

ENVIRONMENT & SUSTAINABILITY GUIDELINES

Rationale

In its Environment and Sustainability grantmaking, the Compton Foundation seeks a balanced and healthy relationship between humans, other life, and the planet. The Foundation believes it is possible to pursue a holistic and sustainable vision that blends concern for environmental conservation and economic viability, links urban and rural priorities, supports land and water health, and views humans as one part of the natural world. The Foundation has chosen three focus areas in which we feel we can make a meaningful contribution to realizing this vision in the United States.

Goals

I. Advancing ecologically healthy, economically sustainable, and socially just visions for the care and use of fresh water.

Fresh water ecosystems are among the most threatened habitats on earth and all ecosystems require some fresh water to survive. Yet the Compton Foundation believes that fresh water is more than just an environmental issue. Scarcity of clean water also stands as a major impediment to human and economic development; water is fundamental to life. Cold, clear water not only provides a home for fish, invertebrates, and plants, it also carries human hopes and dreams. Rivers and lakes slake our thirst, offer a place to play, irrigate our crops, cool our power plants, and run through most of our industrial production. Nevertheless, most political systems fail to care for fresh water, neither advancing a vision for shared water stewardship nor offering fair and transparent means for making water allocation decisions. The Compton Foundation supports efforts to: (1) build strategic alliances to protect fresh water across sectors, constituencies, and regions; (2) research water policy across jurisdictional lines to identify political leverage points; and (3) develop fair and sustainable fresh water stewardship plans.

II. Promoting community-based strategies to support healthy ecosystems and thriving rural communities.

Some believe that rural communities must choose between economic and environmental health. The Compton Foundation believes we can build a society committed to both. Collaborations between diverse interests are integral to local and regional sustainability. We fund efforts to support communities to develop creative solutions to complex social, environmental, and economic challenges. The Compton Foundation supports: (1) efforts to improve economic and environmental sustainability in land and water ecosystems; and (2) new models for collaborative community-based natural resource management.

III. Reducing the US contribution to global climate change.

The US is the largest national contributor to global climate change. Our nation not only plays a major role in global warming because of the size of its annual emissions, but also

because US decisions alter the context for international action. The Compton Foundation aims to help advance climate policy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions while encouraging adaptation planning in the areas where the harshest climate impacts are likely to be felt first. We support efforts to: (1) ensure that implementation of California's Global Warming Solutions Act (AB 32) is effective and politically successful; (2) advance a new energy economy with particular focus on renewables, efficiency, and both urban and rural green jobs; and (3) promote analysis of the climate/water nexus and use the emerging information to help provide fresh water for both human needs and aquatic ecosystems.

Geographic focus

Grants in the field of Environment and Sustainability will be made only to organizations based in the US for domestic programs. In climate change, we have a particular focus on California. For all other grantmaking, the Foundation prioritizes projects in the following order: (1) regional or statewide projects in the three Pacific coast states: California, Oregon, Washington; (2) regional or statewide projects in the eight states of the Interior West: Colorado, Utah, Idaho, Montana, Arizona, New Mexico, Nevada, Wyoming; and (3) projects of national significance in the US. The Compton Foundation does not usually fund environmental work in Alaska or Hawai'i, or outside the boundaries of the United States.

Strategies

The Compton Foundation seeks to build and expand broad constituencies committed to taking action that will help foster and support a healthy environment. Over the short term, we will support efforts to educate and motivate personal choices. We are interested in projects that develop creative and uncommon alliances. Over the long term, we hope to promote changes in public opinion and policy.

We are interested in projects that fit into one of our three focus areas—water, climate change, or rural sustainability—as well as projects that explore the connections between two or more of those areas. We believe both approaches are valuable and will not prioritize one over the other.

We expect foundation funding to be constrained over the next few years, and will be interested in efforts to track and leverage federal funding of projects in our three areas of focus. We will also be looking for projects that develop models and best practices for the ways in which future federal investment can be directed toward projects that lay the foundation for a new green economy that benefits both urban and rural communities.

The Compton Foundation is particularly interested in projects that:

- promote values that affirm sustainable relationships with land and water;
- defuse conflict and create spaces for people to find and work from common ground;

- share best practices and lessons learned;
- encourage a diversity of experience, interest, and organizational scale in defining and addressing environmental issues;
- offer creative new approaches;
- foster environmentally informed, responsible leaders.

The Compton Foundation does not generally fund conferences or marine projects. We do not fund land, water, or easement acquisitions, or place-based conservation or restoration projects unless they represent a new model of resource stewardship and offer a plan for replication.