

# ANNUAL REPORT 2023



# FROM OUR STAFF



Dear collaborators, supporters, partners and friends,

We write this letter at a time of real turmoil in our world- some of which we could have anticipated and other things that have knocked us on our heels. In 2023 new wars have erupted, the climate crisis has continued to intensify bringing devastating fires and floods, and communities continue to struggle to meet their basic needs. We know that these crises will only continue to sharpen and intensify until we can build the power we need to shift conditions.

At the same time we have seen the resilience and determination of working people. We have seen significant labor organizing, large-scale direct actions and a focus on movement resilience that is daily giving us hope. There are organizers that are struggling well with each other- to build the kind of clarity we need to run and win campaigns and there are members who are stepping into big and bold leadership to shape the future of our movements.

At The Organizing Center we have not been immune from these ups and downs. We have navigated changing conditions by sharpening our role in the movement ecosystem and doubling down on the hard skills of organizing that we believe will build the power we need to make long-lasting change. We have continued our commitment to providing coaching, training and peer support spaces to the organizations that need it most- those led by, and building the power of Black and Brown, poor and working class, women and gender-oppressed people. We are proud of all the work we've done in 2023 and are excited about what we will build together in 2024.

Forward together,

*Christi*  
**CHRISTI**

*Shakiya*  
**SHAKIYA**

*Kristin*  
**KRISTIN**

# WHO WE ARE

## MISSION

The Organizing Center provides the training, coaching and support organizers need to build strong movements for social justice. We help organizers build the necessary skills to run a successful campaign, bring power back to the people and create change.

## BOARD



*Eboni Taggart*



*Arielle Klagsbrun*



*Bryan Mercer*



*Alison Stohr*



*Noah T. Winer*



*Sunyoung Strait*



*Sarah Turbow*

Our Board is made up of active organizers, trainers, evaluators and coaches. Being rooted by our movement partners support our organization to stay grounded in conditions facing organizing groups and scenario plan for what is needed in the future

# BUDGET

Our FY23 budget was \$420,000. We have three full-time staff members and a dozen contracted trainers and coaches who support us to carry out our vital programs.

## Income

A little more than half our of budget comes from foundation partners:

**Samuel S. Fels Foundation**

- \$90,000 over 3 years

**Patricia Kind Family Fund**

- \$75,000 over 3 years

**William Penn Foundation**

- \$76,000 over 2 years

**Kataly Foundation**

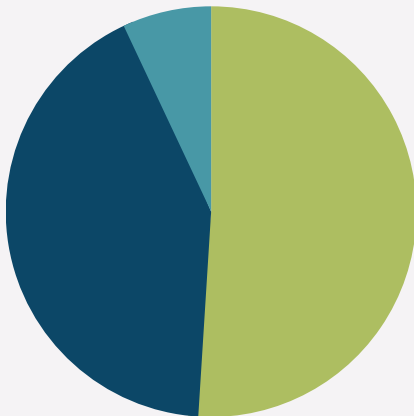
- \$150,000 over 2 years

**Valentine Foundation**

- \$45,000 over 3 years

At the end of 2023 we have taken steps to expand our individual donor base through a \$30,000 fundraising leap.

Individual Donors  
7%



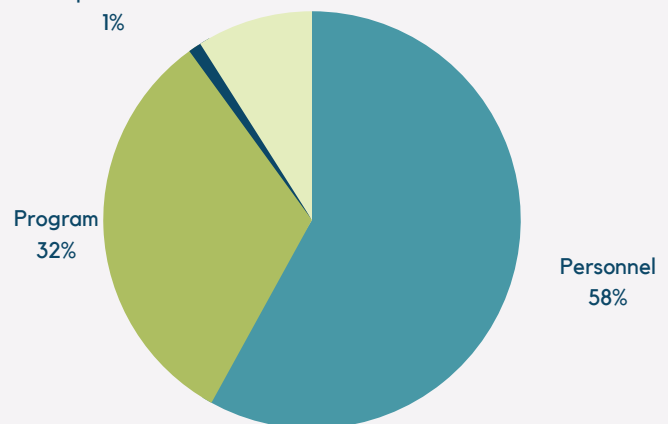
Foundations  
51%

Earned income  
42%

## Expenses

The majority of our funding goes to the people who run our programs- our staff and our contracted trainers and coaches. The next largest portion goes to carrying out our programs. The miscellaneous category includes our fiscal sponsor fee.

