

## Experimental Giving Models

### A deep dive into First Nations Climate Justice

# Trippl

A 100% impact private investment company seeking to use capital as a force for good through a combination of investments and grantmaking.

We acknowledge the traditional owners of the land. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present and remember that sovereignty was never ceded.





## Introduction

As we face increasing global crises, Tripple, like so many funders, is reflecting on how best to enable the deep transformational change and systemic impact we need to create an environmental and socially just world. As part of our response to this question, we analysed our granting strategy and developed a set of new initiatives in 2022 to help us fund the change we want to see.

This report aims to share the learnings from one of these new initiatives: a 'deep dive' into funding First Nations and Climate and Environmental Justice. It is for anyone interested in doing thoughtful, effective grant making in this area and for anyone interested in being part of a community of practice examining what it means to be a good funder and how to do systems-level funding.

Funding systems change is a lifelong journey, this initiative is a work in progress and we have plenty to learn from here. However, we want to share learnings as we go, and open up an honest conversation about what it takes and how to approach it. We welcome feedback on this report and discussion of the approach with our team.

## The Deep Dive Initiative

During a review of our giving strategy, we recognised that our current method of providing one-time grants based on received opportunities did not allow us to effectively fund progress in the areas we are most passionate about creating change in. However, we did not want to limit ourselves to a specific impact area or a lengthy process, so we developed an approach for a brief but intensive period of focus, or a "deep dive".

As part of the deep dive, our aim was to develop a fit-for-purpose granting framework that enables us to holistically analyse and more effectively fund organisations working on the most important levers of change in that sector, at that moment.

In 2022, we tested this approach for the first time for our first deep dive interest area: funding at the intersection of First Nations Climate and Environmental Justice. Our goals were to:

- test our assumptions about the number of organisations in the sector
- look at the sector holistically
- create a granting framework to prioritise high-impact organisations
- learn about First Nations organisations and campaigns
- strategically fund First Nations organisations working on climate and environmental issues



The deep dive process included talking to community partners, advisors, movement leaders and other funders working in this space in order to develop a sector map. This was then used to build out a framework for the intersection that Tripple was most interested in funding. This framework was based on the level of potential impact, momentum and energy from organisations, community-identified priority areas to fund, and alignment with Tripple's broader focus areas. To apply for funding, organisations underwent a two-stage process, including submitting an initial 200-word expression of interest and a meeting with our team. See appendix 1 for detail on our methodology.

Both a condition of success and an aim of this initiative was to learn how to fund more effectively and to remain open and flexible. There was a lot we didn't know (and lots we didn't know that we didn't know), and adopting a mindset of openness to learning was crucial to the initiative's success and the future success of similar initiatives.

## Key findings

**There are more people working in this space than we previously thought.** Despite working in this area for four years with well developed networks in the space, we were overwhelmed by the response to our open EOI with 57 applications coming through from incredible organisations, 80% of which were previously unknown to us.

**There is a deep interconnection between the health of Country and the health of First Nations people.** This extends to an interconnection between the health of Country and climate solutions. Indigenous knowledge and sustainable cultural practice are essential to achieving ambitious climate solutions and should not be treated as optional additions. In practice, campaigns and activities should not focus solely on climate change or environmental solutions but should instead prioritise integrated solutions across various areas, including Country, People, and Health.

**Campaigning looks different in First Nations organisations compared to many of the organisations we have typically funded.** During our conversations with various organisations, we noticed that they use different strategic frameworks and mental maps with a heavy focus on co-designed strategy instead of a centralised strategy. This way of doing strategy takes longer, and leaders cannot always articulate their vision before this work is done. However, funding is needed to do this important convening work.

## Key findings cont.

**Everything is more expensive and takes longer in regional and remote places.** This can make funding this work less appealing with a perceived lower return on investment. We need to adjust our expectations around what's feasible when supporting organisations that work in these areas.

**Organisations spend a significant amount of time and resources writing grant applications.** Our meetings were a welcome relief for leaders who would otherwise have spent valuable time crafting grant applications. However, it's worth noting that a few organisations had trouble accessing an online meeting (especially those in remote places), for those organisations we had a call instead.

Unsurprisingly, **everyone, including the organisations we know well, are vastly underfunded/under-resourced.**

**Allow for longer time frames to accommodate deeper consultation with advisors.**

While we engaged with a First Nations advisor during the design and development stages, we would have liked to involve them in later stages of the project. Unfortunately, we did not factor in enough time from the beginning and were accountable for meeting deadlines with applicant organisations.

**We need to be transparent about our granting processes.** We reached a high proportion of organisations that were 'new' to fundraising and for some leaders, this was their first interaction with philanthropy and granting processes. To combat the power imbalance this causes, we need to share more about the likelihood of funding at each stage, the total amount being granted, the likely amount given to each organisation.

**Building a fit-for-purpose model and maintaining a learning mindset was crucial to funding effectively within this sector.** The deep research, design and flexible thinking allowed us to build a granting model to fund effectively in this area.



