

# GRASS ROOTS FUND



## *2018 Annual Report*



# WELCOME!

## HOW SERIOUS ARE WE?

This question has been on our minds throughout 2018.

The Grassroots Fund is on a journey to center equity and justice as core to creating healthy, just, safe and environmentally sustainable communities. This is not a matter of 'choice', of 'readiness'. And it is not a linear path with clear action steps but a daily commitment and deepening of understanding as we have conversations and call in a broad range of lived experiences.

Equity and participatory decision-making are terms that seem to be popping up across the nonprofit and philanthropic sector. But it's not always easy to understand what those words mean - how serious are people and organizations when they use that language? Whose voices and concerns are prioritized throughout conversations? How is that input implemented?

In 2018, the Grassroots Fund fully launched its open call for readers, event planning committee members and workshop presenters, understanding we can't solely rely on the networks of staff and board to bring in participants across our programs.

To truly remove barriers, we have to commit to creating pathways for all those in our region interested to share their perspectives and participate, not just those that happen to have the right networks and speak the dominant language.

In 2018, the Grassroots Fund worked to lower barriers to participation by offering stipends to people joining our grantmaking review committee and delivering workshops at our trainings and conferences. We offered food, travel reimbursements, child care, interpreter services, and stipends to help cover lost work time in order to participate in an event or gathering. We ask for those participating to self-identify across a range of demographic characteristics so we better understand whose lived experiences are part of our processes and whose we might be lacking. We haven't figured it all out and we know we have blind spots and plenty of room to improve.

So, how serious are we? We share this not to self-congratulate or celebrate, but to transparently put out there how we want to be challenged and grow. We hope you read this annual report as an invitation to add your voice. If there are ways we can further lower barriers, push harder, please be in touch ([connect@grassrootsfund.org](mailto:connect@grassrootsfund.org)).

To create resilient, sustainable, just, safe and healthy communities, we must focus on justice and liberation. We must face oppressive systems and commit to aligning the allocation of resources with this commitment to justice and liberation by lowering systemic barriers for voices that have marginalized lived experience and by seriously shifting power towards a just transition.

Thank you for taking the time to review this report.

With great appreciation,

  
VIDYA TIKKU  
2016-2018 Board President



  
REV. MARIAMA  
WHITE-HAMMOND  
2019 Board President



  
JULIA DUNDORF  
Executive Director



# GRANTMAKING GUIDING VALUES

The Grassroots Fund uses our Guiding Values - which can be traced back to our founding principles - to guide our participatory grantmaking process. We do this by having our Grant Readers score applications against a rubric based on our Guiding Values:

## JUST TRANSITION

We support groups that are actively considering the connections between environmental, social and economic issues at the core of the work. Their work contributes to a shift toward procedures and strategies that ensure ecological and social well-being, cooperation and regeneration, and away from an extractive economy.

## SHIFTING POWER & DECISION-MAKING

We support groups that have stakeholders either directly represented within the core group of volunteers or there are procedures to hear voices that need to weigh in to set priorities and make decisions.

## EQUITY IN PARTICIPATION

We support groups that show awareness and can point to procedures that ensure the group puts equity at the center and engages traditionally marginalized voices in strategy and priority-setting in a meaningful way. These groups are actively creating opportunities for people and groups to work with others outside of their regular networks, so they may share their expertise and experiences.



## ACCESS TO RESOURCES

In line with our Guiding Value to “Lower Barriers to Funding” we support groups that can articulate their barriers to resources, such as: philanthropy’s expectation about a group’s tax status (ad hoc groups often can’t fundraise from ‘traditional’ funders); the length of time the group has been operating (emerging groups may not yet have long-term fundraising plans); the lack of resources within the region the group is operating in; or, philanthropy’s ‘inner circle’ of connections making it harder for groups to gain visibility with other (traditional) funders. We also look to see if groups have attempted to access alternative resources and sources of funding (i.e. in-kind services, donations, community fundraising, etc.).

