

WE LEAD FUND 2023 Annual Report

Yearly Highlights

Landscape Analysis

In the spring of 2023, WE LEAD had just completed its fourth year of grantmaking and wanted to learn more about how that investment was impacting our grantee partners and what else these and other organizations might need to sustain and thrive in the climate/ environmental justice space.

The team conducted interviews with organizational leadership, had multiple funder conversations, and heard back from many of our grant partners who participated in a comprehensive survey. Their collective feedback and insights can be found in this report, which includes recommendations for philanthropy.

WE LEAD will build upon the knowledge gained through these conversations and is establishing a new advisory council who will help shape the fund's strategy and framework for grantmaking in 2024.

The full report can be viewed here: <u>Understanding the</u> Landscape for Black, Indigenous, Women of Color-led Climate and Environmental Justice Organizations.

Below we invite you to learn more about our grantee partners and their challenges and successes. The handful of grantee profiles included here highlight the diversity of community approaches to organizing around environmental justice. The full list of approved grants in 2023 can be found at the end of the report.



March to End Fossil Fuels and Climate Week

WE LEAD supported a group of grantee partners to attend the March to End Fossil Fuels and Climate Week events in September 2023 as an important way to connect with peer organizations; partner on advocacy and policy efforts; influence local, regional, and national campaigns; and be in community and organize with each other.

Maui Docket

In response to the wildfires that ravaged Maui, Hawai'i, in early August 2023, WE LEAD made critical grants to local frontline organizations in support of relief and recovery efforts. Despite local government and federal support, the mismanagement, failed systems, and cultural disparities with FEMA highlighted the need for community-centric partnerships.



Who We Are

TIDES

We believe that a just and equitable future can exist only when communities who have been historically denied power have the social, political, and economic power they need to create it.

To make that a reality, we work in deep partnership with doers and donors to center the leadership of changemakers from these communities, connecting them to services, capacity building, and resources to amplify their impact. Our values influence all that we do, from cultivating deep partnerships with movement leaders and helping donors shift resources to advancing the crucial work of justice and equity. Everything we do at Tides is in service of helping leaders on the ground move us all toward a just and equitable future. We partner with individuals and organizations committed to shifting the social sector toward more equitable norms and practices, and provide equity-focused services ranging from operational support and grantmaking to donor advised funds and more.

TIDES-LED INITIATIVES

Our pooled grantmaking funds are organized to support the most critical social justice work, whether it's nimbly responding to frontline climate justice leaders, organizing for the health of our democracy, investing in the storytelling power of immigrant communities, or making long-term investments in the power and voice of girls and women of color and their allies. Established in 2019, Tides initiatives channel funding directly to the bold visionaries on the ground who are devoting their lives to addressing deeply rooted injustices.

Embracing the practices and principles of trust-based philanthropy, we work with movement leaders and donor networks to identify the most impactful strategies to support communities on the frontlines, including rapid response grants that cover urgent needs, multiyear funding commitments that foster growth and sustainability, and participatory grantmaking that involves communities in decision making.

Through our initiatives, we leverage the collective power of multiple donors to supercharge their donation — and their impact. From 2019–2023, \$100 million in funding has been granted through <u>our six Tides-led initiatives</u>, supporting 350-plus grantee partners both within and outside the United States.



West Virgina Rivers Coalition

WE LEAD

In April 2020, the Tides Foundation launched the Women's Environmental Leadership Fund (WE LEAD), a Tides-led grantmaking initiative that supports women's and gender-diverse people's grassroots leadership on the frontlines of environmental disruption in the United States.

WE LEAD focuses on addressing historic inequities by directing resources to environmental justice organizations and climate-focused programs led by proximate leaders most impacted by these issues including Black, Indigenous, and women of color–led organizations. Rooted in the conviction that those living closest to the issues have the best solutions, the WE LEAD grantmaking initiative has invested in dozens of groups advancing equity and justice through the individual and collective power of community-driven advocacy and action.

Fund Priorities

Leadership.

Elevating the leadership of Black women, women of color, Indigenous women, and other proximate leaders, and directing funding to organizations that intentionally sustain, heal, and grow women's leadership. Women include cisgender women, transgender women, two-spirit, gender nonbinary, and gender nonconforming.

