

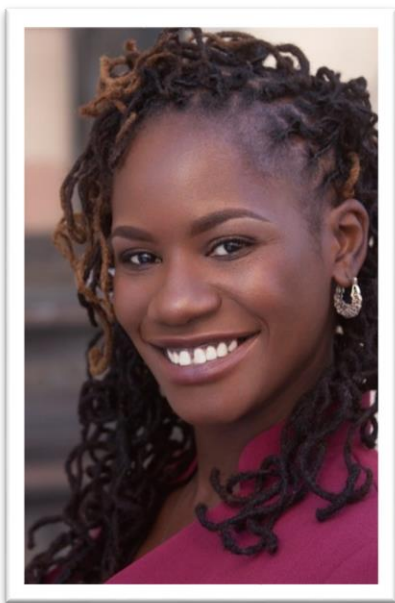


CONNECTICUT  
COUNCIL *for*  
PHILANTHROPY

**Learning Experience with Funders Collaboratives**

**March 26, 2024**

*Prepared for Council of New Jersey Grantmakers*



Alexis Bivens

- Vice President of Strategic Initiatives at the Connecticut Council for Philanthropy
- Managing Director for the Supporting Organizing Work (SOW) CT Funders Collaborative
- 15+ years of experience in community and nonprofit programming
- Grad School @ Fairfield University: a *Master of Arts in Community Counseling*
- Undergrad @ ECSU: *Bachelor of Arts in Social Work, Minor in Sociology*
  
- Philanthropic Professionals of Color Network (PPOC)
- New Haven Adult & Continuing Education Center
- Advancing Youth Development Training Facilitator
- Emily Hall Tremaine Foundation
- Fairfield County's Community Foundation
- McGivney Community Center, Inc.



- CT born, based, and raised
- Proud, Black, Woman
- Daughter, little sister, mother, auntie, niece, friend, and busybody
- Organizer, planner, philanthropist & disruptor
- Celebrated Kwanzaa since 1997
- Grew up in New Haven
- Dreamed of being a pediatrician, hairdresser, and cashier
- Gemini who loves to dance, watch comedies, gameshows and documentaries
- Loves Black art, Black history and quotes

### Issue-Focused Groups

**Health Affinity Group** is focused on best practices, discussions, and emerging opportunities on topics related to health, health policy, and health grantmaking.

**Housing Affinity Group** brings private and public funders together to focus on structural and racial inequities related to housing instability, homelessness, and supportive services and to prevent and end homelessness in Connecticut.

**Workforce Affinity Group** is convened to support member grantmakers who are interested in learning about workforce issues and its intersection with or investments by philanthropy.

### Peer Networks

**Communications Network** - For communications staff and those responsible for communications.

**Community Foundation CEO Network** - For CEOs of member community foundations throughout the state.

**Development and Donor Relations Network** – For all members of development and donor relations staff.

**Foundation Administrator Network** - For foundation administrators, operations staff and executive assistants.

**Organizational Capacity Builders Network** - For members who work on capacity-building efforts to strengthen nonprofits and grassroots groups.

**Philanthropy Professionals of Color Network** - For all members in the sector who identify as people of color, inclusive of the many colors and shades that exist for Black, Brown and Asian Pacific Islander Desi American communities.

**Program and Grantmaking Network** - For staff responsible for program and grantmaking.

**Scholarship Providers Network** – For member institutions that provide college scholarship opportunities in Connecticut.

### Regional Networks

**Fairfield County Funder Network** – For members headquartered or funding specifically in Fairfield County.

**Greater Hartford Funder Network** - For members headquartered or funding specifically in Greater Hartford.

### New Networks

**Family Foundation Network** – For family foundation members, their executive leadership, trustees, and staff.

**Corporate Giving Network** – For corporate giving programs and corporate foundations and their staff and leadership.

**Information, Technology & Operations Network** – For members leading information, technology, and operations support at their foundations.

**Small-Staffed Foundation Network** - For foundations with minimal staff (or none at all) to discuss ways to improve and sustain their philanthropic activities.

### Funder Collaboratives

**CT Early Childhood Funder Collaborative** is a project of the Connecticut Council for Philanthropy for which the Council serves as fiscal agent and manager. The Collaborative comprises 21 funders from around the state who bring many years of experience in supporting and operating programs that serve the needs of children and families.

**Supporting Organizing Work- CT** is a funders collaborative that believes community organizing is a process that builds collective power and leadership (i.e. the ability to act and decide) among community members to bring about systemic and structural change for social and racial justice.

