



WE LEAD

WOMEN'S ENVIRONMENTAL LEADERSHIP FUND



2022 REPORT

In 2022, WE LEAD continued to invest in impactful women-identifying and non-binary leaders who are addressing the root causes of environmental injustice. Through our philanthropic grantmaking, our intention is to strengthen the power and capacity of Black, Indigenous, LatinX, and women of color leaders, and their organizations, who are transforming communities across the United States through advocacy and organizing.

Since launching the WE LEAD fund three years ago, we've made grants totaling close to \$5 million. And between 2021 and 2022, we nearly doubled our giving. In the years ahead, we intend to continue to grow this justice-based grantmaking initiative to elevate communities that are most in need, and support them with the leadership that can effect the greatest change towards a healthier, more equitable world.

As you read the grantee highlights below and review this year's list of WE LEAD's grant recipients, we invite you to share in our belief that these leaders are the vanguard of the climate movement. They are the justice focused visionaries developing the best solutions to the climate crisis that protect and defend not only their communities, but all of ours.

A group of hikers with backpacks walking on a trail in a natural setting. The hikers are seen from behind, wearing various colored backpacks and hats. In the foreground, a woman with a yellow backpack is smiling and looking back towards the camera. The background shows a dirt path winding through a hilly, vegetated area.

The Semilla Project, a WE LEAD grantee, provides skills, knowledge, and community framework for upcoming leaders in communities of color to achieve climate and racial justice and equity.

Who We Are

In April 2020, the Tides Foundation launched the Women's Environmental Leadership Fund (WE LEAD), a pooled grantmaking initiative that supports women'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 Black, Indigenous, and women of color (BIWOC). Rooted in the conviction that those living closest to the issues have the best solutions, the WE LEAD grantmaking initiative has already invested in dozens of impactful groups advancing equity and justice through the individual and collective power of community-driven advocacy and action.

By being intentional in our efforts to provide resources to BIWOC leaders and their organizations, we help ensure they have what they need to pave the way for a new era of social and environmental justice.

Funding Priorities

Leadership. Elevating the leadership of Black women, women of color, and Indigenous women and directing funding to organizations that intentionally sustain, heal, and grow women's leadership. Women include cis-gender women, transgender women, two-spirit, gender non-binary, and gender non-conforming.

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.

WE LEAD grantee Go Austin/Vamos Austin mobilizes community power to reduce barriers to health while increasing institutional capacity to respond to the people most impacted by historic inequities.



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' 47 years of experience** working hand-in-hand with movement leaders and grassroots environmental and social justice organizations.

