AMERICANS FOR PUBLIC TRUST

The Rockefeller Network

How the Rockefeller Family Turned Their Oil Fortune into Extreme Climate Activism

SEPTEMBER 2026

The Rockefeller Foundation

Rockefeller Brothers Fund
Philanthropy for an Interdependent World

ROCKEFELLER FAMILY FUND

ROCKEFELLER Philanthropy Advisors

Key Findings

The Rockefeller network has, over years, quietly, but doggedly, abandoned true philanthropy to instead focus on and promote climate activism—all while bankrolling radical causes, receiving millions in foreign funding, and even working with Communist China.

- The Rockefeller network is comprised of four main branches: The Rockefeller Foundation, Rockefeller Brothers Fund, Rockefeller Family Fund, and Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors.
  - All are distinct legal organizations that share a connection and lineage with America's first billionaire: Standard Oil founder John D. Rockefeller Sr.
  - All entities in the network try to portray an image of investing solely in brick-and-mortar charities, but the Rockefeller groups have quietly and swiftly morphed into activist organizations focused on bankrolling a radical green agenda.
- **The Rockefeller Foundation (RF)** is the oldest and the largest group within the network—and sits on over a $5 billion endowment. However, despite its age and prominence, RF's history is fraught with troubling events:
  - RF "created and funded the pseudo-science of eugenics."
  - RF is currently led by Rajiv Shah, whose tenure has been accompanied by allegations of financial mismanagement, criticism over his compensation, and concerns that the foundation has adopted an overly "top-down approach" to philanthropy.
  - RF funds numerous left-wing organizations and causes, including Southern Poverty Law Center, Center for Climate Energy Solutions, and National Academy of Sciences, as well as grants for "achieving a net zero economy" and supporting a "tax and revenue strategy" that would support "a transition to a greener economy."
- **The Rockefeller Brothers Fund (RBF)** is the second cog in the Rockefeller network, founded by the sons of John D. Rockefeller Jr.
  - RBF has a $1.4 billion endowment, and "climate change" has become "a larger and increasingly central objective" of the fund.
  - In addition to financially supporting climate activism, RBF has been accused of funding anti-Israel organizations, including several which openly celebrated Hamas' October 7th terrorist attack.
  - RBF is also a registered charity in China, with a representative office in Beijing, and has funneled nearly **$32 million** into China-based nonprofits, including over **$2 million** to government entities overtly administered by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).
- **The Rockefeller Family Fund (RFF),** established in 1967 by fourth generation Rockefellers, is the most radical of the network.
  - RFF maintains three policy focuses: climate, democracy, and economic justice for women.
  - One of RFF's largest grants in 2024 was to States Newsroom, a network of fake, online newspapers that post "articles" attacking oil and gas companies, while, at the same time, promoting climate groups.
- **Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors (RPA)** is the final wing of the network, and serves as a left-wing dark money ATM for progressive causes. It has served as a passthrough for at least $300 million in foreign money that has been steered into U.S.-based nonprofits.
- The Rockefeller network has long supported climate litigation, both directly and indirectly, by donating millions "to organizations that have supported the climate liability lawsuits through advocacy, research or litigation."
  - In 2017, RFF created the Center for Climate Integrity (CCI) "to lead efforts to hold fossil fuel companies accountable for the climate damage they caused."
  - Between 2020 and 2024, the Rockefeller network has given almost **$50 million** to organizations supporting climate lawsuits.
- Rockefeller Family Fund (RFF) created the legal concept of a "Climate Superfund Law," and built campaigns to enact such laws on the state level.
- The Rockefeller network has long funded direct and indirect attacks on the oil and gas industry, creating the "#ExxonKnew campaign" that "fueled a wave of climate litigation against the oil giant."

About Americans for Public Trust

Americans for Public Trust is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to restoring trust in government by holding politicians and political groups accountable for corrupt and unethical behavior. We use in-depth investigations and bold legal action to ensure that those who disregard the rule of law are held responsible. By raising awareness of this work, we help to rebuild public faith in our elected leaders.

What is the Rockefeller Network?

The storied name "Rockefeller" might at first produce a range of thoughts and images, from Gilded Age oil titans to philanthropy to even New York City's famous Christmas tree lighting. However, beneath over one hundred years of history, a new image has also quietly emerged. While still armed with billions of dollars from the endowment of America's first billionaire and Standard Oil founder John Rockefeller Sr., the Rockefellers of this generation are much more focused and centered on activism than charity. The Rockefeller network of the modern era—comprised of The Rockefeller Foundation, Rockefeller Brothers Fund, Rockefeller Family Fund, and Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors—have all ditched their philanthropic roots in pursuit of climate activism, lobbying, bankrolling left-wing agendas, and working with Communist China.

Despite earning their billions from oil, the Rockefeller network is now focused on opposing the oil and gas industry at every avenue, passing legislation to stymie the industry, staging protests encouraging divestment, and financially supporting climate litigation across the country. Each tentacle in the network operates independently, but they all share a common goal of bankrolling activist causes to fit a political agenda. While we can never truly know what John D. Rockefeller would think of his endowment being used to fund activism instead of charity — and to attack the very American enterprise, industry, and entrepreneurialism that allowed for its creation— this report is the first step to shining a light on these inner workings and activist machinations of the Rockefeller network. The name might be common and well known, but the Rockefellers' clandestine, radical advocacy is not. Their alarming ability to quietly bankroll numerous radical and leftist projects across the country deserves to be exposed.

The Rockefeller Foundation

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"Rockefeller established the foundation that bears his name with a $100 million endowment. His children and grandchildren started other charitable groups including the Rockefeller Brothers Fund in 1940 and the Rockefeller Family Fund in 1967."

Newsweek, October 19, 2023

Methodology

Details on the Rockefeller network (Rockefeller Foundation, Rockefeller Brothers Fund, Rockefeller Family Fund, and Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors) have been identified through a comprehensive analysis of the following sources:

- Annual Form 990s (tax returns) of the network.
- Media articles and images, including reporting by *The New York Times, Politico, Fox News,* and *The Chronicle of Philanthropy.*
- Collection of additional electronic sources, including websites, online records, social media accounts, and more.

