



2023 Year **In** Review



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SERVING WITH JOY

A NOTE FROM OUR CEO

A few years ago, Groundswell developed a Statement of Values that has guided our organization ever since. Every single member our team contributed, including Fellows and members of our Board. We live out our values every day through **what** we do and **how** we do. This includes the way we measure the impact of our work as a team as individuals. As we have reflected on the past year, it seems very appropriate to share some of the good stuff we got done together through our values as a framework.



One of our values that is especially resonate to me is “**serving with joy**.” As my colleague Kristal Virgil has often observed, our culture can view service as something lowly – propagating through headlines and imagery the false idea that it is better to be served than to serve others, when in fact that could not be further from the truth.

Systems produce outcomes according to the values on which they’re founded. That is why, to change the outcomes of our energy systems, we have got to deeply inquire about the values at the center of our current energy systems and have the courage to change them. That means reorienting our energy systems away from models that extract resources, leave pollution in their wake, concentrate wealth, and impoverish communities and move toward models that share power, share wealth, improve health, and sustain communities.

I count it a privilege to show up every day and work alongside our team, the people and communities we serve, and many of you to put our collective knowledge and capabilities to work cutting energy burdens, improving resilience, building community power and showing what our clean energy futures can look like when we put love for each other at the center of the good, joyful work.

With gratitude,

Michelle Moore

Illustrations by Ngadi Smart
Photos by Groundswell



BUILDING EQUITABLE CLEAN ENERGY FUTURES

2023 IN REVIEW

Groundswell has always focused on driving transformative change and getting things done. The results of those efforts were evident in the impact created by each of our programs in 2023. Across the board, Groundswell’s programs have worked to build community power while embodying our values of **equity, respect, integrity, excellence, supporting each other**, driving **transformative change**, and **serving** people and communities **with joy**.

In the following pages, you’ll read about the **transformative** impact that Groundswell’s programs have had —and are having — for the communities we **joyfully serve**. Our experience implementing each of these programs informs how we interact with new projects and communities.

This summer, the community solar project Groundswell developed at **Sargent Memorial Presbyterian Church** in Washington, DC, was energized, and our total number of subscribers served reached more than **6,000**. We effectively and **respectfully** shared meaningful information to community solar subscribers, informed by ongoing research and data analysis.

Likewise, outreach efforts for resilience hubs in **Georgia, Illinois, and Maryland** were informed by our communications experience with community solar subscribers. Informed by survey results, we saw that taking time to proactively answer common community questions early in the experience makes it easier to **take care of each other** throughout the process. This practice extends to both our neighbors in the communities to be served by the projects and the outreach team. It also enables us to better serve communities with **excellence** by allowing community conversations to center on where and when instead

of how and why. Our experience **serving** communities has also allowed us to help **City of Refuge Baltimore** become one of the first community-owned solar projects in the state enabled by the “direct pay” provision of the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA).

Meanwhile, the **Save On Utilities Long term (SOUL™)** program highlighted the importance of strong community partnerships built on **integrity** and **respect** when, within a matter of months, an expansion **served 26 households** in Georgia with **more than \$500,000** in health and safety-related home upgrades in Georgia. These repairs were informed by findings from our research, and the experience highlighted the need for an increased focus on rural energy moving forward.

These projects informed the planning, and the needs we heard from community members informed the creation of the **Rural Renaissance Roadshow**. The Roadshow attracted local leaders from across the country for three days of sessions designed to equip rural leaders to build thriving local clean energy futures.

Finally, Groundswell launched the **Community Power Fund** to leverage the new “direct pay” option from the Investment Tax Credit (ITC) for solar energy toward community ownership. Thanks to the IRA, nonprofits and municipalities can now directly receive the value of the ITC, which is a game-changer that enables more communities to own their own power.

We are energized to share a few details about the impact of Groundswell’s projects in 2023 with each of you. Thank you for helping us build clean energy futures that reflect the beautiful diversity of the communities we serve.