Miscellaneous  
9%



Personnel  
58%

Program  
32%

Operations  
1%

# OUR HYPOTHESIS

The Organizing Center is grounded in a vision of vibrant base building, led by communities impacted by the issues, with a strong pipeline for Black and Brown leadership into organizations that are resiliently building power to shift material conditions for people of color, women and gender-oppressed, and poor and working class communities.

To move in this direction we have a hypothesis that we are testing:

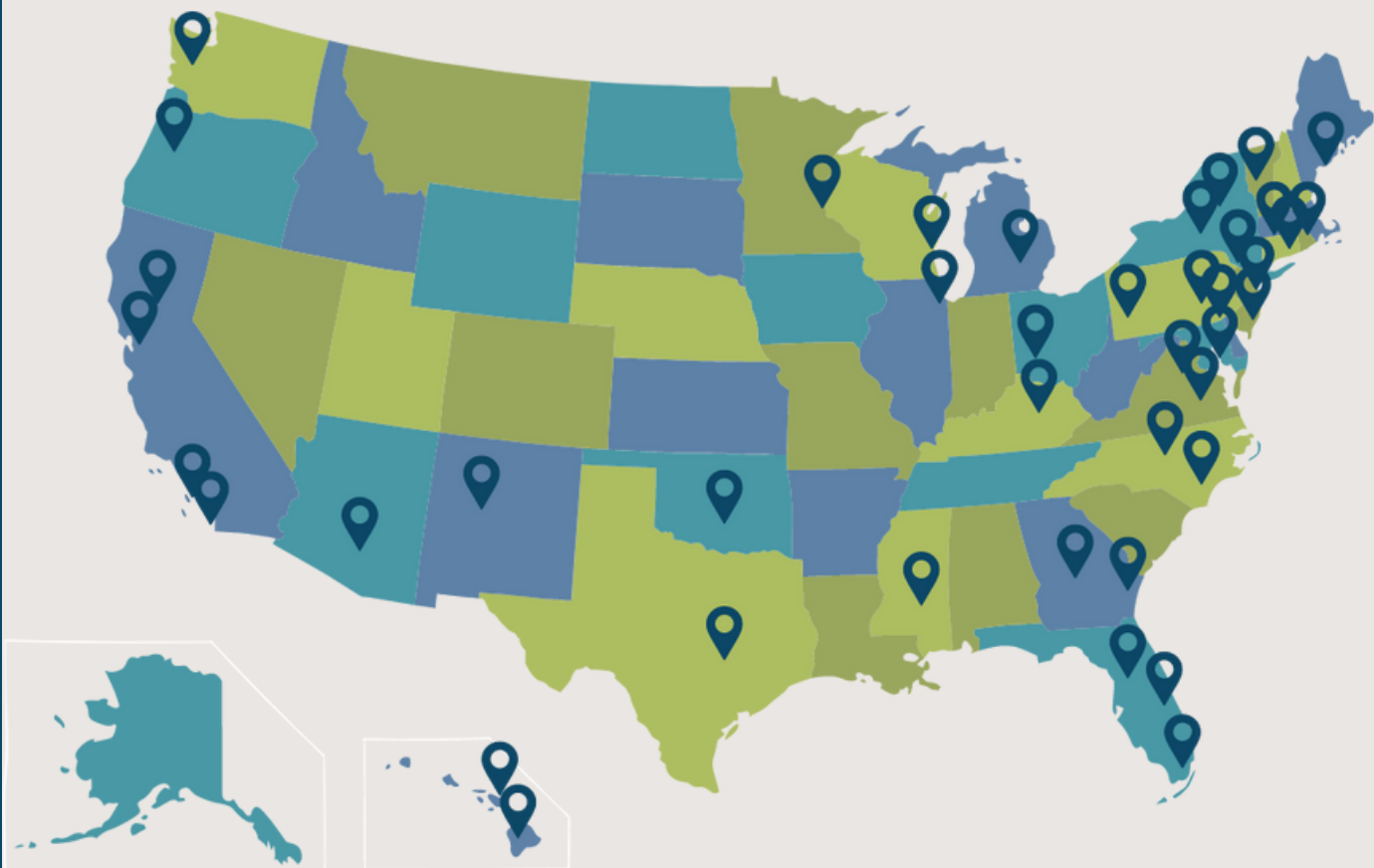
**IF** The Organizing Center first provides rigorous, concrete organizing skills training and coaching to base building organizations, with an emphasis on supporting a pipeline of Black and Brown organizers and, second, develops those same organizations' capacities to engage in organizing work with resilience,

**THEN** we will help strengthen base building organizing and those organizations' capacity to win systemic change in the short and long term, and support the development of self-reported resilience practices for organizers and organizations.



