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Examining and Developing Environmental Stewardship Funding Networks in Los Angeles

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Abstract

Following general patterns in non-profit funding, environmental grants have a continuing history of being inaccessible to the groups that could benefit from them the most. While many environmental stewardship organizations (ESOs) are in need of funding for projects, Los Angeles lacks a clear network of environmental funders that is accessible to all potential actors. In this study, we will be researching existing funder coalitions as well as philanthropic trends in Los Angeles. The findings from this review will be used to compile a database of environmental grant sources in Los Angeles detailing funders as well as specific grant programs, and will finally lead to the creation of a preliminary funding network. This funding network will be accessible to the general public and will allow for thorough, yet efficient grant-seeking in hopes that stewardship organizations of all scales and focuses will feel more confident pursuing funding for environmental projects.

Introduction

Background

- Significant gaps in literature regarding ESO funders in Los Angeles
- Recent movement to prioritize environmental justice in grantmaking
- Worsening climate crisis has put pressure on grantmakers to focus on resilience measures
- Preexisting Funding Networks of Interest: SoCal Grantmakers, The Los Angeles Funders Collaborative, Biodiversity Funders Group, Environmental Grantmakers Association

Research Questions

- How are ESO funding networks structured in LA?
- How do ESOs, particularly community organizations, engage with the grantmaking process and funder networks?
- Are there patterns of certain organizations being more involved in the network than others?
- How can a new funding database improve older models to increase transparency and connectivity between all actors in the funding network?

Final Deliverables

- Database of 30 organizations and 30 grant programs that can be filtered by grantor type, focus area, scope, grant award range, or maximum individual award
- ArcGIS Story Map with buffers around geographic areas served by each grant

Methods

Data Collected

- Grantor
- Grantor Type (ex: city, state, federal, private foundation, family foundation, corporate foundation, public foundation)
- Program Name (when applicable)
- Focus Area (ex: education, public health, pollution, conservation, environmental justice, etc.)
- Non-Environmental Causes (when applicable)
- Scope (ex: Southeast Los Angeles, California, North America)
- Total Grant Allotment
- Grant Award Range
- Maximum Individual Grant Amount
- Grant Term (ex: allotted in three segments over the course of 1 year)
- Grant Description
- Annual Application Cycles
- Application Deadlines
- Contact
- Address
- Relevant Awardees
- Partners
- Site

Data

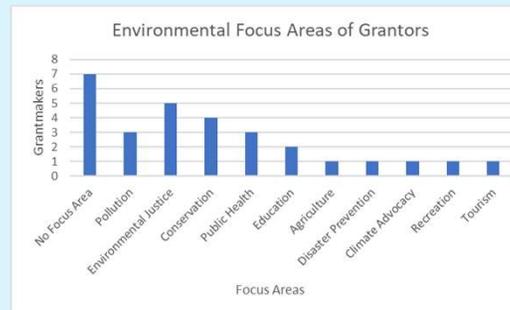


Figure 1: Primary focus areas of grantmakers (N = 16) within the environmental field.

Grantor Type Distribution



Figure 2: Grantor organizational classifications. Foundations classified under different charity / 501(c)(3) categories.

Preliminary Results

Analysis

- 18/30 grantmakers/grant programs logged
- While all state and city agencies offered grants through specific programs, only 1 out of 10 foundations did.
- 30% of foundations accepted grant applications by invitation only.
- 70% of foundations did not have a specific focus area within the environmental field.
- 80% of foundations supported additional causes unrelated to the environment.

Anticipated Discussion

We anticipate that while foundations and governments are focusing more on disadvantaged communities in their grantmaking, particularly in climate resilience, there continues to be a lack of clear network that makes these grants truly accessible to small nonprofits and community organizations. A more in depth network analysis of philanthropy in Los Angeles would be beneficial to better clarify these pathways to project funding.

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