

Long Range Plan 2025-2030

The Roots of Resilience:

Grow, Challenge, Build & Steward



LAND
STEWARDSHIP
PROJECT

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Cover: Farmers examine a rotationally grazed pasture on the Adam and Amanda Bedtke farm in southeastern Minnesota during an LSP soil health field day. (LSP Photo)

A Time to Grow, Challenge, Build & Steward

Dear LSP Members, Allies & Friends:

Welcome! Every five years, the Land Stewardship Project's board of directors gathers input from our members, supporters, allies, and staff on our organizational priorities so that we can develop a long range plan that best fulfills our mission going forward. This document is the result of this latest endeavor. We invite you to explore LSP's latest vision for the future of farming, food, rural communities, and the land.

IT'S TIME TO GROW

For more than 40 years, LSP members and supporters — farmers, rural residents, suburbanites, and city dwellers — have been committed to our mission to foster an ethic of stewardship for farmland, to promote sustainable agriculture, and to develop healthy communities. As we look to the future, LSP's members, staff, and supporters are poised to build on the values that are the foundation of our work as we navigate the changes that face small and mid-sized independent, diversified farmers, our rural communities, and the food system we all rely on.

IT'S TIME TO CHALLENGE

The current system of corporate consolidation of land ownership, industrialized livestock, and commodity production harms our soil and water while extracting wealth from our rural communities. This system leaves behind shuttered businesses and hospitals, empty schools, and an unhealthy food infrastructure. The current system also harms communities of color and blocks the path to land stewardship for all who want to follow it, no matter their race or background. And overall, lack of access to land for all farmers has created a consolidated system that favors corporations and the wealthiest landowners.

The farmers we work with and support understand that healthy soil and fair access to land and markets for all people supports clean water and vibrant communities, builds climate resilience, and sustains a food system that nourishes everyone.

IT'S TIME TO BUILD

LSP is committed to democracy in action and equal opportunity. So much of what goes on in farm country is directly connected to policy decisions made by elected and appointed officials. When we see the problems created by these decisions for small and mid-sized farms and for our food system, we organize in our communities and ensure those who are affected most by these policies are part of the conversation and decision-making. When we know new policies could enhance the possibilities for beginning and emerging farmers to build their agricultural futures, we advocate for those changes.

IT'S TIME TO STEWARD

We have the skills, the lived experiences, and the strength of our mutual values to find common ground. Our shared visions for health and prosperity connect all of us to the future we want for our families, communities, and for the generations of people that follow.

This long range plan is bold and ambitious — and attainable! Our members, supporters, allies, and partners, along with our talented and dedicated staff, are ready to move forward with energy and excitement as we renew our commitment to creating transformational change in our food and farming system. There is great strength in our LSP community and positive energy to bring our vision to reality over the next five years.

We are ready to engage in the work ahead of us, and you play an important role in that work. Now really is the time to grow, challenge, build, and steward.

Thank You!



Beth Slocum

Beth Slocum,
LSP Board of Directors Chair
and Welch, Minn., Farmer



Scott Elkins

Scott Elkins,
LSP Executive Director

Thank You
to our
**Long Range
Planning
Committee**

Bonnie Haugen, chair of Long Range Planning Committee, Canton, Minn.
Beth Slocum, LSP board chair, Welch, Minn.
Josh Bryceson, board member, Clear Lake, Wis.
Laurie Driessen, board member, Canby, Minn.
Dan McGrath, board member, Saint Paul, Minn.
Terry VanDerPol, LSP member, Granite Falls, Minn.
Claudia Lenz, LSP member, Star Prairie, Wis.
Josie Trople, LSP member, Northfield, Minn.
Nick Olson, LSP staff, Litchfield, Minn.
Megan Smith, LSP staff, Minneapolis, Minn.
Brian DeVore, LSP staff, Minneapolis, Minn.

Mission

The Land Stewardship Project's mission is to foster an ethic of stewardship for farmland, promote sustainable agriculture, and develop healthy communities.

Vision

LSP is committed to building vibrant rural communities that are places of belonging and opportunity for everyone. We envision a countryside where the soil, water, air, and the natural world are healthy, with more successful stewardship farmers raising both livestock and crops on the land and strong local economies where all can succeed.

Purpose

We are dedicated to creating transformational change in our food and farming system. We work within a broader movement that is fighting for justice and positive change. Some of our allies focus on issues such as healthcare and racial justice, while LSP works for change through the lens of farming, food, and rural communities.

Values

LSP believes that by working together, culturally and racially diverse rural and urban people can take practical steps that result in greater stewardship of the land, more family farmers, healthy food for all, and resilient, racially just communities. The following core values guide LSP's efforts to achieve our mission: **Stewardship, Justice, Fairness, Democracy, Health, and Community.**

For more on LSP's Core Values, see Important Context, Section A, page 21.

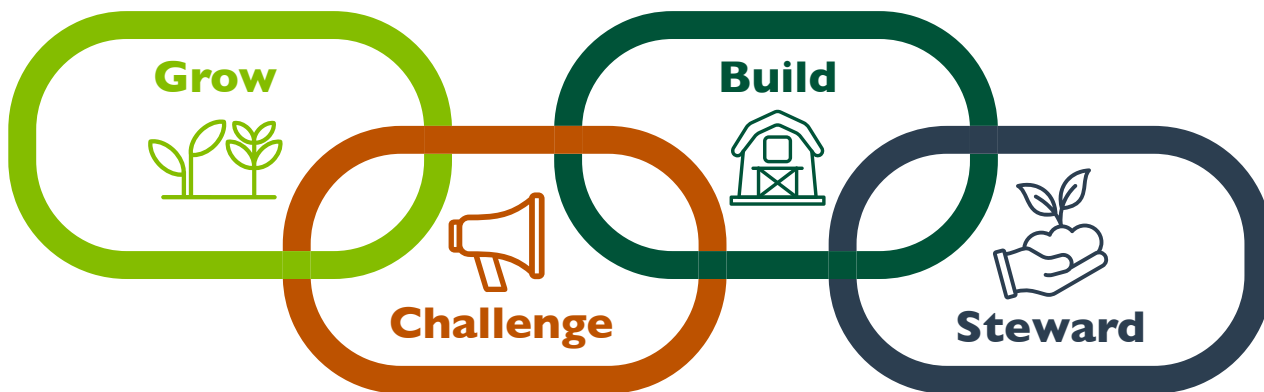


Photo: LSP members Jon and Ruth Jovaag experiment with no-till organic cropping on their farm near Austin, Minn. (Mower County SWCD Photo)

