

# STATE OF FOUNDATION FUNDING FOR THE PRO-IMMIGRANT MOVEMENT

## A MOVEMENT INVESTMENT PROJECT BRIEF

A future that is inclusive, just and welcoming to all is not just aspirational, it is essential and within reach. Our country's success is rooted in the success of our communities. Immigrants are an integral part of our national resilience, vibrancy, accomplishments and growth.

This future is also increasingly in peril as immigrant communities face growing threats on all fronts.<sup>1</sup> But responding to these attacks is a vibrant movement comprised of a diverse ecosystem of individuals and organizations nationwide fighting for human rights, equal opportunity, justice and full participation in society for all people regardless of legal status.

Philanthropy can invest in this frontline, intersectional movement and the thriving future it is fighting for by ensuring that it has the resources needed to succeed.

## THE PRO-IMMIGRANT MOVEMENT UNDER-RESOURCED AND UNDER THREAT

According to Foundation Center data, between 2011 and 2015, barely 1% of all money granted by the 1,000 largest U.S. foundations was intended to benefit immigrants and refugees.



In practice, this means that the organizations and leaders responding to the current crises have been under-resourced for years and now must drive their efforts full throttle while running on empty. National networks and local grassroots groups focused on organizing have been particularly under-funded.<sup>3</sup>

## WHAT IS A MOVEMENT?

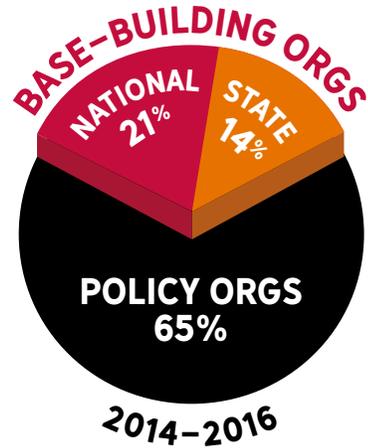
*"While there is no formula for a social movement, they usually share a few features. It involves people who are mobilized around issues they care about, and who share a powerful vision about what is wrong with society and how it can be improved. These people are engaged in diverse activities that are not under any one leader's control, and that lead to a change in attitudes, practices and public policy."*

**JEAN HARDISTY  
AND DEEPAK BHARGAVA**

*"Wrong about the Right" in *The Nation*<sup>2</sup>*

**AS RECENTLY AS 2016, ORGANIZING EFFORTS HAVE CONTINUED TO RECEIVE AN EVEN SMALLER PIECE OF THE VERY SMALL MOVEMENT FUNDING PIE.**

In 2016, movement groups received \$124 million in grants. From 2014–2016, only 14% of dollars flowed directly to state and local groups and less than a quarter went to national membership networks that are directly accountable to local grassroots and impacted communities. The lion’s share went to national organizations doing litigation and federal policy advocacy through the courts and Congress.<sup>4</sup>



Even when money has supported state and local work, funding often has not correlated to the areas of greatest threat.

Support for the movement is also concentrated in a small group of dedicated funders. From 2014–2016, just 11 foundations were responsible for half of all pro-immigrant movement funding.

**DOLLARS OF FUNDING (PER IMMIGRANT)**

**CALIFORNIA  
NEW YORK  
ILLINOIS**

**SOUTH  
EAST**

**SOUTH  
WEST**

**FLO-  
RIDA**



**IMMIGRANTS DEPORTED (PER LOCATION)**



**1 icon = 120,000 IMMIGRANTS**



**FOR THE PRO-IMMIGRANT MOVEMENT**

**FUNDERS RESPONSIBLE FOR HALF OF ALL PRO-IMMIGRANT MOVEMENT FUNDING 2014–2016**

1. NEO Philanthropy
2. Ford Foundation
3. Carnegie Corporation of New York
4. The JPB Foundation
5. Open Society Foundations
6. Silicon Valley Community Foundation
7. Unbound Philanthropy
8. The Pershing Square Foundation
9. The California Endowment
10. The James Irvine Foundation
11. Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund

## DESPITE LOW FUNDING LEVELS AND A TINY CADRE OF FUNDER ALLIES, MOVEMENT GROUPS HAVE HAD TO CONTEND WITH AN ENORMOUS GROWTH IN THE INFLUENCE OF ANTI-IMMIGRANT POLITICAL POWER, RHETORIC AND NARRATIVES.

