



Community  
Resilience  
Organizations

## 2023 ANNUAL REPORT



*Community Resilience Organizations empowers and collaborates with community partners to nurture the growth of resilient communities working at the intersections of climate and racial justice. We tend this work with tenacity, flexibility, and love!*

# Letter from Co-Directors

Vermont is home to six of the top ten counties in the nation that are projected to experience the *least harsh* impacts of climate change. This fact was ringing in our ears while standing in the most climate resilient county in the nation in the rubble of catastrophic flooding in July. We *know* that Vermont already has harsh impacts of climate change, and it also means that Vermont will continue to see an uptick in climate migration, which has huge implications for land and housing access, and notably, the social fabric of the state. Community Resilience Organizations (CROs) remains centered around building climate refuge in Vermont, supporting marginalized community members who have already made a home here and those yet to come.

Our Grassroots Capacity Building Hub is the crux of our unique organizational model and the framework for how we're impacting change in frontline communities. As we've participated in advocacy, community organizing, and movement-building ourselves, we saw an opportunity to create better conditions for people on the frontlines of climate crisis and climate action so that they can be cared for, supported, and generate change informed by their unique positionalities. We envision the Grassroots Capacity Building Hub as a pilot of a Vermont-based "Climate Justice Corps," where organizers and projects can have a centralized location for administrative needs and equitable transactions. This infrastructure is critical to building the capacity necessary for a climate justice movement in Vermont. We hope this positions CROs and our partners as key actors in future federal and state dollars that are being unlocked for green jobs and a national "Climate Corps." Our model is both for frontline, marginalized communities to design their own solutions and at the the frontline of addressing real needs of climate activism in Vermont. Through this Hub, we offer 1) fiscal sponsorship to aligned projects, 2) equitable green jobs for grassroots organizers, and 3) coalition initiation and leadership. Together, these strategies allow us to fold in voices and perspectives that have been pushed to the margins as we engage in power-shifting organizing. We believe that the dual model of resourcing frontline groups and engaging in pinpointed state-level systemic change is critical to Vermont's climate crisis approach.

Our vision for 2024 is to sustain the Grassroots Capacity Building Hub, land and home access advocacy, climate justice public education, and coalition leadership. One project we're gearing up for is gathering frontline community members in four corners of the state for emergency preparedness conversations and building kits together. With our longstanding Co-Director Mindy Blank transitioning out of this role at the end of 2023, we seek to hire a new co-leader who can pick up the torch and support CROs and its networks.

Sincerely,  
Jess Laporte & Mindy Blank

**Community Resilience Organizations**

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Co-Directors: Mindy Blank (she/her) & Jessica Laporte (she/her)

# Staff and Board of Directors - effective as of September 2023

## CROs Leadership

Mindy Blank (she/her), *Co-Director*  
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Jessica Laporte (she/her), *Co-Director*  
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## Board of Directors

Kenya Lazuli (she/they), *Chair*  
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**Leadership Composition - Co-Directors & Board of Directors** - *we are using these categories as commonly recognized categories to represent diversity within an organization in the United States. These categories can be descriptive, reductive, harmful and/or misleading depending on how they are used.*

- women -  $8/8 = 100\%$
- trans/gender queer -  $2/8 = 29\%$
- white -  $4/8 = 50\%$
- black -  $4/8 = 50\%$
- asian or pacific islander -  $0/8 = 0\%$
- south asian -  $0/8 = 0\%$
- indigenous and/or native american -  $1/8 = 12.5\%$
- hispanic/latinx -  $2/8 = 25\%$
- immigrant and/or refugee descent (1st or 2nd generation) -  $4/8 = 50\%$
- disability status -  $2/8 = 25\%$

## Finances

In 2023, CROs continued to grapple with a fundraising gap and pursued a diverse set of strategies to fund the organization this year and into the future. In Quarter 1 alone, CROs applied for \$1M in grants, receiving only \$25K from those efforts. This disconnect highlighted both the need for grant seeking support and strategy, but more importantly a barrier in understanding for funders of CROs role in Vermont taking an integrated equity and grassroots approach to Climate Action.

