

# Community Resilience Organizations (CROs) 2024 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 to this work with tenacity, flexibility, and love!



Community  
Resilience  
Organizations





## Letter from CROs Co-Directors

Every year, in a variety of ways and with many outcomes, CROs has turned inwards and outwards to ask essential questions:

*Why us? Why this? Why here, and why now?*

In 2024, the need for Community Resilience Organizations remained clear. This year, our state experienced many more rounds of catastrophic flooding, first on the anniversary of 2023's major flood event, then again and again. Against the backdrop of an escalating climate disaster, Vermont is also grappling with an aging population; compounding housing shortages and delayed maintenance on our infrastructure; and increasing inequality and cost of living. Times are tough, but these challenges open the door for innovation towards a safe, equitable, and thriving future.

We at CROs know that bringing ideas and new systems to life takes time, money, and an ability to navigate the complex bureaucracy that often quells innovation. Barriers to entry for receiving funding, establishing an organization, and keeping new work moving mean that small, bold projects often can't get off the ground.

For the last decade plus, CROs has oriented our work around supporting and resourcing the organizers and community leaders we know are best equipped to bring forward new solutions and systems. We remain committed to showing up for these folks, who are too often unpaid or underpaid but keep showing up themselves.

Towards that end, we invested deeply in our Grassroots Organizing Hub, which provides the essential support and guidance organizers and new projects need to answer the biggest questions of our time with boldness and care. Our eight fiscally sponsored projects forged ahead in their work advancing climate and racial justice. CROs showed up for flood recovery as waters rose and collaboratively crafted long-term resilience work as the rivers returned to their beds. We also turned inwards and began crucial work of stabilizing our operations to keep our social movement infrastructure available for years to come.

When we look back at 2024—asking *why us?*—we see the gap CROs filled with our fiscal sponsorship, technical assistance, capacity for making connections, and perspective as a multi-racial team of justice oriented folks. When we ask *why this?*, we consider the common practice of allocating every moment of organizational energy and budget line as if the world won't keep changing, casting our communities into the breach with new and known disasters. We know that flexibility is a key part of CROs' utility to movements for climate and racial justice, and do not engage in this standard practice so we can remain nimble. Our ecosystem of organizations and movement efforts in Vermont is robust; we see how CROs' flexibility is essential to our ability to step into that breach and advance transformative work.

Our answer to *why here, and why now?* remains the same as it has since our founding in 2011. Vermont is already experiencing land grabs and resource hoarding—dangerous byproducts of already-inequitable access to land and safe, secure housing. The state's settlement pattern, which maps closely onto river corridors, makes the communities we work with especially vulnerable to flooding. There has never been a more urgent time to draw resources and agency into communities, and away from the systems that oppress and extract from people and the earth. As climate collapse and migration continue to unfold, we know that people-centered work is at the core of keeping us safe and well, and beginning to repair the harm wrought by racial capitalism.

There's more to say about all of that—keep reading! Thank you for your engagement with Community Resilience Organizations in 2024, however it looked. We are full of gratitude for the broad web we get to weave and tend as co-directors of CROs, and are thrilled to share some of our accomplishments with you in these pages.

Onwards,

Jess Laporte and Lena Greenberg  
Co-Directors, Community Resilience Organizations

## Our Staff and Board

At the end of 2023, longtime Director Mindy Blank transitioned out of co-leadership, and Jess Laporte continued as a solo Director. In early 2024, Jess proposed hiring two new part-time Co-Directors to join her in leading the organization.

Sister Sankofa Williams and Lena Greenberg joined the CROs leadership team in April 2024. As a trio, co-directors worked to establish a clear set of policies for co-leadership that would create stability and redundancy amid any conflicts and transitions that might arise. These policies made explicit many of CROs' existing operating principles and articulated methods for making decisions and managing the organization in a non-hierarchical and collaborative way. The policies draw on resources from the [Sustainable Economies Law Center](#), [Sociocracy](#), and the [Turning Towards Each Other](#) conflict workbook.

