

# REPORT 2020-2025



GROUNDSWELL  
FUND



## FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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At this critical time for our country and the planet, Groundswell Fund provides an essential irrigation system for social justice movements – a channel into which individual donors and foundations can pour resources to reach vital work at the grassroots.

Intersectional grassroots organizing (organizing guided by a race, class, gender, and decolonization analysis) led by women of color and transgender and gender nonconforming (TGNC) people of color is playing a critical role within every major social change movement today. It is winning with bold strategies that refuse to leave people behind, and that build the durable participatory democracy that is needed to win now, defend victories, and win again into the future.

In every movement, this approach to organizing is a north star, lighting the surest path to freedom for all people. Groundswell Fund's purpose has been, and continues to be, to resource this work so that these north stars can shine brighter.

The urgency with which we do this work is at an all-time high.

Our esteemed colleague Tarso Ramos, Executive Director of Political Research Associates notes that “the United States is facing a choice between a multi-racial feminist democracy and authoritarianism.” At Groundswell, we recognize that unless intersectional grassroots organizing is funded at scale, this country will not have the political will to make the right choice.

This Blueprint is a bold plan to dramatically increase this funding. It is informed by what we've learned and experienced as a leading national funder of women of color-led grassroots organizing, moving \$60 million into the field over the last 15 years. It is drawn from over a year of deep reflection, intentional conversations, and conscious data collection with our grantee partners and our donor/funder community.

The vanguard of social justice is fighting with courage and heart for the survival of our planet and the liberation of all people. Groundswell is proud to have their back. We invite you to join us.