In 2016, approximately \$20 million in institutional philanthropic dollars supported extremist anti-immigrant organizations, including Federation for American Immigration Reform, Center for Immigration Studies and The Remembrance Project, which are classified as hate groups by the Southern Poverty Law Center.<sup>5</sup>

However, the strength of the anti-immigrant movement's influence depends less on philanthropy-funded hate groups than on how those groups' views are echoed and mainstreamed through a vast network of major media institutions, social media platforms and political allies at the highest levels of government. These combined channels use their bully pulpit and enormous reach to blanket the public discourse with anti-immigrant narratives.

For example, in the weeks after the Trump administration's 2017 announcement about rescinding Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) protections, right-wing media like Fox News devoted more than 5 times as much airtime to the immigration issue than did CNN and MSNBC combined.<sup>6</sup> The anti-immigrant message is a powerful one. In the same year, YouTube channels with an explicit anti-immigrant message grew at almost twice the rate as other political channels and were twice as likely to reach a threshold of 50 million views.<sup>7</sup>

2017 Sample  Political Channels

**VIEWS OF  
ANTI-IMMIGRANT  
CHANNELS GREW  
2X FASTER THAN  
OTHER POLITICAL  
CHANNELS**



Pro-immigrant advocates have won critical victories in countering the narratives of hate and the powerful people and institutions that propagate them through community and electoral organizing.<sup>8</sup> But given the magnitude of the opposition, movement groups need resources and support beyond current amounts to do so consistently and to turn the tide of our country toward a more inclusive and equitable society.

## REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS

Refugees and asylum seekers are distinct populations under U.S. and international law, and refugee-related work has had a parallel structure of resettlement services and advocacy institutions. Historically, those organizations have relied largely on funding from government rather than philanthropic resources.

NCRP relies on Foundation Center data, which combines grantmaking information for the immigrant and refugee populations and provides an incomplete picture of funding specifically intended for refugees and asylees. And because the vast majority of refugee-related funding comes from government sources, which are not covered by this brief, our analysis reflects the state of foundation giving for the pro-immigrant movement only.

As government funding and legal protections for refugees and asylum seekers have come under attack, organizations focused on immigrants more broadly and those focused more specifically on refugees are finding common ground, presenting leaders with exciting opportunities for collaboration. This is a crucial connection for funders to explore and support.



Rise Together Fund gave rapid-response support to representatives of the Council of American-Islamic Relations and prominent American Muslim civil rights activists to attend a protest against inhumane treatment of asylum seekers and migrants. Photo by Naaz Modan.

## THE BOTTOM LINE: WHERE AND HOW DOLLARS FLOW MATTERS

Philanthropic funding for the pro-immigrant movement has been:

### DISPROPORTIONATELY LOW AND LIMITED TO A SMALL GROUP OF FUNDER ALLIES

The funding is not commensurate with the challenges immigrant communities face, including an opposition with powerful mechanisms to push their narrative and policies.

### SKEWED TOWARD INSIDE-GAME STRATEGIES

Funding has been heavily focused on national groups that are not engaged in direct organizing and not necessarily accountable to or representative of immigrant populations.

### GEOGRAPHICALLY UNEQUAL TO THE THREAT LEVEL

Funding has been historically lacking in regions of the country as well as areas of well-funded states where the threat to immigrant communities is heightened by vocally anti-immigrant elected officials, greater numbers of deportations and a history of anti-immigrant legislation.

Philanthropy has an urgent opportunity now to support immigrant communities organizing to combat hate and create a better future for all. As research by [NCRP](#)<sup>9</sup> and [others such as The Proteus Fund and Solidaire](#)<sup>10</sup> show, foundations have played important roles in social movements of the past, partnering with them to support major social, cultural and political shifts. Individual donors – from the ultra-wealthy to small-dollar givers – and foundations are often key to movement sustainability. They provide crucial capital to build organizational capacity that channels popular support. Their dollars can be a stable, reliable resource amid the ups and downs of long-term movement-building and social change work.



Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund committed to investing in the growth and capacity of California's immigrant rights movement. Photo credit: Ed Crisostomo

## WHAT DO MOVEMENT LEADERS SAY?

**NCRP SPENT A YEAR IN CONVERSATION WITH MORE THAN 30 PRO-IMMIGRANT MOVEMENT LEADERS TO UNDERSTAND HOW GRANTMAKERS AND DONORS CAN BETTER SUSTAIN THE MOVEMENT IN LIGHT OF CURRENT CRISES.**

These leaders were from well-known national organizations as well as statewide and regional groups all over the country, some with annual budgets of under \$300,000. For all the diversity of perspectives, they had many of the same observations about the state of the relationship between philanthropy and the movement.



