



# 2022 ANNUAL REPORT

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Throughout 2022, the Illinois Environmental Council Education Fund (IECEF) and the Illinois Environmental Council (IEC) celebrated a year of significant milestones. Our organizations carried out our collective work with the largest, most well-resourced team in our organization's 47-year history.

In 2022, IEC employed 23 full-time employees and operated on a **\$3.4 million**. Our organizations are strong, vibrant, and fiscally sound, and we've exceeded 112 affiliate organization members from across the state. In other words, IEC remains well-positioned to tackle the climate crisis as we protect Illinois' communities and environment through education and advocacy.

Over the past year, we grew into our new Chicago office space and embarked on an intensive internal process of evaluating IEC's culture, policies, and practices and developing a collective plan for intentionally incorporating equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) in our work.

In that process, we engaged external stakeholders, our board of directors, and our staff to gather their input, experiences, and perceptions of IEC's EDI performance. We retained the guidance of experts in the field to help us evaluate that information and develop internal and external benchmarks to measure our progress. Those experts also guided us through the creation of a multi-year organizational plan to improve IEC's EDI performance, giving us informed goals and a path to realizing them. This progress set the stage for the next steps in our EDI work in 2023 – adopting foundational principles, missions, and visions for our organizations to live by as we carry out our EDI plan.

As our team and resources have grown, so too has the breadth and depth of our work. Staff in our relatively young City of Chicago program were instrumental in carrying forward calls for the city to re-establish the long-disbanded Chicago Department of Environment (DOE). In the years since its dissolution, enforcement of environmental laws has sharply declined, leaving families across the city with increasingly unsafe environmental conditions. Amid IEC's advocacy, Mayor Lightfoot took a concrete step toward delivering on her promise to re-establish the city's DOE by budgeting for a brand new Office of Climate & Environmental Equity. This was a huge win in our fight for a fully resourced, permanent department. For more details, see our [Chicago City Budget Analysis here](#).

Our state policy team also racked up some exciting wins for Illinoisans and our environment, despite challenging circumstances. For instance, the pandemic shifted the timeline for the upcoming state elections, which had a cascading effect that impacted the campaign season timeline, and, thus, the need for legislators to wrap up the session early enough to spend time campaigning in their home districts. That meant this session was about half as long as it normally is, leaving just as much, or more, to accomplish in far less time – during an election year at that. Challenging circumstances, to say the least.

Still yet, we advanced victories for our people and our environment while stopping troubling proposals from passing along the way. For example, we gained important ground on sustainable agriculture funding, coal ash cleanup, and comprehensive environmental justice reforms, to name just a few. Additionally, we defended the Climate and Equitable Jobs Act (CEJA) from outlandish attacks that would have gutted some of the most important components of Illinois' new climate action law. For a full rundown of our state policy accomplishments, you can check out our [2022 Legislative Report here](#).

The support of our members, affiliates, and funders helps IEC to share resources, create informed decision makers, and facilitate robust policy development to maximize environmental protection. In 2022, we hosted more than 50 educational events that empowered enviros across Illinois to become stronger advocates for the environmental issues they care about most.

Our educational events, town halls, and lobby days were attended by over 2,000 Illinoisans, and we educated elected officials at nine farms, open spaces, and other conservation tours. In short, 2022 was another historic year in the books for IEC/IECEF. We look forward to continuing to serve Illinois and our shared environment in 2023 and beyond.

Thank you for your support.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jennifer Walling". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jennifer Walling  
Executive Director, Illinois Environmental Council

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# HIGHLIGHTS

## STATE

Despite challenging circumstances, IEC's state policy team achieved some exciting wins for Illinoisans and our environment. Due to a pandemic-induced shift in the timeline for state elections, the 2022 legislative session was about half as long as it normally is, leaving just as much, or more, to accomplish in far less time. Nevertheless, we advanced victories for the state's people and environment while blocking troubling proposals. For example, we gained important ground on sustainable agriculture funding, coal ash cleanup, and comprehensive environmental justice reforms, to name just a few. Additionally, we defended the Climate and Equitable Jobs Act (CEJA) against bad-faith attacks that would have dismantled some of the most important provisions of Illinois' new climate action law. A few of our key victories are outlined below. For a full rundown of our state policy accomplishments, check out our [2022 Legislative Report here](#).

