

MAPPING STUDY //

**Philanthropic Contributions  
to Consciousness**

**PROJECT REPORT**

**By Mina Lee**

*Sponsored by Joe Hudson (DBJ Foundation)*

# Project Context

[Joe Hudson](#) (previous MD of [DBJ Foundation](#)) and [Mina Lee](#) hoped to gather individuals who were contributing philanthropically to raise consciousness, to explore what could be possible in collaborating and working together.\*

“We saw that there were many contributing to this space but were working as individuals, and did not know about each other, especially internationally. We also found that many philanthropists new to this space were at a loss for where to begin, and didn’t know what was and wasn’t working in this space. We hoped that by mapping the space and making it publically available, we could **provide a tool to help people find each other, share resources and information** so we could all be **more effective as an ecosystem and community.**”

# Mapping process

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Shortlisted

Filtered

Prioritized

Interviewed

200

130

65

45

Contributing to  
consciousness  
raising projects

Contributing  
philanthropically

Consciousness  
raising core to vision  
and mission

# Information sources for compiling shortlist

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Screened **online databases** [Guidestar](#), [Inside Philanthropy](#), [National Center for Charitable Statistics](#), [Foundation Directory Online](#), [Pro Publica Non-Profit Explorer](#) with the terms “mindfulness”, “consciousness”, and “human potential”

**Reverse filter of funders backing consciousness focused entities** like IONS, CIIS, Chopra Foundation, Science and Consciousness Conference. ‘[Spiritual Civilization’ Affinity Group](#) of the Global Philanthropists Circle.

**Word of mouth referrals**

# Interview Approach and Questions

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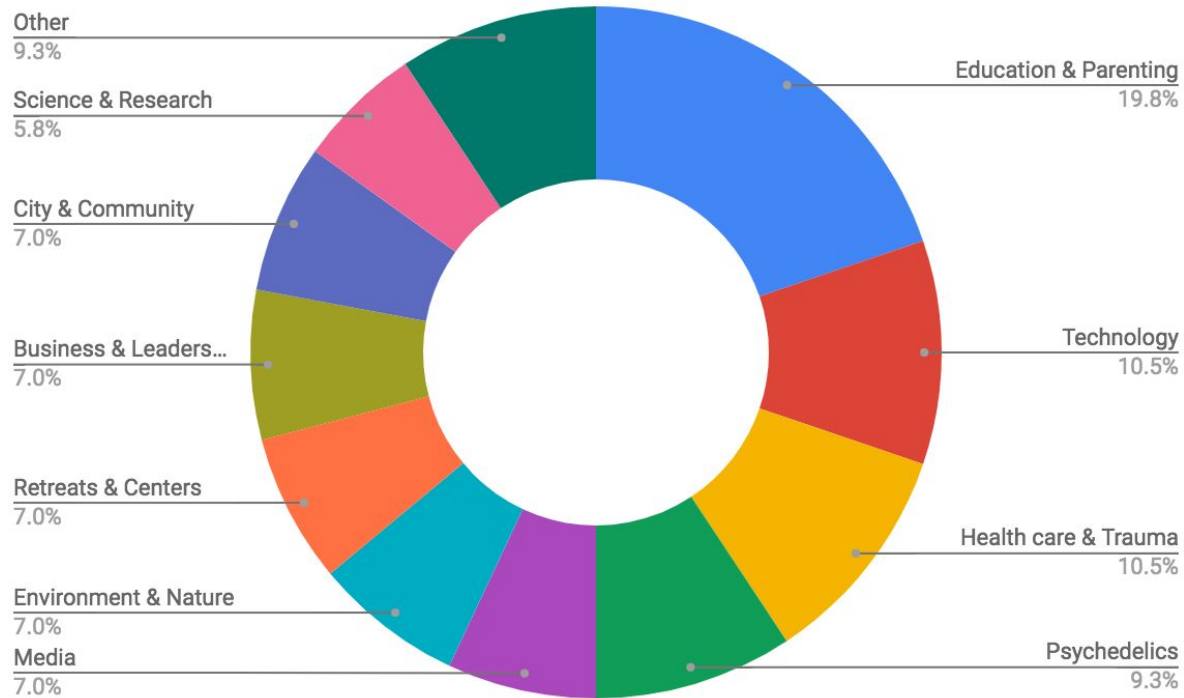
## Inquiry

- **Personal Journey:** Why invest in consciousness, what does it mean to you? Personal spiritual journey and how this became meaningful for them.
- **Projects:** What do you contribute to and why? How do you find them, how do you filter and select, how do you measure success? What are the greatest challenges? Opportunities?
- **Ecosystem:** What framework should we gather under? If you had unlimited resources, what would your consciousness portfolio for the world look like? What would make a gathering with others in the field meaningful for you?

