

# FOOD

## 2018 Grassroots Trend Report



New England  
Grassroots  
Environment Fund

*Working Draft*

### Background of Respondents:

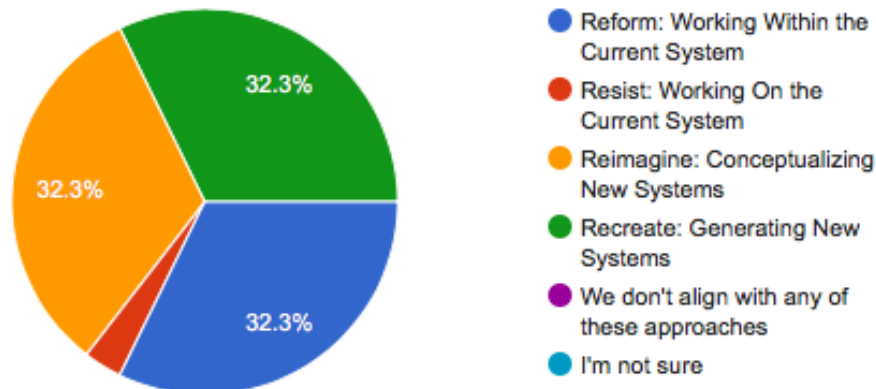
| Where this information is coming from:

- Sources: 18 2017 and 31 2018 Food survey responses, 1 in-depth conversation with a grassroots group, numerous reports and webinars from Food organizations
- Organization Size: Majority 30 or fewer members
- Top Services Provided: Education, Networking, Organizing, Direct action, Advocacy, Trainings and Support
- Low response from Maine and New Hampshire

**Just Transition:** shifting from an extractive to an equitable economy

| What we're seeing:

- Theory of change: (2018 survey responses)



- Popular Projects: Network and coalition building, Community and school gardens, Eat local campaigns
- Driving Factors: Equitable, Locally sourced, Sustainable, Resilient

| Barriers:

- Access: Lack of land access

| Gaps:

→ Theory of Change: Resist-aligned work

→ Groups Would Like to See More: Food as medicine; Food cooperatives; Food preservation; Food sovereignty programs; Seed saving; Sustainable fisheries; Vocational programs in prisons, technical schools, and within immigrant and working class communities

**Shifting Power:** empowering people & creating networks that value a diversity of lived experiences

| What we're seeing:

- Leadership Structure: Combination of styles, Many aim for consensus
- Representation: Vast majority of groups feel it is very important to represent community demographics in group membership and leadership
- Feedback: Many groups rely on open community meetings, surveys, and feedback boxes to determine whether they are meeting community needs, Several rely on state or national statistics

| Barriers:

- Outreach: Groups can find it difficult to effectively reach out to underrepresented communities that they do not have existing relationships with

| Gaps:

- Representation: Most groups are not as representative of community demographics as they would like to be - particularly across race, socioeconomic status, and age

**Lowering Barriers:** addressing systemic challenges through community outreach

| What we're seeing:

- Outreach to Underrepresented Groups: Working with groups that have more diverse constituencies, Increased presence within traditionally underrepresented communities
- Communication: Asking members to identify their preferred language and method of communication and reaching out via those methods to maximize reach
- Accessibility: Creating physically accessible garden spaces, Leaving gates open to encourage communal use, Holding meetings and events at varying times, locations, and languages and offering services such as childcare, food, and accommodations

| Barriers:

- To involvement: Limited financial and time capacity on individual and group levels, Communities may be addressing other issues that are seen as more

pressing, Lack of multilingual staff/core volunteers

| Gaps:

- Trust: Lack of trust amongst different community groups

- Leaders: Trusted community leaders who can bridge gaps between groups

## **Community-based Resourcing:** addressing funding barriers in creative, collaborative ways

### | What we're seeing:

- Strategies: Diversification of funding sources, Skill-sharing between organizations, Strengthening organizational storytelling to engage more people
- Collaborations: Groups working on similar issues, Groups in the same geographic area, Community-University partnerships
- Assistance Received: Networking and information sharing, Communications, Capacity building, Policy support

