

FRONTLINE RESOURCE INSTITUTE 2025 IMPACT REPORT



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On the Cover: 2025 Street Works Earth participants engage with “Mean. Equity.” by Anjali Deshmukh and Ernest Verrett.

FRI and EDF staff at Street Works Earth. Photo by Felix Masi.

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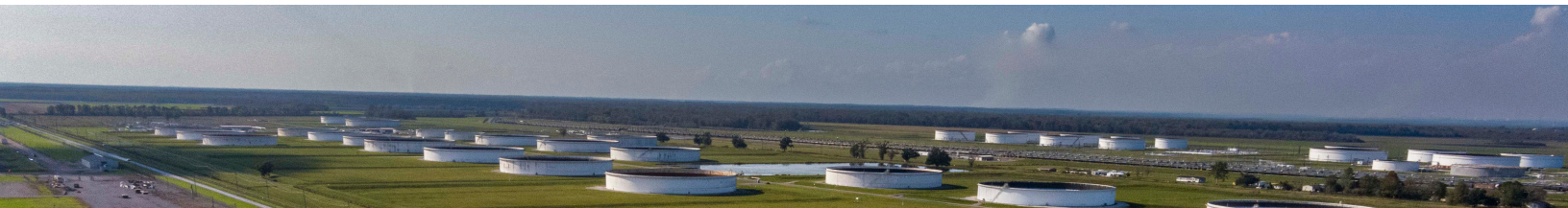
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A LETTER FROM FRI'S ACTING DIRECTOR

As a child, my grandmother often reminded me that what did not kill me would make me stronger. Last year, just hours after being sworn in, President Trump and his Administration attempted to systematically dismantle decades of environmental and climate justice progress. One of their first, and most devastating, actions was revoking Executive Order 12898, Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations, along with all related directives, and rescinding billions in congressionally appropriated funds intended for frontline communities.



While the speed and precision of these actions were jarring, one year later I can attest that my grandmother was right: the environmental and climate justice movement remains stronger than ever. Yes, every community has fewer environmental protections, and frontline organizations have received only a fraction of the federal funding they were awarded. Yet what endures is our collective strength, a strength that transcends any single political moment and stretches across borders and nations around the world. That strength has carried us through this year.

In 2025, I saw that strength firsthand as I met with visionary leaders from Melbourne, Australia, to New Orleans' Lower Ninth Ward. These leaders represented every age, race, gender, and lived experience imaginable. Despite the political upheaval around them, each carried a steadfast determination to keep moving, because the stakes are simply too high to stand still. Individually and collectively, they are building a just, sustainable, and joyful future where frontline advocates lead the way in delivering environmental and climate justice for all.

At the Frontline Resource Institute (FRI), we exist to serve these leaders and the communities they represent. We amplify the priority needs of community-based organizations, shift decision-making power to frontline advocates, and convene leaders to inspire, nourish, and share wisdom with one another. This year, we supported hundreds of frontline leaders across the globe, with an intentional focus on shifting power to youth, because they are future stewards of the Earth.

Research has long shown that solutions centered on those most impacted lead to more durable, popular, and effective outcomes, even in contentious political settings. This truth underscores our work: only by following the knowledge, expertise, and lived experience of frontline advocates can we drive change that lasts at the scale the climate crisis demands. The highlights you'll see in this 2025 Impact Report demonstrate the power of frontline leadership in action and remind us that we are part of a global community bound by unrelenting determination to create healthy, thriving communities for every person.

AND THAT DETERMINATION REMINDS ME, ONCE AGAIN, THAT MY GRANDMOTHER WAS RIGHT: WE ARE STILL HERE, AND WE ARE STRONGER THAN EVER.

Margot Brown

Margot Brown, Acting Director of FRI
SVP of Justice and Equity at EDF

RESOURCING FRONTLINE COMMUNITIES

GRANT TRAINING PROGRAM RAISES \$9.5M FOR FISHING COMMUNITIES FACING CLIMATE CHALLENGES

FRI and our partner Writing for Green provided a comprehensive grant writing training and coaching program that helped ten fishing and coastal community-based organizations from Alaska to the Gulf of Mexico raise \$9.5 million to address climate vulnerabilities threatening their livelihoods. This year we are expanding the grant training to help communities losing federal support to diversify their funding through social enterprises and other approaches.

