



THE TRUTH ABOUT THE MINNESOTA MIRACLE: THE COORDINATED INVESTMENTS AND STRATEGY THAT BUILT THE POWER TO WIN EQUITABLE CLIMATE ACTION IN MINNESOTA

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

“The “Minnesota Miracle” was not a miracle. These wins were the result of a strategy to build cross-movement infrastructure that required years of coordinated investment from democracy and climate funders working in deep partnership with field leaders.”

—Jodeen Olguín-Tayler, The Equity Funds

“We are significantly more powerful on these issues than we were 7 or 8 years ago. Hands-down, without a doubt.” —Doran Schrantz, ISAIAH

“Unless we’re able to engage folks from diverse communities in the climate fight, which means changing not just the messages but also changing the policies that we’re fighting for, then we’re always going to fall short when it comes to power.”—Jordan Estevao, The Equity Funds

Overview

WHAT: A case study of the investments and strategy to build an inclusive and powerful climate movement in Minnesota that resulted in wins such as the state’s 2023 100% clean energy law

INSIGHTS & RECOMMENDATIONS: We identify a number of funding strategies that contributed to growing the movement and a range of policy victories, which funders elsewhere may wish to employ

WHO THIS REPORT IS FOR: This case study holds lessons for **climate funders** seeking to expand their giving to non-traditional climate grantees; **non-partisan civic engagement funders** wishing to enable favorable policy environments; and for **movement strategists** and **community organizers** seeking to build coalitions and secure durable policy wins.

The Story

An inclusive movement has driven impressive policy change in Minnesota. This **case study examines the work of the 501(c)(3) Climate and Clean Energy Equity Fund (CCEEF) and its allied funders,¹ the field infrastructure and movement they supported, and the victories achieved.** Since 2017, the Equity Funds have invested in long-term power and coalition building among a diverse group of grantees in the state, including many new to climate and energy. We identify a number of funding strategies they employed that contributed to growth in the power of the movement and to a range of policy victories over this period, notably the passage of a statewide 100% clean energy requirement by 2040.

This report details those movement-building, resource mobilization, and multilayered grantmaking approaches behind the Minnesota 100% clean energy coalition, and their climate, energy, and health equity fights and victories along the way. It draws on **reflections, insights, and key takeaways from those involved**, including how long-term investments in movement infrastructure in Minnesota created the conditions necessary to pass and implement ambitious climate policies. While the list of such victories is notable, this report also focuses on the broader movement, with passage and implementation of legislation as only one of several indicators of success of the movement building efforts.

¹These included the associated 501(c)(4) Climate Equity Action Fund (CEAF). In this report, unless specifically noted otherwise, we use “Equity Funds” to refer to either (or both) CCEEF and CEAF. With respect to all of the events and strategies described in this report, each of the organizations made sure to adhere to the Internal Revenue Code requirements applicable to their respective tax-exempt statuses. And, all discussion of grants by the “Equity Funds” should be understood to mean that CCEEF made grants only to 501(c)(3) organizations.



100% Campaign Rally at the Minnesota State Capitol. (Source: 100% Campaign)

What we found: A distinct playbook for climate funding and movement-building

In contrast to common models of climate philanthropy and policy advocacy focused on short-term, transactional funding of incumbent green organizations, **what we saw in Minnesota comprised a distinct set of funding strategies** pursued by the Equity Funds and other allied funders. These included:

- **Sustained funding:** Building the movement and power for big wins takes time, including a commitment to invest over several years, even before the conditions for victory are in place. And multi-year grants offered stability for partners to build out long-term plans, coalitions, and a lasting, engaged multi-racial base of climate voters.
- **Focus on movement & power building:** The sustained funding was oriented towards building a lasting state movement, with patient, long-term organizing developing an influential constituency for climate equity in state politics.
- **Cooperation & Trust:** Grant makers worked to permit flexibility and self-direction on the part of grantees, such as through the use of general operating support grants (rather than grant dollars earmarked for a specific program). And they supported cooperative and inclusive coalitional dynamics among organizations and ownership of the campaigns by investing in local leadership.
- **Bringing new players onto the team:** To create a powerful, equitable, and inclusive multi-racial, cross-class climate movement in Minnesota, these funders went beyond the usual suspects on climate and energy policy to fund new entrants into the climate space, including groups focused on racial justice, communities of color, rural areas, and multi-issue social justice organizations. This funding allowed many of these organizations to work directly on climate and clean energy for the first time.
- **Constructing movement infrastructure:** Movements need connective tissue and common resources beyond what individual nonprofits usually possess on their own. Funders invested in shared assets (like narrative research), coordinating bodies (like the 100% Campaign), and broad-



Supporters of the push for 100% clean energy in Minnesota. (Source: 100% Campaign)

- based expertise (through policy accelerator trainings).
- **Leaning into civic engagement:** The 501(c)(4) Climate Equity Action Fund has been able to provide support for political and legislative campaign activities, such as party caucus organizing to influence clean energy platforms and lobby days at the state capitol. These efforts were able to translate the broader movement's people power into policymaking muscle.

These funding strategies can change the landscape

Each of these strategies contributed to an innovative equity-driven funding model that has helped to build the influence of an inclusive movement and support policy wins in Minnesota.

Funding equity and power building of racially diverse communities has fundamentally changed the climate space in the state, by putting race and equity prominently into the mix, and was important for achieving equity victories such as a pollution cumulative impacts law, and climate justice provisions in the 100% clean energy legislation.

And the work continues. The 100% Campaign strategically combined both short-term win and long-term base building approaches, enabled by funders who demonstrated patience and a longer time horizon in their support. There was awareness that a **one-off legislative win was not the (only) objective** and should not obscure the goal of building a racially broad constituency voice at the table to inform policy implementation and future wins.

INTRODUCTION

“Winning 100% Clean Energy legislation in Minnesota was not a miracle, it was the result of a coordinated strategy. Key parts of that strategy were coordinated philanthropic investments premised on two truths: First, that to accelerate climate action we need to fund strategies designed to build the political power of an organized multi-racial constituency base. And second, that climate policy solutions must address pocket book and community-health priorities identified by that constituency base. This is essential to building both public demand and political will for accelerated action.”—Jodeen Olguín-Tayler, The Equity Funds

“Those who are closest to the problem need to have a say and voice in the solutions that drive it.”—Funder

“The underlying theory of change was that in order to win some of these fights on climate we need to think differently than the traditional climate funding world had been, with predominantly grass-tops.”—Funder

“We need to have a climate movement that is a movement for equity.”—Jordan Estevao, The Equity Funds

In February 2023, Minnesota passed a law that committed the state to 100% clean energy by 2040, along with a host of other progressive legislation dubbed the “Minnesota Miracle 2.0.” The clean energy law was something that many of the people responsible for this victory did not think was fathomable six years earlier, when the Climate Equity Action Fund and the Climate and Clean Energy Equity Fund (the “Equity Funds”) first started investing in Minnesota. As one funder who supported the effort says, “This is not a miracle; this is years of investment from the philanthropic side and also from the field side.”

This report serves as a case study on what it took to win clean energy legislation in Minnesota, and the Equity Funds’ roles. If we are to see similar policy wins in other states, it is essential for climate funders to understand the types of philanthropic investment, over what period of time, the nature of the partnerships, and the multi-racial base that needs to be at the table to make such a win possible and durable. The hope is that sharing this knowledge will lead to more productive and inclusive funding in other states.

The Equity Funds have been a leader in promoting the idea that addressing climate change should be understood as a political problem as much as it is a science problem. As a staffer at the Equity Funds put it, “We can’t properly address [climate change] if it’s approached primarily as a science problem. Effectively advancing climate action requires we approach it as a political problem, one which requires a broad, diverse base, and a more activated, engaged base of

support than the mainstream environmental movement.” That means devoting resources to informing the general public and government officials of the facts about climate change and persuading them about the steps they can take to mitigate it.

At the time of the Equity Funds’ inception and subsequent investment in Minnesota, approaching climate action as a political problem was not the approach taken by much of climate philanthropy. And yet, increasing political polarization was dimming the prospects for bipartisan support for climate action across the U.S. Climate action had become anathema in conservative circles, which meant that even moderate Republicans across the country who accepted the reality of climate change were not voting for binding climate bills. And climate change still was not a top priority for many Democratic legislators and their constituents. Climate change was seen by many as something that privileged White people had the luxury to worry about, while for many communities of color, working class and rural residents, issues such as housing, childcare, and wages were more top of mind. Lacking sufficient political will, strong legislative climate action was not happening on the scale that was urgently needed.

In the mid-2010s, climate impacts were becoming more noticeable, with an increase in the number and severity of extreme weather events. There were organizations representing frontline communities that had become increasingly interested in figuring out the role they could play in addressing climate change, yet many of them operated on shoestring budgets. As a result, these groups had little power

in the climate space, despite having powerful stories to tell. Though there was growing awareness of the potential impact these groups could have, as evidenced by the prominent role environmental justice groups played in the People's Climate March in New York in 2015, the climate movement was clearly leaving power on the table by not harnessing the potential of frontline communities.

The bulk of philanthropic climate funding was going to Big Green nonprofit organizations whose base of supporters tended to be disproportionately White, which may be in part why their approaches were not resonating with frontline communities. Frontline communities bear the brunt of climate impacts as well as pollution stemming from the reliance on fossil fuels and they should have a leading voice in climate solutions, yet as one Equity Funds grantee put it, climate organizing was typically "200 White guys in white shirts and khakis talking numbers." To put enough pressure on political leaders to compel them to prioritize climate action would

require a wider spectrum of support, and hence a shift in climate philanthropy.

The campaign for 100% clean energy in Minnesota leveraged the existing racial and economic justice movement infrastructure into the climate space. The Equity Funds provided grant funding, policy analysis, and strategic communications resources to help experts in organizing who had not worked on climate bring their organizing skills into the climate space. They also funded smaller environmental justice groups and transformed them from minor to major players. They helped to expand the climate movement to include farmers and rural communities, community organizing and racial justice organizations fully into the climate fight. The Equity Funds considered it a key indicator in enabling climate policy to grow this organized multi-racial constituency in support of clean energy and its jobs, health, equity and safety benefits.

METHODOLOGY

Methodology Overview

We utilized several methods to collect the evidence that formed the basis of this case study. Most central were 21 interviews with a range of actors, including the locally-based leaders and organizers of the coalition behind the campaign for 100% clean energy, and the funders who supported them. We supplemented those conversations with a survey sent to local organizations. For general background information, we reviewed grant reports, webinar recordings, news media stories, social media accounts, campaign materials, and other content to provide a fuller picture of events in Minnesota, the thinking of various actors, and to confirm specific facts

and dates. We also conducted a more systematic review of media coverage related to the 100% clean energy legislation, to assess themes around the coverage and any lessons about the Campaign's, advocates', and community organizations' media strategies and tactics. We also performed a review of the academic and practitioner literature on concepts relevant to this case study, to cross-check if research findings related to those concepts were in alignment with what we were observing elsewhere and the conclusions they led us to (see chapter below).

Interviews

We conducted 21 interviews with a variety of individuals as a key data-gathering method for this project. Interviews were conducted from September 2023 to April 2024. Interviewees fell into several categories:

- Staff at organizations who led the community engagement and 100% clean energy coalition work in Minnesota
- Key funders and staff at foundations that have been

involved in funding climate and clean energy advocacy work in Minnesota

- Other individuals with roles in or knowledge of the work surrounding the Equity Funds' involvement in Minnesota

We attempted to speak to someone from each community-based grantee organization working on the campaign, but we did not hear back from all of them. Hence there may be gaps in

the perspectives offered in this report. Interviews with funders and foundations were based on recommendations we received and interviewee prospects who in turn recommended. We selected additional interviewees based on our knowledge of those involved in or informed about the events in question.

Interviews were semi-structured, based on a series of prepared questions that was standard for each category of interviewee. Interviews were recorded to permit verification of our notes and to provide exact verbatim quotations for inclusion in this report. We followed up with each interviewee to confirm with them any quotations we planned to use. In several cases, we requested and conducted follow-up interviews or posed additional questions over email, in order to clarify and deepen our understanding.

The authors considered it important to the integrity of the

project that interviewees felt as free as possible to provide their full and honest opinions without concern that this might reflect negatively on them, their organization, or their prospects for future funding. All interviewees were offered the opportunity for the information and statements they provided to be anonymized: only the writing team for this report would have access to raw notes and recordings and records linking those to the names of interviewees, and interviewee names would not be attached to specific quotations or statements made in the report. We subsequently made requests of several interviewees to associate their names with quotations or other information they provided, in cases where the specific identity of the interviewee would add substantial context and value to the reader. Any names cited in this report are with the approval of the interviewee.

Surveys

Following the interviews, interviewees were asked to complete an online survey. This was intended both to elicit additional qualitative information via open-ended text prompts (especially to ensure that certain topics were universally addressed, even if in the course of given interviews time was not available to address them), as well as to collect quantitative information, such as numeric ratings of the interviewees' assessments of the effectiveness of various components of the philan-

thropic support they had received. After initial invitation, two follow-up reminder messages were sent requesting survey completion. There was a 45% response rate, representing a range of organizations, including environmental justice, people of color-led, Greater Minnesota-based, multi-issue, multi-racial, and traditional green. And they included some of those who had more critical perspectives during the interviews.

Media Analysis

We conducted a general search for news media coverage surrounding the campaigning for, passage of, and subsequent implementation of the 100% clean energy legislation. The (approximately 100) resulting stories were analyzed for their

principal themes (such as whether they covered the equity provisions of the legislation), and the organizations and individuals quoted or referenced in them.