- **Convenient Vehicle Emissions Testing Returns to Chicago**

After all of the vehicle emissions testing stations in Chicago were closed six years ago, residents were forced to wait in line and drive for miles to complete their vehicle emissions test. With support from IEC, a bill that increases the availability of testing stations within city limits passed the state legislature and was signed by the Governor.

- IEC co-hosted a press conference with the state legislators who championed the bill in the General Assembly. You can see [local press coverage here](#).

- **Safe Drug Disposal Made Easier**

In alignment with the growing movement to establish extended producer responsibility models to safely dispose of certain waste products, we were ecstatic to pass the Illinois Drug Take-Back Act in 2022. This bill responds to alarming evidence that consumers often landfill unused pharmaceutical products, or, worse yet, flush them down the toilet when they don't have better disposal options. This practice leads to water contamination that impacts our drinking water supply and harms wildlife in our rivers, lakes, and streams. Instead, Illinoisians will now have easy access to safe drug disposal through their local pharmacies, healthcare providers, and law enforcement partners. Supported by environmentalists, drug manufacturers and retailers, this bill was a shining example of what can be accomplished when all parties come to the table in good faith.

- [Learn more by reading this WTTW article on the bill.](#)

- **Hurdles Removed from Providing Healthy, Local Food in Schools**

In recent years, well-meaning anti-corruption reforms instituted a requirement that governments accept the lowest bid during a procurement process. Unfortunately, the low-bid requirement also had the unintended consequence of lowering the quality of the food provided in public schools because decision makers had to weigh the food's financial cost above its nutritional value. In 2022, IEC and our partners advocated for a bill—ultimately passed by a bipartisan majority of legislators in both the House and Senate—that removes this low-bid requirement for food service providers if a school is considering factors besides cost like better nutrition, sustainability, or wanting to choose a local/regional business.



## HIGHLIGHTS CONTINUED

### • State Budget Reflects Environmental Priorities

This year's state budget indicated that our strategies to build power for people and the environment in Illinois are effective. For example, while the Governor's proposed budget originally cut funding for Soil and Water Conservation Districts, the funding ended up being increased from last year in the final version, thanks to IEC's efforts. In addition, the Open Space Land Acquisition and Development fund was nearly doubled and included new provisions that allow the state's most vulnerable communities to more easily access it. The Governor's Office noted that this represents the largest single investment in parks in our state's history. The budget also made exciting investments in improving water quality, including allocating funds for loans to fix drinking water infrastructure, address toxic substances in drinking water, and replace lead service lines.

- [Get all the details by reading IEC's analysis of the Governor's FY2023 Budget Address.](#)



## CHICAGO

- IEC advocated for the re-establishment of the Chicago Department of Environment, building up a strong campaign around this demand. As a result, DOE became a talking point leading up to the 2023 municipal elections, with candidates for Mayor and Alderperson alike touting their commitment to re-establishing a Department of Environment. Moreover, while not a full victory yet, we did see a first step from the City of Chicago in establishing the Office of Climate & Environmental Equity (OCEE) through the city's 2023 budget.
  - [Read a blog from City Programs Director, Iyana Simba, making the case for a Department of Environment](#)
  - [Watch IEC's Lunch & Learn outlining what happened to Chicago's previous Department of Environment, and why we urgently need to reestablish it.](#)
  - [Watch Iyana on Chicago Tonight discussing the creation of OCEE](#)
- In 2022, the City of Chicago released its first city plan in decades, WeWill Chicago. The process behind WeWill involved numerous meetings with community members across several key issues, and IEC's City Programs Director, Iyana Simba, was at the helm behind the environmental pillar.
  - [Watch Iyana on Chicago Tonight discussing the environmental pillar of WeWill Chicago](#)