## ROOTED INNOVATION

In line with our Guiding Value of “Flexibility & Risk-Taking,” we support groups that offer an innovative, community-based solution or new approach that is founded in an understanding of the existing community context. The solution offers significant potential, that may not yet have been tested or proven, but could provide an important learning opportunity for the community.

## OVERALL “GUT FEELING”

Recognizing that our rubric cannot capture everything about this project that might be worth up-lifting, this category speaks to the reader’s overall assessment of the project. Proposals scoring a five may be bringing important ideas or people to the table, or demonstrate that their work fits into a community context or political moment that is worth addressing.





# AMPLIFYING VOICES

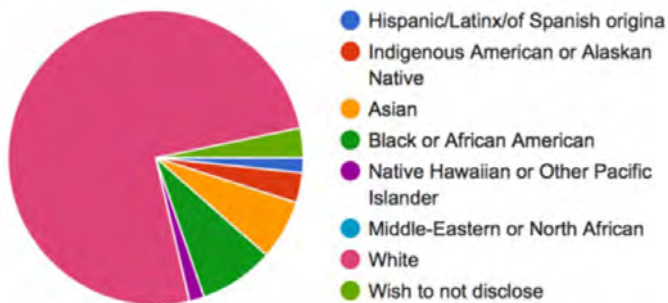
We believe all community members have perspectives and experiences to offer and deserve to have their voices heard. We strive to ensure that voices that have traditionally been marginalized are supported to meaningfully participate throughout our program areas.

## OUR PARTICIPATORY PROCESS: HOW IT WORKS

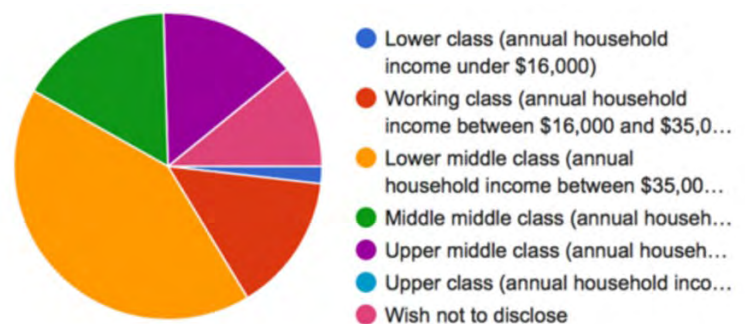
We believe it's critical that grant decisions are made collectively, by those who donate money, those who receive grants, and those throughout our region who are passionate about grassroots action. In 2018, we had 160 Grant Readers reviewing 139 grant applications, many of them past or present grantees themselves. Grant Readers come to this process with a wide range of organizing experiences and lived experiences, and add breadth and depth of knowledge to decisions about resource allocation. We ask readers to self-identify across a number of demographic characteristics and below is an overview of our 2018 reader pool.

Grassroots Fund staff complete due diligence phone calls to each applicant based on the feedback and scores given by a wide range of Grant Readers. That information gets passed on to our 15 person Grantmaking Committee - a selection of Readers from across states and demographics of our region. This Committee reviews the scores and makes the final funding recommendations to the Grassroots Fund Board of Directors, who give final approval.

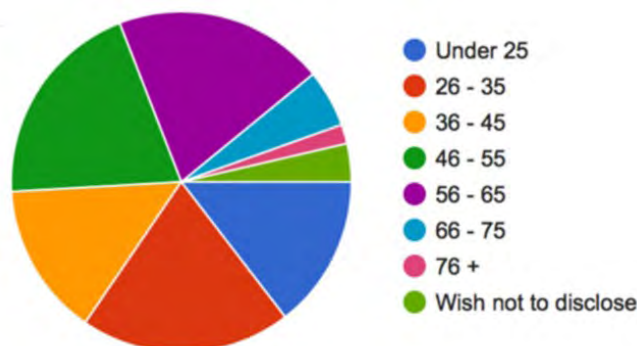
### READERS BY RACE/ETHNICITY



### READERS BY SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS



### READERS BY AGE



## AN OPPORTUNITY TO PRACTICE ADDRESSING BIAS IN DECISION-MAKING

A core part of our work with readers and grantmaking committee members is to talk about how our biases show up throughout our work. Reviewing applications offers a great opportunity to practice disrupting bias and call each other in as we make decisions about how to allocate resources. In collaboration with consultants from CQ Strategies, we are learning together how the anchoring effect, confirmation bias, survivorship bias and blind spot bias impact how we make decisions and what we can do to pay attention and stay conscious of the impacts.

