



Growing Power for Women Environmental Leaders

2025 Annual Report



Letter from Our Leaders



In a moment when our work for a better world can feel daunting, it has been grounding and energizing to hear from the women in our community about their courage and successes. Our network of environmental funders and advocates are showing up: with clarity, courage, and a deep commitment to doing and resourcing work that might otherwise be overlooked.

In 2025, Rachel's Network had several milestones:

- We raised over a million dollars for the Catalyst Award program which supports women environmental leaders of color (our best year yet).
- We elected board members representing our grantee community and nonprofit leadership for the first time, a practice we will continue as part of our commitment to trust-based philanthropy.

- We celebrated our 25th anniversary of fighting for a healthier, safer, and more just world. We honored this moment with advocates and funders in New Orleans.

In these difficult times, the words of author and activist Grace Lee Boggs provide direction: "The only way to survive is by taking care of one another." Care has long been a special focus of our work here at Rachel's Network and we welcome you to join us as we deepen our efforts. Learn more on the pages ahead.

In solidarity,

Fern Shepard
Rachel's Network
President

Kef Kasdin
Rachel's Network
Board Chair

About Rachel's Network

The Context

Women are more reliable and effective supporters of environmental protection, as voters, legislators, directors, and community leaders.

Despite this, women-led environmental work receives less than 1% of grants. Only 0.5% of foundation giving goes to women and girls of color, the most environmentally friendly demographic.



How We Work

Rachel's Network creates brave spaces for collaboration, learning, and action, and a stronger, more connected environmental movement.

Members of collective giving groups like ours report positive impacts to their wellbeing and generosity. We also build care into everything we do, from hosting restorative retreats for grassroots leaders, to funding individual wellbeing as a vital component of environmental work.



What We Do

We organize women funders and advocates through collective funding and community-building. We make grants to the most under-resourced and effective leaders in the environmental movement. Beyond financial support (over \$3.5 million granted so far), we actively champion, network, and elevate these leaders and their work.

Through trust-based philanthropy, our members are shifting giving to be more accountable, responsive, effective, and joyful.



What We're Fighting For

Collectively, we're advancing a regenerative, just, and equitable future. By supporting women leaders, we're also supporting all the things they fight for: climate action, biodiversity, health, environmental justice, regenerative agriculture, and so much more.

Community Building

Research shows that diverse groups can solve complex problems collectively that none of their individual members could overcome alone*. As women working to tackle the most complex problems of all, community building is essential.

Our network of women environmental funders, Catalyst community members, staff, advisors, and partners inspire and support each other's work and keep each other informed on ways to take action. They forge partnerships and pursue projects they wouldn't have otherwise.

Rachel's Network has expanded my exposure to topics beyond climate, and the in-person meetings are the best!

- Judith Albert, Funder and Board Member

To facilitate these connections and help members build and deepen relationships with one another, Rachel's Network hosts a variety of in-person and virtual events every year, and maintains a private listserv, newsletter, and member directory.

Interested in joining us as a funder? Visit rachelsnetwork.org/join.

I learned so much during the in-person retreats, particularly from the Indigenous women in Montana and the women we spoke with during the Cancer Alley tour. Their connection to both the land and the history of the land was incredibly powerful to me.

- Maria Kolby-Wolfe, Board Member

Members Making Connections

Our members make lasting and impactful connections through their involvement in Rachel's Network. Here are just a few members whose relationships led to something meaningful.



**Kef Kasdin and
Doria Robinson**

Kef learned about Doria's work directing Urban Tilth in Richmond, California after the latter won the 2020 Catalyst Award. Kef became a funder of Doria's work which, along with support from Rachel's Network, helped enable Doria to expand the North Richmond Farm.



**Laura Francis and
Dr. Nikki Traylor-
Knowles**

After connecting through Rachel's Network over their shared love of the ocean at an event in 2023, Laura and Nikki hosted a group of funders for a hands-on learning immersion in coral restoration science and conservation at Nikki's science lab in Miami, Florida.



Ning Mosberger-Tang

Several Rachel's Network members have joined Ning's organization 1.5°Climate, a national donor collaborative fighting the climate crisis. 1.5°Climate members have contributed over \$35 million to impactful climate organizations and projects.



**Abi Rome and Maya
Winkelstein**

Abi joined Maya's Louisiana Climate Donor Group after meeting at the Rachel's Network 2025 Spring Meeting in New Orleans. Maya started the group to bring together donors and foundations addressing the causes and effects of climate change in Louisiana.



