



Winning the Fight Against Petrochemical/ Oil & Gas Industry

Capacity Needs & Funding Priorities to Support the Advocacy
Ecosystem in Texas, Louisiana, & the Ohio River Valley

May 2022



Executive Summary

For decades, the petrochemical industry has produced detrimental impacts on the natural environment and human health. People living in fenceline communities experience higher rates of physical and mental illnesses; industry infrastructure contaminates and destroys land with historical, cultural, and ecological significance; and its presence can weaken local economies (e.g., tourism and fishing) and heighten political divides. Because the impacted communities are often Black and Brown, Indigenous, and/or low-income, the petrochemical industry is not only an affront to environmental health, but also achieving environmental justice.

In response to these pervasive challenges, Bloomberg Philanthropies has commissioned a body of research to help inform their campaign and a set of actions centered around promoting clean energy, climate policies, public health, and supporting local groups working against the petrochemical industry. Individuals from over 80 organizations (including community-based organizations and funders) were interviewed to inform an emerging strategy, grounded in the experiences, capacity, and funding needs of organizations on the frontline of these fights. Although respondents frequently reported relying on multiple strategies at once in their work, four broad categories stood out: community organizing, leadership, and advocacy (i.e., communicating with industry, protesting, job training); legal strategies (i.e., monitoring permits, litigation); coalition building and collaboration (i.e., partnerships focusing on a specific region or to stay on top of news); and the use of data for education, action, and influence (i.e., to pressure policymakers or educate the public). The barriers respondents commonly reported facing included limited financial and human capacity, the outsized influence of industry, structural racism, and various political and legal barriers (including weak regulations, lack of enforcement due to corrupt lawmakers, and a flawed permit appeal process).

Drawing from these findings we propose the following 10 priority actions for anyone working to foster a healthier, more equitable, and clean energy future that minimizes the reliance and dominance of the petrochemical and oil and gas industry:



Gather unbiased health data to connect the dots between industry and health impacts. Doing so (by funding community-based organizations (CBOs) to do the work, creating a science network, etc.) will help communities to provide evidence of the daily impacts they experience and build stronger legal and political cases.



Eliminate exports by stopping port expansions. With the leadership of those directly affected, a coordinated strategy to target ports (including a resource hub), and the appropriate funding, new and expanding extraction projects can be delayed and ultimately stopped.



Deeply fund general operating and capacity support to Black, Indigenous, and People of Color led organizations for longer funding horizons. This will allow for perpetually underfunded organizations to have the means to provide long-term financial and operational support to their staff, access technical assistance, and support data collection.



Develop and implement a structure to support dignified relocation and equitable buy-outs for communities that remain in hazardous conditions. Supporting equitable relocation work, similar to that of the New Legacy Foundation, will expand the options for many communities who have historically been offered low buy-outs, allowing them to move to healthier neighborhoods.



Build a cross-cultural and cross-sectoral movement. Though it can be difficult to create a united front because of the racial politics and cultural identities surrounding energy, the economy, and the environment, actions like hiring multilingual staff and requiring antiracism training are a few ways to strengthen the movement.



Elevate voices and stories of those impacted in a national communications campaign to humanize the cost of polluting industries. By identifying experts to support CBOs in their media strategies and establishing coordinated messaging, these stories can help to counteract the industry's false narrative.



Establish and promote an alternative vision to petrochemicals: an Equitable and Just Transition to clean energy and energy efficiency. Presenting a viable and detailed transition plan from dirty to clean energy (at local and state levels) that highlights economic prosperity is essential for building support for this movement and will help to rally people from across the political aisle.



Cultivate a collaborative community of learning and practice. Doing this (by creating cross-regional groups, identifying shared training needs, supporting existing convening spaces, etc.) will help to create a stronger, more unified strategy for CBOs to follow.



Enforce and strengthen environmental regulations and other legal protections for residents. Weak industry regulations and a lack of enforcement makes it difficult for CBOs to hold industry accountable for their actions. In addition to tighter regulations that prioritize health, policies related to zoning, industry maintenance and warning systems would increase resident protection and ease the fight against industry.



Support campaigns of community leaders to run for office and counter the current pro-petrochemical representatives. This will help to reduce structural barriers for organizations working against the industry and can be supported through actions such as funding a c4 in every region.

By analyzing the interviews of over 80 organizations working against the petrochemical industry in Texas, Louisiana, and the Ohio River Valley, we were able to better understand the strategies they rely on and the barriers they face, from a lack of funding to political corruption. We also interviewed state technical assistance organizations and funders supporting work in this region. In addition to informing the 10 priority actions for funders, advocates, and allies, we elevate the voices and stories of those facing prolonged suffering at the hands of this industry and hope it will serve to not only illustrate the reality of the situation but motivate everyone to take a role in addressing this challenge.

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Acknowledgements

We are grateful to the community-based leaders, environmental and social justice advocates, academicians and coalition leaders that we interviewed for this report. The wisdom, honest advice, knowledge, and advocacy these organizations engage in to fight the petrochemical industry is incredible. Your time is invaluable. We were humbled by the many community members in Texas and Louisiana that were impacted by Hurricane Ida and still took the time to talk with us. Listed below is each participating organization by region with hyperlinks to each organization's website in case you want to learn more about their work or get involved.

Ohio River Valley organizations include: [Allegheny-Blue Ridge Alliance](#), [Breathe Project](#), [Center for Coalfield Justice](#), [Clean Air Council](#), [Community Foundation for the Alleghenies \(Ohio River Valley-Appalachia Collaborative Fund\)](#), [Concerned Ohio River Residents](#), [Delaware Riverkeeper Network](#), [Environmental Health Project](#), [Fair Shake Environmental Legal Services](#), [Food & Water Watch](#), [FracTracker](#), [Freshwater Accountability Project](#), [Mountain Watershed Association](#), [Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition](#), [Ohio River Valley Institute](#), [Pennsylvania United + local groups](#), [Philly Thrive](#), [Protect Northern PA](#), [Protect PT](#), [Public Lab](#), [River Valley Organizing](#), [Robert D. Bullard Center for Environmental and Climate Justice at Texas Southern University](#), [The Climate Reality Project](#), [West Virginia Rivers Coalition](#), [Wild Virginia](#)

Texas organizations include: [Achieving Community Tasks Successfully](#), [Air Alliance Houston](#), [Carrizo/Comecrudo Tribe of Texas](#), [Central Texas Interfaith Organization](#), [Coalition of Community Organizations](#), [Coastal Alliance to Project Our Environment](#), [Community In-Power and Development Association Inc.](#), [Environment Texas](#), [Environmental Community Advocates of Galena Park](#), [Fenceline Watch](#), [For the Greater Good](#), [Healthy Port Communities Coalition](#), [Hillcrest Residents Association](#), [Ingleside on the Bay Coastal Watch](#), [Jolt Action](#), [Kelly Haragan at the University of Texas Environmental Law Clinic](#), [Livable Arlington](#), [Northeast Houston Redevelopment Council](#), [Port Arthur Community Action Network](#), [Public Citizen](#), [Rio Grande International Study Center](#), [Society of Native Nations](#), [Texas Campaign for the Environment](#), [Texas Freedom Network](#), [Texas Housers](#), [Texas Rio Grande Legal Aid](#)

Multi (working across states, regionally and nationally) organizations include: [ACLIMA](#), [Another Gulf is Possible](#), [Earthworks](#), [Green Amendments for the Generations](#), [Hive Fund](#), [Indigenous Environmental Network](#), [Mom's Clean Air Force](#), [One Breath Partnership](#), [Rapid Response Campaign](#), [Turtle Island Restoration Network](#)

Louisiana organizations include: [350 New Orleans](#), [Action for a Livable Tomorrow](#), [Alliance for Affordable Energy](#), [Center for International Environmental Law](#), [No Waste Louisiana](#), [Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana](#), [Concerned Citizens of Mossville](#), [Deep South Center for Environmental Justice](#), [HBCU-CBO Climate Change Consortium](#), [Green Army](#), [Healthy Gulf](#), [Louisiana Bucket Brigade](#), [Louisiana Environmental Action Network \(LEAN\)](#), [L'eau Est La Vie \(Movement Training Network, formerly known as Louisiana Rise\)](#), [Power Coalition for Equity and Justice](#), [RISE St. James](#), [The Lens](#), [Thrive NOLA](#), [Together Louisiana](#)

This work was commissioned by Bloomberg Philanthropies to help build a stronger movement, increase advocacy capacity and enable more victories in the fight for environmental health and justice across Texas, Louisiana, and the Ohio River Valley.

EGE2's offices are situated on the Original Lands of the Potawatomie Peoples.

We acknowledge that this work was conducted on these lands and appreciate the sacrifices our ancestors made to allow us to do the work that we do.



Introduction

The petrochemical industry has long been fueled by sacrifice and consumption. Year by year, acre by acre, body by body, this industry, with its leaders, government officials, and sometimes regulators as accomplices, has impacted the lives, livelihoods, and quality of life of countless people of all ages, many of them Black and Brown, Indigenous and low-income:

A family had to move from their generational family home because a fracking site was making the family sick. Little did they know that the community they relocated to would suffer the same fate.

A young woman recounts the numbers of community members, house by house, that have been touched by cancer and are in proximity of refineries, ports and frequent toxic releases.

A historic African-American community is forced to stay in a place that holds deep cultural ties but is hazardous to their health, diminishing their quality and quantity of life.

This is the unfortunate reality of many people and families living near refineries, pipelines, fractionators, gas processing plants, desalination plants, petrochemical plants (e.g., ethane cracker, propane dehydrogenation), ethane export terminals, methanol plants, fertilizer plants, and plastic production. The petrochemical industry is entrenched in these communities: the logos of industry partners don the t-shirts of the local baseball team; the research conducted at local institutions of higher learning are biased and conclude the industry has had no negative impacts on the communities in which they operate; the industry provides employment and wealth to generations of families they employ. However, these benefits are not equal for low-income or majority people of color communities where these facilities operate. This deep influence of the petrochemical industry on the powers that be – local and state legislators, state regulators, enforcement units and other influential decision makers – has required a combination of tactics for communities to fight and survive, particularly in some of the low-income, and/or communities of color in Texas, Louisiana and the Ohio River Valley.

