



Institute for Conservation LEADERSHIP

2023

ANNUAL REPORT

Hello Friends of ICL –

Collaboration is at the heart of ICL's work. In 2023 we saw the power of change when collaborative efforts involve partnership within and across communities and sectors. In our efforts, ICL created more environmental health, community engagement, sustainable food systems, accessible trails, and stronger leadership.

We believe we need to work together. As in all ecosystems, each unique species is dependent on the collective to survive and thrive. Big, impactful change around us and in our systems involves this same kind of symbiotic relationship in our communities.

Throughout this year at ICL we've seen big changes and new program evolution. We developed two new resources to add to the collection of useful tools in our Collaboration Resource Hub. We began offering public facilitation workshops virtually in support of peer learning across the US. We launched a new responsive website design to better serve our partners. And we welcomed two wonderful new board members to our board of directors.

All of ICL's growth and experimentation feeds into ICL's strategic goal of reaching more collaborations and leaders. With your partnership and support we will continue to increase the strength and build all of our human collective ecosystems. This will help us move towards the systems changes needed now and into the future!

Dianne J. Russell
President

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Institute for Conservation
LEADERSHIP

OUR MISSION

To support healthy communities and a healthy Earth, the Institute for Conservation Leadership strengthens leaders, organizations, coalitions, and networks.

OUR VISION

We envision a diverse set of leaders equipped to solve the most pressing issues that affect the well-being of our communities and the Earth. These leaders effectively engage others, work across sectors and boundaries, and choose and implement strategies that create positive change.

STRATEGIC ACHIEVEMENTS

In 2023, ICL expanded our reach to more leaders working on the most pressing issues facing our environment through direct engagement, resource distribution, and renewed public programming.



Over **725**
organizations &
collaborations
supported



Over **1380**
leaders
reached from
all **50** states



Leaders from
48 states &
23 countries
downloaded
our resources



135 leaders
developed
facilitation
skills

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT FOR ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

Berks County Community Foundation



*Community members craft their
visions of a resilient community*

During the first half of 2023, ICL facilitated a community engagement and data analysis study with the Berks County Community Foundation to help address environmental issues raised by community members. Over 45 Berks County leaders from government agencies, nonprofit organizations, and local businesses met with the Community Foundation to discuss community resiliency and community health. Analyzing the input to pinpoint approaches for funding environmental work in the county, ICL identified recommendations captured in a detailed report for the foundation.

“ICL helped participants in our community meeting have some fun and use creativity rather than just stating and restating the problems. A major takeaway we heard from participants was that they planned to start using this solutions-based approach in their own work. ICL did such a great job at facilitating that the group clapped after it was over! Participants stayed after to talk to each other and to the ICL folks and kept coming back for subsequent meetings – confirmation that they enjoyed the meetings!”

ICL is very good at going with the flow, which lends a hand to how good they are at their facilitation work. They incorporated their national expertise and experience through input and examples that were helpful for our project and were able to understand the intersectionality of participants’ work very seamlessly. Another approach they took was to be inclusive of the participants in the room who were not directly involved in the environmental field, by helping them feel comfortable and included in the conversation.”

- Emily Smedley,
Environment and Energy Program Officer
& Monica Reyes,
VP for Programs & Initiatives

BUILDING SKILLS AND CONNECTION THROUGH AFFINITY

Delaware River Watershed Professionals of Color Cohort Program



The cohort enjoys lunch outside at Awbury Arboretum

BIPOC individuals within environmental organizations often face obstacles in advancing their careers due to underrepresentation and systemic barriers. In response to these challenges, Senior Associates Pri Ekanayake and Joy Jackson collaborated to design a yearlong program to connect and support professionals of color working on environmental and conservation issues in the watershed. The cohort met virtually throughout the year to engage in lessons and activities focused on career development, network building, and skills development, with the goal of enhancing and advancing their professional pursuits.

Special thanks to the William Penn Foundation for supporting this program.

“Being a part of this cohort was a super valuable experience. It helped me with tangible skills and gave me the inspiration and confidence to make a huge career leap. The personal pitch module was especially important for me. The way it was facilitated helped me clarify what I was doing in my career and what I would like to be moving towards.

The experience of doing this learning alongside other people of color in different stages in their careers was really powerful. This cohort program gave me the opportunity to see the world outside of my regular daily viewpoint.”