History and Management

The Rockefeller Foundation (RF) was established in 1913 by John D. Rockefeller Sr. with the stated mission of promoting "the well-being of mankind throughout the world." That same year, RF made its first grant: to the American Red Cross. More than a century after its founding, RF continues to cultivate a reputation for charitable giving. As one observer noted, the foundation even "spends a small fortune on communications, in part to burnish Rockefeller's reputation." Yet beyond its carefully curated press releases and annual reports, a more complicated picture emerges.[1]

Incredibly, despite its self-professed claims of attempting to improve the condition of mankind across the globe, RF was an early financial supporter of the eugenics movement. Alongside the Carnegie Institution and the Russell Sage Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation "**created and funded the pseudo-science of eugenics**, which was built on the belief that the human race could be improved through selective breeding." Over time, eugenics theories provided part of the intellectual foundation for the racist ideology later embraced by Nazi Germany.[2]

In a since-deleted press release, the Rockefeller Foundation acknowledged its historical involvement with eugenics, stating that it was confronting its "own history in relation to eugenics" and had recognized "that the work we engage in today does not absolve us of yesterday's mistakes." The foundation also announced that it would undertake an official investigation aimed at "uncovering the facts and confronting uncomfortable truths" in relation to its involvement with eugenics. However, when asked about the status of that effort in October 2023, a Rockefeller Foundation representative said the organization was "still planning to do a study." As of 2026, no such study has been publicly released.[3]

> **"... Rockefeller created and funded the pseudo-science of eugenics, which was built on the belief that the human race could be improved through selective breeding."**
>
> *The Chronicle of Philanthropy*, October 5, 2023

> **"A group of staff members complained to the board, alleging that Shah brought on former colleagues and friends as foundation fellows, spent lavishly on consultants, and mismanaged staff."**
>
> *The Chronicle of Philanthropy*, October 5, 2023

Since 2017, the Rockefeller Foundation has been led by Rajiv Shah, who previously held senior leadership positions at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Obama administration's U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). His tenure has been accompanied by allegations of financial mismanagement, criticism over his compensation, and concerns that the foundation has adopted an overly "top-down approach" to philanthropy. In 2018, an internal complaint against President Rajiv Shah was filed, alleging that he "mismanaged staff and steered contracts and grants to individuals with close professional and personal ties to him."[4] New York law firm Patterson Belknap was hired to review the complaint and found no wrongdoing had occurred, and no disciplinary action was taken against Shah. A main tenet of the complaint centered around the then-newly created Rockefeller Foundation Fellows program. The anonymous complaint took issue with the cost of the program, claiming that it was "staggering," that the program was "haphazardly constructed," and that the fellows were selected based on having close ties to Shah. Shah did admit that he had "previous professional relationships with all of the fellows," and that the three-year program cost $6 million, but declined to give specifics for the individual awards granted to fellows.[5]

Shah has also been criticized for being one of the highest paid CEOs among big foundations. Shah's 2024 reported compensation – the last year available – was over $1.7 million. Simultaneously, Rockefeller Foundation has been criticized for spending more money than their peer foundations on administration and operations. In 2024, Rockefeller Foundation spent almost as much on administration and operations as it spent on grants, $171 million and $187 million, respectively. The Rockefeller Foundation's management strategy is also markedly different from other family foundations, and has been classified as a "top-down" approach. This method creates a system where very few individual grants awarded by Rockefeller are for general operating support—a type of grant preferred by nonprofits

for their flexibility and unrestricted nature. Instead, major projects are developed in-house, and then enacted by nonprofits and outside consultants. This approach has not only been labeled as "unpopular" by the philanthropic and nonprofit community, but has also resulted in RF spending "so much money on itself."[6]

Finances

The Rockefeller Foundation is a private foundation whose net assets, as of the close of their last fiscal year on December 31, 2024, are almost **$5.6 billion**. This staggering amount makes them the largest cog in the overall Rockefeller network. As such, the Rockefeller Foundation relies very little on outside contributions, and instead, is sustained almost exclusively by their permanent endowment. According to the Rockefeller Foundation, between "1913 and 1929, the Rockefeller family endowed The Rockefeller Foundation with around $4 billion (in today's dollars)," and because of "prudent management over the last century," the organization has deployed more than $26 billion in "philanthropic capital." The source of this endowment is, of course, oil tycoon John D. Rockefeller, and the fossil fuel empire he built over decades. In December 2020, after being **"founded by oil money,"** the Rockefeller Foundation announced that they were taking steps to divest from fossil fuels, and instead, invest in solar power and initiatives to speed up the energy transition.[7]

"Rockefeller's staff is said to be less responsive, less respectful, less transparent, and less trusting than its peers, as well as not as knowledgeable and or compassionate as peers are about those it aims to serve."

The Chronicle of Philanthropy, October 5, 2023

Spending

According to a 2023 *Chronicle of Philanthropy* analysis on their 2021 grants, Rockefeller Foundation "spent $1 on its own operations for every $3.37 that it made as charitable gifts." This same analysis also found that "no other foundation spent nearly as much proportionately in-house that year." Rajiv Shah, RF's CEO, "makes no apology for the fact that big decisions are made by senior leaders at the foundation;" a system that ultimately creates more spending on in-house operations. Regardless of their strategy, and whether this money is being diverted to in-house projects or left-wing nonprofits, RF is sitting on billions of dollars that are ready to be deployed. According to their 2025 impact report, Rockefeller Foundation awarded more than $350 million across 235 grants.[8]

"A $5 billion foundation literally founded on oil money is saying goodbye to fossil fuels"

CNN, 12/18/20

Key Grants in 2022, 2023, and 2024

GROUPS	PURPOSE	AMOUNT	YEAR
Hopewell Fund	In Support of a National Tax Infrastructure Project to Align State and Federal Organizations Around a Tax and Revenue Strategy That Benefits Low-Wage Workers and **Supports a Transition to a Greener Economy**	$2,000,000	2024
National Academy of Sciences	Developing a Roadmap for **Achieving a Net Zero** Economy That Promotes Global Health	$175,000	2024
Center for Climate Energy Solutions	**Advancing a Clean Energy Transitio**n in Developing and Emerging Economies	$500,000	2024
C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group	Assisting City Official Response to Extreme Heat in Vulnerable Populations	$299,220	2024
Missouri Organizing and Voter Engagement Collaborative	In Support of a Grassroots Coalition That Connects Revenue Policy with Pro-Worker and **Democracy Building in Missouri**	$200,000	2023
New York Community Trust	For Use by Its Collaborative Fund, VoteNYC, Toward the Costs of **Improving Voter Turnout By Conducting Non-Partisan Voter Education, Engagement, Mobilization For Elections**, And Strengthening Civic Engagement In New York City	$100,000	2023
RF Catalytic Capital Inc	Towards The Costs of The Invest in Our Future Fund to **Accelerate Emissions Reduction** and the Equitable Implementation of Federal Funding	$15,000,000	2023
The How Institute for Society	In Support of Improving Social Impact Outcomes and Accelerating Systems Change by Helping Leaders Adopt Moral Leadership Ideas and Techniques	$370,000	2023
VoteRiders	Toward The Costs of a Voter ID Education and Assistance Program to **Facilitate Eligible Citizens Ability to Vote** In the U.S. While Also Bolstering Their Ability To Access Employment, Housing, Healthcare, And Other Services	$200,000	2022
WRTH LLC	In Support of Research and Strategic Alignment to Develop a Women Led Climate Justice Campaign That Unifies Small Island States, Indigenous People, And Underserved Communities to Reduce Carbon Emissions By 45% By 2030	$250,000	2022
Women's Reproductive Rights Assistance Project	In General Support of Its Mission to Ensure That All Women of All Ages, Genders, Ethnicities and Cultural Backgrounds Have Access to Safe, Legal Abortion Care and Emergency Contraception	$150,000	2022
National Public Radio (NPR)	Toward The Costs of Building Reporting Capacity for Covering Energy, Environmental and Climate Change News In Order to Improve Public Knowledge and Understanding, Provide Public Accountability and Help Communities Take Action to Protect The Planet	$500,000	2022