2025 Event Snapshots

Rachel's Network held 16 events in 2025, reaching 339 participants. These programs were a combination of place-based conferences, public webinars on a variety of environmental topics, virtual member gatherings, book clubs, and more.

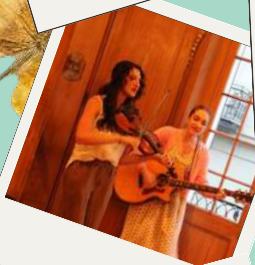
Our events serve our mission of uplifting women leaders and building relationships for sustained environmental efforts. To see upcoming in-person and virtual events, visit rachelsnetwork.org/calendar.



Visiting the women leading urban agriculture in Chicago (featuring Catalyst Recipient Erika Allen)



Funders retreat in Montana (here in Glacier National Park)



Legacy Award Retreat in Senegal (Credit: The Teranga Experience)



25th Anniversary Celebration in New Orleans

Event Highlight: Spring Meeting

Rachel's Network members and guests spent four days in New Orleans for our 25th Anniversary Spring Meeting in March, hearing from top advocates and philanthropy experts, building community, and learning about environmental justice issues facing Louisiana.

Highlights included:

- A 25th anniversary dinner celebrating the impact of Rachel's Network attended by 50 members and friends
- Moving testimonies from participants about their reasons for getting involved in environmental work, along with the creation of a collective altar
- Rousing keynotes from activists (and Catalyst Awardees) Colette Pichon Battle and Heather McTeer Toney on ways to make progress in the current political environment
- A field trip to "Cancer Alley" to learn from local leaders about the legacy of slavery and petrochemical development in the Gulf Coast
- Performances from local artists immersed in the region's rich musical traditions



I enjoyed being able to meet likeminded women who are also passionate about creating a better future for the next generations. It was a treat to be able to listen, share challenges, and learn from one another in a supported space.

- Jhana Young (Conservation International), 2024 Catalyst Awardee, right, pictured with Board Member Alice Liddell



Catalyst Program

Women of color are both the most impacted by environmental harms *and* the most reliable supporters of environmental action, yet they don't receive adequate funding, support, or recognition for their leadership.

The Rachel's Network Catalyst Award was launched in 2019 to change that. Each year for three years, we provide awardees with a personal prize (\$15,000) and an organizational grant (\$10,000, if applicable). Since 2025, finalists receive a one-time prize of \$5000. The program has granted more than \$2.1 million to 142 women leaders of color and their organizations. In 2025, Catalyst prizes to individuals totaled \$278,250. Grants to Catalyst-affiliated organizations are listed on page 9.

Apart from award grants, the program has expanded in recent years to include wellness retreats, professional development support, and—new in 2025—the Legacy Award honoring women with 25+ years in the movement. Recipients also become lifetime members of Rachel's Network, with access to events, networking tools and opportunities, and continued learning on the issues they care about.

In 2025, we received nearly 200 applications, and robust fundraising allowed us to award an additional awardee and finalist. A group of former recipients led the final selection, aligning with participatory grantmaking principles.

Every aspect of our member programs has been influenced by the Catalyst Award, and roughly half our funder members indicated in a recent survey that their philanthropy has changed due to the award. Since its inception, collective member giving has increased over 600%.

In leadership I often feel isolated, but connecting with network members breaks that illusion and reminds me of all the resources we have and represent to one another.

- Renae Reynolds (Tri-State Transportation Campaign),
2024 Catalyst Awardee

2025 Catalyst Award Recipients

Awardees



LaTricea Adams

Young, Gifted & Green;
Memphis, TN



Tricia Cortez

Rio Grande International
Study Center; Laredo, TX



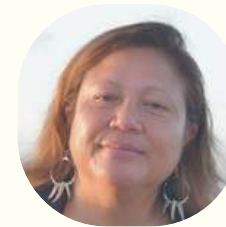
Viviana Moreno

Little Village
Environmental Justice
Organization; Chicago, IL



Maria Hernandez May

Micronesia Climate
Change Alliance;
Tamuning, Guam



Healani Sonoda-Pale

Ka Lāhui Hawai'i;
Honolulu, HI



Candice Youngblood

Youth on Root;
Los Angeles, CA

Finalists



Jo Banner

The Descendants
Project; Vacherie, LA



Keisha Cameron

High Hog Farm;
Grayson, GA



Crystal Cavalier-Keck

7 Directions of Service;
Mebane, NC



Shilpi Chhotray

Counterstream Media;
Oakland, CA



Deseree Fontenot

Movement Generation:
Justice and Ecology
Project; Oakland, CA



Marnese Jackson

Midwest Building
Decarbonization
Coalition; Pontiac, MI



Grantee-Partners

Since 2000, our network has collectively granted over \$3.5 million to organizations that grow healthy communities and promote women’s leadership. We also provide selective place-based grants to organizations located where our events are held. In 2025, we provided grants totaling \$535,725 to the following organizations*:

Agri-Cultura Cooperative Network
Aleut Community of St. Paul Island
Bayou City Waterkeeper
Blackfeet Environmental Office – Climate Strategies
Black in Marine Science
Boston Farms Community Land Trust
Children’s Environmental Health Network
Conservation International – Hawaii
Heart of the Rockies Initiative
Jean Charles Choctaw Nation
Kako’o Lahui
Little Village Environmental Justice
Local Clean Energy Alliance
Louisiana Bucket Brigade

Micronesia Climate Change Alliance
Patagonia Azul Project
Rewilding Argentina
Rio Grande International Study Center
RISE St. James
The Chisholm Legacy Project
The Descendants Project
The Partnership Project
Through Piscataway Eyes
Tri-State Transportation Campaign
Urban Growers Collective
Urban Tilth
Yellowstone to Yukon
Young, Gifted & Green
Youth on Root

**Total includes \$365,000 in pass-through grants not counted as income/expense on page 13. Total doesn’t include grants to individuals through the Catalyst Award (\$278,250), honoraria, or individual member giving.*

Grantee-Partner Spotlight



RIO GRANDE INTERNATIONAL STUDY CENTER (RGISC)

Founded in 1994, RGISC is a Laredo-based research and advocacy environmental nonprofit. It seeks to improve lives on the South Texas border as a change agent and steward for the preservation and restoration of the environment of the Rio Grande basin. rgisc.org

BLACK IN MARINE SCIENCE (BIMS)

Advancing research, supporting workforce development, and fostering a collaborative environment, ensuring that all voices contribute to the future of our oceans.

blackinmarinescience.org



MICRONESIA CLIMATE CHANGE ALLIANCE

Uplifts and unites Micronesian communities to create culturally-centered solutions that protect and heal sacred islands, waters, and peoples.

mccalliance.org



The Legacy Award

Rachel's Network celebrated its 25th anniversary by announcing a new program to support women leaders of color with long experience in and deep dedication to the environmental movement: the Legacy Award.

"Since 2019, we've focused our efforts on mid-career leaders through the Catalyst Award," said Rachel's Network Catalyst Program Director Shreya Durvasula. "But we also see applicants with over 25 years of experience in the movement and wanted to honor their contributions through this new program."

Inaugural awardees (right) participated in a week-long retreat in Dakar, Senegal, hosted by organizer Dr. P. Qasimah Boston. There, they met social justice, sustainability, and women's rights leaders; connected with each other; and enjoyed space for reflection, learning, and rest.

Future retreats will provide grounding and wellbeing for long-time environmental leaders who have given so much to their communities.



Anita D. Collins

Urbana Perry Park
Neighborhood Planning
Assembly, Brunswick, GA



Konda Mason

Jubilee Justice,
Alexandria, LA



Queen Zakia Shabazz

United Parents Against
Lead, Petersburg, VA



Kolu Zigbi

New York, NY

The Legacy Award and Terenga Experience renewed my energy and creativity. I am not only excited to continue ongoing work, the award was also a catalyst for a new collaborative project. Thank you, Jërējëf, for making this life-affirming experience possible!

- Legacy Awardee Kolu Zigbi

Leadership

Staff

Jamie Boese
Program Director

Shreya Durvasula
Catalyst Program Director

Erica Flock
Communications & Advocacy Director

Hannan Sheikh
Finance Director

Fern Shepard
President

Sarah Walker
Membership & Development Director

Board of Directors

Judith Albert
Letarik Amare
Martha Davis
Josie Gabel
Tacy Hahn
Annel Hernandez
Kef Kasdin (Chair)
Maria Kolby-Wolfe
Alice Liddell
Fa Liddell
Elena Marszalek
Kimberly Middleton
Virginia Necochea
Autumn Saxton-Ross
Molly Ross
Nikki Traylor-Knowles

Advisors

Maite Arce, Hispanic Access Foundation
Abigail Dillen, Earthjustice
Angelou Ezeilo, Greening Youth Foundation
Jennifer Dianto Kemmerly, Monterey Bay Aquarium
Kathleen Rogers, EarthDay.org
Janis Searles Jones, Ocean Conservancy
Dilly Severin, Universal Access Project
Whitney Tome, Raben Group

