2019 IMPACT REPORT
Puget Sound Sage combines research, innovative public policy and organizing to ensure all people have an affordable place to live, a good job, a clean environment, and access to public transportation.

What We Do

BUILD COMMUNITY POWER

Our cross-sector approach brings together community, faith, labor, environmental and public sector partners who often have never worked together before. Through coalition organizing, we are able to build collective power that we wouldn't have individually and use that power to create systemic change. Only through long-term relationship building across sectors can we transform the systems throughout our region and build more power for our communities.

SHAPE THE DEBATE

By unapologetically centering racial justice and equity in all of our work, we have moved numerous groundbreaking policies on affordable housing, labor standards, transit access, and climate justice. Elected officials and government agencies view Puget Sound Sage as a go-to resource for policy expertise, seeking our organization’s framing and feedback when it comes to moving equitable policies grounded in community priorities.

FORWARD POLICY SOLUTIONS

We generate community-based participatory research, which centers community needs from the start and identifies policy solutions from those most impacted. We believe communities can prosper in place when we center the liberation of all people, and together work to address the root causes, not just the symptoms, of the issues through transformative policy solutions.

GROW THE MOVEMENT

We value the solutions of communities most impacted and work to create a collaborative process for community voices to be centered by resourcing community-based organizations and leaders with shared learning opportunities, leadership development, cohort stipends, curriculum development, and technical assistance so communities have the tools they need to shape the key policy decisions impacting their neighborhoods.
2019 by the numbers:

- 15 full time staff
- 7 board members
- 37 community leaders trained
- 35 CLI alumni currently serving on boards and commissions
- 14 community listening sessions hosted
- 28 SouthCORE members
- 383 surveys administered

South Communities Organizing for Racial & Regional Equity represent a growing multi-racial coalition of community and member-based organizations in the Southeast Seattle area.
Our Programs: Equitable Development

Reimagining development without displacement in the Graham Street neighborhood

In 2031, Sound Transit will open a light rail station on MLK Jr. Way South between the Othello and Columbia City stops, which will be the new Graham Street Station.

Along with the new station will come a hub of new businesses, homes, and infrastructure. However, investments in public infrastructure without adequate planning often lead to gentrification and displacement. People who can afford higher priced homes move to be closer to the light rail, while those who have been rooted in the neighborhood for decades are forced out of their communities into cities and towns with more affordable homes and business spaces, farther from jobs and accessible transit.

In order to form a different outcome, the Graham Street neighborhood gathered to create a shared community vision for their future. Facilitated and resourced by Puget Sound Sage, local leaders, business owners, and institutions that are deeply committed to preserving and growing the Graham Street community launched a visioning process comprised of listening sessions, surveys, and planning sessions, which reached over 2,000 people throughout the course of 2018.

Community members envisioned the Graham Street neighborhood to be:

- a beautiful, supported and stable neighborhood
- a place to find jobs and economic opportunity
- an abundance of multigenerational and multicultural spaces
- a healthy environment that helps people thrive
- have a community-centered mobility that gives safe and simple access to what the community needs

At the beginning of 2019, seven community-based organizations formalized the Graham Street Community Action Team (CAT). This coalition became the steering committee of the Graham Street Vision to build the long-term capacity and infrastructure that will make it a reality.

As their first major step, the Graham Street CAT leaders met with Seattle City Councilmembers to share the story of Graham Street. They urged councilmembers to support Mayor Durkan’s proposed Strategic Investment Fund, but to call for community-driven development and land stewardship for small community-based organizations to be established as one of its main priorities. As a result, community priorities were added to the proposal and the vision for Graham Street was recognized by the local government leaders, an important step in making the vision a reality.

Puget Sound Sage and Graham Street CAT meet monthly to learn together about anti-displacement strategies and how other communities are creating resources for community-owned and community-controlled development. In the coming year, we will continue to build the capacity of Graham Street CAT and develop policy priorities that will bring true community ownership for the neighborhood over the course of the next decade in preparation for the new light rail station.
In December 2019 the Graham Street Community Action Team, along with our CREST participants, took a trip to Portland to meet the MercyCorps NW staff and learn more about their Community Investment Trust.

