



Environmental
Leadership &
Training Initiative

ORGANIZATIONAL STRATEGY 2026-2036

FRONT COVER,
CLOCKWISE FROM
TOP LEFT

Landscape visited
during a field
course in Indonesia.

ELTI participant
and instructor
during a field course
in Rwanda.

Cows on a silvopastoral
farm in Panama.

ELTI participants
during a field course
in Panama.

BACK COVER

View from ELTI’s former
training landscape
in the Philippines.

ELTI IS AN INITIATIVE OF

Yale SCHOOL OF THE ENVIRONMENT

The Forest School

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ARCADIA

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TABLE OF
CONTENTS

ACRONYMS
& ABBREVIATIONS.....

2

DIRECTOR’S MESSAGE

3

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

5

2. OUR CONTEXT

11

THE MAIN CHALLENGES WE SEEK TO ADDRESS

12

OUR NICHE

13

OUR CONTRIBUTION TO GLOBAL FRAMEWORKS

14

OUR AUDIENCES

15

OUR THEMATIC SCOPE

16

OUR GEOGRAPHIC SCOPE
& COLLABORATIVE NETWORK.....

18

ELTI & YALE

19

3. MISSION, VISION,
GUIDING PRINCIPLES,
& VALUES

23

MISSION & VISION.....

24

OUR VALUE PROPOSITION.....

25

OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES.....

26

OUR CORE VALUES.....

27

4. OUR APPROACH TO
CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

29

OUR UNIQUE APPROACH

30

OUR CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT MODEL

34

EXAMPLES OF CAPACITY
DEVELOPMENT PATHWAYS

35

OUR CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT MODALITIES.....

36

OUR TRAINING LANDSCAPE NETWORK.....

37

OUR GLOBAL REACH.....

39

5. KEY ACHIEVEMENTS.....

45

PHASE ACHIEVEMENTS

47

COURSE ACHIEVEMENTS.....

48

TROPICAL RESTORATION LIBRARY

49

LEADERSHIP PROGRAM RESULTS

50

PILOT LAND USE CHANGE ANALYSIS
IN PANAMA

52

6. ORGANIZATIONAL IMPACT GOALS
& THEORY OF CHANGE

55

OUR 2036 ORGANIZATIONAL IMPACT GOALS.....

56

OUR THEORY OF CHANGE.....

58

7. STRATEGIES

61

OUR KEY PRIORITIES

62

STRATEGIES OVERVIEW

63

OUR PROGRAMMATIC STRATEGIES

64

OUR ENABLING STRATEGIES

66

8. MONITORING, EVALUATION,
& LEARNING.....

69

MEL STRATEGIC PLANNING DOCUMENTS

72

9. LOOKING AHEAD.....

75

STRATEGIC GOALS.....

76

NEXT STEPS.....

78

10. GLOSSARY

81

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

87

BELOW

An ELTI course in
Indonesia focused on
harvesting non-timber
forests products.

A photograph showing three individuals in a tropical forest setting, engaged in harvesting non-timber forest products. One person in the foreground is wearing a grey cap and a dark jacket, focused on bundling green palm-like leaves. Two other people are visible in the background, also working with the vegetation. The forest floor is covered with fallen branches and organic matter.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRATEGY 2026–2036 1

ACRONYMS & ABBREVIATIONS

APASPE.....	Association of Livestock & Agro-Silvopastoral Producers of Pedasí
CATHALAC	Water Center for the Humid Tropics of Latin America & the Caribbean
CIFOR-ICRAF.....	Center for International Forestry Research-World Agroforestry Center
CPI.....	Centers, programs, & initiatives
ELTI.....	Environmental Leadership & Training Initiative
FLR.....	Forest landscape restoration
IPÊ.....	Institute for Ecological Research
IP&LC	Indigenous Peoples & local communities
ISTF.....	International Society of Tropical Foresters
IUCN.....	International Union for Conservation of Nature
LP.....	Leadership Program
MEL.....	Monitoring, evaluation, & learning
NTFP.....	Non-timber forest products
PI.....	Principal investigator
SMART.....	Specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, & time-bound
TEK.....	Traditional ecological knowledge
TFL.....	Tropical forest landscapes
ToC.....	Theory of Change
ToT	Training-of-trainers
TRI	Tropical Resources Institute
TRL.....	Tropical Restoration Library
WCS.....	Wildlife Conservation Society
YCNCC.....	Yale Center for Natural Carbon Capture
YPS.....	Yale Planetary Solutions
YSE.....	Yale School of the Environment



“As we look to the next decade, our new 10-year organizational strategy reflects ambition, purpose, and a call for collaboration.”

DIRECTOR’S MESSAGE

Since its founding in 2006, the Environmental Leadership & Training Initiative (ELTI) has worked with partners around the world to pioneer approaches to strengthening capacity for conserving and restoring human-dominated tropical forest landscapes. By focusing on tree-based solutions that restore ecological function while enhancing local livelihoods and well-being, ELTI has supported more than 5,000 land managers, practitioners, and decision-makers in advancing sustainable land management across the tropics.

I am privileged to work alongside an exceptional team and network of partners to adapt and expand our capacity development model. As a program within The Forest School of the Yale School of the Environment (YSE), **our work is grounded in a multidisciplinary, experiential approach to place-based learning that integrates theory and practice while providing post-training support.** We connect Yale’s scholarship with knowledge and wisdom of local communities, land managers, and practitioners to deliver field-based and online training that promotes socially equitable and ecologically sound solutions. YSE students and faculty actively engage with our programs, providing unique opportunities for experiential teaching and learning.

At the heart of our work is the recognition that **addressing environmental challenges requires systems thinking and diverse forms of knowledge.** By bridging disciplines, perspectives, and worldviews across generations, we equip participants not only to understand these challenges, but also to act on them. Our commitment extends beyond training through mentorship, technical support, and seed funding that help ensure knowledge is translated into lasting impact.

As we look to the next decade, our organizational strategy reflects our commitment to collaboration and experimentation. Co-created by our team of environmental professionals, and with input from our Steering Committee members, **it outlines a path to expand our global impact by scaling capacity development, accelerating the application of knowledge, increasing the extent of tropical forest landscapes under improved management, and improving human well-being and livelihoods.** Our aim is to cultivate a global network of leaders equipped to address the complex environmental challenges of our time.

We invite you to read this strategy as a call to partnership. **The challenges before us are immense and require collaboration and exchange across sectors, disciplines, geographies, and generations.** We look forward to working together to advance shared solutions that create lasting benefits for tropical forest landscapes, the people who depend on them, and the biodiversity they sustain.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Eva J. Garen'.

Eva Garen, PhD
Director & Principal Investigator



AT LEFT

Field training on sustainable mangrove honey harvesting in West Kalimantan.

1

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In this strategic plan, we outline how, over the next 10 years, the Environmental Leadership & Training Initiative (ELTI) at the Yale School of the Environment (YSE) **will expand and deepen its impact through a distinctive approach to developing capacity for systems thinking in forest and landscape restoration.**

It addresses the critical and growing need for land managers, practitioners, and decision-makers across the global tropics to strengthen or acquire the knowledge, skills, and support to design and manage effective strategies and interventions for the conservation and restoration of tropical forest landscapes.

OUR CONTEXT

Since its founding in 2006, ELTI has been guided by a clear vision: **a world in which people steward tropical forest landscapes in ways that effectively sustain biodiversity, strengthen climate resilience, and support thriving livelihoods.**

To advance this vision, we train and support people across generations and from diverse sectors and backgrounds to conserve and restore tropical forest landscapes, integrating knowledge and practical experience from multiple sources, disciplines, and perspectives. Our training includes strategies and interventions that address the socio-ecological complexities of human-dominated tropical forest landscapes and **emphasizes practical, actionable solutions tailored to local contexts.**

OUR CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT MODEL

As one of the **centers, programs, and initiatives (CPIs) of YSE**, we are uniquely positioned to connect the science and scholarship of a world-class university with the expertise and lived experience of local partners, including academics, practitioners, land managers, and communities. YSE students participate in select program activities, enabling experiential learning in tropical forest landscapes. **We deliver highly interactive courses and programs** through field-based, online, and blended formats, all designed to enable participants to apply what they learn.

We also offer **opportunities to freely access our content** through webinars, a self-paced abbreviated version of our 10-month online certificate program, and an open-access online library featuring curated literature, guides, and case studies aligned with ELTI’s core themes.

4

ELTI TRAINING LANDSCAPES
(page 37)

7,298

INDIVIDUALS ENROLLED
IN ELTI COURSES
(page 48)

467

INITIATIVES LED BY
PAST PARTICIPANTS
WITH ELTI SUPPORT
(page 50)

As of July 2025

BELOW

View from the Brazil training landscape.



LEARN MORE ABOUT
ELTI's programs
at elti.yale.edu

BELOW

Participants from a workshop at Yale to strengthen partnerships in Brazil.



Our place-based, experiential approach to capacity development

builds on the model established at Yale-Myers Forest, enabling participants to apply theoretical and practical knowledge to complex, real-world challenges in ways that reflect socio-ecological contexts.

Through post-training assistance and the facilitation of communities of practice, we provide past participants with a range of support to apply and share their knowledge, ensuring that learning evolves alongside real-world challenges. Many past participants go on to serve as instructors in our programs, contributing to a **vibrant model of peer-to-peer teaching and learning.**

Our programs are shaped by the experiences of our participants, whose knowledge, insights, and feedback help guide the development of training content and approaches.

OUR 10-YEAR IMPACT GOALS

In the past 20 years, our programs have reached more than 5,000 individuals worldwide and contributed to lasting positive environmental outcomes across a wide range of contexts. Building on this strong foundation, we are now poised to significantly expand and deepen our impact over the next 10 years by advancing the following **four interrelated organizational impact goals** (page 56):

1. Strengthened capacity in tropical forest conservation and restoration at scale.
2. Increased application of knowledge to advance conservation and restoration actions in tropical forest landscapes.
3. Expanded area of tropical forest landscapes with improved conservation or restoration practices.
4. Improved human well-being and livelihoods of those living or working in tropical forest landscapes.

STRATEGIES

Through a highly participatory process, we developed a results chain-based theory of change (ToC) to identify these goals and how our programs can most effectively achieve them. This process resulted in the identification of **eight strategies** (page 63) — four programmatic and four enabling — that will guide our work over the next decade.

PROGRAMMATIC STRATEGIES

1. Bolster the availability and accessibility of learning resources that combine diverse knowledge sources and perspectives.
2. Deliver place-based, experiential programs and courses to those well positioned to influence changes in the landscape.
3. Scale capacity for effective forest landscape conservation and restoration strategies and practices.
4. Enable the transition from knowledge and skills acquired to implementation in the landscape (for past participants of our courses).

ENABLING STRATEGIES

5. Develop diversified, and long-term funding.
6. Strengthen collaborations with YSE, Yale, and external partners.
7. Measure and communicate impact.
8. Strengthen internal systems, learning, and team effectiveness.

KEY INTERMEDIATE RESULTS

Together, these strategies are designed to generate **four key intermediate results** that will lead to our long-term organizational impact goals:

1. Broad and diverse audiences demonstrate increased capacity.
2. People positioned to implement or influence changes in the landscape demonstrate increased capacity.
3. More communities and organizations trained by ELTI past participants demonstrate increased capacity.
4. Enabling conditions are in place for the implementation of forest conservation or restoration practices.



LEARN MORE ABOUT
the Yale School of the
Environment at
environment.yale.edu

IMPLEMENTING OUR ORGANIZATIONAL STRATEGY

In 2026, we also developed a comprehensive **monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) framework** to track progress toward achieving our strategic goals and strategies and understand the effectiveness of our programs. This framework will support **adaptive learning, ensuring that we remain responsive, effective, and aligned with our long-term vision**. Our capacity to **experiment with new approaches, engage in self-reflection, and remain flexible** has enabled us to stay relevant and effective over the past 20 years.

Achieving our ambitions over the next 10 years will require a dedicated team and sustained financial support. This organizational strategy provides a clear foundation for setting fund-raising priorities and communicating our vision and impact to a diverse community of donors and partners. Demand for our programs has never been greater, **underscoring the essential role of capacity development in conserving and restoring tropical forest landscapes** — and our unique and growing contribution to this field.

BELOW

A curriculum development workshop at Yale to create a new ELTI online course, involving ELTI staff, YSE faculty and students, and guest experts.

“This 10-year organizational strategy will guide ELTI’s evolution, focusing on understanding and expanding our impact within the landscapes where we work, increasing the practical application of theoretical knowledge, and scaling place-based teaching and learning.”

EVA GAREN, PHD, ELTI’S DIRECTOR & PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR





2 OUR CONTEXT

AT LEFT, CLOCKWISE
FROM TOP LEFT

Carbon monitoring
workshop at Yale's
Great Mountain Forest.

Carbon markets
workshop at Yale.

Cacao pod from an
agroforestry system
in Brazil.

TFL participants and
instructors at a Yale
conference.

Silvopastoral system
in Colombia.

Mangrove restoration
field training
in Indonesia.

ELTI applies a systems approach to land management challenges in human-dominated tropical forest landscapes across Latin America, Asia, and Africa, developing capacity for conservation and restoration strategies adapted to local sociocultural and ecological contexts.

THE CHALLENGES WE SEEK TO ADDRESS

Tropical forest landscapes are widely recognized for their **importance to livelihoods, biodiversity, and climate change mitigation and adaptation**. Yet deforestation and forest degradation continue at an alarming rate. Although efforts to conserve and restore tree and forest cover are widespread, **many initiatives — despite good intentions — fail to achieve lasting impact or cause unintended harm**, particularly for marginalized communities. More restoration and conservation efforts are needed, but they must be appropriately designed and implemented to avoid these pitfalls.

PREVALENT ISSUES

Although numerous factors influence the effectiveness of conservation and restoration efforts, our programming focuses on the following three:

- **Practitioners often design and implement projects in ways that do not accurately reflect local socio-ecological contexts**, including the unique opportunities, limitations, and complexities of each landscape.
- Individuals living and working in tropical forest landscapes — including people of different generations, genders, and socio-economic backgrounds — are often well positioned to create lasting positive change but **lack access to the knowledge, mentorship, and resources** needed to design and implement effective actions and interventions.
- **Indigenous Peoples and local communities (IP&LC) who already manage natural resources sustainably are often excluded from decision-making spaces** where their traditional knowledge and customary practices are insufficiently valued.

OUR FOCUS

Addressing these challenges so that global and other initiatives are actionable requires **bridging the persistent gap between knowledge and practice** while ensuring that **traditional and local knowledge systems are respected and meaningfully incorporated**. This process demands drawing on insights from diverse disciplines, knowledge systems, and worldviews.

Only through such an approach can those who steward and govern tropical forest landscapes be recognized for their sustainable land management practices and be equipped to design, implement, and finance interventions that are ecologically sound, culturally relevant, and socially sustainable.

Equally important is ensuring that this knowledge reaches those who need it most and is shared in ways that are accessible, relevant, and applicable within their own contexts. **This work takes time and the ability to test and adapt approaches, something ELTI has achieved over its 20 years of implementation.**

6.7

MILLION HECTARES OF
PRIMARY FOREST LOST
IN 2024

96%

OF GLOBAL DEFORESTATION
OCCURS IN THE TROPICS

2.5

BILLION PEOPLE DIRECTLY
RELY ON FORESTS & THEIR
ECOSYSTEM SERVICES

54%

OF THE WORLD'S INTACT
FORESTS ARE MANAGED
BY IP&LCS

Accessed: February 2026

Source: fsc.org/en/blog/deforestation-facts

AT RIGHT, TOP TO BOTTOM

ELTI's global strategy advisor presenting at an ELTI symposium in Rwanda.

Exploring a native tree seedling during an ELTI field course in Rwanda.

Learning about agro-forestry during an ELTI field course in Brazil.

OUR NICHE

GLOBAL PROBLEM

Widespread deforestation and forest and land degradation, coupled with the effects of climate change, leading to unprecedented rates of biodiversity loss and adverse impacts on climate and people, leading to...

