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One year after signing up with the Justice40 Accelerator, frontline climate justice groups are putting millions of dollars in federal grants to work as part of the Justice40 Initiative. 

Funding environmental justice groups is the best way to ensure the promise and potential of the Justice40 Initiative is realized; accelerator-style collaboration delivers results.

In the year since 52 community-rooted climate justice groups from across the country formed the Justice40 Accelerator’s first cohort, participants have successfully applied for millions of dollars in federal funding flowing from the Biden/Harris administration’s Justice40 Initiative. As the accelerator’s new 2022 Cohort begins its work, it’s time to accelerate investments in frontline communities.

“The achievements won by the organizations in the Justice40 Accelerator’s first cohort prove that the right partners providing the right technical assistance to move the needle in achieving systematic and real community solutions to the climate crisis works, and works well,” said Nathaniel Smith, founder and Chief Equity Officer of the Partnership for Southern Equity, which co-founded the accelerator together with other climate equity organizations.

“Moving the needle requires that we continue to push ahead, because time is critical. Communities of color and low-income communities continue to bear the worst effects of climate change and dirty energy — much of this resulting from structural racism, unfair systems, historic policies and other inequities that too often undermine the success of these communities,” Smith said.

The Justice40 Initiative directs at least 40% of the benefits from federal investments in climate and clean energy solutions to disadvantaged communities. It acknowledges that Black, Indigenous, and other communities of color and low-income communities have experienced disproportionately harsh impacts of climate change and dirty energy.

To remove barriers blocking access to federal funding informed by the Justice40 Initiative, leading climate justice and community development nonprofits created the Justice40 Accelerator. Its 12-month program provides seed funding, technical assistance, training,
connections, and peer support for community-anchored climate justice organizations seeking Justice40 Initiative funding.

“There’s brilliance and resilience in our frontline communities. Their experience, knowledge, and wisdom make for effective, intersectional climate solutions that address a multitude of issues, from economic development to clean water,” said Gloria Walton, CEO and President of The Solutions Project, which co-founded the accelerator. “Historically, Washington hasn’t made big investments in grassroots organizations that have so much skin in the game. The work of environmental justice organizations inspired this administration’s Justice40 commitment. Now frontline communities are excited to influence and decide where the dollars go, recognizing that 40% is just the beginning.”

Leaders of the Justice40 Accelerator’s founding organizations know from experience that merely finding out what federal funds are available is a challenge, to say nothing of navigating the complicated application process and winning contracts for innovative community solutions.

“The process of applying for government funding is time-consuming and complex,” said Anne Evens, CEO of the Chicago-based nonprofit Elevate, which co-founded the accelerator. “Trusted community organizations with great ideas are places people turn to now more than ever, and they are at capacity. We knew there had to be a better way to help them submit successful proposals to meet the needs of the people they serve. The Justice40 Initiative is that better way to prioritize funding. The Justice40 Accelerator is here to dramatically increase access.”

Forty-nine organizations have accepted membership in the Justice40 Accelerator's 2022 Cohort, which will kick off in July. Like the inaugural 2021 Cohort, the 2022 Cohort represents groups from Black, Indigenous, Latino, and Asian and Pacific Islander communities — rural, urban and suburban — from across the United States.

Each organization receives $25,000 in unrestricted grant money to support participation and project development during the cohort. They can access one-on-one technical assistance, the support of expert Justice40 Navigators, and curated notices of funding opportunities. They can participate in grant-application workshops, peer-to-peer learning sessions, and informational meetings with government agency officials. And when the initial year-long program is complete, they can join the accelerator’s alumni network for continued support.

