

# More than just funding.

Building an inclusive movement by shifting power at the community level  
& across environmental justice philanthropy.



## GRASS 2020 STLOOR ANNUAL FUND REPORT



Fostering  
Innovation  
through Grants



Amplifying  
Voices



Convening  
Changemakers



Revolutionizing  
Philanthropy

PRESENTED BY THE NEW ENGLAND GRASSROOTS ENVIRONMENT FUND, INC.

# Welcome!

Dear Friend:

2020's intersecting crises of the COVID-19 pandemic, racist violence, economic injustices and rising climate impacts catalyzed the rapid formation of countless grassroots groups across New England and beyond. These groups, largely focused on mutual aid, were often ad hoc/non-501c3 and inherently challenged traditional models for organizing -- and for resourcing themselves. That growing base of community members rolling up their sleeves to solve local challenges with local ingenuity and resources are here to stay. **The movement for local care and demand for new, compassionate systems serve as a mandate to the Grassroots Fund to continue to grow our grant pool and programming to support networks focused on environmental justice\*.**

The Grassroots Fund distributed almost \$1M in 2020 to grassroots groups across New England, a sizable jump over any other year of grantmaking. We saw an unprecedented level of unplanned support -- roughly \$300,000 -- from both foundations and individual donors for COVID-related response efforts. Those added resources allowed a nimble response during the early days of the global shut-down in mid-March. We adjusted the Seed grant program to move over \$175,000 in rapid response grants to 180 mostly new, mostly all-volunteer mutual aid efforts across the region in spring, followed by almost \$90,000 additional funds in late fall of 2020.

Dozens of grantee group leaders contributed time throughout the year to help us adapt and respond to quickly emerging realities in communities. Grassroots organizers overwhelmingly shared their frustration with tinkering in the margins of harmful existing conditions and a desire to get to root causes. Mutual aid efforts - like many community-driven, grassroots groups - are living into a solidarity framework and seeking to meet their own needs rather than rely on (often harmful) institutions. They are experimenting with making decisions by consensus, learning about experiences that are not their own, explicitly facing differences within the group, and building skills from broad analysis.

2020 left us as an organization seeking to better understand the wide range of tactics, practices and impacts that occur as grassroots groups implement their projects. In order to do this, we have to build better post-grant data collection tools and explore the mechanisms for participatory evaluation and research. And more than ever, the Fund will structure participation as a tool to give people new skills for practicing democracy, redistributing resources, and centering justice. Thank you for the part(s) you're playing!

In solidarity,

  
REV. MARIAMA  
WHITE-HAMMOND  
Board President



  
JULIA DUNDERF  
Executive Director



*\*Environmental justice is the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income, with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies. (Environmental Protection Agency)*



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Fatu, a 2019 intern with  
GF Grantee New Community Project

## Guiding Practices

The Grassroots Fund's Guiding Practices inform our priorities in programming, grantmaking, and strategic planning. They are rooted in our commitment to undoing the systems that cause social and ecological harm. The Practices are drawn from the practices and protocols we hear about from grassroots initiatives across the region. As we continue to implement and evolve these practices, we know they are relevant for all work across the region.

*Working alongside grassroots organizers across the Northeast, we are gathering and reflecting on the questions, directions and ideas for how to center equity & justice in all of our programs. The Guiding Practices introduce the 5 topics that continue to surface with each participatory review round through reader & organizer input.*

The Practices ask us to consider how decisions are made and who we believe has the right or authority to make those decisions. We believe that these interventions are not only values-aligned, but also necessary to building resilient solutions to the multiple crises we face. Undoing the bias that prevents us from working with people of diverse perspectives is the best opportunity we have for creating a more socially and ecologically just world.

### Centering Just Transition

Integrate ecological and social justice  
in your vision for your community.

### Shifting Power & Decision-Making

Practice group governance that  
intentionally shares power.

### Equity in Participation

Support the fullest involvement  
of all community members

### Access to Resources

Transform the culture of sourcing and managing  
resources in your community

### Rooted Communities

Set priorities informed by the whole community,  
rather than a limited group of people.

