



**SGSO**  
**NETWORK**  
School Garden Support Organization Network

**2025**

**Impact Report**

# What We Do and How We Do It

## Our Mission:

The SGSO Network is an open peer-to-peer learning network with the goal of growing, sustaining, and elevating a movement of equitable garden-based education.



## What We Do:

We provide professional & leadership development, resources, and platforms to connect for members serving at a school, district, regional, state, or national level.

## Our Values:

- Accessible, open communication that encourages collaboration, networking, and the cross-pollination of ideas.
- Transparency, open-source sharing, when possible, and mutual support.
- Intentionally seek to make our organization, resources, and the experience of school gardening accessible to all children and communities.
- Commitment to an equitable movement and organization - one that strives for inclusion and justice, acknowledges and celebrates diversity and strives to bring this lens to all of our work.



# Update: We've Grown!

2025 was the 1<sup>st</sup> year with two full time staff for the SGSO Network: Programs Coordinator, Daniel Barrera Ortega and Executive Director, Tristana PirkI. This has allowed us to increase the quantity and deepen the quality of our programs and reach more members.



**Tristana PirkI**  
Executive Director

When I look back over the first nearly five years of our organization's history, it's clear that 2025 was a pivotal year for the SGSO Network. It was our first year with two full-time staff, allowing us to deepen our programs and expand our responsiveness. The Network has benefited immensely from Daniel's experience, passion, and dedication to supporting our members.

We began putting into practice the changes identified through our 2024 member survey: deepening engagement in communities with lower participation, promoting the resources members value most, and creating new pathways for leadership and mentorship.

This year we also launched work on the most comprehensive national map of school gardens and the organizations that support them to date, and we're excited to see how this tool can help propel the movement forward.

We're grateful to have received our second Sprouts Healthy Communities Foundation Impact Grant, providing three years of funding to sustain our core work while launching new programs, including mentorship and an ambassador program that will build an advisory council.

As I look at the world around us, I'm reminded that school gardens matter more than ever as places where community, belonging, and health take root. Guided by our long-term objectives, we'll continue strengthening the systems that support school gardens, mobilizing new stakeholders, and ensuring every school gardener knows the SGSO Network is here to support them. We grow better together—and we hope you'll continue to join us!



**Daniel Barrera Ortega**  
Programs Coordinator

I envision the SGSO Network operating very much like a web of mycelia with individual school garden programs and support organizations as the trees in the forest with the network as the connective tissue between each program, re-distributing information, passing along resources and best practices. I feel incredibly fortunate to become one of the facilitators of these connections.

Working as a classroom teacher and school garden educator through FoodCorps and then later with FRESHFARM FoodPrints in Washington, D.C., I've watched first hand the impact of garden-based education on a community. Seeing a student's face light up as they try sun gold tomatoes and say "wait, these are like candy!" or watching parents harvest herbs with their students have become part of my core memories. My experience and background informs the different programs we craft so that they may better support programs to provide similar experiences to their students. I hope to maintain this vision at the forefront of my work.

The school garden movement has such a unique sense of camaraderie that excites me for the future. Not simply for having more school garden programs but for the unity it models. As we continue weaving networks at different scales, I'm thrilled to see the deep collaboration amongst friendly faces that happens within our platforms or that of other partners. I'm here for the journey and excited to support everyone in moving forward.



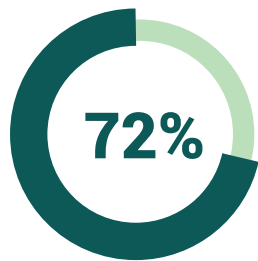
# SGSO Network is Member Driven

## 2024 Survey Results

All SGSO Network programming is guided by member needs and requests. We seek member feedback as often as we can and engage member leadership wherever possible.

In 2024, as a follow up to our inaugural survey in 2021, we launched an even more in depth survey of our members and programs. Almost 300 members responded.