# PARTNERS THAT SHOW OUR SCALE

The Organizing Center was founded in Philadelphia and, in just three years, has national scale. Working with organizations in Philadelphia has been instrumental in our program development and evaluation work- our staff has decades of experience as organizers and trainers, working in, or closely alongside, many of these organizations. We are both a trusted partner to them and we trust them to provide direct feedback, allowing us to incubate and improve upon programs.



This map represents many of the locations that our workshop participants, peer learning lab cohort members and coaching clients come from.

In Philadelphia we have provided coaching & customized workshops to 16 organizations across a broad range of issues including:

## WORKERS RIGHTS



## ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE



## ENDING MASS INCARCERATION



## YOUTH ORGANIZING



## HOUSING & DEVELOPMENT



## TECH JUSTICE



PHILADELPHIA COALITION FOR AFFORDABLE COMMUNITIES

## EDUCATION JUSTICE



### Elected Officials & Foundation Partners

In addition to partnering directly with organizations we have also been hired by elected officials, foundations and foundation intermediaries. When hired by Philly and PA elected officials we have done planning retreats for their staff and supported them to work on their plans to introduce and pass the legislation.

We have been hired by foundations to do one of two things: (1) train their staff and/or Board, (2) train their grantees. We have provided staff training to Spring Point Partners and have been hired by the Movement Voter Project and Independence Public Media Foundation to train their grantees. Additionally we were hired on a year-long contract by the Funders Collaborative for Youth Organizing (FCYO). Over the course of this year we trained grantees during two of their in-person convenings, during virtual skill-building sessions, and we provided coaching for 35 youth organizations across 16 states.

Outside of Philadelphia our work has spanned the country- from the Northeast, to the South, to the Midwest, to the Southwest, to the West Coast.

Some examples of organizations we have worked with include:

**Firelands** organizes workers in the logging, milling and canning industries in rural northwest Washington State. Their work is centered around supporting workers to have family sustaining jobs and the industries they work in to take into account the environmental impacts of their work. We have provided coaching for their Organizing Director, facilitated a staff retreat and had their staff and members participate in our public workshops.



**Dream Defenders** is a black youth-led organization that centers racial justice. It was founded in Florida after the murder of Trayvon Martin, and has recently shifted to being national in scope. The Organizing Center is providing coaching to their National Organizing Director and recently completed a retreat, supporting the organization to develop its two year, national campaign plan.



**Brighter Future Institute** is based in Durham, NC. In 2023, The Organizing Center worked with Brighter Future to carry out its pilot organizer apprenticeship program. This program trained and supported 17 organizers across 15 organizations to develop deep canvassing and organizing skills through a three week intensive in-person retreat (of which we developed content for and led in week 1), provided weekly online training, coaching and peer support, and worked with the organizations locally to figure out how to retain the organizers after the apprenticeship. This program ends in December 2023 and there will be more learnings to share after that.



**Hui Aloha Aina** exists to affirm the continuity of Hawaiian independence; to restore Hawaiian national identity; to exert all peaceful and legal efforts to secure for the Hawaiian People and Citizens their Civil Rights; and to ensure that the United States of America complies with international humanitarian law. They have been on Hawaii since 1893 and are currently supporting hundreds of families in Lahaina who are still struggling to find stable housing after the wildfires. The Organizing Center, in December, will train dozens of their member leaders, from all four islands, on how to develop campaign strategy and effectively build a grassroots member-led organization. In the future The Organizing Center will also likely support their "cease the lease" campaign- the goal of which is to end U.S. military base leasing of indigenous land by 2029.





# PEER LEARNING LABS

## LEADING THE WAY

In our Leading the Way 2023 program, we supported 9 women and gender oppressed organizers through a six week cohort to further develop organizing and resilience skills and discuss challenges - in relationship to their gender and systems of oppression - that impact their organizing. We identified best practices that would help them to tap into their agency and navigate their challenges.

