

**THE
SOLUTIONS
PROJECT**

100%
FOR
100%

**CLIMATE NARRATIVE
& MOVEMENT BUILDING CASE STUDY**

FEBRUARY 2021

THESOLUTIONSPROJECT.ORG

CASE STUDY COMMISSIONED BY THE SOLUTIONS PROJECT

DEVELOPED BY CLIMATE ACCESS



Climate Access is a nonprofit organization focused on building political and public support for climate and clean energy solutions by developing and promoting effective communication and engagement approaches. Since 2011, Climate Access has demonstrated the value of going beyond environmental frames and using new narrative concepts that have since become widely used, such as illustrating the interconnectedness between energy use and climate change and emphasizing the need for carbon-free or low-carbon energy. We introduced the idea of shifting from a “should we act?” to a “we are acting” posture with the Preparation Frame that places a greater emphasis on the need for communities to ready themselves for current and future climate impacts.

ClimateAccess.org



The Solutions Project is a national nonprofit organization that promotes climate justice through grantmaking and amplifying the stories of frontline community leaders in the media.

The organization seeks to accelerate the transition to 100% renewable energy and equitable access to healthy air, water and land by supporting climate justice organizations, especially those led by women of color.

TheSolutionsProject.org

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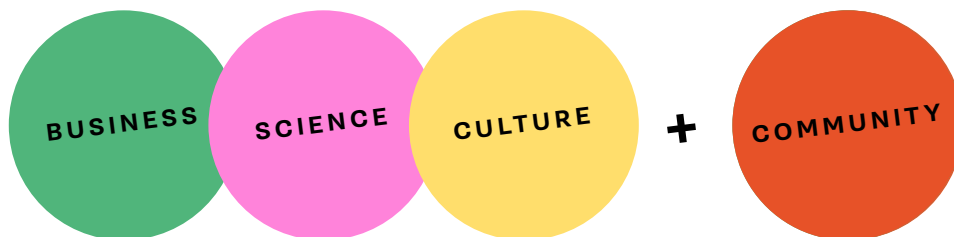
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CASE SUMMARY

The *100% for 100% Climate Narrative and Movement Building Case Study* illustrates how political and social outcomes were achieved as a result of placing equity at the center of an organization's culture, programmatic mission and financial model. It tells the story of how The Solutions Project popularized the 100% renewable energy goal and expanded its core purpose to be "100% renewable energy for 100% of the people." This narrative shift took place through collaborative partnerships and a series of internal transitions that led to a commitment to becoming a radically inclusive and culture-led organization. The case study highlights how The Solutions Project overcame internal and external operational challenges to shape an equitable 100% renewable energy narrative, as well as lessons learned for other leaders working to tackle the climate emergency and advance bold solutions.

Formed initially around a three-pillar structure of "business, science, and culture" to achieve the 100% renewable energy goal, The Solutions Project's first Executive Director, Sarah Shanley Hope, added "community," in 2014. This additional pillar set the foundation for launching the organization's grantmaking program in January 2015. A key leader in this transition was Gloria Walton, who was the CEO of Strategic Concepts in Organizing and Policy Education (SCOPE) in Los Angeles, an inaugural grantee in 2015. She then joined The Solutions Project board in 2017 to help build a new vision to scale investments in, and amplification of, community solutions. Gloria joined the staff as President and CEO in October 2020.



FOR 100%

Coming out of 16 years of community organizing, I joined the board because I believe in anchoring climate solutions in frontline communities. I saw our communities' legacy work honored and reflected in The Solutions Project's vision of 100% renewable energy for 100% of people. I joined the team to take this vision to the next level, in partnership with leaders building power from the ground up who can draw down far greater resources, and who's stories can inspire the world. Together, we can and will create the future we want.



GLORIA WALTON
PRESIDENT AND CEO, THE SOLUTIONS PROJECT




Under Gloria's leadership as President and CEO, The Solutions Project supports the work of women and people of color through its narrative and grantmaking programs, partnerships, staffing, and organizational development efforts.

As part of its executive leadership transition, The Solutions Project commissioned the nonprofit Climate Access to evaluate the organization's efforts and summarize it into the *100% for 100% Climate Narrative and Movement Building Case Study*. While the case study research was completed before the COVID-19 pandemic and the resurgence of the Movement for Black Lives, as the largest social uprising in our country's history, the findings are more relevant than ever. Many climate and environmental leaders, including funders, are taking a fresh look at racist practices within their organizations and how to change their cultures and programs for transformational results. For The Solutions Project, this case study also provides a critical point of reference as it continues to evolve its internal culture and seek even greater mission impact.

100% RENEWABLE ENERGY FOR 100% OF THE PEOPLE

INTRODUCTION



Founded in 2013, The Solutions Project operates under the premise that “clean energy can power social good and racial equity” and that the path to equitable renewable energy policy is only possible through frontline leadership. For a national intermediary organization, walking this path then requires authentic collaboration and relationships with frontline communities. The Solutions Project’s model is to bring together business, science, culture, and community to “inspire, invest in, and connect” community solutions to bring about 100% renewable energy for 100% of the people. Supporting equity-focused and frontline power-building organizations is at the heart of The Solutions Project's efforts to achieve 100% renewable energy and eliminate harmful fossil fuels.

CASE STUDY PURPOSE

The Solutions Project commissioned Climate Access to develop a case study to gain a deeper understanding of the 100% renewable energy narrative and its role in the development and adoption of equitable renewable energy policies and programs. In early 2020, Climate Access conducted qualitative research to examine the trajectory of the narrative; elements of success that served to move the conversation and policy change forward; communication and public engagement barriers that were overcome and remain; and recommendations for the continued advancement of the frame.

The following case study provides an account of The Solutions Project's methods for working with community-based organizations and cultural influencers to advance a narrative about the possibility and feasibility of a 100% renewable energy transition – and how it contributed to a movement for equitable policy design and implementation. The case study illustrates the successes and challenges of communicating about the “100% for 100%” goal and the influence this narrative strategy had on driving state- and local-level commitments and pledges. Finally, it introduces key building blocks like community solutions, popular education about scientific research, celebrity-powered media, and business voices that are not often joined together. The audience for this case study includes other organizations, foundations and strategists for any industry seeking to bring about a more just, equitable, and green economy. The Solutions Project is using this report to inform an expansion in its vision to ensure racial equity and environmental sustainability in the energy sector, but also in water and food systems.

The research highlights how the organization underwent a shift from majority white male leadership who believed in the potential for 100% renewable energy and strove to disseminate technical-based solutions, to a racially diverse and more feminine leadership team that strives to share power and resources with organizations led by Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color (BIPOC), predominantly women. These shifts occurred both internally and externally, which is a key learning for narrative strategists.

