REPORT ON THE 15TH ANNUAL
2020 GRASSROOTS GRANTEE CONVENING
OF THE NORTHERN CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL GRASSROOTS FUND,
CALIFORNIA WILDLANDS GRASSROOTS FUND,
AND GRASSROOTS LEADERSHIP FUND

A Seven-Part Virtual Series
Held via Zoom
Friday’s October 9 – November 20, 2020

2020 Virtual Convening Theme: Organizing for the Digital Age

In response to an unprecedented year of national crisis and social distancing requirements due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the annual Convening of the California Wildlands Grassroots Fund and Northern California Environmental Grassroots Fund grantees went virtual for the first time in its 15-year history. The virtual format also allowed us to include grantees from our Grassroots Leadership Fund. Altogether, 64 attendees (51 of whom were grantees) participated in seven free 1.5 hour online training workshops exploring digital tools for organizing, outreach and growing constituencies. Workshops were held every Friday from October 9 – November 20, 2020.

The series focused on online organizing and virtual engagement strategies, topics that many grantees have expressed interest in in the past, and which became more urgent in 2020 under the social distancing restraints of COVID-19. Training topics included:

1. Action Network (an emailing and action tool) for beginners [This covered the basics of petition creation, and constituent data tracking]
3. Facebook for Organizing
4. Organizing via Text and Mobile
5. Zoom Town Halls and Livestreaming to build and engage your supporter base and pressure targets
6. WhatsApp for Organizing
7. Creating a Pipeline and Effective Engagement Ladder for Activists

We partnered with digital organizing experts, Social Movement Technologies (SMT), to lead the seven webinar training sessions. Please see below for a list of the Convening instructors.
Highlights
Altogether, 64 attendees (51 of whom were grantees) participated in the seven virtual workshops. This is equivalent to the in-person attendance of our last several convenings. On average we had about 21 grantee attendees per session. 33% of attendees were grantees of our Northern California Environmental Grassroots Fund, 28% were grantees of our California Wildlands Grassroots Fund, 16% were grantees of our Grassroots Leadership Fund, and another 28% were from other Rose Foundation grantmaking programs (mostly grassroots grantees from our watershed funds and Rapid Response Fund).

We were encouraged by grantee enthusiasm for the series, particularly the number of grantees who attended multiple workshops. 61% of grantees attended 2 or more sessions, and as many as 18 grantees attended 4 or more of the sessions. This consistent group of engaged participants helped to build trust, connection, and engagement despite the limitations of a virtual format.

Grantees were also able to get to know each other and network during small group discussion activities in breakout rooms. This was an unexpected success. We initially had doubts about the capacity of a virtual event to allow for the kind of networking that takes place at our in-person Convenings and were happy to see grantees connecting with each other.

Benefits of a Virtual Convening
Although we would have preferred the connectivity of an in-person event, the online format provided flexibility for our grantees to plug into the trainings where and when desired, and we received a lot of positive feedback around that point. Going virtual also removed travel barriers and allowed grassroots grantees from across California to participate in the workshops; we had grantees from Trinity County and Los Angeles participating in the same workshops. Training remotely also allowed us to invite grassroots grantees from across the country, including Louisiana, Texas and New York.

As a follow-up, all session recordings are available on our website, allowing those who could not attend to access the webinars afterward. We are not certain how many additional
“attendees” this represents, but at least anecdotally, we know that some grantees have accessed the convening in this manner and others have expressed interest in sharing the recordings with colleagues and board members.

To access the webinar recordings and slides, go to the Rose Foundation Portal and enter access code ROSE-FOUNDATION. Find step-by-step instructions here.

Overall, we are happy to report that the Convening was a success. We were able to pivot to meet the unusual circumstances of this year and learned a lot about hosting virtual events in the process. We are now using this experience to plan for more video-based networking and training opportunities for our grantees.

**Spanish Language Accessibility**
For many years, the Rose Foundation has offered simultaneous Spanish translation during the Convening to make the event accessible to grassroots groups led by Spanish-speaking community members. This year, our webpage about the event, email outreach, and registration for the Convening were offered in both English and Spanish. Every session had simultaneous Spanish interpretation with workshop materials in both English and Spanish, and the workshop on WhatsApp for Organizing was held in Spanish with English translation. SMT did an excellent job incorporating Spanish translation in their response to questions and direct engagement with Spanish-speaking participants during the workshops. We were pleased to see 15 registrants and at least three to five people per session who utilized the simultaneous translation.

