Youth Climate Engagement at Phipps Conservatory



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Phipps Youth Climate Programs



THE HEINZ ENDOWMENTS

HOWARD HEINZ ENDOWMENT • VIRA I. HEINZ ENDOWMENT



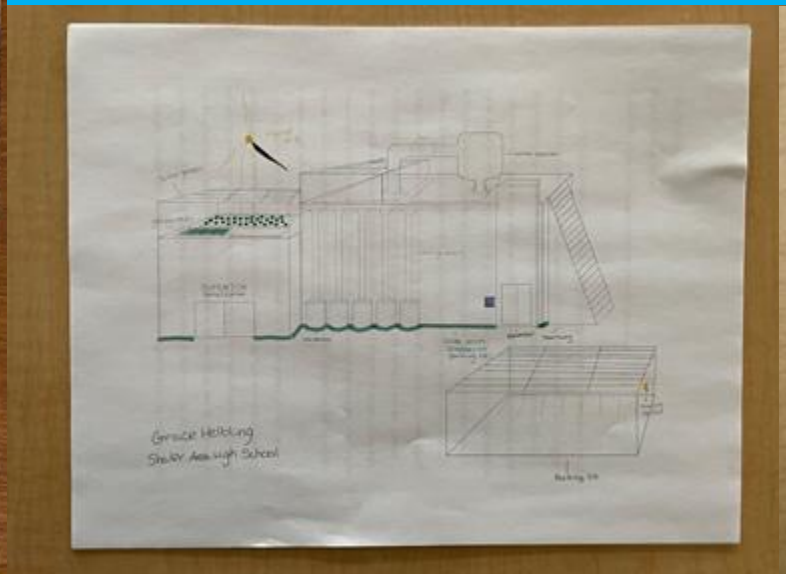


Fairchild Challenge at Phipps

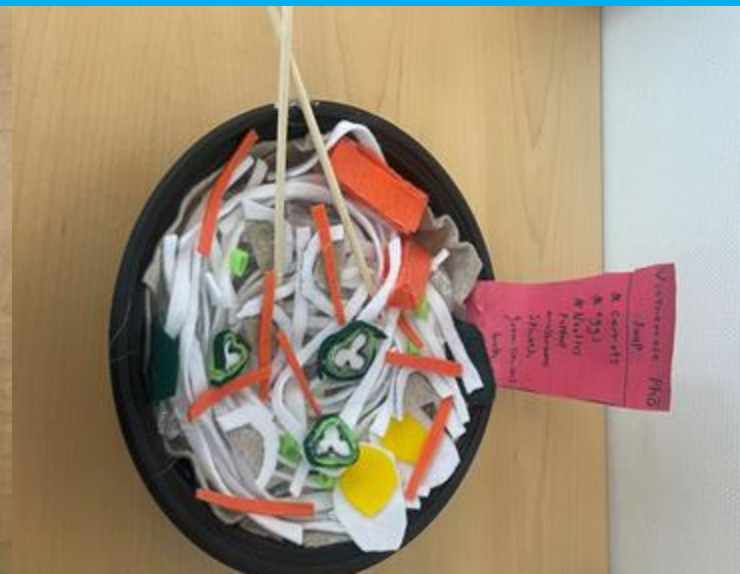
Focuses on multidisciplinary, project based, collaborative learning

Aligned with PA State Standards k-12

Offers an opportunity to engage students in more environmental topics that align with their curriculum













Phipps EcoLeader Academy

- Summer dates: June - July
- Wednesday or Thursday cohort
- For ages 14 to 19
- Paid a small stipend to attend
- Hands-on learning about a variety of topics: ecosystems, public health, climate policy, food & agriculture, pollution, energy, and environmental justice













Youth Climate Advocacy Committee





- October-April, meet on 2-3 evenings per month
- For ages 16 - 23
- Paid a small stipend to attend
- Youth-led climate action on issues you care about with support and resources from Phipps
- Climate education, opportunities to collaborate with other youth
- Leadership, skill development, and speaking opportunities