Four Interlinked Paths to Resilience

Over the next five years, the Land Stewardship Project will utilize four interlinked strategies in an intentional manner to accomplish our goals: **Grow**, **Challenge**, **Build**, and **Steward**. Some of this work is building on what LSP is already doing, while other aspects will require germinating new initiatives. The challenges we face together are daunting — the climate crisis, political uncertainty, and rural disinvestment have placed farming communities in a unique, and oftentimes difficult, position. In addition, systemic economic injustice, structural racism, and gender inequity are major barriers to the advancement of LSP’s mission. These forces are interconnected and impact every facet of our work.

At a time of uncertainty and division, LSP sees opportunity and promise in uniting people around shared values such as living soil, clean water, healthy food, and vibrant communities. This optimism is built on the success we’ve had over our 43-year history. Here, we present how we will connect with a broad spectrum of people — farmers and non-farmers — to carry out this work going forward.





Grow

The Next Generation of Farmers

Access to affordable land and infrastructure can be a significant barrier to even the most well-trained farmer, particularly if they are a farmer of color. LSP's vision of creating a resilient, regenerative food and farm system cannot be attained until all people, no matter their race or background, are allowed to gain access to the land, resources, and markets needed to be good stewards.

LSP will:

- Strengthen our Farm Beginnings course so that its curriculum and networking infrastructure is relevant to the next generation of diverse and prospective farmers. We will invest in new farmer training to expand access and relevance and grow our network in support of agriculture's new generation.
- Get more agricultural assets into the hands of a new generation of stewards by developing and deepening connections between retiring farmers/non-operating landowners and beginning/prospective farmers.
- Develop new and deepen current connections with allied organizations and partners that are developing alternative land ownership and land access models.

Economic, Racial & Gender Justice

If we are to have a truly sustainable farm and food system, we need more farmers on the land, not fewer. Our overall goals of having a sustainable, regenerative farm and food system will not be reached without racial, gender, and economic equity. LSP is in a prime position to help urban, suburban, and rural people work together to get more farmers on the land.

LSP will:

- Strengthen our programming to better support and represent low-income people, people of color, Indigenous people, women, veterans, LGBTQ people, and other emerging farmers.
- Deliver practical solutions for transitioning farmland and agricultural infrastructure by supporting and collaborating with allied organizations led by people of color and others most impacted by land access challenges.
- Address systemic discrimination currently associated with government programs and their implementation through reform of state and federal legislation.
- Collaborate with groups led by Indigenous people and support them in efforts to reclaim ownership of tribal lands.

What Success Will Look Like in 5 Years:

- There are more small and medium-sized farms operating successfully in the Upper Midwest, and they represent a greater diversity of racial and gender backgrounds.
- Farmers of color are given fair access to the land, resources, markets, and support they require to be successful, and systemic institutional discrimination of these farmers is addressed through policy changes.
- People from varying economic, racial, political, and geographical backgrounds are united behind a common goal of creating a sustainable and fair farm and food system.

**It Can Be Done: The Next Generation**

During the past five years, LSP has offered five Farm Beginnings courses in the Minnesota-Wisconsin region, graduating over 200 new farmers. Based on a recent Farm Beginnings graduate survey, of those who responded, 71% were farming, 70% met or exceeded their goals for family income from farming, and 100% of those who were farming sold their production within an 80-to-100-mile radius of their farm.

**It Can Be Done: Racial Justice & Equity**

Since 2019, LSP has moved forward our work on equity by partnering with multi-racial coalitions to win changes in systems and policies that affect BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and people of color) farmers. One focus of LSP's work has been to make our Farm Beginnings class more relevant to BIPOC farmers and prospective farmers. Each year since 2020, we have met or surpassed our goal of recruiting 20% BIPOC Farm Beginnings participants annually; of the 48 individuals enrolled in the 2023-2024 course, 37% identified as BIPOC and 48% identified as women. In 2024, for the first time in its eight-year history, LSP's popular "Land Access: Are You Ready?" workshop was offered in Spanish. LSP and partners, including the Midwest Farmers of Color Collective and the Latino Economic Development Center, organized to advance policy in the new Farm Bill that, if passed, would support land access for beginning farmers of all backgrounds. This led to the introduction of the "Land Access, Security, and Opportunities Act" in both the U.S. House and Senate in the summer of 2023.



It Can Be Done: Transitioning Farms to the Next Generation

LSP launched the Land Access & Land Legacy program in 2019 as a way to support the transition of farms and farmland to the next generation. Through this initiative, we connect with 20-25 landowners a year through one-to-one support and as many as two-dozen farm families a year via farm transition workshops. LSP was one of the first organizations to directly reach out to and support non-operating landowners who are seeking to either pass on their farmland to the next generation or develop rental agreements that support their conservation values. Since 2019, over 150 non-operating landowners have been engaged through LSP workshops and one-to-one discussions that center around issues such as soil health and innovative lease agreements.