Bloomberg Philanthropies is developing a comprehensive campaign focused on mitigating sources of dirty energy, improving air quality, supporting climate policy, local opposition, and smart litigation to improve public health for all, particularly frontline communities.

In partnership with the Bloomberg Team, our research team at Empowering A Green Environment and Economy (EGE2) interviewed over 80 individuals and organizations fighting to address the challenges of the petrochemical industry, including community-based organizations (CBOs), coalition/network leaders, technical assistance providers (legal, research, media experts), and funders. The purpose of our research was to garner a better understanding of the priorities, organizational capacity and funding needs of community-based organizations and advocates working in and across the Texas, Louisiana and Ohio River Valley regions to address the immediate health, environmental and economic challenges in these communities.

In this report, brought to life with quotes and firsthand experiences from interviewees, we summarize the varied impacts of the petrochemical industry, the common strategies and barriers faced by CBOs in the fight against industry, and the victories they have achieved so far. This will help to illustrate what frontline communities face on a daily basis, the long-term impacts of these facilities on the environment and health, and the status of the fight against the industry from the perspective of CBOs, funders, and coalition leaders. Building on the wisdom and experience gained from these interviews, we offer a set of 10 Priority Actions for those working to combat the petrochemical industry. This includes funders, advocates, allies, government officials, regulators, and those in the petrochemical industry itself. For each priority, we describe the problem it seeks to address, list proposed approaches to be taken by stakeholders, and highlight examples of CBOs taking these actions. Although plans of action will differ based on individual community needs, these 10 priority actions provide a springboard to mitigating and ending the petrochemical industry, while supporting a clean energy future that prioritizes equity and human health, especially across the geographies studied in this work.



RESEARCH METHODS OVERVIEW

In an effort to understand the organizational capacity and financial needs of CBOs and technical assistance organizations fighting petrochemical pollution in Texas, Louisiana, and the Ohio River Valley, the Bloomberg Team sought to interview grassroots, community leaders and advocates engaged in the fight. The Bloomberg team identified 120 organizations and community advocates to reach out to through existing grantees and other funder and NGO contacts in the three states/regions of interest. Members of the EGE2 research team made at least 3 attempts to contact each organization during July 2021 to invite them to participate. Of the 120 organizations that were contacted, 83 agreed to participate for a response rate of 69%. Some of those who declined did so because they were impacted by Hurricane Ida which hit the Gulf Coast in late August requiring organizations to relocate and/or prioritize emergency response. Of the 83 participating organizations, 3 were funders, 67 were CBOs, and 13 were Technical Assistance Organizations. Each region was represented with just over 30% each from Texas and the Ohio River Valley, almost 23% from Louisiana, and just over 13% who worked across multiple states. Interviews were conducted virtually between August 3rd and October 5th, 2021, each lasting approximately 30-90 minutes. Most were conducted with one member of the target organization, some with two or more.

Before their interview, participants were provided a project overview and a list of questions they would be asked. Questions asked about community impacts from the petrochemical industry, the organization's advocacy work, effective strategies, biggest barriers, any other issues and impacts connected to the industry, and ways in which the organization's work has changed the community. Interviewers also gathered details about each organization's capacity and structure (i.e., budget, staff) and the types of support they needed.

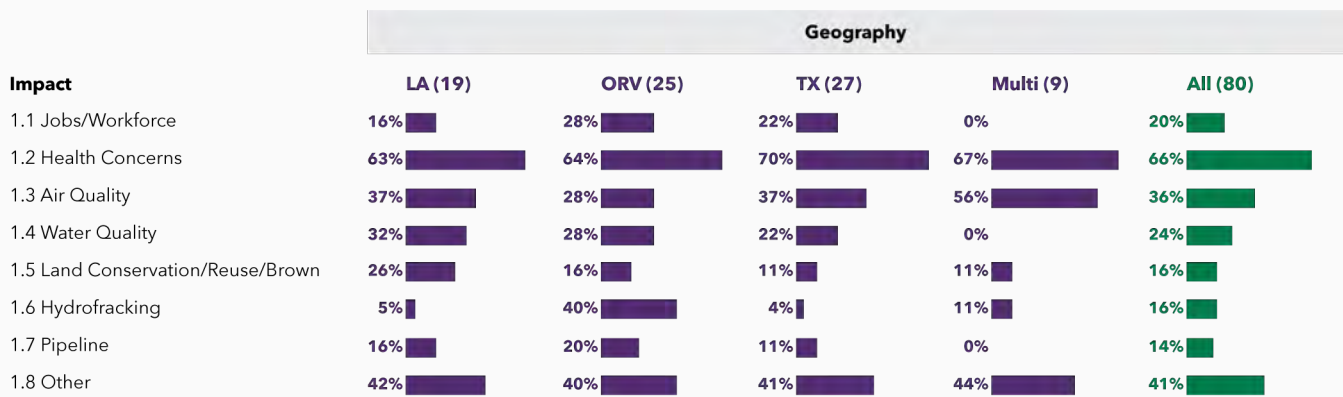
A qualitative analysis of the interview data was then conducted using mainly Excel. The research team developed a 'codebook' of broad categories and themes based on the interview questions and what we sought to learn. Categories included impact, advocacy, strategies, barriers, organizational capacity, support, other issues and impacts, community change, and additional thoughts. (A deeper dive into each of these categories is included in the Appendix). Recordings and transcripts of interviews were used to organize statements and quotes around these categories. SPSS was then used to produce a simple quantitative analysis (i.e., counts) based on geography and organizational type. These analyses did not include funder interviews so the main analysis focused on CBOs and technical assistance organizations.



The Impacts of the Petrochemical Industry on People, Planet and Society

The refining and petrochemical industries in the US collectively emit over 400 million tons of carbon dioxide equivalent (MT CO₂e) each year according to a forthcoming research report by Rocky Mountain Institute, and without demand reduction measures, petrochemical consumption is expected to increase 3-4% annually, doubling by 2040. Researchers at Environmental Integrity Project have identified more than 100 petrochemical and oil refinery expansion projects in the US, the majority of which are located in the Ohio River Valley, Texas, and Louisiana. Although the vast majority of petrochemical and refinery emissions are carbon, other harmful pollutants include sulfur oxides, particulate matter, and volatile organic compounds. A forthcoming pilot study by public health researchers at Johns Hopkins University finds that fence-line communities are exposed to far more air pollution than is reported by current monitoring techniques and that it can vary greatly throughout these neighborhoods over time. In fact, Health Concerns and Air Quality were mentioned by more of our interviewees than any other impact of the petrochemical industry, lasting approximately 30-90 minutes. Most were conducted with one member of the target organization, some with two or more.

Figure 1: **Health concerns and air quality were frequently mentioned impacts by CBOs.**



Contrary to the overwhelming and unavoidable messaging from the petrochemical industry that their presence will bring jobs and economic prosperity, respondents document far reaching detrimental impacts because of living near industrial developments. In this section, we break these impacts down into three sections: **(1) environmental health and equity, (2) land, culture, and climate resiliency, and (3) economy and local politics.** Each section elevates the voices and accounts of study respondents.

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND EQUITY

Oil pipelines, landfills, well pads, fossil fuel plants, fracking infrastructure, and more run through countless communities in Louisiana, Texas, and the Ohio River Valley.



Manchester residents can walk out their door and walk less than 10 feet, and there's a big fence, a big container of crude oil, a chemical tank, or a petrochemical plant in their backyard. Manchester is blocked in by the industry – there's only one way in and out. It's a disaster.

– Coalition of Community Organizations



Despite their proximity to residential areas, safety mechanisms (such as early warning systems and evacuation plans for the inevitable emissions leak, chemical spill, or explosion) are often not invested in by these facilities, and are not considered in the proposal process. Abandoned oil and gas wells which can contaminate drinking water when left unaddressed also plague these communities.



Our water is impacted by it because they're fracking around the public water source for Westmoreland County. There's actually well pads right next to the water. To look at pictures, you can see how risky of an activity they're doing so close to a public water source for 150,000 households and businesses. That's not people. That's households and businesses.

...they found out in Westmoreland County, the Westmoreland Sanitary Landfill had been accepting fracking waste for at least 10 years and their leachate started killing the good bacteria in one of the water systems, the local water system they were pumping their leachate to.

– Protect PT

Furthermore, these communities are often home to predominantly Black, Indigenous and People of Color Led Organizations and low-income residents (Pastor et al. 2001). Respondents shared that in St James Parish alone, there are at least a dozen industrial facilities on the west bank of the Mississippi River and nine on the east bank, located mainly in the African-American 4th and 5th districts of the Parish.

These and many similar communities exist in what has been deemed a 'sacrifice zone,' which describes the willingness of government and white citizens to sacrifice Black communities. These represent deeper systemic failures.



There's a bigger issue here, a more systemic issue that is associated with sacrifice zones, that is associated with racism. The presentations [by industry] are about how some communities are used to these chemical manufacturing being in their neighborhoods, that people in Louisiana are used to and have no problem with pipelines. Let's just keep doing it... that is a long-standing problem that overlaps with an education issue.

– Alliance for Affordable Energy

Hazardous pollutants from these industries contaminate the air and water, producing deleterious health effects for the people living nearby including increased rates of cancer (Bonzini et al. 2019, Huebner et al. 2004), asthma, and other health conditions in both children and adults. One respondent shared that a company emitted over 11,000 tons of a sort of particulates, sulfur dioxide and sulfur trioxide and noxious oxides into the atmosphere in Port Arthur, illuminating the fact that studies have shown that this area has twice the state and national average for certain forms of cancer, as well as heart, lung and kidney disease, basically "killing us off". This reality is not bounded by geographic lines.



The Council has a field organizer in Washington County, which is fracked gas country, who participated in a study that took samples of her and her family members' blood. She found out her blood levels showed high levels of harmful chemicals. They happen to live near fracking infrastructure, and with the proposed Shell cracker, a number of additional wells will have to be drilled. She's got it in her blood, and it's in her family's blood. It's sad. It's unacceptable.

