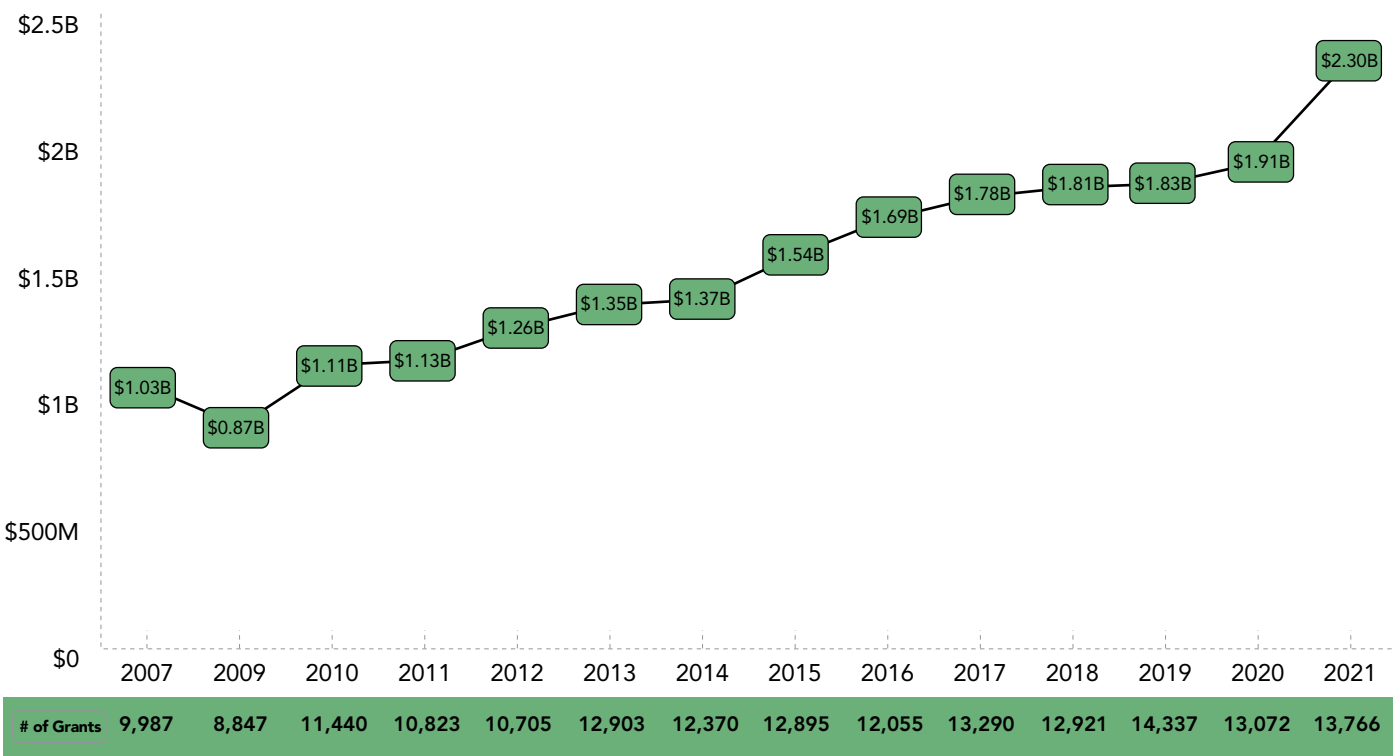
EGA's *Tracking the Field* research team recorded **13,766 environmental grants given by 190 EGA members, totaling \$2.3 billion in 2021.**

- **2021 had the largest year-over-year increase in environmental funding observed by EGA since 2007,** marking a 21% increase (15% adjusted for inflation) from 2020 and a 26% increase (19% adjusted for inflation) compared to the pre-pandemic level in 2019.² When looking at the same pool of funders (159) whose data were included in both the 2020 and 2021 datasets, a similar rate of increase (23%) was observed. Therefore, this increase is not the result of new entrants to the environmental grantmaking space.
- **The increase of environmental funding outpaced the growth of overall philanthropic giving.** Consistent with EGA's observations, multiple sources confirm that environmental funding surged in 2021 and grew at a

faster rate compared to overall philanthropic giving. Giving USA estimates an increase of 11% in charitable giving to "Environment / Animal" organizations in 2021, compared to a 4% increase in overall charitable giving.³ Foundation Source⁴ similarly found that "Environment and Animals" was the sector that experienced the highest increase in funding in 2021.

- **Despite these increases in funding, environmental grantmaking is still largely insufficient relative to the urgency and scale of the growing global environmental crisis.** Giving USA estimates that only 3% of total philanthropic giving in 2021 supported "Environment / Animals." The ClimateWorks Foundation estimates that less than 2% of global philanthropy is focused on climate-related giving.⁵ According to NOAA's National Centers for Environmental Information, 2023 was the warmest year in its 174-year climate record, and the ten warmest years have all occurred in the past decade.⁶ In 2021, NOAA recorded a total of 20 "billion-dollar

Figure 1. EGA Members' Total Environmental Grantmaking Over Time, 2007–2021



weather and climate disasters,” compared to the annual average of 7.4 such events between 1980 and 2021 (CPI-adjusted). These weather and climate disasters in 2021 alone cost \$145 billion in total damage.⁷

- **Environmental funding continued to be concentrated among the largest grantees.** The top 3% most-funded grantees (204 out of more than 6,800 grantees) received 50% of the total funding dollars recorded by EGA in 2021. While a small number of grantees continued to receive much of the total funding, the funding share among these top grantees decreased in 2021 (from 54% in 2018 and 58% in 2015). This is a positive sign that efforts are being made to direct more grant dollars to smaller grantees, though the “big greens” and other large institutions still dominate when it comes to receiving philanthropic resources.

Funding in Response to COVID-19 and Racial Justice Movements

Since 2019, the COVID-19 pandemic heightened global disparity in access to essential materials, security, and finances for low-wealth communities and Black, Indigenous, and all People of Color (BIPOC) communities. Amid these challenges, the surge in racially targeted violence against Black, Indigenous, and Asian communities in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, and murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and countless others by police sparked the reinvigoration of movements in service, including the Movement for Black Lives (M4BL). These ongoing racial justice movements made 2020 a turning point for philanthropy. Public statements from EGA members, analyzed in the *Tracking the Field: Volume 7* report, showed that, **in 2020, EGA members pledged to give at least \$2.3**

billion in COVID-19 relief and at least \$900 million to advance racial equity in the next few years.⁸ Members also pledged to increase unrestricted general support funding to grantees. We are seeing the results of these commitments reflected in the recent funding data.

