



Staff Report

Operations – Sustainability & Solid Waste

Report To: COW-Operations_Planning_and_Development_Services
Meeting Date: November 19, 2024
Report Number: CSOPS.24.079
Title: Youth Climate Action Fund Update
Prepared by: Nicholas Cloet, Sustainability Coordinator

A. Recommendations

THAT Council receive Staff Report CSOPS.24.079, entitled “Youth Climate Action Fund Update”;

AND THAT the Mayor and Clerk are authorized to execute a Grant Agreement between the Youth Climate Action Fund as represented by Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors and The Corporation of The Town of The Blue Mountains to receive \$100,000 USD for administration and disbursement of funding for youth-led climate action projects, pending a review by the Town’s Youth Climate Action Fund Project Team and an independent legal opinion;

AND THAT the Youth Climate Action Fund Project Team continue to be comprised of the same members in Round 2 as in Round 1.

B. Overview

The Youth Climate Action Fund (YCAF) program provided the Town with \$50,000 USD, which allowed the Town to provide eight eligible recipients with funding to support youth-led climate action projects. The Town’s success and engagement with the YCAF program in this first round means the Town may be eligible to participate in Round 2, which is expected to distribute up to \$100,000 USD to participating community governments around the world for the same purpose of supporting youth-led climate action projects in 2025.

C. Background

On June 3, 2024, Council provided authorization to the Mayor and Clerk to execute a Grant Agreement with the Youth Climate Action Fund, represented by Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors, allowing the Town to receive \$50,000 USD (\$66,565 CAD after the exchange rate) to distribute as microgrants for eligible youth-led climate action projects.

The YCAF program calls for recipient municipalities to organize a Project Team to support the program’s implementation. Council identified two members of Council in addition to the Mayor to join the Town’s YCAF Project Team, alongside key Town staff, the Blue Mountains Library

CEO, and up to two Public Members to be appointed by Council following a call for applications. After the Clerk's office reviewed applications for Public Membership, one additional member from Beaver Valley Outreach was added to the YCAF Project Team. The Town's YCAF Project Team is now comprised of the following members:

1. Mayor Matrosovs
2. Member of Council (Councillor Ardiel)
3. Member of Council (Councillor Maxwell)
4. Library CEO (Jennifer Murley)
5. Sustainability Coordinator of the Town of The Blue Mountains (Nicholas Cloet)
6. Communications and Economic Development Coordinator of the Town of The Blue Mountains (Allan Gibbons)
7. Public Member (Meghan Loney, Youth Engagement Coordinator, Beaver Valley Outreach).

The June 3, 2024 decision also directed staff to launch The Blue Mountains Youth Climate Action Fund application form and guidance for applicants. The program materials were built on templates and information provided by the YCAF program, and were made available on a dedicated website (www.thebluemountains.ca/YCAF) on June 4, 2024, with a Public Notice announcing the program on June 7, 2024. The program was designed with two proposal intake periods: an initial deadline for early consideration on July 8, 2024, and a final submission deadline on August 12, 2024.

One of the Project Team's tasks, accomplished in a June 18, 2024 meeting, was to identify members for a Selection Committee to review and select proposal submissions. The Selection Committee helped to ensure proposals were eligible and undertook a joint scoring exercise for each proposal according to a rubric provided by the YCAF program. The Selection Committee also asked clarifying questions and suggested scope changes where necessary to ensure projects would be eligible for the fund. The Selection Committee for the first round of funding was facilitated by the Sustainability Coordinator and included the following members:

- Mayor Andrea Matrosovs
- Jennifer Murley, Library CEO
- Mylene McDermid, Accounting Analyst for the Town
- Megan Myles, Climate Change Coordinator-Outreach and Engagement, Grey County
- Kassandra Shand, Library summer student.

The Selection Committee met twice to review submissions. Of the eight submitted project proposals, all eight were eventually accepted. Most of the submissions required minor scope changes or had to answer clarifying questions to ensure they were eligible to receive the funds.