National Immigration Law Center	Toward The Costs of Its Protecting Immigrant Families Coalition, An Effort to Protect Access to Health Care, Public Services, And Economic Supports for Immigrants and Their Families	$350,000	2022
Southern Poverty Law Center	For General Support Of Its Mission	$25,000	2022
Council On Energy Environment And Water	In Support Of Research On Coal Decommissioning and Replacement with Renewables	$250,000	2022

(Rockefeller Foundation, 2023 Form 990, and 2024 Form 990)

Rockefeller Brothers Fund
Philanthropy for an Interdependent World

History and Management

The second cog in the Rockefeller purported philanthropic wheel is Rockefeller Brothers Fund (RBF). Today, this "charitable" private foundation is virtually unrecognizable compared to the one that was founded by the five sons of John D. Rockefeller Jr. in 1940. In their early days, RBF supported the YMCA, the Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, the New York Zoological Society, and Colonial Williamsburg. And while their philanthropic giving perhaps has always tilted left – demonstrated by early investments in Planned Parenthood and the Population Council – RBF mostly supported organizations that were nonpartisan institutions that provided for the common good.[9]

However, beginning in the 2000s, RBF began a quiet transformation from conservation to climate activism and alarmism. While the foundation once focused on issues like fishery management and sustainable forestry, suddenly, "climate change became a larger and increasingly central objective at the Fund." RBF quickly and forcefully began not only pushing extreme positions on climate, but also generating campaigns to drive public and policymaker awareness on green issues, while, at the same time, working with "grassroots" networks on climate action.[10]

In September 2014, RBF shockingly announced they would disavow their family's oil and gas industry legacy, and would begin divesting from fossil fuel companies. In their decision, RBF cited the "moral tension" that arose from profiting via the same industry they were trying to end. RBF later instructed an outside firm "to divest from fossil fuel stocks without hurting the fund's returns or contributing to volatility." However, as of December 31, 2025 – over 10 years after announcing this dramatic business course correction and their divestment plans – RBF amazingly still remains extensively invested in fossil fuels.[11]

"Rockefellers, Heirs to an Oil Fortune, Will Divest Charity of Fossil Fuels"

New York Times, 9/21/14

Finances

Rockefeller Brothers Fund is a private foundation whose net assets, as of the close of their last fiscal year on December 31, 2024, are almost $1.4 billion. The majority of their holdings are "derived from the profits of the Standard Oil Company," but they have also received generous gifts from John D. Rockefeller Jr. and the estate of his fifth son, David Rockefeller. David's gift of $225 million to RBF was "by far Rockefeller's most sizable single gift to any recipient." Despite their hefty endowment, RBF still relies on private donations—both from liberal philanthropists and foreign sources. As a private foundation, all donations to RBF are disclosed on their annual tax return.[12]

Major Domestic Donors

Rockefeller Family Endowment
O'Neill Family Charitable Trust
ClimateWorks Foundation
The William & Flora Hewlett Foundation
Ford Foundation
Foundation to Promote Open Society (Soros)

Major Foreign Donors

The Advantage Foundation (Switzerland)
Power Corporation of Canada (Canada)
The Redlands Trust (Singapore)
Lao Niu Brother Sister Philanthropy (China)
Japan International Cooperation Agency (Egypt)[13]

Spending

In 2024, RBF granted a record of over $82 million in "charitable disbursements," while purportedly maintaining a mission of "advancing social change for a more just, sustainable, and peaceful world." Their largest budget item – constituting almost 19% of their total spending – related to advancing solutions to combat climate change. In 2022, RBF promised to spend $100 million "to address climate change over the next 10 years." Over the past several years, RBF has used this pledge – and the massive grants made on its behalf – to advance climate change awareness amongst policymakers, push for a clean energy economy and a reduction on the reliance of carbon-intensive energy, and to work on the international level to halt the progress of climate change.[14]

Some of RBF's climate disbursements in 2024 found their way into the coffers of some questionable organizations. The foundation gave nearly $300,000 to Inside Climate News, a media outlet that has been accused of being "a mouthpiece run by a public-relations consultancy that gets its funding almost exclusively from groups with an environmental agenda." Another $300,000 was disbursed to Oil Change International, an extremist green group that works "to support the climate movement and partners in their struggles against oil and gas companies."[15]

In addition to funding extreme climate groups, Rockefeller Brothers Fund has also been accused of fueling anti-Israel causes. A *Tablet Magazine* analysis found that from 2013 to 2017, "$880,000 in RBF funding has also gone to groups working to advance a boycott of the world's only Jewish state." An additional *New York Post* investigation found that RBF "shelled out more than $2.6 million since 2018 directly or indirectly to at least six anti-Israel organizations, several of which openly celebrated Hamas' Oct 7 terrorist attack on the Jewish state." In August 2021, Israel designated Samidoun Palestinian Prisoner Solidarity Network as a terrorist organization, and in August 2022, RBF gave $100,000 to their fiscal sponsor – the Alliance for Global Justice .[16]

RBF has also given nearly $500,000 directly to Jewish Voice for Peace, an organization which "explicitly describes itself as anti-Zionist," and supported protests on college campuses following the October 7 attacks. In December 2023, RBF issued a statement that said while they support a two-state solution between Israel and Palestine, and support the right to peaceful protest, they reject any claim that their grantee organizations supported terrorism.[17]