Environmental justice.

Focusing on organizations or programs that center their strategy on addressing the root causes and impacts of climate change and solutions-based approaches to systemic change. Prioritizing organizations leading work at the intersection of racial, gender, and environmental justice movements.

Community.

Lifting up organizations that center the voices of community members historically and systematically overburdened by climate change, where the organization is building community power and advancing advocacy efforts for long-term impact.

By the Numbers

2023 Grantmaking



Our Approach

- Flexible, unrestricted, general operating, and project support grants to contribute to the sustainability of frontline environmental and climate justice organizations.
- Provide rapid response grants and multiyear grants on a case-by-case basis to help groups thrive for the long term.
- Funding decisions through a participatory grantmaking model designed to work directly in partnership with frontline groups, leaders, and activists.
- Trust-based philanthropy practices that are accessible, transparent, and responsive. WE LEAD seeks to practice the Six Principles of Trust-Based Philanthropy to address the inherent power imbalances between funders and grant recipients.
- Draw upon Tides' nearly 50 years of experience working hand-in-hand with movement leaders and grassroots environmental and social justice organizations.

To learn more about our approach to grantmaking, see <u>Tides Grantmaking Best Practices</u>.

Governance

WE LEAD awards grants through a variety of processes, including Tides-initiated open requests for proposals run by staff using a peer-review process. WE LEAD also supports opportunistic grants that are aligned with the fund's mission.

We are grateful to our Independent Advisory Committee members who have reviewed our 2023 grant proposals and made funding recommendations aligning with our mission and charitable purpose and goals of the organization. Current IAC members are: Kimberly Middleton, Michelle Mitchell, Peter Martin, and Shauné Zunzanyika.



Grantee Profiles

Downwinders at Risk Texas

The organization Downwinders at Risk was founded in 1994 by Sue Pope, a white woman who became an activist after she realized that her community, a few miles outside of Dallas, was suffering the toxic effects of hazardous waste being burned in their midst and that the government was not going to protect them. Evolutions like Pope's — from community member to empowered activist — remain the foundation of Downwinders at Risk, which considers building and networking homegrown leaders to be at the heart of what it does.

Downwinders is now Dallas-based and focuses on working in the city's communities that have been prey to race- and income-based zoning that permitted toxic industry at their doorsteps. Most of these communities are in southern and western Dallas, areas where Black and Hispanic residents are highly concentrated. Within these neighborhoods, Downwinders assists informal groups in streamlining and organizing; among them *Justice for Joppa*, which formed in the oldest Black community in Dallas. The residents of Joppa have been lobbying against a nearby asphalt batch plant's pollution for years. When an additional concrete plant was proposed, *Justice for Joppa* was able to fight a proposed zoning change that would have paved the way for the plant with the support of Downwinders. Singleton United/Unidos Neighbors, is based in Floral Farms, a neighborhood of West Dallas adjacent to an area that was infamously known as Shingle Mountain because it housed an illegal dump and processing plant for discarded roof shingles. Although residents had been protesting the toxic waste produced by the site since 2018, the municipal government seemed to find a neighborhood where a quarter of the residents speak primarily Spanish, and thus easy to ignore. When the Floral Farms residents linked with Downwinders at a *Justice for Joppa* meeting, they were able to streamline their efforts, wage a media campaign and force the city of Dallas to clean up more than 70,000 tons of toxic waste.



Downwinders helps organize these groups to work beyond their individual neighborhood and fight as a unified force for widespread rights. It supported Singleton United, Joppa environmental activists, and the Coalition for Neighborhood Self-Determination in filing a 2022 complaint with HUD alleging that concentrating industrial zoning in the Black and brown neighborhoods of Dallas violates the Fair Housing Act. Groups like these are also looking ahead with a coalition organized by Downwinders called the *Neighborhood Self-Defense Project* that advocates for community-led development through equitable processes such as a mechanism for the rapid approval of neighborhood-created land use plans.

Although Downwinders has evolved over the years, it has stayed true to its roots as it was born from a community-led campaign. Not only does its board reflect the makeup of Dallas — both are majority people of color — but it lives its principles: Downwinders' current head of community organizing, Joppa resident Alicia Kendrick, first encountered the organization by attending a meeting while fighting for her community.



