ANNUAL REPORT 2024









Wellspring Cooperative

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Letter from Directors

2024 was a year of renewal and new opportunities, setting the stage for the next phase of Wellspring's growth. Our organization-wide approval of new bylaws transitioned Wellspring from governance by member organizations (as established during our founding) to governance by a broad-based membership centered in our region's gateway cities, especially Springfield and Holyoke. This is the culmination of priorities established in our 2022-24 strategic plan to increase community participation and leadership. While voting is shifting to individual and organizational members, our board make-up retains the same mix of stakeholder organizations including Wellspring co-operatives, anchor institutions, community and labor organizations, and development organizations, in addition to at-large individual representatives.

Major new financial resources have also opened up new opportunities as we enter 2025. A number of community land trust possibilities are under consideration based on a $300,000 donation we received through the People's Network for Land and Liberation. Also One Project's commitment of $100,000 for two years to support the solidarity economy ecosystem in Massachusetts will in part, support the hire of an additional program team member. Wellspring's program work has also expanded based on multi-partner grants including USDA funding for the Springfield Prescription Produce Project, Health New England funding for Go Fresh Mobile Market and MassDevelopment and Federal Reserve support for the Gran Cocina community kitchen.

Establishing the Gran Cocina/Great Kitchen as an incubator for food-based businesses as well as a space for community events, is another important milestone. Over the past year Gran Cocina has established itself as an important partner in the food economy of the region.

The Lower Valley Community Land Trust (LVCLT) is a critical initiative that provides connective tissue for much of our work. The vision is to leverage a community land trust (CLT) model to develop a local solidarity economy ecosystem that will enable local communities to meet their own needs including housing, food, production, tools and technology, and also centers the importance of culture, connection and learning.

These positive developments are tempered by a renewed assessment of the strengths and challenges facing our cooperatives. A couple startup businesses ended their efforts in 2024 after many years. Northeast Biodiesel ran out of funds and is seeking a buyer ideally committed to continuing as a cooperative. Farm Bug's efforts to create a craft cannabis co-op ended after a number of unsuccessful efforts to secure a community host agreement. Two other cooperatives are reorganizing due to personnel changes including Wellspring Upholstery and All Good co-op. Other cooperatives have strengthened this year including Natural Living Landscapes, Wellspring Harvest and Energia. These mixed results remind us of the challenges of developing startup businesses, especially where significant capital is required. An evaluation of lessons learned from our first eleven years of co-op development will be a major focus of our 2025 strategic planning process.

We also enter the new year with eyes wide open about the assaults on working people and the safety net from the federal government. We join in solidarity with our partners working to resist these attacks. In the face of policies designed by and for the ultra-rich, we renew our commitment to building an alternative to the dominant system that is failing us–a just, democratic and regenerative economy that serves people and the planet.



Fred Rose



Emily Kawano

Meet our New Board Members!



1 **Braxton Campbell**



2 **Ayanna Crawford**



3 **Hilda Roque**

Worker Cooperative Spotlight:



Energía, a worker cooperative in our network, is a energy services company that provides energy efficiency upgrades for residential and commercial properties. Energía's mission is to create efficient and healthy buildings that transform our communities and environments into thriving places to live and work. Ivelice, a worker owner of Energía, shared some 2024 insights:

How did Wellspring help Energía grow this past year?

"Wellspring helped Energía's management with much needed moral support and exposure to other co-op's facing the same financial challenges."

What was a 2024 highlight for Energía?

"Energía had a 17% increase in revenue in 2024 and 4 workers were added as owners!"

What was an obstacle for Energía this past year?

"Cash flow was an ever-present obstacle as well as losing a couple Owners/Workers to rival companies. These were not things overcome so much as survived."

Our Solidarity Economy Initiatives!



2024 Solidarity Economy Festival and Gathering



Wellspring was part of the core organizing team for the 3rd annual Solidarity Economy/Co-op Festival & Gathering, held over the weekend of July 27th and 28th in the Roxbury neighborhood of Boston. It was an uplifting convergence of people from across the state who are involved in, or simply curious about, the solidarity economy and co-ops. This year's theme was land and housing, so we were thrilled to be hosted for the first day by the renowned Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative (DSNI), whose Community Land Trust (CLT) stewards over 30 acres of land and includes 228 affordable housing units, commercial properties, and community gardens. This was a day of building relationships, learning together, strategizing and setting priorities for the coming year.