Participants in a recent LSP Farm Beginnings class pose for a photo. (Photo by Nick Olson)



Challenge

The Corporate-Controlled, Industrialized Farm & Food System

While multinational corporations rake in record profits, farmers of all types are being pushed off the land at an unprecedented pace. People in urban and rural food deserts have limited healthy food choices, working conditions in food processing plants are dangerous and exploitative — particularly for new immigrants and communities of color — and wealth is being exported out of communities into the bank accounts of multinational companies. Giant farm and food firms enjoy unfair advantages as a result of public policy, including not being held accountable for the water and air pollution they cause, mismanagement of cropping systems, and soil loss. They also receive public support in the form of subsidies, which, in turn, promote practices that are detrimental to the land, the climate, communities, and small and medium-sized farmers.

LSP will:

- Advocate for statewide policy that promotes farming systems that have positive environmental, agronomic, and economic impacts in communities.
- Advocate for statewide policy that prevents environmental harm caused by factory farms/ concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs).
- Advocate for reforms to the federal crop insurance program, ensuring that it provides a safety net that is more supportive of small and mid-sized food and fiber producers and local food businesses.
- Support federal policy that holds corporations accountable for blocking farmers from fair access to markets.

Conventional Narratives

LSP's long experience with training the next generation of innovative farmers, advancing viable regenerative farming practices, and working to develop resilient food systems proves that we can unite around creating a fair, sustainable system of agriculture. Corporate control of our farm and food system is threatening to create a self-fulfilling prophecy: the only future for agriculture is one in which a handful of highly-industrialized, mega-operations control everything from field-to-fork and export wealth out of our rural communities. This false, conventional narrative divides us along economic, political, racial, and geographical lines and stands in opposition to our mission.

LSP will:

- Invest in our communications resources to expand the reach, engagement, and impact of the stories of people who are proving that there is a future for agriculture that benefits the land, our food system, and rural communities.
- Challenge and debunk myths and misinformation generated by the beneficiaries of our current industrialized, corporate-controlled agricultural system.
- Develop practical resources that support farmers, prospective farmers, and retiring farmers/non-operating landowners who see a positive future for their communities and want to participate in the transitioning of resources to the next generation.

What Success Will Look Like in 5 Years:

- Out-of-control consolidation in the agricultural industry is recognized by policymakers and society in general as a major detriment to farmers and working people, our economy, our climate, and our health. As a result, concrete, enforceable policies are put in place to limit monopolization, the growth of large-scale CAFOs/factory farms, unfair market control, and mistreatment of farmers, workers, and anyone else who is part of the food chain.
- Specific state and federal policy reforms are put in place that end the use of public resources to subsidize a large-scale, consolidated model of agriculture. These reforms will instead direct public resources toward supporting and rewarding a diversified, regenerative system of farming.
- The close ties between corporate-backed agriculture, government agencies, and educational institutions are disrupted, creating an environment where the industrialized, corporate-controlled system of “Big Ag” is held accountable for actions that run counter to the public good.



LSP members and allies make their voices heard during a township meeting in Fillmore County, Minn. (Photo by Amanda Koehler)



It Can Be Done: Local Democracy & Fighting Consolidation

During the past five years, LSP has supported 10 groups of local leaders organizing in their communities to place limits on the development of large-scale CAFOs. We have established organizing committees with local leaders in communities throughout Minnesota, including Winona, Fillmore, Kandiyohi, and Stevens counties, where LSP members have been standing up against the corporate consolidation of our animal ag system. During the past four years, LSP's members and supporters have won numerous victories related to requiring a large dairy operation to adhere to Winona County's animal unit cap. This fight has become a landmark example of what local citizens can accomplish when they refuse to be silenced.



It Can Be Done: Farm Policy

In 2019, the Minnesota state budget included just \$500,000 for soil health programs, and there was little conversation about creating a statewide initiative to support soil healthy farming practices that tackle climate change. By 2023, Minnesota's state budget reflected a significant commitment to climate and regenerative agriculture, with more than \$50 million in investment in resources to support farmers implementing soil building practices, thanks in large part to the work of LSP and our allies in promoting the idea that soil-building farming can play a key, positive role in cleaning our water, sequestering carbon, and revitalizing the economies of rural communities. On the federal level, LSP helped secure funding for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, Conservation Stewardship Program, and the Conservation Reserve Program by demonstrating overwhelming demand for these resources. In 2023, working with members and allies in Winona County, LSP successfully pushed through legislation that significantly bolsters fish kill reporting and response requirements for Minnesota state agencies.



Build

Vibrant Rural Communities

The health of our land and soil is inextricably linked to the health of our communities. The ongoing economic crisis that threatens our small and medium-sized farms, as well as local businesses and institutions, has devastating impacts on the residents of our communities — farmers and non-farmers alike. Addressing this crisis means creating a system of economic equity and fairness where all farmers, no matter their size or the products they raise, have free and fair access to open markets, and communities achieve food security. We must staunch the flow of money, soil, and people from our rural communities, and rebuild resiliency.

LSP will:

- Organize at the state and federal levels to pass legislation that gives farmers fair access to profitable markets and infrastructure, such as local meat and grain processing.
- Develop a community food web infrastructure — processing, aggregation, transportation, marketing — that returns profits to farmers and builds wealth locally by working with community organizations, farmers, local businesses, and local government.
- Work to facilitate the development of viable markets for farmers who produce sustainably-raised food and fiber.
- Work with allies to advocate for policies that provide fair treatment of and equitable pay for laborers in all aspects of the food and farm system.
- Build and strengthen relationships with allies taking the lead on issues critical to the success of LSP's overall mission, such as developing a healthcare system that is affordable and accessible to everyone, child and elder care, housing, immigration reform, and racial justice. For example, during the next five years we will take the role of a supporting partner with our allies who lead on fighting for affordable and accessible healthcare. By serving as a partner in the organizing work, we will ensure a farm and rural voice is represented on the healthcare issue.
- Collaborate with our tribal allies to support efforts to return tribal lands to the original stewards of the soil and water — Indigenous people.

