A CASE STUDY REFLECTION / JULY 2026

The Organizing Center

The Hyams FOUNDATION



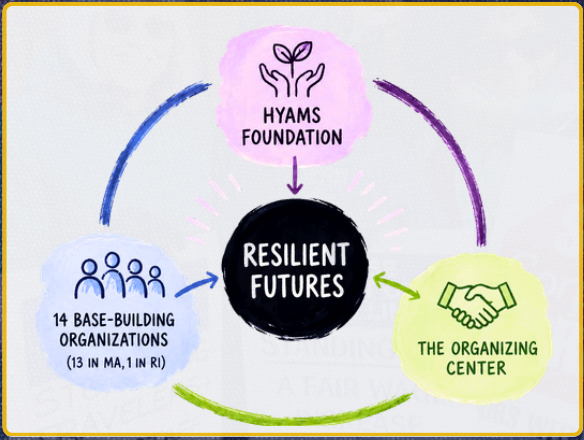
RESILIENT FUTURES

Strengthening A Regional Organizing Ecosystem by Investing in Culture

By The Organizing Center & The Hyams Foundation

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background: Resilient Futures is a transformative cohort program that emerged as an evolution of Hyams Foundation's Building Movement Infrastructure Project (BMIP). BMIP is rooted in the critical alliance of **14 base-building organizations** (13 in MA and 1 in RI), the Hyams Foundation as an aligned and trusted philanthropic partner, and The Organizing Center as a seasoned capacity-building partner.



This report serves as a reflection on Resilient Futures' multi-year process and with an eye toward what this critical combination of forces makes possible: stronger movements capable of winning durable power. It affirms that organizational transformation is not only possible, but achievable with the right combination of support, trust, and long-term commitment.

The Resilient Futures Approach

At the outset, participating organizations consistently named their struggles to navigate internal challenges as the largest obstacle hindering their capacity to meet their organizing and base-building goals. Therefore, **Resilient Futures focused on supporting organizations to transform their own organizations from within.**

Our Theory: to be successful in their organizing and base-building work, organizations need healthy internal cultures and practices that allow them to build and sustain sufficient unity, trust, and resilience.



Asian American Resource Workshop



Massachusetts Jobs with Justice

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

What Set Resilient Futures Apart

1. **Concentration on two widely underdeveloped capacities for resilient organizational culture:**

   Resilient Protagonism
   Cultivating leadership that is grounded, accountable, and capable of navigating challenges constructively.

   Principled Struggle
   Building skills to engage conflict in ways that deepen alignment, strengthen relationships, and advance collective purpose.

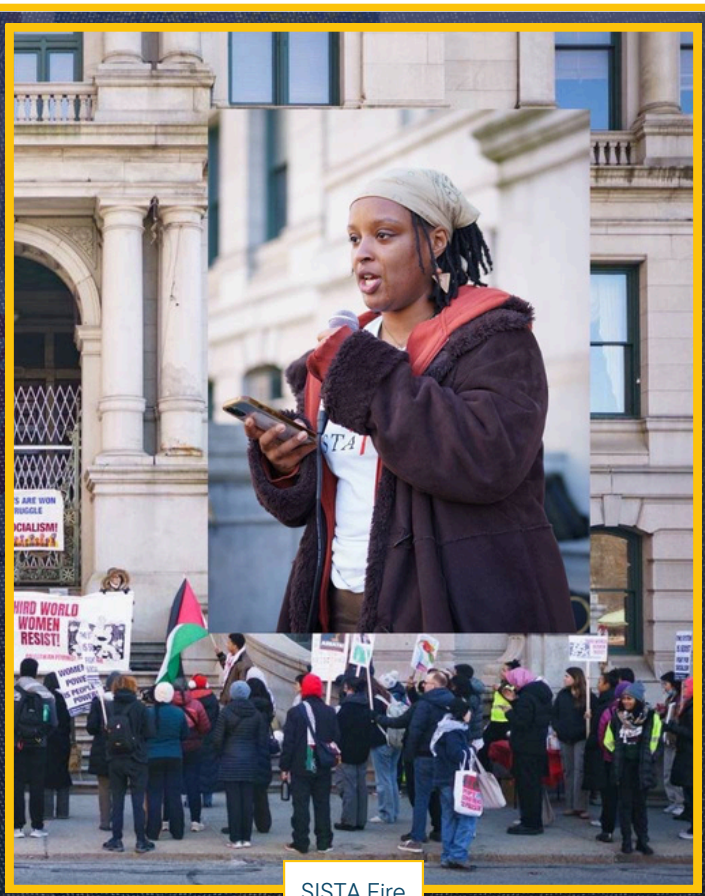
2. **Participants at Multiple Levels of Leadership:**
   Resilient Futures required the participation of both **organizers and directors.** Involving staff at multiple levels of leadership and decision-making was critical to the success of the work.