- Jehane Samaha,
Urban Nursery Specialist, US Forest Service



Discussion during the personal pitch activity

“When I joined this program, I had high hopes for gaining leadership development skills and the results were even better than I imagined they would be! The way the program was facilitated was magical. We were empowered to make it a collaborative process and asked for input and feedback from the start. All of the sessions combined created a holistic feeling to the program.

What I learned led to a year of growth for me and gave me confidence to value my own ideas and contributions. I know I can call on my cohort if I need to ask for advice, share events, or just to say ‘hello.’”

- Asha- Lé Davis,
Trees Program Manager,
Pennsylvania Horticultural Society



Pri and Joy with the cohort at the
celebratory gathering

PLANNING A MORE CONNECTED FUTURE

Rails to Trails Conservancy

“ICL staff know our sector well but didn’t come to our strategic planning process with any dogma. They are collaborative, nimble, flexible thought partners interested in cocreating a process based on the circumstances at hand. They worked to understand our group, were great about facilitation, and got a broad representation of people involved and participating.

We are really pleased with the work. What’s nice is we’re hearing that from partners and supporters as well. RTC is a complex organization that does a lot. It’s also a pretty dynamic time in terms of opportunity and value in our sector, so this was not an easy project.”

- Ryan Chao,
President



Ohio & Erie Canal Towpath - Jason Cohn,
Courtesy Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

Rails to Trails Conservancy is a national organization reimagining public spaces and connecting communities via trails. In 2023, they came to ICL to create a five-year strategic plan. Their goal is to ensure that trails and trail networks are prioritized as essential for people, communities, and the environment.

BUILDING CAPACITY THROUGH COLLABORATION

Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay – Local Government Advisory Council

“When you run a lot of meetings, you can get stuck in a rut. But having an outside expert helped us break out of that and rethink how we could make an impact and be effective with our time.

Working with ICL on planning for the forum was seamless right up to the day of the event. ICL was really thoughtful about the experience for both in-person and virtual attendees - it was never an afterthought. We got very positive feedback on the virtual piece of the forum, including from attendees who shared it was the best hybrid meeting they’ve ever been a part of.”

- Laura Cattell Noll,
Local Government Initiative Director



Small groups collaborate at the
annual Local Government Forum

In November, ICL facilitated the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay’s annual Local Government Forum, which provides a space for deep dive collaborative problem solving amongst local governments, nonprofit leaders, businesses, and funders. When it came time to plan for the meeting, the Alliance for the Chesapeake needed a facilitator who knew local governments and facilitation, and ICL was the perfect fit.

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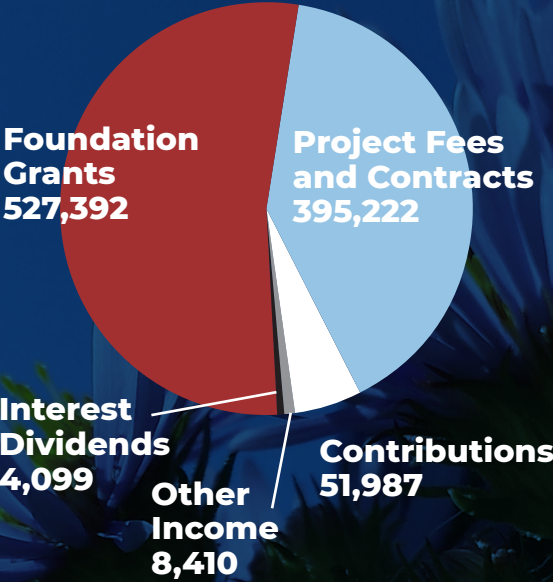
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63 NEW DONORS

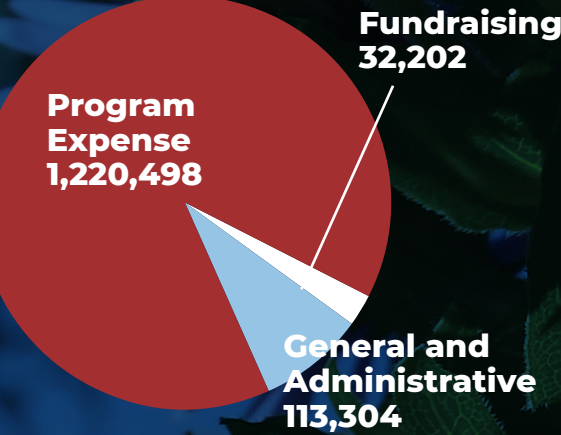
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