- **In 2020 and 2021, we observed a dramatic surge in “general support” funding and continued funding directed to pandemic relief for grantees.** EGA member grants totaling \$35 million in 2021 mentioned the keywords “COVID” or “pandemic” in their grant descriptions. “General support” funding peaked in 2020 when the nation was experiencing the worst economic shutdowns under the pandemic, accounting for 24% of the total funding dollars given by EGA members that year. **In 2021, “general support” funding remained elevated: EGA members gave \$484 million in “general support” funding to grantees,** 21% of the total annual funding dollars and a 72% increase compared to its pre-pandemic level in 2019.
- **EGA members are turning commitments to increase racial equity funding into action.** In 2021, we tracked a record-high \$324 million in grants with “Health & Justice” as their primary issue focus, double the amount from 2019. Funding to “Environmental Justice” specifically almost tripled since 2019. Based on analysis of organizational demographics data made possible through EGA’s partnership with Candid, EGA members gave at least \$278 million in environmental funding to BIPOC-led grantees in 2021, double the amount from 2020. (For further details on this analysis, please see the “Who Do EGA Members Fund?” section.)

Where Do EGA Members Fund?

When mapping the geographic breakdown of environmental giving, *Tracking the Field* tracks **where the work is being done for the programs that are supported by the grants** rather than where the grantee organizations are located. Figures 2 and 3 show historical data comparisons of funding given internationally and domestically based on five-year funding changes from 2017 to 2021.

International Funding

■ **A record high percentage of funding supported international or global initiatives.** In 2021, 40% of EGA members' environmental funding supported international initiatives, the greatest share EGA has ever recorded. This is an increase from 38% in 2019, pre-pandemic.

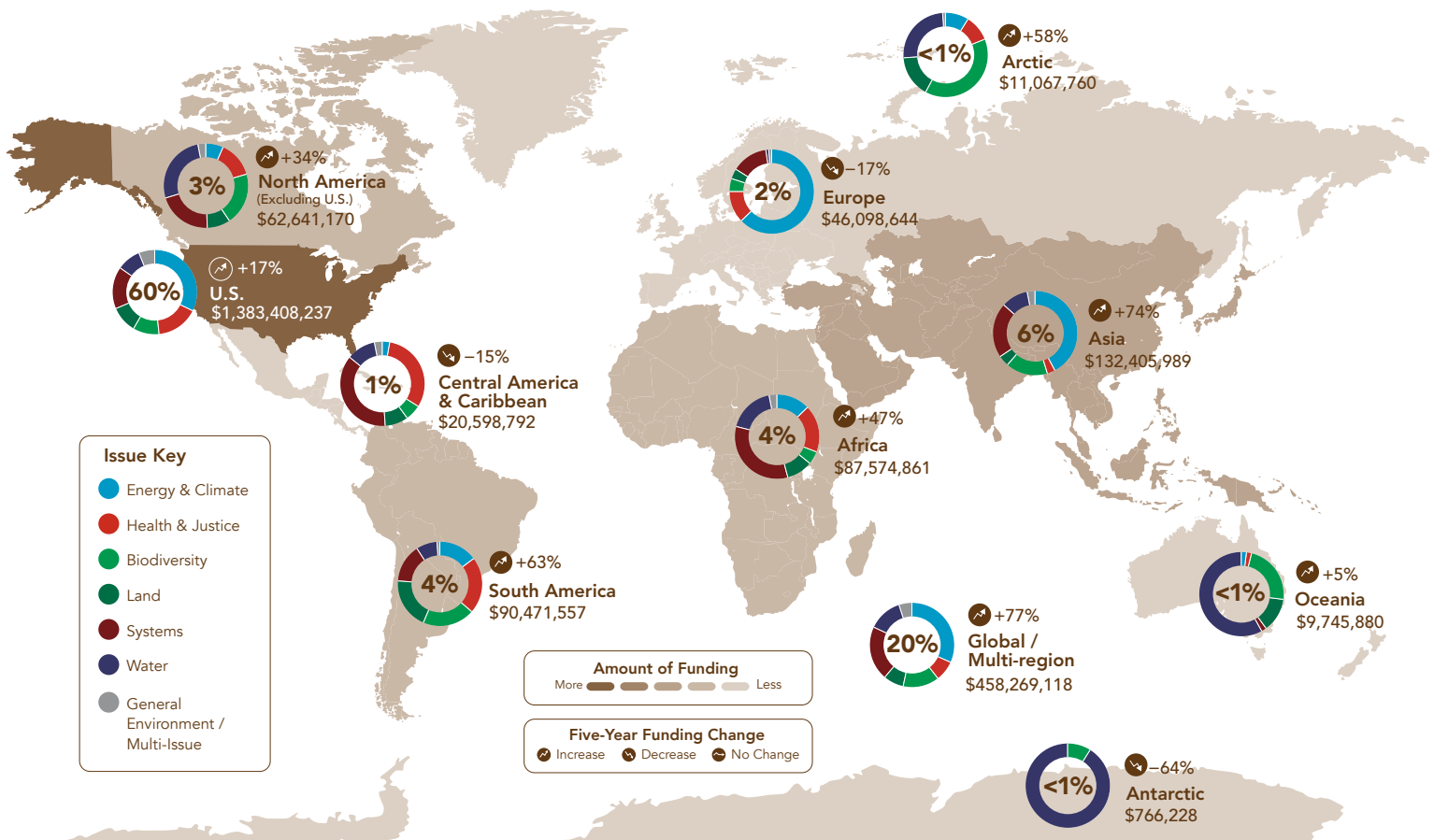
■ **Funders understand that environmental issues do not care about human-made borders and boundaries.**

From 2017 to 2021 Global / Multi-region funding increased by 71%. In 2021, half of international funding supported Global / Multi-region grants. Of this funding, 32% funded "Energy & Climate."

■ **Among the individual regions, Asia, South America, and Africa saw the highest growth rates.** Funding growth rates from 2017 to 2021 indicate that international grantmakers increasingly prioritized giving to Asia (+74%), South America (+63%), and Africa (+47%).

■ The only regions that saw decreases in funding from 2017 to 2021 include Antarctic (−64%), Europe (−17%), and Central America and the Caribbean (−15%).

Figure 2: EGA Members' Grantmaking by International Region and Primary Issue Group, 2021



■ **The priority issues funded differ from region to region.** “Energy & Climate” was the most-funded issue group in Europe (63%) and Asia (42%), and at the Global Level (32%). In South America, “Health & Justice” was the most-funded issue group (22%), with grants largely focused on land rights of local and Indigenous communities. In Africa, the most-funded issue group was “Systems,” with a main focus on grants supporting sustainable agriculture and food systems. More details can be found in Figure 2.

