





## 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

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# WHO WEARE

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## LETTER FROM CO-DIRECTORS

#### **Dear Friends and Supporters,**

We're thrilled to share a snapshot of our work in 2023 with you. This year asked us to evolve how we think about our role in the ecosystem, and shift how we've historically worked. In doing so, we've continued to center the power of trusted relationships and our team's efforts to live into our mission of bringing together diverse people and ideas to co-create solutions that build healthy farms, equitable economies, and resilient food systems.

Our organization's vision is that all communities should have the power to nourish themselves and regenerate ecosystems through just food and agriculture systems. With this vision in mind, we worked with partners to extensively expand resources available to support value chain coordination practitioners, and supported community organizations to help them gain access to federal dollars.

The Wallace Center, through its programming, partnerships, and communities of practice, seeks to serve as a conduit through which individuals and organizations can connect to resources, individuals, and other values-aligned organizations.

Within these pages, you'll read about two dynamic partnerships we created in 2023 that advanced farming and food systems transformation in the United States. One such partnership is with nine community organizations in the Mississippi River Basin that seek to reduce nonpoint source pollution on farms in their networks and increase the sustainability and resiliency of farm operations. Additionally, we were honored to learn from and support 10 community-based teams across the country that are strengthening small farm viability while alleviating food insecurity in their communities through our Farm to Food Assistance Learning Lab. In both programmatic examples, we're centering partners' leadership and knowledge in creating local and regional solutions to complex problems.

The landscape of our farming and food systems is ever evolving and the Wallace Center commits to rising to the moment, and changing how we show up to meet our partners' needs with a commitment to support the remarkable communities that are working toward a more just food system.

In solidarity, **Pete Huff and Susan Lightfoot Schempf** WALLACE CENTER CO-DIRECTORS

## MISSION

The Wallace Center brings together diverse people and ideas to co-create solutions that build healthy farms, equitable economies, and resilient food systems.

### VISION

All communities have the power to nourish themselves and regenerate ecosystems through just food and agriculture systems. At the heart of these systems are dynamic networks of people connected through interdependent relationships with each other and the land.

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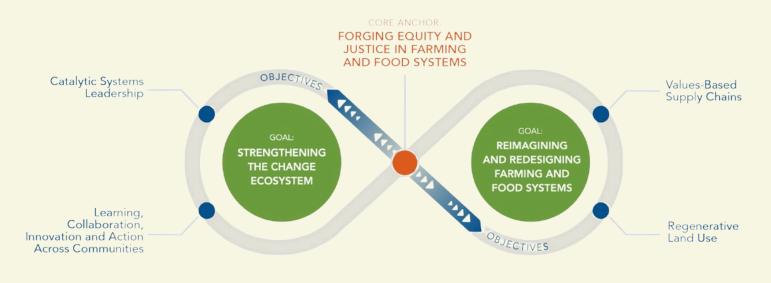


### OUR VALUES



- Systems-based and intersectional approaches
- Practitioner knowledge and leadership
- Anti-racism, equity, and multi-culturalism
- Ecological resiliency and regeneration
- Economic justice and fair markets
- Local and regional solutions and self-determination
- Human-centered and joyful organizational culture

### WE WORK TO REACH OUR VISION BY FOCUSING ON FIVE INTERCONNECTED OBJECTIVES:



The Wallace Center commits to centering anti-racism, racial equity, and inclusion in our programs, operations, and culture.

I'M A FARMER.

**INCREASE** organizational transparency to build accountability with our partners, funders, Winrock International (our parent organization), and those we serve – particularly Black, Indigenous, and People of Color.

**STRENGTHEN** Wallace Center as a human-centered organization that supports the agency and leadership of its staff and partners.

AFFIRM Wallace Center's core commitment to the structures that center racial equity and humancentered culture in our work and partnerships—through both our policy and our practice.

**ENGAGE** with Winrock International staff and leadership to share resources and support conversations around racial justice.