# Convening Changemakers

*The area we most diverted from our original 2020 plans, due to the pandemic, was in planning for and delivering various in-person convenings. However we were able to adapt quickly and in response to community needs in order to deliver several virtual programs.*

## FEEDBACK FROM PARTICIPANTS:



*You've been a great organization to work with because you focus on teaching and making bigger change than just funding my little project. And that comes across and is effective. It's changed the way I think about my work."*

- Community of Practice Participant

*'The result of this series for me was a general increased awareness. A desire to learn more, embrace more and start important changes."*

- Lunch & Learn Series Participant

*'I thought that the Community of Practice group for Just Transition was really interesting. For me, it's biggest value was not for my group but for me personally, in all the work I do. I do a lot more work in the community than what you fund - that's really a tiny piece of what I do. The Just Transition framework and concepts I had started hearing about at a past RootSkills...have been very influential in terms of my community engagement."*

-Community of Practice Participant

## COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

Our Communities of Practice began as a pilot program in the spring of 2020 based on our Guiding Practices (see page 2 for descriptions of each): Just Transition, Equity in Participation, Rooted Solutions. These groups met regularly, virtually, over 3 months to learn with other grassroots organizers and to workshop and implement new practices and to share questions, challenges and innovations with each other.

During the summer of 2020 we ran two more Community of Practice groups that dove deeper into one guiding practice: one on Equity in Participation and another on Rooted Solutions. Additionally over the summer of 2020 we ran a Communities of Practice series for mutual aid groups that had received funding through our Covid-19 Rapid Response round.

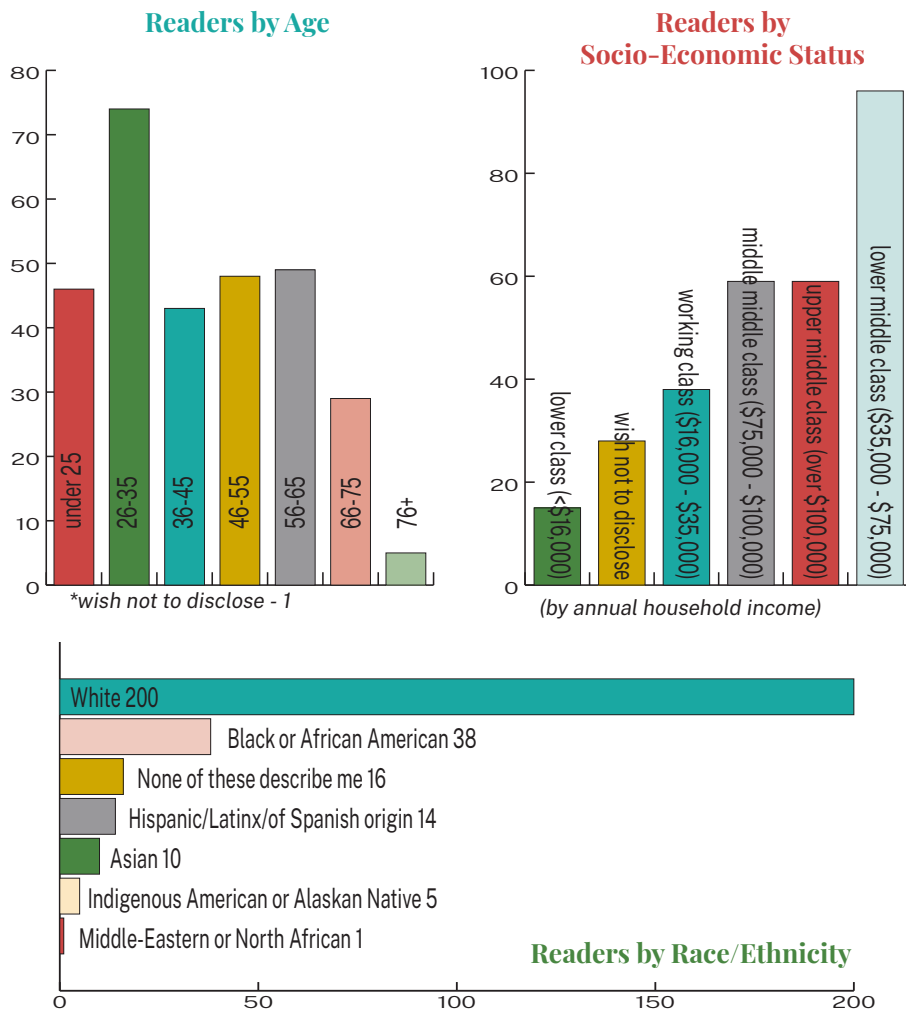
The total number of 2020 Community of Practice participants was just shy of 100 individuals, in 10 different cohorts, representing over 70 community groups across New England. During the fall of 2020, our program staff conducted one-on-one calls with past participants to check our assumption that the Community of Practice model helps actualize our Guiding Practices in grassroots community work (in short, it does!).