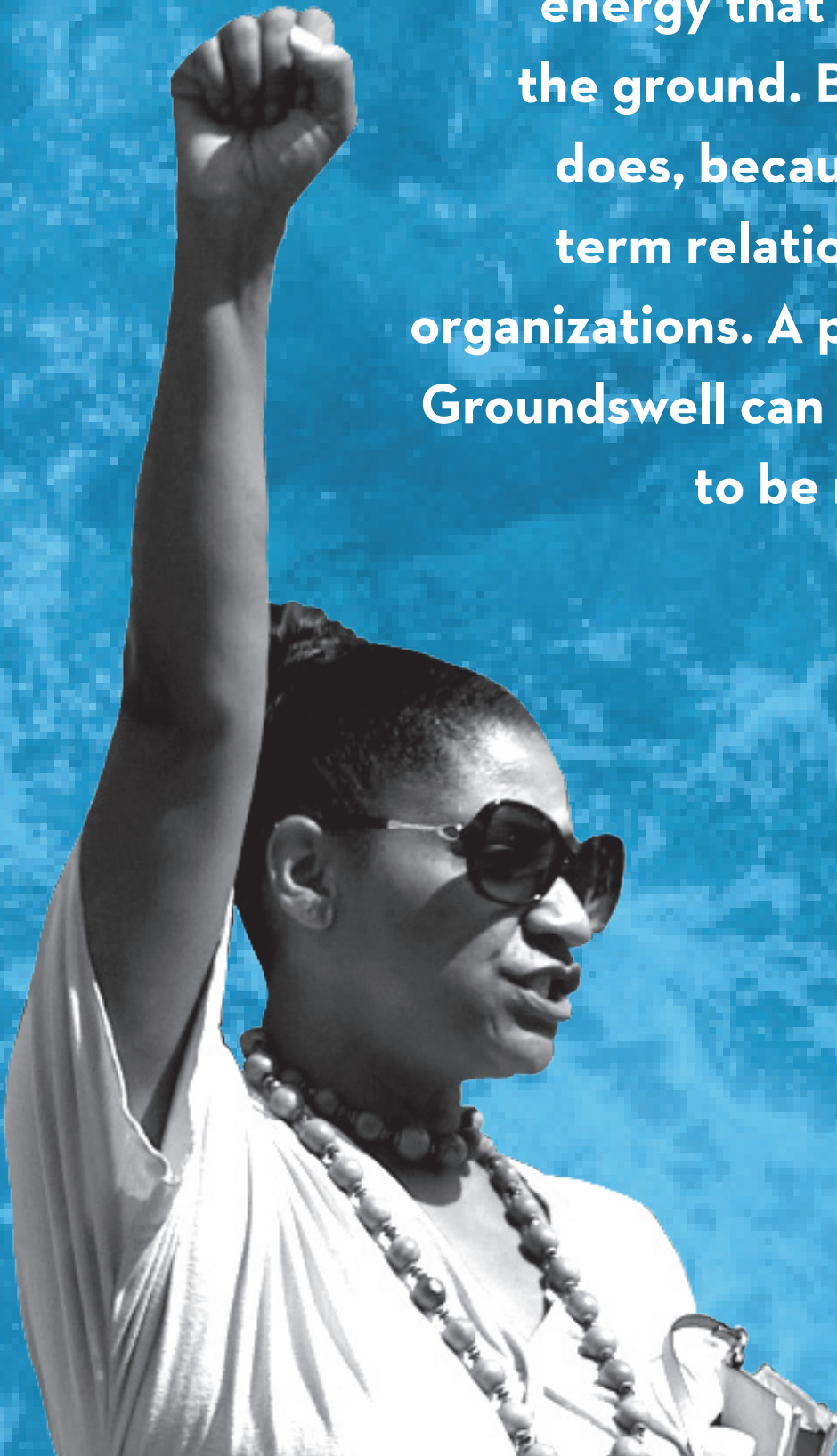
In Solidarity,

Vanessa Daniel  
Executive Director



**In this political moment, many of us don't fully understand the energy that is happening on the ground. But Groundswell does, because it has a long-term relationship with base organizations. A partnership with Groundswell can help any funder to be more impactful.**

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Advance Native Political Leadership

## GROUNDSWELL FUND IS UNIQUE IN PHILANTHROPY

Our board of directors and advisory board members who guide our strategy include the most prominent women of color movement leaders of our time.

Our staff team is led by women of color and transgender people of color who are former grassroots organizers with decades of on-the-ground organizing experience across the United States within many different social justice movements.

Our donors and funders trust that when this kind of leadership guides a foundation, the giving will look different.

Our community currently includes **400 individual donors** and **40 foundations** who are giving through Groundswell to support **over 150 grassroots organizations** across the United States.

Together **we have moved more than \$60 million to the field over the past 15 years.**

In the process, we are modelling the kind of beloved community we hope to see in the world, one where people reach for each other and build solidarity across race, class, and gender.

### We Believe

- 1) The people living at the sharpest crosshairs of race, class, and gender injustice often have the clearest insight into systemic oppression and the best solutions for dismantling it for all people.
- 2) The chasm that exists between the progressive values held by the



overwhelming majority of people in the United States and regressive systems and policies that govern our lives can only be closed through powerful grassroots organizing that empowers people and communities at large to hold public officials accountable.

- 3) Intersectional organizing is the most effective means of energizing and sustaining a grassroots base of support, and winning and protecting material improvements in people's daily lives.
- 4) Philanthropic giving, when done right, is an opportunity for people of all races, classes, and genders to return to right relationship with each other by transgressing greed and control to share and redistribute resources and power towards a more just and equitable world, one in which large-scale philanthropy will no longer be necessary to advance freedom.



Changing Woman Initiative

**I think that part of what prevents donors from trusting and being in real relationship with the people that we ‘want to help’ is that fear of connection, or an anxiety about it. And if I can communicate what a gift it is to work through that fear and connect anyway... that would be the most valuable legacy, because from there ... the world is open.**

**KAREN GROVE**

The Grove Foundation, Groundswell Fund Board Member

# GROUNDSWELL FUND'S 2020 — 2025 BLUEPRINT

## OUR MISSION

Groundswell Fund strengthens U.S. movements for reproductive and social justice by resourcing intersectional grassroots organizing and centering the leadership of women of color – particularly those who are Black, Indigenous, and Transgender.