Inclusive Louisiana Louisiana

Sitting between better known neighbors, New Orleans and Baton Rouge, is St. James Parish, the fourth smallest of Louisiana's 64 parishes (a Louisiana parish is akin to a county).

Heavy industry began coming into the parish in 1958. By 2003, the United States Environmental Protection Agency found that the rate for certain types of cancer in St. James Parish exceeded the national average. So, the Parish Council decided to concentrate on the toxic but lucrative industrialization: In 2014, it adopted a Land Use Plan that redesignated sections of its majority-Black 4th and 5th districts as "future industrial."

In a bombshell 2023 lawsuit filed with two other parties, Inclusive Louisiana — a community organization founded by three retired women who are lifetime St. James Parish 5th and 6th district community members — brought a claim against the parish for violating the US Constitution's 13th Amendment because, it alleged, the Land Use Plan "operates as a badge or incident of slavery." They sued the parish for violating the 14th Amendment because, they allege, the parish intended unequal treatment toward Black residents. The suit alleged that the plan is religious discrimination in violation of the Constitution because it burdens the ability of the Black Baptist churches to worship. And, it





challenged the parish for violating the 14th Amendment's guarantee of "bodily integrity" by exposing the residents to hazardous toxins.

Although the lawsuit suffered a blow at the end of 2023 when the U.S. Fifth District Court ruled that it was filed too late, Inclusive Louisiana, et al., are appealing. And indeed, the judge's decision made it clear that while he was dismissing the lawsuit because of the statute of limitations, he disagreed with the Parish Council's characterization of Inclusive Louisiana's claims as "immaterial, impertinent, and scandalous."

In the meantime, the industrialization of their community has marched on. Since 2014, five industrial-plant proposals have been approved. "We get particulate matter from the grain elevator, and all of those plants are putting out chemicals into the environment," says Barbara Washington, an Inclusive Louisiana founder and executive director with Myrtle Felton and Gail LeBoeuf. "We're full," adds LeBoeuf.

How were all these things able to happen? In the shadows, LeBoeuf and Washington say. According to them, the Parish Council would vote for one thing in a heavily attended meeting and then vote for the opposite when scrutiny had diminished.

"How can it be that in 2022 these meetings aren't being recorded?" LeBoeuf asks. Funds from WE LEAD will be used to record the council meetings. The organization has also purchased a building that will be a "lighthouse" for the community as a place to shed light on the dangers in their midst and to gather light — they plan to power it with solar energy.

And they will continue to pursue the lawsuit with their co-plaintiffs, a local church and RISE St. James, a sister environmental organization based on the other shore of the Mississippi River that winds through the Parish. "They're on the West Bank fighting and we are on the East Bank fighting, "Washington says. "The environmental injustice that we see is from all of the plants that we have. The fight is the same." •





Maui Medic Healers Hui Hawaii

On August 8, 2023, the deadliest US wildfire in 100 years broke out in the town of Lahaina on the Hawaiian island of Maui. The next day Maui Medic Healers Hui's teams of healers set out, providing holistic care to those affected. "Doctors, nurses, acupuncturists, therapists, lomilomi [traditional massage], Indigenous birth keepers and midwives — we really just took care of the community," says Noelani Ahia, the founder of Maui Medic Healers Hui (MMHH). "Whether that was 'mommy medicine' like Band-Aids or helping people get wheelchairs and walkers or their medications that burned in the fire — whatever it was they needed."

MMHH emerged in response to a violent incident suffered by a Kānaka Maoli [Hawaiian] man protesting the desecration of a sacred mountain. As she witnessed his distress, Ahia realized that the protesters needed to be able to tend to each other. With Kalana Ni, a doctor and activist, she formed Maui Medic Healers Hui, to facilitate access to healthcare for vulnerable activists. Their target population has since grown to include all vulnerable people on Maui Island, with the goal of providing them with culturally appropriate physical, mental, and spiritual care.

Spiritual tending is a crucial part of Ahia's quest because it was essential to her own journey. Born in California to a Hawaiian man who had been raised to be ashamed of his culture, she was living in New York when she felt called to Hawaii in order to, as she says, "discover who I was as an Indigenous person." Ahia was working on Maui as an

FIRST AID

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acupuncturist and trying to understand why she saw so many Hawaiians with stress-related ailments like diabetes, hypertension, and heart disease. "I started to understand that it's not because there's anything wrong with Hawaiians, it's because we live in a system of oppression that targets our people. And I started to understand that if we didn't address these larger systemic issues, our people are never going to be well." This led her to activism and then to the creation of MMHH.