DRIVING TRANSFORMATIVE CHANGE LABS



Groundswell leads groundbreaking research and thorough data discovery processes to lead with **integrity** as a thought leader in how to **serve** low to moderate income communities and customers. Through careful examination of the common barriers to equitable clean energy deployment, the Labs team seeks to **transform** energy markets and policies that enable energy equity and promote inclusive solar access for disadvantaged communities. In the spirit of “**Supporting Each Other**” and “**Getting Stuff Done**,” Labs applies this same lens of examination to Groundswell’s other program areas to discover new insights and solutions that enable our team to **serve** all our customers with **excellence**.

Just & Equitable Transition to 100% Renewable Energy External Thought Leadership & Research Dissimination



In **service** of the industry-wide knowledge base on **equitable** clean energy programming, Goundswell’s research team continued to extend its expertise through external partnerships, event presentations, and data-driven and evidence-based research publications.

Specific achievements include **four** industry event presentations, **three** Energy Futures webinars, and **four** publications on various channels. In addition, with **respect** to our collaboration with the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL), Labs supported data classifications for NREL’s Sharing the Sun database – for community-owned and resiliency projects that **serve** low to moderate-income households.

Lastly, Groundswell published an article discussing how the Inflation Reduction Act will **transform** clean energy markets; particularly how the new “direct pay” provision of the Investment Tax Credit and other financing mechanisms can enable community and nonprofit ownership models. [Read the article at ImpactAlpha.](#)

Shared Power Through Accessible Energy Systems Innovative Data Solutions for Core Program Questions

Dr. Moleka led research digging into technical questions at the core of many Groundswell programs, providing essential support to the team’s efforts to build sustainable and replicable program models. Labs collaborated with the Subscriber Management Services team to determine household eligibility for the DC Solar for All program as published in the **Income-Verification Assessment** report for the DC Department of Energy & Environment in June 2023.



Labs also authored an **End of Project** report for the DC Solar for All program, comparing Year 1 and Year 2 customer survey results. Furthermore, in **service** of the Energy Programs team, Labs helped to finalize program design for the U.S. Department of Energy-funded Renewables Advancing Community Energy Resilience program, **Resilient Communities, Maryland.**

Labs supported the project team in developing a mixed research methodology approach and gave feedback on the initial data collection questionnaire and the technical documentation process. This will enable the team to deliver novel and **transformative** metrics to quantify community resilience priorities and a framework to plan and build **equity**-driven community resilience centers over **two years**.



Resilient Energy Systems That Regenerate Communities Low to Moderate-Income Community Solar and Storage Research



In Groundswell’s spirit of “**Getting Stuff Done**,” the Labs team submitted a **75-page Final Technical Report** and all final deliverables to the U.S. Department of Energy in April 2023, to formally close-out the Accelerating Low-Income Financing and Transactions (LIFT) for Solar Access Everywhere Project.

As the **LIFT Toolkit** was a major accomplishment of the three-year project, its maintenance remained a priority for the team in 2023. Dr. Moleka led the research, data collection, and

analysis to add to and maintain the **integrity** of the LIFT database. **Eleven** new low-to-moderate income-serving community solar or solar + storage projects were added to the database, along with **three case studies**. **Two** of these case studies delivered insights into solar+storage projects **transforming** the reality of community power for small communities in Alaska and California.

In future years, Groundswell will continue to center our efforts to disseminate our expertise on equitable clean energy programming. We will research, maintain and add to the LIFT Toolkit to provide industry stakeholders with actionable best practices for developing and financing equitable solar and resilience programs.

692
Users of the LIFT Toolkit
Project Optimizer

23
Form
Submissions

7,308
Number of times the LIFT
Toolkit has been viewed

RESPECTFUL SERVICE

SUBSCRIBER MANAGEMENT



Groundswell showcases and celebrates how programs can **serve** our low to moderate-income neighbors with **excellence** through every aspect of the subscriber experience. The Groundswell Team coordinated with subscribers to identify areas where we could **respectfully** provide additional resources to **support** subscribers. These efforts will enable subscribers to take control of their energy bills and make decisions about community and climate impacts. Additionally, program resources and information central to subscriber outreach highlighted the **transformative** impact of Groundswell's community solar subscribers, how subscribers improve energy **equity** in their communities, and the work of values-aligned women of color.