■ **Funding to address climate change in the Global South, which includes countries whose economies have contributed the least to climate change and some of the most climate-vulnerable communities, continues to be a gap.** While steps are being taken to increase climate change funding in the Global South (increases in funding to regions such as South America

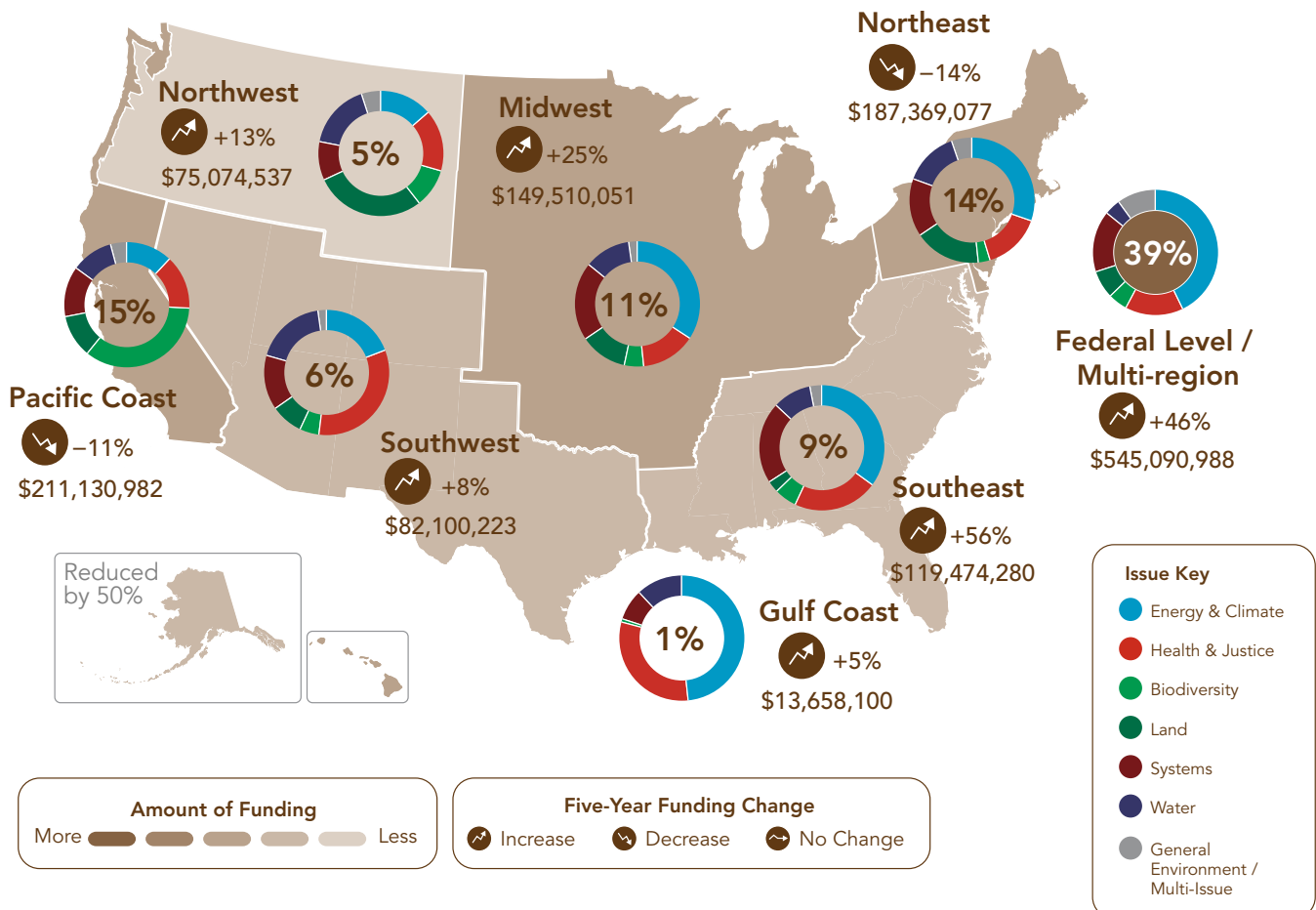
and Africa), more investment is needed to address the disproportionate harm the Global South is facing.

Domestic Funding

Unprecedented recent federal investments in community-led climate solutions in the U.S. make federal-level funding by philanthropy especially critical. Philanthropy’s support is needed in standing up accountability measures, helping communities navigate bureaucracy, and building capacity to ensure that funds reach the communities that need them most.

■ **In 2021, EGA members’ domestic environmental giving accounted for 60% of the total funding at more than \$1.4 billion.** While total domestic funding dollars steadily grew, the share of domestic funding is a slight decrease from 62% in 2019 and 2020.

Figure 3: EGA Members’ Grantmaking by Domestic Region and Primary Issue Group, 2021



■ **Domestic funding continued to prioritize supporting Federal Level / Multi-region initiatives.** At 39% of domestic funding, this share is the highest recorded by EGA, compared to between 32% and 37% from 2017 to 2021. Federal Level / Multi-region programs also had one of the highest five-year funding growth rates (+46%).

■ **The Southeast experienced unprecedented growth in funding, but the region remains largely underfunded.** A historically underfunded region, the Southeast had the highest five-year growth rate (56%) among all regions, receiving 9% of total domestic funding in 2021. However, it is important to note that the Southeast is home to the largest number of biodiversity hotspots within the country.⁹ The Southeast states also have the

highest percentage of populations living below the poverty line in the U.S.^{10,11} Environmental injustice is pervasive throughout the region due to the history of redlining and discriminatory land-use policies that burden communities with polluting industries. **Despite being in the spotlight with increasing philanthropic investments, the Southeast remains largely underfunded, considering the critical needs and challenges in the region.**

■ **The Pacific Coast and Northeast continued to be the most-funded regions, though both saw decreases in funding in recent years.** While the Pacific Coast (15%) and the Northeast (14%) remained the most-funded regions since 2009, they were the only domestic regions that saw decreased funding from 2017 to 2021.

What Do EGA Members Fund?