As of January 2021, over 170 cities, 10 counties, and 8 states across the U.S. have made 100% clean energy commitments. A handful of state and municipal governments, including California, New York State, Washington state, the cities of Atlanta, Seattle, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Pueblo, CO and Washington, DC have mandated equitable energy transitions, notably including the organization's priority places where frontline grantees are leading.

METHODOLOGY

Climate Access reviewed relevant organizational materials from The Solutions Project and online communication content of grantee organizations, conducted a series of interviews, fielded a survey, and completed a media analysis to gain an in-depth understanding of the 100% renewable energy narrative's development and impact.

The Climate Access team:

ANALYZED ONLINE COMMUNICATIONS

Analyzed the online communications of The Solutions Project's current grantees to assess how frontline organizations are framing 100% renewable energy campaigns.

REVIEWED FINDINGS

Reviewed findings from The Solutions Project's previously commissioned third-party grantee evaluation and Renewable Energy Narrative Analysis.

DREW UPON ADDITIONAL RESEARCH

Drew upon additional research conducted for two case studies produced by Climate Access in 2018 on How the 100% Clean Energy Story is Being Told in American Cities featuring, among others, an interview with Jodie Van Horn

who was serving as director of the Sierra Club's Ready for 100 campaign.

DISTRIBUTED A SURVEY

Distributed a 12-question survey to grantees to gain an understanding of their efforts to advance 100% renewable energy campaigns and the role that the “100% for 100%” narrative played in their organizing, policy, and culture change efforts.

CONDUCTED INTERVIEWS

Interviewed grantees, staff, Board members, and external partners to gain further insights into their communications approaches.

MEDIA ANALYSIS

Conducted a media analysis with a focus on news stories related to the following three key 100% renewable energy milestones: the 2014 People's Climate March in New York City, the California State Assembly's passage of Senate Bill 100 “100 Percent Clean Energy Act of 2018” (SB 100), and New York state's 2019 passage of the “Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act” (CLCPA). Climate Access used the Google News aggregator as the primary tracking and search tool, which produced a resulting dataset of 32 articles across 24 English-language news outlets.



**GENESIS OF THE
100% RENEWABLE
ENERGY FRAME**

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The concept of 100% renewable energy has been considered in academic circles for nearly 50 years, with its first mention in a scientific paper in 1975. Yet, the concept picked up steam only relatively recently, with a rise in studies on 100% renewable energy scenarios for the U.S. in the last decade. In 2009, Mark Jacobson (Stanford University) and Mark Delucchi (University of California, Berkeley) published “A Path to Sustainable Energy by 2030” in *Scientific American* that laid the groundwork for how wind, water, and solar could provide 100% of the world’s energy and eliminate fossil fuels, and pointed to political will as a primary barrier to achieving that goal. The concept received substantial criticism for being unrealistic. However, not everyone was incredulous about the potential of 100% renewable energy.

ORIGINS OF THE SOLUTIONS PROJECT

In 2011, Rabobank executive Marco Krapels met and brought together Jacobson, and actor and anti-fracking activist Mark Ruffalo to discuss how New York state could move away from fracked natural gas. The fortuitous gathering led to the development of a 100% renewable energy roadmap for New York, later published in the journal Energy Policy. The group continued to meet and The Solutions Project was officially formed in 2013 with the intent to continue a collaboration among scientists, renewable energy pioneers, business and labor leaders, farmers, celebrities, and cultural figures. The initial goal was to raise awareness of the viability of renewable energy and the roadmap for New York, as well as to leverage private capital to demonstrate the success of renewable energy projects.



Photo Credit: The Solutions Project

Elizabeth Yeampierre, Executive Director of UPROSE and co-founder Mark Ruffalo at The Solutions Project's inaugural grantee convening in 2015

The Solutions Project built an advisory board in 2012 consisting of high-profile experts and celebrities and was joined by Jon Wank as chief operating officer, who led the development of a series of infographics that visually communicate the 50 state 100% roadmaps. The idea began to garner attention and The Solutions Project team was invited to meet with Silicon Valley business leaders, NGOs, journalists, government officials, and policymakers. In 2013, The Solutions Project shared its 100% roadmap for California with Jodie Van Horn, who later became the founder and director of Sierra Club's Ready for 100 Campaign (focused on engaging U.S. cities in the transition to 100% renewable energy) and an ongoing partner. This was followed by the hiring of Sarah Shanley Hope in 2014, first as a consultant to facilitate the strategic trajectory of the organization and then as the organization's first executive director. The Solutions Project then transitioned from a fiscally sponsored project to gaining its 501(c)(3) nonprofit status.

Even before 169 countries signed the historic Paris Climate Agreement, Mark Ruffalo and his organization, The Solutions Project, released roadmaps to transition the entire world to 100% renewable energy. This bold idea quickly became the rallying cry we needed to inspire cities, businesses, countries and citizens across the globe to raise the ambition of their actions to solve the climate crisis.



CHRISTIANA FIGUERES

FORMER EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF THE UNITED NATIONS FRAMEWORK
CONVENTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE (UNFCCC)

TIME LINE

2013

The Solutions Project (TSP) founders bring their 100% plans to the Nantucket Project.

TSP founders' 100% goal is dismissed by elected officials and environmental leaders.

TSP founders meet with Vice President Joe Biden to present the case for a 100% transition.

TSP showcases "100% for 100%" at the People's Climate March, in full-page New York Times ad, and Leonardo DiCaprio's UN speech.

RE100 launched at Climate Week.

TSP convenes NY environmental and economic justice advocates for energy democracy.

2014

TSP becomes first funder of frontline coalitions on 100% in NY and CA.

TSP co-creates the 100% Network with the Sierra Club and Environment America.

TSP co-founder presents 100% roadmaps at COP 21 and staff support frontline leaders for just transition public actions in Paris.

2015

Democratic Party platform endorses 100% goal after TSP co-founder presentation.

Sierra Club launches Ready for 100%.

TSP launches rapid response fund and media supports with grants to Indigenous organizers at Standing Rock.

2016

OF EVENTS

2017

U.S. Conference of Mayors passes 100% resolution.

Environment America launches the Voices for 100% Renewable Energy project.

TSP receives NCRP Impact Award in innovation of frontline grantmaking for rapid response support of Standing Rock.

SB 100 passes in CA with TSP providing celebrity amplification for frontline partners credited with win.

100% Network reaches 100 members with frontline-led steering committee.

100 U.S. cities and towns commit to 100% via Sierra Club's Ready for 100 campaign.

US Climate Action Network releases 100% Renewable Energy Campaign Starter Guide.

