2022 Annual Report
Celebrating IDEAS For Us in our biggest year yet and the launch of our new STEM workforce training programs across the State of Florida!

www.IDEASForUs.org

Headquarters: Orlando, Florida
United States of America
Hello IDEAS community,

2023 marks 15 years since our inception, a milestone that we should all be proud of. When we sought out to create IDEAS, we wanted to create an outlet for community engagement where everyday people to be part of the solution to create a better World. An opportunity for youth to gain real-world experiences and to meaningfully contribute to cleaner, healthier, and a more sustainable world, starting on their campus or in their own back (or front) yard. And as you’re probably aware, IDEAS has become a global network of branches and sustainability leaders working to advance this vision, with tailored and localized solutions and sustainability action projects implemented in over 30 countries.

As you might have heard, in Summer 2022 I accepted a Presidential appointment to join the Biden-Harris team and move to Washington DC to work on advancing our nations climate and clean energy goals of transitioning to 100% clean energy by 2035 and net-zero emissions economy-wide by 2050. The offer was to come serve as the inaugural Chief of Staff and help create a new Office at the US Department of Energy that focused on managing $16 BILLION in funding and technical assistance for a wide range of stakeholders, including State and Tribal governments, City and County governments, school districts, nonprofit orgs, workforce and training agencies, and with a particular focus on helping low-income and historically disadvantaged communities take advantage of all these new grants, rebates, and incentives for clean energy.

This is a dream come true for me…and opportunity to put my relentless passion for this cause to work for our country and help us meet this important moment in history. But with this appointment came the requirement to vacate all of my outside positions, which included IDEAS, Climate First Bank, and other commitments…

As our past IDEAS President, this was obviously not my choice or desire — but in hindsight this it gave us an opportunity to welcome new leadership on the Board who could build upon our foundation that we’ve set and continue to evolve IDEAS. I’m forever grateful for Jeff Benavides, our new Board President, and Lee Perry, our Board VP, along with all of our volunteer Board members, for stepping up to ensure that IDEAS continued to thrive and drive impact in the World. They bring an incredible wealth of knowledge, connections, and experiences to IDEAS.

In a future message, I’ll fill you in only the details of my new position here but for now, I just wanted to express that I cannot be more proud of all of YOU...our IDEAS board of directors, executive team, staff, volunteers, partners, followers, and supporters for the work that IDEAS continues everyday.

Chris Castro
Chief Of Staff
Department of Energy
Hello IDEAS Community,

We have so much to be grateful for as we reflect on 2022. Our work across Florida has strengthened thanks to our volunteers, supporters, and members. Globally, our impact includes hundreds of hands-on action projects addressing real issues in their communities related to energy, water, food, waste, and ecology. More than 21,000 volunteer hours, equating to over $630,000 USD in donated labor, has mobilized for reforestation through tree plantings, ecosystem clean-ups, school garden builds, family fun days, urban wetland restorations, native landscapes, and so much more.

As I step into lead the next phase of IDEAS for Us as President, I'm focusing on building the capacity of our staff and volunteers and strengthening our partnerships as we expand into new regions.

As we welcome 2023, you can help us celebrate our 15 year anniversary by leaning into the ever popular 'Think global, act local' saying. We are honored to have your continued support. Thank you for making this impact a reality.

Sincerely,

Jeff Benavides
Board President
IDEAS For Us, Inc.
Hello IDEAS Community,

2022 has been a momentous year for IDEAS For Us. Not only did we launch The Florida Green Jobs Youth Initiative, our organization’s first ever fully comprehensive STEM workforce training program, it was also the first year we broke the million dollar ceiling in contributions for a single 12-month period. We are tremendously thankful to all our donors, volunteers, supporters, friends, and collaborators around the world for making this our best year ever. As you will read, IDEAS For Us experienced a strong demand across our entire project and program portfolio in 2022. However, as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit and United Nations Accredited NGO, dollars raised are not our sole measure of success: we are not and never will be a nonprofit that thinks that way.