### **THE MOVEMENT'S RAPID RESPONSE HAS SHIFTED TO LONG-TERM CRISES, BUT FUNDING IS STILL AD HOC.**

At many pro-immigrant movement organizations, rapid-response work has turned into ongoing core programming because of threats from the current administration. Grantmaking patterns have not caught up with this reality.

There are a few great, agile and fast-moving pro-immigrant movement funders,<sup>11</sup> and many foundations respond generously and quickly to emergencies such as the family separation and internment crisis at the southern border in 2018 and the attempted anti-Muslim ban in 2017. But many other well-meaning funders are clinging to standard grantmaking processes and practices at a time when the movement needs them to move money in innovative ways. Frontline movement groups especially need multi-year general operating support to continue countering current and future threats.



### **WE ARE WINNING AT THE STATE AND LOCAL LEVELS, BUT NEED A MUCH HIGHER LEVEL OF INVESTMENT.**

Many of the threats to immigrant communities post-2016 come from the federal level. However, recently and in the foreseeable future most pro-immigrant movement victories – including electoral victories – come at the state and local levels.

Despite these wins and the difficulty of the path to federal policy change in the form of Comprehensive Immigration Reform in the current environment, national policy and impact litigation groups continue to receive the majority of funder support. A few funder allies have consistently moved money toward state and local work, but there is a real opportunity for place-based funders in particular to step up and fill gaps.



### **IMMIGRANTS ARE A DIVERSE GROUP OF PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES, BUT MOST FUNDING DOESN'T REFLECT THAT.**

The pro-immigrant movement is lifting up the complexity of their experiences and pushing back against narratives that paint a monolithic picture of immigrant communities.

There has been unprecedented collaboration across immigrant identities, yet few funders have supported the rich intersectionality of this movement. That includes support for Asian American and Pacific Islander, Muslim, Black and LGBTQI immigrant groups as well as cross-community immigrant coalitions, networks and campaigns.



### **FOUNDATIONS HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO BETTER SUPPORT THE LEADERSHIP OF IMMIGRANTS.**

The leadership of pro-immigrant organizations is beginning to look more like the movement itself, particularly at the state and local levels. However, grassroots movement organizer burnout is an increasingly costly challenge.<sup>12</sup>

The emotional and physical toll of organizing in post-2016 political conditions is high on those confronting anti-immigrant hatred in their role as movement leaders as well as in their personal lives. These organizers – immigrants and the children of immigrants who are most impacted and best equipped to lead – have not received the funding and support necessary to stave off burnout. Movement groups need resources to support enough full-time employees with livable salaries and health benefits so that advocates have financial security and staffing support to share the work of constant crisis response.

# THERE ARE HOPEFUL SIGNS, BUT MORE NEEDS TO BE DONE

IN 2017–2018, A SAMPLE SET OF MOVEMENT GROUPS FOR WHICH WE HAVE DATA SAW AN INCREASE IN FOUNDATION GRANTS.

However, in the context of the general spike in recent philanthropic funding for progressive issues for major sector players across issue areas, this growth still falls short.<sup>13</sup> For example, while foundation funding for our sample grew around 40% in 2017–2018, foundation funding for the ACLU and Planned Parenthood – powerhouse national anchor organizations in the progressive space that work on a range of issues (including immigration) – grew by more than double that rate.

More funders appear interested in the movement. But the welcome addition of 60 new funders in our sample set was offset by the fact that 90% of funding for these movement groups came from existing funders that increased their giving.



Almost half of the funding for our sample came from just 5 national foundations. If this small and dedicated group of funder allies expanded to include more

committed, long-term grantmakers and donors, the movement would be better positioned to sustain itself and succeed.

The core group of pro-immigrant funder allies have important lessons to share with the sector including innovative work to look beyond the pro-immigrant movement as a single issue; funding across portfolios of criminal justice, health equity, gender issues, education, economic equity, civic participation and democracy; and how to move money quickly and effectively to where groups need it most.<sup>14</sup>

## WE CAN FUND DIFFERENTLY

The most obvious and immediate way that funders can support the pro-immigrant movement is to increase the amount of dollars flowing to movement organizations. In addition to increasing how much they give, grantmakers and individual donors also have an important opportunity to shift how they give by aligning their practices and strategies with existing gaps identified by movement leaders.