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In Q2 and beyond, CROs focused on securing earned income through contracting and professional services as well as strengthening the fiscal sponsorship fee structure to adequately support the Grassroots Organizing Hub services in the long-run. After consultation with the Board, CROs rolled out a new model for fiscal sponsorship fees that has guided new agreements and adjusted previous agreements. While it requires more financial involvement from each of our projects, our fees remain considerably lower than most other fiscal agents and we offer ample administrative and financial support to our projects in return.

CROs successfully sought and secured a contract to facilitate the Land Access and Opportunity Board (see more below) that generated over \$80,000 over 7 months. This contract both deepened CROs involvement in this systemic approach to land access for marginalized people in Vermont while also sustaining and expanding the Co-Director positions with new responsibilities. In addition, the Co-Directors advocated and secured funding for shorter-term consultations, bringing value to our network weaving and community engagement work. This is a strategic approach to both expanding our reach and raising funds that leverages the unique skills of those involved in CROs. As we move forward we can consider how to expand these opportunities for Co-Directors, Grassroots Organizers and other positions across our projects.

As we move into to 2024, CROs will continue to pursue involvement in state and grassroots climate action through grants, earned income and sponsorship of growing initiatives. In particular, we are seeking additional resources for Communications Strategy and grant-writing and appreciate the support of our Board in these efforts moving forward. We are also seeking the support of our fiscally sponsored projects to highlight the role of CROs in their work and garner the support of their funders for our organizing hub.

### CROs 2023 Fundraising Breakdown

Income Source	Amount	Description
State Grants	35,000	Limited-time grants offered through the Vermont Department of Health
Earned Income	84,755	Through contracts and engagements, primarily the Land Access and Opportunity Board
Grants	64,000	Combined Restricted and Unrestricted grants from local foundations and grant programs
Corporate	8,000	From local businesses

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<b>Individual Donations</b>	2,589	Unsolicited individual donations received
<b>Fiscal Sponsorship Fees</b>	38,525	Majority from long-term fiscal sponsorship and \$6,360 from short-term fiscal sponsorship
<b><i>Total 2023 Revenue</i></b>	<b>~\$235,000</b>	

In addition, CROs facilitated approximately \$75K in funds for short-term fiscally sponsored projects. This increased our programming budget from our 2023 Goal while engaging and being guided by local initiatives and leaders rather than a top down approach. We believe that our programming budget will continue to focus on these partnerships and enabling community-driven work into 2024.

CROs Grassroots Organizing Hub enabled an additional \$765,000 in funding to be directed to and support projects across our long-term fiscally sponsored projects. In total CROs stewarded just over \$1M in funds for Climate Justice projects across Vermont. This growth from an annual \$50K budget from 2015-2021 to over \$1M in funding in just 2 years represents an incredible jump in fiscal responsibility and proof of the viability and demand for the Grassroots Organizing Hub. We plan to continue to grow our hub through fiscal sponsorship of both short-term and long-term projects.

## Project Highlights

### Community Wellness Program

CROs Community Wellness Program aims to increase access to wellness services not typically covered by insurance for marginalized individuals, effectively removing upfront financial barriers to a diverse range of healing modalities, including bodywork, herbalism, acupuncture, yoga, music and movement, hair care, birth and death support, and food as medicine. Our statewide network now includes 13 practitioners, and nearly 50 individuals have received meaningful wellness services free of charge through this program, while bolstering small wellness businesses and building partnerships.

In 2023 we began scaling a statewide model region-by-region for community wellness with focus on BIPOC and LGBTQIA+ practitioners and recipients of wellness gifts. This growth was focused in Upper Valley and Central Vermont this year with support from grants through the VT Department of Health.

<b>Upper Valley</b> \$31,500 grant	\$18,000 to rural, wellness businesses in the Upper Valley \$8,200 to a dedicated Grassroots Organization for program development Partnership with OneHeart Wellness in Windsor to transfer CROs program to a local/regional wellness hub
<b>THRIVE - Barre Health District</b> \$3,500 grant	\$2,800 to wellness businesses and initiatives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Rainbow Bridge Community Center (Community Care Days) - contribution to wellness supplies</li> <li>● Grian Apothecary and The Everything Space post-flood support</li> <li>● Money Matters Eco-Feminism Symposium event support and sponsorship</li> </ul>

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## Flood Relief

When the second 100 year flood in just over a decade hit Vermont in July 2023, CROs Co-directors immediately stepped into localized mutual aid and emergency response networks that emerged across Central Vermont and Lamoille County. From gathering and disseminating information, to redirecting resources to less visible and supported areas, CROs was working in collaboration with a diverse group of community members to seek our resources for marginalized people who were flood impacted.