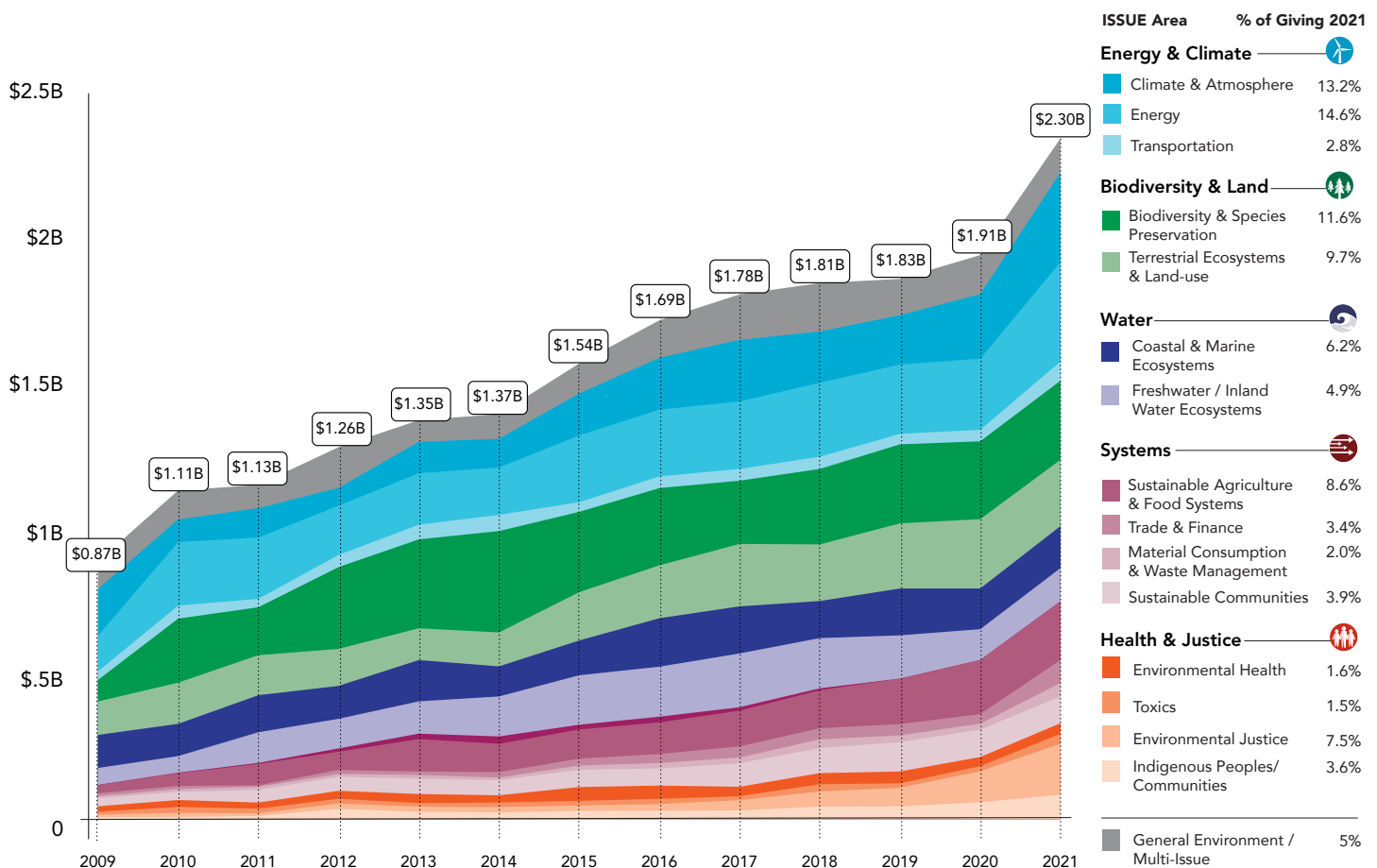
Acknowledging that grants often support multiple interconnected issues, EGA's research team tags each grant in the *Tracking the Field* database with a primary and a secondary issue focus to best capture the grant priorities. Figure 4 shows the high-level trend of EGA members' giving by primary issue over time. EGA members can access more details about secondary issue funding analysis in the full report.

■ **"Energy & Climate" remained the most-funded issue group and experienced the highest increase in funding dollars.** Since 2021, the same year the United States re-entered the Paris Agreement, U.S. philanthropy is increasing investment in climate change mitigation and adaptation. "Energy & Climate" experienced the greatest surge in funding dollars, receiving \$705 million, or 31% of the total funding in 2021. This is a

\$228 million (48%) increase from 2017. The growth trend we observed in giving to "Energy & Climate" was echoed by similar surges observed globally, according to findings from ClimateWorks Foundation, Philanthropy Europe Association, and Australian Environmental Grantmakers Network.¹²

■ **Conservation issues ("Biodiversity," "Land," and "Water") continued to receive almost one-third of the funding.** Ecosystem conservation issues often intersect, but there are some distinctions in funding trends. "Biodiversity" and "Land" received moderate increases in funding in 2021. Together, "Biodiversity" and "Land" received 21% of the funding, totaling \$492 million. However, from 2017 to 2021, funding to "Biodiversity" and "Land" increased only 16%, slightly higher than the cumulative inflation rate of 11%. Notably, the "Water"

Figure 4: EGA Members' Grantmaking by Primary Issue Area, 2009–2021



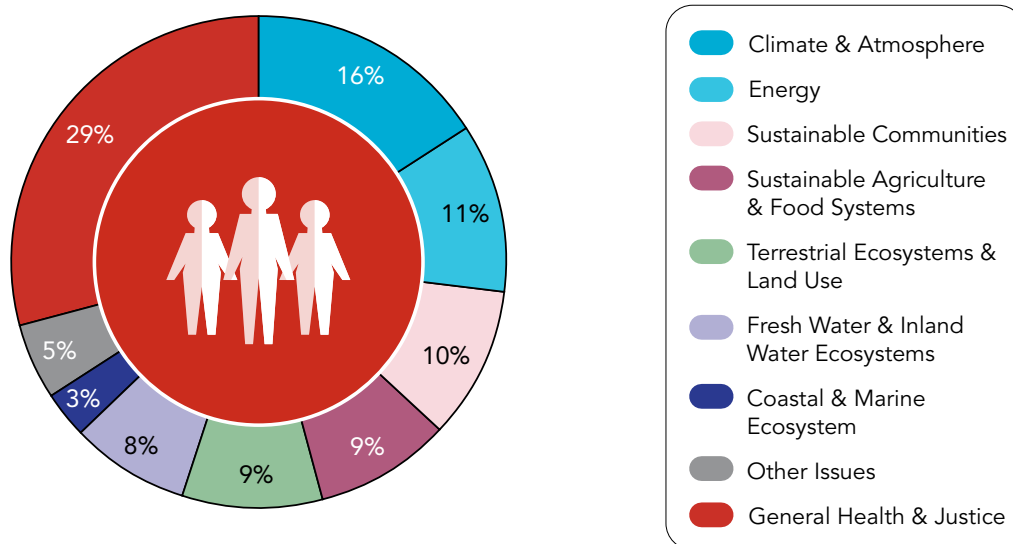
issue group is the only issue group that experienced a decrease in grant dollars. Over the five-year period, funding to “Water” issues decreased by 25%. Funding to “Freshwater & Inland Water Ecosystems,” specifically, decreased 38% since 2017.

- **“Health & Justice” experienced the highest five-year growth rate.** As a historically less-funded issue group, “Health & Justice” received nearly triple the amount of funding compared to 2017, totaling \$324 million. Notably, primary-issue funding to “Environmental Justice” totaled \$172 million, almost quadrupling from 2017. In the past few years, funders and grantees have been much more likely to use justice – and equity-related language in the descriptions of their funding priorities and program focuses. “Health & Justice” grants can touch a wide range of issues, most notably “Climate & Atmosphere,” “Energy,” “Sustainable Communities,” and “Sustainable

Agriculture / Food Systems,” with major types of projects focusing on climate justice, energy access, and equitable food systems, as shown in Figure 5.

- **“Systems” was the third-most-funded issue area, with a high growth rate.** The “Systems” issue group, which includes themes related to sustainable systems such as “Sustainable Agriculture & Food Systems” and “Sustainable Communities,” received \$412 million in total in 2021. It was also the issue group that had the second-highest growth rate (53%) from 2017 to 2021. “Material Consumption & Waste Management” and “Trade & Finance,” remained the least-funded issues within “Systems,” while both received record high amounts of funding, marking a 135% and 108% five-year increase, respectively.