Sustainable Value Chains That Empower Communities

Partnering with the DC Department of Energy and Environment to Deliver DC Solar for All



"I just want other people to know [DC Solar for All] is available to them and to find out whether they can get in on it too because it really does benefit all."
Diane Nicks, Solar for All subscriber

As the subscriber management organization for DC Solar for All, Groundswell has had the **privilege of serving more than 6,000 low to moderate-income subscribers**. Groundswell's people-centric method for subscriber engagement includes managing the subscription activation process, liaising with the utility to ensure subscribers' credits are delivered as expected, distributing meaningful communications, and administering a dedicated subscriber contact center.

Each Solar for All subscriber received a personal phone call welcoming them to the program and ongoing engagement informed by subscriber feedback. The program has delivered **solar savings** to subscribers while establishing a sustainable model for **equitable** community solar that is already being used as a template for programs across the country.

Subscribers reported the **transformative** impact of Solar for All savings on their household budgets, and the National Community Solar Partnership recognized the impact of DC Department of Energy and Environment's Solar for All program with the **Grand Prize at the Sunny Awards**.

More than
\$6.8 million

Delivered to LMI households to date through Groundswell subscriber management

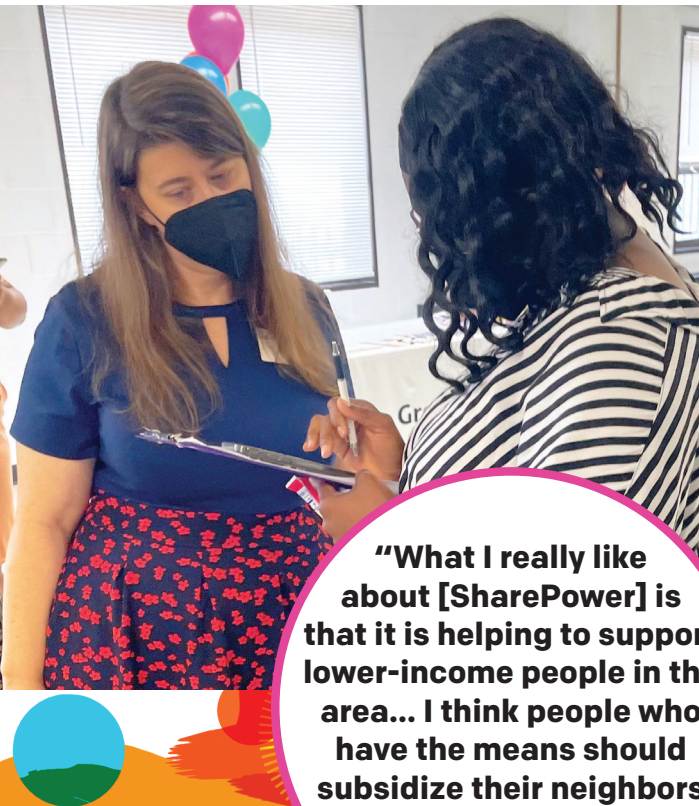
Programs That Reflect The Beauty Of Our Communities

In Maryland and Washington DC

In 2023, **SharePower subscribers in the District celebrated three years of building community power with Groundswell**, and SharePower Maryland subscribers received their first solar bill credits. SharePower by Groundswell now **serves 132 Empowered** low to moderate-income subscribers with clean energy savings.

The **transformative** impact of SharePower by Groundswell community solar subscriptions was recognized by the National Community Solar Partnership at the **Sunny Awards** where Community Solar at the Monastery of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel was honored in the **Greater Household Savings** meaningful benefit category.

