

FIVE-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

2023 - 2028



WHO WE ARE

Since 1975, the Illinois Environmental Council (IEC) has worked to safeguard Illinois—its people, its plants and animals, and the natural systems on which all life depends by building power for people and the environment. Representing over 100 environmental organizations operating in Illinois, IEC carries out its mission to advance equitable public policies that create healthy environments across Illinois through collaboration, building power, and advocacy.



WHAT WE DO

IEC works at all levels of government by bringing together the Illinois environmental community to influence decision makers and ensure clean air, clean water, and healthy communities.

We coordinate our affiliate member organizations to share resources, mobilize supporters, and respond quickly to the most pressing issues facing the environment in Illinois. From building consensus around an annual environmental agenda to lobbying city, state, and federal decision makers, **IEC takes pride in leading our environmental movement in Illinois.**





BACKGROUND

In 1975, partner organizations and individual environmentalists in Illinois' environmental and conservation sectors formed the Illinois Environmental Council (IEC) to ensure the collective voice of the environmental community was elevated in the state legislature.

Forty-eight years later, IEC is delivering on that early vision, leading an Illinois environmental community more powerful than ever in our state's history. This five-year strategic plan focuses on how we carry out that grounding vision with modern strategies to accomplish today's environmental priorities.

What does that look like in 2023 and beyond? For IEC, it calls for leaning into our niche, which is building power for people and the environment in Illinois. It means working toward a future where decision-makers within governmental bodies at all levels always make the best decisions for environmental protection and environmental justice.

Building bodies of government with a preference for environmental protection must be intentional and metric-based. In this strategic plan, you will find many strategies to carry our work into the future.

AT THEIR CORE, OUR STRATEGIES INCLUDE:

Foster a great place for a diverse and excellent staff to work, fully funded by balanced revenue streams.

Grow, align, and coordinate a powerful and inclusive environmental movement in Illinois.

Build environmental power among decision-makers within the halls of Illinois' governmental power.

Live up to established equity, diversity, and inclusion commitments and values, leading by example within Illinois' environmental movement.



BACKGROUND (CONTINUED)

IEC and our partners have had significant successes over the last decade, including the passage of the nation-leading Climate and Equitable Jobs Act, requirements for lead service line replacement, electric vehicle manufacturing policies, funding for the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and open space programs, new resources to address nutrient pollution, reduction of waste through plastic elimination, composting laws, and so many other pro-environmental policies. We've also played an important role in stopping many anti-environment policies from passing in the legislative process.

IEC will continue to build on that success in the next five years, a critical period in our collective future. We have big dreams and urgent problems to solve as a community. If we want to accomplish them, we must move faster and bolder than ever.

Note: IEC is a 501c4 non-partisan, non-profit organization. The Illinois Environmental Council Education Fund (IECEF) is IEC's sister organization and is a 501c3 non-partisan, non-profit organization. The work of both organizations is included in this strategic plan.

A NEW MISSION AND VISION FOR IEC AND IECEF

In our previous strategic plan, IEC set out to build our equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) values into the structure and work of our organization in a more formal way. To that end, we underwent an extensive process, retaining outside expertise to guide our board and staff in drafting an EDI plan, adopting formal EDI values, and developing more inclusive organizational mission and vision statements.

We collected input from our boards of directors and staff to develop these new mission and vision statements collaboratively, and we are proud to make those public here in our new five-year strategic plan. They, of course, will ground our work into the future and guide the strategic initiatives and goals we have adopted within this plan.

IEC/IECEF VISION:

We envision an Illinois where informed decision-makers and empowered communities successfully champion the environment.

IEC MISSION:

We advance equitable public policies that ensure a healthy environment across Illinois through collaboration, building power, and advocacy.

IECEF MISSION:


We cultivate an inclusive, equitable, and powerful movement to ensure a healthy environment for all Illinoisans through education, communication, and collaboration.



BOARDS OF DIRECTORS

Over the years, many in the environmental community have served at least one term on the IEC or IECEF boards of directors. Our organization's rich history of leadership and support from affiliate organizations has made us stronger. In the last five years, we accomplished a significant strategic milestone in splitting our C3 and C4 boards, and we've seen an increasing number of affiliates join at the board level. In the next five years, we'll work to match each board member's interest with the best engagement space to ensure that IEC/IECEF have the leadership and resources needed to thrive and serve the environmental community. The boards of directors are also important spaces for policy making, and the long-standing pay-for-involvement model will need to be replaced with one that is more equitable and includes community voices and Black and Brown leaders.

STRATEGIC INITIATIVES



IECEF/IEC boards of directors are composed of members who reflect the racial and geographic diversity of the state of Illinois.


IECEF/IEC boards of directors are fully engaged and connected to opportunities to donate their time, talents, or funds.

The IEC board enacts a decision-making structure that incorporates an equitable power dynamic for environmental justice communities and their priorities and explores a structure that will increase board engagement and potential involvement by IEC in political campaigns.

HR & OPERATIONS

IEC staff are key to all of the elements of the strategic plan. We strive to hire excellent, racially and Illinois geographically diverse staff who are excited to maintain a career with IEC/IECEF because of our culture, salary, and benefits. We strive to have a model organization structure with strong operations and support staff that are also excellent resources for our allies at community-based organizations and environmental justice organizations.

STRATEGIC INITIATIVES



IEC/IECEF retain an excellent, diverse staff by working to increase pay, benefits, and workplace satisfaction.

IEC/IECEF create policies, procedures, and staffing to backfill key positions, train entry and junior-level staff to succeed in senior positions, and incorporate equity, diversity, and inclusion into workplace culture.

