


**MCGREGOR**  
FUND

**REST IS  
JUSTICE**



*“People have disproportionate access to rest, and  
the ability to rest is an indicator of privilege.  
Working for justice requires refueling.”*

*Suma Karaman Rosen  
InsideOut Literary Arts*

**MCGREGOR**  
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**2023**  
**Miller**  
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# THE CALL

## Why Prioritize Nonprofit Wellness and Thriving?

Philanthropy leans far too heavily on our nonprofit leaders. We count on their commitment, rely on their energy, and laud their ingenuity, while simultaneously demanding they prove their worth year after year. We expect so much from them, and we rarely honor and protect their individual humanity.

Nonprofit leaders and their teams form the infrastructure driving social change. Without ceasing, they simultaneously move their community's visions forward and meet community needs, while swimming against constant currents of racism and oppression. They are relentless, and they are also exhausted. They deserve to experience the dignity of rest.

We at the McGregor Fund are listening closely and now understand our commitment to racial equity and justice must prioritize the well-being of the professionals we, and the rest of philanthropy, rely on to advance our missions. As we continue to learn from our partners and evolve, we call on our peers to do the same.



# OUR RESPONSE



Kate Levin Markel  
President

Before reflecting on the last two years, I'd like to share some recent experiences.

A search firm helping recruit a new CEO for a local nonprofit asked for my perspective. I couldn't get past the job description, which required such an exhaustive list of superpowers and experience that no one could possibly live up to the outsized expectations.

A nonprofit board wouldn't sign off on their CEO's sabbatical funding application out of fear the CEO would leave, even though he expressed that he was desperately exhausted.

At a retreat of foundation presidents, peers from across the country reported widespread burnout and departures among key leaders driving justice-oriented work.

A new college graduate, dreaming of a nonprofit social work career, shared her frustration looking for an entry-level job. There were plenty of openings, but salaries fell short of barebones living expenses.

I checked in with a grant partner to see how fundraising was going for an exciting expansion project with time-limited public funding. They were still waiting to hear back on a couple key foundation proposals, months after our last check-in.

When unthinkable fraud was discovered at a large, esteemed local nonprofit, some local foundations wondered aloud whether to require universal financial controls and oversight for all grantees, regardless of their size and despite scant evidence of fraud in the sector.

There's nothing new in these stories. What's striking is that these conditions and dynamics persist at a time when the nonprofit workforce has reached a well-documented crisis of burnout, uncompetitive compensation, and overall vulnerability to breakdown. Clearly, funders (and some nonprofit boards) need to take a hard look at how our own actions create additional strain, and change.

In my last letter I acknowledged the burdens uniquely born by leaders of color, and the Fund's commitment to support their leadership and well-being. I also shared our commitment to focus our learning and seek guidance from partners who are closest to the community and leading racial justice-oriented work.

In this report, you'll hear directly from partners in our 2023 Miller Fellows cohort — about the experience of their sabbaticals and what they're asking of us, from rest and wellness resources to lower funder burdens.

And we've responded — with reduced burdens in our application and reporting processes, and grants supporting community expertise and vision, thought and practice leaders pursuing multiple domains of racial and economic justice, and big-dream projects that center community thriving. We're truly excited about the evolution of our work in response to partner feedback.

I'll conclude by acknowledging our exceptionally talented team whose big hearts guide everything they do, and our clear-eyed, values-driven board who bring out the best in us. Special thanks to Joyce E. Jenereaux, who gives so much time, care, and insight in her role as Chairperson and in supporting me personally.

Kate



In Spring 2020, the McGregor Fund announced our anti-racism commitment, a guiding statement centering our work around justice and equality. This led to significant self-examination, learning, reflection, and thankfully, some implementation. We've made progress, but not nearly enough. Not yet.

We were determined to shift the power imbalance inherent to foundation work and focus on board governance, inclusive conversations with grant partners, community-centered decision-making and endowment investing opportunities. We unanimously decided to apply a racial equity lens to everything we do as a fund. It was a major step forward.

We now fund more organizations that embrace equity and justice as part of their mission. A justice-centered investment policy is important to us and we're looking at advocacy in new ways. We solicit grant partner feedback, particularly around future board governance. Our staff is developing a conceptual equity- and justice-centered grantmaking framework. We're proud of our Miller Fellowship sabbatical participants who are helping shape the program's future.