This ongoing work is central to our work at the Grassroots Fund to organize our programs in alignment with our Guiding Values. In addition to piloting this process within our grantmaking practices, we serve as an advocate for democratized, equitable grantmaking practices and believe that this model has the potential to revolutionize traditional power dynamics within philanthropy.

JOIN US: [WWW.GRASSROOTSFUND.ORG/PARTICIPATE](http://WWW.GRASSROOTSFUND.ORG/PARTICIPATE)

# CONVENING CHANGEMAKERS

We're building networks. We're strengthening grassroots movements by making powerful, intersectional connections between a broad spectrum of individuals, groups and organizations all working toward common goals, encouraging cross-issue conversations and supporting them as they develop solutions to big problems.

## 2018 WEBINARS, WORKSHOP AND CONFERENCE

5	<b>ROOTSKILLS WEBINARS</b> were offered throughout 2018, with topics like 'Communicating in Maine about climate change' and 'Community Investment Funds'.
3	<b>CATALYST CONVENINGS</b> in Maine, New Hampshire and Rhode Island - bringing together close to 150 people for networking and world-cafe style conversations.
80	<b>PARTICIPANTS</b> joined in Wethersfield (CT) for a daylong training in April, offering six workshops across 3 tracks
260	<b>ATTENDEES</b> gathered in Worcester (MA) on December 7 & 8, choosing from 35 workshops offered across 11 tracks

## LOWERING BARRIERS, OPEN CALLS AND CO-CREATING AGENDAS

30+	<b>DIVERSE AND TALENTED PLANNING COMMITTEE MEMBERS</b> guided development of learning objectives and decision-making on workshop proposals as we collectively put together agendas and offerings to reduce barriers to participation.
56	<b>RESPONSES</b> to an open call for workshop proposals ahead of our December RootSkills conference.
\$40,000	<b>IN FINANCIAL SUPPORT</b> was provided in the form of scholarships, expense reimbursements, childcare, and language interpretation. More than 200 participants throughout our RootSkills offerings received support of this kind.

## FEEDBACK FROM PARTICIPANTS

“

*The engagement of participants is among the best I've seen at any conference.*

*I feel that this conference is really different than others as it really tries to include voices that are not of the majority and not often highlighted. I feel it is more than just lip service but a commitment.*

*I was able to see through the lenses of others due to the diversity of people and programs represented.*

*It was a really wonderful opportunity to get connected with folks/organizations in my region who are values-aligned and with whom there may be potential for collaboration.*

