Welcome!

In the past few months of 2020, we have seen communities confronting the realities of both COVID19 and systemic racism. As this 2019 annual report looks back to work we are proud to share, we also realize it reflects a past reality and we are committed more than ever to confront and disrupt white supremacy culture and to center equity across all of our work going forward.

Thank you for taking the time to read.

2019 was another year of significant organizational growth and deepening programs, grounded in our Guiding Practice evolution. While distributing the highest number of grant dollars in our organization’s history, as well as additional funds to make our processes and events broadly accessible to community members, we pushed ourselves to work more deliberately on opportunities to build a stronger community of practice of grassroots participants.

We believe it is critical that grant decisions are made collectively, by both those who donate money and by those who receive grants. The Grassroots Fund participatory grantmaking process transforms the traditional funder-applicant structure in which one person, or a small group of people, with money, make all the decisions. We believe in supporting those closest to environmental and social problems in determining their own solutions and seek to create opportunities for people and groups to work together, so that they may share their expertise and experiences. We believe that including a wide range of knowledge and lived experience leads to better funding outcomes, and we serve as an advocate for democratized, equitable grantmaking practices within the philanthropic sector.

In 2019, we had 242 volunteers join us as grant reviewers in order to weigh in and share their perspectives on where resources are most needed in the environmental movement in New England. This meant that each Grow and Young Leader grant application was assigned 10+ volunteer reviewers from a diverse range of lived experiences, and those readers raised questions and crafted funding recommendations that were reviewed by our grantmaking committees (members come from the pool of grant reviewers). By pooling our wisdom as well as our resources, we are creating resilient solutions across our region that are place-based and peer-reviewed. Building on the wisdom of these 242 readers to decide upon and distribute funds resulted in 225 grants totaling $503,094.

In addition to our grant programs, our deep work over the past year through integrated gatherings and events has led to a marked increase in ‘ambassadors’ - grant applicants, awardees, readers and planning committee members. A key goal and growing outcome of our convenings is to create safe, thoughtful spaces that allow a diverse group of folks to come together to connect, learn and co-create across difference and commonality. Whether due to geography, lived experience, issue areas/challenges or approaches to problem solving, we believe creating these welcoming spaces that challenge old or biased thinking is critical to finding long-term, resilient solutions to our complex environmental and social justice issues. And we’re hearing from participants that these are uncommon and deeply necessary spaces. With all our convenings we invest time and dollars to ensure our events, which move about New England, are accessible to all. This includes offers of childcare, interpreter services and travel stipends to help folks join events without geography or transportation creating a barrier.

We’re deeply grateful for our participants, grantees, convening attendees and, of course, donors, all of whom are making this Grassroots Fund community ever-increasingly robust, welcoming and powerful. Not a participant (yet)? Please join us this year as a grant reader, planning committee member or grant applicant. Your lived experience is needed!

With great appreciation,
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.

Guiding Practices

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Guiding Practices

**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.

**Access to Resources**
Transform the culture of sourcing and managing resources in your community.
Our Participatory Process: How it Works

We believe it’s critical that grant decisions are made collectively, by both those who donate money and by those who receive grants. In 2019, we had 242 Grant Readers reviewing our Young Leader and Grow grant applications, many of them past or present grantees themselves. Grant Readers come to this process with a wide range of volunteer 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 2019 reader pool.

Grassroots Fund staff 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.

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
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.

2019 WEBINARS AND CONVENINGS

| 6  | ROOTSKILLS WEBINARS were offered in 2019, with topics based on our Guiding Practices, like Just Transition, Shifting Power, and Access to Resources. |
| 2  | CATALYST CONVENINGS in Boston, MA, and Hartford, CT - brought together close to 100 people for networking and world-cafe style conversations. |
| 150 | PARTICIPANTS joined in 2, day-long RootSkills Workshops in Brattleboro, VT, and Providence, RI. |
| 4  | POP-UP OFFICE trips met in 14 different communities, with 90 community groups and over 100 individuals. Over half of the individuals at the pop-up offices were new to the Grassroots Fund. |

LOWER BARRIERS, OPEN CALLS AND CO-CREATING AGENDAS

| 30+ | DIVERSE AND TALENTED PLANNING COMMITTEE MEMBERS guided development of learning objectives and decision-making on workshop proposals as we collectively put together the agenda and offerings. |
| 46  | RESPONSES to open call for workshop proposals ahead of 2 day-long RootSkills Workshops in Brattleboro, VT, and Providence, RI |
| $41K | IN FINANCIAL SUPPORT was provided in the form of scholarships, expense reimbursements, childcare, and language interpretation. More than 165 participants throughout our RootSkills offerings received support of this kind. |

I think this is one of the most useful and important workshops I have attended in recent years!

(Regarding sliding scale pay) I love your transparency! Thank you for being thoughtful.

