



EARTHLAB

UNIVERSITY *of* WASHINGTON



STRATEGIC PLAN 2021 - 2025

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	1
II.	EARTHLAB MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS	3
III.	ABOUT THE PLAN	4
	A. Origins of EarthLab	4
	B. The Purpose of This Plan	4
	C. How This Plan Is Organized	5
	D. The Logic Behind the Plan: Moving From Theory To Action	5
IV.	EARTHLAB VISION, MISSION and THEORY OF CHANGE	6
	A. EarthLab's Vision	6
	B. EarthLab's Mission	6
	C. EarthLab's Theory of Change	6
V.	EARTHLAB'S STRATEGIC DIRECTION	7
	A. Three Strategic Priorities	7
	B. Four Primary Action Areas	8
	C. Current State, Goals and Objectives	8
	D. EarthLab's Differentiating Competencies	13
VI.	NEXT STEPS	14
VII.	APPENDIX	15
	A. Strategic Planning: Processes Employed	15
	B. Key Themes From Stakeholder Engagement	18
	C. Three Strategic Priorities in Detail	22
	D. Four Primary Actions Areas in Detail	25
	E. Core Inputs and Differentiating Competencies	33

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Developing a Roadmap in Tumultuous Times

As EarthLab set out to update its strategic plan on the eve of 2020, how could we have known that the “Decade of Action” would begin with such a devastating year? Global events including COVID-19 and extreme environmental incidents driven by climate change have exacerbated pervasive structural inequities and harm, particularly towards Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) communities. As EarthLab is a response to significant structural and cultural barriers to collaboration and innovation, within academia and with community partners, this moment requires us to think differently about our path forward.

We are moved to action by partnerships among nonprofits, businesses, Tribes and public agencies, and UW faculty, staff, students and researchers. Together we see opportunity in connecting across differences to co-produce actionable research that contributes to an equitable, just and sustainable world where people and planet thrive. We are inspired by the level of shared passion in pushing boundaries to develop innovative and equitable solutions to environmental challenges.

With holistic input from our partners, we have established a new roadmap to guide program development and investment between 2021-25.

Our Opportunity

We are hopeful about the road ahead. Our plan honors existing programs and partnerships while leaning in with greater urgency and action on the climate crisis and social justice. There is a shared sense among our stakeholders that there is no more important issue for us to engage in at this unique moment in time. Climate “blurs the lines” and our thinking about collaboration needs to do the same.

Our place at the University of Washington helps to define our purpose. As a Carnegie-classified Community Engagement University, UW aspires to be the #1 university in the world as measured by impact. The university has a constellation of boundary-crossing entities that share a commitment to population health, equity and justice, and community engaged research. This network is foundational to the development of this plan and bolsters our chances for meaningful impact. We are both motivated and humbled by this challenge.

The Next Five Years

2021 - 25 Priorities

- 1 **Activate**, leverage and sustain a web of cross-boundary networks, relationships and resources
- 2 **Drive** momentum for collaboratively solving pressing challenges at the intersection of the climate crisis and social justice
- 3 **Secure** a stable funding model for EarthLab programs, member organizations, and faculty, student and community engagement



Listening to stakeholders and developing a shared understanding of the destination are critical aspects of building a roadmap. Our updated vision, mission, strategic priorities and action areas reflect what we heard from our stakeholders and set the direction for our programs and investments for the next five years. We are grateful to the many individuals who helped us shape this plan.

Measuring Impact

This is an ambitious challenge. We have reimagined what will be different in 2025 and have identified the following six measures of impact that will hold us accountable.

- 1 We are a well known “connector” and hub of activity, at the boundary of campus and community, that focuses on community engaged research at the intersection of climate (adaptation and mitigation) and social equity.
- 2 Existing member organizations flourish under our shared services model. Their connections and body of research continue to co-produce science and solutions to complex environmental challenges.
- 3 We inspire and incentivize research that is usable and used in response to real-world climate justice challenges in the community. Projects may start small but have the potential to be replicated and adapted to make change at scale.
- 4 We have trusted relationships with community organizations due to our honest commitment to “showing up” (i.e., taking the time to earn that trust and understand the context of the challenges we may endeavor to work on together).
- 5 UW transdisciplinary centers, colleges and campuses are more tightly connected to one another, conversant in and amplifying each other’s programs, sharing best practices and generating new community engaged research collaborations.
- 6 Our funding model is secure with a mix of sources that stabilize our programs and enables us to respond to big opportunities.



This strategic plan was created between January-December 2020 with input from the EarthLab staff, faculty steering committee, advisory council, governing board of deans, member organizations, community partners, and other University of Washington (UW) early supporters and collaborators. See Appendix A for more information.

II. EARTHLAB MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

As of January 2021, EarthLab has eight distinct member organizations that are connected through their commitment to addressing complex environmental issues. EarthLab provides administrative, technical and communication services to help member organizations reach their goals and objectives.

EarthLab member organizations listed alphabetically

Center for Health and the Global Environment

The Center for Health and the Global Environment (CHanGE) envisions a world in which climate action protects health and health action prioritizes climate resilience. <https://deohs.washington.edu/change>

Climate Impacts Group

The Climate Impacts Group is widely recognized for scientific discovery, as an experienced creator of impartial & actionable science and as a catalyst for building regional climate resilience. <http://cig.uw.edu>

Doris Duke Conservation Scholars Program

The Doris Duke Conservation Scholars are a diverse, committed, and creative community from around the country that centers equity and justice in nature conservation. <http://uwconservationscholars.org>

Future Rivers

Future Rivers is a National Science Foundation Research Traineeship for graduate students focused on scientifically innovative, culturally relevant, transdisciplinary approaches to freshwater ecosystem sustainability. <https://futerivers.uw.edu>

Nature and Health

Nature and Health seeks to understand the connections between nature and human health and well-being and to translate that understanding into programs, practices, and policies that benefit all people and nature. <https://natureandhealth.uw.edu>

Nippon Foundation Ocean Nexus Center

The Nippon Foundation Ocean Nexus Center aims to transform ocean governance so the oceans benefit everyone equitably in a culturally relevant manner. <http://oceanexus.uw.edu>

Northwest Climate Adaptation Science Center

The Northwest Climate Adaptation Science Center is a federal-university partnership that produces relevant and accessible science on climate change impacts and adaptation actions for Northwest natural resource managers and policy makers. <https://nwcasc.uw.edu>

Washington Ocean Acidification Center

The Washington Ocean Acidification Center serves Washington state by leading priority areas of ocean acidification research. <https://oceanacidification.uw.edu>

III. ABOUT THE PLAN

A. Origins of EarthLab

The creation of EarthLab was originally approved by the University of Washington (UW) Board of Regents as part of the founding of the College of the Environment in 2009. Formally established in 2015, the vision for EarthLab was to bring together communities, academia, public and non-profit agencies, and businesses to co-produce actionable knowledge that generates solutions to the most pressing environmental challenges. Between 2012 and 2016 the Dean's Office of the College of the Environment, the college advisory board, and a small group of early faculty advisors worked to define, name, fundraise and manage EarthLab's ideation phase. In 2017 EarthLab appointed its first executive director whose initial focus was to bring together four pre-existing organizations; assemble an external advisory council of supporters from a diverse set of backgrounds, sectors and experiences; launch a grants program; and ensure the necessary foundational core operations, programs and people were in place to support these activities. All of this was done with the goal of supporting faculty, researchers, students, staff and community collaborators seeking to co-create actionable research and new knowledge.

In early 2018 EarthLab developed a preliminary strategic framework with guidance from its faculty steering committee. This clarification of vision, mission and strategic outcomes guided the core aspects of EarthLab programs and the shared services model supporting and amplifying EarthLab member organizations. The administrative, grant-writing, grant-administering, networking, fundraising and communications services enable faculty, researchers, community partners, scholars and students to focus their time on research and collaboration rather than operations. Now in place, EarthLab's Innovation Grants Program received over 70 proposals and awarded \$550K to nine teams in its first two years. Concurrently, EarthLab expanded the number of member organizations from four to seven and added six affiliated organizations. Looking back, it is clear that EarthLab has established collaborations with numerous units and programs across the UW; built diverse and inclusive advisory bodies within and across the UW and the wider community; translated its intent to center equity and justice

into annual action plans; and initiated programs that advance transdisciplinary (multidisciplinary and community-engaged) and applied work.

B. The Purpose of This Plan

In late 2019 EarthLab initiated a process to update the strategic framework and to create a five-year strategic plan for 2021-25. Following a competitive bidding process, the Sustainability Partners consultancy was selected to help the team with this process. This intensive and extensive process involved consulting with a broad cross section of stakeholders through both 1:1 in-depth interviews and more broadly based surveys. Stakeholders provided input and perspectives on EarthLab's vision, mission, theory of change and strategic direction. A summary of the strategic planning process is provided in **Appendix A**. The key themes that emerged from the stakeholder engagement are set out in **Appendix B**.

The purpose of the updated strategic plan is to guide and focus EarthLab's efforts and resources as it emerges from the initial start-up period into the next phase of growth, impact, engagement and connection. This plan outlines EarthLab's vision, mission, theory of change, strategic priorities, and areas for action for the next five years. It serves as both a means to focus EarthLab's efforts and resources and as a guide for program development, budget planning, fundraising and strategic decision-making going forward.