The Solidarity Economy Festival on Sunday took place at the Shirley Eustis House, which was the estate of a British colonial governor that included slave quarters. Docents include this history in their tours to ensure that the reprehensible legacy of British colonialism and slavery are not swept under the rug.



It was great to see a number of Wellspring Cooperative Network members participate, including Wellspring Harvest (see Clive in action at the Wellspring table), Natural Living Landscapes, Northeast Biodiesel, and Catalyst Cooperative Healing. Wellspring is proud to be part of organizing and participating in this annual Solidarity Economy Festival & Gathering to build the movement for “another world.”

Lower Valley Community Land Trust (CLT)

Wellspring is excited about the potential to leverage a CLT model to connect our co-op work and other solidarity economy initiatives. Given the context of potential system breakdowns from climate change, global supply chain disruptions, economic and financial fragility, and growing political fragmentation, it is with a great sense of urgency that we work to strengthen capacity for local production and provisioning by developing a local solidarity economy ecosystem. **Key elements of this ecosystem include: affordable housing, a regenerative food system, production through worker co-ops as well as community production, a Center for Community Production that provides the tools and technology to support all of the above, and spaces for culture, connection and education.**



Over the past couple of years, the core organizations of the LVCLT (Wellspring, Neighbor to Neighbor and Equity Trust) have been taking the time to build a strong foundation for shared governance. We organized a group from Springfield and Holyoke to visit the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative's Community Land Trust, and held a series of community meetings in both cities. In 2024, the Lower Valley CLT worked to form a Steering Committee, which will move forward the process of incorporation and engage in a learning process to deepen members' knowledge about CLTs.

The LVCLT is a member of the Valley Alliance for Land Equity, a collaborative effort to connect up the CLTs and other shared equity projects in the Valley.We are excited to see these efforts to take land and housing out of the speculative market joining up throughout our Valley, as well as across the state.

Wellspring is also a member of the People's Network for Land and Liberation (PNLL) which is working to build a local solidarity economy ecosystem grounded in a Community Land Trust model through peer learning, mutual support and resource sharing. The six nodes include Wellspring, Cooperation Jackson (Jackson, MS), Cooperation Vermont (Marshfield, VT), Community Movement Builders (Atlanta, GA), Incite Focus (Idlewild, MI – last year Blair Evans was the keynote speaker at our General Assembly), and Native Roots Network (Redding, CA).

In the face of convergent crises, intensified by the Trumpist agenda, the work to build local, resilient and caring communities that own and control the means to meet their own needs is no longer just a nice idea. It is now all the more a matter of survival.

Strengthening the Regional Food System



Wellspring continued to strengthen the regional food system over the past year through food-access programs that advance nutrition and health, and food-based development to support livelihoods and community wealth.

Go Fresh Mobile & Presciption Produce Project

The Go Fresh Mobile Market and Springfield Prescription Produce Project bring affordable produce from our region's farms to food insecure families in Springfield. Go Fresh is the largest mobile market in Western Mass, delivering $60,940 of fresh fruits and vegetables year-round to 797 people at affordable housing sites, health care centers and community facilities across the city. SNAP recipients can use their state Healthy Incentive Program benefits to purchase produce, and Wellspring continues to advocate to restore these benefits after they were cut this year due to budget shortfalls.





Go Fresh has benefited particularly from funding by Health New England, including a $50,000 Health Equity grant this year. Increased consumption of fruits and vegetables improves health, and the Prescription Produce Project is working with 126 patients from Baystate's three Springfield health centers to track the health benefits of increased produce consumption on diabetes, hypertension and obesity. This is the last year of a three-year USDA grant that Wellspring received in partnership with Baystate and the Center for Research on Families at UMass.



Gran Cocina: Our Community Kitchen



Gran Cocina/Great Kitchen in Holyoke, is a joint project of Wellspring and Neighbor to Neighbor that has three aims:

1. To provide a space for food entrepreneurs to grow their business and for community members to cook and process food together.

2. To hold community events for learning, sharing and mutual aid.

3. To build out a cafe which will also provide space where cooks can sell their products.

In May, Gran Cocina held its Grand Opening. The space was jam packed with community members, public officials, Gran Cocina cooks, and supporters. Attendees sampled delicious food cooked up by Gran Cocina members, toured the space, met the team and heard about our vision for the kitchen, community space and cafe.

