

Entrepreneurship in action across Winrock's portfolio

Across the U.S., Africa, Asia and other regions, Winrock advances entrepreneurship as a core pathway to resilient livelihoods, competitive markets and locally led economic growth. The examples below illustrate how this integrated approach plays out across geographies and technical portfolios — beginning in the U.S. and extending globally. **Entrepreneurship is a critical component of Winrock's 2026–2028 strategy**, which centers on a clear goal: increasing the resilience of rural communities and the environmental and enterprise ecosystems they depend on. By strengthening value chains, advancing small and medium enterprises and aligning economic incentives with environmental outcomes, **entrepreneurship allows Winrock to translate technical expertise, training, mentorship and access to capital into business and job creation, strengthened value chains and competitive markets.**

While Winrock's 2026–2028 strategy sharpens how we deliver impact, our mission remains unchanged: to empower communities, increase economic opportunity, and sustain natural resources.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN THE U.S.: SCALABLE MODELS WITH GLOBAL RELEVANCE

With decades of experience in rural and small town U.S. communities, Winrock's work demonstrates how **strengthening enterprise ecosystems — not just individual businesses — delivers durable, measurable impact.**

Through U.S. Programs, Winrock helps design and support systems that leverage federal, state, philanthropic and private sector capital; strengthen capacity across rural and small town communities; **support thousands of entrepreneurs with a strong focus on women and underserved populations; and generate jobs, revenue and competitive local enterprises.**

These U.S.-based models both inform and are informed by Winrock's global entrepreneurship work, reinforcing a shared emphasis on market-driven, locally led solutions. Some of Winrock's signature U.S. entrepreneurship platforms include:

Science Venture Studio: This ongoing project supports early stage, Arkansas-based science and technology startups to secure nondilutive federal research funding, **accelerating commercialization and enterprise growth.**

Validation Fund: Winrock has deep experience developing and managing Arkansas's first evergreen, nonprofit early stage fund, **closing a critical financing gap for validation stage startups.**

Arkansas Women's Business Center: As a longtime implementer of this U.S. Small Business Administration-funded program, **Winrock supports women entrepreneurs with training, mentoring and access to capital**, helping women-owned businesses to start, grow and compete in rural and small-town economies.

Together, these and other projects and platforms reflect Winrock's integrated approach of **linking capital, technical assistance, and systemwide support to help entrepreneurs succeed.**

GLOBAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP: CO-CREATING ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

Around the world, Winrock advances entrepreneurship as a pathway to stronger rural livelihoods, competitive markets and resilient food systems.

In West Africa (Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau), through the Mastercard Foundation-funded **Women's Economic Empowerment through Cashew Processing** project, Winrock is working to transform the cashew sector into a competitive, inclusive economic engine.

The program integrates women and youth into higher value economic roles, strengthens local enterprises and value chains, and mobilizes investment. It aims to create over 300,000 jobs, 70% for young women, and up to \$150 million in new investment — goals closely aligned with entrepreneurship-focused work supported by philanthropic partners in Arkansas and the U.S.

In Ethiopia, **Winrock is currently piloting solar-powered micro-milling enterprises with grain millers**, facilitating new opportunities for women-owned and operated businesses while improving food security and reducing reliance on diesel milling. This project, supported by the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, **centers women as entrepreneurs within local grain value chains.**

In other parts of the world, including Central, South and Southeast Asia, Winrock embeds entrepreneurship into agricultural and rural development programs by **expanding access to finance, strengthening value chains and enabling entrepreneurs to develop viable, bankable enterprises connected to higher-value markets.**

Winrock supports enterprise models tied to conservation, clean energy, water and ecosystem services, aligning economic incentives with environmental outcomes. For example, in Vietnam and other countries, Winrock has partnered with women-led enterprises **advancing market-based environmental solutions that link entrepreneurship directly to sustainability and climate outcomes.** Entrepreneurship allows Winrock to translate environmental science into economic opportunity, creating pathways for adoption, scale and long-term stewardship.

Winrock recognizes that economic opportunity underpins dignity, agency and resilience. In Bangladesh, our current **Ashshash** project, funded by the Swiss government, **integrates entrepreneurship training, business development and market linkages to advance survivor-led enterprises** as part of human trafficking prevention and economic reintegration. Across Central Asia and West Africa, Winrock advances women and youth-led enterprises as drivers of inclusive growth, strengthening profitability, market access and leadership within local economies. Entrepreneurship is fundamental to human rights outcomes because it bolsters prevention, recovery and long-term resilience, especially in resource-constricted or vulnerable communities.

LOOKING AHEAD: LEARNING AND INNOVATING

As Winrock advances its 2026–2028 strategy, entrepreneurship will continue to strengthen livelihoods and market systems, support dignity, agency and resilience, and enable locally owned solutions to scale and endure.

For example, Winrock is developing AWBC-led work that combines the Wallace Center's expertise in regenerative agriculture and local food systems with Winrock's deep experience advancing women-owned small businesses in the U.S. South. **This integrated approach advances women-led, agriculture-connected enterprises operating along value chains** — from production and aggregation to processing, branding and regional market access. Entrepreneurs will receive assistance in business planning, financial modeling, product positioning and connections to buyers and broader ecosystems.

Winrock's entrepreneurship work aligns with locally led solutions, market-driven opportunity, systems-level impact and prosperous rural communities.

Entrepreneurship is how Winrock advances shared priorities across geographies, sectors and generations of work.