40%	of Wallace Center participants in key services—including retreat & training participants, mini-grant recipients, mentorship recipients —identify as BIPOC
48%	of technical assistance service providers—partners, speakers, mentors, advisors—identify as BIPOC
46%	of Wallace Center partnerships and subawards with BIPOC-led entities

These numbers reflect the Wallace Center's **commitment** to build meaningful and accountable relationships with BIPOC leaders and communities. \**BIPOC* = *Black*, *Indigenous*, *and People of Color* 



### 2023 TEAM



Elizabeth Atwell – Durham, NC Aryn Blumenberg – Conway, AR Ellie Bomstein – Washington, DC Andrew Carberry – Lebanon, IL Dana Christel – Mount Horeb, WI Melony Edwards – Port Townsend, WA Pete Huff – Menomonie, WI Lucy Jodlowska – Washington, DC Jane Jordan – Chicago, IL Danika Lam – Los Angeles, CA Susan Lightfoot Schempf – New Orleans, LA Michelle Mathew – New Orleans, LA Juan Quinonez Zepeda – Como, MS Elisabeth Spratt – St. Louis, MO Kelsey Vergin – Charlottesville, VA Megan Wall – Reston, VA Jon Winsten – Shelburne, VT

Pictured L-R: Jon Winsten, Jane Jordan, Juan Quinonez Zepeda, Pete Huff

Wallace Center Team, 2023



#### WALLACE ADVISORY GROUP

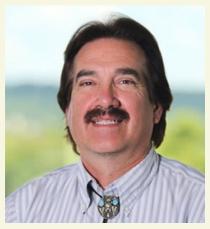
We're honored to work in partnership with the Wallace Center Advisory Group (known as the WAG). Distinct from a board of directors, these six esteemed farming and food systems leaders offer strategic guidance and hold us accountable to our mission to bring together diverse people and ideas to co-create solutions that build healthy farms, equitable economies, and resilient food systems.



Renee Catacalos
Director of Strategic Investments
FRESHFARM
UNIVERSITY PARK, MARYLAND



John Fisk President, Bluestem Consulting Group LANSING, MICHIGAN



Martin Jennings

Executive Director, Northwest Indian Community Development Center BEMIDJI, MINNESOTA



Angel Mendez Executive Director, Red Tomato PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND



Brennan Washington Southeastern Outreach Coordinator, Southern SARE LAWRENCEVILLE, GEORGIA



Sally Worley Executive Director, Practical Farmers of Iowa



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Photos: (top and bottom L) Rice harvest
near El Campo, TX; (bottom R) New Mexico
Food Hub, credit: Christy Parent

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Mississippi River Sunrise Photo Credit: Jessica Bolser, US Fish and Wildlife Service

# Supporting Organizations to Capture Federal Funding

The landscape of federal investment into local and regional food systems has dramatically shifted over the last several years. Congress and the USDA have made unprecedented investments into farming and food systems transformation as a key strategy for building climate resilience, racial equity, and economic opportunity in the U.S. But applying for these funds can be complicated; the money often does not reach the communities they're intended to support—namely communities facing particularly arduous barriers to capturing funding. Given this reality, the Wallace Center has prioritized supporting community organizations in a long-term, intentional way to access federal resources. An example of how we're putting this priority into action is through administering a subaward program funded by the EPA's Gulf of Mexico Division (GMD).

The Farmer Conservation Leader Subaward Program, a five-year commitment funded by the EPA GMD, focuses specifically on getting federal dollars and ongoing support to organizations that serve historically underserved farmers in the Mississippi River Region.

#### CREATING THE PROCESS AND WHY IT MATTERS

Several federal funding programs have been inaccessible to frontline communities for many reasons, including high funding minimums and burdensome administrative requirements. Frustratingly, this means underserved farmers who are and have been conservation leaders, have often been omitted from conservation programming, which contributes to ecological harm.

For this project, the Wallace Center team partnered with four advisors to design and launch a competitive application process—one that prioritized relationship development and allowed for more equitable proposal deadlines. Applicants to the program submitted brief concept notes outlining their projects, which were evaluated by a panel of Wallace Center staff and advisors. Selected applicants then participated in a collaborative process (with help from advisors) and were compensated to design their projects in the latter half of 2023. The Wallace Center supported applicants on the most timeconsuming and complicated elements of an application: evaluation, compliance with federal regulations, and budget development.