Resilient, Climate-Positive Farming Systems

The climate crisis threatens not only the health of people, communities, and the land, but our ability to produce food. In recent years, LSP's work with thousands of crop and livestock farmers through our Soil Builders' Network, and with specialty crop producers via our Climate Resilience Cohorts, proves that agriculture has great potential for mitigating the climate crisis by adapting to extreme weather in a way that builds long-term resiliency. Climate-positive farming is one key to creating a brighter climate future.

LSP will:

- Draft and advocate for state and federal legislation that promotes and rewards farming practices that build soil health, protect water quality, sequester carbon, and help farmers become more economically, agronomically, and ecologically resilient.
- Ensure all farmers have fair access to conservation resources — no matter their size, what they raise, or their race — and that conservation resources are directed to actual farmers.
- Organize to end public policy that punishes or otherwise disincentivizes soil-friendly and regenerative practices.
- Further develop a public narrative based on farmers' experiences that draws a direct connection between agricultural practices that support soil health, clean water, a more stable climate, opportunities for the next generation of farmers, and more resilient farms.
- Advocate for publicly-funded institutions to do research and outreach that supports the transition of conventional farming systems, which are currently based on energy-intensive monocropping and large-scale confinement of livestock, to practices that are based on diversity and integrating livestock back onto the land in sustainable and economically viable ways.

What Success Will Look Like in 5 Years:

- Regenerative farming practices based on crop diversity, integrating livestock onto the land, and building soil health are considered a “normalized” way of pursuing agricultural production and dealing with the climate crisis in the Upper Midwest.
- Small and medium-sized farms utilizing diversified regenerative practices are widely considered a public good that is worth supporting via public policy and the markets.
- Food webs based on a regional, and interconnected, processing, marketing, and transportation infrastructure are established, providing models for replacing the current consolidated, centralized food system.
- LSP is in a strong, strategic relationship with elected leaders who are our partners in advancing climate-positive policy initiatives on the local, state, and federal level.



It Can Be Done: Climate Resilience

Thanks to efforts on the part of LSP and our allies, “soil health” is now consistently listed as a primary goal when implementing local, state, and federal farm conservation programs that build climate resilience. In addition, to secure a future for specialty crop farmers facing uncertainty due to climate change, during the past five years Farm Beginnings organizers have worked with LSP member-leaders to develop Climate Resilience Cohorts. Through these cohorts, dozens of specialty crop farmers in Minnesota and Wisconsin have developed and implemented practical, holistic resiliency plans on their farms.



It Can Be Done: Soil Health

Over the past five years, LSP’s Soil Builders’ Network has grown to 4,000 people. We’ve engaged more than 3,200 farmers, landowners, and agriculture professionals in educational soil health events and peer learning circles. Hundreds of farmer-members have grown as leaders as they share stories of their soil health journeys with other farmers, organizational partners, and decision-makers at all levels of government. Based on surveys, LSP estimates that we’ve directly supported farmers in implementing regenerative practices such as cover cropping, reduced or no-till, and managed rotational grazing on more than 38,000 acres.



It Can Be Done: Community-Based Food Systems

Over the past five years, LSP has worked with numerous partners to bolster regional food systems that open up markets for small and medium-sized farmers while generating (and keeping) wealth in local communities. Minnesota’s Farm-to-School Program now has an annual budget and is managed by a dedicated position at the Minnesota Department of Agriculture. Local meat processing in Minnesota has received major legislative support via funds to support local meat lockers and training programs. In 2021, LSP relaunched our Community-Based Food Systems Program. Currently focused on the Upper Minnesota River Valley, this work has engaged hundreds of farmers, community members, partners, and public officials in conducting feasibility studies of new local foods enterprises and launching a distribution route to increase sales of local food and build wealth in the region.



Steward



LSP members organize around a frac sand mining ban in Winona County. (Photo by Kaitlyn O'Connor)

Local Democracy

The bedrock of sustainable, vibrant communities is the ability of people to, through their townships, counties, and other forms of local government, shape the kind of future they want for the land, as well as farms and Main Street businesses. Backers of large-scale CAFOs/factory farms and other forms of extreme natural resource extraction often oppose functioning local democracy because it gives people the power to speak about and determine their future. This attempt to silence people attacks the foundations of democracy and intentionally divides members of our communities.

LSP will:

- Make explicit the connections between local democracy and promoting and supporting farming practices that provide a viable economic future for communities. We will continue to oppose, at the local and state level, any efforts to weaken people's right to determine their community's future. We will organize community members, provide them resources, and stand up for their right to speak out and stand up for their rights.
- Through our 501(c)4 political action partner, Land Stewardship Action, we will support efforts to unite rural communities around shared values, and elect officials who stand up for policies that hold corporations accountable and promote resilient and just farm and food systems.



Our Membership Mix of Farmers, Rural, Urban & Suburban People

LSP is effective and unique in part because our membership is not only made up of farmers; non-farmers who live in rural communities, as well as suburban and urban areas, are also LSP members. This diverse community of people has joined forces under the LSP banner because they believe small and medium-sized farms are a benefit to the food system, the land, and local communities. As a grassroots organization, our members give us the power to bring people together around shared values and a shared vision of a farm and food system that fosters vibrant communities, resilient and just economies, healthy soil, and clean water, while creating opportunities for farmers to be fairly rewarded for their hard work, no matter their race or background.

LSP will:

- Educate, engage, and organize with our members and supporters to emphasize the connections between a resilient and equitable farm and food system, a clean environment, vibrant communities, healthy food, and a robust democracy. We will empower all of our members and supporters to take action to promote the best and fight the worst. LSP will show how urban, suburban, and rural people work together to get and keep more farmers on the land.
- Dedicate time and resources, through steering committees, board development, and other community trainings, to the development of member-leaders who are committed to creating change within their own communities to advance a sustainable, regenerative farm and food system. We will work with our members to support them as trusted voices in their communities, as well as in our state and federal Capitols. Through trainings and resources, we will help them authentically share and elevate their stories, stand up for their values, and organize others to act effectively for change. LSP will make sure the people most impacted have the loudest voices in public policy decisions.
- Continue to expand LSP’s work to increase our foundation of supporters and steward our membership base so it represents a greater diversity of races, genders, and ages, as well as farming, economic, and geographical backgrounds.