After the immediate response, CROs received \$10,000 through the Vermont Community Foundation's Flood Response Grant program and advocated for additional funds to go to Regeneration Corps and response in the Upper Valley. CROs also uplifted the work of the Rainbow Center in Barre, Jennifer's Promise in Johnson, Out in the Open organizers in their communities, VT Releaf Collective and Northeast Kingdom Organizing (NEKO).

- \$2,800 in support for CROs mutual aid and emergency response
  - Mutual aid coordination, deliveries, communication, resource-sharing, community organizing
  - Other related activities and network collaborations received a total of \$1,000 in support from CROs
- Supported our 2022 Grassroots Organizer who was involved in flood relief with a \$1,000 stipend for their engagement in flood relief
- Bolstered our Community Wellness Program to support flood victims and volunteers with a \$2,000 infusion of resources

## Land Access & Opportunity Board (LAOB) Facilitation

After 2 years of advocating for the creation of the LAOB, CROs pursued and secured a contract to Facilitate the LAOB in collaboration with WholeHeart Inc. This brought together years of CROs' coalition work with Seeding Power Vermont and various land access initiatives, with skills and energy to steward the LAOB from early stage through hiring their first staff. The Facilitation team developed board engagement opportunities to create a Memorandum of Understanding with their fiscal agent, Vermont Housing and Conservation Board as well as the Recruitment and Hiring process for Co-Directors. Through facilitation, CROs also supported the LAOB to develop board management infrastructure, create a learning plan for advisory powers role within State housing and land programs, and create community engagement opportunities.

## Grassroots Capacity Building Hub

### Long-term Fiscally Sponsored Projects

CROs currently sponsors six long-term climate justice projects located across the state, while fielding referrals and new requests every few weeks and integrating short-term projects throughout the year. We implement a non-hierarchical process with our Board to evaluate and determine which projects to take on. We developed a low-cost fiscal sponsorship model with sliding scale fees based on the type of funding a project receives to keep costs minimal for low-budget, ongoing projects. For community members, CROs sustaining and further developing the Grassroots Capacity Building Hub means that there is a trusted nonprofit to walk through bureaucracy with them every step of the way, which in turn means that locally-led climate justice projects have a place to incubate and grow.

Here are some of the 2023 highlights the work of the projects we fiscally sponsor. The following statements are what each project chose to highlight in their work this year:

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Project	Description	2023 Funding
<b>Conscious Homestead (CH)</b>	<p>2023 was a pivotal year of growth and change for Conscious Homestead after obtaining fiscal sponsorship under CROs and receiving our first major grants from both the Vermont Department of Health and VT Community Health Equity Partnership in 2022.</p> <p>This key financial and infrastructural support enabled Candace to shift Conscious Homestead from a solopreneurship that they established in 2016, and solely operated as such until 2022, into a budding organization with a paid staff of five; Vic, Tony, Zymora, Stephanie and Candace.</p> <p>One of CH's core programs is the Flying Fish Fellowship running annually from May to early October. CH works with numerous vendors and contractors to offer a comprehensive experience to the fellows throughout their summer on the homestead. The fellowship has demonstrated how transformative and healing it is to have an affinity space for Black &amp; Brown folks to cultivate land-based skills in self-sufficiency rooted in Afro-Indigenous ancestral wisdom. Our fellowship has also shown how important it is to have a sacred space to hold the legacies of trauma and resiliency we each carry and its connections to land-based oppression and displacement.</p>	\$314,000 in 2023 with \$200,000 in pledged funds for 2024
<b>Regeneration Corps (RC)</b>	Our mission is to support youth with the knowledge and skills to mitigate and respond to climate change and its constituent impacts, while building community resilience and strengthening local food systems. Regeneration Corps is a learning movement supporting youth in gaining the hands-on skills necessary to transition from an extractive to a regenerative culture. We create opportunities for students to earn credit in areas of interest, while providing experiences that connect them to a community of local farmers, community leaders and place based solutions.	Raised \$61,400 in 2023
<b>Radical Imagination (RI)</b>	Radical Imagination has been building infrastructure and gathering resources for our Radical Residency Program that will re-emerge in the summer of 2024. We have already begun to host BIPOC groups and individuals on the land again at our Vermont site in collaboration with Conscious Homestead and Black and Brown individuals in need of respite and healing.	Maintained a budget under \$8,000 this year
<b>Environmental Justice Network (VT-EJN)</b> <i>new in 2023</i>	The VT-EJ Network was established to advance environmental justice for all Vermonters by centering the communities most impacted by inequities and bridging these overburdened community members with decision-makers at the state and local level. We are proud to be part of the larger ecosystem of climate justice grassroots organizations across	\$108,100 in funding carried over from previous fiscal sponsor as well

