

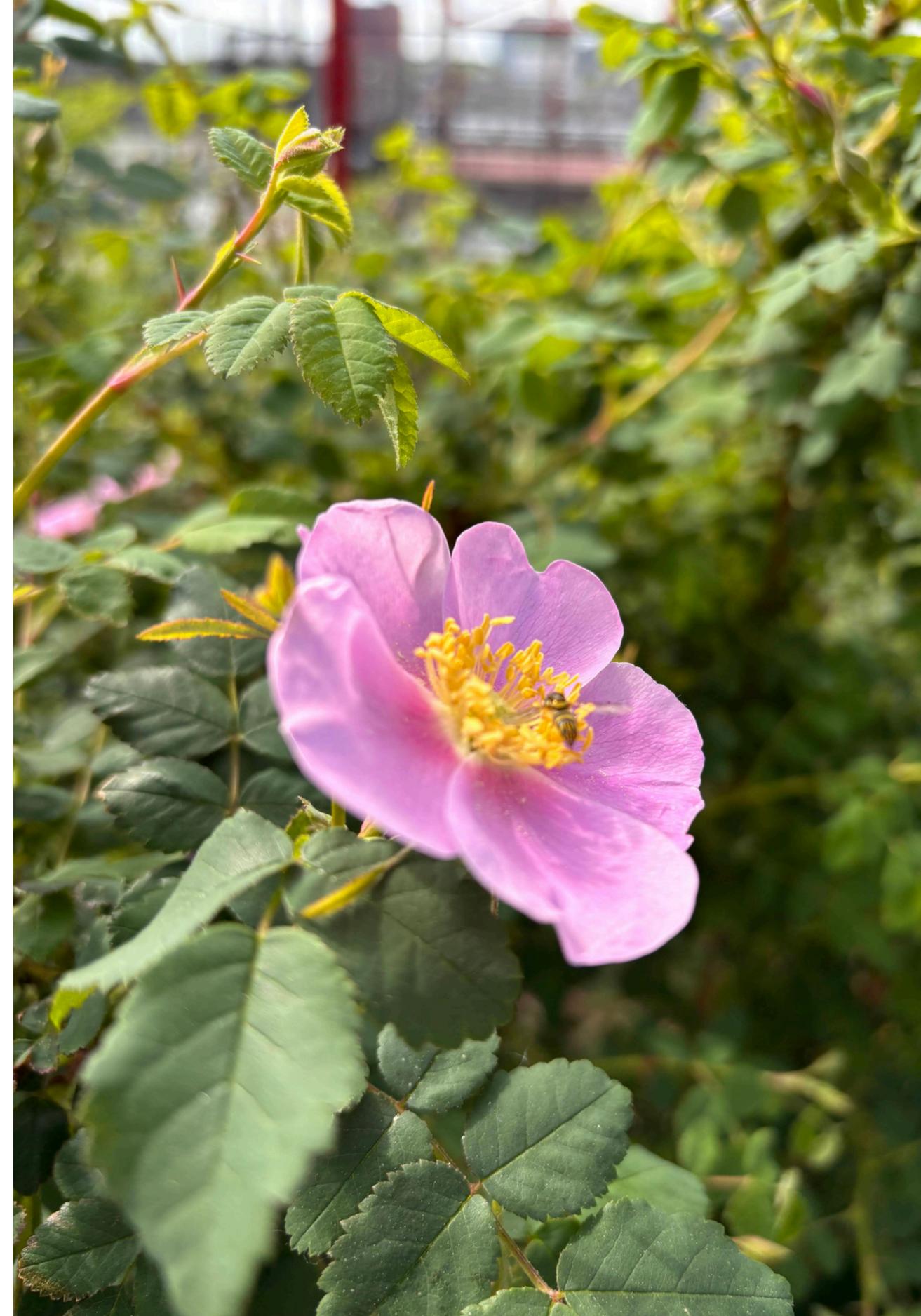
LOWER EAST SIDE ECOLOGY CENTER

2024

ANNUAL REPORT



Outstanding Renewal Enterprises, Inc.
d/b/a: Lower East Side Ecology Center
PO Box 20488
New York, NY 10009
212-477-4022
www.leecologycenter.org