All proposals needed to have a sponsoring organization, with a bank account in the organization's name, in order to be able to receive the funds. Each of the sponsoring organizations signed an agreement with the Town agreeing to adhere to the YCAF project requirements, including spending only on eligible expenses and final reporting deadlines, as detailed on the YCAF website: www.thebluemountains.ca/YCAF. These agreements were signed

by the Mayor and Clerk and allowed the Town to distribute the awarded funds to each recipient project. The agreements and grant distributions took place before a September 30 deadline to distribute funds established by the YCAF program.

A requirement of the Town's involvement in the YCAF program was to allocate all funding by September 30, 2024 and to submit a report containing program metrics (the 'Disbursement Report') by or before October 15, 2024, detailing the number of projects supported, amount of funds distributed, activities that these projects would undertake, and the number of youth leaders. One of the YCAF program's objectives with this report is to identify which communities performed well and can be invited to participate in a second round of the YCAF program in 2025. At the time of writing this staff report, specific details for Round 2 of the YCAF program have not yet been confirmed; however, it is anticipated through earlier information from the YCAF program that Round 2 will provide \$100,000 USD to selected communities with a budget for Town expenses (staff time, event expenses, etc.) of up to 20% (\$20,000 USD).

Communities with unallocated funds by the September 30 deadline were encouraged to allocate these funds either to municipal spending (up to a maximum of \$10,000 USD) or to provide additional support to grant recipients (seeking at least \$40,000 USD in grant funding, and a maximum of \$5,000 USD per recipient). As the Town's expenses had reached the maximum allowed amount, and the Town's YCAF recipients collectively requested less than the \$40,000 USD target, additional funds were allocated to each recipient. These amounts are detailed in the Analysis section.

All YCAF-funded project activities must be completed, and all funds spent by December 31, 2024. Final reports outlining the outcomes of each project must be prepared by the recipients and are due to the Town by January 31, 2025. A final report summarizing the results of these projects, along with any media, photos, and other supporting materials must be processed by the Town into a final report for submission to the YCAF Program by February 28, 2025.

D. Analysis

The Blue Mountains YCAF program received eight project submissions. Three submissions were received by the July 8 deadline and five more were received by the August 12 final deadline. Most of the submissions were asked to provide additional detail or to revise their scope of work to ensure eligibility and alignment with the Town's climate and sustainability objectives. All eight of the final project proposals were evaluated by the Selection Committee and scored highly enough to receive funding.

Up to \$6,000 CAD was initially available per successful proposal; however, because of the YCAF Program's encouragement in September 2024 that communities allocate unspent funds to support recipients, each recipient has been allocated up to \$6,600 CAD for eligible project spending, which falls just below the \$5,000 USD limit given the exchange rate when the Town received YCAF funds.

The projects receiving YCAF funding in 2024 are as follows. The table includes the initial funded amount and then the updated funding allocation to \$6,600 CAD (\$4,957.56 USD) for each project.

Project Title, Sponsor Organization & Brief Description	Funding (\$ CAD)
<p>Aki Guardians Climate Outreach, sponsored by Bagida'waad Alliance</p> <p>Guided hikes to provide outdoor education for youth and other members of the public, focusing on climate change and biodiversity content and engaging youth in litter cleanups.</p>	<p>\$6,000 → \$6,600</p>
<p>Envirothon Education, sponsored by Grey Bruce Catholic District School Board</p> <p>High school students participating in an 'Envirothon' student group will utilize the funding to enhance their learning about climate change and will share learnings with other youth. Envirothon participants will also explore feasibility and hope to implement a project to enhance endangered bat habitat affected by climate change with bat house installations.</p>	<p>\$3,000 → \$6,600</p>
<p>Remote sensing monitoring of the inland lakes in Bruce Peninsula National Park, sponsored by Bruce Peninsula Biosphere Association</p> <p>A master's student will install water level loggers at Bruce Peninsula National Park and will ground-truth new satellite data to study the impacts of climate change on inland aquatic ecosystems, which will involve other young park workers and will share information about the project with youth in the broader region.</p>	<p>\$6,000 → \$6,600</p>
<p>Tiny Forest, sponsored by Beaver Valley Outreach</p> <p>A youth-led initiative with assistance from Climate Action Now Network will plant a 'tiny forest' on a small plot of land provided by the Town. In a tiny forest, a high density of trees and shrubs are planted to mimic natural forest succession over time, leading to greater carbon sequestration and more biodiverse planting compared to typical tree plantings.</p>	<p>\$6,000 → \$6,600</p>