Building on this success, Groundswell launched the **SharePower Advisory Committee** to identify what SharePower subscribers want to see from the program in the future and how the program can best serve subscribers with **excellence, integrity, and respect** for years to come.



"What I really like about [SharePower] is that it is helping to support lower-income people in the area... I think people who have the means should subsidize their neighbors as much as they can."
John Evans, SharePower subscriber

1.5k Metric tons of carbon dioxide pollution prevented by SharePower subscribers to date

Sharing Power By Improving Clean Energy Access

Focusing on Justice, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

As part of Groundswell's commitment to **respect** and **excellence**, the subscriber management team reviewed and updated information about programs under Groundswell's management and how that information is presented to improve the accessibility of information about Groundswell, SharePower, and DC Solar for All. Our **Subscriber Advisory Council** advises the team on how to improve accessibility of SharePower by Groundswell and other programs. Team training on **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion** inspired the team to create a **Community Resource Guide** with local resources for low to moderate-income subscribers and address potential barriers

posed to subscribers and potential subscribers by language barriers or disabilities.

The team coordinated with the DC Mayor's Office of Latin Affairs to translate information about the DC Solar for All program, introducing **Spanish-language flyers, webpages, text messages, webinars, and videos** — in addition to the existing Spanish e-newsletter and call center services. Additionally, Groundswell's site was tested with web page readers, and English-language videos were created to improve information access for subscribers with visual or language processing impairments.

TAKING CARE OF EACH OTHER

COMMUNITY RESILIENCE HUBS



Groundswell works with community partners to build resilience hubs at centralized, trusted community locations. Resilience hubs provide community members with a space where they can access reliable power for their essential devices, continue to receive information as emergency situations develop, and store medications sensitive to temperature when their neighborhoods face natural disasters and emergency situations. In 2023, the team made significant progress on resilience hub planning in Maryland, Illinois, and Georgia — with the team establishing relationships with community partners who are already guiding us in **serving** communities in ways that are meaningful to them. In some cases, the **transformative** impact of these resilience hubs could be felt before installing the first solar panel, thanks to local investments inspired by the forthcoming projects.

Resilient Energy Systems Regenerating Communities

Advancing Resiliency in Maryland



Continuing our **respect** for and partnership with the Baltimore Office of Sustainability to implement the **Baltimore City Community Resiliency Hub Program**, in 2023, Groundswell sought to advance **at least two** Baltimore resiliency hubs into construction.

In October, Groundswell — in partnership with the City of Refuge in Baltimore, the Maryland Energy Administration, the City of Baltimore Office of Sustainability, and SunCatch Energy, with support from Sol Systems and the Wells Fargo Foundation — celebrated the first resilience hub in Maryland that will allow a nonprofit to achieve community ownership thanks to the “**direct pay**” provision of the Inflation Reduction Act. The **110 kW** solar installation for the **Baltimore City Community Resiliency Hub** at the City of Refuge will utilize **372 kWh** of battery storage.

Supported by the U.S. Department of Energy’s **Renewables Advancing Community Energy Resilience Funding Program**, **Resilient Communities Maryland**, a **transformative**, research-based initiative, will expand the framework for valuing resilience in disadvantaged communities. The first **Resiliency Council** meetings with community members in Baltimore were held in November to scope and begin setting **equitable** community resilience priorities.

“Not only are we increasing the capacity of our operational budget to continue to do good work and expand the work, we’re also contributing to the larger environment.”
Pastor Billy Humphrey,
Executive Director
City of Refuge in Baltimore

Additionally, the Maryland Energy Administration funded feasibility studies, which allowed the team to extended its **service** to Montgomery County, Maryland, in the initial planning and feasibility study phases of building a community resilience hub in this jurisdiction.

Community-Led Energy Programs

Advancing Resilience in Atlanta

Building off the groundwork laid by the **Breaking Barriers project**, which was part of NREL’s Solar Energy Innovation Network, Groundswell advanced the community led resilience hub hosted by the **Community Church of God serving West Atlanta** toward a planned construction start in the first quarter of 2024. This project will also be community-owned, leveraging “direct pay.”

