

# ADVANCING REGENERATIVE FOOD SYSTEMS IN THE U.S.

A STRATEGY TO NOURISH COMMUNITIES, HONOR PEOPLE AND  
THE PLANET, AND BUILD LASTING REGIONAL PROSPERITY.







## WHO WE ARE

The Wallace Center is a national program of Winrock International, a global nonprofit advancing social, environmental, and economic equity. Since 2000, we've worked with Winrock's broader Domestic Programs team to strengthen regenerative agriculture and equitable food systems across the country. Founded in the 1980s and rooted in the values of Henry A. Wallace, we support farmers, food businesses, community leaders, and nonprofits through tools, training, and partnerships. With strong regional roots and national reach, we regrant funds, deliver technical assistance, and catalyze community-led innovation to build resilient local economies and shift power to historically excluded communities.

## WHY US AND WHY THIS STRATEGY

We are uniquely positioned to advance regenerative, equitable food systems. With decades of experience and deep trust across the value chain, we bring the tools and infrastructure to drive lasting change. As a national organization with strong regional roots, we scale innovation, channel resources, and support local leadership. In a time of climate, economic, and market disruption, our strategy meets the moment—amplifying underserved voices and aligning investment, policy, and practice to build food systems that nourish people and the planet.



## OUR VISION FOR THE FUTURE

We envision a future in the U.S. where interconnected networks of people who produce food and steward natural resources collaborate with communities, businesses, and governments to create regenerative food systems that center human wellbeing, strengthen regional economies, and nurture the environment. In this future, food systems provide accessible, safe and nutritious food, well-paid jobs, and diverse ecosystem services that enhance ecological resilience and grow multi-generational economic prosperity for communities.

## OUR MISSION

The Wallace Center brings together diverse people and ideas to co-create solutions that build healthy farms, fair economies, resilient food systems, and vibrant communities. This mission nests within Winrock's broader mission "...to empower the disadvantaged, increase economic opportunity and sustain natural resources."



PHOTO: 4 BIRDS PHOTOGRAPHY



PHOTO: EVELYN PONCE HERNANDEZ



PHOTO: LULUS LOCAL FOOD





## OUR VALUES

PHOTO: JANE JORDAN

### We value regenerative food systems that:

- Promote equity and inclusion by addressing systemic barriers to participation, prosperity, and ownership.
- Support fair, transparent, and accountable relationships across the value chain.
- Enhance ecological and community resilience in the era of climate change.
- Strengthen the profitability and impact of food and farm businesses that operate with purpose and integrity.
- Honor traditional knowledge while embracing innovation and future-focused tools.
- Uplift human dignity, protect ecosystems, and build generational opportunity.

### When working with partners, we value:

- Partnering with those closest to the work, co-creating solutions that reflect their needs, strengths, and leadership.
- Defining clear roles, sharing decision-making power, and reducing administrative burdens to foster true collaboration.
- Advocating with and for our partners, ensuring their voices are heard across funding, policy, and public arenas.
- Building strong, place-based relationships through in-person and long-term support—beyond the bounds of any single project.
- Engaging in continuous learning and evaluation to improve outcomes and strengthen future work.

### When working within our team, we value:

- Making thoughtful, data-informed decisions that reflect diverse perspectives.
- Using consistent, transparent processes to build trust and promote fairness in relationships.
- Centering collaboration and systems thinking to align strategies across programs.
- Investing in staff development to foster shared learning and distributed leadership.

