



INSTITUTE FOR
Sustainable
Communities

Strategic Direction 2019-2022

what's possible

Who We Are

Who We Are

The ISC Approach

Passionate: in our desire to build sustainable communities, improve lives, and make a positive contribution.

Respectful: of our partners, our beneficiaries, and each other. We are excellent listeners who inspire trust.

Fair and Welcoming: of diversity in gender, race, religion, heritage, sexual orientation, ability, and socioeconomic status.

Entrepreneurial: nimble, innovative, flexible, and strategic.

Dedicated: to improving people's lives and the health of the planet.

Pragmatic: solutions-oriented, business minded, and accountable.

Optimistic: We believe sustainable communities are possible.

Integrity: in everything we do.

Our Vision:

A peaceful and healthy planet for humanity.

Our Mission:

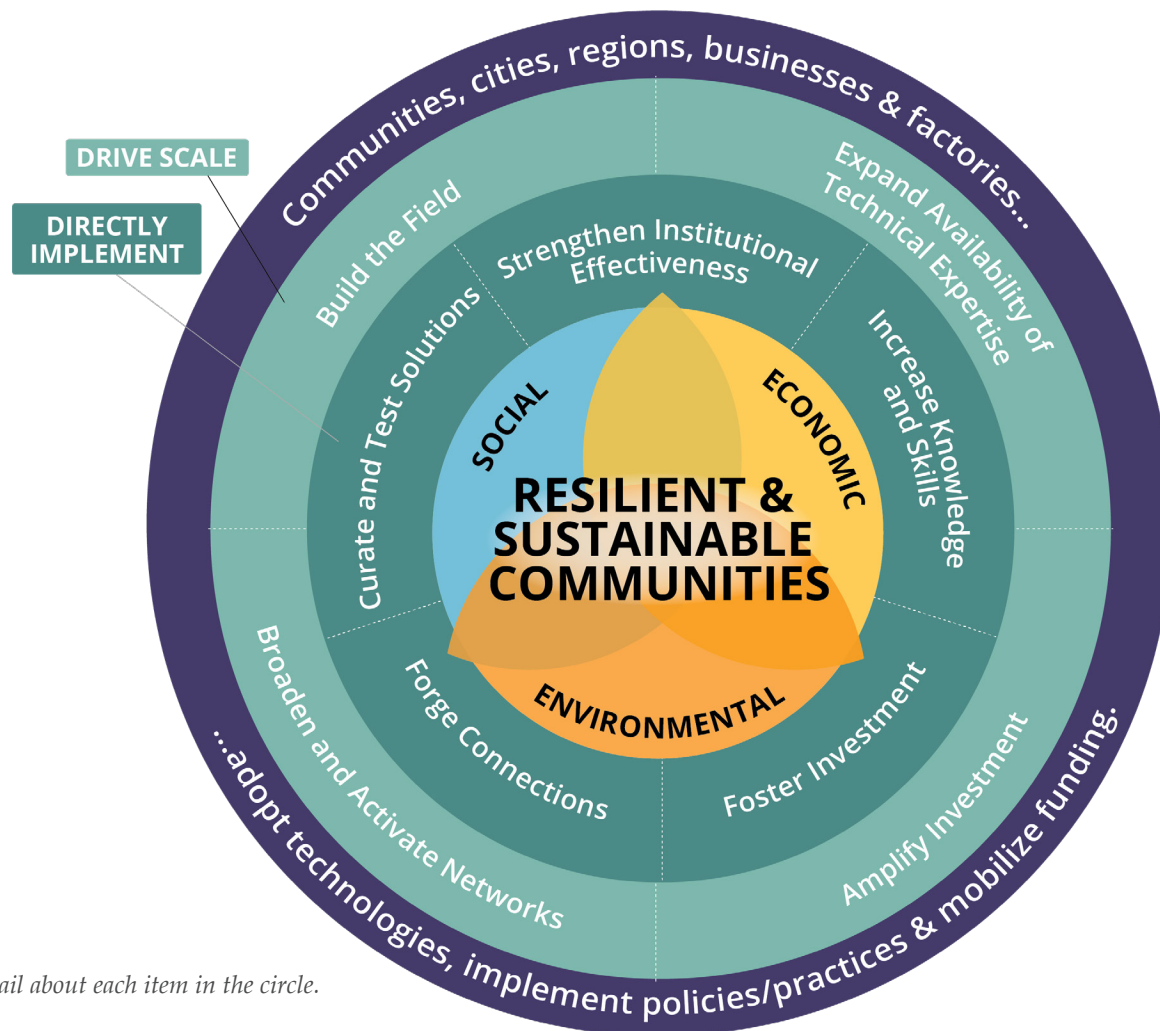
ISC's mission is to help communities around the world address environmental, economic, and social challenges to build a better future shaped and shared by all. We are a leader and recognized expert in advancing sustainability in communities and cities by building a culture of engagement, fostering greater equity and inclusion, transitioning to a low-emission economy, and becoming more resilient in the face of climate disruption.

