

# TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND CAPACITY BUILDING IN THE EVOLVING IMPLEMENTATION LANDSCAPE

*Analysis of Challenges & Opportunities for Philanthropy*

**MAY 2025**



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## Introduction

### Background

The passages of the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), and CHIPS and Science Act (CHIPS), collectively catalyzed a once-in-a-generation investment in America's infrastructure, clean energy economy, and manufacturing base. Over the past three years, philanthropy has played a crucial role in helping communities access and implement these funding streams: bridging funding gaps and matching investments, fostering collaboration across the public and private sectors, providing technical expertise and grant application assistance, and more.

In 2025, federal funding implementation is entering a new era marked by unique needs, opportunities, and challenges. Many funds are now disbursed, shifting priorities from grant application to on-the-ground project execution.

#### *The Current Moment in IRA, BIL, CHIPS Implementation*

- **Most IRA, BIL, and CHIPS funding is out the door:** Federal agencies have obligated or announced at least 71% of non-tax funds from IRA, BIL, and CHIPS.<sup>1</sup> The task of administering funds has shifted away from the federal level toward state and local governments, which are now responsible for implementing projects.
- **New federal actions and priorities have caused widespread uncertainty:** A January executive order issued by the current administration – entitled “Unleashing American Energy” – required federal agencies to halt the disbursement of funding from IRA and BIL, including obligated funds.<sup>2</sup> Many funds have since been unfrozen – including after mid-April court decisions – although some IRA and BIL programs remain paused.<sup>3</sup> The pause has created enduring uncertainty for IRA and BIL awardees, who may face additional federal scrutiny and risks even if their funds are no longer impacted by the freeze.
- **Despite the pause, projects are underway:** Funding recipients across the country are already implementing federally-supported projects despite ongoing uncertainty, increasing the need for capacity at state and local levels.<sup>4</sup>
- **Philanthropic support for implementation is still critical:** While the greatest project implementation challenges and opportunities for philanthropy have evolved with the landscape, essential community needs are holding constant. For example, while the focus has shifted from grant application to execution needs (e.g., compliance and legal assistance, financial planning and analysis, strategic planning, and development/engineering), technical assistance support remains critical to enabling implementation.

While the new federal balance of power creates significant uncertainty, the implementation of current and future federally-funded projects will continue for years to come, necessitating the adaptation of existing strategies – and the adoption of new ones – for philanthropic implementation support.

Recognizing the need to understand how philanthropy can help communities in this new period of implementation, What Works Plus undertook an analysis to identify current challenges and opportunities for philanthropic engagement.

## Methodology & Areas of Inquiry

This analysis focused on technical assistance and capacity building – two areas of philanthropic support that have taken on outsized importance as project implementation moves forward. Interventions in these categories can help communities overcome burdens with the potential to hinder implementation progress, or even halt projects entirely before they can begin. This report draws on new and existing research and interviews with technical assistance providers, capacity building organizations, communities, funders, and other relevant stakeholders to:

- **Identify project implementation needs and barriers**, particularly roadblocks to implementation that could be alleviated with technical assistance and capacity building.
- **Surface opportunities for philanthropy** that can help address pressing needs on the ground, and highlight organizations doing relevant work.

This report also includes insights from interviewees that, while not directly related to technical assistance or capacity building, emerged as critical considerations for funders interested in advancing project implementation more broadly.

## Challenges, Needs, & Barriers

Interviewees identified several significant challenges constraining the effective implementation of projects supported by IRA, BIL, and CHIPS. Common themes among the challenges raised include the disruptive impacts of the federal funding freeze on project momentum, persistent capacity and functional limitations within state and local governments, the complexity of inter- and intra-government relationships, and areas where philanthropic support has not fully aligned with the urgency of needs on the ground.

Zooming in across these themes, the issues outlined below illustrate key roadblocks to implementation, where targeted action or additional support may yield outsized impacts.

