

# THE WHAT WORKS PLUS FUNDER COLLABORATIVE

A Review of Accomplishments and  
Impact

July 2025

**FREEDMAN**  
CONSULTING, LLC

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## Overview

From 2022 to 2025, the [What Works Plus \(WW+\)](#) collaborative served as a key coordination and learning hub for philanthropic organizations supporting the effective and equitable implementation of federal infrastructure, climate, and economic development funding. The collaborative was a project of [Freedman Consulting, LLC](#), which provides strategic consulting services to foundations and nonprofit organizations, and was supported by a diverse group of philanthropic organizations.

To thoughtfully enhance learning and collaboration between philanthropy and federal, state, and local government, nonprofits, labor, and other key stakeholders, WW+ played several key roles:

- **Philanthropic Coordinator & Knowledge-BUILDER.** WW+ mapped, researched, and presented on topics of particular interest to members, synthesizing complex information on implementation to help inform donors' grantmaking priorities and collaborative decisions.
- **Cross-Sectoral Connector.** WW+ facilitated meaningful information-sharing and coordination between philanthropy and other key implementation stakeholders, including government, nonprofits, labor and others.
- **Implementation Support Gap-Filler & Matchmaker.** WW+ identified and supported initiatives to address gaps in implementation, primarily by spotlighting existing opportunities and collaborating on the design and launch of high-value, targeted initiatives to help fill areas of need.

By design, WW+ consistently adapted its strategy in response to the evolving federal funding and philanthropic landscape. As the status of key legislation and federal climate, economic development, and infrastructure programs shifted, so too did coordination needs around supporting implementation. Given the extent of these changes, which necessitate new structures and approaches to respond effectively to emerging needs, the WW+ collaborative will wind down, and the team will focus on a more tailored suite of services that help foundations advance their unique priorities for implementation of climate, infrastructure, and economic development projects.

**This report documents the evolution of the federal implementation field over WW+'s tenure, the structure of the collaborative, and its major activities and achievements.** We hope that it can inspire the field and provide insights for collaborative efforts going forward.

## Evolution of Implementation Landscape

In 2021 and 2022, the federal government passed three pieces of legislation which injected a historic amount of funding into the American economy: the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, the Inflation Reduction Act, and the CHIPS and Science Act. These landmark bills presented an opportunity to improve the country's infrastructure, address climate change, strengthen the American economy, and create good jobs across the country, especially in places and communities historically left behind.

The three pieces of legislation were enacted in quick succession:

- Passed on November 15, 2021, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, often referred to as the **"Bipartisan Infrastructure Law,"** provided \$1.2 trillion to expand and introduce a number of programs supporting water, transportation, broadband, energy, and more.

- On August 9, 2022, the **CHIPS and Science Act** passed, appropriating \$80 billion to boost American semiconductor research, development, and manufacturing with an additional \$200 billion authorized but not appropriated in the legislation itself.
- The **Inflation Reduction Act**, passed on August 16, 2022, created and expanded tax provisions, grants, and loans to reduce pollution, improve clean transit, increase affordability of clean energy and climate resilience, among other investments.

Even when compared to major federal investments in recent decades, this legislation was ambitious. The government aimed to invest over \$2 trillion through a mix of existing and new programs and intended to reach many recipients who had never received federal funding before. Federal staff were tasked with standing up hundreds of grant, loan, and tax programs, educating a host of constituencies about the opportunities, and taking on innovative outreach and administrative tactics.

While these historic investments were substantial on their own, philanthropy understood that communities would require additional support to be able to actually access and implement these funds, especially for the Energy, Justice40, and Tribal communities which the legislation and Biden administration made efforts to support. As such, philanthropic leaders – often in partnership with the White House’s newly-created Office of Clean Energy Innovation and Implementation – quickly convened to identify priority opportunities that philanthropy was uniquely positioned to support. A key role of WW+ was to help distill the complexities of these policies and translate them into clear opportunities for philanthropic funding and other efforts. This “sensemaking” – helping to consider what connections, partnerships, and other mechanisms would be needed for implementation – was critical to building the know-how needed to leverage these policies effectively and create tangible change in communities.

By the end of the Biden administration in January 2025, the federal government had distributed hundreds of billions of grants and loans throughout the country, not to mention [billions of investments](#) spurred by IRA tax credits. In parallel, philanthropy mobilized hundreds of millions of dollars to support communities seeking to take advantage of this once-in-a-generation opportunity. A [WW+ effort](#) tracked \$231+ million in philanthropic investments among all fifty states, DC, and Puerto Rico for education, technical assistance, project development, and much more.

Since then, under the Trump Administration and current Congress, the federal government has scrutinized many of these funds closely, initially placing a blanket freeze on federal funding and eventually cancelling a subset of awards totaling in the billions. In addition, a slew of executive orders have reshaped how remaining funds would be distributed by changing the criteria for which entities could receive federal support and how they could use funding. Finally, the “One Big Beautiful Bill Act” repealed, restricted, and set plans to phase out many of the IRA’s tax provisions.

Despite recent hurdles to implementation of these once-in-a-lifetime investments, the long-term promise of these hundreds of billions in public investments remains. In the coming years, philanthropy can continue to play a role in helping communities realize the intended impacts of BIL, CHIPS, and IRA, creating economic, climate, and other intended benefits nationwide.



## Key Achievements of WW+

Over the course of three years, WW+ played a central role advising, coordinating, and empowering philanthropy to support more effective and equitable federal funding implementation. Key accomplishments are listed below, and [the appendix](#) contains a list of resources that WW+ developed.