“ We are reimagining our future right now. We are in desperate need of solutions. EarthLab has an enormous set of assets at its back to take in and solve problems. What we need now is more, and this is the promise of EarthLab: to step up and reimagine what the world will be, to be forward looking, because right now everything's up in the air. ”

-Maggie Walker, Seattle philanthropist & UW Foundation Board member



C. How this Plan is Organized

Following this introduction, **Section IV** sets out EarthLab's vision, mission and theory of change. **Section V** provides details on EarthLab's strategic direction. It includes priorities (what) EarthLab is setting out to do from 2021-25 and action areas (how), including a summary of specific goals and objectives through which EarthLab is implementing its theory of change (why) to deliver results on its mission. **Section V** also outlines differentiating competencies that give a competitive edge to EarthLab to successfully achieve the priorities and actions identified in this plan.

D. The Logic Behind the Plan: Moving From Theory to Action

Actionable, community-engaged research constitutes the core of EarthLab's approach and informs how the priorities, goals, objectives and activities for the period of this strategic plan were developed. The logic model in **Appendix A** illustrates the relationships that connect the assumptions, theory of change (ToC), differentiating competencies, priorities, actions, outcomes and impacts that give shape to EarthLab's strategic direction, described in more detail in **Section V**.

“The challenges we face in the world are horizontal, large and complicated. They transcend different disciplines and require people with differing expertise and lived experiences to come together to achieve lasting change. One of my greatest hopes and aspirations for EarthLab is to engage, enable and foster the development of academic professionals at the UW to work collaboratively across disciplines and in partnership with constituencies to solve big environmental challenges, especially those that have a disproportionate impact on disadvantaged communities. It is my hope that these efforts will result in a professional path forward that moves beyond the traditional “publish or perish” inertia of academia to reward these UW scholars for collaboration, community engagement and the creation of real-life, sustainable solutions that are put into action.”

-Sally Jewell, Chair, EarthLab Advisory Council & Former U.S. Secretary of the Interior



IV. EARTHLAB VISION, MISSION and THEORY OF CHANGE

In consultation with key stakeholders, EarthLab developed a theory of change, which describes why the articulated approach and activities set out in this strategic plan will be effective. This strategic plan, in turn, details specific actions that will lead EarthLab from theory to tangible action. The core assumptions and process conducted to create the theory of change are outlined in **Appendix A**.

A. EarthLab's Vision

An equitable, just and sustainable world where people and planet thrive.

B. EarthLab's Mission

We push boundaries to develop innovative, just and equitable solutions to environmental challenges. We do this by connecting across sectors and academic disciplines to inspire and incentivize new partnerships that bridge the UW and the wider community.

C. EarthLab's Theory of Change

Our vision:

We envision an equitable, just and sustainable world where people and planet thrive. The need for action is urgent because our communities and planet are in crisis. As a Carnegie-classified Community Engagement university, the University of Washington, a global leader in research, seeks to be the best in the world as measured by impact. EarthLab is a visionary institute at the University of Washington that brings together communities, businesses, nonprofits, public agencies, Tribal nations, academia and others to co-produce actionable research that generates solutions to our most pressing environmental challenges.

Our approach:

We understand that the interrelationships of human and natural systems are complex and multi-dimensional. The collective wisdom of community partners, published research, and the successful experience of EarthLab programs indicate that a transdisciplinary approach is a highly effective way to solve these complex problems. We support a range of social and environmental initiatives that encourage this approach, with an increased focus on climate (mitigation and adaptation) and social justice.

Our work:

EarthLab catalyzes action by convening cross-cutting conversations, investing in innovative interdisciplinary and multi-sector collaborations, supporting and amplifying the success of our member organizations, and fostering the development of professionals skilled in transdisciplinary and applied work. Together, we enable students, staff, faculty and partners from all sectors to push boundaries and build new connections that generate innovative solutions.

V. EARTHLAB'S STRATEGIC DIRECTION

The direction set out in this plan is established by three strategic priorities for 2021-25 that describe what EarthLab will focus on in this time period to achieve its mission and four action areas that set out specifically how EarthLab is going to activate its priorities.

A. Three Strategic Priorities

As a result of the strategic planning process EarthLab has established three strategic priorities that build on the strong foundation established during its initial start-up phase. These three priorities (in abbreviated format) are as follows:

1. Activate, leverage and sustain a web of cross-boundary networks, relationships and resources
2. Drive momentum for collaboratively solving pressing challenges at the intersection of the climate crisis and social justice
3. Secure a stable funding model for EarthLab programs, member organizations and faculty, and student and community engagements

These three strategic priorities are illustrated in **Figure 1** and are set out in greater detail in **Appendix C**.

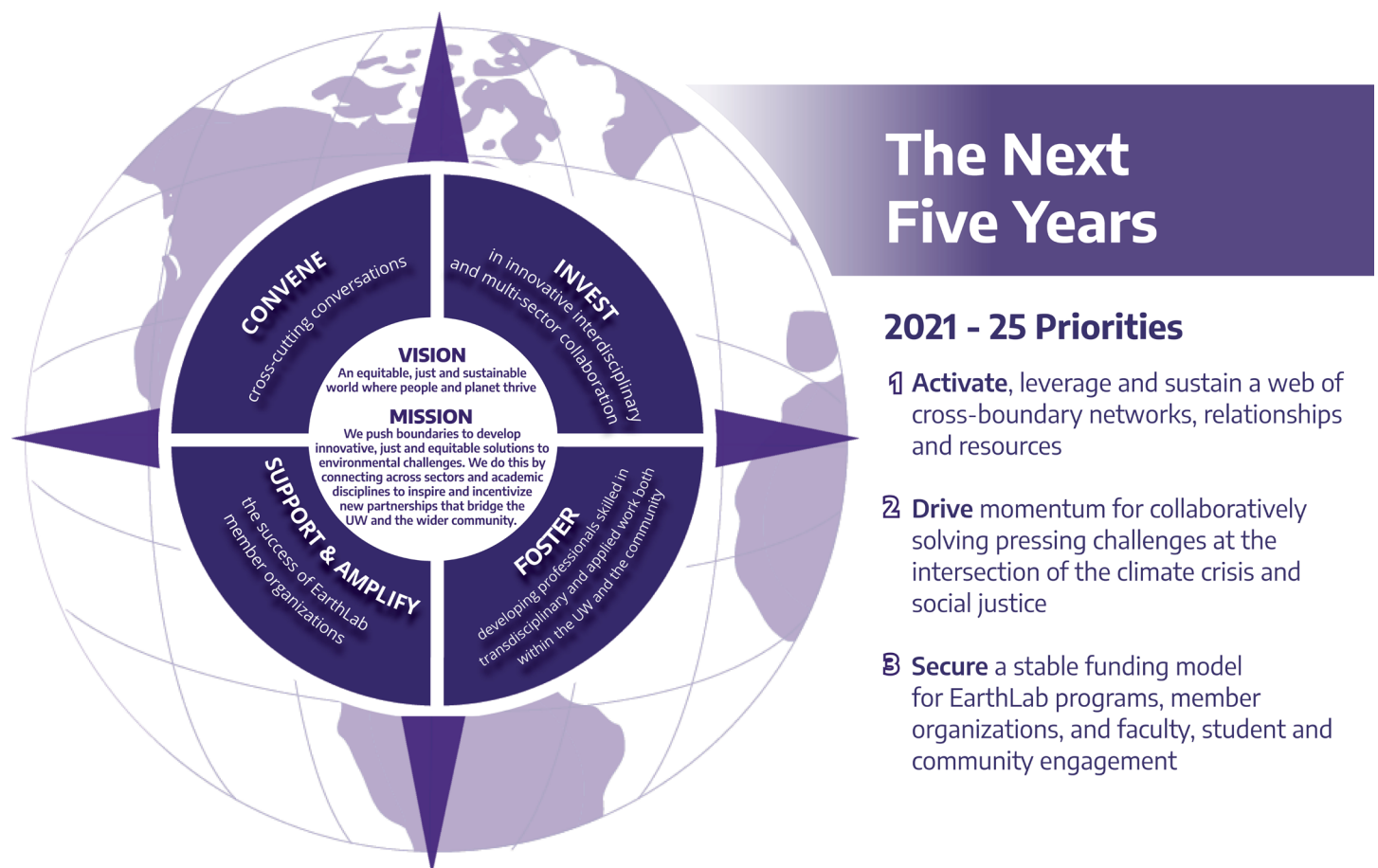


Figure 1. EarthLab's vision, mission, three strategic priorities and four primary action areas.

B. Four Primary Action Areas

To activate its strategic priorities, EarthLab is focusing on the following four primary action areas:

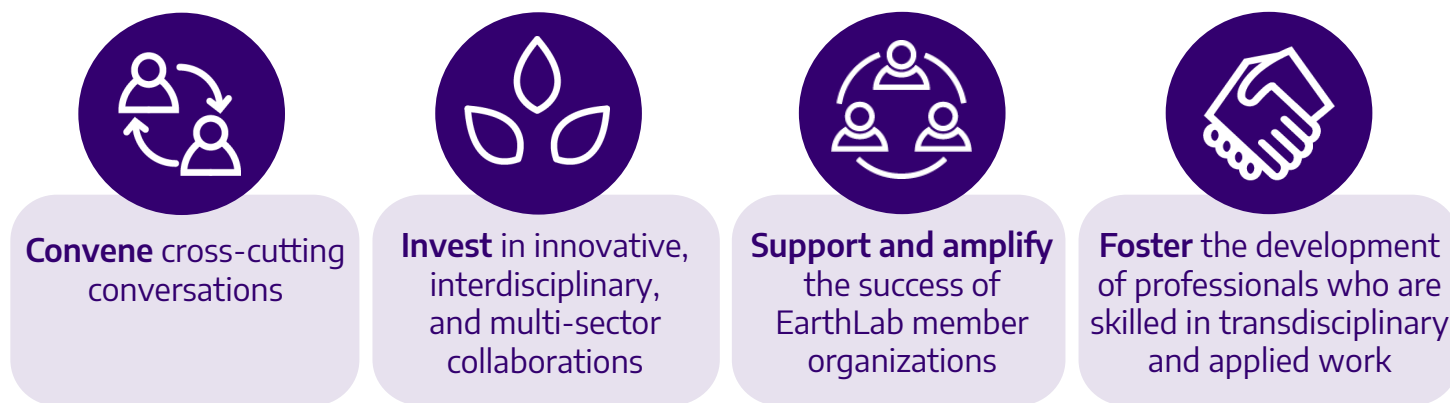


Figure 2. EarthLab's four primary action areas.

