

The Solutions Project Transition Interviews

Key Interview Themes

November, 2018



Objective 1: Seek feedback from grantee partners regarding the Solutions Project transition.

- Interviewees were highly appreciative of transparency from Solutions Project about the transition and the opportunity to talk with Sarah and/or Rudi via the interviews.
- Several interviewees mentioned that they were unclear about the reasons for the transition, and a few mentioned concerns about a focus on California, which they described as relatively well-resourced compared to other areas of the country.
- Several interviewees brought up questions about the current stage of the transition and asked whether Solutions Project is nearing the end of the transition period.
- Interviewees affirmed Solutions Project's increased emphasis on equity.
- A few respondents expressed concern that Solutions Project would cease providing funding opportunities.
- Several interviewees underlined that there is a need for Solutions to continue to transform philanthropy by holding briefings, webinars, and helping others to understand the importance of investing in frontline communities.

Objective 2: Identify grantee partner priorities for future support from the Solutions Project and gain a focused understanding of media and field building support that would be helpful to grantees.

- Funding is still needed. Almost all interviewees noted that flexible financial support at important programming or growth points is critical for their work.
- Rudi was repeatedly lifted up as an ally, champion, and coach who is accessible, listens, and clearly cares and wants to be helpful to grantee partners.
- Interviewees appreciate past introduction to other funders and would like to see this continue.
- Interviewees would like to continue to be connected to other movement leaders in order to tell a national story about just transition. Several expressed interest in a Solutions Project-sponsored convening. A few noted the need for more cross-sector partnerships with leaders in health and business.
- Desired media supports include:
 - Access to successful messaging on clean energy and best practices for how to shape narratives.
 - Training and technical assistance on: writing press releases and op-eds, leveraging social media, impactful storytelling, engaging media in a way that transforms traditional frames, building relationships with reporters and key media contacts, and protection against bad media.
 - Direct assistance or mini grants for photography, video development, brief communications tools (i.e. one-pager), op-ed ghostwriters, artist partnerships, and story placement.

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- Assistance via media strategy and PR consultants—although a few interviewees noted that they would prefer to be able to choose the consultants.
- Celebrity support for causes, which is important for gaining attention and support of decision makers and to show national leadership.
- Protocols for communications, narrative, and storytelling.

Objective 3: Seek feedback and generate ideas for integrating the Solutions Project media, investment, and field building strategies.

- Several interviewees mentioned enthusiasm about the idea of combining general operating support with media supports and highlighted the importance of flexible funding.
- A few interviewees noted that some organizations will not have the capacity or bandwidth to benefit from an integrated approach that includes media, field building and funding. One grantee noted that it may be helpful to explain to grantees the full scope of expertise and resources at their disposal and then allow them to choose based on what they know is needed.
- Interviewees emphasized that Solutions Project should continue to fund and provide media and capacity building supports to smaller, on-the-ground community organizations in order to strengthen the larger ecosystem.
- Interviewees indicated that they would like Solutions Project to use stories and anecdotes to measure success. Others highlighted the importance of capturing “small wins” that lead up to bigger wins, including key moments, media coverage, events, and candidate interventions that lead to narrative or culture shift. Additional areas that grantees suggested should be included when measuring success were:
 - Breadth of types of communities served (rural, urban, coastal, mountain, etc.)
 - Grassroots leadership development
 - Spin-off coalitions that have emerged
 - Policy goals achieved and outcomes that increase equity
 - Increased percentage of low-income communities, communities of color, and most-impacted communities represented in public discourse
 - Types of supports that grassroots organizations are asking for and using
 - Grantee feedback on Solutions Project’s grants, media supports, etc.
- The vast majority of interviewees indicated that they did not have major duplication concerns about Solutions’ plans. On the contrary, they highlighted that Solutions’ work is unique in combining media, grantmaking, and field leadership in support of frontline communities working for just transition.

Key individual comments (not necessarily themes, but worth noting):

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- There is concern that the Central Valley could get lost in an overemphasis on the Bay Area and Los Angeles in California.
- There is a need to celebrate Republicans who have led the movement for clean energy and just transition. This is important for ensuring that the movement transcends a single party.
- Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund was lifted up as an example of a funder that provides capacity, funding, and media supports.
- Face time and site visits are important and meaningful.
- The maps on Solutions Project's website is incredibly helpful data that "helps people realize we can do it," in the words of one interviewee.

Continued questions for reflection:

- How can we effectively measure narrative shift? How do we measure changing hearts and minds? Interviewees noted that Solutions would make a huge contribution to the field by identifying some of those metrics.
- Not all organizations will have the capacity or bandwidth to benefit from an integrated approach. One interviewee lifted up the question, "Knowing [lack of capacity] will be the case in lots of organizations, what then? Is that a good indication that it's not a good fit or is there a need to hold flexibility in order to have the right grantees?"

* For Reference: [Link to complete interview notes](#) (permission request may be needed)