

ioby

South Phase 0 Summary Report

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Introduction

ioby's MISSION AND THEORY OF CHANGE

ioby directly supports residents rebuilding and strengthening healthy and sustainable neighborhoods, towns, and cities. We blend resource organizing and crowdfunding to help leaders of local projects find the resources they need within their own communities. Our vision is to create a future in which our communities are shaped by the powerful good ideas of our own neighbors. Our mission is to mobilize neighbors who have good ideas to become powerful civic leaders who plan, fund, and make positive change in their own neighborhoods.

ioby removes friction from neighborhood action, helping people to make positive change. ioby supports resident leaders in every step, from idea through implementation. We focus on local residents because we know that they have great ideas to improve the neighborhoods where they live, work, and play. But there are many barriers to leading positive change, such as: lack of funding, lack of confidence, lack of knowledge about permitting processes, lack of 501(c)3 status, lack of teammates, and fear that no one will help.

ioby's model—including a crowdfunding platform, coaching, fiscal sponsorship, resources, and project implementation support—removes these barriers, so that great ideas from residents can be implemented locally, quickly, and with neighbor support. Making it easier for residents to take neighborhood action is important because neighborhoods are the most tangible, relatable, accessible places for us to practice civic participation and flex the civic muscle we need for a healthy democracy.

OUR WORK IN THE SOUTH TO DATE

“The success of the ioby campaign kept bringing more and more donations and funding way after the deadline. This additional money has allowed us to apply for other grants and provide match funds. All of it was truly a domino effect!”
- Ivette Lopez Bledsoe, ioby Leader, “Firefly Trail” in Georgia

ioby has supported over 435 leaders in the Southern United States, including those resulting from our partnership with the City of Memphis since 2012, several partnerships in Greater Atlanta, and standalone projects like the Firefly Trail, a rails-to-trails project in Georgia that received \$16 million in follow-on funding after their successful \$62,000 ioby campaign. These leaders have used ioby's crowdfunding platform to raise a total of over \$1.4 million for their projects. In conversations with ioby leaders in the region, two themes have consistently emerged that we hoped to explore deeply in our Phase 0 reports:

- 1. ioby's model seems to resonate with grassroots and nonprofit leaders in the South.** Southerners seem to be comfortable with the tenets of grassroots fundraising, and many of our leaders came to us with a depth of fundraising experience. These ioby leaders' prior fundraising experience commonly includes “passing the hat,” giving circles, and tithes to places of worship. In addition, new civic leaders in the region have told ioby that they learned a great deal from our grassroots fundraising trainings and one-on-one coaching.
- 2. Systemic racism has had profound and nuanced impacts on civic life and leadership.** As in the rest of the country, barriers to civic participation in the South have been shaped and reinforced by systemic racism. The legacies of slavery, segregation, redlining, and urban renewal are felt profoundly, and historical barriers to capital influence residents' willingness and confidence to fundraise.

PLACE-BASED ORGANIZERS

While ioby is available to residents across the United States, in places where ioby determines that our platform and services are a strong fit for the local civic landscape, we hire Action Strategists—community organizers who work intentionally to support residents, increase civic engagement, and strengthen community power in neighborhoods with histories of disinvestment.

We currently have Action Strategists working with residents in Memphis, Cincinnati, Detroit, Cleveland, and

Pittsburgh to support them in making positive change happen where they live. These Action Strategists:

- Leverage a network organizing approach to identify and engage resident leaders and support them in idea and project development, fundraising, engagement, and implementation.
- Hold training workshops in neighborhoods throughout the city and meet with ioby project leaders for one-on-one support at local community centers, libraries, and coffee shops, bringing assistance to residents in convenient spaces.
- Build and strengthen relationships with their local city agencies and nonprofit organizations.

SOUTH PHASE 0: OVERVIEW AND OBJECTIVES

Before we begin a deliberate phase of work in a new place, ioby strives to learn as much as possible about the civic landscape from the very people who we will eventually be supporting. We do not make any assumptions at the outset about the skills, needs, and resources of the community leaders whom we hope will eventually be using our platform and services. We aim to support and contribute to, rather than supplant or duplicate, the services of existing local technical assistance providers.

Many organizations have studied the Southern United States in order to understand how systems of racial oppression, conditions of scarcity in the nonprofit sector, and a fundamental and broad distrust of leadership have shaped civic life in the region. We were particularly inspired by the work that the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation has done to assess and improve public health policies and systems in the Southern and Appalachian states, as well as the “As the South Grows” series of reports by the National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy and Grantmakers for Southern Progress. This research helped to inform our research parameters and questions, and we hope that these reports will offer new insights for organizations like ours that are considering how to work most effectively and responsibly in the Southern United States.

Applying our “Phase 0” approach, we sought to understand how ioby can best serve residents, including possibilities for future expansion of our Action Strategist model and other approaches in the South. Given the differences in conditions, histories, and attitudes across the Southern U.S., we felt that it was important for us to draw lines around distinct civic environments where the effects of national social, economic, and public health trends have been felt differently.