At the end of 2024, we are nearly at full implementation of this new and improved decentralized leadership model. Among other shifts, CROs has adopted a dual control model of financial management, creating redundancy and building lasting protocols for emergent circumstances. Our leadership team has begun a regular feedback practice and a strategic planning and review process that will guide our work in years to come.

Ultimately, Sister Sankofa decided not to continue in her role at CROs, and Lena and Jess have continued the work of developing a structure that can be flexible and strong in future leadership changes. In early 2025, we learned of Sister Sankofa's passing and were grateful for the time she dedicated to CROs and as a part of this team.

CROs' June 2024 board meeting, hosted under a canopy built by Dandelion Housing Project  
Worcester, VT

### Board of Directors

**Krystal Sanchez** (she/her)  
*Board President*  
Burlington Yoga Equity Project  
and VT Professionals of Color  
Burlington, VT

**Meg Fuerst** (she/her)  
*Board Secretary*  
Action Circles  
Royalton, VT

**Aly Mars** (she/her)  
*Board Treasurer*  
VT Department of  
Transportation  
Barre, VT

**Destinee Pierce** (they/she)  
VT-EJ Network  
Underhill, VT

**Joanna Colwell** (she/they)  
Middlebury Yoga Equity Project  
and Otter Creek Yoga Studio  
Middlebury, VT

**Murphy Robinson** (he/they)  
Dandelion Housing Project and  
Mountainsong Expeditions  
Worcester, VT

**Karen Ganey** (she/her)  
Regeneration Corps Program,  
White River Conservation District  
Permaculture Solutions, LLC  
Norwich, VT



# Financials and Development

In 2024, CROs developed language and a one pager to support our development work. In years past, CROs' infrastructure and the role we play in supporting movements for change has not been sufficiently legible to funders. Our intentions in crafting this language, which shaped a website update that will come online in early 2025, are to better bridge the gap between our work and the entities with resources to make it possible.

This year, we also received funds to convene a coalition of BIPOC leaders in Vermont. Coalition members are six aligned and already collaborating organizations that are exploring partnerships, collaborative funding and collective narrative to address funders and other nonprofits with a clear shared message. Most importantly, this is a peer support group in which leaders can learn and work through challenges together. In 2025 we hope to boost this coalition with additional funding and begin some shared fundraising initiatives to benefit all six member organizations.

Looking ahead, CROs will continue to generate funds through individual donors, grants, business donations, and earned income for providing tools and services. Our work is best sustained by funders who have curiosity about our work and are committed to facing our climate future. We've just begun receiving stock donations as a new avenue to generate major donors. Because CROs' flexibility is made possible by unrestricted funds, we'll be investing in our capacity to cultivate major donors in 2025.

We see earned income opportunities as a strategy to both utilize our collective experience and bring CROs' vision into new organizations and institutions. We will continue to build relationships towards a goal of sustaining funding from sources that recognize our value and respect our responsiveness to movement needs, including grants, foundations, and businesses. With a robust budget, we can return to our intention of compensating grassroots organizers who are already at work (unpaid) in their communities, creating conditions for movement growth and stability.

As a manager of finances on behalf of CROs and our fiscally sponsored projects, we will continue to streamline and improve our financial processes. In 2024, we integrated bookkeeping services, which protects co-director time and increases our team's capacity. At right, see a breakdown of our income sources and funds managed this fiscal year.

