

2022 SGL Pilot Year

School Garden Liaison Program



Earth Charter Indiana

The SGL Program is part of the Indiana Thriving Schools Program and made possible by a **USDA NIFA Food & Service Learning Program Grant**.

Content Index



01. Overviews

03. Community

05. Vision & Mission

07. Proposal to
Implementation

10. Curriculum

13. Obstacles

14. Success

16. Questions for the
Future

Director's Report

This program came into being over the course of several years and multiple conversations.



As the program lead for the Indiana Thriving Schools Challenge, I noticed that many schools with gardens had no one to tend to them in the summer.

As a grower, I kept having conversations with folks that either lost their farms or community gardens.

As a parent, I am perpetually trying to find new avenues that keep youth engaged.

As a resident in one of the leading cities for lack of food access, many of us are looking for solutions to combatting food apartheid.

As a community organizer I have become a part of a network of grassroots organizers, nonprofits and more that are seeking way to unite our work in ways that I truly think can change lives.

What happens when you take a community facing a lack of food access, a school with land to grow food, youth that are seeking summer employment, knowledgeable growers ready to share their know-how, a group of community members ready to try something new and a USDA grant?

The School Garden Liaison Program, is what you get.

Tatjana Rebelle

Director of Youth Programming
Earth Charter Indiana

ECI & ITSC

Information



Earth Charter Indiana

Began:

Founded: 2001;
Incorporated as 501(c) 3: 2004

Mission:

Earth Charter Indiana exists to inspire and advance sustainable, just and peaceful living in Indiana by promoting the values and principles of the Earth Charter.

To serve our mission we educate youth regarding the climate crisis, and support them in expressing themselves to make their voices heard.



Indiana Thriving School Challenge

Began:

Born out of Indiana's Thrive Plan: 2019
ECI took over program: 2020

About:

The Indiana Thriving Schools Challenge is a green schools 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.

School Garden Liaison Overview

School Garden Liaison Initiative Proposal

The School Garden Liaison Initiative is a training and internship program for Indiana Youth ages 16-20. Liaisons will be trained within the realms of environmental justice, the fundamentals of climate science, circular economy and civic engagement.

They will then intern with local urban or smaller scale rural farmers. Gaining real world experience prior to becoming a school garden manager in the summer.

When the school year begins, Liaisons will be able to assist educators seeking assistance with lesson plans facilitation, utilizing the nutrition and climate based curriculum guide ECI is creating with national and local partners.

This program is funded through a USDA NIFA Food & Agriculture Service Learning Program Grant.

Meet The Super Team

Each and every member of the School Garden Liaison Program shared the same goal of ensuring our Liaisons had an in-depth understanding of the systems impacting their lives.

While also ensuring they were given the tools to create change within themselves and their community.

They were influential in creating the 6 week curriculum for Youth Leadership Development.



Tatjana Rebelle
SGL Program Director
Director of Youth Programming
Earth Charter Indiana



Benjamin Clark
Environmental Justice &
Institutional Barriers
Anthropocene Household
IUPUI Arts & Humanities
Institute



Bailey Schwartz
Asset Mapping as a tool
for Community
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Self & Social Awareness
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Mystrie Rose
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Seed Sovereignty
Seed Steward/ Farmer
Flanner House Farms



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Research Project Lead
Masters Student Human
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Additional Community Partners



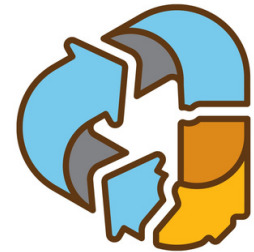
Community Alliance of the Far Eastside (CAFE): Youth Recruitment via their Summer Teen Employment Camp

The Teen Employment Camp is a paid six-week career and leadership development camp for Far Eastside students ages 15 - 18. The program is designed to give participants internship experience in a career of their interests by working half days and then returning to CAFE in the afternoon for workshops and training.

Circular Indiana

Workshop Facilitation on the Circular Economy as part of "Wealth Outside of Capitalism"

CIRCULAR INDIANA is focused on education and advocacy to strengthen the circular economy. Indiana is ready to leverage our unique strengths—manufacturing industry, transportation network, and geographic position—to eliminate waste, create jobs, and strengthen supply chains with benefits for all. Circular Indiana is here to lead the transformation.