"How a storied philanthropy came to lend its legitimacy – and money – to groups that push boycotting Israel"

Tablet, 5/24/17

"Rockefeller Brothers Fund funding pro-Palestinian groups, at least one Israel calls 'terrorist' org"

New York Post, 12/2/23

Dangerous Partnership with Communist China

While the Rockefeller Brothers Fund (RBF) has long maintained that its core mission involves "advancing social change for a more just, sustainable, and peaceful world," and promoting the "advance [of] transborder democratic practices for social and environmental justice," for years, the group has poured tens of millions of dollars into China-based non-profits, including organizations headquartered in Beijing with direct ties to the Chinese government.[18]

According to its own tax filings, **between 2020-2024, RBF funneled nearly $32 million into China-based nonprofits, including over $2 million to government entities overtly administered by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)**, including the Chinese Academy of Sciences, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, and Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences. RBF funds all these programs while also being a registered charity in China, with a representative office in Beijing. Although RBF reports that many of the Chinese organizations receiving its sizeable grants have earmarked the funds for innocuous and non-controversial endeavors – such as anti-pollution and poverty initiatives – a closer examination of recipients instead reveals a veritable "who's who" list of organizations with alarming ties to the CCP's attempts to project global soft power, all via feigned international development or outreach.[19]

Chinese Groups Backed by Rockefeller Money

While most of RBF's grants in China have been to Chinese domestic groups and organizations, an alarming amount – well into the millions – has found its way directly into the coffers of entities that are either official vestiges of the Chinese government, or directly and irrefutably administered by the CCP and its representatives. And many of these entities, while operating under the guise of "green" and environmental research, are, instead, using these funds to help buttress China's foreign influence programs across the globe, especially the CCP's infamous "Belt and Road Initiative" (BRI).[20]

"The Rockefeller Brothers Fund is a registered charity in China with a representative office in Beijing. The China program prioritizes grant funding for Chinese institutions and organizations working on the ground in China."

Rockefeller Brothers Fund

Between 2020 and 2024, **RBF funneled $400,000** into the Foreign Environment Cooperation Center, a division of the Chinese government's Ministry of Ecology and Environment (MEE), which plays a key role in the administration of vital portions of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The BRI, and the "green development" it purportedly is promoting worldwide, has been identified by the U.S. government as China's "signature foreign policy initiative." While China states that the goals of the BRI revolve around trade, development, and diplomacy, and that "green development concepts" are heavily stressed components of these plans, an investigative report by the American government presented to Congress in 2024 identified the BRI as a "significant challenge to U.S. economic, political, and security interests around the world." The investigation also found that while some host countries that participated in China's BRI saw some benefits, many China-financed projects were "considered unsustainable," and caused more problems than they solved.[21]

Another major recipient of RBF grants is the China Council for International Cooperation on Environment and Development (CCICED). Over the past several years, RBF has funneled nearly **$1.5 million** to the Beijing-based organization. While the group purports to focus on generating green solutions in China for climate change, biodiversity and habitat loss, and pollution, CCICED's direct ties to the Chinese government are undeniable. The self-reported "non-profit international advisory body" was in fact founded with the approval of the government, has a chairman that sits on the country's State Council – which "executes laws and supervises the government bureaucracy" – and maintains direct ties with the highest echelons of Chinese leadership. CCICED is administered by MEE, and plays an important and significant role in the development of the BRI.[22]

RBF has also given **nearly $200,000** to Tsinghua University, a Beijing research university that is the *alma mater* of Chinese president Xi Jinping. While RBF has reported that the grants are funding programs to "create low-carbon development guidelines in China," or "city-level research into co-benefits of emissions reductions and air pollution control," the Chinese university is known to have close ties to China's People's Liberation Army (PLA), and has been implicated in supporting PLA military research, creating technology that the CCP used in its genocide of the Uyghurs, intellectual and technological espionage, and even cyberattacks against China's rivals. In 2024, Tsinghua University announced that the school's Office of the President had merged with the CCP to "form a new Party Committee Office that would run the school."[23]

Why RBF's Grants to China Are So Alarming and Dangerous

China completely controls its nonprofit ecosystem, and utilizes it to exert influence on, intimidate, and even attack its opponents, both foreign and domestic. Its nonprofit, non-government organization (NGO), and charity sectors are mired in a honeycomb of labyrinthine bureaucracy, restrictive operational and procedural red tape, and near-omnipresent government surveillance. All are policed by the CCP, or the Party-State, and its authority is near absolute. As such, it is, in essence, currently impossible for nonprofit organizations – or "social organizations" as they are generally known in China – to engage in any type of independent policy research, education, or advocacy without the purview and permission of the state.[24]

The various types of "social organizations" that are authorized to operate domestically are closely administered and monitored by China's Ministry of Civil Affairs, and are shepherded by the state to promote and execute government goals and policies. At the same time, the government can use such groups to limit and stifle non-approved or independent movements, including "dissident" political or religious causes. Other groups, such as professional or trade organizations, are direct offshoots of the government.[25]

Even actual charities are not exempt from CCP authoritative oversight. Under China's "Charity Law," all philanthropic "[C]harity work shall be conducted under the leadership of the Communist Party of China." The prohibitive nature of the Charity Law does not end with just the enforcement of CCP ideology. The statute makes all charities subject not only to civil affairs bureaus and tax authorities, but also places them under direct control of the police and public security. Using this Orwellian-like system, the CCP uses all forms of domestic philanthropic outreach to police, control, and indoctrinate its citizens. It also employs these same vehicles, as identified by the U.S. government, to advance its soft power goals around the world to challenge its military, trade, and diplomatic rivals. And into this system, the Rockefeller Brothers Fund has credulously and unquestioningly poured tens of millions.[26]

ROCKEFELLER FAMILY FUND

History and Management

The most activist group of the entire network is the Rockefeller Family Fund (RFF). RFF was established in 1967 by fourth generation Rockefellers – John D. Rockefeller Jr.'s grandchildren – or, as the family calls them, the "cousins." RFF is described as "swinging" philanthropy to support projects in five areas: conservation, equal opportunity for women, institutional "responsiveness," the arts and public aesthetics, and education.[27]

Unlike other branches of the Rockefeller network, RFF has barely dipped their toe into actual philanthropy, and instead, immediately dove into activism. In 1972, RFF initiated support for the ACLU Women's Rights Project, and in 1985, backed the Tobacco Products Liability Project—one of the first initiatives to assert tobacco companies should be held accountable for deaths associated with cigarettes. Ironically, RFF would later eventually rely on this legal theory – holding tobacco companies responsible for illnesses – in a similar pursuit to hold "polluters accountable" for perceived damage caused by climate change.[28]

RFF has been led by Lee Wasserman since 1999. According to a *Fox News* investigation, Wasserman and other climate advocates "first pitched the idea of subpoenaing oil giant ExxonMobil to then-New York Attorney General Eric Schneiderman's office in early 2015." Emails showed Wasserman repeatedly pushed for meetings with the New York State Attorney General's Office, and sent an RFF memo outlining a legal case against Exxon. *Fox News* noted that the RFF "memo notably resembles the arguments the state would eventually make in court." In March 2016, RFF announced they would divest from their fossil fuel holdings "as quickly as possible."[29]

"The Family Fund, in particular, 'came of age at a time when there was considerable tumult in society, and the interests of the cousins were those kinds of issues — the environment, economic justice for women, corporate accountability.""

