

Grassroots Support Organizations Directory

**Your go-to guide on getting to
know Grassroots Support
Organizations, Contact Information,
and ways to network with one
another.**

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Center for Participatory Change

Supporting Grassroots Efforts in Western North Carolina

What does your organization do?

Each year, CPC supports around 45 grassroots groups and networks working on racial or economic justice issues across 25 rural, mountain counties in Western NC.

How does your organization do GSO work?

CPC's GSO work has five parts:

- (1) community organizing – mostly helping groups and networks figure out how to do community organizing work, but also doing a bit ourselves;
- (2) organizational capacity building – helping groups and networks do technical things like develop a board and do a strategic plan but also do “softer” things like increase participation among groups members;
- (3) leadership development – helping leaders develop confidence and skills by doing the work of improving their communities;
- (4) network-building – helping groups come together to build the collective power needed for broad-scale change; and
- (5) microgrants – making small grants for new projects or groups.

Organization's Strengths:

Some of the things CPC has developed skills and experiences in are: thinking about and doing GSO work in general, working with Latino communities (also other communities of color), and working across languages (English and Spanish). Also, we have a flat, non-hierarchical organizational structure – we don't have an Executive Director; five staff share authority and responsibility. We're often asked to share that story, as people look for new models.

Organization's Challenges and Knowledge you want to learn from GSO Partners:

Some of the things CPC is looking to learn are: how to support groups that are trying to earn income for members (particularly worker-owned co-ops), how to spur or seed small farmers' groups, how to think about and do food systems work.

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Georgia Community Loan Fund, Inc.

What does your organization do?

- Provides loan financing and technical assistance to rural, low-income community development projects sponsored by non-profit organizations. The initial focus is on working with residents in manufactured home communities to form organizations to purchase and cooperatively operate their communities.

How does your organization do GSO work?

- We organize and assist resident groups in manufactured home communities to form organizations to cooperatively purchase and operate their communities. We also assist grassroots groups with planning, and fundraising strategies.
- We established and coordinate a “Policy Working Group” bringing residents and policy advocates together to analyze and strategize around policy changes needed to more justly treat residents in manufactured housing.
- Our Board consists of representatives from grassroots groups, or organizations working with such groups, spread across rural Georgia. Several of these members represent a direct connection to the groups that either already are, or will be, the recipients of GCLF loans and/or technical assistance, and will be make up the network of rural development groups that we plan to organize and empower.

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Organization’s Strengths:

- Our strengths come from our connections to and experience with grassroots organizations, through our Board and staff contacts. This is most strong, at this point, with residents in manufactured housing communities. We have gained extensive knowledge about issues related to manufactured housing, in the past few years.
- Our one staff member is an experienced consultant on assessments, organizational development issues, and Board training with small non-profits. Our Board has extensive connections and experience with minority farmer groups, housing groups, land trust networks, coastal sustainable development groups, as well as legal expertise. Given the opportunity and correct format we would be glad to share whatever of this will be helpful to others.

Organization’s Challenges:

- Currently we only have one part-time staff person. Limited core funding is slowing down implementation of our programmatic plans. Legal complications have slowed down the capitalization of the Loan fund’s investment assets. The sheer size of the state and number of counties in GA also present a challenge to building to realistic state-wide programming quickly.

Knowledge you want to learn from GSO Partners:

- Successful models/best practices, of developing, serving, sustaining and empowering a network of rural low-income development organizations.



What does your organization do?

- Good Work trains, coaches, guides, and supports everyday people, entrepreneurs, and leaders from all walks of life to help them advance their financial, economic, business, and entrepreneurship literacy.
We equip them with the knowledge and skills to be better stewards of their gifts and become more self-reliant and entrepreneurial.

How does your organization do GSO work?

- We help our constituents, entrepreneurs and leaders from the public, private, and civic sectors, increase their understanding of household economics, asset development, entrepreneurship, business and organizational development, marketing, financing, stewardship, sustainability, sustainable community economic development, community investing, socially responsible businesses, social entrepreneurship, and servant leadership.

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Organization's Strengths:

- We understand the nuts and bolts of business, entrepreneurship, and organizational development, marketing and business planning, grassroots organizing, community development and business financing, cross-cultural work, and re-entry dynamics from an everyday person's perspective well enough to coach someone else.

Organization's Challenges and Knowledge you want to learn from GSO Partners:

- Volunteer training, alternative models of leadership development, succession planning, alternative forms of organizational structure, staffing and governance, leveraging technology and media.

RED BIRD MISSION

What does your organization do?

