

GRASSROOTS ANNUAL ROOTS FUND *REPORT*

Presented by The New England Grassroots Environment Fund, Inc.

2022

MORE THAN JUST FUNDING

Building an inclusive movement by shifting power at the
community level & across Environmental Justice philanthropy.



Photo Credit: Maine Youth for Climate Justice

WELCOME!

The 2022 annual report shares some of the highlights of a year where the Grassroots Fund distributed the **highest amount of grant dollars — over \$1.3m — in its 26-year history.** Many of the hyperlocal mutual aid responses we saw emerge in 2020 continue to develop their programs and are establishing themselves as more **permanent community-based resources.** History proves that it is grassroots organizers who have the technical, cultural, and lived expertise of how to address larger systemic issues that impact their communities. And groups across the Northeast are demanding and creating models for the systems change necessary to address climate change, the impacts of racism and poverty.

In addition to seeing the continued growing need for our grant programs, we are seeing the ongoing reflection and evolution of our Guiding Practices - Rooted Innovation, Shifting Power in Decision-making, Equity in Participation and Centering a Just Transition (see more at: <https://grassrootsfund.org/guiding-practices/explore-each-practice>).

Applicants continue to share specific protocols and procedures that center equity and readers and grantmaking committee members reflect and discuss how they see proposals align with the Guiding Practices. As an organization, we are working to strengthen how we can capture the learning and reflections that happens across all of our programs to make it available for participants and grassroots organizers.

We are seeing groups who are:

- Meeting community members where they are already convening to learn how a new project can complement existing efforts and strengthen the local ecosystem.
- Leaning into consent decision-making models and who are learning how to function as a collective for both long-term vision setting and short term prioritizing.
- Embracing language justice and committing to ensuring meetings are accessible and participants receive the care and support needed to fully participate.
- Embracing solutions that are intersectional, that look at environmental, social and economic impacts and that broaden the scope of our collective work.

Internally, the Grassroots Fund continues to establish a co-director model and is updating internal protocols to reflect a distributed organization that is now mostly virtual. With consultant support, we have started updating our strategic plan to ensure we align with our values internally and throughout our programs. We are developing our participatory programs by establishing participant roles to facilitate and evaluate the process with staff and to deepen the onboarding process to work with frontline organizers in ways that work for all involved.

Sharing power means distributing the actions of decision-making, program creation, implementation, and impact evaluation across all process participants, truly blurring any rigid divide between designer and participant, expert and beneficiary. Who has power? Who has access to resources? Who is participating? These are all questions that continue to bring us closer toward an equitable and just movement.

As you review this annual report and as we move deeper into 2023, we welcome your feedback, your input, your support and your participation as we collectively grapple with these questions.



Bilal Tajildeen
Board President



Bart Westdijk
Co-Director



Sarah Huang
Co-Director

Meet the Grassroots Fund Staff and Board of Directors!

Table of Contents

Welcome **1**

3 Guiding Practices

Our Participatory Processes: How They Work **4**

7 Fostering Innovation Through Grantmaking

Meet 6 of the Grassroots Fund Grantee Groups from 2022 **12**

16 Financial Results

Thank You to Our Donors **17**

The Guiding Practices

The Guiding Practices serve as the grounding that underpins the work we see taking place throughout New England and that we hope to continue to support. They offer a framework for our grant applicants, Community Grant Readers, and other community partners to reflect on the values that underlie the Environmental Justice movement and for us to learn about how to continue to deepen the work of Environmental Justice. **It's these values of bottom-up organizing, centering the voices of those most impacted, and shared community leadership that we believe are necessary to truly build just and resilient communities.**

We hope that the Guiding Practices can create a space for ongoing reflection and learning because we know that this type of work - work that centers and empowers the voices of those most impacted by today's most pressing issues - is not easy, that there isn't just one approach, and that it's never truly done. Whether it's community organizing, responding to a state's climate action plan, developing a local food plan, or building mutual aid infrastructure, we are only going to build a better future by working together.

Throughout this annual report you'll find reflections and prompts to consider for each Grassroots Fund Guiding Practice based on the ongoing learning directly from grassroots groups who are doing it best in their own communities. We encourage you to engage with these questions in relation to any work you're undertaking and to also challenge our understanding. **We, at the Grassroots Fund, are on this journey with you and strive to continue to learn alongside our network.** Come engage with us, ask questions, and dig deeper.