### A Chilling Effect is Limiting Progress

**State of Play:** New agency priorities are presenting short- and long-term risks to federal investments. Since January, the federal funding freeze has affected even those projects whose funding is no longer impacted. Cities, worried obligated or dispersed funding will be revoked or limited in the future, may be slow-rolling projects that are otherwise ready for implementation. A number of privately-funded clean energy projects that would have provided jobs and other benefits to cities have also hit the pause button as industry players wait to better understand the current environment.<sup>5</sup> Beyond the funding

freeze, agencies will continue to scrutinize awardees for financial mismanagement and other activities, as exemplified by the Environmental Protection Agency's audit of Solar for All (initiated after awardees' funds were unfrozen).<sup>6</sup> Finding any actual violations – or alleging violations – of award terms and conditions could lead agencies to attempt to deobligate funds, recoup spent funds, or terminate awards.<sup>7</sup>

#### ***Uncertainty Around Solar Funding Creates Delays***

The Environmental Protection Agency announced in March 2025 that they had unfrozen funds related to the IRA's \$7 billion Solar for All Program. However, lingering doubts about the program's financial stability have led many solar developers to halt or abandon projects, even after receiving federal commitments.<sup>8</sup> While the full financial toll of the Solar for All funding freeze, and subsequent delay, on solar projects is difficult to quantify, the disruption poses severe consequences for projects and the industry as whole.

### **Permitting Processes Delay Getting Shovels in the Ground**

**State of Play:** Projects receiving federal funding often need to go through three levels of permitting reviews – federal, state, and local – before they can move forward. Federal permitting processes are notoriously slow. According to data collected by the Department of Energy, it takes an average of 4.5 years for a project to go through the federal environmental review process and obtain a federal permit.<sup>9</sup>

Similarly, state and local processes can be onerous, and often, agencies at these levels struggle to adequately staff permitting review programs, leading to further delays and backlogs.<sup>10</sup> Long permitting processes across the three levels of government can hinder project progress and viability.

#### ***A Bipartisan Appeal for Permitting Reform***

During the 2025 National Governors Association (NGA) Winter Meeting, Oklahoma Governor Kevin Stitt and Pennsylvania Governor Josh Shapiro announced the formation of a Bipartisan Working Group to focus on improving the energy and infrastructure delivery process to provide better results for states and territories.<sup>11</sup> The Working Group will identify best practices of cross-sector efforts to improve permitting, highlight the ways governors are leading efforts to build, and create opportunities to strengthen the state-federal partnership and engage Congress and the Administration to improve federal permitting.

To build off the efforts of the Working Group, NGA will initiate work with six governor-designated state teams to facilitate implementation of specific state policy objectives, such as permitting reform, accelerating project delivery, addressing resource adequacy, and grid modernization. This policy academy will allow NGA to apply lessons learned from the Working Group to the real-world objectives of a bipartisan group of governors, resulting in meaningful outcomes and power sector advancement.



## Implementers Grapple with Staff and Capacity Gaps

**State of Play:** The burden of project implementation is shifting from the federal government to states and cities, many of which do not have an adequate workforce to handle increasing project needs. At the same time, private sector partners driving implementation rely upon a specialized, skilled workforce to get shovels in the ground. Aside from a sheer lack of workers in state and local government, interviewees surfaced other specific needs related to gaps in the workforce:

- *Lack of specialized knowledge:* States and cities need more workers with specialized skill sets – such as engineers, compliance officers, and developers – to successfully get projects off the ground.
- *An aging workforce:* The workforce in many states and cities is aging and there are not enough workers coming into local government to replace those that are retiring. In fact, 31% of local government workers are eligible to retire by 2025 while the number of applicants per public sector job in cities has decreased 55% since 2019.<sup>12</sup>
- *Local governments struggle to stay competitive:* Local government hiring processes are lengthy, averaging 130 days to fill open positions, compared to 36 days in the private sector.<sup>13</sup> In addition, local governments often offer lower salaries than the private sector and provide fewer opportunities for flexible work, like remote or hybrid arrangements, which are being increasingly prioritized by job seekers.<sup>14, 15</sup> These challenges can contribute to talented candidates opting to work in the private sector over local government.

