

Annual Report 2025

GRASS
ROOTS
FUND

2025



Project Priceless, 2025 Grow Grantee

Table of Contents

Community Care, Led Locally

Page 2: Message from Leadership

Page 3: Grantee Maps

Page 4: Grantmaking Committee Map

Pages 5-6: Grantmaking in 2025

Pages 7-8: Grantee Highlights

Page 9: Financials

Page 10: Our Strategic Direction



Alma Arcoiris, 2025 Grow Grantee

Letter from Leadership

As we reflect on 2025, I am struck by both the urgency of this moment and the enduring power of grassroots action. Across New England, communities are navigating accelerating climate impacts, persistent environmental injustice, economic uncertainty, and profound social change. And yet, again and again, we have witnessed neighbors organizing, imagining, and acting together to protect what they love and to build healthier, more just futures.

We believe environmental progress begins at the community level. Long before policy shifts or large-scale investments take shape, it is local people, often volunteers, unpaid, and acting without formal nonprofit status, who step forward to address the environmental challenges in their own backyards. Many of the groups we support are ad hoc collectives, mutual aid efforts, or emerging community-led initiatives that may never seek 501(c)(3) status, yet are deeply credible, trusted, and effective within their communities. Their work reminds us that environmental leadership does not require permission: it requires care, courage, and commitment.

2026 marks our 30th anniversary, and we look ahead with both humility and ambition. The forces shaping our world are complex and interconnected: climate change, geopolitical instability, technological disruption, shifting demographics, and evolving models of civic engagement. At the same time, we are seeing renewed interest in local solutions, place-based leadership, and community care. The next era of the Grassroots Fund will be defined by our ability to stay grounded in our values while adapting to these changing conditions.

As we enter our fourth decade, we do so with gratitude for all who have shaped this work and with confidence in the communities who carry it forward. Thank you for standing with grassroots leaders across New England at this pivotal moment.