### About our Members



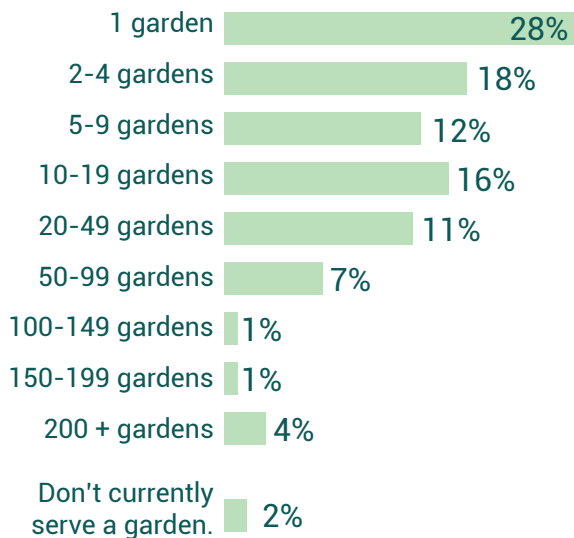
support more than 1 school garden



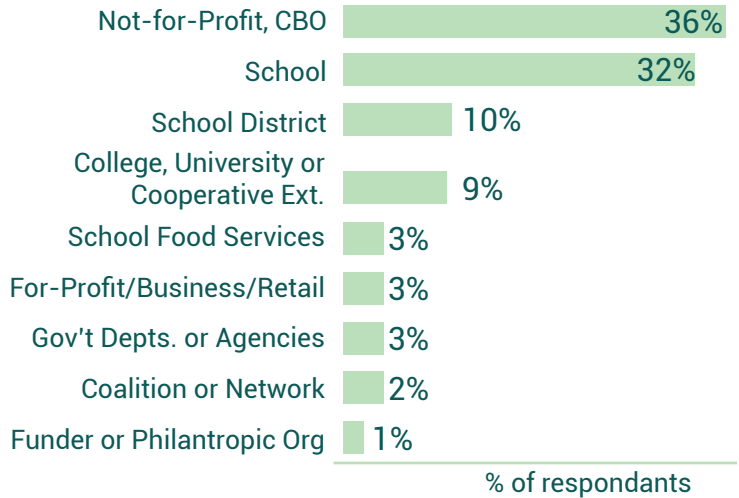
operate out of a non-school entity

32% based at a single school

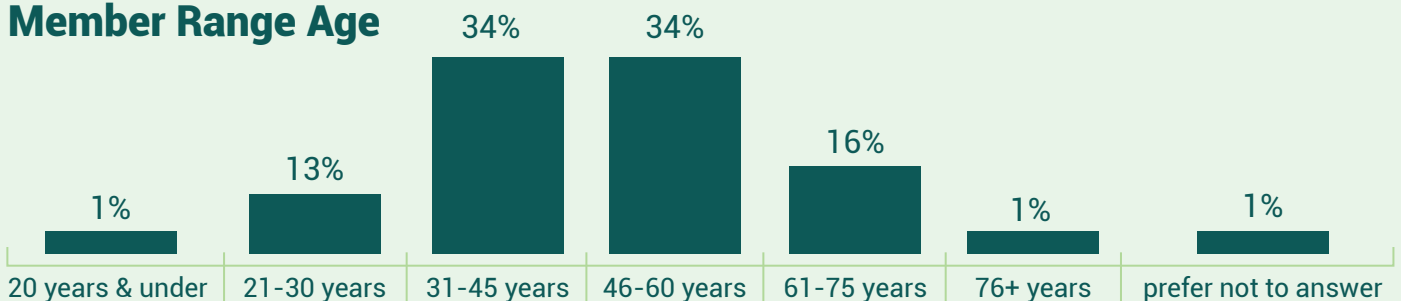
#### Number of gardens supported



#### Organization Type:

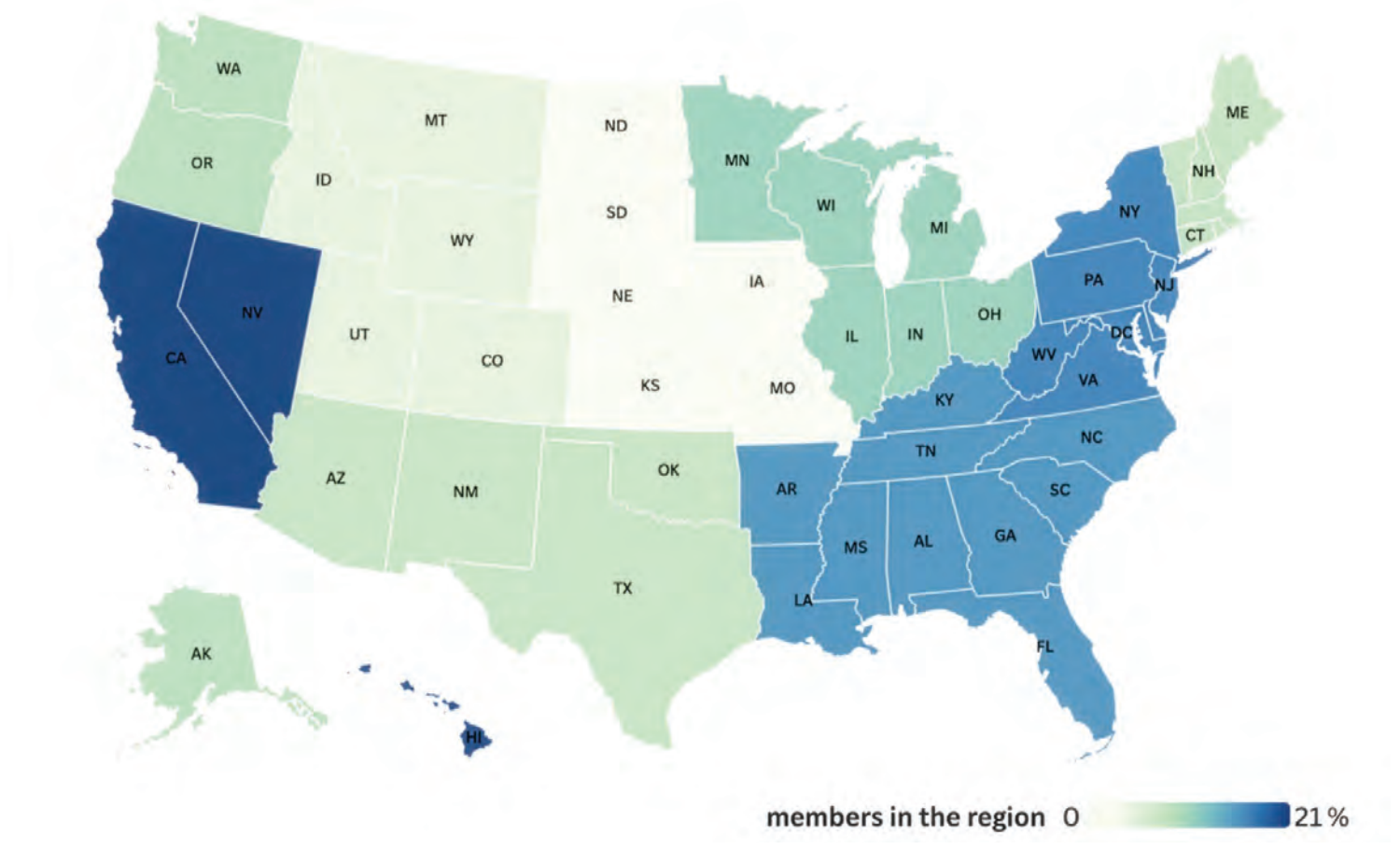


#### Member Range Age

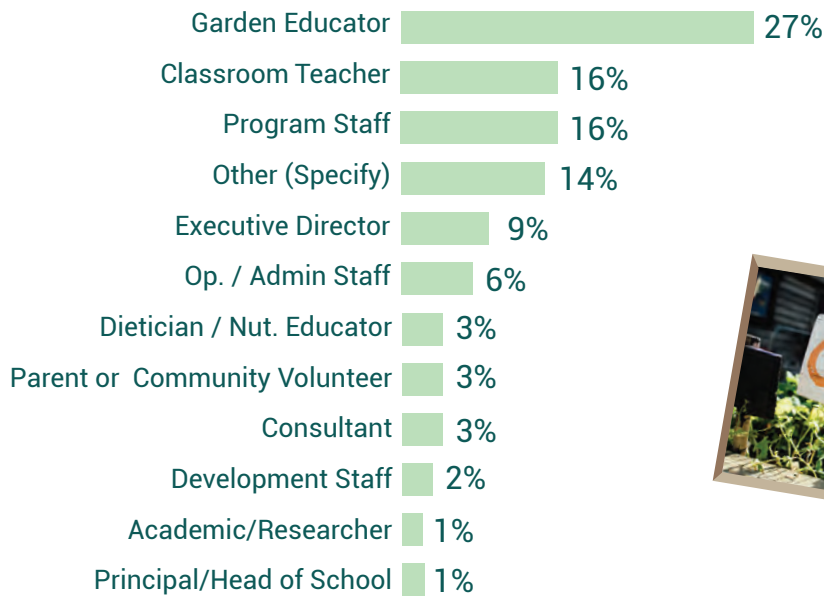


# Where Members are Located

By Region



## Primary Role



**43%**  
are directly  
teaching in  
gardens



**57%**  
are support  
staff





## What you Shared and what we learned...

Our programs are helpful to your school garden work, especially our newsletter and webinars.

We'll keep doing what we do!

You are the least aware of the Promising Practices documents and Google forum (but those that were aware found them to be very helpful).

We'll increase our promotion of these resources

You'd like more regional support

We're in conversations with regional partners on support systems

You weren't aware of how member driven we are

We'll share this more broadly.

You weren't aware of opportunities for leadership but want to get more involved

We'll grow leadership opportunities and make sure you know about them!

## We'll also be working on

- Grow support for young and emerging school garden professionals
- Deepen our reach in areas with low membership
- Find ways to support school garden educators with live events that aren't during the school day.



