



Youth and Citizens Groups

This section is for individuals and organizations that are interested in supporting or providing environmental and sustainability education to citizen and youth organization leaders and members.

Outcomes

Youth and citizen groups will:

1. Be informed about environmental issues, the value of local natural environments, and issues of environmental health

Sample Indicators:

- They have a basic understanding of environmental issues, ecology, and **sustainability**.
 - They know how and where to access good environmental resources, and use the tools and resources they need to respond to environmental issues.
 - Their members make requests for and know how to access information on environmental health and other environmental issues.
2. Offer **environmental education** programming under the mantle of their ongoing activities

Sample Indicators:

- They share environmental concern, knowledge of issues, positive experiences, and opportunities with their members, the local community, and the broader public.
- They help, in the context of their community initiatives and events, to educate group and community members about the dependency of human health on healthy environments.
- They mentor other citizen and youth groups to educate them, and to develop strong, local and provincial, environmental **stewardship** networks of volunteer.
- Businesses, women, Aboriginal youth, and youth-at-risk are empowered to play a significant role in environmental decision-making.



3. Initiate and lead community involvement in planning and carrying out local environmental and conservation projects

Sample Indicators:

- They act as stewards of local environments, monitor local ecosystem health, and take action on identified concerns.
 - They work in collaboration with other individuals and organizations, initiating partnerships and projects to benefit, designate, and protect local environments.
4. Have and encourage direct contact with and appreciation of the natural world

Sample Indicators:

- Group members increase and encourage contact with, and positive interactions in, local natural environments.
 - Urban group leaders and members make more connections to urban nature.
5. Understand how government works, and engage in local democratic processes and decision-making actions leading to a clean, healthy environment

Sample Indicators:

- They act locally and politically, engaging in the political process and broader community decision-making on environmental issues.
 - They demonstrate critical thinking (e.g., question authority and consumer culture).
 - They ask for accountability and transparency from the government.
5. Model environmental citizenship (walk the talk)

Sample Indicators:

- They integrate environmental considerations, ecological principles and an ecosystem approach into their decision-making.
- They make a conscious effort to apply an **ecocentric** rather than an **anthropocentric** world-view in their criteria for decision-making.
- They integrate economics with the environment.
- They apply environmental knowledge and skills in their personal lives, as well as in professional and social actions.
- They organize their lives to make environmental decision-making as practical as possible.



Needs

Youth and citizen group leaders and members need:

- Awareness of the natural history of their region, including identification and public recognition of local areas needing protection
- Training opportunities in leading **environmental education** activities, such as **environmental education** program ideas that can be delivered in their local community
- Awareness of and access to material, resources, and contact information
- A better understanding of citizens' rights and opportunities to participate in environmental decision-making
- An education system that creates a society of people looking for more than rewards (extrinsic learning)
- Formal **environmental education**: environmental science/studies in the curriculum
- Committed teachers to participate in community environmental programs
- Internalization of ecocentrism before reaching their teen years
- The means to examine and counter values propounded and reinforced by media and advertising
- Ability to overcome the fear of the environment costing people their jobs and current lifestyles
- Motivation, education, and empowerment
- Baseline research and community-based research
- Easier and expanded communication among similar interest groups and like-minded individuals to share creativity and successes
- Youth–adult partnerships for environmental problem-solving
- Access to meeting spaces
- Better representation of youth at events and entities such as conferences and boards
- Ways to deal with the transitory nature of group membership (especially youth groups)
- Improved organizational capacity (e.g., time, commitment, and resource support)
- Funding, staff, volunteers, and training, including peer recognition programs for volunteers
- Know-how to access and produce awareness-building material (e.g., resources, contact information, advertising, staff with media and public relations skills)
- Buy-in and management to allocate resources in the area of environmental health
- Recognition for environmental initiatives and achievements

Strategies

Programs, Projects, and Policies

1. Provide increased opportunities for youth and citizens to engage in environmental learning and action programs:



- a) provide annual **environmental education** training workshops and conferences for youth and citizen group leaders;
 - b) provide motivational presentations for groups;
 - c) incorporate environmental programs into after-school programs, groups, and daycares; make them available to interested parties;
 - d) provide innovative programs that blend social and environmental needs for **new Canadians**; and
 - e) support environmental networking and access to information for interested citizens and youth.
2. Engage youth and citizen groups in projects to enhance, restore, and celebrate local natural environments.
 3. Promote increased use of local natural environments, outdoor education centres, and urban nature for youth and citizen groups.
 4. Provide programs that educate group members and the public about special features of natural areas, in an interesting and engaging manner.
 5. Strategize to overcome existing barriers to local **environmental education** activities.
 6. Help youth to increase their presence on environmental foundation boards.
 7. Institutionalize the right of youth and citizen group members to participate in decision-making in environmental organizations and initiatives.

Resources

1. Create an infrastructure for environmental action.
2. Enhance the capacity-building potential of groups.
3. Create a central database/exchange of environmental organizations, publications, networks, contacts, and financial supporters.
4. Create a website of program activities for youth.
5. Create a how-to website to facilitate communication and contacts among groups and individuals.
6. Establish partnerships and networks among groups:
 - a) create partnerships between local environmental groups and their initiatives, and local businesses who can help with capacity-building;
 - b) establish connections between formal and informal organizations (e.g., establish partnerships among teachers and environmental organizations; define ways in which groups can help teachers meet curriculum objectives with a focus on **environmental education**);
 - c) liaise with professors, instructors, deans, and department heads at universities and colleges to create community-based research, credit for product, and professional experience courses;
 - d) create partnerships and strategies to help locate new volunteers; and
 - e) engage youth and citizens in existing environmental group campaigns.
7. Identify and arrange access to space for youth and citizen discussions and activities.
8. Provide staff consultation to help with technical details of proposed initiatives.



9. Develop assessment tools for programs and initiatives.

Support

1. Collaborate to provide funding support.
2. Obtain media coverage for events; reinforce media skills.
3. Recognize the achievements of youth and citizen groups in environmental initiatives and **environmental education** (e.g., a John Muir recognition program).
4. Recognize role models (e.g., celebrities, community members, businesses, and corporate leaders).

Please see Appendix 1 for a list of useful websites.