– Clean Air Council

In addition to contaminating resources, the city of Corpus Christi, for example, has considered selling critical clean groundwater to petrochemical industries to support desalination. One respondent shared that the city has enough groundwater, well water, to last for the next 50 years, but “if the petrochemical industry wants to come in, then the city will sell that to them.”

Several respondents shared that the industry has also caused developmental issues, miscarriages, and mental health concerns, including stress and anxiety. Explosions and earthquakes caused by drilling can also cause immediate injury and death.

LAND, CULTURE, AND CLIMATE RESILIENCY

Fracking and other extraction infrastructure also wreak havoc on land related to community culture and climate resiliency. In Texas, oil and gas infrastructure cuts through cemeteries and historic villages, preventing access to ancient relics and artifacts that are culturally and historically significant to native tribal communities (**Corrizo/Comecrudo Tribe of Texas**). In the historically Black community of Mossville, LA, which was started by freed slaves soon after the Emancipation Proclamation, residents who used to be able to live off the now polluted land are forced to choose between staying in unsafe environments or leaving their historic neighborhoods for unfair home buyouts (**Concerned Citizens of Mossville**). In Louisiana, wetlands and indigenous lands are being lost “several football fields at a time,” contributing to land loss that reduces storm protection (**Power Coalition for Equity and Justice**). Emissions from the petrochemical industry also contribute to the increasing frequency and severity of extreme weather caused by climate change. By not accounting for these changes, industry is vulnerable to accidents which impact nearby communities and ecosystems.

ECONOMY AND LOCAL POLITICS

CBOs from all three regions report negative impacts to the local economy after the arrival of the petrochemical industry. In addition to a lack of industry training and transition programs for local workers, the industry may bring in outside workers who drive up housing prices resulting in “industrial gentrification.” The opposite can also occur where the industry causes neighborhoods to empty out and as plants close, local tax bases drain and empty properties are left behind. Other economic impacts include damages to local industries, such as fishing in Texas due to an increase in brine entering the Corpus Christi bay, and tourism in Pennsylvania due to new pipelines, railways, and truck traffic. Where the petrochemical industry props up the economy and employs many families, tax exemptions (such as those granted by Louisiana’s Industrial Tax Exemption Program) reduce funding for local government services (i.e., schools, infrastructure).

Because of powerful industry messaging that often sells false narratives about jobs and economic growth, the **Climate Reality Project** stated that the presence of the petrochemical industry leads to social tensions where people are seen as pro-economy and anti-environment or pro-environment and anti-jobs.



The plans to turn the Ohio River Valley into another petrochemical cancer corridor will not only be environmentally but economically disastrous as opportunities for better jobs the region are squashed. More massive pollution means environmental injustices become further entrenched for the sake of fossil fuel and plastic profits. No matter how “green” a petrochemical company says it is - it’s not!

– Freshwater Accountability Project



I wouldn’t say it’s not that people don’t want accountability or change, it’s that the industry is bought and paid for the political system here and so nothing is happening.

– Center for Coalfield Justice

The following two sections are based on what interviewees shared regarding the strategies they employ and barriers they face in their work. The figures below describe the trends - by region - of interviewee responses in the Strategies and Barriers categories.

Figure 2: **Community organizing and coalition building are common strategies across all geographies, while social media, fundraising, and shaming the industry are consistently low.**

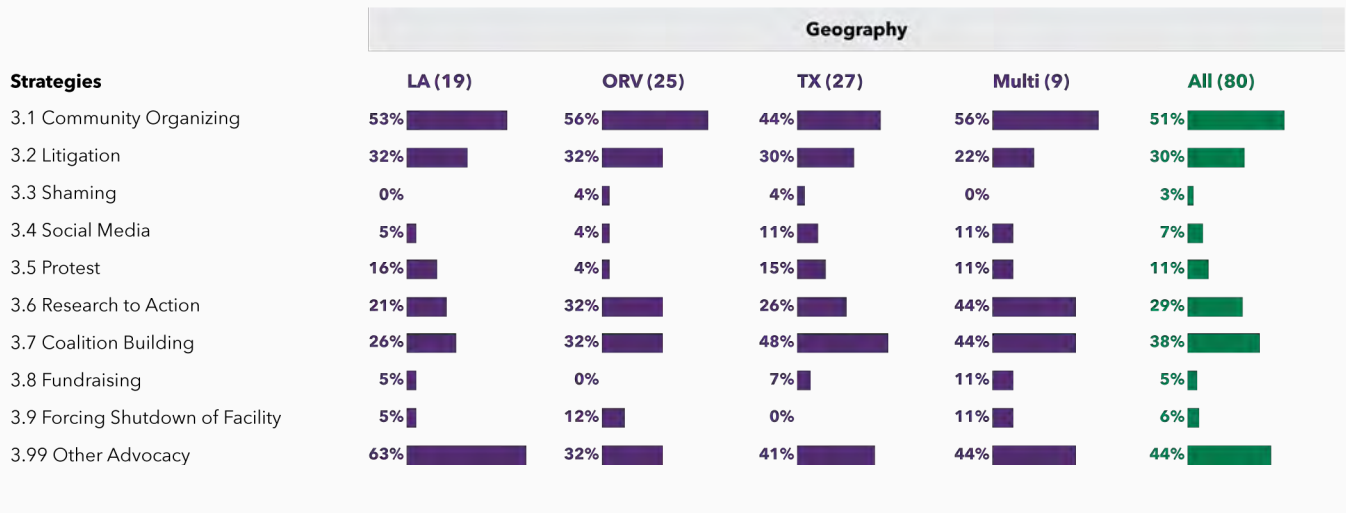
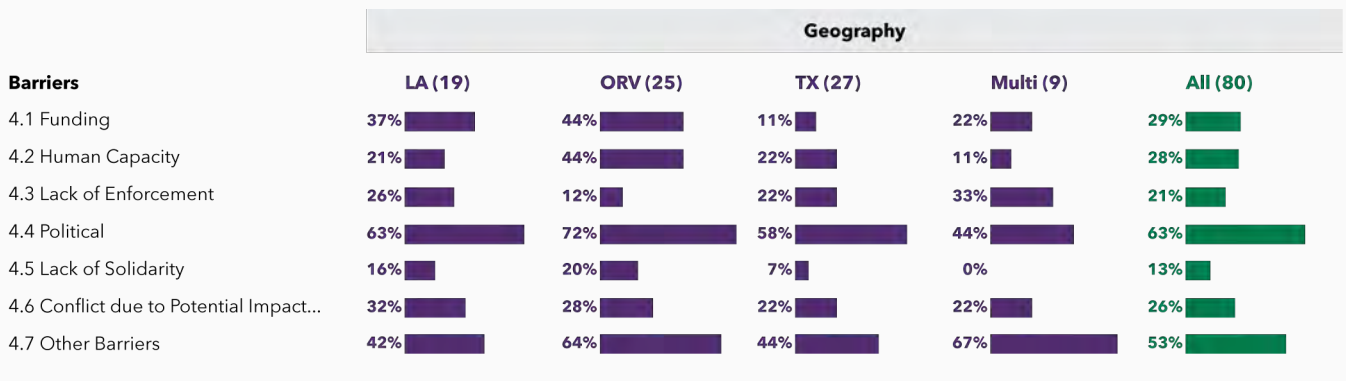


Figure 3: **Political challenges were commonly reported barriers across geographies while funding was more common in the ORV.**



Common strategies CBOs use to fight the petrochemical industry

In addition to reporting on the impacts of the petrochemical industry, respondents described strategies they employ and barriers they face in their work. For this study, "strategies" were defined as any concrete written set of goals, actions, mission or vision that focuses on any related aspect of the petrochemical industry. Based on our findings, we created four categories of strategies used by our interviewees: **(1) community organizing, leadership, and advocacy, (2) legal strategies, (3) coalition building and collaboration, and (4) data for education, action, and influence.**

Community Organizing, Leadership, and Advocacy

- Build trust, engage with community long-term
- Hire local
- Conversations with industry
- Training for remediation and renewable jobs



"So if the community doesn't want to fight this infrastructure piece, but they want to fight this other thing in their community, we work with them on that. You have to meet people where they are and bring them in." – **Center for Coalfield Justice**

Organizing and Advocacy Methods



Canvassing



Petitions



Call-in Days



Civil Disobedience



Music and Art



Protests



Text Campaigns

Legal Strategies

- Monitor permits
- Attend public hearings
- Litigation (less common, but effective)
- Access to high quality research and legal representation is key
- Track projects and provide technical comments to build record for legal challenges



PennFuture

"We want to make Pennsylvania as inhospitable a place as possible for this industry and because of that I don't think we are bringing near enough litigation... Throwing a lot more legal headaches is a really good and interesting strategy to make sure that this industry knows that opposition exists here." – **PennFuture**



Carrizo/Comecrudo Tribe of Texas visits sites where pipeline and other industry infrastructure is located or under construction, and takes photographs to use as evidence to challenge permits or use in litigation.

Coalition Building and Collaboration

Aims:

- Focus on specific region or topic
- Broaden access to data and expertise
- Coordinate legal, media, and organizing strategies
- Stay on top of new developments, research, and news

CBO + CBO

CBO + Community Members

CBO + Experts

Leverage each partner's strengths to build stronger and sustained interventions



"In 2020 Jolt Action developed a five-year climate action plan. And we did it as part of an alliance. It's called Texas Youth Power Alliance. And it was that coalition that included Jolt, Texas Rising, and move Texas... And so this was a campaign specifically to push legislators to prioritize everyday Texans that were impacted by the winter storm here in Texas." – **Jolt Action**

Data for Education, Action, and Influence

Multiple respondents, such as the Deep South Center for Environmental Justice discussed the importance of building capacity through evidence-based reports, studies and mapping.