PUSH FOR CHANGE

International push for massive conservation and restoration results.
E.g., Sustainable Development Goals, The Bonn Challenge, UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, and many others

KEY CHALLENGES

Insufficient access to diverse sources of knowledge and inadequate support for designing, implementing or scaling enduring conservation and restoration actions.



We work to ensure that the people best positioned to lead or support the conservation and restoration of tropical forest landscapes are valued and equipped with the knowledge, mentorship, and resources needed to affect positive and lasting change.



OUR CONTRIBUTION
TO GLOBAL AGENDAS
AND FRAMEWORKS

Given the urgency of addressing deforestation and land degradation combined with the widespread loss of biodiversity and a rapidly changing climate, many institutions and organizations have made large-scale commitments to conservation and restoration worldwide or established partnerships to facilitate rapid changes.

These pledges, which include restoring hundreds of millions of hectares of degraded land through planting billions of trees, have generated both momentum and pressure for rapid results.

However, in many cases, the approaches employed ignore or do not align with local socio-ecological contexts, leading to ineffective interventions that can even harm marginalized communities and the environment. For example, these initiatives often implement tree planting campaigns on land that may already be providing value to local land managers.

Our capacity development programs help individuals working on these initiatives at varying scales to recognize these shortcomings and **design enduring projects that are grounded in the contexts of the places they are working to restore and protect.**

EXAMPLES OF GLOBAL INITIATIVES

ELTI’s strategy supports a range of global and regional initiatives (see examples below) by focusing on strengthening the capacity needed to design and implement effective interventions. While many of these initiatives are set to conclude in 2030, they are likely to be extended. ELTI both predates these initiatives and will continue its work regardless of how they evolve.

30X30 INITIATIVE (2022–2030)	 Convention on Biological Diversity cbd.int/gbf
UN DECADE ON ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION (2021–2030)	 UNITED NATIONS DECADE ON ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION 2021–2030 decadeonrestoration.org
TRILLION TREES (2016–PRESENT)	 TRILLION TREES trilliontrees.org
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (2015–2030)	 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS sdgs.un.org/goals
THE BONN CHALLENGE (2011–2030)	 RESTORE OUR FUTURE BONN CHALLENGE bonnchallenge.org

OUR AUDIENCES

Our target audiences typically fall into **four main groups**. Participant selection and recruitment vary in approach, ranging from open calls and donor recommendations to nominations and applications. Most courses and programs will engage with a subset of the four audience groups, as participation is tailored to the specific objectives and context of each course or program. Building trust and fostering respectful communication are key to working with all our audiences.

LOCAL LAND MANAGERS
& COMMUNITY MEMBERS

We work with local land managers and communities, including farmers and members of community cooperatives, to adapt or co-create context-appropriate conservation or restoration strategies and interventions across a variety of landscapes. Our approach ensures that these efforts align with local socio-ecological contexts and build upon traditional knowledge and practices.

STUDENTS & ACADEMICS

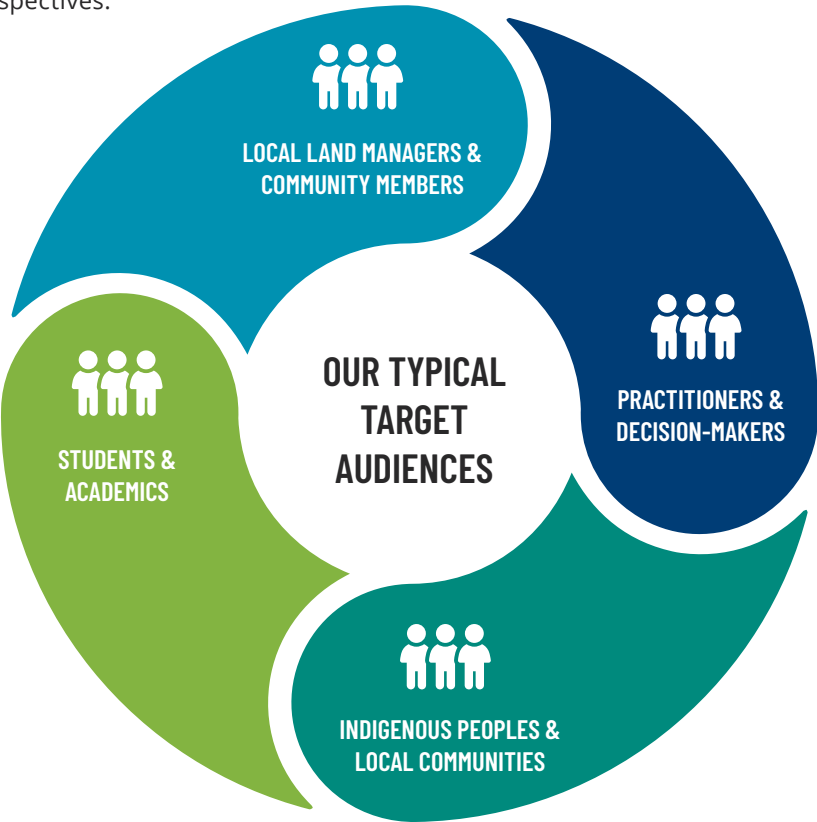
As an applied program at Yale University, we offer select field courses to Yale students and often include students outside of Yale in our broader offerings. Through these experiences, students learn directly from land managers and gain firsthand insight into our approach to co-creating and implementing conservation and restoration solutions, thereby enhancing their professional development and understanding of real-world environmental challenges. We also collaborate with Yale faculty to incorporate ELTI programs into their courses and research initiatives.

PRACTITIONERS
& DECISION-MAKERS

We collaborate with practitioners and decision-makers at multiple scales, including government and non-profit staff, to help them adopt a systems approach to their work. This target audience is often well positioned to drive and influence organizational change. We encourage participants in this group to critically examine the contexts in which they work and to identify or co-create solutions that are responsive to local socio-ecological realities, drawing on knowledge from diverse disciplines, sources, and perspectives.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES
& LOCAL COMMUNITIES

We work with Indigenous Peoples and local communities (IP&LCs) on rights-based approaches to conservation and restoration. Our support includes sharing knowledge of relevant frameworks and resources to advance their UN-recognized rights to sovereignty, strengthen efforts to defend their territories and traditional practices, co-develop strategies and interventions, and build networks that amplify their impact.



OUR THEMATIC SCOPE

ELTI’s capacity development activities are tailored to diverse audiences and fall within one or more of the following **five overarching themes**:

BELOW

TFL participants attending a field course in Brazil.



THEME 1
FOREST RESTORATION
& SUSTAINABLE LAND USE

ELTI provides diverse audiences with **scientific principles, local knowledge, and technical skills** to design and implement restoration and sustainable land use interventions tailored to specific social and ecological contexts.

Participants learn a range of strategies and land use practices, including **native species reforestation, assisted natural regeneration, silvopasture and other forms of agroforestry, biodiversity conservation, and mangrove rehabilitation**.

Many of our courses emphasize the principles of forest and landscape restoration, which focus on **regaining ecological functionality, promoting climate resilience, and enhancing human well-being** through the implementation of diverse sustainable land uses within multifunctional mosaic landscapes.

Drawing on **multiple knowledge systems and disciplinary perspectives**, we integrate theory with practical case studies to strengthen participants’ capacity to make informed land use decisions and implement selected strategies.

THEME 2
HUMAN DIMENSIONS, ENGAGEMENT,
& GOVERNANCE

ELTI supports participants in understanding the **historical and sociocultural contexts** of project sites, designing interventions that **promote local livelihoods and human well-being** and both identifying and avoiding inaccurate assumptions about the relationship between people and the natural environment that can lead to ineffective interventions.

Participants learn about **land tenure and property rights, the complex power dynamics that shape access to and control over resources, and governance systems** at both project and broader institutional scales.

They also examine **heterogeneity within households and communities** that leads to differing levels of access to resources, decision-making authority, and environmental benefits, as well as the **critical role that historical, sociocultural, political, and economic variables play in land use decision making**, underscoring the need for tailored interventions.

Additionally, we teach **theoretical considerations and practical tools for engaging with land managers and communities in an ethical and participatory manner**, including rights-based approaches and co-creation processes.

THEME 3
PROJECT DESIGN, IMPLEMENTATION,
& MONITORING

ELTI teaches a **holistic approach to project development** so that participants gain project development skills that account for historical, political, sociocultural, and ecological contexts.

Participants learn **practical tools and interdisciplinary frameworks** to evaluate social and ecological conditions and select interventions that address both the root and proximate causes of deforestation and land degradation.

Emphasizing a place-based approach to land management, we promote the **design of interventions that build on effective local and traditional practices and are ecologically appropriate**. We also provide ongoing support and leadership development to **help participants implement projects, overcome initial challenges, and promote the adoption and replication of conservation and restoration activities**.

In addition, our courses introduce **frameworks for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of strategies and interventions** and for learning from outcomes to inform adaptive management.

THEME 4
FUNDING SOURCES
& FINANCING PATHWAYS

ELTI supports diverse audiences to understand the **range of funding opportunities available for conservation and restoration**, including philanthropy, government grants, and private investment.

We strengthen the capacity of individuals and organizations to navigate emerging financial mechanisms, such as **carbon markets and biodiversity credits, as well as sustainable enterprises** that generate income from ecotourism or the sale of forest products, agricultural goods, and other ecosystem services.

Participants learn to **assess which fundraising and financing approaches best fit their context**, as well as the potential benefits and trade-offs.

We also provide mentorship and training to **enhance organizational capacity to access national and international funding** and to manage these resources effectively.

THEME 5
CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT
& KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE

ELTI guides participants in designing and **implementing their own capacity development initiatives** based on our unique approach and other proven practices.

We emphasize the importance of (1) **tailoring capacity development approaches** to the needs of intended audiences, (2) **co-creating content** with those audiences and experienced partner organizations, and (3) delivering training that is **accessible across diverse learning styles and languages**.

Participants learn **curriculum design, how to deliver immersive training, and other methods for facilitating effective knowledge exchange**.

We also strengthen the communication and training skills of land managers and other participants, enabling them to share their experiences more effectively.

Through **training-of-trainers (ToT) courses and mentorship**, we prepare participants to facilitate peer-to-peer learning, allowing effective practices to scale and replicate across landscapes.

OUR GEOGRAPHIC SCOPE & COLLABORATIVE NETWORK

Based in New Haven, Connecticut, as one of the CPIs at the Yale School of the Environment, ELTI implements place-based field programs with **local partners in selected human-dominated tropical forest landscapes across Latin America, Africa, and Southeast Asia.**

As of 2026, our field programs are active in **Panama, Brazil, Rwanda, and Indonesia** and were established in collaboration with local partners who have long-standing relationships in the area.

These partners include **universities, research institutes, non-governmental organizations, and community associations.** Our partners employ our field team members (referred to as field affiliates), who lead the development and implementation of courses and post-training support. **We strategically work with partners with strong regional relationships to ensure our place-based field programs are grounded in local contexts.** Our field affiliates often work closely with their teams and target audiences to identify capacity development needs and opportunities with people in positions to make and scale positive changes in the landscape.

In addition to our field-based work, **we maintain a global online presence** for practitioners and decision-makers around the world engaged in efforts to conserve and restore tropical forest landscapes.

We work with an **extensive network of collaborators** for these courses, often incorporating their research and applied experiences into virtual course curricula.

In many cases, our collaborators attend online live sessions to **share their work and interact directly with course participants** and mentor participants both during and after a training, especially to support the development of applied projects.

4

FIELD PROGRAMS

40+

GLOBAL PARTNERS

100+

EXPERT SPEAKERS IN THE
TFL CERTIFICATE PROGRAM

As of July 2025

BELOW

Landscape visited during a field course in Colombia.



LEARN MORE ABOUT
the Yale School of
the Environment at
environment.yale.edu

ELTI & YALE

ELTI maintains a vibrant and synergistic relationship with the Yale School of the Environment (YSE) and Yale University more broadly that significantly enhances our programs while enriching the academic, professional, and experiential learning opportunities available to Yale's faculty, students, and alumni. This partnership is multifaceted and mutually reinforcing, encompassing the following areas:

FACULTY & ALUMNI CONTRIBUTIONS

Faculty and alumni contribute as lead instructors and guest experts in ELTI's field, online, and blended courses and provide mentorship for applied projects. Many faculty members note that teaching and mentoring ELTI participants is especially rewarding because it allows their research and expertise to be applied directly to real-world conservation and restoration challenges. Several faculty are also conducting research in ELTI's field sites, the results of which strengthen the scientific foundation of ELTI's programs.

STUDENT RESEARCH

Funded primarily by YSE's Tropical Resources Institute (TRI), YSE students conduct research on social and ecological themes within our training landscapes. Our field teams collaborate closely with students to support research design and implementation and frequently integrate research findings into course curricula.

ELTI STUDENT FELLOWS

During the academic year, YSE students work as ELTI fellows, contributing to various programmatic activities, including curriculum development, support for online short courses and the TFL certificate program, and the enhancement of open-access resources and opportunities. These opportunities provide YSE students with invaluable connections to practitioners in their field and professional development experiences that help prepare them for the next stage of their careers.





AT LEFT, TOP TO BOTTOM

YSE master's student conducting summer research in ELTI's Panama training landscape.

YSE students in Dr. Garen's spring YSE-ELTI seminar during a field course in ELTI's Panama training landscape.



138

STUDENTS HAVE WORKED AS ELTI FELLOWS

106

STUDENTS HAVE TAKEN ELTI'S YALE SEMINAR

59

STUDENTS HAVE TAKEN AN ELTI FIELD COURSE

15

STUDENTS HAVE CONDUCTED RESEARCH IN ELTI TRAINING LANDSCAPES

As of July 2025

CROSS PROGRAM COLLABORATIONS

In addition to working closely with YSE faculty, we collaborate with other CPIs at YSE and centers across Yale. We have a longstanding partnership with the Poorvu Center for Teaching and Learning, which has supported the TFL certificate program and other online learning initiatives. We also partner with TRI to support YSE students conducting research through our programs. More recently, we have partnered with the Yale Center for Natural Carbon Capture (YCNCC), the Yale Center for Environmental Justice, and the Yale Applied Science Synthesis Program on a range of programs and events.

RECRUITING YSE MASTER'S STUDENTS

The TFL certificate program has emerged as an effective pathway for recruiting students into YSE's master's program. As of 2026, 12 past participants of the TFL certificate program have enrolled as full time YSE master's students.

Together, this partnership strengthens both YSE and ELTI, advancing shared goals in education, research, and practice while fostering meaningful contributions to the field of capacity development.

POSTGRADUATE FELLOWSHIPS

YSE alumni can work as postgraduate fellows for up to two years, gaining professional experience in capacity development. Notable projects have included assessing training needs and building partnerships for a new field program in Rwanda and developing an interactive online platform to support an ELTI-wide community of practice.

GRADUATE SEMINARS

Students can enroll in a graduate seminar taught by ELTI's director that focuses on engaging land managers in conserving and restoring tropical forest landscapes. The course draws on the experiences of ELTI field teams and global partners and includes a weeklong immersive experience in an ELTI training landscape, as well as a final project conducted with TFL certificate program participants.

CONFERENCES, WORKSHOPS, & SYMPOSIA

ELTI organizes, sponsors, and participates in events at YSE involving faculty, students, and staff, including curriculum development workshops and symposia on ELTI themes such as native species restoration. ELTI also supports and engages in the annual student-run conference of the International Society of Tropical Foresters (ISTF).

"The ELTI graduate seminar provided me with a strong theoretical foundation in engaging local communities in conservation as well as strategies for engagement. The accompanying field course demonstrated how community members become genuine agents of change and leaders in the conservation of tropical ecosystems." JORGE FORERO FAJARDO, '25 MEM



3

MISSION, VISION, GUIDING PRINCIPLES, & VALUES

AT LEFT

View from an ELTI
training course
in the Philippines.

ELTI's 2026–2036 organizational strategy serves as a foundational guide for strategic decision making and promotes adaptive management. It provides the framework ELTI teams will use to design, implement, and operationalize their respective work-plans in collaboration with partners. Our mission, vision, guiding principles, and values guide this work.

