

Philanthropy a powerful strategy to mitigate the climate crisis for an equitable future

The case for climate philanthropy

Climate change can feel daunting sometimes, from the perspective of a global citizen (how on Earth can I save the Earth?) to the mindset of a journalist (what solution can I offer when reporting on the tragedies of a warming world?).

One strategy in our toolkit offers humans the chance to accelerate climate solutions at speed and scale for a sustainable future: philanthropy.

The climate crisis encompasses all areas of life, from the [water we drink](#) to the [cars we drive](#) to the [places we call home](#). As every decision impacts our planet, we need a strategy that targets opportunities to support a wide range of solutions focused on people and the environment. And we need to do so in a way that is inclusive.

Climate philanthropy is unique in its ability to be nimble, broad, and equitable. Funding for climate change mitigation will continue to catalyze change quickly for those who need it most.

Philanthropy builds an ecosystem of resources to partner with communities, civil society, and public and private sectors to urgently scale and implement climate solutions.

Why funding matters in a warming world

Amplifying the power of philanthropy is a critical strategy to help end the climate crisis.

Philanthropy helps chart a more sustainable future by connecting businesses, environmental groups, researchers, and governments to leverage the power of collective action. More than 90 countries have set [net-zero targets](#), so funding the tools and capacity to implement these climate commitments is paramount.

Funders are expanding their reach to explore investments in new geographies, sectors, and intersectional approaches as the pressure for climate action intensifies. A more diverse group of grantees can bring a wider range of perspectives to help address the challenges.

One-third of the [climate mitigation](#) needed to meet Paris Agreement goals can be sourced from [nature-based solutions](#) like conservation and land management. Climate philanthropy allows us to move faster and more ambitiously to support these climate solutions and, in turn, support the people and natural ecosystems disproportionately impacted by a warming world.

Recent [global philanthropic pledges](#) back climate action from Indigenous Peoples and local communities, who manage half the world's land and care for an astonishing 80% of Earth's biodiversity. At least \$1.7 billion in direct funding was set aside at COP 26, with the understanding that solutions from local communities are best positioned for durable change.

Philanthropic efforts also supported [climate advocates and analysts](#) that pushed forward the historic [Inflation Reduction Act](#). The bill is predicted to reduce climate pollution by almost 40% by 2030 and is a clear example of foundational support leading to bending the emissions curve.

Philanthropic [funding for climate change mitigation](#) jumped by 25% in 2021, compared to an 8% increase in overall philanthropy. The increase is encouraging, especially if the trend continues, but global funding has a long way to go for an equitable future. Less than 2% of global giving goes to mitigating climate change in a world where every human is affected by climate change.

Background on climate change mitigation

Climate change mitigation prevents the planet from warming to more extreme temperatures by avoiding and reducing greenhouse gas emissions *before* they are released into our atmosphere. It's a compliment to adaptation, which supports people and natural ecosystems as climate impacts intensify.

Before the Paris climate agreement, which set a global goal to limit [warming to 1.5°C](#), the world was on track to [heat nearly 4°C](#) by the end of the century. As this outcome was widely seen as catastrophic, ambitious [2030 targets](#) were established to abate Earth's warming to 2.4°C.

What do 2 or 4 degrees of warming mean, really?

- The 2°C marker translates to a [profoundly disrupted climate](#) with fiercer storms, [higher seas](#), animal and plant extinctions, and higher death rates from [infectious disease](#).
- A 4°C increase looks like [coastal cities underwater](#), [deadly indoor temperatures](#) for millions, and the [displacement of billions](#) living on the African continent and elsewhere.

It's clear that we need to bend the emissions curve to mitigate harm to humans and natural ecosystems alike. Every fraction of a degree matters.

Story ideas

Environment

- A new collaborative called [Forests, People, Climate](#) looks to mobilize \$1.2 billion to end tropical deforestation and spark sustainable development. How can funding from this collaborative positively impact indigenous communities in your country?
- Over 190 countries adopted a [landmark United Nations agreement](#) nicknamed 30x30 to protect 30% of Earth's planet and oceans by 2030. What steps is your nation taking to pause the biodiversity crisis? How can philanthropy accelerate conservation efforts?

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- At COP 27, the [Gates Foundation](#) pledged \$1.4 billion to help sub-Saharan African and South Asian farmers confront climate change. How will this investment help your country build agricultural resilience?

Policy

- How can philanthropy accelerate transitions to a net-zero economy in [the decisive decade](#)?
- Is your nation one of the 93 that have set [net-zero pledges](#) for greenhouse gas emissions? How can climate funding catalyze action and encourage binding targets?
- How is philanthropy helping to drive [accountability](#) in carbon and greenhouse gas emissions reporting?

Justice

- Grants that take risks with ambitious mitigation projects or have flexible spending requirements are shown to be [impactful giving models](#). What local climate grants or research proposals fall under these umbrellas?
- Why does a [stable democracy](#) impact your area's ability to provide solutions to the climate crisis? What is the role of peace and conflict in sustainable philanthropy?
 - I.e., the right to vote empowers [communities to stay environmental guardians](#).
- Climate change affects equity in every size and shape of community. How can just, inclusive, and sustainable policies be supported by climate funding?

Economy

- How can we change our global [public finance system](#) to address the debt and inflation crises seen across many nations while funding initiatives that address the climate crisis?
- How can funders engage with public and private partners to accelerate finance for clean economy transitions in emerging and developing markets?
- The \$10.5 billion fund [Global Energy Alliance for People and Planet](#) helps emerging economies move to clean energy, as half of the world lives in “energy poverty.” How can funding support the shift toward clean energy?

Health

- A warming world [weakens human immunity](#). What climate tech startups or companies that address human health could spark innovation with philanthropic support?
- Last year [broke records worldwide](#), from extended drought in China to historic flooding in Pakistan. What local climate initiatives can benefit from the global and economic partnership offered by philanthropy?

Reporting resources

National – United States

- A list of the nation's 25 largest environmental grant makers, or “[green heavyweights](#).”
- This list details “[green middleweights](#)” – same idea, different amount.
- The [Inflation Reduction Act](#) (IRA), explained. McKinsey breaks down investment trends, energy and healthcare savings, and more.
- The [Climate Funders Justice Pledge](#) provides transparency and numbers on commitments to diversity for top funders.

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- The pledge includes a list of [BIPOC scholars with PhDs](#) who focus on climate and energy justice for expert insights.

Global

- ClimateWorks Foundation's [annual report on funding trends](#) in climate change mitigation philanthropy, with global data on individual and foundation giving from 2015 to 2021.
- A searchable [foundation database](#) with in-depth profiles of each grantmaker.
- A [fact sheet](#) breaks down the United Nations 30x30 pledge.
- An [extensive list of foundations](#) giving grants for climate change.
- [Funding trends](#) in climate-related government aid, commitments, and much more.
- [Ford Foundation's report](#) provides an update on donor spending progress on the Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities Forest Tenure Pledge.
- The five top environmental foundations (ranked by 2021 total giving): [Bezos Earth Fund](#), [Gates Foundation](#), [Yield Giving](#), [Hewlett Foundation](#), and [Bloomberg Philanthropies](#).