Figure 5: Health & Justice Funding Related to Other Issues, 2021



* Each grant is tagged with a primary issue and a secondary issue. This chart includes grants tagged with an Health & Justice issue and one of the other listed issues.

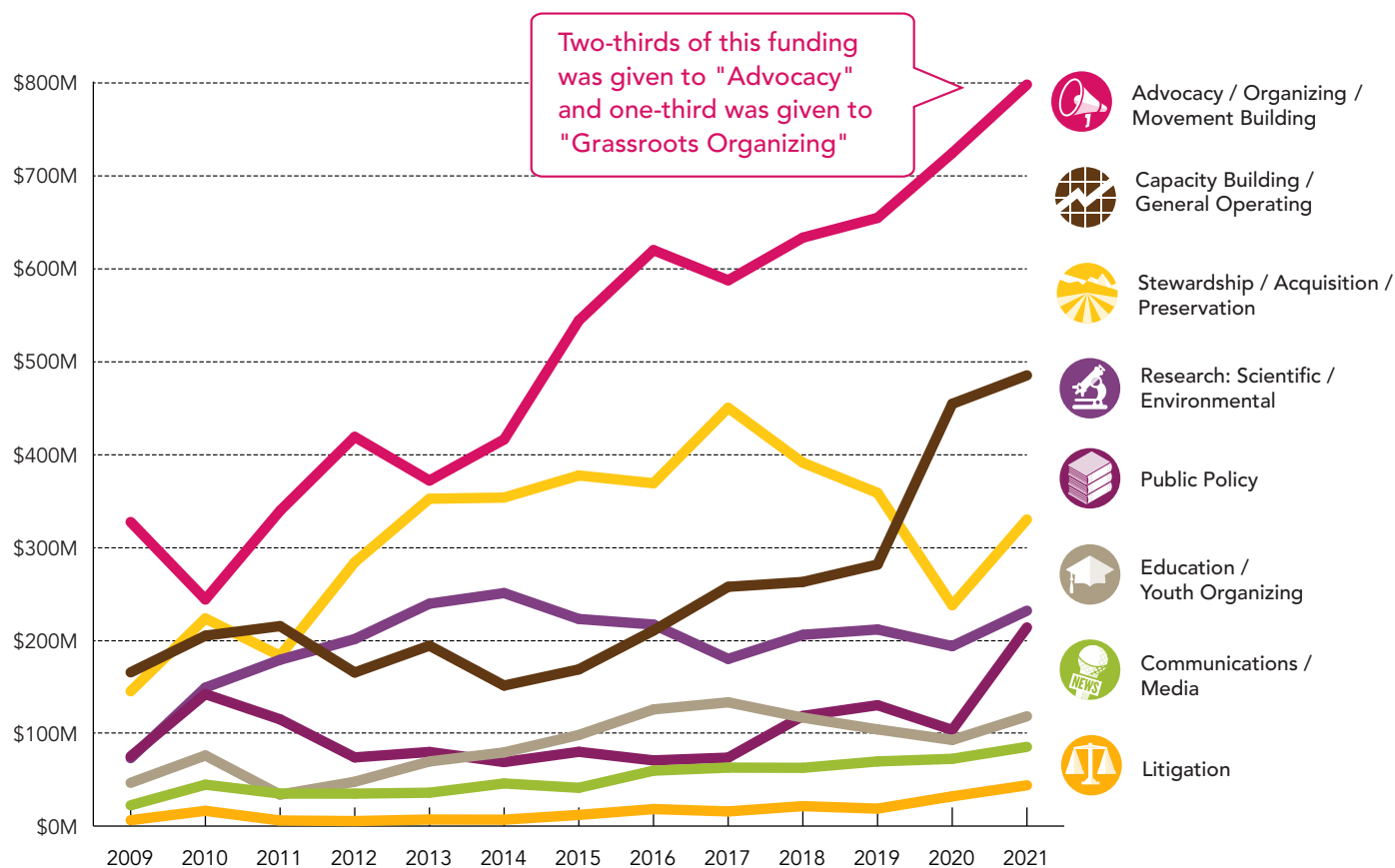
How Do EGA Members Fund?

The EGA research team analyzed grant descriptions as well as grantees' websites to determine the primary program strategy supported in each grant.

- **Funders are giving much larger grants.** 2021 saw the largest median grant size (\$48,628) ever recorded by EGA, compared to a historical range of \$25,000 to \$35,000 from 2007 to 2020.
- **"Advocacy / Organizing / Movement Building" remained the highest-funded strategy for EGA member grantees.** In 2021, funding supporting this strategy totaled \$797 million, accounting for 35% of the overall funding.
- **Funding to "Grassroots Organizing" and "Public Policy" both doubled from 2020 to 2021.** The rapid growth of "Grassroots Organizing" and "Public Policy" from 2020 to 2021 suggests that funders are prioritizing systems change both in governance and at the community level.

- **"General Operating" funding has been surging since 2019.** Giving unrestricted grants is seen as an important mechanism for funders to support grantees in staying afloat during the pandemic. It is also part of funders' increased commitment to trust-based philanthropy to redistribute power between grantors and grantees. Pre-pandemic, "General Operating" strategy accounted for only 15% of the total funding. In 2020 it rose to 24% of funding, and it reached 21% of funding in 2021, marking a 72% increase compared to pre-pandemic levels in 2019.
- **There was a moderate bounce-back in the "Stewardship" strategy after decreases in previous years.** In 2021, 14% (329.4 million) of the total funding supported "Stewardship / Acquisition / Preservation" efforts, showing a reversal of its declining trend from 2017 to 2020.

Figure 6: EGA Members' Environmental Grantmaking by Strategy, 2009–2021



Who Do EGA Members Fund?

Funding by Communities Impacted

Each grant in *Tracking the Field* is tagged with a “Communities Impacted” field. In 2021, the research team identified 27% (\$629 million) of EGA members’ funding dollars as targeting one or more specific communities. Figure 7 shows the breakdown of funding to the different communities.

- **Of the most historically underfunded communities in the environmental movement, “Communities of Color” received the highest share of funding.** From 2019 to 2021, funding to “Communities of Color” more than doubled (from \$140 million to \$330 million), with over 80% of all EGA members giving at least one grant directed to this group.
- **Of the \$198 million given to “Low-Income Communities,” two-thirds supported domestic initiatives.** Commonly supported initiatives for this population include affordable and equitable clean energy, equitable park access, increased economic opportunities, and equitable food systems.
- **“Women” and gender-equity issues received the least support out of all groups.** Only 2% of the total funding

specifically targeted “Women & Gender Equity.”¹³ This funding typically supported reproductive justice related to hazardous environmental waste, or fair treatment and meaningful engagement in environmental implementation and decision-making.

