

Grantmaking That Advances Equity

A Teaching Case

MAY 2019



JOHNSON CENTER
AT GRAND VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY



**GRAND VALLEY
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Acknowledgments

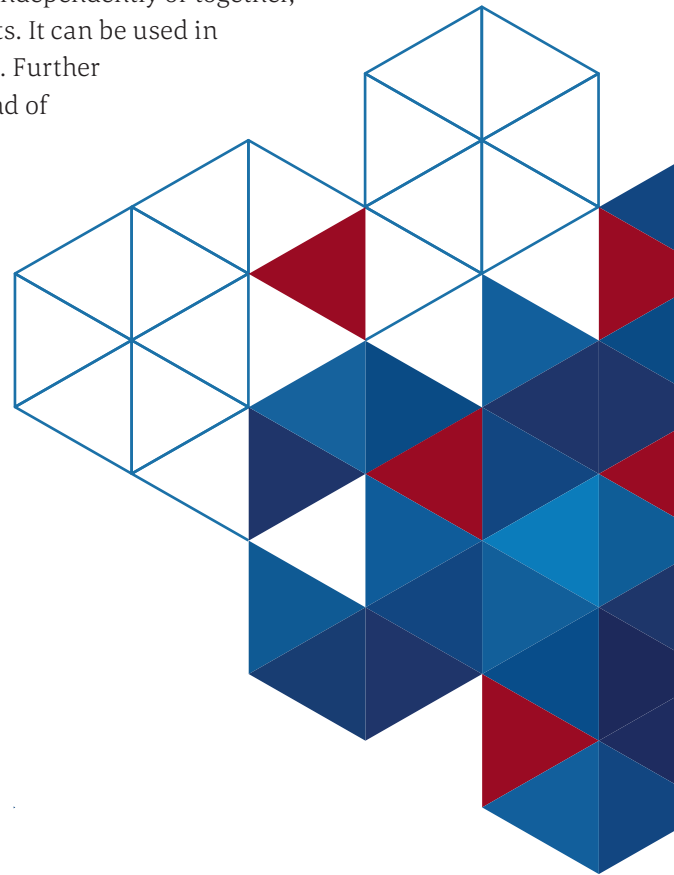
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Case Purpose and Organization

The purpose of this teaching case is to help grantmakers deepen their understanding of the complexity of equity-focused grantmaking efforts. This real-life example provides an opportunity to explore the key decision points, options, trade-offs, etc., involved in the choice to focus on equity in grantmaking. This case is intended to provide enough information to provoke reflection and discussion. It is not a comprehensive account of all relevant perspectives and events. The case study relies on documents from the The Kresge Foundation's Climate Resilience and Urban Opportunity (CRUO) Initiative and in-depth interviews with those involved in the work. We deeply appreciate the foundation's leadership and willingness to share this story for the benefit of the larger field.

The case is organized into sequential modules that can be used independently or together, depending on the time available and the needs of the participants. It can be used in graduate programs as well as professional development sessions. Further guidance for use of the case is provided in the appendix at the end of this document.



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Background and Context

The Kresge Foundation is a private, national foundation that works to expand opportunities in America's cities through grantmaking and social investing in arts and culture, education, environment, health, human services, community development in Detroit, and an American Cities program focused on inclusive community development practices nationally. Founded in 1924 to promote human progress, Kresge fulfills that mission today by building and strengthening pathways to opportunity for low-income people in America's cities and seeking to dismantle structural and systemic barriers to equality and justice. Using a full array of grants, loans, and other investment tools, Kresge invests more than \$160 million annually to foster economic and social change.

In its first 80 years, the foundation focused on funding capital campaigns — building the long-term capacity of nonprofits by encouraging donors to give to an institution. In the mid-2000s, as the search for a replacement for the foundation's outgoing president began to take shape, Kresge's trustees recognized that a change in leadership offered an opportunity for the foundation to elevate its aspirations and rethink its approaches. During the board's search for a successor, a pivotal conversation took place among the trustees leading the process. Richard "Rip" Rapson, who became the new CEO in 2006, described that moment in a letter accompanying the foundation's 2017 annual report:

Elaine Rosen and Lee Bollinger were co-chairing the board's search for a successor to our distinguished and long-serving president, John Marshall. After a first round of candidate interviews, Lee turned to Elaine to suggest that the foundation needed to elevate its aspirations — to migrate from practices that had become narrow and calcified toward approaches that held promise of penetrating the defining issues of our time. In a word, Lee suggested that we look to Russell¹ and "hang a question mark" on both what we took aim at and how.

The conversation set in motion the fundamental, long-term shift in how the foundation would continue to fulfill its founder's directive to "promote human progress." In 2006, the trustees identified six program areas for strategic investment: Arts & Culture, Detroit, Education, Environment, Health, and Human Services. The foundation also committed to four principles:

1. taking an integrative, long-term view;
2. embracing risks commensurate with the magnitude of the challenges it sought to address;
3. developing a more complete philanthropic toolbox; and
4. addressing the root causes of disparities facing low-income people.

Over the next several years, staff in each of the program areas developed in their subject matter expertise and became situated within their respective fields and sectors. Then, at a 2011 board retreat, a trustee raised the question: "What makes us more than a holding company of six separate programs? Do we stand for something across the board?" The question indicated that the Kresge brand, which had been clear in the days of capital campaigns, felt less clear across the six strategic investment areas. And, emerging when it did, the question surfaced a common thread across programs: dismantling obstacles to equitable opportunity in American cities. The Urban Opportunity Framework surfaced and became the overarching strategic architecture. A focus on creating opportunity for low-income people in American cities became an explicit part of the foundation's work, with equity an emerging theme across programs.

¹ Philosopher Bertrand Russell: "In all affairs it's a healthy thing now and then to hang a question mark on the things you have long taken for granted." In 1950, Russell won the Nobel Prize in Literature "in recognition," the Nobel committee stated, "of his varied and significant writings in which he champions humanitarian ideals and freedom of thought."

The adoption of the Urban Opportunity Framework created the need to assess the six program areas within the framework and create more alignment where needed. Four of Kresge's six program areas were using strategies that were aligned with the framework; in the Arts & Culture and Environment programs, however, that alignment was less evident.

Putting equity in the center meant addressing long-standing and difficult issues in a more head-on manner. As Rapson noted, "We didn't need philanthropy to perpetuate privilege." Initially, the focus was not explicitly on racial equity; the umbrella of urban opportunity was a framing that was comfortable for all the trustees. Over time, however, it became clear that if the work is intended to dismantle barriers to opportunity among low-income communities in U.S. cities, then a focus on people of color will follow. This focus on communities of color and equity has become more explicit, as evident in a letter from Elaine D. Rosen, the foundation's board chair, accompanying the 2017 annual report:

In the mid-2000s, we began using our resources in much more direct ways. Today's work is incredibly complex and intricate, fully aimed at tearing down barriers and replacing them with enablers that increase opportunities for people to enter and thrive in the economic mainstream.

Although still firmly seeded in our founder's mission, this new way of working forced our trustees — willingly — to establish a framework to ensure that each of the hundreds of unique grants and investments awarded by the foundation each year is keenly focused on an overarching goal.

As this strategy was taking shape, our reflections and deliberations were difficult: We knew the vision we sought would take time, involve risk and test every facet of the organization. Through much individual and group soul-searching, guided by our incredibly insightful President and CEO, Rip Rapson, the board adopted the "urban opportunity framework" as our north star. It was — and remains — rooted in the aspiration that American cities grow more inclusively so that disparities among their residents are eliminated and all have full access to the building blocks of just and equitable life opportunities. More simply: to expand opportunity for people with low incomes in America's cities.

To consider our framework is to deal head-on with issues of equity. We constantly ask ourselves how we might demonstrate our commitment to help ensure that status at birth does not equal destiny. We ask how we might support our grantees as they confront bias and constraint. And we ask each other if we are truly advancing equity.

Developing the Strategy: 2012–2014

Beginning in 2009, Kresge’s Environment Program was fairly traditional in its approach to addressing climate change, supporting both climate mitigation (reducing greenhouse gases) and climate adaptation (preparing for the effects of climate change). However, these efforts were somewhat siloed, with different program officers for each of the two funding areas and Lois DeBacker, managing director of the Environment Program, paying attention to the whole suite of work.

DeBacker dove into the challenge of strategy refinement for her program area with what CEO Rapson referred to as “all her skill and decency.” At the time (and largely still), philanthropic funding for climate change tended to concentrate on large organizations’ strategies to reduce greenhouse gases. Those focused on mitigation of carbon emissions didn’t take into account where these reductions occurred. Money was primarily directed toward large organizations. To build a program that emphasized low-income urban communities in alignment with the Urban Opportunity Framework would require a very different direction for the Environment Program’s grantmaking team.

As Rapson noted in a 2013 address at the University of Michigan,

Climate change has set in motion forces that will forever change the nature of life in America’s cities. In exactly what form, in what degrees of disruptive severity, and over what period of time is not entirely clear. But what is clear is that a foundation, or any entity, seeking to strengthen cities cannot ignore that dynamic. ... Confronting that dynamic in turn requires, to borrow from [University of Michigan Professor] [Rosina Bierbaum](#), that we do two things: avoid the unmanageable and manage the unavoidable.

Diverging or Merging Frameworks: “Design to Win” and “Pathways to Resilience”

To make the necessary shift in the strategic framework, the board, staff, experts, and other partners engaged in a deliberate process that would ultimately reimagine Kresge’s environmental grantmaking. DeBacker recalls early conversations with the program’s board work group,² where it became clear that the trustees were not happy with the direction of the program: “We learned we were in the hole and we needed to climb out of it. It was a challenging time, but we were committed to aligning with the Urban Opportunity Framework.” Also offering important counsel and insight during the strategic alignment phase were Marian Urquilla, a consultant on large-scale community-change efforts,³ and Kresge colleagues — especially Wendy Lewis Jackson, deputy director for the Detroit Program, and David D. Fukuzawa, managing director of the Health Program. Amid numerous conversations and convenings, Jackson suggested to DeBacker, “Why don’t you flip the frame? What if you designed the strategy as a whole focusing on low-income benefit, and then add the climate lens?” DeBacker recalled the remark as a pivotal moment in the strategy refinement.

In order to dive more deeply into “what would it look like to work on climate resilience with opportunity for low-income people at the forefront,” DeBacker drew upon extended outreach to organizations known to be working with a racial justice lens on climate change or environmental issues. As she

² Each of Kresge’s program areas engages regularly with a dedicated board group to discuss strategy and program development.