Closely examining regional history, as well as trends in public health, climate, population growth, economic development, migration, racial and income segregation, and poverty, we identified seven subregions with distinct economic, environmental, and social conditions. Each of these areas also has its own cultural identity that is deeply rooted in its history. In each of these regions, residents, civic leaders, and funders are pursuing different priorities and facing challenges that are specific to their own areas and communities. We defined the following regions for our analysis:

- **Border Region:** includes a portion of southwestern Texas. Cities in this region include: Brownsville, TX and El Paso, TX.
- **Central Appalachia:** includes portions of: southern West Virginia, eastern Kentucky, eastern Tennessee, western North Carolina, western Virginia, northern Alabama, and northern Georgia. Cities in this region include: Knoxville, TN; Chattanooga, TN; Nashville, TN; Asheville, NC; Greenville, SC; Charleston, WV; and Huntington, WV.
- **Central Black Belt:** includes portions of central Mississippi, central Alabama, and central Georgia. Cities in this region include: Jackson, MS; Tuscaloosa, AL; Birmingham, AL; Montgomery, AL; and Atlanta, GA.
- **Delta Region:** includes portions of eastern Louisiana, western Mississippi, and eastern Arkansas. Cities in this region include: Little Rock, AR and Baton Rouge, LA.
- **Eastern Gulf:** includes portions of southeastern Louisiana, southern Alabama, southwestern Georgia, and western Florida. Cities in this region include: Biloxi, MS; Mobile, AL; Pensacola, FL; Panama City, FL; Tallahassee, FL; and Tampa, FL.
- **Greater Carolina:** includes South Carolina, eastern North Carolina, and the northeastern coast of Georgia. Cities in this region include: Charlotte, NC; Greensboro, NC; Raleigh, NC; Durham, NC; Columbia, SC; Charleston, SC; and Savannah, GA.
- **Western Gulf:** includes portions of southeastern Texas and southern Louisiana. Cities in this region include: Houston, TX; Corpus Christi, TX; New Orleans, LA; and Biloxi, MS.

Southern Regions for Phase 0 Research



OBJECTIVES

In each region, ioby aimed to:

1. Improve ioby's understanding of the region's civic landscape.
2. Assess competition and new opportunities for ioby to add value to the region's civic sector.
3. Measure the region against ioby's predictors of success, including
 - Culture of giving
 - Cooperative civic sector
 - Openness to grassroots fundraising
 - Transparent, accessible government services
 - Civic pride
4. Evaluate potential demand for ioby's services in the region.
5. Identify the trends that drive communities' interest in taking on projects like those that ioby typically supports.
6. Characterize and identify barriers to civic participation.
7. Recommend strategies to source and serve ioby project leaders across the region.

PREVIEW OF OUTCOMES

When ioby began our research, we did not know whether or how we would grow our presence in the Southern United States. Our Phase 0 research is designed to help us understand how we can support grassroots work in a place so that we can responsibly invest our time and resources. Typically, when a city is a fit for ioby's focused, place-based work, we hire an Action Strategist, as we have done in Detroit, Miami, Cleveland, Pittsburgh, and Cincinnati. In other places, we have crafted strategies to support residents and civic leaders through partnerships where ioby was part of a larger place-based initiative, as we did in Connecticut in partnership with Sustainable CT and in Memphis in partnership with Livable Memphis (now BLDG Memphis).

Because most of the southern regions that were included in our Phase 0 research are large and include expansive rural areas, each with its own history and conditions, it was important that our approach to reaching, encouraging, and supporting civic leaders be flexible, context-sensitive, and broad. This is why we are proposing three strategies to expand our work in the Southern United States, with adaptations and exceptions based on our findings from each region. At a high level, these strategies are:

- Hire an Action Strategist in one or more cities in the region.
- Launch training programs meant to reach, build trust with, and learn from residents in rural areas.
- Secure match funds that will encourage leaders who are new to grassroots fundraising and create opportunities for quick wins that will inspire more residents to action.

Overview of Methodology & Limitations

LOCAL RESEARCH FELLOWS

To conduct Phase 0 research across the seven regions, ioby felt that it was essential to engage with local research fellows who had deep roots and connections in their region:

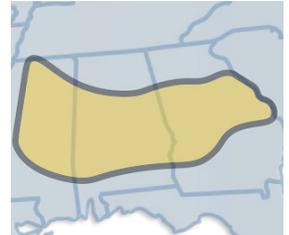
1. Border Region (La Frontera): Cemelli de Aztlan, a native El Pasoan, has been engaged in community organizing, social justice advocacy, and cultural education throughout her career. She holds a Masters in Divinity from Harvard University and received her Bachelor of Arts from Concordia University at Austin. de Aztlan serves as the Network Weaver for the El Paso Equal Voice Network, a coalition of community organizations rooted in social justice, human rights, environmental justice & women's rights, as an adjunct lecturer at The University of Texas at El Paso, and serves on the board of La Mujer Obrera.



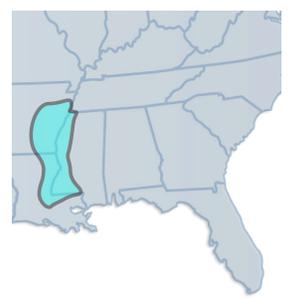
2. Central Appalachia: Alea Tveit is originally from Nashville, TN and currently lives and works as a student and community activist in Chattanooga. With a passion for environmental and social justice, anti-racism work, gender studies, and community led grassroots work, she received her undergraduate degree in Environmental Sociology with a minor in Women's Studies at the University of Tennessee. She spent the last 5 years working in local Chattanooga nonprofits with focuses on community grassroots organizing, social and racial justice, equity, public education advocacy, and research. She is currently pursuing a Masters of Macro Social Work at the University of Tennessee at Knoxville.



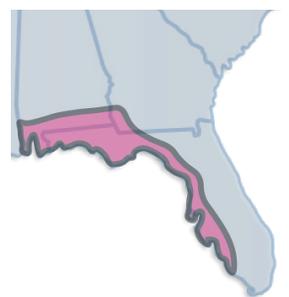
3. Central Black Belt: Lauren Taylor lives in Atlanta, Georgia, and is originally from Detroit, Michigan. She received a Bachelors in Sociology and a Master of Public Administration from Clark Atlanta University, a historically Black university. Lauren has served as the secretary of the International City Managers Association, Partnerships Chair for her university's Student Government Association, as well as a member of several social justice and professional organizations, including the NAACP.