BACKGROUND:

FERTILE CONDITIONS IN MINNESOTA FOR ADVANCING EQUITABLE CLEAN ENERGY

"[The Equity Fund] came in at a really good moment in our state's ecosystem and leveraged a different theory of change into the environment. It was disruptive but not hostile, and very overtly it built the power of a whole new cohort of organizations to be active strategic players on climate and clean energy."—Equity Funds grantee in Minnesota

"These organizations [community-based organizations] are the future for how you're going to pass not just good policies but actually have durable political will, because things are going to get worse before they get better in trying to combat the largest fossil fuel industry on the planet."—Midwest Funder

In 2017, the Equity Funds chose Minnesota to be one of five states in which it was then investing. The political situation looked promising; there were grassroots multiracial, multi-issue power-building organizations with a track record of winning on big policy issues who had developed a healthy infrastructure; and there was a prominent regional funder—the McKnight Foundation—that shared the Equity Funds’ vision. Also, although Minnesota’s communities of color are relatively small percentage-wise, they have been growing rapidly—particularly in the Twin Cities where power in the state is concentrated. The Equity Funds recognized their potential to be a leading voice calling for climate action, as they had increasingly become on other issues.

And, Minnesota politically was a closely divided state, so if public opinion could be mobilized behind the 100% Campaign’s policy goals there was a prospect that a governor and legislature would be receptive to enacting them. The Equity Funds wanted to be prepared for an environment in which progressive, equitable climate policy was more possible.

Unlike many states where grassroots groups are seen as bit players on the margins of power compared to labor unions and the Democratic Party machine, in Minnesota there were organizing groups such as ISAIAH and TakeAction MN doing cross-sector work who had become major players in state politics. These multi-issue power-building organizations had acquired real power and recognition via successful policy campaigns such as the Fight for a Fair Economy, which helped defeat a same-sex marriage ban and voter ID ballot measures. These groups generally had good working relationships with each other after having been in the trenches together on various campaigns. Their efforts were aided by their concentration in the state’s only large metropolitan area, Minneapolis-St. Paul (even as they were simultaneously building necessary support in Greater Minnesota).

There were organizing lessons these groups had learned that could be readily applied to a campaign for climate change policy, including how more could be accomplished by working together and sharing analyses and resources, instead of trying to go it alone. According to an Equity Funds staffer who formerly worked at one of the largest funders for voter/civic participation in the country, and confirmed by other funders in the democracy and civic engagement fields, this was made possible by a decade-plus strategy and commitment by democracy and civic engagement funders to build the organizing and power-building infrastructure in Minnesota. Several funders had worked across institutions to make multi-year commitments to fund a set of organizations that were intentionally working together and aligning their membership, strategies, and policy agendas.

There were environmental groups in Minnesota doing good work on climate change, but community organizing groups that knew how to mobilize a wider swath of people,

including BIPOC communities that had been traditionally underrepresented in the climate movement, were not being funded to work on climate even though there was growing interest in doing so on the part of these organizations. The leaders of some of these groups say there were several barriers to their involvement on climate—the complex technical nature of climate change and climate solutions; the existing campaigning in Minnesota around climate had not been very intersectional; the climate movement felt too White with at least one BIPOC organizer saying they didn’t always feel welcome; and other issues for their members were top of mind.

As one Equity Funds grantee explained, the bridge to the environmental and climate movement for multi-issue organizing groups at the time in Minnesota was weak. “There was a tremendous asymmetry between the nature of the infrastructure that existed, what it was focused on and how it oriented itself and the kinds of policies and the movement capacity that would allow more and more regular people to roll up their sleeves and be a part of it [the climate movement].” At the same time, a grantee also noted, “At least for a decade prior to the campaign, there were increasingly more and more people in progressive organizing who had not been doing climate advocacy, but began wrestling with realities of climate change, and its impact on people’s lives. That also tracked onto policymakers also feeling that.”

There were some regional funders interested in building that bridge. Aimee Witteman (formerly) of the McKnight Foundation, which had been funding clean energy work since 1994, was committed to broadening the climate movement, and was trying to coordinate climate efforts in Minnesota and build statewide climate infrastructure. Also, the Solidago Foundation, which played a role in the creation of the Equity Funds, had been funding economic and electoral work by TakeAction MN and ISAIAH and decided to give small experimental grants to the groups to start exploring working in the climate space. It was an opportune moment for the Equity Funds to begin investing heavily in Minnesota; according to a Midwest funder, “The Equity Fund was the one who really stepped in with the scale of funding that was needed.”

Funders, including the Energy Foundation, Solidago Foundation, the Ford Foundation, the Minnesota Forward Fund, Carolyn Foundation, See Forward Fund, People’s Action, The Partnership Fund, and the McKnight Foundation were also increasingly funding climate work in Minnesota. According to one grantee, there was a burst of climate funding around 2016/2017 that enabled community organizations to hire a staff person to work on climate; however, this did not necessarily lead to more organizing.



SYNOPSIS: HIGHLIGHTING THE EQUITY FUNDS' SUPPORT IN MINNESOTA

“The 100% Campaign is such a good example of what happens when you embed equitable coalition principles from the get-go and actually bring diverse voices to the table.”—Interviewee

In 2017, the Equity Funds identified a few base-building organizations in Minnesota as having the potential to make headway on climate equity and began funding them. Two of the groups, ISAIAH and TakeAction MN, had not worked on climate previously but had a long track record of successfully organizing a diverse base of Minnesotans to advocate for progressive policies. The other group was MN350, whose main focus was climate change. Importantly for the Equity Funds, these three groups were among the 22 progressive organizations in the state that created Our Minnesota Future² in 2017, through which they developed a shared narrative strategy to center race and equity in their communications.

In 2018, the Equity Funds stepped up investment in Minnesota by also funding Minnesota Interfaith Power & Light, Black Visions, and Navigate MN (later renamed as Unidos MN). That summer, the Equity Funds held their inaugural power-building national summit in Minneapolis. One of the attendees was veteran organizer Chris Conry, at the time the executive director of TakeAction MN, who was eager to apply his organizing skills to climate change. The Equity Funds and the McKnight Foundation became the core funders for Conry's vision of creating a campaign calling on the state of Minnesota to commit to using 100% clean energy. The idea was to broaden the climate movement by leveraging the existing racial and economic justice movement infrastructure into the climate space and build lasting power for groups representing frontline communities bearing the brunt of climate change.

In January 2019, the 100% Campaign organization³ officially launched. The Equity Funds provided an annual grant to the campaign and added COPAL and the Land Stewardship Project to the list of Minnesota groups they were supporting with annual general operating grants. All the grantees became involved with the 100% coalition. A 100% clean energy by 2050 bill was introduced into the legislature in 2019, but as expected, it did not pass the Republican-controlled state senate.

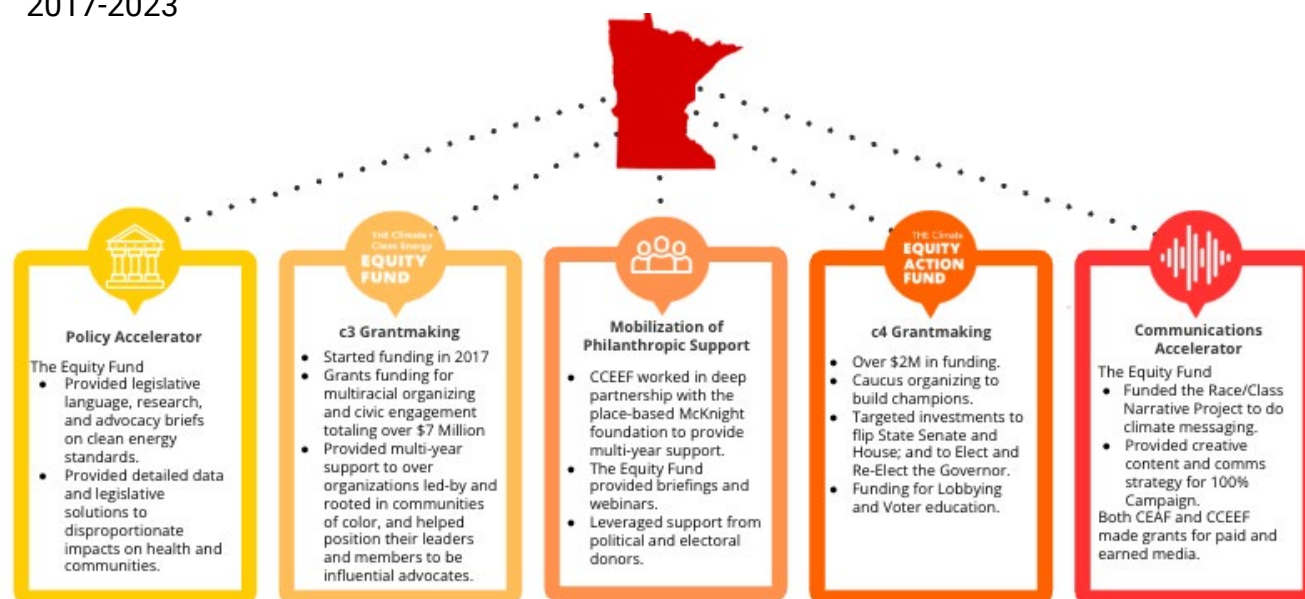
In the fall of 2019, the Equity Funds hosted a power-building summit just for Minnesota grantees, and the 100% Campaign held a 10-week policy accelerator, thanks to financial support from the Equity Funds and others, to acclimate coalition partners to the state's political playing field.

It was possible that 2020 would be the year when the DFL would win a political trifecta, which was seen as necessary for the passage of progressive policies such as the 100% Campaign's proposal. The Equity Funds continued to fund their grantees with annual—and in some cases multi-year—(c) (3) grants, and their (c)(4) affiliates, as efforts were ramped up to promote equitable clean energy and elect clean energy champions with rallies at the Capitol. Rep. Jamie Long, in conjunction with the 100% Campaign, held town halls on climate policy in competitive legislative districts as part of an effort to broaden support for a 100% clean energy bill.

In the 2020 election, the Republican Party retained narrow control of the state senate, while the DFL retained control of the state house and (since 2019) the governorship. Senate Republicans opposed the 100% clean energy bill, favoring instead a more modest “Clean Energy First” bill. Even though there were not the votes to pass it, a 100% clean energy bill—with the timeline moved up from 2050 to 2040—was introduced in the state legislature by DFL Senators in early 2021. It served as another trial run, and an opportunity to broaden the foundation of support for the bill despite inhospitable political conditions.

Instead of pausing support while the state's political environment precluded legislative wins, the Equity Funds maintained and increased efforts to build power and push for climate equity in Minnesota. Funding from the Equity Funds helped the 100% Campaign and allied groups join the opposition to the controversial Line 3 pipeline and support the successful push for a strong federal Clean Cars standard.

Deployment of Support to Minnesota 2017-2023



Summary of CCEE and CEAF's investments and activities in Minnesota. (Source: CCEE and CEAF)

In 2022, the 100% Campaign organized another Caucus for Climate event and continued to build momentum for equitable clean energy. The Equity Funds added Honor the Earth to their list of Minnesota grantees as well as the newly created Minnesota Environmental Justice Table, which aimed to close the Hennepin Energy Recovery Center (HERC) incinerator in Minneapolis over air quality impacts to frontline communities. In the November 2022 election, the DFL won a one-seat majority in the state senate, resulting in its control over both legislative chambers and the executive branch. Thanks in part to the 100% Campaign and allied organizations, DFL legislators were well aware by this point that there was widespread support for the 100% clean energy bill, whose endorsers included most Equity Funds grantees as well as traditional environmental organizations, health advocacy groups, and labor groups.

Due to pressure from several Equity Funds grantees, stronger equity provisions, including the exclusion of HERC from eligibility to receive a renewable energy credit, were featured in an updated version of the 100% bill. Introduced into the Minnesota legislature in January 2023, the bill

quickly passed both houses and was signed into law by the governor on Feb 7, 2023. Other climate-related wins soon followed that Equity Funds grantees had advocated for, including the passage in May 2023 of cumulative impacts regulations that required comprehensive assessments of repercussions on communities of color for new energy projects, and the creation of a state climate bank.

Also in 2023, the Equity Funds supported the creation of Rise & Repair, an Indigenous-led alliance of Minnesota organizations fighting for climate justice and the honoring of tribal rights. In October 2023, the MN EJ Table made progress in its fight to close the HERC incinerator when local officials approved a resolution calling for a plan to close the facility by 2040.

