

# The LittleSis Climate Program



## Introduction

LittleSis's climate program supports movements and campaigns for energy, climate, and environmental justice through conducting and facilitating power research focused on the fossil fuel industry and its financial backers. We work with national and local partner organizations and base-building groups to bring transparency to the fossil fuel industry's influence in society and politics, expose the ways it seeks to advance its interests, and locate points of vulnerability within the fossil industry power structure. We perform and facilitate this power research in order to provide strategic leverage, education, and skill-building to movement organizations that are challenging the fossil fuel industries power and interests.

Our climate program has been a core feature of LittleSis for over a decade. Since 2012, we have conducted extensive investigations of the industry and its agenda that have garnered major media coverage and delivered significant impact. Our research has identified politicians and regulators who are captured by the industry; exposed academic institutions and identified think tanks and front groups that are helping it move its agenda and shape public opinion; mapped Wall Street banks and investors who are providing critical financial underpinning to the industry; and connected the dots between fossil fuel money and other areas of injustice.

We are currently working in partnership with organizations to name-and-shame Wall Street financiers of fossil fuels – with a focus on big asset managers and private equity – support campus fossil fuel divestment campaigns, highlight ways fossil fuel industry power drive racial injustice, and support state-level fights to protect climate legislation and to take on utility power.

## Why climate is a focus for LittleSis

LittleSis has long focused on power research on the fossil fuel industry because that industry is the main force driving global climate catastrophe as well as environmental and climate injustice against the world's most vulnerable frontline communities already targeted by racial capitalism. Moreover, like Wall Street and Big Tech, the fossil fuel industry is a core sector of the larger corporate power structure that LittleSis is dedicated to researching. Finally,

movements for climate, energy and environmental justice are - and for the foreseeable future, will continue to be - at the forefront of the broader struggle for progressive change.

## What LittleSis offers under the climate program

LittleSis is dedicated to bringing the strategic benefits of power research and power mapping to support the climate movement in several ways:

- **Actionable research.** We provide research to strengthen organizing efforts to challenge the oil and gas industry, its agenda, and its key allies. Our brand of research focuses on locating points of leverage to support campaigners and organizers and to bring transparency to the power and influence of the fossil fuel industry. This research includes reports, internal memos, and quick-hit news posts.
- **Trainings and movement education.** We conduct trainings and workshops on how to research the power and influence of the fossil fuel industry, and can orient these towards specific campaign targets and goals of partners. We publish how-to guides on researching the fossil fuel industry and news stories and reports that increase public education about the industry's power structure.
- **Movement capacity building.** We build power research capacity among organizers, advocacy organizations, and journalists around the fossil fuel industry, but also with an intersectional orientation to help draw connections between related issues, break down silos, and build movement power and solidarity.

## Climate program impact

- **Holding “frackademia” to account.** Our research on the fossil fuel industry's influence in academia has helped discredit pro-industry studies and PR antics that sought to advance oil and gas drilling, fracking, and infrastructure buildout. For example, our work helped shut down a fracking institute at the University of Buffalo, discredit a pro-fracking report from the University of Texas Energy Institute which led to the resignation of its industry-tied director, and exposed that a University of Minnesota-Duluth pro-Line 3 pipeline report was backed by Enbridge.
- **Supporting divestment campaigns and wins.** We've worked closely with some of the most prominent campus fossil fuel divestment efforts around the US, providing them with trainings, how-to guides, internal memos, and reports. For example, we've collaborated with Divest Harvard as they've achieved historic divestment victories and continue to hold their university to account around its ties to fossil fuel power, while our report on the University of Michigan's private equity oil investments contributed to the

University of Michigan Climate Action Movement's successful divestment effort. In our CorpU report, we mapped out the fossil fuel ties of trustees at 20 universities to support organizing efforts.

- **Aiding efforts to halt fossil fuel infrastructure expansion.** From our “Power Behind the Pipelines” reports to our power mapping of the lobbying and campaign finance behind controversial proposed power plants, our research has supported struggles against fossil fuel infrastructure buildout. For example, our report on the massive lobbying efforts behind NRG’s proposed Astoria fracked-gas power plant, produced in collaboration with partners campaigning against the plant, was part of the broad effort that succeeded in halting the plant in late 2021.
- **Bringing accountability to financiers of climate catastrophe.** We’ve published numerous reports on the financial backing of the fossil fuel industry. For example, our report on private equity’s worst climate villains, produced in collaboration with Private Equity Stakeholder Project, was featured in a 2022 Guardian story and has sparked campaigns against the Carlyle Group’s David Rubenstein across the nation, focused on cultural institutions and universities where he has trustee seats. In 2024, we and our partners released the [FossilFuelFinanceHub.org](https://www.fossilfuelfinancehub.org), a primer on fossil finance for activists and campaigners, with resources and campaign examples.