IECEF funds and develops office spaces that model environmentally sustainable policies, education, and design, accommodate hybrid meetings, and are fully accessible to the environmental community.

DEVELOPMENT & FUNDRAISING

Development and fundraising are the backbone of IEC/IECEF's work. Not only does bringing in resources fuel our operations, but it also allows us to showcase and value our work for individuals, communities, and Illinois's environment. While our funding has increased severalfold over the last decade, we'll need to raise money to maintain current operations and accommodate modest growth over time as we fulfill our staffing and programming vision. IEC/IECEF will prioritize diversifying funding sources, including new efforts to reach individual donors and bring in new racially and geographically diverse donors to our funding pool through our participation in Anti-Racist Fundraising.

STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

IECEF/IEC has a diverse revenue stream with balanced support from affiliates, corporations, individuals, special events, and grants.

IECEF/IEC implements a strategy for equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) in our fundraising practices using the Conservation Voters Movement Anti-Racist Fundraising Values and Principles document.

IECEF/IEC staff are fully connected to grant deliverables and reporting requirements.




EQUITY, DIVERSITY, & INCLUSION


In 2022 and 2023, IEC embarked on an ambitious initiative to formally build equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) values into the structure and work of our organization. The process was expansive and collaborative, gleaning input from our entire organization – board members and staff alike – to draft an EDI plan, adopt formal EDI values, and develop more inclusive organizational mission and vision statements.

Over the next five years, our EDI plan and all of the materials we developed will guide our work, the priorities we undertake, and the culture we cultivate within our organization. The strategic initiatives included in this section are accounted for within our EDI plan and are consistent with the formal values IEC adopted as a part of that process.


STRATEGIC INITIATIVES



IEC centers equity by addressing structural causes and impacts of environmental issues through solutions created by and for those most affected.



IEC implements an EDI plan with goals, metrics, and accountability measures that engage each staff and board member. The organization communicates EDI work widely.



IEC supports environmental justice (EJ) community-based organizations through a spectrum of fiscal support options.



ILLINOIS ENVIRONMENTAL COUNCIL EDUCATION FUND



EDUCATION, COMMUNICATION, AND COLLABORATION

The Illinois Environmental Council Education Fund is an environmental advocacy education organization. It educates its members, partner organizations, stakeholders, potential action-takers, and decision-makers on protecting the environment through policy changes. Using rich experiences like tours, district-specific data, and connections with constituents through town halls, events, and constituent service information, IECEF builds its relationship with lawmakers and ensures they have information vital to making policy decisions.

IECEF focuses on six program areas: conservation, transportation, clean energy, clean water, zero waste, and sustainable agriculture.

IECEF IS WORKING TOWARD

A strong, informed, and equitable environmental movement with powerful and diverse champions led by impacted communities.



ILLINOIS ENVIRONMENTAL COUNCIL EDUCATION FUND

STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

IECEF cultivates diverse decision-makers and advocates into successful environmental champions through education and relationship building.

IECEF brings together organizations, partners, and individuals to create a strong environment and justice policy agenda.

The organization's brand and content position us as a strong and inclusive thought leader within the environmental space across the issue areas and geographic footprints of our work, making IEC a go-to, trusted media source for Illinois' environmental movement, policy, and process information.

IECEF utilizes communication tactics informed by our power analysis to directly support our public policy and capacity-building priorities.



ILLINOIS ENVIRONMENTAL COUNCIL

COLLABORATION, BUILDING POWER, AND ADVOCACY

IEC's top priority in the next five years is solidifying an environmental majority in key government bodies, including the Illinois General Assembly, Chicago City Council, and Illinois' congressional delegation. We are working to grow our power so that policies impacting our environment do not move forward without the support or consent of our environmental community. To do this, IEC already metrically tracks our power, including among those decision-makers who are strong or poised toward Illinois Legislative Green Caucus membership. In the coming years, we will grow that number through bill tracking and analysis, direct lobbying, grassroots lobbying, and increasing our pool of action-takers through communications, civics education, and strengthening our democracy.

While individual actions to protect the environment are important, it's clear that strong, science-backed policy changes are necessary to make progress in solving environmental and social problems at scale. That will continue to be a key piece of our theory of change at IEC.

Additionally, partnerships are critical to accomplishing all the strategic initiatives outlined in this section. Chief among them are our environmental justice affiliates and partners. Going forward, we are doubling down on our commitment to ensure that those most impacted, residents of environmental justice communities, determine environmental justice policy. Over the last several years, we have won significant climate victories with partners in Illinois' labor movement and business community. We plan to develop those partnerships further, finding common ground and shared priorities for future campaigns.

IEC IS FIGHTING FOR

A strong, informed, and equitable environmental movement with the power to pass and enact policies that maximize environmental protection.



ILLINOIS ENVIRONMENTAL COUNCIL

STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

IEC monitors, reviews, analyzes, and takes a position on every proposed policy that impacts the environment, communicates this information to lawmakers and the public, and holds lawmakers accountable for their votes through an annual scorecard.

IEC conducts a yearly assessment of the power of the environmental community and its allies in the Illinois General Assembly, City of Chicago, and other key government bodies and trains our staff, affiliates, and individual activists on tactics to build our power strategically.

IEC lobbies elected officials and activates environmental champions to campaign for just and equitable policies.

IEC leads our movement in harnessing power to support a broadly defined allyship policy platform, recognizing the intersectionality of environmental and social issues on vulnerable communities impacted by our work.

IEC invests further in civic education and democracy tools and explores the expansion of our advocacy toolkit to local government bodies new to our work.