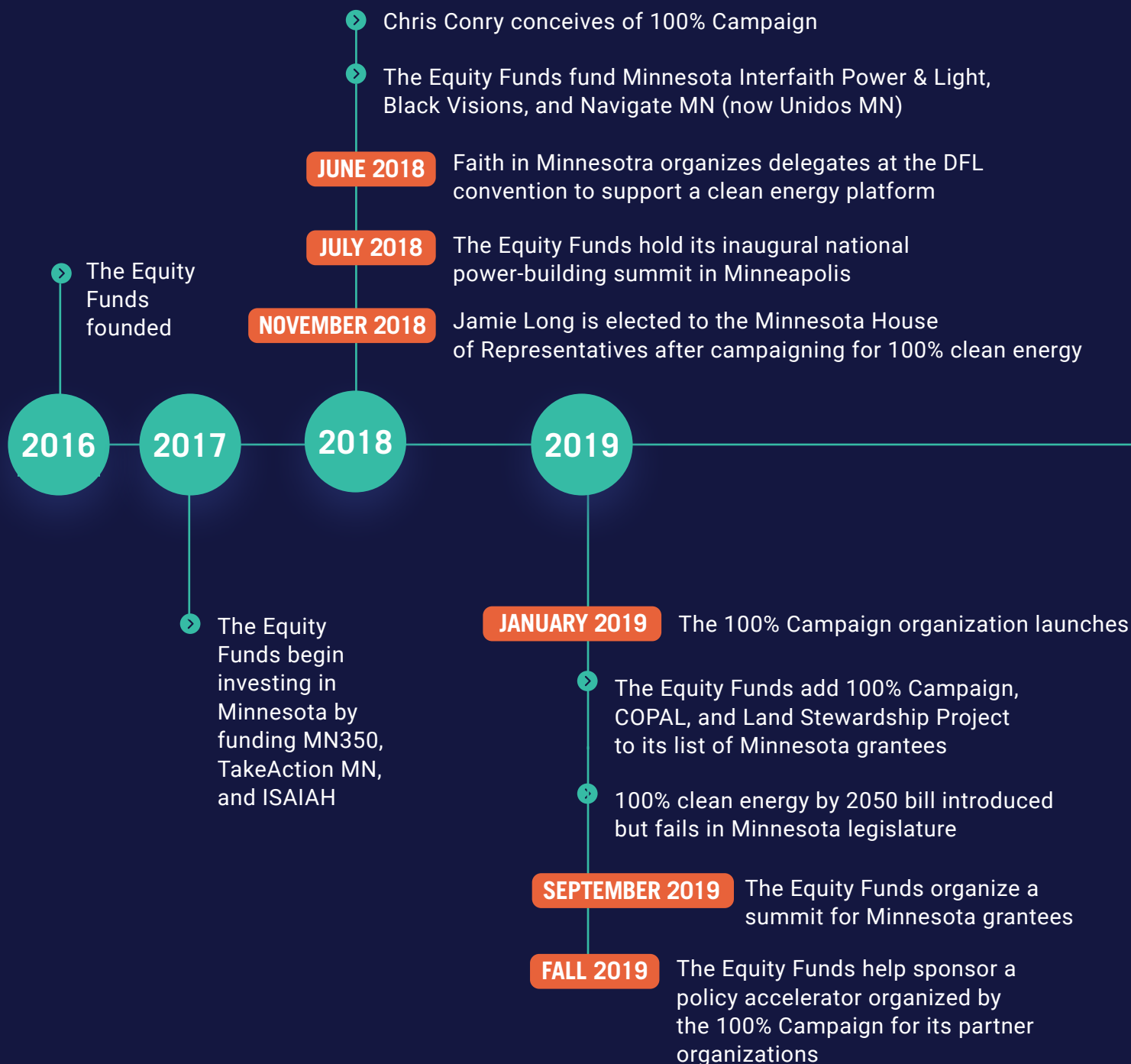
Having gained technical know-how and political clout during the campaign, Equity Funds grantees continue to play an important role in the implementation of the 100% law. Groups are regularly meeting with state officials to ensure that equity provisions in the bill end up benefiting frontline communities.

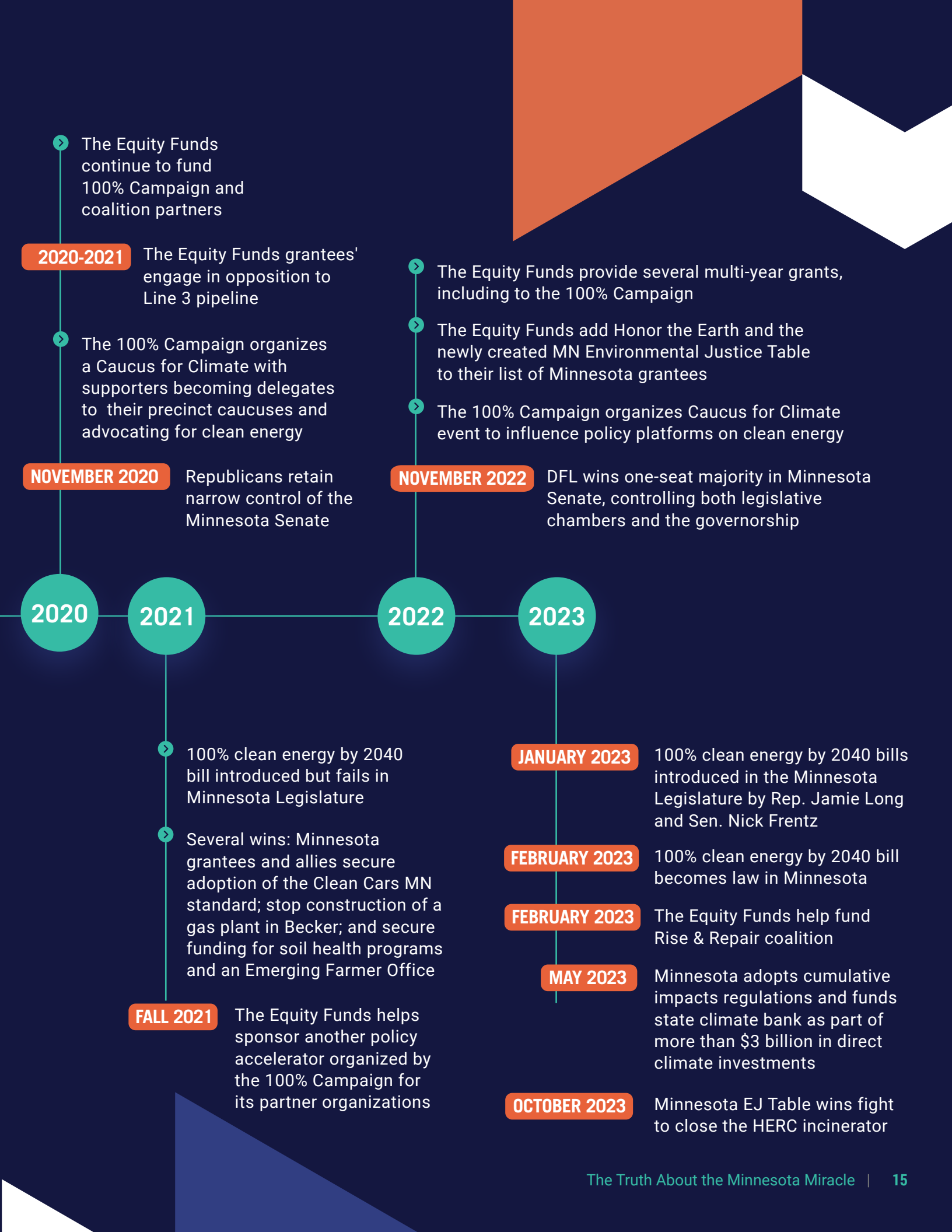
The following chapter fleshes out various themes and additional pieces of the story summarized above.

¹Later known as the Narrative Justice League. Also in 2017, House and Senate DFL leaders in partnership with organizing organizations created the Minnesota Values Project to take the pulse of Minnesotans.

²We use "100% Campaign" to refer to the formal organization, and "100% coalition" to refer to the constellation of groups broadly supportive of the goals and strategy of the 100% Campaign organization.

EQUITY FUNDS MINNESOTA TIMELINE





> The Equity Funds continue to fund 100% Campaign and coalition partners

2020-2021 The Equity Funds grantees' engage in opposition to Line 3 pipeline

> The 100% Campaign organizes a Caucus for Climate with supporters becoming delegates to their precinct caucuses and advocating for clean energy

> The Equity Funds provide several multi-year grants, including to the 100% Campaign

> The Equity Funds add Honor the Earth and the newly created MN Environmental Justice Table to their list of Minnesota grantees

> The 100% Campaign organizes Caucus for Climate event to influence policy platforms on clean energy

2020

2021

2022

2023

FALL 2021 The Equity Funds helps sponsor another policy accelerator organized by the 100% Campaign for its partner organizations

> 100% clean energy by 2040 bill introduced but fails in Minnesota Legislature

> Several wins: Minnesota grantees and allies secure adoption of the Clean Cars MN standard; stop construction of a gas plant in Becker; and secure funding for soil health programs and an Emerging Farmer Office

JANUARY 2023 100% clean energy by 2040 bills introduced in the Minnesota Legislature by Rep. Jamie Long and Sen. Nick Frentz

FEBRUARY 2023 100% clean energy by 2040 bill becomes law in Minnesota

FEBRUARY 2023 The Equity Funds help fund Rise & Repair coalition

MAY 2023 Minnesota adopts cumulative impacts regulations and funds state climate bank as part of more than \$3 billion in direct climate investments

OCTOBER 2023 Minnesota EJ Table wins fight to close the HERC incinerator

THE STORY OF CLEAN ENERGY & EQUITY SUCCESS IN MINNESOTA: HOW SIX YEARS OF INVESTMENTS IN THE STATE RESULTED IN BIG WINS

The Genesis of a Campaign for 100% Clean Energy: A Vision to Build Lasting Power for Community Organizing Groups Advocating for Equitable Climate Solutions

"It was a moment when many organizations and legislators were at a place where 'we need to do something, and we're struggling to find what is the big thing we should do.'"—Equity Funds grantee in Minnesota

"They [100% Campaign] were a model of what good advocacy looks like." —Jamie Long

"The 100% Campaign approached it just the right way, which was trying to build as big a coalition as possible and understanding that we all have a stake in our climate future and that we need everybody at the table to solve it."—Jamie Long

"In California or New York this may not seem very radical, but the 100% Campaign as a demand was for the environmental movement in Minnesota a bit of a mindblower, more maximalist than people were used to."—Equity Funds grantee in Minnesota

"Having a campaign that was a big yes changes the dynamic and it puts you in the position of you're the one making the proposal."—Equity Funds grantee in Minnesota

The conception of the 100% Campaign in 2018 occurred at a time when bold calls for climate action were far from the norm— it was prior to a Congressional proposal for a Green New Deal and before a wave of student climate strikes hit the U.S. Up until then, many proposed climate solutions called for starting with incremental changes. While the 100% Campaign organizers knew that a 100% clean energy bill was not politically feasible in a divided Minnesota legislature, their organizing idea was to operate based on what they sought to make politically possible, not what was possible at the time.

By 2018, California and Hawaii had already passed legislation committing the states to achieving 100% clean energy, but it was not something that had been tried in other, colder and less sunny parts of the U.S. While some people, including some funders, expressed doubts that providing 100% carbon-free energy could be accomplished in Minnesota's climate, others appreciated the boldness of the idea hatched by Chris Conry, who had recently left his position as strategic campaigns director of TakeAction MN to helm the 100% Campaign.

The believers included the Equity Funds and McKnight

Foundation, which had a relationship with each other and both funded TakeAction MN. They were quite familiar with Conry's organizing work, including his active role in Minnesotans for a Fair Economy, and understood his idea that calling for 100% clean energy could serve as an onramp for community organizing groups and rural and racial justice organizations to join the climate field in a more permanent way.⁴

Conry sought to create conditions that would make it possible for groups to develop their own successful climate programs. Because the policies and politics of climate change are so complex, Conry wanted to have "an issue cut" that would allow community organizing groups to do some organizing around climate while they developed the staff capacity and raised money so that after a few years they could work on their own fully developed takes on the issue and fully build out climate programs.

He also set up a separate 100% Campaign organization that built a coalition but did not give out subgrants; he wanted coalition partners to have their own relationships with funders who would fund them directly. The 100% Campaign kept itself

⁴Several observers note that it was key that Conry was part of the progressive community's infrastructure in Minnesota and had been active. He and others from organizing-oriented groups saw an opportunity to take ownership of climate work, which until then had been mostly the province of Big Green organizations.

small, never more than six staffers, and made it clear that the campaign was a collaborative effort.

After McKnight provided the 100% Campaign an initial (c)(3) grant, the Equity Funds followed with annual support and additional (c)(4) funding. The Equity Funds and McKnight reached out to other funders to elicit more support for the groups they were funding to work on climate, in September 2019 co-organizing a roundtable meeting in Minneapolis with the Energy Foundation, Minneapolis Foundation, Carolyn Foundation, Goldbay Foundation, Win Minnesota, and several grantees. According to several interviewees, when the 100% Campaign launched, some climate funders who later came around, did not initially support it because the 100% Campaign did not originate with a traditional environmental organization, and they were skeptical about the plausibility of the campaign's goal of 100% clean energy.

The 100% Campaign centered equity in its vision for 100% clean energy and Conry formed a steering committee that abided by a rule of thumb that leadership should be at least half people of color and 2/3 women, because he felt that groups with this kind of a composition operate differently

than those dominated by White men. He also created a three-person executive committee of the steering committee with representatives from Fresh Energy, MN350 and the North Star chapter of the Sierra Club.

As one interviewee notes, there is a lot of muscle memory in the environmental movement to oppose things, but not as much muscle memory to push for what is desired. The 100% Campaign wanted to be a “big yes” campaign, in contrast to many of the past major environmental efforts in the state that had focused on opposing problematic policies and projects. Instead of being in the antagonistic role of trying to stop something, proposing a proactive policy was seen as a way to change the dynamics, with other players then reacting to the movement rather than vice versa.

Initially, the target date for the 100% Campaign was for Minnesota to be powered by 100% clean energy by 2050; this was the target included in the bill that was introduced into the Legislature in 2019. A grantee explained that due to pressure from coalition partners who argued that 2050 was too late to meet broader climate goals, the target was moved up to 2040 in subsequent drafts of the bill.