**“The workforce part of the conversation is a huge problem that does not yet have a solution.”**

*- Nonprofit partner*

At a minimum, these challenges may reduce the potential impacts and benefits of federal investments for local communities and the climate. In the worst case, they could result in awardees' failing to meet their awards' terms and conditions, which would potentially give federal agencies a legal basis to deobligate, claw back, or terminate funds. Precedent exists from the California High-Speed Rail project in 2019: though federal funding for this project was likely targeted for political reasons, the Department of Transportation's notice of termination alleged that the project had failed to comply with the grant agreement and make reasonable progress.<sup>16</sup>

## Disconnect between State and Local Government

**State of Play:** States have access to unique funding mechanisms that localities do not, such as matched funds, revolving loan funds, and state infrastructure banks, and financing from these sources can be essential to getting local projects off the ground. Consequently, frequent conversation and coordination between the two levels of government is critical.

However, some interviewees expressed concerns that local governments may feel hesitant to highlight their fiscal challenges to their respective state governments, due to fears the state may not sustain their budgets if local governments appear unprepared to handle an influx of funding.

According to some interviewees, states may inadvertently neglect underserved areas that may benefit from funding the most, by deploying funding most frequently to the same set of cities that appear most prepared.

#### ***Minnesota's green bank provides essential funding to local project***

In March 2024, the Minnesota Climate Innovation Finance Authority – the state's first “green bank” established to fill funding gaps for environmental projects – provided an essential \$4.7 million bridge loan to The Heights Community Energy project, a community-owned district geothermal energy system that also braided in heat-pump funding from IRA.<sup>17</sup> The project is currently under construction thanks to the state support.<sup>18</sup>

### **Chilling Effect Extends to Philanthropic Funding**

**State of Play:** In early 2025, there was a general sense among grantees that philanthropic funders were taking a pause in grantmaking to reevaluate their strategies in response to the rapidly changing federal landscape.<sup>19</sup> As philanthropies reconfigure their strategies in 2025 and beyond, interviewees offered some reflections for funders interested in helping get projects off the ground to consider.

*Rapid Response Funding is Essential:* Understanding that philanthropy's role is not to completely backstop funding for projects that have lost federal dollars, philanthropy can play a pivotal role in sustaining key community projects by rapidly deploying emergency support directly to projects most in need.

*Local Approaches are Necessary, and Not Always Replicable:* Several interviewees report that funders often focus their giving on initiatives that can scale to other places. However, many implementation needs right now—such as finding local champions to cultivate political buy-in and helping projects through local approval processes—are hyper-place based and not necessarily easily directly replicated in other locations.

**“Quietly getting it done and not leaning into the political framing is another way national philanthropy could be very helpful.”**

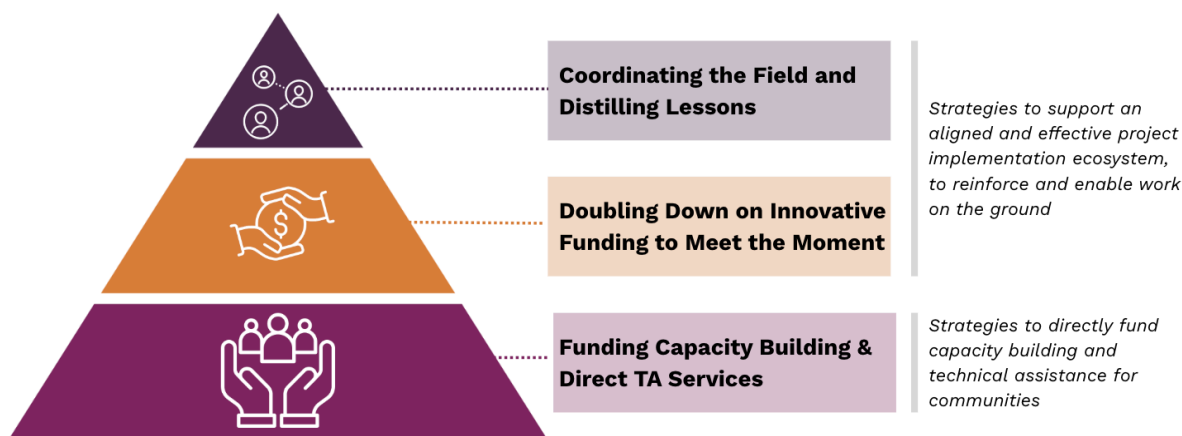
*- Philanthropic collaborative*

*Political framing when choosing projects:* While political context can be an important factor in philanthropic decision-making, several interviewees emphasized the importance of prioritizing community needs and project readiness over political considerations. They encouraged funders to adopt an inclusive approach that ensures support reaches a diverse range of geographies, including communities that may not be in “swing states” or other politically-charged states, but still face significant capacity challenges.