**Evaluation**
Since SMT hosted the trainings and managed registration via their webinar system, we were not able to conduct the same level of evaluation as past years. Although SMT collected rudimentary data and we conducted brief surveys at the end of each session, many attendees skipped the survey and simply clicked out after the training concluded, so we struggled to get a sufficient response rate. Thus, although we have received a lot of anecdotal feedback, we could not conduct our normal evaluation.

**Future Convening Topics**
Based on the responses we did get, grantwriting and website development consistently surfaced as grantees’ top choices for future Convenings. Other leading suggestions included board development and volunteer management and recruitment. There was also considerable interest in continued learning and deeper exploration of Facebook and Action Network as tools for outreach and supporter recruitment.
Selected Quotes from Grantee Participants:

“Breakouts are EXCELLENT. It is exciting to meet other people who are working on similar issues. Would love to have Breakouts for a whole session by issue or by location as well as issues.”

- Beverly, Save North Petaluma River Wetlands

“Muy útil, muchas gracias por esta maravillosa oportunidad de aprender y crecer!!”
[Very useful, thank you for this wonderful opportunity to learn and grow!]

- Gema Perez, Greenfield Walking Group

“A lot to absorb but very grateful for the information. It will only make us better.”

- Elizabeth Lambe, Los Cerritos Wetlands Land Trust

“YES! The webinars are wonderful! I will be using the recordings to access presentation materials for our Board members and to build information files for each webinar, especially for our first and biggest need, Facebook! I had never been on a Zoom call that had breakout rooms. I enjoy having this option not only for the breakout project goals, but to also "meet" some of the people and organizations working on similar issues. What a positive and wonderfully diverse group of people and organizations!”

- Trudy Tucker, Friends of the San Joaquin River Gorge

From Anonymous Feedback:

“Thank you, I’m excited to use Action Network. I believe it will help get me through the obstacles I’m experiencing in engaging our community.”

“Liked all the discussions, as it helped me wrap my head around the topic more to hear what other people were using live streaming for.”
Meet the Trainers:

**Christine Miranda** has a diverse background in Latinx and immigrant community organizing. Since 2017, she has been an organizer and digital strategist with Cosecha, a decentralized movement fighting for permanent protection for all undocumented immigrants. Christine has supported local and national projects including the May 1, 2017 “Day Without Immigrants,” state-based “Licenses for All” campaigns, and the national Undocumented Worker COVID-19 Fund. She specializes in digital tools that meet people where they’re at, including WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger bots.

**Kevin Pujanauski** focuses on using digital tools to reach and organize with community members and voters, including texting, tech-enabled relational outreach, and Facebook ads. Kevin has worked on issue and electoral organizing at the local and state level, including leading digital for City Council candidate Andre Vasquez, who ousted a 36-year incumbent despite being outspent 10:1. Kevin first became active in local racial justice work fighting mass incarceration, including the fights for police accountability in Chicago and to abolish cash bail in Cook County. Kevin’s background also includes significant experience shaping the direction and usability of software tools through user research and product management.

**Hannah Roditi** works with unions and organizing groups across the country to help them ramp up with social media to build power and win campaigns. Hannah is passionate about the use of new tech tools to strengthen on-the-ground organizing and ramp up pressure on targets. A long-time union (Teamsters, AFSCME, SEIU, ILGWU), community, and faith-based organizer, Hannah founded and ran a faith-based – labor coalition in Connecticut for 10 years. Hannah has designed and led social media training for groups from D.C. to Oakland, as well as online training with up to 500 organizers, including in Spanish and bilingually for mixed language groups.
Samir Shrestha is an organizer, based out of the Bay Area-occupied Ohlone territories, who grew up in Nepal and moved to the US in 2008 as a student. As a settler and non-Black person of color, he is drawn to work to decolonize and organize around issues of state terror that Black and other Brown communities have faced for too long in the U.S. Samir is one of the founders of Liberation Logistics, an organization committed to supporting Bay Area movements with logistics. He is active in the Anti Police Terror Project and Buddhist Peace Fellowship. Recently, Samir has been providing Zoom and livestreaming support to Right to the City Alliance for its “Cancel Rent Festival” as part of its Beyond Recovery Campaign. He has experience working with livestreaming platforms and troubleshooting sound, streaming, and other Zoom-related tech.