5 meetings with elected officials to share the Graham Street Story

Small businesses, religious and cultural institutions in the Graham Street neighborhood

Filipino Community Center Youth plan for the scale of development and uses along MLK Jr. Way S.

THE GRAHAM STREET COMMUNITY ACTION TEAM:

- Cham Refugees Community
- Somali Community Services
- Somali Health Board
- Al-Noor Islamic Center
- Co Lam Pagoda
- Debre Mihret Kidus Mikael (St. Michael Ethiopian Church)
- Filipino Community of Seattle
OUR PROGRAMS: EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT

Influencing $20 million in funding for Equitable Development
Including $15 million for land acquisition

South Communities Organizing for Racial & Regional Equity (SouthCORE) represent a growing multi-racial coalition of community and member-based organizations in the Southeast Seattle area.

When the City of Seattle passed legislation implementing a tax on short-term rental properties like Airbnb in 2017, it stated that $5 million from the tax revenue would go towards Seattle’s Equitable Development Initiative (EDI), established to address displacement and fund community-driven development projects in Seattle.

In the summer of 2019, City of Seattle Mayor Durkan proposed a budget which would redirect tax revenue towards general funding, and cut funding to specific initiatives like the EDI. In response, SouthCORE members mobilized. They attended council hearings, provided testimonies, and wrote letters to the Council opposing the proposed budget and affirming the importance of community-led development especially in times of high housing costs and displacement.

Alongside Councilmember Mike O’Brien, SouthCORE members shaped the policy on how the money made from the sale of the Mercer Mega Block should be spent. The mega block is a 2.86 acre string of properties in South Lake Union that was partly left over from the City’s reconfiguration of Mercer Street, which the City sold to a private developer for $143.5 million last September.

SouthCORE members urged the City to prioritize communities of color and fund equitable development projects using the funding.

As a result of SouthCORE and their allies’ advocacy, the $5 million in EDI funding was secured and an additional $15 million from the Mercer Mega Block Sale was allocated for the creation of the EDI acquisition fund. This program will support community organizations get site control for their development projects.

Two of the SouthCORE members - Rainier Beach Action Coalition and Cham Refugees Community - won EDI funding to support their development projects, and will also qualify for and have access to the $15 million land acquisition fund.

Rainier Beach is developing a Food Innovation Center, which will be a multi-purpose facility with a commercial kitchen, food production and training space, and areas...
to provide supportive services and education. They are pursuing a joint venture with Mt Baker Housing Association, which will develop affordable housing on the site. Cham Refugees Community is seeking to build an upgraded 12,000 square-foot community center at their existing location. The facility will expand their programming while increasing the usability for youth, the elderly, and disabled members of the community. 

**SouthCORE Members:**

- African Diaspora of Washington State
- Asian Counseling & Referral Services
- Cham Refugees Community
- East African Community Services
- El Centro de la Raza
- Eritrean Association of Greater Seattle
- Ethiopian Community of Seattle
- Filipino Community of Seattle
- Friends of Little Saigon
- GABRIELA Seattle
- Got Green
- HomeSight
- Horn of Africa Services
- InterIm CDA
- Kandelia
- LGBTQ Allyship
- One America

Puget Sound Sage staffs the coalition and assists with research, policy, and communication.

- Multicultural Community Center Coalition
- Rainier Beach Action Coalition
- Rooted in Rights
- SEIU Local 6
- Somali Community of Seattle
- Somali Health Board
- Tenants Union
- Urban Impact
- UNITE-HERE Local 8
- United Food & Commercial Workers Local 21


O U R  P R O G R A M S :  E Q U I T A B L E  D E V E L O P M E N T

Reshaping who holds the knowledge, power, and tools to build our neighborhoods

We have made significant strides towards a future where people can own land and develop projects by and for their communities through our Community Real Estate Stewardship Training this past year.