2018

CLCPA passes in NY, heralded as the country's strongest, most equitable climate policy with TSP media clout behind frontlines.

1/4 of US pop. in areas committed to 100%.

TSP makes 100% Commitment to Justice directing funds largely to women of color.

Analysts and pro-nuclear groups seize 100% message in response to Green New Deal.

2019

The 100% Clean Energy Collaborative forms.

NRDC launches "Race to 100% Clean" tool.

President-elect Joe Biden announces the goal of reaching 100% by 2035 with 40% clean energy investments in frontline communities.

2020



**KEY STRATEGIES
FOR SUCCESS
ON 100%**

COLLABORATE WITH FRONTLINE COMMUNITY LEADERS

A significant component of The Solutions Project’s focus on equity is narrative co-creation. It not only provides messaging guidance but also shapes communication strategies with frontline communities. The Solutions Project is “breaking the mold in their approach” by relating its narrative strategy with the advocacy work of its grantees. As part of this trust-based approach, The Solutions Project partners with frontline leaders to help amplify their work. This is distinct from what are typically top-down, prescriptive narrative and advocacy strategies in the field. By building authentic relationships, groups shape messages together and gain a platform to advance their work. The Solutions Project promotes grantee collaboration by providing funding for convenings and supporting coalitions. Its ecosystem approach connects people and organizations with similar values and approaches to develop a network of allies across business, science, culture and community working toward a shared vision, as well as connecting with other funders to share information and strategies.

The Solutions Project was on the phone with us in the very beginning as we were starting to come together and facilitating the beginnings of the Energy Democracy Alliance in 2014. They were in on the ground floor and funded convenings and member organizations to do early coalition building and coordination. They gave in-kind communications support through communications consultants, which helped us with social media, media releases, op-eds and a strategic communications training. The Solutions Project gave us access to those resources.



JESSICA AZULAY

ALLIANCE FOR A GREEN ECONOMY, ENERGY DEMOCRACY ALLIANCE

Frontline partners repeatedly commented that their relationship with The Solutions Project was more approachable and distinct from other funders, with the team acting as thought partners, mentors, and “crucial informal advisors.” For example, groups felt that they could pick up the phone and discuss strategy for moving policy forward with The Solutions Project, gain a better understanding of the power structures in the energy democracy field, and receive organizing and communication strategy support through learning calls, convenings, and training. One recommendation that emerged from The Solutions Project’s recent evaluation was to continue to improve communications and feedback both at the time of grant completion and around the decision not to renew funding, to build stronger collaborative partnerships beyond a granting relationship.



Miya Yoshitani, ED of APEN and Philanthropic Trustee of The Solutions Project

Photo Credit: APEN



HELP PEOPLE ENVISION THE 100% TRANSITION

The Solutions Project’s 100% roadmap infographics are successful in making technical information accessible through simple, concrete visuals that capture people’s imaginations and convey abstract concepts in concrete ways. Frontline partners work with The Solutions Project to create social media content, including shareable memes and short videos to impart not only information but also the values behind why "100% renewable energy for 100% of the people" is a necessary goal.

Frontline partners work with The Solutions Project to reach out to their communities not only online, but also to build a local base of support through on-the-ground organizing. They facilitate in-person member meetings and workshops to talk with community members about how they see themselves in a just transition future as well as convening town halls, doing door-to-door voter engagement, and phone banking. Community organizers made direct, personal connections between the vision and what people care most about, such as health, rent and jobs. For some groups, meaningful public engagement involved translating materials into different languages.

[VIEW THE FULL COLLECTION OF INFOGRAPHICS](#) ▶

100% UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

A vision for the transition to 100% wind, water & solar energy



Residential rooftop solar
10.9%



Solar plants
16.4%

2050

PROJECTED

Commercial & government rooftop solar
14.6%



Wave devices
1%



CONVEY THE MESSAGE THROUGH MULTIPLE SOURCES

Communications research has shown that people need to hear a message from multiple sources and types of media before it becomes salient and memorable. These multiple messaging points are not reaching everyone, underscoring the need to continue to expand the message's reach while working to ensure key goals are not co-opted or diluted by other interests.

The Solutions Project understands that the messenger is as important, if not more so, than the message and frontline leaders have incredible stories to tell about the solutions they are creating. A unique advantage of partnering with The Solutions Project is its success in building relationships with well-known celebrities and some corporate leaders who collaborate with the organization to amplify the work of grassroots organizations. Through their media clout and influence with large groups of social media followers, celebrity spokespeople have pushed for policy change, celebrated legislative victories, helped the movement maintain momentum, and brought the "100% for 100%" narrative to broad audiences. Critically and strategically, these influencers have brought their spotlight behind frontline leaders and equitable policy provisions within the 100% clean energy movement.

The frame is everywhere now and The Solutions Project's critical role isn't always well known. This national framework has succeeded in altering public policy in a fundamental way. The first part of the frame is a technical transition from one energy production source to another, which is essential, but it alone doesn't speak to the history of racist and classist energy practices and distribution of energy benefits, so figuring out how to keep the 'for 100% of the people' part central is important.



AARON BARTLEY
CO-FOUNDER AND FORMER EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF PUSH BUFFALO

SHIFT INTERNAL ORGANIZATIONAL DYNAMICS

The Solutions Project's commitment to equity is an ongoing process and did not come about without bumps in the road. For those who come to the climate movement from a carbon analysis perspective, emissions reductions are often perceived as the primary metric of success. With this mentality, the importance of gender and racial diversity is often viewed in terms of optics and politics at best, a distraction at worst. Without authentic dedication to making difficult and at times personally painful organizational changes for those who have traditionally held dominant positions of societal privilege and power, the concept of equity runs the risk of merely being a checkbox talking point to protect an image.

The Solutions Project leadership reflected on their journey and determined that having an organizational change management plan in place as well as conflict resolution coaching would have improved its internal process. This would have allowed the organization to more effectively align expectations with equity goals and make the necessary transitions for the program, staff, and board to be more representative of the movement and in step with the values of grantee organizations. A common challenge for organizations working toward justice goals is the acknowledgment that organizational and personal development, including anti-racism work specifically, is a necessary part of a commitment to equity. Yet, those in positions of leadership often do not fully understand or accept the depth of change that is required to shift power and financial relationships. This transformation means accepting that if the organization is successful, the people at the table will ultimately be different than those who currently hold positions of leadership.