<p>Green Grey Blue Mini Series, sponsored by Beaver Valley Outreach</p> <p>This youth-led short video series will educate the public, targeting youth, about local sustainability initiatives, the importance of climate action, and the various ways individuals can contribute to these efforts through storytelling, visual media, and a little humour to foster a sense of environmental stewardship and community pride.</p>	<p>\$5,375 → \$6,600</p>
<p>Youth Climate, Sustainability and Engagement Summit, sponsored by Escarpment Corridor Alliance</p> <p>The goal of the Youth Climate, Sustainability, and Engagement Summit is to run an event in December for youth to learn more about local sustainability and climate action, and network with and learn more about local environmental agencies, with opportunities for youth looking for green jobs and/or volunteer opportunities.</p>	<p>\$6,000 → \$6,600</p>
<p>Natural pigment markers R&D, sponsored by Beaver Valley Outreach</p> <p>The youth lead will work with an advisor and will build local contacts to investigate locally sourced, natural/native plants as potential dye sources, will experiment with methods to turn these dyes into marker ink, and will also investigate potential marker casing materials, with a component of the project focused on educating other youth on plant-based dyes and climate impacts of conventional markers.</p>	<p>\$5,900 → \$6,600</p>
<p>Events for Life Climate Action, sponsored by Events for Life</p> <p>Events for Life serves people with special needs, a group typically underserved by climate education and with limited opportunities to take action. This project will engage young EFL participants in climate education with the help of a youth coordinator and young volunteers, and youth participants will create monthly newsletters to share what they learned about climate change.</p>	<p>\$6,000 → \$6,600</p>

Staff time was utilized to deliver The Blue Mountains YCAF program beginning in March 2024. The project manager for the Town’s Youth Climate Action Fund is the Sustainability Coordinator position, which contributed the bulk of staff hours. The following table outlines hours for the following Town staff positions up to September 30, 2024: Sustainability Coordinator, Communications and Economic Development Coordinator, and Accounting Analyst. Positions such as Mayor, Councillors and Library CEO were not included. Staff rates include hourly wages as well as benefits, pension contributions and all other associated staffing costs.

Town Staff Member or Expenses	Staff Hours	Total Cost
Sustainability Coordinator	254.5	\$13,776.13
Communications & Economic Development Coordinator	40	\$ 2,233.24
Accounting Analyst	20	\$1,202.40
Event expenditures: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refreshments for July 4 grant-writing workshop at Town Hall • Refreshments and venue for July 17 grant-writing workshop in Meaford • Three virtual events (informational webinar, and two orientation events for YCAF recipients) did not incur costs beyond staff time 	NA	\$241.63
Total YCAF spending (includes all above staff time & expenditures) for March 1, 2024 – September 30, 2024	314.5	\$17,453.40
Projected estimate of YCAF resourcing for October 1, 2024 – February 28, 2025	74	\$4,016.72
Round 1 YCAF spending covered by the YCAF budget	NA	\$13,313.00
Estimated Round 1 YCAF spending covered by the Town’s sustainability staff budget	NA	\$8,157.12

At the exchange rate applied when the Town received YCAF funds, the \$10,000 USD budget amount provided to the Town was equivalent to \$13,313 CAD. Sustainability Coordinator time was necessary over and above the amount compensated by the YCAF program, and will be covered by the sustainability staff budget. Additional staff time will be needed to provide occasional support to YCAF fund recipients in the October to December 2024 period, and to undertake final Round 1 reporting in early 2025. A final report is due to the YCAF program on February 28, 2024. Additional staff time needed between October 1, 2024 and February 28, 2025 is estimated at approximately 74 more Sustainability Coordinator hours at a dollar value of \$4,016.72 CAD. This estimate could change based on actual needs for project support as youth leads implement their projects and prepare material for their final reports.