“THIS TRAINING GIVES ME HOPE FOR THE FUTURE OF MY ORGANIZATION, THAT I CAN HELP US SECURE FUNDING TO STAY AFLOAT DURING A CRISIS.”

**GRANT TRAINING ATTENDEE
AK BERING SEA CRABBERS**

FLOOD-VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES CO-CREATE ROADMAPS FOR RESILIENCE

FRI and our consulting partner Mike Burns of the Community & College Partnership Program worked with communities in Louisiana and North Carolina to develop roadmaps for adapting to devastating floods that jeopardize their ability to stay in place. We developed the roadmaps with Nicholls State University in Louisiana and the University of North Carolina at Wilmington, with additional technical partners including Louisiana State University, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Southeast Regional Office, the American Geophysical Union (AGU), and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. FRI is now working with communities to implement aspects of the roadmaps and to develop a template roadmap that can support similarly vulnerable communities in the United States and beyond.

FRONTLINE LEADERS GET SUPPORT FOR STORIES THAT DRIVE CHANGE

Leaders from some of the nation’s most climate vulnerable communities—from Minnesota to El Paso—came together in fall 2025 to gain tools for telling powerful stories that accelerate environmental results. Over two days in October, FRI grantees gathered in New Orleans to learn from communications experts and one another about how to share their lived experiences with specific audiences, while owning and controlling their narratives. Each organization received a \$50,000 grant and technical assistance from FRI to develop and share stories over the next year aimed at securing results for their communities. Research, including FRI’s own work on storytelling and narrative sovereignty, shows that storytelling is central to driving institutional and legislative change.

“THESE SPACES ARE POWERFUL BECAUSE THEY CREATE ROOM FOR COLLECTIVE HEALING, LEARNING, AND SOLIDARITY....CONVENINGS LIKE THIS ARE NOT ONLY NECESSARY—THEY ARE ESSENTIAL FOR SUSTAINING ORGANIZERS AND MOVEMENTS.”

**CRISTINA GUTIERREZ
CALIFORNIANS FOR PESTICIDE
REFORM, 2025 FRI GRANTEE**



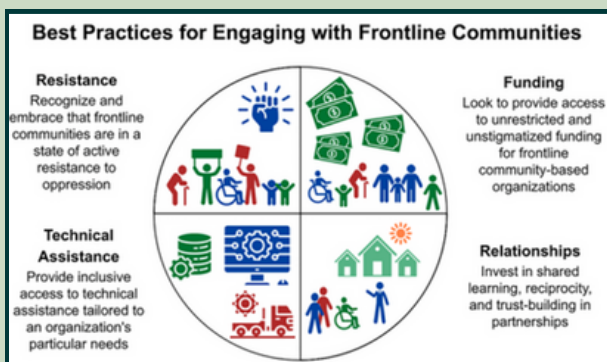
Grantee convening in New Orleans.

NEW RESEARCH SUPPORTS FRONTLINE PRIORITIES

STUDY HIGHLIGHTS FOUR THINGS FRONTLINE ORGANIZATIONS NEED

A peer-reviewed study by KTLN Consulting, FRI's Dr. Margot Brown, Rachel Marston, and our collaborators is the most comprehensive we know of detailing the critical needs of U.S. communities on the frontlines of the climate crisis. It finds frontline communities seek four things when engaging with large environmental organizations, and with funders:

1. AN UNDERSTANDING OF BEING FRONTLINE AS A STATE OF ACTIVE RESISTANCE.
2. UNRESTRICTED AND DESTIGMATIZED FUNDING.
3. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE.
4. RECIPROCAL RELATIONSHIPS BASED ON EQUITY, RESPECT, AND SHARED LEARNING.



From Marston et al., 2025

The paper was selected for an editor's highlight by the AGU's Eos.org, an honor bestowed on only 2% of papers out of AGU's 24 journals, and has had 1,300 downloads in the four months since its publication. The paper was informed by the perspectives of 250 frontline organizations in FRI's network, engaged through surveys, interviews, and text analysis.

READ THE PAPER HERE! 

"...HOW DO WE PLACE THE BURDEN NOT SO MUCH ON FRONTLINE COMMUNITIES AND PROVING THAT THESE [ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE] ISSUES ARE OF CONCERN, BUT ACTUALLY HAVING THE DATA TO SHOW THAT NOT ONLY IS IT A CONCERN, BUT THE POLICY NEEDS TO UNDERSTAND AND SUPPORT BETTER DECISION MAKING..."