## LUNCH & LEARN PROGRAMS

All Grassroots Fund donors were invited to join a new six part virtual program series, "Lunch & Learn: How To Be a Solidarity Donor". Once every three weeks between August and December, we gathered virtually to discuss the tension between responding to emergent needs and solving root causes, to explore the donor-recipient dynamic, to learn about biases in our decision making and more. Each session featured a different presenter and a different guiding practice provided the framework for each discussion. 35 Grassroots donors joined at least one of the sessions live.

# Our Participatory Process: How it Works

**295 total readers for Grow and Young Leader**



The Grow and Young Leader Grant programs utilize a multi-step participatory review process: Each grant cycle, while grant applications are coming in we also 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. Grassroots Fund staff then complete due diligence phone calls with each applicant, drawing from the feedback and scores given by at least 10 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, deliberates on reviews that are on the cusp of various funding levels, and makes final recommendations. Grow and Young Leader rounds utilized the full participatory process for both Spring and Fall grant rounds, although the typically in-person retreats for final grant award decision making were conducted virtually because of the pandemic.

## 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 CQ Strategies, we are learning together how the anchoring effect, confirmation bias, survivorship bias and blind spot bias impact how we view things, and what we can do to pay attention and stay conscious of the impacts.

This ongoing work is truly at the center of what the Grassroots Fund is about. 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 throughout the philanthropic sector.

**Join us:** <https://grassrootsfund.org/amplifying-voices/make-decisions-on-grants>

# 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 environmental and social justice issues that traditional funders often overlook, and encouraging them to take creative approaches to challenging existing systems.*

**SEED:** \$250 - \$1,000 grants with rolling deadlines and review process of 4-6 weeks. Focused on groups and projects that are new and need early support to gain momentum.

**GROW:** \$1,000 - \$4,000 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.

**YOUNG LEADER:** up to \$6,000 grants, offered once yearly through a participatory decision-making process. Focused on projects giving meaningful leadership roles to people under 25 years of age.

**OTHER:** occasionally the Grassroots Fund collaborates with partner organizations on specific partner grants or pilots new programs.

**FISCAL SPONSOR:** the Grassroots Fund acts as a fiscal sponsor for a limited number of grantee groups who seek additional financial support but don't (yet) have a tax exempt status.

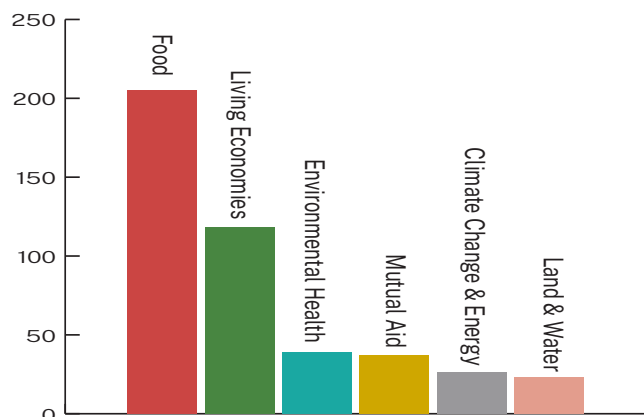
Our grant programs are focused on community-based, local initiatives.  
For the Grassroot Fund that means that:

- *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."*

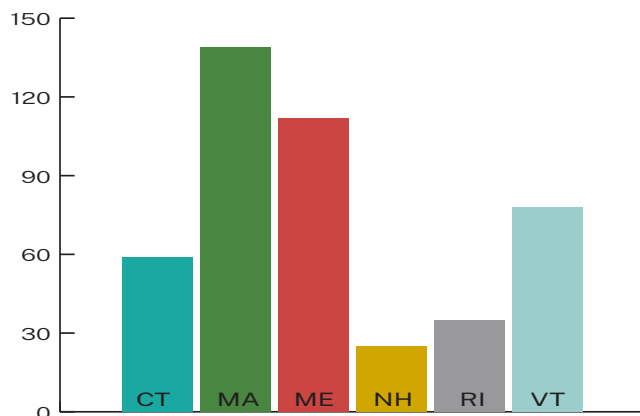
The Grassroots Fund distributed almost \$1M in grants in 2020 to grassroots groups across New England, a sizable jump over any other year of grantmaking. This includes nearly \$300,000 for COVID-19 response work in communities (a rapid response round of Seed grants in Spring and a round of BIPOC Mutual Aid grants at year-end).

Competitive grants\* totals and statistics:

\*Doesn't include \$343,632 in special grants distributed to 9 fiscal sponsee groups

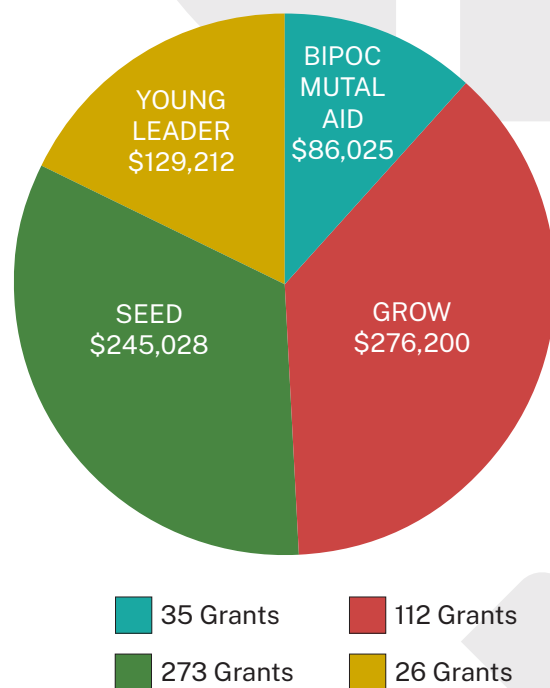


Grant Awards by Primary Issue Area



Grant Awards by State

Grant Awards by Grant Programs



3 Year Comparison

|                                     | 2020      | 2019      | 2018      |
|-------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Total # Grants                      | 448       | 222       | 174       |
| Total \$ Grants                     | \$736,465 | \$513,708 | \$340,671 |
| # Core Vonunteers                   | 6,292     | 3,466     | 3,097     |
| % that are ad hoc tax status        | 53.35%    | 52.70%    | 51.72%    |
| % with annual budget under \$50,000 | 63.84%    | 68.47%    | 68.39%    |

Go deeper! Dig into our grantee map at:  
<https://grassrootsfund.org/about-us/grantee-map>



# Meet 6 of the Grassroots Fund Grantee Groups from 2020

## WARNER AREA COMMUNITY LAND TRUST

Warner, NH

**Issue areas: Climate Change & Energy, Food, Land & Water, Living Economies, Environmental Health**

The Warner Area Community Land Trust is a non-profit organization, in the process of formation, that connects people to place and builds local resilience in the Warner area. WACLCT serves the community through property stewardship and education, holding lands and buildings in common to provide a framework for affordable housing, regenerative agriculture, local economic revitalization, and open space preservation. This group received a Seed grant in 2020 to support the legal and accounting council for their efforts to connect people to place and build local resilience in the Warner area in the beginning phases of their group's formation.