With deep appreciation,

Kimberly Blakemore
The Grassroots Fund Board President



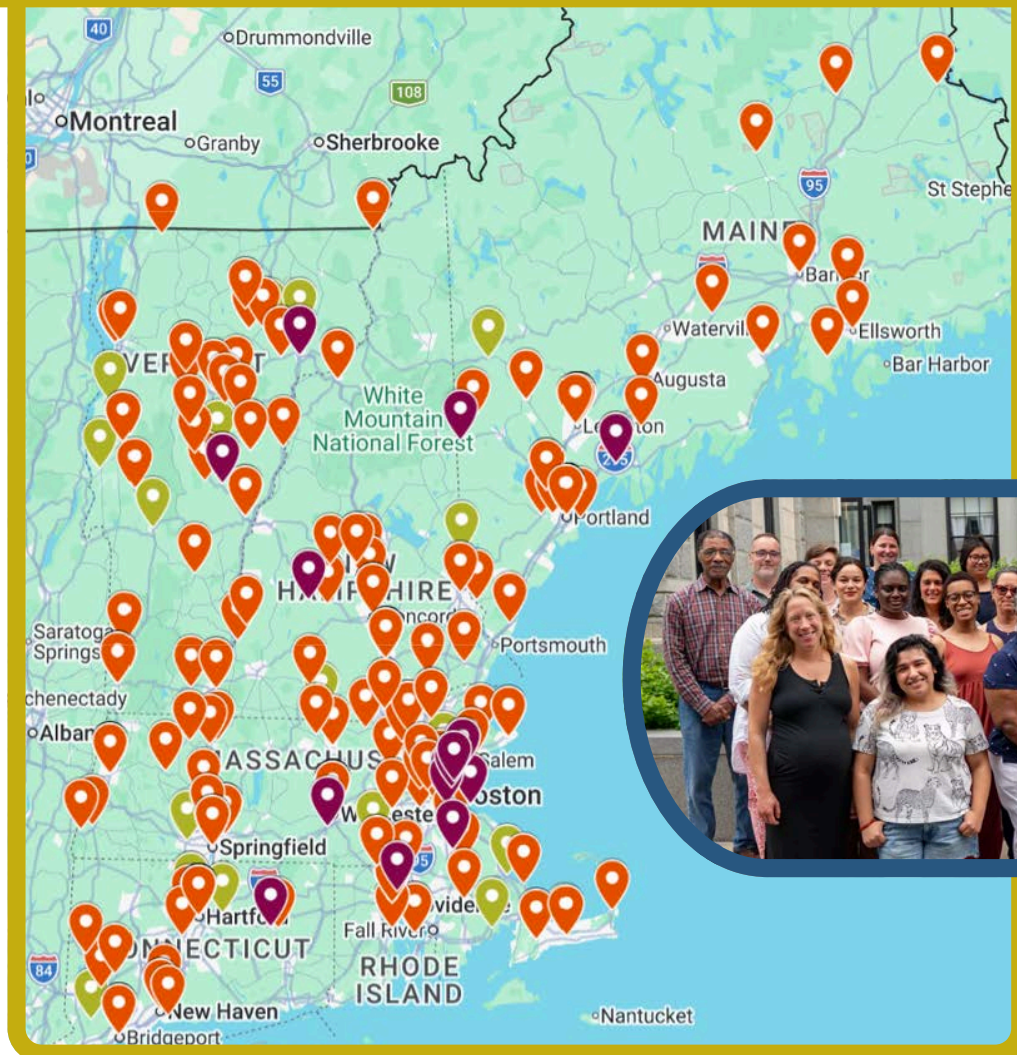
Grantee Maps

Our regional reach is the result of long-standing trust and consistent presence across New England. While we do intentional outreach every year to make sure new groups know about us, most grantees find us through word of mouth.

One group connects us to another, that group brings in a neighbor or partner, and over time a network grows organically. Existing groups often spark ideas for new groups, and their knowledge of our funding leads them to our grant programs. This kind of growth only happens when funding is accessible and deep trust is built.

The map shows the widespread breadth of our work across the region in 2025.

[Access the interactive map online.](#)