MISSION

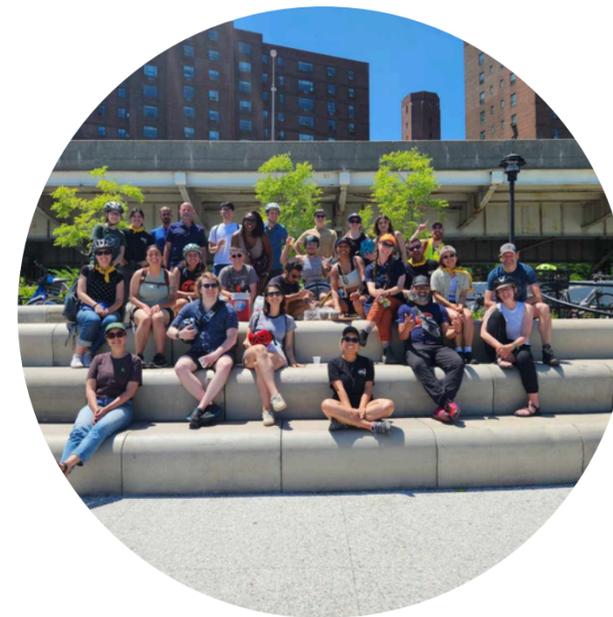
The Lower East Side Ecology Center has pioneered community-based models for urban sustainability since 1987. We provide unique e-waste and composting services, environmental stewardship opportunities, and educational programming for all New Yorkers to create an equitable, resilient, and sustainable city.



Community
Compost



Stewardship



Environmental Education



Electronics Recycling

COMMUNITY COMPOST

In 2024, we:

- Collected 703,353 pounds of food scraps
- Operated six food scrap drop-off sites
- Contributed 60,000 pounds of finished compost to enrich the health of NYC's soils
- Provided compost technical support to 16 groups

The Ecology Center's community compost program provides free food scrap drop-off opportunities, distributes finished compost, and supports the growth of community composting across NYC.

Throughout the year, we operated six food scrap drop-off sites spanning from the Lower East Side up to Hell's Kitchen and Kips Bay in Manhattan. We collected about 13,500 pounds of food scraps each week, serving about 2,000 participants weekly.

During 2024, we strengthened our partnership with Earth Matter and began delivering the food scraps that were collected at our drop-off sites to the Compost Learning Center on Governors Island. This partnership not only keeps the food scraps that we collect within the network of community composting, but it helps to create more compost that is then applied to the green spaces on Governors Island.

With persistent advocacy, our community compost program's city funding was reinstated in July 2024. This allowed us to build a compost team back up and offer a wider array of compost services and educational opportunities. Once the team was back in action in the fall, we began to offer our compost support services again to those looking to grow or enhance their community compost programs. This year, we offered a new compost support service to assist buildings in carrying out a successful curbside composting program for their residents.



"The Hell's Kitchen community has proudly hosted the Lower East Side Ecology Center (LESEC) food scraps drop-off site at Mathews-Palmer Park. As MPP food scraps stewards, we've partnered with LESEC to build and strengthen our local composting network through education and engagement. In collaboration with LESEC and Councilmember Erik Bottcher, we've organized compost and bin giveaway events, educational tabling at neighborhood gatherings, and community tree care days. Our outreach has mobilized neighbors to advocate for composting when funding was at risk, and we regularly attend the food scraps drop-off site to engage residents and share the benefits of composting and urban tree care in our neighborhood and across the city. LESEC has been a force of inspiration and support!"
—Mathews-Palmer Park Food Scraps Stewards



ELECTRONICS RECYCLING

In 2024, we:

- Hosted 65 electronic waste recycling events
- Collected 318,241 pounds of electronic waste

The Ecology Center has diverted over 11.3 million pounds of unwanted electronics from the waste stream since the inception of its e-waste program 21 years ago. In 2024, we held 65 pop-up e-waste events in Queens, Brooklyn, and Manhattan and collected 318,241 pounds of unwanted electronics from 7,355 households. The events are organized in partnership with local elected officials and community-based organizations. Our two recycling partners are EcoTech Management, located on Long Island, and WALTER, located in Brownsville.