## CHANGE THE WORLD KIDS

Woodstock, Vermont

**Issue areas: Food, Climate Change & Energy, Land & Water, Environmental Health, Living Economies**

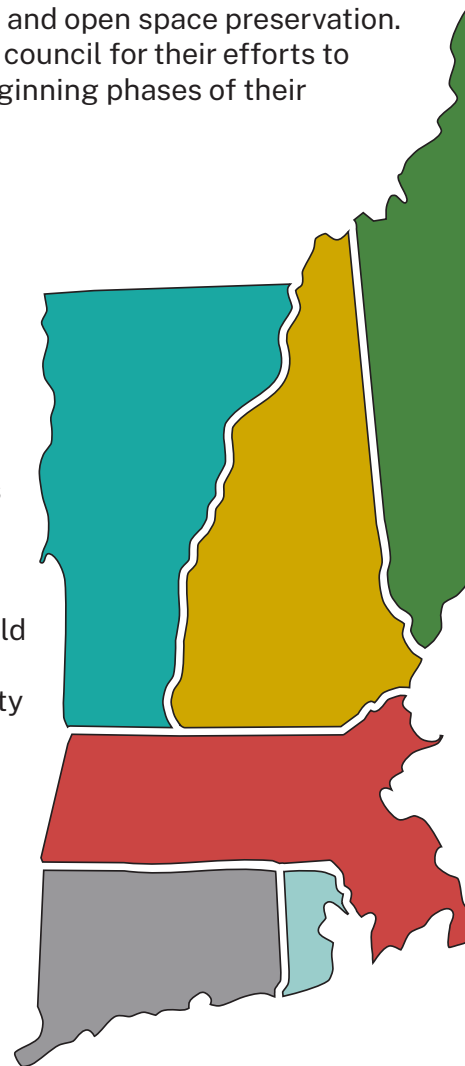
Change the World Kids is a local, diverse group run by teenagers dedicated to make positive change. Their goal is to assist individuals in need, work to improve our communities, and steward the natural world in which we live. This group received a Grow grant in Spring 2020 to expand the capacity of their Food Justice Garden Program by establishing a vegetable washing station, a composting system, and expanding the size of the garden. They received a Young Leaders grant in Fall 2020 for a collaboration between Change the World Kids, The Regeneration Corps and The Sharon Academy to expand their Food Justice Garden Program to a new geographic area, aiming to further community resilience, just transition and local food security.

## LIFE IN MY DAYS

Waterbury, Conn.

**Issue areas: Environmental Health, Living Economies, Climate Change & Energy**

Life in My Days purpose is to start intersectional difficult conversations in their community, and work with other New England communities to also support and empower them to start these conversations, specifically around social and environmental justice, equity, mental health and disabilities, and abuse and trauma. This group received a Seed grant in 2020 as part of our rapid response release of funds to support community groups responding to the COVID19 outbreak, for initiating a project to intentionally and sustainably incorporate equity into grassroots organizations, to transform work being done into intersectional and justice centered work. This group also received a Young Leaders grant in Fall 2020 to run their 12-week Transformative Justice Academy.







## JUSTME FOR JUSTUS

Gorham, Maine

**Issue areas: Climate Change & Energy, Land & Water, Env. Health**

JustME for JustUS is a new youth-led project dedicated to advancing civic engagement, climate and environmental justice in Maine. Their goal is to convene a powerful group of diverse Maine youth from rural and marginalized communities who care about the environment and climate justice, connect them with each other and provide training and resources needed to be a force in 2020 and beyond. They offer regional listening sessions and youth organizing, training, school and campus visits, speaking, writing and workshops, and curriculum/project support for Maine teachers. This group received a Young Leaders grant in Fall 2020 to pay youth stipends to participate in their CORE leadership team and chair/participate on the task forces on environment and climate justice, climate and environmental justice education, civic engagement, and racial justice.

## GROUNDWORK SOMERVILLE

Somerville, Mass.

**Issue areas: Food, Environmental Health, Land & Water, Living Economies, Climate Change & Energy**

Groundwork Somerville is bringing about the sustained regeneration, improvement, and management of the physical environment through the development of community-based partnerships which empower people, businesses and organizations to promote environmental, economic and social well-being. They received a Grow grant in Fall 2020 to support their city in combatting the damaging effects of excessive heat and to promote biodiversity within low-income neighborhoods through tree plantings and shade structure creation. Grant funds were used for technical materials and assistance, construction materials, youth coordinator stipends, and community outreach and marketing materials.