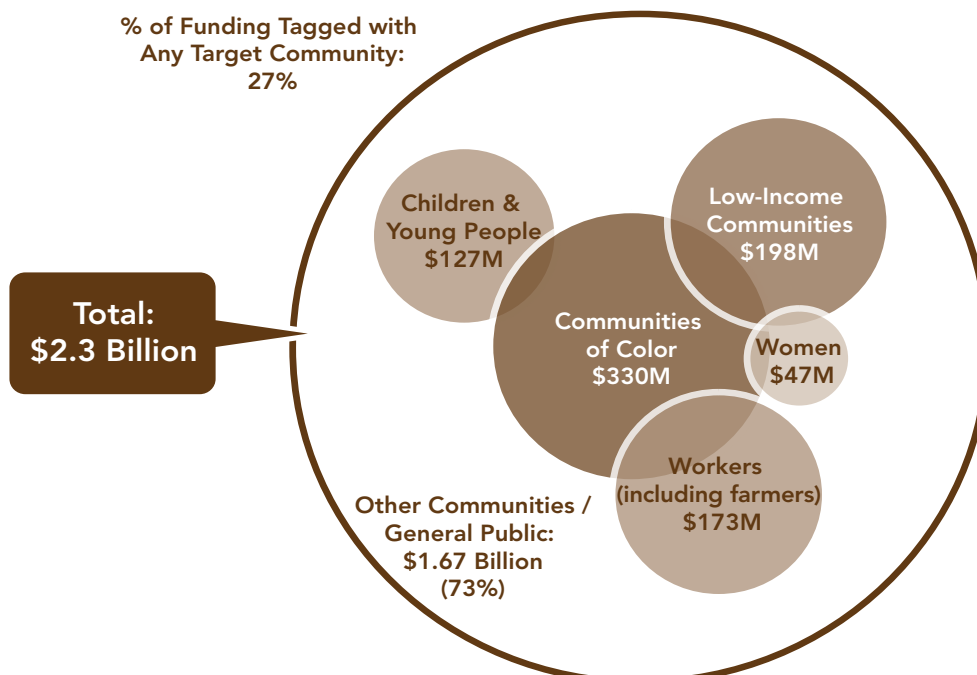
Funding to BIPOC-Led and Female-Led Grantees

This analysis uses demographic data reported voluntarily by nonprofits in their profiles on Candid (<http://candid.org>). Of the domestic grantees supported by EGA members in 2021, 32% (1,636 grantees) had shared demographic data through Candid as of August 2023. Definitions of female-led and BIPOC-led organizations for this analysis can be found on the right. EGA members can access more detailed analysis on this funding in the full *Tracking the Field: Volume 8* report. Below are a few key takeaways from this analysis.

BIPOC-Led Grantees

- **From 2020 to 2021, more BIPOC are holding decision-making roles at environmental grantee organizations, but the disparity remains dramatic.** There was a slight increase in BIPOC representation among

Figure 7: EGA Members’ Grantmaking by Communities Impacted, 2021



every level (leader, board, senior staff, and staff) for 2021 grantees compared to 2020. In 2021, about a quarter (24.9%) of grantees had a leader identifying as BIPOC, compared to 21.4% in 2020. This is a positive sign that more BIPOC individuals are holding decision-making roles at environmental organizations. However, there is still a lower percentage of BIPOC-identifying leaders among environmental grantees compared to nonprofits across all sectors in the United States (24.9% vs. 26.7%). **Moreover, BIPOC representation in the leadership of environmental grantees is still dramatically lower than the share of BIPOC in the U.S. population (41.9%).**

- **Funding given to BIPOC-led groups more than doubled from 2020 to 2021.** Out of the 1,565 grantees from 2021 that reported demographic data, 30.2% were BIPOC-led, with either the organization leader or the board majority identifying as BIPOC. BIPOC-led grantees received a total of \$278 million in environmental grants from EGA members in 2021, more than double the amount in 2020. This figure demonstrates both a major shift in funding and increased commitment to racial equity, as well as an increase in demographic transparency.¹⁴
- **Despite the increase in total funding, BIPOC-led grantees received fewer grant dollars per grantee compared to their White-led counterparts.** On average, White-led grantees received 12% more funding per grantee compared to their BIPOC-led counterparts (\$661,519 vs. \$589,927). This reveals that while there is progress in the representation of BIPOC in the leadership of environmental grantees and total funding to BIPOC-led grantees, there is still much work to be done to achieve racial equity in environmental philanthropy.

Female-Led Grantees

EGA's gender-identity analysis in this section uses the results from Candid's survey question asking if respondents publicly self-identify as "male," "female," "nonbinary/genderqueer/gender-nonconforming," or "decline to state." The Candid survey also included a second gender-identity question asking respondents to select "transgender," "not transgender," or "decline to state." Therefore, a transgender woman who responds "female" to the first question and "transgender" to the second question is included in our analysis of "female" responses. A transgender man who responds "male" to the first question and "transgender" to the second is included in our analysis of "male" responses.

Definitions

There are many different definitions used in the philanthropic sector to define BIPOC-led organizations. For the purpose of analyzing funding given to BIPOC-led and female-led groups, below are the definitions we used in calculating funding given to these groups.

BIPOC-led: *Either* the organization leader *or* the majority of the board identifies as BIPOC. By using this more inclusive definition, we are inviting allies and acknowledging organizations in the process of transition to bringing BIPOC into their leadership. It might take years to bring BIPOC members onto the board, or to complete an executive search process to fill a vacant organizational leader position.

White-led: *Both* the organization leader *and* the majority of the board identify as white.

Female-led: The organization leader identifies as female.

Furthermore, to provide multiple lenses to evaluate the number of organizations led by BIPOC, Table 5 also provides BIPOC identity data by board majority, senior staff majority, and staff majority, in addition to organization leader.

Our analysis in this section of female-led grantees includes all women and femmes, including trans women.

- **Females are still underrepresented in leadership of environmental grantees compared to their overall representation in the full staff of these organizations.** Among the 2021 environmental grantees analyzed, 67% of all staff identify as female. However, only 53.6% of these organizations have a female-identifying leader, showing that females are less likely to be able to move up to leadership roles in organizations.
- **Despite being the majority, female-led grantees received less funding per grantee compared to their male-led counterparts.** More than half (53.7%) of EGA members' 2021 grantees were female-led, 43.4% were male-led, and 0.8% were nonbinary-led. On average, male-led grantees received 38% more funding per grantee compared to female-led grantees (\$720,932 vs. \$523,182).

Looking Ahead

Philanthropy as a whole, but especially environmental philanthropy, finds itself at a crucial turning point. Grantmakers have the power to resource-repair, invest in community-led solutions, and align with one another to amplify their collective impact. The grantmaking shifts we have seen since 2020 have proven that philanthropy can act nimbly and urgently if it chooses to do so.

Critical Questions for Environmental Philanthropy

With these findings of environmental grantmaking trends from the past few years and a deeper understanding of the surrounding social and environmental context, EGA poses five key questions for environmental funders:

1. How can we support Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities and resource them to lead?

Between 2020 and 2021, overall funding recorded to BIPOC-led organizations nearly doubled. However, BIPOC are still severely underrepresented among the leadership of 2021 grantees (24.9% among organization leaders compared to 41.9% in the overall U.S. population). Furthermore, 68% of domestic grantees do not have demographic data in Candid (and therefore were not able to be included in this analysis). We encourage EGA members to **direct 30% of your environmental funding to grantees led by Black, Indigenous, and People of Color by 2025.**

In addition to strengthening your foundation's racial equity journey, much of this work also starts with tracking and metrics. We also ask that EGA members join EGA's Demographic Data Transparency Campaign by updating the [demographic data section on your](#) Candid nonprofit profile on GuideStar and asking your grantees to do so. Learn more by visiting EGA's full campaign page at: ega.org/datatransparency.