SCARABYS Consulting of Kheprw Institute Workshop facilitation on Social Capital as part of "Wealth Outside of Capitalism"

Scarabys Consulting provides consultation and training in the areas of social entrepreneurship and social capital to organizations, community, businesses and institutions. We apply contemporary knowledge and ancient wisdom to create solutions using social capital and social entrepreneurship.

SOLFUL GARDENS

Built and planted 6 beds prior to program to ensure we had a base to teach from

Solful Gardens is an Indiana State Department of Agriculture-recognized Indiana Grown natural produce provider in central Indiana. We provide consultation, guidance and installation for those wanting to grow their own food.



Vision & Mission



V

There are two obstacles we face with ensuring school gardens are sustainable and extend beyond one school year; 1) the reliance on the champion to have gardening experience and 2) maintenance during the summer months when school is out. Training youth to become the school garden managers will tackle those issues, as well as provide an opportunity for on-the-job training for youth seeking a career path in gardening/farming.

M

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

02

Each school will be paired with a local food producer to assist with skill sharing. Youth seeking hands-on job experience will spend time at a local farm or urban garden, get training developed in partnership with various community youth centered organizations on the history of environmental justice, soil health, circular economy and more.

03

SGLs will work to take over school gardens in the summer as a means to tackle the biggest challenge with school gardens: what happens to the gardens during the summer when school is out of session.

2022

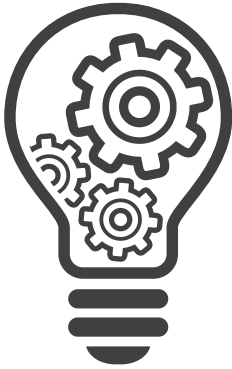
Program Developers agreed upon

GOALS



- 1** Increase school champions capacity by providing our Thriving School Gardens a trained individual knowledgeable about growing practices
- 2** Increase the amount school gardens can produce by ensuring gardens are tended to in the summer
- 3** Increase amount of youth within communities throughout the state that know how to grow their own food
- 4** Increase the amount of food producing gardens throughout the state in rural and urban communities facing food apartheid by using asset mapping
- 5** 6 week training implementation will become the foundation for the ECI Youth Leadership Program through an asset based approach.
- 6** Creation of a collective of young people to be champions in their neighborhood, environment and community.
- 7** Apply evidence-based crime reduction strategies through community-based, collective efficacy-centered approaches (i.e. peer mentoring/coaching, leadership development)
- 8** Expanding collaborations and networks between organizations, growers, schools and youth in an attempt to solidify the community bonds.
- 9** Each garden will be utilized as a hands-on classroom that will give real world applications to climate- and nutrition-focused curriculum that will be developed as part of the program.
- 10** 2 certifications opportunity for youth: School Garden Liaison Certification & Junior Master Gardener Certification
- 11** Interested participants would become future facilitators of the program and provide input to training structure

The SGL program proposal to the USDA



From idea

Phase 1: Program Development

- SGL program developed with community partners.

Phase 2: Youth Recruitment

- 5 youth receive a stipend while undergoing training developed in phase 1.

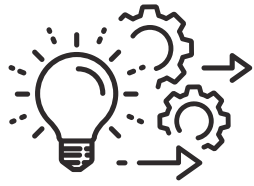
Phase 3: Urban Grower Connection

- Youth paired with a local grower to learn from a hands on approach.

Phase 4: School Garden Takeover

- SGLs paired with a Indiana Thriving School and take over gardens during summer break, allowing the program to be in multiple schools at once.





To implementation:

Why shifting made the most sense

Phase 1: Program development:

- Took time to get partners together
- Realized transportation would be an issue
- Virtual vs in-person
- Summer was approaching

Phase 2: Youth recruitment

- CAFE Indy became our recruitment partner through their Summer Intern program
- Utilized their timeline to shape our program timeline
- Proximity to a former Thriving School
- Provided transportation

Phase 3: Urban Grower Connection

- CAFE Indy connected us to a community grower they had ties to
- Met several times with them to become lead grower and facilitate on site growing education
- Allowed Phase 2 & 3 to occur at the same time

Phase 4: School Garden takeover

- Tindley Summit was a former ITSC school that was unable to build its garden due to capacity issues for educators
- Already planning with Dr. Jarrod Dortch of SolFul Gardens to build beds
- Proximity to CAFE Indy meant transportation was not a concern
- Program Director spent years developing a relationship with the school



Research Opportunity



Community Design with Environmental Data Research project with IUPUI's Human- Computer Interaction program

School Garden Liaisons were also given the chance to be a part of first-of-its-kind research in Indianapolis that will help their community and other communities understand and face environmental issues like climate change and environmental justice.