[Read more about our Guiding Practices here.](#)

Our Participatory Processes:

How They Work

Our participatory grantmaking processes are rooted in creating meaningful spaces for individuals with direct lived experience in communities and Environmental Justice across New England to make decisions around supporting grassroots organizations. It takes multiple forms across our grant programs including; open calls for readers, invited Grantmaking Committee members, three-month reader commitments, and shared gifting circles. Over the past six years of concerted exploration and testing of participatory grantmaking, we've learned from community participants that carefully crafted processes to fit grantmaking goals is essential. **In this realm, process truly matters and one-size definitely does not fit all.** These lessons have also proven how critical it is to establish and hone a clear set of values based in equity and justice that can serve as a north star for design, implementation, and revisions to the processes, such as the Grassroots Fund Guiding Practices - Rooted Innovation, Shifting Power in Decision-making, Equity in Participation, and Centering a Just Transition.

Our participatory processes look different across our grant programs - **Seed, Grow, and Young Leaders** as well as the **Food System Resilience Fund** and **Community-Led Climate Resilience in Boston** shared gifting circle cohorts - to reflect the Guiding Practices in how we're working to shift power to community members and how we're supporting grassroots organizers.

[Read more about helping us make grant decisions.](#)

Seed Grant Readers

Over the course of 2022, the Grassroots Fund continued adapting the long-standing Seed grant program to shift to a participatory review process. The Seed grant program provided a few challenges in crafting a participatory process as two key elements of the program are rolling deadlines and rapid decisions for applicants. Within those constraints we invited past, experienced Community Grant Readers from the Grow or Young Leaders grant programs to join us in this experimentation of developing a participatory process for Seed review and to help us make improvements along the way. Throughout the year, groups of about six individuals met every other week for a three month review session. Reviewers used a consent-based decision-making process based on a model shared by Sociocracy for All.

[Read more about Sociocracy for All](#)

We want to thank all individuals who make our participatory processes possible! A big thanks to our Community Grant Readers, Grantmaking Committee members, GMC facilitators and evaluators, Ita Meno from CQ Strategies who leads bias in decision-making trainings, and our cohort members.



Grow and Young Leaders Readers & Grant-making Committee

The Grow and Young Leaders grant programs utilize a multi-step participatory review process: We invite grant readers to apply via an open, public call. After online training, readers are assigned grants to read and score using a common rubric form based on the Guiding Practices - Rooted Innovation, Shifting Power in Decision-making, Equity in Participation, and Centering a Just Transition. Our readers are able to test and learn about the Guiding Practices, learn more about work happening in their communities, and, in turn, begin to implement Guiding Practices and Environmental Justice work in their own communities.

Following the readers' review and staff's applicant interview calls, Grow and Young Leaders facilitators and evaluators are brought together before the Grantmaking Committee (GMC) retreat each spring and fall, and help Grassroots Fund staff to make the GMC more accessible, productive, and representative of New England communities as they both plan, facilitate and evaluate our final decision-making process for each round. This fall, we primarily invited previous grantees who have scored high on our Guiding Practices to join the Grantmaking Committee. We heard that this shift allowed former grantees to learn more about Grassroots Fund's participatory review process, how to implement and test the Guiding Practices, and about different project ideas and strategies from other grant applicants.