Since our last report, we've welcomed Phil Phillips, Donna Murray-Brown, Byna Elliott, and Kelly Major Green as trustees. Their passion and collective skills energize and guide us. We're a small and intimate group with enormous respect for one another. Eight out of nine of us are persons of color, and our average age has decreased. I'm honored to have the privilege of working with them.

We said goodbye to four long-serving trustees in 2023: Cynthia N. Ford (24 years), Susan Schooley, MD (18 years), Gerry Anderson (14 years), and Leslie A. Murphy (9 years). We were sad to lose these selfless individuals and we will miss them tremendously. We thank them for their wisdom, support, contributions, and wonderful friendship.

Our President, Kate Levin Markel, is an inspiration. Her wisdom, knowledge, deep empathy and caring for the community fuels my own passion. Our staff exhibits similar qualities, thoughtfulness, intelligence and drive, and their input and knowledge allow us to make board decisions with confidence. I'm thankful for them and for their deliberate, empathetic approach to making our work more just.

Our grant partners deserve more thanks and recognition than words can express. Their tireless efforts to pursue equity and justice are unmatched. They are innovative, creative, and passionate, providing inspiration, leadership, and motivation to all.

I am humbled to be part of the McGregor Fund and by the hard work and dedication of our grant partners, staff, and board who strive to improve our community today and tomorrow. In 1925, Tracy and Katherine McGregor formalized their noble quest "to relieve the misfortunes and promote the well being of humankind" through the establishment of this fund. Our work will continue to honor their great legacy by engaging our community to work with us towards equity and justice.



Joyce E. Jenereaux  
Chairperson

A handwritten signature in white ink that reads "Joyce". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

# OUR PARTNERS TELL US

The Eugene A. Miller Fellowship program honors outstanding, experienced leaders of McGregor-funded nonprofit organizations in metropolitan Detroit, supporting them in taking time away from their day-to-day responsibilities and undertaking a self-designed sabbatical to rejuvenate themselves. In 2023, after a pandemic hiatus, an unprecedented nine fellows were chosen, all of whom were known for their long-term dedication to their communities and to racial equity and justice.





## “WE ARE TIRED”

Our life’s work is to care for our communities, but we have no time to care for ourselves.



## “WE KNOW THE SOLUTION”

We need to rest and have time to tend to our loved ones and to our own physical, mental, and emotional health.



## “LISTEN TO US”

Everyone deserves the opportunity to rest, to create, and to dream.



“ Opportunities like the Miller Fellowship advance justice and will help keep people in the field. We already know what we need to rest. The Fund supported us with resources to do so, while trusting us to design our sabbatical plans ourselves. They should challenge other funders to do the same.

**KIMBERLY JOHNSON**”

“ Foundations should say the answer is yes and invite a conversation — instead of making us answer lengthy questions, instead of making us worry. Remove unnecessary steps in the process. Make reporting easier. People on the ground doing the work are tired. Foundations have the power to make these changes — the whole process could be better for everyone involved.

**SUMA KARAMAN ROSEN**”

“ Until you are given permission to do it, you don't actually really rest. Leaders in the sector are always in a scarcity mindset, with not enough time, people, or boundaries. If the sector were more resourced, organizational leadership would be better able to find balance.

**DEREK AGUIRRE**”

“ We know what the solutions are. Define them. Say them out loud and let's engage in action-oriented dialogue. The philanthropic community needs to understand the load nonprofit leaders are carrying as well as the power dynamics their practices are perpetuating.

**ALLANDRA BULGER**”

“ Especially for BIPOC leaders, there is so much disinvestment, fatigue, and trauma...but no repair. Our work and bodies have been commodified...literally sold for money...with no reparations or recourse. We are on the front lines repairing harm to our communities that we didn't perpetrate.

**COURTNEY SMITH**”

“ Everyone deserves beautiful things, to rest, and to be healthy. When you're in the middle of work, you don't take the time to see the physical and mental toll it's taking on you.

**ANGELA REYES**”



Let's be clear: those being denied rest, well-being, and the opportunity to thrive are Black and Brown women, and workers in our sector — the very people who held our communities together through the pandemic for nickels on the dollar. Our people and communities can only achieve better outcomes when rest and well-being are prioritized. We are exhausted — and that is an injustice.