We had some transitions in staffing, as Sean Terwilliger had to step down as Gran Cocina's manager for health reasons. We were fortunate that J Jasper was able to fill in while we conducted a search for a new manager, which culminated in hiring Betsaida Vargas in ??. Our membership of food crafters continues to grow, one member is doing a cooking class for youth, and our first Thing Swap, a form of mutual aid where people donate items as they are able and take what they need for free, was a great success.

Worker Cooperative Program Work

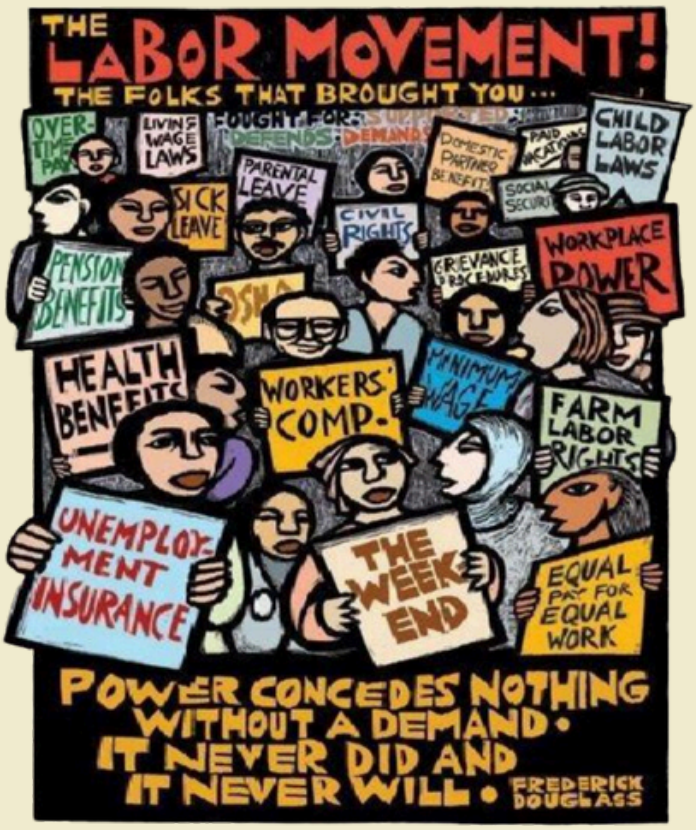


Wellspring Labor/Co-Op Committee

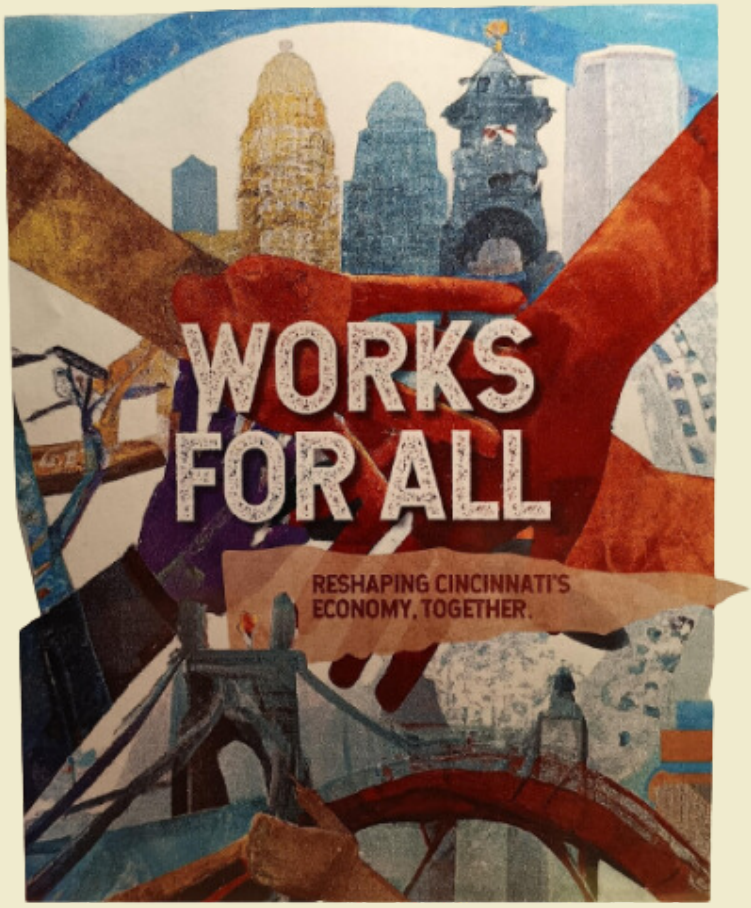
Wellspring's Labor/Co-op Committee helped to organize two public events this year: Voices of a Working People's History in honor of May Day, and a screening of Works For All in honor of Labor Day.