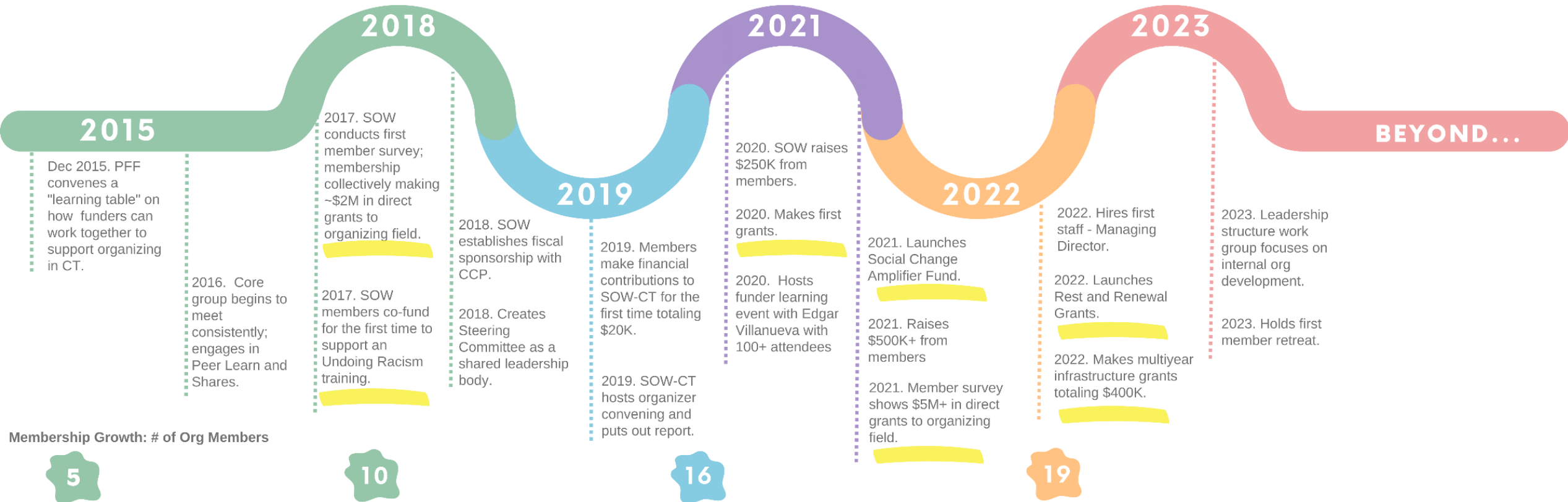


# Supporting Organizing Work - CT

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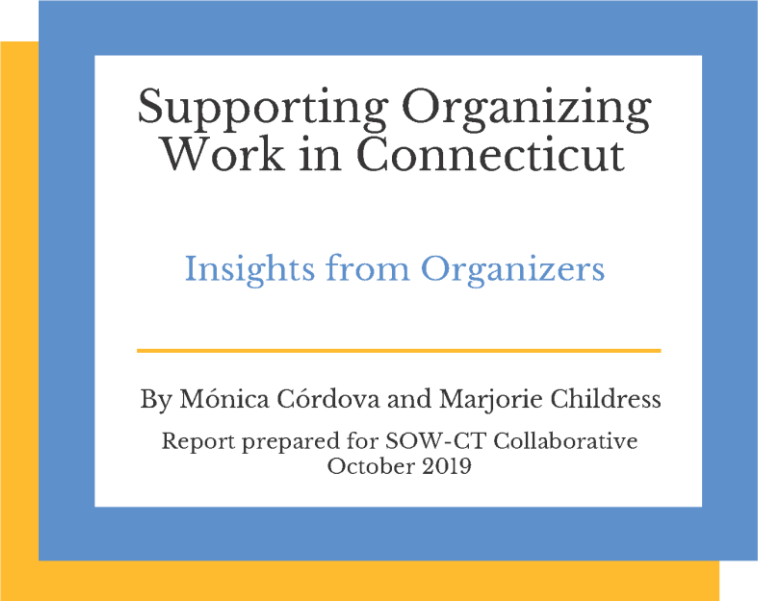
## Part 1 About SOW-CT's Work