**DEVELOPING THE
100% FOR 100%
APPROACH**

EVOLVING THE SOLUTIONS PROJECT'S

THEORY OF CHANGE

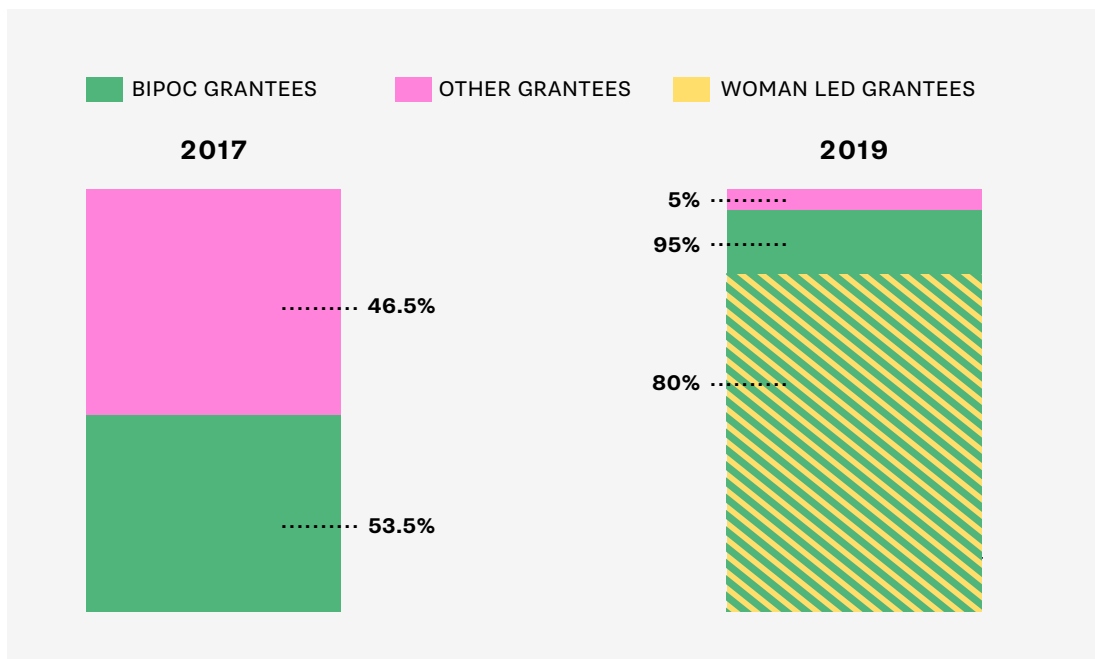
The Solutions Project began with a focus on raising awareness of the viability of 100% renewable energy through a three-pillar structure of business, science, and culture. As a consultant and then as interim executive director, Hope asserted that adding “for 100% of people” to the vision of 100% renewable energy and including “community” as the fourth pillar was essential for the organization. At the outset of her tenure as executive director in 2014, Hope set forth a plan to support leadership from the ground up as co-creators of a national narrative strategy. In partnership, they would amplify community visions and models for a just transition to 100% renewable energy. Drawing on lessons learned from roles at the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights, Green For All, and the Alliance for Climate Education, it was clear to Hope that this approach would not only achieve policy buy-in, but that large-scale change could not be made unless energy solutions benefit everyone, especially Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) who are on the frontlines of climate change and impacted most by the fossil fuel industry. Their leadership and stories of people making “100% for 100%” happen in their communities would bring about the best chance of transition.

She stressed that the "100% for 100%" narrative and movement building efforts would only succeed if they were grounded in the vision and expertise of frontline communities, implemented by members of those communities, and strengthened by taking steps to equitably share power and resources. With funding support from the Leonardo DiCaprio Foundation, The Solutions Project launched the field's first intermediary fund focused on equitable climate solutions, in 2015.



Committed to this vision, Hope set out to create a collaborative model with grantees and partners to amplify their work and increase funding to BIPOC and women-led organizations working to drive renewable energy solutions, as well as to look internally and diversify The Solutions Project's staff and board. The Solutions Project began its grantmaking approach to provide grants to smaller organizations working at the community level. This focus aimed to address a critical gap in philanthropic support for frontline organizations innovating solutions with those communities most affected by climate change and who would otherwise be left out of a clean energy transition. To achieve these shifts, The Solutions Project established a philanthropic advisory committee, which ultimately became the organization's trustees, to oversee the grantmaking process through an equity lens. Hope also recognized the need to identify and work closely with partners and funders that shared a commitment to 100% clean energy, but may be less familiar with issues of equity, including the Sierra Club.

With a growing staff and program, The Solutions Project began amplifying leaders speaking about community solutions to the climate crisis, including Gloria Walton from SCOPE who became an early co-creator of the organization's national narrative. Walton also offered a key source of feedback for the organization to learn in real-time when communications were misaligned with frontline experiences and the narrative strategy needed to reconnect with movement. Additionally, she illuminated how media can both spotlight and support frontline innovation. Partners spoke of The Solutions Project's "unwavering commitment" to equitable solutions and how it is not always acknowledged in the media or by other organizations for the provenance of the "100% for 100%" vision and approach. In 2017, 46.5 percent of The Solution Project's grants went to organizations led by people of color. Walton brought her expertise and lived experience to inform the Board's bold commitment to justice in 2018. By the end of 2019, The Solutions Project invested 95 percent of its resources in frontline organizations led by people of color



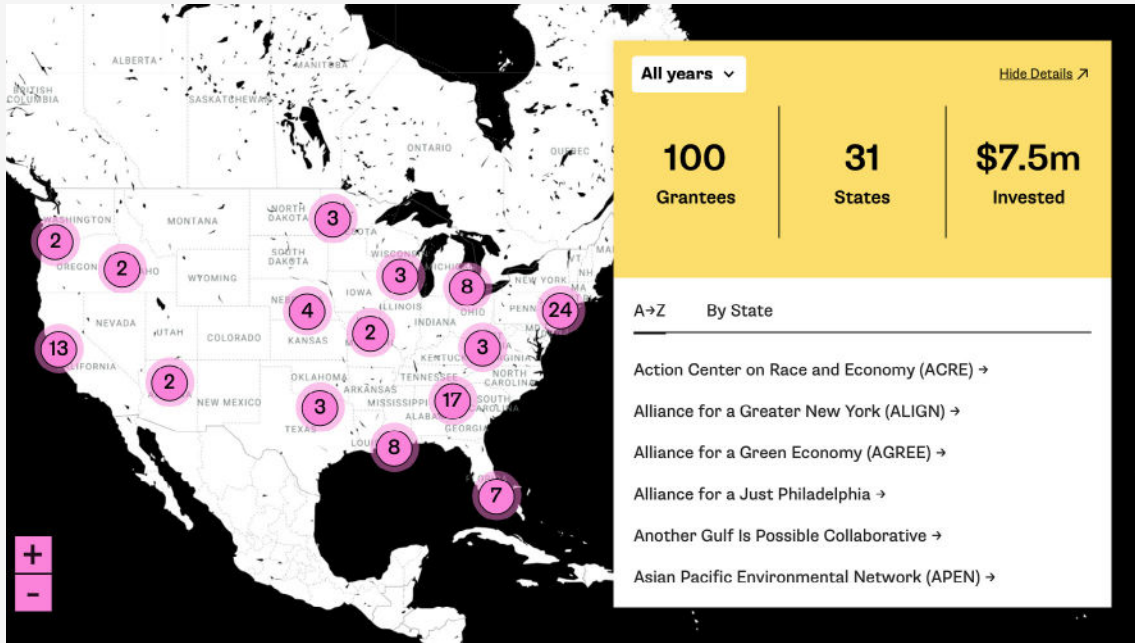
LAUNCHING AND NORMALIZING

THE IDEA (2013-2015)