2. How can we actively resource-repair in systemically overlooked communities in less-resourced regions?

Our findings show that member funding to the U.S. South and Global South, two historically underfunded regions, has generally increased over the last

five years. Funding to regions such as Europe and the U.S. Pacific Coast and Northeast have seen a sharp decline when compared to 2017 levels (–17%, –14%, and –11%, respectively). Although these trends are promising, along with a dramatic increase in globally focused and multi-region grants (+77%, 2017–2021), there is still a gap that needs to be addressed. In 2021, the Pacific Coast received nearly the same amount of funding as the Gulf Coast, Southeast, and Southwest combined. EGA members can use this data to identify target regions for just resource redistribution.

3. How can we deepen relationships and build trust to resource community-led solutions?

Providing general support to grantees is an essential component to trust-based funding. This edition of *Tracking the Field* saw record-high general support funding, which peaked at 24% of all grants in 2020. Another way to resource community-led solutions is through regranting, or providing funds to intermediary organizations that have deeper relationships in the specific communities targeted. Both of these strategies, in addition to multi-year grants, can be employed by funders to provide more funding stability for grantees and place trust in community-led solutions rather than seeking specific project grants.

4. How can we address root causes while continuing to tackle pressing issues?

In 2023, flooding in the Northeast United States and wildfires in Maui have brought together the philanthropy community to support swift action. The climate crisis and other environmental challenges will continue to create situations that demand immediate relief. However, we must also be steadfast in supporting organizations that are dedicated to eradicating injustice at the root. Democracy, movement-building, and narrative strategy require sustained, long-term support to yield meaningful change. While we highlight trends in the sector, there is no correct set of issue areas, regions, or advocacy strategies on which to focus. Grantmakers must continue to deepen the intersectionality of their funding portfolios, promoting a more holistic and impactful approach.

5. How can we invest enough funding to ensure that our planet is habitable for future generations?

Environmental grants tracked through *Tracking the Field* have more than doubled since the beginning of this project, growing from \$1 billion in 2007 to \$2.3 billion in 2021. More recently, we have observed a 21% increase in environmental funding by EGA members from 2020 to 2021. While this progress is heartening, it must be recognized that the urgency of environmental challenges—natural disasters fueled by climate change,

mass biodiversity extinction, pollution-induced environmental health crises—necessitates that funders seize this momentum and take decisive action, expeditiously channeling their resources to drive transformative change. Now, more than ever, is the time for collective commitment and immediate action.

As we press ahead, envisioning the possibilities ignited by these findings and the questions they evoke, we illuminate a collective path toward an unyielding, just, and sustainable future for people and planet.

Next Steps for *Tracking the Field*

EGA's *Tracking the Field* project will continue to deepen the understanding of trends, challenges, and critical needs in environmental philanthropy. This extensive database supports dynamic coalitions by increasing data-driven partner identification and optimizing grant dollars for more strategic impact. The recent infusion of demographic data from Candid serves as a potent catalyst, intensifying our call to action for members to advance racial equity.

EGA members are encouraged to use our **Searchable Grant Database** and our **Grantor and Grantee Directory** to search for potential partners and access grant details and organization profiles. EGA also works with funders and affinity groups to support custom research projects focusing on specific funding areas of interest. This includes deliverables such as custom data runs, custom data visualization, custom briefing reports and custom databases. Learn more about *Tracking the Field* at: <https://ega.org/connect/ttf>.

For questions about this data and to learn more about EGA's custom data services, contact Ashley Li, Senior Research Manager at ali@ega.org

Appendix:

Environmental Grantmaking Taxonomy

Geographic Regions

- **INTERNATIONAL** (all regions outside of the United States)
 - Africa (Eastern Africa, Middle Africa, Northern Africa, Southern Africa, Western Africa)
 - Antarctic
 - Arctic
 - Asia (Central Asia, Eastern Asia, Southeastern Asia, Southern Asia, Western Asia / Middle East)
 - Central America & Caribbean
 - Europe (Eastern Europe, Northern Europe, Southern Europe, Western Europe)
 - Global / Multi-region (cross-regional international grants)
 - North America (all grants to Mexico, Canada, and cross-border grants to the United States)
 - Oceania (including Australia)
 - South America
- **DOMESTIC** (all regions within the United States)
 - Gulf Coast, Northeast, Southeast, Midwest, Northwest, Pacific Coast, Southwest
 - Federal Level / Multi-region (all cross-regional domestic grants)

Issue Areas

The following 17 categories have been used to analyze grants in this report and past *Tracking the Field* reports. Each grant is placed in the category in which it fits most closely. This categorization has been developed in discussion with other environmental funding networks internationally, allowing for easier comparison between research and publications on different continents. These issue descriptions were directly taken from the Environmental Funders Network (EFN) 2012 report *Where the Green Grants Went 5: Patterns of UK Funding for Environmental and Conservation Work*.

* Starred issue areas were not included in the UK report.



ENERGY & CLIMATE

Climate & Atmosphere

Most of the funding in this category is given to work on some aspect of climate change, with a much smaller amount to work on ozone depletion. Also included in this category are the issues of acid rain, air pollution, and local air quality.

Energy

This category includes alternative and renewable energy sources, energy efficiency and conservation, fossil fuels, hydroelectric schemes, the oil and gas industries, and nuclear power. It is often paired with "Climate & Atmosphere."

Transportation

Transportation includes all aspects of transportation systems, including public transport systems, transport planning, policy on aviation, freight, road-building, shipping, alternatives to car use and initiatives like car pools and car clubs, the promotion of cycling and walking, and work on vehicle fuel economy.



BIODIVERSITY & LAND

Biodiversity & Species Preservation

This is a broad category, focused on work that protects a particular species or set of species. It includes botanical gardens and arboreturns; research on botany and zoology; protection of birds and their habitats; marine wildlife, such as whales, dolphins, and sharks; protection of endangered species, such as rhinoceros and elephants; protection of globally important biodiversity hotspots, including the use of refuges, reserves, and other habitat conservation projects; and wildlife trusts.

Terrestrial Ecosystems & Land Use

As with "Biodiversity & Species Preservation" preservation, this is a broad category encompassing land purchases and stewardship; national or regional parks; landscape restoration and landscape-scale conservation efforts; land use planning; tree planting, forestry, and reducing deforestation; and the impacts of mining.



WATER

Coastal & Marine Ecosystems

As the name suggests, this category includes both the open ocean and coastal wetland systems. These systems include fisheries; aquaculture; coastal lands, deltas, and estuaries; marine protected areas; and marine pollution (such as marine dumping).