3. **Focus on Implementation (not just skill development):**
   Resilient Futures was an immersive experience that provided a peer learning space for reflection, application, and feedback, along with practical tools and coaching support for implementation.



Springfield No One Leaves

"This entire project is a huge advance, because it needs to be understood that organizations themselves receiving funding is not the same thing as funding infrastructure."
- Resilient Futures participant



SISTA Fire

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Resilient Futures' Impact

Resilient Futures offers a compelling model for how funders and capacity builders can partner with movement organizations to strengthen individual organizations and the broader ecosystem needed to win lasting change.

Participating in the Resilient Futures cohort **helped leaders reshape how they understand their work, their organizations, and their relationships to the broader movement.**

- **Deepened relationships between organizations** - Participants valued the rare opportunity for collective problem-solving and also remarked how this experience sharpened their understanding of their organization's relationship to the broader ecosystem.
- **Tangible shifts in organizations' structures and how they operate** - Organizations built stronger leadership structures and evolved their internal systems (financial systems, operations, and technology) to meet the demands of their work.
- **Increased organizations' ability to navigate internal tensions and organizational culture** - Participants described becoming more intentional about how their organizations practiced feedback, handled conflict, and fostered accountability.
- **Stronger relationships meant stronger collaboration, new organizing strategies, and institution building externally** - including a stronger emphasis on institution-building for Black organizations in Boston and deeper engagement with the concept of governing power and their role in helping to build it.

Recommendations

At a time when many movement organizations are navigating significant external pressures alongside internal strain, investments in relational infrastructure, conflict capacity, leadership sustainability, and cross-organizational solidarity gave leaders a set of frameworks and tools to meet the moment with clarity, discipline, and resilience. **This report's findings point to a clear opportunity for funders to deepen their impact and advance toward more responsive, trust-based philanthropy by:**

- building stronger, more transparent relationships with grantees and aligned capacity builders,
- shifting practices around grantmaking strategy and decision-making to match the realities organizations face on the ground,
- committing to sustained and flexible support,
- and expanding the ways they show up beyond funding to support the long-term resilience and effectiveness of the field.

BUILDING MOVEMENT INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECT LEADERS

1. Alternatives for Community and Environment
2. Asian American Resource Workshop
3. Boston Ujima Project
4. Chinese Progressive Association
5. City Life/Vida Urbana
6. Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative
7. Homes for All Massachusetts
8. Massachusetts Jobs with Justice
9. Massachusetts Voter Table
10. Neighbor to Neighbor
11. New England Community Project
12. SISTA Fire
13. Springfield No One Leaves
14. The City School



Massachusetts Jobs with Justice



New England Community Project

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SISTA Fire



Massachusetts Jobs with Justice

INTRODUCTION

The news today paints a grim picture of a world under multiple crises. The challenges we face—income inequality, climate change, and lack of access to quality healthcare, housing, education, and more—are compounded by a rise in nationalism and authoritarianism. People of color and those who are poor and working-class, experience the greatest impacts of these compounding crises. Yet, the people who are most directly impacted are most often those who are at the forefront of efforts to challenge inequities and transform systems. Progress is slow, and hard-won victories, such as voting rights and reproductive rights, are often rolled back.

It would be easy to think that Massachusetts is immune from the most extreme changes happening in other states. But that is not the case. Massachusetts ranks in the top 10 states in income and wealth inequality. The public transit system is outdated, public schools face significant infrastructure challenges, and environmental hazards disproportionately affect communities of color in cities such as Boston, Brockton, Worcester, and Springfield.

At the heart of these challenges is the imbalance of power. To make a real difference, communities must build the power to win their vision of a society that works for everyday people, and hold off the inevitable attempts to roll back their wins. Across Massachusetts, organizations are facing both an urgent challenge and a powerful opportunity. More people than ever understand that the systems shaping their lives aren't working for them. Many are ready to take action—but too often there isn't a clear pathway from concern to collective power, rooted in strong relationships and resilient organizing.

Strong, impactful organizing, regardless of issue or geography, depends on base building organizations that are resilient – with intentional internal culture – and able to build the people power needed to win. Many organizations recognize that there is a gap in what they want to do and what they have the capacity to do. This gap is not about a lack of commitment—it's about a lack of capacity-building support and shared infrastructure. What's missing is a stronger, more connected ecosystem that helps organizers deepen their skills, learn from one another, build sustainable teams, and develop long-term movement leaders.