Many of the healers who work with MMHH have other jobs that they take leave of when a crisis such as the Lahaina fire calls. The funds from Tides will enable stipends for these healers while they serve the community, in addition to enabling MMHH to provide training and purchase of medical supplies. But MMHH's true goal is, as per Ahia's cultural outlook, more holistic. She notes that Indigenous people take care of 80 percent of the world's biodiversity but suffer deeply from man-made catastrophic environmental imbalance. MMHH wants to help heal the Kānaka Maoli people and return to a value system where the land is an extension of the people rather than a resource to be exploited. • "I started to understand that if we didn't address these larger systemic issues, our people are never going to be well."





The Smile Trust Florida

The Smile Trust, founded by Valencia Gunder eight years ago, provides food, showers, clothing, rent support, and really anything that is needed to the unsheltered and under-resourced residents of Miami. But even before that, Gunder was providing what she could ad hoc — she knew what was needed because Gunder was once unsheltered herself.

"People would just throw the food at me any kind of way, and I promised myself, like when I got on my feet, I would help," Gunder recalls. She grew up in Miami in Liberty City, an inland neighborhood that has long been home to Black residents. Within Liberty City is Liberty Square, a housing project that was developed as part of the New Deal in the 1930s. Known in the 1980s for crime and drug traffic, the city announced a plan to raze and redevelop the complex in 2015. Nearly \$75 million has been committed to rebuild Liberty Square and the neighborhood, but for whom, the residents are asking.

"When I was a girl, my grandfather always used to say, 'They are going to come and take Liberty City because we don't flood," Gunder said in the 2023 Academy Award– nominated documentary "Razing Liberty Square," about the revitalization project.

Gunder and other Liberty City residents are wary of this climate-induced gentrification. "If you look at the history of them telling us we couldn't go onto the beach, we had to stay in this specific neighborhood, these are the same exact neighborhoods that they forced us to live in that now they want because they are going underwater. We are seeing an increase of displacement due to sea level rise in our community and Liberty Square is the vital point of that," Gunder says. The community is fighting to ensure that the displaced residents can actually move back into Liberty Square when the project is finished.

> "These are the same exact neighborhoods that they forced us to live in that now they want because they are going underwater."



Hunkering down in Liberty City, The Smile Trust has transformed an empty church it was gifted in the area into a "Freedom Lab." The organization crowd-sourced the money to renovate it, and it now houses seven social-justice organizations including The Smile Trust. Following the grand opening in December 2023, The Smile Trust has been feeding 200 families every day from the space. In addition, Gunder says they have housing organizations, the only free urgent care clinic in the Liberty City community, and they even grow food.

"We shape-shift the building so it's whatever the community needs it to be," Gunder explains. Because of their desire for fluidity in order to best serve the community's current needs, Gunder says, "It's been hard to explain what we do to philanthropy, and we've been doing this work off of pennies. Support from a foundation like Tides would be life-changing for us."





West Virginia Rivers Coalition West Virginia

"One of the few silver linings of the pipeline boom in Central Appalachia is that the battle against it has helped unite once disparate communities of West Virginians who want to protect the environment," says Angie Rosser, executive director of the West Virginia Rivers Coalition (WVRC).

"We have parts of our state where there's been more coal mining, and other parts where there's been more fracking. But the pipelines really widened that impact tremendously and made the state as a whole realize that no one, no matter where you live, isn't going to be untouched by extractive industries," Rosser says. A transplant from Ohio, she moved to West Virginia soon after graduating from college: "I live here because it's beautiful and wonderful and the people are just the most friendly you'll ever meet anywhere. We deserve better."

In 2012 when Rosser began working at the WVRC, the state was undergoing a shale-gas fracking boom as companies attempted to extract shale from the Marcellus and Utica formations some 5,000 to 12,000 miles under the surface of West Virginia and surrounding states. Because of the large footprint, the deep horizontal drilling, and the chemicals that were being used, the waste produced brought a host of water quality concerns to local communities.

