



# INDIANA THRIVING SCHOOLS CHALLENGE 2022 ANNUAL REPORT

EARTH CHARTER INDIANA

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Photo from ITSC school garden

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**earth  
charter**  
INDIANA

# A WORD FROM OUR PROGRAM DIRECTOR

I first came to Earth Charter Indiana at the end of 2019 to lead the Thriving Schools Challenge. This program is dear to my heart and the nucleus of my work. There is nothing more inspiring and motivating to me than to witness our educators and school administrators continually show up for their students. I have been able to witness the power of students taking a leadership role in their own education and that is absolutely magical.

These aren't just sustainability projects. These are moments for students to become advocates for the future they deserve. These are opportunities to connect youth to food by growing it themselves. These are chances to shift the culture of schools not to just focus on testing, but wellness and fun.

I am so grateful to watch this program continue to expand across the state and become the means for growth on levels beyond what we can imagine. I look forward to seeing what's to come. I just know that the ITSC program has a bright future ahead.

**TATJANA REBELLE**  
DIRECTOR OF YOUTH  
PROGRAMMING





Photo of ITSC school Richmond High School Green Team

## ABOUT EARTH CHARTER INDIANA

Created in 2001 by John Gibson and Jerry King, Earth Charter Indiana (ECI) is inspired by the Earth Charter declaration at the Peace Palace in The Hague, Netherlands, in 2000.

The Earth Charter is a proclamation of fundamental principles for building a just, sustainable and peaceful global society in the twenty-first century. ECI was incorporated as a nonprofit corporation (501C3) in 2004.

ECI's focus is on intergenerational action and education in the face of our climate crisis, what we can do to mitigate the crisis, and how we can adapt with dignity and resilience. Explore ECI's website site to discover individual programs and actions [www.earthcharterindiana.org](http://www.earthcharterindiana.org).

## ABOUT ITSC PROGRAM

The Indiana Thriving Schools Challenge is a project based learning grants program for Indiana K-12 schools, with precedence given to schools in Marion County and underserved rural communities.

Project funding is available to schools in need of financial support, maximizing the opportunity for all schools in our community to participate in tackling sustainability.

Selected schools are eligible for up to \$5,000 in funding to implement up to three new projects, as well as to improve upon or expand existing projects. The dedicated teachers and staff who champion the implementation of new projects at selected schools will receive a stipend of up to \$1,000 with no strings attached.

## HIGHLIGHTS OF ITSC PROGRAM



Photo ITSC school students at School for Community Learning

- 2019: The inaugural year of the Indianapolis Thriving Schools Challenge (ITSC), birthed from the Indianapolis THRIVE plan, and certified 53 green schools from all corners of Marion County, while granting funds for 31 schools totaling 51 unique sustainability projects.
- 2020: Earth Charter Indiana took over the program entirely, as well as adopted a two application round approach to enable more schools to participate.
- 2021: ITSC went statewide becoming the Indiana Thriving School Challenge, with our first school Danville Middle School.
- 2022: ITSC was awarded a USDA NIFA Food and Service Learning Program grant supporting the School Garden Pillar and the implementation of the School Garden Liaison Initiative.

## PILLARS OF THE ITSC

The focus of the ITSC program is within three areas of sustainability called Pillars:

- School Gardens (native, pollinator and food)
- Energy & Waste Reduction (recycle programs, LED Conversion, zero waste cafeterias and more)
- Climate & Sustainability Curriculum Creation

## YOUTH INVOLVEMENT

All schools must have students involved with ideation and implementation, generally known as a Green Team, but can also be, but not limited to, an afterschool garden club, individual classroom, entire grade or entire school.

**Youth involvement is mandatory**



Photo ITSC School Holy Angels Catholic School Green Team

## EQUITY CONSIDERATIONS

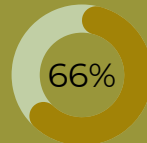
Priority consideration is given to:

- schools within historically underserved communities based on the percentage of students receiving Free and Reduced Meal assistance,
- demographics of the student body,
- median household income, proximity to grocery stores and more.

To ensure funding is distributed in equitable ways, ECI has equity goals. These goals are used as a lens on who to consider first. This framework helps to ensure rural and urban schools are given first priority in funding decisions. No school is denied funding based on equity considerations.

### Prioritization Measure:

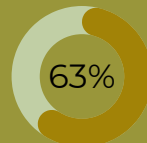
60% Free & Reduced Lunch recipients  
50% Students Identified as BIPOC  
12% Students living with Disabilities



**FRM**  
recipients

APPROXIMATELY 42% OF PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS IN INDIANA ARE ELIGIBLE FOR FREE LUNCH (2023).

