



New England  
Grassroots  
Environment Fund

# 2017

ANNUAL REPORT



# WELCOME!

Dear Friend:

A record \$576,762.59 in grants were awarded to 222 grassroots groups in 2017. More than 4,000 people and groups were served by our program offerings. Participation in grassroots activism is stronger than in recent history, in lock step, of course, with the heightened threats and challenges facing our region's communities. New and better ways to approach these challenges are being developed and shared through grassroots networks, and we are glad to be of service to them (you!), and to share some of the exciting results here.

The Grassroots Fund looks to communities to develop their own solutions to the complex issues affecting where they live as well as the health and enjoyment of the people who live there. We support grassroots volunteers with the specific tools, resources and connections needed to make an impact.

And **when we say 'we', we truly mean all of us.** Our participatory decision-making processes invite you to join in making decisions on incoming applications, helping design and organize events and gatherings, and collecting stories and data from throughout the region.

**We foster innovation.** We invest dollars in individuals, activities and groups working across a broad range of environmental and social justice issues. Because they are often newly-starting and unincorporated, many of our applicants are overlooked by traditional philanthropy. We support their creative approaches to challenging existing systems in their communities, the places they know best.

**We convene changemakers.** We're strengthening a grassroots movement by making meaningful, real connections between a broad spectrum of individuals, groups and organizations all working towards common goals. We encourage cross-issue conversations and support those who are developing solutions to big problems.

**We amplify voices.** We want all community members to have a seat at the table, particularly traditionally marginalized individuals, groups and organizations who have been left out of mainstream movements. We want all constituent perspectives to be valued, heard and considered in decision making.

We mean it when we say this is OUR Grassroots Fund. Thank you for the part you played in the grassroots movement in 2017, whether as activist, advocate, donor, or otherwise. We hope this serves as a record of extraordinary impact from a year in the movement. We'll see you out there!

In solidarity,

*Vidya Tikku*  
VIDYA TIKKU  
Board President



*Julia Dundorf*  
JULIA DUNDORF  
Executive Director



## GUIDING VALUES

The Grassroots Fund's Values can be traced back to our founding principles and remain an important touchstone for all of our work. While we don't expect groups to have found solutions for all the overarching questions, these Values open up opportunities to have conversations around who is involved in (co-)creating local solutions, how a group's work is (or can be) contributing to a Just Transition and what we can do to support on-the-ground efforts. Never hesitate to contact us with any questions and we look forward to talking more.

### JUST TRANSITION & STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS

Our values are rooted in co-creation, fairness, and equity. Our strategies and programs are increasingly focused on efforts to move from an extractive fossil-fuel driven economy grounded in consumerism, militarism, the exploitation of land, labor and resources to a local, living, loving economy grounded in ecological and social well-being, cooperation, and regeneration.

To make transformative social change, the Grassroots Fund will always advance direct democratic decision-making and community organizing efforts that ensure those who are being impacted by a problem are a part of the solution. We believe in supporting those closest to environmental and social problems in determining their own solutions. The power of grassroots organizations is their ability to organize, to educate, and to mobilize. We aim to reorient power to be more local and democratic.

### SHIFTING POWER: TRANSPARENCY, ACCOUNTABILITY, DEMOCRACY

We believe it's critical that grant decisions are made collectively, by both those who donate money and by those who receive grants. The Grassroots Fund grantmaking committee transforms the traditional funder-applicant structure where one person, or a small group of people with money, make all the decisions. We seek to create opportunities for people and groups to work together, particularly with those outside of their regular network, so that they may share their expertise and experiences. We serve as an advocate for democratized, equitable grantmaking practices and are an avenue for widespread grassroots grantmaking through formal and informal funder networks.