SUPPORTING PEOPLE TO ACHIEVE A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

Since ELTI's founding in 2006, we have consistently focused on capacity development in tropical forest landscapes around the world. ELTI's updated vision and mission represents two decades of organizational learning and embodies our new organizational strategy while staying true to our roots.



Environmental
Leadership &
Training Initiative

VISION

ELTI envisions a world in which people steward tropical forest landscapes in ways that effectively sustain biodiversity, strengthen climate resilience, and support thriving livelihoods.

MISSION

ELTI supports people from diverse sectors and backgrounds to conserve and restore tropical forest landscapes, combining knowledge and applied experiences from many sources, perspectives, and disciplines.

BELOW

A view from ELTI's training landscape in Brazil.

OUR VALUE PROPOSITION

ELTI is a unique capacity development program dedicated to the conservation and restoration of human-dominated tropical forest landscapes. By combining curated content that bridges knowledge from diverse disciplines, perspectives, and sources with sustained post-training support, we help participants apply and share their learning in real-world contexts.

Recognizing the crucial connection between healthy ecosystems, climate change resilience, sustainable livelihoods, and human well-being, **ELTI offers a tailored approach that strengthens the knowledge and skills of participants to enhance ecosystem services and promote long-term resilience.**

We recognize the need for a systems thinking framework that supports **adaptable, localized, and place-based approaches applicable across a range of scales and contexts.** By collaborating closely with local partners and nurturing a dynamic network of past participants, we share innovative approaches and practical solutions while continuing to support and learn from our past participants.

While our work spans different continents and reaches global audiences, our approaches are adaptable and can be tailored to resonate across geographies and socio-ecological contexts.

As part of YSE, we leverage the institution's strong culture of innovation and scientific inquiry, offering flexible, responsive learning experiences that encourage participants to think creatively and act effectively in the face of complex environmental worldwide challenges.

As one of the few programs worldwide focused exclusively on capacity development in tropical forest landscapes, **we enhance the ability of landholders, practitioners, and decision-makers to design, implement, and influence effective and achievable solutions to reduce deforestation and land degradation.** This approach has earned ELTI recognition as a trusted partner with a collaborative global network focused on the tropics.

"ELTI's program not only provided valuable knowledge but also boosted my confidence. Learning from the outstanding faculties and a strong network of professionals helped me discover my strengths and refine my approach."

MD. EHSANUL HOQUE, ELTI PAST PARTICIPANT

OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES

ELTI’s eight guiding principles reflect two decades of adaptive experience and learning. They serve as the foundation for how we make decisions, collaborate, and ultimately achieve our mission.

1	Addressing the complex sociocultural and ecological challenges of deforestation and land degradation in tropical forest landscapes requires innovative, context-specific, and achievable solutions.
2	Sustainable and scientifically informed land management strategies must be rooted in the social, cultural, and ecological contexts of each landscape while remaining practical and achievable for landholders and land managers.
3	Developing capacity for sustainable land management is a long-term process involving a series of targeted training opportunities complemented by ongoing support to help individuals effectively apply and share the knowledge they have gained.
4	Access to knowledge, resources, and networks informed by diverse knowledge systems, disciplines, and worldviews is essential for those who manage, govern, and depend on tropical forest landscapes to make informed and sustainable decisions.
5	Capacity development for conservation and restoration is most effective when it is place based and experiential, connecting theory to practice and drawing on local knowledge through hands-on learning and mutual learning with peers.
6	Bridging the knowledge-to-action gap is achieved by ensuring mechanisms are in place to translate knowledge into concrete, applied interventions that lead to measurable outcomes for people and the environment.
7	Scaling sustainable practices is particularly effective when individuals learn directly from experienced peers, creating authentic and relatable learning experiences.
8	Effective tropical forest conservation requires attention both to intact forests and to human-dominated landscapes, which contain much of the world’s remaining biodiversity while also supporting the livelihoods of millions of people.

OUR CORE VALUES

Based upon 20 years of program experience, we identified eight core values that frame our work.

 INNOVATION We foster creativity and embrace new ideas, drawing inspiration from the past and proven practices, to shape innovative, practical solutions for the future.	 LEADERSHIP We aim to inspire, motivate, and strengthen the capacities of individuals to be responsible stewards of the land, encouraging them to share their vision, knowledge, and experience.
 INCLUSIVITY We value diverse perspectives, worldviews, and knowledge systems and foster learning environments to ensure that diverse individuals are respected and able to participate fully.	 SUSTAINABILITY We promote solutions that not only address immediate environmental problems but also support the long-term resilience of ecosystems, livelihoods, and cultures, recognizing the interconnectedness of these entities.
 ADAPTABILITY We view capacity development as a dynamic process, responsive to evolving ecological and sociocultural contexts and the changing needs of landholders, practitioners, and decision-makers.	 INTEGRATION We recognize that people are part of nature and strive to strengthen this connection across all aspects of our work.
 AGENCY We support individuals — whether acting independently, within communities, or as part of organizations — to acquire and advance the knowledge, skill sets, and networks to create lasting change.	 RESPECT We honor all people, cultures, and the natural world, fostering trust-based relationships, humility, and mutual understanding while committing to integrity, care, and respectful dialogue and collaboration.



4

OUR APPROACH TO CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

AT LEFT, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT

Howler monkey in the Panama training landscape.

ELTI field course in the Philippines.

ELTI participants preparing soil for tree planting.

A landscape during an ELTI field course in the Philippines.

Members of ELTI's online team.

YSE students and ELTI team members visiting a model farm in ELTI's Panama training landscape

ELTI was launched to address a significant gap in conservation training for environmental professionals in the tropics.

At that time of ELTI's founding in 2006, most training programs focused on enhancing the management of parks and protected areas, which remains a vital need to this day.

However, there was a notable deficiency in training focused on conserving and restoring biodiversity and natural resources in regions outside these protected areas. These regions, often referred to as **human-dominated tropical forest landscapes, are home to much of the world's biodiversity and support the livelihoods of millions, including IP&LCs.**

ELTI was established to fill this gap by developing the capacities of land managers, practitioners, decision-makers, and others who directly manage or influence these vital and complex landscapes to design, implement, and monitor context-appropriate strategies and interventions.

OUR UNIQUE APPROACH

Given the complexities of human-dominated tropical forest landscapes, ELTI’s approach needed to go beyond one-off training events. For us, capacity development is a process through which individuals and organizations gain knowledge and skills to strengthen their ability to define problems, set goals, implement projects and programs, and achieve sustainable results over time. While our capacity development model includes training components, it has evolved into a comprehensive and adaptive model that includes the following **six key elements**:



LEARN MORE ABOUT
ELTI’s principles of
capacity development
at tinyurl.com/ELTIvideo



AT RIGHT
ELTI participants
learning about crops
produced by a
farmer in Colombia.

ELEMENT 1
FRAMEWORKS & METHODS FOR NAVIGATING COMPLEXITY

To effectively identify problems and develop solutions in human-dominated tropical forest landscapes, **individuals must understand the socio-ecological, political, and institutional dynamics specific to their areas of focus.**

Many conservation and restoration strategies in these contexts rely on technical or market-based solutions to address complex challenges yet often fail to reflect local contexts or grapple with their full social and ecological dimensions. **This disconnect can lead to unsuccessful projects that worsen the very problems they aim to solve,** causing harm to people living in these landscapes — particularly marginalized individuals and communities.

ELTI’s training programs **support participants in adopting a comprehensive and holistic view of their areas of focus,** considering both ecological opportunities and limitations and the sociocultural, political, and institutional dynamics that influence how land and natural resources are managed.

This approach helps to ensure that strategies and interventions are grounded in local contexts through an authentic **co-creation process rather than being imposed externally.**



AT LEFT
Participants during
an ELTI field course
in Indonesia.

ELEMENT 2
KNOWLEDGE FROM DIVERSE
SOURCES & PERSPECTIVES

Identifying effective strategies and solutions requires connecting knowledge and practical experience from a wide range of sources and perspectives, including scientific knowledge across disciplines, traditional ecological knowledge (TEK), and the wisdom and cultural practices of IP&LCs.

ELTI’s training content **encompasses relevant scientific knowledge from the natural and social sciences,** such as ecological information about soil health, silviculture, plant and animal biodiversity, and hydrology, as well as sociocultural and institutional knowledge about statutory and customary tenure and property rights related to land and natural resources, community and household heterogeneity, and power dynamics.

Additionally, our content **includes TEK and other forms of knowledge and tangible case studies** that demonstrate how individuals experiment with different interventions in various contexts and the outcomes of these endeavors.

Given the diverse content included in ELTI’s training events, **instructors often include IP&LC members and scientists and practitioners from Yale, ELTI, and partner organizations.**



YALE-MYERS FOREST

ELTI's field programs in the tropics draw on the Yale-Myers model, applying place-based, experiential learning to connect scientific and local knowledge and explore context-appropriate sustainable land management with local land managers.

Yale-Myers Forest — the largest of the Yale Forests at 7,840 acres (3,213 hectares) — is located in northeastern Connecticut and serves as the central teaching and research forest for The Forest School at YSE.

With a Forest Stewardship Council-certified harvesting operation, the forest provides YSE master's students with hands-on experience in timber harvesting. It also includes interpretive trails and demonstration sites where students engage in immersive learning on themes including forest ecology and succession, agroforestry, and sugar maple production, often as part of their course curricula.

In addition, The Forest School leads the Quiet Corner Initiative, an outreach program that connects YSE students and faculty with local landholders to apply cutting-edge science and management practices, including adaptive land management and appropriate economic development in rural communities, to land use planning and conservation.

ABOVE

A field visit with ELTI guests at the Yale-Myers Forest.

ELEMENT 3 PLACE-BASED, EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

While having access to theoretical and practical knowledge from many sources and perspectives is essential for identifying problems and generating appropriate solutions, **it is equally important to understand how to apply this knowledge to the specific context of a site.**

We accomplish this goal by **engaging participants directly** in local environments and contexts, **emphasizing hands-on, real-world experiences** to facilitate learning. Based on the place-based, experiential teaching model of Yale Forests, ELTI's training programs develop participants' capacities by **situating their learning process in the socio-ecological, political, and institutional complexities of landscapes.**

Participants first learn theoretical concepts through formal lectures, which are followed by real-world experiences that demonstrate the application of these concepts. **This approach enables dynamic, highly interactive learning experiences** in which participants can observe, practice techniques, and interact with those actively experimenting with interventions.



**LEARN MORE ABOUT
The Forest School at
the Yale School of
the Environment at
[environment.yale.edu/
forest-school](https://environment.yale.edu/forest-school)**

ELEMENT 4 TAILORED SUPPORT FOR APPLYING & SHARING KNOWLEDGE

In many cases, ELTI's participants are motivated to apply and share the knowledge they have acquired during an ELTI course, a process we facilitate by **providing specialized support both during and after training.**

During courses, ELTI instructors help participants **apply theoretical and technical concepts to their own projects or circumstances**, which vary depending on context and goals. **Participants often integrate their traditional knowledge and practices with course concepts** and receive feedback from instructors and peers.

After completing a course, participants may receive continued support from ELTI team members and local partners to further develop and implement their projects, and **many remain connected with fellow participants for ongoing mentorship, guidance, and inspiration.**

Participants who successfully advance their projects often become instructors in future ELTI courses or share their experiences informally with others in their landscapes. In addition, participants may receive support to share the knowledge they have gained with their communities or organizations, frequently **organizing their own trainings and courses** using ELTI's content and training landscapes.

ELEMENT 5 TRAINING DESIGNED TO SCALE KNOWLEDGE & RESULTS

Since ELTI's training programs can reach only a finite number of people, **we also formally train participants to teach others about our approach and content**, thereby scaling knowledge and results.

This process includes training people on how to navigate socio-ecological complexities, effectively apply interdisciplinary theory and traditional knowledge to design and implement appropriate strategies and interventions, and teach others to do the same. **Participants who receive this training can go on to hold their own courses and training events**, either independently or with our support.

This approach has a **multiplier effect**, whereby individuals trained by ELTI past participants often will subsequently apply and share what they have learned with many others.

In many instances, participants continue to interact with their training cohort or with the people they trained, fostering ongoing peer learning and the exchange of best practices and other guidance, which also supports the scaling process.

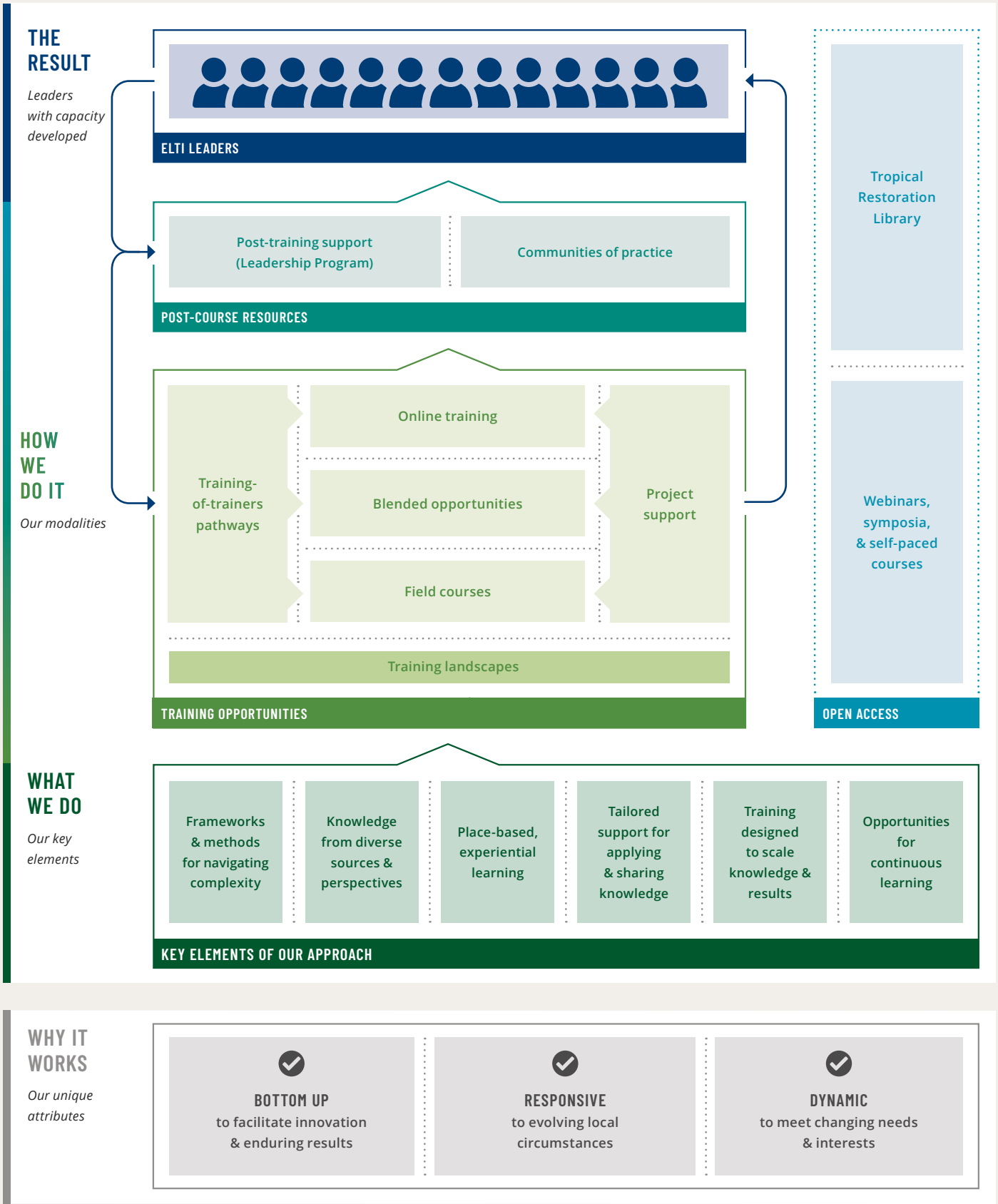
ELEMENT 6 OPPORTUNITIES FOR CONTINUOUS LEARNING

Human-dominated tropical forest landscapes are always in flux, with constantly changing socio-ecological, political, and institutional circumstances, a situation that can be especially pronounced with changing climatic conditions.