Then a wave of pipelines, including the Atlantic Coast pipeline and the Mountain Valley pipeline, began being built to move the gas west and east. Pipelines are long, affecting a huge swath of watersheds, rivers and ecosystems, so at that point, WV Rivers Coalition changed to focus on the effect they were having on the environment, calling on citizen monitors. With Trout Unlimited, a Virginia-based organization, it developed an assessment program and app to train volunteer citizen observers to identify, document, and report pollution incidents associated with the large-scale pipeline development.

Although West Virginia is a small state geographically, its population density is particularly low, and its civilian activists, while dedicated, are often isolated. The funds





from Tides have helped WVRC (one of West Virginia's few statewide environmental organizations) build connections among the various communities working to preserve their environments, together. "We make sure that the various communities aren't feeling alone and isolated; that they have resources, they have tools," Rosser says. "Tides has helped us form the West Virginia Climate Alliance and that brings together regional, statewide, and very hyper-local groups — not just environmental but civil rights, faith- and healthbased groups — to speak in one voice. The capacity building through the climate alliance will help provide training and support to a cohort of local organizers who will be embedded in local communities doing this kind of work."

Rosser is excited about the support they are now able to provide to local communities that are trying to embrace climate-forward work, a delicate balancing act in a state where the economy has been dependent on the fossil-fuel industry. "When you see a community rallying around an electric bus manufacturing center, how cool is that? We're making them here in West Virginia! These kinds of stories and examples are what it's going to take to bring people along with this vision that we don't have to hold on to fossil-fuel dependence." •

"I live here because it's beautiful and wonderful and the people are just the most friendly you'll ever meet anywhere. We deserve better."

Thank You

WE LEAD is profoundly grateful to our philanthropic partners who are responding to the urgency of our climate crisis and advancing equity and justice in the US by resourcing the individual and collective power of proximate leaders and community-driven solutions. Your generous support has increased the expansion of our unrestricted grantmaking and will grow this initiative for years to come. We thank you.

WE LEAD 2023 Approved Grants

The grant recipients of the WE LEAD Fund represent a breadth of environmental and climate justice advocacy and organizing efforts and were chosen for their depth of commitment to their communities. They are working across geographical and perceived borders and intersecting issues to achieve their vision — and our human right — for safe, healthy, and sustainable environments.

ALASKA

Native Movement

nativemovement.org

Rooted in an Indigenized worldview, dedicated to ensuring social justice, Indigenous People's rights, and the rights of Mother Earth.

ARIZONA

Black Lives Matter Phoenix Metro

blmphxmetro.org

A Black, queer, and femme-led organization working toward Black liberation, building solidarities with other colonized Black people in the global South to end imperial rule.

CALIFORNIA

Indigenous Climate Action

indigenousclimateaction.com

An Indigenous-led organization guided by a diverse group of Indigenous knowledge keepers, water protectors and land defenders from communities and regions across the country.

People's Climate Innovation Center

climateinnovation.net

Through leadership training and support, they expand the capacity, networks, and resources of community-based organizations to lift up grassroots leaders as solution makers.

People Over Plastic

peopleoverplastic.co

A multicultural media platform publishing environmental stories from the frontlines by and for BIPOC, focusing on race, culture, and politics.

FLORIDA

The Smile Trust

thesmiletrust.org

A grassroots resilience network, where movement organizations, organizers, and community members become first responders after natural and man-made disasters.

GUAM

Micronesia Climate Change Alliance

mccalliance.org

A grassroots network of individuals and organizations dedicated to creating community-centered solutions to climate change.

HAWAII

Hawaii Alliance for Progressive Action hapahi.org

Committed to championing social, economic, and environmental justice throughout Hawai'i.

Hawaii Peace and Justice

hawaiipeaceandjustice.org

Working toward a liberated world through the promotion of peace, abolition, demilitarization, and climate and social justice.

Ka 'Ehu Hawaii

kaehu.org

Restoring the land and perpetuating traditional Hawaiian culture using a community-based, inclusive, family-oriented approach to environmental stewardship and sustainable agriculture.

Ka Lāhui Hawai'i

kalahuihawaii.com

A native initiative for Hawaiian self-governance advocating for Hawaiian Self-Determination and Human Rights set forth in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and International Human Rights Conventions.