### LOWERING BARRIERS TO FUNDING

We treat applicants with great respect. We view applicants as colleagues catalyzing innovative change or addressing systemic challenges, casting bold visions, and garnering financial support to do their good in the world. We are committed to removing barriers to funding. Barriers may include – lack of the 'right connections'; lack of a formal (organizational) 501c3 tax status; lack of knowledge that the funding exists; language and literacy obstacles; complex, written applications and reporting forms; and labels like 'in startup phase', 'too small' or 'too radical'. As a funder we believe it is our responsibility to both fund through our grantmaking and to help leverage and catalyze more grantmaking that lowers barriers – essentially serving to increase grants from other funders to communities most affected by environmental and social degradation and extraction and disproportionately face funding barriers.

### FLEXIBILITY & 'RISK' - TAKING

We are interested in supporting projects that offer creative, new, community-based solutions and which are unlikely to receive grant funding from other sources. We believe that grant guidelines can be flexible at times and that we must trust recipients to use the funds effectively. We are willing to take risks in our grantmaking and seek to learn together with grantee groups to understand what works and/or what does not. We understand that some projects may 'fail' to achieve the original objectives, and that some will have unimaginable success. In all these cases, we feel there is value in the learning. Our main objective is to support long-term systems change through shared learning with our applicants and grantees.

### CHANGE VERSUS CHARITY

Our assistance is designed to share information and lessons learned to address root causes, not symptoms. The Grassroots Fund is a relatively unique organization, and often the only source of funding for unincorporated volunteer groups. While we acknowledge that this position means we need to provide a range of services to meet the demand, our core commitment is to helping groups realize their initial project visions and then address the root cause of problems rather than the symptoms. We are committed to providing access to resources, both financial and technical, to give groups the support they need.

### COMMUNITY-BASED FUNDING

We believe in equity and recognize the inherent inequities involved in philanthropy. We are committed to creating a more balanced income portfolio with new and more sustainable sources of funding based on the solidarity of the many, rather than the generosity of the few.

### PROCESS IS THE PRODUCT

We take risks in our structures, processes, and our funding decisions. As a result we regularly evaluate ourselves, through grantee reports and partner surveys, so that we may continually evolve and test different approaches. The way we do our grantmaking and how well we are connecting a community of grassroots leaders to one another is our real work. We believe in adaptability and understand that our relevancy depends on bringing in many perspectives, lowering barriers for engagement at the local level, and holding space for co-creating solutions across all viewpoints.

Learn More Here:

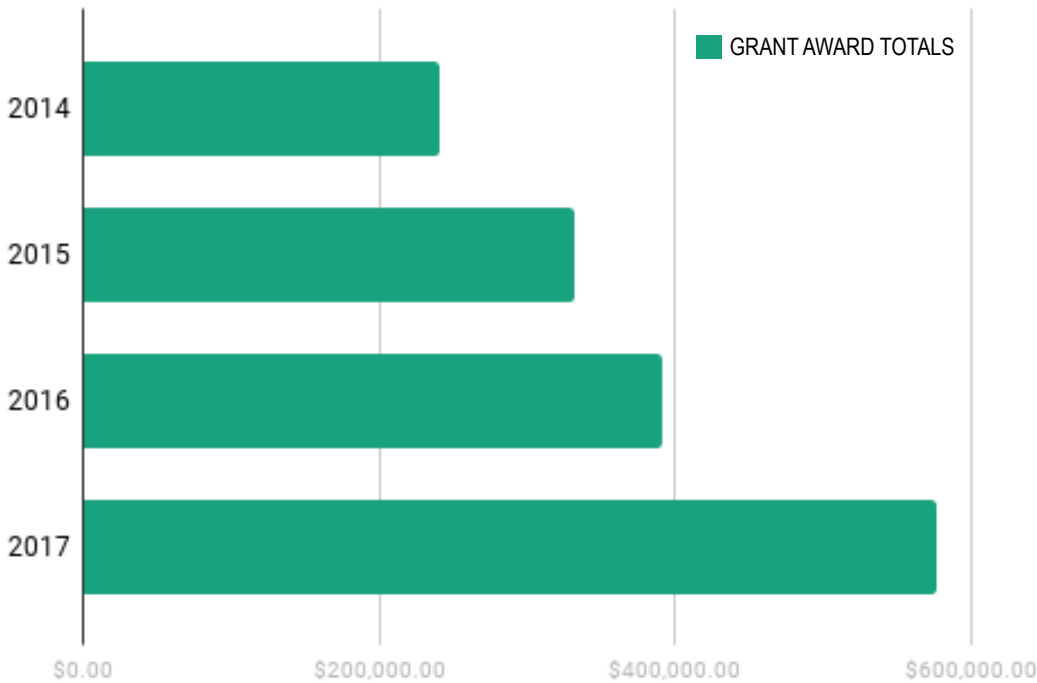
<https://grassrootsfund.org/dollars/guiding-values>