Our 2024 May Day Event

Voices of a Working People's History is a hidden gem of a theater production that brings to life the history of working people fighting for justice with all the many layered intersections of the struggles of people of color, women, immigrants, socialists and other persecuted radicals. Voices draws on Howard Zinn's powerful People's History of the United States highlighting key voices and characters through dramatic readings, music, songs, and storytelling. The production was performed at Holyoke Media to a full room with great enthusiasm.



Our 2024 Labor Day Event



Many thanks to the hard work and dedication of the Labor/ Co-op Committee!

In honor of Labor Day, the Labor/Co-op Committe organized an online screening of Works for All, a documentary about Co-op Cincy and their work to build a cooperative economy in Cincinnati drawing on a strong partnership with unions as well as Mondragon. The documentary is an inspiring story with many voices of worker-owners from a variety of co-ops including a childcare center, a farm, a weatherization co-op, and a cleaning business.

The screening was followed by some brief remarks and Q&A with Ellen Vera, co-director and one of the co-founders of Co-op Cincy and Melissa Young, from Moving Images, who made this film along with Mark Dworkin.

Our 2024 General Assembly



A Day of Community Building and Collective Visioning

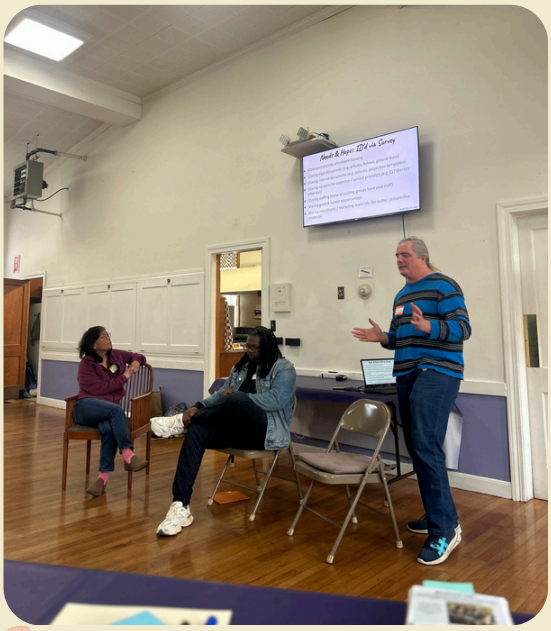
This past November, Wellspring hosted its annual General Assembly at Orchard Covenant Church in Indian Orchard, MA. The event kicked off with members voting on important bylaw changes and electing new board members Braxton Campbell and Ayanna Crawford. Following the elections, panelists Terry Gibson, Martin Omasta, and Emily Kawano shared inspiring perspectives on how Community Land Trusts can serve as powerful tools within the solidarity economy movement.

Our post-panel discussion focused on the importance of decommodifying land as a key aspect in environmental sustainability, affordable housing, and fostering reciprocal relationships with the Earth.



A collaborative design activity allowed participants to illustrate their visions of regenerative economies. Each group was given a map of Indian Orchard and seed cards with various solidarity economy practices (community fridges, housing cooperatives, fab labs, etc.). Participants brainstormed amongst each other which initiatives would be most beneficial and where they could be implemented in Indian Orchard. This inspiring group activity displayed the power of collective imagination in creating a people and planet centered economy.

The event closed with delicious food from ?. Our 2024 General Assembly was a great success in bringing together the Wellspring community and reimagining a sustainable and cooperative economy.







Governance Updates

In 2024, Wellspring began reorganizing to increase community participation, strengthen leadership, and ensure that our initiatives are grounded in the communities we work in. Our 2022-2024 Strategic Plan established a goal to increase community engagement and ensure that Wellspring's development work meets community needs.