## WE SUPPORT THE FIELD IN THREE WAYS

1) grants (almost always general support and long term); 2) capacity building for grantee partners who want to increase their grassroots organizing and integrated voter engagement power; and 3) funder organizing to unlock more resources for the kind of organizations we support – whether or not those resources come through our doors.







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**If I fall, I'll fall five feet four inches  
forward in the fight for freedom.  
I'm not backing off.”**

**FANNIE LOU HAMER**

## WE WILL MOVE \$80 MILLION TO THE GRASSROOTS BETWEEN 2020 AND 2025.

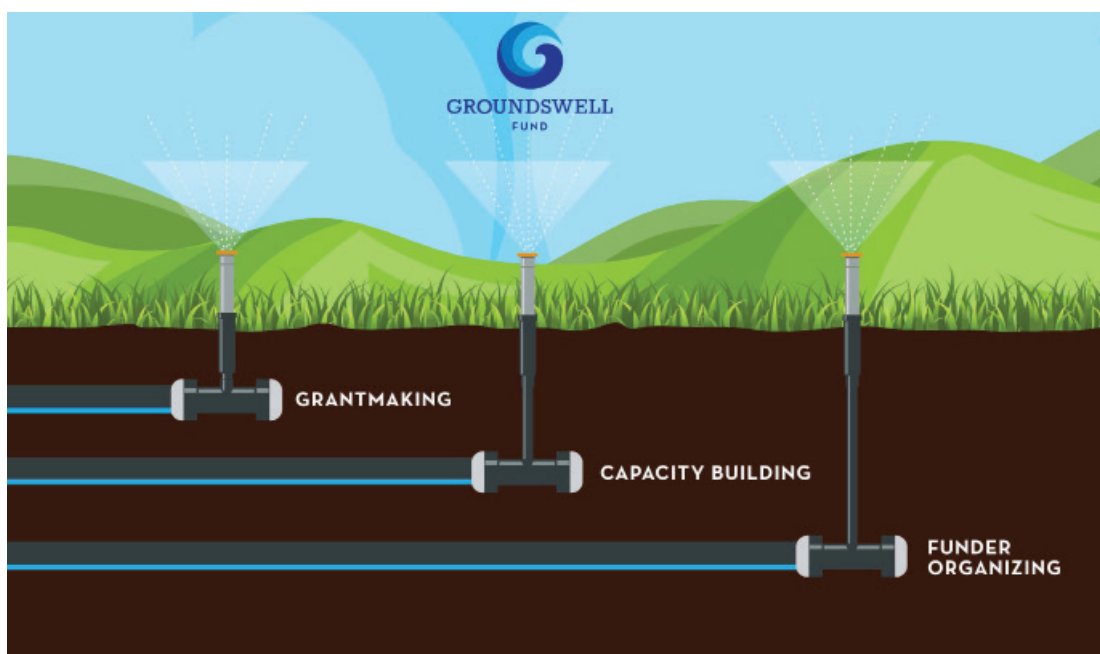
For 15 years, Groundswell Fund has been building an irrigation system to resource social justice movements.

Designed by women of color and TGNC people of color – including many of the most prominent grassroots movement leaders of our time – Groundswell Fund’s approach is thoughtful, sound, and well-aimed at the most promising and impactful organizations.

A **primary goal** of our new Blueprint is **to increase the volume of resources**