Data on the Impacts of the Petrochemical Industry Has Many Uses:



Pressure Policymakers



Educate the Public



Influence Funders



Successfully Litigate the Industry

Common barriers CBOs face in their fight against the petrochemical industry

"Barriers" were defined as the structural, institutional, direct/indirect, and visible/invisible hurdles that inhibit or impede the impact of an organization's work to fight the petrochemical industry. Analysis of responses pertaining to strategies and barriers were used to inform the priority actions. Barriers were organized into 4 categories as well: **(1) limited funding and human capacity, (2) outsized influence of industry and retaining social support, (3) structural racism and sacrifice zones, and (4) political and legal barriers.**

Limited Funding and Human Capacity

- Funding is often insufficient, overly restrictive, and short-term
- Funds are needed for:
 - Leadership and racial sensitivity and bias training
 - Collecting and accessing data
 - Broadband
 - Access to experts (i.e., attorneys, engineers, economists)
 - Paying staff
 - Combatting industry messaging



"We need sustained, multi-year funding to pay [attorneys] salaries and benefits rather than having one-year grants that cover a single position for just one year. We invest in new attorneys, and then we lose them because the funding runs out." – **Texas RioGrande Legal Aid**



"As a news gathering organization, The Lens wants to report on issues of the petrochemical industry, but their funding restricts them to reporting on land loss." – **The Lens**

Outsized Influence of Industry and Retaining Social Support

- Difficult to envision a viable economic alternative to petrochemical industries
- Coalitions are challenging when people are for or against industry for different reasons
- Industry messaging is powerful and convincing, and false narratives are difficult for CBOs to combat
- Industry support of local educational institutions can mean certain truths are not shared publicly



"General marketing campaigns and social media against the petrochemical industry is a struggle because of the sheer size and weight of the 'the ads and marketing in support of Big Oil'." – **Alliance for Affordable Energy**

Structural Racism and Sacrifice Zones

- Historically racist policies (i.e., redlining) and current poor zoning regulations in places like Houston exacerbate industrial harms for BIPOC communities
- Lack of federal recognition limits the ability of indigenous people (i.e., Carrizo/Comecrudo Tribe of Texas) to contest new developments
- Industry sells the message that the economic benefits are worth the sacrifices



"This industry has indoctrinated people about this widespread acceptance of sacrificing some people for the public good." – **Center for International Environmental Law**

Political and Legal Barriers

- Local and state corruption leads to lack of industry regulation and enforcement
- In many states (inc. OH, PA, and TX) oil and gas industry is engrained in local culture and politicians have industry support
- Permit appeal process is flawed
- Compliance plans are often not adequate to protect health and safety and there are no enforcement procedures



"It used to be the case that you could appeal a permit with the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and you had a chance of stopping that permit, but the way the legislation and the law is, it's almost impossible to stop a permit through the legal system. The DEP just caters to the industry so much..." – **Mountain Watershed Association**

10 Priority Actions

Beyond illuminating the major challenges faced by communities living in close contact with the petrochemical industry, respondents described numerous ways in which their work could be supported and expanded. Drawing from these responses, we offer **10 priority actions to drive a healthy, clean energy future for communities and people impacted by the petrochemical industry**. These actions present opportunities for involvement for a wide range of actors, including community leaders and organizers, activists and advocates, funders, policymakers, subject experts, research institutions, journalists, regulators, and any other allies of the fight.

1



GATHER UNBIASED HEALTH DATA TO CONNECT THE DOTS BETWEEN INDUSTRY AND HEALTH IMPACTS

PROBLEM

The direct, indirect, acute and long-term morbidity and mortality associated with living near petrochemical facilities are visible and tangible to communities. However, there is a lack of hard evidence connecting the myriad of chemical exposures to direct health outcomes. One respondent underscored the need for the movement to “connect the dots” between industry and public health:

“There are 14,000 diesel trucks move through the community each day. We need information on ethylene oxide, air toxics, and related health problems. There is a need to “connect the dots” more explicitly between the industry and human misery, whether it’s negative public health impacts, or wars started for oil and gas.

In most communities, there is limited data collection, and little to no infrastructure for capturing data. Entities that are capturing data are biased towards industry, resulting in the data not being useful to local and state enforcement agencies for protection of human health.

“There has been a systematic obfuscation on the part of the petrochemical industry of the empirical data around health impacts, around the actual negative outcomes for immediate surrounding communities, which in the south of the US all the way from the port of Plaquemines, down to Corpus Christi along the Gulf Coast. The people affected by this are largely black and brown, and sometimes, but not always, low income. There has to be funding and a strategy to get the research done, to get the health impacts causally linked to these specific chemicals that are being

emitted by the industries. And we have not done that effectively. And part of that is because the industry actively manipulates data and influences research products.

– Center for International Environmental Law

Furthermore, the lack of data is consistently weaponized and the burden of proof is on the community to prove that the pollution is causing harm.

“We don’t know what we don’t know. We can talk all day about the health impacts of the chemicals that we know about. There are some facilities that have been forced to do fence-line monitoring, but where does that information go? How can you get your hands on it?”

– Environmental Health Project

POSSIBLE DIMENSIONS OF FUNDING & SUPPORT

Data Collection Infrastructure; Local/State Data Hubs; Fund local CBOs; Science Network; Technical support and training for community-based monitoring; Training in community-based participatory research: SW PA Cancer and Environment network is one model: <https://censwpa.org/about/>; Rapid Response grants for sudden disaster situations.

PROPOSED APPROACH

- Identify an independent entity (e.g., public lab or non-profit research organization not affiliated or supported by industry) to support building a data collection infrastructure (i.e., monitoring equipment, broadband, real-time reporting, etc.) for targeted communities.
- Fund a local CBO to co-lead the work (intergenerational leaders from each community) with the independent entity.
- Science network: Recruit a group of either retired or independent epidemiologists, public health, air quality experts, medical personnel, and chemists that can support the data collection and analysis.

- Partner with a well-regarded scientific professional society or non-profit that can help produce reports and make the health-impact connection. (e.g., National Academies of Science, American Geophysical Union, etc.).
- Elevate the work as an environmental justice issue at the Federal Level: target agencies, EPA, HHS, Commerce, NOAA. Seek alignment with the federal Justice40 Initiative work.

CBO HIGHLIGHTS

The **Ohio River Valley** Institute generates original research and communications tools that provide a counter-perspective to industry and politicians regarding the “benefits” of the petrochemical industry, and leverages its research to support advocates who are fighting specific projects.

Turtle Island Restoration Network (TIRN) utilizes science-based research to contact senators, representatives and state and federal agencies to advocate for protection of front-line communities and the environment. TIRN works to educate the public through meetings, distribution of fact sheets, Op-Eds, email alerts and our website. Oil and gas structures in the Gulf of Mexico create a large network of standing structures, interconnected by hundreds of miles of pipelines. Increased ship traffic, spills, and decreased water quality impacts these communities and wildlife. Turtle Island Restoration Network works closely with individuals and organizations in our community and across the Gulf states to stop oil and gas exploitation projects and save threatened coastal resources.

2



DEEPLY FUND GENERAL OPERATING AND CAPACITY SUPPORT TO BLACK, INDIGENOUS, AND PEOPLE OF COLOR LED ORGANIZATIONS FOR LONGER FUNDING HORIZONS

PROBLEM

Black, Indigenous and People of Color led organizations have been historically underfunded while also being disproportionately harmed by the petrochemical industry. Multiple respondents shared the need to support 501c3 and non 501c3 organizations so they can “lead the fight against the petrochemical industry”.

“ Indigenous communities are getting less than 0.5 percent of all philanthropy, and even less of environmental justice funding.

– Indigenous Environmental Network

There is limited funding for necessary functions, such as paying staff a living wage, hiring experts, and collecting and analyzing data. CBOs also emphasized the need for long-term funding.

“ Clean Air Council has been around for 55 years. The Council has been working on fracked gas for the last 13 years. Pennsylvania is a fossil fuel state and the fossil fuel is extremely powerful. I was about two years in the fight against fracked gas when I realized that this [issue] is not a ‘one and done’. So, Bloomberg Philanthropies and others take note: if you’re going to get involved, know that it’s a long ball game... it’s a tie score, and there are lots of extra innings

– Clean Air Council

“ Our model right now relies a lot on getting pro-bono support from many experts but ideally we would like to be able to pay folks for their expertise.

– Robert D. Bullard Center for Environmental and Climate Justice

POSSIBLE DIMENSIONS OF FUNDING & SUPPORT

Human Capacity; Centralized/Regional back-office support; Priorities identified by each organization; Non-financial supports: Connecting groups of funders, Creating the space to build a stronger network of CBOs working and advocating, Connecting groups to technical assistance (legal, research, strategy).

The following tables show the various types of financial and non-financial support that CBOs reported needing, and how they differ by region. General operating and project specific support were important financial needs across all geographies. Common non-financial support needs include training and communications/social media, which was especially important in multi-state organizations.

Figure 4: General operating and project-specific support were commonly reported financial barriers across all regions.