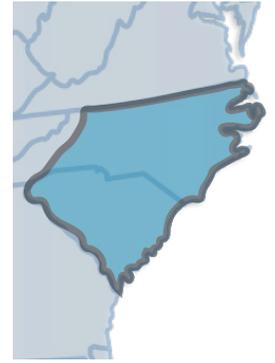
4. Delta Region: Jackson Alexander is a PhD candidate at Mississippi State University (MSU) studying public policy and administration with a focus on rural community development. He also serves as a graduate assistant for MSU's Department of Political Science and Public Administration and a part-time Community Sustainability Facilitator with the Arkansas-based rural development non-profit, Communities Unlimited. In that role, Jackson brings his years of experience in higher education and community-oriented programming to focus on local-level community and economic development in the Arkansas Delta.



5. Eastern Gulf: Rachael Reichenbach holds a Bachelor of Arts in International Affairs from The George Washington University with concentrations in sustainable development, anthropology, and human services. Since 2015, Rachael has held various roles in the Florida food system, including farmers market manager, value chain coordinator, and coordinator of Fresh Access Bucks, Florida's statewide nutrition incentive program. In 2018, Rachael served as the co-chair of the Florida Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival and is currently an active participant in the Wallace Center's Food Systems Leadership Network.



6. Greater Carolina: Raymundo Garcia graduated from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill with a B.A. in Public Policy and minors in History and Social and Economic Justice. Raymundo served as the Co-President of the Carolina Hispanic Association where his activism efforts contributed to the creation of an on campus Latinx Center. Raymundo served as the Chief Financial Officer for So Good Pupas, a social justice food truck and catering company. He also worked at the William R. Kenan Charitable Trust where he worked to bolster community-driven solutions through asset-mapping, particularly in North Carolina. Currently, Raymundo works with Lead for America as the Director of State & Local Development in Chapel Hill, North Carolina.



7. Western Gulf: Melissa S. Lee is the Senior Manager for Planning and Community Engagement at Concordia, a New Orleans based architect and planning firm. Her previous work experience includes serving as Senior Advisor for Commercial Revitalization at the New Orleans Redevelopment Authority (NORA), and Managing Director of the Coalition for the Improvement of Bedford-Stuyvesant (CIBS). Melissa received a B.S in International Relations from the University of Redlands and a M.P.A with a concentration in Urban Community and Economic Development from the Wagner School of Public Service at New York University.



GIS FELLOW

ioby hired a GIS Fellow, Sarah Kontos, to help us understand and visually represent the diverse social, economic, and physical landscapes in each of the southern regions. Using data from the U.S. Census Bureau, the IRS, and other sources, Sarah created maps that informed many of the findings and strategies presented in this report. Sarah is a spatial analyst and urban designer based in Brooklyn, New York. She has worked for a wide and varied range of nonprofits and city-adjacent agencies to translate lived experiences into novel spatial and analytical frameworks. She also has previous experience as a GIS analyst-for-hire, a data visualization specialist, as a teacher, and has served on volunteer boards related to pedestrian and bicycle advocacy. She holds a B.A. in Urban Studies and History from the University of Pittsburgh and an M.S. in Design and Urban Ecologies from Parsons, The New School.

INTERVIEWS

Research fellows conducted more than 245 one-on-one conversations with civic leaders across the Southern United States, including leaders from the public sector, community-based organizations, technical assistance providers, block clubs, and unincorporated groups. These conversations helped us to identify the context, opportunities, and challenges involved in working in each region. While the Local Research Fellows were already connected to some of their interviewees, they also relied on ioby's existing contacts who introduced them to additional leaders in the region.

SURVEY

ioby designed a survey to uncover new perspectives on the civic landscape and asked community-based organizations to share it with constituents. The survey included questions about civic pride, attachment, trust in institutions, and the region’s existing culture of giving to grassroots projects. As an incentive for residents to complete the survey, respondents entered to win one of thirty \$200 gift cards.

We received a total of 601 survey responses from across the Southern United States:

Race/Ethnicity (Self-reported)	Count	Share of Total
Black	125	20.80%
Latinx	125	20.80%
White	239	39.77%
Asian	10	1.66%
Mixed Race	16	2.66%
Native/Indigenous	8	1.33%
No response	78	12.98%
TOTAL	601	100%

WORKSHOPS

ioby’s Local Research Fellows led a total of 15 workshops for over 210 community leaders across the regions. Fellows delivered ioby’s basic grassroots fundraising training and facilitated conversations about attendees’ reactions to our training content and approach to crowdfunding. Attendees contributed insight that informed the content of these reports and will help ioby to tailor our training content and approach to best serve residents in each region.

LIMITATIONS

- **Limited perspectives:** Because most regions are large and varied, compared to the way ioby has typically focused Phase 0 research on a single city, we were unable to account for every perspective on any topic. We acknowledge that each region’s history is far more complex than we were able to describe, and our interviewees and survey respondents can not represent every town, city, and community across the region.
- **Survey limitations:** Using an online survey is a fairly recent tool in ioby’s Phase 0 research methodology. Over the last seven years, we noticed a pattern in our research that commonly after about 20 interviews, most of the answers were similar and reinforced perspectives we had already captured. Originally, our rationale was that an online survey, distributed to residents through intermediary partners, would be a more efficient and more statistically significant way of providing evidence to reinforce answers. Our goal was to receive 800 survey responses across the Southern United States. However, In many regions, not just in the Southeast, but in Philadelphia and Massachusetts, as well, we have found it challenging to get sufficient responses. As a result, we expect we will discontinue this practice given its ineffectiveness, and we expect to return to our former approach of relying heavily on more interviews.