### | Barriers:

- To Organizational Collaborations: Time, Funding, Small organizational scope, Differing organizational goals and values
- To Community-University Partnerships: Rigorous academic deliverables, Short-term semester-long commitments, Staff capacity for student mentorship and supervision

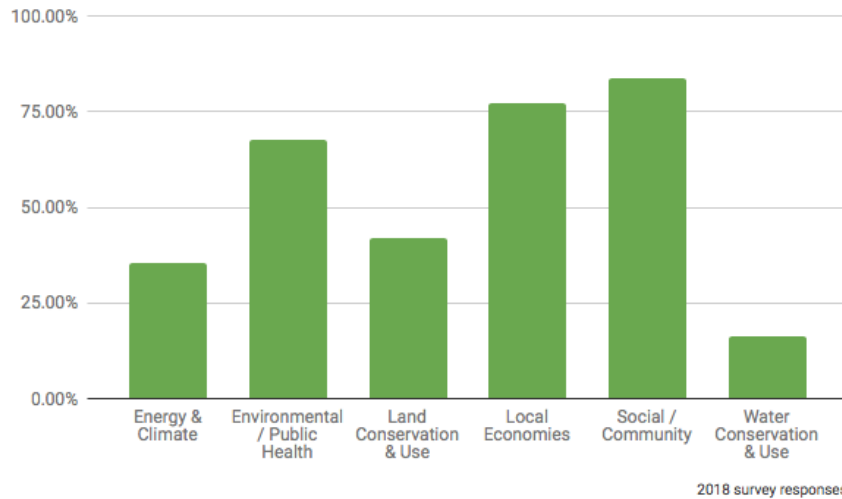
### | Gaps:

- Compensation: Compensation for volunteer time and resources
- Funding: Staff positions specifically to coordinate collaborations

## **Risk Taking & Innovation:** implementing creative practices based on community context

### | What we're seeing:

- Opportunities: Collective farming, Food as a unifier across difference, Food as a Right approaches, Local food sovereignty initiatives, Mental health and empowerment through food and farming, School-based projects, Worker-driven social responsibility supply chain programs
- Co-benefits: Nearly all groups seek co-benefits



**Barriers:**

- Time: Wanting to be established in their primary project before incorporating co-benefits
- Flexibility: Funding that allows opportunities for creative risk

**Gaps:**

- Water Co-benefits: Projects with Food and Water Conservation & Use co-benefits, for example exploring agricultural practices that are less water-intensive

**Change vs. Charity:** addressing root causes & co-creating solutions

**What we're seeing:**

- Environmental Justice: Plays some role most groups' decision-making
- Identified Root Causes: Capitalist system driven by efficiency rather than quality, Commodification of food and land, Systemic racism, Socioeconomic inequality

**Barriers:**

- Compensation: Not being able to offer to volunteers compensation for time and effort

**Gaps:**

- Environmental Justice: 1/4 of respondent groups don't consider environmental justice in group decision-making
- Root Cause Analyses: Addressing root causes rather than symptoms and making connections to other issues

**Process Is The Product:** implementing adaptable practices that prioritize learning

**What we're seeing:**

- Democracy: Establishing democratic, equitable leadership and ownership models while recreating food systems

| Barriers:

- Time: Groups often feel they do not have the time or capacity to focus on

process and incorporating the Guiding Values into their work

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## Recommendations:

| For organizers:

- **Unify:** Engage community members by using food as a way to bring people together across difference

| For policymakers:

- **Support:** Healthy Food Financing Initiatives, SNAP programs such as the MA Healthy Incentives Program, Farm to School Bills, Community Development Funds and Initiatives, Food Policy Councils and Food Plans, Granting public land access for community initiatives

| Check out these groups:

- **Everett Community Growers:** [everettcommunitygrowers.wordpress.com](http://everettcommunitygrowers.wordpress.com)
  - **Stamford VT Seed Savers:** [stamfordvtseedsavers.org](http://stamfordvtseedsavers.org)
  - **Sustainable Livelihood Relief Organization:** [slromaine.org](http://slromaine.org)
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## Partners:



[everettcommunitygrowers.wordpress.com](http://everettcommunitygrowers.wordpress.com)