

NACEDA FAMILY SNAPSHOT 2023

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This year's Family Snapshot survey asked questions about NACEDA members' engagement with environmental and climate justice activities. These associations promote awareness, advocate for local policy, and implement impactful projects that contribute to a more just and resilient future for marginalized communities. The survey questions also explored the barriers to this work that are exceptionally pertinent as the NACEDA network works to catalyze grassroots environmental and climate initiatives.

The data presented in this report was collected in September 2023. Since that time, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has announced \$3 billion in Environmental & Climate Justice Programs and \$27 billion for the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund that include targeted funding for community-based nonprofits in low-income and disadvantaged communities.

The community development and environmental justice fields share a common goal — to create sustainable and fair communities that improve individuals' quality of life. Intersectional partnerships can empower communities to work toward a future where everyone has access to clean air, water, and green spaces regardless of their background. These partnerships can encourage innovative approaches to infrastructure development,

affordable housing, and energy use that minimize environmental impact and enhance community resilience. Through collaboration between sectors, we can create more effective strategies that foster vibrant, equitable, and environmentally-sustainable communities.



WHAT IS ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE JUSTICE?

Historically, marginalized communities bear a disproportionate burden of environmental pollution, natural disasters, and public health hazards. As extreme weather events become more frequent and intense, low-income communities and people of color will face heightened risks due to limited resources, inadequate infrastructure, and social injustices. Environmental and climate justice seeks to redress these imbalances by advocating for equitable policies and implementing sustainable practices that protect the communities that bear the brunt of climate change.

INTRODUCTION

The National Alliance of Community Economic Development Associations (NACEDA) conducts an annual survey of the state and regional community development associations in [our membership](#).

We call it the “NACEDA Family Snapshot.”

➔ NACEDA MEMBERS' ENVIRONMENTAL & CLIMATE JUSTICE WORK

NACEDA MEMBERS' ENGAGEMENT IN ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE WORK HAS SEEN CONSIDERABLE GROWTH.

Our survey revealed that

61.5%
OF ORGANIZATIONS

have an interest in engaging in environmental and climate justice work, a substantial increase from 26 percent in 2020.

↑26%



WHAT CAUSED YOUR ORGANIZATION'S ACCELERATED INTEREST IN ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE JUSTICE WORK?



A FEW ISSUES HAVE COME TOGETHER to make us focus more on environmental and climate justice activities — and environmental issues generally: (1) the increased impact of climate change on communities throughout Illinois and the nation, and how this often has a disproportionately negative effect on communities of color; (2) how climate resiliency is critical as we think of affordable housing development and preservation; and (3) the federal government's increased funding for work in this area.”

— Housing Action Illinois



WE WANT TO HELP OUR RURAL COMMUNITIES with implementing thoughtful policies and programs to protect the health and safety of residents, preserve natural resources, create a more reliable energy system, and build a more resilient economy by accessing the influx of state and federal dollars.”

— Community Economic Development Association of Michigan



THE CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO has a very robust climate action plan with goals to eliminate carbon emissions to zero by 2040. Now that the City of San Francisco is planning to decarbonize buildings, it must create resources to enable low-income residents to be able to afford these investments. It is the lower-income neighborhoods that have borne the brunt of air quality issues, post industrial toxic pollution, nuclear contamination, etc., and have no resources to combat these blights. CCHO recognizes this problem and is working on developing resources to address them.”

— Council of Community Housing Organizations (CCHO)



THE INCREASED FREQUENCY AND INTENSITY OF NATURAL DISASTERS in just the last decade alone has exposed extreme shortfalls regarding the recovery process for low-income residents, and other vulnerable communities. There is a gradual but steadily growing acceptance of climate change as a very real phenomenon which has provided new political will and resources for aiding communities to address factors that impact healthy communities.”

— Housing & Community Development Network of New Jersey



ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES IN COOK COUNTY involved a plant that spewed potentially toxic and harmful fumes that blew into Black and Brown communities. A substantial number of residents experienced decreased air quality, increased rates of pulmonary disease and cancer. Learning about this event, hearing from those who are directly impacted by environmental injustice, and its intersection with healthy housing accelerated Georgia ACT's interest in environmental justice.”