OVERARCHING THEMES

“Growing up in the Mid-South, haunted by the legacy of poverty and racism, I was fortunate to have parents willing to sacrifice their meager resources to invest in my future. [...] Today, poverty and racism are still with us. Fortunately, so are organizations like ioby, providing the tools and support to fight and disrupt their impact on vulnerable populations.” - Jocelyn Mayfield, ioby leader, Memphis, TN

Although the histories vary by region and city, we found that communities in these regions of the Southern U.S. are grappling with issues related to:

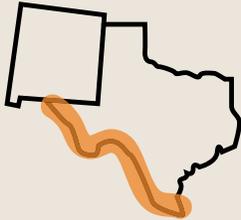
- **Legacies of racism:** Histories of slavery, segregation, redlining, and urban renewal continue to affect the ways in which residents frame and solve problems in their communities. We heard from leaders of color who live in areas with histories of disinvestment that their neighbors are acutely aware of how systems of oppression impact their communities’ environment (built and natural), health outcomes, economic mobility, and access to capital. In every region, racial justice emerged as a topic that has continued to occupy much of civil discourse for centuries.
- **Ongoing resistance to displacement fueled by gentrification:** As private investment accelerates the growth of cities, housing prices are rising quickly and long-time residents are pushed out of their homes. Low-income renters in gentrifying urban areas—and in rural towns and suburbs where governments are intentionally attracting new businesses—are especially vulnerable to displacement from rising housing prices. Interviewees in each region discussed a widespread fear of displacement as well as a variety of efforts by local civic leaders to create and preserve affordable housing.
- **Urban and rural poverty:** Interviewees in each region cited rising income inequality and deepening poverty among the most important topics that are occupying civil discourse. Poverty is concentrated in both urban and rural areas throughout the region. We know from our experiences working in places across the country that poverty presents a substantial barrier to community engagement, and that people who live in areas with histories of disinvestment often have concerns about fundraising from their neighbors. Importantly, research indicates that there is no correlation between a community’s median household income and the success of a crowdfunding campaign in their neighborhood.¹
- **Digital divide:** ioby often works in places where there is a deep “digital divide,” or a substantial share of households that have limited access to the internet. In neighborhoods where large portions of the population do not have reliable and high-speed internet in their homes, we partner with libraries and community-based organizations to reach, train, and support residents offline. In cities, including those in the Southern United States, we have heard from interviewees that digital divides typically run along socioeconomic lines; people without access to the internet at home often cannot afford to pay for access. Through our research in the Southern United States, we learned that a lack of access to high-speed internet at home often stems from lacking broadband infrastructure in the area. People in rural portions of each southern region are not served by an internet provider or are asked to pay more for slower connections. For instance, in many parts of Central Appalachia, we heard that broadband infrastructure is expensive to maintain and internet service providers charge more for access.

We found that other reports from the region frequently focused on crime, housing, poverty, and shifting approaches to philanthropy, but few focused on the lasting, visible impacts of racism on place and on the residents of a place. As a result, we have emphasized these themes in our reports.

¹ Brent, Daniel A. and Lorah, Katie. “The Geography of Civic Crowdfunding: Implications for Social Inequality and Donor-Project Dynamics.” Louisiana State University, July 2017, https://www.lsu.edu/business/economics/files/workingpapers/pap17_09.pdf.

South Phase 0 Regions at a Glance

Guided by the tenets of asset-based community development, ioby always aims to understand the existing conditions of a place before we make plans to grow our local presence. The following assets, challenges, trends, and characterizations of civic participation are based primarily on our interviews with residents and leaders in each region.



BORDER REGION



Assets

- A strong bi-national identity and culture.
- A strong sense of community that binds residents together in a common identity and cause.
- Commitment to voluntarism.



Trends:

- Poverty in the region, made worse by job losses catalyzed by NAFTA.
- Federal immigration policies have resulted in the militarization of the border.



Challenges:

- Inequities in access to high-paying jobs, high-quality education, health care, and affordable housing.
- Elitism and systems of oppression that drive all new economic development in the region and entrench income and wealth inequality.
- Legacies of colonialism that have had

Challenges continued...

lasting impacts on the region's communities of color.

- Rather than address root causes of the issues, nonprofit leaders have positioned their organizations as collectors and distributors of charity.



Civic Participation:

- Residents attend public meetings, meetings with elected officials, public rallies, and protests.
- Interviewees often see the same people participating at each event, signaling a need to expand and diversify the portion of the population that is civically engaged.
- According to ioby's survey, chief barriers to participation in the Border Region include:
 - A belief that their neighbors are disheartened because they do not believe that their participation will result in any important changes (58% of respondents)
 - Civic participation just takes too much time for some people (51%)
 - A lack of knowledge about where to begin (45%)



CENTRAL APPALACHIA



Assets

- Strong sense of community and support; many interviewees told us that residents show up for each other in times of need.
- Residents demonstrate their deep attachment to place, space, and land that leads them to care for their homes, towns, and for the natural environment.
- Strong activism and leadership, particularly among young people, the LGBTQ+ community, and communities of color.



Trends:

- Poverty: Poverty rates in Central Appalachia are higher than the national average, with recent reports revealing a combined poverty rate of 19.7% in Appalachia compared to the national rate of 15.6%.²
- Extraction: Due to the rich natural resources of the region, including timber, minerals, natural gas, and coal, Central Appalachia's history has been marked by heavy concentrations of single resource extractive industries. In addition to the coal mining industry degrading the Appalachian environment and contributing to higher health risks and pollution burden, the economic coal bust has left Central Appalachia as one of the poorest regions in the country.³
- Many communities in Appalachia are organizing to create a just economic transition where equity, social and racial justice, environmental justice, and community-led plans are centered in the formation of new economies in former coal mining communities.