“The Justice40 Accelerator has given us a focus and understanding of what we needed to have in place to be ready to apply for and receive federal funding — including requirements that we weren’t aware of. We learned we needed to have more systems in place and more boxes checked in order to even enter into the game,” said Donele Wilkins, founder and executive director of the Green Door Initiative in Detroit, which won a $200,000 DOE Inclusive Energy Innovation Prize.
“We were able to engage a consultant who gave us much-needed feedback at every iteration of the process, including things that we hadn’t thought of or didn’t know, like phrasing our proposal in a way that would resonate with a reviewer. The technical assistance allowed us to think through what we needed in order to move through the entire federal process and succeed. And the accelerator’s collegiality and community connections were warm and wonderful,” Wilkins said. “We’ll be reaching out for support from the accelerator and our community as we implement our award, because the real work of justice marches on.”

So far, 14 organizations from the first Justice40 Accelerator cohort 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 Farmer’s 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.

“These frontline community organizations are delivering real value, demonstrating solutions that can be replicated in communities across the nation and the world,” said [Danielle Deane-Ryan](#) of the [Bezos Earth Fund](#), which supports the accelerator. Governments at all levels, philanthropy, and private capital can learn from the Justice40 Accelerator and fund environmental justice efforts that amplify the solutions frontline communities continue to create.”

“To achieve a true and just transition to a clean-energy economy, we must repair the damage done to communities by dirty energy and climate change; we must invest in their future,” said [Smith](#) of the Partnership for Southern Equity. “This includes leveling the playing field so that more organizations with innovative climate solutions can apply for federal funding. The Justice40 Accelerator represents a prime example of jump-starting a just transition to a more sustainable, more equitable, more prosperous nation.”

Members of the [Justice40 Accelerator’s 2022 Cohort](#) are:

- Appalachian Voices - VA
- BLVD Harambee - Building Up Leaders for Village Development - MI
- Bridging The Gap - MO
- Bridging The Gap In Virginia - VA
- Casa Familiar - CA
- Centro Fronterizo del Obrero (dba La Mujer Obrera) - TX
Clean Energy Resource Teams (CERTs)    MN
Comite Civico del Valle, Inc.    CA
Communities for a Better Environment    CA
Concerned Citizens of Charles City County    VA
Constructing Hope    OR
Cooperación Santa Ana    CA
Eastie Farm, Inc.    MA
Eastside Community Network    MI
EcoWorks    MI
Flanner House of Indianapolis    IN
Garfield Park Community Council    IL
Georgia Interfaith Power and Light    GA
Green The Church    CA
Groundwork Ohio River Valley    OH
Harambee House, Inc. / Citizens for Environmental Justice    GA
Health People Inc.    NY
Inner City Green Team    NY
Latino Academy of Workforce Development    WI
Local Clean Energy Alliance    CA
Minneapolis Climate Action    MN
Native Conservancy    AK
Native Justice Coalition    MI
Ogema Organics    MN
Open Buffalo    NY
Our Climate Education Fund    FL
Outdoor Promise    NY
Parable of the Sower Intentional Community Cooperative    CA
Racial Environmental Justice Committee (REJC)    RI
For more information, please see the Justice40 Accelerator fact sheet.

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About the Partnership

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**, a national nonprofit that seeks to create a just and equitable world in which everyone has clean and affordable heat, power, and water in their homes and communities — no matter who they are or where they live.
- **Groundswell**, a nonprofit building community power by connecting clean energy projects with economic empowerment for local communities. Groundswell develops and
manages community solar projects in five states and D.C., serving more than 4,100 income-qualified households with affordable clean power.

- **Partnership for Southern Equity**, a nonprofit advancing policies and institutional actions that promote racial equity and shared prosperity for all in the growth of metropolitan Atlanta and the American South.
- **The Hummingbird Firm**, a community-engagement consulting firm, specializing in face-to-face and digital public involvement, environmental communications, climate action, and cultural competency training.
- **The Solutions Project**, a national nonprofit that promotes climate justice through grantmaking and amplifying the stories of frontline community leaders in the media. TSP is accelerating the transition to 100% clean energy and equitable access to healthy air, water, and land by supporting climate justice organizations, especially those led by women of color.