³ Marian Urquilla is principal at Strategy Lift, a national consulting practice focused on coaching, strategy development, and large-scale community change. She has helped launch philanthropic initiatives on climate resilience, community development, and community health, and has designed a range of national leadership programs, including efforts to diversify nonprofit-sector talent pipelines and strengthen educational partnerships. From 2008 to 2012, she served as director of program strategies at Living Cities. See <https://centerforcommunityinvestment.org/our-team/marian-urquilla>

met with people and organizations around the country, and beyond her foundation peers and large environmental groups, the idea emerged to partner with the Movement Strategy Center (MSC) to host a convening of leaders in climate change, environmental justice, and social justice work. With leadership from MSC, and with the Emerald Cities Collaborative, the Praxis Project, and Marian Urquilla as partners, the [Pathways to Resilience Initiative](#) was launched to bring together leading thinkers from across the U.S. to consider the question: “What would a climate-resilience agenda need to include for it to be socially just?” The efforts leading up to, during, and following the convening resulted in the Pathways to Resilience anthology, which includes a framework for climate resilience rooted in communities that disproportionately experience negative impacts of climate change.

When that framework is compared to [“Design to Win: Philanthropy’s Role in the Fight Against Global Warming.”](#) a 2007 report that focused on global-scale carbon reduction, the distinction is clear: Kresge emphasizes the need to recognize and attend specifically to the needs of low-income populations and people of color. DeBacker reflected on the influence of a more explicit focus on equity:

Preventing catastrophic climate change requires a certain volume of emission reductions. While [“Design to Win”] is strong, it doesn’t factor in disproportionate impacts — the human factor. Low-income communities felt the pollution concerns they faced were being ignored or dismissed by philanthropy. Diesel pollutants, like those you might find in areas with ports or freight centers, are bad for public health and are most often located in low-income communities. But these aren’t the highest greenhouse gas emissions, so they are not prioritized. Viewing the work through the lens of equity broadened my and Kresge’s concept of climate-relevant work. We had to accept that people are motivated to address the pollution sources that hurt them and that make their lives difficult. And these issues may be climate relevant, but may not rise to the top of the issues being addressed by a traditional climate funder.

During the Environment team’s 2013 charge to refine the program’s strategy, DeBacker attended a national climate change conference where, at one point, a program officer from another foundation said to her: “Is it just me, or is this the whitest conference you’ve ever attended in your life?” DeBacker recalls that out of hundreds of people at the conference, there were hardly any people of color. It led her to reflect on her personal values and what Kresge stood for institutionally: “Our funding had the opportunity to influence the trajectory of climate change advocacy. I [didn’t] want to contribute to building a field that [wasn’t] racially and ethnically diverse.”

In March 2014, the Environment Program strategy frame stated its goal: “Help communities build their resilience in the face of climate change.” And it revised how Kresge would work toward that goal:

As an institution with a strong commitment to cities and their low-income residents, we have identified Kresge’s distinctive philanthropic niche with respect to climate change as follows. It is to:

- *Advance a comprehensive and integrated approach to resilience that encompasses climate mitigation, adaptation, and social cohesion; and*
- *Elevate the inclusion of low-income and vulnerable populations in efforts to build resilience.*⁴

⁴This wording is from a September 2014 memo to the board. Kresge’s team members acknowledged that they would likely use different wording now.

With the hearty approval of the trustees, this goal and niche provided the foundation on which Kresge's Environment team would design a clearly aligned initiative.

Moving to an explicit emphasis on cities meant there was pushback from grantees who had worked on climate adaptation in rural areas with a focus on ecosystems. But the conceptual difference that emerged from the Pathways to Resilience convening was that of a people-centered approach to climate resilience. As DeBacker noted,

I think it is a winning strategy, to appreciate the experience of a human being, start there, and make climate change relevant versus coming in with the presumption that climate change is the most important thing for them. How does climate change relate to their holistic experience, while also recognizing that, of course, climate change is critical in that it poses an existential threat.

With Refined Strategy, Move Boldly: March–October 2014

Kresge's Environment team recognized that the new strategy needed to come out of the gate in a way that demonstrated seriousness and commitment. As DeBacker noted,

There is a criticism that environmental philanthropy is not animated by principles of equity and has been tone-deaf in engaging with low-income communities and communities of color. The team wanted to demonstrate to [the] trustees that “this isn't business as usual” and we are changing the program, building from the papers and convening that had been commissioned.

While the Environment team's strategy embraced equity, DeBacker and Urquilla recognized the importance of developing a discrete initiative that would reflect the commitment. Recalling a phone conversation with Urquilla during which the outline of the initiative began to take form, DeBacker said it became clear that if Kresge was going to build a field of practice around climate change resilience with an equity focus, it would need to be purposeful in breaking from the homogeneity of the climate change movement. Harking back to Wendy Lewis Jackson's counsel to center low-income benefit in the revised strategy, two fundamental elements of the initiative became clear:

1. deepening the climate change expertise of groups firmly grounded in equity, rather than embedding equity in mainstream groups working on climate, and
2. engaging nonprofit organizations as a cohort in a planning year prior to implementation, to better position the organizations for success and to reinforce the field-building component of the Environment Program's overall strategy.

And three hypotheses formed:

1. **IF** we resource community-based organizations that hold a commitment to civic engagement and authentically represent the priorities of low-income communities to systematically engage in climate-resilience efforts **THEN** we will generate publicly endorsed plans and policies that are more attendant to equity concerns and carry more public support.
2. **IF** community-based organizations are resourced to systematically engage in climate-resilience efforts to elevate the concerns and priorities of low-income residents in the communities in which they work **THEN** we will strengthen social cohesion and connectivity in these places.
3. **IF** we lift-up and share lessons from place-based innovation in advancing climate resilience with a focus on civic engagement and the inclusion of low-income communities **THEN** we will improve the effectiveness of the climate resilience field as a whole.

On July 1, 2014 — just three weeks after the board's Environment Program work group endorsed a strategy paper describing the proposed Climate Resilience and Urban Opportunity (CRUO) Initiative — Kresge announced the initiative with a [program update](#) on its website, on its Twitter feed and Facebook page, and to its email subscribers. The news was also sent to the attendees of the Pathways to Resilience convening to share with their networks.

Figure 1. Expected Outcomes of CRUO’s Two Phases Communicated in Primer

At the conclusion of Phase 1 of this initiative, Kresge expects that funded organizations will have:

- identified specific opportunities to shape and influence local and regional climate-resilience planning, policy development, and implementation to better **reflect the priorities and needs of low-income people** in their communities; and
- developed clear work plans for pursuing those opportunities.

At the conclusion of Phase 2 of this initiative, Kresge expects that:

- Each funded organization will emerge with strengthened institutional and political capacity to influence climate-resilience efforts in its community as measured by its:
 - depth of understanding about climate change’s **likely impacts on its community** as well as appropriate mitigation and adaptation responses;
 - visibility and effectiveness in local and regional climate-resilience planning, implementation, and policy venues;
 - depth of interaction with local officials with decision-making authority relevant to climate resilience;
 - active engagement in multisector climate-resilience efforts; and
 - understanding of the national landscape of climate-resilience efforts.
- The communities in which grantees have worked measurably advance climate-resilience planning, policy development, and implementation.
- Organizations participating in the supported cohort learn from one another and generate model methodologies and policies that can be adapted by other communities regionally and nationally.
- A growing group of individuals and institutions that are grounded in an understanding of low-income communities emerge as nationally recognized thought leaders in climate resilience.
- Kresge builds the evidence base for and defines a clear set of pathways for nonprofits, municipalities, and philanthropy to engage in climate-resilience efforts with leaders and advocates who are grounded in the needs and priorities of low-income communities.

The First Open Call and Funding Decisions: July–October 2014

The CRUO Initiative was announced on July 1, 2014. On July 15, the Environment team hosted a webinar on the initiative, attended by 286 people. A primer was made available on the foundation’s website.

The webinar offered key definitions, such as one for climate resilience:

To build resilience to climate change, communities must:

- Anticipate and prepare for climate change-related pressures and shocks,
- Lessen overall demand for energy and increase the proportion derived from renewable sources, and
- Foster social cohesion.

It also described attributes of competitive organizations:

- deep experience working successfully within low-income, urban communities;
- the standing to move into a leadership role on climate-resilience efforts within their city and/or region; and
- a strong recognition that engagement in climate-resilience efforts is consistent with — and important to the realization of — their mission.

The webinar and primer laid out what kind of efforts would be less successful, including those lacking “deep connections and accountability mechanisms to the low-income, urban communities in which they propose to work.”

Kresge received Statements of Qualifications (SOQs) from 233 applicants by July 31. The applicants were distributed across 37 states and the District of Columbia.⁵ A memo to the board in the fall of 2014 described the applicant organizations as representing

a diverse cross-section of the nonprofit sector, including groups whose missions focus on community development, community organizing, energy, environment, human services, public health, smart growth, and urban agriculture/forestry/parks. They included organizations applying individually, in partnership with one to three other groups, and as larger coalitions.

With Urquilla’s help, the team reviewed the SOQs and on Aug. 20 invited 39 organizations to submit full proposals for the first-year planning grants. To narrow the pool of prospective grantees, the team reviewed the applications’ one-paragraph summaries, which identified applicants that could be ruled out readily (i.e., universities, zoos, botanical gardens, national environmental groups) because they did not reflect the team’s intentional shift toward funding community-based organizations. With anticipated implementation grant amounts of approximately \$200,000 a year, the team also ruled out organizations with operating budgets of less than \$500,000.

⁵ The states from which the greatest number of SOQs were submitted were California (49), New York (28), Michigan (12), Louisiana (10), and Ohio (10).

Figure 2. Criteria for Review of SOQs

1. Focused on and skilled in working within low-income, urban communities;
2. Using or aspiring to use a comprehensive framework of climate resilience;
3. Deeply rooted in the communities in which it proposes to work as evidenced by tenure, membership, governance, and/or engagement;
4. Well respected due to past accomplishments;
5. Approaching its work with the intent of delivering multiple benefits for historically disadvantaged community residents;
6. Engaged or planning to engage in specific, public-sector-led efforts to address climate change that present an opportunity for influence;
7. Committed to pursuing its climate-relevant work in collaboration with one or more private-sector, academic, or other nonprofit-sector partners;
8. Connected to a regional or national network (preferred); and
9. Integrating arts and culture into its work and proposed interventions (preferred).

Proposal Review Criteria — Equity Is Not Opportunistic

The review team consisted of DeBacker, Urquilla, and Amy Solomon, a consultant focusing on climate change and social equity who had recently retired after 15 years as a program officer at the Bullitt Foundation. “Our criteria were clear,” DeBacker recalled of the proposal review. “Fundamentally, we were looking for organizations that had a successful track record working in low-income communities.”

That criteria included discussion of how low-income leadership and communities would be engaged and benefit. For example:

- The first column in the matrix of criteria was labeled “Rooted in Low-Income Communities.” The subcriteria in that category included the statement, “Equity is at the heart of organization mission and vision. Long-term commitment; focus is not opportunistic.”
- Under the category of the “Soundness of the Planning Approach,” the criteria called out:
 - “strategy to engage low-income leadership is substantive”;
 - “consulting with diverse stakeholders, connecting with key actors”; and
 - “paying attention to deriving multiple benefits for low-income people.”
- Another key criteria was that “the identified opportunities have the capacity to serve as significant levers to advance resilience, i.e., desired impact matches opportunity.”