## Organisations Tripple funded

With permission, we are sharing the organisations we funded as a result of this initiative, as well as some of the incredible organisations we loved but didn't have capacity to fund. If you would like an introduction, please reach out to us at [tracey@tripple.com.au](mailto:tracey@tripple.com.au)

### Summary of organisations

[Seed Mob](#) is Australia's first Indigenous youth climate network. They are building a movement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people for climate justice.

[Our Islands Our Home](#) is a campaign led by Torres Strait Islanders to protect their island homes and culture. They won a landmark UN case last year, holding the government to account for their inaction on the climate crisis.

The [GetUp First Nations Justice](#) team leads campaigns to end fracking in the Northern Territory, increase democratic participation, and create new federal laws protecting Aboriginal cultural heritage. Land Rights and Climate Justice are central to all their campaigns.

The [Martuwarra Fitzroy River Council](#) is an entirely Indigenous led organisation, guided by a diverse representation of senior elders with cultural authority, knowledge holders on the front line. They defend and campaign against the destruction of cultural heritage, ecological damage, poverty and climate change.

[Currie Country Social Change](#) was established in 2020 in response to fires and floods, and an identified need for a First Nations controlled and managed charitable organisation in Bundjalung Country operating with an First Nations scientific worldview dedicated to environmental, cultural and economic sustainability. Currie Country Social Change is a First Nations collaborative think tank engaging in culturally-centred advocacy for First Nations peoples in the Northern NSW and SE QLD regions, where that advocacy will assist in empowering vulnerable community to protect and preserve their First Nations rights as land leaders.

**Southern Ocean Protection Embassy Collective (SOPEC)** is an Indigenous led and run organisation by a number of Gunditjmarra Elders and community members. SOPEC campaigns against the expansion of the Otway Basin, an offshore gas and oil basin that sits south of Victoria's South-West coastline, on Gunditjmarra sea country. SOPEC's primary goal is to protect Gunditjmarra sea country from further offshore gas and oil exploitation and expansion in the region, as well as seeking the immediate protection of Koontapool (Southern Right Whale) who returns annually to Gunditjmarra sea country to give birth. (No public website at time of publishing)



## Wish List

Organisations we wish we could fund if we had the capacity:


- [Ngangk Yira Institute for Change](#)
- [Climate Justice Union](#)
- [Gudanji For Country](#)
- [Juluwarlu Group Aboriginal Corporation](#)
- [Common Ground](#)
- Walbunja Education Program on Plumwood Mountain
- [Firesticks Alliance](#)
- [Dharug Strategic Management Group Ltd](#)

Please feel free to reach out to our Philanthropy Lead, Tracey, at [tracey@tripple.com.au](mailto:tracey@tripple.com.au) if you would like to chat further or for an introduction to any of these organisations.

## Appendix 1: Methodology

### Our approach included:

1. **Initial scoping** of which sector/movement we wanted to dive into and focus on. We asked ourselves a number of scoping questions including:
  1. Which movements and issue areas are at the intersection of our focus areas of climate, social and economic justice?
  2. What's on top of the political agenda?
  3. Will funding this movement/ issue area alter who holds power / pave a way for further wins?
  4. What is being underfunded and where would our dollars be most impactful?
  5. What do we care the most about right now? What do we want to learn more about?
  6. What is causing the most harm?
  7. What are we financing in our impact investments? How does this align to build a systems focused portfolio?
2. **Deep research and sector mapping** of the chosen focus area including:
  1. Working with the Australian Communities Foundation to support with designing the project and bringing on a contractor with deep experience in systems change and advocacy
  2. Talking to our peers funding in this space, trusted networks, experts, key movement players
  3. Desktop research on trends

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4. A landscape analysis of the biggest threats and opportunities on the horizon including challenges, key players, context on the moment we're in, upcoming external major moments, our gaps in knowledge
  5. Articulating our assumptions and goals
  6. Refinement of the deep dive sector based on our analysis.
3. **Developed the funding mechanism**, including:
    1. Engaging with advisors with lived experience and expertise in the sector
    2. Building a fit-for-purpose granting framework. Considerations included:
      1. How to reduce the admin and capacity burden on organisations who would apply
      2. Our own internal capacity
      3. The types of relationships we wanted to build with organisations
      4. Deciding on min and max grant amounts
      5. Creating clear [granting guidelines](#) that would enable us to shortlist effectively
      6. Which approaches and activities lead to systemic impact
4. **Implementation**:
    1. We ran a two stage granting process:
      1. Stage one: We asked organisations to submit a written expression of interest answering two questions:
        1. A short 200 word summary of work
        2. To outline if the organisation/community was First Nations led, and if so, how.
      2. Stage Two: We shortlisted organisations who met our granting and decision making criteria. To further understand their work and alignment to our objectives, we met with each shortlisted organisation. This meeting was the equivalent of a written grant application.
5. **Building a fit-for-purpose decision-making framework** as the project progressed, incorporating our learnings and refining our thinking based on the mix of applicants.
  6. **Evaluation and learning**: Instead of an acquittal report, we built in bi-annual meetings with organisations we funded to hear updates on their work. We also internally evaluated the project and are sharing learnings with our networks.