OUR THEORY OF CHANGE

OUR MISSION
We are a social justice fund that supports grassroots organizing led by communities of color building power in New York City and the Hudson Valley. We organize people across race and class to give in support of these movements.

OUR VISION
We envision a world in which resources and power are equitably shared, and a future where everyone can live with dignity and thrive.

WHAT WE DO
We give grants through a process that shifts decision-making power to communities fighting for justice.

Community organizers—including former and current grantees—collectively make our funding decisions and participate in the governance of our organization.

We strengthen the leadership of grassroots organizers.

We support new and emerging leaders and are often the first foundation to fund new organizations or campaigns. We contribute to the social change ecosystem by providing capacity-building and leadership programs to organizations led by communities impacted by injustice.

We organize people across race and class to mobilize resources towards social justice movements.

We offer programs that bring experienced organizers and supporters together to recognize the shared stake we have in dismantling white supremacy and structural systems of oppression. We create opportunities for people to move money and to take collective action towards building a different future.

Approved, February 2020
We challenge the entrenched racism and power imbalances in philanthropy.

We work across the field of philanthropy—where less than 10% of all dollars go to communities of color—to increase funding for social justice movements and to build greater accountability, transparency, and accessibility.

**OUR VALUES**

When Black, Indigenous, and POC Communities Lead, We Win

Race, gender and economic inequality have led to the concentration of wealth, power and resources in the hands of a few. We center the leadership and collective action of Black communities, Indigenous communities, and communities of color in dismantling these systems and building a different future. In all our work, we prioritize communities who are and have been most affected by systems of oppression.

Dignity and Self-Determination Belong to Everyone

All people should have agency over their lives. We work towards a world in which every person’s full humanity is affirmed, respected, and celebrated.

Solidarity is an Everyday Practice

Our lives and futures are interconnected. We are a community of practice. We have a shared responsibility to dismantle white supremacy and systems of oppression, and to work towards collective liberation.

We Strive to Fully and Responsibly Resource Movements

We are accountable to grassroots organizers, who should have sufficient support to pursue goals without restrictions imposed by funders. We strive to be transparent, to build trust, and to shift power as we mobilize resources for this work.
STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS 2020-2023

- Strengthen the New York ecosystem for grassroots organizing
- Dismantle white supremacy as it works in philanthropy
- Dismantle white supremacy as it appears within North Star Fund
- Practice social justice values in the management and organizing of North Star Fund’s money
1. **Strengthen the New York Ecosystem for Grassroots Organizing**

These goals focus on our role as a grantmaker, resource mobilizer and program provider for grassroots movements in New York City and the Hudson Valley. The work we describe here involves bringing more resources into the field as well as programs that build the infrastructure and strength of the overall grassroots organizing ecosystem in our region.

- Increase total dollars for grassroots organizing in NYC and the Hudson Valley distributed through the CFC by at least 10% per year for the next five years.

- Develop and implement effective capacity building programs in NYC and the Hudson Valley that support grassroots organizing groups to become more effective, more stable, more committed to movement building, and more able to experiment. (For example, in 2020, we will launch a new Movement Leadership Program.)

- Deepen our commitment to start-ups, through funding opportunities and capacity-building programs targeted towards newly emerging organizations.

- Design communications strategies and programs that engage more people and funders in grassroots organizing led by communities of color building power in New York City and the Hudson Valley.

- Design communications strategies and programs that amplify both the substantive demands and campaigns for systemic change from organizing groups, as well as the resources, actions and sector changes needed to promote a healthy, growing and sustainable organizing ecosystem.

- Identify and invest a greater share of resources in communities historically and/or currently under-resourced by broader philanthropy, as well as by North Star Fund.
2. Dismantle White Supremacy as it Works in Philanthropy

These goals focus on our role as a social justice fund and our commitment to strengthening our organizing and political education work with individual donors, communities of giving, and institutional philanthropy. The work we describe here involves programs and partnerships designed to change the system of how money moves from private donors and into social justice.

- Articulate the role of individual donors in the movement across class/race and funder behavior necessary to fully fund the movement.

- Create a robust donor leadership program within North Star Fund that centers political education and provides opportunities for people to become involved with North Star Fund’s work in different ways (for example, through the Giving Project).

- Create programming that highlights our grantees, brings North Star Fund stakeholders together and intentionally shifts power dynamics so that grassroots organizers more meaningfully engage with donors, funders and institutional philanthropy.

- Design partnerships with donor organizing and philanthropy peers that strengthen our sector organizing around dismantling systems of oppression as they appear in traditional philanthropy practices.

- Promote practices, including our own, that shift power dynamics in philanthropy through specific and accessible tools. (This includes, for example, our participation in the Trust-Based Philanthropy Project and our work to train funders on how to build participatory grantmaking programs.)

- Promote grassroots fundraising models through accessible programs and curriculum available to groups and movements of all sizes.

- Expand and diversify our base of donors, with an intentional focus on building a movement of people across race and class who do not passively give to North Star Fund but who participate in our programs and then mobilize resources for grassroots organizing.
3. **Dismantle White Supremacy as it Appears Within North Star Fund’s Organization and Culture**

These goals focus on strengthening North Star Fund’s culture and infrastructure as a workplace, but also as a non-profit organization and a broader community of stakeholders—including staff, Board, Community Funding Committee members, volunteers, grantees and supporters. North Star Fund is firmly committed to equity and to the recruitment and retention of people from backgrounds traditionally excluded from philanthropy, including Black, Indigenous and people of color, women, LGBTQ, elders, and disabled people.

- Center equity, and utilize collective liberation as a lens for our work. Make our values transparent to all members of the North Star Fund community, and linked to every aspect of North Star Fund’s operations.

- With every priority, build space for North Star Fund stakeholders—including grantees, organizers, funders—to be in community with each other in ways that are intentionally designed to shift power dynamics.

- Invest in staff development, recruitment and retention towards sustainability and advancement in their chosen fields.

- Strengthen and make transparent our systems of accountability to the grassroots organizing sector, and especially our grantees, in our programmatic work. Formalize how we seek feedback for program design, and design programs to be accessible to groups of all sizes.

- Strengthen the infrastructure, leadership and participation in North Star Fund’s community funding committees. Design programming specific to the recruitment, retention and leadership building of CFC members, both within the North Star Fund community and more broadly in the fields of organizing and philanthropy.

- Transform and strengthen our governance to be more democratic and activist-led in all aspects of decision-making. Engage all aspects of our leadership community in continual political education and alignment around North Star Fund’s theory of change, in order to shift current dynamics of power and privilege as exercised throughout the organization.
4. Operationalize Our Values in the Management and Use of Our Resources

These goals focus on our intention to more broadly practice our values throughout North Star Fund’s treatment and management of our assets, our governance and all of our resources.

- Strengthen and make transparent our financial planning processes, and develop a shared governance model similar to the community funding committee for the management of North Star Fund’s financial assets.

- Continue to deepen the alignment of our investments and financial practices with our values. Engage our finance and operations stakeholders—including those involved with the management of our financial assets—through a clear lens about systems of oppression, capitalism, and white supremacy.

- Develop new ways for North Star Fund’s financial assets to be useful for the communities we serve, including a potential community-based fund that makes capital more accessible to communities that have been most impacted by systems of oppression.

- Be a resource for the sector for financial and operations strategies that are accessible and implementable. Make transparent all of our processes and findings.