(Regarding Flash Talks) Hearing directly from community members and organizations about their work was an awesome way to ground us for the day exploring a variety of topics they might be indirectly or directly revolved around and interacting with.

I am rethinking how power presents itself in not only my meetings, but how I come into spaces, how I perceive situations, and how I feel better equipped to adjust where necessary.

I met several folks working on housing and environmental justice issues in my area who I hadn’t connected with before, so starting those partnerships was really valuable.

(Something I am now re-thinking) Restructuring power in a non-western/ non-white framework.

(Eval from presenter) I would have never considered this opportunity if Tess didn’t reach out. Again, I am thankful first to Rashida and now Tess for being engaging and supportive in this work with Grassroots Fund grantees. I am truly appreciative of all they do and willing to pull potential when they see it in their grantees, such as myself.
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.

$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 - $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.

**YOUNG LEADER:** up to $7,500 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.

Grant applications to the Grassroots Fund are evaluated by staff, community members and fellow applicants against our guiding practices.
Financial Results

2019 was the Grassroots Fund’s largest year in terms of dollars going directly to grassroots organizers through the grantmaking program. We received support from 29 foundation and donor funds as both general operating support and restricted funding. Compared to 2018, we saw growth in our individual donor support. Where fees were charged, our events and gatherings had a sliding scale structure which allows participants to self-identify and offers transparency to all.

On the expense side, we directly approved over $520,000 in grants to 225 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).

Four Pop-up offices, 6 RootSkills webinars & 2 trainings, as well as 2 Catalyst Convenings in Connecticut and Massachusetts convened 200 changemakers across the region. Workshop presenter honorariums, childcare, language services, nutrient-rich, local food, travel expense reimbursements were some of the ways we attempted to lower barriers to participation.

Over 240 readers helped read through 2019 Grow and Young Leader applications and 37 grantmaking committee members joined our 2-day retreats 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.

## 2019 FINANCIALS:

### INCOME:
- Foundation grants: $1,701,000
- Contributions: $92,601
- Sponsorships: $13,800
- Fiscal Sponsor Contributions: $264,871
- Program fees: $8,890
- Other income: $48,970
- Temporary restricted net asset transfer: ($500,232)

**TOTAL INCOME:** $1,629,900

**NET INCOME:** $226,722

### EXPENSES:
- Grantmaking programs: $792,451
- Programs & Events: $51,189
- Fundraising & outreach: $24,197
- Personnel: $439,255
- Contract Services: $45,286
- Organizational & Networking: $18,315
- Office: $32,485

**TOTAL EXPENSES:** $1,403,178

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In the name of The “Lets Ban
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In the name of Mike, from
In the name of Lucie and John
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In the name of Diana Carpinone,
In the name of Global Children, from Elizabeth Hagens
In the name of Janet Wilkinson, from KC Henry
In the name of Joyce MacGovern, from Robert Ringer
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Wedding gifts that give back! Sam Musher and Jon Woodward, longtime donors and grassroots organizers from the Boston area, wanted to offer a wedding gift registry that aligned with their values. They asked their guests to make donations, including to the Grassroots Fund, in honor of the occasion. Donating in someone’s name is a wonderful way to build awareness of our regional work while honoring or remembering someone special, or a special occasion. Thanks, Sam and Jon!
Meet 6 of the Grassroots Fund Grantee Groups from 2019

WARNER PUBLIC MARKET
WARNER, NH

Living Economies / Grow
In many rural communities, hubs of local connection have waned, and opportunities for local commerce have been replaced by big box stores with no intentions of building community wealth or connection. The owners of the cooperatively-run Warner Public Market sought to challenge that trend by creating a welcoming platform for gatherings, educational workshops, and small-scale makers and growers. They aim to provide access to local food, knowledge, culture, and creative exploration to their rural community. By evaluating sustainability and community benefit with a triple-bottom line philosophy, they hope Warner Public Market will be able to support everyone: producers, consumers, and employees.

DAWNLAND HERITAGE GARDEN AND SEED LIBRARY AT STERLING COLLEGE
CRAFTSBURY COMMON, VT

Food / Grow
The Dawnland Heritage Garden is a partnership between agricultural and indigenous groups, who came together to address the erosion of agrobiodiversity that has been accompanied by a loss of cultural and culinary knowledge associated with food and seed varieties native to Dawnland, the traditional Abenaki name for Vermont. The garden serves to rematriate Dawnland seeds in Vermont, especially those important to Abenaki customs and celebrations. In 2018, the garden’s first year, all crops were given back to Abenaki Helping Abenaki and Seeds of Renewal, and the seeds were saved to plant in the 2019 season. During the second year of growth, seeds will be incorporated into the Dawnland Heritage Seed Library, the first seed library in Vermont that specifically highlights the importance of rematriating native seeds in Vermont and sharing the stories of Dawnland seeds.