## Interview methodology

- Ask questions from **'VIEW'**: **Vulnerable, Impartial, Empathetic, Wonder**
- Make each touchpoint, each interview, a consciousness raising experience

# Overall funding focus



**What do you give to?**

# Key takeaways

1

What does consciousness mean to you?

**Consciousness means something different to each person, depending on their spiritual journey. Be aware of pitfalls of rhetoric.**

2

What do you give to and why? How do you find, filter, and measure results?

**75% of people give to projects as a direct reflection of their spiritual journey, 25% of people give based on a systems level view - multiple theories of change that are hard to converge; most find their projects organically and do not have a structured pipeline; most highlight the mindset and principles of leadership as their greatest criteria and success is difficult to measure**

3

What is your biggest challenge?

**1) Talent and governance - balancing business execution with spiritual content, find 1 person (rare) or a team that can do both  
2) Marketing and communications - telling stories of what's working, 3) Lack of data and metrics on what is and isn't working,  
4) Integrating their personal spiritual and professional life (who they are when they play "philanthropist" vs not)**

4

Two consistently difficult to answer questions (yet alive in the community): **Given infinite resources, what would be your consciousness portfolio? What would be the best framework for the community to self organize and find each other under?**

5

What would you want in a gathering for it to be meaningful?

**Connection, openness, depth + shared worldview + learning + for some, a commitment to action**

6

Are there other communities around the world, is this a growing movement?

**There are other funder and philanthropy communities around the world: USA, Germany, Sweden, China, Taiwan, South America**

7

What are possible next steps?

**1) Light touch: Set up funders and projects into an online open source searchable platform  
2) Medium touch: Hire a network coordinator and build a learning network for resources and people  
3) Heavier touch: Build an actual collaborative where donors comes together for systems change a la Co-Impact Model**

**Everyone relates to consciousness in their own way**

**Be aware of the pitfalls of rhetoric when together**



1

# Everyone relates to consciousness in their own way

*What does consciousness mean to you? What does it look like for someone to be 'more conscious'?*

“Consciousness is everywhere, it is an **indescribable state of being**, for me, it simply is”

“Consciousness is **connection** and the recognition that **we are all one**”

“Consciousness is **multi-level state of awareness** of what is happening in this moment”

“Consciousness is **divinity**”  
“Waking up looks like **play**”

“Consciousness is **freedom**, freedom from the suffering I can cause myself, spaciousness”

“My vision is for awakening to be ubiquitous and that for me is when the “**I**” **becomes universal**”

“Consciousness for us is **unconditional love**”

“Greater consciousness is awareness of all the **interlocking systems**”

“Reality is relational, consciousness is **relational**, from the material to the quantum level”

“Consciousness for me is full human **flourishing**, our evolution is **learning how to be human**”

“A conscious person is someone connected to and living from their **heart space**”

“Behavior that suggests embodied **recognition of interdependence** and connection to something larger than self”

“Openness, kindness, awareness of projections, trust, humility, honesty, service, compassion...”

# Strategy is personal

**Connection first: Get to know each other as humans**

# People give as a reflection of their spiritual journey

What do you contribute to and why? How do you search, filter, measure impact? How do you relate to them after giving?

“My projects find me, I don’t find them; it is an **organic process** where people approach me, events, conferences, friends...”

“My family has a **history of mental health** and so I’ve contributed a lot to this space”

“**Becoming a parent has been the biggest part of my spiritual journey**, conscious parenting is my focus now”

“I’ve experienced the **pain of my own family healing** and the economic power and jobs concentrated in **family businesses**, thus I will focus on helping family businesses”

“There is so much trauma passed down from past generations which I have experienced. Consciousness requires us to **evolve and heal with our ancestors**, there is no ‘personal salvation’ without bringing our blood roots along, this is my gift to others”

“If only each person had 5 or so **very close friends** and relationships, the world would be a heck of a better place. I pray for the groundswell of community to meet them”

“I envision a world where **technology evolves to support the evolving human** that recognizes its own potential”

“I believe that the earlier in the development cycle we go, the better, **conscious parenting and education** is where I can make the biggest difference from a human life cycle point of view”

“My vision is to **alleviate suffering** - framed this way makes it an actual problem that can be measured and solved. I believe the place to start where people are ready and willing to pay for it is **health care**, it’s the in-road if I look across sectors that are economically ready”

“When filtering, we hope our **projects can become sustainable**, we don’t want them to rely on our foundation’s funding into perpetuity... for profit or nonprofit investment, whatever the entity needs but it would be great to explore **new investment structures**”

“We see the integrated human - awakening of the **mind, heart, and gut/body**. Thus we invest in entities in all three to inspire inquiry, deepen emotional availability, connect people to their bodies...”