Goals

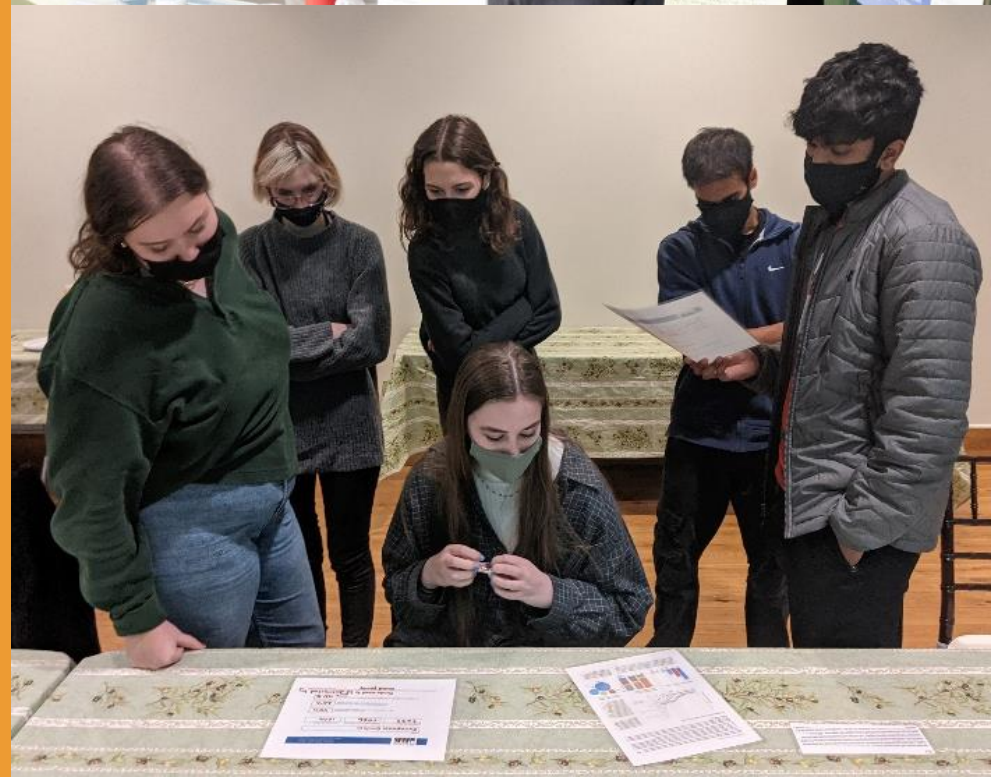
- Highlight the concerns of young people
- Focus on collective action and climate activism
- Bring students together across neighborhoods, grade levels, schools
- Educate and support communities



