



THE CHAIN  
*collaborative*

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2023  
**Annual  
Report**



# Letter from the Founder

When I look at the statistics – that half of all U.S.-based nonprofits fail within the first few years, and of those that don't, 30% won't make it past ten years – all I can think of is that I am very humbled to still be on this journey with all of you, nine-and-a-half years after our founding. I am even more humbled to know that there are an estimated 1.48 million 501(c)(3) organizations in total, and yet each of you has chosen to support this one. I don't take any of it for granted. In fact, given these realities as well as the challenges of our current time, I enter each new year at The Chain Collaborative with one simple hope: that we can stay afloat and continue creating waves of impact in the lives of others. To know that we have not only stayed afloat in 2023, but have also reached new depths, is nothing short of an honor and a privilege. Thank you once again for helping us to make this year our best year yet.

In 2023, our team at The Chain Collaborative worked alongside six locally-led groups from five countries in Latin America as they finalized the implementation of the projects they had designed for their own communities, alongside their communities – as part of our Community-Led Development Incubator program. Our team also onboarded four locally-led groups from three countries in East/Central Africa to the Incubator, marking its first iteration in the region. We are now beyond excited to share the impact of this program with you throughout the remainder of this report, and to highlight our first-ever video describing our work. Launching this video was an enormous milestone for us in 2023, and we could not be prouder that it has come to life – all thanks to our generous supporters.

Of course, so much of what we do at The Chain Collaborative would not be possible without our supporters, and without the earned income models we developed in the early stages of our organization's development. For this, we would like to acknowledge each and every individual, company, and foundation

that has championed our cause and mission over the years, and we send our appreciation to the students and clients who have continued to seek out The Chain Collaborative for sustainability education and expert consulting services. You are the reason for the 2023 outcomes we share in this report, and you are what gives us hope that we will be able to reach our goals in 2024.

During the next 12 months, we look forward to onboarding a new cohort of local leaders from coffee communities in Latin America, finalizing our first cohort of East/Central African leaders, and officially completing the first year of our Alumni Network. In addition, we are happy to report that we will continue teaching courses in coffee sustainability and sustainability reporting, and that we are maintaining relationships with several clients throughout the coffee value stream, such as Fairtrade International and Root Capital. Finally, we will be collaborating on new carbon foot-printing projects in 2024, ensuring our ongoing expertise and learning in this area. It is sure to be another whirlwind year, but if 2023 taught us anything, it's that we can and we must keep swimming – as we'll be sure to find what we need to thrive along the way. Thank you once again for riding the waves with us!

With love and gratitude,

Nora D. Burkey  
Founder & Executive Director  
Organizational Programs and Partnerships Lead



The mission of The Chain Collaborative is to co-create opportunities and strengthen capacities for community-led change in the coffee sector.



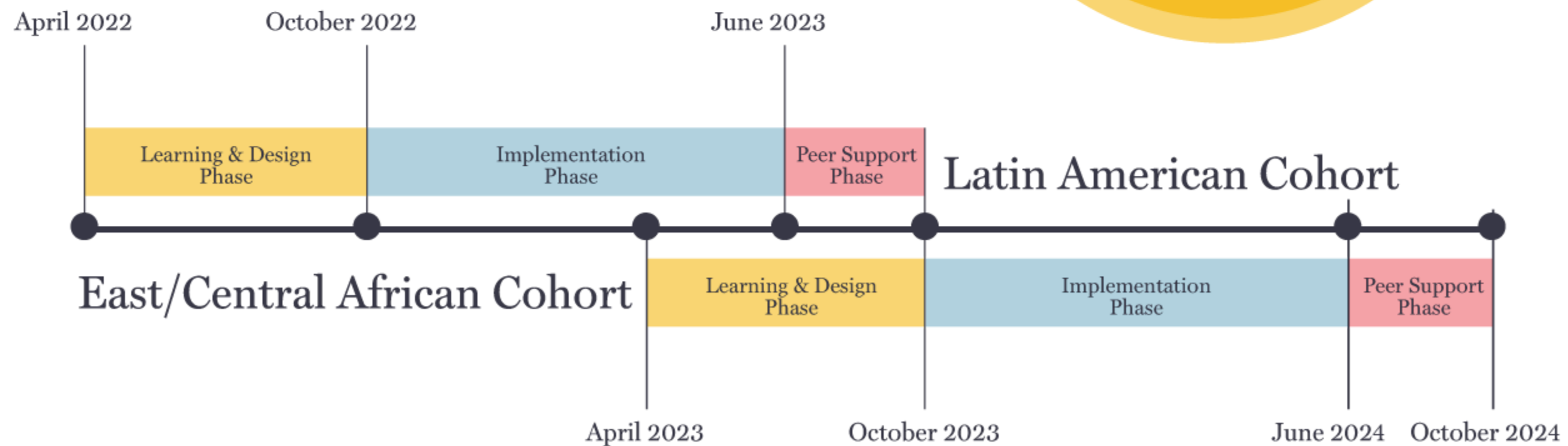
We believe that coffee communities make the best decisions about their own development and that sustainable change comes from local leadership. We know that local leaders possess the drive and capacity to mobilize and inspire their community toward long-term goals that will bring about positive impact.



