ENGINEERS & SCIENTISTS ACTING LOCALLY

ANNUAL REPORT

July 2025 to June 2026



Engineers & Scientists Acting Locally (ESAL)



ESAL ANNUAL REPORT

JULY 2025 – JUNE 2026

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ESAL ANNUAL REPORT

ESAL meeting with state officials, legislative staff, and partners at the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) Legislative Summit in Boston, August 2025

01

A YEAR OF NEW MOMENTUM

Expanded capacity for local civic engagement by people in STEM

ESAL

Engineers & Scientists Acting Locally

Letter from ESAL's founder and chair



> **"What I've learned through sharing these experiences with so many of you is that effective local engagement starts not with a formula but with a commitment."**
>
> **— Arti Garg, PhD**

After several years in federal government, I returned to California and decided to bring my policy interests closer to home through service on a city task force. Soon, I found myself reaching out to a listserv of federal science policy alumni, seeking community and advice on how to be more effective in local engagement. I had a hunch I wasn't alone in wanting connections and support.

Ten years later, that hunch has become a national nonprofit reaching people with STEM backgrounds in every state. As an all-volunteer-led and -run organization for most of that time, we turned what we learned into civic education workshops and virtual courses taught by people in STEM for people in STEM. We've hosted local events and told over 300 stories of scientists and engineers who made a difference in their local communities. ESAL has expanded our content, services, and impact because people kept showing up for our mission and kept inviting others to do the same.

What I've learned through sharing these experiences with so many of you is that effective local engagement starts not with a formula but with a commitment. Someone attends a city council meeting. They listen. They offer their perspective. Then they bring a colleague or neighbor along. This is how we all walk policy's last mile together.

This report marks a decade of that work and honors the volunteers, donors, staff, partners, and participants who made it possible.

Change still starts at home. I can't wait to see who shows up next.

Gratefully,
Arti Garg, PhD
Founder & Chair

ESAL

Engineers & Scientists Acting Locally

Letter from ESAL's executive director



Taylor canvassing in Georgia before the November 3rd Election Day

"These activities help more scientists and engineers contribute to better-informed local decisions that are foundational to safer, healthier, and more resilient communities."

— Taylor Spicer

ESAL began with a core belief: communities thrive when everyone participates, and people with STEM backgrounds have valuable perspectives to add. This year, we celebrate a decade of volunteers, local leaders, partners, and supporters who turned that belief into a national network. Thank you for showing up and helping others do the same.

Throughout this year of widespread political and social change, we heard consistently how much our network members want to be helpful and act alongside each other and their neighrbors. ESAL's answer is to prioritize fruitful relationship building.

Our goal is for every U.S. community to have civically trained scientists and engineers connected and engaged. We do this by inspiring people in STEM to act locally, equip them with information and relationships to be effective civic actors, and help them deepen their impact by supporting local projects they lead and matching them with civic leaders seeking help through ESAL's Local Support Response Network.

Together, we see how these activities help more scientists and engineers contribute to better-informed local decisions that are foundational to safer, healthier, and more resilient communities.

Looking ahead, ESAL will enhance our programs to grow local STEM leadership, answer more civic leader requests, prepare scientists and engineers for operating in new political environments, and coordinate with other STEM engagement networks to leverage our collective strengths.

None of this is possible without you. Now is the time to join our community, volunteer, start a project, or support our work, and invite a colleague or friend to do it with you. Let's make more public good possible together.

With gratitude,
Taylor Spicer
Executive Director

ESAL

Engineers & Scientists Acting Locally

New momentum for local civic engagement

Your STEM expertise matters where you live. ESAL helps you use it.

Our mission

ESAL's mission is to increase local civic engagement by people with backgrounds in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM).

Our vision

ESAL envisions a future where all individuals with backgrounds in STEM can utilize both their expertise and their lived experience to actively engage in civic life.

39

Volunteers

3

Staff

9

Board members

"Getting involved with the community is a really big impact that ESAL has had on me. Understanding the different avenues you can take, and then also **getting more comfortable with taking those avenues** are things that ESAL has provided."