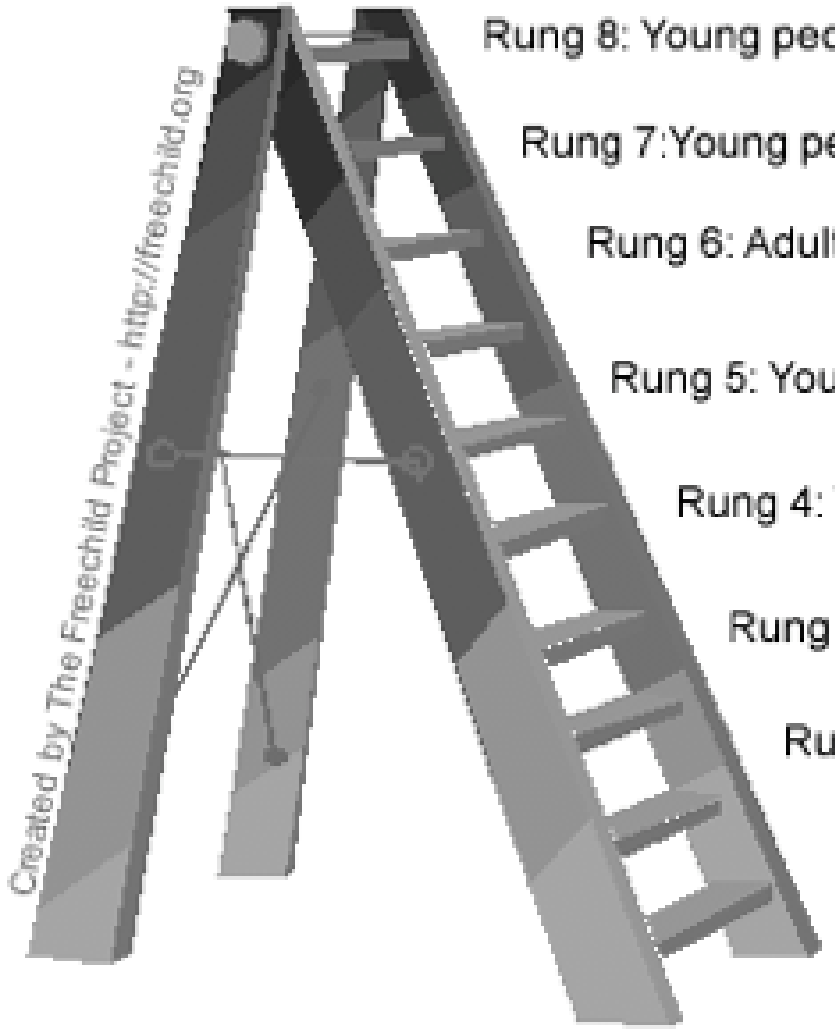
Principles

- Empower each other
- Constructive feedback
- Fairness and inclusivity
- Youth-driven and led





Roger Hart's Ladder of Young People's Participation



Rung 8: Young people & adults share decision-making

Rung 7:Young people lead & initiate action

Rung 6: Adult-initiated, shared decisions with young people

Rung 5: Young people consulted and informed

Rung 4: Young people assigned and informed

Rung 3: Young people tokenized*

Rung 2: Young people are decoration*

Rung 1: Young people are manipulated*

Note: Hart explains that the last three rungs are *non-participation*

Adapted from Hart, R. (1992). *Children's Participation from Tokenism to Citizenship.* Florence: UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre.

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Capacity-building

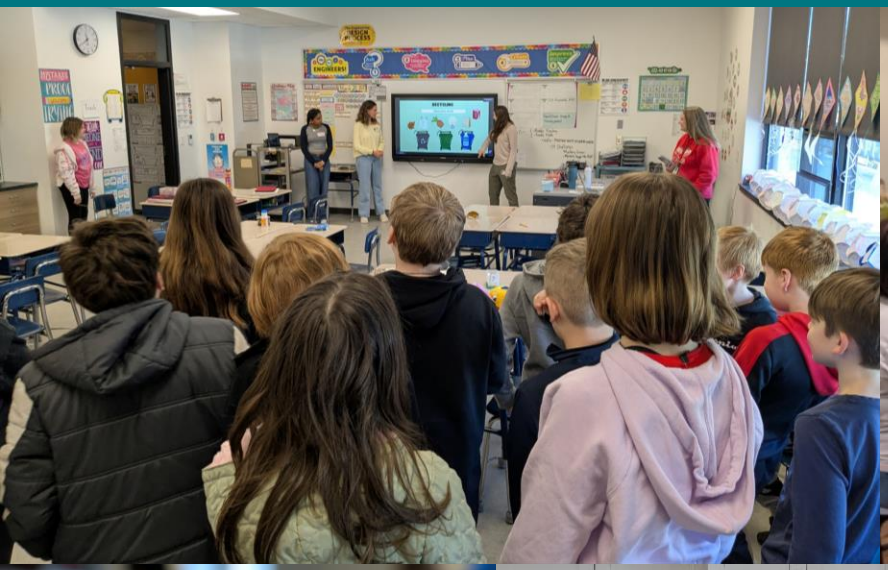
- World Climate Simulation by Climate Interactive (C-ROADS & En-ROADS models)
- Environmental justice discussions with knowledgeable community members
- Local experts and educators: Fair Shake Environmental Law, Tree Pittsburgh, etc
- Practice building climate communication activities for different audiences
- Critical Action Lab partnership with the Natural History Museum of Utah (NHMU)