Our vision for the future is an equitable and responsive global coffee industry that recognizes, values, and accompanies the self-directed development of coffee communities worldwide.

# Our Impact: Community-Led Development Incubator

Through our core program, the Community-Led Development Incubator, we build relationships with emerging organizations in coffee-growing regions of Latin America and East/Central Africa, providing access to funding for their community-driven initiatives. Participants complete three program phases over the course of 18 months, which allows participants to design a community-led development project alongside community members, implement it with TCC funding and robust support, and report on its impact. Finally, participants are able to join an ongoing TCC-led Alumni Network of change-makers in the coffee sector. In 2023, our 2022-2023 Latin American cohort completed the final stage of the Incubator and entered the Alumni Network, while the 2023-2024 East/Central African cohort completed the first stage, the Learning and Design Phase, and entered the Implementation Phase.





# CLD Incubator Participants



In the following sections, we share a snapshot of the Incubator's impact in numbers, as well as six case studies of participants' impact across the three pillars of sustainability:



# Incubator's Impact in Numbers

10

locally-led organizations  
participated

8

countries represented

10k+

community members  
impacted by locally-designed  
livelihood initiatives

80%

of communities experienced  
improved access to  
infrastructure

87%

of leaders reported income  
increase for farmers and  
community members

100%

of leaders reported  
increases in participation  
of women and youth

75%

of communities experienced  
improved access to education  
for youth and/or adults

100%

of leaders reported a  
high level of satisfaction  
with the Incubator

100%

of leaders reported an  
increase in leadership  
skills, both personally  
and within their  
organizations

70%

of communities  
experienced improved  
access to infrastructure

90%

of participating leaders  
reported feeling a sense  
of pride, independence,  
and self-confidence  
thanks to their experience  
in the Incubator

100%

of leaders reported an  
increase in connection  
with and engagement  
from their community





## Biblioteca Girasol Project Highlight

**Biblioteca Girasol** is a community library in the coffee-growing region of Matapalo, Nicaragua run by a team of youth leader volunteers who are dedicated to creating a safe space in their community for children to learn, play, and dream. Despite their commitment to education in their community, most of Biblioteca Girasol's youth leaders are not able to attend high school due to the financial burden of buying school supplies and paying bus fares to reach the nearest public school. To respond to this challenge, through the Incubator, Biblioteca Girasol decided to launch a program that offers scholarships to youth leaders, and provides academic assistance and mental health services. This program now ensures that the library's motivated youth leaders can complete high school, and it supports them to continue giving back to their community - as youth leaders also design and facilitate after-school programming for children who visit the library.