The research included three live sessions and one independent activity that took approximately 6 hours total over the course of the School Garden Liaison Program.

Research activities included:

- Exploring community member stories about their environment
- Discussing how they define and interact with their environment
- Collecting data (things like photos, recordings, and notes) about their interactions with their environment
- Connecting their environmental data with other environmental data collected

Phase 1 Program Curriculum



001

Introductions & Program Overview:
Discussion of definitions used throughout the program to establish a shared understanding. The group is to create *community standards* for the group. As well as share their own expectations for the program and themselves.



002

Civic Engagement & Community:
Cohorts learn about community from an *assets based approach* by creating an *asset map*. This is used as a stepping stone into *reimagining systems* thinking by completing a *Connections Circle activity*. Followed by a group discussion about what *Civic Engagement* means to them.



003

Institutional Barriers around Soil Health :
Cohorts learn about *lead testing* and the implications to communities with high lead in their soil. They learn about the history of the *Environmental Justice and localized Movement* in Indiana. As well as *Climate Justice's tie to Racial Justice*.



004

Indigenous knowledge & Food Sovereignty:
Cohorts hear directly from an Indigenous person about the *history of Indigenous erasure* and the first hand account of Indigenous growing practices. Including the 6 pillars of *food sovereignty*, seed saving and examples of agriculture.



005

Wealth Outside of Capitalism:
Cohorts learn about different ways to approach wealth with community partners. They learn about *social capital* and how it can be utilized to *build community*. As well as using *Circular Economy* to build and reimagine the business of growing food.



006

Self Awareness & Reflection:
The program concludes with a focus on *replication of leadership*. The goal is to give the cohorts the power to have input on the future of the program and what happens within their own community. We use this week to "*reclaim the power that trauma and systems try to steal*."

Lead Grower Curriculum Choice

After weeks of discussion with the Lead Grower, it was decided to utilize the highly effective Junior Master Gardener (JMG) curriculum. In discussion with the Program Developers it became apparent that there needed to be flexibility for each grower to utilize their own methods of teaching our cohorts how to grow food. The Lead Grower for our pilot year felt that offering cohorts 2 certifications would give them an amazing base to become growers.



What is JMG?

JMG " is an international youth gardening program of the university cooperative Extension network."

Why JMG?

JMG offers lesson plans and curriculum to allow for easy connection to our program.

Why Grower's choice?

We want each Grower to be able to teach their specialized method of growing. They are experts in their field and we want to honor that.

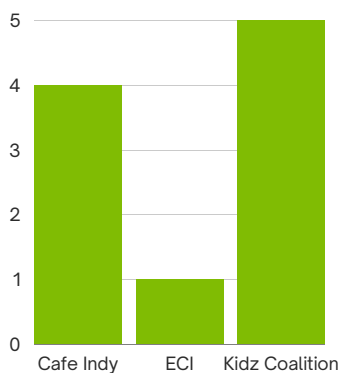
Why two certificates?

We wanted to ensure the Cohorts would have every chance for future opportunities and as many certifications as possible.

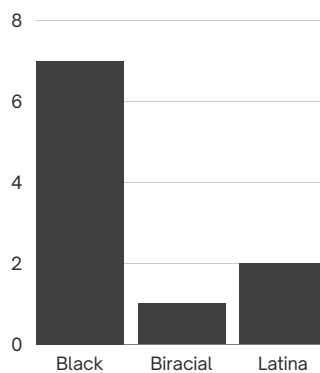
Cohort Demographics

From planning to implementation there was much debate on who should be the target audience for the School Garden Liaisons. By basing the program off of CAFE Indy's Summer Teen Employment camp we were focused on youth ages 15-18. However, youth also came from our grower's own summer program widening the program to ages as young as 11. An interesting lesson we learned is that while the youth under 15 were harder to engage in discussions, they were in fact the most engaged in the physical aspects of the program. We were extremely proud of being able to ensure the cohorts in our program represented the population of the community our host school was in.