In Massachusetts, we are fortunate to have the combination of forces needed to drive transformative change: (1) base-building organizations that are deeply committed to honest self-assessment and transparency, (2) a philanthropic partner such as the the Hyams Foundation, which has cultivated strong, trust-based relationships with movement leaders, and (3) a seasoned capacity-building partner, The Organizing Center, with the expertise to guide organizations through meaningful transformation.

INTRODUCTION

Over the past two years, and into its third, this powerful alliance has collaborated to develop, facilitate, and engage in a multi-phase cohort aimed at tackling some of the most pressing challenges in the Massachusetts movement ecosystem. Beginning with the Hyams Foundation's Building Movement Infrastructure Project (BMIP) and evolving into the Resilient Futures cohort, participating base-building organizations have made remarkable strides. The majority have successfully shifted from internal resilience and culture building to now focusing on forging a cohesive statewide strategy together.

This report serves as both an evaluation and a reflection on this multi-year process. It affirms that organizational transformation is possible and achievable with the right combination of support, trust, and long-term commitment. Through this journey, we've learned that building trust among philanthropic partners, capacity-building partners, and base-building organizations is a cornerstone of success. At the same time, we recognize that there remains substantial room to grow—both in deepening our trust and strengthening our practices.

We present these findings not only for the sake of shared learning, but with the aspiration that they will catalyze further progress, increase our collective impact, and, ultimately, help everyday people win more.

Research Methodology

This report brings together internal evaluations conducted by The Hyams Foundation and The Organizing Center. In addition to anonymous feedback, we conducted in-depth, live interviews at the conclusion of the first two years of the Resilient Futures cohort. We present these findings with an awareness of potential biases in participant responses— both those that can arise in live interviews and those shaped by the time gap between program participation and evaluation. We are grateful for the openness and vulnerability organizations demonstrated throughout this process. To preserve that trust, participant quotes included in this report are intentionally anonymous, ensuring individuals can continue to share candidly and safely.

Evaluation Process

2024

- 16/17 Participants filled out a pre-cohort survey, identifying key challenges to address in the cohort
- Informal, qualitative feedback was requested by participants at the end of each Resilient Futures cohort session. This feedback was in the form of pros and grows for each session.

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INTRODUCTION

2025

- Quantitative and qualitative feedback was requested by participants at the end of the second year of the Resilient Futures cohort. This feedback was in the form of:
    - The following questions, asked of participants during the final cohort session:
        - What did you find most useful about the second year of our cohort?
        - What is one shift your organization has made in the last year as a result of our work together?
        - If Resilient Futures were to continue, what work together would be most impactful for your organization?
    - A brief survey to gather data about the overall usefulness of each of the approaches (in-person retreats, Zoom sessions, coaching)

2026

- Formal interviews of participants, with 15/17 eligible individuals participating
    - Early February: outreach & scheduling
    - Late February & early March: 1 - 1.5 hour Zoom interviews
        - Manual notes
        - Otter ai transcript
        - Google form
    - Late March & early April: themes analysis
- Organizations represented in interviews
    - Alternatives for Community & Environment
    - Asian American Resource Workshop
    - Boston Ujima Project
    - City Life/Vida Urbana
    - The City School
    - Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative
    - Massachusetts Jobs with Justice
    - New England Community Project
    - SISTA Fire
    - Springfield No One Leaves



SISTA Fire

INTRODUCTION

ABOUT

The Organizing Center

The Organizing Center (The OC) is a trusted capacity building organization that supports organizational transformation towards rigorous and resilient base building. The OC is uniquely positioned to successfully carry out this work. Our staff and coaches have decades of campaign and base building experience across housing and land justice, public education, youth organizing, healthcare, mass incarceration, Black organizing and union organizing. This experience has translated into a capacity building organization that acts like an organizer—building deep partnerships with base building organizations, identifying pathways to support their leadership development (through accompaniment and coaching), and ensuring organizations have the skills they need to build rigorous and resilient base building organizations.

ABOUT

The Hyams Foundation

The Hyams Foundation is a private, independent foundation with a mission of increasing economic, racial and social justice and power within working-class communities in Massachusetts. Our vision for the future is a society in which systems and structures are transformed to create the conditions for increased collective well-being and produce equitable power, access, opportunities and outcomes, regardless of race. We see ourselves as a partner with organizations across the state and region, with a commitment to long-term investment in durable power building.



The City School



Asian American Resource Workshop

A REGIONAL EXPERIMENT

Why Resilient Futures

Resilient Futures emerged from a powerful multi-year partnership between The Organizing Center (The OC) and the Hyams Foundation, grounded in trust, shared learning, and a mutual commitment to strengthening movement infrastructure. Through ongoing engagement—including Design Team retreats, direct consultations with Design Team leaders, and sustained listening to grantee partners—Hyams identified a critical need to invest in organizational resilience as a core component of ecosystem health.