## THE GLITTER GODDESS COLLECTIVE // HAUS OF GLITTER PERFORMANCE LAB

Providence, RI

**Issue areas: Environmental Health, Land & Water, Food**

The Glitter Goddess Collective is a community of artists, performers, educators, therapists, and healers dedicated to exploring the intersections of learning, play, liberation and social / emotional / spiritual growth. This group received a Seed grant in 2020 to support the establishment of a liberation garden.

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

# Financial Results

In 2020 the Grassroots Fund distributed the largest amount of direct grant funding to grassroots groups in its 24 year history. The COVID pandemic impacted programming as all in-person events after early March were cancelled for the year. The Grassroots Fund offered a rapid response program for mutual aid efforts in March and raised nearly \$300,000 from foundation partners to support over 180 community/neighborhood support efforts. A second round of funding provided additional support to BIPOC-led, mutual aid efforts (38 grants, distributing \$88,350).

In addition to COVID specific grants, the Fund distributed over \$600,000 through the Seed, Grow, Young Leaders, and Special grant programs.

We received support from 35 foundation and donor funds as both general operating support and restricted funding. The Fund received two substantial multi-year commitments to launch new grant programs in 2021 (and beyond) focused on food system resilience across the region and climate resilience in the Greater Boston area. We continue to see growth in our individual donor support. No program fees or sponsorships were received in 2020 due to COVID restrictions limiting in-person gatherings.

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

## 2020 FINANCIALS:

### INCOME:

- Foundation Grants: \$2,746,500
- Contributions: \$163,067
- Sponsorships: \$13,800
- Fiscal Sponsor Contributions: \$343,632
- Other income: \$30,527
- Temporary restricted net asset transfer: (\$1,519,276)

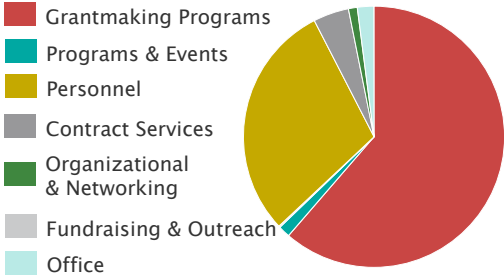
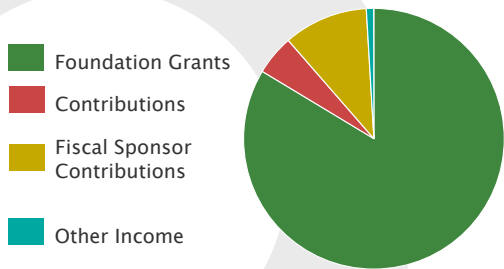
**TOTAL INCOME: \$1,764,450**

**NET INCOME: \$201,985**

### EXPENSES:

- Grantmaking programs: \$958,505
- Programs & Events: \$23,031
- Fundraising & Outreach: \$2,781
- Personnel: \$460,207
- Contract Services: \$68,773
- Organizational & Networking: \$17,355
- Office: \$31,813

**TOTAL EXPENSES: \$1,562,465**



# Thank you to our Donors!

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**Friends of Salter Grove Honor/  
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# Participants

## Participatory Grantmaking Committees

### Grow, Spring

Colin Keegan\*  
Sabina Parker\*  
Dania Feleo\*  
Daniel MacPhee\*  
Maja Cubarrubia  
Austin Bryniarski  
Sarah Berman  
Nicholas D'Amore  
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Sabrina Hunte  
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Vanessa Liles  
Frances Jeffries  
Lindsey Williams  
Molly Siegel  
Bari Zeiger  
Tom Warhol  
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Tarshire Battle

### Grow, Fall

Maja Cubarrubia\*  
Neftali Duran\*  
Abby Burkland\*  
DaVan Johnson\*  
Mohamed Abdillahi  
Cris Blackstone  
Julia Riell  
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Erin Barry

### Young Leader, Fall

Drew Giddings\*  
Maya Malik\*  
Tiandra Ray\*  
Arnetta E Baty  
Hehershe Busuego  
Dania Feleo  
Stacy Luke  
Serena Manna  
Wendy Mcleod  
Aubrey Porter  
Elyse Veloria  
Bari Zeiger

*\* Denotes planning committee members. Grow and Young Leaders Planning Committees are brought together before the grantmaking committee retreat each Spring and Fall, and help Grassroots Fund staff to make the Grant Making Committee more accessible, productive, and representative of New England communities as they both plan and facilitate our final decision-making process for each round.*

## Summer 2020 BIPOC-led Mutual Aid

This committee helped Grassroots Fund staff to determine the most equitable and efficient way to distribute grant funds newly redirected to mutual aid projects led by Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color (BIPOC).