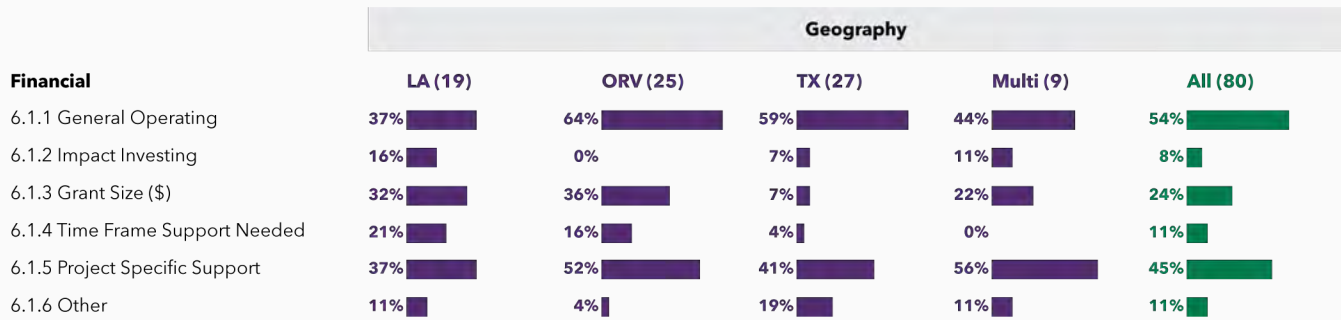
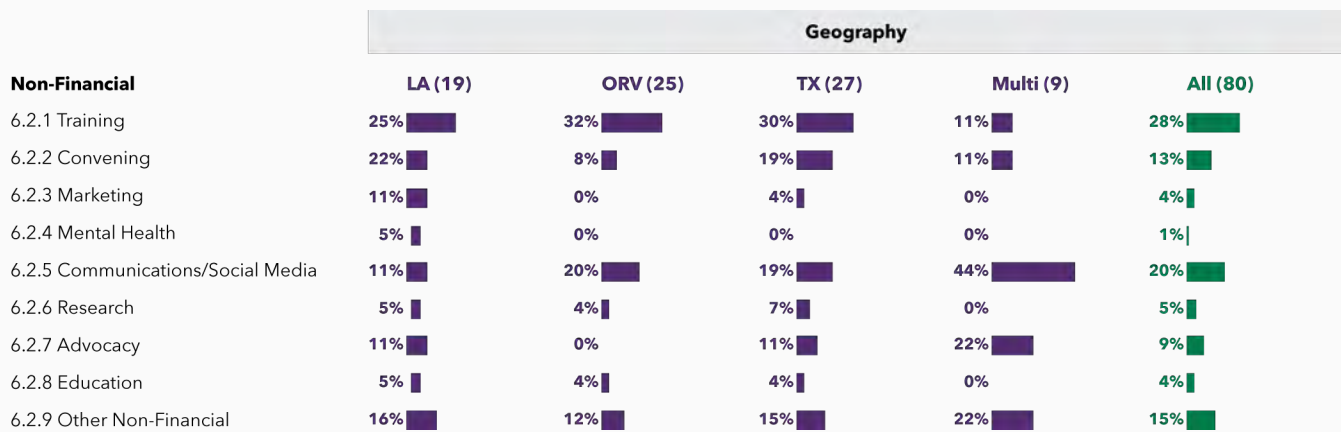


Figure 5: Training and communication were important non-financial barriers across all regions while convening stood out in Texas (possibly due to its size) and advocacy and communications stood out in Multi-state organizations.



PROPOSED APPROACH

Funders:

- Examine the participatory model used by the Fund to Build Grassroots Power.
- Collaborate with peer funders to understand what is needed on-the-ground and take action.

The burden of coordinating who has funding for what projects often falls to the advocates, and we would like to see more communication between foundations and to groups on the ground about where they're allocating their funds.

– The Climate Reality Project

CBO HIGHLIGHTS

Funding for Black, Indigenous and People of Color Led Organizations-led CBOs can lead to more work like that being done by the **Texas Freedom Network** - a progressive base-building organization that organizes young people (18 to 29) in Brown and Black communities in Texas. Texas Freedom Network has three main areas of work are advocacy, organizing campaigns and electoral engagement. Has a c3, c4 and PAC. Organizes across multiple issues (criminal justice reform, reproductive justice, voting rights, etc.) but added an environmental justice component 3 years ago at the urging of young people. They are working in a coalition in Brownsville against a facility there and are building their team in Corpus Christi to target 1 of 4 LNG facilities.

3



BUILD A CROSS-CULTURAL AND CROSS-SECTORAL MOVEMENT

PROBLEM

It can be a challenge to create solidarity in a cross-cultural movement, particularly for white people that have been a part of a historically white-dominated environmental movement. Even when white people's health is affected, solidarity is not easy to build because racial politics play into the divides between community members and what rhetoric impacts them. Two respondents spoke to the racial politics in their state:

“ I mean, honestly, everything is about race, especially everything political. But I think, sometimes, in the white communities, there is just this buy-in to this myth of the oil and gas driving our economy, the jobs will go elsewhere - I don't know - this sense of almost cultural identity around our history and the oil and gas industry and just this idea of capitalism and jobs and growth that isn't actually reflected in the reality of the economics.

I mean, to be honest, we're not rich. The community is not rich. It's working class, but it's mostly white, and having the sensitivity to know cultural issues, understanding that level of oppression is needed.

Organizing power is also diminished when involvement is limited to English speakers and can be maximized by forming cross-sectoral coalitions and partnerships. A respondent expressed more language justice within the movement towards climate justice and environmental justice is needed.

“ The inclusion of those Indigenous languages is a way to truly honor Indigenous, Native, and First Nations communities who have led movements for over 500 years. This could also be a step to action in correlation to “Land acknowledgement” and reparations efforts.

- Another Gulf is Possible

POSSIBLE DIMENSIONS OF FUNDING & SUPPORT

Make available anti-racism training for organizations that request it. This could possibly be a requirement to receive funds.

PROPOSED APPROACH

- Reach out to organizations that identified this as a need.
- More language justice is needed in the movement towards climate and environmental justice.
- Build partnerships with experts and organizers approaching this fight from multiple fields and perspectives (i.e., lawyers, economists, policymakers, public health officials, scientists, advertisers/marketing specialists, etc.)
- Connect law schools with other departments across universities to combine legal expertise with that of engineering, public health, and toxicology and bring stronger cases to court. This could look like an interdisciplinary research program that connects students, professors with non-profit organizations to work on specific legal cases to synthesize expertise together.
- Create a resource hub that connects organizations to outside experts in social media, technical assistance, etc. to prevent employee burnout and encourage cross-sector work. (Liveable Arlington)
- In addition to unions and progressives, identify “unconventional groups” to partner with so as not to focus on one side of the political spectrum. One respondent expressed this sentiment of expanding partnerships:

“ Rural areas are often labeled as monolithic “Trump country” but that is not representative of the values of all people living in these places. There are people present in counties that voted overwhelmingly for Trump that are working to push back against extractive economies, and it is important for national players to recognize the work being done on the ground.

CBO HIGHLIGHTS

Mom's Clean Air Force organized a group called Eco Madres who deal with climate and air pollution issues from a Latina perspective. They are able to speak to community members in their own language and incorporate and address cultural concerns, such as distrust of ICE and the government. They've been very effective in the Houston, Texas area and are expanding into the Gulf area.

4



ELIMINATE EXPORTS BY STOPPING PORT EXPANSIONS

PROBLEM

Several Texas advocates discussed the need to stop the expansion of ports and terminals. This is a major petrochemical-related concern that has not been widely acknowledged, addressed, or elevated. Eliminating exports will stop many of the extraction projects and expansions from happening. Specifically, respondents mentioned pipelines connecting the Permian Basin (large oil deposit located in west Texas and southeastern New Mexico) to the Gulf Coast.

“ If we can stop exports, I think that it would stop a lot of extraction projects and expansions from happening... (including pipelines) to connect the Permian Basin to Gulf Coast.

– Fenceline Watch

POSSIBLE DIMENSIONS OF FUNDING & SUPPORT

- Assess the level of interest (among Texas and Louisiana-based interviewees) in convening together to discuss the current status, needs, and appropriate advocacy to address expansion projects.
- Develop a coordinated strategy and associated funding needs.
- Develop a regional resource hub (legal, technical assistance, strategic support) to support ongoing litigation fights many CBOs are entrenched in.
- Direct support to affected CBOs to participate in advocacy.

PROPOSED APPROACH

- Build a plan co-created and guided by CBOs and communities that are directly affected.
- Identify any immediate health and safety concerns that can be mitigated with fast-tracked resources.

CBO HIGHLIGHTS

Coastal Alliance to Protect Our Environment (CAPE) (TX) was formed as a result of Exxon moving into the area.

“ I kinda like to say Exxon woke us up, because when we realized they were coming, we started realizing that there was a master plan to industrialize the entire area what we call the North Bay area of Corpus Christi Bay.

After Exxon's arrival, their Saudi Arabian partners tried to open an ethane cracker plant which would have required 30 million gallons of water per day, but CAPE has been able to tie them up with desalination permits.

5



DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT A STRUCTURE TO SUPPORT DIGNIFIED RELOCATION AND EQUITABLE BUY-OUTS FOR COMMUNITIES THAT REMAIN IN HAZARDOUS CONDITIONS

PROBLEM

African-American communities across the regions have not been provided a fair and just buyout opportunity for communities that have irreversible hazards and damage (e.g., Mossville, LA).

“ It's because they didn't agree to just give their property away...had they been [offered a fair offer] I believe everybody would be gone. They offered some [white] residents 3x the amount what they offer us.

– Concerned Citizens of Mossville

Another respondent shared a similar experience after conducting a door-to-door survey of fenceline residents:

“ We did a door-to-door survey in 2006 and 2007, and what we heard was that 97-98% of fence-line folks who are homeowners want to be relocated. They want to receive fair market value for their homes— these are really nice homes, brick, lawns, well cared-for. But they are stuck— they’re being offered \$70,000 for a home that’s otherwise valued at \$225,000 but for its location, and that situation is no fault of their own.

POSSIBLE DIMENSIONS OF FUNDING & SUPPORT:

Support entities to help construct fair buyouts (for example: the New Legacy Foundation has been created as the first non-profit model for voluntary relocation in response to repeated requests for ‘buy-outs’ from environmental justice communities).

PROPOSED APPROACH

- Talk with CBOs that expressed a desire for buy-outs/relocation to confirm needs.
- Initiate a conversation with the New Legacy Foundation (<https://thenewlegacyfoundation.com/leadership>) to determine if this is a model that can be expanded.

CBO HIGHLIGHTS

The **New Legacy Foundation** was created as the first non-profit model for voluntary relocation, in response to repeated requests for ‘buy-outs’ from environmental justice communities.

6



ELEVATE VOICES AND STORIES OF THOSE IMPACTED IN A NATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS CAMPAIGN TO HUMANIZE THE COST OF POLLUTING INDUSTRIES

PROBLEM

The petrochemical industry has a strong, positive, and consistent media narrative that does not accurately represent its harms. There is no overarching communications and media strategy to counter the industry, and many local peoples buy into the ill-promised economic benefits of the industry. The stories and lived experience of communities is discounted, undervalued and not heard nor responded to by local, state and national media.

“ And I really believe we are going to win...I think the willingness to dig in deep, and work in partnership with a lot of different allies in order to pursue pretty much every strategy that we could possibly think of, and really center it all around uplifting this story of the leadership that is coming from Cancer Alley has helped, I think, to nationalize the fight. That’s needed now more than ever.