“ We know that we are helping other young people fulfill their dreams and helping our society move forward. The work we are doing is significant because we have helped families who did not have the opportunity to send their children to school. ”

Jubelkys Ramos







## Girl Power Foundation Uganda Project Highlight

“ We believe that when people feel part of the development process and believe they and their descendants will benefit from it, they join efforts to address today’s development challenges. ”

Winnie Ainembaabazi

**Girl Power Foundation Uganda (GPFU)**’s mission is to uplift adolescent girls and young women to utilize their skills and break the patterns that prevent them from thriving. Through a range of initiatives, the organization addresses topics such as women’s rights, mental and physical health, gender equity, and economic independence to encourage young women to discover their potential, make informed decisions, and create positive change in their communities. Through their Incubator project in 2024, GPFU will engage 500+ community members - including women and girls both in and out of school - to increase women's economic empowerment, enhance gender equity, and create a shared space in the community to support and be a part of these conversations. Specifically, GPFU has designed three main focus areas for their project: vocational skills training for women and young girls that are out of school; sports activities for sensitization at school on mental and physical wellness; and community music, dance, and drama for creating unity and raising awareness on important topics.





Environmental  
Impact

## Asoamazonas Project Highlight

**Asoamazonas**, founded in 2018, is a youth-led group from the community of Huaticocha, in the Ecuadorian Amazon. Their aim is to rescue agricultural activities in their region and add value to local products - especially cacao and Robusta coffee - by growing and processing them in a sustainable, environmentally-friendly way. In addition to their work with coffee and cacao, Asoamazonas is passionate about education. With their Incubator project, Asoamazonas provided personalized technical assistance to 15 farming families so they could improve their yield and quality via organic and permaculture practices, obtain environmental certifications, and increase their incomes. In addition, they supported an after-school program for youth and children to promote reading, creativity, and coffee brewing skills; they also led a workshop for children about climate change.

“ Having the resources for this project has allowed us to delegate responsibilities and structure work areas (for example, technical assistance and the reading club); we now see more leadership, motivation, and responsibility from other community leaders. You see a different spirit in them. ”

Andrea López







## Sholi Project Highlight

**Abateraninkunga ba Sholi (Sholi)** originally started out as a small association of about 30 women from the Nyarubuye Village in Rwanda who started a money lending rotation system to help each other grow. Now it has grown into a thriving cooperative that not only processes and sells coffee, but has also established a medical center, a clean water system, and a conference hall in the village. As part of the Incubator, Sholi is developing a project to support young single mothers within their community by reintegrating them into the local economy. The project has two main components. First, they are providing land and a comprehensive training program surrounding coffee and sustainability for a group of 80 young single mothers to increase their incomes through coffee production and differentiated branding. Second, to supplement members' income until they see the profits from the new coffee production, Sholi is fostering alternative income options through skill development in artisan crafting and goat farming, two areas the women identified as being viable and interesting to them.

“As a result of TCC engagement, I have learned about community leadership and participation of our members, [and the importance of] thinking about inclusivity of the people benefitting from the project. Not only will leaders make decisions but [they will] also allow participants to make decisions.”

Gustave Nikomeze







## FEMAC Project Highlight

The **FEMAC Cooperative** works to fight exploitation in the coffee value chain by reducing the amount of intermediaries in their transactions and supporting farmers to produce better-quality coffee - thereby increasing their incomes. In this effort, they aim to bring together 40,000 farmers across several villages on the Island of Idjwi in the Democratic Republic of Congo. As part of the Incubator, FEMAC is working on a project to improve socio-economic outcomes in their community through collective coffee processing and improved sales. Their initiative includes building a coffee washing station as well as providing training to farmers on best practices to ensure high coffee quality and greater opportunities within the international specialty coffee market. With more control of their value chain through processing, FEMAC hopes to retain more of their crops' value and return greater income to their farmer members. FEMAC also seeks to include widowed women and youth who have lost family to conflict in all of their processes.

“The support we received from TCC helped us increase our capacity, as they respect our needs and commitments. What we learned in the Incubator was easily transferable.”

Pascal Kahule







## Kyaffe Farmers Coffee Project Highlight

**Kyaffe Farmers Coffee**, founded in 2017, is a social enterprise partnering with 90 women coffee farmers, working to bring them better prices and using coffee as a tool for development. The organization also runs the only community primary school in the area, where 350 children of farmers have access to quality education. Through their Incubator project, 'Empowering Young Girls Through Barista Skills Training and Mentorship,' Kyaffe has opened a barista academy and will train the first cohort of baristas. Young mothers and girls who have had to drop out of school will have the opportunity to start their careers in coffee as professional baristas after participating in the training and mentorship program. In addition to the barista academy, Kyaffe has invested in new equipment for their coffee shop enterprise in Uganda's capital, Kampala, which returns profits to their primary school.