Effective conservation and restoration efforts in these landscapes require continuous assessment and adaptation to account for dynamic local realities. ELTI recognizes that training focused on these contexts must be **an adaptive and responsive process**, which may involve training the same individuals multiple times on various themes or training new individuals as needs arise. From this perspective, capacity development is an ongoing and evolving process that necessitates long-term investments to train on several themes and meet changing needs.

While most capacity development initiatives consist of one-off events added at the end of projects to disseminate results, **ELTI was designed to counter this limited approach by making long-term commitments in landscapes** and supporting participants at different stages in the design, implementation, and monitoring of strategies and interventions.

OUR CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT MODEL



EXAMPLES OF CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT PATHWAYS

Each participant can have a unique experience with ELTI's training and leadership programs. The following examples of our capacity development pathways illustrate this diversity and demonstrate ELTI's approach.

A TRADITIONAL LAND MANAGER in Panama inherits her family's cattle ranch and attends an ELTI field course to learn on-farm, tree-based solutions that improve the sustainability of cattle ranching amid increasingly intense dry seasons. She takes a second ELTI field course on silvopastoral systems, learning from land managers already using these practices. She receives post-training support through the Leadership Program to establish a landholder association, secure international funding to develop model farms, and manage her new silvopastoral systems. She later shares her experiences with national and international visitors, including as an ELTI instructor.

A TEAM OF GOVERNMENT LAND MANAGERS in Indonesia overseeing a forest management unit, possibly with a coal mine, oil palm plantation, or hydroelectric plant, takes an ELTI field course on forest restoration techniques like assisted natural regeneration and native species planting. They share this knowledge with their team, improving rehabilitation plans that help bring them into regulatory compliance and enable them to meet voluntary carbon certification commitments. Through ELTI's Leadership Program, they organize training programs to teach similar restoration approaches and techniques to managers from other government units and private companies.

A PRACTITIONER working for an international NGO focused on biodiversity and traditional livelihoods enrolls in ELTI's Tropical Forest Landscapes (TFL) certificate program to enhance her portfolio of FLR projects in East Africa. The program develops her skills in addressing land tenure challenges, selecting on-farm restoration strategies tailored to local socio-ecological contexts, and exploring private sector funding opportunities. The following year, she attends an optional ELTI field course in Brazil, joins ELTI's networking platform, and begins ELTI's project incubator program, receiving mentorship and financial support to implement her TFL capstone project.

AN INDIGENOUS LEADER from Ecuador participates in ELTI's blended program to learn rights-based conservation approaches and strategies for strengthening ancestral land rights. Online, he connects with experts and other Indigenous leaders via Yale's online learning platform, accesses materials on the Tropical Restoration Library (TRL), and joins ELTI's networking platform. He then attends the field component of the program, gaining hands-on experience with rights-based conservation. Later, he and community members apply to ELTI's Leadership Program, seeking mentorship and seed funding to launch a land restoration initiative grounded in traditional knowledge and respect for territorial rights.

OUR CAPACITY
DEVELOPMENT MODALITIES

To achieve our capacity development goals, we employ 10 primary training modalities divided into three categories: **training opportunities**, **postcourse resources**, and **open access**.

TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

Within the training opportunities category there are six modalities:

MODALITY 1 TRAINING LANDSCAPES

MODALITY 2 FIELD COURSES

MODALITY 3 ONLINE TRAINING

MODALITY 4 BLENDED OPPORTUNITIES

MODALITY 5 PROJECT SUPPORT

MODALITY 6 TRAINING-OF-TRAINERS
PATHWAYS

POSTCOURSE RESOURCES

There are two modalities associated with postcourse resources:

MODALITY 7 POST-TRAINING SUPPORT

MODALITY 8 COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

OPEN ACCESS

Finally, we offer two modalities associated with open access:

MODALITY 9 WEBINARS, SYMPOSIA,
& SELF-PACED COURSES

MODALITY 10 TROPICAL RESTORATION
LIBRARY

MODALITY 1

TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES:
TRAINING LANDSCAPES

Originally launched as a field program, ELTI identified a **network of human-dominated tropical forest landscapes** for capacity development support by establishing partnerships with organizations that have long-standing relationships in these areas.

ELTI’s field locations, referred to as **training landscapes**, were chosen to encapsulate global issues impacting biodiversity, forests, and livelihoods, offering ample **opportunities for immersive teaching and engagement** with individuals in positions to implement or influence change at different scales.

These training landscapes were also selected for their **history of scientific research, applied projects, and accessibility as well as their proximity to nearby land managers** integrating conservation and restoration strategies into their livelihood strategies.

Within these landscapes, ELTI and its partners established **interpretive trails, demonstration areas with field exercises, and peer-to-peer exchanges** to facilitate place-based, experiential learning.

While each training landscape has a unique and evolving context, as well as a tailored capacity development approach, they all typically feature a central site where most lectures and several field activities occur, connected to a network of nearby satellite sites for teaching purposes.

MODALITY 2

TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES:
FIELD COURSES

Once a training landscape is established, ELTI collaborates with local partners to design a **suite of field courses tailored to the site’s socio-ecological, political, and institutional particularities**.

The curriculum teaches participants how to navigate the complexities of their sites and identify effective strategies and interventions by drawing upon relevant theoretical knowledge, TEK, and the applied experience of nearby land managers, many of whom are implementing what they learned during an ELTI course.

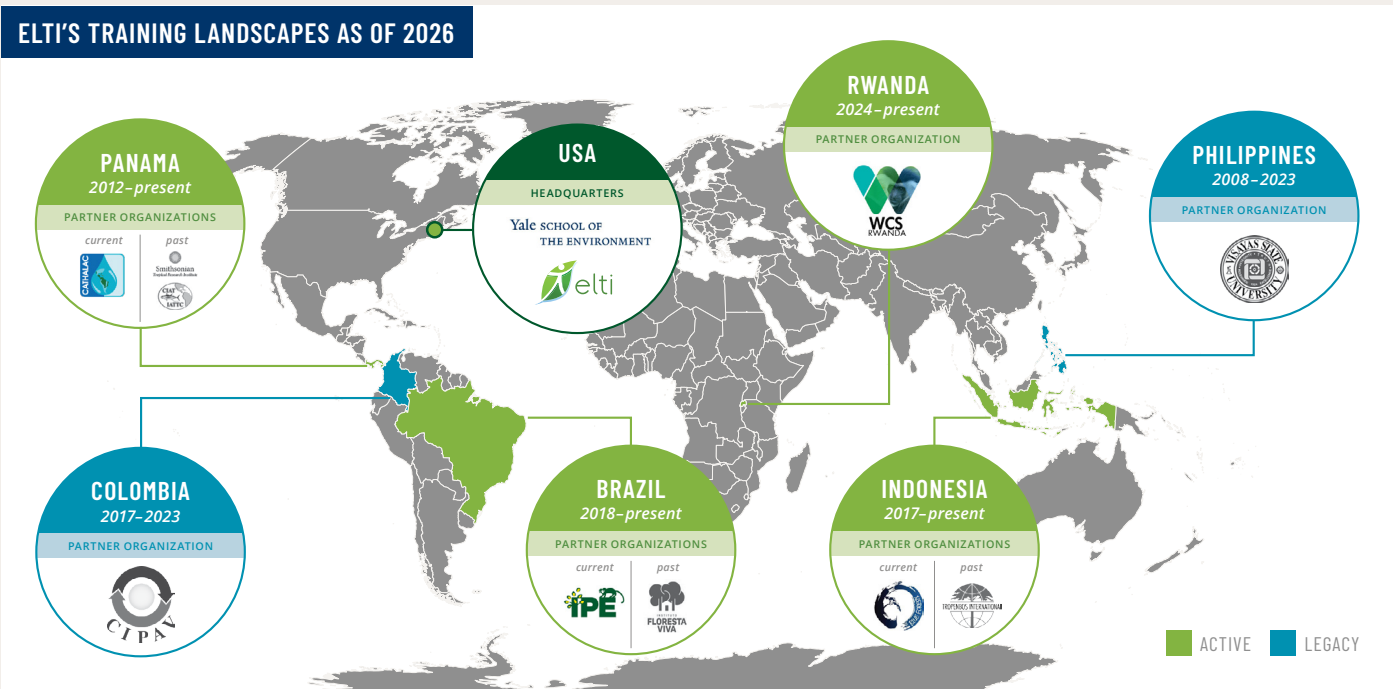
These field courses are **dynamic and highly interactive**, taught in collaboration with local partners and in national languages. Courses combine the use of **formal lectures, field guides, hands-on field components, and exchanges with land managers** to provide a comprehensive and relatable understanding of the concepts.

“ELTI’s field courses are organized around the components of the training landscape so that participants learn in a participatory and relatable manner, often from ELTI past participants.”

JACOB SLUSSER,
ELTI’S GLOBAL TRAINING LANDSCAPE MANAGER

OUR TRAINING LANDSCAPE NETWORK

We partner with local organizations in select human-dominated tropical forest landscapes, including four active training landscapes in Panama, Brazil, Rwanda, and Indonesia and two legacy training landscapes in Colombia and the Philippines.



AT RIGHT

ELTI’s interpretive trail in the Achotines Forest Reserve, part of the training landscape in Panama’s Azuero Peninsula.

MODALITY 3

TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES:
ONLINE TRAINING

To significantly increase the geographic reach of ELTI's training, **the team launched an online program in 2013** that pioneered a highly interactive virtual learning experience.

Hosted on Yale's online learning platform **in multiple languages**, the online courses apply the place-based, immersive pedagogy of ELTI's training landscapes to a virtual format. Through **recorded lectures, assigned readings, and live sessions** with course instructors, the online courses incorporate fundamental concepts and applied case studies from a wide variety of contributors, including Yale faculty members, ELTI partners, land and project managers, and other experts around the world. Participants also engage with peers and instructors through **online discussion boards, assignment feedback, and live sessions**.

Our online courses are designed for working professionals, offered as individual five-to-eight-week courses or as an intensive 10-month certificate program that includes multiple courses and an intensive project development component.

While ELTI's field courses often attract participants living in proximity to the training landscapes, the **online courses integrate diverse participants from around the globe into a single course**.

MODALITY 4

TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES:
BLENDED OPPORTUNITIES

ELTI also offers a suite of **blended training opportunities that combine field and online components into a single course**.

This approach was first introduced to provide participants with foundational training on relevant theoretical concepts in an online format prior to the start of a field course. This blended approach **ensured that all participants arrived at the field training with the same foundational knowledge**, allowing more time for immersive field experiences.

Since then, **our blended courses have taken different forms**, including an initial five-day field course followed by an intensive multiweek online course to support the development of the training plan introduced during the field component, or an initial online component followed by an intensive field course and another online component.

The intensive 10-month online certificate program also includes an optional field component where **participants from around the world come together to learn the pedagogy and content of one of ELTI's training landscapes**, experiencing hands-on peer-to-peer learning and mentorship.

"Although our online participants come from many different countries, ELTI is still able to strengthen their knowledge and skills for place-based land management to guide them in evaluating which strategies are most appropriate for the specific contexts in which they work."

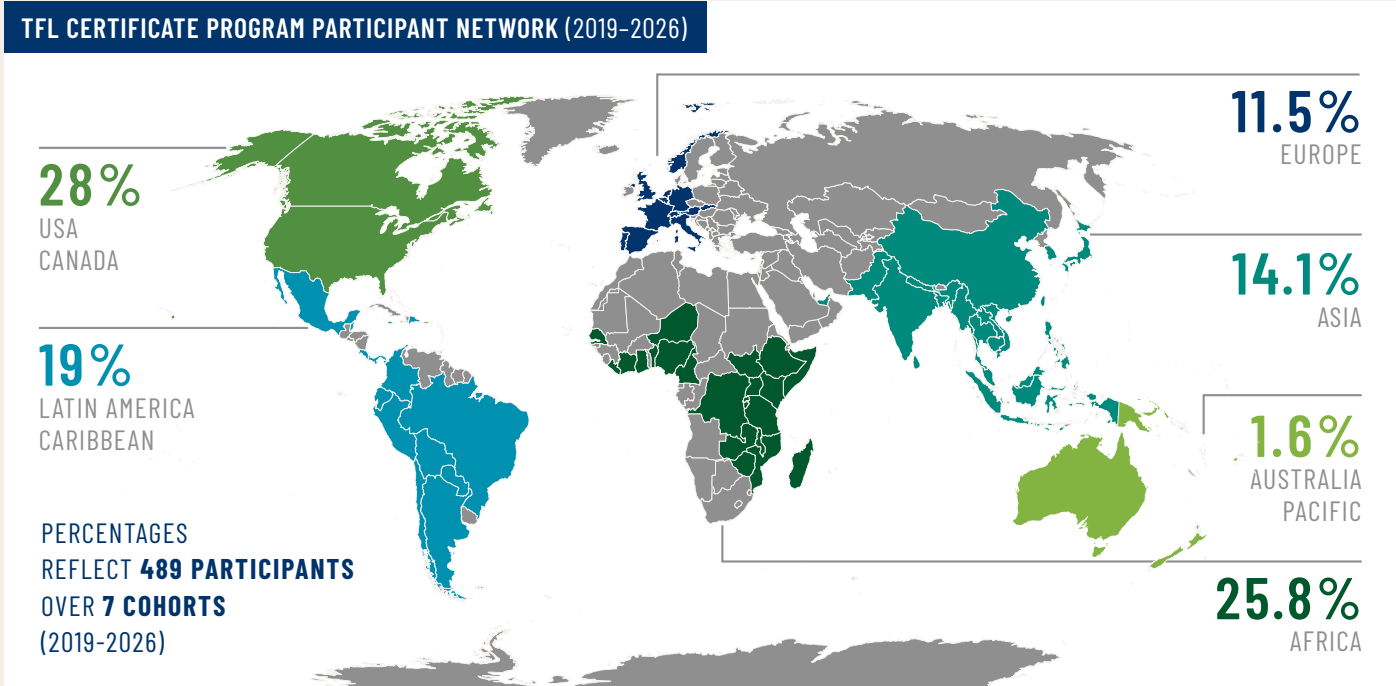
GILLIAN BLOOMFIELD,
ELTI'S ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR
OF ONLINE PROGRAMS



LEARN MORE ABOUT
the TFL Certificate
Program at
[environment.yale.edu/
certificates/tropical](https://environment.yale.edu/certificates/tropical)

OUR GLOBAL REACH

Our online training significantly expanded our geographic reach. Through the TFL certificate program, we reached 489 participants from around the world between 2019 and 2026.



AT RIGHT

A live session with TFL certificate participants, YSE faculty, and ELTI team members.

MODALITY 5

TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES:
PROJECT SUPPORT

Whether participants take an ELTI field, online, or blended course, we often include **tailored support to help participants develop their own projects** and adapt theoretical and other content to their areas of interest.

This applied project component can involve **specific steps to develop a project**, which instructors facilitate either throughout the training or during a separate project development segment.

Project development can be **conducted individually or in groups** and often involves expert guidance from instructors and peer feedback.

While **we design most field, online, and blended short courses to integrate project development activities throughout the training**, we sometimes design online courses with fewer required assignments with the option to develop a project proposal with instructor feedback. In contrast, the 10-month online certificate program requires participants to develop a capstone project that they develop throughout the program.

MODALITY 6

TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES:
TRAINING-OF-TRAINERS PATHWAYS

Seeing the potential and interest among past participants to scale knowledge, **ELTI has developed two ToT pathways** connected to the training landscapes, one offered as a field-based experience and the other a blended opportunity.

The first pathway, part of the field-based curriculum, involves training participants on context-appropriate strategies to integrate trees and forest cover into livelihood practices and then **how to teach others** to the same. **These ToT participants work either independently or with Leadership Program support** to establish new systems on the land they manage and then bring people to their site to learn how to adopt these new practices.

The second ToT pathway, offered as a blended experience, brings participants from a particular region to one of our training landscapes to **teach them how we established the site and trained individuals** through immersive field courses. The ToT participants then continue the program as an intensive online course in which they work together with instructors' guidance to develop their own training plan tailored to the particularities of their landscape. This approach embeds post-training support throughout the process to aid in establishing the training landscape and teaching their first field course.