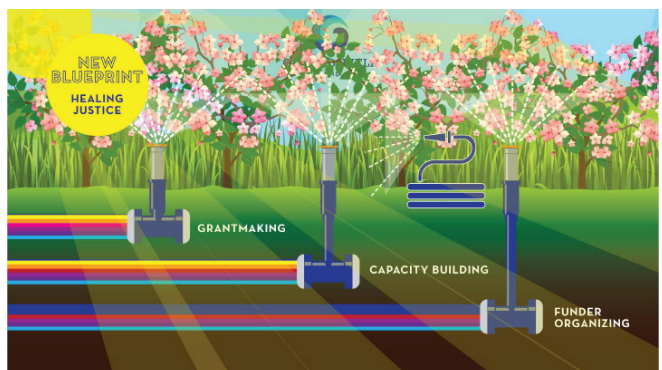
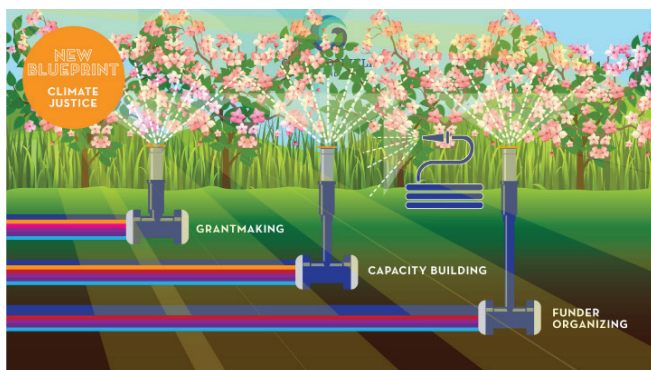
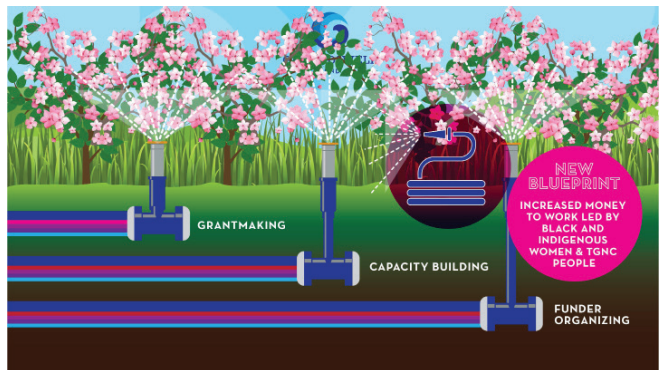
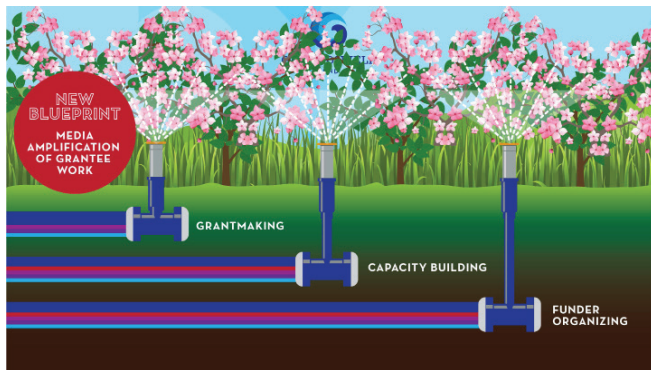
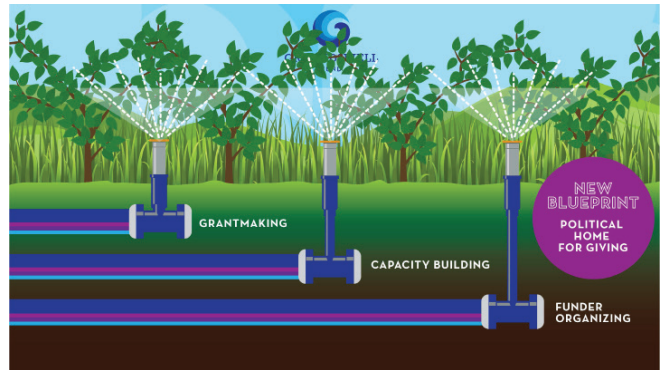
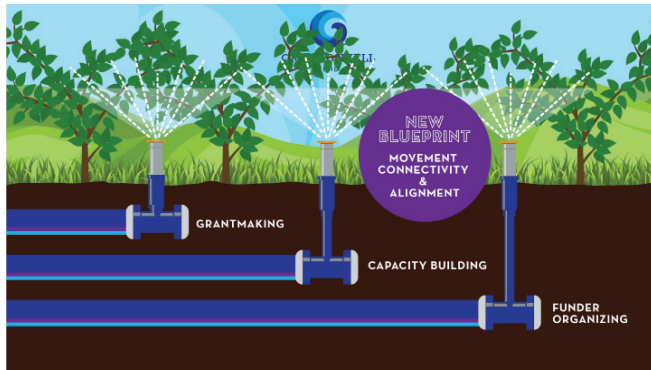
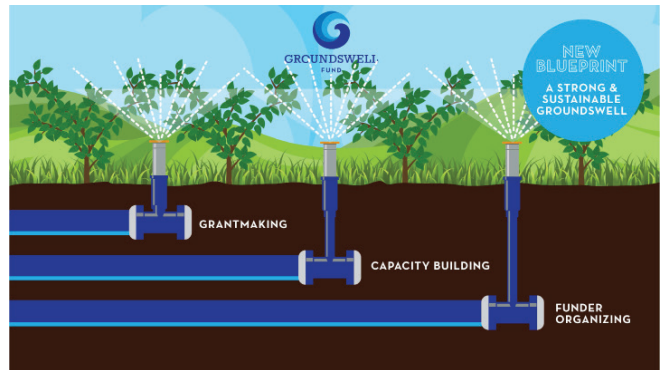
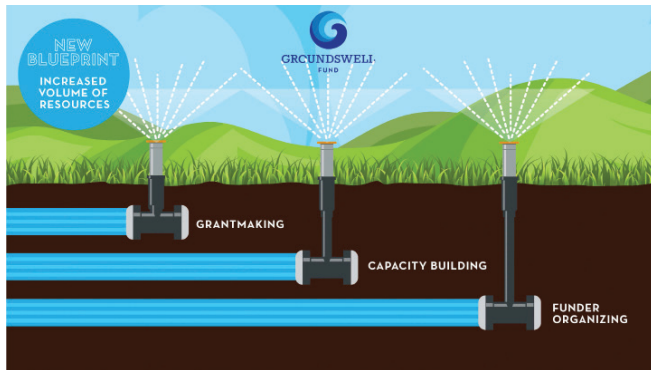
that Groundswell channels to our grantee partners to help them scale their work.