Of the 9 cohort participants, 67% identified as Black, 77% identified as poor or working-class in the past or present, and 33% identified as genderqueer. The cohort was also intergenerational; participants' ages ranged from 20s to 60s, with some people experiencing organizing for as little as 1 year and others experiencing it for over a decade.

### What we accomplished

At the end of the six weeks, participants reflected back that the Organizing Center built spaces that allowed them to: get to know one another, build skills through practice, develop trust, assess their own movement leadership journeys, share vulnerably about systems of oppression and how they show up differently across race and gender, and identify and share resilience skills that supported them in navigating gender-based oppression in their base-building and leadership development work. As we closed out, we hosted a Leading the Way "runway" where each person shared how they are looking forward to Leading the Way with what they learned from the program. Check out this sweet [playlist](#) of their favorite songs that we played as they shared.



## BY THE NUMBERS

89%

BLACK, BROWN OR ASIAN ORGANIZERS

77%

POOR AND WORKING CLASS

100%

WOMEN & GENDER-OPPRESSED

100%

INTERGENERATIONAL - PARTICIPANTS WERE IN THEIR 20S, 30S, 40S, 50S & 60S

“

I started organizing at 57, three years ago. Leading the Way cohort allowed me to express the things I did not know and my curiosity in a way that never embarrassed me and actually welcomed my experience level in a way that nurtured my soul. I would absolutely recommend this program to new and experienced organizers!

• *Bonnie Dobson (Down Home NC), LTW 2023 participant*

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I believe that for that resilience to be sustainable, centered, and not sidelined as we continue to organize for more liberatory futures (and present), staff and member leadership at all levels of the organization must co-create and implement that resiliency plan. There are clear structural differences across staff - worker position, identity, personal impacts of the work on our lives - and in order for the resiliency plan to be real and baked into the culture of the organization, we each need to have a stake in its success, something only accomplished when built together.

• *Nicole Kligerman (NDWA-PA), RF 2022 participant*



## RESILIENT FUTURES

Resilient Futures is our peer learning lab designed for Black, Brown & Asian organizers and their directors. The purpose of this program is to support participants to learn and practice individual and collective resilience practices and frameworks for: the leadership development of organizers and directors, the transformation of organizational culture, and sustenance of collective resistance for the long-term.

By the end of the program:

- Staff have access to tools and resources for every-day resilience practices
- Staff connect the need for individual resilience with the need for collective social change
- Staff have access to tools and resources that help them to build and sustain cultures of resilience within their organizations

The last Resilient Futures cohort we ran ended in February 2023 and we used the rest of the year to support the follow up work of cohort organizations, evaluate our program and make the changes necessary to run an even more successful cohort in 2024.

### Ongoing Work from the 2023 Cohort

After the 2023 cohort ended, new work began. We met with NDWA- PA to support the Director and organizers to build out their resilience plan for the organization together. Each staff member took on a leading role and this resulted in staff having more clarity about their role.

Youth United for Change (YUC) built a wellness space and hired a healing justice organizer to continue building on the work from Resilient Futures.

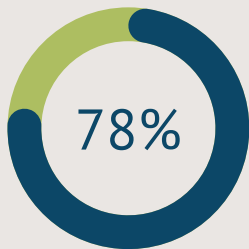
Our Program Director is currently working with a coach to take feedback from last year and revamp the program to include more in-person time, to ensure core learnings happen together across directors' and organizers' cohorts, and ensure organizational resilience plans are created together before leaving the program.



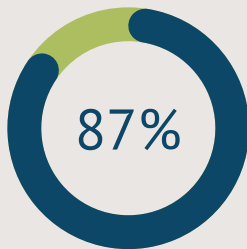
# PUBLIC WORKSHOPS

In 2023, we continued our practice of offering virtual participatory workshops on organizing conversations, transformative leadership development, and coalition maintenance. New this year, we added in a workshop on developing campaign strategy and **doubled** our offerings to include two *Fundamentals* series and two *Level Up* series. In total, we offered fourteen public workshops, six of which included simultaneous Spanish interpretation. See what our participants had to say below.

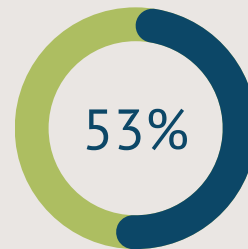
## WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS BY THE NUMBERS



People of Color



Women & Gender-Oppressed



Poor & Working Class

## ON ORGANIZING CONVERSATIONS

"This workshop was very transformative and empowering. I came in with asks that gradually became easier to overcome with the practice sessions and the helpful video on what a successful organizing conversation looks like. I thought it was very real to address the challenges that usually come up such as the "no" response or trying to make an ask that does not come off super pushy. I feel inspired about upcoming conversations."