— Joel Lesher, ESAL volunteer

3,000+

Network connections

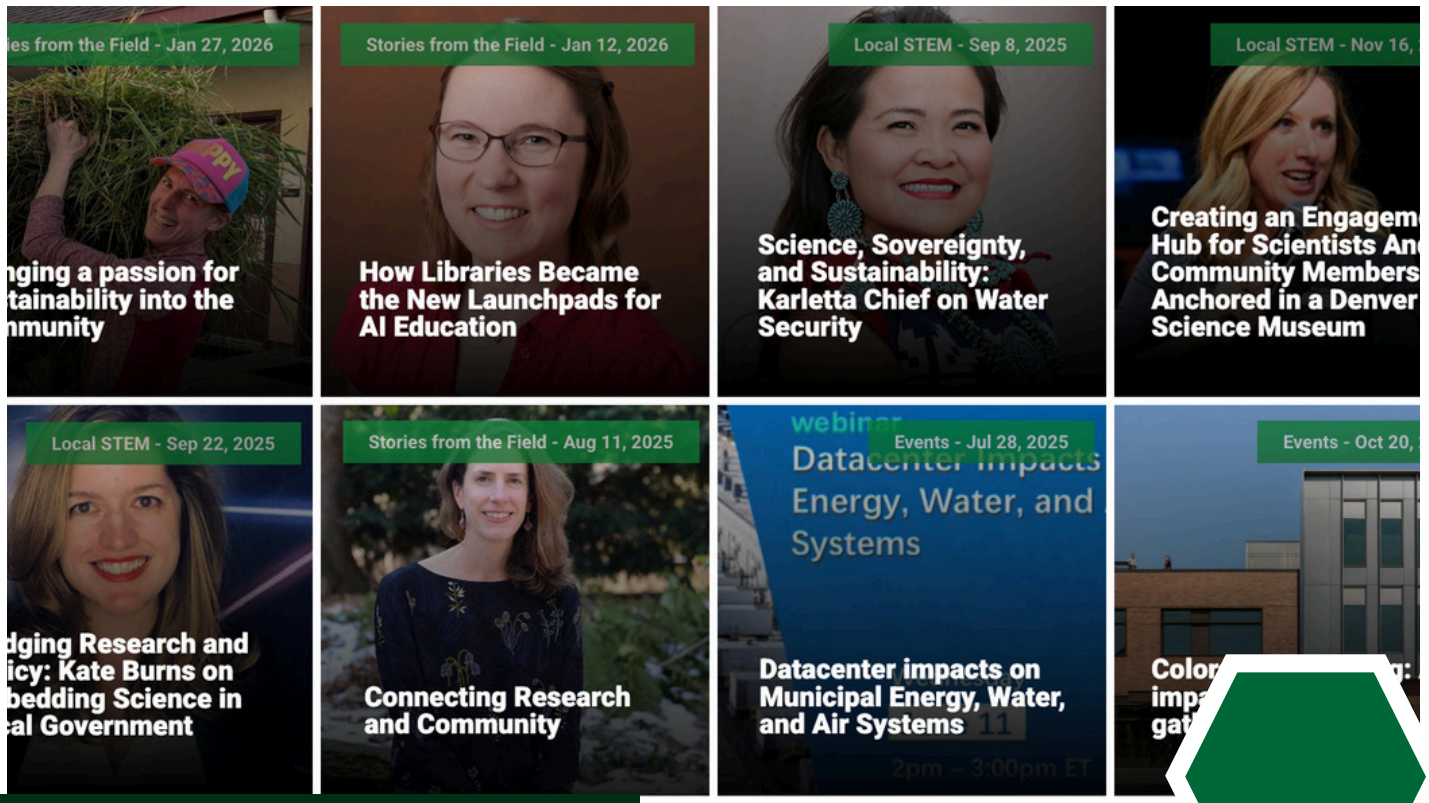
Across 50 states, D.C., and Puerto Rico

23

States + D.C.

Represented by our volunteers, board and staff

Learn more about ESAL ↗



ESAL ANNUAL REPORT

A selection of ESAL article features and event recaps from 2025–26

02

We Are Raising Civic Awareness

Insights, conversations, and stories that spark more local engagement

Articles | Virtual events | Communications & marketing

Local STEM stories catalyzing engagement

ESAL
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Our Content Team turns local connections into insights you can experience

ESAL identifies scientists and engineers making positive impacts where they live, and the Content Team amplifies their stories, highlighting individuals, organizations, policies, and critical conversations shaping local wellbeing. The Team updates and curates our website with original articles and no-cost resources, like our **Local Engagement Playbooks**: how-to guides crafted by people in STEM who have taken action. The Team also publishes **ESAL's monthly e-newsletter**, which includes ESAL news, events, resources, and opportunities.

New this year: America at 250 series

This year, the Team launched the ongoing **America at 250 series**, explorations into how democracy has evolved and intersected with STEM issues throughout the history of the United States. ESAL writers have published about **how everyday science benefits communities**, how artificial intelligence (AI) could influence **redistricting** conversations, and ways **Indigenous relationships, stories, observations, and values shape knowledge**.

Stories shared. Audiences reached.

27 Original stories
Archive: 300+ features

281K Webpage visits
↑ 296%

33.5K Website visitors
↑ 139%

1.2K Newsletter subscribers

Web metrics: FY26 change vs FY25.



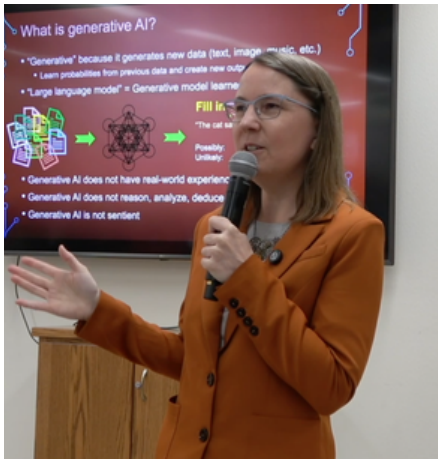
"ESAL has really pushed my knowledge forward and it's pushed my engagement forward into local communities. **Every article I get out there is another chance to be civically involved.**"

Joel Lesher, ESAL writer

Stories and resources for local action

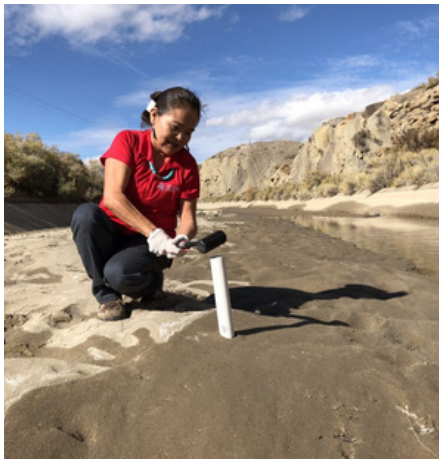
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Local action featured in FY26 stories



[AI education ↗]

Kiri Wagstaff
January 2026



[Water security ↗]

Karletta Chief
September 2025



[Community science ↗]