Equity Funds Grantees in Minnesota: 10 Organizations Funded to Start or Further Their Work on Equitable Clean Energy

“It’s great to be able to develop those relationships and see where there are other ways we can partner and work together.”—Equity Funds grantee in Minnesota

“The key to that funding was the belief we needed a coalition approach with no one trying to dominate.”—Funder

“We no longer take on fights we can take on ourselves, because by definition those fights are too small”—Funder

“They [McKnight and Equity Funds] really moved their funding in such a way as to not create an unhealthy power dynamic in the landscape, to not feed a story of scarcity but actually to support an orientation around abundance and really oriented to the campaign as a vehicle that is collectively held in movement and designed to support shared interests and demands.”—Equity Funds grantee in Minnesota

“We know we won’t have these sorts of wins unless we are investing in power building of racially diverse communities and that organized multiracial constituency as a strategy is an imperative.”—Equity Funds staffer

There were several considerations that the Equity Funds weighed in their grant making in Minnesota.

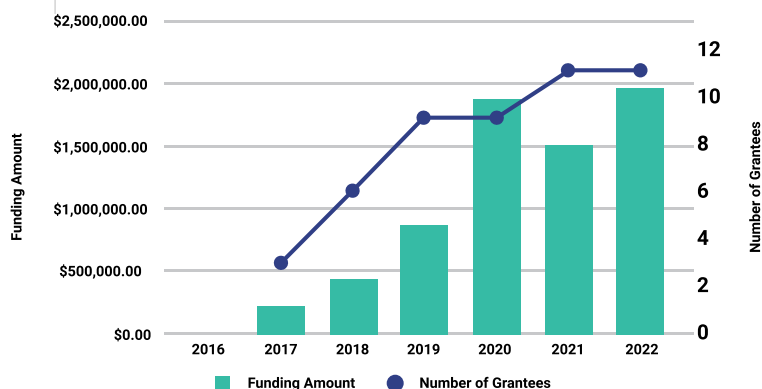
In selecting which organizations to support in Minnesota, the Equity Funds looked to groups that develop local leaders who are building a base and recruiting members, educating voters, and moving people into action at scale; have civic engagement programs; and are able to wage effective

campaigns. In 2017, the Equity Funds started funding their first three organizations in Minnesota (TakeAction MN, ISAIAH and MN350), all chosen because they knew how to organize and had a history of working well with other groups. According to an Equity Funds staffer, having such anchor organizations who know how to organize and mobilize their supporters was critical to the strategy of the campaign for 100% clean energy.

The Equity Funds sought to minimize the strings attached to their grants (which after several years of operating in Minnesota were often for general operating support), other than what was required due to their respective 501(c)(3) and 501(c)(4) statuses; groups were able to make the choice of whether to be part of the 100% Campaign and/or focus on other equitable climate and clean energy work. The Equity Funds would regularly ask grantees about other organizations the grantees have been working with, as a way to support and encourage collaboration without mandating it as a condition for funding. And the Equity Funds were in conversation with the 100% Campaign leadership about who else in the state engaged a particular constituency or could play a role in the campaign.

It was also important to the Equity Funds to not just support one environmental or climate justice group in the state, but rather work to build an ecosystem of such groups, which could grow stronger together. Minnesota Interfaith Power & Light and MN350 are climate groups that do climate justice work, while Black Visions, Unidos MN and COPAL were social justice organizations that were able to build out their climate justice programs thanks to support from the Equity Funds. Because community organizing groups such as ISAIAH and TakeAction MN had been intentionally building long-term

Climate and Clean Energy Equity Fund Grants to Support Power-Building for Climate Equity in Minnesota



The Equity Funds grew their investments in Minnesota, beginning in 2017.

labor/community partnerships for a long time, they were able to support other racial and economic justice groups into the climate space. In addition, Honor the Earth provided an indigenous environmental justice perspective, and the Land Stewardship Project provided an important rural voice. The Minnesota Environmental Justice Table joined this ecosystem upon its creation in 2022, which was made possible in part by funding from the Equity Funds.

Grantee Profiles



TakeAction MN Equity Funds support⁵: 2017-Current

A multiracial, grassroots membership organization that serves as a hub for Minnesota's progressive movement. Played a foundational role in the 100% coalition, offering overall guidance and strategic direction via the steering committee, and activating its base at various moments to help with the organizing.



ISAIAH 2017-Current

A statewide multiracial group of faith communities that fights for racial and economic justice. As one of the most significant power-building groups in the state, ISAIAH's ability to marry a growing depth of base leadership with multiracial civic engagement operations at scale ensured politicians were aware of public appetite for equitable climate solutions.



MN350 2017-Current

A people-powered climate organization working to transition to a just clean energy future. Served as connective tissue between environmental justice groups and traditional environmental players while engaged in base building, organizing, and leadership development. As noted by an Equity Funds staffer, even though the majority of the group's supporters are White, the organization is very conscious of equity and good allyship.



Minnesota Interfaith Power & Light 2018-Current

An organization that works with faith communities and all Minnesotans to build transformative power and address the climate crisis. According to one funder, the group brought a deep understanding of the intersection of racial justice and climate and energy to the coalition. The group helped Black churches in Minneapolis obtain rooftop solar panels as a tangible benefit that communities could see, and has played a leading role in the Rise & Repair alliance.

⁵This list of grantees is organized chronologically according to the year of first Equity Funds support.



Black Visions 2018-Current

A Black-led movement organization in the Twin Cities committed to justice and liberation of Black people. According to one funder, it was critical to include the only Black-led organization doing base building in North Minneapolis as part of the 100% coalition. The general operations support from the Equity Funds helped the group incubate the Minnesota EJ Table.



Unidos MN 2018-Current

A grassroots organization (formerly Navigate MN) led by Latine immigrants building power for working families to advance social, racial and economic justice. The Equity Funds helped the group create a climate program.



Land Stewardship Project 2019-Current

A family farm and sustainable agriculture membership organization that supports family farmers as an economic and environmental justice issue. Provided a countervailing voice from rural Minnesota, where farmers featured by climate opponents typically oppose renewable energy. After the passage of the 100% bill, the organization has been advocating for regenerative soil practices and helping emerging farmers.



COPAL 2019-Current

A fairly new, member-based grassroots organization focused on the state's Latine population. Played a leading role in the passage of cumulative impacts legislation. Created a worker center to place and train people in clean energy jobs.



Minnesota Environmental Justice Table

2022-Current

A grassroots-led coalition fighting for environmental justice, fair development, and self-determination in overburdened and frontline communities. With support from the Equity Funds, leaders of Black Visions incubated the Minnesota EJ Table. The MN EJ Table was an important voice advocating for the elimination of municipal waste incineration in the 100% legislation, which resulted in the exclusion of the HERC incinerator in Minneapolis from the law's renewable energy standard. The EJ Table went on to lead a push to close HERC.



Honor the Earth 2022-Current

An Indigenous environmental justice organization. Brought Indigenous perspectives and concerns to the 100% coalition and played a leading role in creating Rise & Repair.

MOVEMENT INFRASTRUCTURE SUPPORT Policy Accelerators and Trainings Built Skills and Expertise

The policy accelerator organized by the 100% Campaign "was really helpful to bring this high-level policy change to the ground and for our members to see all the different groups that are part of this—'we're really building something here across the state that is needed and it needs diverse partners to be able to drive that forward.'"—Grantee

"The 100% Campaign did a lot of trainings for new organizers, new people working in the climate space. That was really great. There aren't that many policy areas at the capital where people are willing to do those kinds of deep dives and do work like that. I thought that alone was an impressive feat of organizing, to help people understand the work happening at the capital, the policy in depth in a way the folks who don't think about these issues every day could engage with and engage with their elected officials on."—Jamie Long

In addition to granting direct funds to individual organizations, the Equity Funds advised the 100% Campaign and the MN EJ Table when they needed research and documentation to support their efforts. The Equity Funds also helped fund various trainings as part of providing infrastructure support, such as the 100% Campaign's numerous skill-building sessions on topics such as door-knocking.

The Equity Funds helped fund policy accelerators organized by the 100% Campaign in the fall of 2019 and the fall of 2021. Featuring legislators and policy experts, the policy accelerators gave 100% Campaign coalition partners details on different sectors and fault lines in the environmental and energy space so all the groups could become climate experts. The policy accelerators along with technical support from 100% Campaign staff helped grantees build their internal expertise. According to one grantee, 100% Campaign staff built powerful relationships at the state capital and helped leverage coalition members into the political space, "where it's not a transaction where the policy people are telling us what to, but it was a shared space that facilitated our ability to wield power at the state capital."



100% Campaign event at the Minnesota State Capitol. (Source: 100% Campaign)

(c)(4) Funding: Growing and Wielding Political Power

"I can't underestimate the importance of (c)(4) funding. A small amount of (c)(4) funding goes a long way to help groups strapped for budget."—Climate Equity Action Fund grantee in Minnesota

"When you talk to people about the future that they hope for, that is a motivator to get them active and get them to the polls."—Equity Funds staffer

"We wouldn't be at those tables if we didn't have the funds to be there."—Climate Equity Action Fund grantee in Minnesota

[The Equity Funds] "(c)(4) money has been essential to help orgs like ours to have a more powerful political presence and power. (c)(4) money in our state often flows only towards the paid media and consultant class."—Climate Equity Action Fund grantee in Minnesota

Momentum for 100% clean energy in Minnesota increased in June 2018, when ISAIAH's (c)(4) partner, Faith in Minnesota, organized a "Caucus for Climate" campaign and brought the single-largest voting bloc (11%) to the DFL endorsing convention, calling for, among other things, 100% clean energy. This effort demonstrated to soon-to-be-elected Governor Tim Walz that there was a diverse voter base in

favor of climate action, and he left that event saying he would support 100% if he had the opportunity. And it indicated that Faith in Minnesota (and later, the 100% Campaign) was choosing a strategy of working with the future governor, rather than moving into an opposition role. This allowed them to develop relationships with potential political allies and leverage the clout of their activated voters.

COMMUNICATIONS

Shifting the Narrative to Connect 100% Clean Energy with People's Lives

The Equity Funds provided funds for the 100% Campaign to work with We Make the Future (formerly the Race-Class Narrative [RCN] project) to use insights from the RCN research project in its communications. The funding made it possible for We Make the Future to develop its first climate-specific narrative research and strategy. RCN recommendations included calling out racism and offering a counter-narrative of inclusion that fosters an environment for everyone to care about an issue and feel part of the solution.⁶ ISAIAH and TakeAction MN previously had success using the RCN approach on other issues; when they presented their work at the Equity Funds' national summit in 2018, other grantees say they were inspired. RCN was also a feature of a summit the Equity Funds hosted for their Minnesota grantees in 2019 that looked at locations and constituencies in the state where groups could take their work to the next level. The RCN became central to the campaign's communications, and RCN-informed talking points developed by the 100% Campaign were used by legislators and other groups throughout the campaign.

To combat "doom and gloom-ism" and shift the overall narrative around climate change, the 100% Campaign used a less "climatey" way of talking about climate, a mode of communications the Campaign called "non-utopian climate futurism." The campaign wasn't shy about pointing out who is at fault for climate impacts, and that policies needed to change, but the messaging involved selling the vision more than the policy by telling people how clean energy would make their lives tangibly better. Instead of starting out by presenting a proposed policy and asking people to contact their elected representatives, the 100% Campaign led with why their audience needed to care (e.g., "Let's talk about democracy and racial justice") and then guided people through the process of contacting their elected representatives.

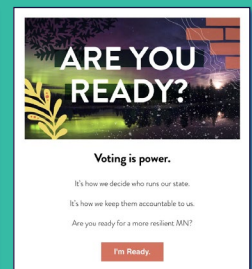
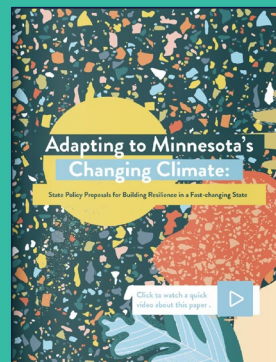
To make it clear that better policies would improve the lives of Minnesotans—and not just other species, other places or the overall planet—the images used in the campaign were not solar panels and windmills but human faces. It was deemed important to connect the messaging, including the terms used, with people's lives. For example, the first event COPAL organized to bring their supporters on board with fighting for climate equity used the term "environmental justice" and turnout was poor. For the next event, COPAL pivoted to focus on personal health and finances and careers and how those issues connected to proposed environmental and climate legislation, including the push for a cumulative impacts law, and this resulted in much-higher turnout.

The 100% Campaign placed a major focus on arts and culture as a way to give people a sense of belonging and hope by addressing questions around what a 100% clean energy state and future would look like, in concrete terms. By engaging artists to produce a wide range of campaign materials, from postcards to bingo cards, the campaign put the focus on the future and people's lives instead of policies. Having multi-year general operations support was key for this. A grantee notes it allowed the campaign to experiment and produce a large variety of content because their work was not restricted by the time-consuming annual cycle of grant funding and having to secure small, project-based grants. For example, the campaign had the money to rapidly produce videos and to put them into the world to judge their effectiveness, rather than having to apply for (potentially) multiple grants over time in order to fully roll out the program.



EXPERIMENTAL CULTURE

Materials produced by the 100% Campaign.



Source:
100% Campaign



⁶According to one grantee, a great deal of conservative politics in Minnesota is undergirded by dog-whistle racism, in which racist sentiments are not explicitly stated, but are nevertheless clearly understood by audiences. This person notes that, typically, the DFL would respond by taking a race-blind and class-blind approach, presuming that its messages and ideas would work for everyone.

PROFILE OF 100% CAMPAIGN COMMUNICATION TACTICS

From Bingo Cards to Daily Planners

The 100% Campaign was creative in building its brand and promoting the campaign through social media and direct marketing. The campaign developed a consistent brand with orange as the primary color, along with some green and yellow. The brand was considered to be a major component of why the campaign was successful. In addition to targeting audiences on social media, there was also a focus on non-digital techniques and delivery systems given the growing challenges in reaching people digitally.