Challenges:

- Systems of oppression, including systemic racism, that require organizations and leaders to examine and dismantle deep root causes.
- Stark contrasts between concentrated wealth and deep poverty.
- Issues relating to environmental injustice and exploited natural environments.
- A stark digital divide that reflects and exacerbates structural inequality.

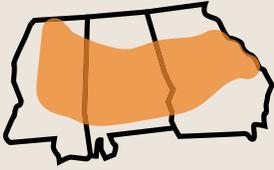


Civic Participation:

- Community organizing and community-led movement-building are deeply present in Appalachia, and most interviewees said that their organizations prioritize equity and the power of people on the ground, and intentionally give power back to the communities they serve.
- Barriers to civic participation in Central Appalachia include:
 - A lack of trust in government, based on generations of exploitation and abuse, particularly in communities of color.
 - The feeling that community members' voices and participation did not truly matter or change things, so that participating is ultimately a harmful process to the community.
 - 65% of survey respondents said that residents lack knowledge about where to begin to become civically engaged.
 - Poverty is a major obstacle leading to a lack of time and resources, such as reliable transportation and access to childcare, that would allow for higher civic engagement.

² Fahe. "Appalachian Poverty." <https://fahe.org/appalachian-poverty/>.

³ Ibid.



CENTRAL BLACK BELT



Assets

- Robust community engagement, particularly in the region's cities.
- Nonprofit leaders who represent the demographics of the communities they serve.
- Government transparency and accountability.



Trends:

- The impacts of slavery are still profoundly felt: In 2017, a FiveThirtyEight study compared maps of rural hospital closings, medical provider shortages, poor education outcomes, poverty, and mortality in the Southern United States. The study found that the maps reveal the outlines of slavery.⁴
- New investment threatens long-time residents: Interviewees told us that communities across the region have seen new investment in cities and towns' commercial corridors. Many of the areas targeted for new development are neighborhoods with histories of disinvestment, and communities of color and low-income residents are particularly vulnerable to rising real estate prices.

⁴ Barry-Jester, Anna Maria. "Patterns Of Death In The South Still Show The Outlines Of Slavery." FiveThirtyEight, 20 Apr. 2017. <https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/mortality-black-belt/>.



Challenges:

- Inequitable access to computers and high-speed broadband.
- Gentrification under the guise of revitalization in low-income communities of color.
- Lack of access to funding opportunities for nonprofits and community-led projects.



Civic Participation:

- Interviewees said that residents show up to public meetings when an agenda item directly affects them, but that only some (mostly urban) areas benefit from consistent, year-round civic engagement.
- Barriers to participation in the Central Black Belt include:
 - 69% of survey respondents said that their neighbors lack knowledge about where to begin to become civically engaged.
 - Residents are disheartened because they do not believe that their participation will result in any important changes.
 - Poverty was cited as a major barrier leading to a lack of time and resources, such as reliable transportation, that would allow for higher civic engagement.
 - Distrust in government, based on generations of exploitation and abuse, particularly in communities of color.



DELTA REGION



Assets

- The Delta has one of the most distinct cultural histories of any region in the country, including incredibly important contributions to our civil rights history, music and arts history, and culinary traditions. For heritage and tourism, these are critical assets.
- The Delta is famous for its deep alluvial river and fertile soils. These important natural resources are enormous assets for expanding an agrarian culture, building new forms of agriculture, and have great value for recreation and beauty.
- Small-scale investments in creative placemaking, community development, tactical urbanism, and small-scale agriculture in the region are some of the leading examples nationally.



Trends:

- Most residents respond favorably to the term “revitalization,” viewing it as a term to return their community to what was likely a more prosperous past.
- Programs like the USDA Rural Community Development Initiative and Rural Economic Development Initiative (REDI) have driven funding into areas with histories of disinvestment.



Challenges:

- The Mississippi Delta is one of the poorest regions in the United States. Poverty does not affect all people in the region equally. The impact of racist policies and practices persist today; rates of poverty are twice as high for African Americans in Arkansas than for whites.
- There are high rates of homelessness⁵, joblessness⁶, hunger⁷, and disease.
- The region has the largest digital divide in the United States.

5 “The Poverty Divide In Arkansas.” Arkansas PBS, 14 Sep. 2018, <https://www.myarkansaspbs.org/programs/povertydivideinarkansas>.

6 Stuff, Janice E., et al. “High prevalence of food insecurity and hunger in households in the rural Lower Mississippi Delta.” *The Journal of Rural Health*, Vol. 20, Spring 2004, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/15085632>.

7 “Delta region: Is there a future, and can it work?” *The Economist*, 2 Jul. 1998, <https://www.economist.com/unit-ed-states/1998/07/02/is-there-a-future-and-can-it-work>.



Civic Participation:

- Barriers to participation in the Delta include:
 - False or incomplete perceptions of financial constraints: Interviewees and survey respondents reported that they believe others in the region might be unable to give financially to local improvements, yet they also list the many ways that people give financially.
 - A lack of knowledge about where to begin.
 - Apathy and feelings of discouragement: many interviewees and survey respondents said that people do not become engaged because they are apathetic or do not feel as though they can make a difference.
- Interviewees told us that, as a result of these constraints, civic participation is often limited to voting.