LEARNING CORRIDOR COUNCIL
CLEAN UP THE INCINERATOR
NEW HAVEN, CT

Environmental Health / Grow
The Learning Corridor is an effort to build community through placemaking and recreation in a low-income community in the neighborhood of Newhallville. Once a thriving working-class community, the loss of the area’s major employer, Winchester Repeating Arms, during the 1980s set the neighborhood into economic distress, which was exacerbated by the housing collapse of 2008. In Newhallville, 90% of children qualify for free or reduced-price lunch, and residents suffer from disproportionate levels of obesity, type-2 diabetes, asthma, and other chronic diseases. In response, the Learning Corridor has transformed a three-block section of the Farmington Canal Heritage Greenway into a vibrant space for community-building, family-friendly festivals and events – a space where community members are able to utilize the Greenway as a unique recreational asset promoting fitness, physical activity and a healthy lifestyle for all ages and ethnic backgrounds.

PITTSFIELD BAGSHARE
PITTSFIELD, MA

Environmental Health / Seed
Pittsfield BagShare received a Seed grant in 2019 to purchase equipment and materials needed to create reusable bags for a community bag-share program. The group’s purpose is to prevent waste to the landfill, teach sewing, start sewing centers, repair sewing machines, and introduce the concept of donation-based collective work that builds community and makes a difference through the creation of a BagShare community hub. BagShare is a regionally run resource that helps set up sewing and distribution hubs within communities, with the hope that the reusable bags made from materials diverted from landfills will complement a simultaneous bag ban initiative.

NARROW RIVER PRESERVATION ASSOCIATION
Saunderstown, RI

Land & Water / Seed
Narrow River Preservation Association has been protecting the brackish tidal inlet for 50 years. Despite this, the group realized that they did not have documentation of the indigenous history and uses of the land they preserved. They used a Seed grant to support a partnership with the Tomaquag Museum, an indigenous-run museum dedicated to broadening perspectives about indigenous culture and perspectives. Through their partnership, they co-hosted a kayak tour of Narrow River focused on historical and current indigenous practices of that land and water, and deepened their understanding of indigenous and environmental justice.

Learn the stories of the groups we’ve funded and get involved with their work at: https://grassrootsfund.org/guiding-practices/community-stories
Participants

Brattleboro, VT
Geraldine Vatan - 350VT/Mother Up Montpellier
Francis Manga - Association of Africans Living in VT
Chris Wood - BALE (Building a Local Economy)
Jacqueline Ward - High school teacher
Marilyn Chiarello - Edible Brattleboro
Kile Adumene - Equity Leaders Fellowship (NH)
Betsy Hands - High Meadows Fund
Abel Luna - Migrant Justice
Ann Garland - NH Upper Valley Democrats
Shaina Kasper - Toxics Action Center
Sarah Brock - Vital Communities
Libby Weiland - VT Community Garden Network
Marie Emerson - Wild Wescogus Blueberries

Providence, RI
Tarshire Battle - Restoration Urban Farm of New England
Sara Canuel - Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council
Janice Falconer - Impact RI
Sebastian Interlandi - Southside Community Land Trust
Vanessa Liles - PT Partners
Catarina Lorenzo - Alliance to Mobilize Our Resistance
Jeanine Silversmith - Rhode Island Environmental Education Association
Dena Haden - Co-Creative Center

Meet our board and staff: https://grassrootsfund.org/about-us/our-team

Grow, Spring
Tarshire Battle
Cris Blackstone
Jennifer Brockway
Aileen Castillo
Kat Champigny
Kendra Dawsey
Michelle de Lima
Paige Heverly
Colin Keegan
Michél Legendre
Vanessa Liles
Oliver Scholes
Sandeep Bikram Shah

Grow, Fall
Kimberly Acosta
Austin Bryniarski
Jeuji Diamondstone
Nicole Feleo
Diana Fontaine
Melissa Guillet
Sabrina Hunte
Amanda Jacir
Michelle de Lima
Daniel MacPhee
Tonisha Pinckney
Aubrey Porter
Vignesh Ramachandran
Oliver Scholes
Brian Watson

Young Leader, Spring
Kimberly Acosta
Claude McLaughlin
Paige Nygaard
William Oppenheimer
Amaryst Parks
Marissa Patterson
Listch Prinston
Vignesh Ramachandran
Samir Richard
Danielle Smith
Kenda Tucker
Farzana Zubair
This is OUR Grassroots Fund. **We encourage meaningful participation.** We are working within our organization and alongside our constituents to challenge the basic structure of problem solving, and hold and create space for the voices that must guide us into the future. Here are a few ways we’d gladly welcome your unique experiences, talents and leadership.

**BECOME A GRANT REVIEWER**
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.

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

**HOST A HOUSE PARTY**
Introduce our work to your network and your community by hosting/co-hosting a house party.

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**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.

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