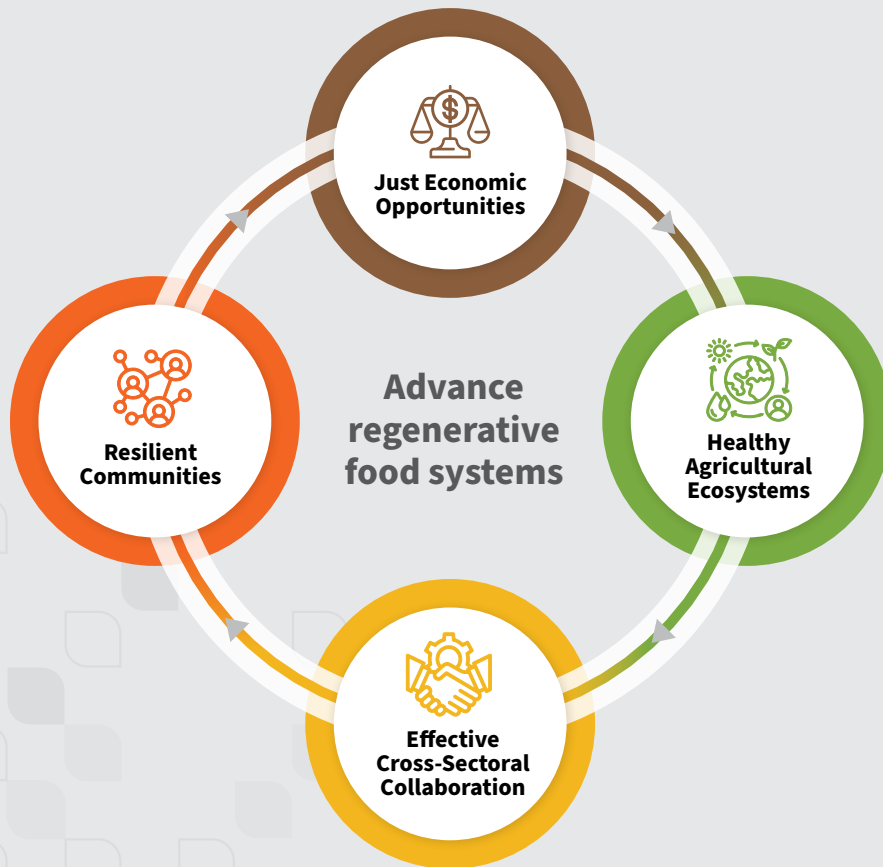
# OUR STRATEGIC APPROACH

**We implement this strategy by connecting regions, sectors, and solutions.**

Through this approach, we advance regenerative practices, build fair markets, and support resilient regional economies that benefit people and the planet. We act as a systems convener and field builder—collaborating across sectors to co-create solutions, coordinate inclusive, place-based value chain efforts, and share resources. Our work delivers results to producers, food businesses, and communities—especially those facing persistent challenges—while working toward systemic change that promotes economic, environmental, and social resilience through food and farming.

*We prioritize:*

- **Just economic opportunities** by expanding local leadership, increasing access to resources and markets, and strengthening transparent value chains that reward regenerative practices and uphold worker rights—building resilient regional economies that improve livelihoods and ensure equitable access to healthy food.
- **Healthy agricultural ecosystems** by increasing awareness of agriculture's broad impacts and accelerating the adoption of regenerative practices that build soil health, strengthen communities, and improve farm profitability—through inclusive training, producer-led innovation, value chain partnerships, and stories that highlight the benefits of ecological stewardship.
- **Effective cross-sectoral collaboration** by fostering strategic partnerships that build resilience, opportunity, and self-reliance for communities. Through strong local and regional networks, aligned policy and advocacy, and shared learning across sectors, we scale innovations that deliver environmental, economic, and social impact and create lasting conditions for regenerative food systems to thrive.
- **Resilient communities** by investing in local leadership and community-led initiatives that improve food access, create good jobs, and build long-term wealth and health. We strengthen markets, unlock capital, and co-create place-based strategies that support policy, continuity, and grassroots solutions rooted in regenerative food systems.