This work builds on Hyams' broader **Building Movement Infrastructure Project**, which was launched following extensive input from grantees and philanthropic partners across Massachusetts and, increasingly, the broader Northeast region, including Connecticut and Rhode Island. Over time, participating organizations consistently named the need for stronger, more grounded internal cultures capable of sustaining organizing and base-building efforts.

In response, Hyams partnered with The OC—recognized for its role as an experienced and highly skilled capacity builder—to design and lead a year-long cohort experience that then expanded to this multi-year project. This initiative, Resilient Futures, brings together Hyams grantees to deepen their organizational practices and strengthen their long-term sustainability.

Rationale

To be successful in their organizing and base-building work, organizations need healthy internal cultures and practices that allow them to build and sustain sufficient unity, trust, and resilience. Our observations tell us that many organizations and their staff struggle to face, navigate, and overcome internal and external challenges, which hinders their capacity to meet their organizing and base-building goals.

Our observations indicate that:

- Staff and leadership often lack the tools to navigate conflict and disagreement in generative ways, leading to fragmentation, organizational strain, and weakened relationships across the ecosystem.
- Dominant organizational practices are not consistently grounded in an analysis of social conditions, which can result in approaches that unintentionally exacerbate conflict or limit long-term effectiveness.
- Broader societal conditions—including economic inequality, social isolation, and the pressures of the nonprofit sector—shape organizational dynamics in ways that can deepen division, including between staff and leadership.
- Individualized approaches to well-being and accountability can further erode collective cohesion, making it more difficult to build aligned, resilient teams.

A REGIONAL EXPERIMENT

These dynamics not only impact individual organizations but also weaken the broader movement ecosystem. Strengthening internal organizational capacity is therefore essential to sustaining organizers and advancing collective goals.

Organizations' internal cultures don't exist in a vacuum. They're shaped by the individuals in it as well as by the material conditions of the world and the dominant culture of society. We're living in a society of increasing isolation, alienation, worsening climate crisis, and despair. Our observations tell us that the dominant practices in the movement, related to organization-building, are not sufficiently grounded in the realities organizations face. Instead, they often rely on assumptions and approaches that contribute to unprincipled conflict and increased fragmentation.

We also see a dominant individualistic approach to meeting collective needs that tends to commodify "self-care" and reject accountability. Coupled with employment dynamics in the nonprofit sector, this often creates unhelpful divisions between organizers and director-level staff. It is also common to see organizations unable to address internal disagreement and conflict in generative and unifying ways. Instead, we see public "call-outs," organizational splits, and organizations severing ties with others across the broader ecosystem.

While there are many aspects of organizational culture a program could take responsibility for, developing the capacities of staff members to transform their organizations themselves will yield better and longer lasting results. **Resilient Futures therefore focused on developing two core capacities: resilient protagonism and principled struggle.**

By building these capacities among organizers and director-level staff, we supported organizations in developing alignment and collective accountability around their plans to develop and strengthen organizational resilience.



Springfield No One Leaves (SNOL)

A REGIONAL EXPERIMENT

Theory of Change

Resilient Futures was grounded in the following hypothesis:

If we strengthen the knowledge and practice of grounded assessment, resilient protagonism, and principled struggle among organizers and directors in Black, Brown, and Asian-led base-building organizations across the Northeast;

And if we do so through an immersive, rigorously facilitated training experience that provides space for reflection, application, and feedback, along with practical tools for implementation;

Then participating leaders will be better equipped to:

- Identify strategic interventions to strengthen their organizations
- Strengthen their leadership and organizational practices
- Navigate challenges and conflict in generative ways
- Build more resilient and aligned organizational cultures

Ultimately, this work contributes to retaining organizers, strengthening organizations, and advancing a more resilient and interconnected movement ecosystem.

Program Approach

Resilient Futures focuses on **building the capacity of organizers** and directors to transform their own organizations from within. Engaging staff across multiple levels of leadership and decision-making was a critical component of this program. Knowing that it takes a team to implement new practices, organizations were asked to send their E.D. or Co-Directors along with 1-2 director-level or lead staff members. Recognizing that every organization has its own needs and challenges, the program emphasized developing shared frameworks, practices, and tools that participants could adapt to their unique contexts, rather than prescribing one-size-fits-all solutions.

The program centers on two core capacities:

- Resilient Protagonism: Cultivating leadership that is grounded, accountable, and capable of navigating challenges constructively.
- Principled Struggle: Building skills to engage conflict in ways that deepen alignment, strengthen relationships, and advance collective purpose.