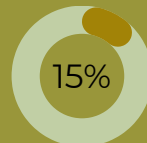
**ITSC FUNDING SUPPORTED 66% IN 2022**



**BIPOC**  
Students

APPROXIMATELY 33.9% OF PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS IN INDIANA IDENTIFIED AS BIPOC.

**ITSC FUNDING SUPPORTED 63% IN 2022**



**Students**  
with  
**Disabilities**

APPROXIMATELY 15.5% OF PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS IN INDIANA ARE IDENTIFIED AS HAVING A DISABILITY.

**ITSC FUNDING SUPPORTED 15% IN 2022**

ECI STARTED COLLECTING THIS DATA DURING ROUND 2



Photo of ITSC School Victory College Prep Green Team and Champion in their garden.

**18**

Grant funding distributed to fund 18 Indiana Schools

**4 schools outside of Marion County**  
**4 schools participated in both rounds**  
**9 new schools into the program**

**34**

34 sustainability projects supported  
**23 school gardens**  
**6 recycling expansions**  
**2 LED or Solar focused projects**

**16**

**\$16,000**  
**stipends for**  
**Indiana**  
**educators**

**47**

**\$47,715**  
**grant funding**  
**for Indiana**  
**schools**



Photo of ITSC school Thomas Gregg Neighborhood School's Green Team

## Schools in 2022 ITSC Program

### ROUND 1:

- DANVILLE MIDDLE SCHOOL
- HERRON HIGH SCHOOL
- HOLY ANGELS CATHOLIC SCHOOL
- INDIAN CREEK ELEMENTARY
- HENRY LONGFELLOW MEDICAL/ STEM MIDDLE SCHOOL
- MISHAWAKA HIGH SCHOOL
- NORTHVIEW MIDDLE SCHOOL
- OAKS ACADEMY- BROOKSIDE
- SOUTHEAST NEIGHBORHOOD SCHOOL OF EXCELLENCE
- THOMAS GREGG NEIGHBORHOOD SCHOOL
- VICTORY COLLEGE PREP

### ROUND 2:

- DANVILLE MIDDLE SCHOOL
- DECATUR CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL
- GOOD SHEPHERD MONTESSORI SCHOOL
- HOLY ANGELS CATHOLIC SCHOOL
- OAKS ACADEMY- FALL CREEK
- OAKS ACADEMY- MARTINDALE- BRIGHTWOOD
- RICHMOND HIGH SCHOOL
- ROOTS PROGRAM
- SCHOOL FOR COMMUNITY LEARNING
- SOUTHEAST NEIGHBORHOOD SCHOOL OF EXCELLENCE
- VICTORY COLLEGE PREP



# USDA NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE GRANT

Earth Charter Indiana is excited to have our work be supported by a USDA NIFA grant. ECI proposed to assist 20 schools in establishing and maintaining gardens to cultivate youth leadership and address high levels of food deserts in Indiana's underserved communities.

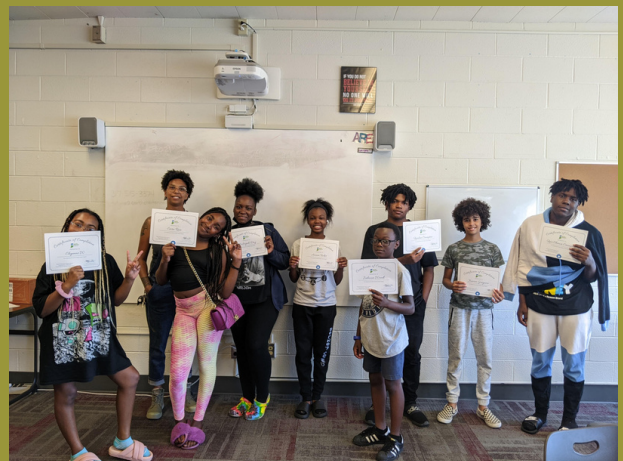
Some of the goals of the NIFA grant are to:

- Address food access by starting or supporting established gardens
- Create climate and nutrition curriculum
- Develop and implement a Youth Leadership program utilizing school gardens in the summer (School Garden Liaison Initiative)
- Solidify foundation for replication throughout the state of Indiana

## The School Garden Liaison

Initiative is a paid, six-week youth leadership program centered around food equity, reimagining systems thinking and learning how to grow food, set at a school garden. There are several goals of the SGL program: assist schools with maintenance of gardens during the summer; increase the amount of youth with knowledge of growing food; create a network of youth empowered to advocate for themselves, their communities and educate young people about the intersection of environmental justice and community empowerment.

*"This was by far the best part of my summer. It gave me something to look forward to."- SGL cohort*



Some of the first cohorts of the SGL program.

A special thank you to the ITSC funders



National Institute of Food and Agriculture  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



**THE INDIANAPOLIS  
FOUNDATION**  
A CICF AFFILIATE



**MCKINNEY  
FAMILY  
FOUNDATION**

We also would like to thank our community partners.