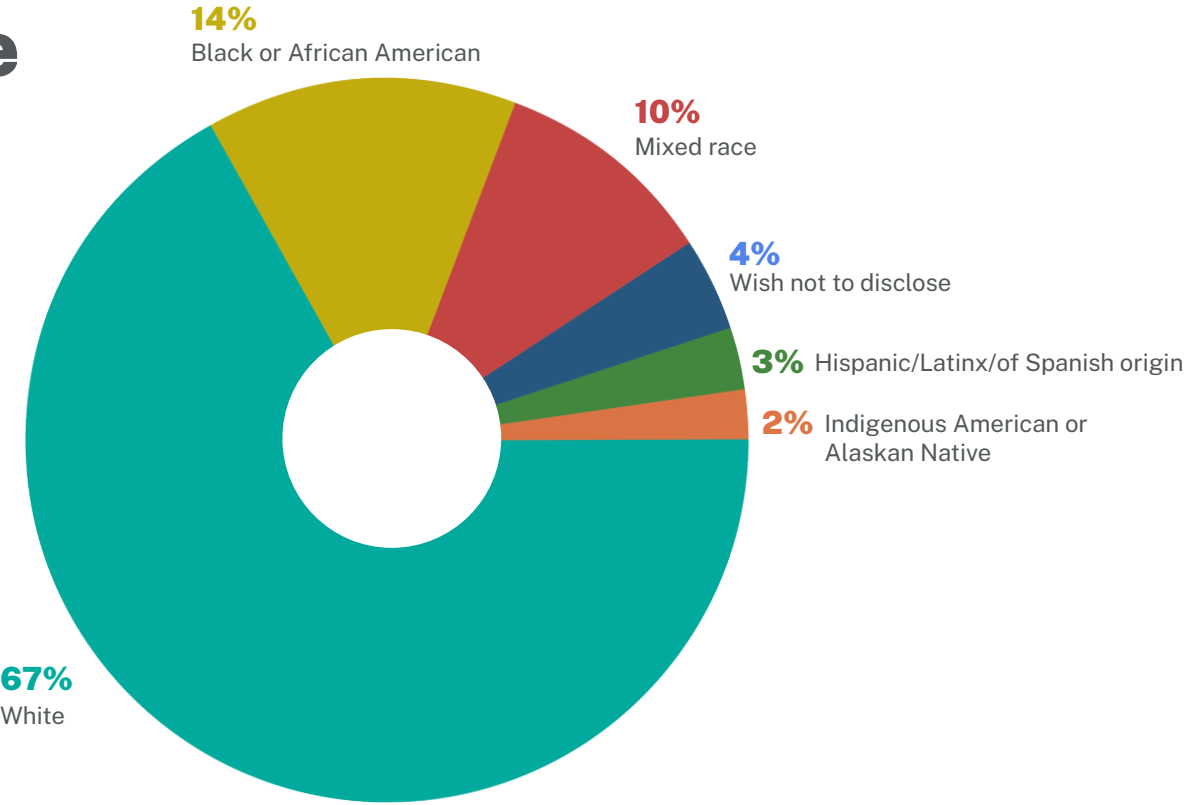
Cohort Shared Gifting Circles

The Food System Resilience Fund and the Greater Boston based Community-Led Climate Resilience cohorts are invitation-only groups that bring together grassroots organizations which have either already been through our participatory process and scored highly on all Guiding Practices or were selected as leaders in their communities and in their work. The Grassroots Fund chose the shared gifting circle model in order to build and expand upon relationships with grantees and provide organizers the funds to support other grassroots leaders across the region. This process involves building trust in order to collectively make decisions while also learning through shared experiences of the food system and mutual aid organizers. Both of these cohorts are pilot projects and we hope to share more about shared gifting circles in the next year.

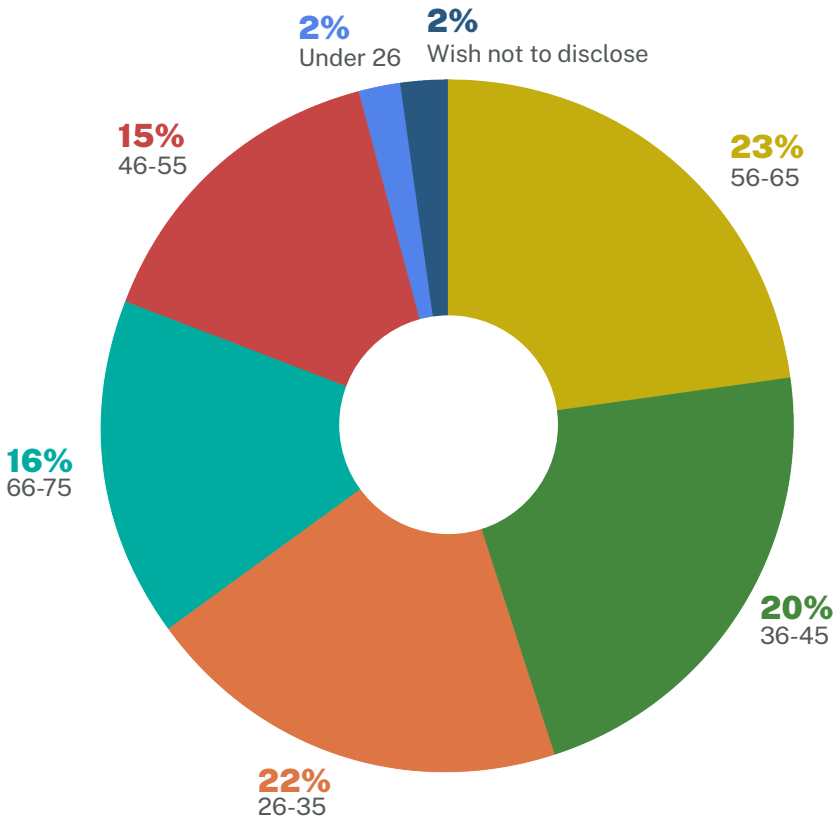
[Read more about the Shared Gifting model of grantmaking here](#)