LSP’s Family Farm Breakfast and Lobby Day at the Capitol has become a major way for members and allies to connect with lawmakers. (LSP Photos)

Investing in LSP’s Organizational Infrastructure & Culture

As LSP looks to the future, continuing to build and support an organizational infrastructure that is strong and lasting is critical to achieving our mission.

LSP will:

- Retain, add, and develop staff positions that meet the emerging needs of our work and are aligned to our members’ needs. We will offer consistent learning and development pathways for staff and member-leaders to create growth opportunities for them.

- Work in good faith with the labor union representing LSP staff members to co-create a culture based on LSP’s vision and values. We will continue to utilize LSP’s Labor Management Committee as an avenue for promoting democratic engagement, communication, diversity, and increased effectiveness of staff as a whole.
- Continue to invest in technology and internal systems that support the effectiveness and well-being of staff. This will include the adoption of cutting-edge membership and development information technology, as well as financial best practices and software.

What Success Will Look Like in 5 Years:

- Rural people are speaking up about the future of their communities and being heard and corporations are held accountable for attempts to silence those who are speaking on behalf of their communities, their future, and the land.
- LSP’s internal systems of operation are aligned with the values of the organization.



It Can Be Done: Expanding Our Base

During the past five years, LSP has expanded its base of supporters from 44,033 to 52,000 people via mailings, petitions, organizing campaigns, workshops, field days, and community events, as well as through “relational” channels like friends, family, word-of-mouth, and online. LSP has also supported member-led organizing campaigns as groups of members pushed the organization to make these efforts priorities. Some of these efforts include the campaign against a factory farm expansion in Winona County, a campaign around manure digesters, farm crisis meetings, and the broader healthcare public option campaign. We have also expanded our member-leader trainings. For example, LSP’s Organizing and Social Change Cohort has trained 117 member-leaders since 2019.



It Can Be Done: Organizational Stewardship

The past five years have shown LSP that investing in internal operations systems, technology, and procedures creates a work environment that fosters healthy morale, collaboration, and a sense of solidarity. More equitable hiring practices, accessible technology, frequent staff meetings and trainings, unionization, and documented procedures and practices have moved LSP toward greater sustainability as an organization. Among other things, LSP has adopted an equitable salary calculation system and broadened and lengthened leave policies.

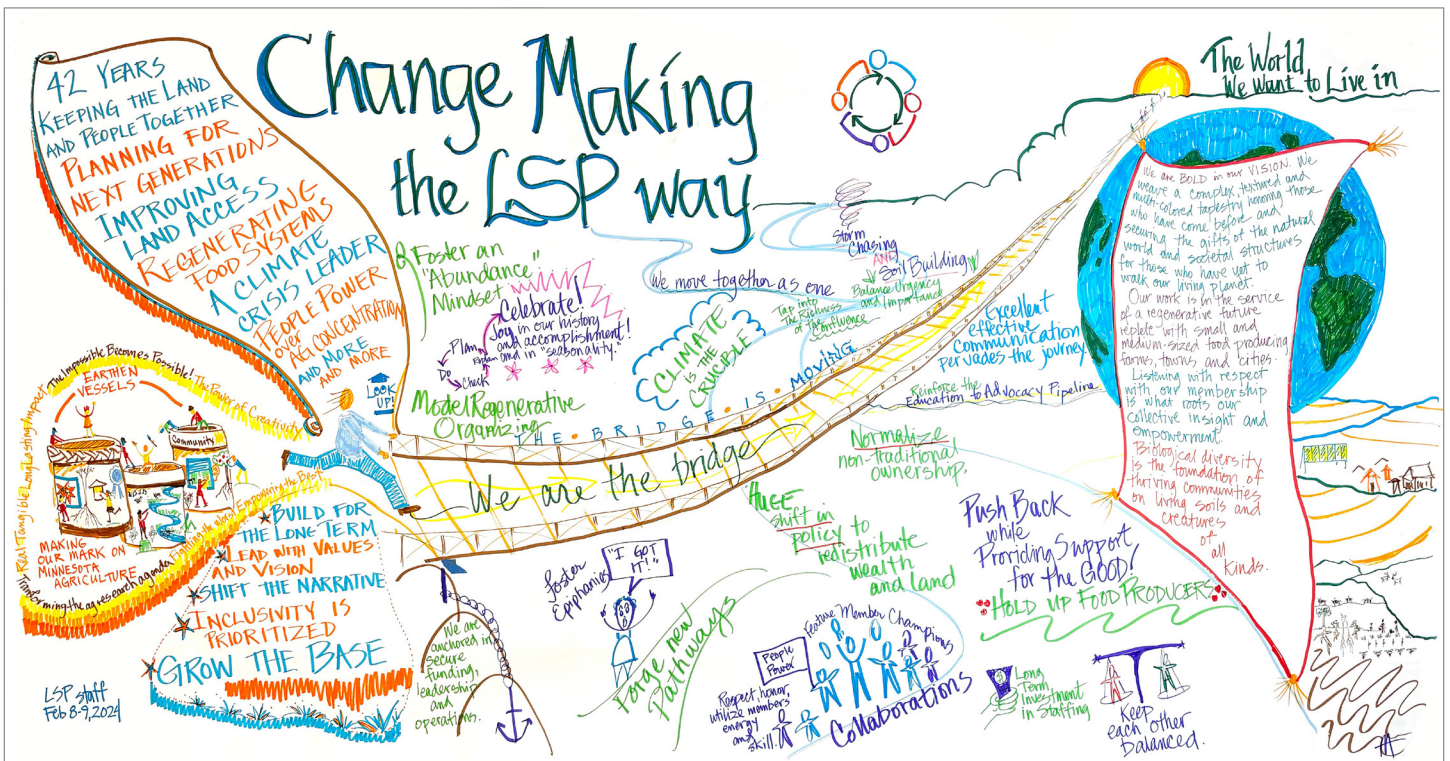
Why This is LSP's Work

The Four Interlinked Paths to Resilience presented in the previous pages outline an ambitious agenda. However, during our more than four-decade history, LSP has proven repeatedly that we can get the job done. From holding giant insurance companies accountable for their treatment of farmland and helping local communities fight factory farms and frac sand mining, to training the next generation of farmers and building regenerative farming systems based on healthy soil, LSP delivers. The “It Can Be Done” sidebars throughout this plan illustrate LSP’s achievements during the execution of the previous long range plan, and show that our approach provides us with a unique ability to accomplish what we set out to do.