# PROGRAM RESULTS

We offered 13 webinars, 2 full day workshop trainings, piloted a grantee/partner networking event (Catalyst Conversations) and a 2 1/2-day conference in 2017 that were attended or utilized by over 1000 people. We awarded \$576,762.59 in grants, the most in our history and a remarkable 33% increase over 2016.

Grants were distributed to 222 groups from around the region, with the average grant award being \$2,598. 48% of grantees were ad hoc groups that might not otherwise have had access to grant funded support for their work.

## GRANT AWARDS:



## GRANT PROGRAMS:

<b>SEED</b>
\$250-\$1,000 awards, quick review turn around and rolling application process, for new projects and groups. <b>\$71,519 AWARDED TO 88 GROUPS IN 2017</b>
<b>GROW</b>
\$1,000-\$3,500 awards, to help established groups increase capacity, deadlines in Spring and Fall. <b>\$243,850 AWARDED TO 118 GROUPS IN 2017</b>
<b>YOUNG ADULT LEADER</b>
\$5,000-\$7,500 awards, previously called 'Harvest', for groups empowering youth-led initiatives, Spring deadline. <b>\$65,345 AWARDED TO 16 GROUPS IN 2017</b>

Energize and nurture long term civic engagement in local initiatives that create and maintain healthy, just, safe and environmentally sustainable communities.

### 5 OVERARCHING ISSUE AREAS:

#### ENERGY AND CLIMATE

Fostering innovative, community-based approaches to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change.

#### LAND AND WATER

Balancing the built environment, working landscapes and wilderness.

#### LOCAL FOOD

Creating a resilient, healthy, safe and equitable regional food system.

#### ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

Preventing and eliminating toxic pollution and health hazards and threats.

#### NEW ECONOMY

Inspiring behavior change towards conscious and ecological living.

# MEET 6 OF THE 222 GRANTEE GROUPS FROM 2017

## HEALTHY NORTHERN KENNEBEC - HEALTHY WATERVILLE - YOUTH ENGAGEMENT HEALTHY NORTHERN KENNEBEC - HEALTHY WATERVILLE - YOUTH ENGAGEMENT WATERVILLE, ME

### NH SOLAR SHARES

PLYMOUTH AREA RENEWABLE ENERGY INITIATIVE  
PLYMOUTH, NH

#### Climate Change and Energy | Grow

2017 Grow grant to develop, launch, fundraise for and run the NH Solar Shares program, an extension of Plymouth Area Renewable Energy Initiative's 'energy equity' work. It gives low-income families regular access to solar PV energy and family service providers access to a new referral program.

### GREEN BURIAL VERMONT

GREEN BURIAL VERMONT  
HINESBURG, VT

#### Land and Water | Seed

2017 Seed Grant to support their work facilitating the creation and operation of green cemeteries in a manner that will maximize environmental benefit, and offer ethical, spiritual and financial value to those who wish to plan for a green burial and their families. It has become clear that education regarding green burial options and issues is lacking throughout Vermont, and the lack of knowledge for starting or effectively operating a green burial cemetery remains a barrier. Green Burial Vermont seeks to act as an education and resource focal point, informing consumers about the social, cultural, and environmental benefits of green burials.