The United Nations Environment Programme estimates that e-waste generation worldwide is expected to double by 2050. While the volume of e-waste is increasing, recycling rates are at about 20%. Effectively, every year, nearly \$10 billion in electronic waste—anything from computer equipment to devices—is thrown away in the US alone. Most of the value loss comes from embedded metals, such as copper, gold, silver, platinum, and palladium. At the same time, these products also contain metals, such as mercury, cadmium, and lead, that threaten environmental health.

The Ecology Center is doing its part to counter this trend by making e-waste collection events accessible on a community level and taking advantage of outreach opportunities to educate New Yorkers about this growing waste problem.



STEWARDSHIP



In 2024, we:

- Engaged more than 1,158 volunteers in stewardship activities at East River Park, Tompkins Square Park, Luther Gulick Park, and Gouverneur Gardens
- Brought beauty and biodiversity to Tompkins Square Park by planting more than 15,000 bulbs and 400 native plants
- Worked with 263 volunteers to care for over 114 street trees on the Lower East Side

The Ecology Center has always placed a high value on stewardship, as we believe that maintaining green spaces is essential to our city's health.

Throughout 2024, over 1,158 participants volunteered with us in Tompkins Square and East River Parks, providing 3,190 hours of their time. Our volunteers join us in this work for many reasons—they might want to pitch in and get their hands dirty, learn more about native plants, or participate in community- or team-building activities with their colleagues. Whatever the motivation, the result is better-maintained green open spaces and a growing awareness of our natural environment.

We also continued to be stewards of the COVID-19 Memorial Garden at Gouverneur Gardens in partnership with the Board of Gouverneur Gardens and Frank Avila-Goldman. Our Horticulture Youth Training Program participants and Mitchell-Lama residents maintained the garden and added 2,000 spring-flowering bulbs. The garden continues to be a vibrant and uplifting spot for the community and serves as a memorial to those impacted by COVID-19.

In 2024, we continued our Horticulture Youth Training Program in partnership with Henry Street Settlement (HSS) and the Lower Eastside Girls Club, recruiting five local youth. Participants received hands-on training in native plants, plant identification, green infrastructure, and horticulture career pathways. They also learned how to be stewards of public parks, community gardens, and urban farms and led street tree care workshops. This program was made possible through the support of our incredible partners: Solar One, Down to Earth, New Roots Community Farm, East New York Farms!, Green City Force, and the Center for Anti-Violence Education.



ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

In 2024, we:

- Engaged 289 youth participants in environmental education activities
- Trained 57 participants through our multi-week educational programs in food justice and horticulture
- Had 2,782 attendees participate in 139 workshop and outreach activities
- Grew 60+ pounds of food for our community
- Caught 10 different species of fish at fishing clinics

The education programs at the Lower East Side Ecology Center aim to provide urban environmental education for New Yorkers of all ages through meaningful, hands-on learning opportunities. Throughout the year, we offered over 139 education and outreach activities, including workshops on topics such as natural dyeing, watercolors, bird walks, and even a mushroom-themed board game night.

In the spring, we partnered with the US EPA Region 2 to host a series of workshops for local high school students about climate resilience. Students learned the difference between mitigation and adaptation strategies, including green infrastructure, and then participated in street tree care stewardship on their block.

Our estuary education efforts continued this year as we hosted eight fishing clinics, including several at East River Park, several at Stuy Cove Park in partnership with Solar One, and a women's freshwater fishing clinic at Prospect Park with the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation. We taught 125 individuals about the diverse ecosystem of the East River and caught 15 fish, including many black sea bass. Additionally, we engaged students on the relationship between composting and healthy waterways at Hudson River Park's SUBMERGE Marine Science Festival and participated in City of Water Day with a coastal cleanup in East River Park.