New York Magazine, 1/8/18

"Billionaire-fueled Rockefeller fund coordinated climate lawsuits with Dem state AG"

Fox News, 2/14/24

Finances

In 1971, Martha Baird Rockefeller established Rockefeller Family Fund's endowment upon her death. As of December 2024, that endowment sits at just over $200 million, making the fund the smallest organization in the network. RFF still relies on outside donations to fuel their operation. While donors to RFF can remain anonymous, RFF did collect $48 million and $75 million in identifiable outside contributions in 2024 and 2023, respectively.[30]

Major Domestic Donors

Climate Imperative Foundation
ClimateWorks Foundation
Sandler Foundation
New Venture Fund
Tides Foundation

Major Foreign Donors

Wyss Foundation (via Hansjorg Wyss – Switzerland)

Spending

Rockefeller Family Fund is the smallest entity in the network—spending only $35 million and $48 million in 2023 and 2024, respectively. Despite spending the least, their presence has made an impact as they "drive social change" by implementing initiatives and making grants to state-based and national organizations.[31]

RFF Has Three Policy Focuses: Climate, Democracy, and Economic Justice for Women

The goals of RFF's climate initiative are "to slow the production of oil and gas and make climate polluters pay for the damage they have caused." RFF makes millions of climate-related grants a year, but specifically calls the following groups their close collaborators and partners: Chesapeake Climate Action Network, Center for Climate Integrity, Vermont Public Interest Research Group, Environmental Integrity Project, and the Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis.[32]

"RFF's initiative helps cities and states pursuing climate damages in court from deceptive companies, enacts first-of-its-kind laws to make polluters pay their fair share of climate adaptation costs, supports scientists working to improve climate attribution methodologies; and holds responsible companies accountable for their ongoing efforts to greenwash and deceive the public about the crisis they have caused and for blocking a sustainable energy future."

Rockefeller Family Fund, Climate Accountability Initiative

Major Climate Grantees: 2023 and 2024

Center for Climate Integrity	$3,560,000	2024
Climate Emergency Fund	$250,000	2024
Conservation Law Foundation	$150,000	2024
Environmental Integrity Project	$688,750	2024
Vermont Public Interest and Research Education Fund	$180,000	2024
Union of Concerned Scientists	$100,000	2024
Sierra Club Foundation	$25,000	2024
Chesapeake Climate Action Network	$125,000	2024
Central California Environmental Justice Network	$150,000	2024
Action for Climate Emergency	$250,000	2023
EarthRights International	$195,000	2023
Global Warming Mitigation Project	$100,000	2023
Brennan Center for Justice	$60,000	2023

(Rockefeller Family Fund Inc., Form 990, 2024)

The Rockefeller network is also no stranger to funding newsrooms to obtain favorable coverage. **In 2024, RFF's largest grant was to States Newsroom for nearly $10 million dollars.** States Newsroom is a hub of left-leaning online "newspapers," which give the appearance of being local or regionally based news outlets, using names such as *Ohio Capital Journal, Arkansas Advocate,* and *Oklahoma Voice*. However, States Newsroom's "articles" more closely resemble propaganda pushing one political ideology than a traditional, independent, and trusted news source.[33]

After receiving millions from RFF, States Newsroom has run a series of articles attacking the oil and gas industry. In May 2024, the *"Michigan Advance"* gave Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel a platform for her "plans to sue [the] fossil fuel industry over climate change impacts," and less than a year later, followed up with another "article" highlighting the importance of states enacting climate superfund laws. In August 2026, the *"Colorado Newsline,"* another States Newsroom entity, ran a profile piece on Colorado ranchers who purportedly "want fossil fuel companies held accountable" for climate change.[34]

ROCKEFELLER Philanthropy Advisors

History and Management

Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors (RPA), the newest philanthropic vehicle in the Rockefeller machine, serves as a left-wing dark money ATM for progressive causes. Valerie Rockefeller, a fifth generation Rockefeller, serves as the board chair, and once said that her family's commitment to the environment is "intergenerational," and "that her 8-year-old daughter lectures her on the destruction of orangutan habitat to create palm oil plantations," even refusing to kiss her if she's wearing lipstick "because there's palm oil in it."[35]

Currently, Valerie Rockefeller helms RPA while attempting to implement their goal of "accelerate[ing] philanthropy...to have a more just and equitable society." Founded in 2002, RPA is a donor-advised fund for mostly left-wing philanthropists and causes. How donor-advised funds, or DAFs, work is simple: a donor contributes to RPA for an immediate charitable tax deduction, and then the donor can recommend charities for RPA to direct their contribution. RPA then makes the contribution to a charity. RPA is not required to disclose the donor's identity to the recipient. The recipient charity reports the contribution from RPA on its Form 990, but not the name of the donor advisor. DAFs give an extra layer of anonymity to the donor, while serving as a passthrough to other entities.[36]

RPA also functions as a "fiscal sponsor" for over 100 projects. Fiscal sponsorships are an arrangement in which a 501(c)(3) – in this case, RPA – acts as an umbrella organization for a group or a project that has not yet obtained its own tax-exempt status. Donors can make deductible contributions to the fiscal sponsor which then provides funding to an unrecognized organization to conduct a particular program.[37]

In February 2025, internal turmoil at RPA was exposed. An *Inside Philanthropy* article detailed how employees used one-word descriptors to illustrate the toxic culture at RPA, calling their workplace "fake," "chaotic," "no-direction," and "demanding." Employees also used the words "fear" and "tension" to describe RPA. Much of this internal upheaval was the result of new leadership. After two decades, the Founding President of RPA, Melissa Berman, stepped down. While leadership changes are known to be challenging, what happened next at RPA was more problematic and concerning than typical, C-suite transitional hiccups. Between the summer of 2024 and January 2025, RPA "lost nearly a third of its staff through a combination of resignations, forced departures and a 27-person layoff in December [2024]." The departures also coincided with reported budgetary challenges and a $40 million deficit in 2023.[38]