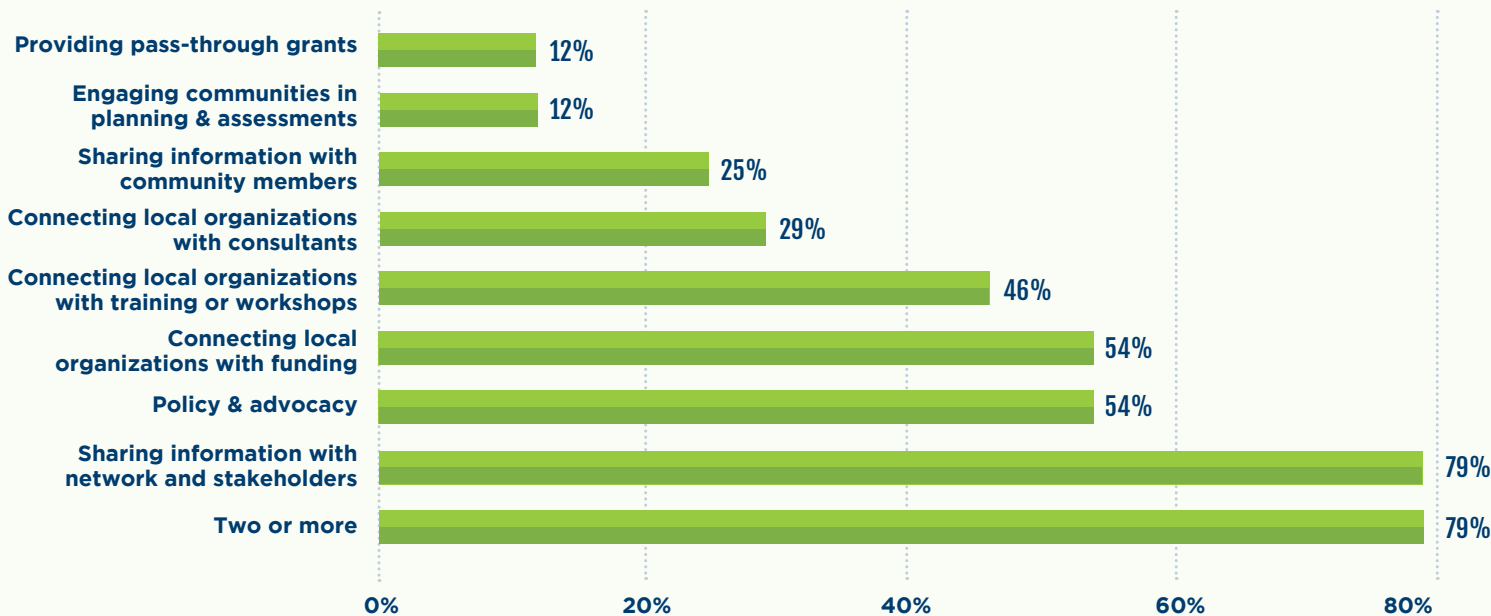
— Georgia Advancing Communities Together (Georgia ACT)

→ ENVIRONMENTAL & CLIMATE JUSTICE ACTIVITIES

With 70.83 percent of organizations already engaging in two or more environmental and climate justice-related activities, NACEDA members have demonstrated commitment to incorporating this discipline into community development. Their primary activities include: Sharing information, engaging in policy and advocacy work, and connecting local organizations with sources of funding for environmental and climate justice activities.

70.83%
organizations engage in two or more environmental and climate justice-related activities

ENVIRONMENTAL & CLIMATE JUSTICE ACTIVITIES



SHARING ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE JUSTICE-RELATED INFORMATION

CONNECTING LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS WITH SOURCES OF FUNDING

ENGAGING IN POLICY AND ADVOCACY WORK

“ We communicate environmental justice-related information with our members, allies and other stakeholders through our newsletters and e-blasts. We also offer direct education through our weatherization and energy efficiency seminars which we conduct over the state. The creation of the weatherization toolkit was a big digital resource for our members in both English and Spanish.”

— Housing & Community Development Network of New Jersey

“ We organized several sessions at the 2023 Housing Oregon Industry Support Conference to connect members with new federal funding sources related to environmental and climate justice.”

— Housing Oregon

“ CCEDA is focused on connecting community development corporations – the majority of which are led by people of color – to non-profit climate and environmental justice organizations as well as relevant state agencies, such as the Strategic Growth Council. Our goal is to develop strategies aimed at climate adaptation in low income neighborhoods of color.”

— California Community Economic Development Association (CCEDA)

→ CAPACITY BUILDING PROGRAMS

NACEDA members have created programs to build their members' capacity to engage in environmental and climate work. These efforts are related to:

GREEN SPACE DEVELOPMENT



The creation of areas that are dedicated to natural vegetation and recreational use.