“Partnering with the Ecology Center over the past four years has been transformative, not just for our youth but for our entire community. Building the garden at 265 Henry Street and growing our own fresh produce has deepened our commitment to food justice in a tangible, powerful way. It’s been incredible to watch young people connect with the land, learn where their food comes from, and feel empowered to be part of a more equitable food system. This partnership continues to nourish our community—in every sense of the word.”

—Carlos Montañez, Henry Street Settlement



FOOD JUSTICE PROGRAM

In 2024, we continued our commitment to food justice by educating community members about urban food systems and strengthening partnerships with local organizations that support healthy food access. At the HSS Food Justice Garden, we engaged 43 youth ages 16-24 from HSS's Community Response Team, Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP), and the Sixth Street Community Center's Teen Climate Justice Program. Participants planted and harvested in the garden, learned to cook healthy meals, and explored their role in creating equitable food systems—producing 64 pounds of fresh food for community distribution.

We also distributed over 400 herb and vegetable seedlings at the Gotham Park Community Block Party and cohosted a Food Justice Bike Tour with Transportation Alternatives and NYC Parks GreenThumb, spotlighting community-led food access efforts across the East Village.

In partnership with the Center for Wellbeing and Happiness, we offered Nourishing Communities, a three-part, intergenerational workshop series on food systems and advocacy, with support from Chefs for Impact, Equity Advocates, and Cafeteria Culture.

In the fall, we welcomed a cohort of nine elders from HSS's Senior Companion Program for a series focused on gardening, cooking for chronic illness, and seasonal wellness. We also helped establish a new community garden at the Vladeck Houses with NYCHA and GreenThumb, installing 10 raised beds and providing seedlings and tools to support residents in growing their own food.

We are excited to continue building on our partnerships and programs in 2025!



HORTICULTURE TRAINING PROGRAM

During the spring, summer, and fall seasons, the Horticulture Training Program equipped 15 youth with skills in urban stewardship and exposure to green career paths. Led by our stewardship team, the youth weeded, planted, pruned shrubs, and applied compost to green spaces, including Tompkins Square Park, the COVID-19 Memorial Garden at Gouverneur Gardens, and local street tree beds. Participants also performed soil testing in preparation for applying compost, gaining a better understanding of soil health. The youth installed over 100 native plants and shrubs across green spaces on the Lower East Side, helping increase biodiversity and enriching our local ecosystems. Participants witnessed firsthand the challenges of stewarding in a changing climate during the summer and fall drought, which required a lot of time spent watering.

The youth took field trips to green spaces throughout New York City, including the Brooklyn Botanic Garden, Starlight Park, East New York Farms!, and Stuy Cove Park, learning from the experts who steward those spaces. Through these experiences and the training given by our stewardship team, our participants were able to gain a greater understanding of different careers related to horticulture and the stewardship of public green spaces.





FALL SOCIAL 2024

Our 2024 Fall Social embraced the theme “Cultivating Community, Nurturing Nature,” celebrating the many ways the LES Ecology Center and our partners care for the environment and steward our shared public spaces. The evening brought together neighbors, supporters, and collaborators for a joyful night of community connection and collective impact.

Guests enjoyed a vibrant selection of seasonal dishes curated by chef Tessa Liebman, featuring fresh, local ingredients generously donated by farmers from the Union Square Greenmarket. The celebration also included a lively silent auction, with contributions from businesses committed to environmental sustainability and community resilience.

We were proud to recognize five honorees whose leadership and partnership embody our mission:

- o Melinda Billings
- o City Council Member Chris Marte
- o Gouverneur Gardens
- o Friends of Tompkins Square Park
- o Seward Park Conservancy

Their dedication continues to inspire and drive positive change in our city. With a blend of celebration, recognition, and culinary excellence, the 2024 Fall Social left a lasting impression, reminding us that together, we are cultivating a greener, more connected New York City.



SAFE SPACE COMMITTEE

The Safe Space Committee was created at the Ecology Center in 2022 to develop a more intentional approach to the organization's commitments to diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) in both the workplace and the communities we work with.