EASTERN GULF



Assets

- Local governments in small and mid-sized cities in the region tend to be accessible to the people. Specifically, it is easier to develop relationships with local government staff and elected officials that can be leveraged.
- Interviewees said that there are deep senses of passion, commitment, and loyalty that keep community leaders pushing forward in service of their communities.



Trends:

- There is a widely held belief that development and new, outside investment is disproportionately benefitting outside developers while displacing, harming, or ignoring historically disinvested communities.
- Bay County (Panama City) and Jackson County were hit especially hard by Hurricane Michael, a climate change disaster that both exacerbated existing economic hardships and brought communities together.



Challenges:

- Individuals in power are largely committed to the status quo; there is not a widespread appetite for systems change, commitment to social justice, or deep desire for community-centered progress.
- Much of the wealth is concentrated in a small number of families that have passed down their wealth intergenerationally. As a result, there is not enough philanthropy

Challenges continued...

in the region for organizations to do the civic engagement work that is needed in the region.

- There is a sense that many people are focused primarily on their own individual or household needs, rather than the needs of their communities.



Civic Participation:

- Tampa and Tallahassee emerged as the most civically engaged cities in the region.
- Interviewees in Mobile, Pensacola, and Panama City described a less robust landscape of civic engagement in their cities.
- In rural communities, civic engagement is driven by grassroots groups that are powered by a small number of engaged and motivated residents.
- Interviewees across the region identified five primary barriers to civic engagement:
 - **Accessibility:** Government meetings are typically scheduled during daytime business hours and are often located outside of disinvested communities. Meetings tend to be formal and can feel intimidating.
 - **Economic constraints:** Poverty places restrictions on resources such as time, transportation, and opportunities to grow wealth or advance economically.
 - **Feelings of discouragement,** particularly among people of color and working class people who do not feel welcome, heard, or valued in traditional civic engagement spaces (e.g. government meetings and nonprofit boards).
 - **Distrust of government** that stems in part from histories of corruption and the legacy of segregation.
 - **Fear:** People in the immigrant community are most concerned about staying hidden out of fear of deportation.



GREATER CAROLINA



Assets

- Highly active nonprofit sector.
- Strong historical legacy of community organizing.
- Critically engaged residents, particularly in fights for equity.



Trends:

- The urban-rural divide has grown as economic forces have largely shaped access to healthcare, education, and other basic needs.
- Grassroots organizations in well-resourced urban areas like the Research Triangle are concerned with stemming the tide of gentrification and creating and preserving affordable housing for existing residents.
- Organizations in rural areas are working to attract new investment and development to areas of concentrated poverty.



Challenges:

- Insufficient funding sources for traditional nonprofits and grassroots projects.
- Lack of collaboration between nonprofits across sectors and issue areas.
- Stark digital and financial divide between rural and urban centers.



Civic Participation:

- According to interviewees and survey respondents, barriers to civic engagement include:
 - Lack of access to basic necessities such as childcare, a living wage, and transportation.
 - Long histories of marginalization and continued oppression contribute to widespread distrust of government among communities of color, and have created mental and emotional barriers to civic engagement.
 - 66% of survey respondents said that residents lack knowledge about where to begin to become civically engaged.

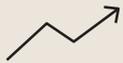


WESTERN GULF



Assets

- A well-connected and self-organized network of nonprofits that value collaboration.
- Many organizations working at the intersection of the arts and civic engagement.
- The region has harnessed its entrepreneurial spirit to inform policy and planning, and organizations and civic leaders have created innovative solutions that contribute to recovery processes following natural disasters.



Trends:

- Civic leaders are spending billions of dollars to build the region's resilience to storms, including by restoring wetlands, barrier islands, and marshes that provide a buffer for populated areas from storms.
- Neighborhood groups, grassroots leaders, and nonprofit organizations are looking for ways to stem the displacement of long-time residents from their homes, as gentrification pushes housing prices up in historically Black and working class neighborhoods.



Challenges:

- The cumulative effect of natural disasters has forced the region to confront deep-seated, entrenched barriers - historic patterns of poverty, the legacy of racial inequity, exclusion, growing income inequality, lack of affordable housing, vulnerability to rising seas, antiquated infrastructure, and failing school systems.
- Meager philanthropic investments made available to those that produce and preserve culture.



Civic Participation:

- Residents in New Orleans have a history of self-organizing during periods of recovery from environmental and economic shocks. Neighborhood leaders' ability to organize their neighbors is widely regarded by researchers as the key to New Orleans's recovery from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.
- Nonprofit and grassroots leaders in neighborhoods with histories of disinvestment find it difficult to build relationships with institutional funders who would assist them with projects to bolster civic participation and improve their communities' social, civic, and physical infrastructure.

Measuring regions against ioby's predictors of success

ioby measures success by the number of leaders trained in online grassroots fundraising and supported on our platform, as well as the amount of “citizen philanthropy” funneled to projects led by neighbors and community-based organizations. Based on our experience working in Pittsburgh, Detroit, Cleveland, Memphis, and New York, ioby has identified five predictors of success for our place-based work:

1. **Culture of giving**, characterized by general participation in charitable giving across income brackets and a general comfort with grassroots fundraising among would-be users of ioby's platform. In a place with a robust culture of giving, ioby leaders are more likely to succeed because they are more comfortable asking for donations and their neighbors are already accustomed to donating to charitable projects.
2. **Cooperative civic sector**, characterized by a culture of collaboration among organizations and government, where collaboration is born out of a mutually enforced creative or strategic ethos rather than from a funder. ioby finds it easier to build meaningful connections to organizations and grassroots leaders in cities where nonprofit leaders are deeply committed to each other's success.
3. **Openness to grassroots fundraising**: To successfully motivate and prepare residents to crowdfund for their ideas, ioby depends on a general openness to the tenets of grassroots fundraising and asset-based community development. ioby may predict the extent to which residents and leaders of community-based organizations will embrace ioby's model of online grassroots fundraising by looking at local examples of successful fundraising campaigns and by surveying residents about their proclivities for fundraising.
4. **Transparent, accessible government services**: ioby determines the transparency and accessibility of local government by examining the extent to which residents find it easy to obtain permission for projects in public spaces. In municipalities and counties where residents are easily able to obtain official permission to execute a project, ioby leaders are able to complete their projects more quickly and, often, with greater efficacy.
5. **Civic pride**: Civic pride refers to residents' demonstrable sense of pride to be from their town, neighborhood, city, and region. ioby measures pride through interviews and survey. When residents are proud to be from a neighborhood and a city, ioby is more likely to be able to motivate them to create and fund civic projects.