## Opportunities for Philanthropy

The challenges and barriers outlined above highlight the critical role philanthropy can play in providing targeted, strategic support to enable successful federal funding implementation at the community level. With the flexibility to deploy funding in a way that meets the moment and invest in areas like strategic staffing support and infrastructure for data and learning, philanthropy can help bridge capacity gaps and support more effective implementation.

In addition to technical assistance and capacity building, interviewees surfaced broader opportunities for philanthropy to shape and sustain effective project implementation via innovative funding strategies and supporting an aligned and connected ecosystem – which can ultimately enable and reinforce technical assistance and capacity building support on the ground.



The following opportunities, surfaced in interviews, illustrate where philanthropic investment has the potential to make a meaningful and lasting impact on project implementation in 2025 and beyond. They are summarized in the table below, and described in greater detail in the coming pages.

**Opportunities for Philanthropy and Illustrative Partners at a Glance**

	Strengthen staffing capacity in state and local governments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>FUSE</li> <li>The Federation of American Scientists (FAS)</li> <li>Work for America (Civic Match)</li> </ul>
	Fund organizations providing and connecting communities to tailored, direct technical assistance services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Subnational Funding Readiness &amp; Performance Accelerator for America</li> <li>Milken Institute (Community Infrastructure Center)</li> <li>Local Infrastructure Hub (Results for America, others)</li> </ul>
	Provide support around narrative building and storytelling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Climate Power Education Fund</li> <li>America is All In</li> </ul>
	Fund local intermediaries with deep ties to community ecosystems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community Foundation Climate Collaborative</li> <li>Specific community foundations in geographies of focus</li> </ul>
	Identify places primed for success and deploy rapid-response funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>TA service providers and connective organizations (see list above)</li> </ul>
	Convene and align public sector actors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>National League of Cities</li> <li>National Governors Association</li> <li>Accelerator for America</li> </ul>
	Support data collection and knowledge building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Subnational Funding Readiness &amp; Performance Atlas Public Policy</li> </ul>

## Funding Capacity Building & Direct Technical Assistance Services



**The Opportunity:** Strategic support for staffing emerged across interviews as a vital remedy to the workforce shortages local governments are facing. This support can take different forms, including directly providing staff and technical assistance to cities in areas they need it most. Potential strategies and example initiatives include:

- *Strengthen staffing capacity in state and local governments:* Philanthropies can play a catalytic role in strengthening the capacity of state and local governments by providing specialized staff support tailored to local needs. This involves supporting organizations with the resources and networks to deploy skilled professionals to fill critical gaps in state and local governments. Interviewees emphasized that the most pressing areas for support include compliance and legal assistance, financial planning and analysis, strategic planning, and development and engineering.



Illustrative partners leading related initiatives include FUSE, the Federation of American Scientists, and Work for America (Civic Match).

### Initiative Spotlight: Bringing Private-Sector Knowledge to Public Sector Roles

FUSE | [fuse.org](https://fuse.org)

FUSE helps local governments accelerate system-wide change by embedding experienced professionals – often with private-sector backgrounds – into public agencies through year-long fellowships. These fellows work on high-impact projects ranging from climate resilience and infrastructure to economic mobility, bringing technical expertise into public sector work. In 2023, FUSE partnered with the City of Cincinnati to leverage federal resources from IRA and BIL for clean energy initiatives. A FUSE Executive Fellow with 16 years of relevant experience was embedded within the city's Office of Environment and Sustainability to lead these efforts. By acting as an intermediary between federal funding opportunities and local implementation, the FUSE Executive Fellow facilitated the development of policy mechanisms and supported grant submissions, ensuring that Cincinnati could effectively utilize federal resources to address energy inequities and scale up clean energy efforts.<sup>20</sup>