Our History and Distinctive Competence:

ISC was founded in 1991 by former Vermont Governor Madeleine Kunin and her policy director George Hamilton. ISC has been successful in Eastern Europe, Asia and the United States in connecting civic participation with environmental problem solving and sustainable development. We design our projects to achieve economic, social and environmental benefits. Our holistic approach is innovative and effective because we involve diverse people and institutions in the design and implementation of our projects. Capacity building is in our DNA which is why we always focus on strengthening the effectiveness of local leaders and local institutions. Often we work at the intersection of communities, cities and industry to advance environmental health, resource efficiency, clean energy, sustainable manufacturing, or community resilience. With a broad group of donors and supporters, ISC takes an entrepreneurial approach to project design and management. We strive to connect our US and Asia programs so they are mutually reinforcing. We look for ways to achieve the greatest impact by leveraging other resources and partnerships, seizing unexpected opportunities, and developing innovative projects that "lead the market" to fill critical gaps and needs.

Theory of Change

ISC's theory of change defines not only the change we wish to see in the world, but also how we achieve it. This is a critical tool for strengthening our programmatic focus and our ability to measure impact. We believe communities, their people, and their institutions can create change when they have the right knowledge and skill, strong connections, effective institutions, investment opportunities, and the ability to access and test solutions. But the real impact comes with scale, which is why we focus on building the field of sustainability professionals, expanding the availability of technical expertise, strengthening networks, and creating mechanisms for amplifying local investments.



Click here to read more detail about each item in the circle.

Our Focus and Goals for 2019-2022

A Few Core Beliefs:

1. Improving people's lives and the health of the planet is why we exist.
2. Climate disruption threatens the future of humanity and the stability of the planet. We feel a sense of urgency to help communities act in the face of this threat.
3. Partnerships (across agencies, sectors, disciplines and jurisdictions), civic engagement, equity and inclusion, institutional development, and peer learning are essential elements to achieving sustainability. They depend on creating and maintaining high-trust relationships, based on good information, open communication, generosity, listening and respect.
4. Innovation and agility are critical to the design and implementation of solutions to the ever-growing complexity of the climate challenge.

During the next three years, we will focus on:

1. Building on our current community, urban, regional, and manufacturing initiatives in the United States and Asia by increasing their scale and impact and by improving performance measurement. We like the path we are on.
2. Assuring that our strategies explicitly address structural racism in the US, and the income inequality in the US and Asia that undermine efforts to build strong communities prepared to respond to climate change. ISC will strengthen its understanding and work to advance equity and inclusion in its programs and internal practices.
3. Increasing ISC's effectiveness and influence by more prominently articulating our values, methods and successes – testing and enhancing our thought leadership and engagement with partners and donors.
4. Enhancing our own capacity, impact, and sustainability as an organization in a more deliberate and proactive way. This includes doubling the size of our 2018 budget and unrestricted resources by 2022 and achieving a successful transition from the founding CEO.

For each goal below, we strive to build on previous learning and success, as well as continue to embrace **entrepreneurship** as a core value and method of ISC.



Goal One

To advance clean, fair, and climate-smart communities, cities and regions in the U.S. and Asia.

Context:

For the first time in human history, more people live in cities and urban regions than outside of them, and that trend is accelerating. Cities are engines of economic development and growth, but they are also responsible for about three-quarters of energy use and associated climate pollution. Urban areas are on the front lines of managing problems such as rising income and social inequality and increasingly severe impacts of climate disruption. Cities can and must transform themselves from being a source of these problems to driving solutions. Many cities desire transformation, but most lack the knowledge, experience, leadership, institutions, social networks, and systems required to undertake and sustain a meaningful transformation at scale. For example, cities need to:

1. Be more data-driven and science-based in their planning and decision-making.
2. Think holistically about economic, environmental and social solutions, and work more effectively across sectors (e.g. local governments + Community-based Organizations + private sector; cities + suburbs + rural areas; etc.).
3. Overcome institutional and political barriers by breaking down silos and working more collaboratively with community groups.
4. Increase access to financial instruments that support a transition to low carbon, more resilient economies.

ISC brings to them a strong focus on, and deep experience in, overcoming institutional barriers, accessing best practices, strengthening institutions and increasing collaboration, civic engagement, leadership development, and governance.