A REGIONAL EXPERIMENT

Through a high-intensity cohort model, participants engaged in deep reflection, practice, and feedback, supported by concrete tools and facilitated with intentionality and rigor. The program also models cultures of resistance that center joy, creativity, imagination, and transformation.

Program Arc

The Hyams Foundation focuses their efforts on strengthening organizing in Massachusetts with an eye toward the broader ecosystem. After deep listening to their partners, Hyams identified that deep investment in movement infrastructure was a key to strengthening base building practice and increasing the number of organizing groups in the ecosystem.

The partnership between The Hyams Foundation (Hyams) and The Organizing Center (The OC) began with the facilitation of a retreat for Hyams' Building Movement Infrastructure Project (BMIP). BMIP was designed as a collaborative, BIPOC-led effort to strengthen social justice movement infrastructure across Boston and Massachusetts. In 2021, Hyams convened 10 grassroots movement anchor organizations representing local, regional, and statewide coalitions to co-create a shared infrastructure-building plan. This process identified six key priority areas (i.e., communications, leadership development, organizing, fundraising, technology, and physical space), and led to a set of pilot initiatives, several of which launched in 2022 with support from multiple funders, including training programs, fellowships, and leadership development efforts. Building on over two decades of field-building experience, Hyams has used BMIP to deepen its approach as a movement funder, emphasizing collaboration, power-sharing, and long-term investment in the ecosystem.

This project was led by a core group of organizations (the Design Team) that set the guiding "North Star" for their shared work. During a retreat in 2024, The Organizing Center built trust with key organizational partners and led the group through an evaluation process. This resulted in the Design Team identifying that a lack of cohesive statewide strategy was one of the barriers to building the power they needed to win governing power in the state.

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Asian American Resource Workshop (AARW)

A REGIONAL EXPERIMENT

It was after this retreat that members of the Design Team, Hyams, and The OC came together to identify the key barriers preventing organizations from achieving impact at scale. Organizations consistently identified the same key challenges:

- having sufficient organizational infrastructure,
- having a strong organizational culture that could support resilience amidst external crises,
- and having space for organizational leaders to build relationships and share challenges.

Out of these conversations emerged **Resilient Futures, a year-long cohort focused on supporting organizations as they identified and tested hypotheses about the interventions that would make them more resilient.** The first year of this cohort included a week-long, in-person retreat, bookended by two three-hour Zoom sessions before the retreat and two afterward.

PROGRAM ARC



2021-2023 | Building Movement Infrastructure Project Sets the Foundation

- Convened Anchor Organizations
- Piloted Organizational Infrastructure Initiatives
- Established and Developed the Design Team



2024 | Resilient Futures Year 1

- Two Online Learning Sessions
- Week-long, In-Person Retreat
- Two Online Learning Sessions



2025 | Resilient Futures Year 2

- Three Peer Learning Sessions
- 12 Hours of Tailored Coaching per Organization

A REGIONAL EXPERIMENT

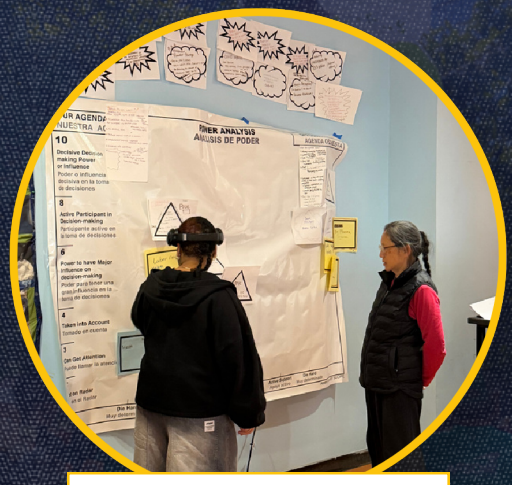
Following the first year, participating organizations expressed a strong desire to continue the cohort, and Hyams renewed its commitment to the program. Organizations were able to opt into tailored coaching to move forward on their hypotheses, and Year 2 concluded with three additional three-hour Zoom sessions. These Zoom calls focused on peer learning and troubleshooting the inevitable challenges that arise when implementing new organizational practices. During these calls, new but related issues emerged that organizations wanted to address. Specifically, organizations identified the internal challenge of needing to build organizational structures while lacking the time, capacity, or staff to do so, as well as addressing high levels of staff burnout. These challenges were exacerbated by the external conditions organizations faced, including ICE and National Guard deployments in their cities, the need to counter misinformation among their members, and an environment of low trust and heightened conflict within their coalition spaces. In peer learning breakouts, we encouraged organizations to grapple with questions such as:

1. Consider one hard choice you are facing within your organization.
2. What options feel available to you?
3. What feelings come up when you think about this challenge, and how do those feelings shape the choices that feel possible?
4. What would each of these options shift for you, for your organization, and for the movement at large?