This transformative project is adjacent to the **Atlanta University Center**, encompassing Clark Atlanta University, Morehouse College, Morehouse School of Medicine, and Spelman College, which was among he leaders of the **Breaking Barriers** project and has envisioned hosting a resilience hub serving the Atlanta University Center.

3 Days of backup power for critical uses to be provided by the community resilience hub at the Community Church of God in Atlanta



“The establishment of the Vicars Resiliency Center will provide a next-level opportunity to help our community in times of greatest needs. Already the center known for assisting residents on a week-to-week basis, Vicars, and Community Church, will now be the nucleus of the community in times of man-made or natural disasters.”
Jaceey Sebastian
Elder, Chair of Property & Finance
Community Church of God

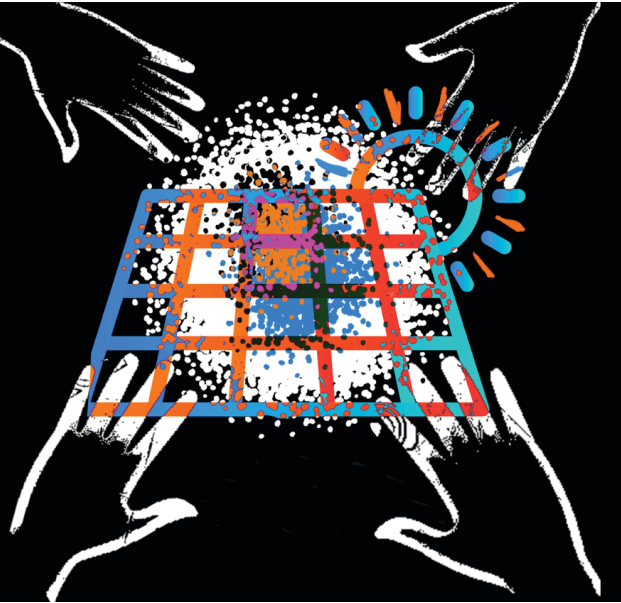
Value Chains Empowering Communities

Bringing Resilience to Illinois

In 2023, Groundswell sought to share our experience building community power with resilience hubs in Maryland and Georgia by identifying new markets to **serve** with similar projects. Over the year, the team began to replicate our **equity**-based approach to community resiliency planning.

Building on our work developing community-serving **Solar for All** projects in Illinois, we expanded our community resilience hub program to **serve** low to moderate-income and under-resourced communities in **Southland Chicago** and **Peoria**, Illinois.

As of November 2023, we have received our first letters of commitment, and the team looks forward to convening **Community Resiliency Councils** in January 2024 to guide the work, including selecting our first resilience hub sites in Illinois.



RESPECT & EQUITY

WE'VE GOT SOUL: SAVE ON UTILITIES LONG TERM



Low-income households spend a disproportionate share of their income on utility bills — measured by “energy burden,” or the percent of gross household income spent on energy costs. Nationwide, energy burdens for low-income households are **three times** as high as those of non-low-income households. Groundswell’s **Save On Utilities Long term** program addresses high energy burdens by connecting households with energy-efficiency improvements that can prevent energy loss and reduce the amount of energy needed to keep a home comfortable. Lowering utility bills frees up money for other critical uses. In fact, nationwide studies on weatherization have found that such improvements can result in **\$1.72 in energy benefits** and **\$2.78 in non-energy benefits** for every every **\$1 invested**.

