

NEWS RELEASE

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REGIONAL FOUNDATIONS ANNOUNCE NEXT PHASE OF COVID-19 RELIEF EFFORTS

Founders of the New England Food System Resilience Fund expand scope of philanthropic efforts to include racial equity

November 9, 2020 (Boston, MA) - Today, [The Henry P. Kendall Foundation](#) (HPKF), [The John Merck Fund](#) (JMF) and partner foundations, The 1772 Foundation, The Sandy River Charitable Foundation and The Harvard Pilgrim Health Care Foundation announced the next phase of an effort that began in March 2020. [The New England Food System Resilience Fund](#) (Resilience Fund) launched then to reinforce, restore, and promote the resilience of the regional food system amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. Today, the founders of the Resilience Fund along with partner foundations announce the transfer of those funds to [The New England Grassroots Environment Fund](#), Inc. (Grassroots Fund), which will assume management of the effort and expand its area of focus to include racial equity.

“It is an honor for us at the Grassroots Fund to carry on this important work at such a critical time for our country and our region,” said Julia Dundorf, Executive Director of the Grassroots Fund. “The coronavirus crisis not only exposed the fragility of our food system, it has also made it impossible to ignore the ways in which white supremacy culture has shaped US agriculture and food systems, from slave labor on colonial plantations to the exploitation of farm and food chain workers.”

Established in March 2020, The New England Food System Resilience Fund is a joint philanthropic effort designed to reinforce, restore, and promote the resilience of the regional food system in a time of unprecedented disruption resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. In April, with help from a volunteer review panel of eight food systems experts from around the region, the Resilience Fund made eleven first-round "[Reinforcement](#)" grants totaling just under \$350,000. Overall, \$1 million has been raised for the Resilience Fund from five foundations and fundraising continues.

George Floyd’s murder just one month after the initial round of grants and the ensuing national reckoning with racial injustice prompted leaders of the John Merck Fund and the Henry P. Kendall Foundation to reconsider the Resilience Fund as a potential vehicle to not only respond to the ongoing pandemic, but also to acknowledge and begin to address the many racial inequities in both the current food system and in philanthropic practices. Further, they recognized that the Grassroots Fund holds the expertise and participatory grantmaking practices necessary to carry this important work forward through a racial equity lens.

The Resilience Fund’s remaining balance of \$650,000 will come under the management of the Grassroots Fund, while fundraising continues. The Grassroots Fund’s participatory process uses an open call for application readers and works with a grantmaking committee to make final decisions on resource allocations. Through self-identified demographic data from participants, the Grassroots Fund intentionally brings together groups with diverse lived experiences and builds skills around bias in decision-making, white supremacy culture and system change.

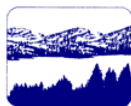
Through the winter, the Grassroots Fund, in partnership with consultants at Karen Karp & Partners, will co-create a landscape analysis of the Northeast food systems with input from frontline organizers, nonprofit colleagues and foundation partners. A steering committee will use this analysis to design grant program priorities, guidelines and application process. The first round of grantmaking is anticipated for Spring 2021 with a goal of distributing up to \$400,000 annually to support a just, resilient, equitable food system.

“Transitioning the Resilience Fund to the Grassroots Fund provides us with a very meaningful way to keep supporting development of a more resilient, vibrant and just food system for New England even as we leave the field,” remarked JMF Board Chair, Whitney Hatch. “When we close our doors at the end of 2022, we will do so knowing that we have helped the Grassroots Fund expand their support for the farmers, food producers and food justice advocates who are ensuring the growth and viability of our regional food system now and into the future.”

Andy Kendall, Executive Director of HPKF, added, “The Kendall Foundation is excited to join with the Grassroots Fund and other partners in learning from and providing resources to community-based leaders who are helping to build a more just, equitable and reliable food system for our region.”

The boards of The John Merck Fund, The Henry P. Kendall Foundation and The New England Grassroots Environment Fund have approved the plan. The Grassroots Fund invites those who wish to learn more about this transition to [click here](#) to complete a form indicating interest.

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THE SANDY RIVER CHARITABLE FOUNDATION