A Snapshot of our Community Grant Readers from Fall 2022

Race



Age



Fostering Innovation through Grantmaking

We’re supporting changemakers who face systemic and structural barriers to traditional funding. We’re investing in community groups and organizations working across a broad range of social and Environmental Justice issues that traditional funders often overlook, and encouraging them to take **creative approaches to challenging existing systems.**

Our grant programs are focused on community-based, local initiatives. For the Grassroot Fund that means that:

- The group is doing **local, grassroots** work in **CT, ME, MA, NH, RI or VT.**
- The group is **volunteer-driven** or has **no more than 2** full-time paid staff.
- The group has an annual operating budget of **under \$100,000.**
- The group does not need to have **formal tax status or a fiscal sponsor.**

Note: The Young Leaders grant program was paused for Fall 2022 and Spring 2023 to reassess how it fits into the overall grant programming and how to best support specific groups within communities. Grow grants continue to be available for eligible applicants.

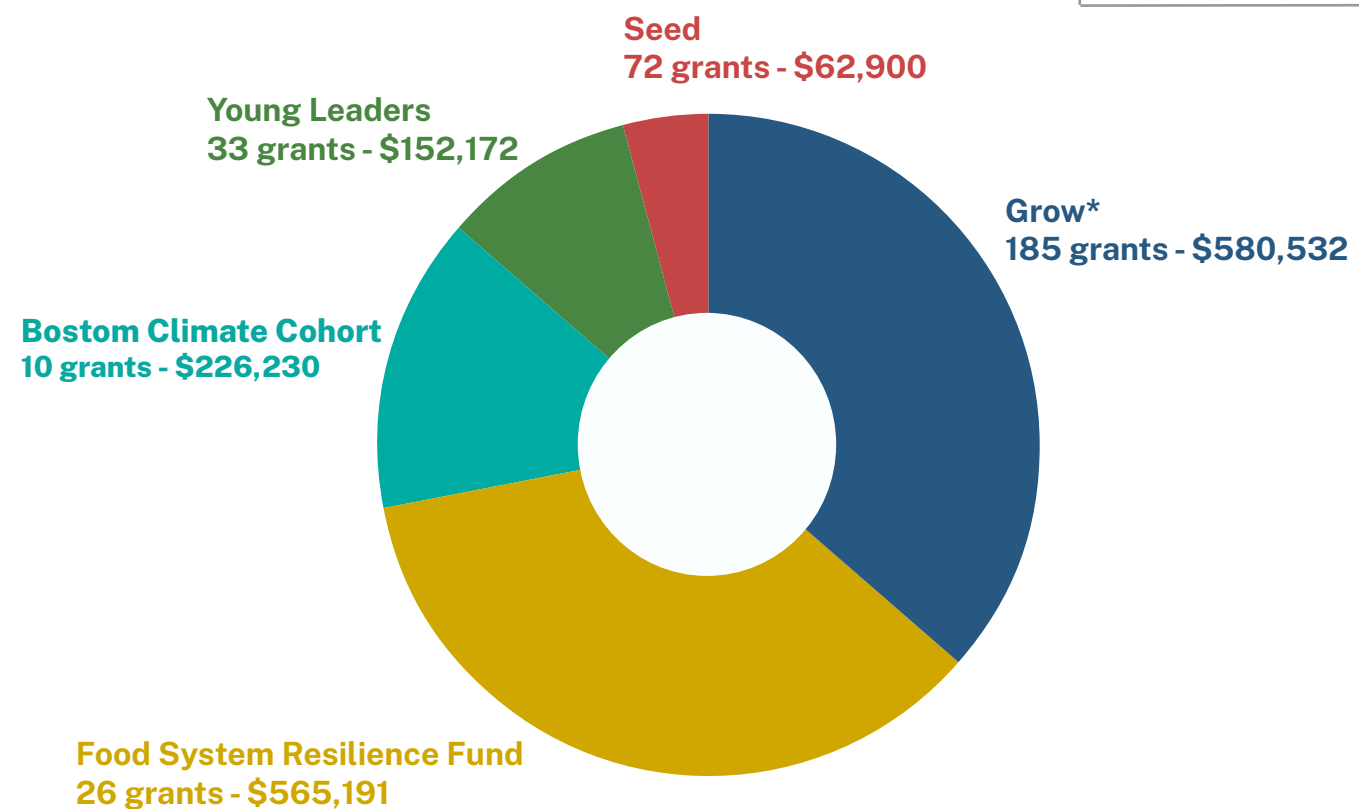
	Goal & Impacts	Primary Guiding Practice	Amount	Deadlines	Timeline	Process
Seed	Support newly forming projects	Focus on Rooted Innovation & Shifting Power as these elements are more adaptable when a project is newly forming	Up to \$1000	Rolling deadlines	4-6 weeks	Staff calls applicant and provides funding recommendation. 8 person committee meets bi-weekly to discuss. Give feedback and approve recommendations
Grow	Support established projects	Focus on all guiding practices and looking for practical examples of lowering barriers to participation and centering just transition	Up to \$4000	March & September deadlines	3 months	Open call for readers who fill out online rubrics and offer suggestions for clarifying questions. Staff then calls all applicants to gather additional information and check for alignment. A grantmaking committee (GMC) looks at reader scores and staff notes to make final decisions
Shared Gifting Circle Cohorts	Co-design a noncompetitive grantmaking model rooted in solidarity and transparency	Ensuring participant groups are aligned with the Guiding Practices	Determined by shared gifting cohort	Annual shared gifting circle process	Set by cohort / at least halfway through the Cohort's length	Build relationships and trust among Cohort members to prepare for participatory decisionmaking processes. The process is ultimately determined by the shared gifting cohort.