C. Current State, Goals and Objectives

The following section offers a snapshot for each action area, including the current state of the area, the longer-term goals EarthLab will achieve by 2025, and the initial objectives that put EarthLab on a path to achieve those goals. A more detailed description of the specific actions EarthLab will take are provided in Appendix D.



► Action Area 1: Convene Cross-Cutting Conversations

EarthLab has built a strong community web both within the university and with people and organizations outside of the university. External partners are approaching EarthLab to more easily tap into university resources to address urgent problems. Similarly, individual researchers, students and teams within the university are beginning to view EarthLab as a bridge to connect to external partners to better understand and work on issues of mutual interest and concern. Convening new conversations that span disciplines and knowledge systems is the foundation for exchanging new ideas, increasing understanding, and appreciating diverse perspectives, all of which are the backbone of effective, equitable and sustainable solutions.

2020 Current State

EarthLab features numerous opportunities for broad audiences to engage in conversations that span disciplines and sectors and elevate new voices and perspectives. These include monthly *Collaborating Across Difference* seminars, which share learning about how to effectively conduct transdisciplinary work; Tribal engagement best practices trainings, lectures, speakers and readings; the EarthLab Showcase, an annual public event that features the work of EarthLab member organizations and Innovation Grant recipients; a salon series on environmental justice; and co-sponsoring the Walker Conversations focusing on the intersection of environment and politics. These free events are often open to the general public and recordings can be accessed on the EarthLab website. In addition, through its internal UW and external community networks, advisory groups, Innovation Grant cohorts, and outreach to community partners, EarthLab engages in ongoing boundary-crossing conversations.

Goals

- Evidence that BIPOC leaders regard EarthLab as a trusted partner and platform
- New connections that produce tangible and equitable approaches to addressing pressing challenges in support of existing member organizations and/or at the intersection of climate and social justice
- Increased awareness and recognition among scholars, community organizations, policy makers and students of the efficacy, outcomes and impact of transdisciplinary and multisectoral work in regards to complex environmental challenges
- Increased general public awareness and urgency for action regarding climate and climate justice topics

Objectives

- Convene, facilitate and participate in conversations that cross conventional boundaries
- Expand the Distinguished Fellows Program to bring multiple stakeholders together around a shared interest or concern
- Develop “matchmaking” events for community organizations, faculty, students, researchers and staff to pitch projects to each other to identify mutual interests
- Develop a targeted inventory of UW and regional climate and social justice projects, and the people working on them, employing students to conduct the review

“As a researcher working on complex environmental problems, I value the opportunities brought by EarthLab lectures and events to expand connections, create synergies and carry out research into the community.”

-Nancy Simcox, UW Faculty, 2019 Innovation Grants

► Action Area 2 : Invest in Innovative Transdisciplinary and Multi-Sector Collaborations

Innovative collaborations that span academic disciplines and engage diverse communities demand time, people and funding to form, sustain and bring to fruition. Equitable, community-based, transdisciplinary research in particular requires all three of these resources and additional time investment to build trusted relationships in order to develop. They are precious resources for potential UW and community collaborators alike.

2020 Current State

In addition to investing the time and staff needed to build core networks, relationships and engagements, EarthLab invests in transdisciplinary work through:

- Directly funding teams of researchers, students and partners in the wider community through the popular Innovation Grants program
- Co-sponsoring initiatives (e.g., providing a grant to the Population Health Initiative for environmental resilience to support interdisciplinary teams; sponsoring an Indigenous Speaker Series; providing support for the Buerk Center for Entrepreneurship's Environmental Innovation Challenge–Community Impact Award; providing honoraria for community presenters to ensure that they are compensated for their time)
- Investing time and funds to secure grants and partnerships that launch new member organizations within EarthLab, which amplify EarthLab's focus action areas (e.g., Nature & Health, Ocean Nexus and Future Rivers)

Goals

- Innovation Grant initiatives result in measurable, scalable, innovative solutions to pressing environmental issues, particularly climate mitigation, adaptation and social justice
- EarthLab is an integral investor in UW's efforts to increase community based participatory research
- EarthLab is viewed as a strong community partner and as a trusted partner of Tribal communities
- Increased general public awareness and urgency for action regarding climate and climate justice topics
- Increased investment in faculty time spent advising and participating in EarthLab programs

Objectives

- Expand and deepen the Innovation Grants program
- Seek out new high risk and high impact collaborations and partnerships outside of the annual grants program
- Invest in ways to increase UW faculty and student capacity and experience to undertake transdisciplinary and applied research

“Thank you for providing us the opportunity to do this research. EarthLab's focus on applied/interdisciplinary/pilot research is unique and helps fill a large hole in the current funding environment. I truly hope that it becomes a model for other funding organizations.”

-Cory Morin, UW Faculty, 2019 Innovation Grants

► Action Area 3: Support and Amplify the Success of EarthLab Member Organizations

EarthLab's member organizations address some of today's most pressing and complex environmental challenges by:

- Bringing focused research and scientific understanding, data, tools and guidance to decision makers
- Conducting research that informs evidence-based policies; connecting decision-makers, policy-makers and impacted communities in the pursuit of equitable and just solutions
- Providing undergraduate experiences and graduate research traineeships to meet an urgent need for transdisciplinary scientists and tomorrow's leaders who can look at complex problems and datasets in innovative ways

2020 Current State

EarthLab's experienced staff provide exceptional administrative, technical and communication services that are both time-consuming and often complex. This work by the EarthLab staff enables member organization researchers, scientists, faculty, students and staff to build and focus their capacity on the research, science, education, community partnerships and innovative approaches they are constituted to achieve. The support EarthLab currently provides includes:

- Administrative functions including budgeting, purchasing and human resources (hiring, onboarding, training and payroll— often complicated due to various funding streams and requirements)
- Fundraising support to ensure continued operations, including grant writing assistance, contract review, donor events and compliance activities to ensure continued funding
- Communications support, including storytelling, videos, newsletters and website development
- Direct financial support to ensure ongoing operations
- Event planning services, including promotion, registration and logistics

Goals

- Member organizations have increased capacity to meet their goals and objectives
- Member organizations receive additional support from EarthLab in the form of direct funding, internships and assistance integrating equity and justice into their work
- Member organizations have expanded connections between member organizations and community stakeholders
- Member organizations have increased visibility and recognition of member organization's work, contributions, impacts and achievements

Objectives

- Maintain and continuously improve the support services including responding to their diverse administrative, technical and communication needs
- Amplify member organization projects and make connections with EarthLab's external network of community stakeholders
- Advance the integration of equity and justice into member organization's work
- Cultivate a greater sense of community among member organizations

“The staff at EarthLab make the complex administration of Ocean Nexus possible, but EarthLab is more than an administrative home. It represents a vision for a new university role in society. EarthLab provides the space where member organizations can adopt and amplify a transdisciplinary, cross-boundary approach to solving big environmental issues.”

-Yoshi Ota, Director, Nippon Foundation Ocean Nexus Center

Action Area 4: Foster the Development of Professionals Skilled in Transdisciplinary and Applied Work

The transdisciplinary approaches needed to tackle today's complex, social-ecological challenges reach beyond traditional multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary problem-solving frameworks. They require new partnerships linking researchers, scientists, practitioners, community members and policy makers, enabling connections among multiple ways of interpreting the world, and enhancing collaboration across conventional knowledge-production boundaries. Education, training, experience and professional development opportunities are needed to build competencies to effectively execute this work both within academia and in the wider community. In addition, academic performance reward-and-promotion structures generally favor more narrowly focused discipline-centered work. EarthLab recognizes that faculty, students and community partners need to develop skills specific to co-producing effective transdisciplinary and community-based projects, including ways to reduce perceived power differentials between disciplines, knowledge systems, and academic and non-academic participants.

2020 Current State

Advancing the development of professionals skilled in transdisciplinary and applied work both within the UW and the wider community is integral to the work conducted by member organizations. All EarthLab member organizations engage in transdisciplinary work, providing a home for researchers, faculty and students attracted to this cross-boundary work. Some member organizations, such as Future Rivers and the Doris Duke Conservation Scholars, provide opportunities for students to develop direct experience and new skill sets working in applied ways that connect academic, government, industry and community partners. Innovation Grants program project teams are required to include at least one non-academic partner, a minimum of two UW researchers from different disciplines, and at least one UW undergraduate, graduate student or postdoc. In addition, EarthLab hosts monthly Lunch and Learns for collaborators from across campus to share their experience working in a transdisciplinary community-based project, as well as trainings, lectures and presentations on how to work more effectively with diverse community groups.