EXAMPLES:

- Mad Libs-style door hangers on 100% Campaign's lobby day where people filled in their climate story about what they were fighting for.
- A series of postcards delivered to people's homes in the weeks leading up to the election, with attention-grabbing but non-political messages on the front.
- Free daily climate action planners so that people every day were thinking about climate action. It was one of the campaign's biggest list-building tools, with more than 7,000 people added the first year the planners were given out.
- Bingo cards given out in the legislature so that spectators could track sound-bites expected to come up during the debate on the Senate floor.
- An art installation called "Mnisota [sic] 2055" at the Northern Sparks festival that presented what music, fashion and art could be like in a fossil fuel-free future.
- Other events such as comedy shows, Zoom concerts, a video series, and climate grief support groups.

When the 100% Campaign launched in January 2019, the DFL held the governorship and had recently won control of the Minnesota House of Representatives, while Republicans held a slim majority in the State Senate. Early on, the 100% Campaign had gained an important ally in political newcomer Jamie Long who was elected to the Minnesota House of Representatives in November 2018 after running on a 100% clean energy by 2050 platform. When Conry called him up after the 2018 election and told him he was starting up a campaign for 100% clean energy, Long says, "I couldn't believe my luck when I heard there was a group that was organized in particular to work on my top priority."

Rep. Long subsequently partnered with the 100% Campaign to organize a series of town halls around the state. Having such a diverse coalition of organizations activating their supporters made it clear to politicians that the 100% Campaign and its partners were helping make climate an important issue for Minnesotans.

Support from the 501(c)(4) CEAF played an important role in this. Overall, (c)(4) funding made it possible for 100% Campaign coalition members that have (c)(4) partners to

be in the same rooms and strategizing about non-electoral activity with projects and organizations that separately were doing direct candidate work, as well as position policies within the government with people making decisions about what is going to move through committees to the floor. According to one grantee, because elected officials carry so many bills and they do not have the time to be on top of everything, it was important to have an organized campaign that could give legislators the feedback they needed as they introduced bills.

501(c)(4) funding also was key to help grantees mobilize their supporters to attend rallies and lobby days for climate and clean energy at the Capitol, and beyond. Following in the footsteps of the Caucus for Climate organized by Faith in Minnesota in 2018, the 100% Campaign organized Caucus for Climate events ahead of the 2020 and 2022 elections.

The 100% Campaign used its (c)(4) funding for direct advocacy but not for elections, and never endorsed candidates. This was part of a strategy to not be seen as an oppositional force and to draw less attention to itself.

⁵According to one grantee, a great deal of conservative politics in Minnesota is undergirded by dog-whistle racism, in which racist sentiments are not explicitly stated, but are nevertheless clearly understood by audiences. This person notes that, typically, the DFL would respond by taking a race-blind and class-blind approach, presuming that its messages and ideas would work for everyone.

Media Coverage Was Not a Priority: The 100% Campaign Favored Direct Outreach to Activate Supporters

While the 100% Campaign held a press conference when it launched, the Campaign's communications largely targeted communities directly, skipping over the intermediary of mainstream media coverage. According to several grantees, their direct outreach efforts were effective in connecting with people and they had built enough support within the legislature through activating their diverse base of supporters that there was not a need for much of a public pressure campaign through the media. There were also concerns that media coverage could get the wrong attention and propel opposition and polarization.

When there were press inquiries, the 100% Campaign directed them to coalition partners because it was more important for them as lasting institutions to receive the attention. But because there were not many press inquiries, the story of how a diverse coalition was the backbone of a bold new law has yet to be told in the mainstream media, based on our review of the coverage. There was some effort to get Spanish language media coverage, and at least one interview happened as a result, but according to one grantee there are still many in the Latine community who do not know that a clean energy bill has passed.

Some Equity Funds grantees note it was disheartening that some of the ways the story was told immediately upon the 100% bill's passage made invisible the years of investment by funders and the important role played by multi-issue organizing groups. For example, at the governor's signing ceremony, the leaders of the 100% coalition were there as invited guests, but were not asked to take part in the photo opportunities, resulting in a very White group of people around the governor's desk featured in media coverage. One grantee wishes their strategy would be covered in the media, so that the story about the 100% bill accurately represents them and helps them with their fundraising.

An Equity Funds staffer notes that one of the lessons learned from the 100% campaign is to increase the fund's capacity to engage the media and other funders in strategic learning. As such the Fund is making investments to build both its strategic communications and philanthropic advocacy capacity, so it can platform the compelling voices of grantee leaders to represent their work and let the rest of the philanthropic community know what happened on the ground to make wins possible.

100% Clean Energy for the Win! Minnesota Bill Commits to 100% Carbon-Free Electricity by 2040 and Includes Strong Equity Provisions

"The 100% bill is the best thing we accomplished in 30 years."—Michael Noble, former executive director of Fresh Energy

"The fact we were ready to go meant that we got this bill done in a month when we got our trifecta...Almost every member of the caucus was a co-author on our bill by the end because of the advocacy work."—Jamie Long

"What the Equity Fund was able to do for the 100% Campaign is keep them honest about being willing to risk losing in order to be authentically promoting equity. And that sometimes it takes risk along with vision to achieve transformation."—Julia Nerbonne, Executive Director of Minnesota Interfaith Power and Light

Even though everyone involved knew there was no chance a 100% clean energy bill would be approved by a Senate opposed to climate action, it was introduced in 2019 and again in 2021. The idea behind introducing bills doomed to fail, according to campaign leaders, was to fight like you are going to win, and have that serve as rehearsals. The experience of going through that process, along with the groundwork laid over the years by the campaign, meant that the 100% coalition was primed and ready to go when a Senate majority receptive to climate action was seated following the 2022 election.

By the end, more than 50 organizations endorsed the 100% bill, making it clear to legislators there was widespread support for the bill. This included most coalition partners as well as traditional environmental organizations, health advocacy groups, and labor organizations.

Having demonstrably broad support was key to getting the bill passed. The Campaign's effort to ensure equity provisions were included in the bill paid off in making it acceptable to such a wide swath of organizations. The equity provisions included:

- Defining “environmental justice” areas and requiring that the Public Utility Commission prioritize them in evaluating utility plans.
- Removal of trash incineration in environmental justice communities from the clean energy standard.
- A prevailing wage requirement for new or repowered large electric generating facilities.

According to Rep. Jamie Long: The 100% Campaign was “very cross-cutting in the organizing and it made a big difference because we were able to build a cross-cutting multiracial, multi-sector coalition that not only showed up in important ways

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE 100% CLEAN ENERGY LEGISLATION

Several Equity Provisions Made it Into the Final Bill

The bill calls for Minnesota to be 80 percent carbon-free energy by 2030, 90 percent by 2035, and 100 percent by 2040. The bill creates a carbon-free energy standard and updates a renewable energy standard that utilities have to meet; solar, wind, biomass, existing hydroelectric dams, landfill gas as well as nuclear power are energy sources that qualify. Efforts by the 100% coalition ensured there were several equity provisions in the final bill:

- Utilities encouraged to locate new energy generating facilities in communities where fossil-fuel plants are closing.
- An expansive definition of what constitutes an environmental justice area and a requirement that the state’s Public Utility Commission prioritize them when evaluating utility plans.
- Municipal solid waste incinerators located in counties with specific population densities no longer count as renewable energy sources. This includes the Hennepin Energy Recovery Center in Minneapolis.
- A prevailing wage requirement for new or repowered large electric generating facilities.
- Utilities are required to report every two years their progress on diversifying their workforce and vendors; to provide workers support to transition to clean energy jobs; to lower air emissions especially in environmental justice areas; and to make electricity affordable for low-income communities.



Gov. Tim Walz signs legislation committing Minnesota to 100% clean electricity by 2040. (Source: Rep Jamie Long)

at the Capitol for speaking on behalf of our bills, coming to rallies, but also made sure support for the bill was broad and cross-cutting—that was really important when we got down to negotiating the final bill too and making sure we were taking all voices into account.”

Governor Walz signed the bill on Feb 7, 2023, just a month after its introduction. There were a number of bills on a number of issues that various constituencies sought to be enacted, but the 100% clean energy bill was able to be one of the first considered and approved due to several key strategic decisions that involved 100% Campaign leaders as well as the campaign’s years of planning and organizing. Leaders of the 100% Campaign helped persuade House Majority Leader Jamie Long and Assistant Senate Majority Leader Nick Frentz to introduce the same version of the bill in each chamber. “Pre-conferencing” the bill meant there would not need to be a conference committee to resolve differences in the bills, a step which could have allowed time for opposition to build. There was also a political decision to have it be a stand-alone bill and thus not encumbered by other issues. And because some compromises needed to be made to ensure the bill’s passage, this process allowed for them to be addressed as a single batch in negotiations (as one big compromise) and gotten out of the way, rather than having repeated “bad news” cycles occur as compromises were hashed out over time for different parts of the bill.

MN EJ TABLE FIGHTING TO CLOSE A POLLUTING INCINERATOR: Calls to Close Minneapolis Facility in 2025

"Now it's not just the folks who really care about carbon emissions who are celebrating, but it's actually people that are being directly poisoned by burning trash." —Equity Funds staffer

The Equity Funds provided funding for one of their grantees, Black Visions, to incubate the Minnesota Environmental Justice Table, which launched in 2020 with a mission "to build power to guarantee environmental justice across Minnesota." The Table was committed to ensuring that sources deemed to be "clean energy" would not include those that benefited some people but harmed others. The Table led a successful last-minute push to include a provision in the 100% clean energy legislation stipulating that waste incinerators in "environmental justice areas" would not count toward the 2040 clean energy goal.⁷ And to that end, the Table's efforts ensured the legislation specifically excluded the Hennepin Energy Recovery Center (HERC) waste incinerator in North Minneapolis from being considered renewable energy. After the bill's passage, the Minnesota EJ Table has continued to advocate for the closure of HERC. In October 2023, the Hennepin County Commission approved a resolution to develop a plan to close the incinerator by 2040, while the Minnesota EJ Table is calling for this closure to occur by 2025.

Coverage of progress in the campaign to close the HERC trash incinerator, May 25, 2023. (Source: Sahan Journal)


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ENVIRONMENT

Plans to close HERC required before Hennepin County can obtain state funds

Minnesota's massive bonding bill awards Hennepin County \$26 million for an organic waste processing project, but won't give up the cash until they see a plan to close the HERC incinerator.

 by **Andrew Hazzard** May 25, 2023 Updated June 12, 2023





The Hennepin Energy Recovery Center, pictured in April 2023, is widely known as the HERC and manages 365,000 tons of trash each year—about 45 percent of all waste produced in the county. Credit: Jaida Grey Eagle | Sahan Journal

RESERVATIONS ABOUT THE 100% CLEAN ENERGY LAW: SOME GRANTEES THINK IT DOES NOT GO FAR ENOUGH

Not everyone involved was satisfied with the outcome. One of the coalition partners, Honor the Earth, opted not to endorse the final bill over concerns that with power from Manitoba Hydro and a Duluth methane gas plant qualified as clean energy, the bill would not benefit Indigenous communities. There were other groups that expressed similar concerns, including about the inclusion of biogas digesters as clean energy, but ultimately supported the bill because it felt like a step forward and might be all that was feasible politically at the time. With the bill moving so fast, some coalition

members, despite their understanding that the bill would not be perfect, wish they would have been kept more in the loop on what was and was not in the bill.

While some of these grantees lauded the 100% Campaign's ability to build consensus, there were some issues raised about how decisions were made. Some BIPOC people involved with the campaign report receiving criticism from their communities for being too trusting and receiving too few details. While members of environmental justice organizations did not necessarily feel tokenized (as some of them have felt in other situations), some of them did not feel as though their voices were always being heard.

⁷Waste incinerators had previously qualified in Minnesota as renewable energy, despite health concerns over various forms of pollution created by burning trash.

Implementation: Equity Funds Grantees Have Rolled Up Their Sleeves to Make Sure the Legislation is Implemented Effectively and Equitably

“The devil is in the details about who wins and who loses economically for building out the new energy system.”—Equity Funds grantee in Minnesota

“We need the type of money that is large enough and sustained enough and flexible enough to allow us to build a depth of infrastructure and institutions that can win, pivot to win more and that can sustain the wins.”—Equity Funds grantee in Minnesota

After the passage in February 2023 of the 100% clean energy bill and in May 2023 of other climate legislation including a cumulative impacts law, the attention of Equity Funds grantees turned to the implementation of these laws, with still many fights to fight. At least one grantee has expressed worries that the legislation could simply result in wealth building for existing companies and not have its desired effect.

As a grantee notes, it is no longer a banner moment, but a roll-up-your-sleeves moment with different clusters of coalition partners doing “deep in the weeds work” on the implementation phase. For example, ISAIAH and the 100% Campaign itself are working on residential decarbonization; the Land Stewardship Project is working on regenerative soil practices and helping emerging farmers, with their power-building work to develop community leadership and organize for water quality and local democracy in Winona County bolstered by the farmer program funds they won in 2021; and Unidos MN and COPAL are involved in workforce issues including the Rise Up Center, a hub for BIPOC workforce development in green building and clean energy.

Through the policy accelerators organized by the 100% Campaign and the experience of working on the campaign, coalition members gained the technical know-how and clout to play an important role in the implementation of the 100% law. By 2022, the 100% Campaign had become a leading resource on climate and energy issues for many Minnesota state legislators, and had strong relationships with several lawmakers. Many Equity Funds grantees are regularly meeting

with state officials to work on implementation. COPAL, for example, is working with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency on the implementation of the cumulative impacts law to ensure effective collection of data on communities impacted by pollution.

The success of the 100% Campaign continues to have a ripple effect. For example, it has inspired the Land Stewardship Project to look into what a 100% goal for cropland in Minnesota could look like, to do in the agriculture sector what has been accomplished in the energy sector.