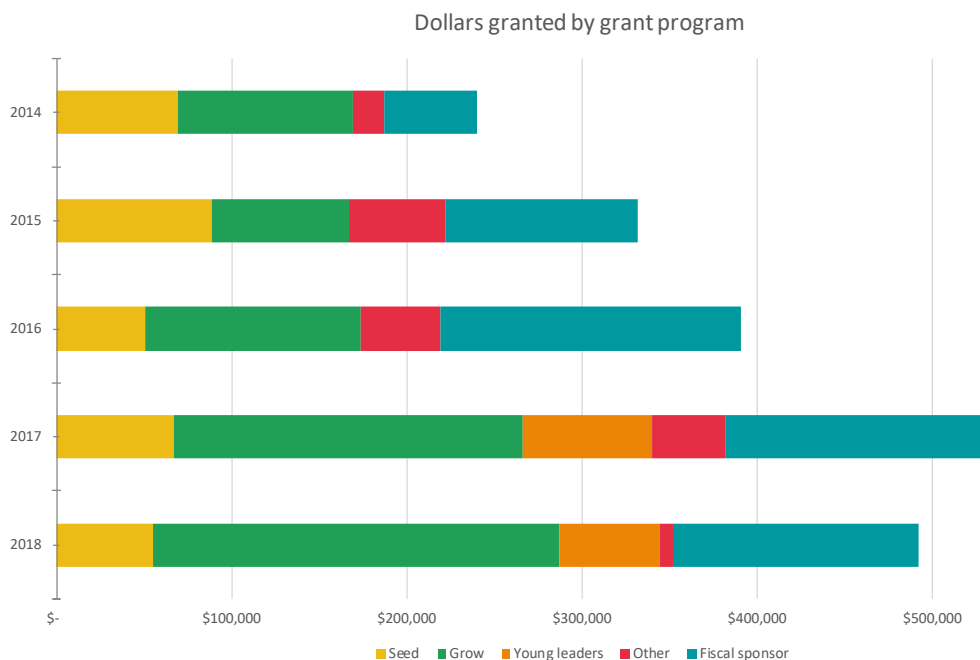
*We were able to get scholarships to attend and even a stipend for gas. It's incredibly important to us to have so much support as I have been volunteering to our organization without pay.*

”

# FOSTERING INNOVATION THROUGH GRANTMAKING

We're supporting changemakers who not only experience marginalization but face systemic and structural barriers to traditional funding. We're investing in individuals, groups and organizations working across a broad range of environmental and social justice issues that traditional funders often overlook, and encouraging them to take creative approaches to challenging existing systems.

## 2014-2018 GRANTMAKING



**SEED:** \$250 - \$1,000 grants with rolling deadlines and review process of 6 weeks. Focused on groups and projects that are new and need early support to gain momentum. In 2018, 71 applications (out of 86 total) were approved for a total of \$61,074.

**GROW:** \$1,000 - \$3,500 grants with deadlines in March & September and a participatory decision-making process. Focused on established projects and groups looking to broaden and/or deepen their impact. In 2018, 96 applications (out of 129 total) were approved for a total of \$216,215.

**YOUNG LEADER:** up to \$7,500 grants with deadlines in March (Letter of Interest) and April (full proposal) and a participatory decision-making process. Focused on projects giving meaningful leadership roles to leaders under 25 years of age. In 2018, 10 (out of 12) applications were approved for a total of \$57,131.

**OTHER:** occasionally the Grassroots Fund collaborates with partner organizations on specific partner grants or pilots new programs. In 2018 we piloted an event sponsorship program, with 11 applications receiving a total of \$7,250

**FISCAL SPONSOR:** the Grassroots Fund acts as a fiscal sponsor for grantee groups who seek additional financial support but don't (yet) have a tax exempt status. In 2018, the Grassroots Fund acted as fiscal sponsor for 11 groups and received \$139,726 in donations.

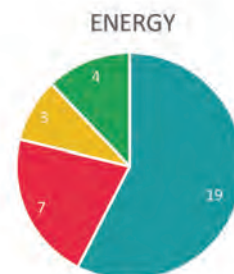
*Note: 2018 grantmaking numbers reflect 2018 award decisions which will vary somewhat from 2018 financials due to timing of grant payments and fiscal years.*

### APPLICANT STATISTICS:

- 101 out of 227 requests came from groups that are ad-hoc/unincorporated.
- Median budget for Seed applicants: \$5,418
- Median budget for Grow/Young Leader applicants: \$20,000
- Average number of core volunteers per applicant group: 16

## 2018 ISSUE & STATE

CT MA ME NH RI VT



# MEET 6 OF THE 189 GRANTEE GROUPS FROM 2018

These groups' scores were among the highest in our participatory grantmaking round, demonstrating the resonance of their innovation and models across the region.

## WINNISQUAM WATERSHED NETWORK OUTREACH WINNISQUAM, NH

### Land & Water | Seed

Despite being the 4th largest lake in NH, Lake Winnisquam was one of the only lakes in the region without its own lake association to coordinate volunteer activities, such as water quality monitoring, invasive species monitoring, and loon census. This seed grant helped community members form an association to obtain grants and local matches for an invasive species control program, work with the local municipalities to get a watershed management plan done, and more.

