



AMERICAN CLIMATE
LEADERSHIP AWARDS

The Wild Center: The Youth Climate Program

wildcenter.org/our-work/youth-climate-program

This guide offers a successful stepwise model for you to replicate in your community. It is part of a series featuring the finalists of ecoAmerica's 2023 American Climate Leadership Awards.

OVERVIEW

The Youth Climate Program convenes, engages and inspires young people to act on climate change through conference-style “Youth Climate Summits” that focus on the knowledge and skills — climate science, impacts, justice and solutions — needed to effectively lead on climate change. Summits empower youth to generate Climate Action Plans to implement in their schools and communities. Thanks to our YCS Toolkit, Summits have been replicated globally and are recognized as a pathway for youth engagement on climate change.

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

1. Download The Free Youth Climate Summit Toolkit

We're here to help you get your Youth Climate Summit up and running! To join this global initiative, download the [Youth Climate Summit Toolkit](#), a step by step guide for launching a Summit in your community, no matter where you live. You'll find [supplemental resources](#) including budgets, timelines, agendas, etc. Join the [Youth Climate Summit Network](#) and attend monthly planning meetings hosted by Wild Center staff!

2. Create a Climate Change Community Asset Map

Who in your community is already working on climate change? Who might want to contribute to a Youth Climate Summit? Think about those in your school, organization, or broader community that might be able to offer time, local expertise, funds, resources, or creative ideas. Then, sketch out some ideas on how your summit fits into the larger picture of climate impacts, action and solutions in your region.

3. Form a Youth Climate Summit Steering Committee with Youth, Teachers & Partners

Now that you've got your team, organize meet-ups that work for everyone. Consider accessibility: youth stipends, hybrid meetings. Work with your team to make major decisions: structure (single or multi day Summit), venue (ensure there is space for keynotes, breakout sessions, meals, and project planning), date (consider sports, exams, prom, concerts, etc.) And, as a group, build your timeline and work plan.

4. Logistics- Agenda

Create an agenda that includes a climate change 101 or similar presentation; a variety of speakers, including youth; time for groups to create climate action plans; and consider climate solutions-focused themed workshops. Ideas: renewable energy, wind power, citizen science, climate and art, waste management, climate justice, transportation, climate communication, starting a green team, and youth leadership. Start contacting potential speakers and workshop leaders (a great job for the youth planning team)!

5. Logistics- Budget

We strongly encourage you to make your Summit free. To support the event, consider local partnerships, creating business sponsorship levels, fundraising with youth, or applying for grants. Make sure to budget for speaker and workshop honoraria, including youth speakers. Plan for venue costs, feeding participants, and providing functional swag such as reusable water bottles and utensils. Be sure to recognize any funders, donors and sponsors at the event.

6. Logistics- Make it Fun & Include Community

Be Creative! Collective art murals, green photo booths, social media scavenger hunts, games, and inspirational activities that bring joy to working together and building community. Offer opportunities for youth to share their work on the main stage ("Bright Spots") and in an interactive poster session. Invite community-organizations that work with youth, on climate solutions and social justice to table to share ideas, opportunities and career pathways.

7. Logistics- Communication Plan and Invitees

Follow the YCS Toolkit's communication timeline, beginning 5+ months before to the week after the Summit. Get the word out through press releases, save the dates, opening registration, email reminders, and follow up photos and resources. Engage local media to promote and cover the event. It's an opportunity for youth to interact with decision-makers, so consider what local and regional partners, officials or policymakers you'd like to invite.

8. Summit Essentials

Ensure youth are actively engaged in every step of planning, including on the planning team and as speakers. Include work time for Climate Action Plans to implement in their schools and communities (see facilitation guide). Be sure to walk the talk by minimizing waste, serving locally-sourced food, and offsetting carbon emissions. Include transition time between activities and leave space for youth to network and get to know one another.

9. During the Summit

Give The Wild Center a shout-out with the Partner Summit Media Kit in the Youth Climate Program's Toolkit Supplemental Resources. Ensure there are clearly defined roles for your student planning team as well as any staff or volunteers. During the event, have someone in charge of taking photos and videos, introducing each speaker and workshop, facilitating meals, keeping time, and passing out the all-important evaluations. Enjoy and celebrate!

10. Post-Summit

Congratulations, you did it! Take a breather. Then, take time to debrief with the steering committee/student planning team. Leave time to process Summit evaluations and reflect on your planning process for your next Summit event. Make sure to send thank you notes to your speakers and funders! Finally, fill out the "I Hosted a Summit Form" so we can learn about your Summit and add you to our Youth Climate Summit Map.

The Wild Center (Natural History Museum of the Adirondacks): The Youth Climate Program is an ACLA 2023 Finalist. For more information and replication guides, go to ecoAmerica.org.

ecoAmerica's American Climate Leadership Awards (ACLA) recognizes, rewards, and shares best practices on climate change advocacy and action nationwide. ACLA provides \$175,000 annually in recognition of real climate leadership. Individuals and organizations selected as finalists have achieved demonstrated success in engaging a broader diversity of Americans for climate action at local, regional, and national levels, in ways that are replicable, while prioritizing diversity, inclusion, and justice.