### Initiative Spotlight: Connecting Federal Workers with Roles in State and Local Governments

Work for America | [workforamerica.org/civicmatch](https://workforamerica.org/civicmatch)

Work For America is a nonprofit initiative that helps state and local governments recruit, retain, and empower the next wave of public servants. The organization's Civic Match initiative connects outgoing federal workers with critical roles in state and local governments across the country. As of May 2025, the Civic Match platform has engaged 8K+ job seekers, 47 states, 500+ government hiring managers, and 190+ cities. While the roles on the platform span a wide range of state and local government capacities - from policy to human resources, and more - they also include several implementation-focused roles. For example, the initiative is working to assist the Vermont Department of Public Service in filling a Grants Program Manager position that will support the implementation of federal energy programs, and could benefit from candidates with federal experience.



### Initiative Spotlight: Connecting Federal Workers to Tech Hub & NSF Engine Innovation Ecosystems

Federation of American Scientists | [fas.org](https://fas.org)

The Federation of American Scientists (FAS) is launching an initiative to connect scientists, engineers, technologists, and other technical professionals who recently departed federal service with emerging place-based innovation ecosystems across the country that need their expertise. FAS is collaborating with CHIPS-funded Tech Hubs and NSF Engines to identify immediate and near-term talent needs within the regional coalitions' leadership teams, across their component projects, and among consortium stakeholders that are contributing to the broader regional vision. Simultaneously, FAS is engaging displaced federal workers and contractors through job fairs and direct outreach to understand their skillsets, career interests, and location preferences. FAS will showcase job opportunities across innovation ecosystems, facilitate direct matchmaking to expedite hiring, and create additional resources tailored to the needs of these professionals and innovation ecosystems. This pilot program addresses critical talent gaps in these innovation ecosystems while offering pathways for continued public-purpose impact and ensuring valuable expertise is not lost. A next phase of this project could include fellowship opportunities for particularly hard-to-fill roles in geographies with limited specialized talent pools.

- *Fund organizations providing and connecting communities to tailored, direct technical assistance services:* In addition to directly expanding staff capacity, philanthropies can deliver high-impact support by funding or facilitating technical assistance in the areas of need listed above to state and local governments. This strategy provides access to specialized expertise on a flexible, as needed basis – allowing cities to address pressing issues without philanthropy having to support a full time salary.



Illustrative partners leading related initiatives include Subnational Funding Readiness & Performance, Accelerator for America, the Milken Institute (Community Infrastructure Center), and the Local Infrastructure Hub (National League of Cities, Results for America, U.S. Conference of Mayors, and other partners).

### Initiative Spotlight: Providing Pro Bono, Flexible Project Implementation Assistance

Subnational Funding Readiness & Performance | [statereadiness.org](https://statereadiness.org)

Subnational Funding Readiness & Performance (SFRP) provides free, fast, and flexible technical assistance to subnational entities implementing climate investments at the federal, state, and local levels. With a focus on advancing climate equity, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and building resilience, SFRP primarily supports capacity-constrained states, local governments, U.S. territories, tribes, and community-based organizations.

SFRP delivers individualized pro bono services to help jurisdictions and organizations meet critical deadlines, improve project outcomes, and advance climate and equity goals. The team integrates quickly into existing structures to offer surge capacity, strategic guidance, and implementation support. SFRP also works to build lasting internal capacity so jurisdictions can independently manage future projects more effectively. In 2025, SFRP will assist with implementation of awarded funding, supporting project delivery through services such as performance compliance, contractor solicitation, stakeholder and community engagement, and workforce development.

