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Contact: Mandy Lee, Senior Program Manager, mlee@emeraldcities.org, 609-802-4285

Just Transition PowerForce develops with Microsoft a model for corporate funding of community-led environmental justice projects and announces grants to frontline organizations

NATIONAL – The [Just Transition PowerForce](#) -- a collaborative of environmental, finance, energy, workforce, and climate justice leaders – announces today that its multi-year partnership with Microsoft has resulted in a new model for corporate funding of community-led environmental justice initiatives, and in financial awards to seven climate justice frontline organizations.

Using justice-centered evaluation guidelines for corporate grantmaking developed over the last 15 months, The Just Transition PowerForce sourced and evaluated clean energy and sustainable project concepts from more than 30 frontline organizations. The seven selected organizations will receive \$50,000-\$100,000 each to advance climate readiness in their communities for projects described below. The rubric for evaluating project concepts establishes minimum prerequisites and aligns environmental outcomes with racial, economic, and social justice drivers, as well as considering the approach and expertise of the leading organizations. Projects led by community-serving organizations with deep understanding and well-established relationships with the project's intended beneficiaries are prioritized, given the importance of representation and self-determination in justice-centered processes.

Prerequisites include requirements for projects to:

- provide direct benefits to under-resourced and historically marginalized populations
- ensure that community perspectives and leaders are involved in planning and decision-making
- compensate labor at a living wage
- limit medium-sized or larger for-profit partners to businesses committed to a clean energy transition
- deliver climate benefits
- prevent displacement and disturbance of sensitive land, if the project is related to development

Following a nomination process in which the Just Transition PowerForce could celebrate their extensive environmental and climate justice networks, the review process was led by eight members of the Just Transition PowerForce and three additional experts in participatory, transformative philanthropy. Ten Microsoft representatives from multiple teams were invited to support the process in a learning and applied practice role with an orientation to grassroots leadership. Together with facilitation by the People's Climate Innovation Center, the reviewers established agreements rooted in the [Principles of Environmental Justice](#), [Jemez Principles for Democratic Organizing](#), and [Just Transition principles](#) to guide them as they tested the justice-centered evaluation guidelines and came to consensus on funding decisions.

To encourage the broad adoption of justice-centered grantmaking and enable the alignment of the climate commitments of corporations towards deep investments in the sustainability and climate resilience of frontline communities, the tools and resources developed through this collaboration are [freely available](#) on the Just Transition PowerForce website. Further updates to the Environmental Justice Measurement & Evaluation Framework based on this funding process will be available in the coming weeks, and this tool will continue to be updated and improved over time.

The Just Transition PowerForce was launched by Emerald Cities Collaborative and the NAACP Environmental and Climate Justice Program in relationship with Microsoft Cloud Operations & Innovation (CO+I), the team responsible for Microsoft datacenter operations, to collaborate on justice-centered principles, strategies, and investments to undergird their climate initiatives.

“The Just Transition PowerForce delivers a model to move from performance to action for values-aligned corporations,” said Meishka L. Mitchell, CEO/President of Emerald Cities Collaborative. “With a deliberate, specific, and measurable process, we can produce deep investments in the sustainability and resilience of overburdened communities that result in economic, climate, and restorative justice.”

“Microsoft’s partnership with the Just Transition PowerForce has been instrumental in advancing justice-centered strategies towards achieving our renewable energy and sustainability commitments,” said Danielle Decatur, Director of Environmental Justice for Microsoft datacenters.

“In consulting across sectors with different corporate sustainability teams, I see an earnest and expanding appetite from companies ready to embrace social justice imperatives. The tools and resources created with the Just Transition PowerForce will help direct this interest into the investments and partnerships that frontline communities actually want and need,” said Jenny Carney, VP Sustainability, Energy & Climate Change for WSP USA, a strategic consulting partner to Microsoft.

Funded projects include the following:

[Native Renewables](#) will receive \$100,000 to expand their workforce training offerings to include solar water pumping training for Navajo and Hopi tribal community members to revitalize existing, non-functioning pumps on wells and address climate adaptation needs related to water drought and transport, diversifying food supply, and livestock management.

[Three Part Harmony Farm](#) in collaboration with [The Black Dirt Farm Collective](#) and [Juniper’s Garden](#) will receive \$80,000 to create a paid training program for aspiring Black, Indigenous and other farmers of color to learn organic vegetable farming at a Black, female-owned production farm in the Washington, DC, metro area. The program will enable a critical hands-on learning experience within a unique safe and empowering learning environment for candidates who would not otherwise be funded to be able to access training while working, increasing future employability, their ability to start new farms, and the dissemination of healthy, fresh food and knowledge about regenerative agriculture, all grounded in anti-oppression.

[Bridging the Gap in Virginia](#) in collaboration with [FLIPP Inc.](#) will receive \$75,000 to train and be a conduit of quality self-sufficient employment for formerly incarcerated individuals, people of color, individuals with low-incomes, transitioning veterans and others with existing economic barriers in the areas of solar panel installation, weatherization, and energy efficiency.

[West Atlanta Watershed Alliance](#) will receive \$75,000 to conduct a Baseline Site Assessment and develop an Integrated Ecological, Socio-Historical, Cultural Landscapes Plan in collaboration with community members as part of the establishment of Atlanta's first Urban Ecology Center within a 22-acre community-managed urban forest. The Center provides a space to expand ongoing climate justice and health equity programs that support and sustain the resilience of southwest Atlanta communities such as: fresh food access via urban agriculture and food forests; green infrastructure and storm water

management; solar power and renewable and energy efficiency; workforce development training and local employment; and youth-focused and intergenerational activities.

[Pittsburghers for Public Transit](#) will receive \$70,000 to continue to organize transit riders and residents to advocate for investments in infrastructure equity and policy that supports deeply affordable, transit-oriented development. This effort elevates the needs and voices of people with disabilities, youth, elders, people of color, and low-income people to ensure that public transit organizing and transportation mode shift away from single occupancy vehicles is prioritized as a solution for mobility, health, and affordability while addressing the climate crisis and mass displacement.

[Harambee House](#), in partnership with The Cornerstone Collective and Damê Consultants, an African American women-owned health and environmental sciences technical consulting firm specializing in community capacity-building and development strategies and ethnographic data analytics, will receive \$50,000 to convene a series of multisectoral community energy equity roundtables and listening sessions to develop an accessible and affordable pathway to clean renewable energy for under-resourced communities experiencing the worst adverse climate impacts and highest energy burdens in Savannah, GA.

[Little Village Environmental Justice Organization](#) will receive \$50,000 to continue to develop a 1.3-acre community farm on a former EPA-designated superfund site in Chicago's Little Village neighborhood. This space will serve as a bilingual teaching site of sustainable agricultural practices, host a future worker cooperative farming business, be a community fruit orchard, and actively contribute to multiple existing mutual-aid food programs grounded in relationships and solidarity, in which people work cooperatively to meet the needs of everyone in the community. Through community-driven and community-owned efforts, La Villita Park Community Farm is establishing a path toward food and land sovereignty to eliminate hunger, poverty, and other factors affecting food security for families in Little Village, Englewood, and other Black and Brown communities.