As the climate heats up and natural resources become scarcer - marked by supply chain issues, inflation, mismanagement, or worse, what is most important to us, is responding to the crisis bravely and decisively. We are led by the values of inclusion, diversity, mutualism, and optimism in everything we do. We strive to be as equitable and scientifically informed as possible and IDEAS has even published a white paper though Columbia University about our unique incorporation of biomimicry into our expansion strategy. Though we do engage in some environmental advocacy, we are predominantly an environmental-action focused organization and so our mission remains to develop ideas, fund action, and scale solutions that solve the world’s most pressing environmental challenges.

The tumultuous years leading up to 2022 challenged us to think bigger than ever before and we responded by transforming our organization through a long-term strategy based on continuous and sustainable growth, careful management and planning, an unwavering focus on our impact and a respectful but forward thinking reinvention of the IDEAS For Us brand. We’ve succeeded because we are always learning and improving our theory of change, logic models, and return on investment with great heart.

But perhaps most importantly, we are helping more people, healing more of the planet, and growing more prosperity in communities that need it the most than ever before. In terms of ambition, quality, and impact, IDEAS For Us still stands, as it has always done, for something that beckons out the best in all of us.

Sincerely,

Clayton Louis Ferrara  
Chief Executive Officer  
IDEAS For Us, Inc.
INTRODUCTION TO IDEAS

IDEAS For Us (IDEAS) is an Orlando-based 501(c)(3) grassroots non-profit organization and accredited NGO of the United Nations. Our story began in a dorm room back in 2008, with the decision to begin the difficult work of solving environmental problems, as opposed to simply talking about them. Since then, IDEAS Eco-Action Projects have been awarded by the Department of Energy, United Nations, White House, and our leaders have been honored by many elected officials and The Vatican’s Pontifical Academy of Science. Today, we are a unique interdisciplinary, intergenerational team of leaders who have dedicated their lives to advancing sustainability through government, industry, and grassroots transformation.

MISSION

Our mission is to develop ideas, fund action, and scale solutions to the world’s most pressing environmental challenges.

VISION

Our vision is to contribute to a future where humanity thrives in harmony with nature and in peace with one another.

GOALS

- Educate people on environmental issues
- Mobilize communities in eco action projects
- Implement long term climate solutions that satisfy the SDG’s

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Our projects aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) created by the United Nations to advance sustainability worldwide.

LOCATIONS

IDEAS For Us is headquartered in Orlando, Florida with branches throughout Florida, Africa, Asia, & Europe. IDEAS has implemented in projects in over 30 countries.
OUR MODEL

Our model is to educate, engage and mobilize communities in creating localized solutions to global climate challenges. This happens through educating people with our monthly Hive meetings and creating eco action projects based on the information learned. IDEAS provides opportunities for people to take hands on environmental action with the ideas shared.

THE IDEAS HIVE

The IDEAS Hive is an interdisciplinary, intergenerational community Think + Do Tank designed to educate the public about sustainability and develop their ideas into local action projects. The IDEAS Hive brings together community members and subject matter experts to educate the public in sustainability topics in the focus areas of water, waste, food, energy, and ecology. These events harness hands-on community brainstorming. Then, at the end of the month, our non-profit engages in an environmental action project associated with the topic of the month. Since 2009, The IDEAS Hive led over 50 engaging IDEAS Hive events through out of IDEAS For Us branches.

ECO-ACTION PROJECTS

IDEAS For Us is an action-oriented organization, working to solve climate issues with boots on the ground eco action projects. These projects include shoreline restoration projects, tree plantings, pollinator garden installations, community garden creations and more. Each of these works to heal ecosystems and help the locals. Each project creates an event where the community can take hands on action towards solving climate change. Most projects incorporate one or more other local groups to bring diverse audiences working on the same goal. This also creates a space for the community to come together with like minded individuals, reminding us that we are not in this mission alone.
OVERALL ANNUAL METRICS

Through grassroots efforts, IDEAS For Us has led monumental efforts in environmental action through community-focused, hands-on activism where it is needed most.