2025 Grantmaking Committee

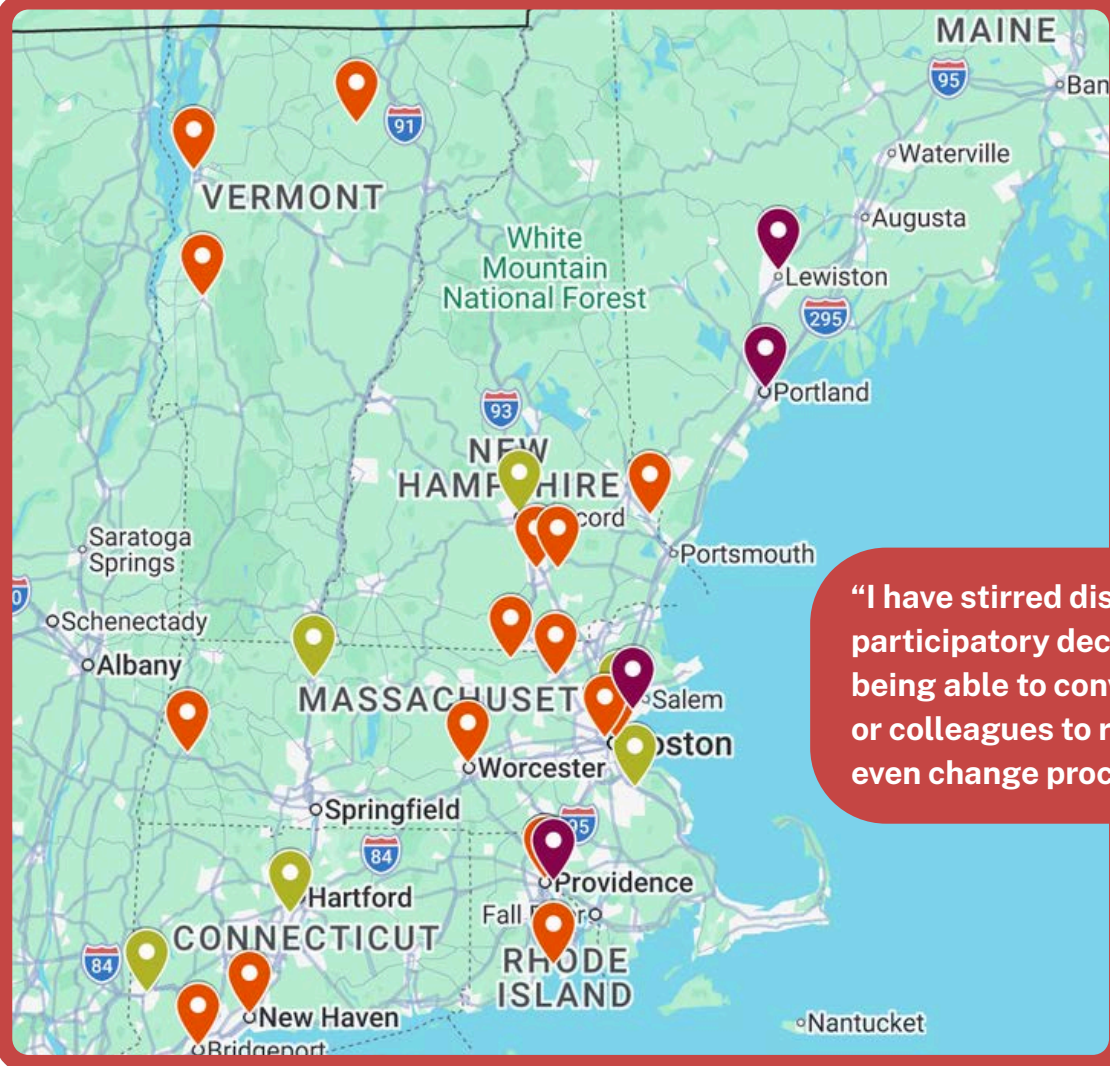
Grantmaking Committee

Participatory grantmaking is an intentional structure involving a range of perspectives from those closest to the issues. These individuals make the final funding decision, ensuring that those most affected by environmental injustice have influence over how money flows into their communities. This approach shifts power and produces more equitable outcomes than conventional grantmaking structures that tend to leave out these lived experiences. The process itself is an opportunity to deepen connections and to share leadership skills with peers.

The Grantmaking Committees map shows that grantmaking itself supports movement growth. When leaders from across regions engage together, they deepen trust and build collective capacity.

This map illustrates the locations of decision-makers in 2025. We are cultivating a decentralized, regional network of environmental justice leadership that sustains itself over time.

[Access the online map.](#)



“I have stirred discussions about biases and participatory decision-making in my work, being able to convince other board members or colleagues to re-evaluate practices and even change processes.” -2025 GMC Member



Boston Climate Cohort site visit, Dorchester, MA



The Laurels Farm, 2025 Grow Grantee

Grantmaking 2025

The Grassroots Fund distributed \$1.5 million in 2025, making this our largest grantmaking year to date. This milestone reflects both the growing demand from grassroots groups across the region and our continued commitment to shifting wealth from our donors into the hands of community groups.

At the heart of our grantmaking, we have a clear priority to fund groups that sit furthest outside of traditional philanthropy and, specifically, ad hoc groups operating with very small budgets. These groups are often the most responsive to emerging needs, yet have access to the fewest funding options and have the most barriers to diversified funding streams.

2025 pushed us to take a closer look at how our grantmaking was actually working in practice. Looking at a full year of data alongside what we were hearing directly from groups on the ground, it became clear that parts of our funding structure needed to change.

2025 was the largest grantmaking year in Grassroots' 30 years!

Doubling down on ad hoc groups.

Ad hoc groups without a fiscal sponsor can now apply for two Grow Grants per year, while 501(c)(3) organizations and fiscally sponsored groups remain eligible for one. We have long named ad hoc groups as a priority because they sit furthest outside traditional philanthropy. In 2025, our data reinforced that these groups are often the most responsive to shifting community needs. This change puts our stated values into action by expanding access to flexible funding for leaders working at the hyper-local level.

Clarifying our focus on small budgets.

Grow Grants are designed to support small, grassroots organizations, historically those operating under \$100,000 per year. Groups with annual budgets over \$150,000 are not eligible for our grantmaking programs. As our funding grew, we saw the need for a clear, transparent boundary to ensure consistent decision-making and focused resources. The data support this approach: the majority of groups we fund operate on budgets under \$70,000, and applications from these groups continue to increase year over year. Setting a clear budget cap helps ensure equity across applicants and keeps our grantmaking aligned with our mission.