That said, it is not as easy to build community engagement when there is not a high-profile policy campaign. This is why it is especially important for the implementation phase that the leaders of the campaign are locally rooted and tied deeply to the state’s community organizing infrastructure.

Grantees appreciate knowing that the Equity Funds are continuing to support them, noting that funding, especially (c)(4) funding, during the implementation phase is more important than ever. An Equity Funds staffer notes the importance of recognizing that passage of the 100% clean energy law was not the end goal and should not obscure the ultimate goal of building a racially diverse constituency that can be a voice at the table and inform the bill’s implementation as well as enable future wins. How wins are implemented is part of how funders can measure the success of their efforts, to gauge whether the implementation of the equity provisions meets the demands and priorities of frontline communities.

Minnesota Grantees Worked on a Number of Fronts, Resulting in Multiple Wins

While the campaign for 100% clean energy was a major focus of most Equity Funds’ grantees for the past six years, the funding supported several other efforts.

Grantees including Honor the Earth, MN350, TakeAction MN, and eventually the 100% Campaign worked in northern Minnesota in allyship with Native communities on a campaign to stop the Line 3 oil pipeline. While the effort did not stop the pipeline from being completed in 2021, it helped to pull together more connective tissue between organizations, according to an Equity Funds staffer.

And there may be much more to come, as relationships among coalition members and other aligned organizations that were forged throughout the process of the campaign for 100% clean energy, especially among the environmental justice groups, have facilitated further ongoing work. This has led to other partnerships beyond the 100% Campaign, such as the Rise & Repair alliance, and a rural progressive table that the Land Stewardship Project, ISAIAH, COPAL and the Sierra Club are developing.

MINNESOTA GRANTEES' WINS

Wins achieved by grantees of the Equity Funds and allied funders

2021



Grantees and their allies succeeded in pushing the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency to pass a strong vehicle emission rule, the "Clean Cars Minnesota" standard.



Grantees were involved in stopping the construction of a gas plant in the town of Becker.



Land Stewardship Project helped win \$50 million in healthy soil farming funds to support regenerative agriculture and farmers and the creation of an Emerging Farmer Office for BIPOC, disabled, and veteran emerging farmers.

2022



The 100% coalition supported successful initiatives for fairer redistricting.

2023



Minnesota adopts landmark law mandating 100% clean energy by 2040.



COPAL led a successful effort involving grantees to include cumulative impacts provisions in the Energy and Environment omnibus bill, requiring assessments of the combined burdens on communities of color when evaluating new energy projects.



Several grantees played a role in advocating for a state climate bank, the Minnesota Climate Innovation Finance Authority that received \$45 million in initial state funding.



RISE & REPAIR

Indigenous-Led Alliance Pushing for Climate Justice Beyond 100% Clean Energy

On February 15, 2023, one week after the 100% bill passed, Rise & Repair, an Indigenous-led alliance of Minnesota organizations, launched to advance Indigenous rights and climate justice and push for priorities that go beyond the 100% clean energy bill. Honor the Earth and Minnesota Interfaith Power & Light led in its creation and were joined by Equity Funds grantees TakeAction MN, MN350, Land Stewardship Project, and the MN EJ Table. During the 2023 legislative session, Rise & Repair held lobby and rally days at the state capitol to call on state lawmakers and the governor to honor Indigenous sovereignty and treaty rights and build an economy based on respect for water, land, and people.

These activities ramped up very quickly, and organizers poured their resources into the work without being able to apply for funding to cover it ahead of time. The Equity Funds provided an emergency grant after the fact for the Rise & Repair rally and lobby day hosted by Minnesota Interfaith Power & Light, which otherwise would have had to lay off a staff member due to costs incurred.

"The fact that they [the Equity Funds] were willing to fund us after we put on an event so that our organizations were not harmed...I've never experienced that before and it was literally the most important thing that could have happened... that vote of confidence just made me throw down so hard on that agenda for the future...I just can't say enough about how important that was...thank God." —Equity Funds grantee in Minnesota

Rise & Repair used a handout on false solutions created by the Equity Funds' Policy Accelerator as part of a successful effort to stop the demolition of a building (the Roof Depot) in South Minneapolis, over concerns that contaminants from an old pesticide plant would be released. The demolition was to be part of an expansion of the city's water yard. Instead, due to the campaign, the building has been sold to a neighborhood group that plans to convert it into a community space with an urban farm. Rise & Repair has also called for the creation of a Tribal Advisory Board that would give tribal nations a voice in the permitting of energy infrastructure projects.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Factors in Building Movement Power

Social movements organize to reform societal injustices. To win, movements need power to be able to influence decisions made by large institutions. Movement groups' structures, processes, and abilities can be difficult to see clearly, but scholars of social movements have carefully studied grassroots groups to produce helpful takeaways on movement success.

One classic study of politics defines the “three faces of power” available to political actors, which can be leveraged by grassroots groups. First, institutional leaders have formal decision-making power over the laws and policies governing society, which movements often aim to influence. Second, many actors across the political landscape have non-decision-making power, which are more informal. For example, movement groups may fight to set the political agenda regarding which problems are serious enough for institutions to solve and which public policy options should be considered. Third, political groups and factions have various degrees of ideological power. For example, certain climate groups may fight to make sure equity and justice are lenses through which climate and environmental policy debates are understood, which can expand the coalitions of groups and constituents traditionally brought into climate policy battles.

Another prominent—and recent—study of grassroots movements defines power in certain specific ways. Powerful movement groups have the ability to change the interests that affect a target's decision. Movement power changes over time, and some forms of power are more versus less visible (similar to the “three faces of power” framework, noted above). For example, having a formal seat at the “table” (whether

at a legislative meeting or in a large coalition) is visible, but defining the terms of a policy debate or influencing narratives or public opinion are less visible forms of movement power. Powerful movement groups often invest in building grassroots, people-powered constituencies and create “participatory structures” that rely on “communal values” to create buy-in within their base. Case studies of powerful groups found that they created deeply intertwined networks of constituent relationships; they allowed members to act as “distributed strategists,” making strategic decisions on their own; they were simultaneously committed to shared goals and also flexible enough to revise strategies; and they developed common identities that bridged across differences.⁸

How do movement groups build power via constituencies? Successful organizations generally aim for large numbers of constituents to be involved, but moreover, they want to create strong member (i.e., constituent) affiliations with the group and strong relationships between members. Prominent sociologists of social movements have argued that strong groups are dedicated to organizing new constituents into the movement and have the organizational structures that allow them to absorb new members. The American climate movement has traditionally been dominated by large nonprofits who make top-down organizational decisions, which makes it difficult to recruit mass bases of movement members who feel motivated to strategize to take action together. Moreover, exercising a group's power to influence decision-makers requires a favorable “political opportunity” moment—for example, when a new legislative majority takes over and is more likely to support certain movement demands.

The Importance of Movement Infrastructure

Social movements need multiple complementary ingredients in order to succeed. Fortunately for movement organizers and funders, social scientists and movement observers have documented many of these crucial pieces. A dominant theory argues that policy changes occur when a political “entrepreneur” intervenes in politics with the right policy idea for the political moment. To meet that moment, certain kinds of social movement infrastructure and capabilities are needed. The following sections summarize those components.

First, social movement groups need strategic **organizational designs** to be sustainably effective. Sociologists have argued for decades that movement groups need formal

organizations with some degree of centralized power to consistently mobilize movement activists. Leaders (aka a “cadre”) with centralized power are necessary in order for the organization to respond strategically in the face of uncertainty and complexity. Member-driven grassroots organizations also need to strike the balance between centralized leadership and decentralization: members and organizers on the ground should have some degree of autonomy to allow room for creativity to create buy-in across diverse membership bases. This balance can best be established with democratic group structures and practices along with accountability mechanisms for the organization's leaders.⁹

⁸Movement groups may choose to use their power in various ways, from engaging in disruptive protest to engaging in elections to alter the composition of institutional decision-makers.

⁹Movement participant-observers have argued that one weakness of the youth climate group Sunrise Movement is that not enough decentralized power has been given to the grassroots, member-led “hub” level, which has likely stifled the motivation for action among rank-and-file members.

Second, an emerging body of study suggests that successful social movement groups **dedicate resources toward year-round grassroots organizing of members/constituents**. Movement organizations should devote personnel and financial capabilities to organize mass membership at scale; organizations need to have organizing “breadth”. Given enough time and support, organizers can commit consistent time to create deeper relationships with constituent members. This level of relationship “depth” allows organizations to mobilize members in response to dynamic circumstances, especially when new issues arise that require political responses. This kind of investment in organizing capabilities requires patience and continued dedication over time, with particular emphasis on developing the talent pipeline of organizing professionals.

Third, movement organizations should **consider how useful coalitions are to accomplishing their goals**. Coalitions—i.e., formal, routine coordination with other aligned groups toward a shared goal—can be very effective, and sometimes necessary, especially when the opposition is powerful or the decision-maker is a large institution that can be hard to influence. Some of the biggest climate policy victories at the state government level in recent years have been driven by coalitions of green non-profits, frontline environmental justice groups, and labor unions (e.g., Illinois Clean Jobs Coalition, New York Renews). Effective coalitional work involves building trust between groups with shared interests that have complementary forms of power to offer. Coalitions should also be willing to evaluate their progress and revise their plans along the way if necessary. Alongside formal coalitions, informal networks of organizations that work on different issues but share values can still beneficially share information and tactics. However, coalitions can also waste valuable time if there is not true alignment between groups or if certain groups in the coalition have no power to offer.

Fourth, movement groups should devote energy, time, and resources to **developing strategic narratives and messaging**. Movement scholars have argued for decades that in addition to organizational resources and political opportunities, the frames

and narratives that movements employ are often helpful in leading to their success. Research shows that strategic narratives are important because stories can more powerfully hook and hold human attention than facts and figures can. Movement groups use narratives to try to persuasively align the values, interests, and goals of their own group with passive supporters in order to recruit them. Effective narratives include conflict between good and evil, characters, imagery, and foreshadowing of potential outcomes. Coalitions of movement organizations sometimes try to develop shared narratives across distinct groups. While this tactic can allow for reaching a broad audience and can be a useful starting point for coalitional work, it can have downsides: it can impede the ability to bring different perspectives into a movement.

Fifth, **sustainable philanthropic funding for movement groups** can help organizations organize consistently and patiently for years. Funders should talk with potential grantees to learn what is working, fund leadership development training, and support groups to develop their own fundraising skills. To maximize the effectiveness of grants, funders should also adjust their processes and practices to align with the needs of movement groups, identify the broader needs of the movement ecosystem, and invest in movement leaders outside of normal grantmaking cycles.

A few other elements can also bolster the effectiveness and sustainability of movements. When organizations have policy expertise to guide their specific demands on decision-makers, it can help garner more media attention and allow for policy proposals that better fit the political moment. Relatedly, “inside game” relationships between movement groups and policymakers allow for access and the potential for movement-supported policy proposals to reach the political agenda. **Movement culture** is also an important factor that determines if movements remain cohesive over time: positive culture can help avoid burnout among activists and leaders, support the resolution of conflict in healthy ways (when it naturally arises), and create an environment where activists across identities feel welcome.

Integrated Voter Engagement

One way that social movement groups can impact electoral politics is via integrated voter engagement (IVE), when organizations leverage their issue organizing power to turn out voters. IVE can be complementary to organizing for policy change during issue campaigns, since electing political candidate champions and winning issue campaigns both require relationships between organizations and constituents that result in constituents taking actions.

IVE focuses on year-round community organizing activists to build a strong base of support among voters. IVE strengthens a group’s ability to hold decision-makers accountable, impact public policy, and build long-term

political power. The strategy aims to meet short-term voter turnout goals while building leaders and established teams for the longer term. IVE works best when relying on “relational organizing,” which directs organizers to leverage their pre-existing social network relationships to have conversations with friends, family, neighbors, etc. to encourage those individuals to take political actions. This kind of organizing can be employed in both issue campaigns and electoral campaigns. It results in higher contact rates and higher quality interactions than traditional electoral outreach tactics such as canvassing or phonebanking people from lists without any pre-existing relationships.¹⁰

¹⁰Interestingly, voter turnout based on single issue strategies—absent any pre-existing relationships with the organization—has been found to be ineffective.

More specifically, IVE involves recruiting organizational staff and leaders from the community where the organizing is happening. IVE emphasizes leadership development of organizers and activists. Organizing then happens on issue campaigns or electoral campaigns—depending on whether it is election season or not—in the same organization’s constituency. Creating pathways for new volunteers and activists to get involved in campaigns—via, e.g., various levels of engagement and teams—is helpful for facilitating continued involvement. Ultimately, IVE can result in increased voter participation and policy changes, whether via direct issue impact or by electing new political candidates who champion the organization’s issue and policy goals. Issue campaigns can build an organization’s capacity to reach out to potential voters because of the issue campaign’s

mobilization; voter engagement campaigns, similarly, can enhance an organization’s ability to win issue campaigns because the newly organized voters can be engaged as issue activists.

Research has shown that issue-focused organizations who engaged in IVE in recent years have registered millions of American voters. Other research has found that an IVE-type experiment in a low-income community—which involved deep investment in relationship-building, community conversations about local issues, political education sessions, and training volunteer leaders—resulted in a 3 percentage-point increase in voter turnout. In summary, IVE can use the same organizing strategies as issue campaigns and provide a complementary way to impact elections and public policies.