To review the 39 full proposals, the team:

- read and discussed each proposal per the criteria;
- based on that discussion, narrowed the applicant pool to 22 finalists;
- conducted due diligence telephone interviews with colleagues knowledgeable about the finalists;
- conducted telephone interviews with each finalist; and
- produced recommendations for support based on information obtained through due diligence.

As a national initiative focused on urban communities, geography was an area of contention. Team members had different assumptions about what constituted a rural versus an urban area: the Central Valley of California, for example, is one of the nation's chief agricultural centers and is also home to cities such as Fresno, whose population is comparable in size to that of Oakland, California. There was also discussion of the risk involved in assessing the depth of accountability to community and organizational models, and the team had to consider what it would mean to bring in groups with less experience and capacity. Would economic or community development corporations, for example, be accountable to communities and have capacity to meaningfully engage community leadership? Wondering if a potential grantee had enough experience in this regard was considered alongside the existence of opportunity within local policy and planning contexts. To some extent, the inclusion of a planning year allowed the team to take some calculated risks and move past differences over how to develop a cohort of grantees. Nevertheless, these varied capacities and local contexts would have bearing throughout the initiative.

In recalling the funding opportunity, a grantee noted:

We work in low-income communities of color and immigrant communities, and local philanthropy doesn't talk much about equity. I remember the RFP had an explicit focus on equity, because it [equity] is also a part of our language. It described an opportunity to advance climate resilience in urban centers and to do so with nontraditional partners. Climate-resilience work was new to us and had appeal. We knew climate would be relevant, but I didn't know enough yet to understand why.

The Environment team anticipated funding a cohort of 20, but ultimately 17 planning grants were awarded in 10 states across the Northeast, Mid-Atlantic, Southeast, Midwest, Southwest, and West. Two states — California and New York — were overrepresented in the cohort, largely because the climate-resilience policy environment in those regions was ripe with opportunity for influence. Foundation staff, grantees, and evaluators noted that the climate focus and policy environments of the coastal states meant their organizations — especially around New York City and California's Bay Area — were further along in the work and more likely to have an impact within the initiative's time frame. In these regions, there were more opportunities to fund groups that were already part of larger networks and that had previous policy or impact wins.

On the decision to fund only 17 organizations, DeBacker remarked, "We asked for something rare, and there weren't 20 that met the criteria, including accountability to community and commitments to equity and to deepen their work on climate."

Figure 3. CRUO Proposal Review Criteria

Rooted in Low-Income Communities	Leadership Standing	Significant Opportunity	High Alignment w/ Climate Resilience Approach	Soundness of Planning Approach	Readiness 1: Capacity to Execute	Readiness 2: Quality of Collaboration	Potential to Make Field Contribution/Generate Field Knowledge
	Due Diligence Focus	Due Diligence Focus			Due Diligence Focus	Due Diligence Focus	
Track record in target geography	Strong track record; applicant has achieved significant wins or impact in the past	At this pre-planning stage, applicant communicates a reasonably clear sense of the venues/opportunities they want to influence. Communicate who, what, when, where concretely.	Application holds a climate lens at the center of the proposed work and there is a clear link between this work and the broader vision of the organization/partnership. Proposed planning efforts include strategies to understand how climate change will affect their area in particular. Rule of thumb: "word appears more than once!"	Consulting with diverse stakeholders, connecting with key actors.	Solid understanding of the landscape, including working familiarity with past efforts, leadership groups, etc.	Partnership/coalition is strong and authentic. This is an ongoing alliance or has the potential to be an ongoing platform for shared leadership.	What the learning and achievement is likely to be captured and shared. They have a track record of doing so and have allocated the internal capacity/budget to meet those requirements.
Equity is at the heart of organization mission and vision. Long term commitment; focus not opportunistic	Recognized player	The identified opportunities have the capacity to serve as significant levers to advance resilience, i.e., desired impact matched opportunity.	The opportunity identified is explicitly climate-focused. If it's not, hold a higher bar for assurance that climate lens is held with centrality.	Attention to the science is evident in the application language and in stakeholder/partner description.	Organizational budget and funding sources — finances are sufficient to assure stability and sustainability for the project period (3-5 years)	If established coalition/partnership: vision/mission well defined, governance structure clear and stable, track record of achievements and joint resource development, implementation capacity strong (whether through dedicated staff or collaborative staffing approaches).	What they learn is likely to be helpful to others. Lessons are generalizable across multiple cities/regions.
Membership base or ongoing mechanism for relationship with a specific set of low-income people	Applicant has strong history of holding formal roles or directly participating in significant public sector efforts	If an identified opportunity is not focused on comprehensive resilience, i.e., retrofitting effort, then there is more than one opportunity that they will plug into and, taken together, the portfolio of efforts can lead to comprehensive frame.	At a minimum, proposed planning is oriented to <u>at least</u> mitigation and adaptation and application articulates approach to the social cohesion piece	Strategy to engage low-income leadership is substantive	Staff capacity is strong. Identified staff and consultants have skill and experience to carry out the work.	If new, impetus for partnership extends beyond grant opportunity, actors have other reinforcing shared commitment that will shore up their work on this effort; partners have a clear plan for division of labor, coordination, etc. required for supporting implementation.	Can leverage significant networks to advance its direct work and to share learning/strategy more broadly
Board composition	Letters of support reflect endorser's familiarity with applicant contributions and capacity. Letters of support include cross-sector endorsements.	Identified opportunity will engage cross-sector leaders.		Application and proposed activities include strong focus on policy and public will pathways	Governance is stable and sustainable. Board is not in major transition and good board practices seem to be in effect.	Differentiated and integrated roles and responsibilities are well described.	
		Applicant experience matches opportunity		Paying attention to deriving multiple benefits for low-income people	Proven capacity working at proposed geographic scale. If scale represents a jump, proposal and follow-up interviews indicate there is a solid bridge to building needed capacity.		
					Application shows capacity for self-assessment and clear understanding of own areas of strength and weakness. Plan to address know weaknesses is evident.		

Launching CRUO and Evaluation: 2014–2015

In order to understand how the initiative sought to keep equity integral to the means and ends of the initiative, it is important to consider the roles and internal structure of the CRUO team, the perspectives of the individuals involved, and the collective that was built.

A New Initiative and a New Program Officer

While the CRUO Initiative was being developed and launched, the Environment team was also in the process of hiring a new program officer. Early in the hiring process, DeBacker said, the team weighed climate expertise against experience and commitment to working with the communities Kresge wants to engage. The soon-to-be-hired program officer, Shamar Bibbins,⁶ recalls the simple interview question that got her excited about the opportunity — “Why you?” — and that she replied, “What you are trying to do here is build a movement. You are trying to build relationships and a movement in a space you haven’t been in.” Bibbins was hired, and in her second week at Kresge wrote the press release announcing the 17 CRUO grantees. While new to the organization, she understood that CRUO was a statement about the Environment Program’s commitment to the Urban Opportunity Framework and to “doing the work differently.”

An Implementation Team

Kresge and similar-size funders will often use a national program office as an intermediary organization to operate initiatives of CRUO’s size and scope. Kresge managed CRUO internally, but did reach beyond foundation staff to form an implementation team. In addition to DeBacker and Bibbins, the implementation group included an evaluation team as well as consultant Marian Urquilla and the Environment team’s first-ever advisory committee. The committee’s members, who received honorariums for their participation, were Denise Fairchild, of the Emerald Cities Collaborative; Lara Hansen, of EcoAdapt; Taj James, of the Movement Strategy Center; Angela Park, of Angela Park Consulting and Mission Critical; Jaqueline Patterson, of the NAACP; and Makani Themba, of the Praxis Project. The role of the advisory committee was “bringing a strong lens to racial equity and climate change and always gut checking and bringing real-time work from the field,” Bibbins said, and it “guided us in implementation of the initiative, providing invaluable counsel that informed our thinking not only about the initiative, but other program-wide priorities as well.” An annual committee charter described the advisory panel’s functions:

- contributing to the identification and monitoring of the outcomes the initiative is intended to produce,
- participating in the developmental evaluation of the initiative,
- sharing with Kresge staff insights gained from interaction with parties active in climate-resilience efforts in low-income communities,
- providing advice on the design of the initiative’s annual grantee convening, and
- providing high-level guidance concerning the initiative’s field-building strategies and activities that are intended to complement the place-based efforts funded through the initiative.

⁶ Bibbins previously served as the director of national partnerships at Green for All, a nonprofit dedicated to building a green economy strong enough to lift people out of poverty. She also received a Fulbright Fellowship to Fukushima University, where she researched environmental social movements in Japan.

In the first year of the initiative, Bibbins made site visits to all 17 grantees and worked closely with DeBacker, the Environment Program's managing director; that working relationship provided a natural onboarding for Bibbins as the CRUO's program officer. Both DeBacker and Bibbins emphasized the importance of Urquilla's role as a thought partner to DeBacker during strategy development and throughout the design and implementation of the initiative, to which she brought tremendous knowledge of and experience with systems and community change. She also aided in designing the annual convenings, facilitating advisory committee calls, and provided coaching and direct support for grantees where needed. Urquilla described her role:

I did not behave like a program officer. This was learning for the foundation; first-generation work, and the decision making needed to rest with them and the advisory committee. My role was bringing the perspective of having run large-scale community-change initiatives, but I wasn't running this one. That was a pretty clear distinction. My role was in the opportunity for them to really learn and be pushed and challenged.

A Joint Evaluation Team

A three-organization team was brought on in the first year of the initiative to implement a developmental evaluation (DE). On the choice of DE, DeBacker joked, "I didn't know what it was, but I knew I wanted one." Developmental evaluation is often used in complex situations where the relationship between actions and effects is not predictable due to the many interacting factors. It is meant to allow for learning that draws on notions of complex dynamic systems, uncertainty, nonlinearity, and emergence.⁷

Spark Policy Institute, with leadership from Jewlya Lynn, led the design and implementation of the evaluation, with support from Ross Strategic, and first-year design and planning support from Marilyn Darling of Fourth Quadrant Partners LLC.

- Spark Policy Institute describes itself as a national leader in using community engagement, research and evaluation, fiscal integration, real-time strategic learning, and adaptive planning to address complex societal problems. It specializes in nontraditional and adaptive strategies with a focus on equitable, inclusive, and participatory processes.
- Ross Strategic brought climate change experience and expertise in the analysis of environmental and organizational issues. It also has extensive experience helping organizations innovate and implement changes, and strong skills in managing stakeholder collaborative processes.
- Darling is a partner with Fourth Quadrant Partners and a founding member of the Society for Organizational Learning. Engaged for the first year of the evaluation, she brought the principles and tools of emergent learning, a platform for strengthening the link between strategy and action and the capacity to use real-time learning to improve thinking and results.

