

2024 Annual Meeting Recap - Project Redwood

October 28, 2024

Project Redwood 2024 Annual Meeting New York City, October 4 – 6



Sixty-six Project Redwood members, grantees and guests attended the 2024 Annual Meeting in New York City. The attendees represented 17 GSB classes and 8 organizations other than Project Redwood. A special thanks goes to Patty Mintz and Ken Inadomi for facilitating meeting spaces. Patty arranged access to the Mintz Law headquarters in midtown Manhattan on Saturday, and Ken arranged for Sunday's morning meeting at the Yale Club.

Friday Activities

Morning tour: The weekend began on Friday morning with an optional event, an Underground Railroad Walking Tour, that included an enlightening lecture and observation of key locations in the history of slavery in New York. Tour attendees reported learning facts that were new to them and commemorated important elements of our country's past.







Board Meeting: The first official Project Redwood meeting was a Board of Directors session on Friday afternoon. Following approval of the Minutes from the last Board meeting, the topics presented and discussed included financial reports by Mike Watt and development guidelines for future fundraising by Richie Geisel. Details of these topics will be included in Minutes of this meeting and filed and available to members.

Friday evening social: The first social event of the weekend was held at Tony's Italian Restaurant. Forty-two Project Redwood members and friends circulated, re-established connections and enjoyed a selection of liquid refreshments and Italian food.









Saturday Morning Session

A packed morning session was kicked off by **Rick Agresta** and **Anna Neverova** (NYC GSB alumni chapter president) and followed by additional welcomes from co-chairs **Ken Inadomi** and **Brad Smith**. Highlights of the session included:



A Fireside Chat with Carter McClelland. Carter, a GSB 1973 alum, is a senior executive who has made significant contributions to the corporate and financial world over a very impressive career. Led by Clara Chow (GSB '13), Carter shared his serendipitous path into the nonprofit sector that leveraged his successful career on Wall Street. As a board member of Echoing Green, he identifies promising startups deserving of seed capital. He noted the missions of Echoing Green and Project Redwood overlap and emphasized the role data and technology can play to help social ventures scale more easily. Despite today's uncertain marketplace, he expressed optimism for Project Redwood's growth potential.

Mike Fitzgerald then turned conversation to the pressing need to alleviate poverty and PRW's role in addressing this problem. He noted that, in support of 77 organizations operating in 29 countries, Project Redwood has distributed \$5.6 million in grants that have improved the lives of more than one million people. Mike's overview included a [viewing of this PRW video](#).

The Grantee Panel

Grantee Panel: With that backdrop, Mike introduced **Carla Williams** who moderated a discussion with four grantees describing their efforts to fight poverty by building human capital.

Comer (Chicago): **Remington Price** attributed Comer’s success to meeting community members ‘where they are.’ Utilizing a variety of skill-building programs, Comer helps students prepare for high school and beyond.

Read718 (Brooklyn- based): Founder **Emily Kirven** launched this after-school reading program in 2015 to improve critically important core reading skills in underserved communities. Through both in-person and remote tutoring, students are benefiting through greatly improved reading.

BOLT (Philadelphia): **Hillary Do** explained BOLT’s mission – to provide coaching and leadership training for local resident/proximate leaders who have the potential to organize community-building programs in their neighborhoods. Those programs then enhance the lives of everyone in the community.

One Village Partners (Sierra Leone): **Jill LaLonde** explained that their mission is to invest in women, teaching literacy and other practical skills that raise their role in society, lead to increases in their standards of living, and reshape their communities.

All commented that small investments ultimately generate broad, positive impact. In closing, each expressed gratitude for Project Redwood’s financial support, expert resources, and networking opportunities. A video of the panel can be viewed [HERE](#).

<p>Moderator: Carla Williams MBA '80</p> 	<p>Jill LaLonde Executive Director</p> 	<p>Hillary Do MBA, '22, Founder and Executive Director</p> 	<p>Emily Kirven Founder and Executive Director</p> 	<p>Remington Price Center Director</p> 
<p>Project Redwood</p> <p>Co-Chair of U.S. Poverty Task Force & Sponsor of WISE and Comer Education Campus</p> <p>📍 Los Angeles, CA</p>	<p>One Village Partners</p> <p>Partners with rural communities to develop sustainable solutions that lead to transformational change</p> <p>📍 Sierra Leone, Africa</p>	<p>BOLT</p> <p>Cultivates, empowers and supports grassroots leaders in driving community-led change</p> <p>📍 Philadelphia, PA</p>	<p>READ 718</p> <p>Builds strong confident readers through one-on-one, in-person and virtual sessions</p> <p>📍 Brooklyn, NY</p>	<p>Gary Comer Youth Center</p> <p>Prepares young people for college, careers, and futures as well-rounded, global citizens</p> <p>📍 Chicago, IL</p>





Carol Head concluded the session by encouraging all partners to assist Project Redwood in meeting its growth goals by directly supporting this work through

- Grantee sponsorships
- Sharing expertise and connections with grantees
- Participation on a committee and/or
- Donating

Saturday Afternoon Session

Eleanor Keare began the afternoon session, setting the stage for a recap of the recent grant cycle followed by discussions on how to grow the PRW community and serve more grantees.