## VERMONT CLIMATE & HEALTH ALLIANCE

CLIMATE CHANGE CONVERSATIONS  
IN EDEN AND COLCHESTER  
BURLINGTON, VT

### Climate Change & Energy | Grow

The Vermont Climate and Health Alliance is a group of Vermont based physicians, nurses, veterinarians and other health professionals who use their expertise to inform the public and lawmakers about the effects of climate change on human and animal health. This Grow grant supported a pilot effort to re-engage citizens in the call for renewable energy by leading conversations about the health impacts of climate chaos in various communities in Vermont.

## CONNECTICUT COALITION FOR ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

CLEAN UP THE INCINERATOR  
HARTFORD, CT

### Environmental Health | Grow

This Grow grant supported community involvement in the company Sacyr Rooney's plans to re-make Hartford's South Meadows trash burning plant as the state legislature required by law in 2014. Local residents are organizing to meet and talk with Sacyr Rooney about how the company can guarantee stronger protections against toxic air pollution at the new facility, and provide stronger community benefits for Hartford and the plant's fenceline neighborhoods and demand enhanced labor benefits for construction workers who will build the new facility.

## SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOOD RELIEF ORGANIZATION

YOUNG LEADER PROGRAM  
LEWISTON, ME

### Food | Young Leader

This 2018 Young Leader grant provided workshops for young people to expand their leadership and skills within an organization focused on supporting New American farmers to develop food business skills to be a part of the local and regional food system. The program offers cultural and farming heritage awareness, while youth leaders also contribute to the overall goals of the organization: to create a local, sustainable livelihood for immigrants and refugees growing a regenerative food system and providing healthy, delicious, and fresh food.

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

## UMOJA NIA

COMMUNITY CONNECTION IN CHILDBIRTH  
EDUCATION SERIES  
PROVIDENCE, RI

### Living Economies | Grow

Umoja Nia's vision for environmental health is to create, engage, and promote a cohort of multicultural, professionally- and diversely-trained maternal health birth workers to promote and activate community-level maternal care to those in need, especially those members of vulnerable populations: disadvantaged teen mothers, low-resource, and low-income families outside of regular routine services that overlook their emotional and psychological well-being. This grant went to supporting a 24-week comprehensive, evidence-based childbirth education program for their community at no cost.

## ASIAN AMERICAN RESOURCE WORKSHOP

DORCHESTER ORGANIZING & TRAINING INSTITUTE  
BOSTON, MA

### Living Economies | Young Leader

The Dorchester Organizing and Training Institute, housed within the Asian American Resource Workshop, is a leadership development and organizing training program for Vietnamese American young adults (16-30) in Fields Corner, Dorchester. This Young Leader grant supported DOT-I's summer organizing institute, which works to intervene in cycles of displacement by linking the dual crises of deportation and gentrification within their community.



# FINANCIAL RESULTS

2018 was another strong year for the Grassroots Fund. We received support from 24 foundation and donor funds as both general operating support and restricted funding. Compared to 2017, we saw growth in our individual donor and RootSkills sponsorship support. Where fees were charged, our events and gatherings had a sliding scale structure which allows participants to self-select and offers transparency and access to all.

On the expense side, we directly distributed over \$350,000 in grants to 189 groups. Our fiscal sponsor program continues to be a resource for unincorporated projects looking to bring in additional dollars (often awaiting confirmation on 501(c)3 applications). RootSkills webinar, trainings and conference, as well as Catalyst Convenings in Maine, New Hampshire and Rhode Island convened

500 changemakers across the region. Workshop presenter stipends, childcare, language services, food, travel expense reimbursements were some of the ways we attempted to lower barriers to participation.

Over 160 readers helped read through 2018 Grow and Young Leader applications and 12 grantmaking committee members joined our first 2-day retreat with ample time to explore bias in decision making.