Learnings and Next Steps

The first round of YCAF funding supports the Town’s sustainability priorities in a number of ways, as detailed earlier in the Analysis. Round 2 is anticipated to be approximately \$100,000 USD (twice the size of Round 1) with similar scope, eligibility requirements, and expectations for participating local governments, including a 20% allocation for Town spending/staff time and 80% for grant allocations. This program expansion would provide the Town and broader region with an unprecedented opportunity to engage youth in supporting local climate change mitigation and adaptation, through tangible projects, community events and learning opportunities.

Through Round 1 engagement activities, the Project Team and regional partners encountered youth and youth-supporting organizations with project concepts that could not be accomplished in the short timeframe provided in Round 1, and a great enthusiasm for the possibility of a better-timed Round 2 opportunity. Round 2 is well-positioned for greater success, as a longer timeframe is expected (November 2024 – October 2025), with a larger overall funding amount including a larger budget to cover Town spending and staff time (\$20,000 USD instead of \$10,000 USD), and the experiences and lessons learned in Round 1 will also lead to improved efficiency and confidence in the program.

The following table outlines several potential areas for improvement that the Project Team and staff can explore further in the preparation and delivery of Round 2.

Challenges Faced in Round 1	Potential Solutions for Round 2
<p>Only eight submissions received, which would not be enough to allocate \$80,000 USD in grant funding in Round 2.</p>	<p>The successes and youth experiences of Round 1 will help build trust and demonstrate that the YCAF funding, work and accomplishments are attainable.</p> <p>Expanded promotional and direct engagement efforts will ensure Georgian College students, high school students, and youth broadly across the eligible region receive YCAF program information. Having more time to spend on these activities is a key aspect of improving the program’s reach.</p>
<p>Low number of project proposals coming from high school age youth (2/8 submissions) and learning that several interested high school students did not ultimately have parental/guardian permission to participate.</p>	<p>More engagement time in Round 2 and launching in the middle of the school year will enable better engagement of all youth, compared to the Round 1 launch mere weeks before summer vacation.</p> <p>Proactive engagement of parents/guardians to ensure they are informed enough to provide youth with permission.</p> <p>Continue and perhaps grow direct engagement activities for high school aged youth with partners such as Beaver Valley Outreach and the Library.</p>

<p>Reliance on staff time to deliver the project, including program design, communications and promotions, workshops, providing project assistance to youth leads, participating in YCAF program webinars, providing final reporting, and other program support.</p>	<p>The YCAF program will benefit from further collaboration with community partners. An initial workshop may help build buy-in and help the Town understand partner needs and benefit from a larger, broader group of partners in Round 2.</p> <p>Some aspects of the project may benefit from contracting out to a third-party service provider. For example, a consultant or non-profit organization could receive funding to deliver workshops for youth and act as a resource to help youth write proposals. This and other areas for third-party support can be explored further by the YCAF Project Team.</p> <p>Some aspects of the project will continue to be led by staff, but with much greater efficiency after the experience gained in Round 1.</p>
<p>The Selection Committee needed to organize quickly, leading to limited engagement of younger people in reviewing and selecting youth-led projects.</p>	<p>Selection Committee can remove one or two Town staff persons and add one or more youth leaders from the projects that were selected in Round 1.</p> <p>With more time available, the Town can provide the opportunity for a young Indigenous person to join the Selection Committee. This person may be recruited from a Round 1 recipient or through outreach via Saugeen Ojibway Nation.</p>
<p>The eligible area for The Blue Mountains YCAF program is the traditional territory of Saugeen Ojibway Nation, but the program did not have Indigenous representation in the project selection process. Mayor Matrosovs made direct outreach to the joint Chiefs and Manager of Saugeen Ojibway Nation’s Environment Office. Limited time to engage in Round 1 was identified as the core challenge to engaging a young member of the Saugeen Ojibway Nation community.</p>	<p>Continued direct engagement of Saugeen Ojibway Nation early in the Round 2 process will be undertaken.</p> <p>Mayor Matrosovs will have met with the Manager of the Environment Office and the two Chiefs on October 23, 2024 to discuss the Round 2 opportunity.</p> <p>An invitation for a young member of Saugeen Ojibway Nation’s community will be extended with more time for consideration compared to the Round 1 invitation.</p>

