

Sustainer Learning Circle: Overview



Sustainer Learning Circle (SLC) is a nine month circle comprising four grassroots organizations in New England who are committed to leveling up their monthly donor programs. SLC members meet together to build community, learn and share best practices, develop a unique sustainer strategy, and support each other to implement the plan. Each organization accesses a stipend and a matching fund to incorporate into their strategy. The circle is facilitated by grassroots fundraising coaches with experience building successful sustainer programs.

Why focus on monthly donor programs?

There are one-time donors, and then there are sustainers (monthly donors). Sustainers give more and for longer, their contribution can be relied on, and they are more likely to engage in the organization's work beyond the gift. In recent years, online giving platforms have made it far easier for small organizations to maintain monthly donor programs, and a growing number of donors prefer it. A solid sustainer program will increase a small organization's resources, independence and sustainability.

What to expect from participating in an SLC?

- **Seven sessions** over nine months, 2 hours per session
- **Coaching** sessions with circle facilitators
- **2-3 designated participants** from each org (staff, board or member-leaders welcome)
- **Matching funds** to support your recruitment of new sustainers
- **Organizational stipend** to cover staff capacity dedicated to the circle
- **Guidance on developing your sustainer program plan** to include giving infrastructure, community building, recruitment and retention of sustainers
- **Community, encouragement, and connection** with other grassroots fundraisers

Who is a good fit to participate?

Organizations with:

- excitement about shifting non-profit fundraising paradigms to build power, movement and sustainability
- staff or member capacity to participate in a monthly conversation and do planning and implementation in between
- small (5-20 monthly donors) or medium (20-60 monthly donors) sized sustainer program who are motivated to build the program to the next level

We want to prioritize Sustainer Learning Circles for groups who are based in New England with leadership from historically exploited communities, building power through community organizing, and with a current budget between \$50-\$500K.

We prioritize small New England-based community organizing groups that are BIPOC, working-class, and LGBTQ led. We focus on organizations using base building and solidarity economy strategies.

How is it funded?

Participating organizations do not pay to participate in SLC. Instead, they receive a stipend to honor the capacity and experience they commit to the circle and a matching fund to use in their sustainer program plan. We seek to pair interested organizations with funding partners who want to support the organization's long term sustainability through grassroots fundraising. An investment made for an organization to participate in SLC will result in a more than 100% return over a two-year period when sustainer program plans are implemented. The cost per organization averages \$12,000, which includes the following:

- **Matching funds:** \$5,000
- **Stipend for participation:** \$2,000
- **Coordination, facilitation and coaching:** \$5,000