# SOW-CT Timeline

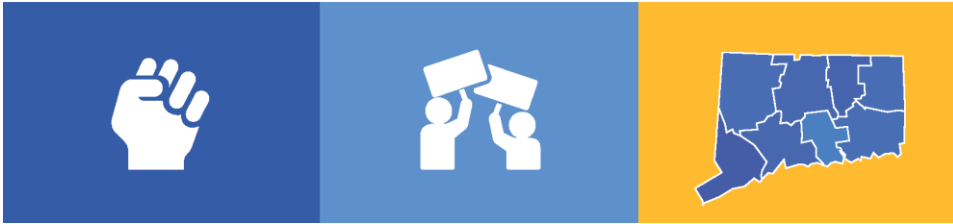




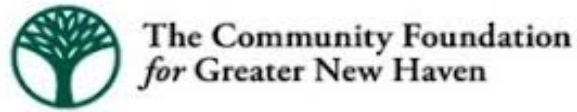
# FOUR KEY FINDINGS



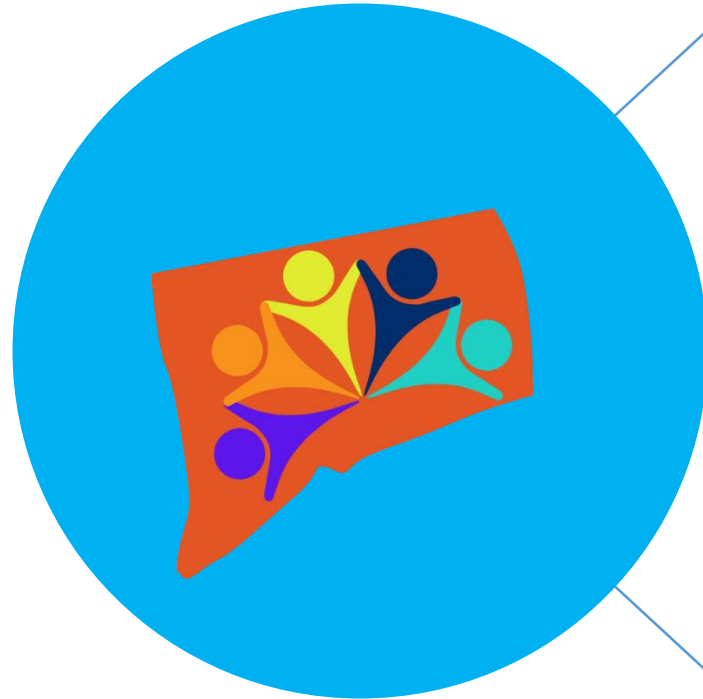
1. **Current funding practices** and systems can create barriers to accessing resources.
2. The Connecticut organizing ecosystem would be strengthened by **deeper relationships** and alignment between philanthropic institutions and organizing groups.
3. Organizing groups and the field would benefit from more **relationship and collective strategy** building opportunities.
4. The sustainability of organizing groups would be deepened by opportunities and investments that support deepened analysis, **organizing and management skills, leadership development and wellness** of organizers and community members.



# SOW-CT Members



***Established 2015***



**WE VALUE**

- **community organizing that centers and is led by people most impacted by injustice and inequity** as a critical and necessary strategy for advancing justice and equity in Connecticut.
- **working in partnership with community organizers** to ensure that our efforts are meaningfully informed by, and responsive to, those that are doing organizing work in real time.

**WE BELIEVE**

- our work **must center on racial justice** and justice for other marginalized communities.
- in **expanding resources available for community organizing**; our work together aims to bring additional resources to the collective table, rather than replacing or reallocating the funding SOW members are already providing to organizing groups.

**WE ARE  
COMMITTED  
TO**

- collectively supporting strategies that leverage resources to tackle challenges that **cut across issue silos and geographic boundaries** in our state.



## FUNDER ORGANIZING

### Doing the work internal work

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- Building our base of people, in-kind and monetary resources
- Influencing Philanthropy
- Funder Learning
- Surveying the CT Landscape

## GRANTMAKING INVESTMENTS

### Funding opportunities that work to address core areas identified by organizers.

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- Field Infrastructure Grantmaking: Organizer Talent Development
- Field Infrastructure Grantmaking: Community Organizing Fiscal Sponsorship
- Capacity Building Grantmaking: Health and Wellness
- Urgent Response Grantmaking: Social Change Amplifier Fund
- Urgent Response Grantmaking: Organizer & Activist Bail Fund



**Constructive themes  
and questions**



**Hopes for the role**



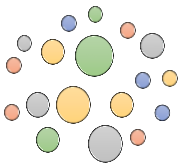
**Affirmation  
regarding the  
position and Alexis**

# Membership 2018 – 2023

## SOW-CT Membership Process



# SOW-CT Participation Levels



Donor /  
Exploring  
Membership



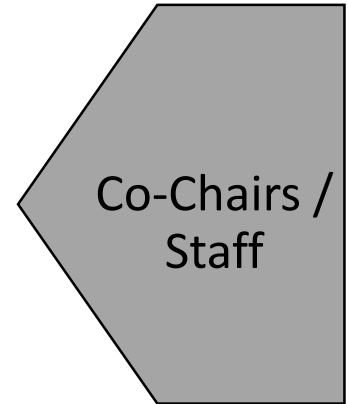
General  
Body



Work  
Groups



Steering  
Committee



Co-Chairs /  
Staff





# Supporting Organizing Work - CT

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## Part 2

### Highlight Funding Opportunities

Social Change Amplifier Match Fund

Rest & Renewal Small Grant Program

# CO-CREATING! SOCIAL CHANGE AMPLIFIER MATCH FUND

## SOW-CT CORE VALUES



1. Centers and is **led by people most impacted** by injustice and inequity
2. Center **racial justice** and justice for other marginalized communities.
3. Recognize and challenge the **power dynamics** between funders and organizers
4. Meaningfully **informed by, and responsive to**, those that are doing organizing work in real time.
5. Tackle challenges that **cut across issue silos and geographic boundaries** in our state.
6. Bring **additional resources** to the collective table, rather than replacing or reallocating the funding SOW members are already providing to organizing groups.