"This program builds relationships among a powerful network of organizations across the Mississippi River Basin. The community organizations funded through this program are at the forefront of environmental issues in their respective communities."

- BRENNAN WASHINGTON

#### **PROJECT ADVISORS**

Farmer Conservation Leader Subaward Program



Felicia Bell RD&S FARM



Pakou Hang WGH CONSULTING



Mackenize Martinez INTERTRIBAL AGRICULTURE COUNCIL



Brennan Washington PHOENIX GARDENS

We received over \$4M in applications for a \$2M funding pool and announced **nine participating organizations** in early 2024. Project advisor Brennan Washington of **Phoenix Gardens** notes, "This program builds relationships among a powerful network of organizations across the Mississippi River Basin. The community organizations funded through this program are at the forefront of environmental issues in their respective communities; they deserve this EPA-GMD funding and additional support beyond this program."

One subawardee in this program, **A Red Circle** (ARC), is using the funds to expand support of farmers on regenerative agriculture practices including demonstrations at the North County Agricultural Education Center. The North County Agricultural Education Center is a vibrant farm and learning space for residents, new and beginner farmers, and students. Part of their grant includes an equipment share program where farmers can borrow large scale equipment to adopt regenerative agriculture practices and scale food production. ARC's Executive Director Erica Williams says, "I have enjoyed working with the Wallace Center, which has been an amazing partner and resource for A Red Circle. I have benefited from the Center's training opportunities, online repository, coffee chats, and funding resources. The staff at The Wallace Center have been very intentional in aligning the vast amount of resources to racial equity within the food system, and they have fun while doing so!"

We are honored to continue supporting these nine organizations in our role as program administrator until 2027. A core element of that support is helping subawardees capture additional dollars for their organizations beyond the life of this program. Stay tuned for project updates over the coming years!

> "The staff at The Wallace Center have been very intentional in aligning the vast amount of resources to racial equity within the food system, and they have fun while doing so!"

> > - ERICA WILLIAMS

WALLACE CENTER IMPACT AT A GLANCE





COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE CONVENINGS IN 2023





# Value Chain Coordination: Expanding and Strengthening the Field

In 2023, the Wallace Center honed its regional and national value chain coordination (VCC) work through creating accessible VCC resources—a VCC curriculum, evaluation template, and national community of practice and offering them to a broader audience of VCC professionals. In doing so, the Wallace Center stepped up its analysis and effort to reflect its equity commitments through its VCC work.

# WHAT IS VALUE CHAIN COORDINATION?

Value chain coordination involves activities and roles that forge connections and add value across individuals, firms, product chains, and regional economies. It encompasses the physical infrastructure (like processing plants and food hubs), and the human infrastructure (such as shared knowledge and peer learning), that support local and regional food systems.

#### VALUE CHAIN COORDINATION: EXPANDING AND STRENGTHENING THE FIELD



In 2023, the Wallace Center built upon years of VCC field-building experience and co-created resources to further strengthen the field, with the aim of advancing our commitment to equity:

# Developed a standardized, open-access curriculum for VCC professionals:

The Wallace Center launched a five-module training program in 2023 in partnership with Kitchen Sync Strategies. This curriculum, funded by a 2021 USDA Local Foods Promotion Program (LFPP) grant, encapsulates the Wallace Center's knowledge in the field over the last two decades, in addition to our partners' knowledge. This pilot curriculum provides a strong foundation for those just entering or refining their VCC work. This curriculum is refined and improved through feedback from professionals who use the resource to advance their local and regional economies. The curriculum strives to build the capacity of those who work in and support regional food businesses to develop, coordinate, and expand intermediated markets by providing a shared language and framework that supports a collaborative approach to value chain coordination.

#### Established a national community of practice:

The Wallace Center created a national VCC community of practice (with over 500 registered members) to facilitate peer-to-peer learning, mentorship, and access to resources. This community meets monthly to discuss the latest in the field, decide on topics for future discussion, and provide feedback on how resources can be improved.