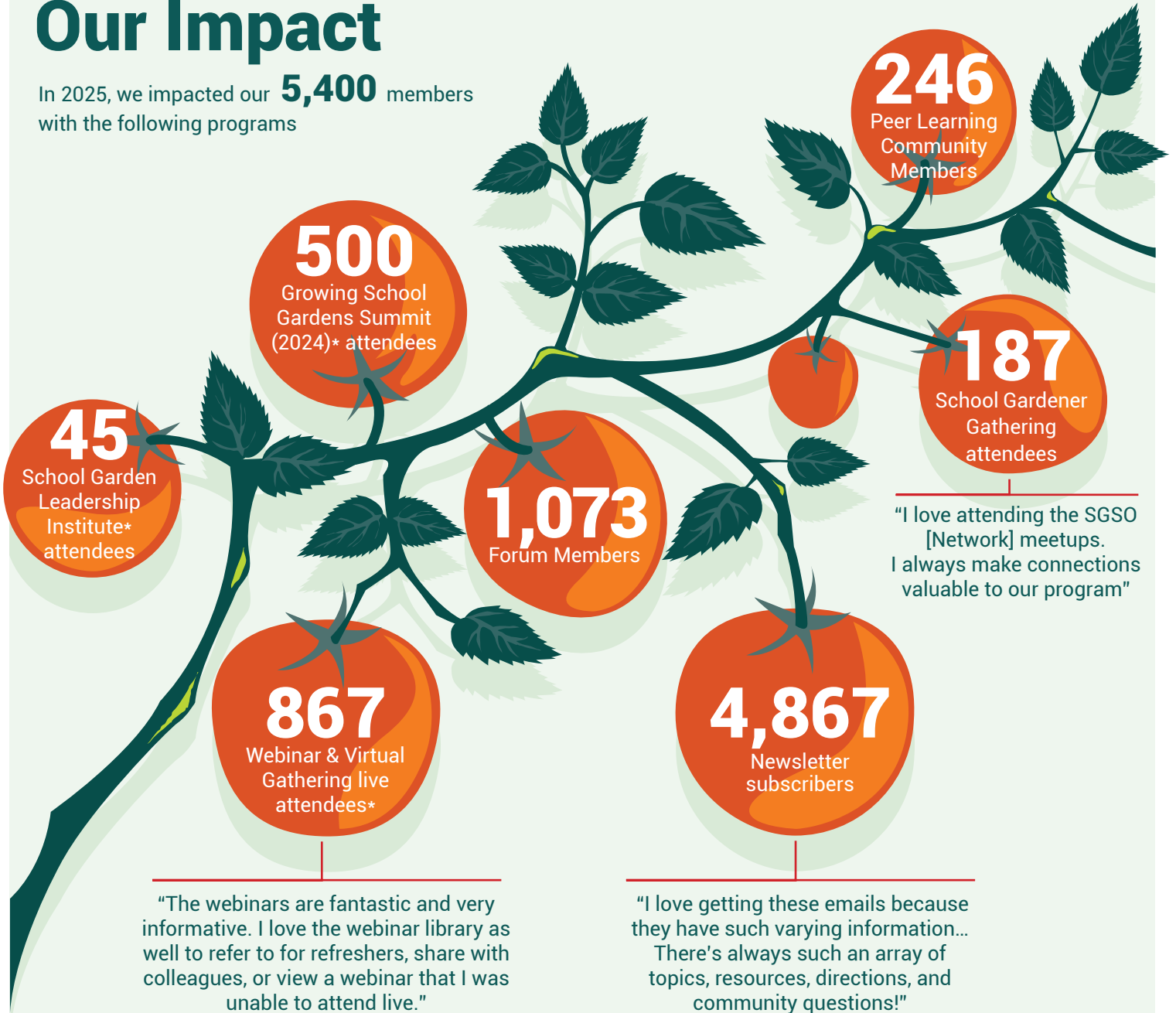
Didn't get to fill out the survey but want to give us your feedback?

You can submit here.



# Our Impact

In 2025, we impacted our **5,400** members with the following programs



“

The SGSO is a singular and significant organization that sets the bar for others. Happily, they share their experiences and insights with so many others of us. Generally speaking, this organization is remarkable and a precious resource for school gardens everywhere.

I find your information so valuable, I don't know what I'd do with out it.

”

\*Growing School Gardens Summit is hosted in partnership with the Sprouts Healthy Communities Foundation & Life Lab. School Garden Leadership Institute is hosted in partnership with Life Lab.

# Program Impact

## Webinars & Virtual Gatherings

### Webinars:

Monthly live presentations by stipended network leaders and experts



### Webinar feature:

"Nurturing Diversity in School Gardens" by Honi Alexander of Galveston's Own Farmers Market

### Virtual Gatherings:

Informal spaces to share ideas and swap solutions to current challenges.



### Virtual gathering feature:

"Pivoting Operations and Programming"

In 2025, **867** attended live.

Our recording library has over **6,500** views.

## New this year: Member Highlights

Member interviews showcasing their inspiring school garden work, personal journeys, and tips for newcomers.

### Member highlight feature

Brianna Abundiz from Sierra Harvest on how their school garden program has built relationships with their local native communities.