### WINDHAM YOUTH CORE

GROW WINDHAM  
WILLIMANTIC, CT

#### Food | Harvest Youth

2017 Harvest Youth Grant provided materials and stipends for Windham Youth CORE leaders (a program of GROW Windham) that will enable them to transform Thread City Family Garden into a laboratory for food system development that is 'Certified Community' - meaning that its products and participants are explicitly integrated with the values, enterprises and advocacy that are the foundation of a strong community.

**Food | Grow**  
2017 Grow grant to support the work of the Youth subgroup to engage high school students to learn about food security and increase empathy for families who need food assistance. Young people will co-lead this subgroup in fun, interactive activities to enhance the new high school food pantry and bring awareness to the broader community.

**SISTERS UNCHAINED**  
SISTERS UNCHAINED  
DORCHESTER, MA

#### Environmental Health | Harvest Youth

2017 Harvest Youth Grant to work with Young Abolitionists to create a series of summer events for dialogue and 'healing of mind, body and soul'. The program goals are to organize ways to better meet the needs of incarcerated children, honor multiple paths towards empowerment and self-determination, support each other in sisterhood, and encourage creativity, radical resistance and leadership in movement building.

### BRYTE SUMMER CAMP

REFUGEE YOUTH TOGETHER SUMMER INSTITUTE  
PROVIDENCE, RI

#### Living Economies | Seed

2017 Seed Grant to coordinate the Refugee Youth Together Summer Institute, a two-week enrichment program for high school refugees in Providence, Rhode Island. The institute engages youth in various methods of leadership and social change as well activities to support meaningful self-reflection, community building, and collective advocacy. The Providence area is heavily segregated and has a large refugee community, so this program will be helpful in providing refugee youth with support and skills to build their own agency to create social change within their community.

Learn the stories of the groups we've funded and get involved with their work at [grassrootsfund.org](http://grassrootsfund.org).

## RootSkills TRAINING SERIES

Our regional grassroots leader training and peer networking program, the *RootSkills Training Series*, included 13 topical webinars, full-day trainings in Newport, RI and Portland, ME, and culminated with the 2 1/2 day annual *Rootskills* Conference in Manchester, NH in November. The conference, attended by over 300 people, included 40 workshops, multiple formal and informal networking and trend-sharing spaces, and energizing keynote presentations by San Juana Olivares and Vien Truong. Focus area themes for the conference included our five issue areas (energy and climate, land and water, local food, environmental justice and health, and new economy) plus fundraising, youth activism, creative communications, diversity and inclusion, and 'greening' your business or program.



### TRENDS AND NETWORKING:

Recognizing the need to more intentionally collect and document regional trends, and a request from grantees for added networking opportunities, we added three new program elements in 2017.

#### Catalyst Conversations

Catalyst Conversations are in-person networking events for grantees, partners and funders, where individuals can share their work, their challenges, trends they are seeing, and help each other solve problems and access support.

#### Catalyst Calls

Catalyst Calls are webinar-based opportunities for grantees to interact, connect and learn from one another. They are a fantastic opportunity to cross-pollinate across issues, regions and backgrounds. All grantee groups are required to participate in one Catalyst Call during their grant period.

#### Trend Reports

Trend Reports are developed from those Catalyst Conversations in addition to online surveys, reports from our grantees, and additional research we conduct. We share Trend Reports in written and webinar form 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.

### JOIN THE CONVERSATION!

We glean information for trend reports through online surveys and interactive conversations. Grassroots Fund Grantees are required to complete an issue area survey and participate in either a Catalyst Call or Catalyst Conversation 6-12 months from the date of their award as part of their grant report. Surveys and Catalyst Conversation events are open to the public.

