

FRONTLINE RESOURCE INSTITUTE

2024-2029 STRATEGIC PLAN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Frontline Resource
Institute

A LETTER FROM FRI'S CONCEPTUAL COMMITTEE

INTRODUCTION

The Frontline Resource Institute (FRI, pronounced “free”) supports frontline communities working to advance environmental and climate justice. Over the past eighteen months, we—the members of the Conceptual Committee—have come together to design, support, and guide FRI’s development and strategy from 2024 to 2029.

The Conceptual Committee is a radical concept—a meaningful partnership between a mainstream environmental organization and frontline activists and advocates. Together, with support from Environmental Defense Fund’s Justice and Equity team and consultants from Metropolitan Group, the Conceptual Committee guided the priorities and strategy for this new institute. We are each so different, yet we have the same direction and purpose: to support frontline advocates as indispensable movement builders and changemakers for communities. As committee members, we brought our collective expertise and experience to position FRI as a valuable resource for frontline communities, and also a thoughtful collaborator within the broader environmental and climate justice movement that many of us formed.



“THE CONCEPTUAL COMMITTEE IS A RADICAL CONCEPT—A MEANINGFUL PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN A MAINSTREAM ENVIRONMENTAL ORGANIZATION AND FRONTLINE ACTIVISTS AND ADVOCATES.”

THE POWER OF FRONTLINE ADVOCATES

FRI centers frontline voices. We recognize the skill and expertise of frontline advocates and Indigenous Peoples and organizations as powerful drivers of environmental solutions. Those on the frontline have the knowledge, expertise, and lived experience to lead. We know that alignment with environmental and climate justice principles and practice is how we must do all environmental work. FRI shifts power so that those who have been overlooked by mainstream environmentalism are the decision-makers. For decades, frontline advocates have been accomplishing work at the scale that matters—for families, neighbors, communities, and ecosystems. FRI will continually ask ourselves: “How do we think bigger so that frontline advocates can have a deeper and broader impact?”

THE MOMENT IN TIME

We created FRI during a momentous time shaped by the global COVID-19 pandemic, which disproportionately harmed and devastated the lives of our family members, friends, children, and colleagues living in frontline communities. This time has also witnessed unprecedented funding and resources for environmental justice from the United States federal government and renewed focus and attention from philanthropy. The climate crisis is focusing the attention of nations on the transition to renewable and non-extractive systems. And yet, there is frustration with global and macro policies that overlook impacts to local communities and places dealing with threats to health and well-being, many of them caused by a legacy of environmental injustice and underinvestment. Even as frontline advocates are being resourced, others are fighting court decisions that disenfranchise their communities and Tribal nations. Other leaders are being killed for their advocacy work.

“
OUR STRATEGIC GOALS
FOCUS ON MOVEMENT
BUILDING, SHARED
LEARNING, TECHNICAL
ASSISTANCE, AND FUNDING
AND DEVELOPMENT.
”



Image courtesy of Chantel Comardelle

OUR STRATEGY

Our strategic goals focus on **Movement Building, Shared Learning, Technical Assistance, and Funding and Development**. We designed FRI to be grounded in principled relationships and authentic collaborations, preserving the self-determination and agency of frontline advocates, organizations, and communities, as well as the sovereignty of Tribal nations. FRI also emphasizes systems-level solutions at the intersection of the environmental, human rights, racial, economic, and social justice movements.

Although our strategic plan covers five years, FRI will provide services to support frontline advocates in their ongoing endeavors for environmental and climate justice and community well-being. As a new organization, FRI's strategy also focuses on ensuring that we have **sustained funding** and **collaborative governance** in place to support frontline communities over the long term.

THE FUTURE

We are proud to have created a dedicated organization that in its short existence has already delivered resources and technical assistance for frontline groups. As political, economic, environmental, and technological changes accelerate, we won't slow down. FRI will continue to learn and grow as an authentic, transformational, transparent, and trusted resource, building power for and with frontline voices.