Grants Totals and Statistics

\$1M 2021 **\$1.6M** 2022

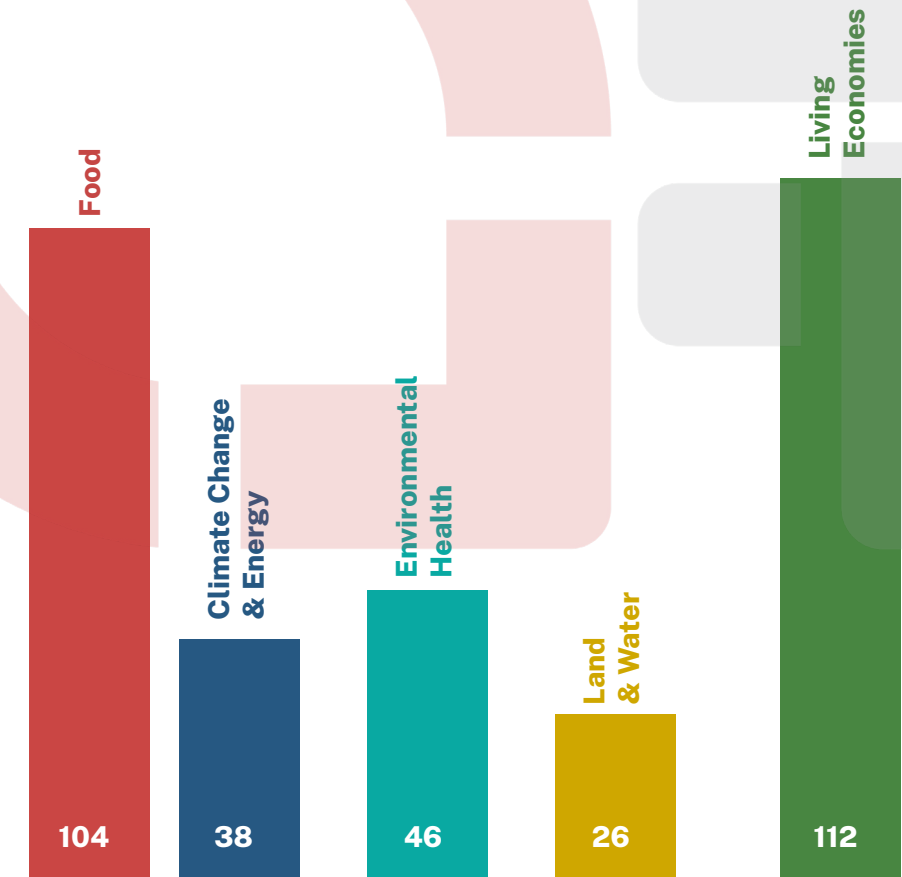
The Grassroots Fund committed almost \$1.6M in grants in 2022 to grass-roots groups across New England, far exceeding 2021's grantmaking level of almost \$1M.