Adventure Scientists
May 2026

Top articles published in FY26

July 2025

[Data Center Impacts on Municipal Energy, Water, and Air Systems ↗]

September 2025

[Bridging Research and Policy: Kate Burns on Embedding Science in Local Government ↗]

May 2026

[Democracy Needs All of Us to Show Up ↗]

Popular evergreen resources

Local budget processes

[Making Sense of Municipal Budgets ↗]

AI and local policy

[Bringing AI Guidance to Local Governments ↗]

Career pathways

[ESAL Playbook: Build Your Career in State or Local Government ↗]

Expert panels sharing local STEM insights

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Events Team brings critical local STEM conversations to you

ESAL tracks issues affecting the STEM community and provides perspectives on navigating local STEM policy and governance discussions. Through **virtual panel events**, ESAL volunteers deep dive into pertinent STEM topics so that you can tune in to learn from local change agents and thought leaders.

ESAL's most popular event this year covered the use of **artificial intelligence (AI) in policing**, moderating a conversation between an academic, police chief, and public defender to tease out the ethical and policy implications of **using AI tools to interpret body camera footage and write police reports**. The recording received the most views on our YouTube channel this year.

ESAL's events strategy centers partnership and relationship building. For example, panelists for our "**Imagining Scientific Futures**" event connected ESAL to new people and audiences:



Fatima Abdurrahman, Ph.D.

Fatima, a popular YouTube creator, shared the event and featured ESAL in a video that reached more than 160,000 viewers



Mahmud Farooque, Ph.D.

Mahmud invited ESAL's executive director to present at an American Science@250 convening in D.C.



Darin Gray, Ed.D.

Darin joined ESAL's board in December 2025 and helped expand outreach in Los Angeles

Two Events

- **Imagining Scientific Futures: Opportunities & Hope in Difficult Times** (September 2025)
- **AI in Policing** (January 2026)

People reached

6
New panelists

110+
Live viewers

340+
Recording views

Recording views
132%
vs FY25

Explore upcoming events ↗ | Revisit past events ↗

Connecting audiences to local action

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Communications & Marketing Team provides consistent updates and a recognizable brand

ESAL's Communications & Marketing team is responsible for designing the look and feel of ESAL's communications to members of our network and the general public.

Showing up every week

Weekly, ESAL posts on LinkedIn, Instagram, Facebook, and ESAL Community (ESAL's internal platform), as well as occasionally on YouTube, to help scientists and engineers find opportunities to contribute to thriving communities and states.

This year, ESAL's Marketing & Design Director, Tyjen Conley, led ESAL through the process of adopting a **new color palette** and **design templates** that honor ESAL's iconic hexagon logo, while incorporating color theory and audience preferences.

Selected colors from ESAL's refreshed palette

Targeted outreach in action

Science Matters in Indiana ↗

See the paid social campaign and its results on the next page.

Candidate Forum in Georgia ↗

For the Mayoral Candidate Forum on Energy & the Environment, local scientists worked with ESAL to purchase **local radio ads on Education Matters**, a show that trains high school students to lead broadcasts. These ads contributed to **filling the local library with 100+ Athenians** who came to hear candidates' perspectives.



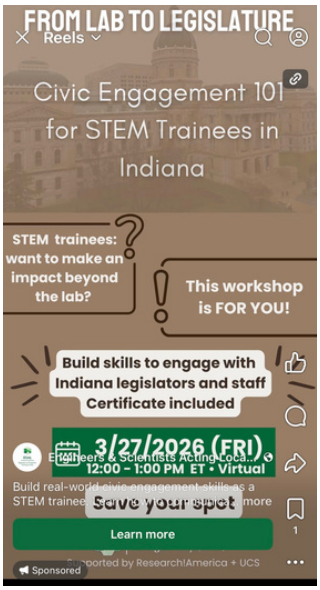
Original candidate forum promotion designed by members of the Coalition of Athens Scientists

100+ attendees
at the Athens forum

From lab to legislature campaign

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ESAL paired paid social ads with direct partner outreach to promote a civic engagement series for Indiana STEM trainees









Paid Facebook ad seen on Marketplace, post and Reels

Paid Instagram Story

BOOSTED META RECRUITMENT AD

25,243
People reached

50,568
Impressions

288
Landing page views

97
TOTAL WORKSHOP REGISTRATIONS
Across the campaign series



ESAL's Toni Kervina (middle), UCS's Melissa Varga (left), and Megan Garcia (right) at the 2025 SACNAS National Diversity in STEM (NDiSTEM) Conference in Columbus, Ohio

03

We Are Building Skills for Impact

Practical skills for effective local civic engagement

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Building knowledge and skills for local action

Conferences & Workshops Team makes civic skills-building accessible to STEM groups

ESAL specializes in helping people in STEM grow knowledge about and skills for effectively engaging with governments, organizations, and neighbors. ESAL does this in part by **delivering workshops and organizing panels of experts** at scientific and science policy conferences. ESAL's sessions are designed to engage 50 to 100 people at busy professional conferences with original content, practical instruction, and supportive guidance.

ESAL presented **14 sessions** at conferences and meetings hosted by:

- American Geophysical Union (AGU)
- American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS)
- Society for Advancement of Chicanos/Hispanics and Native Americans in Science (SACNAS)
- Association of Science and Technology Centers (ASTC)
- Out in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics, Inc. (oSTEM)
- Society of Women Engineers (SWE)

ESAL continues to expand relationships with professional organizations that result in more opportunities for skills building for association and society members. STEM organizations, associations, and societies continue to **use ESAL's on-demand courses and in-person workshops to supplement conference offerings** to better meet the year-round demand of their members seeking support to deepen their local impact.