Key to how LSP accomplishes its work is the use of paired strategies:

- **Advancing the Best & Fighting the Worst:** LSP fights some of the worst ideas and developments that would damage the land, our communities, and our democracy — like corporate-backed factory farms and unjust farm subsidies that consolidate land ownership and extract wealth from rural communities. At the same time, we know that we must work to create and build what we want and need — new farms, new leaders, new ways of farming, new local and regional food systems, and new public policies. By advancing the best and fighting the worst, we fulfill our mission and accomplish our long-term goals.
- **Mission Driven & Member Driven:** LSP is both mission-driven and member-driven. Our mission gives us guidance every day — so do the lived experiences, needs, and aspirations of LSP’s members.
- **Local & Personal, Structural & Systemic:** LSP works in the sphere of local, specific, and even personal action. Examples include helping a farmer develop a soil health plan, organizing with local residents to stop a large-scale CAFO/factory farm, and helping farmers transition their land to the next generation. But equally important is our work to achieve structural change and build thriving rural communities by passing public policy that rewards farmland conservation, working in multi-racial, multi-issue statewide and national coalitions to dismantle structural racism and economic injustice, and creating multi-state collaboratives to expand beginning farmer training. For LSP, investing in both of these two “ends” of the work makes us practical, effective, cutting-edge, and grounded.
- **Taking Action & Telling the Story:** Through reflection, evaluation, conversation, and writing, LSP strives to improve our work and to share what we learn from others; it is a constant and highly valued part of LSP’s work, whether it is through the *Land Stewardship Letter*, commentaries and articles, podcasts, social media, or the evaluation at the end of a meeting. And we also know that we must act, do, create, and build. We strive to create a virtuous cycle where we take action, reflect, and learn from our actions so that we continually learn and grow as we go.

→ **Rural & Urban/Suburban Membership Base:** These days, it is unusual for rural, suburban, and urban people to be united around a shared agenda. But this is what LSP does: we unite a strong rural/small town base with urban and suburban members. We emphasize the need for farmers and other rural people to be leading elements of LSP’s power base, and sources of knowledge and solutions. We know that urban and suburban communities also not only bring important ideas and solutions to the table but are truly invested in local foods and healthy land and water. United by values and purpose, LSP members are able to influence decision-makers, steward the land, and create communities we want and need — together.



During a 2024 Land Stewardship Project staff meeting in Morris, Minn., Audrey Arner, a western Minnesota farmer and former LSP organizer, created this “Change Making the LSP Way” illustration.

Important Context

Section A: LSP's Core Values

The following core values guide LSP's efforts to achieve our mission:

- **Stewardship** is the value of living in a balanced, reciprocal relationship with the land and all that is connected to it: the soil, the water, the air, the plants, microorganisms, animals, and our climate. Stewardship means giving to the land and receiving from it, as well as caring about the entire ecological community. We believe conservation-minded farmers who live on the land, farm it, and care for it are essential to stewardship of farmland.
- **Justice** means there is economic, racial, and gender equity for farmers, farmworkers, and all who are engaged in the food and agriculture system. This requires working to undo systems that have extracted resources and wealth from rural communities and perpetuated discrimination and inequality when it comes to race, gender, and economic status. It also requires the achievement of related rights like access to public resources, land, and markets, as well as food sovereignty for all communities and high-quality, affordable healthcare for all.
- **Fairness** is based on the recognition that due to economic, racial, and gender inequities in our farm and food system — historically and today — certain groups of people have been put at a severe disadvantage and, in some cases, outright discriminated against. Fairness requires that we must go beyond providing simply “equal” opportunities for groups of people who have consistently been shut out of opportunities to participate in the farm and food system on an equitable basis — they must be given a leg-up to succeed. A commitment to equity and justice is essential to achieving true fairness and realizing LSP's vision of more farmers on the land.
- **Democracy** means a society in which the people hold the power to decide how they will be governed. In this way, the people directly impacted by issues can name solutions, set priorities, and win change. They have the freedom to make choices that will improve the quality of their lives and the economic security of their communities. It means that the health and well-being of people and the land takes priority over corporate profits.
- **Health** is the value of nourishing the beauty, function, and vitality of an ecosystem made up of people, landscapes, plants, animals, soil, and water. As Aldo Leopold wrote: “The most important characteristic of an organism is that capacity for internal self-renewal known as health.” The health of the land is a gift that current generations are obligated to maintain for future generations.
- **Community** is the value of understanding our interdependence and caring for the relationships that sustain each of us. Living in community, we are more resilient, creative, resourceful, and powerful — we have greater ability to be the change we seek in the world.

Section B: The Roots of this Long Range Plan

“The strength of LSP lies in the grassroots and deepening the bonds among rural people that empower them to take action.” — Member comment from LSP’s long range plan survey

During the spring of 2024, the Long Range Planning Committee — working with our consulting partner, Seiche, a social impact strategy and communications firm — conducted a member and supporter survey and held six in-person listening sessions. We also hosted a panel discussion with some of the BIPOC allies LSP partners with (see below for a recap of that discussion).