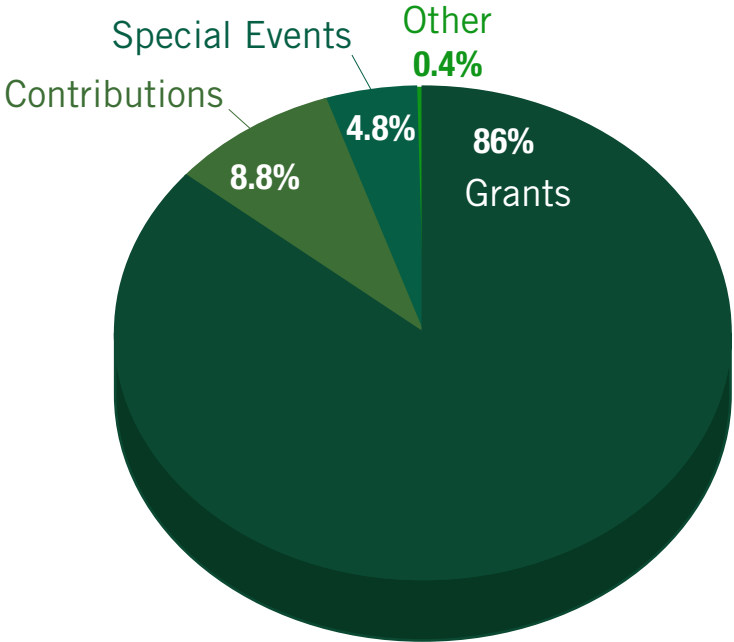
## HIGHLIGHTS CONTINUED

## ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE AND ALLYSHIP

- Chicago's environmental justice communities and allies brought about a major victory—pressuring the city to deny the permit of notorious scrap metal recycler, General Iron, whose parent company RMG intended to move into the environmentally overburdened Southeast side.
  - [Read a blog from City Programs Director Iyana Simba, and Chicagoland Conservation Manager, Tonyisha Harris, giving a round-up of EJ issues in Chicago](#)
- The US Department of Housing and Urban Development [found the city guilty](#) of environmental racism after an investigation prompted by a complaint filed by local activists the year prior.



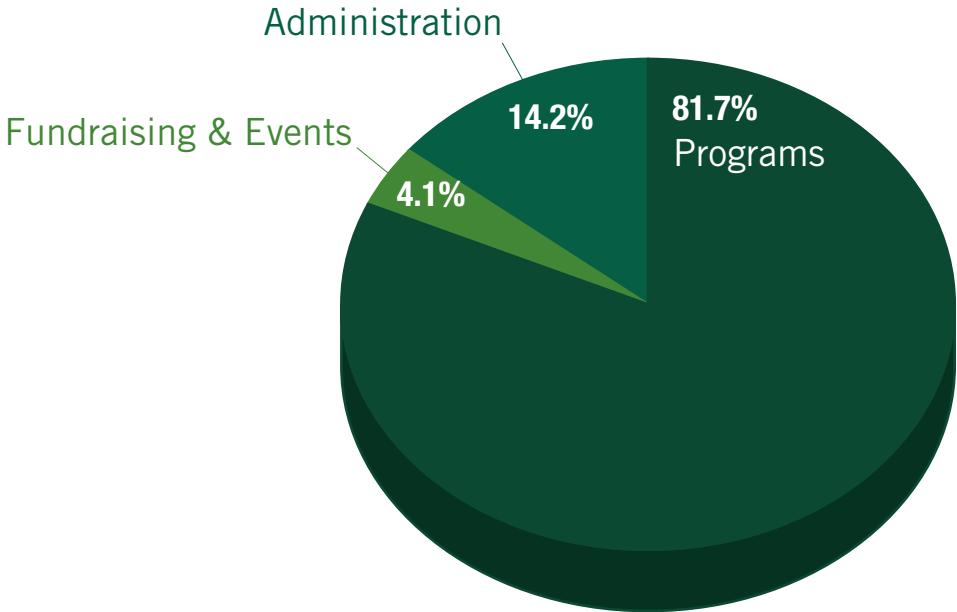
# IEC FINANCES



## IEC INCOME

- Grants - \$1,129,000
- Contributions - \$116,074
- Special Events - \$62,576
- Other - \$4,740