Red Bird Mission guided by Jesus Christ, empowers individuals and advocates justice by providing spiritual, educational, health, and community outreach ministries. We serve 15,000 Appalachian residents residing in southeastern Kentucky.

How does your organization do GSO work?

- Red Bird Mission assisted community members in forming the Women Farmers of Appalachia in 2005. It is made up of southeastern Kentucky families working together to achieve self-reliance. Agricultural project outcomes set included: increased income, improved nutrition, and local training and educational opportunities.
- A local Farmer's Market, seed distribution and horticulture education was initiated in 2006. Local farmers and neighboring farmers are donating livestock, training and technical assistance.
- In 2007 a United Methodist Women's Division grant provided farm preparation to assist low income families in preparing their property to receive livestock through Heifer International.
- In December 2008, the WFA Red Bird Farmer's Project received a grant from Heifer International for \$122,400 to continue these grass-root efforts.
- We have been pleased by the local and neighboring media coverage. WYMT and WBIR provided news coverage of families participating in this project. Red Bird Mission is highlighting accomplishments in literature to United Methodist supporters as well.

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Organization's Strengths:

Our strengths would include community building (relationship building/communication), networking, recognizing natural strengths in individuals and empowering those individuals. Passion, our staff is passionate about advocacy.

Organization's Challenges and knowledge you want to learn from GSO partners:

Limited by the funding, needing more funding for our Project Coordinator. Clearly after the grant started there is enough administrative work for 2 days a week instead of the one day we anticipated. Eager to create a 3 year strategic plan for our project, focusing initially on 12 month staff goals, advice on marketing and continued community development of local leaders.



Resourceful Communities Programs

The Conservation Fund



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What does your organization do?

- Resourceful Communities is a grassroots network that implements or supports implementation of the “triple bottom line” in the communities it serves by building capacity and developing a statewide movement that advocates for sustainable economic development, social justice, and environmental stewardship.

How does your organization do GSO work?

- In our **Capacity Building Program**: Staff provides: direct technical assistance to our partners one on one. We convene regional and state level forums for partners to connect with each other with common interests, and concerns where they share strategies for how to confront the challenges they face. We provide small grants through the Creating New Economies Fund (CNEF) and we facilitate access to additional funding from other sources outside the CNEF process. We help leverage the resources and access we have as a national conservation organization, and bring our partners to the table on their own terms to ensure their full participation (rather than us serving as a gatekeeper) – doorstep analogy.
- **Movement Building**: To support the development of a broad based movement that will advocate for sustainable development that has social, economic and environmental benefits: RCP provides 180 grassroots groups with opportunities to build their knowledge base, access to resources, and skills while connecting with their peers. We help our grassroots partners connect with over 150 state, regional and national partners, by facilitating our partners’ participation in collaborations that provide them and the people they serve with genuine benefits.
- **Policy & Advocacy**: We engage grassroots leaders in local and state policy initiatives and educate decision-makers about sustainable economic development. We support our partners interest in starting with local organizing and policy change as a focus of their grassroots advocacy efforts – example, this year we are supporting regional workshops and will then provide small grants to partners who want to host candidate forums in their communities before the elections.
- **Innovation & Demonstration**: RCP helps our grassroots partners build non-traditional partnerships that leverage resources to implement innovative projects such as conservation-based affordable housing and community forestry.

Resourceful Communities Programs

The Conservation Fund



Organization's Strengths:

- See attached document
- In summary, a wide range of organizational skills, event planning, curriculum development, conservation tools and strategies for community development, event planning, fundraising, Conservation-based affordable housing, Community Forestry, Land Use Planning Tools, Smart Growth Tools/ BMPs

Organization's Challenges:

- **Fundraising** - We have to expand our non-grant sources of revenue.
- **Capacity** – There's always more work than we ever have capacity to do the work. So we need to have better ways of deciding:
 - **Expansion** how we spread our program beyond our present reach (within and outside the state)
 - **Project Selection** what's the most effective strategy for determining which projects to take on given our capacity and the
 - **Depth versus Breadth**—Whether we should go deeper with fewer groups or work with more groups which means we don't have the same level of depth to our work with them.

Knowledge you want to learn from GSO Partners:

- Food security – who's involved, what's happening where in NC and outside?
- Immigration issues
- Fundraising – diversified, comprehensive strategies
- TA gaps – business planning
- Leadership transition and planning (Succession Planning)
- Policy – comprehensive strategy
- Green Jobs and Economy

Strategic Planning – How do we support each other in our strategic planning internally?