

Merrimack Valley Project (MVP)

FOUNDED: 1989

CURRENT ORGANIZATION BUDGET: \$500,000

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Merrimack Valley Project

For 35+ years, Merrimack Valley Project (MVP) has organized working-class and immigrant communities to build collective power and shape the policies and systems that govern life across the Merrimack Valley.

Rooted in Lawrence, Lowell, and Haverhill, MVP works regionally with neighboring cities and towns. It brings together 40+ congregations, labor unions, and neighborhood organizations and engages thousands of resident leaders across race, age, language, and faith. Across the region, those most affected by decisions about housing, schools, and neighborhoods are excluded from where those decisions are made. MVP exists to change that.

Each year, through leadership development, MVP trains 200+ grassroots leaders and supports 8+ active community teams that conduct thousands of one-on-one conversations that drive campaigns advancing housing justice, immigrant justice, healthcare access and community well-being, civic engagement, and youth leadership.

Rather than providing direct services, MVP builds durable organizing infrastructure that has secured local and state policy wins—from advancing immigrant driver’s license legislation to modernizing affordable housing policy—while expanding civic participation. Affiliation with the Massachusetts Communities Action Network (MCAN) and Faith in Action strengthens MVP’s work through training, partnerships, and organizing infrastructure.

Two-Year Goals

- **Build Community Power**
Increase leadership training from 200 to 400 grassroots leaders annually and grow active congregational, labor, and community teams from 8 to 12
- **Expand Regional Infrastructure**
Launch three permanent organizing hubs in Lawrence, Lowell, and Haverhill
- **Strengthen Organizational Capacity**
Grow staff from 2.5 to 5.5 FTE and double community-wide leadership trainings for staff and leaders

Investment Opportunity

MVP is scaling at a moment of urgent need and proven momentum. MVP seeks an investment of \$1.1 million to accelerate leadership training, solidify regional organizing infrastructure, and strengthen campaigns advancing housing stability, immigrant protections, healthcare access, economic justice, and civic empowerment. Additionally, this investment will strengthen community-led systems change across the Merrimack Valley.

Ways to Invest

- **\$260K:** Support four staff to recruit, train, and organize **150+ community leaders** and sustain MVP’s regional organizing infrastructure
- **\$150K:** Launch the **Rising Youth** organizing program, training and supporting high school and college-aged leaders
- **\$50K:** Expand local and regional leadership training, national organizing cohorts, and board and staff development
- **In-kind support:** Provide expertise in fundraising, board development, communications, interpretation services, or provide meeting space for trainings and community events

Merrimack Valley Project's Model



Building Community Power Through Organizing

Merrimack Valley Project advances justice through an inclusive grassroots organizing model that translates community leadership into systems-level change. The model integrates relationship-building, leadership development, resident-led initiatives, and collective action to drive durable outcomes across issue areas.

The work begins with deep listening and base-building. MVP organizers and core leaders conduct thousands of one-on-one conversations each year within congregations, labor unions, and neighborhood organizations to pinpoint shared concerns and identify emerging leaders. Through this process—led by organizers and strengthened through peer relationships—cross-racial, intergenerational teams are formed to anchor MVP's regional work.

MVP develops community leaders through a structured cycle of trainings, organizing meetings, and public action. Workshops are offered regularly—typically monthly, sometimes twice a month—building skills in power analysis, facilitation, public narrative, and campaign strategy.

Through this process, renters, workers, immigrants, youth, and faith leaders step into visible roles, set priorities, guide campaigns, and mobilize thousands of residents each year.

MVP's organizing model follows a cycle of listening, training, research, action, and evaluation. Past and current initiatives include:

Immigrant Justice: Multilingual Know Your Rights and Family Preparedness trainings; rapid response with the Merrimack Valley Interfaith Sanctuary Network; support for families impacted by deportation; and immigrant-led advocacy for rental assistance, tenant protections, and statewide policy change.



Housing Justice: Resident-led campaigns advancing rent stabilization, tenant protections, inclusionary zoning, and affordable housing policies, including leadership in the statewide Keep Massachusetts Home coalition that mobilized 124,000+ petition signatures toward a 2026 ballot initiative.

Healthcare Access & Community Well-Being: Community organizing to protect access to care and advance health equity, including campaigns that prevented the closure of two Holy Family Hospital campuses and safeguarded 1,600+ healthcare jobs.

Voter Engagement: Year-round, nonpartisan, multilingual voter outreach and leadership development reaching 5,000+ voters in low-turnout communities through canvassing, phone banking, and civic education.

In 2026, MVP will launch the Rising Youth organizing program, a new leadership development program for young people in Lawrence and Lowell. The program will equip participants with skills in community organizing and civic engagement.

Together, these efforts prioritize leadership enabling MVP to mobilize quickly, negotiate effectively, and advance long-term change across the Merrimack Valley.