- Solar Workforce Training Program Launched
- 6,620 Aquatic Plants Installed
- 45 Community Gardens Installed
- 750 lbs of Waste Diverted
- 26,455 Trees Planted
- 18 IDEAS Hive Events
- 4,744 Volunteers Mobilized
- 85 Interns Trained
- 21,438 Volunteer Hours Led
- 124 Action Events Led
Think Global Act Local

Our model allows for community members to come together with local solutions to contribute towards global goals set by the United Nations. These Global Goals exemplifies the main focuses of our projects.

Florida Focus
Florida is one of the American states most affected by climate change. The Florida peninsula has warmed more than one degree (F) during the last century. The sea is rising about one inch every decade, and heavy rainstorms are becoming more severe. In the coming decades, rising temperatures are likely to increase storm damages, harm coral reefs, increase the frequency of unpleasantly hot days, and reduce the risk of freezing to Florida’s agriculture.

IDEAS For Us is taking direct-action through our branches in Orlando, Tampa Bay, Miami, & on the UCF campus.
LAGOON RESTORATION

IDEAS For Us Orlando partnered with Marine Resources Council on their ongoing restoration initiatives in the Indian River Lagoon. Together we created and deployed over 50 concrete oyster domes and prisms, and planted 80 mangroves that will serve to improve shoreline accretion, create habitat for oysters, and increase climate resiliency.

NEW PAKISTAN BRANCH

IDEAS For Us expanded its reach to the country of Pakistan! Our incredible branch leader, Muhammad Ajjal, is tirelessly working in the community of Punjab to plant native trees, create fruit tree orchards, reduce pollution, and mobilize his community in climate action projects.

TAMPA SPRING PLANTING

The Tampa team partnered with Ecosphere Restoration Institute to continue our shoreline restoration initiative at Ulele Springs. In 2022 we held two aquatic and upland plantings at the spring to help heal the ecosystem, sequester pollutants, and provide cleaner water as the spring flows into the Hillsborough River.

GARDENS FOR AFRICA

The IDEAS Africa branches worked hard this year to provide their communities with local food sources. Each branch created nurseries, installed community gardens, or worked to create gardens in households to empower individuals to grow their own food. Thank you to A Well Fed World for making this project possible!
ECO-ACTION SUCCESS STORIES

GLOBAL PLANT A TREE DAY
In partnership with One Tree Planted, IDEAS For Us conducted international tree planting initiatives in Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, Rwanda, Nepal, Pakistan, Uganda, Florida and Democratic Republic of Congo. Together, our branches mobilized 850 volunteers to plant 7,500 native native and fruit trees across 10 communities to improve ecosystem health and food sovereignty.

POLLINATOR GARDENS
Restoring native landscapes has been one of the main focuses of the Orlando branch throughout 2022. Thanks to many partnerships, we were able to create 26 native landscapes across central Florida with over 2,750 native plants installed. These landscapes are essential to the health of our pollinator insect populations, and to our ecosystem health.

UCF FRUIT TREE PLANTING
IDEAS UCF was able to execute two on-campus fruit tree planting events in 2022. The first tree planting we held with the Health and Wellness Promotional Services to plant 12 trees on Lake Claire in the spring semester. In the fall we were able to partner with the Arboretum to support and plant 15 fruit trees to kick off their on campus fruit tree orchard.

PATHLIGHT HOME COMMUNITY GARDEN
IDEAS is working towards food sovereignty for all in Central Florida by installing community gardens in vulnerable communities and educating people on gardening. Our community garden at the affordable housing facility, Pathlight Home, has been an amazing opportunity to empower people to grow their own food, have healthier diets with local produce, and provide them with a natural space.
One Tree Planted is a 501c(3) non-profit based out of Canada that helps communities plant trees around the world. Since their inception in 2014, they have planted 40 million trees across 43 countries, implementing projects in urban areas, degraded landscapes, and more.