“ TCC's tools enabled me to envision the project's trajectory more clearly, highlighting key milestones and the interconnections between different components. This will be instrumental in guiding our actions and decision-making as we move forward with the project. ”

Elizabeth Nalugemwa





# Alumni Network

This year, we launched the TCC Alumni Network, a remote community for learning and connection for past Incubator participants. So far, all Latin American leaders from the 2022-2023 Incubator cohort have joined the network and will now have the opportunity to foster long-term relationships with TCC, sustainability and justice-minded professionals in the coffee sector, and other Incubator alumni. They will also have the chance to further their community initiatives, expand their networks, continue learning, and work together to create more opportunities and engagement with other professionals. The Alumni Network will additionally offer alumni the opportunity to:

- Apply for grants to further their community-led initiatives.
- Receive mentorship from industry professionals.
- Provide mentorship to current Incubator participants.
- Utilize TCC fiscal sponsorship.
- Take part in webinars and learning opportunities.
- Receive discounts on coffee education courses.





# Consulting Partnerships

## The Nature Conservancy

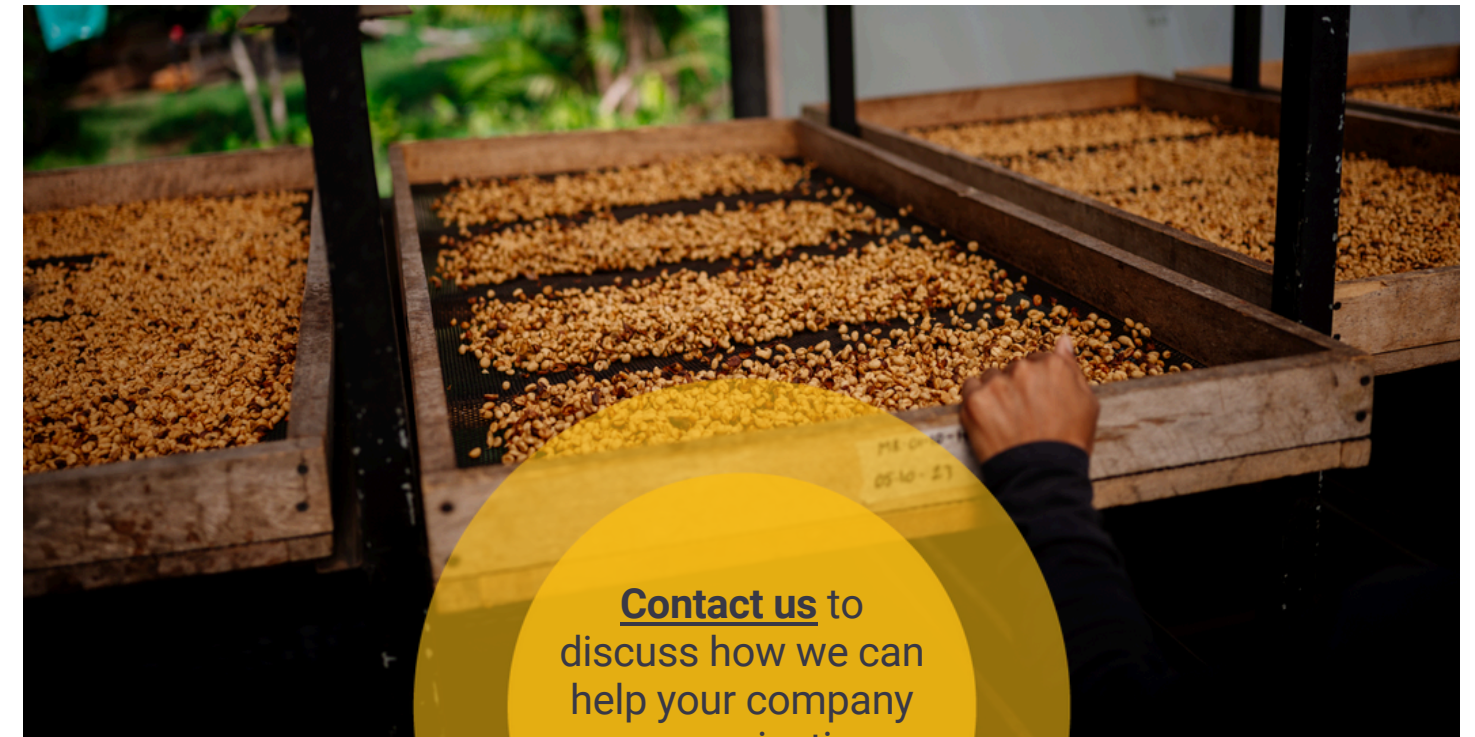
In 2023, we partnered with Expressing Origin and Karl Weinhold to assess the feasibility of decarbonizing six key industries in southern Mexico: coffee, cacao, honey, timber, ecotourism, and dairy. Through extensive research involving analysis of public documents from 61 regional companies, examination of 32 digital tools, and interviews with industry personnel, our collaborative team gleaned insights into existing initiatives and potential pathways for decarbonization. The findings from this research culminated in a comprehensive report, offering a roadmap for conducting a decarbonization pilot project within a dairy company chosen by The Nature Conservancy.