Overall, 591 individuals provided input for this long range plan. Seiche also gathered the perspectives of LSP staff during a special listening session. We’d like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who participated in this process — your input and insights were invaluable. Because of this input, we feel confident the 2025-2030 long range plan communicates in an open and honest manner our intentions as we address the work ahead. And during the next five years, stay tuned: we will be consistently and clearly communicating to our members, allies, and the general public about how this exciting work is being carried out.

BIPOC Panel: LSP as an Ally

“For LSP’s work to be successful, we must continue working to dismantle systems of oppression (racism, sexism, homophobia, etc.) in the food and farming system.” — Member comment from LSP’s long range plan survey

In April 2024, LSP hosted a panel discussion on racial equity with several of the BIPOC-led groups we partner with. During the discussion, we asked panelists a series of questions centered around the best ways LSP can be an ally on racial equity issues, the relationship between racial disparity and economic justice, and situations in which LSP has fallen short on these issues.

Responses included:

- LSP should keep a focus on rural organizing and needs to consider race when talking about transitioning farmland to the next generation.
- When working with communities of color, LSP should serve the role of being an ally. For example, on issues such as tribal land access, LSP needs to keep showing up without being asked.
- LSP needs to increase internal training to make the organization more welcoming to staff of color.
- Supporting and promoting the ability of a community to grow its own food is a critical role for LSP.

What is Valued About LSP

During LSP’s long range plan listening sessions and via our surveys, members and allies highlighted what they value about the organization:

- LSP’s grassroots relational organizing approach is highly valued and viewed as critical to advancing our organizational priorities. Across all community listening opportunities, LSP was described as a community-building organization — a group that brings people together to build trust and relational capital.
- LSP is seen as playing a critical role in bringing forward the perspectives of members and supporters, especially farmers and farmworkers, rural community members, and supporters of sustainable/ regenerative agriculture.
- LSP’s advocacy and lobbying capacity is strong, and it’s something that makes the organization unique. LSP leverages its privilege, history, and relationships to advocate for and advance policy reforms in alignment with the organization’s mission — within communities and at the Capitol — in a way that’s unique within the Minnesota political ecosystem. Additionally, having an expanded set of political tools through our partner, Land Stewardship Action, was viewed as helpful in advocating for specific issues and topics — stakeholders noted the importance of building political candidate pipelines and growing local political leadership.

“I count on LSP to track, craft, and lobby for the policy work side of things. My head and heart are in the land — thanks for doing the city work.” — Member comment from LSP’s long range plan survey

TOP-RANKED ORGANIZATIONAL PRIORITIES

Fighting excessive corporate power and consolidation in crop and animal agriculture to build a more equitable and fair food and farm system for producers and consumers.

Building climate resilience in our farm and food system.

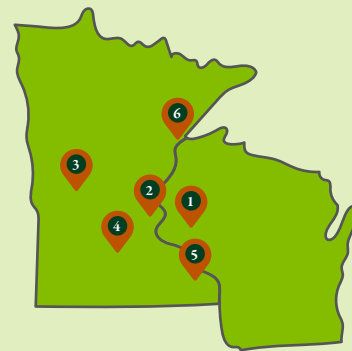
Addressing agricultural impacts on water quality and soil health.

Farmer-to-farmer soil health education.

Advancing policy reforms in our farm and food system at the local, state, and federal levels through grassroots community organizing.

LISTENING SESSIONS LOCATIONS

- | | |
|--------------------|------------------|
| 1. Menomonie, WI | 4. St. Peter, MN |
| 2. Minneapolis, MN | 5. Winona, MN |
| 3. Spicer, MN | 6. Wrenshall, MN |



DESIRED FIVE-YEAR OUTCOMES

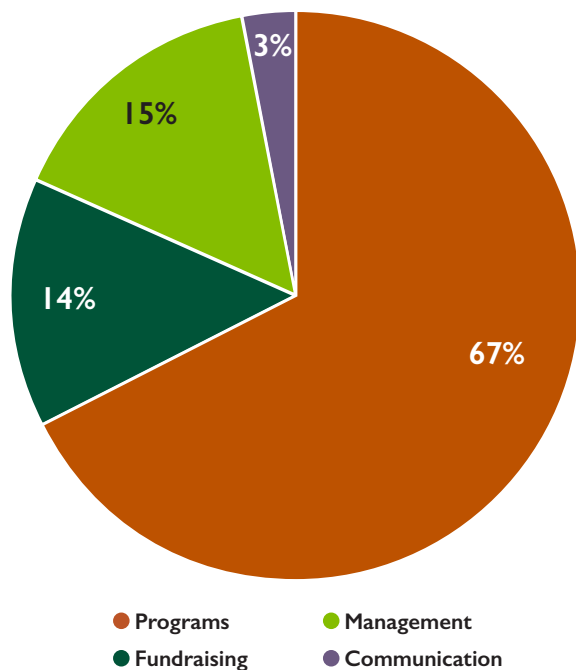
- ➔ More farmers and smaller farms
- ➔ Sustainable agriculture practices are normalized
- ➔ Policy reforms that support the economic viability of small farms and sustainable agriculture practices

