

Reignite Environmental Movement from the Grassroots Up, Report Urges

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A new report from the National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy (NCRP), written by Sarah Hansen, argues that the environmental movement has recently stalled out, and offers a strategic approach to reigniting environmental initiatives from the grassroots up. The report, "Cultivating the Grassroots: A Winning Approach for Environment and Climate Funders," suggests that the philanthropic community with an interest in advancing positive environmental change should support more grassroots organizing.

Specifically, the report offers four main suggestions:

1. "Provide at least 20 percent of grant dollars to benefit explicitly communities of the future." This recommendation acknowledges that lower income and minority communities are the most jeopardized by the injustice that climate change and other environmental problems create.
2. "Invest at least 25 percent of grant dollars in grassroots advocacy, organizing and civic engagement." This suggestion is based on the idea that local groups will be best able to identify and mobilize coalitions around issues of immediate and obvious relevance (the report offers "stopping toxic pollution, creating viable new jobs and reducing energy bills" as examples)—issues that will then foster a connection to more global concerns.
3. "Build supportive infrastructure." This can be accomplished, the report states, either through direct funding of grassroots environmental groups, or indirectly through community-based public foundations.
4. "Take the long view; prepare for tipping points." This point takes note of the fact that supporting grassroots environmental organizing may require grantmakers to shift their current focus, perhaps moving away from quick deliverables and instead embracing "the slow, patient process of movement building."

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