On the composition of the evaluation team, Jewlya Lynn noted,

There are not that many experts in developmental evaluation, equity, and the environmental issue area. If you hire for an equity expert without developmental evaluation, you might get something more structured than an

⁷ See: Patton, M. Q., (2010). *Developmental Evaluation: Applying Complexity Concepts to Enhance Innovation and Use*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.

emergent initiative needs. But if you hire someone with developmental evaluation expertise and no equity lens, you are going to miss some of what really matters in the work. And without Tim [Larsen, of Ross Strategic] and his expertise in climate, we would not have been asking the right questions to get at how the adaptation and mitigation advances were functioning [in the context of the initiative].

Because Bibbins, DeBacker, Urquilla, and the advisory committee were bringing such a strong equity lens and because that lens was so central to the initiative, there was confidence that it would be maintained in the evaluation.

An ideal scenario for practitioners of DE has them at the table beginning with an initiative's design phase, as a partner in strategy formation. In this case, the evaluator was brought on when the cohort planning year was underway and the first of the cohort's annual convenings had been scheduled. For an organization without a culture of infusing evaluation, however, the choice of a DE approach and to engage evaluators from the outset of funding was significant — and understood as such by the evaluator.

At the time CRUO launched, having an initiative-level evaluation in place was not a consistent expectation for Kresge's programs. In the lifetime of the initiative, this shifted substantially within the foundation. Not long after CRUO started, Chera Reid, previously a program officer for Kresge's Education team, stepped into the newly formed role of director of strategic learning, research and evaluation.⁸ This role is described on Kresge's website as leading "organizationwide work to grow the foundation's learning endowment — drawing from the full suite of philanthropic tools, including evaluation and thought leadership — to join conversations that advance the nonprofit and philanthropic sectors." Of her first months in the role and determining priorities, Reid recalled:

I talked with Shamar [Bibbins] and understood CRUO had the best of the best with Marilyn Darling, and Tim Larsen from Ross Strategic, and Spark Policy Institute on board; so, in triage style, working one to many, I said, "If I don't hear from you, I will assume CRUO is coming along."

⁸ In addition to her program experience at Kresge, Reid worked in program development at MDRC, a national nonpartisan education and social policy research organization that works to improve programs and policies affecting the poor.

Figure 4. Overview of Key Activities^a of the Initiative During Planning Year

During the planning phase of the initiative, the team led several activities to support and monitor the development of the planning-grant recipients' work plans. Activities included the following:

- In January, the foundation hosted a gathering that brought together each of the organizations funded through the initiative, as well as a handful of grantees funded under our Urban Energy Resilience focal area and our cross-cutting field-building category, for a peer-learning event. The opening of the convening was focused exclusively on the planning-grant recipients, providing opportunities for them to get to know one another's work and to discuss Kresge's expectations of them during the planning-grant period.
- In early March, the team hosted a webinar to provide planning-grant recipients with more detailed guidance concerning our expectations of them during the planning period.
- Also in March, Shamar [Bibbins] conducted one-on-one phone calls with the planning-grant recipients and coalition partners playing a lead role on the projects. The calls were an opportunity to further clarify guidelines and expectations, discuss staffing and coalition updates, and identify emerging challenges. Originally, we had planned to conduct the calls in April; however, we accelerated our timeline by a month to provide grantees an earlier opportunity to discuss their planning efforts and address concerns.
- In early May, Spark Policy Institute conducted interviews with all 17 planning grantees. The interviews were intended to gauge whether grantees received clarity on expectations and guidelines from the various engagements with Kresge staff and how these touch points affected their work going forward. Specifically, the interviews focused on three areas:
 - the extent to which Kresge's expectations as articulated aligned with grantee work,
 - changes grantees made as a result of the information presented by Kresge, and
 - potential challenges facing the grantees.

This data helped the team deepen its understanding of the grantees' work and was useful context in preparing for site visits.

- Between June and August, the team conducted site visits to all 17 planning-grant recipients to discuss their work.^b We originally had planned to conduct site visits beginning in July, after the submission of the draft work plans. However, we decided to prioritize six site visits in June with grantees that were having challenges developing aspects of their work plans early on.

^aFrom a Nov. 13, 2015, memo: "Climate Resilience and Urban Opportunity Initiative Multiyear Implementation Grant Recommendations: From Shamar Bibbins and Lois DeBacker to Rip Rapson and Ari Simon [vice president and chief program and strategy officer for Kresge]."

^bConsultants Amy Solomon and Marian Urquilla supported the Environment team in the conduct of site visits and review of draft work plans.

Different Progress Across the Cohort

In terms of developing strategic plans for implementation during the remaining years of the initiative, there were differences in the progress that grantees were able to make in that first year, as reflected in their implementation proposals. Grantees spoke about the need to have the right staff in place and that some initial hires or staffing decisions had to be reconsidered as the roles and work became clearer. The initiative had always planned to narrow the field of grantees from the one-year planning grants (20 anticipated, 17 awarded) to 15 multiyear implementation grants. The foundation knew that progress in the first year and the quality of the initial plans would vary within the group, and anticipated that plans might require revision so they could be appropriately resourced for implementation. The team chose to stick with its original plan of 15 implementation grants and to decline two organizations. In the case of both, the grantees' timeline and expectations did not fit with the initiative, although both had very strong track records of accomplishment working with low-income communities and were making important contributions to the field. Among the remaining 15, three grantees seemed as though they would benefit from additional time and support to successfully transition from planning to implementation. The foundation opted to allow those three grantees additional time as well as consultant support from Urquilla, which was funded by Kresge. In a different scenario, these grantees might have been eliminated from the cohort rather than given the chance to strengthen their plans.

One grantee commented about the planning year and Kresge's support for their transition from planning to implementation:

[F]or us, there was a steep learning curve. We had not done any climate work before this. We know all of these issues are going to have disproportionate impact on the communities we serve, and we only barely understood the importance. Had it not been for this funding as a catalytic opportunity, I'm not sure where we (our organization and community) would be with it (climate work). We were the first to arrive locally. A couple of small, local nonprofits were doing climate education, but not with an equity lens. At first, we spent time just convening like-minded organizations and finding out was there a "there" there. But we just didn't have the right staff in place to do the work. It took me a while to figure that out. I was a young [executive director], and I didn't have the wherewithal to act on red flags. I'm quicker now. Submitting the implementation proposal did not go the way I wanted. When we got the feedback ..., I don't know why they'd decided to [support us after the implementation proposal]. They could have said, "You didn't get your shit together, sorry." Plenty of funders do that.

Moving From Planning Year to Implementation: 2015–2016

Grantees submitted implementation work plans at the end of their planning year. The plans' structure and content varied by grantee, including document design that ranged from Word documents with minimal formatting to presentations that likely received attention from a graphic designer or were created according to an organization's branding and style guide. From these plans, the evaluator developed a one-page graphic with a theory of change (ToC) in order to ensure that expectations about grantees were clear and that both Kresge and the grantees were beginning CRUO's implementation phase with shared expectations. Reflecting common elements within the varied documents, each ToC included Strategies, Signals of Progress, and Impact within the focus of Policy Change and Social Cohesion.⁹ Each ToC also included three discussion questions; examples of those questions included:

⁹ToC dimensions within the Policy Change focus also included "Policy Wins."

- A. What is missing from the strategies, signals, or wins? Is anything included that is a good idea, but not currently your top priority?
- B. Do the signals of progress logically flow from your activities? Will they help you get to your policy wins and impact?
- C. What strategies will help you achieve the social cohesion impact and signals of progress?
- D. What does social cohesion look like for individual community members? How have they changed?
- E. How will you know when you need to adapt along the way? What might be the signals in the external environment?
- F. What are some of the signals you'll monitor to see if you are on track to meet the long-term targets included in your policy wins?

Generally speaking, questions A and B were included on each grantee ToC. Questions C through F reflect the focus of the one or two additional questions included on a grantee's ToC. These questions provided opening and focus for conversation with each of the 15 sites, led by Shamar Bibbins and Marian Urquilla.

From the evaluator perspective, the conversations with grantees spurred by the ToCs provided deeper understanding of what it meant to advance certain types of outcomes and, given the similarities and differences in the sites, what could be advanced, when, and where. One of the evaluators recalled that the grantees and the implementation team came to realize that there was still little specificity on social cohesion and what it meant to drive change. Consideration of terms, definitions, and shared concepts across the evaluators and the Environment team as well as what resonated with grantee and/or community members was ongoing for the initiative and evaluation. The evaluators and the Environment team were concerned about the extent to which key terms were overly academic or loosely defined; working toward clarity around social inclusion was a key example of this. One member of the evaluation team wondered whether additional conceptual "fuzziness" would have surfaced if the evaluators had had more engagement with communities earlier or if the grantees had driven more of the evaluation.

Acknowledging that commitment and conceptual clarity do not always arrive together, one evaluator noted that commitment was not the equity challenge for Kresge in this initiative; it was defining equity and social cohesion in a way that fit together and that a grantee plan could be held accountable to. As this evaluator observed,

Equity can mean many different things to people, and evaluators need to be able to translate these concepts across different groups. It's important for evaluators to understand what aspects of equity are important to the client and what aspects of equity are important to themselves as evaluators, and be willing to struggle with the foundation in that conversation.

One of the ways the implementation team navigated this area of accountability was in its relationships and conversations with grantees. Accountability to equity was less about having to prove via a defined measure, but instead about having conversations and asking and responding to tough questions, together unpacking meaning and intention in their interventions.

Figure 5. Example Theory of Change With Discussion Questions

Discussion Draft: Theory of Change for The Point CDC, 2.2.16 (based on the final plan)

Comprehensive, equitable climate resilience that delivers multiple benefits to local residents			
Impact	The 5 Neighborhoods of the SMIA are safe, sustainable and equitable, including achieving climate resiliency, sustainability, health, equity and environmental justice		Impact
Policy Wins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase Funding commitments from the city to be on the poor with other New York City flood zones (grant outcome) • Structure in place to ensure jobs, business opportunities, and ownership structures benefit local residents living and working in SMIA (grant outcome) • Open spaces and connected greenways that provide waterfront access and flood protection strategies • Full funding and implantation of Lifelines and resiliency plans for the entire SMIA (Comprehensive flood protection system building on Lifelines levee Lab/ greenway proposal including demo projects consolidating public/private/community partnership, ecological infrastructure, restored brownfield sites and opportunities for procurement innovation) • Creation of clean energy resources as part of energy infrastructure investments including resilient energy system providing cleaner power generation and improved distribution strategies (microgrid) 		Signals of Progress
Signals of Progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased disaster and emergency preparedness in SMIA communities (grant outcome) • NYC EIA and The point represented on NYC committee including; NYC Department of planning open industrial uses and Resilient Industries technical advisory committees. One Day Built to Last, Economic Development and Environmental committees of Bronx Community Board Hunts Point Monitoring Committee • Support for a resiliency roadmap incorporating Lifelines and other community plans • Social and economic needs of SMIA become a City priority • City is held accountable to ensure community priorities implemented • Support from the city consultant working on the energy pilot and coastal protection feasibility • City consultant/NY Prize consulting team commits to including SBCRA principles in implantation strategies • Commitment from City to fundraise for implementation of the plan 		
Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create resiliency implantation roadmap for the five south Bronx SMIA waterfront communities and support and coordinate plans and advocacy among residents and the business community in the SMIA neighborhoods (grant outcome) • Develop energy pilot project • Conduct feasibility study for implantation of coastal protections: assess feasibility of implementing energy-related recommendation in Lifelines plan focused on creation microgrid • Create resiliency roadmap for SMIA communities that serves as advocacy document • Pressure policy makers to include SMIA in City capital budget plans to fund resiliency efforts • Work with elected officials and other partners to identify funding opportunities • Hiring and training using high road economic development principles • Train the community and assign roles/responsibilities for climate disaster preparation • Leverage experience, expertise, community connection, political leverage of SBCRA planning board members • Coordination among local planning and development efforts within the SMIA • Community education, information, and organizing for resiliency plans/community preparedness • Communications/media used strategically to support campaign goals 		Strategies
Policy Change		Social Cohesion	

Discussion Questions:
 What does “social cohesion” look like in your community; and what strategies will help you build it?