# HOW WE WORK

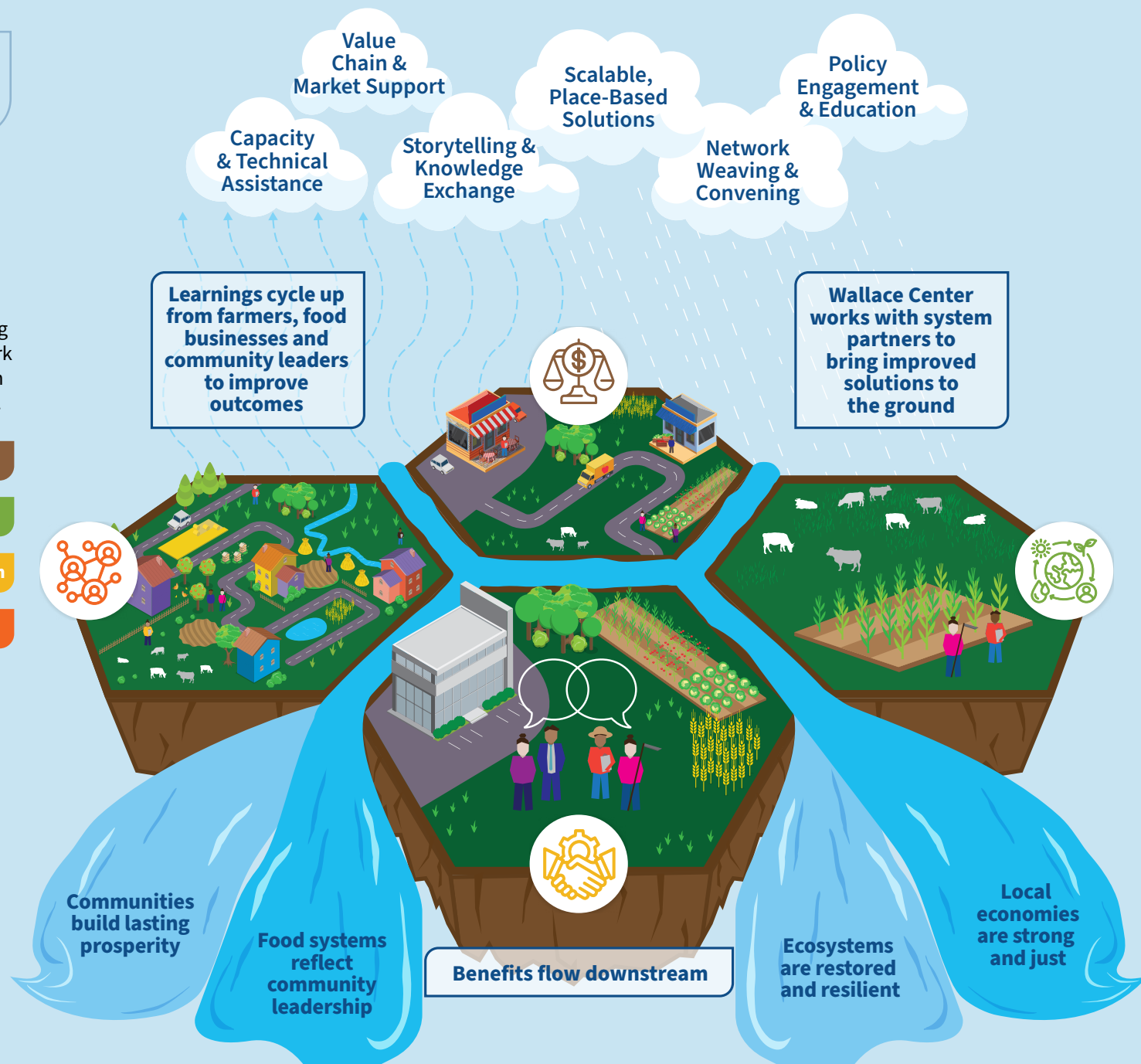
We put our values into action through the way we work. We see partners as anyone outside our organization, including farmers, food businesses, and community groups. We're committed to being collaborative, transparent and accountable to all our partners. Mirroring a water cycle, here's how we see our work connecting with our partners, change on the ground, and "downstream" benefits.

 **Just Economic Opportunities**

 **Healthy Agricultural Ecosystems**

 **Effective Cross-Sectoral Collaboration**

 **Resilient Communities**





# PRIORITY AREAS OF ACTION

*We focus our efforts in four interconnected action areas that reflect our understanding and approach to regenerative systems change.*



## Just Economic Opportunities

### Grow Value Chain Coordination (VCC) Field of Practice:

Refine VCC knowledge frameworks and tools for collaborative VCC training, mentorship, and knowledge sharing activities that span regional and national non-profit, private, and public sectors.

### Enhance Financial Acumen Across the System:

Work with partners to offer financial and enterprise planning, budgeting, and grant writing support to producer networks, nonprofits, and other value chain actors, and engage values-aligned businesses in developing tools and trainings that support financial resilience.

### Expand Aligned Capital Access and Readiness:

Engage the investment and lending community, including mission-driven corporate investors, to match responsible and accountable investment mechanisms to the needs of regenerative businesses and support investment readiness education.

### Strengthen Regional Infrastructure and Markets:

Encourage value-chain infrastructure and technical knowledge investments (on-farm, transportation, processing, distribution, etc.) to boost equitable institutional and high-volume markets access, in part by coordinating with companies that can co-invest in regional systems transformation.

### Quantify and Communicate Broader Economic Benefits:

Develop research-backed analysis and share resources on how local and regional food systems—particularly regenerative—contribute to measurable outcomes in jobs, health, climate, and equity, working with business and philanthropic partners to amplify impact narratives.



## Healthy Agricultural Ecosystems

### Strengthen Regenerative Agriculture Technical Capacity:

Support local partners in growing a diverse pool of technical assistance providers through accessible training, peer learning, and partnerships with values-aligned businesses.

### Demonstrate the Potential of Expanded Regenerative Practices:

Develop frameworks to pilot and quantify diversified agricultural practices—prioritizing underserved producers—and share results and resources widely with the broader agricultural community, inviting strategic business partners to contribute to evaluation and communication efforts where aligned.

### Support Producer-Led Networks to Advance Change:

Support the farmer and watershed networks that drive and sustain regenerative practices by partnering with national organizations and values-aligned businesses to provide resources, connect networks, and elevate grassroots leaders.