Goals

- A growing cadre of individuals within the UW and the wider community are skilled in and comfortable with working across disciplines and sectors
- Transdisciplinary, community-based research is achieving greater prominence and validity as not only a means to address the most complex challenges but also as a legitimate pathway to professional achievement, attracting more faculty, student and community partnerships in the common pursuit of finding more effective and durable solutions to pressing social-ecological challenges
- An increasing number of UW and community-based teams are engaged in actionable research endeavors and partnerships that integrate an equity and justice lens to focus on both the challenges and potential solutions arising from the disproportionate impact of the climate crisis in BIPOC communities

Objectives

- Continue to develop learning opportunities co-led by partners from the UW and the wider community
- Increase the participation of students in actionable, transdisciplinary research
- Strengthen the capacity for community members to bring their professional and lived experiences and perspectives to the UW community

“The only reason I am considering applying to the University of Washington is because of the Future Rivers program. I wish all the graduate schools I am looking at had the same thing.”

-Prospective student, 9/14/20, via Zoom



D. EarthLab's Differentiating Competencies

The action area goals and objectives (above) require directing and applying the differentiating competencies, both tangible and intangible, that EarthLab has developed since its inception. They provide a strong foundation for meeting the daunting challenges that underlie EarthLab's mission. These core inputs and competencies that are fundamental to EarthLab's success are summarized here and described in more detail in **Appendix E**.

Tangible Differentiating Competencies

- EarthLab staff
- EarthLab member organizations
- EarthLab affiliate organizations
- UW research, scholarship, education and support capacity
- Strategic advisors and networks
- Funding and fund raising capacity via university support, grants and donations
- Location in an innovative region (Seattle and the Pacific Northwest)

Intangible Differentiating Competencies

- Expertise
- Time
- Partnerships and connections
- Convening power
- Reputation
- Local and global reach
- Timeliness of EarthLab's focus

VI. IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN

This strategic plan will inform our annual operating plans beginning with FY22. The following steps are in motion to advance the strategic plan from strategy to action to impact. The intent was to build a plan reflective of our stakeholders' input and actionable for our core team and member organizations.

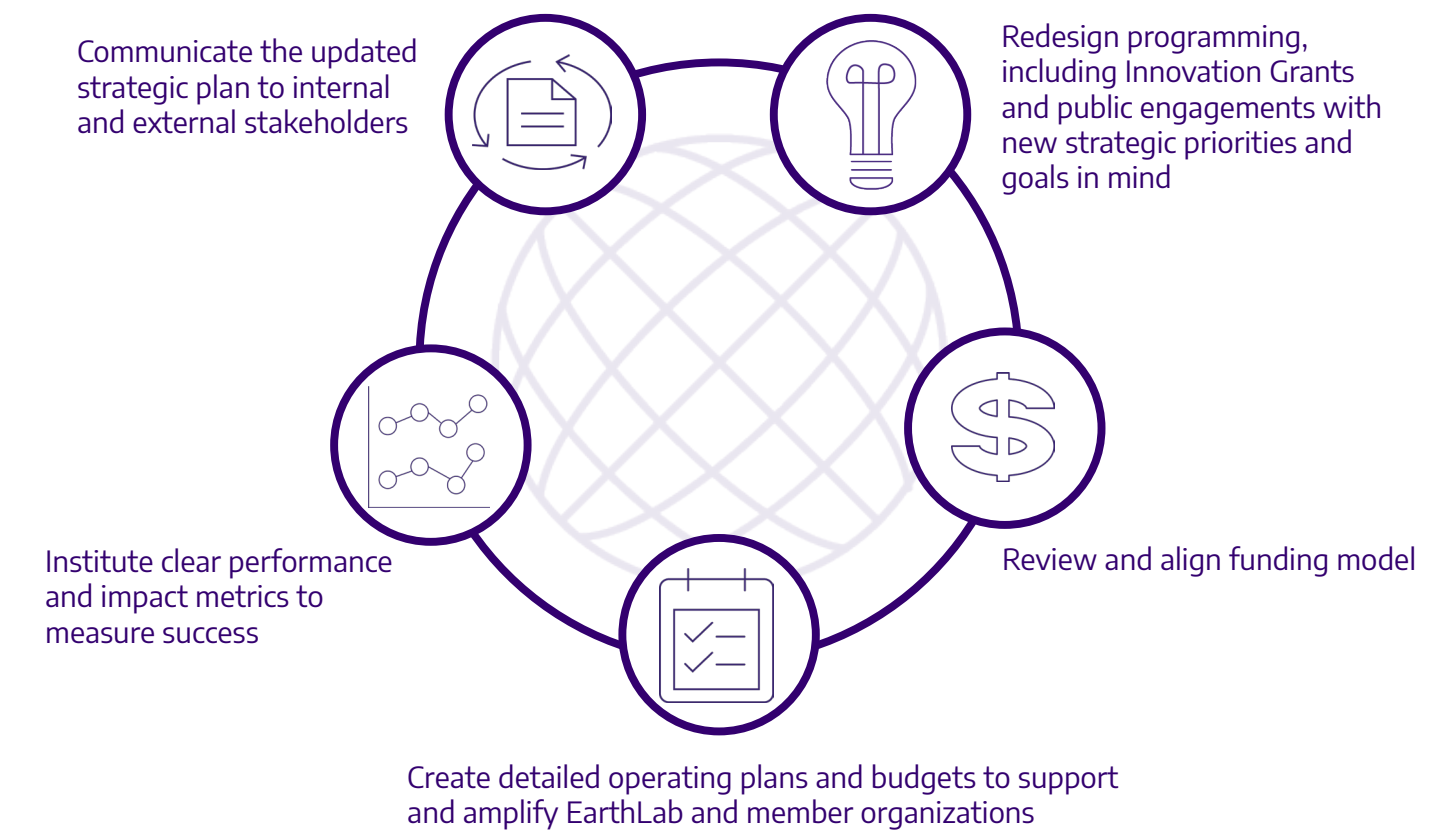


Figure 3. EarthLab’s implementation steps.

VII. APPENDIX

APPENDIX A: EARTHLAB STRATEGIC PLANNING 2020 PROCESSES EMPLOYED

A. Overview of the Strategic Planning Process

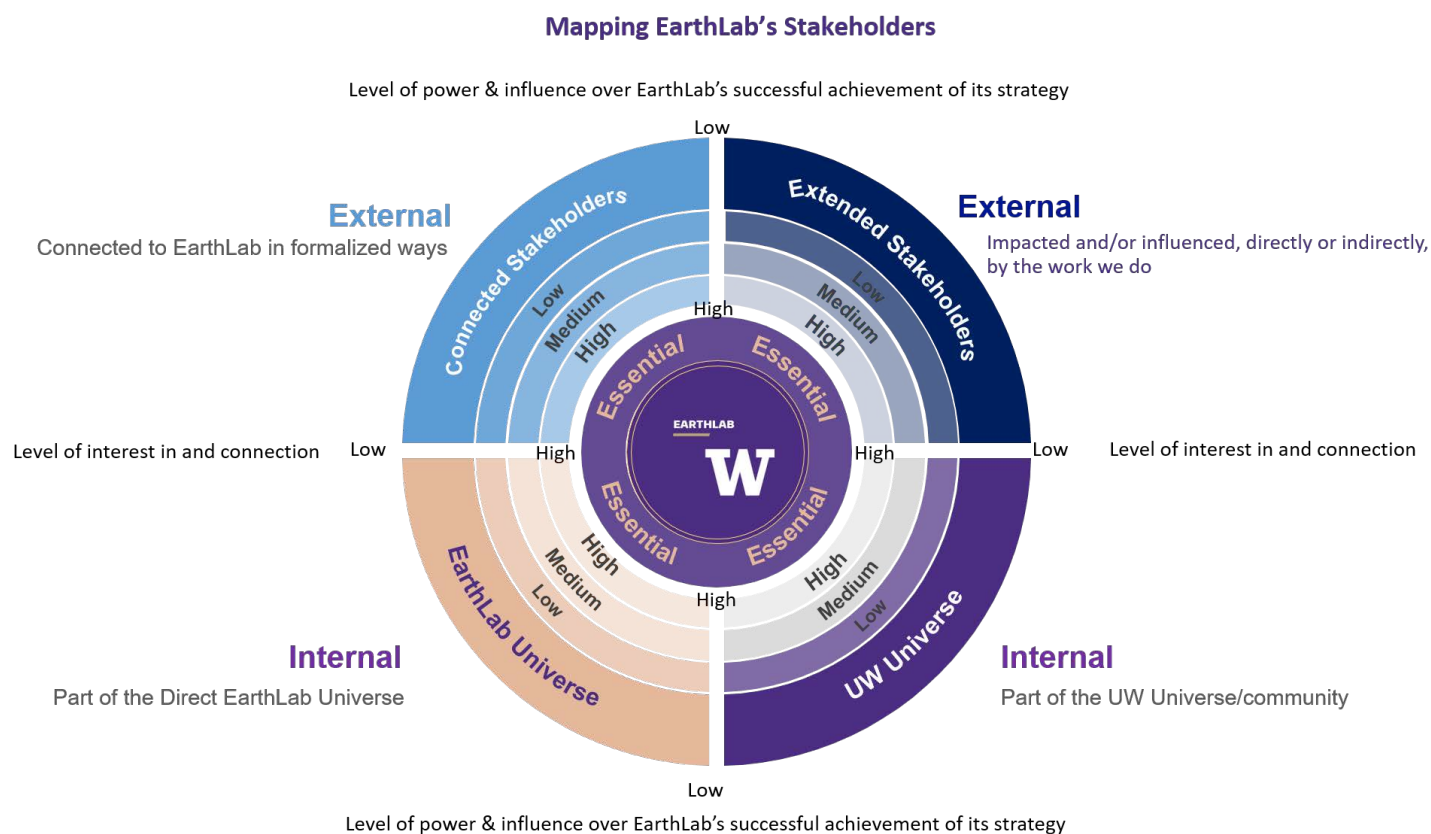
The planning process for updating EarthLab's strategic plan consisted of these components:

- Review of EarthLab’s history and reason for being constituted
- Analysis of EarthLab’s current programs and services offered
- Review of similarly constituted academic-based institutes at other major universities
- Engagement across EarthLab’s key stakeholder groups, described in more detail below and in Appendix B.
- Synthesis of insights and perspectives gained from EarthLab stakeholder engagement
- Analysis of the implications of stakeholder insights for EarthLab’s strategic direction for the next five years

B. Stakeholder Engagement Process

The overall strategic planning process was designed to engage both the UW community and many members of the wider community. This was achieved through:

1. Mapping and prioritizing EarthLab's stakeholders, illustrated here:



2. Developing and executing a focused EarthLab stakeholder engagement plan in coordination with the EarthLab core staff.
3. Conducting:
 - a. 32 in-depth, confidential interviews with EarthLab stakeholders across nine stakeholder categories: the UW administration, College of the Environment administration, College of the Environment advancement, the EarthLab advisory council, the EarthLab board of deans, wider community leaders, donors to EarthLab, the EarthLab faculty steering committee, EarthLab Innovation Grant grantees, and EarthLab member organization directors.
 - b. Four surveys including:
 - i. A survey to review the elements of the current strategy with the EarthLab core staff
 - ii. A survey seeking perspectives and insights from researchers, advisors and staff of EarthLab member organization
 - iii. A survey inviting input from both cohorts of Innovation Grant grantees
 - iv. An online open survey of people interested in EarthLab
 - c. Two convenings to update EarthLab advisors about the direction of the strategy and to further explore important elements of the emerging strategy with the
 - i. EarthLab faculty steering committee (10/20/20)
 - ii. EarthLab advisory council (10/30/20)

This extensive engagement process provided key EarthLab stakeholders with the opportunity to offer direct input and perspectives on EarthLab's vision, mission, early articulations of its theory of change and strategic direction. This input has been vital to the development of this plan. Key themes that emerged from the stakeholder engagement process are provided in Appendix B.

C. Process for Articulating the EarthLab Theory of Change

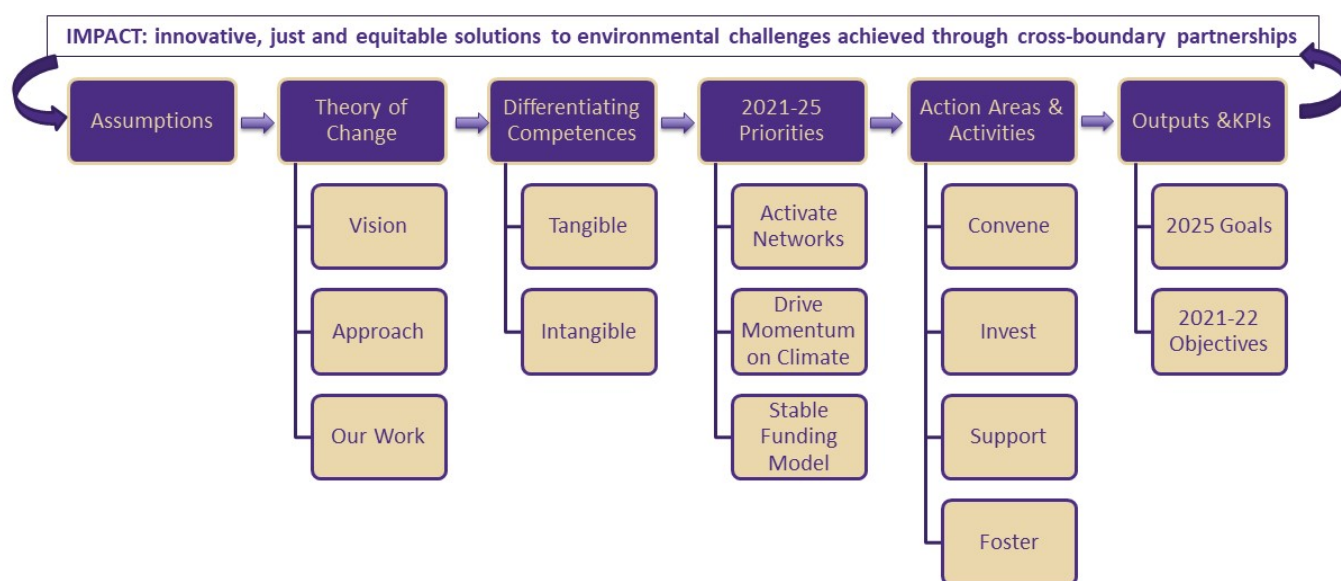
In 2020 EarthLab's staff articulated the theory of change that drives EarthLab's mission and helps focus the action areas through which the mission is realized. This process began by identifying the core assumptions that EarthLab holds about how the change it seeks in the world occurs. These core assumptions can be summarized as follows:

- Transdisciplinary, intersectional, multi-sectoral approaches are needed to solve complex environmental challenges;
- Effective, durable solutions need to be community-driven and community-centered, i.e., grounded in the impacts that communities experience, often disproportionately due to systemic racism and social injustice;
- Addressing complex environmental challenges with justice and equity at the center requires prioritizing work that is conducted with, and led by Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities;
- As one of the world's pre-eminent research universities, the UW provides a powerhouse of research potential that can be activated and leveraged to help solve these pressing problems that one discipline or sector cannot adequately address in isolation, and which communities do not already have the resources to address on their own; and

- EarthLab's distinctive advantage as an organization at the boundary of the UW and wider community is its capacity to facilitate, form and sustain initiatives and partnerships that harness the powerful scholarship resources of the UW together with the insights, experience, and resources of community partners. Working together, they can create enduring and impactful solutions to some of society's most complex challenges.

A preliminary draft of the theory of change was shared with the directors of all EarthLab member organizations, who provided valuable insight into how it could be more focused and improved. Based on their insights and feedback, the theory of change was refined and then shared with a diverse array of EarthLab stakeholders to elicit their responses and suggestions for further improving its clarity and brevity. This feedback was consolidated, synthesized and integrated into a concise theory of change statement, which was then further developed into a strategic planning logic model. This model sets out the strategic direction EarthLab will take and the impact it seeks to achieve over the next five years.

EarthLab Strategic Planning Logic Model



The strategic planning logic model is more fully articulated in the strategic plan, with additional detail provided in Appendix C on 2021-25 Priorities and Appendix D, which provides more detailed information on EarthLab's primary action areas and activities for the period covered by this strategic plan.

APPENDIX B: EARTHLAB STRATEGIC PLANNING 2020 KEY THEMES FROM STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

In preparation for updating EarthLab's strategy and setting out its next five-year strategic plan, Sustainability Partners conducted interviews with 32 stakeholders across the following stakeholder categories: College of the Environment leaders, College of the Environment advancement team, community leaders, EarthLab advisory council, EarthLab Board of Deans, EarthLab donors, EarthLab faculty steering committee, EarthLab Innovation Grant grantees, and EarthLab member organization directors. This appendix summarizes key themes that emerged from these interviews.

A. Aspirations and Hopes for EarthLab

Three broad themes emerged related to aspirations and hopes for EarthLab:

1. Play a proactive leadership role in:

- Bringing partnerships together to create high-impact solutions to pressing social-ecological problems;
- Excelling in developing scalable solutions at the intersection of climate (adaptation and mitigation) and social equity and justice;
- Serving as a solutions hub through which external partners identify problems that, when solved, can be brought to scale for high impact; and connect external partners with university expertise to co-create and implement those high impact solutions;
- Working with all parties to secure the financial support and provide the administrative expertise to carry out, complete, assess and measure impact, and communicate learning and results; and
- Translating what is learned and achieved into something that is valuable and useful in the community.

2. Be a model boundary organization and vehicle for:

- Breaking down academic silos and engaging academic professionals, especially those earlier in their careers, to work collaboratively in solving big environmental challenges, especially those that have a disproportionate impact on disadvantaged communities;
- Creating career paths that reward transdisciplinary collaboration and community-based research focused on implementing actionable solutions at scale; and
- Creating incentives for people to work together across the university, academic disciplines, and communities (private and public sector) to help shape environmentally-related change.

3. Secure generous funding to:

- Finance individual projects designed to experiment, generate and “prove up” solutions with high-impact potential
- Catalyze sustainable investment in positive change including potential multi-year, high-risk, high-reward, high-impact signature projects; and
- Cover ongoing operations to achieve stability and continuity.

B. Strengthen EarthLab's Focus on the Intersection of Climate and Social Justice

With limited resources, EarthLab needs to focus its attention and efforts. It cannot, and should not try to, be everything to everybody in the environmental arena. EarthLab should strengthen its focus on climate solutions with an emphasis on the intersection of climate impacts and social justice. It should devote time, attention and resources to develop solutions that are scalable and/or replicable. Some key stakeholders said that it is time for EarthLab to “go big or stay home!” meaning to choose one big environmental goal to rally behind. However, taking this approach does not mean that EarthLab should abandon current member organizations and current projects, which certainly operate at a high level but on many issues. Existing member organizations should continue to receive administrative, fundraising and communication services. They should also be encouraged to use a social justice lens in their projects and operations wherever possible. EarthLab needs to be clear about how it will strengthen capacity to focus on high-impact climate and social justice solutions by:

- Setting-out clear criteria for what initiatives EarthLab will seek out, respond to and develop moving forward;
- Building on existing strengths within EarthLab (e.g., Climate Impacts Group, CHanGE, WOAC, etc.) to address climate issues and to apply learnings about how to work effectively and respectfully with diverse community stakeholders;
- Ensuring that problems are generated based on clear community needs brought to the university from the community, and that the problems are well-defined, evidence-based, and rigorously and scientifically (including social and professional sciences) set-out and developed, which calls upon the distinctive expertise of the university; and
- Focusing on initiatives with potentially high, scalable impact, which would not only benefit Washington and the Pacific Northwest but could potentially be adopted around the world.