“We fund **science** to shift the paradigm for others working in this space - if we **prove that connection is real** then we can start talking about coherence; we put **alternative questions** in the mainstream to attract more resources”

Minority with structured, systems approach

Strategy is personal for 75% of people,  
Only 25% Take a structured systems approach

# Greatest professional challenges

1

## Talent

Who can both execute and are on the spiritual path? How do we build a team where there's explicit accountability for both?

2

## Media and storytelling

How do we highlight what's already working? How do we tell the story? How do we make this part of the cultural movement?

3

## Metrics and case studies

What's working and not working? Who's doing what?

**Lynchpin focus points**

Solving any one of these = big impact

# Greatest personal challenge

## Integration of spiritual and philanthropic life

How to live a congruent inner and outer life?

How do I align the way I feel and am in my spiritual community  
with the way I feel and am in my professional / philanthropic community?

How do I show up in my philanthropy as a spiritual being and not as a commodity?

# Greatest challenges have been talent, story, and data

*What have been your greatest challenges in contributing to this space? What are the opportunities w/in the community?*

“**Talent** - I need more people that have both the spiritual values AND executional capabilities - most in this space are meditators, nurses, teachers, scientists - they lack the commercial capabilities to create and grow sustainable companies, I need more people that walk both paths”

“We need more storytelling and media to truly create a cultural shift, to spark interest in self development and consciousness. E.g., TV shows following a main character’s journey of continuous inquiry and examination. The counterparty has clear stories perpetuating fear, we need a better media strategy for this movement to really be in the mainstream”

“I would love to learn about what others are doing, case studies of what has worked and hasn’t worked, some quantified number sharing on impacts would be great, measured in both the number of people reached and depth of transformation enabled...”

“**Collaboration** - if only we could work together more. To do that, we need safe spaces where we can be really vulnerable. We need leaders to prioritize creating them as a part of their organizational culture and we need infrastructure leaders to create physical spaces as part of our homes, schools, and public places”

“I would love to meet others interested in the same space (conscious parenting, US-China, psychedelics,...), it’s very important to me the type of person they are (egoic vs service)”

“**Integration** has been very difficult for me, feeling congruent between the me that shows up in my practice and spiritual community and the me that shows up when I invest / lead / contribute in the world”

## Two questions that were challenging for interviewees:

What framework for consciousness would you propose to help people self organize and find each other with?\*

Imagine you have infinite resources, how would you allocate the world's consciousness portfolio for the greatest impact?

\*E.g. By stakeholder, modality, transformation approach, human life cycle, system, and/or others? OR 'If you had all the people in the field in one room, what would you label the breakouts so people could find each other?'

**People want open, authentic, vulnerable connection**

**Prioritize and design convenings around this experience**



# What we heard funders want in a gathering

*What would be meaningful for you in a gathering? What if it were to happen, would be disappointing?*

"I want **action** to come out of it, a **group commitment**, it could be via a group DAF"

"I would love to meet the people out of country and overseas, **international community**"

"A static mapping project is useless, it's out of date the moment it's created" - an **organic and live online map** would be much more interesting and useful for us to solve the search and talent problem"

"You can **convene, share, and connect** but **difficult to converge** because everyone has their **own theory of change - need people to connect deeply first**"

"Sometimes even though people come in with loyalty to a cause, **they can quickly forget that once they meet people whom they like to show up with, they then shift interests with that group**"

"The most important thing for me is to **cultivate deep relationships**, it is the fabric from which everything else emerges. When someone loves you, they know you are hungry before you do - I want to create these deep relationships of love and service to each other..."

"The most important thing to me is the people; it's more important to me that they come from an **authentic and open place** and allow our intersections to emerge"

"I want to meet others who are interested in my **same areas of focus**, psychedelics and conscious parenting, what are they doing, **what's working and succeeding, what are the learnings?**"

"I want to **hear about the impacts**, what has **been working and has not** for others, I would love to **see numbers** so I could better know how to evaluate or what to look for"

"In our experience, **the "learner" profile is only 7% of contributors**, the one who actually wants to learn about the projects, many contribute for social capital and other reasons"

**6** This is a global movement with funders in China, Sweden, Germany, East and West USA, South America



# Potential next steps for the movement

*Least resources*

1. **Build a live Online Resource Hub.**
  - a. Make the list of funders and projects found in this study searchable AND open-sourced so the community can keep it updated
  
2. **Build a Learning Network.**
  - a. Hire a network coordinator to define the framework and shared language, to convene and proactively connect individuals, to put together the infrastructure and tools for the network to take the next step. E.g., online case studies library, community sub-groups, coordinate projects across donors

*Most resources*

3. **Build an Action Network - a partnership of donors that are pooling resources, networks, and expertise to drive change at scale. e.g. [Co-Impact model](#)**



**Questions and comments:**

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Sponsored by [Joe Hudson](#), DBJ Foundation

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