“Through the capstone assignment, I was able to see my community from a new angle, full of potential and opportunities for the livelihoods of its members and beyond.”

METOLO FOYET,
ELTI PAST PARTICIPANT

BELOW

Participants during an ELTI field course in the Philippines.



16

TRAINING-OF-TRAINER
COURSES

293

ACTIVE USERS ENROLLED
IN ELTI'S NETWORKING
PLATFORMS

As of July 2025

MODALITY 7

POSTCOURSE RESOURCES:
POST-TRAINING SUPPORT

Participants who complete an ELTI course are eligible to participate in the **Leadership Program**, which primarily supports project implementation by providing technical support and mentorship from ELTI team members and partners and seed funding in the form of small grants.

To date, most Leadership Program assistance has been provided to past participants of field courses seeking **support to implement the projects they initiated or designed during the training**.

These projects often **generate tangible, positive results in the landscape**, demonstrating how ELTI's capacity development model contributes to positive social and environmental change.

With new donor support, **ELTI will launch a project incubator initiative in 2026** for past participants of the 10-month online certificate program, allowing them to further develop and implement aspects of their capstone projects.

This initiative will be the **first time ELTI is offering such extensive Leadership Program support to past participants of an online course**, which is expected to yield tangible results across the global tropics.

MODALITY 8

POSTCOURSE RESOURCES:
COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

Once participants complete an ELTI course, many choose to stay connected with their new network. These **communities of practice serve as avenues for ongoing peer guidance and support** beyond formal training sessions, as well as for the sharing of news and opportunities.

While they mostly have occurred informally through WhatsApp groups and other communication platforms, ELTI past participants have also **successfully arranged to meet each other in person**, with and without ELTI's support.

Additionally, we are piloting an **interactive community networking platform** with selected past participants of the 10-month certificate program.

For ELTI, this platform has the potential to be a **powerful scaling tool**, enabling our participants from all ELTI field and online courses, along with guest experts, to interact with each other and spread innovation and learning long after the formal training ends.

MODALITY 9

OPEN ACCESS:
WEBINARS, SYMPOSIA,
& SELF-PACED COURSES

Since many people cannot attend ELTI's courses, we developed a **self-paced abbreviated version of the 10-month certificate program** in English, will be available for free on ELTI's open-access YouTube channel and currently available for a small fee on Yale's Coursera platform.

This course has **enabled thousands of individuals to learn about ELTI's content and approach** and has inspired us to offer this course in other languages and develop additional self-paced courses on other themes.

The team also regularly hosts **webinars and symposia** on various sustainable land management themes, often in multiple languages, that are open to the public. The webinars have **reached thousands of individuals**, and the recordings are posted on the ELTI website, **available to all viewers at no cost**. Our symposia, which can often be attended in person or virtually, are an effective way to connect past participants, practitioners, and other interested parties in the field or at Yale.



LEARN MORE ABOUT
about our self-paced
Coursera course
at coursera.org/learn/tropicalforests101

MODALITY 10

OPEN ACCESS:
TROPICAL RESTORATION LIBRARY

To support all of ELTI's training and post-training processes, we developed the **Tropical Restoration Library (TRL)**, a curated online database that includes peer-reviewed articles and other publications from the natural and social sciences, training guides, case studies, and other materials related to the conservation and restoration of human-dominated tropical forest landscapes.

The content is categorized by country, ecosystem, species, theme, and geographic region and is searchable with custom keywords and filters.

The TRL is **freely available to the public** and includes open-access publications that can be downloaded at no cost. Each resource includes a summary of its content, and **many are available in multiple languages**, including Spanish, Portuguese, and French.

We are **regularly adding new resources** to the site to support the emerging training needs of our audiences.

1,479

PEOPLE COMPLETED
ELTI'S TROPICAL FORESTS
COURSERA COURSE

17,748

PEOPLE ENROLLED IN
ELTI OPEN-ACCESS EVENTS

As of July 2025

BELOW

Panama past
participant speaking
during an ELTI field
course.



CAPACITY IS
BEING DEVELOPED MUTUALLY,
BOTH ON THE PART OF
THE FARMERS & LAND OWNERS,
& ON THE PART OF ELTI.
IT'S A TWO WAY STREET.

MICHAEL DOVE

MARGARET K. MUSSER PROFESSOR OF SOCIAL ECOLOGY,
ELTI FACULTY ADVISOR & STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBER



5

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

AT LEFT
Reforestation training
sites in ELTI's legacy
training landscapes in
the Philippines.

ELTI's approach and programs have unfolded over four core phases, marked by major milestones and core donor support. Each phase has posed unique challenges and resulted in multiple successes. As we look toward ELTI's next core phase, we take a step back to see how far ELTI has come.

1

PHASE 1

(2006–2012)

PROGRAM LAUNCH & FOUNDATION

ELTI launched its field-based capacity development model in the Neotropics and Southeast Asia in collaboration with two institutional partners, the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute in Panama, where our director’s office was located, and the National University of Singapore. Our key initial activities included field courses, symposia, and global conferences on payments for ecosystem services, native species reforestation, agroforestry, and ecosystem threats such as biofuels production.

We initiated a ToT series in the Philippines with a new field partner and piloted the Leadership Program to support past participants in applying and sharing the knowledge they acquired and meeting their professional development needs. We also developed the first version of the TRL to provide open access to relevant resources.

By the end of Phase 1, we had firmly established ourselves as a pioneering capacity development program focused on tropical forest landscapes, completing 51 events, training 1,944 individuals, and supporting 83 past course participants.

Funding: Arcadia was ELTI’s sole donor during the Phase 1 period.

2

PHASE 2

(2012–2017)

APPLICATION & INNOVATION

ELTI relocated our director’s office to YSE, established regional partnerships in Panama, Colombia, Brazil, the Philippines, and Indonesia, and introduced the training landscapes model.

We launched a global online training program and expanded our ToT approach to Panama. ELTI organized program activities around the central theme of forest landscape restoration (FLR) and began profiling successful past participants through Leaders in Action stories.

We also expanded the TRL, initiated student engagement opportunities at YSE, and established initial monitoring and evaluation indicators.

By the end of Phase 2, ELTI had become globally recognized as a leader in capacity development, completing an additional 57 training events, reaching 1,522 individuals — 365 of whom completed ToT courses — and supporting an additional 75 ELTI past participants through the Leadership Program.

Funding: Arcadia remained our primary donor, but ELTI secured its first non-Arcadia funding award during this period.

3

PHASE 3

(2017–2023)

EXPANSION & ACCELERATION

ELTI significantly expanded ELTI’s reach and scope by developing five training landscapes with partners, where our teams implemented 15 signature courses in national languages. Our ToT programs began to demonstrate how ELTI’s approach can effectively scale results. The Leadership Program supported an additional 226 applied projects.

The online program, including the new Tropical Forest Landscapes (TFL) certificate program, gained global attention. During its first three years, the TFL certificate program enrolled 193 practitioners from 53 countries and 136 organizations, with practitioners from the Global South receiving substantial scholarship support. Additionally, the online program partnered with the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ) to offer ELTI’s first online and blended courses for participants in tropical Africa.

By the end of Phase 3, we had trained an additional 3,250 people through field and online courses and engaged over 6,000 more via webinars during the COVID-19 pandemic. The team also developed an initial set of tracking indicators, expanded opportunities with YSE students, and progressed with open access initiatives.

Funding: With continued Arcadia support, we raised an additional USD \$7.5 million from various sources, including international organizations, tuition fees, and donor gifts to Yale, including ELTI’s gift from YCNCC.

4

PHASE 4

(2023–2027)

ENDURANCE & IMPACT

ELTI is focusing on strategic growth by commissioning a program evaluation, resulting in this new 10-year organizational strategy with a results chain-based theory of change (ToC) and corresponding MEL framework.

While we concluded our partnerships in Colombia and the Philippines, we launched our first Africa training landscape in Rwanda. Additionally, the online team excelled with new courses and the TFL certificate, earning two distinguished Yale awards.

The ToT portfolio expanded, with our team now training other organizations on our content and pedagogy, paving the way for a global capacity development course.

The Leadership Program continued to support project implementation, bolstered by a new project incubator initiative for past participants of the TFL certificate.

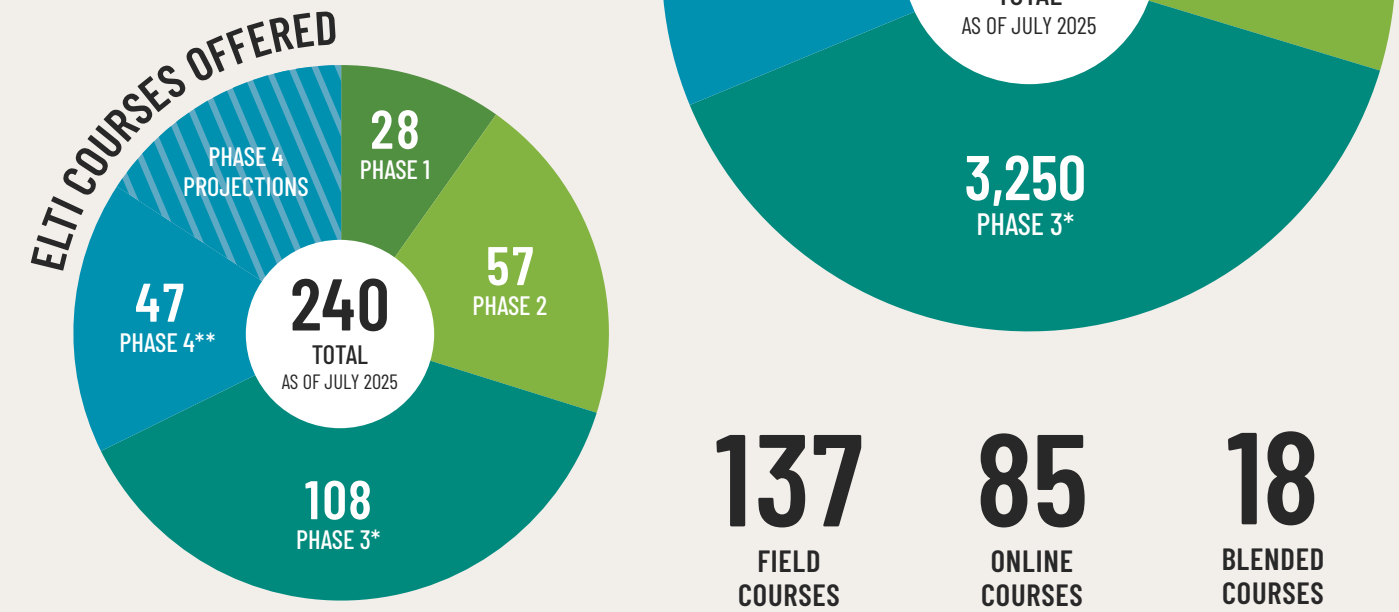
ELTI also strengthened ties with YSE through teaching, expanding the ELTI fellows program, conducting workshops with Yale faculty, and launching an initiative focused on Indigenous leaders with the Yale Center for Environmental Justice.

Funding: As Arcadia’s support concludes, we are actively seeking funds to maximize ELTI’s impact and long-term sustainability, having already raised over \$2.5 million in new funds as of 2026.

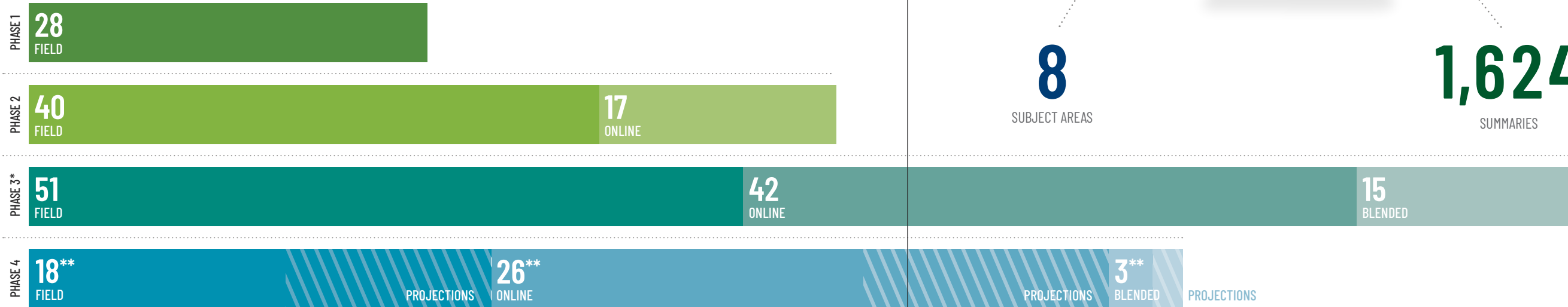
COURSE ACHIEVEMENTS

Throughout our 20 years of operation, we have been committed to making restoration and conservation strategies more accessible to those who need them most, either through courses or open-access information.

** Phase 3 was six years long rather than five years.*
*** Phase 4 numbers are as of July 2025.*

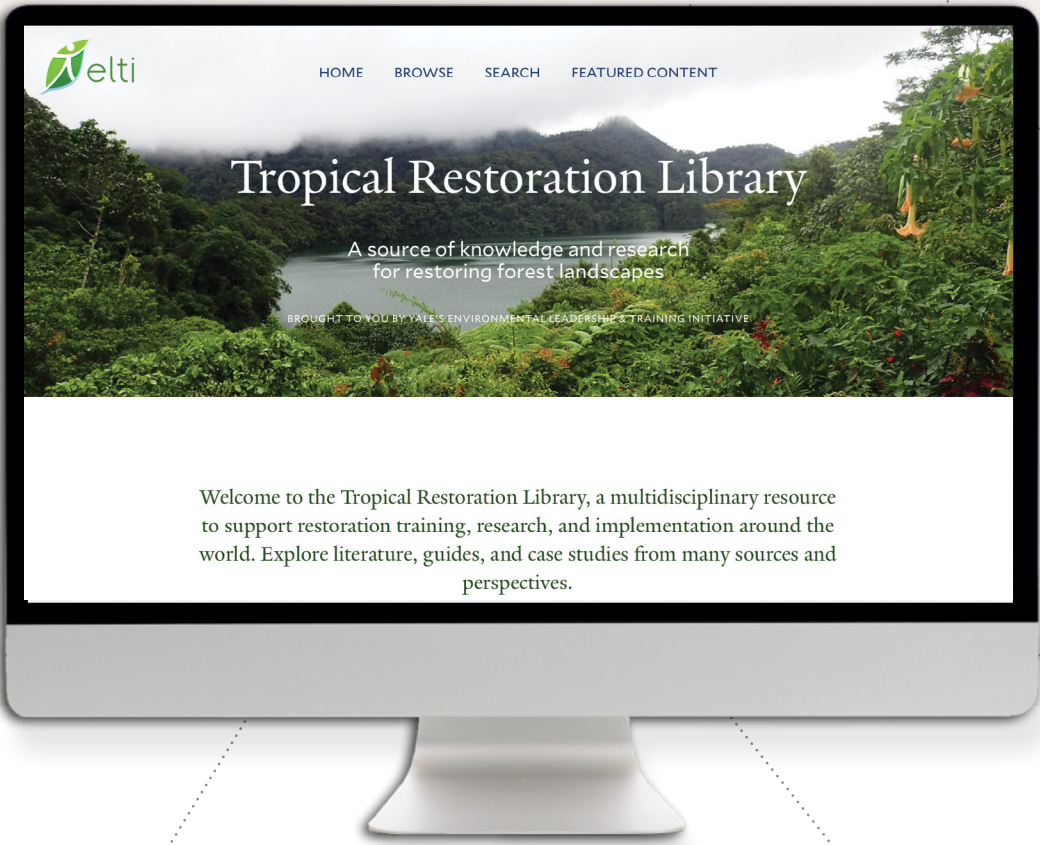


ELTI COURSES AS OF JULY 2025



TROPICAL RESTORATION LIBRARY

The TRL is a platform that showcases, summarizes, and shares restoration training, research, and case studies from around the world.