C. Build and Strengthen Relationships with External Stakeholders

Effectively engaging, collaborating and co-creating solutions in partnership with community stakeholders takes time, resources and focused attention to ensure relationships are mutually beneficial and take place on an even playing field. EarthLab member organizations, such as WOAC and the Climate Impacts Group, are often referenced as excellent examples of how to build and sustain community relationships. Stakeholders all agree that building relationships of trust and forming partnerships with community stakeholders takes a real investment of time and attention. Several faculty interviewees pointed out that time is the coin of the realm inside the university: faculty time is limited and is focused on contractual obligations to the university and on fulfilling career advancement requirements. The time required to build and nurture relationships is often done on the side or ends up being voluntary, rather than compensated, and thus is often not done. At the same time, community organizations, especially small community organizations, are very capacity-strapped and have a lot going on, especially in dealing with response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Community stakeholders need to know how they will benefit, how power dynamics and racial equity will be handled and respected, and that the focus will be on the problems that they need to solve—not on communities merely as subjects that mainly serve academic research.

From an internal UW faculty perspective, EarthLab should play an outward focusing role as a connector, an intermediary with a robust system and network to engage outside partners and connect them with the interests of UW faculty. EarthLab should invest in both strengthening existing relationships and building new ones, both within and outside UW to better facilitate the ability for faculty and researchers to engage with external resources. Essentially the hope is that EarthLab will build the relationships both within and outside the university, so that external stakeholders in the private, public, non-profit, and front-line community sectors can easily access UW expertise, and that UW researchers can easily access outside connections.

From an external community leader perspective, community stakeholders want to partner with the university. They want to be able to bring their needs and problems to the university to find solutions that they do not have the internal capacity to address on their own. They recognize that the UW is an intellectual and scientific powerhouse. They want to leverage that expertise to move the needle on problems that matter to them. They want to be met equally, not patronized, and have their knowledge and experience considered and honored. Community stakeholders view EarthLab as a portal into the university where they can take the challenges they are addressing and find the university resources that can help put in place tangible, on-the-ground initiatives with real impact. EarthLab is seen as an organization that has worked with diverse communities to help solve their problems. Both the Climate Impacts Group and WOAC were called out as organizations that know how to create and sustain solid, mutually beneficial community relationships.

D. Build and Strengthen Internal University Connections Into a Web of Relationships, a Social Infrastructure, Which Can More Rapidly Respond to Opportunities as They Arise

Universities, including UW, are conventionally organized as hierarchies and into siloes. Research tends to go deep and narrow, whereas many of today's challenges require a broad diversity of approaches, collaborators and disciplines to address them. Internal UW interviewees perceive UW as a place that values collaboration and seeks to promote more transdisciplinary and intersectional research and education. The university is actively exploring how faculty member promotional requirements can better consider community-based initiatives that require time to develop and implement by beginning to rethink tenure standards so that community engagement and working with boundary organizations can be seen as part of a faculty member's research and teaching portfolio.

UW interviewees consistently reported that time is their most precious resource. A valuable role that EarthLab can play is to make the necessary investments of time to:

- Build relationships with external stakeholders (public, private, NGO and government community stakeholders);
- Work with external stakeholders to identify and define the big problems they need to solve;
- Connect those relationships and problems with the university resources that can bring expertise to bear to find solutions (e.g., through direct connections, convenings, etc.);
- Identify promising high-risk, high-reward, high-impact initiatives and mobilize the community stakeholders, UW resources and donor resources to develop and implement them;
- Facilitate relationship building among faculty across UW who otherwise may not know one another or are generally too busy to meet. Do this through in-person and online convenings, better utilizing

the faculty steering committee, and building a network of EarthLab “ambassadors” in academic units to more quickly connect potential external community needs with the university resources that can contribute to solving those needs; and

- Explore ways to enable faculty members to devote time to EarthLab initiatives through fellowships, course buy-outs, financial support for graduate students and other incentives.

E. Critical Advice for EarthLab Executive Director and Core Staff

Stakeholders interviewed across all categories offered the following advice specifically to the EarthLab executive director and core staff:

- The buy-in and championing of EarthLab by the new dean of the College of the Environment is important to its continued existence. EarthLab needs to demonstrate its distinctive value in the College of the Environment and across the UW and be ready to present the new dean with a solid and viable strategic plan for the path forward.
- Provide a focused vision. Be selective in choice of projects. Be bold, not incremental. Be innovative and experimental. “Go big or stay home.” This is not the time to be cautious and conservative. Go for high-risk, high-reward and high-impact solutions to very real, climate-related community challenges, especially those of the disproportionately impacted. Convene groups to identify the big, concrete problems.
- Be more proactive in building the internal UW and external networks into a web of relationships (i.e., a social or relational infrastructure) that is ready to be activated to consider the most pressing problems.
- Take the time that is needed to go into communities to build trust and relationships, reaching out on a regular basis, not only when EarthLab or the university want something.
- Within UW, bring in outside (i.e., community) partners so that the university understands what those problems are. Use convening to get awareness inside UW of the problems outside of the university.
- Decide on 2-3 areas where if an initiative is successful it would move the needle for the communities EarthLab serves. Decide which things fall into the category where the problem is well enough defined to solve it. Set out clear criteria to guide what problems and projects EarthLab will consider and advance.
- Connect with the UW leadership agenda about reinventing education and drawing in the best students who want to make an impact in the world. Create more opportunities to engage students (undergraduate and graduate) in EarthLab convenings, projects, member organizations. Continue to create ways to engage in cross-sector, community-based, transdisciplinary research and projects by strengthening and expanding the innovation grants program.

APPENDIX C: EARTHLAB STRATEGIC PLANNING 2020

THREE STRATEGIC PRIORITIES IN DETAIL

As a result of the strategic planning process that EarthLab has recently undertaken, it has established three strategic priorities that build on the strong foundation established during its initial start-up phase. These three priorities are:

1. Activate, leverage and sustain a web of cross-boundary networks, relationships and resources
2. Drive momentum for collaboratively solving pressing challenges at the intersection of the climate crisis and social justice
3. Secure a stable funding model for EarthLab programs, member organizations and faculty, student and community engagements

The following provides more detail on each of these priorities.

1. **Activate, leverage and sustain a web of cross-boundary networks, relationships and resources as follows:**
 - Within the UW by strengthening existing, and building new, powerful relationships and networks across the university to bring transdisciplinary, intersectional and multi-sectoral approaches to bear on complex environmental challenges in partnership with communities that are most impacted by these problems. The objective is to engage and connect all levels of the university in a web, including but not limited to:
 - + UW administrative leadership
 - + Donors
 - + Board of deans and chancellors
 - + Faculty across colleges, schools, departments (tenured, tenure-track and non-tenure track)
 - + Researchers
 - + Students (undergraduate, graduate, post-doc)
 - + Other transdisciplinary initiatives at UW
 - + UW Sustainability Action Plan
 - Within the wider community by strengthening existing, and building new, community relationships into a web of networks across multiple sectors, including but not limited to:
 - + Community organizations and coalitions
 - + Front line communities
 - + Government agencies
 - + Media
 - + NGO's and ENGO's
 - + Private sector businesses/corporations
 - + Tribes
 - Across boundaries by integrating internal and external networks into a web of relationships and serving as connective tissue that bridges existing and facilitates new connections, collaborations and partnerships to:
 - + Co-define urgent problems that would benefit from a transdisciplinary approach that brings together as partners both community and UW resources

- + Co-design approaches to developing solutions that draw upon and respect the knowledge, expertise, wisdom, and lived experience of community partners along with UW scholars and researchers
- + Co-produce tangible outcomes that translate research into action, needs into solutions, and solutions into positive enduring change
- Increase and strengthen opportunities for faculty interested in transdisciplinary work across UW colleges and schools to directly engage with and influence the direction of EarthLab's work (e.g., developing broader faculty representation for their college/school on the EarthLab faculty steering committee).

2. Drive momentum for collaboratively solving pressing challenges at the intersection of the climate crisis and social justice through activities that:

- Identify, act upon and grow initiatives that bring together disciplines and sectors to coproduce solutions with potential high impact through scalability or replicability by:
 - + Building on current EarthLab strengths and member organizations related to the climate crisis and its disproportionate impacts on BIPOC communities (e.g., Climate Impacts Group, CHanGE, Program on Climate Change, climate aspects of Ocean Nexus and WOAC) and creating new multi-sectoral and transdisciplinary partnerships to:
 - Identify complex problems that the most impacted communities are facing where UW resources can be brought to bear to accelerate instituting real solutions
 - Co-create transdisciplinary multi-sectoral initiatives to develop and implement solutions
 - Multiply potential impact by documenting and sharing solutions that can be scaled or replicated by other impacted communities
 - + Continuing to leverage, support and amplify EarthLab member organizations through exceptional administrative, technical, communication, program management, fund-raising, networking and convening services that free-up member organization resources to focus on research activities and outcomes.
- Promote and support transdisciplinary, multi-sectoral partnerships that fully engage the communities most impacted by:
 - + Amplifying EarthLab strengths related to:
 - Understanding the impact of the climate crisis, particularly on communities most impacted due to systemic racism and social injustice
 - Exploring and implementing community-based solutions related to climate mitigation, adaptation and resilience
 - Creating and sustaining strong relationships with impacted communities
 - + Focusing and strengthening EarthLab's competencies for organizing and leveraging cross-boundary resources
 - + Instigating, developing and managing new transdisciplinary, multi-sectoral initiatives that bring together the strengths, competencies, knowledge, experience and wisdom of both UW and community partners to co-produce more effective, enduring solutions resulting in measurable positive change
- Grow capacity and professional and research skills in transdisciplinary and applied work within both the university and the wider community, and enable students, staff, faculty, and partners

from all sectors to push traditional boundaries, build new connections and generate innovative solutions that will:

- + Strengthen and grow the Innovation Grants program
- + Explore instituting EarthLab fellowships, internships, and other means to support early-career faculty, and students at all levels, to participate in EarthLab initiatives
- + Develop educational opportunities (e.g., workshops, webinars, etc.) focused on building the skills needed to conduct effective transdisciplinary research and applied, community-based, equity and justice-focused work.