"Fear and Tension: What's Going On at Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors? "

Inside Philanthropy, February 10, 2025

Finances

Individual donors to Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors are anonymous, but it has been documented that RPA regularly works with "billion-dollar legacy funders such as the Ralph C. Wilson Jr. Foundation, ultra-wealthy families (like the Rockefellers) and corporations like JetBlue and Adobe." Many foreign charities reportedly use RPA as a pass-through to U.S. nonprofits, with the organization channeling at least $300 million in foreign money since 2010.[39]

Major Domestic Donors

MacArthur Foundation
Gates Foundation
United States Energy Foundation
New Venture Fund
Tides Foundation
Martin Community Foundation
George Soros' Open Society Institute[40]

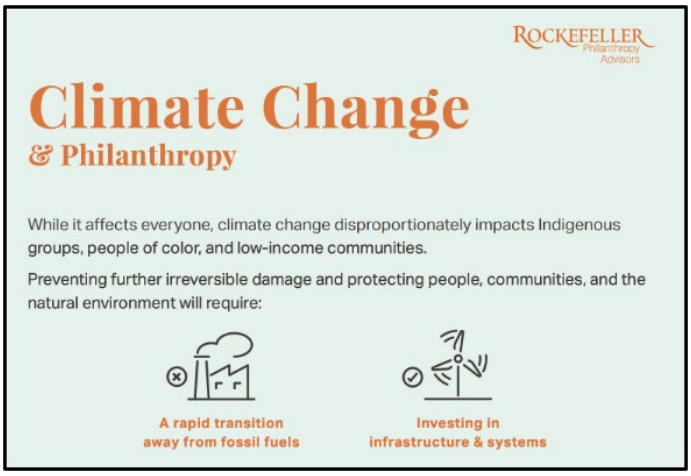
Major Foreign Donors

Arcadia Fund (United Kingdom)
Clean Air Fund (United Kingdom)
IKEA Foundation (Netherlands)
KR Foundation (Denmark)
Laudes Foundation (Switzerland)
NORAD (Norway)
Oak Foundation (Switzerland)
Wellcome Foundation (United Kingdom)
Quadrature Climate Foundation (United Kingdom)[41]

Spending

In 2024, Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors disbursed over $460 million in grants to over 1,000 organizations. Grants ranged from $5,000 to $9 million, and went to well-known liberal organizations like Planned Parenthood, ACLU, Conservation Law Foundation, and League of Education Voters.[42]

In 2021, RPA released their "insights into philanthropy trends," and noted that "more funders have recognized the urgency of climate change and have dramatically increased their contributions toward addressing the crisis." RPA also advertises that their organization "can help advise donors looking to build a full portfolio of climate-related projects."[43]



(RPA, "Climate Change and Philanthropy: A Topic Brief for Donors," 11/18/21)

Investment in Climate Litigation: Almost $50 Million to Groups Suing the Oil and Gas Industry

The Rockefeller network has long supported climate litigation, both directly and indirectly, by donating millions "to organizations that have supported the climate liability lawsuits through advocacy, research or litigation."[44] In an escalation of the attacks on the oil and gas industry, in 2017, **the Rockefeller Family Fund (RFF) created the Center for Climate Integrity (CCI) "to lead efforts to hold fossil fuel companies accountable for the climate damage they caused."** In 2018, CCI received **$7 million in foreign money to "initiate, coordinate and support ground-breaking cases in multiple countries."** This foreign money came via British billionaire Christopher Hohn's "charity," the Children's Investment Fund Foundation (CIFF).[45]

In May 2018, RFF grantee Conservation Law Foundation filed "a first-of-its-kind lawsuit against ExxonMobil for violating the Clean Water Act and the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act." Since then, numerous "states and municipalities have used the Fund's work to file dozens of lawsuits seeking climate damages from oil companies that deceived the public about the climate risks of their products." RFF's early investment and strategy to pursue climate litigation has over the last few years only expanded.[46] In 2024, Miranda Kaiser, a fifth-generation Rockefeller and the president of the Rockefeller Family Fund (RFF), disclosed that her organization was "funding litigation and other support for more than 30 lawsuits around the U.S. against the fossil fuel industry." *The Wall Street Journal* also confirmed that RFF was consulting with state attorneys general to bring cases against Exxon, with the goal of collecting billions from the oil and gas industry for what they described as "their [the oil and gas industry's] contributions to climate change and the damages caused by it."[47]

During a five-year period (2020–2024), Rockefeller Foundation, Rockefeller Brothers Fund, Rockefeller Family Fund, and Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors have collectively given almost $50 million to groups engaging in high-profile climate litigation.

ORGANIZATION	ROCKEFELLER NETWORK FUNDING
350.org	$315,000
Air Alliance Houston	$445,000
Appalachian Voices	$940,000
As You Sow	$100,000
Center for Biological Diversity	$1,486,540
Center for Climate Integrity	$11,860,000
Chesapeake Climate Action	$859,000
Citizens for Clean Air & Clean Water in Brazoria County	$55,000
ClientEarth USA	$835,000

Columbia Riverkeeper	$365,000
Conservation Law Foundation	$1,758,000
Earth Island Institute	$1,967,400
Earthjustice	$1,366,544
Environmental Defense Fund	$1,699,000
Environmental Integrity Project	$1,578,750
Friends of the Earth	$1,770,000
Greenpeace Fund	$2,921,369
Healthy Gulf	$1,216,100
Indigenous Environmental Network	$1,223,929
Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis	$3,552,888
National Wildlife Federation	$825,000
Niskanen Center	$3,825,000
Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC)	$3,598,400
Organic Consumers Association	$125,000
Sierra Club Foundation	$1,656,095
Southern Environmental Law Center	$541,667
Sunrise Movement	$1,300
Union of Concerned Scientists	$455,250
WildEarth Guardians	$815,000

The most well-coordinated and well-funded group – Center for Climate Integrity (CCI) – leads in climate litigation. In 2026, CCI helped launch the "first wrongful death case targeting fossil fuel companies over their role in global warming," convincing a woman whose mother died while operating a car without air conditioning in 108° heat to file suit.[48]

Another organization, the Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis (IEEFA), armed with at least $3.5 million in Rockefeller network money, also plays a key role in climate litigation support. IEEFA provides research and documents "as part of campaigns, administrative, legislative or judicial proceedings" regarding climate litigation.[49]

Rockefeller Network: History of Lobbying and Funding Efforts to "Make Polluters Pay"

Due to legal restrictions, not all organizations within the Rockefeller network engage in robust lobbying operations. For instance, private foundations like Rockefeller Foundation are limited to the degree to which they are allowed to engage in lobbying. Others, like Rockefeller Family Fund, have developed entire initiatives to drive legislative changes on the state and federal levels. Since 2020, RFF has disclosed more than $3 million in lobbying expenditures.[50]

"The idea for the climate superfund bill was hatched when I [Lee Wasserman] was at Fenway watching the Red Sox with an old friend..."