### Help Producers Leverage Profitable Value Chains:

Utilize VCC tools for value-chain analyses, trainings, and partnerships between regenerative producers and values-aligned buyers, specifically those committed to fair contracts, responsible sourcing, and long-term accountability.

### Help Tell the Story of Regenerative Agriculture:

Co-create culturally relevant, multi-lingual, and multi-media storytelling to communicate the value of regenerative agriculture to broad audiences—jobs, health, climate, equity, and community resilience.

## PRIORITY AREAS OF ACTION, CONTINUED:



### Effective Cross-Sectoral Collaboration

#### Embed Policy Change:

Integrate state and federal policy analysis and administrative advocacy into program design and delivery, as much as possible, by training staff and partners to identify opportunities, document impacts, and engage policy coalitions.

#### Cultivate Accountable Networks:

Invest in long-term, culturally grounded, and networked relationships—especially with grassroots organizations—and build lasting partnerships with private sector actors who are deeply aligned in values and committed to supporting community outcomes.

#### Use Convenings as Strategic Tools:

Host and join action-oriented convenings that share practitioner knowledge, connect partners who don't often work together, and build strategies to shift institutional power (e.g., political, financial).

#### Align and Integrate Internal Knowledge Systems:

Break down silos across policy, equity, markets, and conservation by creating processes (e.g. communities of practice, etc.) to share insights and better align grant writing and program design.

#### Expand Strategic Influence to Scale Systems:

Leverage our platforms to develop place-based partnerships, scale regional innovations, and build infrastructure for regenerative agriculture across sectors by coordinating with values-aligned corporate partners.



### Resilient Communities

#### Elevate Local Leadership:

Resource the professional development and capacity of local regenerative agriculture and food organizations to sustain long-term work, working with national partners to increase the visibility and influence of these leaders.

#### Invest in Place-Based Relationships:

Co-create regenerative agriculture and food systems strategies with local and state leaders that reflect community needs, build shared timelines, stack accessible resources, and create “post-project” sustainability plans, leveraging the assets of private sector partners where appropriate.

#### Support Local Officials and Policies:

Develop learning cohorts for local public officials to build shared knowledge of regenerative agriculture and food systems via local case studies (data, site visits, etc.) to strengthen political will for supportive policies.

#### Translate Community-Based Knowledge into Tools:

Work with local leaders to share grassroots, regenerative solutions with regional and national partners through best-practice tools that reflect cultural and contextual integrity.

#### Foster Local Ownership and Continuity:

Work with local partners to plan leadership transitions and funding strategies that sustain work beyond initial grants.





PHOTO: 4 BIRDS PHOTOGRAPHY

## PROCESS FOR CREATING THIS PLAN

We developed this plan through a multi-step process beginning in early 2024. The Wallace Center staff led a series of individual and group conversations with internal and external partners. Internal participants included the full Wallace Center team and other Winrock teams working in the United States with expertise in regenerative food systems. Wallace Center staff recommended external partners with diverse perspectives and experiences across sectors and generations. This included members of the 2024-2025 Wallace Advisory Group.

The staff synthesized outputs of these conversations into anonymized summary documents and prepared a scope of work for an external facilitation team to guide the next stage of an internal engagement process. The selected facilitation team led planning for the internal engagement process, which included a multi-day, in-person meeting of Wallace Center and Winrock staff.

Following this meeting, Wallace Center and Winrock working groups held virtual strategy sessions, where they finalized the content of this strategy. External partners reviewed and provided their feedback, followed by Winrock's Executive Team approving the strategy.

### Acknowledgements

Many people contributed to the creation of this plan—both through their participation in the process and through their thoughtful content suggestions. We are deeply grateful for the time, energy, and insight they shared.

We especially thank Julia Monaghan of *People Centered Change* and Dorothy Suput of *DSuput Consulting, LLC*, our external facilitation team, who guided us through a dynamic and collaborative process that honored many voices and perspectives.

We also extend sincere appreciation to the Winrock and Wallace Center team members who engaged at every step, as well as to our external partners who contributed.

A special thank you goes to the 2024-2025 Wallace Advisory Group, whose guidance and input not only shaped this plan but also helped lay the groundwork for the process we followed. Finally, we are grateful to Winrock's Executive Team for their trust and support in empowering the Wallace Center to lead this effort. All photos are used with permission.

### Feedback

We welcome your questions and comments at [wallaceinfo@winrock.org](mailto:wallaceinfo@winrock.org), and we'll do our best to reply promptly. We truly value feedback—especially thoughtful critiques that help us learn, grow, and improve our work.