**YODIT MESFIN JOHNSON**

One of my biggest takeaways from this whole sabbatical process is that I am worthy to care for myself in this way. It has been transformational.

**COURTNEY SMITH**

When you're exhausted, you can't dream bigger because your mind is weighed down with too many things. If you relax, you might miss opportunities to enable others to feed their kids dinner or be employed. You can never just stop and turn it off.

**KIMBERLY JOHNSON**

The time and space my sabbatical afforded me made one thing crystal clear: the work we are doing together is crucial and timely. I'm certain there is no other work more significant or impactful for me to pursue than what I have the privilege of doing every single day.

**ASHLEY ATKINSON**

For years, I had a second job to care for my family, while doing this work that I deeply love. I did not realize how tired I was and how much this impacted every decision that I made. To do this work in a sustainable way, rest is critical.

**CHRISTINE BELL**

As a woman of color, we must do a lot more than most people to prove ourselves and to find resources. We take on way more than we should to our own detriment. We sacrifice too much: our families, our health, our lives.

**ANGELA REYES**



**ALLANDRA BULGER**  
2023 MILLER FELLOW

# Co.act Detroit

*Co.act Detroit builds collaborative action and increases impact across Michigan nonprofit and community organizations by generating ideas, sharing learning resources, and developing solutions.*

Racial and social equity have been at the forefront of Co.act's partnerships and programming, particularly during the pandemic and its aftermath. With four partners, Co.act co-founded the Transforming Solidarity Collective to grow capacity and generate solutions for organizations navigating unusual challenges. Then and now, their technical, financial, and well-being expertise helps non-profit teams build power, eliminate barriers, and thrive in their work.

Executive Director Allandra Bulger's time as a Miller Fellow further advanced Co.act's organizational culture. While she finally had time to recharge as a leader and find space for creative thinking, the team accelerated its strategic planning for the coming year. Staff members worked with an executive coach, while stepping into leadership, mutually growing into responsibilities, and supporting each other in the process.



# Detroit Hispanic Development Corporation

*The Detroit Hispanic Development Corporation offers high quality, culturally appropriate services including adult education and after-school and summer programs for youth, adults, and families in Southwest Detroit.*



DHDC addresses systemic injustice through services that empower youth, families, and the community to flourish, from housing counseling and financial literacy education to ESL classes, entrepreneurship support, and community violence interruption. They work towards liberation through community organizing, creating safeguards for families facing deportation, leadership development, and actions to advance environmental and educational justice for students and communities.

Executive Director Angela Reyes' sabbatical time pushed her young team's boundaries, as they took on new roles and grew into power in their transforming positions. At the same time, acknowledging that many on the team have experienced the same traumas as the very community members they serve every day, expanding staff care and rest opportunities have grown in importance across the organization. DHDC is also filtering this prioritization of rest into its programming.



**ASHLEY ATKINSON**  
2023 MILLER FELLOW

# Keep Growing Detroit

*Keep Growing Detroit works towards food sovereignty in Detroit through education, entrepreneurship, and resource support for a network of nearly 30,000 Detroiters cultivating more than 2,400 urban gardens and farms.*

KGD collaborates with Detroiters to foster systemic change and reduce community members' susceptibility to food insecurity and disruptions. Its approach is informed by decades of implementing community-driven programming designed to serve the unique people, systems, and natural landscapes of Detroit. "I may not have a dime in my pocket, but I will never be hungry" personifies the act of growing food as an effective alternative to dependence on the dominant food system. KGD provides tools for individuals and communities to adopt practices of self-reliance, actualize their

personal goals for health and well-being, and become advocates for change.

KGD Co-Director Ashley Atkinson's sabbatical opened up space and opportunities for professional development, learning, and processing that the entire team is weaving back into their work in regenerative ways. Though KGD had always operated as a co-leadership model, Ashley's time away illuminated the less obvious, but significant responsibilities she'd taken on. KGD's co-leadership journey — and its partnership work with Detroiters feeding their neighbors — continues.





# Urban Neighborhood Initiatives

*Urban Neighborhood Initiatives partners with community members to offer youth development and educational opportunities, while also focusing on land use and economic development, all to build safe and thriving neighborhoods.*



UNI believes that all people have the right to cultivate community and access resources within their own Southwest Detroit neighborhood. Working with existing community networks, UNI helps foster a thriving environment in which all residents feel safe and want to live, work, and play. For young people, their creative solutions include job readiness education, paid work experience, and environmental transformation, all shaped and informed by youth-driven leadership programs.