## IDH/The Sustainable Trade Initiative

In 2023, on behalf of IDH, we researched cost of production and volume as two key drivers of living income for smallholder farmers across multiple sectors, including coffee. In addition to exploring the relationship between these factors and their impact on production systems, we also analyzed their interaction with other drivers of income, including land access, diversification, and price. Finally, we developed an analysis framework to support supply chain actors to understand the impact of potential cost of production and/or volume-related interventions on living income and livelihood development.

## Fairtrade Cost of Sustainable Production Template

TCC and Expressing Origin were contracted by the Fairtrade International Standards and Pricing Unit to review the current Cost of Sustainable Production (COSP) template for coffee, and incorporate elements related to Human Rights and Environmental Due Diligence (HREDD) and Living Income Reference Price (LIRP). To this end, we reviewed related internal Fairtrade documents, conducted interviews with Fairtrade stakeholders, and developed an updated template and guidance document for testing with small producer organizations in Asia, Latin America, and Africa.



**Contact us** to discuss how we can help your company or organization make a meaningful impact.



# Collabs

## Now Africa Initiative

TCC's first-ever local leader partner since 2014, Now Africa Initiative (NAI) is a grassroots farmer organization located in Nyamigoye Parish in the Kanungu District of Southwestern Uganda. NAI's mission is to play a catalytic role in contributing to the socio-economic transformation of rural Uganda through sustainable agricultural development and educational improvements. Now, NAI is one of TCC's Collab partners. We support NAI by providing fiscal sponsorship and by helping to build funding partnerships for their essential work.

Since 2014, NAI has founded a primary school, opened the first locally-owned coffee mill in Southwestern Uganda, improved access to clean drinking water, and offered a range of training programs to coffee farmers and their families. Below we highlight a few of their main accomplishments in 2023.





# Now Africa Initiative in Numbers

## Coffee

In 2022, NAI founded the first-ever locally-owned coffee mill in their region of Uganda. In 2023, they had the following success in their work with farmers:

**980** farmers are now working with NAI

**100** metric tons of milled coffee purchased.

**20%** increase in price paid to farmers.

**8,000 USD** has been re-invested in NAI projects, such as farmer training and support for their primary school's operational costs.

**25,000 USD** provided in pre-financing to NAI farmers allowing them to meet urgent needs like school fees, purchase of some farm inputs, and home improvements - all without relying on loan sharks and middle-men.

## Clean Water

A year since installation, NAI's solar-powered water filtration system has led to:

**1,320,000** liters of safe water distributed.

**215** households with **1,505** individuals accessing safe water.

A reduction in waterborne diseases among teachers, learners, and community members, leading to **98%** school attendance for both teachers and students (up from a 60% absenteeism rate in 2022 due to sickness).

## Education

NAI's commitment to education and investment in their primary school, Karama Education Center, in 2023 led to the following outcomes:

School enrollment increased by **14%**, from 350 students in 2022 to **405** in 2023.