> "This **workshop provided the space I needed to think creatively** about how I could engage locally on topics I'm interested in; while I think a lot about local engagement, having dedicated time to learn more about how my local government functions and ways I could engage - as well as hearing other people's stories of ways they have/are engaging - **helped get my creative juices flowing**."
>
> **— Workshop attendee**

By the numbers

14 Workshops delivered

9 STEM groups / societies reached

8 Staff/volunteer facilitators

480+ Workshop participants

Workshop participants

↑ **11.6%** vs FY25

Request a workshop ↗ | View conference sessions ↗

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Workshops for professional and leadership development

ESAL's Conferences & Workshops Team also works with STEM groups seeking specific skills development through workshops. This year, the team partnered with **Science Matters in Indiana** to present a **two-part workshop series** that prepared a group of people in STEM to engage with their representatives at the Statehouse. These interactive sessions allow the participants to gain the confidence they need to show up and make their voices heard during in-person meetings with their elected representatives.

The Team also partnered with the prestigious **AAAS Science & Technology Policy Fellowships (STPF) Program** to build on Fellows' experiences in federal policy with a **full-day, interactive workshop** to identify and apply for local board and commission roles, deliver public comments, and prepare for careers in state and local governments. Attendees also participated in a simulation of a local zoning meeting with a data center proposal on the agenda.





AAAS Science & Technology Policy Fellowships professional development workshop, April 2026

Request a workshop ↗ | Read the Indiana story ↗

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Expanding access to civic learning

The Local Civic Engagement Toolkit: a comprehensive, on-demand civic education course designed by people in STEM, for people in STEM

The Toolkit is an **immediately actionable resource**. Designed for busy students and professionals, it combines **short video modules** featuring **real-world examples** of people in STEM making a difference locally and worksheets that help learners translate their learning to **identify personal motivations and activities for involvement**.

The course guides learners through steps they can take to find practical ways to contribute locally, using their STEM skills to benefit their communities.

Practical ways to take action

Learners gain insights for:

- Advising state government officials
- Working with and leading nonprofit organizations
- Organizing around local issues
- Participating in community science initiatives
- Leading STEM education and outreach projects

Built from local experience

Like everything created by ESAL, the course was made possible by sustained **collaboration** between ESAL staff, volunteers and featured members of ESAL's network. The **15 local STEM leaders who contributed to the course** have been featured in ESAL's articles, been panelists for events, or volunteered with ESAL to create local community impact.

By the numbers

15 STEM leaders featured

4 hrs Video content available

Voices from **10** states



Meet local STEM voices in The Toolkit ↗

Explore the Toolkit ↗ | Watch the course trailer ↗

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Voices from The Toolkit



"One thing that I found really interesting about Missouri is that there are almost always bipartisan decisions being made by our legislature… When I got into those conversations one-on-one with lawmakers, **almost everything had bipartisan consensus** in some way or another."

Rachel Owen, Ph.D. | Missouri



"The Georgia General Assembly has a long memory… You really have to **understand who's in charge and what really needs to happen**, which at times is horribly discouraging, but then at other times, if you can still manage to get people swayed, that's really important."

Amy Sharma, Ph.D. | Georgia



"Our second workshop was a DIY air purifier workshop. Unfortunately during that time, Northern California and Oregon had fires in 2023, so it was very much top of mind. We had more than 15 individuals show up and we were able to make 10 DIY air purifiers and also have those discussions on, yes, **this is a short-term solution, but what are we thinking about long-term?**"

Cynthia Prieto-Diaz, MPH, CPH | California

Each featured leader shows what can be possible when you transform caring about your community into action. Participants learn from their examples and advice and use tailored activities to finish the course as local change-makers with personalized action plans.

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Member benefits for STEM societies

Partnership with the Ecological Society of America (ESA)

ESA is partnering with ESAL to provide **expanded member benefits** to ecologists seeking more support to make an impact where they live. Organizational partnerships like this are grounded in civics education, tailored to **match a group's needs**, and connected directly to **support local actions** taken by scientists and engineers.

ESA and ESAL are co-leading a **Civic Society Cohort of 20 ESA members** using The Local Civic Engagement Toolkit to grow knowledge and skills they will apply through local projects.

Each member of the cohort will complete a **capstone project** applying what they learn to their local communities, furthering ESAL's mission to empower people in STEM to **take local action.**



Attendees at ESA's 2025 Annual Meeting

Support for cohort members

- An **exclusive space** within the ESAL Community platform
- **Two live, tailored workshops**
- Support for planning and implementing **capstone projects**

ECOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF AMERICA

esa

×

Engineers & Scientists Acting Locally (ESAL)

Explore organizational partnership with ESAL ↗



Attendees of the University of Maryland Science Policy Group, Engaging Scientists and Engineers in Policy (ESEP), and ESAL joint networking event in D.C. in December 2025

04

We Are Strengthening Bonds

Connecting people in STEM to each other and to civic leaders

Bringing people together across the country

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This year, ESAL volunteers and staff hosted events around the United States that brought people in STEM together to make new connections and to discuss the pressing issues facing their communities. From **Modesto, to Washington D.C., to Phoenix**, and more, we connected people locally through **meet ups, community clean ups, convenings, and panel discussions**. ESAL collaborated with diverse partners to expand our reach and use these opportunities to connect people in STEM to each other and to civic leaders.



"The opportunities and the people I've met at ESAL have actually opened up just a lot more opportunities to get involved in other areas of volunteering, organized work, and community efforts...

I'm meeting more people, I'm doing more things that are civically and locally engaged."