## School Gardener Gatherings

Networking dinners for school garden professionals attending national conferences

This year we hosted **187** school gardeners at:

- Green Schools Conference
- National Children and Youth Garden Symposium
- Farm to Cafeteria Conference



# Peer Learning Communities (PLCs)

Virtual learning communities for school garden professionals sharing similar roles, areas of interest, personal identities or locations.

## Currently running PLCs

- Therapeutic Gardens
- LGBTQIA2S+ Affinity Group
- School Garden Entrepreneurs
- Executive Directors of SGOs
- Program Directors and Managers
- District Led School Garden Programs
- School Garden Professional Development
- Middle and High School Garden Programs
- Elementary School School Garden Programs
- Master Gardeners Supporting School Gardens
- People of Color in School Gardens Affinity Group
- Youth Garden Grantmakers Community of Practice
- Statewide Farm to School and School Garden Network Leaders



Scan the QR code to join a PLC or suggest a new one!

# Newsletters

Bi-monthly editions with packaged resources, best practices and tips focused within a school garden programming theme

## Popular 2025 newsletter topics:

- Professional Development in School Gardens
- School Gardens in Wellness Initiatives
- Serving Student Grown Produce in the Cafeteria

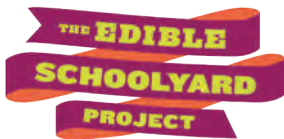


# Now Launching: National School Garden Map!

In 2024, the SGSO Network gathered a group of core national partners, as well as regional partners, to consolidate our data on school garden locations, school garden support organizations, and garden-based education sites to build the most comprehensive national school garden map to date!



## Core partners



NATIONAL  
FARM to SCHOOL  
NETWORK



## Funders





# Looking Ahead: Long Term Objectives

The SGSO Network has officially been its own organization for 5 years this Fall. To guide our growth into 2029, we developed the following goals:

## Programming

- Advance School Garden Resilience Through Support Systems: focus our work on the systems that support school gardens.
- Grow SGSO Network Membership: ensure every school garden professional knows the SGSO Network exists and it can support their work
- Grow School Garden Adaptation & Mobilize Stakeholder Support: bring in new adaptors of school gardens while growing stakeholder knowledge and support
- Map the National Landscape & Support Movement Building: identify where school gardens are and who supports them and helping to connect major stakeholders for synergies and collaboration
- Establish a SGSO Network Ambassador Program and Advisory Council: expand the reach of our small team while creating more pathways to leadership & opportunities for feedback

## Internal Operations

- Diversify our Revenue & Grow Operational Reserves
- Generate Funding and Development Capacity for the Movement - call out: The SGSO Network has an annual goal to channel 20% of incoming revenue directly to members.
- Invest in Human Resources



# Upcoming New programs

We are excited to launch these new programs in 2026 - stay tuned for details.

## Mentorship Program:

This program will provide stipends to experienced school garden leaders to support emerging leaders through a year-long structured mentorship program.



## SGSO Network Ambassadors and Advisory Council:

This program will provide stipends to school garden leaders to host networking events and represent the SGSO Network at national conferences, and provide programmatic feedback through an Advisory Council.



# Thank you to our supporters

## Funders:



National School Garden Map funder



School Garden Leadership Institute funder

## Governance Board



**John Fisher**  
Life Lab



**Laura Thompson**  
Transformational  
Investing in Food  
Systems (TIFS)



**Stephanie Porto**  
Center for Nutrition  
& Health Impact



**Whitney Cohen**  
Life Lab



**Sarah Cramer**  
Stetson University /  
Volusia County Public  
Schools



**Maxine Garcia Reilly**  
Nike



**Abby Randall**  
EcoRise



**Ashley Rouse**  
Edible Schoolyard  
Project



**Em Shipman**  
KidsGardening



**Lyndsey Waugh**  
Sprouts Healthy  
Communities Foundation



## Join Our Free Peer to Peer Learning Network



sgsonetwork.org

