



2025 Community-Led Climate Resilience in Boston
Shared Gifting & Shared Learning Cohort (Climate Cohort)
– Program Summary –

Purpose Statement:

Grassroots Fund continues to support a participant-driven and peer-supportive structure for community-led social justice organizers who are working collectively and independently to center climate resilience in their organizing strategies. This program provides a network of support for these emerging leaders who face significant barriers in accessing traditional philanthropy, and creates a learning environment that equips participating leaders with peer support to sustain their efforts. In turn, this work helps develop capacity and infrastructure for climate organizing in Greater Boston. We believe that grassroots organizations providing direct support and/or services in response to community-identified needs are creating the type of infrastructure that is needed to address local climate impacts. This Cohort ultimately works to support the sustainable, long-term growth of participant organizations as we facilitate the connection between their withstanding organizing work around Social Justice, to Environmental Justice and to Climate as a whole. We do this through engagement in our Shared Gifting & Shared Learning Cohort processes: this 9-month long Cohort program centers relationship building and participatory grantmaking to ensure local leaders have resources to both sustain their current efforts and increase climate organizing capacity in Greater Boston, MA.

This group of roughly 12 grassroots organizers (representing 5 organizations) will continue will continue developing local & regional capacity for climate organizing by:

- 1) Networking and engaging in Shared Learning with a group of likeminded grassroots organizers who are discovering and deepening the connective threads between their work, the climate justice movement, and one another's organizing strategies;
- 2) Continuing to develop their respective "Climate Projects," and continue to deepen the way in which climate resilience is embedded into their organizing work in a mutually-supportive space;
- 3) Engaging in a Shared Gifting Circle, after having been in relationship with one another for 1.5+ years and having identified Shared Values/Funding Priorities;

- 4) Building community over shared challenges, solutions, and grantmaking experiences; and
- 5) Engaging in 1x in-person Relationship & Trust Building Retreat, and 2x in-person Neighborhood Meet-Ups throughout the Cohort year.

Through hosting this Cohort, Grassroots Fund has learned that being in relationship & engaging in participatory grantmaking with a group of peer leaders experiencing similar challenges & opportunities has positively impacted participants intellectually, socially, and financially, while contributing to sustainable organizational growth. Intellectually, the Cohort creates space for deep, intentional reflection on how groups do their organizing, and how they show up in grantmaking spaces. Socially, it facilitates local and regional connections among like-minded, values-aligned organizations of similar stature that might not otherwise be in relationship with one another due to the nature of their neighborhood and towns-based community-level work. Financially, participants ultimately work together to make funding decisions using methods of participatory grantmaking. Funding is often very limited for the type of work participant organizers do – it is typical for dominant funders to place qualifications and limitations on the types of groups that can access their resources. For example, funders often look to fund specific projects, and not general operating expenses; they may require certain tax statuses, exclude Ad-Hoc organizations from their consideration, and require a long-term record of campaign and fundraising successes for grant consideration. We do this differently: funding for participatory grantmaking amongst Cohort participants is abundant, unrestricted, and available to all participant organizations, regardless of tax status. Overall, the Community-Based Climate Resilience in Boston Cohort supports the sustainable growth of organizations exemplifying our Guiding Practices by providing an alternative grantmaking framework for organizers to continue resourcing their work and/or their internal infrastructure in a mutually-supported peer space.

Expected outcomes for Cohort members:

Grassroots Fund feels the participatory grantmaking method of Shared Gifting – specifically, when it is done in a relationship-based way that prioritizes Shared Values and Shared Funding Priorities – makes for a more equitable grantmaking. The table below describes shifts we try to implement by engaging the Cohort in relationship-based Shared Gifting. Beyond this, participants can anticipate the following outcomes:

- Networking and learning amongst the Cohort and with knowledgeable climate justice leaders;
- Further understanding of the connection between climate resilience and social justice missions;

- Collective envisioning of what it means to be working on climate resilience & towards climate justice in light of your organizing capacity;
- Coalition building among participating grassroots climate organizers;
- Engaging in active feedback loops led by Grassroots Fund staff;
- Experience using the participatory grantmaking method of Shared Gifting to distribute a community-led grant pool.

Competitive →	Collaborative
Fragmented →	Whole
“Professional” →	Grassroots
Scarce →	Abundant
Extractive →	Generative
Rigid →	Adaptive
Dogmatic →	Emergent
Environment →	Just Transition

Table Credit: [RESIST Philanthropy](#)

2025 Program Structure: September 2024 - May 2025

- This is a multi-year program that engages Cohort participants on a 3-year cycle, lasting from Fall 2021 - Spring 2025. The 2025 Cohort is the last of this 3-year cycle, running from September 2024 - May 2025. Following this, there is potential for a new Climate Cohort to be established.
- 6x 1.5-hour Monthly Cohort Calls will be held over Zoom in SEP, NOV, DEC, JAN, MAR, and MAY. There will be no Cohort Call in OCT, FEB, or APR since there will be in-person meetings (see below).
- The following 6-hr in-person convenings will take place:
 - 1x Relationship & Trust Building Retreat in OCT 2024 (TBD)
 - 2x Neighborhood Convening in FEB & APRIL 2025 (TBD)
- The “best” time for these monthly meetings will be determined using a survey at least twice throughout the Cohort year (one for Fall ‘24, one for Spring ‘25)
- Maria Elena Letoña will facilitate all cohort meetings. This decision was made by Grassroots Fund staff and supported by feedback collected after 2024 Cohort completion.

Participant Information: Attendance Expectations, Selection Process, Roster, etc.