Multiracial, Cross-Class Coalitions

A principal challenge for growing the climate movement’s power is in building political relationships across race and class. Groups organizing for climate justice may sometimes seek to build relationships between organizations that work toward climate action from different backgrounds or whose policy goals are intertwined with climate. The challenges often include overcoming past broken trust between groups, lack of clear communication about goals, and lack of established norms and practices regarding shared power in and contribution to the coalition. The Lab and other movement organizations have studied successful examples of multiracial, cross-class coalitional organizing, which suggest several approaches.

The following are some evidence-based best practices to build strong coalitions between groups such as traditional environmental organizations, frontline climate justice groups, labor unions, and more. Explicitly state your shared goals, agree upon a coalitional goal, and revisit them frequently. Clarify boundaries and guidelines regarding coalition membership criteria. Provide resources to support under-resourced member groups to address internal power differentials. Assess the skills and knowledge bases that coalition members bring into the collective. Map out how and by whom coalitional decisions—big and small—will be made so that all members have some input. Make credible commitments to contribute to joint actions and explicitly recognize when trust was harmed in the past. Establish

a routine of consistent meetings and practices. Over communicate to avoid misunderstandings. When groups come together to create relationships, following these steps will increase the chances for sustainable, powerful coalitions.

Organizations may also seek to do better multiracial, cross-class organizing within their own group and constituency. To do so, here are a few common challenges to overcome: campaigns are too often led by White activists, organizers of color are too often tokenized, lack of policy demands that would concretely benefit working-class communities, unclear decision-making structures, past divisions or non-trusting relationships, and the prioritization of “mobilizing” over “organizing”. Although that list of challenges may seem daunting, there are clear best practices to successfully do multiracial, cross-class organizing for any given group. First, center policy demands that would clearly deliver material benefits to working-class communities. Second, elevate leaders of color to positions of power, creating truly diverse leadership groups which are visible from outside the group. Third, invest in leadership development resources so that less experienced activists can succeed in positions of responsibility. Fourth, explicitly recruit and retain activists across a range of identities, which can include establishing internal “caucuses” by identity and devoting attention to building trusting relationships. Fifth, establish norms and practices of evaluation and learning, focused on revision and improvement.

¹¹Here is a particular example of Integrated Voter Engagement (IVE) employed by the organization Bay Rising.

CASE STUDY ANALYSIS

This section of our report builds off of the narrative and in-depth description above to provide higher-level understanding of how the Equity Funds' grantmaking strategies played out in the Minnesota context.

Funding Multi-Issue Organizations

We see a direct line from the support provided by the Equity Funds to the involvement of several multi-issue organizations in Minnesota in climate and clean energy campaigning and organizing. This includes TakeAction MN, Black Visions, Unidos, COPAL, and ISAIAH, which did not have climate nor environment programs before they received CCEEF funding. The 100% Campaign created an operationalized on ramp that gave such groups a way to start working on climate. The 100% Campaign's early selection of "100% clean energy" as the fundamental focus allowed organizations that had not previously been involved in climate a straightforward way to engage with the issue (until they built out their own more nuanced policy positions). This learning and acclimatization curve for organizations new to climate and energy issues did necessitate a long on-ramp (and more funding) to become oriented to the field.

Multi-issue organizations offered a place for different kinds of people to connect and build social capital that could then become the foundation of long-term movement building. One observer noted the importance of multi-issue organizations like TakeAction MN that meet people where they are at in terms of issue interests, and then allow them to gather, plug in, and find connection with others, though such organizational venues are not present in all states. And all five grantee survey respondents indicated that the sustained nature of the funding from the Equity Funds was "very helpful" in increasing their organization's capacity to engage in climate and clean energy work.

"No one wakes up in their day and it's like, I'm going to think about my life in sectors today."

And today I'm going to care about these issues. And tomorrow I'm going to care about these issues...like everything's blurred together."

—Interviewee

We heard from several people that having organizing as a central aspect of the work was critical, and without groups with a strong organizing focus—as multi-issue groups such as ISAIAH and TakeAction MN do—good policy ideas would not have gone far, lacking their power to turn out people at critical moments such as lobby days and caucuses.

In turn, support from the Equity Funds increased involvement, capacity and power of these organizations in the climate realm:

"[Equity Funds support] allowed us to show up with the contribution we had to make, leverage that contribution incredibly powerfully, negotiate out our own terms and bottom lines, build our own expertise and capacity internally to operate in this space."—Equity Funds grantee in Minnesota

Several observers noted how the political heft of the multi-issue groups (among others) contributed to passing the 100% bill. And there has been a long-term power payoff. Those efforts helped to give them the legitimacy and technological know-how to be able play a role in current implementation and future climate work. For example, it gave them credibility to meet again with the legislature and Minnesota's Commerce Department on further issues such as building de-carbonization.

Sustained/Long-Term (Multi-Year, Multi-Cycle) Funding

Over the course of their support for the 100% Campaign, the Equity Funds moved from providing annual to two-year grants. This is notable as not all intermediary funders offer multi-year grants. This longer time-horizon for funding relieved grantees of the burden of frequent report writing and execution of immediate deliverables. It also allowed them to spend less time on the solicitation of grants and the associated administrative work.

"The amount of time it saves an org to not have to do fundraising work or the administration of that is obviously huge."—Equity Funds grantee in Minnesota

By giving multi-year grants, funders created an atmosphere of abundance, where groups knew they had or could have the money to do what was needed to build power. For instance, multi-year funding allowed grantees to devote a greater amount of their focus to organizing and creative campaigning. More generally, it allowed them to ride out short-term variability in income, plan for the future, and have the confidence to spend money in the immediate term that would eventually pay off.

For example, it allowed COPAL to have enough funding to support people doing the work by giving their members gift cards or transportation and food support, which enabled greater participation (especially in situations such as afternoon

meetings where that type of support was particularly helpful).

For the 100% Campaign, the freedom provided by long-term (and general operating) support allowed them to produce a higher volume of communications material because they did not have to wait for a new grant cycle to apply for specific funding for materials production if that was not part of their prior grant. They had the money to both produce videos and distribute them into the world conjointly, instead of having to repeatedly apply for funding a little bit by bit for each part of the process.

"If you really are looking in this day and age to connect with people and you're not doing it over a multi-year period, then you're not doing it."

—Interviewee

More broadly, long-term funding allowed for the long-term strategic perspective of the 100% Campaign: the idea was that you can operate based on what you want to make politically possible, not what is possible today. This was a necessary

prerequisite both for the investments in power building and the years of preparation for policy adoption while the composition of the statehouse shifted to allow for eventual passage. And most fundamentally, the trust implied on the part of funders in providing grantees with multi-year support can **change the relationship between funder and grantee**, allowing for a more open, collaborative dynamic when the funder ceases to be concerned that the groups will take the money and run.

"I found it [multi-year grants] to be the most helpful thing because it also totally changes your relationship to the grantee." —Funder

We thus assess that the gradual work of power building, the trust and buy-in from a range of organizations, and the long-range political strategy that were all enabled by multi-year grantmaking laid the foundation for eventual policy passage and a durable climate-equity coalition and constituency across the state.

General Operating Support

Providing grantees with autonomy was an important part of the Equity Funds' grantmaking approach. As an Equity Funds staffer noted:

"We want them to work on climate, but we actually know the best way to support them to do that is to give them general operating support and allow them to let us know what it's going to need to look like for them to build climate into their long-term agenda."

The Equity Funds were able to begin offering this general operating support after several years, and this approach also existed alongside dedicated funding: in the grantee survey, three respondents received both general operating and program funding; the other two received just program funding.

Grantees highly valued this general operating support: four of five respondents indicated that such grants from the Equity Funds were "very helpful" in increasing their organizations' capacity to engage in climate and clean energy work.

General operating support enabled grantees to go deeper

in investing in their core internal capacity and cross-movement social capital, along with the flexibility to adapt their work based on community needs. The Equity Funds' support enabled one grantee to "build internal expertise and capacity" on the climate issue and provided the time and space for another grantee to do the long-term work of relationship building across the space, along with leveling up skills across their staff:

The "Equity Fund has made it possible for us to hire one staff focused on environmental justice who has the ability to spend time relationship building and helping the greater movement, and the support for everyone on staff to use equity as a first lens that we examine issues through."

—Equity Funds grantee in Minnesota

It allowed another grantee the flexibility to prioritize the needs of their base; in their organizing, "having the ability to be nimble and respond to the priorities of our constituents is invaluable."

Funding Civic Engagement and Political Involvement

Whereas the McKnight Foundation (a major funder in the state) does not provide (c)(4) funding, CEAF has emerged as a significant source of (c)(4) support in Minnesota. The Equity Funds wanted to be sure they were giving to a diverse set of membership-based organizations to ensure that there would be an actual constituency base of mobilized voters who care about the issue and can connect it with other local priorities. One grantee's comments reinforced this, when they noted the value of not only providing (c)(4) funding in general, but specifically providing it (as CEAF does) to grassroots

and issue organizations, which has been rare in the state compared to (c)(4) funds flowing to consultants and for paid media.

Three grantee survey respondents indicated that 501(c)(4) funding for electoral and lobbying work from CEAF was "very helpful" in increasing their organization's capacity to engage in climate and clean energy work (the two others indicated it was not applicable to them or they did not know).

The Caucus for Climate events (discussed above) were a key leverage point for (c)(4) funding. Faith in Minnesota's



Representative Jamie Long meets with 100% Campaign supporters. (Source: 100% Campaign)

2018 Caucus was effective in illustrating to Tim Walz that the organization was serious and they could move people strategically. They used this as an opportunity to get their foot in the door and help to shape his governing agenda. Building off of this, the 100% Campaign co-led (along with groups such as ISAIAH, TakeAction, and Unidos) the 2020 and 2022 Caucuses for Climate, with Climate Equity Action Fund (c)(4) dollars playing a key role here and in related advocacy, such as mobilizing volunteers for climate days at the legislature.

Separately, CEAF support was seen as helpful for the climate justice movement’s capacity overall, with an appreciation of how (c)(4) money unlocks many doors, especially when married to the broader movement and power building that can be accomplished via (c)(3) money. In the survey, there was fairly

high agreement about the benefit to the movement of support in the overall building of organizations’ political operations, with two respondents saying CEAF’s support was “very helpful” in this regard, and two saying “somewhat helpful (one was unsure).

However, CEAF was seen as less beneficial for more direct aspects of the political work, with lower ratings of their support in terms of its helpfulness in relationship building with elected leaders, influencing elections, and organizing for climate policy at the DFL caucus; while some respondents saw CEAF as “very helpful” in these regards, one answered “Not at all helpful” and some others were unsure.

“C4 money has been essential to help orgs like ours to have a more powerful political presence and power.”—Climate Equity Action Fund grantee in Minnesota

General operating support provided flexibility to maximize impact during each legislative biennium. From 2019–2023, the 100% bill passed the House fairly quickly, allowing the 100% Campaign time during sessions to work in additional ways that helped build long term support or provided additional benefit. For example, they focused on including and publicizing climate considerations across a range of committee budgets, which led (DFL) legislators to see “climate as not a four letter word” even when talking about issues such as education and health.

Ultimately, the 100% Campaign wielded influence in several ways. It won the “hearts and minds” of policymakers and was reputed to be one of the leading resources for most legislators. It also exercised political muscle and demonstrated the popular support for clean energy policy by mobilizing people for Capitol events and rallies, which Jamie Long credits with making an important difference in the 100% bill’s outcome.

Generalized Ultimate Impact of Funding Strategies

Across multiple interviews with those with direct insight, we heard a broad takeaway that the work of the coalition assembled with support from the Equity Funds was able to make climate justice a mainstream concern in Minnesota over the last half dozen years. This builds off the generally increasing salience of climate change for DFL politicians and candidates (where it was seen as a key issue that candidates need to demonstrate bona fides on, including in swing districts).

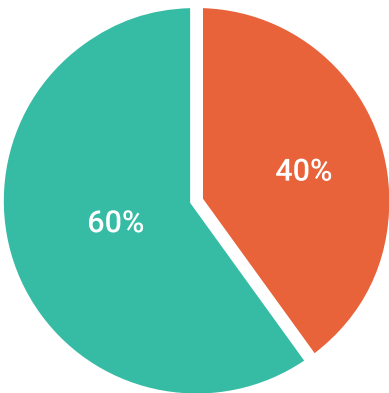
Regarding the 100% legislation, all the years of preparation allowed for the bill’s passage to move quickly once winning the governing conditions to pass climate policy. The Equity Funds say they learned from their grantees not to wait until there was a supportive governing majority to start introducing and lobbying for good policy. They were practicing governance so they would be ready to govern when the time came. It was critical to develop and socialize the policy ideas, build a base around them, generate political cover for them, and educate legislative champions before they were even able to see the specific “goal posts” related to when the bill might pass, or

even when the majorities to permit passage would arrive. Thus, the bill’s sponsors were able to move it forward in the first few weeks of the new DFL trifecta government in 2023—because they had already started years before.

Imagine a world in which the Equity Fund had NOT become involved in Minnesota: in that world, how surprised would you be to still see the climate justice power building and legislative outcomes of the past few years in the state?

6 RESPONSES FROM GRANTEEES

- Not at all surprised
- A little surprised
- Somewhat surprised
- Very surprised
- Don't know



CONCLUSIONS

"I don't want funders to lose sight of the fact that having BIPOC [people] in every working group, in every conversation, in every external conversation was a hundred percent part of why that all worked."—Interviewee

"It still surprises me how much they've [100% Campaign] been able to accomplish."—Funder

Overview of Conclusions

Based on the foregoing narrative and analysis, we draw several conclusions from this case study. We present **key takeaways regarding the Equity Funds' model of grantmaking**, finding overall support for the model. We also consider ways in which the model presented in Minnesota may be **replicable in other states**, and ways in which it may not be.