– **Earthworks - Permian Gulf Coast Coalition**

“ As the profit potential for plastic production continues to decrease, the industry is shifting their focus towards other ventures, like blue hydrogen and carbon capture and sequestration. Because the industry has control over the politicians and the media, we’re being fed the narrative that these are green and climate-friendly alternatives, but we know that any “climate solution” that requires the continued extraction and burning of fossil fuels is simply greenwashing.

– **The Climate Reality Project**

The stories of struggle, resilience and victory beyond these regions are largely unknown. Consumers worldwide are largely unaware that their purchasing and use of plastics are connected to the fossil fuel industry and its many impacts, as well as how the industry is connected to other harmful industries such as plastic production.

“ I didn’t know that other people in the world didn’t know about this. So glad you are talking to people who live in this mess. It’s better talking to us firsthand, we’re tired.

POSSIBLE DIMENSIONS OF FUNDING & SUPPORT

- Identify communications consultant firms specialized in working with CBOs.
- Identify a Black, Indigenous or People of Color led communications consultant to develop specific messaging. An example: the Cancer Free Economy has created a messaging guide for Climate, Toxics, Health and Equity.

- Identify local/state partners (e.g., journalism schools, professional societies, etc.) to support CBOs immediately (e.g., provide a scholarship, stipend to the university, etc.) with communications needs.

“ With Hurricane Harvey, we made sure that ‘hurricanes as a major pollution event’ was a part of the storyline, the narrative. Part of that was making sure journalists saw the frontline eyewitness accounts of what was happening in the communities.

– One Breath Partnership

PROPOSED APPROACH

- Develop a core group of CBO representatives from each of the states/regions. This core group will work with a strategic communications consultant to develop a national communication strategy that draws on real, truthful local experiences.
- Ensure a core group of CBO representatives is connected to data hubs and/or information support groups that can portray the depth and breadth of local industrial impact.
- Work with existing coalitions (state/regional) to help identify targets, potential partners, strong allies, influencers, etc. to develop a state/regional strategy that aligns with national messaging.
- Document and elevate – consistently – stories of victory.
- Document and elevate stories about unfulfilled industry promises, particularly around economic issues.

CBO HIGHLIGHTS

Louisiana Environmental Action Network (LEAN) (LA) has documented oral histories and collected pictures from community members for several years to honor those in the movement and build awareness. With these collections they have been able to “capture the heart and story of the people” including the Louisiana women of the environmental movement. Using art installations and creating material that can be used for youth programming, they act as a repository that can “inspire people that they can make change – ordinary people can do extraordinary things.”

Earthworks was able to use media coverage to “call out and shame” facilities for violating the Clean Air Act emission limits.

7



ESTABLISH AND PROMOTE AN ALTERNATIVE VISION TO PETROCHEMICALS: CLEAN ENERGY AND ENERGY EFFICIENCY, AND A JUST TRANSITION

PROBLEM

Many of the communities find themselves backed into the corner of ‘fighting against’ something instead of ‘fighting for’ something (**350 New Orleans**). Many people across the political aisle understand the detrimental effects of the industry but are unable to envision an alternative possibility, especially when it comes to economic and household security. There is a need to develop a more concrete painting of the possibilities, what a Just Transition could look like (i.e., centering the needs of those most impacted) or lead to, and how alternative investments could provide a pathway out of economic hardship. A respondent from the Louisiana Bucket Brigade shared the importance of concretizing transition plans and jobs in the new green economy in order to facilitate the transition from fossil fuels. Not only is this critical for low-wealth workers, but it is also needed to win over more conservative Louisiana communities.

“ They need an alternative to fossil fuels. People just kind of accept that you live in a sacrifice zone, and you sacrifice your health for energy. But, if they had an alternative where they could have a safe, clean job that wasn’t poisoning their children’s future, their air, their water, they would go for that.

– Jill Hunkler (environmental and community advocate and 7th generation Ohio Valley resident)

POSSIBLE DIMENSIONS OF FUNDING & SUPPORT

- Create the convening space for state and regional leaders to create a shared vision. This vision must provide economic alternatives at the local and state level that provide a viable transition plan – policy, financing, etc. – from a total reliance on dirty energy sources to clean energy. The vision must encompass the full ‘plastics’ life cycle.
- Support CBOs, economists (national, local) to engage.

PROPOSED APPROACH

- Create a regional table to discern interest in supporting campaigns for clean energy.
- Create demand for clean energy, addressing both the demand-side and supply side: An interviewee from **Hive Fund for Gender and Climate Justice** shared:

“ In the long-run we cannot keep fighting the industry if there continues to be a strong demand for fossil fuels. It's like drugs, if there continues to be a demand, people will continue to produce it. So we need to spend more time building the alternative green economies we want to see and build the demand for that.

CBO HIGHLIGHTS

Thrive NOLA has trained over 50 small businesses on green infrastructure and job and workforce development.

West Virginia Rivers Coalition promotes jobs impact reports on climate infrastructure investments in the region, which helps to build awareness for the need for alternative industries. This work is led through the Reimagine Appalachia Campaign.

8



SUPPORT CAMPAIGNS OF COMMUNITY LEADERS TO RUN FOR OFFICE AND COUNTER THE CURRENT PRO-PETROCHEMICAL REPRESENTATIVES

PROBLEM

Local leadership is critical to winning local battles. The petrochemical industry is a part of local political dynamics that create structural barriers for organizations working against them. For example, **L'eau Est La Vie (Movement Training Network, formerly known as Louisiana Rise)** has been listed as “enemies of the state” by the Louisiana Oil and Gas Association (LOGA). Interviewees suggested it would be great to have an equivalent voice to counteract those representing oil and gas interests. The majority of local and state

officials are supported and influenced by big industry and it has been difficult for CBOs to get supportive candidates into office to counteract them.

“ In some places in southwestern PA, the gas industry ran their own candidates and those candidates won, probably not by large margins either. So that is a piece of work I think that needs to be looked at, and it doesn't seem like to me that there's a lot of work being done on that front, but that could be potentially really important. We need to beat them at their own game.

– **Clean Air Council**

“ People are left without support or protection due to the government not addressing the very real concerns of the people; In Texas, the governor and leadership have chosen not to govern, not to address real concerns of their citizens. That is an issue that impacts everything else because organizations like ours end up having to raise funds to give directly to families in need (after the winter storm), which is not what we were designed to do; We live somewhere where our governor and our leadership have no interest in governance. They have interest in power. And we are being asked to step in and fill these immediate disasters, right?

– **Texas Freedom Network**

POSSIBLE DIMENSIONS OF FUNDING & SUPPORT

- Fund a 501c4 in each state/region.
- Fund training, support and campaigns for CBO leaders to run for specific positions at all levels.

“ To truly build power, we have to engage in the full spectrum of organizing: from civic engagement, to direct action, to political campaigns. If the truth alone could set us free, that would have worked already. Only when we are able to flip state legislative seats, have a platform in statewide elections, and take power in municipal and county governments will we be able to actually counter extractive industries. And the key to all of this is electing not just any candidates, but doing the deep work of recruiting our members to run for office, supporting them every step of the way, and co-governing with them when they win.

– **Pennsylvania United + local groups**

PROPOSED APPROACH

Discuss and assess the desire for a 501c4 by state or regions within the group of interviewees.

CBO HIGHLIGHTS 

Jolt Action (TX) is involved in multiple campaigns focused on Redistricting, Special session advocacy, Climate Fellowship, 2022 Election cycle (civic engagement), Monthly Giving, and Voting Rights. They have also helped to build an alliance called Texas Youth Power Alliance to push legislators to prioritize helping Texans that were impacted by the winter storm in 2021.

“ We have developed volunteers into really strong community leaders, not just in southwest Pennsylvania, but in eastern Pennsylvania too, and statewide, some of whom have gone on to win elected positions of power in local, county, and state level seats.

– **Food & Water Watch**

9



CULTIVATE A COLLABORATIVE COMMUNITY OF LEARNING AND PRACTICE

PROBLEM

Conflicting strategies and communication barriers between climate groups, environmental justice groups and others are making it difficult to address the underlying systemic changes necessary for a just, equitable and non-toxic future.

POSSIBLE DIMENSIONS OF FUNDING & SUPPORT

Time, travel, human capacity, support services to facilitate virtual and/or in-person meetings, learning opportunities, etc.

PROPOSED APPROACH

- Assess the desire to convene cross-regional groups of CBOs/networks across various focus areas.
- Support existing convening spaces.
- Identify shared training needs (i.e., grant-writing, leadership, anti-racism, website development, social media, etc.).

- Create the space to garner ideas regarding an equitable, funding strategy from key leaders.
- Create and support open source data so findings are public and shareable.

“ At Public Lab, we want people to have the tools to document and elevate environmental harms in their community. Through our collaborative network, people can connect with one another to ask questions and provide support to those lived or learned experiences.

– **Public Lab**

CBO HIGHLIGHTS 

Allegheny Blue Ridge Alliance (ABRA): facilitates connections between organizations. **Wild Virginia** is able to stay up-to-date on news and legal updates on a weekly basis through ABRA and their extensive network.

10



ENFORCE AND STRENGTHEN ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATIONS AND OTHER LEGAL PROTECTIONS FOR RESIDENTS

PROBLEM

The problem of lax industry practice is twofold: (1) environmental regulations are not rigorous enough to protect environmental and human health and (2) existing regulations are not strictly enforced, especially where the industry's influence in government is strong. The **Mountain Watershed Organization** noted that there are flaws in the permit appeal process that limit the power of their work. There are often not adequate compliance plans in place to protect health and environment, or ways to enforce that compliance. Some of our interviewees also emphasized the need for better tracking of permits. An improved permit tracking system would enable organizations to more easily challenge permits that violate state laws. This will require a concerted effort from larger organizations with adequate resources.

The Biden administration provides a particularly important window to make progress on this priority.

“ We have nearly 100,000 abandoned oil wells and gas wells, many of them are not properly maintained and they’re exposing the nation and the world to methane and butane. It’s not like the people in charge don’t know that, but they don’t do anything about it. Because the industry controls the regulators that regulate this, we could have a significant impact tomorrow.

– **Green Army**

There is also little protection for people in zoning and other planning laws which can be changed to favor industry at the expense of human health.