Grant Awards by Grant Program

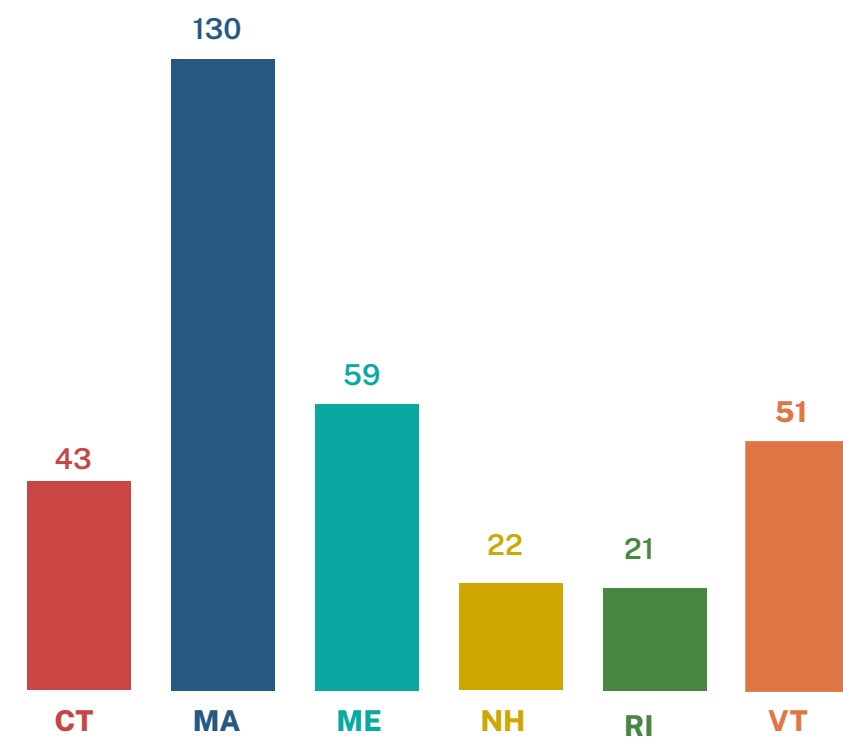


*Significantly more Grow grants were distributed with the pause of the Young Leaders grant program after the spring round.

Grant Awards by Primary Issue Area



Grant Awards by State



5 Year Comparisons**

	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018
Total # Grants	326	237	448	222	174
Total \$ Grants	\$1,587,025	\$669,295	\$736,465	\$513,708	\$340,671
% with ad hoc tax status	52.60%	45.99%	53.35%	52.70%	51.72%
% with annual budget under \$50,000	59.70%	67.51%	63.84%	68.47%	68.39%

**2020 numbers higher due to rapid response COVID grantmaking.

Meet 6 of the Grassroots Fund’s 2022 Grantee Groups

These are just six groups (one from each New England state) that we’re highlighting from the **326** grant awards we made to grassroots groups in 2022. Each exemplifies one or more of our Guiding Practices in exciting, innovative and diligent ways. As a non-endowed public foundation, committed to funding non-501c3 groups, the Grassroots Fund is an integral part of the philanthropic ecosystem in the region. We have a particular focus on funding ad hoc groups and those with 501c3 status that are newer in their evolution or have other barriers to accessing resources.

[Visit the list of all 2022 Grantees.](#)

[Go deeper! Dig into our grantee map.](#)

COMMONS
ENERGY
COLLABORATIVE

Dover-Foxcroft, ME
Fall 2022 Grow Grant
Issue Areas: Climate Change & Energy, Living Economies, Environmental Health, Food
Tax Status: Ad-hoc



Commons Energy Collaborative, based in the rural Maine Highlands, began their work in 2015 using local, practical solutions to improve the health, wellbeing and sustainability of the community while building climate consciousness and community bonds. One of their approaches leverages the proven Window Dressers model based in Rockland, ME that supports local groups with systems to construct and install low-cost insulating window inserts in homes and businesses, helping people to stay warm while reducing CO2 emissions and heating costs. Commons Energy Collaborative is working deeply into Rooted Innovation as they both address local needs and amplify equity and justice at a state level. They are specifically drawing attention to ways in which communities must implement strategic climate plans within an equity framework. One of their members was an active participant in the Equity Subcommittee of the Maine Climate Council’s review of the Governor’s “Maine Won’t Wait” Climate Plan.

PROJECT
S.T.O.R.Y.

Concord, NH
Fall 2022 Grow Grant
Issue Area: Living Economies
Tax Status: Incorporated with Fiscal Sponsor



Project S.T.O.R.Y. combines education and knowledge with holistic support to build successful pathways towards youth achievement, empowerment, and leadership in a variety of areas that exemplify the intersectionality required for a Just Transition: Academics, Sports, Music, Creative Arts, Life Skills, Racial Justice, Clubs, College Planning, Scholarships, Tutoring, Transportation, Employment, Environmental Education, Social Services, Food and Clothing, and Mental Health. They provide essential support for 90+ New American youth, primarily from African and Southeast Asian countries. Their youth-driven programming encourages critical thinking and emphasizes the importance of youth leadership for creating change in the world that is rooted in everyone’s value and the necessity of helping others within the community.