**23** primary school students graduated.

**5** Karama Education Center graduates received secondary school scholarships from NAI.

**60** girls participated in the Go Girls Mentorship Program to develop confidence, goal-setting and leadership skills

# Collabs

## Digital Coffee Future

Digital Coffee Future (DCF) is an organization that offers coffee value stream actors access to information regarding digital innovations in the industry. Its approach involves hosting events, providing educational programs, offering consulting services, and sharing resources on digitalization within the coffee industry. As one of The Chain Collaborative's Collab partners, we support the growth of DCF by providing strategic guidance, as well as through supporting them with educational content development and consulting services.



# Fellowships

## TCC Program Fellowship

The Chain Collaborative Program Fellowship provides the opportunity for coffee professionals to i) work alongside our team on our community-led development programs and consulting projects for 10 months; ii) learn how to engage in community-led development in the coffee sector from an anti-top down and anti-colonial perspective; and iii) complete the three levels of the SCA Coffee Sustainability Program at no cost. In 2023, two fellows from Peru and Ethiopia successfully completed the program.

“ *The fellowship program has helped me gain a clear awareness of the difference between the support that organizations in coffee-growing communities actually require and the support that is assumed they should receive. Even the smallest details, such as how we communicate and offer support, can play a part in challenging power dynamics and helping deviate from the industry norm.* ”

Beamlak Bekele  
2023 TCC Program Fellow

## Sustain Coffee Library & Fellowship

Founded in 2018, Sustain Coffee was created to connect various actors within the coffee industry to a comprehensive database collating available research and resources on sustainability. We have the privilege of partnering with them to contribute a variety of resources each year and manage the Sustain Coffee Fellowship. The Sustain Coffee Fellowship is a five-month opportunity for young coffee professionals to work directly on the development of the resource database; receive credit they can put toward the cost of TCC courses; and receive training and mentorship in social media and stakeholder outreach.



# Education

We offer online, virtual coursework to coffee professionals and enthusiasts worldwide. Our work promotes a shared understanding of the complexities of sustainability in the coffee value stream and offers a greater focus on social, environmental, and economic justice.

## SCA Sustainability Program

The Specialty Coffee Association's Coffee Sustainability Program consists of three course levels: Foundation, Intermediate, and Professional. The Foundation level is designed to offer baseline knowledge of what the term sustainability means and the challenges of acting sustainably across the coffee value stream. The Intermediate level builds on these concepts, while developing each student's ability to analyze and interpret a variety of sustainability projects in the coffee sector. The Professional level offers an intensive, practical experience in which students design their own sustainability project in accordance with their individual or organizational goals.

## Sustainability Reporting

This online course is an opportunity for coffee professionals to explore the importance of corporate and non-profit accountability, and practically develop a strategy to improve sustainability, impact, or transparency reporting at their own companies and institutions. Students learn about the different types of industry-wide reporting, understand key terminology, and assess opportunities for data collection. The goal of the course is to develop each student's understanding of how to use specific tools and frameworks to develop a feasible data collection and sharing methodology.