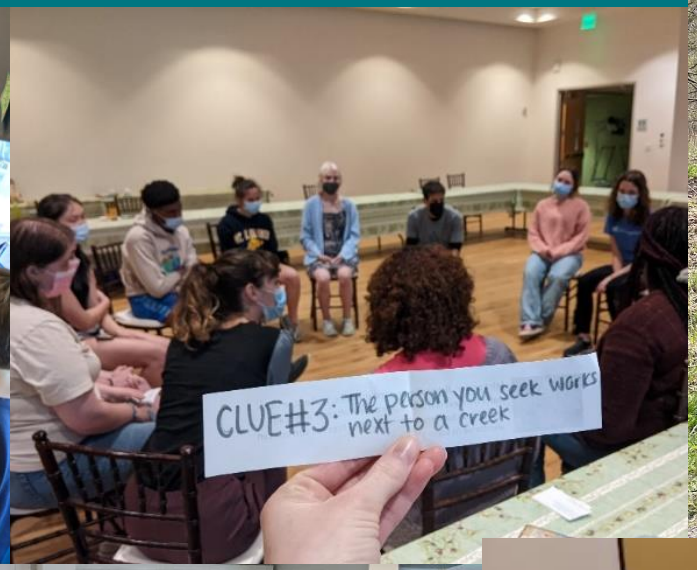
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YCAC Project Working Groups











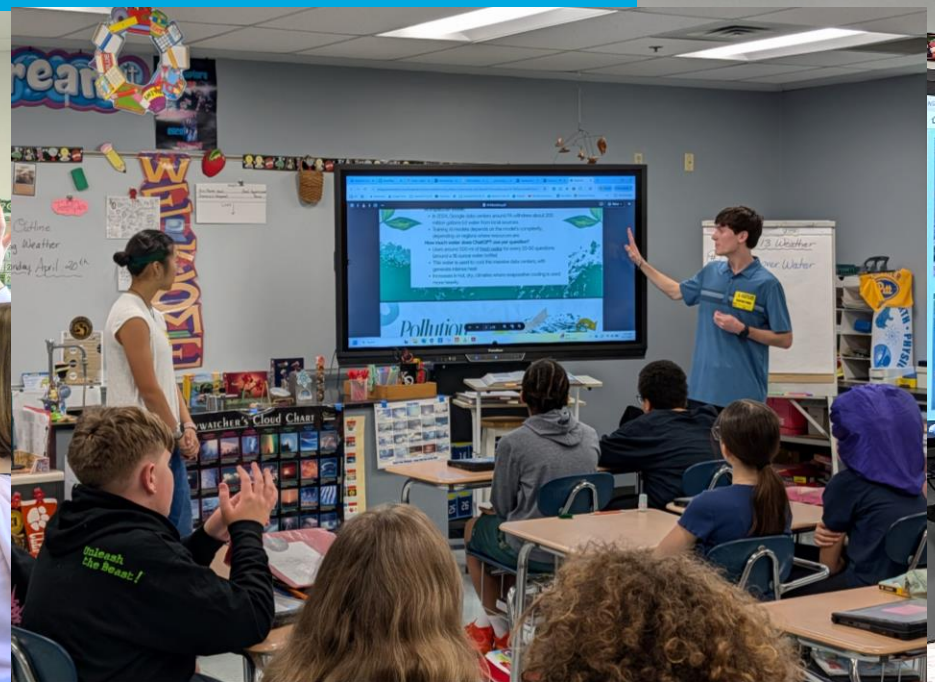


Education Working Groups

- Created content for grades 4 - 6 & 6 - 12
- Lessons met PA State Standards of Education and were peer-reviewed by staff
- Taught over 660 students in three years, both virtually and in person!