Executive Director Christine Bell's Miller Fellowship was UNI's first chance to test out its emergency succession strategy. Her sabbatical illuminated which systems no longer worked and led to refined plans for the growing organization. When she returned, she did not take back some of her delegated tasks and her interim executive directors kept many of their new responsibilities. Ultimately, these adjustments are helping UNI maintain its philosophy while continuously growing its quality service to its neighbors.

**COURTNEY SMITH**  
2023 MILLER FELLOW

# Detroit Phoenix Center

*Detroit Phoenix Center serves Detroit youth via wraparound services, a drop-in center, and emergency housing interventions for young people at risk of or currently experiencing housing insecurity.*

From its founding, DPC has partnered with young people, centering their voices and lived experience in every decision made and service offered. DPC works to prioritize racial equity and return power and resources to youth, breaking down barriers they face in housing and education while meeting their basic needs. They also mobilize teens and young adult leaders impacted by inequitable systems as they grow skills, access work opportunities, form safe and authentic relationships, and share their wisdom through a youth-run podcast and action board.

Executive Director Courtney Smith's sabbatical period bolstered the team's confidence and the entire organization's ability to operate beyond her individual capacity. Leaders adopted expanded roles and overall infrastructure was strengthened.

Courtney's own acceptance that she was indeed worthy of self-care, that rest itself is a form of resistance, and that repair and healing are possible, are values her team is now weaving into the DPC organization itself and its programs and resources.





# Racquet Up Detroit

*Racquet Up Detroit supports youth from neighborhood schools, teaching them how to play squash while supporting their educational journey toward post-secondary and career success.*



Access to high-quality athletic and educational opportunities, and intensive and sustained training and mentoring, are why Racquet Up exists. Youth in northwest Detroit can tap into programs to pursue their college and career aspirations, while receiving holistic support as they journey through school and young adulthood. The RUD team lives its commitment to justice by walking alongside youth as they navigate a critical period of development, often made more challenging by an imbalance of resources and opportunities.

During CEO Derek Aguirre's time away, team members experienced a successful period of stress testing, with staff stepping into leadership and handling challenges with grace and expertise.

Since his return, the team's decision-making and idea-generating abilities are stronger and shared, and the organization continues to move towards a more equitable distribution of opportunity and responsibility.



**KIMBERLY JOHNSON**  
2023 MILLER FELLOW

# Developing K.I.D.S.

*Developing K.I.D.S. provides afterschool and summer activities including leadership and workforce development, entrepreneurship, and community service, as well as support for families and the greater community.*

Open to all youth and families without exception, Developing K.I.D.S. builds up the community by fostering inter-generational leadership among the young people residing within it.

From educational programming to advocacy and voter education, sincere and long-term community engagement is encouraged, and college preparation and career readiness are prioritized. At the same time, youth are encouraged to use their voices as they address racial inequities and drive organizational and societal change.

During CEO Kim Johnson's segmented sabbatical periods, the Developing K.I.D.S. team demonstrated growth in their new roles and a collective shift from anxiety to excitement at the opportunity to prove themselves. Ultimately, staff were promoted, responsibilities shifted, team members better understood their individual fit and flow, and trust in each other greatly increased. Going forward, Developing K.I.D.S. will also prioritize sabbaticals for senior team members, as to be well and thrive requires rest. People deserve rest and should not feel guilty taking it.



# InsideOut Literary Arts

*InsideOut Literary Arts gives youth creative writing tools and opportunities to discover and share their authentic voice, with guidance from professional writers-in-residence in local schools and in after-school and community programs.*



Through classes and workshops, the young people served by InsideOut are encouraged to unleash their creativity for themselves and their communities.

Whether in school, after school, in performance, or in visiting writer workshops, youth learn their words matter, have power, and can transform the spaces around them. It is an understanding that once gained, can never again be contained.

To support this work during Executive Director Suma Karaman Rosen's sabbatical, InsideOut team members grew their individual capacities and refined some of their less efficient structural practices.

Recognizing that disproportionate access to rest is itself an injustice, leadership also instituted a sabbatical program in support of full-time staff in long-term service to the organization.