WASTE REDUCTION AND RECYCLING PROGRAMS

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT



The development of thriving communities that are environmentally conscious and meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to do the same.

CLIMATE JUSTICE AND EQUITY

PROPERTY STEWARDSHIP AND CONSERVATION



The ecological preservation of land while respecting its cultural heritage, including rectifying historical injustices related to land dispossession.

CLEAN AND RENEWABLE ENERGY

RESILIENT COMMUNITIES

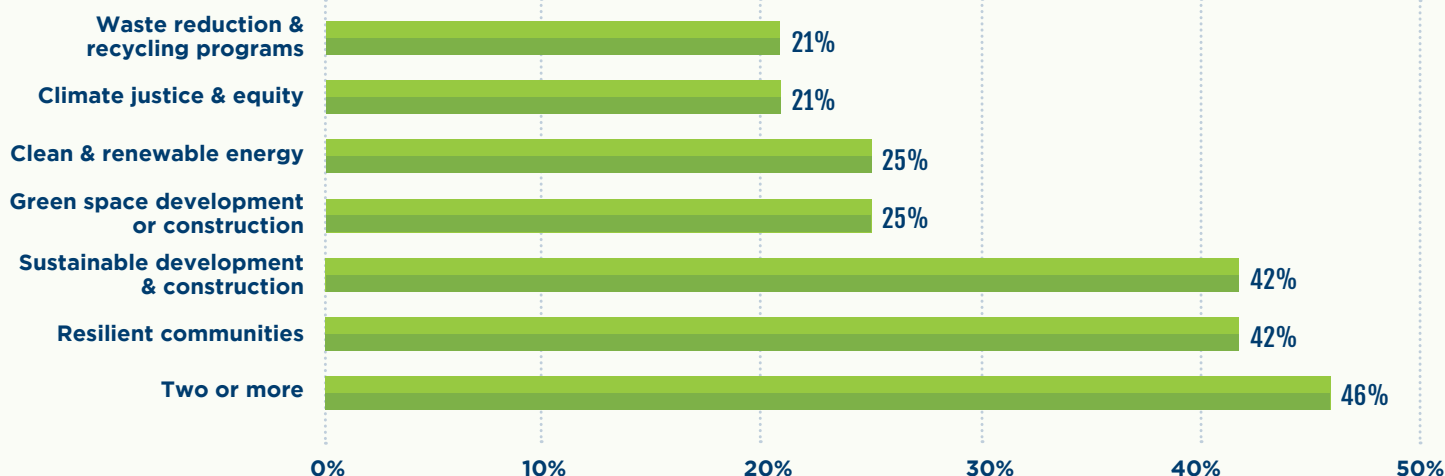


The rehabilitation of buildings to strengthen a community's capacity to prepare and respond to climate change and other environmental stressors.

IN THE UNITED STATES, FLORIDA IS AMONG THE MOST VULNERABLE TO NATURAL DISASTERS. Florida Alliance for Community Solutions provides the public with resources for natural disasters, emergency preparedness, and financial assistance.

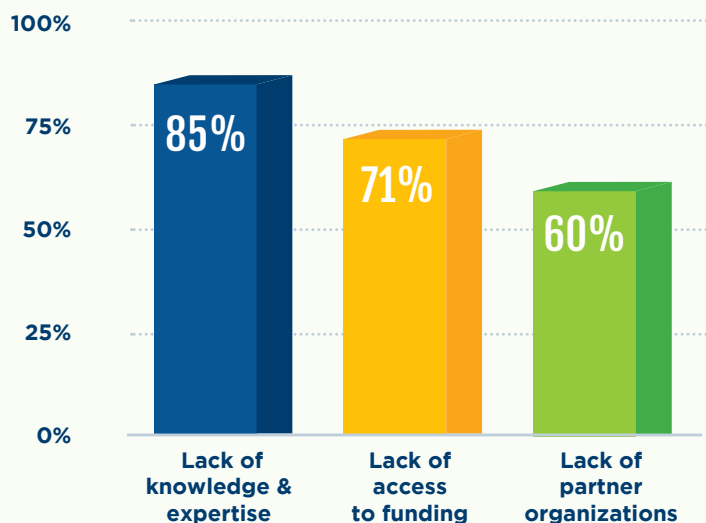


CAPACITY BUILDING PROGRAMS, SERVICES & RESOURCES



→ BARRIERS TO ENVIRONMENTAL & CLIMATE WORK

BARRIERS TO ENVIRONMENTAL & CLIMATE JUSTICE WORK



While our members expressed accelerated interest due to a recent influx in federal and state dollars for this work, they reported notable barriers to obtaining these funds.