# FINANCIAL RESULTS

2017 ended as the strongest year in the organization's 22 year history across our programs and organization/fiscal strength. On the income side, we were funded by over 30 foundation and donor funds through both restricted and general operating grants and saw modest growth in both our individual donations and sponsorships of the RootSkills Series. On the expense side we distributed over \$576,000 in grants to grassroots action across our grant levels and programs (a 33% increase over 2016) and launched the new Young Adult Leader grant program. We delivered more trainings and reached more participants (over 1000 attendees) than in any previous year, while offering thousands of dollars in trainer stipends, scholarships, translators, childcare, lodging and travel stipends to make our events welcoming and accessible to a broad, diverse participants. We launched a new peer-to-peer networking

framework, Catalyst Conversations, that bring diverse ideas and brings voices together and informs our new, ongoing Trend Reports in each of our five issue areas. Through our work with participatory planning committees and consultants we developed a program Assessment Tool and began work in improving communications tools that will launch in mid-2018.

**A couple important notes on the income balance: 1) as in previous years much of the year-end balance will be distributed in early 2018 to grants approved in late 2017 and 2) unrestricted surplus assets (minimum of 2% per year) will be deferred by board vote to building a board-required restricted reserve fund.**

THE GRASSROOTS FUND CAN SUPPORT AROUND 10 GRANTEE GROUPS AS FISCAL SPONSOR. THIS ALLOWS THEM TO BRING IN MORE SUPPORT, AS THEY FORMALIZE AND DETERMINE THE BEST GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE. LEARN MORE AT:

[HTTPS://GRASSROOTSFUND.ORG/DOLLARS/FISCAL-SPONSORSHIP'](https://grassrootsfund.org/dollars/fiscal-sponsorship)

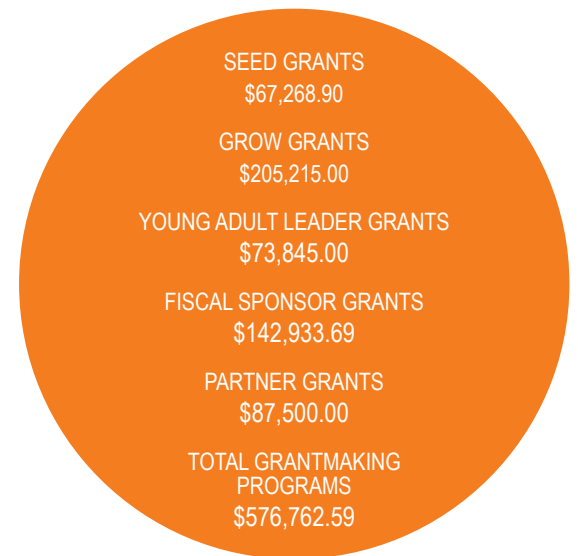
## INCOME

FOUNDATION GRANTS	\$815,050.00
CONTRIBUTIONS	\$37,514.91
FISCAL SPONSOR CONTRIBUTIONS	\$149,547.44
PROGRAM FEES	\$27,188.43
OTHER INCOME	\$11,524.13
TRANSFERS FROM DEFERRED REVENUE	\$292,750.00
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>\$1,333,574.91</b>
<b>NET INCOME</b>	<b>\$117,663.90</b>

## EXPENSES

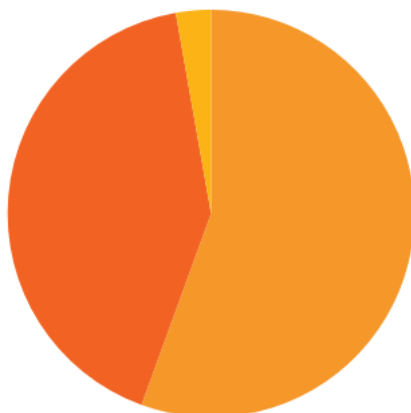
GRANTMAKING PROGRAMS	\$576,762.59
PROGRAMS AND EVENTS	\$70,532.63
FUNDRAISING AND OUTREACH	\$35,845.33
PERSONNEL	\$398,860.76
CONTRACT SERVICE EXPENSES	\$90,741.08
ORGANIZATIONAL & NETWORKING	\$11,539.04
OFFICE EXPENSES	\$31,629.58
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$1,215,911.01</b>