NORTH END
LITTLE PANTRIES

Hartford, CT
2022 Seed Grant
Issue Area: Food
Tax Status: Ad-hoc with Fiscal Sponsor



North End Little Pantries works to alleviate the impact of the food desert in their Hartford neighborhoods by installing little free pantries that can be stocked with non-perishables, bread and fresh produce. They have installed four pantries using a mutual aid model of “take what you need, leave what you can” available 24/7 with no paperwork or set hours, and have plans to add a refrigerator. They are also building a hydroponic “little living pantry” garden to provide more free produce, and supporting BIPOC farmers by hosting a series of free farmers markets. The program was started in 2020 as a more organized way for a long-standing informal network to share available resources within the community. They’re working to Shift Power through a diverse group of decision-makers who reflect the communities within which they work.

PVD
THINGS

Providence, RI
2022 Seed Grant
Issue Area: Living Economies
Tax Status: 501c3



PVD Things is a community lending library for tools and other useful things that formed in the fall of 2022. At the core of their work is a focus on empowerment, access and community. The majority of the things they offer are tools as they see tools as one of the keys to empowering people to make positive changes in their homes and communities. Home disrepair and deterioration of community public space is an ever present issue in many parts of Providence; access to tools removes a key barrier to maintaining and creating-allowing community members to create the changes that they want to see. PVD Things leans into Rooted Innovation and Equity in Participation by continuously gathering feedback from members about what they would like the co-op to offer and what values they would like the co-op to embody.

**NIPMUC INDIAN
DEVELOPMENT CORP**

Hassanamisco Nipmuc Tribe’s historic homelands that include central Massachusetts, northwest Rhode Island, and northeast Connecticut

Fall 2022 Grow Grant

Issue Area: Food, Living Economies, Land & Water, Environmental Health

Tax Status: 501c3



Nipmuc Indian Development Corp (NIDC) is the non-profit arm of the Hassanamisco Nipmuc Tribe, a state-recognized tribe with a reservation in Grafton, MA. Their mission is to assist in the revitalization of the Nipmuc community through the promotion and provision of culturally-appropriate community and economic development programs. This fall 2022 grant is helping to support improving the accessibility of reservation pathways to lower barriers to participation in ceremonies for elders and people with limited mobility. The NIDC’s broader work is rooted in a Just Transition through tribal relationships and a focus on food sovereignty, land back efforts and cultural traditions of the Nipmuc people.

**ADDISON ALLIES
NETWORK , INC.**

Middlebury, VT

Fall 2022 Grow Grant

Issue Area: Food, Living Economies

Tax Status: 501c3



Addison Allies Network has the goal to create a support system for immigrants working in Addison County who are left out of the current and available systems because of their work schedules, language barriers and immigration status. This grant helps to support the planning phase of establishment of a community kitchen and tortillaria in Addison County, VT. The group focuses on the barriers to Equity in Participation and works to make sure that all voices are represented - this includes barriers to attending meetings, being proactive about finding ways to make sure that community member voices are present in decisions, and providing stipends for participation.

[Learn about the groups we’ve funded and get involved with their work](#)

Financial Results

The Grassroots Fund has historically provided support to community-based groups through a combination of grant funding, convenings, and skills-building events. Due to the ongoing impacts of the global pandemic, the Grassroots Fund was only able to host a few in-person events for its shared gifting cohort programs. Our grantmaking committee meetings for the Seed, Grow and Young Leaders grant programs were held virtually. While the value of in-person convenings are undeniable, the safety of our community groups and our staff are paramount.

In terms of our grantmaking, in 2022 the Grassroots Fund distributed the largest amount of funding to date: \$1,328,088. As in prior years, the demand for support from a growing number of more diverse grassroots groups continued on. In fact, the Grassroots Fund was only able to provide 75% of the total amount requested. The mission and work of the Grassroots Fund was supported through 28 institutional and family foundations in 2022, including both general operating and restricted funding. Individual donors contributed over \$450k in donations, an increase of 41% from the year prior, which shows growth in that income category as we seek to further diversify income streams.