Discussion Questions:
 Do the signals of progress logically flow from your activities? Will they help you get to your policy wins and impact?

Discussion Question:
 What is missing from the strategies, signals or wins? Is anything included that is a good idea, but not currently your top priority?

Implementation and Evaluation: 2015–2018

Equity in the Big Picture and Context of Individual Grantees — Line of Sight, Lift, Learning Agendas, and Learning Cycles

At the end of the planning year, the team communicated¹⁰ the following preliminary outcomes to foundation leadership as those it would use to assess the success of the initiative (emphasis added):

- The systematic engagement of leaders and advocates who **authentically represent the concerns of low-income community members** in climate-resilience efforts will generate publicly endorsed plans and policies in the communities in which the grantees are working that are attendant to equity concerns and carry greater public support as a result;
- The groups which we are funding **elevate their influence and are seen as experts** in the ability to engage on climate-resilience issues in their communities; and
- The grantees' work will generate a **new understanding of how to approach climate-resilience policy and planning with equity considerations front and center.**

The CRUO Initiative contains common mechanics of grantmaking, with annual reporting to the foundation and a follow-up call for grantees and the program officer to review and discuss the report. As noted in the prior section, evaluation was set into motion at the initiative level as the planning grants were underway. Summary and synthesis of grantee documentation generated by the program officer and the summary products of the evaluation helped the implementation team stay on course with each grantee and the cohort as the work progressed and new challenges and opportunities were revealed. Across these summary documents, two key terms are routinely used: “line of sight” and “lift.” The Environment team worked from a posture of wanting all of the grantees be successful, and these two concepts were instrumental in shaping opportunities to support grantee success.

The development and use of the individual grantee ToCs led to conversations that brought more clarity for the implementation team and grantees around a grantee’s own vision for the work, or line of sight. The line of sight in the ToCs expressed a shared understanding between the grantee and Kresge about where the grantees were headed and ways to monitor and hold them accountable within an expressed frame of adaptability and success. This articulation of vision, beyond the timeline of the initiative, cultivated space for tactics to shift while everyone was still headed toward and accountable to the bigger picture change. The ToCs, with this attention to line of sight, have underpinned honest communication, transparency, and accountability.

Summaries and the concept of “lift” provided a format for the implementation team to navigate 15 sites working in varied ways in different contexts, each with a multitude of partners. Looking at lift, or forthcoming challenges and/or opportunities, shows where there could be 1) a need for follow-up or support for individual grantees, and 2) a consideration for what might benefit the cohort as a whole toward the initiative’s purposeful field building. Of note, the term “lift” was not used with grantees, but held as shared language for the implementation team and a vehicle for determining how to provide support. For example, grantees might receive some specific coaching from Marian Urquilla, or lifts

¹⁰ From Nov. 13, 2015, memo, “Climate Resilience and Urban Opportunity Initiative Multiyear Implementation Grant Recommendations”: from Shamar Bibbins and Lois DeBacker to Rip Rapson and Ari Simon.

could point to topics to be included at the annual convening for CRUO grantees or areas around which to communicate with the advisory committee.

With each interim report and follow-up, one-page summaries were developed by the program officer to track notes related to each grantee regarding line of sight, ToC areas of focus, notable signals of progress (in the reporting year), and lift (challenges and opportunities in the year ahead).

The DE was focused by a learning agenda, which included learning questions, sources of information, and when or for what decision the information could be used. Learning cycles pinpointed strategic moments for working with information. Learning agenda questions addressed: 1) initiative design, 2) grantee implementation of key concepts, 3) grantee interim outcomes, 4) grantee context, and 5) grantee impact. Assumptions and elements of complexity were included, and each of the learning questions explicitly calls upon inquiry around equity.

Guided by the learning agenda, the evaluation team developed briefs summarizing themes from learning cycles. While these have served the initiative well, one evaluator noted, “I wish we had time to work with the team more in a reflective manner rather than a deliverable manner.” This evaluator suggested that structured time and resources to engage in sense-making throughout the process could have provided more manageable pieces of meaningful learning to the community. Recognizing an ongoing tension in the design and implementation of initiative-level evaluation, and one that might weigh more heavily when applying an equity lens, the evaluator remarked, “There’s been great learning for philanthropy and the field, but I don’t know that the evaluation has yet brought similarly rich learning to offer communities.”

However, with the final year of the evaluation activities still underway, it is hard to say what learning will emerge. It is notable that Kresge altered typical reporting requirements for CRUO grantees in order to focus these reports in relationship to the ToCs and offer a more reflective process. Using reporting as a deliberate point of reflection was intended to support grantee success with space for elaboration on context and learning that could generate insights and adaptations during the course of the initiative. In the last year of the initiative, the evaluation included site visits with grantees and community partners, and grantees engaged in an end-of-initiative phone interview with the evaluation team and Urquilla. The hour-long phone calls were another reflection point focused on each grantee’s ToC and how the work adapted over the course of the initiative. The interviews helped inform the creation of site-specific, two-page reports developed by the evaluation team that grantees could use to promote and share their work with partners, funders, and other stakeholders. The grantee phone interviews and two-page reports developed by the evaluation team were in lieu of a final grantee narrative report. The grantees’ final reports consisted of a revised ToC and a discussion with the program officer to review learning and progress.

Figure 6. Reporting Guidance & Post-Report Call Focus

Guidance Provided on 2016 Interim Reporting Template

In early 2016, the CRUO team worked with you to develop a theory of change that described your CRUO work plan as submitted. The theory of change explicitly ties to your plan and includes the outcomes agreed upon for your grant. The theory of change is being used as the basis for your interim report, continuing the approach of using the theories of change as an ongoing communication tool between you and the Foundation. As a reminder, your grant outcomes are listed in italics in your theory of change. We recognize that the work you are doing is necessarily adaptive. As shifts occur in your political environment, community, partners, and organization, your priorities and activities can and should shift. Our goal with your interim report is to understand with you how these shifts are happening and the impact on your work and opportunities to increase climate resilience.

Abbreviated questions from Implementation Year 1 check-in call:

1. Since you submitted your interim report, what (if anything) has changed for your organization?
2. What impacts have you experienced and/or do you anticipate in light of the changing political climate?
3. When considering your interactions with decision-making entities, how are you positioning yourselves to ensure the “inside” and “outside” game approaches are complimenting each other?
4. As you continue your climate-resilience efforts, what (if any) external organizations have you been working with during this year?
5. How has your focus on environmental justice helped you advance long-term climate resilience in your community? What are some of the ways the long-term climate-resilience frame is influencing your environmental justice strategies?
6. How have you worked to expand your organizational focus to more explicitly integrate climate change across your work?
7. In year 2, we will be honing our focus on efforts toward social-cohesion goals. With that in mind, do you have any thoughts about where you’re heading with your social-cohesion goals and how you would measure how well those efforts are going?
8. Given your experiences in year 1, how are the CRUO Initiative supports meeting your needs?

The Environment team worked from a posture of wanting all the grantees to be successful. This was evident in the coaching and direct support from consultants such as Marian Urquilla. Grantees commented on the responsive and adaptive framework in which they were able to situate their work, holding to the “line of sight” in their work and responding to challenges while adjusting to elevate the influence and impact of the investment of time and resources brought by the initiative. After the first year of implementation, one grantee recalled being asked to rethink their implementation plan for years two through three. At issue was the amount of the budget going to small grants for things such as vacant lot treatments, community gardens, and passive parks or pathways improvements. The grantee recalled

understanding that the foundation didn't want to get to the end of three years and "have a bunch of little projects." The identified "lift" from this time period was "moving from projects to impact and participation to strategic influence on policy." As with the transition from planning to implementation, consultant support was made available to the grantee so that they could rethink their plan. In making this shift, the grantee further accounted for others supporting small-grants projects and realized that their own shift would not necessarily remove this avenue of investment for communities. Another grantee observed:

There is open dialogue with Kresge. A lot of what we set out to do has changed, but Shamar [Bibbins] and Lois [DeBacker] anticipated this and they baked in a certain amount of flexibility. A lot of these movements are going to take shape in the moment, and we have to roll with the opportunities ... going where an opportunity is ripe.

Holding the relationship between being adaptive and responsive and coming back to the initiative's North Star was continuous for CRUO's implementation team. Team members recognized that flexibility is important to what it means for a foundation to center equity. They also acknowledged that they are still learning; that centering equity is nuanced and requires a thoughtful approach. This need to be adaptive was especially evident in the wake of the 2016 election, as struggling cohort members had to respond to immigration issues and other immediate concerns. As one of the implementation team members noted, "Shamar has been so attendant. She makes regular calls with grantees. She checked in about how they were managing post-election without threat of pulling the money. This is time-intensive, next-level responsive grantmaking." One grantee shared this assessment of connection with a responsive program officer; for another, a stronger connection was formed with the consultant who provided direct support, and the involvement of the foundation staff seemed more hands-off.

Annual Convenings — Equity in Focus and Function

Annual convenings of CRUO grantees were a consistent feature of the initiative's design. A member of the implementation team recalled how two other members of the team, Taj James and Angela Park, encouraged Kresge to not "make the grantees orbit around you" and urged the foundation to "reinforce their connections to one another, but don't make them become a network to you. Support their emergence in the field." This intentionality is perhaps most clearly seen in the convenings, where a portion of time at the start was set aside just for the cohort. Subsequent days included additional Environment Program grantees, peer funders, and allies, thus opening potential to support the cohort's emergence as leaders in the field.