### Initiative Spotlight: Linking Communities with Technical Assistance Providers

Community Infrastructure Center (Milken Institute) | [communityinfrastructurecenter.org](https://communityinfrastructurecenter.org)

The Community Infrastructure Center (CIC), an initiative of the Milken Institute, serves as a connection point to link communities implementing projects with trusted providers who can provide funding and expertise. The initiative's goal is to scale up equitable capital deployment and accelerate community-led infrastructure projects in historically underserved communities. The CIC offers free technical assistance capacity for community project sponsors, project advancement tools, and links to a wide range of sources—including impact and institutional investors, federal and state grants, philanthropy, and project development expertise. CIC connects project sponsors on the ground with free, automatic tools from grant searching to readiness assessments and matchmaking with providers to get their projects implementation ready. Project sponsors can engage in curated discussions designed to connect them and their project pipeline to aligned capital providers, from CDFIs to impact investors.

In response to a range of unique challenges faced by communities and a lack of clear “one size fits all” solutions, CIC leverages its direct connections with community project sponsors to identify and uplift the targeted technical assistance support needed to address specific challenges faced on the ground.

- *Provide support around narrative building and storytelling:* Strong storytelling capabilities are critical to the success of individual projects and the long term sustainability of public investments because they cultivate community buy-in. Interviewees underscored the need for technical assistance that helps communities craft compelling narratives such as highlighting local support for infrastructure projects, the real-world consequences of federal delays, and the benefits of successful implementation. Philanthropy can support this effort by funding communications staff, consultants, playbooks, or training programs that build capacity to communicate to the community, or by supporting organizations collecting and disseminating success stories.



Illustrative partners include Climate Power Education Fund and America is All In.

## Doubling Down on Flexible, Targeted Investments to Meet the Moment and Unique Place-Based Contexts



**The Opportunity:** As the implementation landscape evolves, philanthropic funding strategies must adapt to meet the urgency and complexity of the moment. Interviewees emphasized that funding approaches should be hyper-local, responsive, and grounded in the unique dynamics of each community. Rather than a national, “one size fits all” approach to funding, grantees need flexible, targeted investments that allow them to capitalize on existing momentum in their communities. Potential strategies and example initiatives include:

- *Fund local intermediaries with deep ties to community ecosystems:* Local intermediaries like community foundations are well positioned to support project implementation on the ground. These entities often have a unique understanding of community priorities, project-specific needs, and key decision-makers in the ecosystem who can help move projects forward. Philanthropy can amplify the impact of these institutions by providing them with funding for implementation-focused efforts or supporting broader networks that serve them.

### Initiative Spotlight: Leveraging A Network Approach to Place-Based Implementation

Community Foundation Climate Collaborative | [cfclimatecollaborative.org](http://cfclimatecollaborative.org)

In 2023, a nationwide coalition of more than 40 community foundations launched the Community Foundation Climate Collaborative (CFCC)—a coordinated effort to help local communities access federal funding and respond more effectively to the impacts of climate change. In addition to providing a structure for coordinated learning and problem-solving for communities across the country, this effort fostered critical partnerships between community foundations in neighboring states to work together to apply for and secure competitive federal funding grants (e.g., the Pittsburgh Foundation and Cleveland Foundation working together with regional partners to successfully secure funding from the IRA's Solar for All program).

At this pivotal moment, CFCC demonstrates the power of a networked approach to advancing place-based climate implementation work. Acting as both an information broker and an intermediary, CFCC connects national philanthropic and policy resources to the realities on the ground. It bridges the gap between national organizations and local knowledge streams, while ensuring that philanthropic funding flows to implementing the climate and clean energy projects—and communities—that need it most. Through shared learning, resource coordination, and strategic alignment, CFCC helps community foundations deliver successes.

- *Identify places primed for success and deploy rapid-response funding:* Timely access to philanthropic funding can help projects get off the ground, especially given recent disruptions to funding.<sup>21</sup> Interviewees emphasized the need for philanthropic dollars to be deployed quickly, particularly in communities that are primed for success. These are communities where there is clear project readiness – a unified, cross-government commitment to moving a project forward, alignment among key stakeholders, and the staffing capacity to execute effectively. By prioritizing readiness above other funding considerations, philanthropy can accelerate implementation and create momentum that may spur projects in other areas to move.