Pro-immigrant movement groups work at the intersection of public health, economic security, civil rights, education access, public safety, gender justice and many other issues that philanthropy cares about. Immigrants are moms and dads, entrepreneurs and small business owners, teachers and students, doctors and nurses, caregivers, construction workers and much more. When we embrace the complexity in the history and identities of all people in our communities and enable them to thrive, those communities become healthier, safer and more prosperous.

This movement has been historically under-resourced, yet its creativity and resilience in the face of an onslaught of crises continues. Funders and donors have an unprecedented opportunity to become part of changing an environment of fear and hate by investing in movement work that can create an inclusive, just future where individuals, communities and ultimately our entire nation can flourish.

# 5 ESSENTIAL PRACTICES FOR DONORS TO SUPPORT THE PRO-IMMIGRANT MOVEMENT



## 1. GIVE UNRESTRICTED, MULTI-YEAR SUPPORT TO IMMIGRANT BASE-BUILDING ORGANIZATIONS THAT ARE ACCOUNTABLE TO AFFECTED COMMUNITIES AT THE STATE AND LOCAL LEVELS.

Whether they are building power for the long term, mobilizing quickly to respond to a crisis or forging coalitions with other movement organizations, statewide and local pro-immigrant organizations accountable to affected communities are the backbone of the movement, and they need resources to succeed.



## 2. DON'T SHY AWAY FROM FUNDING BOTH COMMUNITY ORGANIZING AND DIRECT SERVICES.

For immigrant families threatened with criminalization and separation, accessing direct services is critical to addressing urgent needs. To change the system that criminalizes them, the movement also needs funding and resources to boost leadership, strengthen organizational capacity, engage constituents and pursue other efforts that build power within communities.<sup>15</sup>



## 3. HELP GRANTEEES ACCESS 501(C)4 FUNDS.

Pro-immigrant organizations have already proven that they can win campaigns to elect immigrant and pro-immigrant candidates, and pass or defeat legislation and ballot measures on key issues.<sup>16</sup> They have greater flexibility to carry out these critical activities with 501(c)4 funds than with (c)3 foundation grants.<sup>17</sup>



## 4. COLLABORATE AND COORDINATE WITH OTHER MOVEMENT FUNDERS TO ENSURE THE FULL MOVEMENT ECOSYSTEM IS WELL-RESOURCED.

From service provision to base-building to community organizing to mass mobilization to narrative change to civic engagement to policy change and beyond, the pro-immigrant movement includes myriad strategic components. Each is crucial to winning better long-term outcomes.

Understand the gaps in the ecosystem, the connections between movements and how different organizing strategies operate. Work to break down funding siloes.<sup>18</sup> Does your gender justice portfolio include immigrant women? How do the privatization of immigration detention centers and criminalization of immigrants of color fit into your criminal justice or racial equity work? Are you considering the role of mass mobilization or (c)4 organizing activities in your funding strategies?



## 5. SUPPORT THE MOVEMENT BEYOND JUST GRANT DOLLARS.

Listen to what organizations in the movement need from you to ascertain if you can wield your organizational, board and reputational power and access in helpful ways.

Examine your investments in companies that invest in detention centers. Speak out against local deportations and lend your foundation's voice to the advocacy around them when requested by grantees. Provide access for movement leaders to key spaces with elected officials in your community if that can help advance their work. You have a voice and social capital. Find out how movement groups you support might want to deploy them as a resource.<sup>19</sup>