# Created a VCC evaluation framework that centers racial equity:

The Wallace Center developed a comprehensive evaluation template to assist VCC professionals to create effective evaluation plans. The goal of this template is to help professionals capture and communicate the impact of their VCC strategies based on best practices in the field. This guide helps VCC professionals set values, link them to strategies, and assess short-term and long-term outcomes. An accompanying evaluation spreadsheet aids in tracking metrics and impacts, enhancing communication with funders.

# Launched an effort to develop a Midwest regional VCC strategy:

In June, the Wallace Center won a USDA Regional Food Systems partnership (RFSP) grant to focus on building shared knowledge and strategic planning for VCC in the Midwest. This strategy is specific to advancing "continuous living cover" practices like perennial grains, perennial pasture, and more. By engaging a specific group of Midwest partners, the Wallace Center aims to adapt its curriculum and help these partners create a shared strategy for their VCC work moving forward.

Moving toward more broadly relevant and accessible resources connected to national and regional communities of practice will help professionals start, improve, and evaluate their VCC efforts to build more equitable outcomes.

New Mexico Food Depot Photo credit: Christy Parent

# Supporting Farm to Food Assistance

Over the past several years, there has been a tremendous growth of programs across the United States that aim to strengthen small farm viability and food security. These programs connect local farms to food assistance distribution partners such as food banks, food pantries, and other efforts to end hunger. These Farm to Food Assistance (F2FA) initiatives, as some of these programs are known, play a key role in renewing local food and farm economies and supporting food-insecure communities. These local economies are foundational to a community-driven and equity-centered food system.

Through innovative programs like the USDA Local Food Purchase Assistance Cooperative Agreement Program

(LFPA), new partnerships between state agencies and tribal governments, food banks, food pantries, food hubs, farmers, and community-based organizations are narrowing the longstanding gap between the charitable food system and local and regional food systems.

The Wallace Center's Food Systems Leadership Network (FSLN)'s Farm to Food Assistance Learning Lab launched in 2023 to support organizations implementing F2FA initiatives across the country. This community of food systems leaders hailed from nine states and Puerto Rico, and connected with one another through monthly community of practice calls to share best practices in this emerging field of farm to food assistance. Each team contributed to a body of research, slated to be published by the Wallace Center in late 2024.

Thanh Tran, founding Co-Executive Director of the OKC Food Hub and Learning Lab participant, shared her story with us and the role the Wallace Center played in it.

#### SPOTLIGHT STORY: THANH TRAN

Thanh Tran learned the meaning of "courage" from a young age. Originally from Vietnam, Thanh arrived in Oklahoma City from Vietnam with her family at age six after the Vietnam war.

"My family had to rely on public services; I experienced all the ways in which underserved, at-risk communities experience poverty."

As Thanh recalled her formative years, she paused when she remembered the moments that led her from working in corporate information technology to a career in local food systems work.

"In 2010, after three years of intensive work-related travel, I felt like there was something else I needed to learn to do outside of corporate America."

Thanh recalled feeling burnt out by the demands of the job and making the decision to quit and eventually move to Essex, NY where she started her own medicinal herb and vegetable garden. Upon her return to Oklahoma where her family resides, Thanh recognized that the state's producers needed more help.

"I realized that, for me, becoming a beginning farmer in Oklahoma wasn't the best use of my skills. So I started an LLC that was organized as a co-op neighborhood micro-grocery store and we supported local food producers that way."

"Until I connected with the Wallace Center, I didn't really look at food through an equity lens. The Wallace Center opened my eyes to how broad and deep this work in local food systems is and connected me with supportive people who wanted to hear my story."

— THANH TRAN



#### SPOTLIGHT STORY: THANH TRAN



Photos (L): Members of Oklahoma's local food system; (R) OKC Food Hub in action. Photo credits: OKC Food Hub

In 2022, through a USDA-funded Local Food Promotion Program (LFPP) grant, she and Jenna Moore co-created the OKC Food Hub, a non-profit organization that focuses on securing mid-tier supply chain support for Oklahoma's producers. Six months after securing the grant, they launched operations. The food hub's mission is to support the state's small to midsize producers to scale up to institutional markets. OKC Food Hub works with farmers to strengthen their farm businesses by connecting them with institutional buyers and providing technical assistance to these farmers. In its first year, the food hub boasted \$1M in sales. It was also during this first year of operations that they connected with the Wallace Center's Food Systems Leadership Network and participated in the Farm to Food Assistance Learning Lab.