A secondary goal will be to increase the “nutrients” we are putting into Groundswell’s irrigation system to boost the power and sustainability of our grantee partners, and by extension the social justice movements of which they are a part.





## NEW GROUNDSWELL FUND INFRASTRUCTURE



# 4 THERE ARE FOUR KEY ASPECTS TO OUR NEW BLUEPRINT:

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## CONNECT

Groundswell's community is vibrant and wide reaching. It includes 150 grantee partners working in 49 states and territories, 400 individual donors, and 40 foundations.

The loudest message we received from grantee partners and funders alike whom we interviewed to inform this Blueprint was that Groundswell would significantly increase our impact if we helped members of our community connect to and energize one another.

As a leading funder of intersectional organizing efforts within every major social change movement in the United States, we plan to answer this call in a way that is driven by grantees, not funders, to support strategic alignment and movement building.

In this way, we plan to establish Groundswell as an even more vibrant movement home for donors and foundation staff, growing our community of individual donors from 400 to 1,000 over the next five years.

**Groundswell will model how philanthropy can be a space for people to come together across race, class, and gender to move into greater alignment with their own humanity and into right relationship with each other.**





**Not only will we deeply invest in building the capacity of our growing staff – primarily made up of former frontline leaders and people from our core constituencies – we will:**



**Implement a comprehensive, data-based communications and digital organizing strategy** to amplify the work and impact of Groundswell and our grantee partners to a broader audience of funders and donors.



**Lead donors to be powerful organizers** within philanthropy itself to help transform it.



**Join together funders, donors, and movement leaders** to build relationships and discuss thorny issues facing the field.