**Shout-Out**

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### Special thanks to the following folks for your individual contributions:

Salwa Abdussabur, Rebecca Allen, Milly Arciniegas, Tiheba Bain, Alexis Bivens, Tasha Blanco, Joseph Dickerson, Jackie Downing, Karla Fortunato, Lucy Galarza, James Jeter, Lorenzo Jones, Barbara Lopez, David Martin, Matt McDermott, Sarana Nia, Ala Ochumare, Kennard Ray, Jewu Richardson, Diane Sierpina, Cierra Stancil, and Lynn Stoddard.

### Shout out to the affiliate community groups and organizations:

Black Infinity Collective/Black Haven, Black Lives Matter New Haven, CONECT, CT Bail Fund (Community Bonds), CT Students for a Dream, Full Citizens Coalition to Unlock the Vote, Mutual Aid Hartford, Hartford Parent University, Make the Road CT, The Katal Center for Equity, Health, and Justice, Women Against Mass Incarceration

# SOCIAL CHANGE AMPLIFIER MATCH FUND PILOT: THE NUTS & BOLTS

## SOW's Intentions

- ✓ Support emerging and established groups', led by BILPOC folks engaged in social change work
- ✓ Learn about the benefits and limits of partnering with a group like Sustainable CT, an organization intentionally designed to support responsive grantmaking and fiscal sponsorship
- ✓ Addressing the need for training, coaching, consulting support and mentoring for groups and leaders we work with to attract more money

*Sparking Action from Elected Officials  
To Grassroots Leaders*



## Crowdfunding Opportunity

- ✓ \$15,000 Max, \$1-to-\$1 Match: \$7500 Community Contributions/\$7500 Sustainable CT
- ✓ Up to 50% of any one contribution is eligible for a full match by Sustainable CT
- ✓ Support projects led by BILPOC organizations, groups, and movement leaders across 131 partnering Connecticut municipalities.
- ✓ No deadlines, funding cycles, and a simple application
- ✓ Sustainable CT will cover all fees incurred through the platform and credit card processing (~8%)

## Project Examples

- ✓ promote public awareness and education
- ✓ community canvassing, surveys, forums and meetings
- ✓ vision sessions, focus groups
- ✓ community leadership training
- ✓ restorative justice projects
- ✓ murals and other public art

## Get Connected


Contact Sustainable CT to discuss ideas

[funding@sustainablect.org](mailto:funding@sustainablect.org)



**Bikes for Jobs : Hartford**





**KCC Sterling Street Sanctuary**

# VALUES FIRST! REST & RENEWAL SMALL GRANT PROGRAM



SOW-CT values community organizing that centers and is **led by people most impacted** by injustice and inequity as a critical and necessary strategy for advancing justice and equity in Connecticut.

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SOW-CT also values **working in partnership** with community organizers to ensure that our efforts are meaningfully **informed by, and responsive to,** those that are doing organizing work in real time.

# REST & RENEWAL SMALL GRANT PROGRAM PILOT: THE NUTS & BOLTS

## Making Decisions

**“Good Enough For Now, Safe Enough To Try”**

We're intentionally choosing to disrupt traditional philanthropic decision making standards.

## Due Diligence

- ✓ Outreach to applicant
- ✓ Confirm 501c3 or fiscal sponsor
- ✓ Confirm mailing info.

## Application



**ROUND 3 CLOSED TUES. 11/14**

## Disperse Funds

- ✓ Eligible groups could request funds (up to \$2,000 per request / \$6,000 per year)
- ✓ Release funds within 30 days

## Review for Alignment

- ✓ Organizing Group
  - Community Organizing
  - Activism and Advocacy
  - Electoral Engagement
- ✓ Grassroots Group
- ✓ Low-Resourced Group
- ✓ BILPOC-led
- ✓ CT presence



## Workgroup & Reviewers

Rosana Ferraro,  
Malwin Davila, Kara Straun, Cierra Stancil,  
Ila Duncan, Dave Martin, Stephanye Clark, Bilal Tajildeen & Alexis Bivens



**Part 3**  
**Discussion with Vice President /**  
**Managing Director**