Section C: Financials

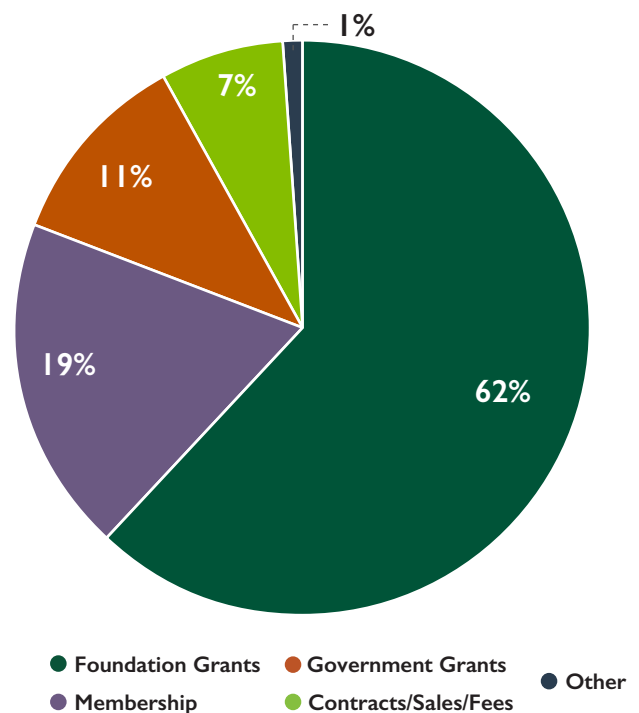
We are grateful for the financial support and generosity of the many people who support LSP’s work. LSP funds our work through a variety of sources, including membership dues and contributions from individuals, private foundations, and public funding. We take seriously the trust our members and donors have in us when they support us financially.

Over the next five years, LSP will continue to invest in effective financial management and fundraising that upholds the values of the organization and advances the work presented in this plan.

Expenses by Operational Area
Fiscal Year 2023-2024



Operating Revenue
Fiscal Year 2023-2024



Section D: The Ecology of LSP

LSP organizes its work into nine program areas, or departments, our staff work within: **Soil Health, Farm Beginnings, Land Access & Land Legacy, Community-Based Food Systems, Policy & Organizing, Membership & Communications, Development, Operations & Human Resources, and Finance.** For more on LSP’s various program areas, visit landstewardshipproject.org.

These program areas operate on multiple levels and cover various aspects of our work, often intersecting in numerous ways. Through our mix of programs, LSP strives to become a changemaker by balancing our farmer-led training/technical assistance support with advocacy and action. For example, beginning farmers and farmers seeking to adopt soil health practices can’t be successful without supportive, innovative policy; but if we only focus on policy work, then we lose touch with what farmers on-the-ground need.

Ecology of LSP



Our members value the work we do to conserve and support the viability of specific farming cultures and practices, including small and medium-scale diversified cropping/livestock operations, cutting-edge regenerative ag practitioners, and direct-to-market specialty crop growers. On the other hand, they also expect us to pursue outcomes that can shape the course of agriculture as a whole, including work to reverse the trends of consolidation and implementing climate-friendly practices at scale. This is not an either/or proposition; LSP pursues work at both of these levels, and to do so, all aspects of our programmatic and advocacy work are inextricably linked. LSP utilizes several smaller, interlocking stepping stones that eventually lead to the achievement of major milestones.

For example:

Advancing soil health and water quality involves:

- Soil Health Program
- Policy & Organizing Program
- Farm Beginnings Program
- Land Access & Land Legacy Program

Building climate resilience involves:

- Soil Health Program
- Farm Beginnings Program
- Policy Program
- Community-Based Food Systems Program

Ensuring vibrant rural communities involves:

- Community-Based Food Systems Program
- Policy & Organizing Program
- Farm Beginnings Program
- Land Access & Land Legacy Program

Advancing racial, gender, and economic equity involves:

- Policy & Organizing Program
- Farm Beginnings Program
- Land Access & Land Legacy Program

Fighting consolidation and building fair markets involves:

- Policy & Organizing Program
- Community-Based Food Systems Program

Launching the next generation of farmers involves:

- Farm Beginnings Program
- Policy Program
- Land Access & Land Legacy Program
- Community-Based Food Systems Program

Finally, it should be noted that the **Organizational Stewardship** which binds all of this work together is our **Membership & Communications, Development, Operations & Human Resources, and Finance** departments; without a deep base of members, ways to tell the story of positive change, financial resources, and a talented staff that feels supported, none of our work to achieve our mission would be possible.

LSP Board & Staff Members

LSP Board of Directors (2025)

Executive Committee:

- Chair: Beth Slocum, farmer, Welch, Minn.
- Vice-Chair: Laura Cullip, farmer, Hutchinson, Minn.
- Secretary-Treasurer: Sara Morrison, food co-op manager, Osceola, Wis.
- Fourth Officer: Laurie Driessen, farmer, Canby, Minn.

Members at Large:

- Aleta Borrud, retired physician, Rochester, Minn.
- Dan McGrath, organizer/consultant, Saint Paul, Minn.
- Josh Bryceson, farmer, Clear Lake, Wis.
- Les Macare, farmer, Colfax, Wis.
- Paula Williams, life coach, Barnum, Minn.

LSP Staff (2025)

- Alex Kiminski, Soil Health/Land Access Organizer
- Alex Romano, Soil Health Organizer
- Amy Bacigalupo, Program Director
- Annelie Livingston-Anderson, Farm Beginnings Organizer
- Brian DeVore, Managing Editor
- Clara Sanders, Membership Organizer
- Elizabeth Makarewicz, Membership Support Specialist
- Emily Minge, Political Organizer
- Heather Benson, Communications Specialist
- Josh Journey-Heinz, Major Gifts Officer
- Karen Stettler, Land Access & Farm Beginnings Organizer
- Laura Schreiber, Policy Organizer
- Matthew Sheets, Policy Organizer
- Megan Smith, Membership & Communications Director
- Natalia Espina Talamilla, Human Resources & Operations Director
- Nick Olson, Farm Beginnings Organizer
- Olivia Blanchflower, Development Director
- Pam Hartwell, Policy Organizer
- Robin Moore, Land Access & Land Legacy Manager
- Scott DeMuth, Regional Food Systems Organizer
- Scott Elkins, Executive Director
- Sean Carroll, Policy & Organizing Director
- Seth Kuhl-Stennes, Operations Specialist
- Shea-Lynn Ramthun, Soil Health Organizer
- Timothy Kenney, Finance Director
- Whitney Terrill, Farm Beginnings & Land Access Organizer

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Keeping the Land & People Together

This long range plan is available
at landstewardshipproject.org/long-range-plan