## GRANTS AWARDED IN 2017



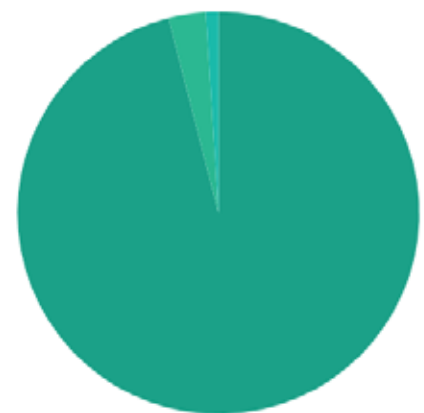
## EXPENSES BY CATEGORY

- 20% Governance & Administration
- 15% Fundraising & Development
- 65% Programming (including grant awards)



## INCOME BY CATEGORY

- 96% Contributions
- 3% Earned income
- 1% Other income



# THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS!

Our donors, representing one community member directly supporting others, complete the wider loop of resilience building that is required to sustain this regional movement. Together, we are amplifying real-world, impactful local efforts across New England, and we are so grateful to all who have joined this community of grassroots supporters.

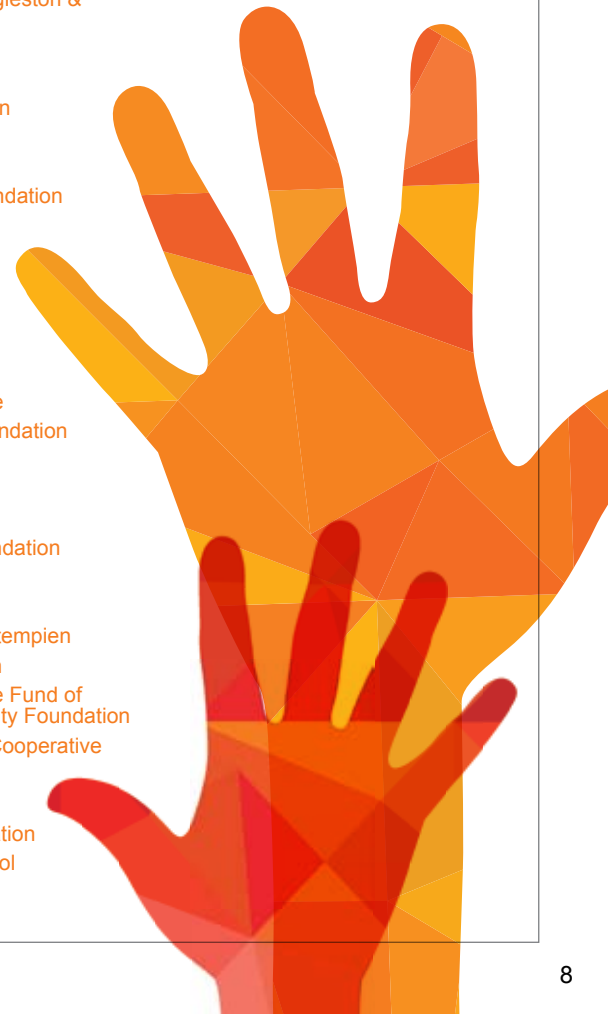
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On behalf of the entire organization, we offer sincere thanks to each of these outstanding volunteers who have stepped into a leadership role. We recognize our true fortune in having your commitment of time and expertise, in the midst of a life that is no doubt full of other demands and choices. Your service elevates our work and inspires our actions, every single day. Thank you!

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Minister for Ecological Justice  
**Boston, MA**

## GROW GRANT MAKING COMMITTEE - FALL 2017

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## GROW GRANT READERS:

**Includes all of the Grow Grant Making Committee members, plus:**

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PAMELA CORCORAN  
HAKIM CUNNINGHAM  
SARAH DELUCA  
LARRY FISHER  
ELLEN GUGEL  
SHAINA KASPER  
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## 2017 ROOTSKILLS CONFERENCE STEERING COMMITTEE

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## GROW GRANT MAKING COMMITTEE - SPRING 2017

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ASHLEY BELL  
ELLEN DICKENSON  
KARRISHA GILLESPIE  
MELISSA HOLLENBACK

DEBBIE NGUYEN  
CEARA HOGAN TOMAINO  
COREY YARBROUGH

### JOIN US!

Are you interested in joining us in one of these capacities? We welcome your leadership and support! Please contact us via our website <https://grassrootsfund.org/participate> or call 603 905 9915.