"Until I connected with the Wallace Center," Thanh said, "I didn't really look at food through an equity lens. The Wallace Center opened my eyes to how broad and deep this work in local food systems is and connected me with supportive people who wanted to hear my story." On the list of people who wanted to hear her story was the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition who, along with the Wallace Center, invited Thanh to speak at a Congressional briefing on the need for sustained funding for the Local Food Purchase Assistance Cooperative Agreement Program.

When asked about the future of Farm to Food Assistance work in Oklahoma, Thanh sees a clear need for an increased number of Farm to Food Assistance programs to provide funding to connect local farmers with low-income communities.

"Producers need purchasing contracts and they need to be engaged and know that they'll have a guaranteed market to sell their products," she responded. "We have to continue to find those contracts to create the onramp for producers to scale up to the next level."

Thanh is committed to this hard work. And that's courage in action.



Photo credit: Intertribal Agriculture Council

# Growing Value for Ranchers and Rice Farmers

This June, the Wallace Center, along with Winrock International and ACR, won a USDA-funded Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities (PCSC) grant. The project, Growing Value for Producers Through Increased Access to Markets for Climate-Smart Commodities, will offer financial and technical support to cattle ranchers on Tribal Lands and rice farmers in Arkansas and Missouri. The Wallace Center will collaborate with Intertribal Agriculture Council (IAC) and Riceland Foods to engage two very distinct producer groups, creating a strong foundation for post-pilot national scalability. IAC and Riceland Foods will provide this technical support and also enroll interested members into the program. The goal of this project is to increase adoption of climate-smart practices and for farmers to profit from the climate value they are creating.

#### **GROWING VALUE FOR RANCHERS AND RICE FARMERS**



#### EXPANDING AND INCENTIVIZING CLIMATE-SMART PRACTICES

Climate-smart agricultural practices reduce or sequester greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, whereas traditional agricultural practices often increase these emissions. However, switching to climate-smart practices can be costly and involve expensive inputs and more labor; farmers who commit to helping the planet need to be compensated so they can expand these practices. Through this project, Winrock seeks to incentivize farmers to adopt climate-smart practices and develop a registry, or digital tracking database, to issue GHG certificates that benefit farmers and the climate. Project partner Blue Raster will design and develop this registry. Arva Intelligence is a technology B-corporation that will work with Riceland producers via its "Riceland Carbon Ready" program to facilitate the collection, monitoring, and automated transfer of on-farm practice data to the ACR Agriculture Registry platform.

#### WITH PARTNERS











BY 2028, THE PROJECT ANTICIPATES THE FOLLOWING IMPACTS AND BENEFITS:



 50,000 new acres enrolled in climate-smart practices with at least 10 new practice types adopted on new acres.

Practices include nutrient management, range planting, prescribed grazing, irrigation water management, no till, etc.

- Adoption of new practice by at least 20 underserved producers on 30,000 acres
- 150,000 MT CO2-e- in GHG benefits issued as GHG certificates for agricultural practices in Arkansas and Missouri and rangeland practices on Tribal Lands
- \$6.5 million to producers for adoption of climate smart practices and monetization of greenhouse gas certificates

The project will build capacity with agricultural nonprofit organizations, cooperatives, and private businesses interacting with a range of producers, including underserved.

It will create a new source of income for farmers who are adopting climate-smart practices. The project will offer financial and technical support to producers to adopt practices and participate in the GHG certificate market so that they can access an additional source of income. These certificates can be sold by producers to corporate buyers to vouch for their climate claims.

Between June and December 2023, the project was in its beginning phase, focusing on hiring support staff. The team also attended the PCSC Network meeting and IAC Annual Conference, where staff connected with partner organizations and planned for outreach and enrollment of members into the project.