In 2022, One Tree Planted supported all 12 of the IDEAS For Us branches to complete diverse projects in their communities that focus on environmental restoration and humanitarian aid. Each branch was mobilized to host several tree planting projects, and together we planted 28,000 native and fruit trees globally.

Beyond just tree plantings, One Tree Planted also gave our branches capacity to do events that satisfied specific needs in their community, including creating 36 international school/community gardens, and several shoreline ecosystem restoration projects, pollinator garden installation, and clean ups.

Thanks to One Tree Planted we were able complete 50 projects across 11 countries in 2022.

We are continuing this partnership in 2023 with even more projects, including long term investment in the projects initiated in 2022. Stay tuned for more boots on the ground action with One Tree Planted this year!
ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION HIGHLIGHTS

NEIGHBORHOOD NATURALIST

IDEAS For Us has partnered with the Arnold & Winnie Palmer Foundation to create the Neighborhood Naturalist program, featuring ecology lessons for young explorers and their families. These programs include Ecology in Action, a weekly class featuring environmentally focused adventures, crafts & games, as well as a monthly nature walk and a weekly gardening class at West Lakes Early Learning Center. These programs occur at Lake Lorna Doone, next to Camping World Stadium and are completely free to the public.

ACE GARDEN CLUB

Since 2018, IDEAS For Us has had the pleasure of operating and maintaining the garden club at the OCPS Academic Center for Excellence (ACE). After a total garden remodel in August in partnership with Keep the City Beautiful and the expert leadership of the new ACE Educator, the garden club has flourished and become a point of pride for students and teachers alike. This program is sponsored by the VoLo Foundation and students are able to take home everything they grow.

JOE R. LEE GARDEN CLUB

IDEAS For Us hosts a weekly garden class at the Eatonville Boys & Girls club. These sessions are very relaxed and set to the children’s pace; they are free to simply relax in the garden after a long day at school, or participate in guided garden maintenance with the IDEAS For Us educator. Children aged 2nd to 5th grade are able to help seed, harvest, and maintain the garden, as well as eat whatever they grow.

EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH

IDEAS For Us hosted many educational events throughout the Orlando community during the 2022 year. We hosted 2 lake cleanups for local High School students, were featured as guest teachers at the Alianza and Leadership For Girls summer camps, as well as building a partnership with the Orlando Science Center through Food Heroes presentations and participating in Science Night Live!
SCHOOL GARDEN BUILDS

Working in countless schools throughout the year, we have created, expanded, and maintained many gardens. Most notably we were able to create gardens at schools in underserved communities such as Pine Hills Elementary, Rolling Hills Elementary, Memorial Middle School, Spring Lake Elementary, and many more schools throughout the Central Florida community. To date, the Edible Landscapes landscaping service has created 41 school gardens and 5 community gardens.

One such school garden is at Rolling Hills Elementary, where we created a therapeutic garden that children are using to learn how to grow food. We installed 6 garden beds with the help of Marriott Grand Lakes, along with a fruit tree orchard, and a pollinator garden.

PATHLIGHT HOME COMMUNITY GARDEN

Every day, Pathlight Home provides a safe place to live and supportive services to more than 600 formerly homeless individuals in the Central Florida area. At Pathlight, individuals who were previously experiencing homelessness are given support to transition back into society. This area is considered to be a food apartheid. Edible Landscapes was able to create a Florida native plant pollinator garden and a community garden space able to provide individuals to enjoy their garden oasis.