Our Community Real Estate Stewardship Training (CREST) is a nine-month learning circle designed to support grassroots organizations led by and for communities of color to pursue community-driven development, land stewardship, and strategies for long term affordability.

The CREST program acknowledges that institutional racism and other systems of oppression have excluded many Black, Indigenous, and people of color from controlling the future of their neighborhoods. In response, 20 leaders from community-based organizations across the region collectively gained the strategies, tools, and relationships necessary to stabilize their communities through community-led development and land stewardship. Community-driven development leverages

The CREST Cohort includes leaders from:

• Africatown Community Land Trust
• Cham Refugees Community
• Colectiva Legal del Pueblo
• Debre Mihret Kidus Church
• Duwamish River Cleanup Coalition
• East African Community Services
• Estelita’s Library
• Global to Local
• Got Green
• Hilltop Urban Gardens
• Ingersoll Gender Center
• Lake City Collective
• Living Well Kent
• Multicultural Community Coalition
• Na’ah Illahee Fund
• Rainier Beach Action Coalition
• Seattle Indian Services Coalition
• Skyway Solutions CDA
• Washington State Coalition of African Community Leaders
• White Center CDA
existing assets and resilience strategies to stabilize the housing, business, and cultural institutions that are essential to a thriving community.

Launched in July 2019, the CREST cohort has met monthly to explore the development process - everything from envisioning their goal to financing their project - all while centering community accountability.

Over nine sessions, the cohort deepened their knowledge of community organizing strategies, models of community land ownership, the development process, financing and fundraising for land development, partnerships, and conflict resolution strategies. In addition, participants have built transformative relationships, both with other participants and with outside experts, to support and guide them throughout their development projects.

One of the participants, Hilltop Urban Gardens, is building the capacity on their Land and Housing Liberation project which will start community land trusts. Another participant, White Center Community Development Association, will redevelop a former County property to build 80+ affordable housing units, a hub for partner organizations to expand their services, and a new home for the Community Development Association which will open in 2023 or 2024. Both will be using the technical knowledge they learned at the CREST sessions to facilitate community engagement and visioning in 2020.

We sat down with Aaron Garcia, a cohort member representing the White Center Community Development Association to share his experience of the CREST program:

How have the CREST sessions helped you in your work? Development for smaller community-based organizations are given very few options for developing affordable housing, so CREST allowed us to see that there are broader opportunities around land stewardship. It also provided a great networking opportunity to meet peers in the same work around our region, be able to ask questions and do it in a way that's not intimidating.

Oftentimes if you’re in a meeting with a big developer or banker, you don’t know what you don’t know and you’re a little bit more reserved. In this space, we are all allowed to bring our different strengths into it and we’re allowed to be vulnerable with our questions. That can be very empowering.

What does land stewardship mean to you? First, it’s recognizing the history of the land that we’re on, and being able to honor that in a way that’s respectful, honest and sincere. Then, making sure that whatever comes of this project that it is truly grounded in both that history but also in the ability to strengthen community. To have it be something that belongs there and will stay there, and not another resource that people can just come and take.
As part of the national 100% Renewable 100% Equitable Cities Project, we conducted a series of listening sessions, surveys, and interviews over the past year to define a just transition.

The need to transition from fossil fuel is increasingly urgent as the effects of climate change become more frequent, severe, and widespread. Our economy is shifting towards renewable energy, which means the entire system around energy - including stakeholders, workers, and communities impacted - is changing rapidly.

Study after study has proven how immensely the fossil fuel industry has profited at the expense of people of color, low-income people and frontline communities both locally and worldwide. The extraction of oil forced indigenous communities in Sudan, who depended on the land for their livelihood, out of their own lands. In Seattle, low-income neighborhoods and communities of color are disproportionately exposed to fossil fuel pollution and toxic air pollution every single day. With this shift to renewable energy comes an opportunity to ensure that the benefits of our energy system are invested back into community.