**YODIT MESFIN JOHNSON**  
2023 MILLER FELLOW

# Nonprofit Enterprise at Work

*Nonprofit Enterprise at Work (NEW) equips nonprofit organizations, leaders, and businesses with the tools, resources, and space to advance mission-driven work, all while fostering a collective vision of a just and thriving society.*

Recognizing the deep impacts of injustice on the social sector, NEW partners with clients to disrupt traditional nonprofit management through transformative consulting, power-building in learning communities, and support services that prioritize effective operations and long-term impact.

CEO Yodit Mesfin Johnson's sabbatical through the Miller Fellowship underscored that rest, especially for BIPOC leaders, is not just self-care — it's an act of justice.

Her journey reinforced that collective liberation is tied to personal healing and rest. During her time away, Yodit learned from leaders rebuilding after war, genocide, and famine through shared vision, mutual support, and courageous decisions. This reinforced her understanding that organizational cultures must prioritize rest for just outcomes. NEW's subsequent move to a distributed leadership model reflects this commitment to fostering collaboration, shared power, and rest as foundations for advancing justice.





*"Our grant partners and their communities hold the vision, wisdom, and know-how to move towards our collective aspirations for a more just world. Philanthropy misses out on so much when we don't listen, learn, and follow their lead. Even when that's our intention, our practices of extractive, time-consuming, unnecessary grant applications, reports, meetings, and inflexible grant awards achieve the opposite. Let's examine our practices through the experiences of our grant partners and hold ourselves responsible for doing better by them."*

*-Vanessa Samuelson  
Director of Learning & Reporting*



*"Our grant partners are our greatest teachers. We trust them completely. They are guiding the Fund's journey to justice as we work to become a reflection of their cultures, values, and practices. We hold ourselves accountable to them and the communities they serve. We do this in earnestness and with deep gratitude and respect."*

*-Heidi Alcock  
Director of Grant Development & Communications*



OUR GRANT PARTNERS HAVE ASKED US  
TO LISTEN, TO TRUST, AND TO ACT. WE CALL ON OUR  
FUNDING COLLEAGUES TO JOIN US AS WE RESPOND.

**WE KNOW:**

**REST IS  
JUSTICE**

- *Rest is not only for a privileged few. It is a key to liberation for all.*
- *Nonprofit leaders and their teams are exhausted. They move their community's visions forward, and ceaselessly support their communities through crises, because that is what the work requires.*
- *BIPOC leaders are expected to do more at every turn while receiving less access to funding and opportunities for rest.*
- *Philanthropy must support nonprofit leaders in acquiring the means and time to pursue self-care, for their own – and their teams' – well-being.*
- *Philanthropy must remove all default practices that perpetuate burnout, including excessive application and reporting requirements that are burdensome, extractive, and unnecessary.*
- *For philanthropy to embrace racial justice in grantmaking, it must also embrace just practices in its requirements and decision-making.*
- *It is time for us to be bold and vocal. To care for one another through action. To push forward for racial and economic justice, together.*



# OUR GRANTMAKING

McGregor Fund grantmaking for 2022-23 reflected our strategic priorities of ending homelessness and chronic unemployment, as well as our deepened commitment to rest, recovery, and restoration.



# BASIC NEEDS & HOUSING



Food, shelter and other necessities essential for day-to-day living.

# RECOVERY & RESTORATION



Pathways to safety and healing from interpersonal and societal violence, abuse and inequity.

# SKILL BUILDING & EMPLOYMENT



Economic mobility opportunities that focus on personal development, fulfillment, choice and connection.