Leadership Caucus April 2024

Our 2024 Leadership Caucus convened at the Orchard Covenant Church in Indian Orchard. Participants met first within their affiliated sectors to discuss challenges and opportunities for collaboration, followed by discussions across sectors to identify actionable projects. Proposals focused on ways to strengthen the Wellspring cooperative network through mutual support such as sharing employees when work is slow for a co-op, group purchasing, joint marketing, and educational programs among other ideas. **All participants highlighted the importance of better communication, building collective power and mutual support in the face of overwhelming crises like climate change.**

Wellspring Bylaw Changes

Election reorganization via online voting



At the General Assembly, Wellspring's voting members passed new election procedures. **The new bylaw allows online voting for board members and bylaw changes**, rather than require voting only at the General Assembly. While we retain the same mix of board members from different sectors and individual community representatives, they will no longer be elected by their own separate caucuses but by an open vote of the membership. Election software allows candidates to provide personal information that enables voting members to be better informed.

Rethinking Wellspring Membership



Implementing the new election process requires clarification of membership; specifically who has the right to vote. While Wellspring's original bylaws included an application process for individuals and organizations to join as members, this process fell out of practice and there was considerable confusion during elections about membership. To rethink our membership process, the Governance Committee convened two retreats on June 6 and August 14. The consensus of these retreats was to have individual members' votes count equally with organizations. This is a change from our previous bylaws that prioritized organizational votes where individual members voted as a block.

During our 2024 General Assembly, voting members passed three updated bylaws proposed by the Governance Committee :

1. **Individual members' votes count equally with organizations.** This is a change from our previous bylaws that prioritized organizational votes where individual members voted as a block.

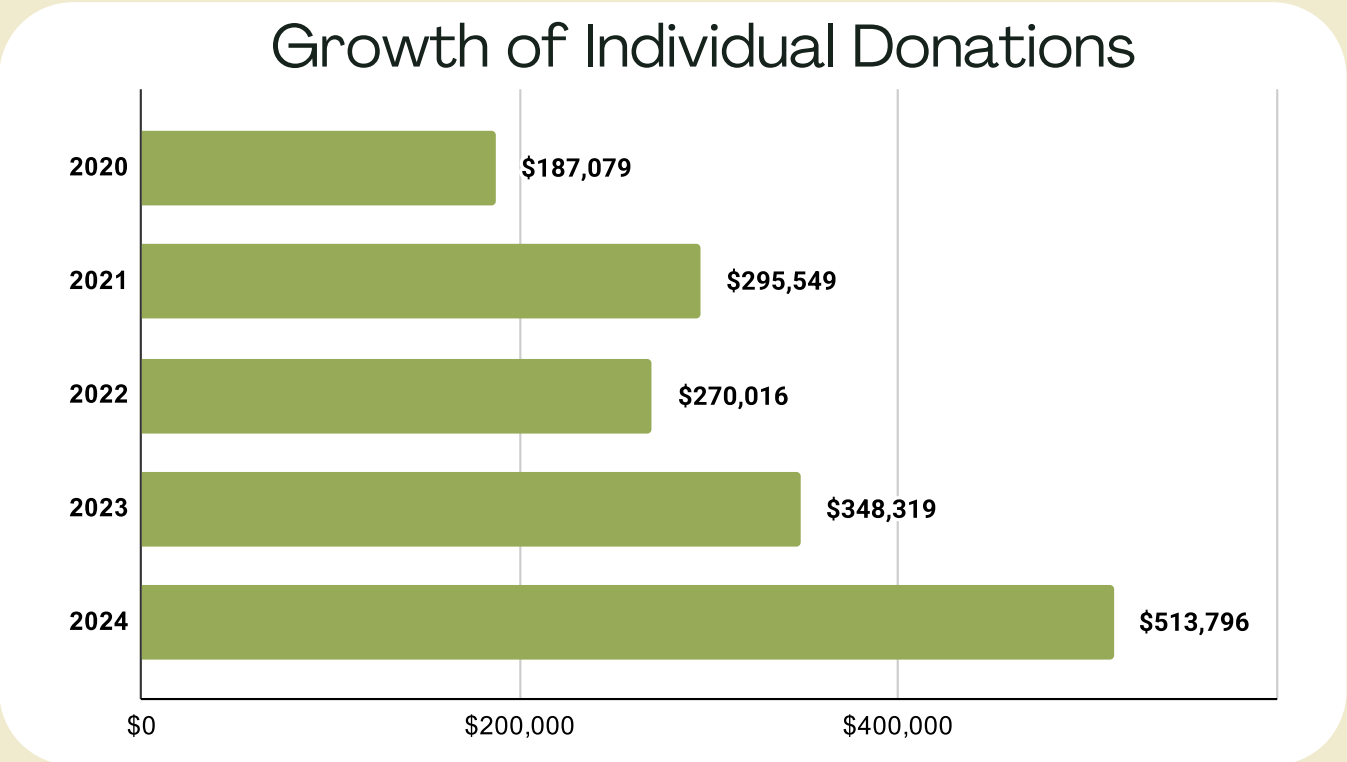
2. **Change the percentage of board representation to 20% for each class**, which adds more individual, unaffiliated board members to increase community representation:
   20% Wellspring Co-ops (was 30%)
   20% Community and Labor organizations
   20% Anchor Institutions
   20% Development organizations
   20% Individuals (was 10%)