We have been working in partnership with King County on the 100% Cities project, which centers racial equity in the transition to renewable energy - directing resources and developing processes that foster community-driven solutions in the face of the climate crisis.

Over the past year, we’ve conducted listening sessions...
with youth, elders and community members from Got Green, InterIm CDA WILD, Cham Refugees Community, Duwamish River Clean-up Coalition, and East African Community Services to determine what an equitable transition to renewable energy would take.

With a specific focus on energy, we asked our communities to lay out how energy is embedded in their daily lives, to explain the problems they face and the solutions they envision for the future.

Conversations explicitly centered around energy aren’t as common in our dialogue around climate and the environment. Climate disasters and the extinction of species often take up more media coverage than the technological breakthroughs towards renewable energy. In addition, we found that issues like affordable housing, transit access, and safety were more pressing needs for frontline communities than the concept of energy, which made organizing initially challenging.

However, as we started to frame the discussion around bills and affordability, we discovered how deeply connected our communities are to energy issues. Community members said that in some cases, a third of a household’s income is spent towards energy bills. They also shared traditional practices and cultural knowledge around conserving energy that they have been applying for a long time - such as elders in their home country who use the oil from the fish they catch to light their homes.

The surveys and listening sessions helped shape the way we look at organizing for climate change and reducing carbon emissions. We found out that people care deeply about climate change and carbon pollution, in addition to high energy bills. Climate disaster is more abstract than the expenses we encounter day-to-day, and arguably a more effective way of organizing is around reducing our energy bills and increasing accountability to community. Emerging policy solutions include improving our energy efficiency and advocating for publicly-owned utilities where profits circle back to communities in the form of lower rates, better infrastructure, more jobs, and less pollution. ♦

**383** community members from 7 community-based organizations were surveyed

**81%** survey respondents identified as Black, Indigenous, or People of Color. 37% identify as Black or Indigenous

**30** interviews with community leaders, union leaders, and government partners were conducted

Nearly 50% of our respondents live below 150% of the poverty line ($0-$29,999), indicating a high degree of economic insecurity

In 2020, we will publish the full report of our research, host community report-backs, and bring community leaders and government officials together to create actionable steps toward an equitable future in energy.

Puget Sound Sage’s Climate Justice Team: Debolina Banerjee, Yolanda Matthews, and Katrina Peterson.

Building community power to move major policy decisions at the local and regional level

Some of the boards and commissions CLI alumni are currently serving on:

City
- City of Seattle Energy Equity
- Commission on Immigrants and Refugees Affairs of Tacoma
- Environmental Justice Committee for City of Seattle
- Federal Way Diversity Commission
- Move Seattle Levy Oversight Committee
- Seattle Bicycle Advisory Board
- Seattle Community Technology Advisory Board
- Seattle Planning Commission
- Seattle Women’s Commission

County
- King County Accountable Communities of Health
- King County Board of Ethics
- King County Climate & Equity Community Task Force
- King County Conservation Future Citizen Oversight Committee
- King County Housing Authority Board
- King County Transportation Access Equity Cabinet

State
- Washington State Environmental Justice Task Force
- Washington Women In Need

Fifty-one fellows have graduated from Puget Sound Sage’s Community Leadership Institute since its launch in the fall of 2015.

Our Community Leadership Institute is a fellowship program that supports, trains and places emerging leaders from low-income communities and communities of color to sit on local boards and commissions.

The six-month fellowship trains emerging leaders in issues such as housing, land use, transit, climate, and economic development. Graduates learn the nuts and bolts of local government processes, such as municipal budgeting, parliamentary procedures, and lawmaking, as well as advocacy, storytelling, and communication skills. After graduation, the fellows apply for and are placed on strategic boards, commissions, and task forces at the city, county, and state level.

51 program graduates since 2015
69% of graduates currently serve on boards and commissions
17 new fellows joined the CLI program in the fall of 2019
Jennell Hicks, an alumni of the 2018-19 CLI Cohort, currently serves on the Regional Executive Committee and Executive Board for PROTEC17 (Professional & Technical Employees Local 17 union), which represents almost 9,000 members across Washington and Oregon.