Income source	Amount	Description
Grants	\$82,500	Mostly unrestricted, capacity building grants from local and regional foundations.
Earned income	\$35,922	CROs partnered with Vermont Council on Rural Development to run our Community Resilience Assessment as part of their visit process in Johnson, VT. CROs also supported Northeast Kingdom Organizing with technical assistance.
Donations	\$1,521	In 2024, CROs collaborated with the leader of a fiscally sponsored project to promote CROs work and seek out monthly donors. This yielded an average of \$25/month through 4 monthly donors. While a small start, these monthly donors have boosted our morale and confidence in securing popular support for CROs.
Fiscal Sponsorship fee income	\$30,355	CROs collects fiscal sponsorship fees to offset our provision of admin, finance, and HR services.
<b>Total raised by CROs in 2024</b>	<b>\$150,298</b>	Funds raised through donations, grants, earned income, and fiscal sponsorship fees.
<b>Total CROs funds in 2024</b>	<b>\$243,298</b>	Total funds raised in 2024, plus \$93,000 rollover from earned income work in 2023
<b>Total CROs operating costs in 2024</b>	<b>\$176,000</b>	Total funds spent in 2024
<b>CROs 2024 surplus</b>	<b>\$67,000</b>	Unspent funds at EOY 2024
<b>Total raised by fiscally sponsored projects in 2024</b>	<b>\$678,565</b>	This number reflects the combined budgets raised by our fiscally sponsored projects.
<b>Total funds managed by CROs in 2024</b>	<b>\$921,863</b>	This includes funds raised and managed for CROs operations, as well as funds raised by and managed for fiscally sponsored projects.



## Fiscal Sponsorship

In 2024, our fiscal sponsorship program remained a core part of CROs' offering to the movement for climate and racial justice in Vermont. We added two long-term fiscally sponsored projects—[Dandelion Housing Project](#) (DHP) and Emergence Mutual Aid Network. DHP is based in Central Vermont and builds affordable, energy-efficient tiny homes for sustainable living. DHP is a queer and gender-diverse worker cooperative, and prioritizes building homes for BIPOC, queer, transgender, flood-impacted, and otherwise marginalized home-seekers. Emergence is based in the Upper Valley and grows, cooks, and distributes free food to their community. [See a full list of our long-term fiscally sponsored projects here.](#)

We also supported one short-term fiscally sponsored project. Bottomless Well is a refuge for environmental/social justice artists, activists, and leaders, particularly BIPOC and LGBTQIA+ practitioners seeking safe space and land access. In 2024, Bottomless Well hosted two weekend-long retreats that engaged participants in a variety of land-based and artful projects.

CROs also saw a new milestone as a fiscal sponsor—one of our earliest projects outgrew us! We offer fiscal sponsorship as a welcoming launchpad for small, innovative projects to grow. We were excited to support Regeneration Corps in their transition away from CROs to merge their programming with the White River Natural Resources Conservation District. This transition will secure full-time employment for Regeneration Corps staff and bring their programming to hundreds of young people in the Upper Valley. In their own words:

“We are grateful to our fiscal sponsor, Community Resilience Organizations, an incredible organizational home for the Regeneration Corps since 2019. Our success would not have been possible without the organizational and programmatic support they provided us over the years. The work of resilience, regeneration, reconciliation and education can not be done in isolation and similarly the strength of our work lives in collaboration. CROs' model fit so well for us and many other essential projects that are all working towards a livable future together.”

In 2025 we will continue to field requests for new fiscally sponsored projects, and launch updated guides to CROs' processes and protocols to keep this service accessible and supportive.

Left: The first subsidized house built by Dandelion Housing Project, pictured with the crew: Murphy, Silas, and Kiana.

*Photo by Murphy Robinson*

Right: Environmental Justice in Your Community event, hosted by the VT EJ Network, fiscally sponsored by CROs since 2023.

*Photo by Destinee Pierce*



## Looking outwards: weaving the CROs web

When flooding hit again, and again, in the summer of 2024, grassroots responders knew CROs as a reliable source of coordination and communications capacity. We updated information lists and websites; drafted and circulated press releases; coordinated supply runs; and rented a storage unit to collect furniture donations for displaced folks.