Despite the rapidly growing renewable energy sector and passage of 100% renewable energy legislation in key states and cities across the U.S., skeptics raised questions. They challenged the ability of wind and solar to meet the nation's energy demands, noting supply and storage concerns, and claiming that natural gas remains necessary as a "bridge fuel" until renewable energy sources can be brought to scale. When The Solutions Project initially shared its 100% renewable energy roadmap in 2013, it was met with derision by prominent NGO leaders and decision-makers, who found the transformative idea to be laughable. Undeterred, The Solutions Project continued to share its vision with supporting research underscoring its viability.

The organization publicly launched the "100% for 100%" narrative at the People's Climate March on September 21, 2014, in New York City, with frontline organizers of color as the lead voices. This meant not only supporting the equity frame and frontline leaders, but matching their voices and visions with the celebrity spotlight and media coverage that follows, bringing wider public awareness and momentum behind the movement. Organized in response to the U.N. Climate Summit of world leaders, Hope also saw the march as an opportunity for The Solutions Project to collaborate with groups who would ultimately join forces as the New York Energy Democracy Alliance and NY Renews that supported the 100% vision. As frontline organizations and community members converged in NYC, The Solutions Project convened a listening and strategy session to align goals across the state and influence the Governor's emerging "Reforming the Energy Vision" (REV) process to ground in equity principles.

VIEW OUR INTERACTIVE GRANTEE MAP ▶



The People's Climate March was a watershed moment, where frontline groups were the lead organizers supported by mainstream environmental groups. The Solutions Project's "100% for 100%" message was a rallying cry for those who saw the need for increased equity and an attention on the solutions we want and our movement can offer. Media outlets including The Guardian, CNN, NBC, New York Magazine, and People Magazine, featured the voices of advocates who celebrated the moment as a turning point and 100% renewable energy as a vision for the future. The Solutions Project leveraged the amplification power of celebrity with staff and frontline partners, especially Indigenous, marching alongside Mark Ruffalo and Leonardo DiCaprio, who held signs that prominently displayed the "100% for 100%" message. The U.N. Climate Summit offered a parallel opportunity to

influence decision-makers and garner widespread public attention to the climate crisis. The Solutions Project saw the potential to extend the "100% for 100%" message to a new audience and placed a full-page advertisement in the New York Times. On September 23, 2014, DiCaprio addressed the United Nations General Assembly in a well-publicized appeal for climate action, which included the message that renewable energy could indeed supply 100% of the world's energy needs by 2050. The Solutions Project and frontline groups worked to harness the momentum from these highly publicized events to secure commitments for transitioning to 100% renewable energy and prioritize solutions for those impacted the most by the climate crisis.



100% Network members meet outside PUSH Buffalo's School 77, NY's first community solar project.

Photo Credit: Stacey Heras, The Solutions Project

This is also the timeline when The Solutions Project was designing its programs, including what became the field's first intermediary fund supporting equitable climate and clean energy solutions. Proposals were invited from frontline organizations in NY and CA, including many of its core partners who continue today like APEN, PUSH Buffalo, SCOPE, and UPROSE. Climate Week NYC 2014 also marked the launch of RE100, formed by The Climate Group in partnership with the Carbon Disclosure Project as part of the We Mean Business coalition. RE100 was formed to bring together influential



Artist John Quigley assembles an aerial photo of a call for 100% RE outside COP21

Photo Credit: Yann Arthus-Bertrand for Spectral Q

businesses in support of driving market change to achieve 100% renewable energy and positioned to communicate the business case for the economic benefits of renewable electricity. The Solutions Project congratulated the RE100 coalition on social media and pointed to these corporate commitments as an example of large-scale shifts occurring among corporate leaders.

The United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP 21) in Paris in 2015 presented the next large-scale opportunity for The Solutions Project to bring the "100% for 100%" message to a global audience. They funded frontline leaders with an equitable 100% renewable energy goal to attend COP 21. The Solutions Project also supported co-founder Mark Jacobson with his testimony before the U.S. congressional delegation and several talks at the COP, including a presentation in between U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry. He presented the 100% roadmaps for the 139 countries with the highest carbon emissions and described how, together, these countries emit more than 99% of all global greenhouse gases and air pollutants. The Solutions Project distributed unbranded versions of its 100% transition infographics via partner organization Avaaz to amplify out the narrative on social media and use in their advocacy in the lead up to COP 21.

Jacobson was interviewed by CNN as a result of the COP 21 presentation and positioned The Solutions Project as an organization aiming to help the world move to 100% renewable energy. However, the focus on communities and equity was not centralized.

The message that 100% renewable energy is possible gained global recognition during COP 21, yet the equity component was not fully communicated. The evening before COP 21 began, artist Naziha Mestaoui, joined by Avaaz, lit up the Eiffel Tower with a call for “100% Renewable.” Another highly visual action was an aerial art installation by artist John Quigley and co-sponsored by a group of nonprofits including the Sierra Club, which organized participants to use their bodies to spell out “100% renewable” for a widely shared photograph. Images of these actions were picked up by mainstream media outlets and shared by supporters on social media and blogs to illustrate the momentum driving 100% renewable energy commitments. Unfortunately, the dominant narrative in media coverage of COP 21 continued to be “100% renewables by 2050” rather than “100% renewable energy for 100% of the people.”

PILLARS IN PLAY

BUSINESS

Pointed to corporate 100% commitments as evidence of change happening in the private sector.

SCIENCE

Commissioned groundbreaking research to demonstrate the viability of 100% renewable energy.

CULTURE

Spread the “100% for 100%” message to a broad audience through celebrity messengers.

COMMUNITY

Collaborated with frontline organizations working toward equitable climate goals.