Noah Santos | Washington Seattle Civic STEM Meetup, June 2026

A year of local connections

Jul 2025
Colorado Convening: An impact-focused gathering ↗

Sep 2025
California Coastal Cleanup Day Modesto, CA ↗

Nov 2025
Politics Aside, Policy Forward: Data Centers Solutions Testing Event ↗

Dec 2025
December Happy Hour in D.C. ↗

Feb 2026
AAAS 2026 – Science Policy Shindig in Phoenix ↗

Apr 2026
Athens, GA Mayoral Candidate Forum on Energy and the Environment ↗

Jun 2026
Engaging with Local Policy: A Seattle Civic STEM Meetup ↗

By the numbers

7 Events

7 Communities engaged

9 Partnerships

395+ Total attendees

Explore upcoming events ↗

Local conversations, shared action

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DENVER, COLORADO

Planning for local action↗

ESAL hosted a convening in Denver, Colorado, of local scientists, nonprofit leaders, artists, and sustainability consultants. Attendees chose to use their time together to discuss climate resiliency in a wildfire-prone environment, local economic impacts of cuts to the NOAA workforce, and implications of accepted data collection practices used to count people experiencing homelessness in Denver. ESAL led the group through a series of **relationship-building and action-planning exercises**. Attendees built campaigns that **centered big-picture strategies and meaningful tactics** they could employ.

> "Loved the **openness and warmth** of the facilitation. Felt **comfortable** to share and learn."
>
> "I want to get more involved with science and activism communities in Denver. Makes me feel **inspired**!"
>
> "I want **more connection with people** in this room. I would appreciate forming a learning network."
>
> **- Colorado Convening participants**

ATLANTA, GEORGIA

Discussing AI and data center impacts↗



Science for Georgia's Amy Sharma framing the conversation about data center impacts and solutions, November 6, 2025. Photo credit: Dana Clare Redden

When **AI and data centers** began to dominate the national conversation, ESAL teamed up with partner organizations for an in-person event in Atlanta, Georgia. At the Politics Aside, Policy Forward: Data Centers Solutions Testing Event co-hosted with Science for Georgia and the National Science Policy Network, we **brought together local leaders, scientists, and students** to discuss the trade-offs and opportunities of the local push for AI adoption and infrastructure expansion. Attendees weighed the **impacts on the energy grid, watershed, innovation economy, and local autonomy, policy, and decision making.**

Explore past events ↗

Growing a community for local civic action

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ESAL Community is the online platform for connecting civic-minded people in STEM and powering local action

Networking with purpose

ESAL's online programming helps Community members connect. Each month, members meet with someone new through the matching program, "**Meet me in the Break Zoom.**" ESAL's **Action Hour** events provide a consistent time for members to receive individualized support to start or troubleshoot local projects.



Chris Jackson, Ph.D., hosted a virtual workshop exclusive to ESAL Community members to help them prepare for state legislative sessions. The recording is accessible to all members.

Responding to local leaders

Members can access a dedicated space for responding to requests from local civic leaders, ESAL's **Local Support Response Network**. By showing up to local events and gatherings of civic leaders, ESAL builds relationships with officials and staffers that lead to requests for assistance with STEM issues. As ESAL's capacity grows, this project will expand to become a pipeline for fostering working relationships between STEM and civic networks.

Finding new opportunities

By joining ESAL Community, members can find opportunities to engage in real-time. **From skill-building and leadership development workshops to opportunities to deliver public comment, apply for jobs, fellowships, and community grants** - there are many ways members can take local action. Community members have logged over 1,000 interactions posting events, resources, comments, and replies.

Growing participation, deepening connections

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How ESAL Community Members Engage

Based on 95 member profiles

Numbers show members reporting each activity. Multiple responses allowed.

Community involvement

Volunteer with local organizations	49
Public outreach	40
Advocate for local policy	32
Provide expert guidance	15

Engaging local government

Attend local government meeting	35
Deliver public comment	24
Join advisory body	23
Meet with local officials	21
Advise government officials	21

Civic learning & leadership

Research local policy	25
Policy fellowship	24
Work for local government	3
Serve as elected representative	2
Run for office	1

Additional unspecified response: “Lots!” — 10

ESAL Community members engaging locally and virtually

274 Total members

19+ States represented

200 Active members

90 Contributing members

18
Paid memberships

10
Average new members per month

45+
Programming attendees

20
Advocacy areas of interest

1,000+
Platform interactions

98+
Direct conversations



Tackling toxic litter in Modesto, CA for California Coastal Cleanup Day, hosted by Cynthia Prieto-Diaz, MPH, CPH in partnership with ESAL and TOPS Coalition in September 2025

05

We Are Supporting Your Local Action

Harnessing resources, civic skills, and connections for local action

ESAL

Engineers & Scientists Acting Locally

Centering local needs in our work

Connecting civically trained people in STEM and local leaders to work together for community wellbeing

Local governments and community organizations often have limited access to people in STEM; yet **decisions made about local STEM issues at the city, county, and state levels directly shape daily life**.

ESAL equips scientists and engineers with civic skills, networks, and opportunities, and connects them with local leaders and communities who request their support. Together, we **improve community resilience by using science-based approaches** to respond to emerging local and state risks and opportunities.

But how do we do this?

Currently, ESAL uses three main strategies:

1. At civic events and conferences, ESAL connects with local and state leaders, and democracy, policy, and community engagement experts. We nurture these relationships and **get to know civic leaders directly shaping local communities.**

2. Within the ESAL Community, we coordinate a Local Support Response Network, an online space where we **match local requests with scientists and engineers** who can respond.