Our collaborators also asked us to leverage our capacity to think bigger than was possible when standing in feet of muck. Folks in the Northeast Kingdom, where half of the state's flood-damaged homes are located, and Central Vermont, also hit hard years in a row, asked us to steward the creation of shared demands for a transformative recovery from flooding.

In deep collaboration, we helped craft [the People's Demands for a Just Recovery from Flooding](#). Dozens of organizations across Vermont have signed on in support of these demands; we held a press conference at the State House in August to share our demands with legislators and the Governor. Since then, we've pulled together a core group of grassroots leadership to steer the [Just Recovery Coalition](#)—a grassroots coalition that informs policy-making around flood recovery and a just transition.

Alongside the necessary work of continuing to engage with institutions, CROs and our collaborators recognize that the trend of mutual aid networks and communities bearing the brunt of disaster response will continue. In alignment with the [Just Transition framework](#), we recognize the need to 'stop the bad' while drawing down money and power to 'build the new.' Towards this end, CROs has begun to articulate a model for a decentralized resilience network—a hub and spoke model for towns and regions to create connectivity and resilience while reducing duplicative work.

This model envisions each town or cluster of villages as a [Permanently Organized Community](#) (POC). Many communities spring into action and organization when disaster strikes, standing up structures for community care that do not exist outside of acute disaster. POCs retain and make sustainable these structures, ensuring that basic needs get met and there is a baseline of community connectivity.

Our conception of POCs draws on what we have witnessed after flooding and other disasters in Vermont. One organization or mutual aid formation acts as a hub for gathering and distributing resources and information to other similar entities and individuals, as well as the state and more formalized institutions. Investing in the capacity and structure of these hub



Above: Amy Lester of the Vermont Workers' Center speaks at a press conference organized by CROs launching the People's Demands for a Just Recovery from Flooding  
Below: (from left to right) CROs Co-Directors Lena Greenberg, Jess Laporte, and Sister Sankofa Williams at the press conference  
Montpelier, VT, photos by Audrey Grant





organizations can create conditions for them to steward a community into permanent organization. CROs is practiced at offering this kind of organizational development support.

CROs has been convening a cohort of frontline, grassroots flood responders to develop a strategy for resourcing these hubs and getting them running. We've been drawing on existing work that cohort members are already doing to identify best practices from supply lists to social infrastructure, looking to Appalachian communities recovering from Hurricane Helene, and more. We hope to be sharing open-source tools with communities across the state throughout 2025, with opportunities to gather feedback and hone those tools.

Throughout all of this work, we have been building relationships with organizations and entities similar to and very different from CROs. Both the Just Recovery Coalition and Resilience Hubs work have offered an opportunity to enter into deeper collaboration with the Land Access and Opportunity Board, Northeast Kingdom Organizing (NEKO), and Cooperation Vermont.

Our Co-Director team spoke at an event in November hosted by Rebuild by Design, attended by over 200 practitioners and legislators in Vermont, focused on flood resilience. We've begun collaborating with the Conservation Law Foundation to understand legal potential for strong implementation of flood-related policy, and have brought grassroots voices to statewide input processes about climate and disaster planning.

We also had an opportunity to update our [Community Resilience Assessment](#) (CRA), and run the CRA in Johnson as part of the Vermont Council on Rural Development (VCRD)'s community visit process. CROs was invited at the request of Johnson's planning committee for the event, to provide context and tools for considering climate resilience after Johnson was hit hard by flooding in 2023. We had over 100 Johnsonians participate in the CRA, results of which influenced the community's choices about which collective projects to prioritize in the coming years.

## Looking ahead

CROs heads into 2025 grateful to be in movement work at a time of drastic shocks and shifts to the world we know.

We will be focused on supporting the launch of decentralized climate resilience hubs; bolstering our internal systems and resources to ensure our stability as a grassroots hub and technical assistance provider; and organizing for change in our existing systems while working in community to build new ones.

Thank you for joining us in this work!



Community Resilience Assessment at VCRD's Community Visit; Johnson, VT