WE LEAD Funding History

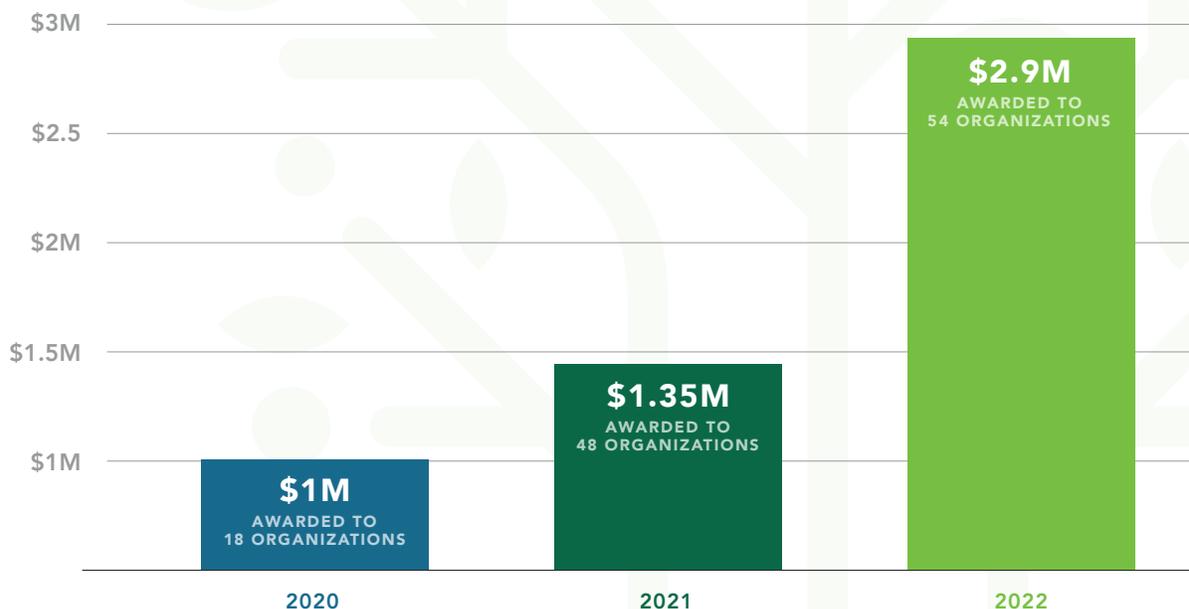




Image: Native Renewables

Grantee Highlights

Native Renewables

In 2016, Suzanne Singer co-founded Native Renewables to bring affordable, clean energy to up to 15,000 homes in Navajo, Hopi, and other Indigenous communities. Drawing on her extensive background in mechanical engineering — most recently as a staff engineer at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory — Singer aspires to provide clean energy to Native families who currently live without what most consider the basics of modern life — everything from refrigerators to lighting to internet access.

Historically, off-grid solar photovoltaic (PV) systems installed in Indigenous communities have failed because they were installed by outside companies that didn't provide ongoing maintenance. As a Navajo (Dine) tribe member who knows firsthand the hardships of the underserved and underemployed Native population, Singer seeks not only to provide reliable sources of solar power to thousands, but to empower the community so that they are installing and overseeing the PV systems.

To that end, Native Renewables supports a workforce development program — made up of electricians, engineers, and scientists — that creates much-needed jobs by training Native American solar installers to build and maintain off-grid PV systems and work with grid-tied projects nationwide. Singer's hope is that through Native Renewables, Tribal Nations will be both powered by the sun and empowered by a renewed sense of autonomy and agency.

Fenceline Watch

Based in Houston, Texas — home to the nation’s largest petrochemical complex with more than 400 facilities — Fenceline Watch is an environmental watchdog group defending the rights of those living on the frontlines and along the fencelines of industries polluting their air, land, and water.

Founder and director Yvette Arellano (they/them), a Mexican American gulf coast organizer and environmental justice leader, launched Fenceline Watch after witnessing the multigenerational devastation inflicted on the local population where the oil and gas industry continues to expand in the midst of a global climate crisis.

With over a decade of experience fighting for immigrant, reproductive, food access, and environmental justice, Arellano brings an intersectional lens to their advocacy. From sounding the alarm about how the petrochemical industry puts the health of local residents at risk to battling language discrimination so non-English-speaking people are warned in their language and alerted when there is a toxic disaster, Arellano is intent on ensuring that the most vulnerable populations have a voice in demanding the basic right to a healthy, safe, and productive life.



Image: Fenceline Watch

Rise St. James

Recognized as an environmental justice champion in the movement — and winning the 2021 Goldman Environmental Prize — Sharon Lavigne did what many believed impossible: she took on a multibillion-dollar industry, galvanizing community opposition to stop the construction of 14 chemical plants.

The daughter of civil rights activists, in 2018, Lavigne founded Rise St. James in St. James Parish, Louisiana, a low-wealth area that is known as “Cancer Alley” for its high cancer risk and concentration of polluting industries. Already, 200 industrial plants dot an 85-mile stretch between New Orleans and Baton Rouge on the Mississippi River.

Rise St. James’s most current battle is against Formosa Plastics, which is slated to expand the chemical corridor by building a massive \$12 billion, 2,400-acre petrochemical complex in St. James Parish. It’s estimated that the new complex would annually increase local pollution by 800 tons and greenhouse gas emissions by 13.6 million tons, as well as destroy the burial grounds of enslaved ancestors of some of the current population. Lavigne vows to continue raising up her voice and her community through her tireless and forceful advocacy.



Image: Rise St. James

2022 WE LEAD Grantees

ARIZONA

[Black Lives Matter Phoenix Metro](#)

A Black, queer, and femme-led organization supporting the most impacted in the Black community by providing support and resources, fostering sustainability and community engagement, cultivating healing, and creating art.

[Native Renewables](#)

Using off-grid solar photovoltaic systems, Native Renewables provides power to homes on the Navajo and Hopi reservations through their Hozho Homes Program.

CALIFORNIA

[Women's Earth and Climate Action Network](#)

Engaging women worldwide in policy advocacy, on-the-ground projects, trainings, and movement building for global climate justice.

[People Over Plastic](#)

Telling stories to disrupt harmful narratives and to inform movements that center the intersection between environmental and racial justice.

[Youth on Root](#)

Tapping into the existing power that all low-income youth and youth of color have to make grassroots change for environmental justice.

[Youth vs. Apocalypse](#)

Young climate justice activists working to lift the voices of youth, particularly youth of color and working-class youth.

FLORIDA

[The Farmworker Association of Florida, Inc.](#)

Empowering farmworkers and rural low-income communities to have agency over the social, political, economic, workplace, health, and environmental justice issues affecting their lives.