ADVANCING INCLUSIVE NARRATIVES

AND POLICY (2016-2018)

The 100% renewable energy frame and policy concept began to go mainstream in 2016 due to growing calls for 100% renewable energy from civil society, the business community, and local government stemming from the expansion of the renewable energy market. The Solutions Project drew attention to corporate clean energy commitments made through the RE100 coalition by highlighting and publicly thanking businesses on social media, including Apple and Visa, for pledging to transition fully to renewable energy. What was initially received as a pie-in-the-sky idea four years prior became a political position supported by the Democratic Party's major presidential candidates, including Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders, who integrated The Solution Project's publicly available, unbranded roadmap infographics on his website. In addition, the Democratic Party platform officially endorsed the goal of a 100% transition to clean energy by 2050 with co-founder Mark Ruffalo speaking on "100% for 100%" to the DNC in support of the endorsement.

Jacobson continued to establish the technical viability of the 100% narrative. He and a team of scientists published a paper in 2017 on the 100% renewable all-sector energy roadmaps for 139 countries. The study provided scientific evidence for the idea that electrifying all energy sectors and transitioning to 100% wind, water, and solar power was technically and economically feasible, including data to support the potential for job growth, reduction in air pollution fatalities, and increased global access to energy.

From 2015 to 2018, The Solutions Project co-founded and co-led the 100% Network with the Sierra Club and Environment America. The Network sought to bring together a diverse group of organizations, from frontline leaders to national environmental and intermediary groups, advancing the 100% renewable energy transition. Looking to leverage this momentum and amplify the work of frontline organizations, the Network hired Aiko

Schaefer to coordinate members and develop a policy framework for an equitable and just transition. The Network also co-developed a set of principles to address the barriers to ensuring 100% renewable energy for 100% of the people. The Solutions Project also worked to bring frontline leadership into the governance of the Network, further anchoring this policy approach in the visions and values of its frontline grantee partners. Now, with frontline leaders overseeing the Network, they have replaced the policy framework with building blocks truly developed from the ground-up and changed the name to reflect a larger vision as the Just Solutions Collective.



Environment California, APEN and The Solutions Project meet with CA legislators in support of SB 100

Photo Credit: Stacey Heras, The Solutions Project

The Solutions Project decided to test the principles in action by supporting frontline groups to advocate for SB 100, a landmark energy bill in California, setting a target for 100% carbon-free energy by 2045. For more than a decade, environmental justice groups, such as the California Environmental Justice Alliance (CEJA), advocated for equitable energy policies, worked to ensure that frontline communities were at the forefront of policymaking efforts, and laid the groundwork for the passage of SB 100. The Solutions Project supported frontline coalitions and groups, including APEN and SCOPE to create a 100% narrative and outreach strategy for amplifying equity-driven work that recognized the need for these leaders to be at the table to define solutions.

The Solutions Project team worked with celebrity activists, including Avengers actors Mark Ruffalo, Chris Evans, and Don Cheadle, to share the importance of SB 100 on social media and mobilize their followers to contact legislators in support of the policy.

Too often, the 100% renewable energy conversation is guided by politicians and policy wonks who are using a narrative that is different from those on the frontlines and consequently those voices are getting drowned out or included merely to check a box. Through their celebrity channels, The Solutions Project helped amplify our work and the focus on equity in particular. They excelled at highlighting how legislation would be most beneficial to frontline organizations.



PARIN SHAH

FORMER POLICY DIRECTOR WITH APEN & NOW DIRECTOR, POLICY ACCELERATOR AT THE CLIMATE AND CLEAN ENERGY EQUITY FUND

As part of a multiyear effort, The Solutions Project worked with SCOPE, APEN, CEJA and other members to co-create messaging that centered frontline communities. When SB 100 sponsor state Senator Kevin de León was under pressure from utility companies that claimed it would raise costs for ratepayers, The Solutions Project threatened to pull its support for the bill if it was weakened. It was also able to open doors in the state capital and organize a round of visits to legislative offices. The Solutions Project also enlisted key voices from business to put their power behind grantees as they advocated their position with decision-makers and staff during what at times was a contentious legislative atmosphere. Opponents to SB 100 questioned the viability and affordability of solar and wind, and claimed that 100% was an expensive, unrealistic idea and that nuclear energy and natural gas were necessary “bridge fuels.” Advocates pushed back and asserted that renewable energy is abundant, affordable, and becoming less expensive by the day.

Media coverage of SB 100 prominently featured proponents who heralded California as a leader and emphasized the potential for increased innovation and investment, reduced energy costs, job creation, and improved public health.

In 2017, The Solutions Project's Board of Directors grew to include Gloria Walton, who was then the President and CEO of SCOPE, a South Central Los Angeles organization focused on building power and elevating the voice of communities of color locally, state-wide and nationally. SCOPE played a pivotal role in driving campaigns that created equitable investment in green jobs and climate solutions in California. As The Solutions Project continued to evolve in alignment with its external strategy, it was joined by two prominent leaders as part of the Philanthropic Trustees body: Miya Yoshitani, executive director of APEN, which is building the power of Asian communities on the frontlines to stop big polluters, and Elizabeth Yeampierre, Executive Director of UPROSE, a women of color-led, intergenerational grassroots organization that promotes sustainability and resiliency through community organizing in Brooklyn, NY.

PILLARS IN PLAY

BUSINESS

Highlighted The Climate Group's RE100 coalition reaching more than 100 corporate renewable energy commitments.

SCIENCE

Published a paper on the 100% renewable all-sector energy roadmaps for 139 countries.

CULTURE

Worked with celebrity activists to build support for SB 100.

COMMUNITY

Partnered across national and community-based organizations to form the 100% Network.

BROADENING AND DEEPENING EQUITY (2018-2020)

While the organization was implementing its values of diversity, equity, and inclusion through expanded Board and Trustee Leadership that brought authenticity to its programming -- and receiving recognition for those efforts -- the staff and Board were not yet fully aligned to a multiracial and more feminine culture. The Solutions Project worked with a consulting partner, Keecha Harris and Associates, Inc (KHA), to increase capacity around diversity, equity, and inclusion practices on the senior team and board. A key part of the culture shift to fully express the evolution of its model involved the difficult process of Hope examining and maturing her leadership approach.

In the Spring of 2018, The Solutions Project faced a funding crisis when two major funders underwent restructuring and program changes that resulted in the loss of two-thirds of the organization's annual budget. The financial setback required the organization to make significant budget cuts, testing its internal culture and commitment to equity. Recognizing immediately the impact these funding shifts would have on the organization 6 to 12-months down the road, Hope worked with key members of the Board, KHA, and select grantees and funders to quickly assess the best course of action. The Solutions Project decided to follow through with its commitment of financial support to grantees who were working to advance the "100% for 100%" narrative and as a result, chose to lay off staff in place of eliminating grants in the field.