At the time of writing this report, a formal offer to participate in Round 2 of the YCAF program had not yet been received. Council is asked to allow the Clerk and Mayor to sign a Round 2

grant agreement, should one be offered to the Town, provided an independent legal opinion and review by the Project Team are in keeping with the Town's expectations for the YCAF program. A full consensus of Project Team members would be sought to ensure Round 2 of the YCAF program is adequately resourced and appropriate for the Town.

E. Strategic Priorities

1. Communication and Engagement

We will enhance communications and engagement between Town Staff, Town residents and stakeholders

3. Community

We will protect and enhance the community feel and the character of the Town, while ensuring the responsible use of resources and restoration of nature.

F. Environmental Impacts

Youth-led projects supported by The Blue Mountains YCAF program needed to demonstrate alignment with the Town's sustainability plan, The Blue Mountains Future Story, and/or with the County's Climate Change Action Plan, Going Green in Grey. While not specifically identified as Key Steps written in the original plan in 2022, all eight youth-led projects align with many of the Goal statements and Bold Actions in TBM Future Story, including but not limited to:

- Numerous Goal statements affirming the Town's attention to reducing its carbon footprint, adapting to climate change, supporting biodiversity, seeking meaningful engagement and public involvement for all community members, and in particular, "The Blue Mountains... Includes diverse opportunities for youth to connect to the broader community and engage in civic life" (under Social Well-Being, pg. 10)
- Bold Action 2: Develop a Climate Change Adaptation Plan with Grey County's Climate Change Action Plan
- Bold Action 6: Develop a Biodiversity Strategy
- Bold Action 12: Establish litter and construction waste management plans
- Bold Action 14: Develop a Circular Economy Recommendations Report and expand circular economy
- Bold Action 20: Host an annual Community Sustainability Summit.

Youth-led projects supported by The Blue Mountains YCAF also includes the following Actions from Going Green in Grey:

- Action 1: Forest, Habitat and Biodiversity Protection and Expansion
- Action 5: Waste Diversion
- Action 16: Climate Adaptation Plan
- Action 19: Climate Action Engagement Program.

G. Financial Impacts

The Blue Mountains can claim program delivery expenses prior to September 30, 2024, including staff time, as eligible expenses to be covered by the YCAF budget, to a maximum of \$13,313 CAD. The value of staff time spent on YCAF program delivery prior to September 30, 2024 was approximately \$17,453.40. The value of staff time to be spent on supporting the YCAF program through to end of February, 2025 is anticipated to be approximately \$4,016.72. With the YCAF program covering \$13,313 of the Town's expenses and staff time, the total cost to the Town to deliver Round 1 of the YCAF program is approximately \$8,157.12.

H. In Consultation With

Monica Quinlan, Director of Corporate and Financial Services / Treasurer

I. Public Engagement

The topic of this Staff Report has not been the subject of a Public Meeting and/or a Public Information Centre as neither a Public Meeting nor a Public Information Centre are required. However, any comments regarding this report should be submitted to Nicholas Cloet, Sustainability Coordinator sustainability@thebluemountains.ca.

J. Attached

1. No attachments

Respectfully submitted,

Nicholas Cloet,
Sustainability Coordinator

Jeffery Fletcher,
Manager of Sustainability & Solid Waste

Alan Pacheco
Director of Operations

For more information, please contact:
Nicholas Cloet, Sustainability Coordinator
sustainability@thebluemountains.ca
519-599-3131 extension 235

Report Approval Details

Document Title:	CSOPS.24.079 Youth Climate Action Fund Update.docx
Attachments:	
Final Approval Date:	Nov 4, 2024

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

Jeff Fletcher - Oct 24, 2024 - 2:25 PM

Alan Pacheco - Nov 4, 2024 - 12:07 PM