This year, civic leaders have requested help to:

- Strengthen an **organizational AI policy**,
- Verify environmental and public health concerns pertaining to **data centers**, and
- Recruit and train scientists to fill critical local **elections protection** roles.

3. Scientists and engineers have access to **support services** from ESAL that are flexible and responsive to a range of civic engagement needs. ESAL's volunteers and ESAL Community paid

Supporters can:

- **Request up to $250** for an event or project,
- Partner with ESAL to **apply for grants** up to $10,000 to support local initiatives, and
- Contract with ESAL to serve as a **fiscal agent** for larger grants.

These services are designed to overcome barriers to starting and sustaining local engagement.



Connecting local leaders with STEM expertise

Request Project & Event Support Services ↗

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Helping Indiana scientists take their first steps into civic engagement

The Indiana Civic Engagement Series, using ESAL's support to realize Cherry Cheung, Ph.D.'s civic engagement vision

Cherry wanted to create a **practical pathway for scientists to share their expertise**, listen to community needs, and build relationships with state policymakers.

Working with ESAL's executive director Taylor Spicer and co-organizer Hanyu Xia, Ph.D., Cherry developed the project, navigated multiple grant applications, and secured support from the Union of Concerned Scientists' Science for Public Good Fund and Research!America's Civic Engagement Microgrant Program. **ESAL served as fiscal sponsor**, administering the funding and **providing the planning, resources, and workshops** needed to prepare participants for legislative meetings, communicate their research to non-scientific audiences, and create one-page materials introducing their work.

The series culminated in an Indiana Statehouse Engagement Day on April 24, 2026, where seven participants joined four meetings with legislators and staff representing five elected officials and toured the Statehouse. **Participants reported greater confidence engaging with policymakers**, with one reflecting that "our legislators really do listen to us." **All participants expressed interest in continuing civic or policy activities**, showing how a volunteer-led idea, paired with ESAL's guidance and resources, can help scientists turn local civic engagement into action.



ESAL volunteer and organizer Cherry Cheung, Ph.D. (in a white blouse), co-organizer Hanyu Xia, Ph.D. (far right), and seven participants with Indiana State Senator Andrea Hunley (in a green blazer) during Indiana Statehouse Engagement Day



Participants also toured the Indiana Statehouse to learn about its history and role in state government

Explore fiscal sponsorship ↗ | Request a workshop ↗ | Read the Indiana story ↗

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Growing local leadership with ESAL volunteers

Local Engagement Volunteers

Local Engagement Volunteers are members of ESAL's team who want to **develop or accelerate on-the-ground engagement where they live.** Each volunteer works with ESAL staff to establish local priorities. Our current volunteers are based in six states.

Enhancing environmental health

Cynthia Prieto-Diaz, MPH, CPH

Leading **community cleanups and outreach events** to improve community-level environmental health in San Leandro and California's Central Valley.

Valuing Indigenous lifeways

Kendra Zamzow, Ph.D.

Connecting Indigenous communities and scientists in Alaska and across the country, opening conversations that help ESAL's broader audience **learn from and value other ways of knowing "science" and being scientists.**

Addressing misinformation

Hailey Reiss Kastor

Building a local group of people in STEM leading a **campaign to address scientific misinformation** in rural Pennsylvania.

Building civic STEM networks

Noah Santos

Launching a civic STEM meetup series in Seattle, WA to build relationships between scientists and engineers and **increase local civic know-how and activation.**



Building civic STEM connections in Seattle, WA

Rooted in six states so far

New York | Washington | Virginia | Pennsylvania | California | Alaska

Join the Local Engagement Team ↗

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Voices of local action

Local Engagement Volunteers report greater confidence and follow-through



"I'm definitely **more emboldened and empowered** in using my voice and my action to get myself and other people involved. Especially with the community, the engagement efforts that we've done with ESAL, I understand the process a lot more of saying, 'Hey, there's an event here. Let's get involved. If you're interested in this sort of thing, let's do that.' It gave me the experience to feel more comfortable doing that in other aspects of not just civic engagement and volunteering, but just organizing people in general. I'd say that I'm **more likely to be a community voice and a collective action organizer because of ESAL.**"

Noah Santos
Local Engagement Volunteer, Washington



"My involvement with local civic engagement has changed drastically since I became involved with ESAL. I've gotten more comfortable as I've volunteered with ESAL and learned more about advocacy and engagement and outreach. I do participate in town hall meetings when they are of interest to things that I'm involved in. I try to keep abreast of local politics and meeting minutes at my township. I also have been able to **form a small but mighty group of folks** who are in my area who are also interested in local science outreach and local science advocacy.

I'm really grateful for the tools and the skills and the resources that ESAL has given me to feel like I'm able to **actually make a difference in my community and locally engage**. I feel like ESAL has been there every step of the way to provide me with the things that I need to feel better prepared and empowered to go into spaces."

Hailey Reiss-Kastor
Local Engagement Volunteer, Pennsylvania



Building connections between Bay Area engineers and scientists at one of ESAL's first events in 2017

06

We Are Turning 10!