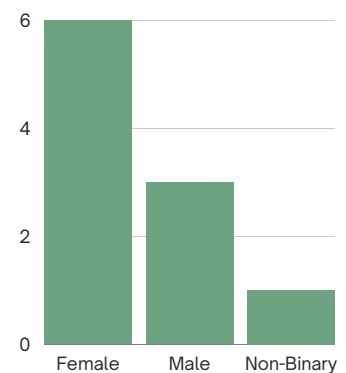
Organizational Link



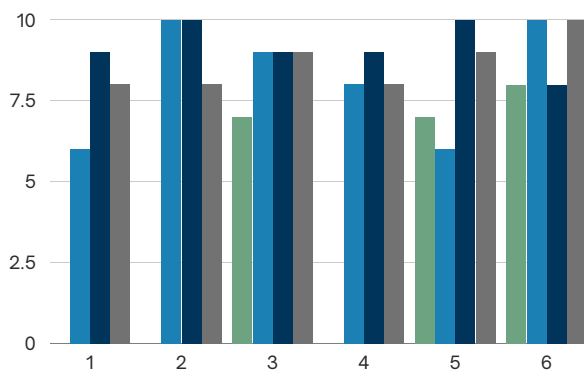
Racial Demographics



Gender Diversity



Attendance per day for 6 weeks



Our SGL Cohorts and Program Director during a visit with Mr. Brandon

Obstacles to Overcome

School turnover: Less than a week prior to the start of the program, the principal our Program Director had been working with for two years, unexpectedly left the Host School. With his departure we had to work with new school administrators that also had the task of getting prepared for the upcoming school year. Coupled with the reduction of educators, our Host School became severely understaffed.

Water access: Much consideration was taken in selection of where the garden would be located and it was all contingent on an outdoor water source. The only outdoor water spigot was in fact irreparable. We were unable to come up with a watering solution due to communication issues caused by school turnover.

Grower issues: The lead grower in charge of running the JMG curriculum and teaching the cohorts how to grow and maintain the garden, backed out of their duties in the midst of the program. We were able to find a grower to step in but that was not until halfway through the six week program.



**Educator,
administrator and
staff turnover**



**No outdoor water
source nor
consistent access to
indoor water
sources**



**We can't assume
teachers are growers
and growers are
teachers**

How do we measure success?



Cohort Retention: Over the course of our 6 week program we were able to retain the vast majority of cohorts. Two cohorts for week one did not return but those that replaced them did. One cohort had to shift to part time due to personal reasons.



Problem Solving: Our obstacles provided real world examples to problem solving. SGL cohorts devised plans to tackle watering. As well as had input on what they wanted to learn, giving them ownership of the program itself.



Self Awareness and Community: The goal of the program was to create space for each cohort to see themselves as an asset. As well as to become an asset to their community, no matter where they are. This became evident as we witness them work as a team and a community.



Economic independence: Offering cohorts a stipend provided for instruction on money management and invoicing. Offering insight to what it would be like to be in the job force. For all but one of the cohorts, this was their first paying job.



New Skills Learned: Cohorts were given the tools and space to problem solve in real time. Each of them participated in working as a team to build beds and individually come up with solutions in the areas that interested them.



A Garden for a School: Our host school now has a full fledged garden that they can utilize how they see fit. This garden will be utilized as an outdoor classroom and assist with new programming as they develop them.



Youth Leadership Development: The six week Phase 1 programming we developed with our partners was a huge success. It will become the foundation of ECI's Youth Leadership program that will be adjusted dependent on what area youth would like to focus on.



Collaboration and Network Expansion: This program has proven to be an effective way for multiple organizations, community programs and more to work together. There are already talks for more collaborations in the future.

The Future of the School Garden Liaison Program.



What is in store for 2023?

- Developing protocol based on community, educator and youth input on how we select our School Garden Liaison Host School
- Continue to develop relationships with growers and build a more robust vetting program for schools and our cohorts
- Establishing protocol for youth recruitment for 2023
- Reimagining the length of the program to enable the best results
- Inviting the past School Garden Liaisons to become facilitators and leads for the next round of cohorts.

2022 SGL Pilot Year Report

School Garden Liaison Program

Thank You



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



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charter**
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