#### **GROWING VALUE FOR RANCHERS AND RICE FARMERS**



Photo: Waterfowl gather on rice and other farm fields near Stuttgart, Arkansas. Photo credit: Lance Cheung (USDA)

#### The potential impact of this approach is immense.

This pilot project tests rice and beef commodities with a limited number of farmers and geographic areas. The Wallace Center intends to expand the agricultural registry to several commodities, increase the number of farmers, and eventually expand our reach to all 50 states. This shift to climate-friendly agricultural practices will help small and medium-sized farmers generate additional income for their farms. We also intend to engage with more companies as we grow the registry, so we have reliable buyers to purchase the producer's GHG certificates.

**TOTAL 5 YEAR AWARD AMOUNT: \$20,000,000** AMOUNT SPENT IN 2023: \$281,598

## 2023 FEATURED PUBLICATIONS







Scaling Up Farmer-Driven Water Quality A FRAMEWORK FROM TAINTER CREEK, WISCONSIN



#### USDA LOCAL FOOD PURCHASE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM: INITIAL IMPACT REPORT

The USDA's Local Food Purchase Assistance (LFPA) program was created to connect local farmers, and underserved producers with communities experiencing food insecurity. Approximately 13 percent of the U.S. population is food insecure. Food insecurity and other challenges—including limited access to capital and land—are compounded for Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) communities. By building value chains between local farms and food assistance programs, LFPA-funded initiatives are helping to create fair, institutional value chains for local farmers, while getting fresh, healthy, local products to those in need.

**READ THE REPORT** 

### SCALING UP FARMER-DRIVEN WATER QUALITY

This report compiles lessons learned from a farmer-focused program designed to concentrate financial resources, technical assistance, water quality monitoring, and decision-support tools in a specific watershed to improve water quality. This project supported farmers in Tainter Creek, Wisconsin from 2019-2023 to transition nearly 1,000 highly sensitive acres to regenerative practices, in many cases converting highly erodible cropland to perennial pasture. This report was created in partnership with Valley Stewardship Network and the Tainter Creek Farmer-Led Watershed Council.

ACCESS THE REPORT

## 2023 FEATURED PUBLICATIONS



#### FUNDAMENTALS OF VALUE CHAIN COORDINATION TRAINING COURSE

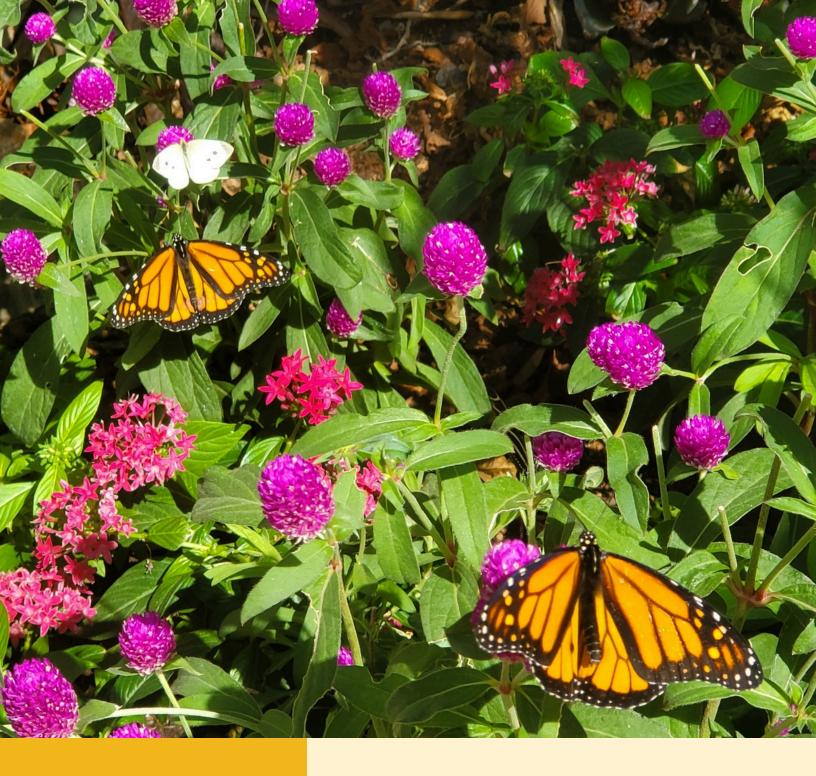
Value Chain Coordination (VCC) is essential to building resilient and equitable local and regional food systems. VCC practitioners are shifting power to create food systems that foster interdependence, transparency, and community agency. Though the work of value chain coordination has been taking place in some shape or form for centuries, efforts to understand and build the diverse skills, strategies, and impacts of VCC are relatively recent. The Wallace Center created this five-part training course to help value chain coordination professionals gain the language, skills, and more to help support their work.