By the Numbers

\$1.5 million distributed

83% of grantees had annual budgets at or below **\$75,000**

115 groups self-identify as **ad hoc**

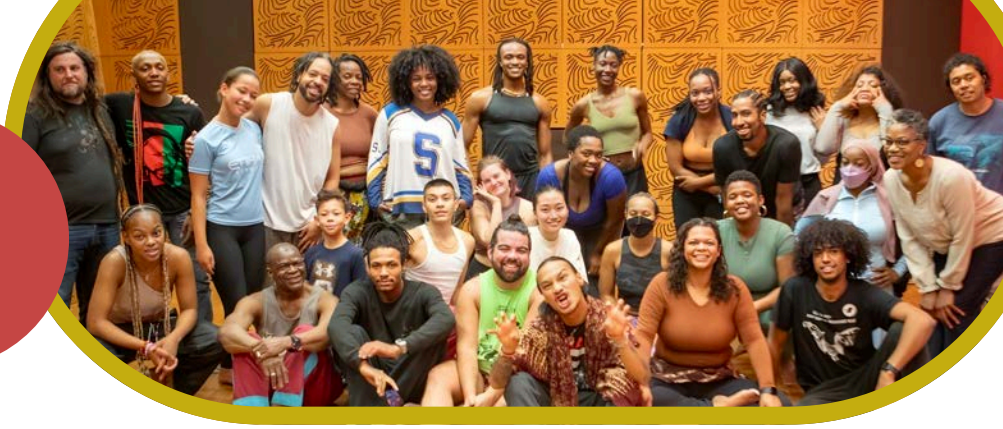
135 newly established groups funded

Grantmaking Reflections

10 New England Food systems grassroots leaders, growers, and grassroots organizations came together to share their stories, build community, and decide how to split a shared pool of grant funds. This gathering shed light on both triumphs and challenges facing food systems throughout New England, due to loss of federal funding, climate change, and shifting organizational structures and priorities.

[Learn more about the Food System Resilience Fund Cohort.](#)

Grantee Highlights



Haus of Glitter Dance Company

Haus of Glitter embodies **Equity in Participation** by ensuring the whole community, especially those whose needs can be overlooked at large public events, could participate fully. Not only was their PRIDE SZN event free, the group provided live interpretation and many of the offerings showcased the multiple, vibrant languages and cultures of the greater Providence region.

Corn Sisters Circle

Our readers felt that this project exemplified **Rooted Innovation** by grounding its solutions in ancestral knowledge, place-based practices, and community relationships, creating something new by drawing on what's always been known. It also powerfully embodies **Centering a Just Transition** by addressing immediate community needs: food access, healing from trauma, and cultural revitalization while actively building Indigenous self-determination and long-term resilience.



Rich Dae Entrepreneur Foundation

Grassroots Fund grant readers thought that Rich Dae has fully embraced **Shifting Power** in their work. Youth lead programs from concept to execution, and returning youth members are stepping into leadership roles. The group leans into the unique perspective and wisdom young people offer their communities and empowers them to run with their own ideas.

Shared Gifting Cohorts



Grassroots leaders often face similar challenges: doing vital work in isolation, with limited resources and few opportunities to connect. The Grassroot Fund's cohort model directly addresses this by pairing intentional community with flexible funding. Instead of competing for scarce resources, leaders learn alongside each other and build a trusted network of support.

Mount Washington Valley Farmers Market

"We're dreaming bigger now. Hearing what other folks have done has broadened our perspective on what's possible. Being a part of this cohort has really helped us set goals beyond just surviving and instead set community-oriented goals based around our mission." -Hazel Pine, representative of MWW Farmers Market in the Food Systems Shared Gifting Cohort

Liberation Ecosystems

"Sometimes you don't know what's possible until you're part of it. It has been enormously helpful to see how funders like Grassroots Fund, with resources and connections, are working to support new models for resourcing grassroots organizations in collaborative and relational ways." -Samantha Langevin, representative of Liberation Ecosystems in the Food Systems Shared Gifting Cohort



Asian American Resource Workshop

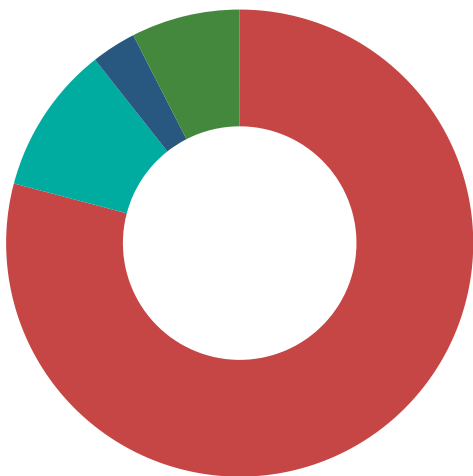
"The shared gifting was a thoughtful process in participatory democracy. The general operating support was really helpful, but it's the networking and shared learning that feels extremely valuable."