In partnership and alignment across stakeholders that centered frontline leaders, Hope and the organization embarked on a far deeper process of self-reflection and strategy evaluation to ensure this moment resulted in the maturation of its model and team through the crisis.

Together, these changes ultimately led to The Solutions Project reaching the milestone of majority leadership of color across its team and a co-created new vision – one that is radically-inclusive and culture-led.

The Solutions Project was able to stabilize and rebuild by cultivating support from foundations that understood and were enthusiastic about the equity focus and movement-aligned approach. This renewed financial security and growing support for the "100% for 100%" vision allowed The Solutions Project to draw upon its experience with SB 100 and bring a similar approach to New York. It funded frontline groups in New York, including the leadership of NY Renews, striving to move policy at the state level with an equity frame. NY Renews worked with allies in the State Senate and State Assembly in 2019 to convince Governor Andrew Cuomo that economy-wide emissions reduction targets were necessary and would be beneficial for the state. As a result of extensive organizing efforts, New York state passed the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA). Equity provisions were nearly gutted in the final steps of the political process. The Solutions Project intervened with corporate executives from Seventh Generation (an eco-friendly household product company) and celebrity messengers who amplified frontline partner messages. As a result, the law not only mandated that 100% of New York's electricity supply be emissions-free by 2040 but also directs 35 to 40 percent of the state's climate and clean energy spending to historically disadvantaged communities. This key victory later inspired the Biden/Harris administration's environmental justice commitment. Regional media coverage of the process included advocates who emphasized that protecting New Yorkers from climate change needed to be achieved with racial and economic justice at the center of the policy.

With inspiration from Gloria Walton and full support from others on the Board and staff, The Solutions Project announced its "100% Commitment to Justice" pledge in February 2019. This pledge to invest 95 percent of its resources in frontline leadership of color and their innovations, with at least 80 percent going to organizations led by women was fulfilled within the year. Previously, less than half of its grants were made to organizations led by people of color. The pledge is reflected in the selection of 44 frontline grantees in 2019, including Georgia WAND Education Fund, Gulf Coast Center for Law & Policy, and Native Renewables.

The Solutions Project also grappled with what needed to change within its organizational culture to ensure BIPOC and women are at the center of the work. This led, and continues to create, significant shifts across The Solutions Project's structure, including pressure on its founders to eventually step back and make space for increased gender and racial diversity, collaboration, and empowerment across the program, staff, and board to achieve a reorientation of who is leading the organization.

The Solutions Project is helping lift up leaders from our organization to give women of color and people of color more of a platform and space to speak about solutions that are coming from our communities, in particular Asian American immigrant and refugee communities that tend to get left out and are not often represented. So for The Solutions Project to help us amplify voices from our work has been important, along with support to help us think through narrative strategies, working with organizers and comms teams when there's something urgent to get across to a wider public.



MIYA YOSHITANI
ASIAN PACIFIC ENVIRONMENTAL
NETWORK (APEN)

PILLARS IN PLAY

BUSINESS

Collaborated with Seventh Generation to push for equitable energy policy in New York.

SCIENCE

Used evidence-based research to communicate how "100% for 100%" is possible.



CULTURE

Continued amplifying frontline partners through celebrity messengers in support of "100% for 100%" policies in New York.

COMMUNITY

Expanded grantee portfolio to significantly increase focus on BIPOC-led organizations, especially women.

LESSONS LEARNED



The “100% for 100%” narrative reflects a bold positive vision of the future that centers and stems from frontline communities. The combination of these frames in tandem with The Solutions Project's investment in frontline partners who are collaborating and co-creating a shared narrative ensures the message is personal, authentic and speaks to people's values. It helps stakeholders and audiences envision what the "100% for 100%" transition will mean for their communities. And it disseminates the narrative by a range of messengers across multiple channels.

To get to this point, The Solutions Project cultivated the "100% for 100%" frame and made grantmaking decisions to fund frontline organizations that are advocating these shared goals. As the 100% renewable energy narrative gained momentum, The Solutions Project worked to prioritize the "for 100% of the people" component as other groups without the same commitment to equity adopted 100% campaigns. A review of [renewable energy media trends](#) conducted by Conspire for Good and The Solutions Project found that only six percent of news and opinion articles about renewable energy referred to issues of equity and justice, and just two percent referenced communities of color. The Solutions Project saw from this 2019 study that there is more work to be done to ensure that partners, funders and others in the movement recognize the significance and benefits of a just renewable energy system and begin to move in the same direction.

Narrative strategies shape what's possible and determine what is politically realistic.



CENTER FOR STORY-BASED STRATEGY

A BOLD YET ACHIEVABLE VISION

The power and symbolism of a simple, concrete message like "100% for 100%" captures people's imaginations. The "100% for 100%" narrative is unique in its positivity and hopefulness, and it provides an opportunity to talk about solutions at the scale that is required to achieve transformational systems change. It solidifies that now is the time for swift, aggressive action. While the "100% for 100%" vision still doesn't seem believable to some people, even those who question the specifics are often supportive of the end goal. In fact, [Climate Nexus and Yale polling shows 82% of voters want the US to achieve 100% clean energy.](#)

What I like about the 100% frame is that it's an absolute, aspirational and hopeful frame, which is not always the case with environmental issues. The challenge is that we don't want people to think it's a panacea or that once we get there then we're done...The aspirational nature of setting a target hasn't yet bled into the aspirational nature of communities coming together to fundamentally change the way things are structured to bring technology to scale. The 100% frame has the power to create the 'we can do it' spirit that we need.



AIKO SCHAEFER
DIRECTOR, JUST SOLUTIONS COLLECTIVE
(FORMERLY THE 100% NETWORK)

CENTERING FRONTLINE COMMUNITIES

Frontline justice, equity, and energy democracy are all components of the "100% for 100%" narrative. It underscores that those impacted the most by the fossil fuel industry and climate change should be at the forefront of policymaking. They need to be at the table to define, develop, and implement solutions to benefit from job creation and pollution reductions. This inclusive approach to energy policy addresses the unevenness of how new energy infrastructure would benefit communities in terms of health and economic opportunities, as well as any negative externalities, such as increased housing costs and displacement gentrification. "100% for 100%" means working toward community control of energy, generating local wealth, and ending monopoly control of energy generation.