From these conversations, organizations were supported in making shifts in their work. As one participant shared, “Organizations went through big transitions this year - and being seen in the shifts we made with other organizations allowed for us to be braver.”



New England Community Project



The City School

KEY LESSONS

This two-year initiative has given us enough information to be clear: **this work has resulted in tangible shifts across the movement ecosystem and has made new possibilities achievable.** Organizations have shifted their internal culture practices, built deeper relationships across the ecosystem, and now feel more prepared to engage in the work of developing shared strategy. At various points throughout the process, we collected qualitative and quantitative data from participants. Below, we outline the key lessons learned from this initiative.

Challenges at the Outset

In our initial survey of Resilient Futures participants, they identified key dynamics within their organizations that they hoped the Resilient Futures cohort would help address. Key themes included:



Navigating movement dynamics. Organizations shared experiences of challenging movement dynamics, where conflict was present but the leadership needed to transform that conflict was not. Participants named their own challenges in stepping into that kind of leadership within their coalitions.



Participation of members and staff. Across the board, organizations wanted greater participation- in organizational and coalition activities, as well as in decision-making. However, they were often unsure what structures needed to be in place to support that level of participation..



Internal organizational culture. The majority of organizations identified that they were looking for ways to build healthy struggle and disagreement into their organizations. They shared the challenges of creating a culture of experimentation and supporting staff resilience, especially in the years following COVID.

Along with naming these challenges, organizations were clear that focusing on organizational culture would have a meaningful impact on their organizations.

> *"By strengthening our organization's culture, it will help create the necessary shifts for us as a team that will be needed. Currently myself and my Co-ED have made an assessment that our team might be really challenged in the fall with an anticipated shift in the political terrain, and knowing that rapid response will continue in this work, wanting to create a culture of both responsiveness and resilience that raises people's threshold to be able to hold more, without leading to burnout and feeling like they need to transition from the organization and leave movement work."*

KEY LESSONS

Relationship between Foundation & Grantees

During the evaluation process, we asked participants about their relationship with The Hyams Foundation and, more broadly, about their advice to foundations- seeking to build trusting partnership with grassroots organizations.

Grantees consistently emphasized the need for stronger feedback loops and more meaningful dialogue between funders and the organizations they support. They also urged foundations to more directly address power dynamics, while increasing access to long-term, multi-year funding and making deeper investments in organizing. Many called for fewer restrictions and a greater willingness to take risks, and alongside support that extends beyond financial contributions. Some expressed a desire for more decisive action, encouraging funders to move from intention to implementation.

"It is really, really important that people invest in movement infrastructure. It couldn't be more important...I think that this entire project and way of thinking is a huge advance in philanthropy. Because it needs to be understood that organizations themselves receiving funding is not the same thing as funding infrastructure. As much as it's true that organizations themselves are holding an enormous amount of the infrastructure, that's not even always recognized or seen. But I think continuing to illuminate that those are two different sets of work that organizations are holding, sometimes in partnership with other organizations and with movement support organizations."

"We gotta be able to have funders feel comfortable with hearing what we are actually dealing with, and then see if they have the resources and vision to partner with us to figure it out. And this is not a one-on-one, organization-by-organization project, but whether we see strength in the ecology of movement organizations? And if we see this as an ecology issue, how does the ecology of funders address those issues?"

"It's wild to me that a funder (Hyams) looked at the organizing ecosystem and was like, you know what orgs need? And nailed it...Having a funder that's like, we need our orgs to survive, to struggle with each other, be deeply connected- was incredible. It's not just useful for (Name of Organization), but for every organization we are connected to, every organization that I will ever be in from now on gets to benefit from the practice and knowledge that Hyams identified as important. I think that is massively useful for the movement in general".

KEY LESSONS

Results of the Cohort & Coaching

Participants described the Resilient Futures cohort as something that did not simply offer ideas—**it actively reshaped how they understood their work, their organizations, and their relationships to the broader movement.**

Stronger Relationships Led to a Stronger Ecosystem

For many participants, the most immediate and lasting value came from the relationships they built. What began as a cohort evolved a network of collaborators, confidants, and co-strugglers. As one participant reflected, "This was the biggest value for me. Many of those organizations are still partners today. **We've built real pathways for continued relationships and collaboration.**" Others spoke about how these connections deepened over time—not only expanding their networks, but also strengthening trust, mutual support, and shared purpose. The formation of spaces like the Black ED group, along with ongoing peer support, helped participants feel more grounded in a collective ecosystem rather than isolated within their own organizations.