**\*Note: as per board policy, the Grassroots Fund directs 2% of income to a restricted reserve fund.**

## 2018 FINANCIALS

### INCOME

FOUNDATION GRANTS
\$1,230,644
CONTRIBUTIONS
\$52,728
SPONSORSHIPS
\$27,000
FISCAL SPONSOR CONTRIBUTIONS
\$139,726
PROGRAM FEES
\$22,767
OTHER INCOME
\$9,513
2018 TEMPORARY RESTRICTED NET ASSET TRANSFER (\$280,261)
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>
<b>\$1,202,117</b>
<b>NET INCOME*</b>
<b>\$130,113</b>

### EXPENSES

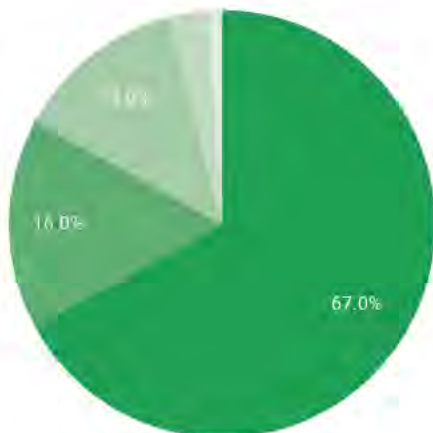
GRANTMAKING PROGRAMS
\$492,314
PROGRAMS AND EVENTS
\$65,776
FUNDRAISING AND OUTREACH
\$16,956
PERSONNEL
\$379,835
CONTRACT SERVICE EXPENSES
\$71,802
ORGANIZATIONAL & NETWORKING
\$10,292
OFFICE EXPENSES
\$35,030
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>
<b>\$1,072,005</b>

### GRANTS AWARDED IN 2018

SEED GRANTS
\$55,074
GROW GRANTS
\$232,118
YOUNG ADULT LEADER GRANTS
\$57,131
FISCAL SPONSOR GRANTS
\$140,741
OTHER GRANTS
\$7,250

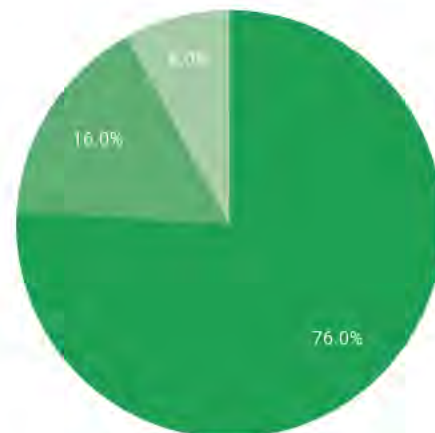
### INCOME BY CATEGORY

- Restricted Grants: 67% (\$995,500)
- Unrestricted Grants: 16% (\$235,144)
- Contributions, Incl. Fiscal Sponsor: 13% (\$192,453)
- Earned Income: 3% (\$49,767)
- Other Income: 1% (\$9,513)



### EXPENSES BY CLASS

- Program: 76% (\$819,627)
- Administration & Governance: 16% (\$171,884)
- Fundraising & Development: 8% (\$82,229)





# 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.

## GRASSROOTS FUND DONORS, GRANTORS AND SPONSORS

### GRANTORS AND SPONSORS:

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### DONORS:

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# THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS!

## DONORS TO FISCAL SPONSEES

Grassroots Fund acts as Fiscal Sponsor to several like-minded regional organizations, the following are donors to those organizations, the donations were accepted and administered by us.

### FISCAL SPONSEE:

Boston Climate Action Network

### DONORS:

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Balanced Change

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### FISCAL SPONSEE:

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### DONORS:

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Melysa Friedman  
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Jackson Koeppel

Margaret Levy

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### FISCAL SPONSEE:

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Margot Hubbard  
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Elizabeth Marcus  
Kara McCormack  
Sarah Raleigh  
John Raleigh  
Elizabeth Rose & Joe D Hull  
Margaret Thomas  
Francisco & Linda Villalobos



# PARTICIPANTS

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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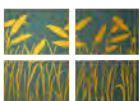
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