Justice40 Accelerator

Advancing the promise and potential of the Justice40 Initiative

The Justice40 Accelerator is helping community-based organizations on the front lines of climate change successfully apply for funding flowing from the Biden-Harris administration’s Justice40 Initiative, which directs 40% of the benefits from federal investments in climate and clean energy solutions to disadvantaged communities.

Year One: Early Success

- 52 community-rooted climate justice groups from across the country formed the Justice40 Accelerator’s inaugural 2021 Cohort.
- Participants represent Black, Indigenous, Latino, and Asian and Pacific Islander communities from rural areas, cities, and the suburbs, all across the nation.
- So far, 14 of these organizations have tallied about $3 million in federal Justice40 Initiative funding and in-kind technical assistance:
  - Highland Park Community Crisis Coalition (HPC3) in Michigan is part of a multi-stakeholder team receiving a Department of Energy (DOE) Communities LEAP Award providing technical assistance worth up to approximately $500,000 to develop a community-wide action plan designed to cut local air pollution, boost energy resilience, lower utility costs and energy burdens, and create long-term jobs and economic opportunities.
  - Honor the Earth is an Indigenous-led organization in Minnesota that received a DOE Energy Storage for Social Equity award providing technical assistance worth up to approximately $500,000 toward increasing energy resilience and affordability by leveraging energy storage.
  - Ayika Solutions in Atlanta is using a DOE Energy Storage for Social Equity award providing technical assistance worth up to approximately $500,000 to assess local energy issues, evaluate potential solutions, and find partners to support the community in meeting its energy goals.
  - The People’s Justice Council in Alabama won a National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine Gulf Research Program award of $300,000 to work toward engaging communities on the impacts of climate change on human health and community resilience.
  - Green Door Initiative in Detroit is applying a $200,000 DOE Inclusive Energy Innovation Prize toward mitigating energy insecurity, increasing access to climate-smart job training and placement, and establishing an environmental justice model that can be replicated in other communities.
  - The West Georgia Farmers Cooperative and Groundwork Northeast Revitalization Group of Kansas City, Kansas, have each won $200,000 in USDA Healthy Food Financing Initiative Grants, which aim to improve access to healthy foods in underserved areas, create and preserve quality jobs, and revitalize low-income communities.
  - Blacks in Green is applying an EPA Environmental Justice Small Grant of $75,000 to a community-directed lead-free water project focused on education, testing, and increasing access to in-home filtration for vulnerable residents in Chicago.
  - Little Manila Rising (Stockton, California) is part of a multi-stakeholder team receiving a DOE
Communities LEAP Award providing technical assistance worth up to approximately $500,000 to address historic energy and pollution burdens and drive a clean, reliable, equitable, and safe electricity system that works for the community.

- **GreenRoots** (Chelsea, Massachusetts) won an EPA EJ Small Grant of up to $75,000.
- **Greater-Birmingham Alliance to Stop Pollution** (GASP, of Birmingham, Alabama) won an EPA EJ Small Grant of up to $75,000.
- **Youth Ministries for Peace and Justice** (Bronx, New York) won an EPA EJ Small Grant of up to $75,000.
- **People for Community Recovery** (Chicago, IL) won an EPA EJ Small Grant of up to $75,000.
- **Water Wise Gulf South** (New Orleans, LA) won an EPA EJ Small Grant of up to $75,000.

Additionally, a total of $8,171,477 in funding has been awarded to cohort members with accelerator support, including $3,350,000 from federal government programs, $4,571,477 in state grant program funding, and $250,000 in philanthropic funding.

An additional 32 applications were submitted by Cohort 1 members for Justice40 Initiative or other public funding and are awaiting decisions on their applications.