Growing the organization that facilitates deeper local engagement for people with backgrounds in STEM

A decade of turning STEM expertise into local action

ESAL
Engineers & Scientists Acting Locally

Scaling one astrophysicist's path into local civic life to a network of thousands of civic-minded scientists and engineers

2017: Founders established ESAL
Launched written content, conference sessions, and in-person events programs

2018: Published Civic Engagement Survey
Revealed engineers' and scientists' local engagement actions and barriers

2019: Became a 501(c)3 to deepen impact
Launched accessible resources, like the Local Engagement Playbooks and Local STEM Database

2020: Built virtual connection in crisis
Virtually convened STEM audiences and local civic leaders to discuss pressing local issues

2021: Secured transformative funding
Developed workshops and conferences program with new funding to grow access to civic learning

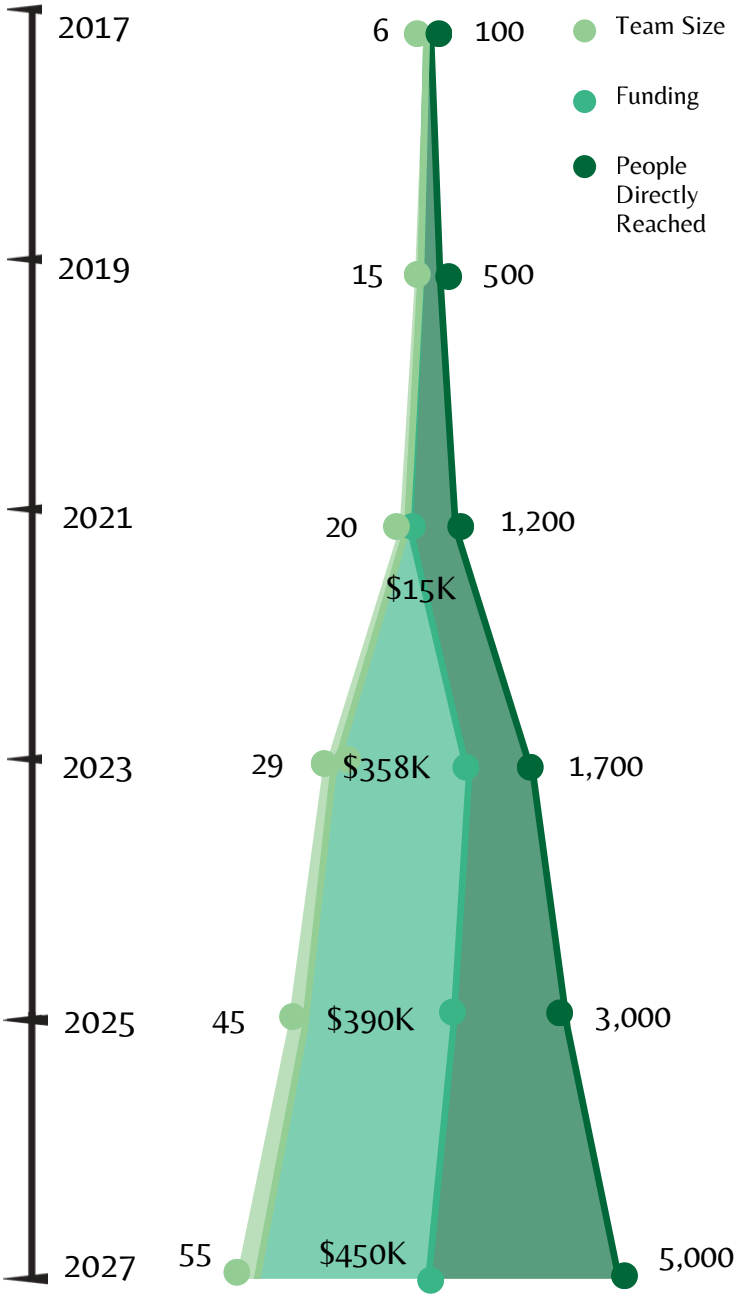
2022: Improved access with new website
Launched a refined website with informational content and a Local Engagement Map

2023: Grew organizational capacity
Hired first part-time staff, recruited more volunteers, and expanded the board

2024: Set priorities with a strategic plan
Adopted ESAL's Strategic Plan, 2027 with engagement, capacity, and awareness raising goals

2025: Expanded programs and impact
Launched the ESAL online platform to connect and activate network members

2026 and beyond: Showing up for communities
Mobilizing around elections, hosting on-demand civics course, and starting volunteer response network to match local civic leaders with requested STEM support



ESAL's origin ↗ | About ESAL ↗ | Major gift for ESAL's 10th anniversary ↗

Your support makes local action possible

ESAL
Engineers & Scientists Acting Locally

Thank you to our donors and clients. Your gifts and purchases of services helps ESAL support engineers and scientists making a difference in communities across the country.

How ESAL's FY26 work was funded

89%
Philanthropic grants

5%
Individual giving
65+ donors

2%
Earned revenue

4%
Other income

Sources of earned revenue: workshops, courses, ESAL Community subscriptions, and fiscal sponsor fees.

Thank you to our funders and clients

Gordon & Betty Moore Foundation

California Municipal Finance Authority

AAAS Science & Technology Policy Fellowships

Ava Community Energy

Research!America Civic Engagement Microgrants

UCS Science for Public Good Fund

Make a gift for ESAL's 10-year milestone

Your gift helps keep ESAL's resources and events open to all. Volunteers are central to our work, and donations help fund staffing, events, outreach materials, travel, and organizational management.

Your gift sustains a national network working to improve the safety, wellbeing, and resilience of U.S. communities.

Give to ESAL

esal.us/donate

Ways to give

- Become a monthly donor
- Give through your donor-advised fund
- Ask your employer to match your gift

Charity Navigator FOUR-STAR 2026

Platinum Transparency 2026 Candid.

Putting our strategy into action

2024–2027 STRATEGIC PLAN UPDATE

ESAL
Engineers & Scientists Acting Locally

In 2024, ESAL adopted its organizational Strategic Plan, 2024–2027. The three-year plan set network engagement, organizational capacity, and brand awareness priorities. By the end of year two, ESAL made significant progress to reach wider audiences, strengthen governance and operations, and evolve ESAL's engagement programs and resources.