Comments by Lee Wasserman, Rockefeller Family Fund President

Several years ago, RFF **"created and built a campaign to enact" the nation's first climate superfund law in Vermont**. RFF president Lee Wasserman said the idea for a climate superfund bill was "hatched" during a Red Sox game while he was discussing climate damages lawsuits, and he ultimately concluded "that it would be totally appropriate for state legislatures to ask for a contribution from the fossil fuel industry to pay for the damage they caused and the adaption [sic] costs states will face for decades to come."[51]

Wasserman and his Rockefeller Family Fund have pursued climate superfund legislation on the state and federal level ever since formulating the concept. In 2021, they "helped develop the proposed legislation" with Senator Van Hollen (D-MD) and Senator Bernie Sanders (I-VT). The legislation was drafted "to tax Exxon, Chevron and a handful of other major oil and gas companies" to pay for "floods, wildfires and other disasters that scientists have linked to the burning of fossil fuels."[52]

"The Rockefeller Family Fund donated $50,000 to the Institute for Policy Integrity to fund her [Rothschild's] research, which led New York and Vermont to propose [climate superfund] legislation."

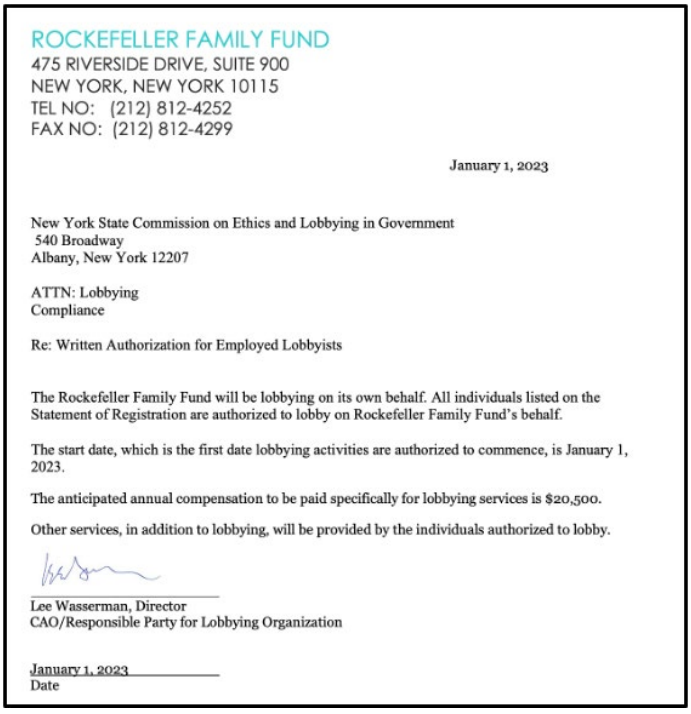
The New York Times, 3/27/25

After encountering significant roadblocks on the federal level, RFF shifted their efforts to the state level. They donated $50,000 to the Institute for Policy Integrity to fund legal research that would provide the basis for the nation's first "climate superfund" laws. The research, conducted by Rachel Rothschild, "laid out the case for states" to force oil and gas companies to pay for alleged climate-related damages.[53]

After RFF's various strategic and financial investments, Vermont was the first state to enact a climate superfund law in May 2024. RFF later confirmed they spent at least $200,000 on backing the climate superfund law's passage as well as other environmental efforts in Vermont.[54]

New York was the next state to enact a superfund law, and RFF and its director Lee Wasserman were ultimately heavily involved in the multi-year plan to get this law enacted. In January 2023, a year before the superfund law was enacted, RFF anticipated spending $20,500 in New York on lobbying. Wasserman also registered as an individual lobbyist to directly support the climate superfund bill.

When Governor Hochul signed the legislation into law, Lee Wasserman said "Nothing could be fairer than making climate polluters pay." On August 3, 2026, a federal judge struck down New York's climate superfund law. The law would have required certain fossil fuel companies to pay $75 billion in damages over 25 years "for projects to bolster the state's ability to withstand the extreme weather linked to global warming." The judge found New York's "unusual and sweeping statute" was unenforceable.[55]



ROCKEFELLER FAMILY FUND
475 RIVERSIDE DRIVE, SUITE 900
NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10115
TEL NO: (212) 812-4252
FAX NO: (212) 812-4299

January 1, 2023

New York State Commission on Ethics and Lobbying in Government
540 Broadway
Albany, New York 12207

ATTN: Lobbying
Compliance

Re: Written Authorization for Employed Lobbyists

The Rockefeller Family Fund will be lobbying on its own behalf. All individuals listed on the Statement of Registration are authorized to lobby on Rockefeller Family Fund's behalf.

The start date, which is the first date lobbying activities are authorized to commence, is January 1, 2023.

The anticipated annual compensation to be paid specifically for lobbying services is $20,500.

Other services, in addition to lobbying, will be provided by the individuals authorized to lobby.

Lee Wasserman, Director
CAO/Responsible Party for Lobbying Organization

January 1, 2023
Date

Work in Maryland and Beyond

While the strategy of implementing superfund legislation across the country might need to be retooled given New York's recent ruling, it is undeniable that the Rockefeller-funded research by Rothschild, as well as her *pro bono* work in the state, was "critical" to passage of the law in New York. Rothschild even commented that she was glad she "could help states like Vermont and New York draft these laws."[56] Currently, California, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Oregon, Rhode Island, and Connecticut are now pursuing climate superfund legislation.