Key Takeaways from the Equity Funds' Model

The Equity Funds' involvement in Minnesota presents a model of how to support equitable climate and clean energy policy outcomes. They believed that *expanding the constellation of organizations actively pushing for climate and clean energy policy—to include multi-issue, multi-racial, and social justice organizations—could build capacity, infrastructure, power, and—ultimately— policy wins, if they were funded with sustained, general operating support that allowed them to invest in civic engagement and deepen their community organizing*. And that these can be supplemented with technical assistance and a community of funders dedicated to both coordinating amongst themselves as well as encouraging convening and alignment amongst actors in the state. **This case study broadly finds that that model has borne fruit as an effective approach to promote equitable climate and clean energy policy, by growing the power of a multiracial, cross-class constituency in Minnesota.**

GRANTEE SELECTION (THE "WHO")

- **Granting to multi-issue organizations:** The Equity Funds' support for multi-issue organizations such as ISAIAH and Take Action MN allowed them to move into the climate and clean energy space, bringing their large memberships and expertise in community organizing to the fight. They both contributed to the passage of the 100% legislation, and—through that process—gained power to support the long term implementation of the measure and future climate work.
- **Granting to racial justice organizations:** The Equity Funds' support for organizations such as Black Visions, Unidos, and COPAL transformed the space in Minnesota from one in which climate was seen as "White" (according to one interviewee) and these groups did not have climate programs, and to a place in which these communities were integral to mainstreaming climate justice policy, adoption of the cumulative impacts law, and made an appreciable difference in supporting passage of the 100% legislation.

FUNDING FOCUS (THE "WHAT")

- **Funding civic engagement via (c)(4) dollars:** The Climate Equity Action Fund's provision of support for civic engagement (voter contact and lobbying), especially with the greater freedom provided by 501(c)(4) grants, unlocked doors at the statehouse for grantees. Through programs such as "Caucus for Climate," this increased the movement's influence with climate-receptive legislators, making a material difference on policy outcomes.
- **Funding community organizing:** The Equity Funds' support substantially increased both the number and the diversity of grantees' community organizing staff. This was a shift from a policy expertise-focus in the state's climate movement, to one oriented around building long term power. The fact that some of the first Equity Funds grantees in Minnesota were focused on organizing served as anchors for the entire emerging strategy and 100% Campaign. This organizing has supported mobilizations that helped to ensure various policy wins, from the 100% bill to the Green Bank, and ensured ongoing capacity for implementation work and later formations such as Rise & Repair.

FUNDER METHODS AND PROGRAMS (THE "HOW")

- **Multi-year grants:** As the Equity Funds were able over the course of their involvement in Minnesota to extend the duration of their grant cycle, they reduced administrative burdens on grantees while increasing their sense of freedom, trust and creativity. It was these longer time horizons that were especially helpful to develop the broader strategic perspective for the 100% Campaign and to allow the support for organizing and power building to take root.
- **Flexible, general operating support:** The Equity Funds were able to provide a substantial portion of their grantmaking in Minnesota as general operating support, rather than as grants tied to specific programs or

deliverables. This provided freedom and flexibility for grantees to build their internal capacity and respond nimbly to dynamic circumstances on the ground. For example, the 100% Campaign could pivot at the end of each legislative session from specific policy advocacy to longer-term power building.

- **Technical assistance:** In addition to grantmaking directly to organizations, the Equity Funds supported communications and narrative development (through research on the Race Class Narrative), and operated policy accelerators to skill up grantees' staff, particularly those new to climate and energy policy. The Race Class Narrative principles played a central role in the 100% Campaign's communications with supporters, providing an effective, fresh, optimistic and equity-centered messaging framework. The policy accelerators helped to increase the level of knowledge among grantees and set those without

prior climate platforms on the path to developing their own policy positions, but the nature of the implementation of the accelerators also came in for some mixed reviews.

- **Convening and coordinating:** The Equity Funds were lauded by a number of grantees for the way they created and showed up in coalitional spaces in Minnesota, serving a role in convening multiple organizations and stakeholders in conversation around policy priorities and campaign strategy, while remaining non-directive and allowing movement leaders on the ground in the state to take the initiative, work out differences, and create the vehicles (such as the 100% Campaign) for coordination and decision making. Simultaneously, the Equity Funds worked in the background with like-minded funders (such as the McKnight Foundation) to coordinate giving, bringing in resources and expertise from across the philanthropic sector in alignment with a shared strategic vision.

How Replicable are the MN Clean Energy Successes?

Is what was achieved in Minnesota over the past six (plus) years replicable in other states? This is a difficult and nuanced question to answer. Some of the preconditions to the successes in Minnesota do not necessarily exist in every state, but there are some elements that may be quite replicable.

In terms of **geography**, interviewees noted some similarities across states that could make the lessons from Minnesota applicable elsewhere. Within the Midwest beyond Minnesota, the politics of deindustrialization is also present, with marginalized communities who have been disinvested in for decades. At the same time, the Midwest is not monolithic, and there are subtly different complexities in each state. We are seeing efforts to bridge those differences, however, and share what has worked in Minnesota. The pioneering narrative work was deemed so successful in creating a politically enabling environment in Minnesota that funders are disseminating it to other parts of the Midwest. And in fact, ISAIAH has been funded to train those in other states on organizing techniques they have mastered. Also, movement players in other states have debated similar tensions around the question of whether clean energy legislation has included sufficient environmental justice priorities.

And there is the matter of **time**, for even if all the requisite factors are in place, these ingredients need to fully 'bake'. Laying the groundwork for the 100% bill occurred over many years. A receptive legislative and executive branch developed later than movement leaders expected, and success required a multiyear, multi-sector, concerted and sustained organizing effort focused around a major legislative goal; this is not easily accomplished, nor necessarily easy to replicate either.

Overall, funders and movement actors on the ground may find it readily **feasible to reproduce these elements** that were key to success in Minnesota:

- Funding of organizations that do multi-sector organizing

work

- Coalescing of campaigning around a focused goal
- Funding, including (c)(4) funding, to help groups build more political power
- Practicing governance: proposing bills before they can be passed and developing policy ideas over time
- Building a tentpole coalition or alignment table (the 100% Campaign)
- Developing narratives that are actively inclusive and actively push for equity

It is however important to note preconditions to the victories in Minnesota that are not present in every state.

These **difficult to reproduce conditions** include:

Majority support for climate action in the state government

- A strong set of existing organizations, especially multi-issue groups adept at organizing that already have real power and have been effective at working with other organizations. Interviewees stressed the importance of having an 'ecosystem' of organizations with strong relationships in order for things like the joint planning and budgeting of the 100% Campaign to work
- Locally-based movement leaders with the vision and connections, tied to existing movement infrastructure (ideally leading membership-based organizations operating on the ground)
- A strong leadership development pipeline (aka a "deep bench"); this was present in Minnesota (vs. what one interviewee described as a leadership vacuum in some other states), meaning movement leaders could switch into other roles (such as in government) without depriving organizations of all their leadership

RECOMMENDATIONS

We conclude with recommendations for funders, movement strategists, and those doing the work of organizing and advocacy in communities for equitable clean energy and climate policy. What follows is a synthesis of both the authors' original opinions, along with suggestions sourced directly from interviewees.



Fund a diverse set of membership organizations

This ensures that there is an actual constituency base of people who are mobilized and care and can connect the clean energy transition to other local community priorities.



Have organizing at the center

Without community organizing groups, legislative proposals would have had a harder time passing, but organizing helped bring them to fruition with political muscle, evidenced in such things as repeated turnout for the campaign's lobby days and Caucus for Climate events. Campaign organizers say it was very powerful to watch people show up multiple times for years on end at the Capitol with a visionary message.



Capitalize on investments in politics

Political activity is a distinct role only for (c)(4) funding and engagement, since (c)(3) organizations are prohibited from direct or indirect involvement in political campaigns. But a major insight from experiences in Minnesota has been that climate funders and democracy/civic engagement funders benefit from understanding each other's work.



Paint a picture of what is possible

This can combat the typical doom and gloom associated with climate change, and serve as a counterpoint to the draining feeling of always playing defense. Give supporters a goal to work toward, through a proactive campaign with a specific and ambitious policy target such as 100% clean power. This helps to energize them and bring many kinds of people together.



Practice governance

Do not wait for perfect governing conditions to get working and begin introducing and lobbying for equitable climate policies. 'Practicing governance'—that is, introducing bills despite inhospitable political conditions—allows movements to be ready to legislate when the time comes, by developing and socializing the policy ideas, building a base around them, generating political cover for them, and educating legislative champions.

"The fact we were ready to go meant we got this bill done in a month when we got our trifecta." —Jamie Long

These were all critical to do even when the 100% bill had no chance yet of passage. Starting this work years before allowed the campaign to move the bill forward quickly in the first few weeks of 2023 when a new government finally made its passage possible.



Support local leadership

To build infrastructure for grassroots climate work, investing in state-based groups and local leaders is more sustainable than cyclically bringing in national entities. The 100% Campaign was led by Chris Conry, who came out of one of Minnesota's membership organizations, which is very different from a national organization or external consulting firm placing a campaign director in the state who is not deeply tied to the local infrastructure. Developing leadership that is locally rooted and tied to the community organizing infrastructure is also valuable for continuity and focus during the policy implementation phase after legislative passage.

And give opportunities for local decision making. Trust groups on the ground who understand

the situation to plot strategy. Support in ways that do not dictate the outcome, such as by providing resources to hire a facilitator to lead a collaborative process, rather than prescribing a policy package. Deferring can create the trust that builds an ecosystem and tends toward better results because it requires people to develop ways of working together from the beginning.



Build expertise and capacity

Tools such as policy accelerators, research services, and grants to add issue-specific staff capacity allow all partners in diverse coalitions to be actively and genuinely involved. Rather than having to outsource policy and strategy development to another entity, grantees report a different kind of buy-in and ownership in the campaign when organizations are engaging and co-strategizing after having been able to independently develop their own issue positions, which articulate their ideological commitments and are informed by genuine policy knowledge.



Build the coalition thoughtfully

Prioritize groups that play well with others, resourcing organizations that are oriented toward collaboration.

And gradually: Not every eventual coalition partner needs to be involved at the outset of a campaign, which can begin with a small number of groups. While one approach to try to produce cohesion and cooperation is to mechanistically involve every group from the start, it can also work well to begin with two or three anchor groups that already work well together, with an orientation for building out from there.



Fund outside your silo

Funders need to be willing to invest outside their issue-specific scope, from a perspective that allows for broader strategy and power building to be the imperative, not the particular mission statement of the foundation. That common investment in movement infrastructure and capacity can then bear fruit across multiple policy domains.

ABOUT THIS REPORT

JUSTIN ROLFE-REDDING

As a social scientist at the Lab, Justin works in the Lab's research program to develop field research projects with advocates, translate social science findings into actionable advice, consult with members, and liaise with the academic and researcher communities. His studies have examined the role of emotions (such as hope), priming, political and social identity, values and news coverage in climate engagement. A grassroots environmental organizer since high school, he is passionate about bridging movement and social science worlds. He received a PhD from George Mason University (where he worked at the Center for Climate Change Communication). Raised in the Pacific Northwest, he now lives in Denver.

DAVID MINKOW

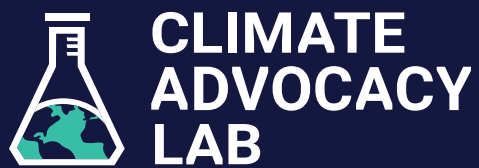
A veteran print and broadcast journalist, David has produced news programs for public radio and written for daily newspapers and online publications. He has also provided communications expertise to several environmental non-profits and was founding editor of Climate Access. For the Lab, he has written dozens of research summaries and worked on literature reviews on topics such as shareholder advocacy and the 2021 infrastructure bill. He conducted the majority of interviews for this report. He lives on Salt Spring Island in British Columbia.

SAM ZACHER

Sam is a PhD candidate in political science, and has worked in a research capacity for the Lab since 2021. His academic research focuses on the politics of inequality, redistribution, and the climate crisis in the contemporary U.S. For the Lab, he has worked on literature reviews on topics such as building social movement coalitions and movement infrastructure, and keeps the Lab's Resource Library updated with the latest research, polling, and strategic guidance for climate advocates. He also organizes in the grassroots climate movement. He is currently based in Los Angeles, CA.

The **Climate Advocacy Lab** equips the US climate movement with the evidence-based insights, skills, and connections needed to build durable power and win equitable solutions. The Lab was created to ensure the collective impact of the climate movement is greater than the sum of its parts. They help to create the conditions necessary for movement groups to engage and activate more people, more quickly through their organizing work — and in the sustained way that continues to meaningfully build our power. Since 2015, they have served as critical climate movement infrastructure, making training, research expertise, and an extensive resource library free and accessible to a community of more than 4,000 climate practitioners from 1,500+ organizations across all 50 states and beyond.

The **Climate and Clean Energy Equity Fund** and the **Climate Equity Action Fund** were founded in 2016 with a belief that in order to expand the base of support for climate action and clean energy solutions, equity needs to be at the heart of the climate movement and that climate funders have an important role to play in this. The Equity Funds provide multi-issue, economic and racial justice community-organizing groups capacity building, technical assistance and both catalytic and sustained funding to work on climate action and clean energy transition. Most of the Equity Funds' grantees received their first grants to work on climate from the Equity Funds, and represent a field and type of community-based organization that have often not received support from other climate funders. The work of the Equity Funds has the ability to transform the narrative about who is driving climate solutions and as a result, build lasting power for communities (especially Black, Latine, AAPI, Indigenous and other communities of color and low-income communities) on the frontlines of climate change. The Climate and Clean Energy Equity Fund commissioned the Climate Advocacy Lab to conduct this report.



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