How Grassroots Fund Supports Individual Participation:

Shared Learning	Upfront information on climate change, climate justice, climate resilience, and how it is connected to other social justice organizing efforts. While participants are supported in their climate organizing efforts, they will also continue developing shared knowledge and language.
Onboarding	Following 2024 feedback, there will be a multi-week onboarding process leading up to the first Cohort Call in September 2024. Onboarding materials will be packaged and made readily available for any unexpected participant changes throughout the year.
Participant Compensation	Base Grants will be awarded to all participant organizations following the first Cohort Call in September 2024. These funds are intended to provide upfront cash for each participating organization to compensate their representatives (this is an alternative to providing individual stipends to participants) and to support the general operating expenses of participating organizations.
Networking	Facilitating a space for connections to grow deeper; establishing a network of like minded climate organizers.
Travel Support	All meeting travel logistics will be managed by GF staff. Gas/rental car/public transit reimbursements, and meals during in-person convenings will be provided. Additional travel support is available upon request.

Financial Support	Each organization will receive a Shared Gifting Circle Grant in April 2025, following group decision-making.
Decision-Making Support	Support Cohort decision-making by suggesting frameworks/ facilitating processes that meet Cohort wants/needs.
Accessibility	Offering language interpretation when needed, transcription/recordings of group meetings, meeting in accessible spaces.

Attendance Expectations:

- **We highly recommend participating organizations onboard at least 2 representatives to the Climate Cohort, if possible.** Each participant organization is only required to have 1 designated representative, but additional support could help your organization stay up-to-date on Cohort happenings.

Feedback gathered following the 2024 Cohort confirmed that organizations with at least 2 representatives felt they were more easily able to fully engage and show up in the Climate Cohort space, felt less of a gap between missed meetings, and have facilitated stronger connections with other Cohort members. Consistent attendance also helps facilitate greater relationship & trust-building amongst Cohort participants. Given the limited amount of time we have together throughout the year, it is important that there is consistent representation from your organization.

- Each of your organization's Climate Cohort representatives should be present at the first Monthly Cohort Call in September 2024. After this initial Cohort Call, it is expected that at least 1 representative will attend each monthly meeting.
- If all representatives from your organization will be absent, we ask that you notify the Program Manager ASAP. Monthly Cohort Call notes should be reviewed prior to the following month's meeting.

Summary of Participant Selection Process:

In an effort to best support the expansion of Environmental Justice infrastructure in New England, Grassroots Fund made the following decisions regarding 2025 participant selection:

- The 2025 Cohort will essentially serve as a continuation of the 2024 Cohort; participants will continue developing their respective and/or a collaborative Climate Project;
- The 2025 Cohort will serve as the final Cohort of a 3-year program cycle. Following May 2025, there is potential for a new Climate Cohort to be established;
- All 2024 Cohort participants are invited back to participate in the 2025 Cohort, i.e. participant organizations remain consistent between the 2024 and 2025 Cohorts;
- All participating organizations have the option to onboard new Cohort representatives, or to continue with the same representatives that engaged in the 2024 Cohort.

Cohort participants are invited to continue building upon the relationship and trust that has already been established amongst the group, as a result of the program's relationship-based grantmaking and coalition building activities. Multi-year support of this core group of organizers aligns with Grassroots Fund's goal of deepening and expanding regional capacity for Environmental Justice organizing. We believe that slow, intentional relationship development can be used as a tool for more equitable grantmaking, especially in the context of Shared Gifting. The 3-year cycle model of this Cohort allows participants to have intentional time for relationship and capacity building, while ensuring the program reaches a wide range of participants over time. Additionally, these cycles ensure that the Grassroots Fund is able uphold its commitment to participants by confirming financial support for each three year cycle from our funding partners. This type of sustained engagement creates a solid foundation for meaningful participation, leadership development, and peer-to-peer support amongst participant groups over time.

All major program decisions, including the way in which participants were selected, are heavily influenced and supported by consistent participant feedback gathered during individual evaluative interviews. Grassroots Fund conducted these interviews following the conclusion of the 2024 Cohort Year, in June 2024.

List of 2025 Participant Organizations:

Revere Youth in Action
Lynn United for Change
Neighbors United for a Better East Boston
Dorchester Not 4 Sale (Asian American Resource Workshop)
Brockton Interfaith Community

Expected Time Commitment:

Commitment	TOTAL between SEP '24 - MAY '25
Climate Projects (independent work, outside of Cohort meetings)	10.5 hrs
6 Monthly 1.5-hr Meetings + Pre-Meeting Prep (15' ea)	9 hrs 1.5 hrs
1 6-hr Relationship & Trust-Building Retreat + Pre-Retreat Prep (ex. Cohort Share)	6 hrs 1 hr
2 6-hr Neighborhood Convenings + <i>(Option to lead a session)</i>	12 hrs + <i>(optional prep time)</i>
Pre/Post-Cohort (ex. Feedback Interviews, Availability Surveys, etc)	2 hrs
Shared Gifting Prep (ex. Proposals)	2 hrs
Total Required + Travel	44 hrs, + up to 6 hrs (travel to-from in person events)
+ <i>(Optional) End-of-Cohort Call with BARR Foundation's Climate Team</i>	+ <i>2hr meeting (optional)</i> + <i>Independent prep time</i>

Use of External Platforms:

Please make yourself familiar with the following platforms that will be used throughout the 2025 Climate Cohort:

- **Zoom** - for virtual meetings
- **Google Groups** - sharing docs, project updates, email messaging specific members or full cohort
- **Google Docs** - for meeting agendas + notes
- **WhatsApp** - TBD: for Cohort communications

Questions / Comments should be directed to Jazz (Program Manager) →

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