**Increased coordination and knowledge building across philanthropic initiatives:** WW+ produced resources responsive to information gaps in the field and connected leaders to one another.

Highlights included:

- Developing and presenting “moment-in-time” analyses of the rapidly evolving federal funding implementation landscape and its implications for philanthropy, including a May 2025 [report](#) detailing evolving technical assistance and capacity building needs and opportunities.
- Leading strategy sprints on [infrastructure and climate work and workers](#), [inclusive procurement](#), and [climate resilience](#).
- Producing 36 [monthly bulletins](#) with a synthesized, timely roundup of key resources, news, and announcements for 650+ subscribers.



**Improved feedback loops between implementation stakeholders:** As this space quickly materialized and progressed, WW+ supported leaders to gauge opportunities to strengthen implementation. Highlights included:

- Launching and running—in partnership with Invest in Our Future and in close coordination with The White House Office of Clean Energy Innovation and Implementation—[Philanthropy's 500/1500 Challenge](#), which tracked over \$231 million in philanthropic investments for activities advancing the implementation of federal climate and clean energy investments.
- Convening—in partnership with the Center for Energy Workforce Development and Jobs for The Future—120+ leaders from philanthropy, industry, labor, education, non-profits, and government to develop [recommendations](#) for cross-sector partnership opportunities that can help build the large, inclusive talent pipeline needed to realize our nation's clean energy transition.
- Helping coordinate philanthropic partners to announce \$50 million in new funding commitments aligned with the [White House's 2022 Talent Pipeline Challenge](#), in partnership with the Families and Workers Fund and America Achieves.



**Expanded partnerships across the country that addressed implementation gaps:** WW+ also enabled cross-organizational partnerships and matchmaking to help address opportunities for knowledge-building, fundraising, and more. Highlights included:

- Coordinating conversations in partnership with the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy with philanthropy, clean energy finance, and community groups about the IRA-funded 48(e) tax credit program, resulting in [a strategic framework and recommendations](#) for catalyzing a new generation of community-scale clean energy projects.
- Co-facilitating a philanthropic working group with the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation on IRS modernization, including maintaining a proposal bank that helped yield over \$15 million in collective philanthropic giving to projects related to IRS modernization.
- Creating the [Catalyze philanthropic registry and matchmaking service](#) to enable philanthropy to scale needed support for initiatives that build a diverse talent pool for quality infrastructure careers, in partnership with America Achieves.

## Key WW+ Resources

Below is a list of deliverables produced by WW+. Please reach out to a member of the Freedman Consulting team with questions about these or any other WW+ materials.

- [Landscape Analysis of Landmark Federal Funding and Opportunities for Impact](#), Produced in February 2023 for the Economy Funders
- [Building a Big, Inclusive Talent Pipeline and Good Jobs through Climate and Infrastructure Investments](#): Working hypotheses and preliminary recommendations for philanthropy, Produced in June 2023 with Families and Workers Fund and Infrastructure Exchange
- [Maximizing Impact from the Inflation Reduction Act: Opportunities for Pennsylvania](#), Produced in October 2023 for the Heinz Endowments and Pittsburgh Foundation
- [Building the Energy Workforce of the Future: Event Takeaways](#), Produced in January 2024 for an event with Center for Energy Workforce Development and Jobs for the Future
- [Catalyzing Implementation of Clean Energy Programs](#): Reflections on the Impact of Philanthropic Support for Communities, Produced in May 2024
- [Readout of Philanthropy's 500/1500 Challenge](#), Produced in August 2024 with Invest in Our Future
- [Philanthropy's Climate and Clean Energy Strategy](#): A Snapshot from Philanthropy's 500/1500 Challenge, Produced in August 2024
- [Landscape of Federal Climate Resilience Funding and Opportunities for Philanthropy](#), Produced in November 2024 for the Packard Foundation
- [Building an American Energy Future for All](#): Market Building for Community-Scale Projects, Business Development, and Good Jobs, Produced in February 2025 with the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy
- [Technical Assistance and Capacity Building in the Evolving Implementation Landscape](#): Analysis of Challenges & Opportunities for Philanthropy, Produced in May 2025

### Acknowledgements

It has been an immense honor to support philanthropy throughout this critical period. We would like to extend our deep appreciation to the following organizations which participated as members:

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| • David and Lucile Packard Foundation           | • Kresge Foundation                    |
| • Families and Workers Fund                     | • Lumina Foundation                    |
| • James Irvine Foundation                       | • Surdna Foundation                    |
| • John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation | • Waverley Street Foundation           |
|   | • William and Flora Hewlett Foundation |

WW+ would also like to thank America Achieves, BuildUS, Invest in Our Future, McKnight Foundation, and The Heinz Endowments for their partnership on projects to advance shared specific implementation goals.

WW+ was led by a team of Freedman Consulting staff – including Talya Karr, Sasha Beder-Schenker, Max Shipman, Amanda Vallillee, Sarah Cooper, and Joey Rauch – who set programmatic direction and stewarded the project. Previous team members also included Lindsay Acker, Claire Carey, Alec Lopata, Kennedy Patlan, Ashley Price, and Emily Van Dusen. Brookings Metro Senior Fellow Xavier de Souza Briggs also played a leadership role, helping launch the effort and serving as Senior Advisor throughout.

## About

[Freedman Consulting, LLC](#), a mission-driven firm, offers strategic consulting services to foundations, nonprofit organizations, and public interest coalitions, advising many of the nation's leading philanthropic institutions.