



ENVIRONMENTAL GRANTMAKERS ASSOCIATION

Vision Statement

EGA 2017 Fall Retreat
Seattle, Washington

On November 8 of last year, President Obama reassured a nervous nation that, “no matter what happens, the sun will rise in the morning.” The following day, he confirmed, “the sun is up.”

Ecclesiastes’ insistence that “there is nothing new under the sun” notwithstanding, it seems as though dawn has broken on a new world. The past year has revealed, and fostered, an astonishing depth of racism, sexism, and xenophobia in our communities. The agents of nationalism and isolationism are feeling their oats, not just in the U.S. but internationally. Protections for air quality, water quality, and public health are at risk; and the U.S. seems ready to abdicate leadership on climate action even as early evidence of climate destabilization emerges in storms, droughts, conflicts, and the displacement of coastal communities. Those with the fewest resources bear a heavier burden in this new world.

In the face of these fractures, though, stands a countervailing force. People across the U.S. and around the world are demanding that the dignity of all people be honored, the health of communities nurtured, and the integrity of the natural world protected. Vast and growing numbers of people are defending civil rights, women’s rights, LGBTQ rights, immigrant rights, and human rights. They’re promoting social justice, racial justice, economic justice, environmental justice, and climate justice. As they grow, these movements are intertwining—informing, inspiring, and fortifying one another. Strengthening this sense of unity and solidarity may be among the most meaningful things that we—individuals, community members, environmentalists, and philanthropists—can do at this consequential moment in history.

The 2017 Fall Retreat will encourage the EGA community to contemplate the connections linking person to person, movement to movement, urban system to ecosystem, and present to past and future. We will meet in a city, an environment defined by the number and density of people but marked by the mingling of disparate ideas, beliefs, and priorities. In the words of Ralph Waldo Emerson, “cities give us collision.” We will meet in Seattle, a city woven into the landscape of mountains and waters that surround it and distinguished by its commitment to socially responsive and environmentally responsible governance. From the Battle in Seattle and the Fight for \$15 to the city’s pledge to reach carbon neutrality by 2050, Seattle has staked its claim to a more just, sustainable, and resilient future.

At the retreat, we will share some of Seattle’s stories. We will explore the relationships linking urban and rural areas. We will consider the role of cities in nurturing connections, fostering equity and sustainability, and leading the way to the world we want. As this year marks EGA’s 30th anniversary, we will celebrate our progress, acknowledge our failures and fears, and lean into our hopes for the next 30 years. We will break bread, and we will dance. But mostly we will gear up. If 2016 taught us anything, it’s that the future remains unwritten. The sun is up, and we have work to do.