About the Artist

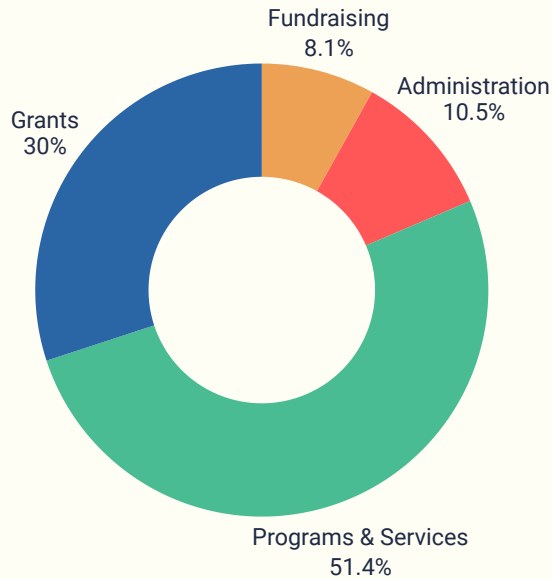


Audrey Sayer is a painter living and working in Nebraska. She creates images reflective of both rural and urban landscapes. Learn more at audreysayer.com.



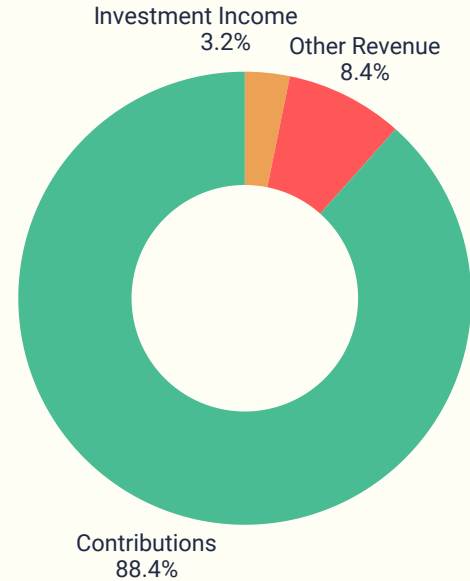
2025 Financials

Expenses



Programs and Services	\$916,082
Grants*	\$537,648
Fundraising	\$144,762
Administration	\$187,075
Total	\$1,785,566

Revenue



Contributions	\$1,946,159
Investment Income	\$70,239
Other Revenue (event fees, etc.)	\$184,898
Total	\$2,201,296

Change in Net Assets \$415,730

*Amount doesn't include \$365,000 in pass-through grants

Expenses Explainer

Programs & Services (51.4%)

From regional events and multi-day meetings, to webinars and book clubs, convening women environmental leaders is a significant part of our programming. We gather women (primarily the funders and Catalyst recipients in our membership) to build their leadership potential, help them make connections with new partners, and support their impact and wellbeing.

Operationally, we seek out event vendors that share our values around equity and sustainability, and we pay all our speakers (whether they join us virtually or in person).



Grants (30%)

Rachel's Network has been steadily growing its collective giving efforts every year. In 2015, our collective giving comprised about 10% of our expenses. In 2025, we grew our grantmaking to over 30%, signifying a growing commitment to resourcing environmental movement leaders. Our funder members contribute significantly more to our shared environmental mission through their direct individual and foundation grants.

Our primary giving vehicle is the Catalyst Award program which not only disburses cash prizes to recipients and their organizations, but also supports their leadership through retreats, conference sponsorships, and more.

Fundraising (8.1) & Administration (10.5%)

Our work isn't possible without a foundation of talented staff and the infrastructure to support them, from the accountant who checks our financials, to our membership software and office space (which we make available to partners for events).

The care we show our community includes our staff. We offer benefits in line with the world we want to build, like collective and individual sabbaticals and wellness stipends.



*Rarely, if ever, are
any of us healed in
isolation. Healing is
an act of communion.*

- bell hooks

Mission

Rachel's Network is a community of women at the intersection of environmental advocacy, philanthropy, and leadership. Our mission is to promote women as impassioned leaders and agents of change dedicated to the stewardship of the earth.

Vision

Catalyzing our collective power, Rachel's Network influences social, political, and economic systems to advance a healthy, thriving world.



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*Traditional lands of the Nacotchtank and
Piscataway people*