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	<p>the state and look forward to continued collaboration with sister entities such as Community Resilience Organizations and its other fiscally sponsored projects.</p> <p>The Network is steered by a coalition of 9 committee members. This summer, we held our first Environmental Justice Symposium which brought over 50 individuals from across Vermont for two consecutive days. The symposium allowed members to talk about pressing environmental issues in Vermont and come to a shared vision for Vermont.</p> <p>In the Summer of 2023 the EJN hosted an Environmental Justice Summit for 2 days that brought together actors and community members across the state.</p>	as newly secured funds
<b>Yoga Equity Project - Middlebury (MYEP)</b> <i>new in 2023)</i>	<p>The Yoga Equity Project is on a mission to make healing practices like yoga available to everyone who wants to participate. We hold weekly classes led by and for People of the Global Majority (BIPOC) and everyone who attends class gets a stipend. We believe that everyone deserves access to restful spaces and time to breathe.</p>	\$50,000+ annual budget

At the end of 2023 CROs also on-boarded two new long-term projects;

<b>Dandelion Home Cooperative (DHC)</b>	<p>DHP is solving the housing crisis in Vermont by building affordable, energy-efficient tiny homes for sustainable living. We prioritize building homes for BIPOC, queer, transgender, flood-impacted, and otherwise marginalized home-seekers. We are a queer and gender-diverse worker cooperative committed to paying a fair wage to our builders and co-creating a joyful workplace. Learn more about our work here: <a href="https://www.mountainsongexpeditions.com/dandelion-tiny-houses">https://www.mountainsongexpeditions.com/dandelion-tiny-houses</a></p>
<b>Burlington Yoga Equity Project (BYEP)</b>	<p>Burlington YEP seeks to extend the benefits of yoga and mindfulness to the global majority (people who identify as Black, Asian, Brown, dual-heritage, indigenous to the global south, and/or have been racialize as ethnic minorities). The BYEP radically breaks the barriers to access wellness spaces for the benefit of our whole community. Through its core offering of BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, people of color) Affinity Space classes through Laughing River Yoga Studio in Burlington, VT, BYEP provides the greater Chittenden County BIPOC community a safe space to come together for wellness and healing. The BYEP seeks to remove these barriers by providing BIPOC Affinity Space classes and offering financial stipends to members of the BIPOC community. Learn more at <a href="#">Burlington Yoga Equity Project</a>.</p>

## Short-term fiscally sponsored projects & events

CROs enabled about around \$75,000 in programming funds to climate justice project across the state, through collaborative networks and our internal infrastructure that focuses on supporting other groups.