74
COUNTRIES REPRESENTED

9
ECOSYSTEMS REPRESENTED

65%
RESOURCES ARE OPEN ACCESS

4
LANGUAGES

15%
RESOURCES IN A LANGUAGE OTHER THAN ENGLISH



LEARN MORE ABOUT THE TRL at restoration.elti.yale.edu

LEADERSHIP PROGRAM RESULTS

Understanding that capacity development does not end after the completion of a course, we are committed to supporting our past participants long after their official training ends. Through our Leadership Program, we support our past participants in implementing or sharing what they have learned, creating a multiplier effect that reaches far beyond the initial participants.



SOPHIE REVIS • PANAMA

Trained Ranchers on Silvopastoral Systems

Sophie Revis was a community environmental conservation Peace Corps Volunteer based in the small rural community of Los Cerritos in Panama.

"ELTI taught me the realities of farming practices in Panama and how to integrate environmental goals with economic needs. This knowledge has made it possible for me to have effective conversations with farmers about reforestation that can also improve their livelihoods."

Taught a Field Course in his Community on Restoring Severely Degraded Land

Mauricio Carvajal was a technical staff member of Colombia's Center for Sustainable Agricultural Production, known as CIPAV, when he took an ELTI field course to learn how to restore severely degraded land with native trees and was inspired to share this knowledge with others in his community.

"The ELTI course gave me new, clear, practical, and applicable information for my work and the improvement of ecological restoration processes."



MAURICIO CARVAJAL • COLOMBIA



FELIPE OTÁVIO CAMPELO E SILVA • BRAZIL

Facilitated a Seminar and Exchange on Agroforestry Systems, Productive Backyards, and Agroindustrialization in Family Farming

Felipe Otávio Campelo e Silva, a researcher and advocate for sustainable agriculture, leads an initiative in southern Bahia, Brazil, focused on the transformative potential of agroecological backyards.

"[ELTI's] course provided practical and theoretical reflections on environmental restoration, supporting the development of strategies for environmental recovery and fostering knowledge exchange among instructors and participants ... [I'm grateful for the] opportunity to blend different knowledge systems — from science to farmer insights — in a continuous learning process."

Rehabilitated Mangroves in Abandoned Fish Ponds

Aan Pratama is an ELTI past participant and mangrove assistant with Blue Forests and was worried about the mangrove ecosystems in Muna, Southeast Sulawesi, Indonesia.

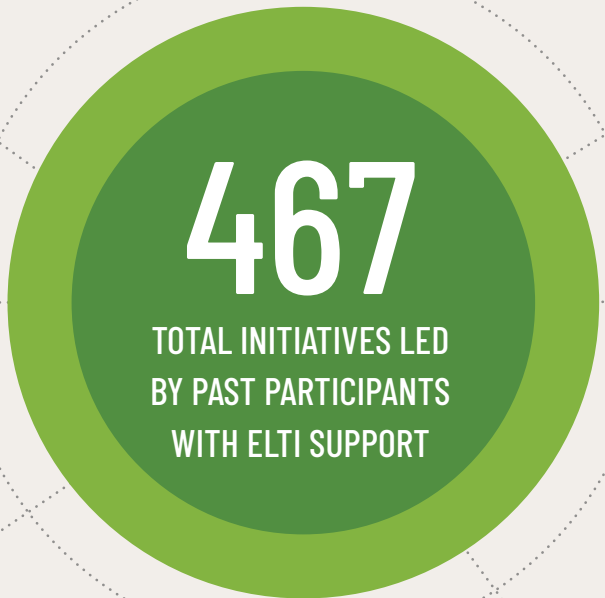
"I wanted to put what I learned through the ELTI course into real practice ... working together, guided by local wisdom and a shared love for nature, we build harmony between people and the environment."



AAN PRATAMA • INDONESIA



LEARN MORE ABOUT
ELTI stories
at elti.yale.edu/our-stories



ROMEO GUTANG • PHILIPPINES

Established a Native Species Reforestation Demonstration Farm to Restore Biodiversity

Romeo Gutang lives on Pilar Island, Philippines, and has been working on restoration projects since 2012.

"ELTI helped me visualize what my project could be and helped me realize that I need to do more activities to really make an impact, not only on the environment but also on the people. ELTI gave me important information to make [my] projects successful!"

Installed Water Conservation Interventions on her Silvopastoral Farm

Catelyn De León is a rancher in the Azuero Peninsula of Panama who had been struggling with frequent water shortages that were negatively affecting her livestock.

"We greatly improved my farm because it was very degraded and often did not have water. The farm has really come a long way, thanks to the support of ELTI."



CATELYN DE LEÓN • PANAMA

PILOT LAND USE CHANGE ANALYSIS IN PANAMA

In 2021, YSE students Anna Raffeld '21 MEM and Cecilia Rogers '23 MFS conducted a land use change analysis within **ELTI's Panama training landscape**. This research was supported by the Childs Family Forestry Research Fund of The Forest School at YSE.

Using satellite imagery from 2011 and 2020, they assessed changes in land use and tree cover on eight farms (110 hectares total) owned by ELTI alumni and members of the Association of Livestock and Agro-Silvopastoral Producers of Pedasí (APASPE) who began restoration efforts with ELTI in 2011 and have received ongoing support for many years since through the Leadership Program.

The analysis found that unsustainably managed land decreased from 96.8 hectares (87.4%) in 2011 to 22.5 hectares (20.4%) in 2020, while **sustainably managed land increased from 4.3 hectares (3.9%) to 72.7 hectares (65.9%), with an additional 12.8 hectares (11.6%) dedicated to riparian conservation** — representing a two-thirds conversion of unsustainable land to sustainable use and a **38.1% increase in conservation areas**.

In 2026, we started working with additional YSE master's students to build upon this pilot study and develop more robust analyses and monitoring protocols.

8

MODEL FARMS ANALYZED

9

YEARS OF ELTI INTERVENTIONS

67%

INCREASE IN SUSTAINABLE LAND USE

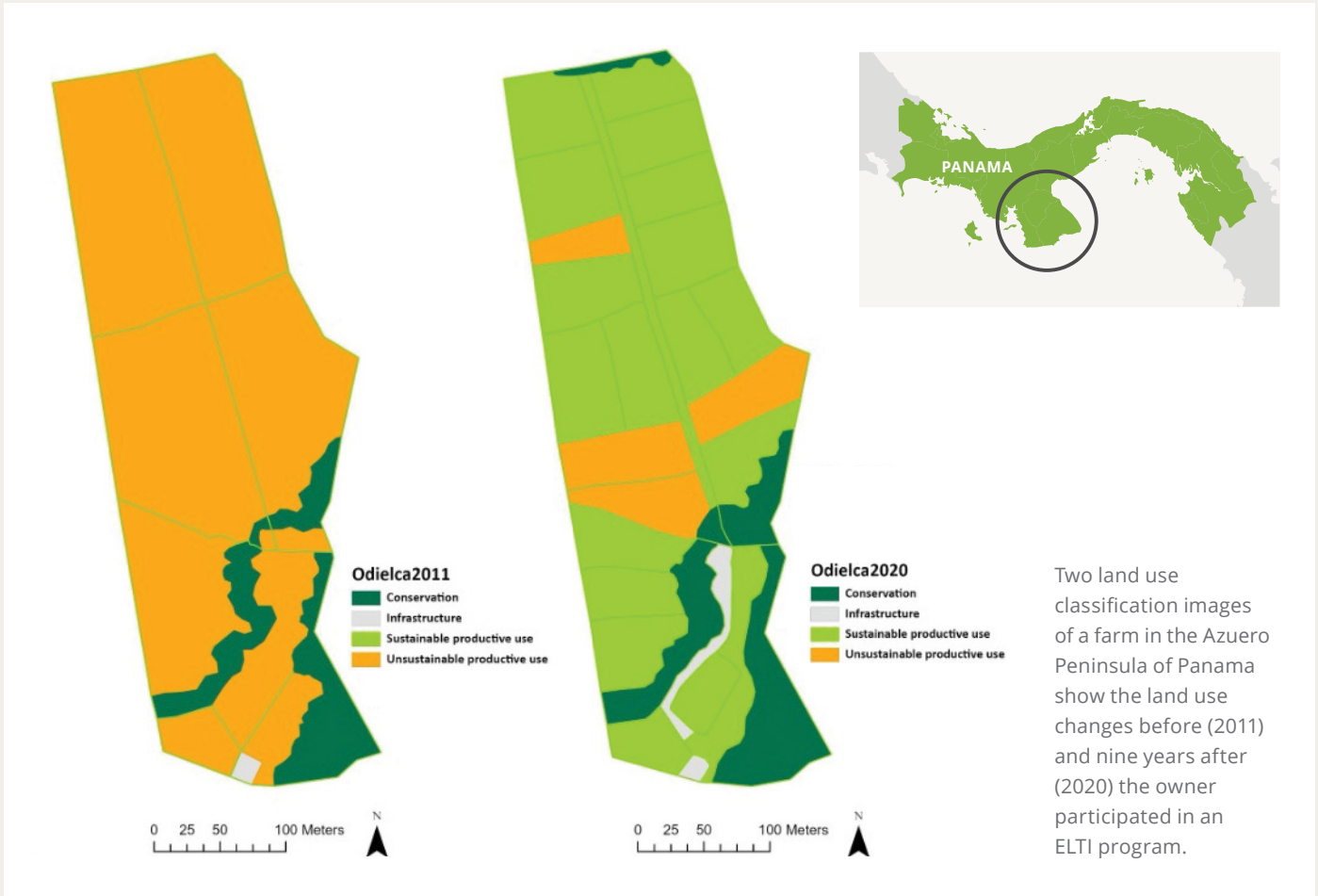
110

HECTARES TOTAL

CHANGES IN THE LANDSCAPE

Before-and-after photos show the changes over eight years on the farm of Dolores Solis, an APASPE member working with ELTI. Solis planted native timber trees to establish a silvopastoral system, which integrates trees into cattle pastures. This system provides cattle forage, timber, improved soil conservation, and shade — an especially important benefit in the region, where heat stress often reduces milk and meat production.

Solis' farm is one of the eight farms analyzed in the pilot land use change study, which demonstrates a significant increase in sustainable land use practices following participation in ELTI's programs.





6

ORGANIZATIONAL IMPACT GOALS & THEORY OF CHANGE

AT LEFT, CLOCKWISE
FROM TOP LEFT

Participants of an ELTI
ToT course in Panama.

A YSE professor
visiting ELTI partners
in Indonesia.

ELTI instructor and
participant in Panama.

A native species
nursery in Brazil.

ELTI partners during a
field training in Brazil.

Reception event at Yale
for TFL participants,
Rwandan colleagues,
and ELTI staff and
student fellows.

Over the next 10 years, ELTI will collaborate with partners to pursue four interlinked strategic organizational impact goals aimed at achieving lasting socio-ecological impact. These efforts will advance our vision of a world where people steward human-dominated tropical forest landscapes to effectively sustain bio-diversity, strengthen climate resilience, and support thriving livelihoods.

OUR 2036 ORGANIZATIONAL IMPACT GOALS

ELTI's four organizational impact goals are closely interconnected, each one building upon and strengthening the others. Progress with one goal naturally enables and reinforces progress in the other goals, reflecting a causal relationship between them. At the same time, no single goal takes precedence — each is equally vital to advancing ELTI's mission and vision. Together, they capture the dynamic and interdependent nature of our work.



GOAL 1

STRENGTHENED GLOBAL CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT AT SCALE

By 2036, at least 1,500 individuals trained by ELTI between 2026 and 2036 will have demonstrated strengthened capacity to implement and/or share effective conservation.

Why we chose it: Because training individuals does not always translate into strengthened capacity, we seek to better understand how many participants demonstrate improved capacity after our courses and programs. Evidence of this learning may include measurable gains between formal or informal pre- and post-training assessments or the application of concepts through course projects. This goal is within our sphere of control and will help us assess and refine our training approach and overall effectiveness.



GOAL 2

WIDESPREAD APPLICATION OF KNOWLEDGE

By 2036, at least 50% of ELTI past participants who were trained between 2026 and 2036 will have applied what they learned to influence or implement conservation or restoration actions.

Why we chose it: We aim to ensure that participants from diverse backgrounds actively apply their strengthened capacity at different scales, recognizing that increased capacity does not necessarily lead to implementation. Application may include implementing conservation or restoration projects and programs, integrating new social or ecological priorities into projects, shaping policies and approaches, or influencing organizational practices, such as approaches to engagement with land managers and adopting restoration strategies beyond tree planting.



GOAL 3

EXPANDED POSITIVE IMPACT ON LANDSCAPES

By 2036, the area of tropical forest landscapes where ELTI has contributed will show increased native tree and forest cover.

Why we chose it: We aim to ensure that the conservation and restoration approaches we promote lead to positive environmental outcomes at the landscape scale, strengthening organizational accountability. These outcomes may include increased native tree cover, along with associated improvements in water quality, biodiversity, and climate resilience. This goal also reflects our recognition of growing global expectations that capacity development efforts contribute to measurable ecological improvements.



GOAL 4

IMPROVED HUMAN WELL-BEING & LIVELIHOODS

By 2036, ELTI past participants trained between 2026 and 2036 report improvements in at least one dimension of human well-being or livelihoods after participating in an ELTI capacity development activity or as they implement or influence restoration and conservation actions.

Why we chose it: We aim to ensure that individuals we train experience a range of positive socio-cultural and economic outcomes as they expand and apply their newly acquired skills and knowledge. These outcomes may include improved household income and food security, strengthened cultural practices, greater tenure security and resource rights, and enhanced opportunities for networking, leadership, and career advancement.

AT RIGHT

Participants of the TFL certificate program working together on their capstone project.



AT LEFT

Establishing agro-forestry systems during an ELTI field course in Brazil.



OUR THEORY OF CHANGE

To address the complex and ever-evolving contexts in which ELTI and our partners operate, our approach is grounded in continuous assessment of and adaptation to the emerging socio-ecological needs and challenges, both globally and within the specific landscapes where we work. This adaptive approach is guided by four interconnected and flexible programmatic strategies and is supported by four enabling strategies to form the basis of our theory of change. Built on a series of causal “if-then” statements, our theory of change explains how and why our strategies will achieve our desired results and ultimate impact.

ENABLING STRATEGIES



ELTI’s four enabling strategies (strategies 5–8) provide the organizational foundation necessary to implement the four programmatic strategies (strategies 1–4) and realize its goals for 2036. See Section 7 for details of the enabling strategies.

PROGRAMMATIC STRATEGIES



STRATEGY 1
If ELTI increases the **availability** and **accessibility** of high-quality and relevant learning resources related to conserving and restoring forest landscapes based on knowledge from many sources and perspectives ...



STRATEGY 2
And if ELTI uses these resources to design and deliver place-based, experiential **training programs and courses** to participants well positioned to implement or influence conservation and restoration of tropical forest landscapes ...



STRATEGY 3
And if ELTI enhances the capabilities of strategic actors, including select past participants and organizational leaders, to develop the capacity of other individuals, communities, and organizations to **scale conservation and restoration capacity** across prioritized forest landscapes ...



STRATEGY 4
And if then ELTI provides targeted post-training support to select past participants who are well positioned to **translate acquired knowledge into effective conservation and restoration projects and initiatives** in tropical forest landscapes ...

RESULTS & IMPACT

Then the **capacity for tropical forest landscape conservation and restoration will be strengthened at a deeper, broader scale ...**
Which will then increase the application of the acquired knowledge to influence or implement effective conservation actions ...

Resulting in **expanded tropical forest landscapes with increased native tree and forest cover and improved human well-being and livelihoods** of those living and working in tropical forest landscapes ...

Which will then contribute to a world where people effectively steward tropical forest landscapes to sustain biodiversity, strengthen climate resilience, and support thriving livelihoods.

“I am very proud of my results. My farm’s production has increased. The streams don’t dry up in the summer. You can see the difference. What’s more, our ranching association is recognized as an expert in the region. We have received many visitors interested in replicating what we have achieved.”

