

For Immediate Release

New Report: Philanthropy Must Fund the Grassroots to Win on Environment and Climate

Watchdog group says reliance on top-down advocacy stymies success of environment and climate change movement



Washington, D.C. (2/23/2012) – For the environment and climate change movements to regain momentum and win important legislative and regulatory battles, more money needs to go towards grassroots organizing and advocacy, according to the [National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy](http://www.ncrp.org)

(NCRP;

www.ncrp.org

). In a report released today, the D.C.-based watchdog organization noted that philanthropy's current over-reliance on large national advocacy groups has failed to address the growing environmental and climate crises we confront.

"You can't win the big fights if you don't have support of the people," said Aaron Dorfman, executive director of NCRP. "Philanthropy needs to fund those groups that listen to people in communities that are most at risk from the impacts of environment and climate change, organize them and rally their support around important solutions."

In “ [Cultivating the Grassroots: A Winning Approach for Environment and Climate Funders](#) ,” author and environment philanthropy veteran Sarah Hansen notes that only 15 percent of the grant dollars given for environmental projects were directed toward reaching the poor and underserved communities most likely to be affected by environmental degradation. Even fewer resources – 11 percent - went to organizations engaged in grassroots organizing and advocacy.

Moreover, in 2009, 50 percent of all environment grants were awarded to large national organizations with budgets of \$5 million or more, which represents only 2 percent of the nearly 29,000 environment and climate public charities in the country. According to Hansen, this points to a predominantly “inside-the-beltway” top-down funding strategy.

“There are many effective pro-environment organizations on the ground that are under-resourced and underutilized,” said Hansen. “By overlooking these grassroots groups and communities ripe for mobilizing to protect our environment from harm, philanthropy is marginalizing proven vehicles of social change and thus seeing less impact and progress.”

The report also demonstrates the interconnectedness of environmental health and issues of justice and equity.

“Foundations needs to re-examine their approach to supporting the environmental movement if they wish to see sustainable success and win on issues that imperil our planet,” said Dorfman.

In the report, Hansen makes the following recommendations for environment and climate funders:

- Provide at least 20 percent of their grant dollars to community-based groups that work to address the needs of underserved people most affected by environmental harm.
- Invest at least 25 percent of their grant dollars in grassroots organizing, advocacy and civic participation.
- Take a long view by building the infrastructure needed to succeed and preparing for tipping points.

" [Cultivating the Grassroots: A Winning Approach for Environment and Climate Funders](#) " is

available for free at

www.ncrp.org

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The National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy in Washington, D.C., is a national watchdog, research and advocacy organization that promotes philanthropy that serves the public good, is responsive to people and communities with the least wealth and opportunity, and is held accountable to the highest standards of integrity and openness. For more information, visit www.ncrp.org.

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