**Lessons Learned**

- Frontline groups are ready for funding. Federal agencies seeking climate-justice delivery partners can look beyond the usual suspects to community-rooted groups with local knowledge of what solutions will work best in frontline communities.
- Frontline organizations address multiple problems at once, implementing intersectional climate solutions that improve lives in local communities while reducing emissions and increasing resiliency. For example, Struggle for Miami’s Affordable and Sustainable Housing (SMASH Miami) applied funding and technical assistance provided by the accelerator to open its first affordable housing cooperative, providing green housing to housing-insecure populations.
- Frontline communities are seeing opportunities for greater impact and integration of public funding across local, state and federal funding streams. The accelerator supports them in applying for funds across the board. For example, cohort member Shelterwood Collective, in California, leveraged technical assistance and navigator support from the Justice40 Accelerator as it successfully applied for a $4.6 million state Cal Fire grant.
- Frontline organizations have place-based knowledge and understand what support their communities need to implement climate solutions. The Justice40 Accelerator’s approach is first to listen, and then to offer help responsively. This more relational, respectful approach is increasing trust-based capital to grow and sustain organizations, committed technical assistance, navigator services, and a supportive national network of program staff and partners who believe community organizations know best what works in their own communities.
- Frontline organizations are revealing existing silos and disconnects across status quo public funding. In response, the Justice40 Accelerator is breaking down barriers and building a network of cross-sector collaborators and technical assistance providers. Through this model, the accelerator is working to demystify systems of power and
liberate once-gated resources, data, and access to institutional knowledge (see, for example, the Justice40 StoryMap). This opens doors for frontline communities to apply self-determined agency to leverage resources they have been systematically shut out from, including federal grants and procurement opportunities.

- There are now more than 100 frontline organizations in the Justice40 Accelerator network, and they represent a new and ready network of climate justice organizations for funders, technical assistance providers, and regional partners to learn about and support. By creating online organization and project profiles, the accelerator fields and facilitates meaningful connections so organizations are sitting at tables where decisions are made, standing at mics and speaking to audiences that need to hear from them, and leading equitable agendas.

- Frontline organizations thrive when supported by an approach that upends a fundamental contradiction that has long reigned in federal funding and philanthropy circles: Overburdened and under-resourced organizations focus on making an impact in the communities they serve, and do not often have the additional staff capacity or access to relationships required to successfully apply for public or philanthropic funding to grow their successful programs. The Justice40 Accelerator disrupts this vicious cycle by first acknowledging the innovations and impacts already present in frontline communities, then working with organizations to grow their capacity and fundraising success from that position of strength.

- The Justice40 Accelerator can serve as a model for climate justice funders and investors beyond the federal government, including philanthropy, state and local governments, and private capital. The accelerator demonstrates how they can fund climate justice initiatives that leverage the resilience inherent in frontline communities to create lasting climate solutions.

**Year Two: Building Momentum**

- 49 community-based climate justice organizations have accepted membership in the Justice40 Accelerator’s 2022 Cohort, which begins work in July 2022.
- As members of the new 2022 Cohort develop projects and seek federal funding, members of the 2021 Cohort will continue to do so, as well.
- Inside and outside of the Justice40 Accelerator, frontline organizations are joining forces to apply for funding or fill in resource and capacity gaps that will position them for successful Justice40 funding.

**Members of the 2022 Cohort are:**

Appalachian Voices
BLVD Harambee – Building Up Leaders for Village Development
Bridging The Gap
Bridging The Gap in Virginia
Casa Familiar
Centro Fronterizo del Obrero (dba) La Mujer Obrera
Clean Energy Resource Teams (CERTs)
Comite Civico del Valle, Inc.

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How the J40 Accelerator works
The 12-month Justice40 Accelerator program for community-anchored climate justice organizations offers:

- $25,000 unrestricted grant per organization to support accelerator participation and project development
- One-on-one technical assistance and Justice40 Navigator support
- Workshops and peer-to-peer learning sessions on applying for government grants
- Informational sessions with government agency officials
Curated notices of funding opportunities
Post-accelerator alumni network

Redressing Injustice
Black, Indigenous, and other communities of color have experienced disproportionately harsh impacts from climate change and dirty energy, and they are developing creative and effective solutions in response. But because of structural racism and inequitable systems, these communities face extensive and unjust barriers to accessing the resources and capacity they need to implement and scale climate projects that meet the needs of the people they serve.

Who’s behind it?
The Justice40 Accelerator is a partnership of climate equity organizations, and is being implemented in collaboration with implementation partner The People’s Climate Innovation Center. It is independent of the federal government. Founding partners include:

- Elevate
- Groundswell
- Partnership for Southern Equity
- The Hummingbird Firm
- The Solutions Project