Ahmad Abojaradeh  
Sarana Beik  
Daniel Pontoh  
Daria Montaquila

Mohamed Abdillahi  
Judicaelle Irakoze  
Eva Blake  
Rilwan Osman

Irischa M Valentin  
Gloribell Mota

**Meet the Grassroots Fund Staff and Board of Directors at:**  
**<https://grassrootsfund.org/about-us/our-team>**



## 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 believe all community members have perspectives and experiences to offer and deserve to have their voices heard. We want all perspectives to be valued, heard, and considered in decision making and are particularly focused on ensuring that the typically marginalized voices are heard.



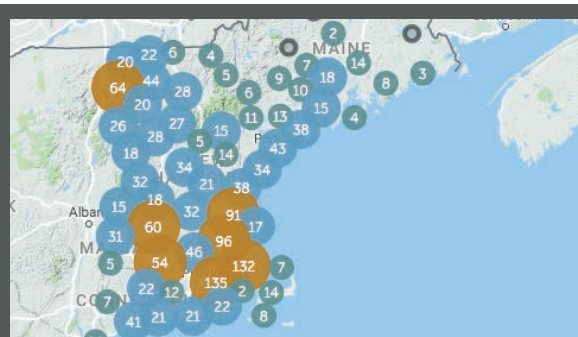
### MAKE DECISIONS ON GRANTS

Be 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.



### HOST A FRIENDRAISER

Introduce our work to your network and your community by hosting/co-hosting a house party.

***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.





Image courtesy GF Grantee Sunlight Media Collective



Image courtesy of Jen Bauer / GF Grantee Merrimack Valley Black and Brown Voices



Image courtesy of GF Grantee Susu Healing Collective

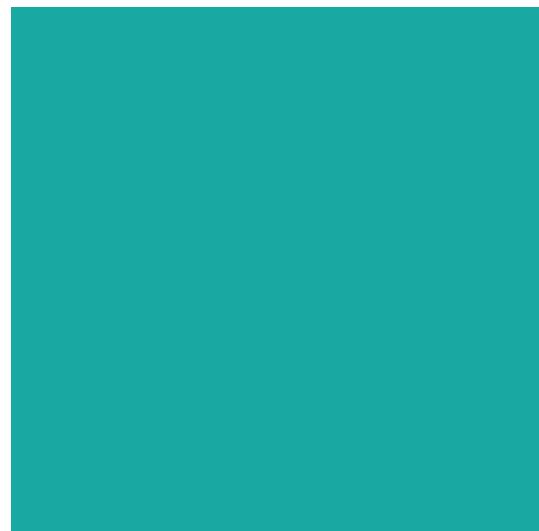


Image courtesy of John Martin / GF Grantee Bradley Street Bicycle Co-op

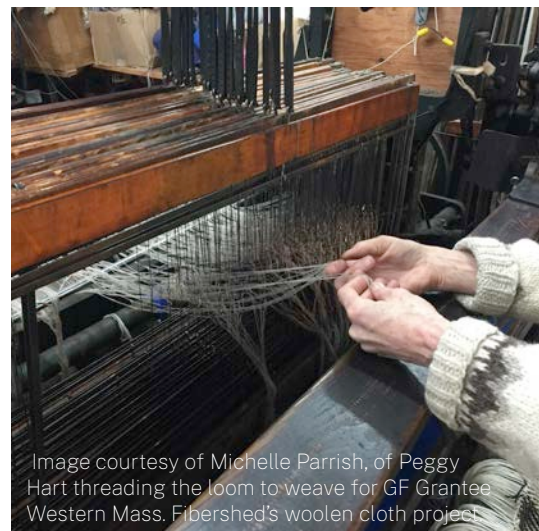


Image courtesy of Michelle Parrish, of Peggy Hart threading the loom to weave for GF Grantee Western Mass. Fibershed's woolen cloth project

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