Network Engagement

Connecting STEM with local action

↻ Ongoing delivery

Stronger civic connections — ◔ Gaining momentum
Building relationships with local civic leaders and elected officials.

Community and learning — ↻ Ongoing delivery
An online community of 270+ members, plus flexible training and mentorship for local action.

More ways to engage — ↻ Ongoing delivery
Growing partnerships for virtual and in-person engagement.

Organizational Capacity

Building a sustainable organization

◔ Gaining momentum

Staffing for growth — ◔ Gaining momentum
Expanded staffing and an updated organizational structure.

Financial stability — ◔ Gaining momentum
Growing development capacity to diversify and expand funding sources.

Stronger governance — ✓ Milestone completed
Board committees, updated bylaws and new organizational policies.

Brand Awareness

Reaching more people in STEM

↻ Ongoing delivery

Broader reach — ↻ Ongoing delivery
Reaching diverse audiences through new content formats and topics.

Greater visibility — ↻ Ongoing delivery
Sharing ESAL's impact through STEM networks, conferences, convenings, and media.

Partnerships for local engagement — ◔ Gaining momentum
Convening people in STEM around local civic action.

Read the 2024–2027 Strategic Plan ↗



ESAL ANNUAL REPORT

ESAL's team of board members, staff, and volunteers who led the governance, programs, operations, communications, and partnerships for the national network

07

We Are ESAL

The people and partners who make ESAL's work possible

ESAL

Engineers & Scientists Acting Locally

People powering local STEM engagement

Volunteers are central to everything ESAL offers, contributing their expertise, time, and local connections to put ESAL's mission into practice. ESAL's **Board of Directors** guides our strategy and sustainability, while the **Leadership Committee** of staff and team directors collectively implement ESAL's strategic plan.

Volunteers

Nick Anthis
Edward Bi
Gwendolyn Bogard
Cherry Cheung
Joan Chimezie
Adira Colton
Seth Commichaux
Vrinda Dambal
Craig Dawe
Mark Feuer DiTusa
Emma Filip
Michelle Frank
William Harley
Abisola Kusimo
Elisabeth Latawiec
Joel Lesher
Ayisha Mahama
Matt Martin
Matt McKeon
Eduardo Medina-Romero
Arielle Moore
David Oh
Uka Onwuka
Rachel Owen
Justin Paredes
Cynthia Prieto-Diaz
Andrew Ramirez
Hailey Reiss-Kastor
Noah Santos
Emily Schafer
Malvika Singhal
Ean Small
Nathan Smith
Roselyn Tomlin
Jessica Trinh
Tony van Witsen
Ben Wolfson
Kendra Zamzow
Lina Zhu

Board of Directors

Arti Garg
Chair
Chris Spitzer
Vice-Chair
Laurie Chong
Secretary
Chris Jackson
Treasurer
Julia Biggins
Member
Meredith Drosback
Member
Darin Gray
Member
Nilesh Kalyanaraman
Member
Erin Partlan
Member

Leadership Committee

Taylor Spicer
Executive Director
Al Licata
Program Manager
Margaret Akinfemi
Operations Associate
Tyjen Conley
Marketing & Design Director
Karthik Ilangovan
Technology Director
Chris Jackson
Workshops Director
Toni Kervina
Content Director
Stefan Peterson
Development Director
Jessica Wu
Events Director

Join the team ↗ | Meet the team ↗ | Meet the board ↗

ESAL

Engineers & Scientists Acting Locally

Serving as connectors and capacity builders, locally and globally

Partners

AAAS
AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF SCIENCE

AGU 100
ADVANCING EARTH AND SPACE SCIENCE

ECOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF AMERICA
esa

GLOBAL NETWORK FOR GEOSCIENCE AND SOCIETY

NSPN

Union of Concerned Scientists

Collaborators

American Association for the Advancement of Science: Center for Scientific Evidence in Public Issues; Local Science Engagement Network; Science & Technology Policy Fellowships
American Academy of Arts & Sciences
American Geophysical Union: Science Policy & Government Relations; Thriving Earth Exchange
Arizona Faith Network
Arizona State University: Consortium for Science, Policy & Outcomes; School for the Future of Innovation in Society
Association for Advancing Participatory Sciences
Association of Science Communicators
Association of Science-Technology Centers
Christine Mirzayan Science and Technology Policy Graduate Fellowship Program
Civic Science Media Lab
Coalition of Athens Scientists
Conservation X Labs Fire Grand Challenge
DC Cheers
Engaging Scientists and Engineers in Policy
Hoosier Environmental Council
Horizons Project
More Unites than Divides concert
National Conference of State Legislatures: Center for Results-Driven Governance
oSTEM Seattle Professional Chapter
Pew Charitable Trust: Evidence Project
Pro-Democracy Narrative Playbook
Protect Democracy
Rocky Mountain PBS
S&T Impact Advisory Group
Scholars Strategy Network
Science and Technology Policy Academy
Science for Georgia
Scientific Citizenship Initiative
Scientist Network for Advancing Policy Coalition
Solar Stewards
Solve Climate 2030
Tobacco Prevention Stanislaus Coalition
University of Maryland Science Policy Group
World Economic Forum G20 Global Smart Cities Alliance
Worldwide Climate Education Week

Explore ESAL's Partners & Allied Organizations ↗

Engineers & Scientists Acting Locally (ESAL)

esal.us

Scan to donate
or visit esal.us/donate