[Florida Immigrant Coalition](#)

Growing the connection, capacity, and consciousness of communities to strengthen pro-immigrant power in Florida, including the development of climigration plans with grassroots member organizations.

[Miami Climate Alliance](#)

Working for equity, resilience, and community well-being through strategic action, with the understanding that climate change and sea level rise are threats to all forms of justice.

GEORGIA

[The Black Table Fund](#)

Using a holistic approach to assist rural, low-income communities to develop knowledge, skills, abilities, and resources needed to build and maintain thriving communities.

[CASA INC.](#)

Creating a more just society by building power and improving the quality of life in low-income immigrant communities displaced by violence and injustice, and increasingly, by climate change.

[Demo Lab South](#)

A movement incubation hub that supports QTCNC and BIPOC-led, community-based projects and organizations to build a Southern-movement ecosystem for a sustainable, healthy future.

[Georgia Conservation Voters Education Fund](#)

Working to advance climate and environmental justice through education, advocacy, and other forms of civic engagement.

[Georgia WAND Education Fund](#)

Empowering frontline communities with the knowledge and resources they need to reclaim, restore, and protect our land and climate future.

2022 WE LEAD Grantees, continued

ILLINOIS

Grassroots Collaborative

Uniting 10 member-based organizations to create policy change on the state and local levels for a sustainable, healthy future.

Macedonia Development Corporation

Improving the quality of life for the most vulnerable residents through renewable energy projects, job creation, and economic development.

People for Community Recovery

Enhancing the quality of life for communities most affected by environmental pollution by fighting for climate justice, securing safe and affordable housing, demanding economic equity, and supporting community health.

LOUISIANA

Bunny Friend Neighborhood Association

Supporting New Orleans's most underserved residents by fostering public health, environmental justice, and community-building.

Coalition for Environment, Equity, and Resilience

Raising awareness of the connections between pollution, place, and the public's health.

Rise St. James

A faith-based grassroots organization fighting for environmental justice by working to defeat the proliferation of petrochemical industries.

Water Collaborative of Greater New Orleans

Leading the charge to make greater New Orleans a global leader in urban water management with green infrastructure.

MICHIGAN

Michigan Environmental Justice Coalition

Working to create a clean, healthy, and safe environment for Michigan residents most affected by inadequate policies.

MISSISSIPPI

Education, Economics, Environmental, Climate and Health Organization

Bolstering communities with a voice for self-reliance and the knowledge and skills to thrive.



“The WE LEAD grant has been an amazing support to take on big polluters at the nexus of plastic pollution, climate change, and human health, and ensure the voices of the most impacted are at the forefront of driving meaningful social change.”

Shilpi Chhotray
Co-founder and Executive
Director, People over Plastic

Image: People Over Plastic
Photo by Amaya Edwards / @amayanicoleedwards

2022 WE LEAD Grantees, continued

NEVADA

Make It Work Nevada

Equipping Black women and low-income women to organize, tell their stories, and use their power to push for solutions at the federal, state, and local levels across Nevada.

NEW JERSEY

Ironbound Community Corporation

Working with the people of Ironbound and partners across the city, state, and country to advance the cause of Environmental Justice.

NEW MEXICO

NM Comunidades en Acción y de Fé (CAFé)

Investing in rural communities that have been disproportionately impacted by extractive industries like mining, oil, and gas.

New Mexico Environmental Law Center

Working with under-resourced communities to ensure that they have the same clean air, land, and water that every New Mexican is entitled to.

Pueblo Action Alliance

Protecting Pueblo cultural sustainability and community defense by addressing environmental and social impacts in Indigenous communities.

The Semilla Project

Advancing the leadership development of BIWOC/ BIPOC youth to achieve cross-movement justice and liberation through identity, culture, wellness, and land-based learning.

NEW YORK

The New School Tishman Environment and Design Center

Supporting frontline leaders to transform political, economic, and social systems; reclaim power; and scale people-centered solutions for climate justice futures.

West Harlem Environmental Action (WE ACT)

Building healthy communities by empowering people of color and low-income residents to help create environmental health and protection policies.

NORTH CAROLINA

Down Home North Carolina

Committed to building power and addressing intersecting injustices for poor and working communities in small town and rural North Carolina.

OHIO

BLAC: Black Appalachian Coalition

Helping to shape how policymakers create and implement inclusive policies addressing air and water pollution, food insecurity, and healthcare access.

Environmental Health Watch

Providing education, advocacy, and direct service to families while working alongside policy makers to spotlight and confront critical environmental health issues.

PENNSYLVANIA

Black Environmental Collective

A cross-sectoral network of Black leaders, rooted in the commitment to environmental equity and social justice.