Each of these convenings is described below. The second convening marked a notable moment in the initiative that was recalled by many, and one that has reverberated beyond CRUO. During a panel discussion of what is required to do equity-centered work, it became clear that a broad continuum of needs exists among leaders, organizations, and communities and that, in some cases, people don't know what they don't know about racial equity. As such, there is no one-size-fits-all approach to addressing the knowledge and skills needed, nor an established point at which some degree of support is no longer needed.

Year 1: Set the Stage // Jan. 26–28, 2015, Berkeley, Calif.

The initial convening set the stage for the CRUO Initiative. Movement Strategy Center worked with Kresge Environment Program staff on the convening, which allowed this new group of planning-grant recipients to meet one another, learn from other Kresge grantees focused on climate resilience in low-income communities, participate in a shared educational experience about climate change and climate resilience, and receive guidance concerning expectations for their planning-grant period.

Space was made available at this first convening for an open session to discuss “Climate Resilience and Anti-Displacement.” From this conversation came a push from grantees about the need for addressing gentrification and displacement as an explicit substrategy of the initiative. In response, Kresge engaged MSC to provide light facilitation for this group and subsequently included this issue as a topic for breakout sessions during each further convening.

Year 2: Race on the Climate Table/Climate on the Race Table // May 2–4, 2016, Chicago, Ill.

A seminal moment in this convening arrived on Day 2 during the morning plenary: “Putting Race at the Center of the Climate Resilience Table/Putting Climate at the Center of the Racial Justice Table.” People spoke honestly and candidly about how racism showed up in the work they did; one interviewee said the session felt like “sacred space,” a sentiment echoed in other interviews. At that moment and in the conversations that followed, the Environment team became more aware that some of the grantees that attended the convening but were not specifically CRUO grantees had very limited awareness of existing gaps in their knowledge around race. This realization led the team to carve out a budget for diversity and equity training and technical assistance to be made available to government, staff, and grantees; it couldn’t be assumed that people understood these concepts. There is, as DeBacker put it, “a vast backdrop of ignorance around racial equity among people in this country who are not people of color. So explicitly thinking about that, and what we can do, is important.” Kresge has since developed a racial equity leadership program where nonprofit organizations funded through the Environment Program can choose from a menu of vetted training and technical assistance providers “who will meet them where they are, be it 101, advanced mentoring, or technical support.”

Year 2 of the CRUO Initiative also coincided with the Environment Program’s 2017 strategy refresh.¹¹ During this process, the program’s goal was refined from helping cities advance climate resilience to “helping cities implement comprehensive climate resilience approaches grounded in equity.” There was also a shift, from low-income benefit and inclusion to the leadership and influence of low-income communities and communities of color. The shift was described as less of a change in the work than an increase in clearly communicating the intention to elevate and recognize leaders in these communities as integral to the leadership and conceptualization of the field.

¹¹ A strategy review and refresh for Kresge programs takes place every two to three years as a time for the program, its board work group committee, and members from Kresge’s executive team to review and adjust as needed, followed by full board review and approval.

Year 3: Shifting Political Landscape // June 14–16, 2017, Detroit, Mich.

Following the 2016 national election and in recognition of how it had changed the landscape and context for the CRUO work (including necessary and urgent shifts in focus for grantees), the convening began with a morning plenary titled “Seizing the Moment: Opportunities and Imperatives of the Current Political Moment.” In the foundation’s newsletter describing this convening, Shamar Bibbins noted:

The foundation and its grantees clearly recognize and understand the new challenges that face our work, particularly at the federal level, but this group is committed to advancing a clear vision of a better future for their cities and neighborhoods — communities that are safe, healthy, powerful, and resilient in the face of climate change.

This convening included deep strategy discussions on bolstering local efforts to drive state-level progress, the critical role of equity and inclusion in accelerating the transition to carbon neutrality and climate-resilient water systems, and implementing frameworks for community transformation.

Figure 7. Excerpt From Kresge CEO Rip Rapson’s Address at 2017’s CRUO Convening in Detroit

Earlier this year, our board of trustees reviewed our Environment Program’s strategy. They had, of course, read the same news accounts we all had of Scott Pruitt’s intentions at the EPA or the president’s ominous rumblings about the Paris [climate] accord, or any number of other unimaginable horrors. The very real question was whether Kresge’s approach to the environment should change dramatically, and fast. In considerable part because they trusted the extraordinary team — Lois [DeBacker], Shamar [Bibbins], Jessica [Boehland, senior program officer], Jalonne [White-Newsome, senior program officer] — our trustees concluded that we had positioned ourselves in exactly the right place. Working with community at the local level, they quickly concluded, was the most powerful antidote to short-sighted, destructive, or otherwise misguided federal policy. More specifically, they affirmed a half-dozen principles that have been formative to Lois and her team’s thinking:

- *The urgency of climate action is undiminished.*
- *The equity and justice implications of climate change remain profound.*
- *The international consensus on the need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions still holds — among cities, corporations, NGOs, and nation-states.*
- *Cities continue to provide strong, bold, and — in some cases - visionary leadership.*
- *Markets are moving inexorably toward renewables.*
- *Cross-disciplinary, distributive leadership models at the community level hold the power to transform public decision-making about climate change.*

So we have stayed the course, and will continue to do so. That doesn’t mean that we’ll be oblivious to existential threats precipitated by a federal policy apparatus that doesn’t understand, or doesn’t care about, or is intentionally unequipped to address climate change. Together with legions of other actors in America, we will remain hypervigilant to the deconstruction of policies, practices, and attitudes we have spent a generation or more seeking to birth and nurture. And, in the meantime, we’ll use all the tools at our disposal to continue to make progress in transforming the energy and water systems of American cities. Forgive the cliché, but we desperately need your help. None of the problems we confront is precisely rooted in a singular set of causes. Poverty, economic mobility, climate change, educational attainment, or health disparities are not issues to be resolved by lining up hermetically sealed funding streams and solution sets.

Year 4: Stronger Together // Sept. 26–28, 2018, San Diego, Calif.

As noted in an announcement shared by Kresge on the foundation's website, during CRUO's fourth and final convening, "Participants exchanged stories from their communities, expressed their hopes for the future of inclusive climate-resilience work, and celebrated the significant inroads in equitable climate-resilience planning that the CRUO work helped make possible."

The convening featured:¹²

- *workshops on scenario planning, anti-displacement strategies for equitable and just climate resilience, community investment financing, and maximizing community benefits;*
- *community visits hosted by local nonprofit organizations working to advance community-driven solutions to build resilience to climate change, including a stop at the U.S./Mexico border to explore the interrelated challenges of flooding, pollution, public health, and local neighborhoods fighting for self-determination and cultural cohesion;*
- *storytelling sessions where participants deepened their knowledge on how to communicate powerful and persuasive stories of their climate-resilience efforts;*
- *workshops and group activities exploring lessons learned and the collective narrative generated by the CRUO work; and*
- *tools and support organizations need to move forward with equitable climate resilience work after the Kresge initiative sunsets in December [2018].*

From Bibbins' perspective, at this last convening, "you could feel the community and trust built over the course of the initiative." The seminal conversation from the second convening was revisited in a three-hour plenary on what was learned about keeping race at the center of the climate table and climate at the center of the race table. It was noted that with deeply personal stories and tears shared in this conversation, a plenary looks quite different when you are talking about "trauma and healing as core to how we approach work."

Shifts and Focus in Evaluation

1. While it won't be complete until June of 2019, Kresge staff has found the initiative-level evaluation to be helpful. Along the way, two separate and intersecting shifts had to be navigated: the shift from developmental evaluation toward an outcome evaluation, and the changing composition of the evaluation team.

In year one, the evaluation began with an emphasis on a developmental approach, then layered an explicit design for outcome evaluation and that evaluation's implementation into each of the following years.

In thinking about an outcome evaluation within the context of equity work and systems change, the evaluators recognized the risk of an approach that tries to evaluate a program as though that program will never change or evolve, because "successful advocates don't keep repeating activities." In the case

¹² See Kresge Foundation, "Stronger Together: Leaders From Across the Nation Celebrate Work Toward Fusion of Social Justice and Climate Resilience," Oct. 2, 2018, at <https://kresge.org/news/stronger-together-leaders-across-nation-celebrate-work-toward-fusion-social-justice-and-climate>

of the CRUO, advocacy efforts were a tool for systems change. As such, the assumption of stability in the evaluation could inhibit adaptation and therefore be detrimental to the work. Fortunately, the members of the evaluation team were able to draw on their backgrounds in advocacy evaluation and hold alignment with the outcomes CRUO intended to advance. The evaluators developed rubrics to measure intent and core competencies in relationship to policy development and wins. The rubrics offered stages of change in the policy environment and the contribution to those by the grantee, rather than a particular sort or frequency of activity. From the evaluator perspective, this approach would provide means for gathering information and learning that balanced being adaptive with collecting “proof.” As one evaluator remarked, “Shamar and Lois were thoughtful partners who attended to the complexity of the initiative and put careful thought into the outcomes CRUO would advance.” Beneficially, they did not allow the “evaluation to drive the work.” Still, the work of narrowing in on a manageable set of outcomes on which the evaluation would focus was challenging, not only in the work it required but also in the shifting roles on the evaluation team that came into play.

The second shift came when a lead evaluator unexpectedly had to leave just prior to the last year of the initiative. Evaluators and implementation team members recalled the transition as more difficult than had been expected. In addition to the loss of shared context, the incoming evaluator recognized that the outgoing evaluator, in setting up and engaging in the developmental evaluation, had built intimacy and trust. For the newcomer, managing the continued shift toward an outcome evaluation without the backing of an existing relationship was perhaps more challenging than refining the framing and approach for the last phase of the evaluation would have been in other circumstances.

When CRUO began, evaluation was not an integrated function at Kresge. In the intervening years, Chera Reid became Kresge’s first director of strategic learning, research, and evaluation. Reid and Shamar Bibbins talked about the best way to move forward during the CRUO evaluation team transition, clarifying the objectives for a conversation with the evaluation team. In reflecting on this moment in time, Reid noted, “Shamar has great relationships with all of our partners, including the evaluation team. Her professional acumen, her demeanor and personality, are worth noting. She has built strong relationships and trust. She built the trust, so she could have the candor.” Ultimately, the program and evaluation teams were able to work through this transition, noting that they challenged themselves to get creative and to identify the information that would be most meaningful. As the evaluation moved through its final year, it included visits to all sites, where evidence of learning and progress toward climate-policy wins was highlighted in community conversations.

Looking back at the initiative after the final convening, Bibbins recalled CRUO’s hypotheses: 1) resourcing community-based groups and infusing civic engagement in their work will result in climate-resilience policies that are rooted in equity; 2) social cohesion will be elevated or strengthened in funded places; and 3) lessons from place-based innovation and climate resilience with a focus on civic engagement and inclusion of low-income communities will improve the effectiveness of the field as a whole. Or, as Bibbins went on to note, “what looks different when you put equity at the center.”