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<b>Building Fearless Futures</b> <i>\$25,000 grant</i>	<p>Building Healing Affinity Spaces for Students of Color, brought together affinity group leaders and students who have started or are in affinity groups to share collective knowledge, engage in the healing work necessary to continue supporting each other and build toolkits to help other Black and Brown Vermonters learn how to start their own affinity groups. The support, connection and straight up fun we had during this project was one of the best parts of my year.</p>
<b>Milkweed Home Pilot Project</b> <i>\$14,000+ raised through grants and donations</i>	<p>The Milkweed Home Pilot Project was designed by and for queer and/or BIPOC folks, fiscally sponsored by CROs, and enabled a small crew of grassroots organizers and chosen family to actualize a project of beginning to create long-term, stable housing for our people and support the sharing of trades skills in a safe environment. We're grateful for the container that CROs holds for us to move more resources towards the folks doing the on-the-ground work.</p> <p>Milkweed Home Pilot Project met it's fundraising goal of \$14,000 at the end of 2023 and was able to compensate builders and organizers for their work.</p>
<b>Our Medicine - Health Equity Storytelling</b> <i>\$1,000 in grant funding</i>	<p>Our Medicine advised hospitals and health organizations on how to implement meaningful, sustainable storytelling initiatives within public health infrastructure to increase health equity.</p>
<b>Wellness Events and Services for BIPOC with VT Releaf Collective</b> <i>Approximately \$5,000</i>	<p>In collaboration with VT Releaf Collective CROs sponsored two opportunities post-flood for BIPOC Wellness Events post flood in August 2023.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 full day retreat with 4 wellness modalities offered, full meal and space to retreat.</li> <li>• 1 evening event that shared a meal and discussion about community wellness as well as</li> </ul> <p>This was continued in December in collaboration with The Healing: New Year Transformation series led by offering 6 sponsored registrations for BIPOC.</p>
<b>Eco-Feminism &amp; Radical Love Symposium, Money Matters</b> <i>\$4,500 in grants and donations</i>	<p>Through on-going collaboration with Shanda Williams from SD Communications and Marketing LLC, CROs was asked to sponsor the 2nd Annual Money Matters Symposium in October 2023 at Goddard College. This year's theme was "Eco-Feminism + Radical Love." The Symposium involved a dozen speakers, healers and presenters in a day long program and had around 50 participants. The day also featured a local black caterer and invitations for further engagement in multi-racial projects led by and for femmes of color.</p>

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<p><b>Central Vermont Economic Development Corporation (CVEDC)</b> \$22,500 in 2023 with \$60,000 incoming for 2024</p>	<p>To execute the Flood Recovery for Businesses program, CVEDC worked with CROs as a fiscal agent on three projects:</p> <p><b>1) Flood Recovery Center Grant #1</b> - In the July 2023 floods, CVEDC supported over 1,000 impacted clients who were business owners that had flood impact and work in our region. Our response was to pop up a drop-in flood recovery center which moved through the region and offered counseling support to those impacted. The need was so great that we needed to increase our staff and their hours, add secondary locations, provide supplies (office supplies, other program supplies such as cleaning equipment) and fund professional services necessary for participation such as translation services. The initial \$7,500 was allocated entirely to this program.</p> <p><b>2) Flood Recovery Center Grant #2</b> - This secondary \$15,000 grant continued to fund the work above but with a thought toward expanding this work to move from immediate response to long-term recovery and resiliency. Examples of specific work completed in the secondary part of this program was the development by our intern to create an economic injury report and perform many surveys on longterm, future, and ongoing needs. We developed a third program as a result of these conversations, what became titled the “Small Business Uplift” program.</p> <p><b>3) Small Business Uplift</b> - this \$60,000 grant was funded by the Phish Water Wheel Foundation. This grant will specifically bring professional services and case management to BIPOC, immigrant, and low income business owners impacted by the flood. Transformational projects to market, advertise, strategize, and facilitate both financial planning, rebuild, construction, and re-opening efforts with professional service providers are now in the works. This program will run through May 2024</p>
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### Testimonial

*“As a BIPOC- woman, small business owner, it gives me so much joy to see CROs show up for me and my body of work within the community, in so many beautiful and complimentary ways. It has not been easy as a BIPOC Community Advocate and Reparations Activist to cultivate deep meaningful relationships that are true and authentic to me and my work. I have been actively engaged with CROs since Juneeteenth in '21. Most recently, I was presented my "Innovator of The Year" award, from Central Vermont Economic Development Corporation by Jess LaPorte from CROs, the night before my Money Matters: Eco-Feminism + Radical Love Symposium! It was so deeply meaningful to see this organization show up for me in so many positive and impactful ways when others weren't sure they could feel "comfortable" supporting me! I am forever grateful for the relationship that we have begun, and look forward to more milestones together in the future!”* - Shanda Dee, SD Communications and Marketing LLC

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