## ENDNOTES

1. These threats include, but are not limited to, the anti-Muslim travel ban and the end of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) in 2017 and the family border separation and internment crisis in 2018. Read: <https://www.politico.com/story/2017/09/03/trump-dreamers-immigration-daca-immigrants-242301>, <https://www.cnn.com/2017/02/10/us/trump-travel-ban-timeline/index.html>; <https://www.vox.com/2018/6/11/17443198/children-immigrant-families-separated-parents>.
2. Jean Hardisty and Deepak Bhargava, "Wrong about the Right," *The Nation*, Oct. 20, 2005, <https://www.thenation.com/article/wrong-about-right/>.
3. From 2007-2012, while anti-immigrant legislation such as Arizona's notorious SB 1070 or "Show Your Papers" law spread state-by-state across the country, the share of immigrant rights funding flowing to national policy organizations increased 20% while the share flowing to national power-building network groups and local grassroots organizations decreased from 13% and 6%, respectively according to Foundation Center data.
4. NCRP researchers used an adapted form of the social movement ecology framework, as described in the Ayni Institute's 2018 report "Funding Social Movements," in order to assign movement organizations codes that describe their primary and secondary function: either structure organizing, inside game or personal transformation. Learn more at <https://ayni.institute/fundingmovements/>.
5. Organizations classified as hate groups by Southern Poverty Law Center: <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/groups>.
6. Dina Radtke, "Study: Fox News covered immigration five times as much as CNN and MSNBC combined," *Media Matters for America*, Oct. 23, 2017, <https://www.mediamatters.org/blog/2017/10/23/study-fox-news-covered-immigration-five-times-much-cnn-and-msnbc-combined/218265>.
7. From a sample of 320 political channels and 318,000 observations. Original NCRP commissioned research by Kyle F. Butts, Economics Graduate Student at University of Colorado, January 2019.
8. Read about CAUSA Oregon's story on [www.ncrp.org/initiatives/movement-investment-project/movement-briefs/pro-immigrant-movement/success-stories/CAUSA-Oregon](http://www.ncrp.org/initiatives/movement-investment-project/movement-briefs/pro-immigrant-movement/success-stories/CAUSA-Oregon).
9. Sean Dobson, *Freedom Funders* (Washington, D.C.: National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy, 2014), <https://www.ncrp.org/publication/freedom-funders>.
10. For other resources and examples of funders supporting social movements, see our resource list on [NCRP.org/initiatives/movement-investment-project/resources](http://NCRP.org/initiatives/movement-investment-project/resources).
11. Read about Rise Together Fund's story on [NCRP.org/initiatives/movement-investment-project/movement-briefs/pro-immigrant-movement/success-stories/Rise-Together-Fund](http://NCRP.org/initiatives/movement-investment-project/movement-briefs/pro-immigrant-movement/success-stories/Rise-Together-Fund).
12. Stephanie Peng, "You can't give from an empty cup," *Keeping a close eye on philanthropy* (NCRP Blog), February 7, 2019, <https://www.ncrp.org/2019/02/you-cant-give-from-an-empty-cup.html>.
13. Learn more at [www.ncrp.org/initiatives/movement-investment-project/movement-briefs/pro-immigrant-movement/methodology](http://www.ncrp.org/initiatives/movement-investment-project/movement-briefs/pro-immigrant-movement/methodology).
14. For examples of how funders are moving money quickly and effectively, visit [www.ncrp.org/initiatives/movement-investment-project/movement-briefs/pro-immigrant-movement/success-stories](http://www.ncrp.org/initiatives/movement-investment-project/movement-briefs/pro-immigrant-movement/success-stories).
15. Lisa Ranghelli, *Leveraging Limited Dollars* (Washington, D.C.: National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy, January 2012), <https://www.ncrp.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/LeveragingLimitedDollars.pdf>.
16. There are multiple examples such as new sheriffs in North Carolina who ended collaborations with ICE as one of their first acts after being elected in 2018. This directly increased the safety of immigrant communities in these areas. Barry Yeoman, "New sheriffs in town as African Americans win top law enforcement posts in N.C.," *The Washington Post*, January 4, 2019, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/new-sheriffs-in-town-as-african-americans-win-top-law-enforcement-posts-in-nc/2019/01/03/ae54d6b2-0ec0-11e9-8938-5898adc28fa2\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.bbf98b5ceb51](https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/new-sheriffs-in-town-as-african-americans-win-top-law-enforcement-posts-in-nc/2019/01/03/ae54d6b2-0ec0-11e9-8938-5898adc28fa2_story.html?utm_term=.bbf98b5ceb51).
17. See Bolder Advocacy's primer on 501(c)4 vs foundation funding on [https://www.bolderadvocacy.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Comparison\\_of\\_501c3\\_and\\_50c4\\_Permissible\\_Activities.pdf](https://www.bolderadvocacy.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Comparison_of_501c3_and_50c4_Permissible_Activities.pdf).
18. Niki Jagpal and Kevin Laskowski, *Smashing Silos in Philanthropy: Multi-Issue Advocacy and Organizing for Real Results* (Washington, D.C. National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy, November 2013), <https://www.ncrp.org/publication/smashing-silos-philanthropy-multi-issue-advocacy-organizing-real-results>.
19. For more resources on wielding social and reputation power beyond funding, view *Power Moves: Your essential philanthropy assessment guide for equity and justice* at <https://www.ncrp.org/initiatives/philamplify/power-moves-philanthropy>.

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