Freshwater & Inland Water Ecosystems

This category covers lakes and rivers; canals, reservoirs, and other inland water systems; groundwater contamination and water conservation; and wetlands.



SYSTEMS

Material Consumption & Waste Management

This category covers reducing consumption levels; redefining economic growth; waste reduction, sustainable design, and sustainable production; recycling and composting; and all aspects of waste disposal, including incinerators and landfills.

Sustainable Agriculture & Food Systems

This remains a very broad category. It includes organic and other forms of sustainable farming, training and research to help farmers in developing countries, control of the food chain, initiatives opposed to factory farming, horticultural organizations and projects, education on agriculture for children and adults (e.g., city farms), opposition to the use of genetically modified crops and food irradiation, food safety and the genetic diversity of agriculture (including seed banks), and soil conservation.

Sustainable Communities

Grants included in this category support urban green spaces and parks, community gardens, built environment projects, and community-based sustainability work.

Trade & Finance

The "Trade & Finance" category encompasses work on corporate-led globalization and international trade policy; efforts to reform public financial institutions (such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and Export Credit Agencies); similar work directed at the lending policies of private banks; initiatives surrounding the

reduction of developing country debt; and local economic development projects and economic re-localization, such as micro-finance organizations.



HEALTH & JUSTICE

Environmental Health*

Grants tagged "Environmental Health" encompass grants that work toward an environment that supports public health. While many of the other issue areas impact health, these grants are more specifically targeting environmental factors through a health-focused lens. "Environmental Health" may be related to improving environmental health through the food system (reduced toxics in food, healthier eating, etc.), through water quality, or through air quality.

Environmental Justice*

"Environmental Justice" grants are for the "fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income, with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies," as defined by the Environmental Protection Agency.¹

Indigenous Peoples / Communities*

"Indigenous Peoples / Communities" grants focus on protecting the environment for indigenous peoples, both within the United States and abroad. These grants include fighting for the rights of indigenous groups over their land, water, or minerals, or other community rights relating to the environment.

Toxics

This category covers all the main categories of toxics impacting the environment and human health, including hazardous waste, heavy metals, pesticides, herbicides, radioactive wastes, persistent organic pollutants, household chemicals, other industrial pollutants, and noise pollution.

OTHER

General Environment / Multi-Issue Work

There remain grants that are difficult to allocate to specific categories, generally because they take the form of core funding to an organization that works on a range of

1. <http://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/>.

different issues (e.g., The Nature Conservancy, Natural Resources Defense Council, etc.), or because the grant supports environmental media titles (e.g., The Ecologist, Resurgence) or environmental education projects covering

a wide range of issues. Some grants provided to generalist re-granting organizations are also included in this category, as it is not possible to identify which issues will be supported when the funds are re-granted.

Strategies

EGA first introduced strategies in *Tracking the Field: Volume 3*. The following eight categories have been used to analyze grants made since 2009. Each grant is either entered into the category in which it fits most closely or marked as undefined.



Advocacy / Organizing / Movement Building **Advocacy**

This strategy is for grants to organizations or programs that promote public support for a cause or idea. This includes alliance / coalition building, raising public awareness, building or enhancing constituency, encouraging and catalyzing action toward broad scale change.

Grassroots Organizing

This is for grants that specifically help build the capacity of local communities to identify their own shared problems and take actions to solve those problems. This includes mobilizing and generating momentum, catalyzing action toward specific projects or building effective leadership within local communities.



Capacity Building / General Operating

This category is only for general support grants or grants that are given to strengthen the grantee as an organization. This can include supporting an existing or new staff member, purchasing supplies, or other general organization needs. Grants to enhance a specific program do not fall under this category.



Communications / Media

Grants that were tagged in this category cover work targeted specifically at generating or influencing media coverage. This can also include the organization of events and conferences. This strategy also includes the creation of a grantee's communication tools, such as webcasts or interactive websites.



Education / Youth Organizing

Education grants include environmental education for children inside and outside of the classroom. This category is for coaching or training services of educators, the public, etc. It also includes informational services and experiences for the public and youth specifically, such as science or environmental camps.



Litigation

Grants marked "Litigation" focus on legal support and assistance for expert legal counsel relating to environmental protection.



Public Policy

This category is primarily for grants aimed at the development of standards, improving policy management practices, reforming policy at any level, support for international agreements, and participation in regulatory processes. It is distinguished from "Advocacy / Organizing / Movement Building" in that this category implies the focus on a specific policy.



Research: Scientific / Environmental

This category is used for grants that build a base of knowledge or develop a device. This includes conducting a study, assessment, investigation, or developing information and jumps in technology. It also includes any activity relating to collecting data or monitoring environmental effects.



Stewardship / Acquisition / Preservation

This category is for the general protection or purchasing of space (land, estuaries, etc.) or rights of use to protect land, improve management, restore ecosystems, or eradicate invasive species. It is generally a broader category than "Research" and is not necessarily associated with on-the-ground protection or management.

Communities Impacted

Children & Young People

Includes grants focused on prenatal exposures and health; children 0–14 years of age; young people aged 15–24 (per the United Nations’ definition); prenatal exposures or children’s environmental health; and youth organizing and leadership.

Women & Gender Equity

Encompasses work focused on women, trans women, and gender-nonbinary people, including grants addressing those groups’ environmental and reproductive health and justice impacts or concerns (e.g., environmentally attributable cancers and reproductive health problems), as well as grants designed to address and advance gender equity (e.g., through gender diversity, equity, and inclusion; environmental health and justice; capacity-building; organizing; and leadership development).

Communities of Color

Encompasses grants focused on people or communities of color and on organizations representing, serving, and/or led by people of color. Includes grants focused on racial impacts (e.g., racial disparities in environmental exposures and environmentally linked health outcomes; synergistic impacts of exposure to pollution and racism) as well as grants designed to advance racial equity (e.g., through racial diversity, equity, and inclusion or environmental

health and justice work; organizing, civic engagement, and leadership development).

Low-Income Communities

Encompasses grants focused on low-income people and communities, as well as on organizations representing, serving, and/or led by low-income people. Includes grants focused on economic and class impacts of environmental conditions (e.g., economic disparities in environmental exposures and environmentally linked health outcomes), as well as grants designed to advance economic equity (e.g., through economic diversity, equity, and inclusion or environmental health and justice work; organizing, civic engagement, leadership development, policy or markets work).

Workers

Encompasses grants focused on workers and/or on organizations representing, serving, and/or led by workers. Includes grants focused on occupational exposures to environmental hazards (generally or in specific sectors, e.g., manufacturing, agriculture, energy, custodial, health care, beauty); grants supporting worker engagement, organizing, and leadership development; and grants focused on improving occupational environmental health, workforce development, or worker justice.

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Endnotes

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TRACKING THE FIELD



ENVIRONMENTAL GRANTMAKERS ASSOCIATION

The mission of EGA is to help member organizations become more effective environmental grantmakers through information sharing, collaboration and networking.

www.ega.org