Unaudited financials

Income

Foundation Grants:	Contributions:
\$1,547,000	\$456,624
Fiscal sponsor contributions:	Other income:
\$15,547	\$30,779
Temporary restricted net asset transfer:	Total income:
\$721,331	\$2,771,281
Net income:	
\$648,957	

Expenses

Grantmaking programs:	Programs & events:
\$1,328,088	\$29,462
Fundraising & outreach:	Personnel:
\$15,464	\$603,486
Contract services:	Organizational & networking:
\$95,803	\$27,640
Office:	Total expenses:
\$22,381	\$2,122,324

Asha Abdullahi
Susan B Abrams
Sheff Sherman Family Charitable Fund, an
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Kathleen Damon
Larry Dansinger
Daybreak Fund of Vermont Community Foundation
Heidi De Vries
Sarah DeLuca
Louise DeSimone
In Honor of Betsy Weiss: Happy Birthday!
Jim Doble
Doris Burford & Donna Casali Giving,
a donor advised fund of Renaissance Charitable
Laura Dow
Claire & David Dundorf
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Lindsey Dupont
Abby Easterly
Eight Legged Octopus
Cynthia Elder
Elmina B Sewall Foundation
Marian Evans -In Honor of Brenda Young
Neal Evertsen
Elizabeth Falcon

Janice Falconer
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Findlay-Freeman,
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Olivia & Todd Griset
Julia Gualtieri
Bethe Hagens
John Hamilton & Krista Helmboldt
Hannah Taieb - In Honor of Quentin Davis's
work to save the trees on Melnea Cass Boulevard
Nancy Hazard
HDB Investment Group, LLC
Gregory Herr
Herz Fund, a donor advised fund of ImpactAssets
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Kerri Hilton
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Santo Santoriello
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Deborah Schimberg
Susan Schroeter
Seacoast Energy Alternatives Inc.
Gail Shampnois - In honor of John Mejia
Megan Shore
Jenny Silverman & Robert Follansbee
Rose Silverman
Singing Field Foundation
Sobelstein Fund at Amalgamated
Charitable Foundation
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Jeffrey & Deborah Stein
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Community Foundation
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a donor advised fund of Fidelity Charitable

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Simon Thompson
Three Friends Charitable Fund
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Sasha Tracy
Madeline Typadis
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Elaine Wang
Daniel Wanjira
Thomas Warhol
Andrew Whitcup
 In Honor of Rainer M
Mariama White-Hammond
Anna Whitney
Wilkinson Foundation
Janet & Freddie Wilkinson
Lindsey Williams
Carol & Joe Wishcamper
Susan Worgaftik
You Have Our Trust Fund,
 a donor advised fund of Fidelity Charitable

Fiscal Sponsor Group Donors - Grassroots Fund donors supported the following fiscal sponsored groups. Note: The fiscal sponsorship program was closed in early 2022.

Boston Climate Action Network

Ben Antenore
Michael Cutler
Reita Ennis
Richard Feldman
 In memory of James and Grace Lee Boggs
Timothy Havel
Bunker Henderson
Karen Johnson
Martha Karchere
 In Honor of Virginia Dorr-Karchere
Stefanie Komorowski
Lorraine Lerman & Clyde Leland
 In honor of Michael Weinstein
Michael Prokosch
Raven Fund of Fidelity Charitable
Raphael Sulkovitz
The Taproot Fund of iGift Fund
Daniel Weinstein
Debra Weintraub

Muddy Water Initiative

Sam Kendall and Cathie Zusy,
 a donor-advised fund of Fidelity Charitable

**North Country Alliance for
Balanced Change**

Anna Doyle
Tracy Glenn
Kate Harrison
Henry Peterson
Sundman Family Fund of
 New Hampshire Charitable Fund
The Kellogg Family Trust
The Weber Family Charitable Fund of Vanguard Charitable
 In Honor of The Doucette & Morrison Families

Summer of Solutions Hartford

Jeannie Bartlett

IT TAKES A
BROAD AND
DIVERSE
COMMUNITY
TO SUSTAIN
AND BUILD
THIS WORK.

Please consider a donation today!

Our Mission

To energize and nurture long-term civic engagement in local initiatives that create and maintain healthy, just, safe and environmentally sustainable communities throughout the six New England states.



New England Grassroots Environment Fund, INC. • P.O. BOX 611 • NEWMARKET, NH 03857
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A heartfelt thank you for the generous contributors to the design of our 2022 Annual Report. Jacquelyn Briggs, an independent graphic designer, donated hours of skilled expertise to the project through the Catchafire platform, supported through our grant from the Elmina B. Sewall Foundation.