**Resource meetings and gatherings**, large and small, of movement leaders and organizations that have a desire to build together.

Mujeres Unidas Y Activas





Alaska Community Action on Toxins

## //2 RESOURCE

We will continue to move primary grants to organizations through our four main funds:

**The Catalyst Fund for Reproductive Justice** supports grassroots organizing that advances reproductive justice policy; systems change; and cross-movement alliances with other social justice organizations, including labor, environmental justice, and economic justice.

**The Birth Justice Fund** aims to eliminate disparities in pregnancy and birth outcomes experienced by women of color, low-income women, young

women, and transgender people by expanding their access to midwifery and doula care and training.

**The Liberation Fund** supports the strongest intersectional organizing by women of color and transgender people of color across a diversity of social change movements in the United States.

**The Rapid Response Fund** provides fast funding to grassroots organizations in critical but unexpected fights to protect and advance reproductive and social justice.





Across all funds, we will increase our attention on climate and healing justice.

Climate Justice

Since our beginnings, Groundswell Fund has supported women of color-led organizing at the intersections of environmental and reproductive justice.

Women of color are playing a leading role in organizing for climate justice, an issue that will impact every single person on this planet.

We plan to expand the amount of resources we’re moving to women of color-led and TGNC people of

color-led climate justice work to complement and bolster the efforts of key ally funders.

We will also offer grantee partners from across our funds the opportunity to participate in a learning community to explore the intersections of reproductive justice, climate justice, and other social movements, and how these might relate to the work of their organizations.

We will fund in all 50 states and territories but will prioritize funding to the South, Midwest, and Southwest. Across all lines of work, Groundswell will increase our investment in the leadership of Black women, Indigenous women, Transgender women of color, and TGNC people of color.

Funder organizing will be critical to our ability to resource the movement. The following shows the growth we project in this area:

	2019	2025
Annual budget	\$13.8M*	\$20M*
# of individual donors	400	1,000
Money raised from individual donors	3.2 million (15%)	\$4M (20%)
Money raised from institutional funders	10.6 million (70%)	\$16M (80%)

\*Moving at least 80% of all revenue back out to the field

## Healing Justice

Following the 2016 presidential election, we witnessed a number of our grantee partners experience burnout and serious health challenges. In response, we piloted a wellness fund. We received more applications than we had for any other fund in Groundswell history.

Grantee partners were hungry for resources to integrate mind-body and wellness practices into their work; to take a sabbatical; to develop safety plans for their undocumented activist canvassers; to develop HR policies that are aligned with their reproductive justice values; and much more.

The demand for funding was an indication to us of something that most of us who engage with social justice movements already know: burnout is a huge problem in our sector.

The pace of the work, the intensity of the opposition, the trauma absorbed by organizers working with frontline communities

can quickly become too much to bear without the proper tools and support.

The sustained organizing grassroots base needed to build and protect a participatory democracy requires new cultures and practices that promote health and resilience durable enough for a marathon, not just a sprint.

**During this 2020-2025 Blueprint, we want to support our grantee partners who are exploring a healing justice approach, while also looking internally at how we can create more sustainable practices within Groundswell.**

Our hope is that by 2025, Groundswell grantee partners will be supported by Groundswell (and others) to be successful in their organizing efforts without sacrificing the sustainability and health of their staff and members.

### We see our particular niche in supporting healing justice as twofold:

- 1) Learning about and supporting** healing justice practices that are part of broader efforts to build grassroots power;
- 2) Creating ways for birth workers of color to share** what they know about healing justice with a much wider audience.