MAITLAND COMMUNITY GARDEN

At Asbury United Methodist Church in Maitland, the Creation Care Committee partnered with Edible Landscapes and the Winter Park Health Foundation in order to create a community garden for people to commune with "God's creation" and become closer to God by experiencing the beauty of nature. The idea is to care for our mother Earth, our highest purpose in life.
Fleet Farming is one of IDEAS For Us' flagship programs. Having come out of The IDEAS Hive think/do tank, Fleet Farming is an urban agriculture program that transforms the average American lawn into a micro farm including: Fleet Farmlettes (lawns to farms program), a weekly CSA program, Edible Landscapes service, and Fleet Education.

CHANGING THE CYCLE

**Fleet Farmlettes** is an urban agriculture initiative that creates a localized food system in select residential neighborhoods in Orlando, Florida. This serves as a model for communities to learn how to grow food and about sustainable food systems from farm to local market to table. These are common lawns that have been converted into productive urban farmland that the Fleet Farming team helps to maintain by bicycle. This system contributes to promoting healthy lifestyles, a healthy planet, and a community connected to food.

PARTNERSHIPS AND PROJECTS

This year thanks to our partners we were able to launch new projects, refurbish our farms, and buy 15 new bikes. We are very grateful to the Sprouts Foundation for their contribution to this Urban Agriculture program and dedication to serving their local community. Two key projects they helped us to fulfill are at the heart of the community we farm in, located at the Audubon Park K-8 School. At this newly reconstructed school there used to be a community maintained garden dating back to the 1950’s. Through our community partnerships we were able to create a new community garden space and greenhouse space to continue the historical food growing culture of the people in this neighborhood.

FARMLETTE PRODUCTIVITY

Over the course of 2022 Fleet Farming has managed 13 Farmlettes in the Audubon Park neighborhood. We continue to run an intern and volunteer bike powered program and have taken focus on not only the newest growing techniques but also the ancient knowledge of growing food passed on from our ancestors. Our favorite fruits and vegetables we have grown this year include Tomatoes, Garlic, Onion, Watermelon, Sweet Potatoes, Leaf Vegetables, Broccoli, Radish, Carrots, and Beets!
Frontline conservationists, enterprising climate activists, and passionate environmentalists from developing countries are too often underrepresented at the world’s largest gatherings for the climate due to resource constraints. Hence, youth leaders are left to fend for themselves without any hope of ever participating in international climate change conferences which leaves a huge vacuum to fill and a gap to tackle the climate crisis. Already faced with the glaring and galloping effects of climate change, these youth leaders with the energy, enthusiasm, and innovation to find ways for adaptation and mitigation ought to be provided the necessary platforms.

Predicated upon the need to turn this problem into an opportunity that derives solutions to empower youth leaders from developing countries to lend their voices, hone their knowledge, and nurture their experiences, IDEAS For Us funded two of its leaders to participate in their first-ever UN Conference on Climate Change. For the very first time in their life, Stephen B. Lavalah from Liberia and Eliode Bakole of the Democratic Republic of Congo participated in the Conference of the Parties (COP27), which took place in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt from November 6 – 18, 2022.

As IDEAS For Us-funded COP27 fellows, Stephen and Eliode participated in several meetings, panel discussions, and rallies. They also interacted with scores of delegates, dignitaries, organizations, and negotiators among others. Furthermore, Stephen and Eliode visited a number of pavilions, as well as listened, learned, and connected people to IDEAS’s five pillars of sustainability in the areas of energy, water, food, waste, and ecology.

People became abreast about how IDEAS supports its branches across the globe through the Solutions Fund and partnership initiatives with One Tree Planted, and A World Well Fed among others, which fascinated so many people. They were eager to grasp how IDEAS operates with hundreds of volunteers, dedicated leaders, and unceasing commitment to solve the climate crisis, improve livelihood, and advance sustainable solutions utilizing a grassroots-led movement.