“The training really helped me understand the power of boards, mainly the difference between boards that only advise and those that make decisions. I saw the opportunity to use my certificate with King County in Equity and Social Justice to ensure boards and commissions receive equity and social justice training so that their policy decision-making reflects and represents the diverse community.”

Taylor Tibbs currently manages a leadership fellowship through UW Tacoma. She expressed how the CLI has not only impacted her leadership career but also stands out among all other programs, “In the CLI, I found a curriculum designed for people of color, connected to local leaders and grounded in a social justice lens that made me feel like my voice and my experience had a place at the table.”

“After this fellowship, I feel more equipped to talk with elected officials, to talk with and work with people from different sectors, to analyze policy—and not just react to it. The CLI took my understanding of self and leadership, and paired it with this cohort, and a mentor to help me navigate the challenges ahead, preparing me to be the voice for the communities I love.”

Tiffany Chan graduated in March 2018. She currently serves on King County’s Conservation Futures Citizen Oversight Committee:

“Two months after the Community Leadership Institute program ended, I learned of the King County Conservation Futures program whose committee gives recommendations on more than $20 million/year for 40 conservation projects across the county. I have worked in environmental organizations and I have never heard about these institutions and resources being distributed to my community, to my home.”

“Because of Puget Sound Sage and the skills I learned from the CLI Program, I applied and was accepted to the King County Conservation Futures Advisory Committee. I stay committed and motivated because of the community I have here in Seattle that’s constantly fighting for equitable policies that surround and impact our everyday lives.”

Tiffany Chan graduated in March 2018. She currently serves on King County’s Conservation Futures Citizen Oversight Committee:
None of us can do this alone.

As we close 2019, Puget Sound Sage is proud to have joined our coalition partners on the frontlines in their fights for higher wages, equitable development, and corporate accountability.

Our Programs: Coalition Building

This year we stood in solidarity with members of UFCW 21, UFCW 367, and Teamsters 38 as they bargained for and ratified a historic new contract for 30,000 grocery workers across the Puget Sound region.

Along with La Resistencia and Mijente, we told Amazon Web Services and Palantir to cut ties with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) which relies on their technology to target and detain immigrants.

We supported the equitable development work of InterIm CDA in opposing the proposed demolition of the historic Bush Garden building, and in its place the construction of a new luxury 17-story apartment building right in the middle of the International District.

When Delta proposed introducing facial recognition technology at SeaTac Airport, we promptly organized a public response to let the Port Seattle Commission know the dangers of using unregulated biometrics technology at our Port, centering the voices of those most impacted, especially people of color, immigrants, religious minorities and others vulnerable to data privacy and civil liberties violations.

In order to create the future we envision where all people live, work, and play in joyful and just communities, we need to build power together. We will continue to demand corporate transparency and accountability, show up for partners and coalitions, and ensure that the voices of communities of color are represented and heard.
2018 Financials

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

ASSETS

Current Assets
- Cash $984,403
- Accounts receivable 15,791
- Contributions and grants receivable 228,504
- Prepaid expenses 10,140

Total Current Assets 1,238,338

Property and Equipment
- Furnitures, fixtures and equipment 7,173
- Less accumulated depreciation (5,336)

Property and equipment - net 1,837

Other Assets
- Deposits 3,300

TOTAL ASSETS 1,243,975

LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS

Current Liabilities
- Accounts Payable $51,337
- Accrued wages 40,543
- Accrued compensated absenses 33,467
- Accrued taxes and withholding 6,449

Total Current Liabilities 131,796

Net Assets
- Without donor restrictions 373,777
- With donor restrictions 738,402

Total Net Assets 1,112,179

TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS 1,243,975

The information presented above is drawn from Puget Sound Sage’s Financial Statements for the year ended December 31, 2018, audited by Minar Northey. They will be conducting a financial audit for 2019 in the summer of 2020.