While many organizations advocate for clean energy solutions, The Solutions Project's "100% for 100%" narrative positions equity and impacted communities from renewable energy policies at the center. This focus is critical given the myriad forces that work to omit equity from renewable energy policies. When the conversation is led by decision-makers and energy

The Solutions Project is fully committed to ensuring that the transition to 100% clean energy is just, accessible and affordable to native persons, low-income families, and communities of color. We support their work because of the success they've had in popularizing a bold clean energy vision that is uncompromising on racial and economic justice. They amplify solutions from communities who are most impacted by a fossil fuel based economy to show the public that a transition to 100% clean energy is possible - and already happening.



DANA BOURLAND
THE JPB FOUNDATION

analysts, this equity lens is typically absent and frontline voices get added after the fact, appropriated, or excluded from policy design, development, and implementation. Similarly, if the frame itself fails to explicitly mention equity, frontline communities are in danger of getting left out of the decision-making and implementation process, entirely.

A lot of people know about the importance of 100% renewable energy, but don't know about how that links to people of color and frontline communities directly affected by fossil fuel and climate change, or even care to link them...You can't just get to 100% and say you're going to reduce greenhouse gases because sometimes there are policies with particular goals with net positive effect, but a negative impact on frontline communities. The framing always had to focus on frontline communities and how they were affected by 100% policies, and how to design policy so there are public health, climate benefits, and jobs and economic benefits for those communities.



STRELA CERVAS
FORMER CO-DIRECTOR OF CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE ALLIANCE (CEJA)

**LOOKING FORWARD
IN 2021: WE WIN
WHEN EQUITY IS
AT THE CENTER**

STRENGTHEN COMMUNITIES DURING AND AFTER THE COVID-19 CRISIS

Communities on the frontlines of climate change, economic crisis, and racial injustice are now also on the frontlines of the COVID-19 pandemic. These effects are compounded by existing respiratory conditions such as asthma as a result of air pollution from fossil fuels, limited health care as a result of racist disinvestments in public infrastructure, and economic insecurity as a result of exclusionary policy like redlining. The next phase of energy transition campaigning must take into account combined health, economic and climate impacts. It should convey how the "100% for 100%" vision will benefit those who are facing extreme economic hardship and health emergencies due to COVID-19. Finally, it should explicitly expand the "100% for 100%" vision beyond energy to also include soil, food, water, and resilient local infrastructure. This is precisely the vision set by The Solutions Project under the leadership of CEO Gloria Walton in partnership with the staff, Board, Trustees, grantees and other stakeholders.

The Solutions Project staff and stakeholders presenting its Miami ONE100 award to community leaders



2

ENSURE FRONTLINE LEADERS ARE AT THE IMPLEMENTATION TABLE

Monumental strides have been made to shift the conversation about 100% renewable energy from an aspirational idea to enacted legislation. While the vision is bold and ambitious, victories are incremental and mired in details and complexities that are difficult to convey simply, even among those who are engaged and supportive of the overall goal. There is concern among advocates that supporters will be under the impression that the work is done once commitments are made; however, 100% policy is not a panacea unto itself and it is crucial to not walk away once a law is passed. Broad structural changes are necessary, which requires looking beyond setting targets to how those goals will be achieved and scaled to benefit everyone. NY Renews, for example, has a seat at the table as part of the New York Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act's Climate Action Council to help influence the decarbonization plan and map out the implementation strategy.



Miami ONE100 award winner Paulette Richards with friends, family and colleagues

3

TAKE CARE WITH LANGUAGE TO AVOID FALSE SOLUTIONS

Despite significant momentum toward achieving 100% renewable energy commitments, the fossil fuel industry remains a dominant force, seeding skepticism about the ability of renewable sources to meet the country's energy demands. Advocates are up against economic and political systems that have been influenced by fossil fuel interests for more than a century. As coal is phased out, a core narrative has emerged that touts natural gas as an essential bridge fuel to meet energy demand while renewables come up to speed. State policies and utility rate structures have been hostile to investments in energy efficiency and renewables, raising questions among decision-makers and the public about its ability to be adequately brought to scale. Fossil fuel industry-driven narratives highlight concerns about solar and wind storage and the potential for supply to fall short of demand, which would necessitate fossil fuels as a supplemental energy source.

The message that renewable energy sources aren't ready for prime time has become more and more insidious as the 100% movement grows. When groups displace the language of renewable energy with "clean energy," "carbon neutrality," or "carbon-free" to fast-track zero emissions policies, it leaves the door open for what many consider to be "false" solutions, chiefly the controversial inclusion of nuclear energy as a supplemental energy source. The terminology of "clean" and "carbon-free" does not translate into equitable energy solutions. Those groups committed to achieving 100% renewable energy for 100% of the people are actively resisting nuclear energy and natural gas, frequently opposing campaigns led by environmental advocates who have appropriated the 100% frame to include these problematic sources, especially as an incremental alternative to the Green New Deal.

4

INCREASE SUPPORT FOR ORGANIZATIONS COMMITTED TO EQUITY AND ROOTED IN FRONTLINE COMMUNITIES



Organizations advocating for frontline communities need to be respected and well-resourced to achieve the vision. They must be funded in recognition of their success and at the scale needed to win. From an operations perspective, many nonprofit organizations working toward the 100% goal specifically cite a lack in funding for solutions-oriented campaigns and the need for support beyond a small group of funders that provide grants for climate justice-oriented work. It can be more difficult to attract investments in equitable energy solutions compared with efforts to oppose power plants. Groups with small staff sizes and budgets require increased funding and technical assistance, expressing that getting serious about the 100% vision will require significantly more resources and investments in frontline-led, solutions-driven campaigns.



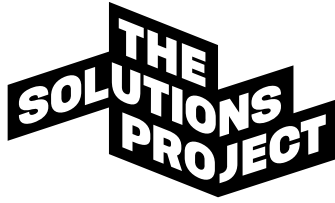
Photo Credit: The Solutions Project

Rev. Leo Woodberry, ED of New Alpha Community Development Corporation

CONCLUSION



By putting equity at the center of its work, The Solutions Project in partnership with frontlines and movement building organizations drove the “100% renewable energy for 100% of the people” narrative. They built awareness and support through partnerships and messengers, which is leading to lasting policy change and cultural shifts. Through these transformations, The Solutions Project has been able to shape and amplify an inclusive, compelling energy narrative and accelerate a movement that has generated significant policy change across the U.S. Now facing the COVID-19 health crisis and global uprisings to dismantle anti-Black structural racism, these struggles of health and justice have always been intrinsically linked with climate change. Communities of color – Black communities in particular – are most vulnerable to the coronavirus pandemic, police violence, and the climate emergency. **The path to 100% renewable energy for 100% of the people is also a path toward stronger, healthier, and more resilient communities.**



100% FOR 100%

LET'S CREATE THE FUTURE WE WANT

100% FOR 100%

100% FOR 100%

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