Chesapeake Climate Action Network (CCAN) is the main organization supporting "Make Polluters Pay" legislation in Maryland. Over the last five years, Rockefeller Family Fund and Rockefeller Brothers Fund have given almost $1 million to CCAN. After Governor Wes Moore vetoed legislation mandating a state study on climate change, Rockefeller Family Fund gave an additional $30,000 grant to the state of Maryland to help fund a climate study.[57]

Rockefeller Network: Targeting the Oil and Gas Industry

The Rockefeller network has long funded direct and indirect attacks on the oil and gas industry. The Rockefeller Foundation, Rockefeller Brothers Fund, and Rockefeller Family Fund are all "engaged in large-scale climate action campaigns, and some of that work challenges Exxon Mobil."[58]

"The Rockefellers' campaign against Exxon began in 2003, when Neva Rockefeller Goodwin, an economist at Tufts and John D.'s great-granddaughter, co-sponsored a resolution at Exxon's annual shareholder meeting demanding the company study climate change's impact on its business."

New York Magazine, 1/8/18

In 2015, the feud intensified when the Rockefeller network funded investigative journalism against Exxon. Rockefeller Brothers Fund donated $200,000 to *Inside Climate News*, while Rockefeller Family Fund donated $200,000 to Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism. "Both donations funded bombshell investigations" against Exxon that created the #ExxonKnew campaign that "fueled a wave of climate litigation against the oil giant."[59]

"Rockefeller descendants speak out against company to which they owe their prosperity"

CBS, 12/2/16

"Why the Rockefellers Are Spending Their Oil Fortune to End Fossil Fuels"

Newsweek, 10/19/23

Rockefeller Family Fund has not tried to hide their role behind the #ExxonKnew campaign. They have taken complete ownership of its creation, helped fund research and protests to support it, and have publicly expressed how their project "catalyzed dozens of lawsuits brought by states and municipalities against oil companies for the damage they have caused by their history of climate deception."[60] Many have questioned why a family, who gained their vast fortune almost exclusively via the oil and gas industry, now spends so much time, money, and energy attacking the very same. Regardless of their motives, the paper trail of their spending and public statements surrounding their strategy is clear: the Rockefeller network is intent on crippling and exposing the oil and gas industry through lobbying, litigation, and public awareness campaigns.

Outside the Rockefeller network of nonprofits, descendants of the Rockefellers have "engaged in shareholder activism with Exxon Mobil, the largest successor to Standard Oil." While the family has acknowledged their actions have not caused Exxon to change its course, they are nonetheless continuing to exert pressure through various campaigns.[61]

In October 2020, fifth-generation members of the Rockefeller family launched BankFWD as a network of individuals and institutions with one goal: "persuade major banks to lead on climate by phasing out financing for fossil fuels." As of September 2026, BankFWD does not appear to be an active organization.[62]

The divestment movement, similar to the rise of ESG (environmental, social, and governance) investing, is popular despite having mixed results. Rockefeller Foundation – in tandem with their sister organizations Rockefeller Brothers Fund and Rockefeller Family Fund – is just one of many nonprofits and institutions not only attempting to divest from fossil fuels, but also encouraging active, expansive, and on-going divestment. [63]

Conclusion

The Rockefeller network is sprawling, dynastic, and complicated. Armed with seemingly unlimited funds, this network has committed a vast majority of their resources to "environmental" causes. However, as outlined through a tangled web of tax returns, public statements, lobbying registrations, and grant requests, their network seems less interested in funding conservation efforts, and far more concerned with climate activism and public perception. This network has spent decades attacking the very industry from which it received its billions. From funding "news" outlets that print coverage attacking their perceived "climate enemies" while promoting radical activism, to working with Communist China, to even backing legislation aiming to completely stymie the oil and gas industry, the Rockefeller network's reach seems to have no boundaries. Only through awareness and education can the general public be truly informed about the actual aims of this herculean network, and that the name "Rockefeller" should not immediately and *de facto* be associated with virtuous philanthropy, but rather, aggressive—and even economically ruinous—out-of-control, leftist activism.

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Appendix A: Rockefeller Brothers Fund Grants to China-Based Nonprofits: 2020 to 2024

RECIPIENT	AMOUNT
Institute of Public and Environmental Affairs	$3,065,000.00
Beijing Chaoyang District Yongxu Global Environmental Institute	$2,380,000.00
Beijing Entrepreneur Environmental Protection Foundation	$2,020,000.00
Guangdong Harmony Foundation	$1,910,000.00
China Environmental Protection Foundation	$1,600,000.00
Beijing Friends of Nature Charity Foundation	$1,500,000.00
Shenzhen Goalblue Low Carbon Development Promoting Center	$1,480,000.00
Beijing Greenovation Institute for Public Welfare Development	$1,450,000.00
China Council for International Cooperation on Environment and Development	$1,450,000.00
Rock Environment and Energy Institute	$1,300,000.00
Chinese Academy of Sciences	$1,010,000.00
Beijing Institute of Finance and Sustainability	$960,000.00
Pesticide Eco-Alternatives Center Yunnan Thoughtful Action	$925,000.00
Shenzhen Zero Waste Environmental Public Welfare Undertakings Development Center	$910,000.00
The ADM Capital Foundation Limited	$900,000.00
Beijing Heyi Green Foundation	$890,000.00
Hainan Zhiyu Sustainability Science and Technology Development Research Center	$850,000.00
Friends of Nature	$800,000.00
North China Electric Power University	$600,000.00
Beijing Haidian District Shan Shui Conservation Center	$550,000.00
Rocky Mountain Institute	$500,758.00
Shenzhen Paradise International Foundation	$500,000.00
BRI International Green Development Coalition	$450,000.00
Civic Exchange	$420,000.00
Foreign Environmental Cooperation Center of the Ministry of Ecology and Environment	$400,000.00
Shanghai Ecocycle Circular Economy Research Center	$340,000.00
Beijing Sheqi Social Organization Development and Promotion Center	$320,000.00
The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology	$300,000.00
Narada Foundation	$300,000.00
Chongqing Liangjiang Voluntary Service Center	$240,000.00
China Energy Research Society	$200,000.00
Oxfam Hong Kong	$200,000.00
Ginkgo Foundation	$200,000.00
Tsinghua University	$180,000.00
Innovation Center for Energy and Transportation	$160,000.00
Lancang-Mekong Environmental Cooperation Center of the Ministry of Ecology	$150,000.00
Duke Kunshan University Educational Development Foundation	$125,000.00
Beijing University of Technology	$100,000.00
Guangzhou Yuexiu Kelaimeite Environmental Protection Exchange Center	$100,000.00
China Association for NGO Cooperation	$100,000.00
Philanthropy in Motion Limited	$15,000.00
TOTAL	**$31,850,758.00**

(Rockefeller Brothers Fund, Forms 990, 2020-2024)