With respect to these hypotheses, CRUO's evaluation has brought learning and clarity to the fore for the Kresge Foundation. As its CEO, Rapson, noted:

What the [CRUO] evaluation findings have reinforced for the foundation is the importance of creating a machinery of social change and obsessing less on outcomes. Trying to measure hard, cold metrics is less meaningful than creating the machinery of social change. If we are about changing policy, in the shorter term, we're developing a way that social change can stay relevant and powerful and compelling. I struggle with this and I just think I'm not imaginative about metrics, but then I also believe if you create a method by which low-income people of color can be meaningfully engaged in the decisions that affect their life and do it in a way that makes a difference, it is a different measurement tool than what you use for 37 particular outcomes...[I]f you create a method by which low-income people of color can be meaningfully engaged in the decisions that affect their life and do it in a way that makes a difference, it is a different measurement tool than what you use for 37 particular outcomes.

Bibbins also recalled that the evaluation team was an important partner in the dance between being adaptive and responsive and coming back to the initiative's line of sight. For example, during the planning phase, some grantees requested that Kresge elevate and fund a focus on displacement as a substrategy of the initiative since this was an issue that required considerable attention in some grantee communities. In response, Kresge supported Movement Strategies Center to help interested grantees to sustain thinking and space on the topic beyond the convening, and elevated grantee-driven programming on the intersection of climate resilience and anti-displacement strategies at each convening for shared learning. Along these lines, DeBacker recalled, "It was never hard to keep equity at the center of the work; it was hard to keep climate at the center." She went on to say that her frame of climate-relevant work became more expansive, and that "when you say you are going to start where people are, you really start where they are." For the CRUO, this meant honoring grantees' knowledge of their own communities with support to point the cohort toward changes necessary to protect communities from the effects of climate change.

In reflecting on the initiative and advice for others stepping into equity-focused grantmaking, DeBacker offered the following:

Don't do it lightly, because to do it in a real way means real change. We have a growing chorus of voices raising the bar about what it means to approach work with equity. We are talking not just about opportunity, but equity and racial equity. You need to be well educated about the causes of inequity and be willing to step into areas that may be controversial with management and board. You can't really do work on equity without staring at racism and institutional racism in the face, and you can't address those without a lot of education, through lived experience or the scholarship around equity. It's a real thing, and to commit to it changes how you do everything.

Reid noted:

CRUO was a big shift for the Environment program. Their big strategy refresh in 2014 was a huge turning point. The team went big and bold and then refined to be even more upfront about an equity lens. They are unapologetic about it and have put resources behind it. They are not sitting up on the hill, saying "good luck with that"; they are putting resources behind the statements about what we value.

Internal DEI at Kresge That Coincided With the Timeline of This Case

A year or so after CRUO was underway, Kresge began to forge a more deliberate path on an organizational journey to bring “a dual focus” on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI): “to our internal work (the organization we want to be for one another) and a racial equity lens to our external ways of working (how we animate our mission).”¹³ At a 2015 retreat, staff members were invited to reflect on their own stories of opportunity to belong, thrive, and contribute.

A cross-departmental task force began work on a DEI road map for Kresge, and the executive team embarked on an exploration of the meaning of DEI to its members. The team worked to support alignment for organizational next steps, including sharing with staff at that retreat a frame for othering and belonging, and considering how race has impacted home ownership and economic mobility.

Three phases of DEI activity were explicitly moved forward between 2017 and 2018:

- *Phase 1: Normalizing.* The first half of 2017 saw the launch of the DEI project with the Center for Social Inclusion (CSI), which brought inquiry and learning with stakeholder interviews and an all-staff survey.
- *Phase 2: Organizing.* A “Racial Equity 101” event for all Kresge staff was co-facilitated by the CSI, and a 16-member delegation representing all Kresge departments attended the Haas Institute’s [2017 Othering and Belonging Conference](#), which the foundation sponsored. In this phase, 25 percent of staff committed to the Kresge Operationalizing Racial Equity (KORE) Team for “train the trainer” learning and piloting of change efforts.
- *Phase 3: Operationalizing.* Between September 2017 and June 2018, KORE Team training sessions and a racial equity staff retreat were completed, and the team launched pilot projects in areas related to vendors, learning, talent and human resources, and programs.

A January 2019 presentation to Kresge staff called out the following as “what we are working toward”:

- Piloting to Application
 - Onboarding new staff successfully into our DEI journey
 - Applying a racial equity lens to all areas of the foundation’s work
- Normalize to Nuance: Developing a more nuanced view on racial equity and being fully engaged in conversation around race, equity, and intersectionality
- Creating a Platform
 - Expanding our external voice and perspective in the field around racial equity
 - Finalizing an equity statement that outlines our values and principles

¹³This section draws primarily on an internal memo to the board from Reid, as well as an interview with her and a January 2019 internal presentation to staff.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

ENVIRONMENT PROGRAM THEORY OF CHANGE: 2013

THE
KRESGE
FOUNDATION

Environment Program Theory of Change

Fundamental concept

Urban decision makers must **ask and act upon “the climate question.”** To facilitate this, we must **empower and engage decision makers within their existing fields of practice.**

The Environment Program will pursue two interdependent core strategies ...

*... to develop **communities of practice and mechanisms to scale innovation** ...*

*... that are necessary to achieve our **program goal.***

Advance place-based innovation



Build the climate resilience practice field

Community-based practitioners, connected through topically-focused problem solving networks, developing model approaches to climate resilience issues

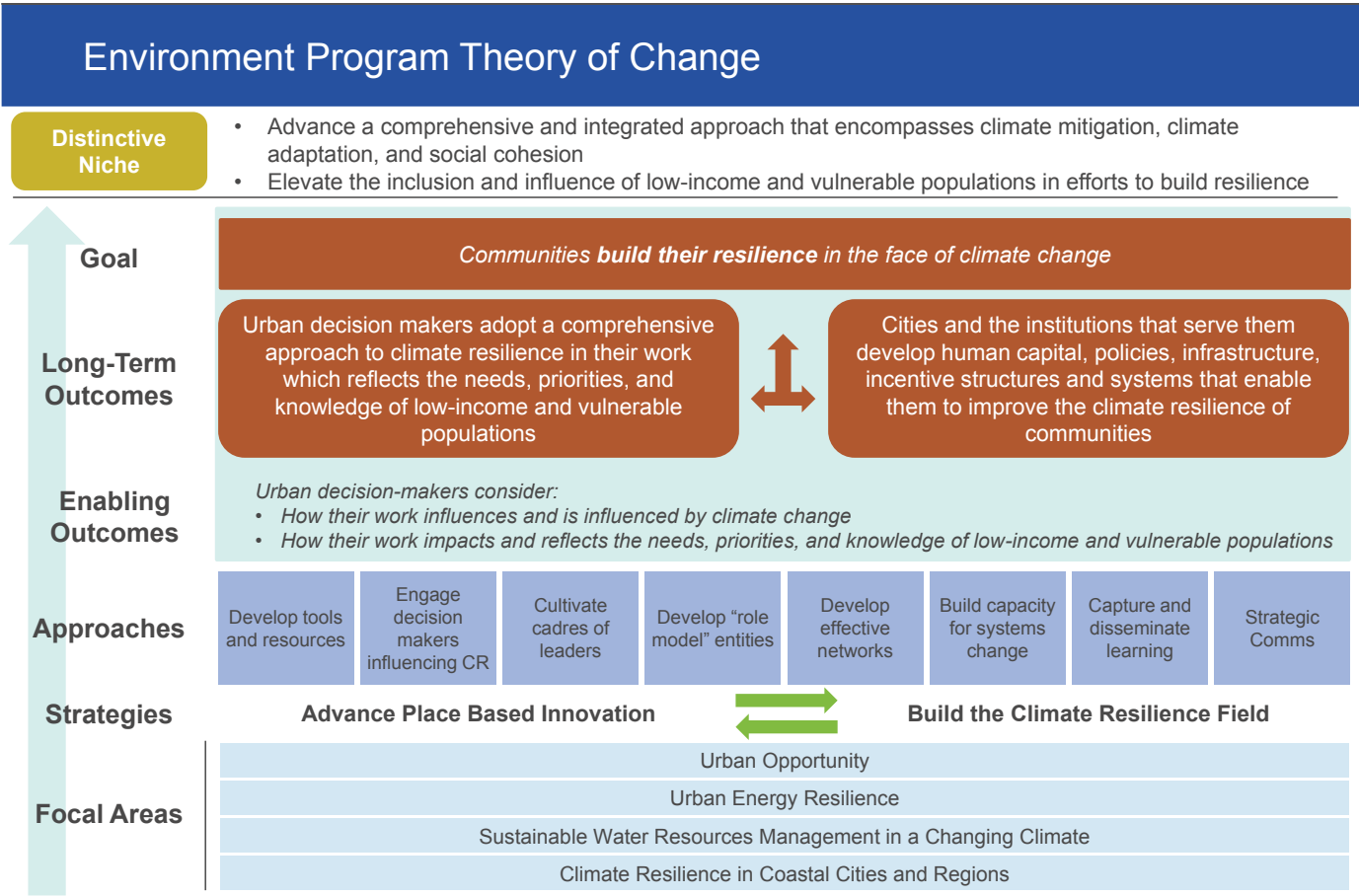
Dissemination and scaling of successful approaches through practitioner networks, professional associations, standard-setting bodies, and policy change

Communities build their resilience in the face of climate change.

*Our work focuses primarily on **cities and the well-being of people living within them,** while recognizing that addressing issues critical to resilience often requires working across jurisdictional boundaries.*

Distinctive niche

- **Advance a comprehensive and integrated approach** that encompasses climate mitigation, climate adaptation, and social cohesion
- **Elevate the inclusion of low-income and vulnerable populations** in efforts to build resilience



ENVIRONMENT PROGRAM THEORY OF CHANGE: 2017 (CURRENT)

THE KRESGE FOUNDATION

Vision Cities build resilience in the face of climate change

Distinctive Niche

- Advance a comprehensive and integrated approach to climate resilience that encompasses climate mitigation, climate adaptation, and social cohesion
- Elevate the inclusion, leadership, and influence of low-income and vulnerable communities

Goal Cities implement comprehensive climate-resilience approaches grounded in equity

Strategies

Signals of Progress

Long-term Outcomes

Build capacity and commitment of urban leaders across sectors to advance equitable climate resilience

Strengthen the evidence base and develop tools to drive widespread adoption of equitable climate-resilience practices

Transform key urban systems critical to climate resilience, focusing on energy and water systems

Municipal leaders and other key decision makers:

- Have fluency in both climate change and equity
- Value / recognize the necessity of comprehensive and equitable climate resilience
- Know what actions to take to advance comprehensive and equitable climate resilience

Community-based and NGO leaders:

- Use strong knowledge of climate change and equity to advance new policies and practices
- Deepen relationships with key decision makers across sectors
- Exhibit greater power to influence public-led processes important to climate resilience

Governance systems reflect:

- The integration of climate and equity considerations into core urban operations
- New and deepening working relationships among people working on climate resilience and equity across sectors and fields
- More inclusive decision-making processes and greater responsiveness of urban leaders to low-income community needs as evidenced in policy, programs, and investments

Cross-sector leadership, public support, and political will are motivating action on equitable climate resilience

Policies, incentives, and other enabling conditions are driving equitable climate resilience

Changes in practice important to climate resilience are adopted, integrated across systems, and responsive to the needs and priorities of low-income people

OVERVIEW OF CRUO SITES

Kresge's Climate Resilience and Urban Opportunity Initiative Cohort:

- [Align](#), New York City, New York
- [Asian Pacific Environment Network](#), Oakland, California
- [Centro por la Justicia / Southwest Workers Union](#), San Antonio, Texas
- [Cleveland Neighborhood Progress](#), Cleveland, Ohio
- [Environmental Health Coalition](#), National City, California
- [Fifth Avenue Committee](#), Brooklyn, New York
- [Ironbound Community Corp.](#), Newark, New Jersey
- [Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy](#), Los Angeles, California
- [Native American Youth and Family Center](#), Portland, Oregon
- [Neighborhood of Affordable Housing](#), East Boston, Massachusetts
- [Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability](#), Fresno, California
- [West Harlem Environmental Action](#), New York City, New York
- [Catalyst Miami](#), Miami, Florida
- [The Point CDC](#), Bronx, New York
- [Puget Sound Sage](#), Seattle, Washington

CRITERIA FOR REVIEWING PROPOSAL

Criteria for Review of SOQs

This initiative is not limited to organizations that currently view themselves as doing environmental work. We anticipate that competitive applicants will include both community-based, nonprofit organizations already working on climate resilience and community-based, nonprofit organizations that have been working on issues relevant to climate change (e.g., air quality, clean energy, public health, transportation planning, and urban sustainability) and are interested in advancing a comprehensive climate-resilience framework through their future efforts.

Please note that we will give strong preference to organizations that:

- intend to engage in an array of efforts related to improving their community's climate resilience;
- are skilled at working across sectors (e.g., nonprofit, public, and private), disciplines (e.g., community development, public health, and environment), and political perspectives; and
- can bring a variety of tactics to their climate-resilience efforts.

We will review SOQs according to the following criteria. A competitive applicant will be:

- focused on and skilled in working within low-income, urban areas (required);
- aspiring to use or already using a comprehensive framework of climate resilience in its work (required);
- deeply rooted in the communities in which it proposes to work as evidenced by tenure, membership, governance, and/or engagement (required);
- well respected due to its past accomplishments (required);
- approaching its work with the intent of delivering multiple benefits for historically disadvantaged community residents (i.e., climate resilience as well as health benefits, economic opportunity, new community amenities, and/or improved quality of life) (required);
- already engaged in or planning to engage in specific, public-sector-led efforts to address climate change that present an opportunity for influence (e.g., local and regional plans focused on climate change mitigation, climate change adaptation, public health, transportation planning, and/or urban sustainability) (required);
- committed to pursuing its climate-relevant work in collaboration with one or more private-sector, academic, or other nonprofit-sector partners (required);
- connected to a regional or national network through which it would share what it is learning (preferred); and
- integrating arts and culture into its work and proposed interventions (preferred).

SUGGESTED READING

More on CRUO:

- [Pathways to Resilience](#)
- [Primer for CRUO Applicants](#)
- [CRUO Overview on Kresge Website](#)
- [Putting Race at the Center of the Climate Resilience Table / Putting Climate at the Center of the Racial Justice Table 2016 Convening Recording](#)

On Evaluation:

- [A Developmental Evaluation Primer](#)
- [Power Moves](#)
- [What Would It Take to Align Foundation Mission and Evaluation Practice?](#)

APPENDIX

Teaching Case Facilitation¹⁴

The purpose of a teaching case, such as the one presented here, is to raise issues for discussion that are typically met in situations of uncertainty and complexity.

Teaching cases are constructed to provide their audience some basic facts about the situation, a narrative of events, and the perspectives of multiple participants in the events — without conclusions or judgments. Teaching cases are taught through the use of questions to uncover the views of participants in a case teaching session about the issues the case is intended to open up. The case teacher begins the session questioning participants about the basic facts of the case as presented in the case document in order to establish a common understanding — what is the situation, who are the players, what is the past experience of the organization, what is the internal and external environment with regard to equity?

The best approach for facilitating the case depends on the purpose of the session(s) as well as the background of the participants. In this section we provide guidance to help you think through different considerations and options.

Identify Learning Objectives for the session. It is important to start by establishing learning objectives about what you want to participants to learn by using the case. While the overall goal is to help grantmakers deepen their understanding of the complexity of equity-focused grantmaking efforts, you may want to focus on the different perspectives or trade-offs involved when shifting to equity-focused grantmaking or a specific grant making task, such as developing and applying review criteria in a more equity-focused manner. Being clear about what you want to accomplish in the session will enable you to plan with that in mind. Depending on the number of and depth of the learning objectives, you may want to focus on specific parts of the case (rather than the entire case) or to focus on specific issues or topics that are informed by the entire case. Depending on the learning objectives, it might be useful to have participants role-play the roles or stakeholder groups involved in the case.

Structure the session. The following is a framework for a case-based discussion:¹⁵

1. Give participants ample time to read and think about the case.
2. Introduce the case briefly and establish discussion guidelines. Reiterate the learning objectives for the session to help focus the session.
3. Either create small groups for discussion or facilitate a large group discussion. Small groups can drift off track if you do not provide structure, so keep that in mind.
4. Ask questions for clarification and to deepen discussion
5. Synthesize issues raised and what was learned

¹⁴ Adapted from Evaluation Roundtable “The Devolution Initiative Evaluation: Innovation and Learning at the W. K. Kellogg Foundation” by Kay E. Sherwood Edited by Patricia Patrizi and Michael Quinn Patton.

¹⁵ Adapted from Carnegie Mellon University’s website: <https://www.cmu.edu/teaching/design/teach/instructionalstrategies/casestudies.html>

Determine what questions would be useful to ask. While a useful line of questions and discussions may emerge from the participants, it's helpful to have a series of questions in mind in order to guide the discussion into topics and issues most relevant to the learning objectives. Below we offer a wide array of potential discussion questions to ask. You would not want to ask all of these questions in a single session. You may also want to develop your own questions depending on the group and your experience teaching the case in multiple sessions. These suggestions are intended to support individual and group analysis and considerations of how this might apply in one's own practice.

Big Picture

- What are the key roles described in the case? Are there any roles that stand out for you? Why?
- Consider your own organization's history, context, current strategy – what do you think is most salient to keep in mind as you think about what takes to shift to equity-focused grantmaking?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of having an explicit focus on equity? What approach would work well in your context? What would not work well? Why?
- What changes or shifts at the structural or strategic level seemed to help or hinder the shift to having an equity focus?
- What is in place at your organization that supports or inhibits the shift to an equity focus?

Equity & Strategy Alignment

- The impetus for Environment team to align their strategy with the Urban Opportunities framework came from Trustees. How does this compare with the role and position of board/trustees in strategy development at your organization?
- With regards to bringing equity to the fore, what activities during the alignment phase seemed critical? Why?
- Consider the notion of 'flipping the frame' to enhance the use of an equity lens. What might be a 'flip the frame' opportunity in your own work and how might you begin to flip?
- How does the role the Managing Director played in this case compare with the positional structures in your organization? Who would lead a strategic shift to equity-focused grantmaking in your organization? What support would be needed?
- Review the Environment Program's Theory of Change, the Overview for CRUO applicants, and the Criteria for Reviewing Proposals. What do you notice about the language and positioning of equity in each of the documents? What reinforces a focus on equity-focused grantmaking? What might be at odds with a focus on equity-focused grantmaking?
- If you were to bring an equity lens to your work, what kind of resistance might you encounter from the larger field? What might be sources of support?
- What are strategies for building broader and more connected perspectives about key issues and priorities among stakeholder groups? What was done in the case example? What is (or might be) done at your organization?
- What do you think is in place at your foundation that would similarly support such an effort?

Initiative Launch & Proposal Process

- Consider the timeline in launching this new initiative, one that was the program's first open proposal process and reached beyond usual grantee groups. How does this compare to your own proposal processes? What, if anything, would you need to consider to reach beyond your existing network?
- Beyond funding different work and different organizations, how else does equity show up in funding and proposal processes? What would you want to keep in mind for your own efforts?
- What stands out to you as critical to equity focused grantmaking during the grantmaking period? What were the activities, the roles, the relationships that mattered in terms of centering equity in this period? Why?

Implementation

- Consider the roles of the program officer, evaluators and grantees in developing theories of change? What were the benefits of this process? With an eye toward equity, what, if any, alternatives might you consider to this process or roles?
- What did you notice about the implementation team (program officer, consultant, evaluators, and advisory team)? What about the group (members, roles, etc.) enhanced CRUO's equity focus? How does this team compare to structures used in your own organization? What do you want to keep in mind in developing similar teams for your own efforts?
- What role did evaluation play in the case? What reinforced the focus on equity-focused grantmaking? What seemed to be at odds with a focus on equity-focused grantmaking? What might you do similarly? Differently?
- How did equity show up in the annual grantee convenings? How did these convening play into the overall initiative?
- In what ways was race and racial equity named explicitly in this case? Why did this matter? What might have been the consequence of not naming racial equity as core to this work?
- What attributes or tactics do you think helped the program team hold the tension between not dictating the planning process for grantees while having a strong perspective on what they wanted? Thinking about equity both as means and ends, what have you done or what might you do in a similar situation?
- What else was happening during the timeline of this case that influenced the equity focus? Within the foundation? Among the philanthropic or non profit sector? In the US? What is important for you / your organization to bear in mind?

Key Themes

While the case itself does not draw conclusions, the following themes have been identified within this case and might be helpful in structuring discussions or bringing the group toward synthesis of ideas.

1. **Flipping the frame:** Making the decision to fund equity-centered groups to deepen their expertise on climate change rather than funding traditional climate change organizations to develop their expertise on equity.
2. **Assembling a culturally-competent implementation team:** Bringing together an implementation team who possess cultural competencies and deep knowledge and experience in advancing racial equity.
3. **Holding an adaptive management posture:** The team understood and worked under the premise that if “we are asking our grantees to change, then we also must be willing to change.”
4. **Naming race:** Explicitly addressing and naming racial equity as core to this work.
5. **Managing risk:** How risk was managed with regards to accountability and power dynamics with grantees.

Create connections between participants and discussion guidelines. If participants don't know anything about each other and aren't clear about the discussion guidelines they might be less likely to contribute to the discussion. Spending some time at the outset of the session can also help make connections between the case context and issues and the perspectives and experience of participants. For example, what participants know about and have experienced with regard to equity-focused grantmaking or developing an initiative can help target the discussion at the right level.

Get feedback. At the end (or shortly after) the session it's important to assess what participants have learned, what is most useful to them, and if there are ways to make the session better.