

New England  
Grassroots  
Environment Fund

# 2018 Grassroots Trend Reports

## INTRODUCTION

*Working Draft*

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### Goals:

| The Grassroots Fund works with our grantees and partner organizations to identify current opportunities and challenges at the grassroots level so that we can build a deeper understanding of the shifting grassroots landscape and better respond to emerging needs. We share these trends through these annual reports and online webinars as part of our democratic grant-making process to provide applicants, Grant Reviewers, and Grant Making Committee members with up to date context on the grassroots landscape within which we work. This context-setting allows any individual to join the grant making process and to bring their own unique experience and perspective, while also ensuring that all Grant Reviewers have a common basis of understanding. We welcome all grassroots organizers, non-profit organizations, funders, and policy makers to utilize the information to inform their programming.

### Our Process:

| Information in these reports has been gleaned from surveys, interviews, in-person Catalyst Conversation events, grant reports and “Catalyst Calls” with grantees, network participation, and the Grassroots Fund’s participatory grant review process. Graphs and percentages represent data from survey respondents.

### Guiding Values:

| The Grassroots Fund's Guiding values act as the framework for our organizational practices and grant review process because we have found them to be essential elements of successful grassroots organizing. These values open up opportunities for conversations around who is involved in co-creating local solutions, how a group’s work can contribute to a Just Transition, and how we can best support on-the-ground efforts.

- **Just Transition:** The work contributes to a shift away from an extractive fossil-fuel driven economy grounded in consumerism, militarism, and the exploitation of land, labor, and resources

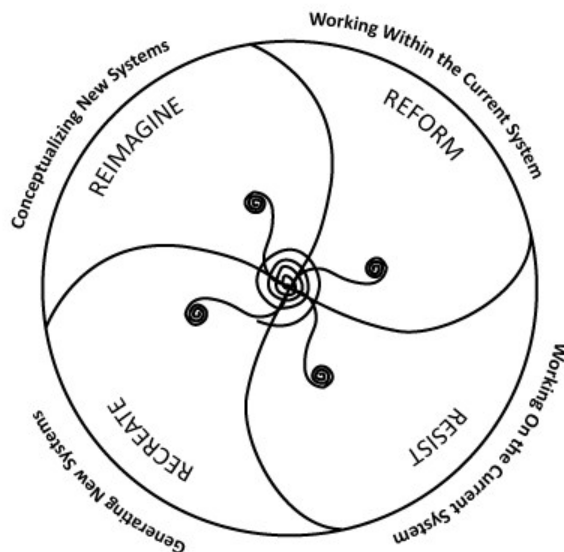
to a local, living, loving economy grounded in ecological and social well-being, cooperation, and regeneration.

- **Shifting Power:** The work actively creates opportunities for people and groups to work together - particularly with those outside of their regular networks – so that they may share their expertise and experiences. There are strategies to ensure group members are representative of the stakeholders in the community.
- **Lowering Barriers:** The work addresses systemic challenges through community outreach and facilitates access for those who disproportionately face barriers to participation.
- **Risk-taking & Innovation:** The work offers creative, local solutions founded in an understanding of existing community context.
- **Change vs. Charity:** The work addresses root causes and seeks to meaningfully co-create solutions to community challenges. The work has the potential to engage neighbors in the long-term by building deep social capital.
- **Community-based Resourcing:** The work addresses traditional funding barriers in creative and collaborative ways.
- **Process is the Product:** The work implements adaptable, equitable, community-based practices that prioritize learning opportunities and regular evaluation.

See [grassrootsfund.org/dollars/guiding-values](https://grassrootsfund.org/dollars/guiding-values) for more information.

## Theory of Change:

The Grassroots Fund aligns with Spirit in Action's Theory of Transformation, which describes the multiple different approaches that are critical to achieving true systems change. These approaches are distinct, yet connected, and we recognize that while each group may align more strongly with one approach than the others, coordination across these approaches is critical.



THEORY OF TRANSFORMATION

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See Spirit in Action's Theory of Transformation for more information: [spiritinaction.net/our-programs/our-approach/](https://spiritinaction.net/our-programs/our-approach/)

## Overarching Trends:

| These common trends were shared by respondent groups across all issue areas.

- **Organization Type:** Most groups represent non-profit and ad hoc community groups
- **Area Served:** Groups work across rural, suburban, and urban areas
- **Lack of Root Cause Analyses:** Many groups identify and address symptoms of environmental problems rather than their true root causes, which ultimately do not prevent symptoms from reoccurring
- **Identified Root Causes:** Capitalist system and systemic socioeconomic and racial inequality
- **Diversity of Lived Experience:** Many groups do not recognize the diversity of lived experiences in their communities and therefore do not incorporate those diverse perspectives in their work or leadership structures

## Recommendations:

| For organizers:

- **Piggyback:** Locate existing areas of community (established events, churches, schools, libraries, homes, community centers) and tap into those networks rather than trying to establish your own from scratch
- **Include:** Expand perceptions of diversity to recognize ability, age, education level, experience, gender, ideology, income, nationality, race, religion, sexual orientation, etc. and their intersections, and prioritize reflecting the diversity of lived experiences in your community in organizational leadership
- **Analyze:** Take time to perform a root cause analysis of the problem(s) you are trying to address and implement intersectional practices that attempt to tackle the root causes of community problems. Identifying root causes can also draw connections between seemingly distinct environmental issues
- **Listen:** Offer to assist other groups before asking for their support
- **Partner:** Develop and strengthen lasting relationships based on shared values rather than single-task-oriented collaborations

| For funders:

- **Be Flexible:** Offer funding that allows for multi-year costs, changing and experimental projects, legal technical assistance, policy work, and operational costs including staff time