Objectives:

SO 1.1 Community-based organizations and networks representing vulnerable areas in the US and Asia pilot and scale climate solutions characterized by equity, inclusion and economic opportunity.

SO 1.2 Urban local governments in the United States and Asia become effective drivers of climate action through the development, financing and implementation of science-based climate strategies and programs.

SO 1.3 Regional collaborations across sectors and administrative jurisdictions in the United States and Asia generate and leverage synergies that accelerate large-scale climate action.

Key direction and targets:*

- Significant reductions in GHG emissions.
- Policies adopted or improved.
- 100 community-based organizations strengthened.
- 25 cities more effectively planning or implementing climate action.
- 10 regional platforms strengthened or established.

** Key targets still being worked on*



Goal Two

To advance clean, safe, fair and climate-smart manufacturing in Asia

Context:

Given the urgency of the climate issue, ISC believes that it must focus on climate and sustainability solutions where the needs and opportunities are greatest. For many communities in Asia, factories have been effective economic engines for lifting people out of poverty; yet they are often operating in violation of local laws and international norms and are major sources of GHG emissions, environmental health problems, personal injury, and resource waste. Recognizing that this resource-intensive industrial model is unsustainable, ISC launched EHS⁺ Centers in China, India and Bangladesh to drive more environmentally sustainable manufacturing practices and to improve the lives of people working in and around those industries. Building on our successes, we will further scale our capacity building services, and we will strengthen key components of the sustainable manufacturing ecosystem, including access to finance, supportive policies and incentives, and a reduction in the transaction costs of adopting new technologies.

Objectives:

SO 2.1 Factories in Asia plan and implement sustainable practices resulting in clean, safe, fair and climate-smart manufacturing.

SO 2.2 The enabling environment in Asia supports clean, safe fair and climate-smart manufacturing through a well-established EHS profession and through market-based incentives for factories to adopt improved practices.

Key direction and targets:*

- 500 factories implementing improved practices.
- Significant GHG and other harmful emissions reduced.
- 20,000 workers/managers educated and equipped with new tools.
- 5 policies adopted or improved.

** Key targets still being worked on*



Goal Three

To strengthen ISC's organizational effectiveness, learning, and sustainability.

Context: ISC has traditionally focused on the success of *others*. As we approach the 30th anniversary of our

founding, we acknowledge the importance of focusing on ourselves as well: how we communicate our values and are

known in the world; and how we build our own capacity as an organization to serve well into the future. We face challenges: divisive and short sighted policies of the US Administration threaten people and communities in the US and around the world; racial injustice is even more visible in the US; and social and economic inequality are growing threats to political stability and community well-being in the US and Asia. Our increasingly large and diverse group of donors wants to more clearly see the impact of our work and what we are learning. As an entrepreneurial social profit organization, ISC is often on the front lines of innovation, giving us an opportunity to advance our thought leadership and inspire the good work of others.

Objectives:

SO 3.1 Diversity, Equity and Inclusion: Structural discrimination, racism and income inequality are serious and increasing threats to communities around the world. Over the next three years, ISC will advance equity and inclusion through all of its programs, internal systems and practices (such as hiring and purchasing).

SO 3.2 Measurement, Learning and Tools: ISC will strengthen its program and institutional measurement and learning systems and develop tools to share with our partners and beneficiaries (including frameworks, curricula, rubrics, and indicators –some may need to be IP protected).

SO 3.3 Financial Stability & Growth: ISC will achieve and sustain a budget level of at least \$15M – the amount we believe is required to adequately support the institutional infrastructure of a small global organization. Over the next three years, ISC will strengthen its business development approach, capacity and functions in order to achieve and sustain the \$15M budget level while increasing annual gifts to the Climate Innovation Fund from \$150K/year to \$500K/year.

SO 3.4 Strategic Communications: ISC will speak and write about its work in order to significantly increase its profile and thought leadership on topics such as community resilience, regional resilience, low carbon development, corporate social responsibility, and equity and inclusion.

SO 3.5 Leadership Succession: ISC's founding CEO has served the organization for more than 27 years. Over the last four years, the ISC Board and staff have carried out a succession strategy designed to prepare the organization for the inevitable transition to a new leader. ISC will ensure that the transition is managed in a way that helps the organization emerge stronger and even more effective.

Key direction and targets:

- \$15M Budget and \$500K/year for climate fund.
- Substantial progress toward equity and inclusion objective as defined by rubrics.
- % of projects with indicators and rubrics that are measured.
- Clear mission based metrics.
- ISC website visits triples between 2019 and 2022.