“ For several years, says they had a “buffer”. The planning and zoning commission has regulations about that, but Sasol bought some property in Mossville that came closer and they rezoned the land to industrial. They also broke that regulation – they didn’t allow a buffer zone, which depends on zoning.

– **Concerned Citizens of Mossville**

Another respondent spoke to the impact of Redlining.

“ We, unfortunately, in the state of Texas redlining was a way of the past and it’s still in the present. And then we have no zoning in the city of Houston. So that’s another problem.

POSSIBLE DIMENSIONS OF FUNDING & SUPPORT

- Support litigation needs of CBOs.
- Provide additional technical support to CBOs.
- Advocate for stronger health based standards and a comprehensive Health Impacts Analysis for impacted communities.

PROPOSED APPROACH

- Pass stricter regulations on industry that accounts for the health of the people and ecosystems surrounding facilities.
- Petrochemical industry actors must make robust investments in the development, implementation, and regular maintenance of early warning systems and evacuation plans for when the inevitable industry accident does occur.
- Planning and zoning commissions must require and enforce buffer zones around industrial facilities.
- Engage community members in planning, permitting, and siting processes.
- Create a system or database for tracking permits and projects and providing technical comment support to build a record for legal challenges.

CBO HIGHLIGHTS

Through litigation, **Earthworks** and its coalition of frontline organizations slowed the permitting and investment decisions for a petrochemical facility to which there was major community opposition.

“ And so, we came up with a plan and proposed a charter amendment forbidding the city from pursuing desalination as a water resource because our city is responsible for the regional water supply. And we thought this would be a great way to, one raise the issue of desalination and its impact on the broader communities but also, it could be a chokehold on industrial expansion because that was accelerating.

– **For the Greater Good (TX)**

These 10 priority actions help to demonstrate the numerous ways in which the work of CBOs can be supported and expanded. By prioritizing these actions, the ongoing fight to stop the expansion of and ultimately end the petrochemical industry can be made more robust.

Victories by Region

The petrochemical industry fights hard, but dedicated CBOs fight harder. Despite persistent threats to the environment and health of the Texas and Louisiana Gulf Coast communities and the residents of the Ohio River Valley, small and big victories have been won. In this section, we highlight these victories to serve as a reminder that change is possible.

In addition to the regional triumphs described below, respondents from every region expressed their pride in having raised awareness about the harmful effects of the industry, enthusiasm for the advocacy work ahead, and hope for a better future.

Ohio River Valley

BREATHE PROJECT

The Air We Share

The **Breathe Project** noted that one of their greatest achievements has been the activation of a broad network and a more informed public. Leaders have emerged who feel comfortable enough to talk about petrochemical industry issues, local voices have been connected, and people recognize a sense of agency. Networks of support and meaningful The Air We Share discussions have come about.



In their successful fight to permanently close a refinery, **Philly Thrive** improved air quality, created social cohesion, and instilled a sense of hope among local residents. In their own words, they "fundamentally changed local residents perspective on what's possible and what's worth fighting for."



By passing 19 ordinances and a ban on fracking in the City of Pittsburgh, **Food & Water Watch** has helped protect hundreds of thousands of residents from the threat and impacts of fracking.



Wild Virginia and **The Allegheny Blue Ridge Alliance** were successful in their advocacy against the Atlantic Coast Pipeline/Dominion Pipeline, which was cancelled in July 2020.



In their first campaign and after an eight-year battle, the **Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition (OVEC)** successfully kicked out a petrochemical facility near Huntington, WV. The facility was located in the low-income and majority Black community of Institute, WV (in a state that is 96% white) and was the only place in the world where the chemical MIC was stored, which was responsible for the Bhopal Disaster in India.



As a result of their community organizing and impact documentation, **Protect PT** was able to get three permit requests for well pads denied.

Louisiana



The **Louisiana Bucket Brigade** was successful in their fight against the Formosa plastic plant, and stopped another plastics facility (Wanhua) from being built. They are now turning to South Louisiana Methanol.



By fighting to remove industry tax exemptions, **Together Louisiana** has brought in \$350,000,000 in annual public revenue for local school districts and public services.

Louisiana Rise

Louisiana Rise successfully fought against the 2016 Bayou Bridge pipeline.



By offering free legal assistance to individuals and organizations that cannot afford private representation, the **Tulane Environmental Law Clinic** gives communities a voice in court while fighting to enforce industry regulations, abate pollution, and protect lands.

Texas



"Our work, and our objective, has been to make our communities more aware, especially about the petrochemical industry and its impacts and effects on the climate, the environment, and health, and the possibilities and probabilities of how dangerous it can be. To be aware of this, as residents, means they themselves can have a say in what takes place." – **Coalition of Community Organizations (COCO)**



Through litigation, **Environment Texas** was able to work out an agreement with Shell and Chevron which resulted in them cutting emissions from their Houston facilities by 90% over three years. They were also able to raise funds through penalty fees that were used for community projects, such as installing solar panels on a high school and cleaning up diesel school buses.



Northeast Houston Redevelopment Council worked with seven groups to secure flood mitigation funds that were passed by the Texas legislature, and is now mobilizing communities to pressure elected officials to ensure the money is distributed and used effectively.



Livable Arlington collected 2,800 people to go to a permit hearing to ask for standing, which required the corporation's attorney to cross each one of them. Through this advocacy and process, too many people signed on to Livable Arlington's campaign, and the company withdrew their application.



Central Texas Interfaith Organization - a coalition of 50 religious congregations, schools, labor and health clinics in 10 counties around Austin, recently killed Texas' largest corporate tax incentive that would allow school districts to give 10 year tax abatements to major oil, gas, and energy companies through one of its campaigns.

Ongoing Efforts

As many CBOs emphasized, this is a long-term fight. Oftentimes when one battle is won, another takes its place. Many of the CBOs, funders, and coalition leaders interviewed discussed the projects they are working on and those they have upcoming. In this section, we highlight some of these ongoing projects and describe a few other research efforts supported by Bloomberg Philanthropies.

Goals	Geography				
	LA (19)	ORV (25)	TX (27)	Multi (9)	All (80)
2.2.1 Plant Shutdown	16%	8%	11%	0%	9%
2.2.2 Get Permit Denied	26%	16%	11%	0%	15%
2.2.3 Raise Awareness	37%	36%	33%	44%	36%
2.2.4 Collect Data	11%	20%	0%	0%	9%
2.2.5 Litigation	21%	12%	11%	11%	14%
2.2.6 Support Key Partner	21%	12%	15%	11%	15%
2.2.7 Other Goals	26%	12%	19%	11%	18%



FracTracker is working to launch a portal which intakes requests for custom mapping. This will allow for a more streamlined way for outside entities to work with FracTracker, making it more accessible.



Public Citizen is building its Public Utility Commission campaign to improve policies and practices of the energy utility. They're also working with Austin Energy on their climate equity plan.



Healthy Port Communities Coalition advocated for a local Climate Action Plan and are working to gain more support on this.



Air Alliance Houston is working with overburdened communities to bring low-cost air monitoring for accountability of local facilities, as well as tools to learn about local air quality and to empower communities to take precautions when quality is bad.



"Our strategies to slow down the sinking of our land include slowing down emissions of CO₂, but also restoring the natural functions that keep us above water. We are involved in a couple of large projects that are reintroducing the river to the wetland, digging canals to let the water come to the wetlands. As an org, we ensure those large projects happen, we ensure they are based on science. We want the industry to be a part of those large projects, part of the solution."

– **Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana**

Environmental Community Advocates of Galena Park

Environmental Community Advocates of Galena Park is working with the Local Emergency Planning Commission to provide a uniform alarm that community members can hear and understand how to respond to when an alarm goes off at a facility.



Green Amendments For the Generations is working to secure constitutional (Bill of Rights) protection for the right to clean air, water, stable climate, and healthy environments for states across the US. Each state needs to have this adopted in order for it to have legal teeth.



In response to state opposition and inaction, **Texas Housers** has shifted from a legal focus to becoming a resource for communities to craft buyouts of fence-line communities and others who are directly impacted.



The **Society of Native Nations** has several ongoing projects including the following:

Pipelines to Plastics Project: "We are working on bringing more attention to [plans to expand and add new refineries in Corpus Christi, Beaumont, and Galveston] by holding community workshops and programs to help families reduce the use of plastic bags, straws, and most consumer products with other options."

Campaigns to fight the construction of the new LNG Facility set to be constructed at the Port of Brownsville in South Texas near the mouth of the Gulf of Mexico and the Exxon Mobil ethylene cracker plant in Corpus Christi "which would be the largest in the world."

RECENT AND ONGOING BLOOMBERG PROJECTS

In addition to this qualitative research study, Bloomberg Philanthropies has several ongoing research efforts aimed at understanding and addressing aspects of the petrochemical and oil and gas industries.

- Rocky Mountain Institute produced a report on the **State of the Refining and Petrochemical Industries** which is an important first step in understanding the full risk these industries pose.
- Johns Hopkins University conducted a study **testing air pollution measurement techniques at refinery, petrochemical sites** between Philadelphia, PA and Wilmington, DE. They found that national testing requirements underestimated actual pollutant exposure which varied greatly in fence-line communities.
- Eric de Place and Beehive Research are analyzing US facilities related to the expansion of the petrochemical and oil refinery industry. Their list of targeted facilities is largely based on a database developed by the Environmental Integrity Project. They've found that over 2/3 of these can be found in five regions (Ohio River Valley states, River Parishes between Baton Rouge and New Orleans, Lake Charles-Port Arthur-Beaumont region of LA, Greater Houston, and the Coastal Bend in Texas) and have targeted types of developments that warrant more research (such as gas-to-liquid and renewable diesel projects).

Closing Thoughts

The purpose of this research was to understand the capacity needs and funding priorities of advocates fighting the Petrochemical/Oil & Gas Industry across Texas, Louisiana and the Ohio River Valley. Interviews of grassroots leaders, environmental justice advocates, advocacy-focused coalitions and technical assistance providers offered a better understanding of the impact of the petrochemical industry on the individual health, community well-being, economic development and community sustainability. These conversations influenced a set of 10 priority actions that funders, activists, government officials, and private industry can take on to advance a more healthy, equitable clean energy future.