## ON LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

"The leadership development training gave me new perspectives on how to become a better leader/organizer as well as how to support my members and move them further into becoming active organizers as well. It was also a very welcoming and comforting space, and I appreciate all of the knowledge shared."

## ON COALITIONS

"This workshop took some of the biggest problems we face as organizers and distilled it into a training that was clear and usable. So many of the conflicts we face are grounded in a lack of clarity around a few basic questions. Identifying these and clear tools and strategies for how we answer will be a crucial step in building more conflict resilient coalitions!"

# TRAINING COHORT

In addition to increasing our workshop offerings, we also grew our training team through our first ever training cohort. The intent of this program was to grow the participatory training skills of grassroots organizers, support movement trainers to better understand organizing and to expand the capacity of The Organizing Center to offer our highly requested public workshops on fundamental organizing skills. This year we hired six people for the cohort. Here is what some of them shared about their experience:

“

Being a member of the 2023 training cohort connected me to an abundance of resources, connections, and opportunities to deepen my organizing and facilitation skills. I grew immensely in this space, learning from the skills of the OC staff and my cohort peers and benefitting from the feedback I was given with love and rigor. It was a transformative experience.



“

Being a member of the training cohort has dramatically benefitted me in so many aspects of my life! I am a better trainer because of the tools and techniques that I have learned from The OC and other members of the cohort. I am better organizer because of the deep understanding I had to have to train other on organizing fundamentals, and because of what I have learned from my peers in the cohort. The facilitation tools I learned have also helped me to think deeper about how to come to decisions and how to present information, which has helped me in other movement spaces.

“

This past year in the training cohort strengthened my skill in both facilitation and organizing in ways that directly supported my base-building with renters in Philadelphia. The Organizing Center created a container of both care and rigor for our cohort, and they supported and challenged us to lean into our personal growing edges. The OC modeled exactly the type of transformative organizing that they teach about - we were all transformed in the process as we learned, laughed, sang, facilitated, debriefed, and skilled up together. It was such a gift to us, to our organizations, and to our movement community to have this deep and intentional investment in our development. I will carry with me the gems of wisdom I learned from the cohort into all my organizing work going forward.

# PRACTICES REFLECT OUR VALUES

## LANGUAGE JUSTICE JUSTICIA LINGÜÍSTICA



From the listening project that grounded the early days of The Organizing Center, we learned from our partners that having organizing skills training offered in Spanish was a significant gap in the movement ecosystem. In the Fall of 2023 we hosted our first fully bilingual public workshop series. This has been a learning curve for us and one we are committed to continuing. It added time and money to our prep work and required us to cut content from our workshops in order to slow down for interpretation. All of these changes have been so valuable to us. We have learned a lot about our own language bias and how easy it is to maintain monolingual spaces, despite our commitment to language justice. We are excited to see the success of this pilot year and plan to continue offering workshops in Spanish in 2024. We are additionally exploring finding more trainers who are bilingual in Spanish to add to our ability to really hear and connect with our participants.

A partir del proyecto de escucha en el que se basaron los primeros días de The Organizing Center, aprendimos de nuestros socios que ofrecer formación en habilidades organizativas en español era un vacío importante en el ecosistema del movimiento. En otoño de 2023 organizamos nuestra primera serie de talleres públicos totalmente bilingües. Esta ha sido una curva de aprendizaje para nosotros y estamos comprometidos a continuar. Nos ha costado más tiempo y dinero de preparación y nos ha obligado a reducir el contenido de nuestros talleres para poder ir más despacio con la interpretación. Todos estos cambios han sido muy valiosos para nosotros. Hemos aprendido mucho sobre nuestros propios prejuicios lingüísticos y lo fácil que es mantener espacios monolingües, a pesar de nuestro compromiso con la justicia lingüística. Estamos muy contentos de ver el éxito de este año piloto y planeamos seguir ofreciendo talleres en español en 2024. Además, estamos explorando la posibilidad de encontrar más formadores bilingües en español para aumentar nuestra capacidad de escuchar y conectar realmente con nuestros participantes.

# FORWARD TOGETHER



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<http://theorganizingcenter.org>