When measured only against other places where ioby has hired local staff, the regions where ioby appears to be the strongest fit include the Border Region (La Frontera), the Central Black Belt, and the Western Gulf. Our findings in the Delta and Greater Carolina suggest that they are moderate fits for ioby's model, and we do not plan to hire Action Strategists in these regions at this time.

IOBY'S FOCUS PLACES (AT THE TIME OF IOBY'S ARRIVAL)

Some scores from ioby's previous Phase 0 reports have been changed to more accurately reflect the nuance in our findings.

	Cleveland	Pittsburgh	Detroit	Memphis	New York
Culture of Giving	STRONG	STRONG	MIXED	STRONG	STRONG
Cooperative Civic Sector	STRONG	STRONG	STRONG	STRONG	MIXED
Openness to Grassroots Fundraising	STRONG	STRONG	STRONG	STRONG	STRONG
Transparent, Accessible, Government Services	MIXED	STRONG	MIXED	MIXED	MIXED
Civic Pride	VERY STRONG	VERY STRONG	STRONG	STRONG	STRONG

SOUTH PHASE 0 REGIONS

	Border Region	Central Appalachia	Central Black Belt	Delta Region	Eastern Gulf	Greater Carolina	Western Gulf
Culture of Giving	STRONG	STRONG	STRONG	STRONG	MIXED	STRONG	STRONG
Cooperative Civic Sector	STRONG	MIXED	STRONG	MIXED	MIXED	MIXED	MIXED
Openness to Grassroots Fundraising	STRONG	STRONG	STRONG	STRONG	STRONG	STRONG	STRONG
Transparent, Accessible, Government Services	WEAK	WEAK	MIXED	MIXED	STRONG	MIXED	STRONG
Civic Pride	STRONG	STRONG	STRONG	STRONG	MIXED	STRONG	VERY STRONG

The Demand for ioby's Services Across Regions

"When I searched online for crowdfunding, I didn't know what to look for; I'm so glad I found ioby. The work they're helping to fund is such beautiful work, and they're so helpful. They're a wonderful resource. I'm so thankful for them. The tips they've shared, all the things you don't know about crowdsourcing, they spell it out so easily."

- Melissa Linkous, ioby leader, "Preserving Forest View Cemetery" in Richmond, VA

In every region, interviewees said that ioby's crowdfunding platform, grassroots fundraising trainings, coaching services, and fiscal sponsorship model would benefit local nonprofits and grassroots groups by supplementing their existing sources of funding. Funders in each region include:

- Municipal governments, namely in large cities, support creative placemaking projects through "micro-grants" or small grants programs for artists and community-based organizations.
- Grassroots grantmakers, including community foundations, typically fund incorporated nonprofits. Interviewees in several regions told ioby that, because such a large share of local philanthropy originates with wealthy developers, funding typically goes to leaders and groups who are less vocal in their opposition to powerful interests. This is particularly harmful to organizations that represent the interests of long-time residents who are grappling with the effects of gentrification.
- A small handful of national foundations that maintain a local presence in the Southern United States support organizations and leaders whose projects align with their values and vision for the region or city. For instance, the Knight Foundation's Charlotte program funds startup nonprofits in the city's Historic West End neighborhood that promote community engagement, work toward a shared community vision, and create and activate public spaces.⁸

In most regions, leaders of community-based organizations told ioby that there is not enough funding in their regions to support the amount of grassroots work taking place. As a result, interviewees believe that the majority of funding typically flows to larger, well-known nonprofits. In places with more abundant funding available to residents and small community-based organizations, grant application and reporting processes are often burdensome, difficult to navigate, and slow. Because they do not expect to find reliable and consistent sources of funding, leaders of small and unincorporated organizations across the Southern United States are accustomed to leading grassroots fundraising campaigns for their projects. The philanthropic need in the region that we see are:

1. More opportunities for right-sized, timely funding
2. More funding for small, unincorporated, or grassroots groups and movements
3. More place-rooted, patient funding
4. More trust in the people leading the projects; less top-down grantmaking

People in every region have experience with crowdfunding platforms. Thousands of residents in each region have led and donated to crowdfunding campaigns on platforms such as GoFundMe, Kickstarter, and DonorsChoose. ioby's intention is to supplement, rather than compete with, these crowdfunding platforms. ioby differs from these platforms in key ways:

- We support projects from idea through implementation, and focus our support and our evaluation of our success on the development of the leader of the project, rather than on the project or on the financial transactions. Informed by organizing models such as asset-based community development (ABCD) and resource organizing, ioby's training and coaching are designed to build the confidence and fundraising capacities of grassroots leaders.
- As a nonprofit, ioby is able to guarantee that all donations made on our platform are tax-deductible. For groups without 501(c)(3) status, we offer project-specific (Type C) fiscal sponsorship.
- ioby believes that residents know what is best for their neighborhoods. We only require that projects be based in the United States or its territory and have a public benefit.
- ioby is mission-driven to focus on communities with the most need, and so we deliberately build networks of leaders in areas with histories of disinvestment.