Make the Road Pennsylvania

Fighting for a world where all community members can breathe clean air and drink clean water by dismantling systemic oppression through civic engagement and advocacy.

New Voices for Reproductive Justice

Identifying, amplifying, and organizing Black women and femmes who are environmental justice leaders to act toward a shared vision with the belief that reproductive and environmental justice are inextricably linked.

Philly Thrive

Organizing to win a complete cleanup of the PES oil refinery site and campaigning for robust neighborhood reinvestments.

PUERTO RICO

El Departamento de la Comida

Supporting the recovery and reconstruction of small food projects practicing sustainable agriculture to achieve food sovereignty in response to recent climate disasters.

2022 WE LEAD Grantees, continued

SOUTH DAKOTA

Brave Heart Society

Dedicated to fulfilling the dreams of Ihanktonwan women elders with a focus on inherent Indigenous rights to be caretakers of the land and water.

TEXAS

Achieving Community Tasks Successfully

Empowering community members to better protect their health and hold polluters accountable.

Bayou City Waterkeeper

Focusing on water quality, wetlands protection, and flood mitigation across the Bayou City region.

Centro por la Justicia | Southwest Workers Union

Organizing communities in South Texas to address multiple facets of injustice that impact low-income families, including contamination cleanup and air quality.

Downwinders At Risk Education Fund

Advocating for and training communities who want to win clean air battles by taking effective action on behalf of those being harmed.

Fenceline Watch

Dedicated to eradicating the toxic multigenerational harm done to underserved communities living along the fenceline of industry.

Go Austin/Vamos Austin (GAVA)

Supporting climate resilience and strengthening neighborhood stability.

MOVE Texas Civic Fund

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

RGISC

Preserving and protecting the Rio Grande-Rio Bravo's watershed and the surrounding environment through advocacy, research, education, and stewardship.

Southern Sector Rising

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

NATIONAL

Anthropocene Alliance

The nation's largest coalition of frontline communities fighting for climate and environmental justice.

The Chisholm Legacy Project

Serving 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.

Green Leadership Trust

Building a more powerful and thriving environmental and conservation community in the United States through a network of Black, Indigenous, and people of color who serve on U.S. nonprofit environmental boards.

National Black Environmental Justice Network

Demanding solutions that use an equity lens to develop policies that address health, environmental, and economic justice challenges facing Black Americans.

REGIONAL

Black Southern Women's Collaborative

Committed to enhancing and empowering Southern Black life, particularly for Black women.

100% of WE LEAD funding goes to BIWOC-led or co-led organizations — or organizations that serve communities of color — who are disproportionately impacted by environmental injustice.

Looking Ahead

From WE LEAD'S launch in April 2020, our mission has been clear: to resource the voice and vision of community-based, women-identifying, and non-binary leaders to help shift the power imbalance in the environmental/climate justice movement across the US. Our strategy has been to offer much-needed funding to those who have made on-the-ground gains in their communities in their determination for environmental justice, as they endure racial, social, gender, economic, housing, and food access inequities, and live with negative health outcomes due to the effects of big polluters and climate change. We recognize that the advocacy efforts of our grantee partners are having ripple effects beyond local impact, and we aim to continue to support the leadership of those who have been working to shift power for years, as well as those advocates and organizers who are newly emerging.

Since launching the WE LEAD fund three years ago, the world has undergone dramatic changes — from COVID, and accelerating gun violence, to the increase in environmental devastation wrought by the climate crisis, to more rights being lost for women, the LGBTQ+ community, and communities of color. Given the shifting social justice landscape and the repositioning taking place in philanthropy to ensure more equitable giving that center the solutions of those closest to the problem, we are revisiting our existing strategy to ensure WE LEAD is making the most impactful and lasting change as we strive to be an effective partner with the leaders and organizations we support. After engaging in deep listening conversations in the second quarter of 2023 with our grantee partners and aligned funders, we will be launching our next Request For Proposals in the summer of 2023.

About Tides

Tides is a nonprofit and philanthropic organization dedicated to advancing social justice. We work across the social sector to shift power to leaders, communities of color, and other historically excluded groups that face systemic barriers. Applying our equity-centered lens and leveraging our vast network of changemakers, we work to strengthen the impact of our partners by offering services like fiscal sponsorship, donor advised funds, impact investing, and grantmaking.





WE LEAD is profoundly grateful to our philanthropic partners. Your generous support is helping to elevate the visionary leadership of those working to improve the lives most burdened in the US by environmental harms and social injustice. As a WE LEAD partner, you are providing valuable resources to BIWOC leaders and their organizations creating transformative solutions in their communities. Because of your contributions, we have increased our unrestricted grantmaking in 2022 and will continue to grow this impactful initiative for years to come. We thank you.

Image: The Semilla Project

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