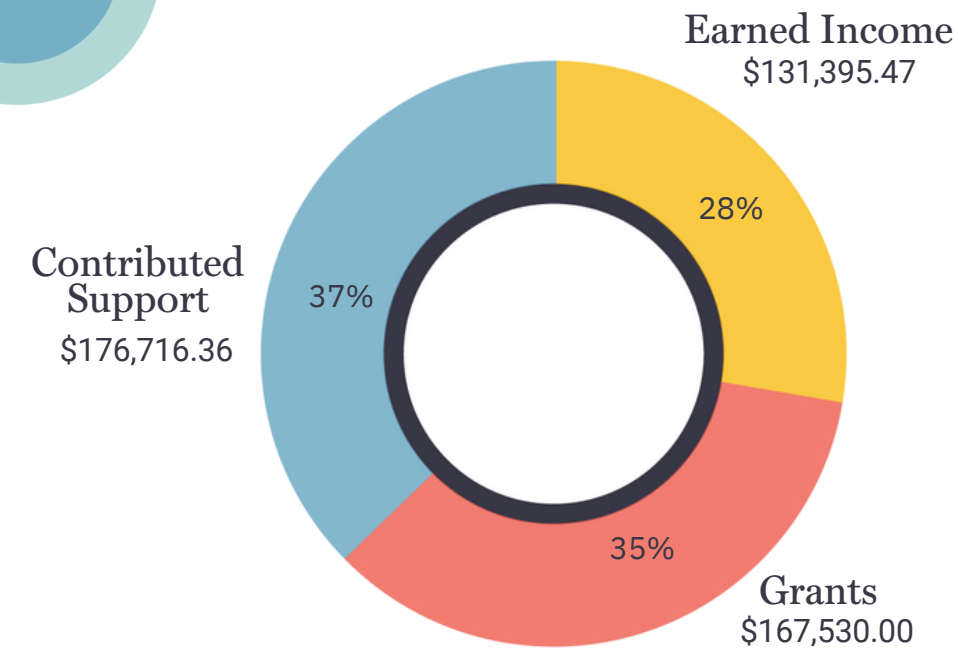
# Education in Numbers







# Financials



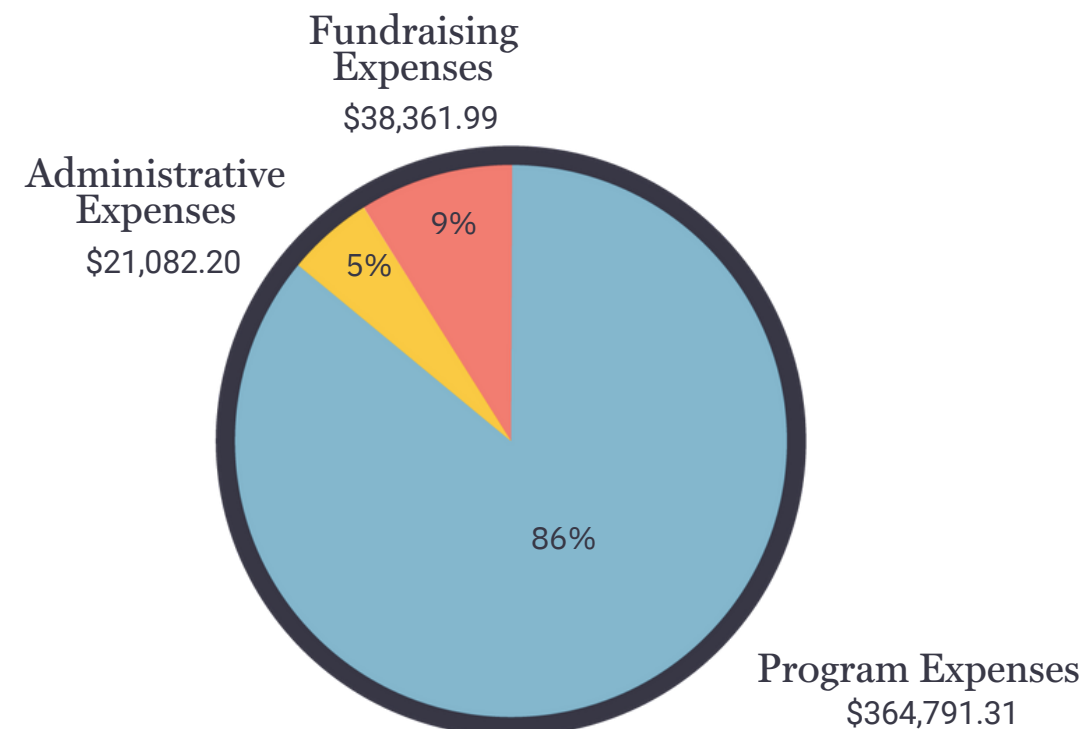
**Earned Income**  
Refers to the earnings coming from our consulting and education activities.

**Contributed Support**  
Refers to the money raised through donations from companies and individuals.

**Grants**  
Refers to the funds we received from Foundations

Income \$475,641.83

Expense \$424,235.50



## Looking Ahead

### Programs: CLD Incubator Latin America 2024-2025 cohort

In parallel to supporting the East/Central African cohort during their Implementation and Peer Support Phases in 2024, we have launched a call for applications for the Incubator’s next Latin American cohort. We expect to onboard eight new groups for the 2024-2025 cohort. The selected participants will begin the six-month Learning & Design Phase in April 2024.