ODIELCA SOLIS, PAST PARTICIPANT & LEADERSHIP PROGRAM RECIPIENT, PANAMA





AT LEFT
ELTI's training
landscape in
Indonesia.

7

STRATEGIES

To achieve our long-term vision and amplify our global impact, we have structured our strategic plan around a set of interconnected programmatic and enabling strategies. These strategies serve as the framework for guiding ELTI's efforts, ensuring that our work is both focused and adaptive to evolving needs and opportunities.

OUR KEY PRIORITIES

OUR FOCUS

At the core of our organizational strategy is ELTI’s long-standing commitment to strengthening capacity for conserving and restoring tropical forest landscapes by expanding access to diverse forms of knowledge and resources and supporting the sharing and application of acquired knowledge.

This focus remains central by continuing to target carefully selected changemakers, as well as the broader public.

This proven approach has built a strong global network and momentum that we can now harness and expand.

In addition to this ongoing work, ELTI is doubling down on our impact by **placing a greater emphasis on two strategic priorities:**

- 1. Scaling our capacity development approach by expanding our existing methods and designing new ones to **support individuals and organizations that can train many others** (Strategy 3).
- 2. Bridging the knowledge-to-action gap by **supporting past participants in applying what they have learned** and implementing effective, context-appropriate conservation and restoration efforts (Strategy 4).

OUR PROGRAMMATIC & ENABLING STRATEGIES

By advancing these priorities, we aim to expand our global reach, deepen our impact, and drive tangible and measurable socio-ecological outcomes.

In pursuit of our mission and vision — and to maximize impact — ELTI will operate under **four programmatic strategies** grounded in our capacity development approach and **four enabling strategies** that provide the organizational foundation necessary to implement the our overarching organizational strategy and realize our goals for 2036.

1

LONG-TERM VISION

4

ORGANIZATIONAL
IMPACT GOALS

4

PROGRAMMATIC
STRATEGIES

4

ENABLING
STRATEGIES

OUR PROGRAMMATIC STRATEGIES

ELTI has identified four programmatic strategies grounded in our capacity development approach to maximize results.



STRATEGY
1

Bolster the availability and accessibility of learning resources that combine diverse knowledge sources and perspectives



STRATEGY
2

Deliver place-based, experiential programs and courses to those well positioned to influence changes in the landscape



STRATEGY
3

Scale capacity for effective forest landscape conservation and restoration strategies and practices



STRATEGY
4

Enable the transition from knowledge and skills acquired to implementation in the landscape*

** Only ELTI past participants are eligible*

OUR ENABLING STRATEGIES

In addition to our four programmatic strategies, we have identified four enabling strategies to provide a strong organizational foundation.



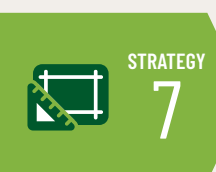
STRATEGY
5

Develop diversified and long-term funding



STRATEGY
6

Strengthen collaborations with YSE, Yale, and external partners



STRATEGY
7

Measure and communicate impact



STRATEGY
8

Strengthen internal systems, learning, and team effectiveness



STRATEGY
1

Bolster the (A) availability and (B) accessibility of learning resources that combine diverse knowledge sources and perspectives

We at ELTI are committed to both generating and curating diverse knowledge that combines multiple sources, disciplines, and perspectives and ensuring that this knowledge is accessible and inclusive for all.

1A Generate, curate, and manage knowledge from many sources. To continue offering high-quality, relevant training resources, ELTI will expand our efforts to generate new knowledge and curate existing knowledge on relevant training themes that draw from diverse sources, disciplines, and perspectives. In collaboration with our partner organizations, local land managers, communities, and Yale faculty, students, and alumni, ELTI will co-create and implement an inter- and trans-disciplinary research agenda that addresses critical information gaps and locally identified needs in tropical forest conservation and restoration.

1B Ensure inclusive and equitable access to knowledge. ELTI will enhance the accessibility of our training materials in both print and online formats by translating content into multiple languages and continuing to offer scholarships and tuition discounts for those with limited financial means, as well as striving to cultivate an even more diverse past participant network. We will also continue to expand our library of open-access resources, open-access symposia, webinars, and courses, several of which are in different languages.



STRATEGY
2

Deliver place-based, experiential programs and courses to those well positioned to influence changes in the landscape

ELTI will continue to collaborate with field partners to deliver high-impact experiential courses and programs in field, online, and blended formats that are grounded in local socio-ecological contexts.

ELTI's core courses will continue to be regularly updated and expanded to incorporate scientific, traditional, and other forms of knowledge and applied learning tailored to participant and organizational needs and landscape realities. When appropriate, we will build out additional core courses by strategically piloting new courses to meet emerging and priority needs.

While inclusivity remains a core value, we will increasingly prioritize developing the capacity of individuals and organizations that are in the position and have the commitment to apply what they have learned to influence positive environmental change.





STRATEGY
3

Scale capacity for effective forest landscape conservation and restoration strategies and practices

Recognizing that lasting change requires a broad coalition of actors, ELTI will pursue a range of capacity scaling approaches. These approaches will target individuals and organizational leaders who can drive organizational change or reach and develop the capacity of others in their networks to achieve conservation and restoration results, sometimes referred to as ELTI multipliers. We plan to target ELTI changemakers or multipliers who are who are leaders with connections to land managers, communities, and resources beyond ELTI's direct reach.

This strategy focuses on equipping these ELTI multipliers with the resources and capacity to confidently train others, effectively scaling out ELTI's capacity development model. The two key modalities we will employ in this strategy are our ToT and Leadership Program initiatives. We are also considering other innovative pathways for scaling capacity.

As another powerful scaling approach, we will expand and steward a vibrant community of practice by fostering mentorship and peer learning across our network of past participants. This approach will enable past participants to stay connected, interact, reinforce best practices, and spread innovations and learning long after a formal training ends.

AT LEFT
Landscape visited in Colombia during an ELTI field course.



STRATEGY
4

Enable the transition from knowledge and skills acquired to implementation in the landscape

ELTI will continue designing our courses and programs to go beyond theory, equipping participants with practical tools and real-world, relatable applications.

Our training landscape components — such as model farms, research sites, and demonstration areas — will serve as “living classrooms” for hands-on learning. Whether delivered in the field, through blended formats, or online, all courses are intended to catalyze action and increase the likelihood that past participants will apply what they have learned.

In this next phase, ELTI's Leadership Program will be intentional about strategically prioritizing support for past participants with the greatest potential to translate knowledge into meaningful action and impact.

By prioritizing project implementation after training, we aim to strengthen our influence on positive landscape conservation and restoration outcomes that demonstrate tangible benefits to biodiversity, climate resiliency, and livelihoods — ultimately building trust and credibility to foster broader adoption of forest conservation and restoration practices.



STRATEGY
5

Develop diversified and long-term funding

To ensure ELTI continues advancing our mission for years to come, we will grow and diversify our long-term funding sources. A comprehensive fundraising plan will guide us in identifying and securing opportunities through the philanthropic sector, private partnerships, tuition and other earned income, Yale grants and endowments, and co-financing agreements.

We will also craft our fundraising strategies and materials to inspire and engage donors, partners, and stakeholders, ensuring they are compelling, accessible, and capable of generating lasting impact.

BELOW
Participants of the TFL certificate program during a field course in Brazil.



STRATEGY
6

Strengthen collaborations with YSE, Yale, and external partners

Achieving ELTI's programmatic goals depends on strong collaborations with external partners; YSE and other Yale schools, departments, and programs; and ELTI's steering committee. To enhance the steering committee's effectiveness, we will revisit its mission, structure, and role, enabling it to provide more targeted support in key areas, including specific geographies, fundraising, research collaborations, and technical guidance.

We also see significant potential to expand engagement with Yale faculty, students, and alumni across various aspects of ELTI's programming.

To strengthen our presence in key training landscapes, we will deepen relationships with existing partners and, where appropriate, establish new collaborations supported by formal agreements.

We will also pursue partnerships with organizations that are focused on similar themes and approaches to capacity development to expand and broaden results and impact.



STRATEGY
7

Measure (A) and communicate (B) impact

We are strengthening our communications and impact measurement approaches to enhance ELTI's effectiveness, ensure that our work is grounded in evidence, and support ongoing learning. These efforts help ELTI adapt over time and clearly communicate our value, outcomes, and lessons learned.

7A Measure progress and impact to strengthen learning and adaptive management. ELTI recognizes MEL's vital role in enhancing program effectiveness. We are updating our MEL framework and protocols across all programs and identifying key learning questions to guide adaptive management. To ensure that insights are systematically captured and applied, we will dedicate the time and resources needed to implement this framework. We also see strong potential in expanding the use of mixed-methods approaches and will integrate additional spatial analysis tools into our MEL protocols.

7B Develop and implement effective, timely communication on ELTI's work and results. We will update our communications strategy to raise ELTI's profile and better reach and engage our target audiences. This strategy aims to generate greater participation in ELTI courses, attract new funding opportunities, and strengthen partnerships. We are also launching a new website and improving the effectiveness of our communication and outreach efforts.



STRATEGY
8

Strengthen internal systems, learning, and team effectiveness

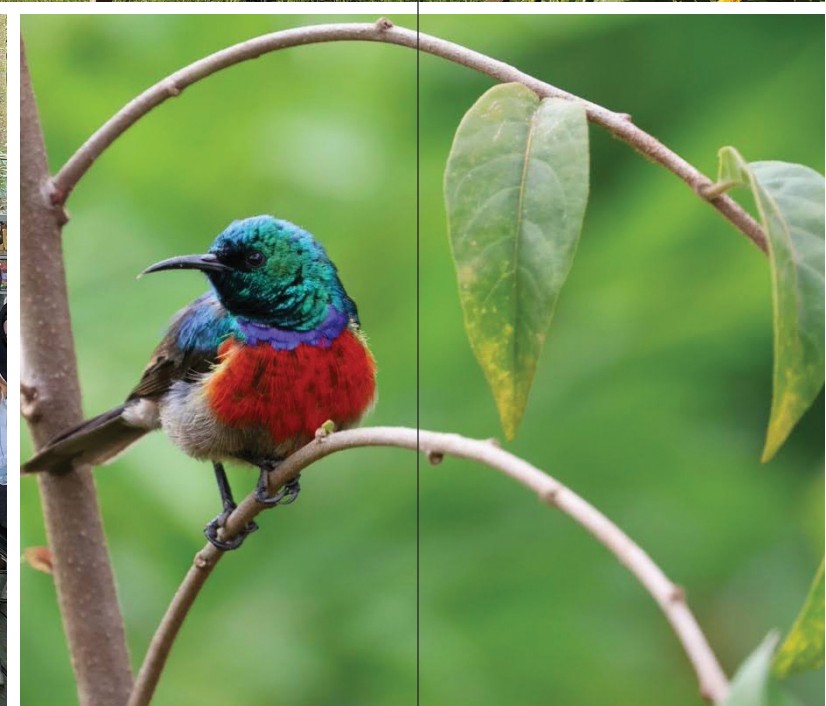
To strengthen ELTI's effectiveness and support team satisfaction, we will invest in internal systems and ways of working that promote collaboration and continuous learning across staff, affiliates, and collaborators.

We will clarify roles, responsibilities, and decision-making pathways to support collaboration across programs and geographies while retaining flexibility for local contexts. This includes strengthening cross-program communication and creating regular opportunities for affiliates and staff to share updates, reflect on challenges, and identify alignment opportunities.

To support organizational learning, we will strengthen knowledge management systems and standard operating procedures to ensure lessons, tools, and institutional knowledge are accessible, up to date, and actively used. We will dedicate staff time to support system maintenance and resource curation and introduce structured internal learning practices, such as reflection sessions, peer exchanges, and cross-program learning reviews.

Additionally, we will invest in team effectiveness and staff development through regular feedback loops, including annual satisfaction surveys and, where feasible, 360-degree feedback processes to support growth and improvement.





8

MONITORING, EVALUATION, & LEARNING

AT LEFT, CLOCKWISE
FROM TOP LEFT

TFL participant
visiting Panama
training landscape.

Landscape visited
in Brazil during a
field course.

Northern double-
collared sunbird in
Rwanda.

YSE alumna with
YSE students in
Panama during an
ELTI field course.

TFL participant and
YSE student presenting
in Rwanda.

ELTI field course in
Indonesia.

To measure progress toward
our organizational strategic goals
and programmatic and enabling
strategies, ELTI is developing a
monitoring, evaluation, and learning
framework.

Each of ELTI's programmatic and
enabling strategies will have a strategy-
level goal and a set of short-, mid-, and
long-term objectives. Together, these
goals and objectives contribute to
ELTI's four overarching organizational
impact goals.



AT LEFT

Participants using ELTI's native species guide.

8

STRATEGY-LEVEL GOALS

17

KEY RESULTS

25

SMART OBJECTIVES

31

INDICATORS

10

LEARNING QUESTIONS

Following a process similar to the development of this organizational strategy, the **MEL framework is a co-created product** that includes input from staff and field affiliates. The framework will include a prioritized selection of impact, outcome, and output results across the results chain-based theory of change.

Each result will have associated SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound) objectives and indicators. The framework will also specify baseline and target values, collection methods, and sources.

In addition, the team identified **10 learning questions that will guide organizational learning and adaptive management.** By focusing on these questions, we will better understand the assumptions underlying the theory of change and improve overall program effectiveness.

Some learning questions include:

- To what extent and under which conditions does increased implementation of effective conservation and restoration actions result in improved livelihoods and human well-being?
- Which aspects of post-training support are most likely to lead to implementation of conservation or restoration actions?
- To what extent, and under which conditions, do ELTI's trainings lead to improved capacity?

Yale staff and field affiliates will be involved in the implementation of the framework by tracking and reporting progress on relevant key indicators.

ELTI's MEL staff will lead and coordinate the **annual progress review and reflection of ELTI's enabling and programmatic goals.**

Based on the annual reflections, we will appropriately update our progress and goals.

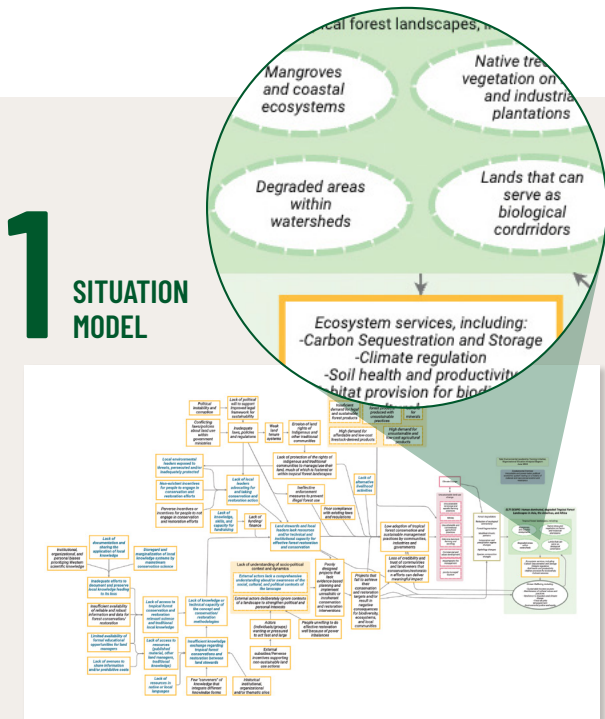
**OUR MEL PROCESS WILL SUPPORT
ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT &
EVIDENCE-BASED DECISION MAKING
BY FOSTERING
REFLECTION ON CHALLENGES,
LESSONS LEARNED, AND
OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT
IN ACHIEVING
ELTI'S IMPACT GOALS**

NICOLE ISRAEL-MEYER

PROGRAM MANAGER OF MONITORING, EVALUATION, & LEARNING

MEL STRATEGIC PLANNING DOCUMENTS

Before developing a MEL framework, we developed key planning documents to reflect ELTI's current context and desired results with a situation model and theory of change.