DR. ERICA HOLLOMAN-HILL
FRI CONCEPTUAL COMMITTEE
AYIKA SOLUTIONS

GUIDE PROVIDES FRONTLINE STORYTELLING BEST PRACTICES

FRI's new guide, "Best Practices for Frontline Narrative and Storytelling Sovereignty," highlights best practices for frontline organizations to create and deploy narratives that drive change on their terms. It also contains recommendations for external collaborators to best support frontline storytellers in creating and controlling their own narratives. Created in collaboration with KTLN Consulting and based on interviews with representatives from frontline community-based organizations and storytellers, the guide is intended to be adapted to best fit organizations' needs while promoting beneficial storytelling norms.

 READ THE GUIDE HERE!



FRI and KTLN Consulting presenting at AGU2025.

PUTTING PEOPLE AT THE CENTER OF CLIMATE ACTION

YOUTH LEADERS GAIN SUPPORT FOR SUSTAINING CLIMATE ADVOCACY

FRI partnered with the Youth Climate Collaborative to host two events at DC Climate Week that brought together more than 80 youth leaders from around the world. For the first event we hosted about 40 participants, majority young women, for a collective discussion about climate anxiety that left attendees feeling less isolated and provided them self-care strategies to cope with climate advocacy struggles.



D.C. Climate Week. Photo by Malek Naz Freidouni.

"I FOUND SOLACE IN COMMUNITY DURING OUR CLIMATE COURAGE EVENT, BY HEARING HOW OTHERS HAVE ALSO BEEN FEELING AND LEARNING FROM THE SELF-CARE AND COMMUNITY CARE STRATEGIES THAT HAVE BEEN HELPING THEM HEAL. I LEFT OUR GATHERING FEELING MORE RESILIENT AND HOPEFUL AGAIN."

POOJA TILVAVALA
FOUNDER, YOUTH CLIMATE
COLLABORATIVE

FRONTLINE STORIES LIGHT THE WAY TO SOLUTIONS

At New York City Climate Week, FRI and Counterstream Media cohosted a Reframing Resistance Story Salon that brought to a packed house a series of short films exposing environmental and climate injustices, from toxic prisons to the nation's first federally funded Indigenous climate refugees—highlighting how expertise from the frontlines shows the way forward.

"IT'S SO IMPORTANT THAT FOLKS WHO ARE WORKING IN ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE AND CLIMATE JUSTICE ORGANIZATIONS HEAR OUR STORIES, BECAUSE WE LIVE IT EVERY DAY..." -

CHANTEL COMARDELLE
FRI CONCEPTUAL COMMITTEE
JEAN CHARLES CHOCTAW NATION

In November, "A People's Climate" podcast from The Nation and Counterstream Media featured the story salon. The podcast, which is in the top 5% of ALL streaming podcasts (yes, of over 3.5 million podcasts out there!), contains vivid testimony to inspire change.



NYC Climate Week Story Salon. Photo by Jeff Weiner.

 **LISTEN TO THE PODCAST HERE!**

ART CONNECTS PEOPLE TO ACTION

The climate-arts festival Street Works Earth drew nearly 100 artists and activists and thousands of visitors to Jackson Heights, Queens, to explore creative climate solutions, bringing NYC Climate Week out of Manhattan and into one of the most diverse neighborhoods on Earth. Research shows that collaboration between artists and scientists makes data more accessible to diverse audiences and can foster collective action to counter environmental challenges.



Street Works Earth 2025. Photo by Felix Masi.

OUR AIMS FOR 2026

As 2026 gets underway, we know we will face the harsh realities of sustained disinvestment in frontline communities even as the climate crisis accelerates. We will need to stand together more strongly than ever, supporting one another and finding joy and determination in community. Our priorities for the year include:

- Piloting a technical assistance program to provide scientific, legal, communications, and other support from EDF to community-based organizations.
- Conducting research based on community-identified needs, including work with KTLN Consulting to support communities in understanding and engaging with AI technologies.
- Supporting frontline leaders as they create and amplify stories that drive change through grants and trainings, including the launch of a new Water Justice Fund that supports initiatives of EDF partners in water scarce communities.
- Bringing community voices to the center of global climate conversations, amplifying frontline leadership, knowledge, and expertise at venues like New York City and DC Climate Week.

To learn more and stay connected, please visit [our website](#).