For an acclaimed globally respected and leading nonprofit organization with UN-accredited NGO status, Stephen and Eliode spread the word about how IDEAS For Us started as a campus-based institution established in a dorm at the University of Central Florida is turning the tide to scaling up environmental actions.
Stephen and Eliode further learned about climate change-related loss and damage from the global, regional, national, youth, and children perspectives. IDEAS leaders visited the U.S. Center to participate in discussions and learn more about what the United States of America is doing to combat climate change. They were pleased to connect with Americans working on lots of innovative climate solutions and explained IDEAS’ mission and vision to them. As part of their engagements, Stephen and Eliode met with Juliette Tronchon, Senior International Policy and Public Affairs Specialist of ProVeg International, a food awareness organization with the mission to reduce the global consumption of animals by 50% by 2040. Another meeting went well with the Honorable Jackie Elward, Mayor of Rohnert Park in Sonoma County, California. Mayor Jackie Elward made history as the first black woman of color to be mayor of Rohnert Park. In addition, she was the first immigrant from the Democratic Republic of the Congo to hold public office in the United States.

A great discussion was also held with Ms. Raphaela Schweizer, Program Director of Migration and Global Issues at the Robert Bosh partnering with the Global Center for Climate Mobility. This meeting provided a unique opportunity to learn more about how the effects of climate change are causing mitigation, threatening human existence, endangering the lives of animals, and destroying biodiversity more than ever before. It was an honor to meet and discuss with Shatsi Namatovu Musherure Kutesa commonly known as Shatsi Kuteesa who is a Ugandan lawyer, politician, and legislator at COP27. She is a member of the Ugandan Parliament from Mawogola County, North Sambabule District. Honorable Kuteesa is a bold, outspoken, passionate, and outstanding leader with an unceasing commitment to the environment and climate change. She pledged continued support to IDEAS For Us, most especially IDEAS For Uganda and other branches across the African continent.

IDEAS leaders left Egypt very optimistic that the climate crisis will be solved when everyone works together for the common good of humanity, understanding that no matter where one lives, how rich one is, to whom one worships, and what sophistication one possesses, everyone inhabits one planet called Earth. Stephen and Eliode expressed exceeding praises to the IDEAS For Us team and profound gratitude to Clayton Louis Ferrara for the opportunity afforded them to set foot in Egypt for the first time in their lives and visit the great Egyptian pyramids.
"After 4 months of getting to know IDEAS FOR US and attending various eco-action events, urban garden installations, fairs, and others, I could feel the passion of its members to want to help Orlando and the world. I also learned from them their organizational capacity, the power of alliances, how to transform challenges into advantages, and environmental strategic planning in the 21st century to address global issues through local action. Traveling with them to different cities, I learned more about American culture. So, I returned to my country Bolivia knowing that although we are different, we face similar environmental challenges, but that we can and must learn from each other to improve. Thank you, IDEAS For Us for teaching me so much and for your friendship."

Joaquin Chila
Joaquin Chila
IDEAS For Us IREX Fellow
Change is not possible without a dedicated staff. IDEAS environmental professions are leading the cause of local action in Florida & beyond.

**OUR STAFF**

Clayton Louis Ferrara  
Chief Executive Officer

Caroline Chomanics  
Chief Operations Officer

Kristin Anderson  
Chief Branch Officer

Alex Luna  
Director of Ecosystem Services

Katie De Bari  
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Brianna Rivera  
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Erik Amnott  
Urban Agriculture Educator

Nicole Smith  
Executive Coordinator

Danielle Roberson  
Greenhouse Manager

**SNAP SHOTS OF OUR TEAM:**
2022 PARTNERS

& more!
WAYS TO GET INVOLVED

Join Our Events
We lead monthly eco-events all over the world. Take action in an event near you. Details at ideasforus.org/events

Become A Member
Join our network of change makers. We offer special benefits for members. Join today at ideasforus.org/memberships

Donate
Every penny goes towards environmental action in meaningful projects across the global. Donate today at deasforus.org/donate
Leading Direct Environmental Action Worldwide

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