- Measure impact and share what is learned by establishing and reporting on clear performance metrics for EarthLab activities, initiatives and outcomes, including how EarthLab member organizations contribute to EarthLab's overall impact model.

3. **Secure a stable funding model for EarthLab programs, member organizations and faculty, student and community engagements through activities that:**

- Develop and implement a comprehensive and diverse funding campaign that ensures EarthLab's continuity and its ability to support innovative initiatives that push beyond conventional boundaries including:
 - + Government Relations
 - + University of Washington financial support
 - + Major donor grants for operations and programs
 - + Foundation, corporate and government grants and contracts for programs
- Help member organizations secure funding in support of their ongoing operations and programs through activities that:
 - + Facilitate and enhance member organizations' capacity to communicate about the benefits and value of the work they undertake
 - + Help member organizations identify and connect with potential sources of funding
 - + Assist in writing, organizing and managing proposals
 - + Manage grant administration activities, including ensuring all terms, requirements and reports are met

Across this set of priorities, EarthLab will establish Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that measure the impact and performance of EarthLab activities by:

- Clearly articulating the impacts and outcomes EarthLab aspires to achieve through its activities
- Setting out impact and performance goals for EarthLab activities and initiatives
- Establishing and tracking qualitative and quantitative performance metrics to measure progress toward EarthLab goals

APPENDIX D: EARTHLAB STRATEGIC PLANNING 2020

FOUR PRIMARY ACTION AREAS IN DETAIL

To activate its strategic priorities, EarthLab is focusing on the following four primary areas by which it is catalyzing action:

1. Convene cross-cutting conversations
2. Invest in innovative, interdisciplinary and multi-sector collaborations
3. Support and amplify the success of EarthLab member organizations
4. Foster the development of professionals who are skilled in transdisciplinary and applied work

This appendix sets out details on the current state of each action area, the longer-term goals EarthLab will achieve by 2025, the initial objectives that put EarthLab on a path to achieve those goals, and the actions through which EarthLab will realize those initial objectives.

Action Area 1: Convene Cross-Cutting Conversations

EarthLab has built a strong community web both within the university and with people and organizations outside of the university. External partners are approaching EarthLab to more easily tap into university resources to address urgent problems. Similarly, individual researchers, students and teams within the university are beginning to view EarthLab as a bridge to connect to external partners to better understand and work on issues of mutual interest and concern. Convening new conversations that span disciplines and knowledge systems is the foundation for exchanging new ideas, increasing understanding, and appreciating diverse perspectives, all of which are the backbone of effective, equitable and sustainable solutions.

a. 2020 Current State

EarthLab features numerous opportunities for broad audiences to engage in conversations that span disciplines and sectors and elevate new voices and perspectives. These include monthly seminars on Collaborating Across Difference, which share learning about how to effectively conduct transdisciplinary work; Tribal engagement best practices trainings, lectures, speakers and readings; the EarthLab Showcase, an annual public event that features the work of EarthLab member organizations and Innovation Grant recipients; a Salon Series on environmental justice; and co-sponsoring the Walker Conversations focusing on the intersection of environment and politics. These free events are often open to the public and recordings can be accessed on the EarthLab website. In addition, through its internal UW and external community networks, advisory groups, Innovation Grant cohorts, and outreach to community partners, EarthLab engages in ongoing boundary-crossing conversations.

b. 2025 Goals

Goal 1: Evidence that BIPOC leaders regard EarthLab as a trusted partner and platform for sharing their ideas and work

Goal 2: New connections that produce tangible and equitable approaches to addressing pressing challenges in support of existing member organizations and/or at the intersection of climate and social justice

Goal 3: Increased awareness and recognition among scholars, community organizations, policy makers and students of the efficacy, outcomes and impact of transdisciplinary and multisectoral work regarding complex environmental challenges

Goal 4: Increased public awareness and urgency for action regarding climate and climate justice topics

c. Objectives and Actions

Objective 1: Convene, facilitate and participate in conversations that bring together different knowledge systems and cross conventional boundaries

Actions:

- Increase capacity of current and future EarthLab staff to work in a culturally appropriate and nation-to-nation fashion with Tribes through training, lectures, speakers and readings
- Continuously develop and conduct convenings focused on:
 - Building a strong foundation for EarthLab researchers to share their work
 - Building relationships across campus that connect the community to UW, bring different voices to the university, and welcome community organizations as members of the wider UW community
 - Sharing learning about how to effectively conduct transdisciplinary work
 - Facilitating learning between companies and across disciplines on potential solutions by developing and conducting the *Corporate Climate Roundtable*: a series of conversations with ~5 faculty and ~5 company representatives to explore common barriers to achieving climate goals
 - Identifying areas for further research

Objective 2: Expand the Distinguished Fellows Program to bring multiple stakeholders together around a shared interest or concern

Actions:

- Identify key shared interest/concern that warrants fellowship research
- Conduct robust outreach to identify potential fellows

Objective 3: Develop “matchmaking” events for community organizations, faculty, students, researchers and staff to pitch projects to each other and identify mutual interests

Actions:

- Measurably increase the number of collaborations, grant applications, connections between community partners and with potential academic partners
- Further develop affiliate program to build-out UW stakeholder engagement
- Increase awareness and strengthen relationships to community organizations by attending and supporting their events

Objective 4: Develop a targeted inventory of people and projects on climate/social justice at the university

Actions:

- Employ students to conduct the review of the current state
- Increase new partnerships and convenings between UW and community
- Demonstrate increases in new faculty and student engagement

Action Area 2: Invest in innovative interdisciplinary and multi-sector collaborations

Innovative collaborations that span academic disciplines and engage diverse communities demand time, people and funding to form, sustain and bring to fruition. Equitable community-based transdisciplinary research in particular requires all three of these resources and additional time investment to build trusted relationships in order to develop. They are precious resources for potential UW and community collaborators alike.

a. 2020 Current State

In addition to investing the time and staff needed to build core networks, relationships and engagements, EarthLab invests in multi-sectoral, transdisciplinary work through:

- Directly funding teams of researchers, students and partners in the wider community through the popular Innovation Grants program
- Co-sponsoring initiatives (e.g., providing a grant to the Population Health Initiative for environmental resilience to support interdisciplinary teams; sponsoring an Indigenous Speaker Series; providing support for the Buerk Center for Entrepreneurship's Environmental Innovation Challenge–Community Impact Award; and providing honoraria for community presenters to ensure that they are compensated for their time)
- Investing time and funds to secure grants and partnerships that launch new member organizations within EarthLab, which amplify EarthLab's focus action areas (e.g., Nature & Health, Ocean Nexus, Future Rivers, etc.)

b. 2025 Goals

Goal 1: Innovation Grant initiatives result in measurable, scalable, innovative solutions to pressing environmental issues, particularly climate mitigation, adaptation and social justice

Goal 2: EarthLab is an integral investor in UW's efforts to increase community based participatory research

Goal 3: EarthLab is viewed as a strong community partner and as a trusted partner of Tribal communities

Goal 4: Increased general public awareness and urgency for action regarding climate and climate justice topics

Goal 5: Increased investment in faculty time spent advising and participating in EarthLab programs

c. Objectives and Actions

Objective 1: Expand and deepen the Innovation Grants program

Actions:

- Increase opportunities to conduct research and projects that may otherwise not have happened
- Increase knowledge and awareness about the work and outcomes produced by Innovation Grant cohorts

Objective 2: Seek out new high risk and high impact collaborations and partnerships outside of the annual grants program

Actions:

- Grow collaborative relationships (e.g., with the Population Health Initiative, Urban@UW, Foster Business School faculty and students, the corporate community, etc.)
- Invest in new cross-sectoral projects
- Institute methods to share the characteristics and applications of Indigenous knowledge and experience in the academic community to open greater possibilities for innovative collaborations and partnerships

Objective 3: Invest in ways to increase faculty and student capacity and experience to undertake transdisciplinary, community-based applied research

Actions:

- Explore how to establish incentives to attract and enable faculty to devote time to transdisciplinary, community-based applied research
- Conceptualize and seek funding to award early-career faculty fellowships for transdisciplinary work to provide opportunity for more faculty to work outside the traditional model of academia and to develop scholars who know how to work across disciplines and sectors
- Conceptualize and seek funding for a Graduate Student Fellows Program to develop scholars who know how to work across disciplines and sectors

Action Area 3: Support and amplify the success of EarthLab member organizations

EarthLab's member organizations address some of today's most pressing and complex environmental challenges by:

- Bringing focused research and scientific understanding, data, tools and guidance to decision makers

- Conducting research that informs evidence-based policies, and connecting decision-makers, policymakers and impacted communities in the pursuit of equitable and just solutions
- Providing undergraduate experiences and graduate research traineeships to meet an urgent need for transdisciplinary scientists and tomorrow's leaders who can look at complex problems and datasets in innovative ways

a. 2020 Current State

EarthLab's experienced staff provides exceptional administrative, technical and communication services that are both time-consuming and often complex. This work by the EarthLab staff enables member organization researchers, scientists, faculty, students and staff to build and focus their capacity on the research, science, education, community partnerships and innovative approaches they are constituted to achieve. The support EarthLab currently provides includes:

- Administrative functions including budgeting, purchasing and human resources (hiring, onboarding, training and payroll— often complicated due to various funding streams and requirements)
- Fundraising support to ensure continued operations, including grant writing assistance, contract review, donor events and compliance activities to ensure continued funding
- Communications support, including storytelling, videos, newsletters and website development
- Direct financial support to ensure ongoing operations
- Event planning services, including promotion, registration and logistics

b. 2025 Goals

Goal 1: Member organizations achieve increased capacity to meet their goals and objectives because EarthLab handles key functions vital to their success

Goal 2: Member organizations achieve additional capacity through direct funding, internships and assistance integrating equity and justice into their work

Goal 3: Member organizations achieve expanded connections with community stakeholders through engagement with the EarthLab web of networks, translating into new partnerships, projects and funding

Goal 4: Member organizations achieve greater visibility and recognition of their work, contributions, impacts and achievements through multiple communications and awareness-raising channels, such as large events, presentations, publications and press coverage

c. Objectives and Actions

Objective 1: Maintain and continuously improve the support services including responding to their diverse administrative, technical and communication needs.