Organizations Got Clearer on Purpose

Alongside relationship-building came a clearer sense of direction. Participants described gaining greater clarity about what their organizations needed to prioritize and how they fit into the broader movement. As one person put it, **"The process helped clarify the role our organization can play in the broader movement,"** while another added, "The space also helped me better understand where we fit within the broader organizing landscape." This clarity extended to identifying leadership gaps, addressing internal conflicts, and more intentionally defining organizational culture.

Peer Learning Supported Integration of New Practices & Skills

The cohort also created a rare and valuable space for collective problem-solving. Participants consistently pointed to the opportunity to troubleshoot challenges with peers as one of the most impactful elements of the experience. In these sessions, they practiced giving and receiving feedback, navigating internal tensions, and approaching challenges with curiosity rather than reactivity. One participant captured this shift vividly:

"This was probably the most useful part. It taught us how to give grounded feedback, offer thoughtful assessments, and troubleshoot challenges without falling into destructive emotional reactions. Instead, we practiced curiosity, self-reflection, and comradely critique...I've been in a lot of leftist groups that talk about doing self-criticism properly, but don't actually practice it. This was a space where it was practiced in ways I want to bring back to every group I'm part of."

Skill-building was another key thread, though it was often woven into relational and reflective spaces rather than taught in isolation. Participants developed tools and practices related to decision-making, facilitation, conflict resolution, and group process. They engaged with concrete frameworks—such as a hypothesis tool, organizational assessments, and partnership evaluations—that helped translate abstract ideas into actionable strategies.

KEY LESSONS

Tangible Shifts Outside the Training Space, Inside Organizations

These experiences led to tangible shifts in how organizations operated. Structurally, many groups revisited the purpose of their internal systems, reconnecting organizational design to their mission and growth. Some strengthened financial systems, operations, and technology, recognizing that infrastructure needed to evolve alongside their work. Leadership structures, in particular, underwent significant transformation. Several organizations built stronger leadership teams, clarified roles, or moved toward more intentional forms of distributed leadership. Across these changes, a clear theme emerged: a focus on building strength and sustainability through co-leadership and team-based models.

Cultural shifts were just as pronounced. **Participants described becoming more intentional about how their organizations practiced feedback, navigated conflict, and fostered accountability.** Some drafted culture documents or brought in additional support to guide organizational development. Others implemented structured rest practices, created timelines for internal growth, or developed shared frameworks for surfacing challenges without defaulting to blame. There was a growing recognition of the link between accountability, conflict, and leadership development, along with a commitment to creating ongoing spaces for reflection, check-ins, and collective growth.

Relationship-building continued to ripple outward beyond the cohort itself. Organizations strengthened their commitments to collaboration and, in some cases, launched new projects. These relationships also shaped external organizing strategies. For example, some participants began focusing more intentionally on institution-building across the ecosystem, clarified how their programs could better support movement partners, or shifted how they communicated with their members about the local ecosystem. Others engaged more deeply with concepts like governing power and aligning their organizational priorities—such as adopting “power” as a central theme for the coming year.

What Was Challenging

At the same time, participants were candid about the challenges. Balancing the demands of the cohort with existing responsibilities often led to fatigue, particularly during our Zoom sessions. There was also a strong desire for more in-person time, which many felt would have deepened the work even further. We had to balance the tension between wanting more in-person time with fellow cohort members and the limited time organizations could devote to retreats, along with the reality of Zoom fatigue. Differences in organizations’ starting points also meant that not every tool or session resonated equally, highlighting the need for more adaptability and clarity of focus.

KEY LESSONS

Still, the emotional and relational impact of the cohort stood out as one of its most important contributions. As one participant shared, “I think that it's useful to have a space where we can talk about what's happening internally at our organizations, because it feels really lonely when you're having difficulty...And those are just not conversations that you have publicly. Having space to talk about that is helpful to everybody, because it can feel so lonely, and getting feedback and understanding how other people have handled that is just invaluable.” Another reflected on the depth of connection that emerged: “I would have run into them in other spaces, but we wouldn’t have the level of love and knowledge of each other, for each other, that we do now. That deep relationship is really important and meaningful to me.”

Of the program components, we learned that:



The Zoom sessions were most useful for providing orientation and introducing the program and the capacities that we used in the cohort. They also provided space for organizational check-ins on implementation, reflection, peer support, and accountability.



The in-person retreats allowed participants to build deeper relationships and practice embodied leadership in real time. As one participant shared, “I wouldn't have given the grounded, principled, and difficult feedback to a supervisor had it not been for the practices we shared and the container we built.” We centered each morning, practiced feedback in pods, sang together in the evenings, and modeled what it means to build a culture rooted in resilience.



The one-on-one and deep-dive coaching helped organizations dig more deeply into challenges they faced. This was especially important during the first year of the cohort, when participants were still building relationships and trust with one another. Through these coaching sessions, we supported organizations in shifting their practices and helped organizational leaders implement those changes.

