



# THE SOLUTIONS PROJECT 2017 EVALUATION SUMMARY

Throughout 2017, Frontline Solutions conducted a third-party evaluation to measure the effectiveness of Solutions Project's grantmaking process as well as grantee partner satisfaction. Data was collected from Solutions Project's internal systems and through interviews with Solutions Project's grantee partners, staff, peer funders, and philanthropic trustees. Indicators were collected to measure progress in four primary areas selected by Solutions Project with Frontline's guidance. The primary findings in each of these four areas is summarized below:

## 1 Right bet, right time

Solutions Project has positioned its work at the intersection of climate change and equity strategies. Solutions Project's grantmaking covered much of the continental U.S. and Puerto Rico. Leadership, Fighter, and Ecosystem Fund giving increased from 2015 to 2017 and Fighter Fund grants resourced urgent needs in a timely fashion. Nearly half of grantee partners were led by people of color, and 26% primarily focused on an issue other than environment or climate.

## 2 Meaningful grantee/funder partnerships:

Solutions Project has cultivated strong, trusting relationships with grantee partners. Grantees felt that they could be transparent and open with Solutions Project staff and were satisfied with the application, approval, and reporting processes. However, more than one-quarter of grantees asked for better communication from Solutions Project staff at the time of grant completion. Leadership Fund Committee members have transitioned to serving as philanthropic trustees. They are eager to own more of the work, and to rely less on the leadership of staff.

**"[Solutions Project] took a risk on us in our development stage when we weren't super powerful yet."** - Grantee Partner

## 3 Strong organizations:

Solutions Project's grantee partners have grown in impact in 2017. Despite a hostile political environment, the leadership capacity, membership, and political influence of many grantee partners increased. Grantees felt that political leaders on a state and local level were more aware of the issues highlighted by grassroots organizations than were political leaders on a national level.

## 4 Rich ecosystems:

Solutions Project staff collaborate well with peer funders and push the field of philanthropy towards equity and diversity. Staff spoke to more than 20 audiences and published more than a dozen articles. Grantee partners reported that Solutions Project has connected them to new funders and organizations.

### The evaluation yielded recommendations for Solutions Project's grantmaking moving forward:

1. Cultivate stronger and clearer communication with grantees.
2. Expand grants team capacity.
3. Clarify messaging on the relationship between communications and grantmaking.
4. Build the grantee referral system.
5. Continue to democratize the grantmaking process.
6. Continue to serve as a relationship builder.