⁸ "Charlotte." Knight Foundation. <https://knightfoundation.org/community/charlotte/>.

- ioby stewards a national network of civically engaged neighbors that project leaders join when they run a campaign with us. We encourage our nationwide network to learn from each other, and provide opportunities for them to do so.

In addition, interviewees and survey respondents reported that their neighbors generally distrust government and leaders from outside of their communities to solve their most urgent problems. There is a strong sense among residents in every region that they know what is best for their towns, cities, and regions. ioby found that residents in these regions are accustomed to taking on projects in public spaces— including creative placemaking projects and tactical urbanism interventions— that make their towns and neighborhoods stronger, more sustainable, and healthier.

Judging by residents’ openness to grassroots fundraising and creating projects in public spaces, ioby predicts that there will be a strong demand for our services in much of these regions.

Recommended Strategies to Support Resident-Led Change

“With the funds we raised with ioby, we were able to start a phase of the project and show community members and funders that we’re not going to wait for the big magical grant, we’re going to roll our sleeves up and get to it.”
 - Danny Glover, ioby Leader, “Georgia’s First Urban AgriHOOD” in Macon, GA

We propose three broad strategies to expand focused work in the Southern United States, with adaptations and exceptions that are described in our report for each region.

Strategy #1: Hire local Action Strategists

Initially, ioby will pursue funding to hire Action Strategists in the following places:

- El Paso, TX
- Birmingham, AL
- Atlanta, GA
- New Orleans, LA

These Action Strategists will identify leaders from across their cities and metropolitan areas, prepare them to crowdfund, and connect them to experts in their fields. Using the blended on-the-ground and digital model successfully implemented in New York, Memphis, Detroit, Cleveland, Pittsburgh, and Cincinnati, each Action Strategist will use the findings of their region’s Phase 0 report as a guide and begin to identify local leaders who have ideas and funding needs.

Strategy #2: Train the trainer

To build ioby’s presence in cities and towns across the Southern United States, in both rural areas surrounding El Paso, Birmingham, Atlanta and New Orleans, as well as in regions where ioby does not currently propose hiring Action Strategists—Central Appalachia, the Delta Region, the Eastern Gulf, and Greater Carolina—ioby would train cohorts of civic leaders from each region to:

- Learn about community development models and frameworks that can help them more creatively address challenges in their towns and cities, including:
 - Asset-based community development (ABCD)
 - Tactical urbanism
 - Creative placemaking
- Preparing to lead a grassroots fundraising campaigns by:
 - Deciding whether crowdfunding with ioby is right for them

- Building a strong and diverse fundraising team
- Crafting and telling a compelling story about their work and its significance
- Assessing their team's fundraising capacity using a prospect chart
- Creating an online communications strategy to support their fundraising campaign

The ideal participant in this cohort is a trusted leader who already spends at least 50% of their time working directly with community residents, and frequently organizes meetings, convenings, workshops, or trainings with residents who are focused on local project-based work. The participants could be staff at a highly regarded local nonprofit or civic institution. Each participant would be compensated for their time. Through this approach to building ioby's presence across the region, we hope to:

- Equip residents and community-based organizations with the tools and skills that they need in order to access citizen philanthropy for projects that make their towns stronger, more connected, more vibrant, and more sustainable;
- Build strong and authentic relationships with leaders of nonprofit organizations that are highly regarded by leaders who might benefit from ioby's services and platform;
- Cultivate a robust culture of civic leadership and giving to grassroots projects in cities, towns, and neighborhoods with histories of disinvestment.

Strategy #3: Seek Match Fund Partners

ioby has found that an effective way to demonstrate to a community that change is possible is by supporting the successful implementation of projects. Trust is earned, and mindsets change.

We have successfully leveraged match fund partnerships to make it easier for a network of projects to be funded and implemented quickly. We have focused this on geographies, or on project types, such as racial justice, transportation improvements, COVID-19 relief, or healthy neighborhoods. A match opportunity with broad eligibility criteria would serve as a strong incentive for residents and community-based organizations to try ioby's services.

Place-based match funds are most impactful when paired with Strategy #1: hire local Action Strategists and Strategy #2: train the trainer. Place-based match funds are most successful when the local leaders and organizations who are promoting the opportunity are equipped to explain the advantages of crowdfunding and prepare people in their networks to run their fundraising campaigns. Project-themed match funds are effective nationally, and we expect that this would be true also for a project-themed match fund across a region.

When ioby has successfully supported grassroots campaigns across the region, we may begin to see momentum build as well-regarded community leaders and leaders of organizations refer people in their networks to ioby.

CONCLUSION

Each of the seven regions of the Southern United States that were part of ioby's Phase 0 research is profoundly different from the others, and contains distinct civic landscapes within it. While we did not hear from every leader or group in every region, ioby is committed to continuing our learning as we execute our planned strategies for each region. As we plan our hiring processes, launch training programs, and seek match funds, we will be interested in learning from our partners and leaders who use our platform about how we can most effectively serve people throughout their regions.

Too often, the country's southern regions are described in terms of their deficits. We hope that our Phase 0 research will inspire other organizations to look more closely at the incredible abundance of civic leadership in each region and support the groups that are making change in their own backyards.

By taking the time to build relationships with and learn from leaders across the Southern United States, we believe that ioby has a deeper understanding and defined strategies to support grassroots work in ways that respect and contribute meaningfully to each region's civic landscape. We are eager and ready to get to work with residents in these regions, including the people who contributed their valuable insights and stories to these reports.

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