Ultimately, participants saw the cohort as a space that embraced both the messiness and possibility of movement work. As one participant explained, “I think [the Resilient Futures cohort] was an important space for a couple of reasons....One, you know, we cannot pretend that this work is gonna be perfect, and we have to talk about ways to hold healthy debates and how to hold each other with love but with accountability during times of conflict. And I learned a lot of different tools and techniques that we could take back home.”

CONCLUSION

What's Next

There are many lessons from the first two years of Resilient Futures. With an ongoing commitment to strengthening the New England ecosystem from both The Hyams Foundation and The Organizing Center, we are moving into our third year of the cohort. In 2026 and 2027, we will move beyond organizational resilience and toward exploring what it will take for organizations to build statewide and regional strategy.

Closing

Resilient Futures represents a deliberate investment in the often under-resourced yet essential work of building strong, aligned, and resilient organizations at the heart of movement ecosystems. By centering the development of resilient protagonism and principled struggle, the program affirms that internal culture, leadership, and collective practice are not secondary to organizing—they are foundational to it. The experiences of this cohort underscore that when organizations are supported to confront challenges with clarity, accountability, and shared purpose, they are better positioned to sustain their work and deepen their impact. As this effort continues to evolve, it offers a compelling model for how funders and capacity builders can partner with movement organizations to strengthen not only individual groups, but the broader ecosystem needed to achieve lasting change.

These findings point to a clear opportunity for funders to deepen their impact by building stronger, more transparent relationships with grantees and aligned capacity builders, while aligning their practices with the realities organizations face on the ground. By addressing power dynamics, committing to sustained and flexible support, and expanding the ways they show up beyond funding, foundations can better support the long-term resilience and effectiveness of the field. The perspectives shared here offer both a reflection of current experiences and a roadmap for more responsive, trust-based philanthropy moving forward.

APPRECIATIONS

Resilient Futures succeeded through a powerful alignment of factors: participating organizations showed up with a high degree of openness and commitment, the program was grounded in thoughtful design and skilled coaching, and the necessary resources were in place to fully support the work. Together, these elements created the conditions for meaningful engagement, sustained learning, and tangible organizational growth.

Building Movement Infrastructure Project leaders (*Hyams Design Team in **Bold***)

Alternatives for Community and Environment (ACE)	**Massachusetts Jobs with Justice**
Asian American Resource Workshop (AARW)	**Massachusetts Voter Table**
Boston Ujima Project	**Neighbor to Neighbor**
Chinese Progressive Association (CPA)	**New England Community Project (NECP)**
City Life/Vida Urbana (CLVU)	SISTA Fire
Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative (DSNI)	Springfield No One Leaves/ Nadie Se Mude (SNOL)
Homes for All Massachusetts	**The City School**

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Special thanks to the people who worked behind the scenes to book retreat space, handle logistics, interview participants, synthesize the data, edit and design this document: The Hyams Foundation Team and The Organizing Center Team





APPENDIX

Interview Questions

Interview schedule- Winter 2026 The Hyams Foundation & The Organizing Center Evaluation	
Format: Zoom **Estimated length:** 60-90min **Interviewer:** Emy Takinami	
Mins	**Topic**
5min	**Welcome & Orientation** • Introductions • Purpose of the interview • Review consent, confidentiality, and logistics
15-25min	**Background & Context** 1) How have you engaged with The Organizing Center (TOC)? a) Attended the Design Team Retreat in June, 2024 b) Participated in the Resilient Futures (RF) Cohort 1 in 2024 c) Participated in the Resilient Futures (RF) Cohort 2 in 2025 d) Received individual coaching from TOC e) Other (please describe) 2) What was your understanding of the purpose(s) of the engagement? 3) What motivated you to participate? 4) What goals did you have for your organization's participation?
20-`30min	**Pluses & Deltas** 5) What did you find most useful or valuable? (Share all that apply) a) Building relationships with other organizations b) Getting clarity about what work we needed to prioritize (in your own organization or in partnership with others) c) Learning new skills d) Being able to troubleshoot challenges with peers e) Other (please describe) 6) What shifts did your organization make as a result of this work, if any? 7) Did your organization meet the goals you initially set? Why or why not? 8) What didn't work well, or could have been improved?
15-25min	**Advice & Reflections** 9) What advice would you offer the Design Team going forward? 10) What advice would you offer the Hyams Foundation going forward? 11) What advice would you offer the Organizing Center going forward? 12) What advice would you offer funders seeking to share power with grantees and invest in movement infrastructure?
5min	**Wrapup** • Invitation to share additional reflections after the interviews • Next steps • Appreciations