Value Chains That Empower Communities

Addressing Housing Inequity in Rural Georgia

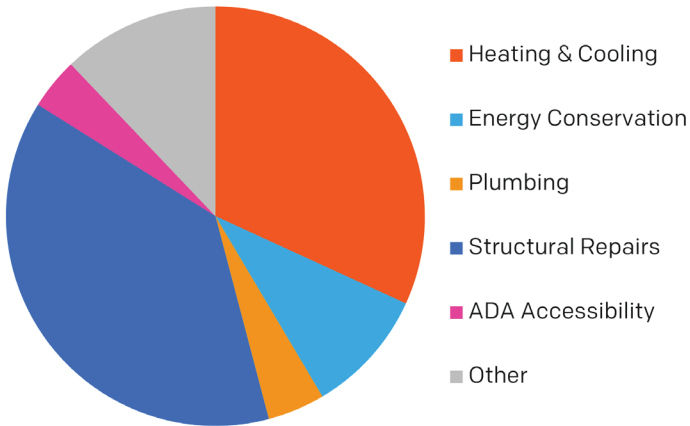


Through the **Save On Utilities Long term (SOUL™)** program, Groundswell addresses housing inequity in Troup County, Georgia, by supporting energy-efficient home upgrades. This year, Groundswell, in partnership with West Georgia Star, launched a home repair program in rural Troup County, deploying **more than \$500,000** into repairs that address health and safety hazards in the homes of low-income residents. During 2023, we assisted **26 families**, addressing critical health and safety hazards, making way for energy efficiency, and supporting generational wealth building by enabling homes to be passed down to future generations. Stacking multiple sources of funding together is how we put energy efficiency to work as a reparative investment in housing equity.

In March, we hosted the **White House Council on Environmental Quality** and the **U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)** in LaGrange, Georgia, to announce the USDA Housing Preservation Grant that made this work possible and to host a **Justice40 Roundtable Discussion** with local residents focused on energy and housing equity.

“I was in need of a lot of things that I knew about and some that I did not know about. This program saved my house and probably my life because I could have been in that kitchen and fallen right through the floor.”
Patricia Cooper, SOUL Home Repairs participant

Groundswell’s Save On Utilities Long term Home Repairs: Share of Funding per Repair Type



Energy Systems That Regenerate Communities

Completing the SOUL Pilot Program in LaGrange, Georgia

Completing the Save On Utilities Long term (SOUL™) pilot program in LaGrange has not only been **transformative** for families in Troup County — it will **serve** as a model for expansion. Energy efficiency upgrades have been completed at **45 homes** to date.

Participants of the SOUL program, receive **up to \$500 a year** in total energy bill savings and **\$9,879 in lifetime energy bill savings**. We look forward to replicating these successes for other rural electric co-ops and municipal utilities.



45

Homes in LaGrange received energy efficiency upgrades through the SOUL program

30%

Average projected electricity bill reduction

A Just and Equitable Transition

Expansion of the SOUL Program in Georgia and Alabama

Energy burden is a widespread issue across rural Georgia and Alabama, and our goal is to bring Save On Utilities Long term (SOUL™) to other electric cooperatives and municipal utilities. In many rural communities, families have a high energy burden because their homes are older and less energy efficient.

Replicating the success of the SOUL program in LaGrange in other rural communities will allow families to preserve their homes for generations to come while reducing energy costs in a more energy-efficient home.

This year, we were awarded the **Buildings Upgrade Prize** (Buildings UP), a U.S. Department of Energy prize designed to build capacity to accelerate

equitable, widespread energy efficiency and electrification upgrades across the country. This prize will help us scale SOUL to **serve** rural communities, and **transform** energy futures using two innovative strategies. The first strategy is stacking multiple sources of funding and financing to meet the holistic needs of energy-burdened low to moderate-income households, so programs are focused on the people — rather than the other way around.

The second strategy involves aggregating program financing across multiple small, rural utilities to achieve scale, reduce costs, and increase participant benefits. We hope to use these innovative strategies and the support from the Buildings UP prize to expand SOUL to **serve** more rural communities.