## OUR BENCHMARKS

FUND	2019	2025	ACROSS ALL FUNDS
Catalyst Fund for Reproductive Justice	\$2.85M	\$4.5M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Increase connectivity among grantees and social movements</li><li>• Decrease administrative burden on organizations</li><li>• Increase our attention to healing justice and climate justice in how Groundswell supports partners</li></ul>
Birth Justice Fund	\$800K	\$1.5M	
Liberation Fund	\$1M	\$1.75M	
Rapid Response Fund	\$250K	\$500K	

While we reserve the flexibility to fund organizations with various types of leadership, we have clear and public benchmarks to which we will hold ourselves accountable for the total percentage of our annual giving to the following groups:

CONSTITUENCY	2018 INVESTMENT*	2025 INVESTMENT
Indigenous women	9.8% (\$795,000)	15%
Black women	34.6% (\$2,800,124)	40-45%
Transgender women of color	7.5% (\$611,000)	12%
Transgender and Gender nonconforming people of color**	15.1% (\$1,224,000)	20%

\*Percentage of total grants moved through capacity building and grantmaking portfolios.

\*\*TGNC numbers include Transgender women of color.



## //3 STRENGTHEN

Grassroots power is built and maintained through strong organizations with the infrastructure and agility to deliver material changes in the lives of people in their communities, and maintain a vibrant and organized grassroots base with the power to defend key victories and win again, year after year.

The movements that Groundswell supports are confronted with an unprecedented base-building opportunity: a chance to bring millions of new people into their ranks to power a much-needed sea change in policies, systems, and culture.

Over the years, our grantee partners have asked Groundswell Fund to support them in leaning into this opportunity to skill and scale their grassroots power, and we

responded with the Grassroots Organizing Institute (GOI) and an Integrated Voter Engagement (IVE) program. Both of these programs have delivered major gains for participating organizations.

**Our new Blueprint goal is that between 2020 and 2025, 64 women of color-led and TGNC people of color-led organizations in our capacity building programs will lead impactful grassroots power building campaigns that shape the social movements of our generation while allowing leaders to be cared for, whole, and seen.**

As always, any and all capacity building offerings that Groundswell Fund provides will be optional, rather than mandatory, for grantee partners.





Tewa Women United

“

**Groundswell’s Integrated Voter Engagement Program allows us to do this work with a gender lens ... to be ourselves. We don’t have to hide our focus on women, girls, queer leaders, and femmes.**

**KABZUAG VAJ**

Co-Executive Director, Freedom, Inc.

**Under our new Blueprint, we will continue our two flagship programs:**

- 1) The Integrated Voter Engagement Program will maintain its focus** on building strong community bases rooted in a clear race, class, gender, and decolonization analysis and year-round grassroots organizing.
- 2) The Grassroots Organizing Institute will continue to support organizations** that are in the early stages of incorporating a grassroots organizing strategy into their work.

## **We will strengthen and expand our work in the following areas:**

### **Civic Education**

A key superpower of intersectional organizing is 360° vision. The ability to look at an issue and see the race, class, gender, and decolonization dimensions allows for the creation of more effective and complete solutions.

This superpower increases the more our vision is sharpened in each of these areas. Sharpening comes through civic education – some of it through direct lived experience; some through hearing the lived experiences of others; and some through study of the history, resistance, and resilience of different groups of people.

**Based on grantee feedback, we will increase our offerings of civic education to our grantee partners.**

We will do this in partnership with skilled grassroots practitioners who have a strong track record of delivering intersectional civic education to women of color and TGNC people of color.

Topics might include: understanding the history and current status of movements for reproductive justice, trans justice, prison abolition, Indigenous sovereignty, rights of excluded workers, and migrant justice; peer learning about organizing and voter engagement tactics that are getting results; and articulating the vision for liberated communities.

Trans Latin@ Coalition

“

**When I dare to be powerful, to use my strength in the service of my vision, then it becomes less and less important whether I am afraid.**

**AUDRE LORDE**



## Infrastructure Building Rooted in a Race, Class, Gender, and Decolonization Analysis

Groundswell will enter into a test partnership with a movement-trusted organizational development provider to work with a set of grantee groups or alliances to build their overall infrastructure – such as their **internal systems for human resources, work management, and leadership development – rooted in a race, class, gender, and decolonization analysis.**

This will address a key challenge to advancing organizing, which is inadequate infrastructure and systems to fully support effective campaigns and sustained organizing.