**“The ability to rapidly deploy capital to projects is astronomically important.”**

*- Nonprofit intermediary*

## Coordinating the Field and Distilling Lessons



**The Opportunity:** Interviewees surfaced a set of complementary strategies that support the long-term viability of federal funding investment and implementation. These include convening key stakeholders to drive cross-sector and government collaboration and supporting data collection and analysis from the initial implementation of BIL, IRA, and CHIPS. Potential strategies include:

- *Convene and align public sector actors:* Interviewees highlighted a disconnect between state and local governments as well as between national and place-based philanthropies. These gaps in coordination can stall project deployment and limit the impact of project deployment. Philanthropy can serve as a convener and connector—bringing stakeholders together and creating a space for knowledge-sharing and alignment across sectors and levels of government. This strategy not only strengthens immediate implementation, but also builds long-term trust between stakeholders.



Illustrative partners who are likely well positioned to drive coordinating infrastructure given their current roles and trust-based relationships in the ecosystem include the National League of Cities (NLC), the National Governors Association (NGA), and Accelerator for America.

- *Support data collection and knowledge building:* The erosion of civil infrastructure at the federal level has left many localities without the tools or capacity to effectively collect, store, and analyze data related to BIL, IRA, and CHIPS deployment. This gap hampers transparency and accountability but also limits the ability of researchers and government to assess impact and improve implementation process in the future. Philanthropy can play a critical role in filling this gap by supporting efforts to collect and preserve implementation data at the local level and by funding analyses that surface lessons, best practices, and scalable models.



Illustrative partners leading data collection and knowledge-building efforts include Subnational Funding Readiness & Performance and Atlas Public Policy (e.g., Local Government Direct Pay Tracker, Clean Economy Tracker).

#### **Initiative Spotlight: Developing a Shared Implementation Playbook**

Subnational Funding Readiness & Performance | [statereadiness.org](http://statereadiness.org)

To help institutionalize lessons from BIL, IRA, and CHIPS implementation, SFRP is developing the Implementation Playbook Initiative—a two-phase project aimed at capturing best practices and delivering timely support to jurisdictions advancing climate policy. This work involves close collaboration with subnational governments, non-governmental organizations, and technical experts to distill actionable strategies for implementation. The Playbook will feature case studies, stakeholder engagement strategies, and customized implementation frameworks that reflect the on-the-ground realities of public agencies and their partners. The second phase will focus on building long-term infrastructure for climate policy implementation. Key efforts will include the creation of a permanent implementation advisory team and expansion of peer learning networks—all designed to reduce reliance on ad hoc support and foster a sustainable ecosystem of practice.

## **Conclusion**

Across the country, communities are transitioning from planning projects funded by BIL, IRA, and CHIPS to on-the-ground implementation. This shift marks a turning point: while previous philanthropic efforts focused largely on helping communities navigate complex grant applications and funding structures, this new era of implementation demands new forms of sustained, hands-on support. Communities are facing new challenges that philanthropy has not contended with in the past few years, such as limited staffing in essential roles like financial planning, insufficient rapid-response funding, and an increasingly uncertain federal funding landscape.

This analysis surfaces emerging implementation barriers and potential opportunities for philanthropy to respond to those challenges with targeted interventions to unstick projects and lay the foundations for a more aligned, effective implementation ecosystem. Grantees, philanthropies, and partners are rising to meet this moment with flexible, community driven strategies that can guide and inspire implementation efforts in the months and years ahead.

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- Community Infrastructure Center (Milken Institute)
- Federation of American Scientists
- FUSE
- National Governors Association
- National League of Cities
- Results for America
- Sameera Fazili
- Subnational Funding Readiness & Performance (Hua Nani Partners)
- Work for America
- Other Anonymous Interviewees

## About What Works Plus



The [What Works Plus \(WW+\)](#) collaborative is a coordination and learning hub for philanthropic funders interested in ensuring effective and equitable implementation of historic federal infrastructure, climate, and economic development funding. WW+ has been supported by a diverse group of philanthropic organizations, and is a project of Freedman Consulting, LLC, which provides strategic consulting services to foundations and nonprofit organizations.

### Questions? Want to learn more about spotlighted partners? Get in touch!

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