3. **Increase the number of board members from 11 to 15, or 3 representatives from each stakeholder group.** This means there would not be a reduction in the number of co-op representatives even though the percentage is reduced.

2024 Financials

Another Record Year of Fundraising

Wellspring Cooperative is funded by (1) unrestricted and restricted donations (to a specific program); (2) grants from individuals, foundations, government programs, and corporations; and (3) other income which includes fees for service. Overall, funds we receive are shifting from unrestricted donations and grants to those restricted to specific programs. This is happening concurrently with the expansion of our programs to include community initiatives in addition to cooperative development. Our total donations for 2024 were $513,550 which represents a record year and increase of 52% over last year, our previous record. Donations represent almost half of our income. We are extraordinarily grateful for our financial partners in this work!



Wellspring Cooperative Corporation
Statement of Activities
for year ending December 31, 2024

		Without Donor Restrictions	With Donor Restrictions	**2024 Total**	2023 Total
Total Revenue & Support					
	Donations	$158,218	$354,857	**$513,075**	$338,549
	Membership	$1,375		**$1,375**	$369
	Foundation Grants	$211,250	$127,500	**$338,750**	$340,034
	Gov't Grants		$184,416	**$184,416**	$123,170
	Fee for Service	$1,959		**$1,959**	$10,688
Total Revenue & Support		$372,802	$666,773	**$1,039,575**	$812,810
Expenditures					
	Personnel			**$251,324**	$261,980
	Programs			**$361,326**	$396,972
	Organizational Expenses			**$31,980**	$7,146
Total Expenditures				**$644,631**	$666,098
Net Operating Expenses				**$394,944**	$146,712

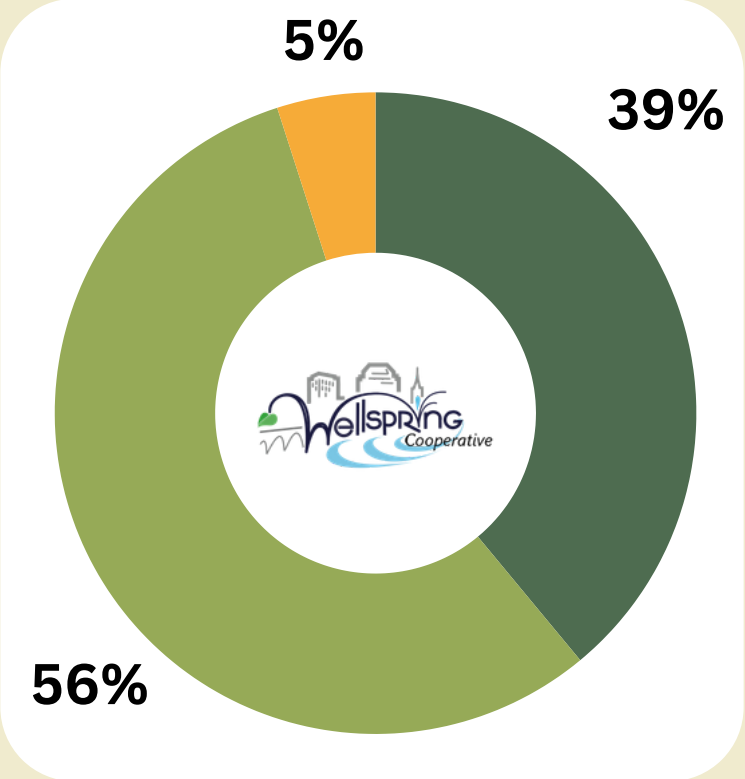
THE COMMUNITY INVESTMENT TAX CREDIT PROGRAM LEVERAGES SIGNIFICANT FUNDS FOR WELLSPRING