-Nicole Eigbrett, representative of AARW in the Boston Climate Shared Gifting Cohort

Financials

As we see a continued rise in the number of funding requests, board and staff are having conversations about sustaining the increase in grant pools across our programs. The Grassroots Fund is often the sole funder for many ad hoc groups in our network that focus on mutual aid and peer support work. We remain committed to diversifying income streams to build a resilient, long-term base for this important community work.

The Grassroots Fund is a public, non-endowed funder that relies on strong annual partnerships to do our work. In 2025, we were supported by over 30 institutional and family foundations, alongside \$300,000 in individual donations.

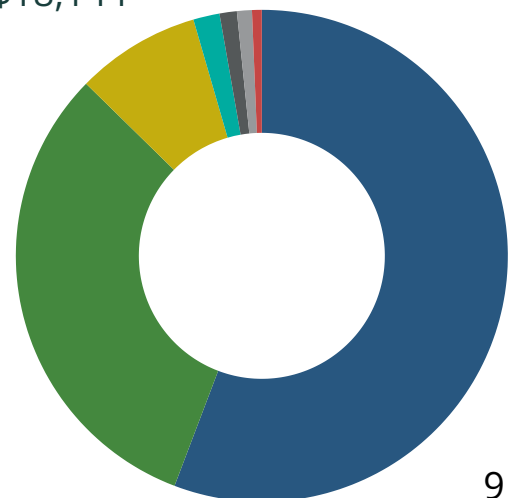


Income

- **Foundation Grants** - \$2,330,500
- **Contributions** - \$302,271
- **Temporary Restricted Net Assets** - \$221,944
- **Other Income** - \$97,197
- **TOTAL** - \$2,951,912

Expenses

- **Grantmaking Programs** - \$1,581,696
- **Personnel** - \$894,947
- **Contract Services** - \$231,968
- **Programs & Convenings** - \$49,013
- **Organizational & Networking** - \$32,217
- **Office** - \$27,859
- **Fundraising & Outreach** - \$18,144
- **TOTAL** - \$2,835,843



Our Strategic Direction

In 2025, our team found grounding in the phrase “When Systems Fail, Communities Prevail.” Throughout the year, we witnessed the cutting, undermining, and dismantling of federal and state programs intended to support environmental justice, promote community health, and provide lifelines for at-risk and underserved communities. While we live in a society where systems have been failing for a long time, moments like this bring into sharp focus the contrast between institutional fragility and shortcomings versus the enduring strength of grassroots, community-led solutions.

We know from experience that grassroots organizations and the people who run them are the ones who show up when times are hardest. When SNAP and EBT were frozen, we saw how food banks, free fridges, and mutual aid organizations responded to feed thousands more than they already do. When ICE threatened the safety and security of our neighbors, we saw grassroots groups pivot to provide safety information, grocery deliveries, and escorts to places like schools. Across the region, we also saw communities identifying and meeting needs for more spaces for rest, recovery, joy, and rejuvenation. In times like these, we believe it is essential to remain steady in our mission and clear about our vision for the future.

We are proud to share the release of our new evergreen Strategic Plan. This plan is the result of over two years of collective reflection, learning, and collaboration, and we are excited to carry it forward in the years to come.

2026 marks our 30th year. This milestone offers both a chance to reflect on the impact of the past three decades and an opportunity to look ahead. Over these 30 years, we have built and supported a vast network of grassroots organizations. What is clearer than ever is that this work is not done alone. Resourcing this network and strengthening relationships within it are what make community resilience possible.

Together, we are building the conditions for communities not only to respond to crises but also to care for one another, adapt, and thrive.

In community,

Faye and Bart,
The Grassroot Fund Co-Directors



Faye Christoforo



Bart Westdijk



GRASS ROOTS FUND



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Interested in making a multi-year gift, exploring a legacy gift, or want to join us in partnership? Send us an email and we will connect you to a Grassroots Fund staff member.