In 2024, the committee focused its attention inward and developed a charter to guide the work of the committee. The charter defined the purpose, responsibilities, and annual deliverables of the committee. The charter also lays out expectations and guidelines for members of the committee. The creation of the charter is an important step in ensuring that there can be accountability and structure to our DEIA work.



Lower East Side Ecology Center Mission and Commitment to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility

OUR PAST & PRESENT

Since 1987, the mission of the LES Ecology Center has been to pioneer community-based models in urban sustainability by offering unique e-waste and composting services, environmental stewardship opportunities, and educational programming to all New Yorkers. To further our commitment to creating an equitable, resilient, and sustainable city, we have embarked on a diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) journey.

DEIA AT THE ECOLOGY CENTER

We view all the work we do through an environmental justice lens. We recognize that by enhancing our efforts in DEIA, we can better fulfill our mission. DEIA means removing barriers to accessing our programs and creating opportunities for people to thrive.

OUR COMMITMENT TO REPRESENTATION

Our approach involves building a diverse team that mirrors the communities we serve and enhancing our capacity to implement DEIA principles. We acknowledge that this journey is ongoing.

OUR COMMITMENT TO EACH OTHER

In our pursuit of a more equitable, resilient, and sustainable city, we pledge to support one another, ensuring that everyone can be their authentic selves. Diversity is our strength, and we collaborate in a safe space that nurtures individual growth and effective teamwork.

OUR COMMITMENT TO OUR APPROACH

We are deeply committed to a culture of collaboration, openness, and flexibility. We are committed to listening to community feedback and reflecting on opportunities for improvement.

We champion the voices of the most vulnerable and proactively collaborate with community partners to create lasting change.

WHAT WE'RE DOING NOW

We are building internal capacity to put our DEIA learnings into practice. We value each individual's experience by actively listening and adapting to meet community needs. Together, we strive to strengthen our teamwork and communication, fostering an inclusive and resilient future.

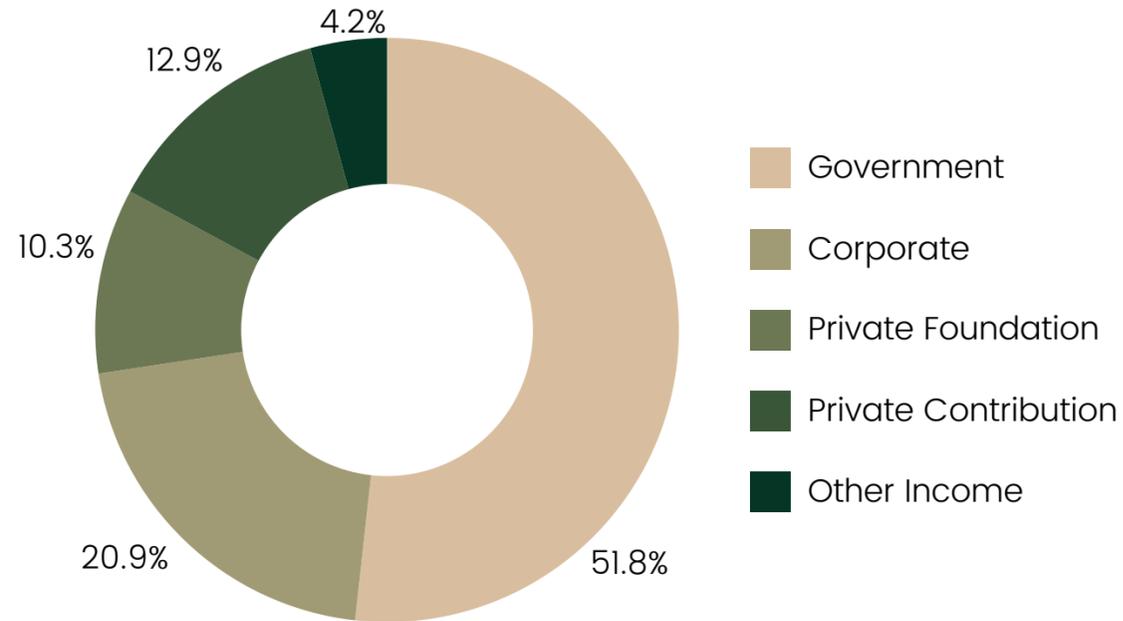
Since we began this intentional DEIA journey in the winter of 2022, we have:

- Established a Safe Space Committee to lead the organization on our DEIA journey
- Created a Safe Space Committee charter
- Worked with consultants to engage the full staff in creating a DEIA vision to guide our future work
- Led all-staff dialogues that addressed a variety of DEIA-related topics
- Seen a majority of the staff participate in at least one DEIA-related training
- Reviewed and improved our hiring process to bring greater access and equity
- Created systems that support individual growth, including professional development opportunities and a holistic performance review process that brings DEIA values to the workplace
- Allocated organizational resources, such as budgeting funds and staff time, to support DEIA growth

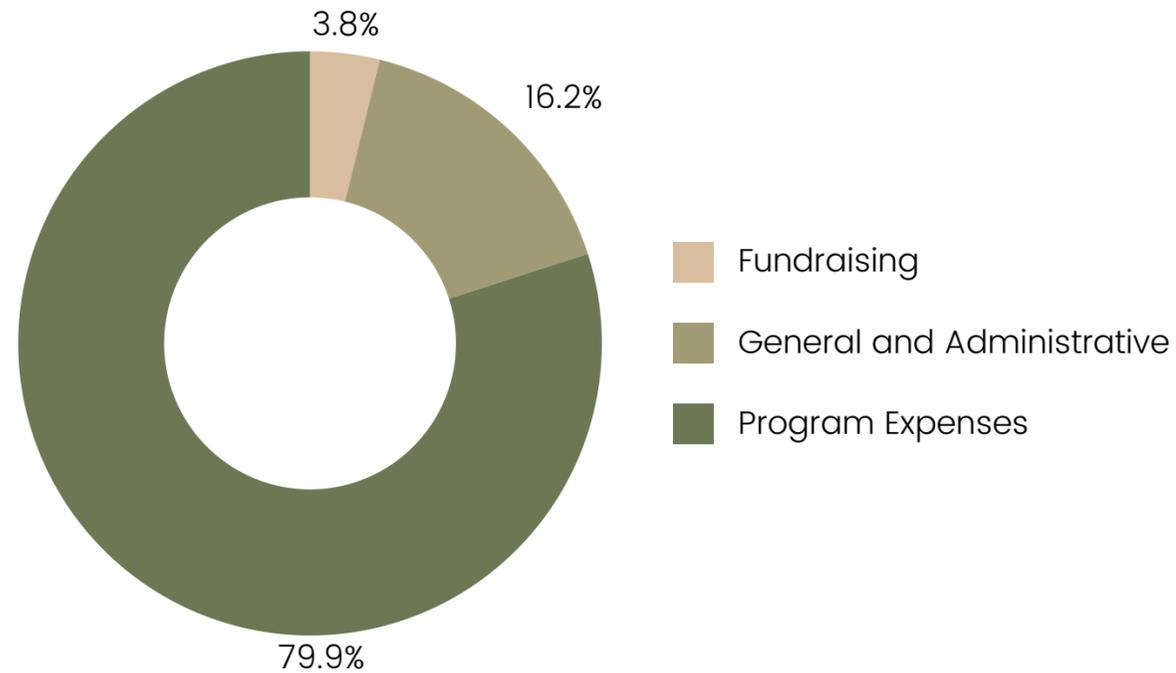
AUDITED 2024 FINANCIALS

January 1, 2024–December 31, 2024

Revenue



Expenses



Revenue

Government	\$918,450
Corporate	\$370,234
Private Foundations	\$182,000
Private Contributions	\$228,657
Other Income	\$75,391
Total	\$1,774,732

Expenses

Program Expenses	\$1,051,280
General & Administrative	\$213,032
Fundraising	\$50,613
Total	\$1,314,925

Change in net assets

\$459,808

SUPPORTERS

Elected Officials

New York City Council Members:

Council Speaker Adrienne Adams
Joann Ariola
Alexa Avilés
Justin Brannan
Gale Brewer
Erik Bottcher
James Gennaro
Jennífer Gutiérrez
Shahana Hanif
Robert Holden
Linda Lee
Christopher Marte
Vickie Paladino
Keith Powers
Lincoln Restler
Carlina Rivera
Sandra Ung

New York State Assembly Members:

Harvey Epstein
Grace Lee

New York State Senators

Joseph P. Addabbo, Jr.
Leroy Comrie
Brian Kavanagh

Corporate Support

Adobe
BNY Mellon
Chanel
Con Edison
David Zwirner Gallery
Deloitte
EcoTech Management
ELEMIS
Fever-Tree
Franklin Templeton
Gander
Givsky
Gloat
Goldman Sachs
Goodera
McKinsey & Company
Microsoft
Mill
Morgan Stanley
Nespresso
NYC Ferry
O'Melveny & Myers
Pace Gallery
Patagonia
Riskified
Sasaki
Something Special Studios
Squarespace
Trane
Travelzoo
USSA
VML
Yext

Foundations

Bloomberg Philanthropies
The City Gardens Club of New York City
CT Charitable Foundation
Educational Projects Foundation
Esther & Morton Wohlgermuth Foundation
Gramercy Park Foundation
Greenacre Foundation
La Vida Feliz Foundation
Moore Charitable Foundation
Rockefeller Foundation
Rohit & Katharine Desai Family Foundation
Schulman Family Foundation
Shelburne Farms Resources
Viking Foundation

2024 Program

Partners

Alliance for Kips Bay
Battery Park City Authority
Big Reuse
Brooklyn Botanic Garden
Bronx River Alliance
Brotherhood Sister Sol
Cafeteria Culture
Center for Anti-Violence Education
Chefs for Impact
Common Ground Compost

Creative Time
Earth Celebrations
Earth Matter NY
East New York Farms!
East Side Community High School
Elijah Shiffer
Environmental Education Advisory Council
Equity Advocates
Essex Street Market
Food Tank
Friends of Corlears Hook Park
Gotham Park
Green Oasis Garden
GrowNYC
Hell's Kitchen Compost Group
Henry Street Settlement
Hudson River Foundation
Hudson River Park
Institute for Local Self-Reliance
Jodie Niss
Kips Bay Alliance
La Plaza Cultural
Lower Eastside Girls Club
Manhattan Plaza
Materials for the Arts
NEST+m
New Roots Community Farm
New York Botanical Garden
NY-NJ Harbor & Estuary Program
NYC Community Compost Network
NYC Department of Parks & Recreation
NYC Department of Sanitation
NYC Parks GreenThumb
NYC Parks Super Steward Program
NYS Department of Environmental Conservation

Queens Botanical Garden
Queens County Farm Museum
Rockaway Parkway Merchants Corridor Association
Samuel's Food Gardens
Save Our Compost Coalition
Seward Park Conservancy
Sixth Street Community Center
Snug Harbor Botanical Garden and Cultural Center
Solar One at Stuy Cove Park
Transportation Alternatives
Trees NY
US EPA Region 2
Waterfront Alliance
YWCA NYC



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Eric Bonner, Compost Associate
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Oliver Clark, E-waste Associate

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Teddy Tedesco, Outreach Coordinator

Shyanne Washington, Stewardship Coordinator
Jermaine Wilson, Operations Coordinator



SUPPORT OUR WORK

Your help allows us to continue protecting, improving, and enriching the city's environment. As a community-based organization, we rely on support from our community of New Yorkers and those who believe in sustainable cities. Donations and financial support enable us to continue providing free and affordable programming for everyone in our diverse community. Our composting and e-waste programs, environmental education, and stewardship of public green spaces all rely on your contributions.

Support the Ecology Center with a contribution today and make your tax-deductible gift by visiting our website.

Thank you for being a partner in fulfilling our mission. We couldn't do it without you!

Sincerely,
LES Ecology Center Team

HOW TO DONATE

Visit www.lesecologycenter.org and select Donate on the main menu.