Youth Eco-Action Showcase

- Engage the public with working group projects
- Speaking opportunities for youth
- Sustainable art & fashion shows – often sell out!
- Local artists and organizations







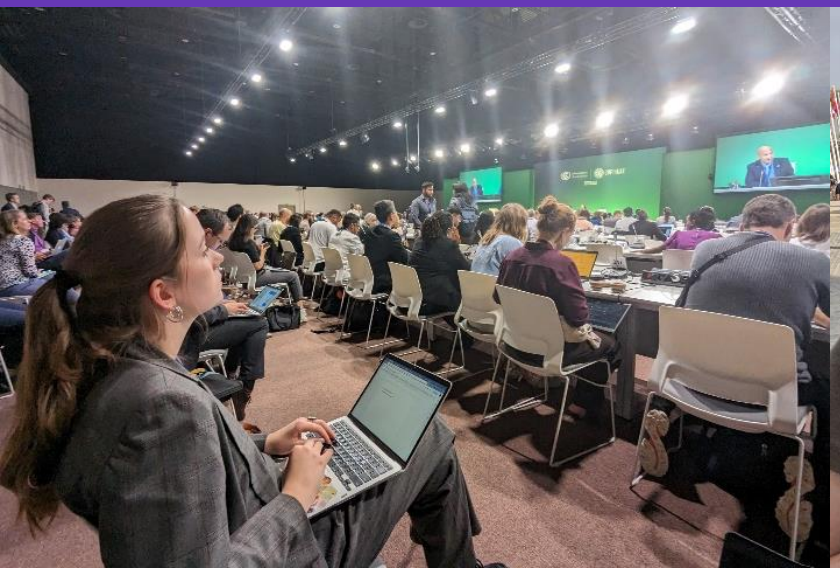




Leadership Opportunities

- Plan and host local events
- Pittsburgh Youth Climate Action Summit
- USA Local Conference Of Youth (LCOY) to draft a national youth statement on climate
- COP28 & COP30 to influence negotiations and draft text on global climate policy!