Learnings from this partnership will inform future offerings to support all Groundswell grantee partners more holistically in their work to build power.







## //4 SET

In martial arts, tai chi, and many sports, “set” is a term used to denote a stance of strength and readiness before taking action. Groundswell Fund’s ability to execute this Blueprint externally will depend on the quality of our “set”: the health, well-being, and sustainability of Groundswell Fund’s own staff and infrastructure. Part of our role is to model what is possible within philanthropy and within social justice organizations more broadly.

**Investing in our own infrastructure will be a top priority for Groundswell’s overall 2020-2025 Blueprint and what is needed to catch up with the exponential growth we experienced from 2014-2019.**

While we will maintain a cap on how many of our resources can go into our internal work (20%), we will treat the sustainability of our staff as social change work and part of the “real work.” We cannot effectively support funders and frontline leaders to transform unless we ourselves are transforming!

To reflect the important holistic role of operations and administration for stable finances, a thriving virtual community (as we are now a virtual organization), and a healthy and liberated organizational culture, we have changed the name of our Operations Department to Community, Culture, and Currency.



URGE

“

**You have to act as if it were possible to radically transform the world. And you have to do it all the time.**

**ANGELA DAVIS**

## **Key goals for strengthening Groundswell Fund:**

- 1) Thrive as a virtual organization** through rigorous training in technology, security, and systems; a culture that fosters connection; and a structure that promotes strong collaboration across departments.
- 2) Support Black, Indigenous, and TGNC leadership within Groundswell's staff** through proactive recruitment, staff development, and ongoing team-wide political education on disrupting bias, micro-aggressions, and structural racism and transphobia.
- 3) Invest in relationship building** by prioritizing opportunities for trust building during virtual and in-person staff meetings and achieving a protocol for decision making that is both collaborative and efficient, allowing us to maintain the nimbleness for which Groundswell is known.
- 4) Foster a sustainable work environment**, ensuring healthy pacing and spaciousness throughout our work to allow for excellence, reflection, and learning.
- 5) Increase our attention to safety**, providing and promoting safer spaces physically, emotionally, and mentally in the places where we and our grantee partners meet and work.
- 6) Maintain strong financial health**, continuing our strong financial systems and processes that allow us to report accurately on the financial well-being of Groundswell Fund.

**We are all more free when women of color and TGNC communities of color are free.**

**We win more ambitious social justice goals when the strategies are being designed by and for women of color and TGNC people of color.**

**This 2020-2025 Blueprint offers a pathway for Groundswell to stay the course in our existing successful strategic direction and to innovate in ways that respond to our learning and to the unique needs of this historic moment.**

**Thank you for believing in us, investing in us, and partnering with us.**



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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We would like to thank all of our board, staff, and partners who have informed the 2020-2025 Groundswell Fund Blueprint. They include:

All Past and Present Groundswell Fund Grantee Organizations who are on the frontlines of innovation and change every day.

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Past and Present Board Members who contributed to this most recent Blueprint design process, including: Amanda Coslor, Independent Donor \* Brook Kelly-Green, Schusterman Family Foundation \* Connie Cagampang Heller, Linked Fate Fund for Justice \* Jamia Wilson, Random House \* Jihan Gearon, Climate Justice Activist \* Karen Grove, Grove Foundation \* Kierra Johnson, National LGBTQ Task Force \* Kiyomi Fujikawa, Third Wave Fund \* La'Tasha D. Mayes, New Voices for Reproductive Justice \* Pamela K. Miller, Alaska Community Action on Toxics \* Rocio L. Córdoba, Funders for Reproductive Equity

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Consultants, including: Blueprint Design Consultant Mari Ryono \* Organizational Development Consultants Elsa Ríos & Lisa Garrett, Strategies for Social Change

Cover images: The left image is courtesy of Trans Latin@ Coalition. The middle image is from Uzazi Village courtesy of MONIQUA Photography, and the right image is courtesy of Changing Woman Initiative.



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