ACCESS THE TRAINING COURSE

#### VALUE CHAIN COORDINATION EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

This evaluation framework is designed to help VCC professionals clarify how to evaluate value chain coordination and effectively document VCC's impact. The framework includes a guide and template to help people develop and implement an evaluation plan.

ACCESS THE FRAMEWORK



## FUNDERS AND FINANCIALS

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# Funders

#### WE'RE GRATEFUL TO THE FOLLOWING FUNDERS WHO MADE OUR WORK IN 2023 POSSIBLE:

- Arkansas Community Foundation
- Cedar Tree Foundation
- Clif Family Foundation
- Deere & Company
- Great Lakes Protection Fund
- Lilah H. Fisher Foundation
- NoVo Foundation
- Regenerative Agriculture Foundation
- Skoll Foundation
- The Rockefeller Foundation
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Gulf of Mexico Division
- USDA Agricultural Marketing Service
- USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture
- USDA Natural Resources Conservation
   Service
- Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation
- W.K. Kellogg Foundation

# 47% UNMET NEED

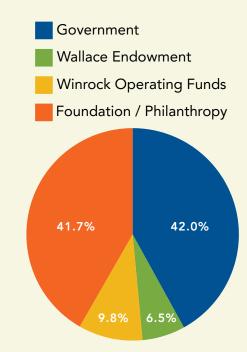
This percentage indicates the total applicants (trainings, mentorship, and more) we were unable to accept due to limited funding. Additional funding will help us serve more of these applicants.

# 2023 Financials

#### WALLACE CENTER FUNDING SOURCES

The Wallace Center staff were responsible for generating over 80% of the funding for the 2023 budget. Through collaboration with partners and well-written proposals, the Wallace Center team leveraged funding from 16 awards during the year that spanned prime awards made directly to the Wallace Center by foundations/philanthropy and government agencies to subcontracts from partner organizations operating their own government and non-government awards. The Wallace Center also drew support from our long-standing endowment and from other sources provided by our parent organization, Winrock International. This resulted in a total budget of \$2,057,933.

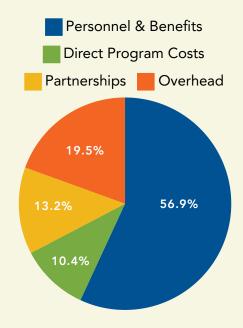
Government	\$858,754
Foundation / Philanthropy	\$852,997
Winrock Operating Funds	\$200,144
Wallace Endowment	\$133,540



### WALLACE CENTER BUDGET BY CATEGORY

To accomplish its work in 2023, the Wallace Center team allocated its budget to develop strong partnerships and high-quality programming. Personnel & Benefits costs were the most significant allocation and include staff benefits. Partnership costs include consultancies, subawards, and other payments to fuel collaboration. Direct program costs include our travel, events, communications, and other expenses. Our overhead costs help to pay for our general operating expenses (e.g., liability insurance, etc.) and back-office staff.

Personnel & Benefits	\$1,170,915
Overhead	\$400,648
Partnerships	\$271,780
Direct Program Costs	\$214,589







## JOIN OUR NETWORKS

The Wallace Center cultivates multiple peer learning networks and topical communities of practice that spread innovation, build capacity, and foster collaboration across the country. Join these networks to access resource libraries, online trainings, event calendars and connect with your peers.

FOOD SYSTEMS LEADERSHIP NETWORK

**REGENERATIVE AG IDEA NETWORK** 

SUBSCRIBE TO OUR NEWSLETTER