“
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”

IN COMMUNITY, THE FRI CONCEPTUAL COMMITTEE

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BACKGROUND

INTRODUCTION

The **Frontline Resource Institute** was founded in 2021 to provide resources to frontline advocates and organizations. We seek to benefit communities that experience and struggle against the first and worst impacts of environmental harms and climate change. Guided by our Conceptual Committee of frontline leaders, we support just, equitable, and community-centered environmental and climate justice movements.

CENTERING LEADERSHIP OF FRONTLINE ADVOCATES

FRI positions frontline advocates as leaders for three reasons.

FIRST, the people closest to the problems are closest to the solutions. Frontline advocates represent communities with extraordinary strengths, talents, and expertise. Frontline leaders have advanced environmental and climate solutions that improve health and well-being on the local, national, and global scale.

SECOND, collective action by frontline groups is essential. Collaboration and partnerships amplify best practices, reinforce values of equity and justice, and expand opportunities for progress. This is why movement building is fundamental to FRI's mission.

FINALLY, frontline communities include millions of individuals in the United States and around the globe living in fragile circumstances. Frontline advocates work to help their communities not just survive but thrive. Frontline voices and leadership catalyze transformation to uplift human potential and build community.



MISSION, VISION, AND FOCUS AREAS

OUR MISSION AND VISION

Over the past two years, FRI has made substantial contributions that amplify the power of frontline advocates. Our first strategic plan sets a five-year course from 2024 to 2029 to further our mission and achieve our vision:

MISSION STATEMENT

FRI provides the current and next generation of frontline advocates with the knowledge, technical assistance, funding access, and capacity-building support to make environmental and climate justice a reality for all.

VISION STATEMENT

We envision a just, sustainable, and joyful future where frontline advocates are leaders, delivering environmental and climate justice for all.

OUR FOCUS AREAS

Our strategic plan declares goals in four focus areas: **Movement Building**, **Shared Learning**, **Technical Assistance**, and **Funding Access and Development**. As a new organization, we also focus on two areas to build our financial sustainability and organizational culture: **FRI Funding and Development** and **FRI Governance**.

By following our vision and fulfilling our purpose and potential, within five years: FRI will be established as a well-resourced and well-trusted entity that builds alliances and provides technical and capacity-building support, focused on strengthening frontline advocates and the broader environmental and climate justice movements.



OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Our strategy encompasses six areas and goals, validated by a needs assessment of 13 grantees and more than 200 organizations.

	FOCUS AREA	STRATEGIC GOALS	TRANSFORMATIONAL RESULT
EXTERNAL GOALS	MOVEMENT BUILDING <i>Keeping Frontline Communities Front and Center</i>	Connect people, policies, and practices through collective action to create transformative and durable well-being for frontline communities.	Frontline advocates are leaders of a strong, transformative, and victorious environmental and climate justice movement.
	SHARED LEARNING <i>Channeling Collective Wisdom</i>	Create opportunities for frontline advocates to learn alongside each other to amplify shared knowledge and cooperative action for environmental and climate justice.	Frontline advocates have increased knowledge, abilities, and skills to advance environmental and climate justice. Our work will nurture and channel the collective wisdom and consciousness of the environmental and climate justice movement.
	TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE <i>Building Frontline Capacity Through Knowledge</i>	Expand access to technical assistance, organizational and administrative capacity building, legal, and scientific support for frontline advocates.	Beneficiaries have increased capacities and capabilities to achieve environmental and climate justice in their communities, as well as at the state, regional, national, and international levels.
	FUNDING ACCESS AND DEVELOPMENT <i>Building Frontline Capacity Through Resources</i>	Increase access to resource development and funding opportunities for frontline advocates.	Frontline advocates have the necessary resources to build a more just, equitable, and sustainable future.
INTERNAL GOALS	FRI GOVERNANCE <i>Strengthening FRI as a Participatory Organization</i>	Develop an effective governance framework to move FRI toward becoming an independent nonprofit organization.	FRI becomes a freestanding institute that is valued and trusted by frontline advocates and the environmental and climate justice movement.
	FRI DEVELOPMENT <i>Endowing FRI to Provide Long-Term Benefits</i>	Secure durable and sustained funding and resources for FRI.	Frontline advocates rely on support from FRI over the long term.