Our hope is that these stories will compel each of us to think bigger, be bolder, and braver as the next set of strategies, campaigns and grantmaking efforts are conceptualized and deployed.



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Appendix

MAJOR THEMES BY CATEGORY

In an effort to dive deeper into each of the Broad Categories, explicit comments and concerns shared by interviewees are delineated and summarized across each state/region. Tables 1 - 7 provide an opportunity to understand any overlap of concerns across regions, as well as any unique concerns for that area.

Table 1: **Economic Impacts shared by study state/regions**

Broad Category	Sub Category	Topic/Comment/Concern	Ohio River Valley	Multi	Texas	Louisiana
IMPACT	Economy	Further economic decline	x			
		Inadequate short-term and long-term economic planning	x			x
		Fracturing neighborhoods	x			x
		Instilling divisiveness across the country: pro-environment vs. pro-job	x			x
		Industry influence on politics	x	x	x	x
		Industrial gentrification (major industries bring in workforce from other parts of the country, driving up local housing market, and then drain tax bases)	x			
		Increase in the export of crude as a result of port terminal expansions	x		x	
		Selling of critical groundwater to support desalination facilities	x		x	
		Brine from desalination: reducing water quality and devastating the fishing industry	x		x	
		Brine from desalination: reducing water quality and devastation for the tourism industry	x		x	
		Reduction in funding for schools, infrastructure and local government services	x			x
		Residential buy-out/relocation: stay or suffer?				
	Cultural	Industry destroyed historically Black communities				x

Takeaways:

- Ohio River Valley and Texas have similar concerns related to the economic impact of the petrochemical industry.
- All regions shared they were concerned with the industrial influence on local politics.

Table 2: Health Impacts shared by state/region

Broad Category	Sub Category	Topic/Comment/Concern	Ohio River Valley	Multi	Texas	Louisiana
IMPACT	Health	Increased rates of childhood cancer and asthma	x	x	x	x
		Respiratory issues	x		x	x
		Noise pollution	x		x	
		Mental health concerns (stress and anxiety)	x	x	x	x
		Highly explosive pipelines running adjacent to residential areas	x		x	x
		Lack of safety plans	x		x	x
		Fracking next to local water supplies	x		x	x
		Developmental disabilities	x	x		
		Noise bleeds	x	x		
		Industrial accidents/chemical emergencies	x		x	x
		Emissions from Port Activities (air pollution, climate)	x		x	
		Abandoned and neglected infrastructure (prone to leak)	x		x	
		Women's health: miscarriages	x			x
		Death	x			x

Takeaways:

- Childhood asthma, cancer rates and mental health concerns are the most commonly reported health impact by organizations across all regions.

Table 3: Environmental Impacts shared by state/region

Broad Category	Sub Category	Topic/Comment/Concern	Ohio River Valley	Multi	Texas	Louisiana
IMPACT	Environment	Landfill expansion	x			
		Radioactive waste disposal	x			
		Improper disposal	x			
		Leaking contaminants	x			x
		Flooding/storm urges	x	x	x	x
		Power outages	x	x		x
		Utility failures	x	x		x
		Threat to the biodiversity of sacred lands	x	x		
		Pollution from natural disasters (e.g. waste containers compromised)	x	x	x	x
		Spills	x		x	x
		Explosions	x		x	x
		Pipeline construction	x		x	x
		Extraction infrastructure cutting through indigenous historic sacred sites	x		x	
		Earthquakes	x		x	

	Poor air quality (toxins)	x	x	x
	Poor air quality (dirt, particulate matter from truck traffic)	x	x	x
	Fracking using drinking water resources	x	x	
	Water scarcity	x	x	
	Water quality: industrial backwash into drinking water systems		x	
	Water quality concerns: desalination		x	
	Water quality concerns: proximity to fracking	x		x
	Sinking land caused by industry infrastructure (land loss, natural green infrastructure for resilience)			x
	Abandoned petrochemical infrastructure			x

Takeaways:

- Flooding, storm surges and pollution from natural disasters were reported across all regions.
- Landfill expansion and radioactive waste disposal impacts were only reported by the Ohio River Valley region.

Table 4: **Advocacy tactics shared by state/region**

Broad Category	Sub Category	Topic/Comment/Concern	Ohio River Valley	Multi	Texas	Louisiana
ADVOCACY		Litigate against petrochemical investment & expansion	x		x	
		Establish local health and safety ordinances	x			
		Raise awareness, expand grass roots organizing and campaigns	x	x	x	x
		Conduct research to document & verify economic, environmental and public health damage	x	x		
		Create an alternative vision for industry and economic development beyond petrochemical/oil & gas industry	x			x
		Coalition building	x	x	x	x
		Educating policy makers	x	x		
		Build industry accountability: monitoring existing and new permits	x		x	x
		Against desalination	x		x	
		Diversifying the economy			x	
		Remove tax exemptions				x
		Broadening communication across regional tables				x
		Encouraging regional planning				x
		Working to delay permits				x
		Targeting infrastructure expansion of Liquefied natural gas and coal export terminals				x
		Data collection				x
		Technical support from non-BIPOC led organizations				x

Takeaways:

- Raising awareness, expanding grassroots organizing, campaigns and coalition building was a shared advocacy tactic across all regions.
- Louisiana respondents mentioned several advocacy tactics that were not mentioned specifically by the other regions : working to remove tax exemptions, broadening regional planning, limiting the expansion of LNG, as examples.

Table 5: **Strategies shared by state/region**

Broad Category	Sub Category	Topic/Comment/Concern	Ohio River Valley	Multi	Texas	Louisiana
STRATEGIES		Community organizing (education, storytelling, building trust, participating in public hearings)	x	x	x	x
		Legal	x	x		x
		Research to action (sourcing real-time data on air & water impacts, sourcing real experiences)	x	x		x
		Coalition building	x	x	x	x
		Support 501c4 work to ready local leaders for political office	x	x		x
		Media campaigns (narrative, social media, communications)	x	x	x	x
		Target landowners who might sell to petrochemical industry	x	x		
		Collaboration/leveraging partner strengths			x	
		Mutual aid			x	
		Co-crafting policy and legislation			x	
		Securing flood mitigation funds			x	
		Building emergency plans for poor air quality event			x	
		Youth education through the development of STEM and environmental justice curriculum				x
		Working with academic institutions (e.g. HBCUs)				x
		Civil disobedience				x
		Music and art protests				x
		Non-anecdotal data: accessing and collecting data to validate the impact from industry				x
		Influencing people with money (e.g. financial investors, philanthropists, financial advisors) to stop petrochemical investments				x
	Local and state legislation review and analysis				x	

Takeaways:

- Community organizing through education, storytelling, participating in public hearings, coalition building and media campaigns were shared strategies across the states/regions.
- Mutual aid, securing federal funds and developing emergency plans were mentioned by Texas respondents only.
- In Louisiana, influencing people with money – financial investors, philanthropists and financial advisors – was a strategy utilized.

Table 6: Barriers shared by state/region

Broad Category	Sub Category	Topic/Comment/Concern	Ohio River Valley	Multi	Texas	Louisiana
BARRIERS		Lack of & inconsistent funding for CBOs	x	x		x
		Excessive funding for CBOs	x			
		Concerned about the longevity and commitment of philanthropy	x			
		Burn-out/human capacity	x			
		Flaws in the permit appeal process	x			
		Lack of enforcement	x	x	x	x
		Difficult to create cohesive legal strategies across a wide geographic scale				
		Industry friendly government & elected officials	x		x	x
		Industry engrained in the culture and lanscape	x		x	x
		Hard to combat false narratives			x	x
		Intimidation by industry/protected despite harms they are creating			x	x
		Local people are unable to envision a viable economic alternative	x			
		Lack of access that ties health impacts back to industry	x	x	x	x
		Need interpreters for non-English speaking residents		x		
		Lack of phones/internet access/broadband		x		x
		More funding to relocate communities from health issues near petrochemical			x	x
		Industry is economic livelihood for communities			x	x
		Data manipulation in favor of industry	x		x	x
		Lack of enviromental champions in the legislature	x		x	
		Linguistic isolation: communication by industry and organizations is not inclusive			x	
		Redlining/poor zoning			x	x
		Lack of recognition as a federal tribe (i.e. limits ability to contest pipeline construction and impacts on ancestral lands)			x	
		Physical size of state presents a barrier for organizations to connect			x	
		Uncertain immigration status			x	x
		Lack of a 'true narrative' around emerging projects and industries claiming to be "green"			x	
		Lack of expers to support 'fact-checking' of public messages			x	
		Need more anti-racism training to build movement solidarity	x		x	
	Tax exemptions for industry			x	x	

	No regulations for orphan well pads and pipelines								x
	No accountability for mishaps threatening public health								x
	Racial divides between communities								x
	Non-health based air standards								x
	Technical capacity across multiple areas: for economic analysis, engineering, flooding and strategic communications								x
	Investigative journalism is under or de-funded								x
	Enviromental racism						x		x
	Moratoriums to limit the creation of solar farms								x
	No accountability for public officials								x

Takeaways:

- Barriers garnered the largest set of responses.
- Common barriers across each region included lack of enforcement and the inability to tie health impacts on the community back to industry.

Table 7: **Other concerns and opportunities shared by state/region**

Broad Category	Sub Category	Topic/Comment/Concern	Ohio River Valley	Multi	Texas	Lousiana
CONCERNS/ OPPORTUNITIES		Grid modernization				x
		Addressing climate change impcats			x	x
		Eliminating silos between advocacy, policy and research groups		x		
		Expand local air monitoring		x		
		Improve disaster response		x	x	x
		Educate children in political science & enviromental science		x		x
		Improve coordination among local government and state agencies (i.e. resources, planning)		x		
		Systems level policy to support a dignified relocation effort				x
		Need more training and capacity around anti-racism competency				x
		Plans for a Just Transition: helping creat that vision	x	x	x	x
		Need to nationalize the Gulf Coast regions story				
	Community ownership of utility resources: need model ordinance					x

Takeaways:

- Shared across each state/region was the need to create a vision or a Just Transition.
- Individual needs related to building competency around anti-racism and creating a fair and equitable relocation effort was only mentioned in Texas.