Wellspring is a member of the Massachusetts Association of Community Development Corporations (MACDC), a state-wide membership association of more than 100 community development corporations (CDCs) and non-profit organizations.MACDCs develop and improve urban, rural, and suburban communities in sustainable ways that create and expand economic opportunities for low- and moderate-income people. The tax credit program awards donors of $1,000 or more a 50% Massachusetts tax credit encouraging donors to double their donations knowing that they will get half back with this tax credit. Wellspring has been participating in this program since 2019. In six years we have raised over $1.3 million through the program! Donations through the CITC program represent a significant proportion of our individual donations and equals 45% of our donations in 2024.

MACDC
Massachusetts Association of Community Development Corporations

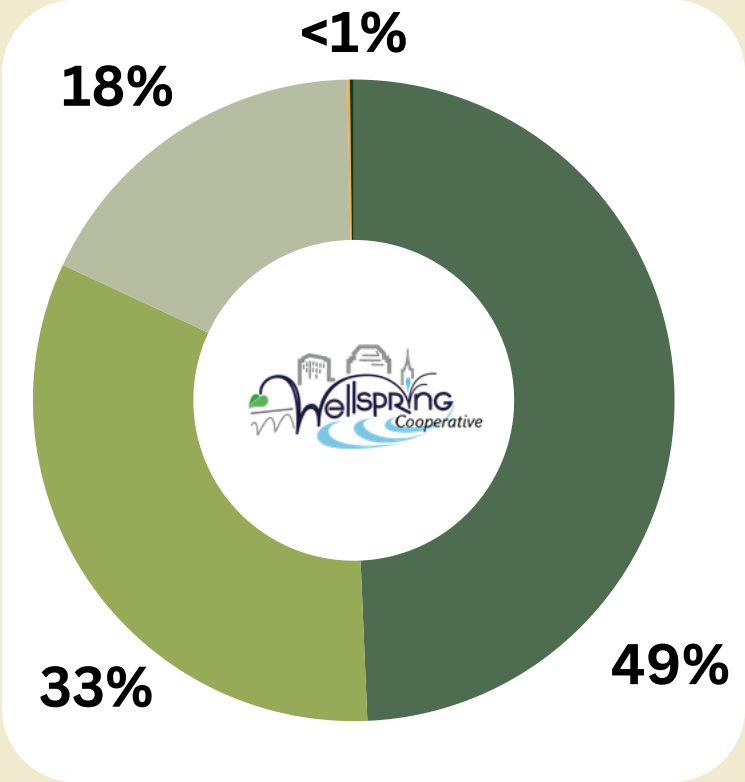
Where Our Support Goes

- PERSONNEL
- PROGRAMS
- ORGANIZATIONAL EXPENSES



How Our Work is Funded

- DONATIONS
- FOUNDATION GRANTS
- GOV'T GRANTS
- MEMBERSHIP <1%
- FEE FOR SERVICE <1%



Thank You to our Donors

Julia Agron
American Giving Foundation
Bettye Anderson Frederic
Lee Badgett & Elizabeth Silver
Sandra Bailey
Todd Bailey
Kristan and Ben Bakker
Daphne & Clint Berry
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Jack Woodsum

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Center for Nutrition and Health Impact
Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts
Dean's Beans Organic Coffee Company
Fourth Horse Fund
Give Lively Foundation
Health New England Foundation
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M & T Bank Foundation
Mass Growth Capital Corp
MassMutual Foundation
Monson Savings Bank
One Project
The Old Howe Place Fund
United Food and Commercial Workers Local 1459
US Department of Agriculture USDA
Wild Geese Foundation

in kind

Carolyn Edsell-Vetter and Johan Matthews, Cooperative Fund of the Northeast

Jerry Koch-Gonzalez

Amine Benali, Director Strategy and Development, Local Enterprise Assistance Fund

Alex Pyle, esq; Sheehan Phinney Bass & Green PA

Stakeholders Capital

Carlos Teuscher, Suffolk University, Transactional Law Clinic

The Wellspring Network would also like to extend much gratitude for our outgoing board members:

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