# PARTICIPATE

YOU KNOW WHAT WE DO. MAYBE YOU'VE ALREADY JOINED US AS A GRANTEE, PROGRAM PARTICIPANT OR A DONOR. WILL YOU CHOOSE TO ENGAGE IN OTHER WAYS?

## THIS IS OUR GRASSROOTS FUND

### WE ENCOURAGE MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION.

We want all community members to have a seat at the table. We want diverse perspectives to be considered in many elements of our work and decision making. And you'll be exposed to new networks and gain professional experience along the way! Here are a few ways we'd gladly welcome your unique experiences, talents and leadership.



New England  
Grassroots  
Environment Fund



### BECOME A GRANT REVIEWER

Become an application reader and add to the diversity of perspectives in our grant review process.



### JOIN A COMMITTEE

Join a planning committee for a RootSkills event or a Catalyst Conversation gathering.



### SHARE YOUR STORIES & TRENDS

Author a RootTalk blog post or respond to a trend survey to share what's happening around you.



### BECOME A TRAINER

Share your experience and wisdom as a grantee or subject specialist during a RootSkills webinar or event.



### BECOME A GRANT REVIEWER

Help our events be accessible to all by sharing your translating skills.



### HOST A FRIENDRAISER

Introduce our work to your network and your community by hosting a friend-raiser.

## ARE YOU READY?

**The next step is to visit the webpage below, share your preferences, and we'll be in touch soon. Welcome!**

### INTERESTED, BUT STILL NOT SURE?

Please, reach out anyway. We'll work with you to tailor your involvement according to your geography, your time available, and your interests (ours are Energy/Climate Action, Environmental Health, Food Systems, Land & Water, New/Regenerative Economy).

[WWW.GRASSROOTSFUND.ORG/PARTICIPATE](http://WWW.GRASSROOTSFUND.ORG/PARTICIPATE) | [INFO@GRASSROOTSFUND.ORG](mailto:INFO@GRASSROOTSFUND.ORG) | 603-905-9915

# SUPPORT THE MOVEMENT



New England  
Grassroots  
Environment Fund

**OUR UNIQUE POOLED FUND MODEL ALLOWS US TO DIRECT YOUR DOLLARS, COMBINED WITH OTHER DONORS' CONTRIBUTIONS, TO VETTED, LOCAL EFFORTS.**

YOU BELIEVE COMMUNITIES HOLD THE KEYS TO A HEALTHY, JUST AND SUSTAINABLE PRESENT AND FUTURE. WE'LL HELP YOU INVEST IN THAT VISION.



## RECURRING & ONE-TIME GIFTS

Your one-time or recurring monthly gift supports deep and innovative grassroots environmental work steeped in the values of equity and inclusion. Recurring donors create vital financial stability so we can offer year-round grant funding, design relevant programming and create ongoing networking opportunities throughout the region.

## PLANNED GIVING & STOCK GIFTS

Donations of stock provide you with the same federal income tax deduction as a cash gift. It's a wonderful way to give an additional gift to the Grassroots Fund without affecting your household cash flow. Planned giving may include bequests and charitable gift annuities, please contact us and/or your financial advisor to get started.

## PARTICIPATE

We deeply appreciate and absolutely rely on your donations, thank you! If you are looking for deeper involvement, please contact us to become a grant reviewer, teach a workshop, host an event, join a committee, share your story, or participate in a regional trend survey.

## COMMUNITY BASED FUNDRAISING

We believe in equity and recognize the inherent inequities involved in philanthropy. We are committed to creating a more balanced income portfolio with new and more sustainable sources of funding based on the solidarity of the many, rather than the generosity of the few.