**Total Income: \$1,302,910**



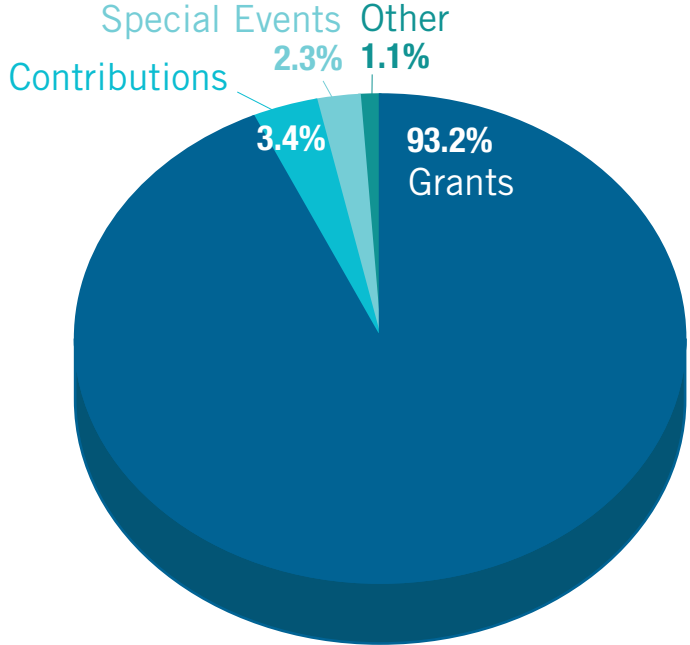
## IEC EXPENSES

- Programs - \$749,341
- Fundraising & Events - \$37,444
- Administration - \$130,430

**Total Expenses: \$917,215**



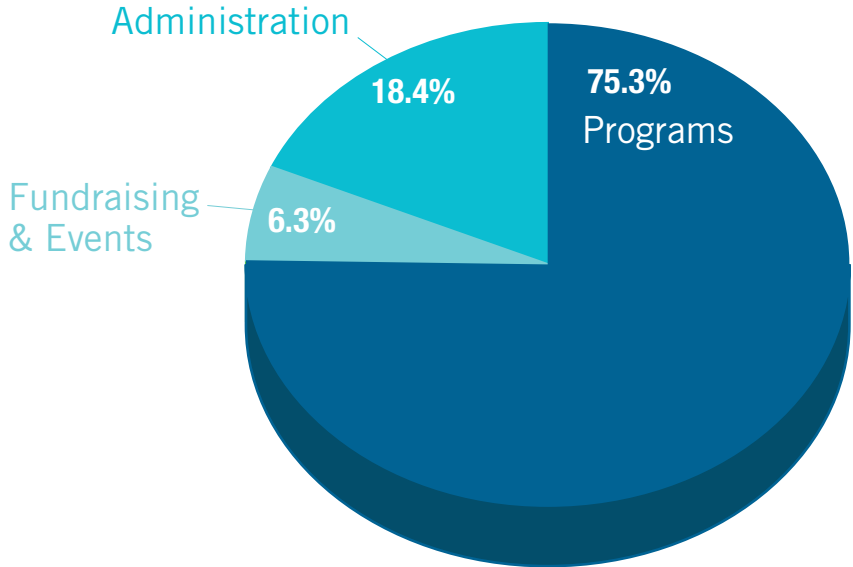
# IECEF FINANCES



## IECEF INCOME

- **Grants** - \$1,954,828
- **Contributions** - \$72,312
- **Special Events** - \$47,893
- **Other** - \$22,473

**Total Income:** \$2,097,506



## IECEF EXPENSES

- **Programs** - \$1,432,858
- **Fundraising & Events** - \$120,408
- **Administration** - \$350,270

**Total Expenses:** \$1,903,536





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Brushwood Center at Ryerson Woods	Natural Investments
Canadian Pacific Railway	Natural Resources Defense Council
Chicago Zoological Society	Nekritz Amdor Andersson Group
Christopher B. Burke Engineering, Ltd.	Openlands
Climate Reality Project	People's Gas
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Constellation	Sierra Club Illinois Chapter
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*Since 1975, the Illinois Environmental Council 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 in the state, IEC carries out its mission to advance public policies that create healthy environments across Illinois through education, advocacy, and movement building.*