85% of members responded that their lack of knowledge and expertise was a barrier to this work. Members expressed a desire to acquire a more thorough understanding of various approaches for addressing environmental and climate issues in their communities before spearheading any initiatives.

Further, **60% of members** cited the lack of cross-sector partnerships as a barrier. The lack of integration between fields has hindered our members' access to expertise. Our members require collaboration with environmental experts to fill their knowledge gaps; however, they have found it challenging to forge these partnerships.

Additionally, the lack of partnerships and integration between fields has negatively impacted our members' access to funding. Community development and community engagement are not yet considered an integral component of environmental and climate justice programming. Instead, environmental and climate justice resources are often treated as supplementary add-ons to affordable housing development, which means they are not given the consideration they deserve by community development funders.

Consequently, **71% of our members** reported their lack of access to funding.



COMMUNITY BUILDERS NETWORK IS CURRENTLY WORKING

to convene a diverse group of stakeholders [nonprofits, for-profits, funders] to identify needs and challenges. We want to have a better understanding on how to tackle the issues about decarbonization in our communities so that we can develop clearer strategies.”

— Community Builders Network of Metro St. Louis

RECOMMENDATIONS

By addressing knowledge gaps and fostering cross-sector collaboration, these recommendations aim to increase accessibility to funding for environmental and climate justice projects within the community development field.

State and regional associations will find it valuable to form cross-sector partnerships with government, academic, and nonprofit professionals that are experienced in environmental justice work. Building these relationships can provide opportunities for knowledge-sharing, funding, and capacity building. NACEDA members have found success by forging contacts with government agencies, such as the [EPA](#), air or water quality management districts, and public utility commissions. These partnerships can also help our members stay up to date with local priorities and upcoming opportunities.

Additionally, associations can look to nonprofit entities and those in their existing network for partnerships, connections, and expertise. While many potential partners reference their work in their name, such as an “environmental collaborative” or a “climate adaptation network,” a wide variety of fields that are closely related to housing and community development engage in environmental and climate justice work. Many faith-based organizations participate in stewardship activities, while real estate developers, building rehabilitators, urban planners, and others include significant elements of environmental

sustainability in their projects.

Professors, researchers, and students from a variety of disciplines can provide technical expertise and a history of environmental and climate justice work to bolster credibility and improve organizations’ chances of securing funding. For example, NACEDA members have found partners in university departments that engage in environmental, geological, and social science research to inform their environmental justice initiatives.

Beyond forming partnerships, we encourage our members to proactively engage with funders and policymakers. Associations and the community developers they represent should highlight environmental issues in their communities and showcase projects that have addressed similar challenges in comparable communities. NACEDA convenings, including our 2023 summit and peer-learning communities, provide an opportunity for members to hear about others’ successes and share their own. By demonstrating the feasibility and effectiveness of their proposed initiatives, our members can influence key stakeholders to support their work.

Funders that primarily allocate money to environmental organizations ought to consider the impact that non-traditional organizations, such as housing developers and network associations, can have on environmental and climate issues. These issues are inextricably linked to housing development with residential buildings accounting for 20 percent of greenhouse gas emissions.¹

Rehabilitating and retrofitting homes with energy-efficient designs reduces both greenhouse gas emissions and utility bills of low-income residents. Thus, funders should consider the value of community development partners as a key component of sustainable, scalable, and successful environmental justice initiatives.

We encourage funders who are already involved in the community development sector to consider providing specific grant programs or giving preference to projects that support environmental and climate justice work. Reserving funds within grant programs for these projects will ensure that environmental and climate work will be embedded in a wide variety of initiatives. As an example, the federal Community Economic Development program recently created a new grant program which aims to spur economic revitalization and remediate environmental degradation in energy communities.

The new year brings billions of dollars in funding for community-based nonprofits in low-income and disadvantaged communities to engage in environmental and climate justice work. NACEDA members can play a critical role in preparing local organizations to undertake this work. Establishing new partnerships and cross-sector collaboration will enable NACEDA members to obtain the knowledge and funding necessary to engage in environmental and climate justice work. Taking these steps will lead to a more sustainable and resilient future for the communities we serve.

¹ Benjamin Goldstein, Dimitrios Gounaridis, and Joshua P. Newell, “The carbon footprint of household energy use in the United States,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, vol. 117, no. 32 (July 20, 2020): 19122-19130, <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1922205117>