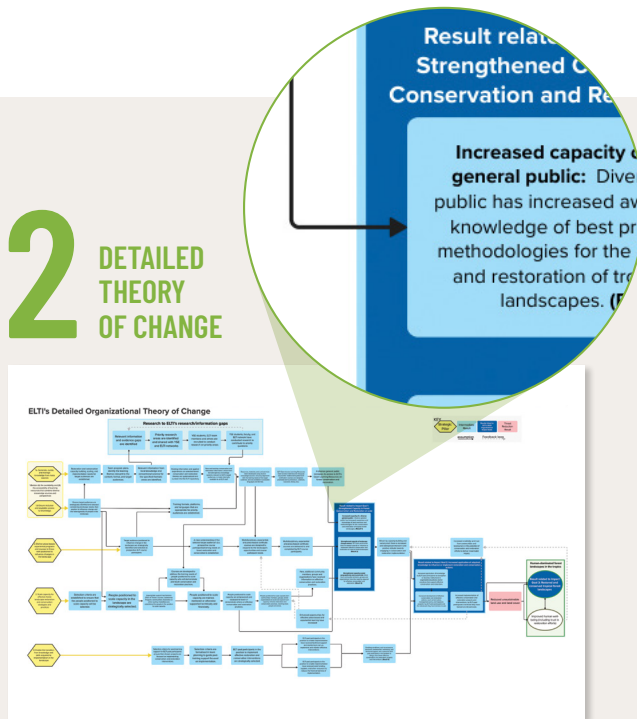
ELTI's situation model graphically represents our context analysis.

By analyzing the context in which we work, we identified several contributing factors impacting the prevalent issues we seek to address. We also prioritized key factors we intend to focus on through our activities.

This version of the situation model was finalized in June 2024 and will be revisited on a biannual basis.



View this situation model at full size at elti.yale.edu/resources/elti-situation-model



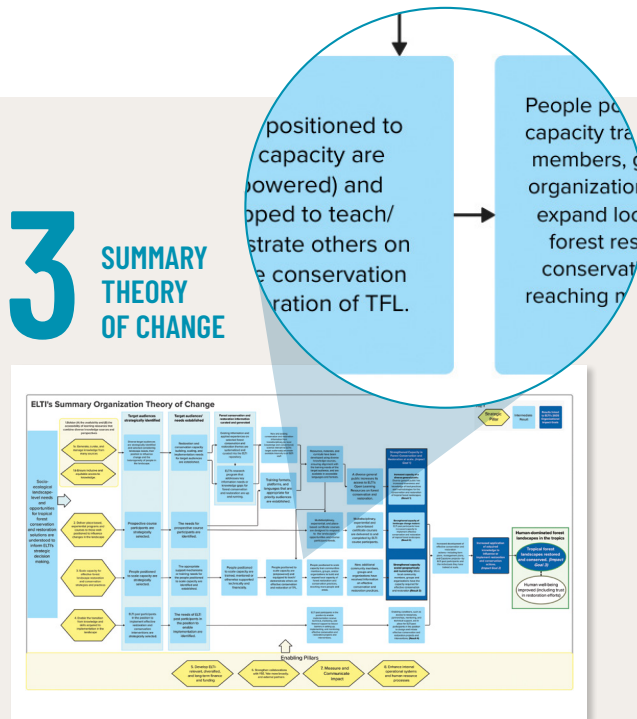
ELTI's detailed results chain-based ToC graphically represents how our four programmatic strategies will achieve our organizational goals and contribute to our long-term vision.

This detailed version articulates the causal *if-then* logic without making any leaps of faith and will also be the backbone for ELTI's MEL framework.

This version of the detailed theory of change was finalized in June 2026 and will be revisited on a biannual basis.



View this detailed theory of change at full size at elti.yale.edu/resources/elti-detailed-toc



ELTI's summary results chain-based ToC graphically summarizes the key elements of the detailed theory of change.

Based on the detailed theory of change, this summary version presents clear causal pathways while summarizing some intermediate results.

This version of the summary theory of change was finalized in June 2026 and will be revisited on a biannual basis.



View this summary theory of change at full size at elti.yale.edu/resources/elti-summary-toc



BELOW, TOP TO BOTTOM

Participant during an ELTI field course in Indonesia.

ELTI's MEL program manager presenting the theory of change.



9

LOOKING AHEAD

AT LEFT, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT

ELTI partner from Brazil at a conference at YSE.

Participants during an ELTI field course in Rwanda.

A landscape in the Philippines visited during an ELTI field course.

ELTI field affiliates during an annual meeting at Yale.

ELTI field affiliate in Rwanda.

An ELTI field course in Indonesia.

ELTI has evolved into a highly respected, globally recognized capacity development program

for conserving and restoring tropical forest landscapes.

Our team has developed eight strategy-level goals corresponding to the eight strategies and is developing short-, mid-, and long-term objectives as part of the MEL framework to achieve the strategy and impact goals by 2036.

GOALS: PROGRAMMATIC STRATEGIES



STRATEGY
1

Bolster the availability and accessibility of learning resources that combine diverse knowledge sources and perspectives

GOAL: By 2036, ELTI’s open access learning resources are widely accessed globally, increasing the availability and accessibility of TFL restoration and conservation knowledge products across diverse countries and languages.*

**Specific performance targets for user reach, geographic representation, and language accessibility are being determined with the 2026 MEL framework development process.*



STRATEGY
2

Deliver place-based, experiential programs and courses to those well positioned to influence changes in the landscape

GOAL: Between 2026 and 2036, at least 1,500 new ELTI course participants will have strengthened their capacity to implement or share effective conservation and restoration actions.



STRATEGY
3

Scale capacity for effective forest landscape conservation and restoration strategies and practices

GOAL: Between 2026 and 2036, ELTI multipliers will strengthen the capacities of at least 2,500 new individuals across diverse geographies on effective conservation and restoration practices.



STRATEGY
4

Enable the transition from knowledge and skills acquired to implementation in the landscape

GOAL: By 2036, at least 50% of ELTI past participants trained between 2026 and 2036 are applying what they learned to advance conservation and restoration actions in tropical forest landscapes.

GOALS: ENABLING STRATEGIES



STRATEGY
5

Develop diversified and long-term funding

GOAL: By 2036, ELTI has raised at least \$15 million in program support from diverse sources (\$8 million in grants, gifts, endowments; \$5+ million in tuition and contracts; and \$2+ million through field-based partners).



STRATEGY
6

Strengthen collaborations with YSE, Yale, and external partners

GOAL A: By 2036, 90% of all ELTI initiatives (research, teaching assistantships, etc.) include student fellows, postgraduate associates, and/or Yale faculty, researchers, and alumni, demonstrating ELTI’s increased profile within YSE and Yale.

GOAL B: By 2036, ELTI has implemented multiyear programming with at least 15 partners outside of current host institutions.



STRATEGY
7

Measure and communicate impact

GOAL A: By 2036, ELTI is widely recognized as a leading organization for capacity development for effective restoration strategies in human-dominated tropical forest landscapes.

GOAL B: By 2036, ELTI has institutionalized an integrated and adaptive MEL system that tracks progress and impact organization wide and across field partners, informs evidence-based decision making, and fosters a culture of learning to continuously improve the effectiveness of ELTI’s work.



STRATEGY
8

Strengthen internal systems, learning, and team effectiveness

GOAL: By 2036, ELTI is a workplace where talented and diverse staff are highly engaged, experience a strong sense of belonging and collaboration, and are actively supported in their professional growth.

NEXT STEPS

With growing global restoration commitments and targets, there is a pressing need to design and implement effective FLR strategies throughout the tropics and beyond. With 20 years of experience, we at ELTI are well positioned to expand our influence and global efforts to be designed and implemented effectively so that they reflect local socio-ecological contexts and are enduring for years to come.

This organizational strategy lays out the groundwork for ELTI's next 10 years. Our redefined programmatic and enabling strategies along with our new theory of change, will enable us to achieve our eight strategy-level goals and our organizational impact goals. We will regularly revisit this living document, our strategies, and our theory of change to ensure that we are on the path to achieving our goals.



LEARN MORE ABOUT
ELTI's news updates
at elti.yale.edu/news

AT LEFT

ELTI past participant
facilitating a visit
to his silvopastoral
system in Colombia.

**THERE IS NO
OTHER PROGRAM LIKE IT.
ELTI HAS DEVELOPED
A UNIQUE IDENTITY IN
RESTORING ECOSYSTEM
PRODUCTIVITY FOR THE BENEFIT
OF PEOPLE AND OTHER
ASPECTS OF NATURE.**

MARK ASHTON

SENIOR ASSOCIATE DEAN OF THE FOREST SCHOOL,
MORRIS K. JESUP PROFESSOR OF SILVICULTURE & FOREST ECOLOGY,
ELTI FOUNDER & STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBER

10

GLOSSARY



AT LEFT

A landscape visited during an ELTI course in Panama.

**AT LEFT**

ELTI field affiliate teaching an ELTI course in Indonesia.

Capacity development

A process through which individuals and organizations gain knowledge and skills to strengthen their ability to define problems, set goals, implement projects and programs, and achieve sustainable results over time.

Collaborator

A person who works jointly on a particular activity or project for mutual benefit.

Community of practice

A group of people who learn together by interacting regularly to deepen their skills, solve problems, and build shared knowledge.

Co-creation

Working with partners to jointly develop a project, program, or initiative by drawing upon the ideas, experiences, and perspectives of all partners, often leading to better more innovative outcomes.

Conservation

The protection and sustainable management of forests and Earth's other natural resources.

Diversity

The presence or inclusion of people of different ages, genders, sexual orientations, and social and ethnic backgrounds.

Ecological context

The complete set of biophysical factors and dynamics that determine what type of conservation or restoration activity is feasible in a particular location.

ELTI course

An ELTI course is a single field, online, or blended training experience.

ELTI program

An ELTI program includes more than one course and can also include Leadership Program support.

Experiential learning/teaching

The process of acquiring/teaching specific skills and knowledge by engaging in hands-on activities and reflecting on that experience to gain a deeper understanding than is possible through more passive forms of learning.

Field affiliate

An ELTI team member who works in one of ELTI's training landscapes and who is hired through a partner organization.

Human-dominated landscapes

Environments heavily shaped by people through agriculture and forestry practices, road building, human settlements, and other anthropogenic disturbances to the region's biophysical systems.

Indigenous Peoples and local communities (IP&LCs)

Terminology that includes both distinct groups with deep historical ties to ancestral lands, unique cultures, languages, and self-identification as original inhabitants (i.e., Indigenous Peoples) and groups living in a specific area who steward natural resources but who are not necessarily recognized as being Indigenous.

Interdisciplinary

An approach that refers to integrating knowledge, methods, and perspectives from two or more academic branches of knowledge to create a more comprehensive understanding or to solve a complex problem.

Knowledge-to-action gap

A common problem in capacity development wherein people who have acquired new knowledge and skills fail to apply what they learned to bring about meaningful change.

Land managers

People who have the direct authority individually or communally to decide how a piece of land is going to be used.

Leadership Program

An ELTI program that helps selected past participants apply what they learned in ELTI's field-based and online training programs through the provision of continuing mentorship or other forms of support tailored to their individual interests and needs.

Multidisciplinary

An approach that involves drawing on knowledge, methods, and perspectives from multiple academic branches of knowledge. Each branch maintains its own methodologies and perspectives, and they are not fully integrated.

Open access

Publications, videos, and other digital content made freely available for anyone to download, use, and share without any financial or legal barriers.

Partner organization

An organization or institution with which ELTI has a close working relationship and hosts ELTI's field affiliates who implement ELTI's programmatic strategies.

Place based

An approach focused on a local environment that aims to understand the complex issues of that location and to develop sustainable solutions by leveraging its unique characteristics rather than imposing a one-size-fits-all approach.

Restoration

A human-driven, planned process of returning something to a former or original condition, as in reestablishing the function, structure, and composition of a forest following deforestation or forest degradation. In the context of forest landscape restoration (FLR), restoration connotes improving ecological functionality — though not necessarily to extent of full restoration — while simultaneously enhancing human well-being.

Sociocultural context

The combination of social, cultural, historical, and economic factors that must be taken into account when planning conservation or restoration activities.

Sustainable land use strategies

Approaches to managing land that meet current human needs for environmental goods and services without compromising the land's ability to provide the same goods and services to future generations.

Systems approach

A holistic analytical approach used for understanding complex problems by applying interdisciplinary methods to understand the interconnectedness of seemingly isolated parts of the larger whole in terms of relationships and feedback loops, the goal being to find more sustainable solutions than is possible through reductionist approaches.

Traditional ecological knowledge (TEK)

A subset of traditional knowledge, skills, and practices which encompasses the community's detailed understanding of plants, ecosystems, and resource management.

Traditional knowledge

Knowledge, skills, and practices that have been developed within certain communities and which are passed on from generation to generation, often forming part of the group's cultural or spiritual identity.

Training landscape

A location or region chosen to hold ELTI field-based training events. These sites are characterized by a history of scientific study; access to innovative land managers, a series of demonstration sites and other amenities that can be used for immersive learning; and close proximity to adequate facilities for hosting participants (e.g., accommodations, lecture rooms, dining areas, etc.).

Training-of-trainer (ToT)

A strategy intended to scale results by teaching experienced individuals how to effectively train others by providing them with both the subject knowledge and instructional skills needed to effectively lead others in learning processes.

Transdisciplinary

An approach that goes beyond integrating and synthesizing perspectives from multiple academic branches of knowledge by focusing on holistic approaches that transcend traditional academic boundaries.

Tropical forest landscape

Large areas of land located near the equator characterized by relatively high levels of biodiversity and dense vegetation, many of which have been heavily affected by deforestation and other forms of ecological degradation.

Tropical Restoration Library

A clearinghouse of open-access literature, guides, and case studies related to tropical forest conservation and restoration developed by ELTI designed to support training, research, and implementation around the world.

Underrepresented groups

Groups of people who, due to their race, ethnicity, age, sex, gender, socio-economic status, or other factors, make up a disproportionately small subset relative to their numbers in the overall population.

AT RIGHT

Proboscis monkey in ELTI's training landscape focused on mangrove restoration in East Kalimantan, Indonesia.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We extend our profound gratitude to **ELTI’s steering committee members, staff members, field affiliates, and partners**, whose talent, creativity, dedication, and tireless efforts have been instrumental in the success of ELTI’s programs.

We are also deeply thankful to **Dean Indy Burke** and the **Yale School of the Environment** for providing ELTI with such a dynamic host institution and environment. The enthusiasm and willingness of YSE faculty, students, and alumni to share their teaching and research with land managers, practitioners, and decision-makers throughout the global tropics have enabled ELTI’s success.

Our gratitude also extends to the **thousands of ELTI participants** who have demonstrated the importance of capacity development and shown us how our programs support their efforts in enabling long-lasting positive social and ecological change in tropical forest landscapes. The ELTI team has learned significantly from our program participants and has integrated this learning into our programming to ensure we meet the needs of those striving to make or impact positive changes on the ground.

We also wish to express our deepest appreciation to **Arcadia, a charitable fund of Lisbet Rausing and Peter Baldwin**, for their generous financial support that launched ELTI in 2006 and has sustained our programs for the past 20 years. More recently, their funding enabled our program evaluation, which led to the development of this new 10-year organizational strategy. Arcadia’s steadfast and flexible funding has enabled ELTI to experiment and thrive, bringing positive changes to many throughout the global tropics.

We are also grateful for the generous support of the **Yale Center for Natural Carbon Capture (YCNCC)**, which has enabled the ELTI team to expand its field and online training opportunities on related themes.

Additionally, the **Three Cairns Group’s** generous gift provides scholarships for students from the Global South to participate in ELTI’s online certificate program.

Moreover, a recent grant from **Yale Planetary Solutions** has supported our recent field program launch in Rwanda, marking ELTI’s first field program in Africa.

OPPOSITE PAGE

ELTI partner teaching a field course in Brazil.

AT LEFT

ELTI team visiting landscape in Colombia.



THE CORE ELTI TEAM IN 2026

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- Jeff Sharpe**
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- Bill Laurance, PhD**
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We also recognize former staff, field affiliates, and steering committee members, whose invaluable contributions helped shape ELTI into what it is today.

BELOW

The ELTI team in 2025 during the annual meeting.





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Leadership &
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