Actions:

- Manage current and develop new funding avenues for current and future member organizations
- Conceptualize and begin building a resources bank for member organizations that is held in a central location easily accessible to all member staff and provides resources related to administration, communications, onboarding, training, Tribal relations, and equity and justice

Objective 2: Amplify member organization projects and make connections with EarthLab’s external network of community stakeholders.

Actions:

- Increase awareness about member organization research, results and impacts by providing greater visibility across diverse communication platforms and events
- Work with member organization directors to identify, develop and implement formal and informal convenings with key external stakeholders

Objective 3: Advance the integration of equity and justice into member organizations’ work.

Actions:

- Provide resources and trainings related to equity and justice issues as they relate to the work conducted by member organizations
- Initiate an inventory of the equity and justice activities that member organizations have in place to increase visibility of how EarthLab, and member organizations as a whole, are advancing greater understanding and implications of the disproportionate impacts of environmental harm on BIPOC communities
- Work with member organization directors to conceptualize performance metrics for tracking outcomes and impacts related to equity and justice with a view toward including evidence of tangible outcomes and impacts related to this work in the equity and justice inventory over time

Objective 4: Cultivate a greater sense of community among member organizations.

Actions:

- Continue and expand regular offerings and modes of communicating, e.g., bi-monthly community meetings, monthly lunchtime presentations featuring member projects, happy hours, etc. to increase knowledge and awareness among member organizations of each other’s work and other EarthLab initiatives
- Convene member organization directors on a regular basis for high value dialogue over current matters, EarthLab strategy and problem solving

Action Area 4: Foster the development of professionals skilled in transdisciplinary and applied work

The transdisciplinary approaches needed to tackle today’s complex social-ecological challenges reach beyond traditional multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary problem-solving frameworks. They require new partnerships linking researchers, scientists, practitioners, community members and policy makers, enabling connections among multiple ways of interpreting the world, and enhancing collaboration across conventional knowledge-production boundaries.

Education, training, experience and professional development opportunities are needed to build competencies to effectively execute this work both within academia and in the wider community. In addition, academic performance reward-and-promotion structures generally favor more narrowly focused discipline-centered work. EarthLab recognizes that faculty, students and community partners

need to develop skills specific to co-producing effective transdisciplinary and community-based projects, including ways to reduce perceived power differentials between disciplines, knowledge systems, and academic and non-academic participants.

a. 2020 Current State:

Advancing the development of professionals skilled in transdisciplinary and applied work both within the UW and the wider community is integral to the work conducted by member organizations. All EarthLab member organizations engage in transdisciplinary work, providing a home for researchers, faculty and students attracted to this cross-boundary work. Some member organizations, such as Future Rivers and the Doris Duke Conservation Scholars, provide opportunities for students to develop direct experience and new skill sets working in applied ways that connect academic, government, industry and community partners. Innovation Grants program project teams are required to include at least one non-academic partner, a minimum of two UW researchers from different disciplines, and at least one UW undergraduate, graduate student or postdoc. In addition, EarthLab hosts monthly Lunch and Learns for collaborators from across campus to share their experience working in a transdisciplinary, community-based project, as well as trainings, lectures and presentations on how to work more effectively with diverse community groups.

b. 2025 Goals:

Goal 1: A growing cadre of individuals within the UW and the wider community are skilled in and comfortable with working across disciplines and sectors

Goal 2: Transdisciplinary, community-based research is achieving greater prominence and validity as not only a means to address the most complex challenges but also as a legitimate pathway to professional achievement, attracting more faculty, student and community partnerships in the common pursuit of finding more effective and durable solutions to pressing social-ecological challenges

Goal 3: An increasing number of UW and community-based teams are engaged in actionable research endeavors and partnerships that integrate an equity and justice lens to focus on both the challenges and potential solutions arising from the disproportionate impact of the climate crisis in BIPOC communities

c. Objectives and Actions:

The following objectives and actions are set out for the first two years of this plan:

Objective 1: Continue to develop learning opportunities co-led by partners from the UW and the wider community

Actions:

- Increase monthly Lunch and Learn participation from the perspective of those who share their knowledge and experience and those who attend to learn new concepts and skills
- Conceptualize, develop and fund a community fellowship or webinar series to help potential community partners navigate the directory of UW people and projects

Objective 2: Increase the participation of students in actionable transdisciplinary research

Actions:

- Develop and offer an annual student internship through which a cohort of students work in community organizations on partnerships that link to UW faculty and research
- Require new grant teams to include a significant role for students in their project
- Offer paid student internships to work in member organizations offering equitable internship and training opportunities
- Facilitate creating student-supported community projects on climate
- Conceptualize and develop a program to advance learning the art of translating science to broad audiences by employing and teach a communications student intern to write and “bank” climate stories to share with media to elevate UW climate science
- Increase EarthLab’s affiliation with UW programs committed to transdisciplinary approaches to understanding and solving environmental challenges, e.g., the Program on Climate Change

Objective 3: Strengthen the capacity for community members to bring their professional and lived experiences and perspectives to the UW community

Actions:

- Expand the Distinguished Fellow Program and provide a small stipend to support engagement for 1-2 quarters
- Conceptualize and develop an initiative to increase the number of community-led projects

APPENDIX E: CORE INPUTS AND DIFFERENTIATING COMPETENCIES

Tangible Inputs and Differentiating Competencies		Intangible Inputs and Differentiating Competencies	
EarthLab Staff		Expertise	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administration • Communications • Community Engagement • UW Networking • Program Management 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing funding sources (e.g., program grants, donor commitments, university support, etc.) • Active campaign to increase and secure both program and operational funding • Dedicated fundraising support staff 	
EarthLab Member Organizations		Time	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Center for Health and the Global Environment (CHanGE) • Climate Impacts Group (CIG) • Doris Duke Conservation Scholars Program (DDCSP) • Future Rivers • Nature and Health • Northwest Climate Adaptation Science Center (NW CASC) • Ocean Nexus • Washington Ocean Acidification Center (WOAC) 		<p>Member organizations have increased capacity and time to devote to research because EarthLab staff focuses its time to perform key business functions including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administration (finance, HR services, program management, etc.) • Communications (storytelling, videos, newsletters, creating websites, etc.) • Community engagement (time required to build and nurture, etc.) • Convening (planning, executing, following up, etc.) • Fundraising assistance through grant writing and compliance management 	
EarthLab Affiliates		Partnerships and Connections	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carbon Leadership Forum • Center for Studies in Demography and Ecology • Clean Energy Institute • M-9 Project • Population Health Institute • Program on Climate Change 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within the UW across units, disciplines, faculty, students, research scientists, etc. • Within the wider community across sectors (public, private, NGO, front-line communities, donors, etc.) • Across boundaries creating an integrated web of networks and relationships and serving as connective tissue across boundaries 	

Strategic Advisors and Networks	Convening Power
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EarthLab advisory board of deans • EarthLab faculty steering committee • EarthLab advisory council 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monthly meetings • Seminars • Speaker series • Trainings • Lectures • Workshops • Issue-oriented events • Roundtables • Informal gatherings • Transdisciplinary and multi-sector convenings to identify pressing problems, create partnerships and build scalable solutions • Meetings to match needs with expertise
UW Research, Scholarship, Education and Support Capacity	Reputation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Established relationships across UW and in the community • Engaged, passionate and talented students • UW College of the Environment leadership, scholarship and fundraising support • UW financial support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The UW is one of the world's preeminent public universities • UW College of the Environment's units are some of the most well-respected and productive within their fields, with work ranging from fundamental discoveries to the implementation and evaluation of natural resource solutions • EarthLab is building a reputation for transdisciplinary collaboration, co-creation of actionable science, communications and multi-sector engagement to solve today's most pressing environmental problems through the lens of equity and justice
Funding and Fundraising Capacity	Timeliness of EarthLab's Focus
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing funding sources (e.g., program grants, donor commitments and university support) • Active campaign to increase and secure both program and operational funding • Dedicated fundraising support staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EarthLab's focus meets the urgent need for effective transdisciplinary work that addresses issues at the intersection of climate adaptation, mitigation and resilience, fully and equally engaging communities experiencing the greatest impact
Location in Seattle & PNW Region	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seattle and the Pacific Northwest are hubs of both technological and social innovation 	