Democratic Grant Making and Grassroots Trend Reports  
Shannon Seigal, UNH Sustainability Fellow, Summer 2018  
Mentors: Leigh Cameron & Julia Dundorf, New England Grassroots Environment Fund

**Background: Guiding Values**
- Just Transition
- Shifting Power: Transparency, Accountability, Democracy
- Lowering Barriers to Funding
- Flexibility & Risk-taking
- Change vs. Charity
- Community-based Fundraising
- Process is the Product

**Objectives**
1. Revise and release Energy & Climate and Food issue area surveys to glean trends, barriers, and opportunities in grassroots organizing
2. Create 2018 Energy & Climate and Food Grassroots Trend Reports using qualitative and quantitative data gathered from a variety of sources
3. Coordinate the planning of a participatory Catalyst Conversation event in New Hampshire

**Approach**

**Trend Reports**
I researched New England Energy & Climate and Food groups, analyzed 2017 survey responses, updated and distributed 2018 surveys, interviewed innovative organizations for deeper conversations, and created 2018 Energy & Climate and Food trend reports with partner input.

**Catalyst Conversation**
I convened diverse New Hampshire environmental justice stakeholders to be part of a Planning Committee, facilitated participatory planning meetings, and coordinated event logistics including date, venue, and bilingual invitations.

"We leverage existing social capital." - Interviewee

**Results**

**Energy & Climate and Food Trend Reports**
- Common challenges across regions and issue-areas include funding restrictions and limited organizer capacity.
- Leveraging existing social capital and utilizing established areas of community are key to successful grassroots outreach.
- Many groups are treating symptoms rather than addressing root causes, leading to issue fragmentation.

**New Hampshire Catalyst Conversation**
- Holding events in the summer should be avoided.
- Much of New Hampshire’s attention is centered on the seacoast; it is important to draw resources to other regions.
- Equitable, participatory processes take substantial time and coordination but must be prioritized for community buy-in.

**Moving Forward**

**The Grassroots Fund**
- Surveys may be institutionalized as part of the grant reporting process so trends can be more readily tracked
- Trend reports are more accessible and engaging
- Grassroots groups need more resources on diversity and root causes

**Philanthropic Organizations**
- Offer funding for multi-year costs, changing & experimental projects, and operational costs including staff time
- Consider implementing participatory processes to help inform decisions and drive resources deeper into communities that most need them

**My work**
- Process really is the product! To facilitate the transition from an exploitative to a just socioeconomic system, we must first transform our own processes, even if they take more time and effort