### Partnerships: Themed Incubators

In 2024, TCC seeks to build more targeted partnerships to implement our Incubator methodology with cohorts that are focusing on a specific theme. Through strategic partnerships with organizations and companies looking to fund community-led development within a specific country, region, or project focus area, we will aim to adapt our current model to include topic-specific instruction. For example, a themed incubator could bring together groups focusing on gender equity or climate change adaptation within coffee growing communities in Central/East Africa in particular.

### Education: Pre-Recorded Courses

In an effort to expand access to our Sustainability Reporting course, TCC will be partnering with the Coffee Knowledge Hub to offer a self-paced and pre-recorded version of the course. Through this partnership, TCC hopes to multiply the number of students and also reduce instruction time in order to maximize our team’s efficiency.





# Our Supporters

We are very grateful to our generous 2023 supporters, who have each contributed to the activation of community-led change and have put change-making power into the hands of local leaders.





# Our Supporters

## Foundation and Corporate

Abt Associates  
Amazon Smile  
Better Grounds  
Brewista  
Caravan Coffee Roasters  
Coffee Tools Distributing  
Cotopaxi  
Equator Coffee Roasters (*on behalf of relief efforts in coffee regions of Peru*)  
John Burroughs School  
Issroff Family Charitable Foundation (*on behalf of Girl Power Foundation Uganda*)  
MiiR  
Mortenson Family Foundation  
Primavera Green Coffee  
Secoya Strategies  
Succulent Coffee Roasters  
Toddy  
Vista Hermosa Foundation (*on behalf of Now Africa Initiative*)  
Whiptail Coffee  
Wonderstate Coffee (*on behalf of relief efforts in coffee regions of Peru*)

## Individual

Adam Monaghan  
Andrew J. Montemayor  
Angelica A. Brisk  
Anika Manzoor  
Anonymous  
Anonymous  
Benjamin Myers  
Beth Essington  
Betty Hillard and Jacqueline H. Slabach  
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Che-Hao Lin  
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Nissa Bagelman  
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Rebecca Roebber  
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## In-kind Donors

44 North Coffee  
Acaia  
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Joe Coffee  
Just Coffee Cooperative  
MiiR  
Pachamama Coffee  
Peace Coffee  
Rise Up Coffee Roasters  
Roast Magazine  
Saint Soph Studios  
Standart  
Succulent Coffee Roasters  
Sweet Bloom Coffee Roasters  
Sweet Maria's  
The Well Coffeehouse  
Three Keys  
Whiptail Coffee  
Yield Coffee Roasters

# Ways to Support Our Work

## Monthly Donor Initiative

Sign up to give a monthly donation of any size. In return, you will receive quarterly updates about the progress of our partners, and a coffee gift by the end of the year!

## In-kind Donations

Every year, on Giving Tuesday, we host our Annual Holiday Auction, where we partner with like-minded companies who contribute with in-kind donations our supporters can bid on. If you would like to donate an item for this year's auction, don't hesitate to reach out!

## Support the Incubator

You can become a financial donor of the program! We partner with individuals, companies, and foundations at all levels of support. Reach out to learn more.

## Support the Alumni Network

To contribute to the continuity of our partners' initiatives you can become a financial supporter of the Alumni Network Program; we have sponsorship opportunities starting at \$250 / year.

If you would like to discuss further options to support our work, get in touch!

## Our Staff



Nora Burkey

*Founder & Executive Director  
Organizational Programs &  
Partnerships Lead*



Tessa Tracy

*Community-Led Programs &  
Internal Operations Lead*



Camila Khalifé

*Impact & Communications  
Lead*



Carolina Pirola

*Monitoring, Evaluation &  
Research Lead*



Elisa Criscione

*Consulting Partner*



Itzel Mendoza

*Alumni Network Leader*

## Our Board

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Hillary Rodriguez

*Vice President*

Stephanie Landers-Silva

*Treasurer*

Lucía Chavez

*Secretary*

Benjamin Myers

*President Emeritus*

Smayah Uwajeneza

Vera Espíndola

Simon Eidodo Ochen



Thank you!

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