Photo taken at Detroit Phoenix Center



**27**

Number of Miller Fellows 2014-2023

**\$5,500,000**

Combined General & Project Support

**\$209,000,000**

In Assets

**\$4,775,000**

Project or Capital Support

**99**

Years of Giving  
Since 1925

**\$21,535,000**

2022-23 Total Grants Awarded

**\$450,000**

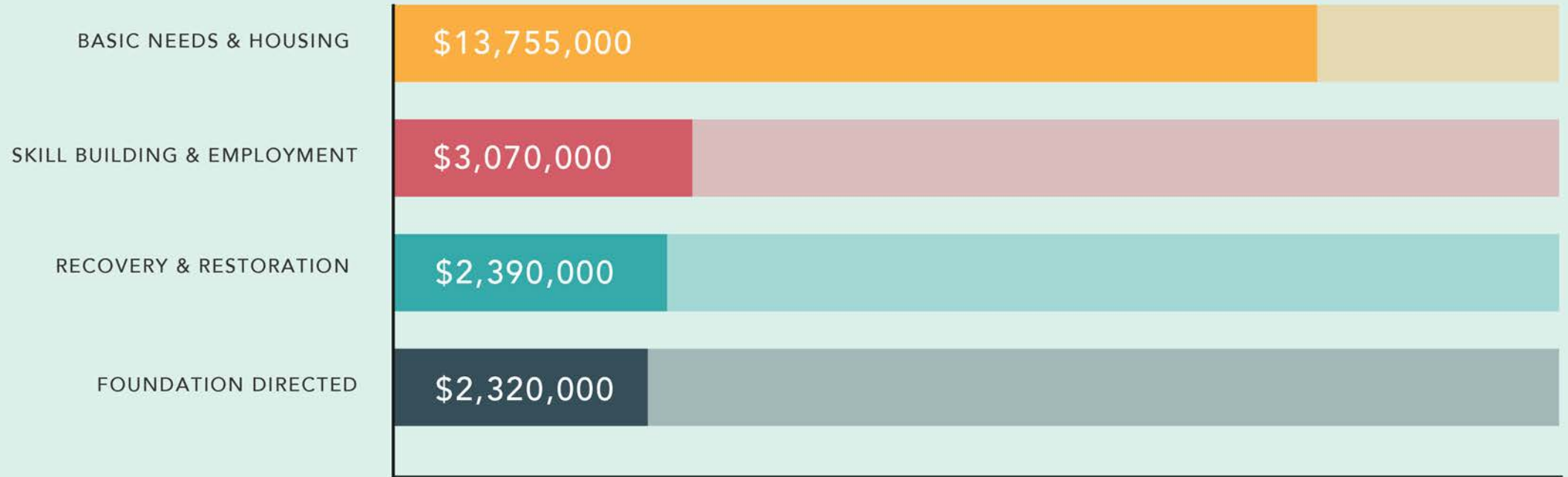
Miller Fellow Support

**86**

Grants

**\$10,810,000**

General Operating Support



# 2022-2023 GRANTMAKING

For a detailed list of grants awarded:  
[mcgregorfund.org/grant-process/grants-awarded/](https://mcgregorfund.org/grant-process/grants-awarded/)



*In 1925, our founders gave us the mission “to relieve the misfortunes and promote the well being of humankind.”*

# A SPECIAL THANKS

## To Our Grant Partners

We are profoundly grateful for your generous and vulnerable sharing of your work, your insights, and your communities. We’ve learned about your labor for justice and how you’ve designed your operations to counter structural and systemic racism.

You’ve also helped us understand how philanthropy’s funding practices, restrictions, timelines, and reporting requirements are burdensome, counterproductive, even harmful to your mission.

Because of you, our grantmaking approach is evolving. We thank you for your honest conversations about the day-to-day work that makes your programs meaningful and effective. Partnering with you, we will continue to prioritize rest, wellness, and thriving as an essential component of our work for racial and economic justice.



# TRUSTEES



**Joyce E. Jenereaux**

Chairperson  
2016



**Sheilah P. Clay**

Vice Chairperson  
2017



**Michelle Johnson Tidjani**

Treasurer  
2020



**Byna Elliot**

2023



**Kelly Major Green**

2023



**Donna Murray-Brown**

2022



**Philip B. Phillips**

2021



**Kristi D. Plain**

2020



**Dr. Felix M. Valbuena, Jr.**

2021

**Kate Levin Markel**

President

**Heidi A. Alcock**

Director of Grant Development &  
Communications

**Marcia P. Gardner**

Grants Manager & Executive  
and Board Administrator

**Ashly B. Jurek, CPA**

Director of Finance &  
Investments

**Vanessa L. Samuelson**

Director of Learning &  
Reporting

# STAFF





*“Listen to **and trust** what the people directly impacted by issues are saying. Design with them, not for them – transparently. Set goals that are audacious, even absurd, and then pursue them, together. Invest in transformation, not incremental change.”*



Yodit Mesfin Johnson  
Nonprofit Enterprise at Work (NEW)

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