GETTING THINGS DONE

SOLAR PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

Affordable & Accessible Clean Energy Systems

Developing Affordable Clean Energy In the District



"We are called by Christ to care for one another. Through this solar array, our congregation at Sargent Memorial is able to share God's gifts with our neighbors in the surrounding community."
Rev. Juan Guthrie
Sargent Memorial
Presbyterian Church

In June 2023, Groundswell — in partnership with **Sargent Memorial Presbyterian Church** — celebrated the newest **DC Solar for All** community solar array. Groundswell **served** as the developer for the new **256 kW DC** community solar array, which now provides **73** local, income-qualified households with **up to \$500 a year** in clean energy savings.

When the project was energized, it brought the number of income-qualified DC residents receiving solar electricity at no-cost through DC Solar for All to **more than 6,000 households**.

To date, DC Solar for All community solar subscribers have saved **more than \$6 million**.

256 kW DC capacity of the community solar array at Sargent Memorial Presbyterian Church

Value Chains That Empower Communities

Developing Empowering Solar Projects in Illinois



More than **736 kW DC** of Groundswell solar projects were energized in Illinois in 2023. The largest of those projects was the community solar project at Christ for Everyone Ministries, which began to **serve 69 low to moderate-income households** in Chicago Heights and surrounding communities with solar savings through **Illinois Solar for All**. Groundswell's team worked with the congregation and leadership at **Christ for Everyone Ministries** to ensure low to moderate-income church members would have an opportunity to receive the benefits of electricity bill savings through community solar sign-up events at the church.

Meanwhile, the behind-the-meter solar project at **Hillcrest Baptist Church** supported the non-profit in its ongoing service to the surrounding community by reducing its electricity bills by roughly **65 percent**. Additionally, **the 82 kW DC** behind-the-meter solar installation at **Zakat Foundation of America** — which was energized in December 2022 — began to provide the Illinois-based non-profit with electricity bill savings in January 2023. Groundswell worked with a minority contractor to complete these projects and ensured that each project offered job training opportunities.



BUILDING COMMUNITY POWER

A NOTE FROM THE GROUNDSWELL TEAM

As 2023 comes to a close, we have much to celebrate and be grateful for, and we are energized to have been able to share how Groundswell has embodied our values while driving **transformative** change for the communities we **serve** through this document.

The dedication of our team, support from our partners, and leadership of our CEO, Michelle Moore, have allowed us to build energy **equity** in support of local communities.

Through our **Labs** program, we have established ourselves as external thought leaders by sharing innovative research publications to contribute to the development of successful and replicable clean energy solutions, utilizing the findings outlined by the Accelerating **Low-Income Financing and Transactions** for Solar Access Everywhere project — which has proved to be a vital resource for developing community solar projects.

In **Washington, DC**, Groundswell celebrated the energization of a new community solar array and marked the DC Department of Energy and the Environment's **DC Solar For All** program's landmark of **6,000** low to moderate-income households served through the program. As the subscriber management organization, Groundswell provided subscription data management, communications, and call center support for Solar for All subscribers.

In **Maryland**, we celebrated one of the first nonprofit organizations in the state to own its solar and battery project outright, enabled by the "direct pay" provision of the **Inflation Reduction Act**. The team

also coordinated with the community to host the first **Resilient Communities Maryland Resiliency Council** meeting in Baltimore in November.

In **Illinois**, Groundswell sought to share our experience building community power — with Resilience Hubs in Maryland and Georgia — by identifying new markets to serve with similar projects, and new partnerships were established with a common goal of improving community resilience.

Meanwhile in **Georgia**, Groundswell advanced a community-led resilience hub, which is expected to begin construction in early 2024. Additionally, Groundswell's **Save on Utilities Long term (SOUL™)** showcased the transformative impact of household energy efficiency upgrades in Troup County. Our experience with the SOUL program will serve as a model for expansion.

Finally, we held our very first **Rural Renaissance Roadshow** in **Arkansas**. The Roadshow which brought together rural leaders from around the country to network, strategize, and learn equitable strategies for bringing clean energy and restorative development to rural communities.

Thank you to all our subscribers, partners, funders, and supporters who helped **build community power** in 2023. We look forward to continuing to work together to build clean energy futures in 2024.

Serving with joy,

The Groundswell Team



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2023