Ko'ihonua

koihonua.org

To reclaim and to restore Hawaiian lands and provide the means and resources for Hawaiians to engage in traditional practices by creating Hawaiian cultural space.

Maui Medic Healers Hui

mauimedichealershui.org

Providing a variety of services as they strive to create spaces for healing in times of struggle, disaster and trauma.

Sustainable Molokai

sustainablemolokai.org

Working to restore 'āina momona (thriving people and abundant land).

ILLINOIS

Macedonia Development Corporation

facebook.com/mdcnfp

A faith-based organization created to address failed institutional policies and answer the call of the most vulnerable residents in the East St. Louis Greater Metro area through major renewable energy projects, job creation, and community development.

LOUISIANA

Deep South Center for Environmental Justice

<u>dscej.org</u>

Partnering with communities harmed by racially disproportionate pollution burdens and attendant climate vulnerabilities.

Inclusive Louisiana

inclusivelouisiana.org

Dedicated to protecting the residents of St. James Parish and neighboring parishes from environmental harm caused by industrial pollution.

Rural Roots Louisiana

ruralrootslouisiana.org

Providing literacy and promoting community stewardship and earth care.

MARYLAND

Chisholm Legacy Project Inc

thechisholmlegacyproject.org

Rooted in a Just Transition Framework, the project serves as a vehicle to connect Black communities on the frontlines of climate justice with resources to traverse the path from vision to strategy to action plan to implementation to transformation.

MICHIGAN

Michigan Environmental Justice Coalition

michiganej.org

Believing in a world where all of us, no matter our race, place, or politics, have access to affordable, renewable, and community-controlled energy.

MINNESOTA

Honor the Earth

honorearth.org

Founded to raise awareness and financial support for Indigenous environmental justice.

MISSISSIPPI

Education, Economics, Environmental, Climate and Health Organization

<u>eeecho.org</u>

Envisions a community of stakeholders vested in more productive and resilient neighborhoods, self-reliance, and advanced preparedness to adequately adapt to the growing challenges which adversely and disproportionately impact our most vulnerable communities.

NEW MEXICO

Earth Care International/YUCCA

earthcarenm.org

Working to equip youth and families with the tools needed to secure a healthy, just, and equitable future.

Nihi Ké Baa

nnmsurj.org/nkb

A collective of grassroots Diné organizers working to remediate their homelands to create a healthy and viable future rooted in ancestral knowledge.

San Juan Collaborative for Health Equity

nmhep.org/partners/san-juan-community-che

Working with rural and metropolitan communities impacted by social, economic, and health disparities stemming from environmental racism.

NEW YORK

The New School Tishman Environment and Design Center/ EJ Movement Fellowship

tishmancenter.org/ejfellowship

Supporting and growing the capacity of movement leaders to design innovative and disruptive strategies that advance a transformative climate justice agenda on a local, tribal, national, and global scale.

TEXAS

Fenceline Watch

fencelinewatch.org

Dedicated to the eradication of toxic multigenerational harm on communities living along the fenceline of industry.

MOVE Texas

movetexas.org

Building power in underrepresented youth communities through civic engagement, leadership development, and issue advocacy.

Rio Grande International Study Center

rgisc.org

Preserving and protecting the Rio Grande-Rio Bravo, its watershed, and environment through awareness, advocacy, research, education, stewardship, and bi-national collaboration for the benefit of present and future generations.

South Texas Environmental Justice Network

facebook.com/SOTXEJN/

A network of directly impacted people of color working toward environmental justice in STX.

Southern Sector Rising, Inc.

southernsectorrising.org

Fighting environmental, economic, and racial inequities through education, coalition and power building, policy advocacy, and mutual aid.

PENNSYLVANIA

Philly Thrive

phillythrive.org

Working to heal the unmet needs the current extractive economy creates for communities while taking direct action to transform the extractive economy into a regenerative one.

WEST VIRGINIA

West Virginia Rivers Coalition

wvrivers.org

To conserve and restore West Virginia's exceptional rivers and streams.



Join Us

WE LEAD WOMEN'S ENVIRONMENTAL LEADERSHIP FUND

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ONLINE TIDES.ORG/WE-LEAD