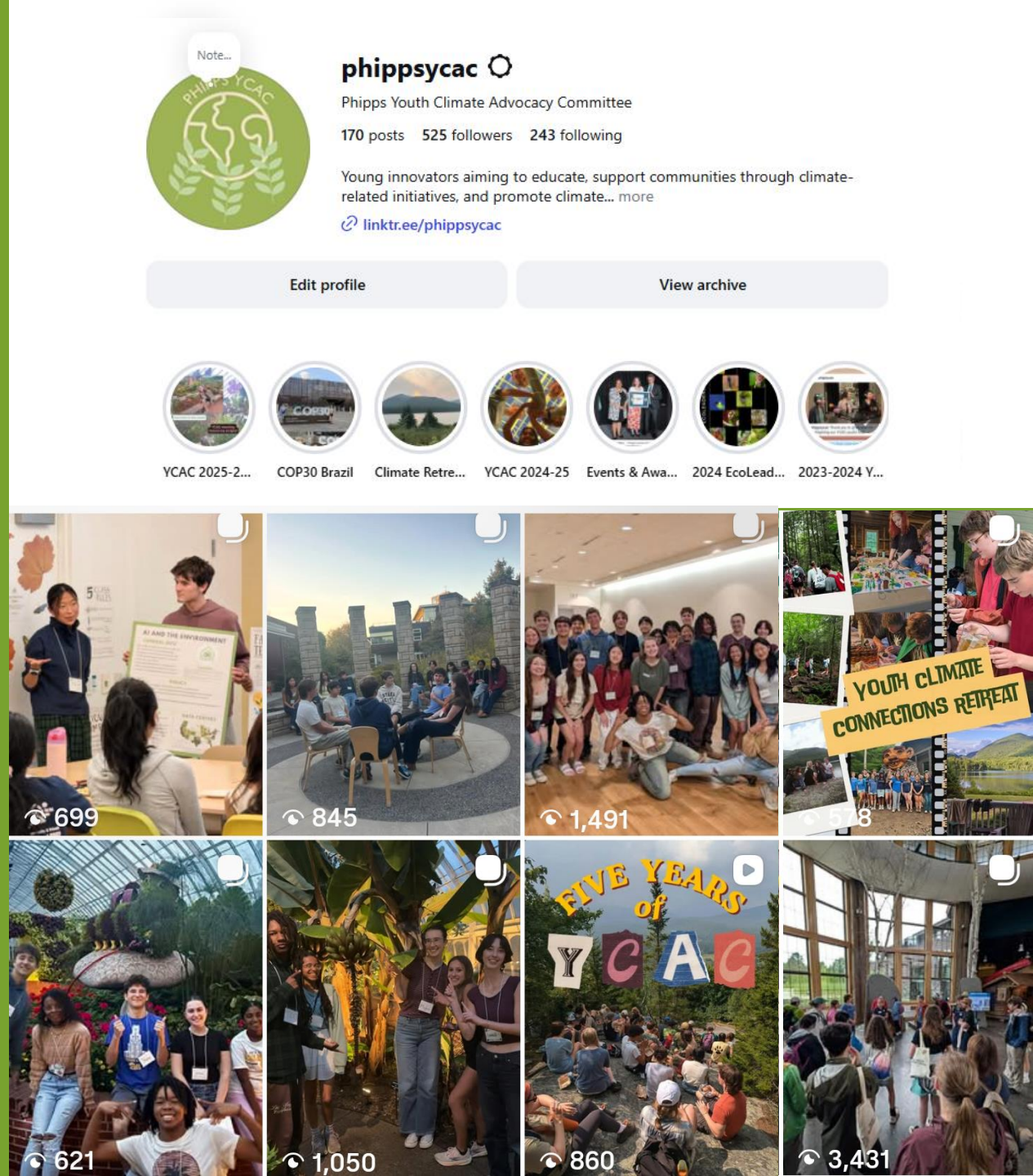




Lessons learned

- Youth thrive in decision-making space
- Youth leaders are essential
- Structure and accountability is welcome and wanted
- Project timelines and planning are areas for growth and skill development
- **Youth want to meet and collaborate with other youth around the country!**

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Climate Toolkit Youth Network



Critical Action Lab
Natural History Museum of Utah



EcoExplorer Internship
Museum of Discovery and Science



Students Promoting Environmental Awareness + Knowledge (SPEAK)
Atlanta Botanical Garden



Youth Climate Leadership Program
Mass Audubon



The Morton Arboretum Youth Volunteer Program
The Morton Arboretum

Climate Toolkit Youth Network (CTYN) Resources

- Youth-led Spotlight Series
- Quarterly Meet-ups to Support Staff & Youth
- Blogs & Stories of Action
- Resource Library
- Best Practices
- Games and Activities



CLIMATE POLICY, YOUTH SPOTLIGHT

Phipps Youth on the World Stage at COP28

January 4, 2024



RESOURCES FOR WORKING WITH YOUTH, YOUTH IN ACTION, YOUTH SPOTLIGHT

Youth Spotlight Series: Building a Community of Nature Lovers in Universities with Gruppo Lataste

December 8, 2025



BEST PRACTICES, RESOURCES FOR WORKING WITH YOUTH, YOUTH IN ACTION

Youth Climate Summit Toolkit

May 22, 2025



RESOURCES FOR WORKING WITH YOUTH

Climate, Energy, and Environmental Games

May 23, 2025



RESOURCES FOR WORKING WITH YOUTH, YOUTH IN ACTION

THE CO-CREATION GENERATION

May 23, 2025

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Ways You Can Utilize the CTYN:

- Interviewing different youth and/or groups about their climate action experiences
- Participating in and amplifying each other's work
- Collaborating on world-wide projects
- Sharing resources and expert knowledge
- Sharing opportunities, events, and networks
- Youth-led virtual meet-ups and summits hosted by a different youth group each time, with topics chosen by youth
- Attending quarterly staff meetings to share what's happening in your institution

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Where do I get started forming a youth climate group?



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How to Start a Youth Group Series

All the details of how our local programs run

- Number of teens and leadership structure
- Application process and schedule
- Budget, stipends, partnerships, and funding
- Meetings, events, and opportunities
- Youth-led project planning

Coming Soon!

Starting Jan/Feb 2027

How other youth groups run their programs, featuring members of the Climate Toolkit Youth Network (CTYN)

Planning session(s) to help you navigate barriers, find areas of potential, and brainstorm what kind of youth program fits the best at your institution

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Questions?