



## Introducing the Grassroots Fund for Equity.

*Building a more equitable, empowered Schenectady.*

### Our Vision for One Schenectady Resident-Driven Systems Change.

**One Schenectady** is a movement seeking to build resident power, unlock human potential, and create a community where opportunity meets the limitless possibilities of its residents and allied non-profits and funders.

We are establishing a community culture in Schenectady County where residents are provided with support and power to fully participate in the decisions that most affect them. By fostering trust, commitment, transparency and consistency, we can form authentic relationships, ensuring that the voices of met and they have agency over their own lives.

### Grassroots Fund for Equity

The newly established *Grassroots Fund for Equity* will play a key role in the advancement of a One Schenectady culture; where the playing field will be leveled for small, neighborhood based groups and grassroots organizations seeking funding to build their capacity to serve, and to more effectively engage their community.

Most traditional funding sources are difficult for grassroots organizations to access, let alone be successful in obtaining the resources they need. The Fund will ensure that groups grounded in their community have equitable access to funding for projects that are most needed and will have the largest impact - especially marginalized groups that find barriers to accessing resources.

Now, The Schenectady Foundation is setting aside funding, and seeking new gifts, to build a dedicated fund for these groups to access funding that helps them be more responsive to the issues experienced by the people of the community.

### What is the purpose of the Fund?

The Fund will exclusively be used to support neighborhood level, grassroots efforts to organize residents and build the capacity of smaller grassroots non-profits to serve.

The Fund will provide a dedicated source of capital to empower the participation of residents who are directly experiencing problems and are therefore also closest to the solutions. We'll ensure that meaningful change can be achieved in neighborhoods by providing resources to those who need it most. The Foundation will match the first **\$130,000** contributed to this Fund, essentially *doubling the impact of your support*

## How will the Fund be operated?

The Fund is an arm of The Schenectady Foundation's continuing direction of engaging the voices of residents in creating their own futures. The application process will be accessible, non-bureaucratic, and open to all neighborhood groups and small non-profits seeking to advance their missions.

As components of the One Schenectady movement, we will be establishing two other entities intended to strengthen the outcomes of Fund grants. First, a "Community Council" of approximately 10-15 grassroots leaders will be assembled to identify priorities for the Fund, and to make recommendations for grants to The Schenectady Foundation and other funders that may wish to participate. Second, we will provide technical assistance to grantees so that they are guided in how to further develop their group's strengths and sustainability.

The Fund will be managed by one of the Foundation's Trustee Banks, providing for income and appreciation of assets, even as we put funding back into our community.

## What is the intended impact?

The intended long-term outcome we envision is that decisions regarding policies and practices of systems and institutions will be increasingly driven by the empowered and engaged residents of the community. Those affected by systems will be in the center of examining how they need to shift policies and practices.

We will establish a vibrant and inclusive community where every individual has opportunities to succeed. We are committed to fostering innovation and implementing practical solutions that address the diverse needs of our community. By building strong relationships, promoting collaboration, providing technical assistance and removing barriers, we aim to empower residents to become leaders, able to be part of creating lasting change.

## What is our 2023 fundraising goal?

The Schenectady Foundation has made a matching grant of \$130,000 to contributions and grants committed to the Grassroots Fund for Equity. Our goal is to end 2023 with \$130,000 in pledges and contributions, so that we can claim the entire match, and start the grant-making program in 2024 with at least \$260,000 in the Fund.

The Foundation intends to continue supporting the growth of this Fund going forward, and to encourage commitments from other foundations, corporations and individual donors.

## Summary

We believe that the way to shift systems is by lifting up the voices of residents who directly experience the impact of policies and practices. By engaging at the grassroots level, and involving the support of allied "grass-tops" institutions we can make our community more equitable – a place where everyone can prosper.

The **Grassroots Fund for Equity** is an essential piece for investing in community change driven by those working at the ground level.