Grant Year in Review: Co-chairs **Mike Fitzgerald** and **Claudia Lindsey** recapped the most recent grant cycle and also expressed appreciation to **Laura Power** for her leadership and creativity in designing updates to grant processes.

- 27 project grants were awarded; seven to US organizations and 20 to international nonprofits.
- Grant amounts increased and over \$1.1 Million was distributed that is expected to help 29,000 beneficiaries.
- Impact grants (unrestricted funds) were also allocated to five organizations who are repeat grantees and are well known to PRW.

For 2025, project-based grants will remain the priority as we assess how to optimize use of impact grants to more broadly support grantees

Growth: To build on that base, **Phil Jonckheer** and **Kristy McHugh** presented two programs aimed at Community Growth and expansion of the PRW partner base. An **Ambassador Program** will promote expansion, especially in the classes of 1981-2001 while a **Community Guide Program** will be used to encourage new partner involvement in PRW. Outreach via email and social media will reinforce awareness of PRW.

Enhanced GSB relationships: **Donna Allen** and **Dave Fletcher** then reviewed efforts underway to strengthen ties with the GSB as this relationship is integral to PRW successful growth. Outreach continues to MBA and non-MBA programs affiliated with the GSB (i.e., Stanford Executive Program, Design for Extreme Affordability class, Social E Lab, Center for Social Innovation). Project Redwood will continue to make presentations at reunions, regional meetings, etc. and be included on the GSB website and in its newsletters. An alumni staff member continues as a resource and source of support. With compatible missions, collaboration benefits both sides as a stronger Project Redwood elevates the visibility of GSB alumni efforts.

External Partnerships: **Topher Wilkins** was invited to speak regarding his experience as director of Opportunity Collaboration (OC). He emphasized that tapping into mission-aligned outside organizations can also generate growth and enhance support for grantees. This type of idea-sharing by Project Redwood goes on with organizations such as Echoing Green, Skoll Foundation, and Opportunity Collaboration.

Grantee Engagement: **Brad Smith** and **Ann McStay** shifted gears to focus on all the ways we can support our grantees. Aside from grant funding and reporting, sharing advice and networking ideas are valuable. They also encouraged site visits as perhaps the best way to understand communities of poverty and how Project Redwood can carry out its mission.

Leadership Transition: The meeting concluded with a salute to PRW leadership. New Board members **Eleanor Keane**, **Ray King**, and **Beth Charlesworth** were welcomed, and thanks were extended to outgoing board members **Vijay Raghunathan**, **Stacy Williams**, and **Bill Westwood**. Recognition was also extended to new leaders **Claudia Lindsey** as co-chair of Grant Review, **Caroline Caufield** and **Mike Fitzgerald** on the Executive Committee, and Project Redwood Co-chair **Brad Smith**. Finally, appreciation was expressed to outgoing Development co-chairs **Carol**

Head and Martha Clark, Grant Committee co-chair **Laura Power**, Executive Committee members **Claudia Lindsey** and **Bill Westwood**, and Project Redwood Co-chair **Claudia Lindsay**. Claudia was awarded a gift of appreciation from Project Redwood for all of her contributions.

Saturday Evening Social

Saturday evening social: The second social event of the weekend was held at Park Avenue Kitchen. Again, Project Redwood members and friends mixed, and solidified connections while enjoying a selection of liquid refreshments and all-American food.









Sunday Morning Session

Following a Yale Club breakfast, a group of 20 attendees gathered in a conference room to discuss Development and Growth, and to offer thoughts about subjects from the past day-and-a-half.

Development: Richie Geisel, who had agreed to co-chair Development, offered comments about how to appeal to new donors and reach potential major donors and future Visionaries. Suggested key elements included:

- Use themes “Investment in Project Redwood” and “Personal return for the public good”
- Make connections that lead to introductions and comfort in approaching potential donors
- Have a plan for each potential major donor
- Be prepared by knowing about the prospect before initiating an appeal conversation
- Realize that developing a relationship that offers opportunity to “ask” takes time

In a role-play illustrating an approach to a prospect, Richie was a potential donor and Ken Inadomi and Carol Head were members introducing Project Redwood to the prospect. Use of a plan, conversational style and establishment of a follow-up were illustrated, and a discussion followed.

Priorities for Growth: To continue the morning session, attendees divided into 4 small teams to solicit and document ideas that arose during the weekend. Every individual offered thoughts that were noted by a team leader and presented to the entire group. These ideas will be summarized and published in notes from the Annual Meeting.







Carol Head then spoke to emphasize the importance of each member's participation in fundraising so that Project Redwood can continue to grow.

Co-chairs **Ken Inadomi** and **Brad Smith** made closing comments and thanked everyone for attending, participating and inspiring each other over the 3-day meeting.



[Click on the image above to view more pictures from the 2024 Annual Meeting.](#)
