

THE KRESGE FOUNDATION

## Environment Program



### We help cities implement comprehensive climate-resilience approaches grounded in equity.

Kresge's Environment Program helps communities address climate change directly so that they will be better prepared for the new challenges and uncertainties it introduces. By explicitly factoring climate change into decisions about infrastructure investments, land-use, building codes, public health and other urban planning issues, urban leaders can make their communities stronger, more equitable and more resilient.

#### CLIMATE RESILIENCE IN COMMUNITIES

Climate resilience involves the capacity not just to withstand stresses and shocks but also to prosper under a wide range of climate-influenced circumstances. Long term resilience is possible only if society acts quickly to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and, thus, avoids the worst impacts of climate change.

To strengthen their resilience, communities must:

- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions that drive climate change,
- Plan for the effects of climate change that are underway or anticipated, and
- Foster social cohesion and inclusion.

Kresge's work is intended to help urban leaders across the public, private and nonprofit sectors consider a two-part climate question as they make decisions that will shape their communities:

- Do proposed investments, policies or actions have implications – positive or negative – for the severity of climate change? If negative, what can be done differently to make them climate positive?
- Do the expected consequences of climate change affect the viability or durability of a proposed investment, policy or action? If so, what can be done differently so the effort is both viable and durable in the face of climate change?

With these questions as guides, urban leaders will be positioned to take actions that benefit their communities by both mitigating climate change and preparing for its effects.

#### GROUNDING CLIMATE RESILIENCE IN EQUITY

Our work also is intended to help urban leaders understand the equity implications of proposed investments, policies and actions so they can make choices that improve opportunity for all community members, particularly those with low incomes and who have been historically underserved.

Climate change has disproportionate effects on people with limited economic resources. We believe it is critical to engage people from historically underrepresented groups in climate-change-related efforts, recognizing the leadership that resides within

those communities. We also believe that people with low incomes and communities of color must share in the economic, environmental and social benefits of clean energy, green infrastructure and other responses to climate change.

## HOW WE WORK

We aim for our work to be driven by the needs of municipal leaders working on climate resilience and their community-based partners. We foster locally grounded communities of practice, providing access to supportive technical assistance, applied research and learning opportunities.

We also support activities to disseminate and bring to scale promising climate-resilience approaches. We seek to learn from the work of our grantees and partners and to see those lessons strengthen the emergent climate-resilience field.

We deploy multiple forms of capital – grants, loans, deposits, equity and guarantees – to advance our goals. We are interested in testing new financing models to bring climate-resilience benefits to low-income communities.

## WE INVEST THROUGH THREE STRATEGIES. THEY ARE:

- **Building capacity and commitment** of local government officials and staff, staff of nonprofit and community-based organizations, and private-sector leaders to implement climate-resilience approaches grounded in equity. This includes deepening their knowledge of locally implemented interventions important to climate mitigation and adaptation as well as their understanding of racial equity and its relevance to climate-resilience. Among other work, our Climate Change, Health and Equity initiative (CCHE), launched in 2019, resides within this strategy. A joint initiative with our Health Program, CCHE aims to accelerate local policies and practices that advance climate resilience and reduce health risks equitably, build the capacity of health systems and local health departments in promoting resilience and beneficial climate policies, and shift the practice of health practitioners to better advocate for climate-smart policies and practices.
- **Strengthening the evidence base and developing tools** to drive adoption of equitable climate-resilience practices. We seek to increase recognition of the need to act on climate mitigation and adaptation and help build a climate-resilience field of practice that embraces equity as an imperative. This includes curating promising concepts and practices and supporting research on topics critical to implementation of climate-resilience measures.

- **Transforming key urban systems** critical to climate resilience. We support the transformation of water and energy systems critical to the health, safety and quality of life of urban residents in low-income areas. We deploy a blend of grants, social investments and market-rate investments to help advance equitable outcomes in the policies and infrastructure of municipal water and energy systems. Among other work, this strategy includes our Climate Resilient and Equitable Water Systems (CREWS) initiative, consisting of nonprofits working on solutions to climate-related storm and flood impacts in at-risk communities, and our efforts to help cities transition to carbon neutrality in ways that reflect the needs, priorities, and knowledge of low-income communities and communities of color.

To learn more about our Environment Program, please visit [kresge.org/programs/environment](https://kresge.org/programs/environment).



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