“MVP is home for Latinx leaders like me. We face many issues impacting our neighborhoods, but here we find the resilience to stand up and win together.”

— Fermin, MVP Immigration Team Leader

Leadership & Governance

Merrimack Valley Project is led by Executive Director Julio Mejía, whose path from youth organizer to executive leadership reflects MVP’s core belief that those closest to injustice should shape the solutions. Julio began organizing as a young leader in the Merrimack Valley and has grown alongside MVP, bringing deep community trust, strategic clarity, and lived experience to the role. As a grassroots community group, MVP is supported by a seven-member Board of Directors drawn from congregations, labor, and community organizations across the region, providing governance, accountability, and stewardship aligned with MVP’s mission and values.

Financial Stability

MVP has doubled its operating budget over the past two years and is implementing a diversified resource development strategy. Foundation grants remain the primary revenue source, complemented by individual giving, special events, and emerging corporate partnerships. Financial sustainability is strengthened through deep partnerships that align resources with organizing capacity and long-term movement infrastructure.

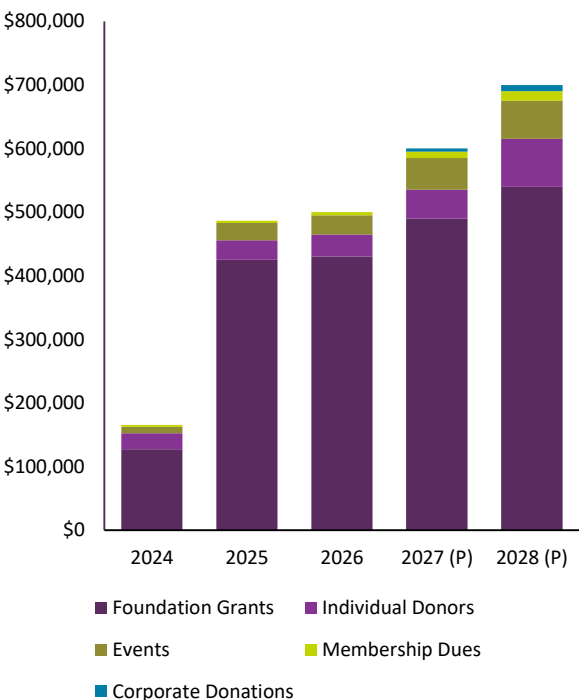
KEY INVESTORS

- Bay State Progress
- The Boston Foundation
- Episcopal City Mission
- Essex County Community Foundation
- Hyams Foundation
- Point32 Health Foundation
- Theodore Edson Parker Foundation

KEY PARTNERS

- Delivering on Equity Collective
- Faith in Action Network
- Homes for All Massachusetts
- LUCE Immigrant Justice Network of MA
- Massachusetts Communities Action Network
- Massachusetts Voter Table
- Resource Organizing Project
- UTEC

Revenue by Source





Success Story

PROTECTING ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE

In 2024, MVP played a central role in preventing the closure of two Holy Family Hospital campuses in Haverhill and Methuen—facilities serving thousands of working-class and immigrant families. Through coordinated organizing with faith leaders, union members, and residents, MVP mobilized public actions, engaged elected officials, and elevated community voices demanding continued access to care. The campaign helped protect more than **1,600 healthcare jobs** and preserved essential hospital services in a region already facing health disparities. The effort demonstrated the power of organized communities to safeguard critical institutions and advance health equity through collective action.

Program Performance and Organizational Health

Below is a summary of the key measures that MVP will track to demonstrate progress, create internal accountability, incorporate lessons learned, and adjust strategy as necessary.

	FY 2026	FY 2027 (P)	FY 2028 (P)
Program Performance			
# of trainings offered	15	20	30
# of community leaders trained	200	300	400
# of voters contacted	7,000	9,000	12,000
# of public events/actions	10	15	20
# of institutional (labor, congregations, etc.) members to expand reach	35	40	50
Organizational Health/Capacity-Building			
Full- and part-time staff	2.5	4	5.5
Board members	7	9	11
Launch the Regional Advisory Team (# of members engaged)	n/a	7	10
Total Revenue	\$500,000	\$600,000	\$700,000

Social Impact

MVP is building durable civic and political power in three gateway cities where immigrant and working-class residents have long been excluded from decision-making. By developing local leaders, advancing equitable housing and healthcare access outcomes, and strengthening civic participation, MVP is helping communities influence public systems, protect essential institutions, and shape a more just Merrimack Valley. Below is a summary of the social impact that MVP aims to have over the next two years.

Indicator	Current Numbers	2028
# of congregational/organization teams leading campaigns	8	12
# of active leaders leading on teams or campaigns	65	125
# of relationship conversations to deepen engagement and action	500	2,000
# of youth leaders who complete training and engage in community campaigns	0	40