



Staff Report

Operations – Sustainability & Solid Waste

Report To: COW - Operations, Planning and Building Services
Meeting Date: July 7, 2025
Report Number: OPS.25.025
Title: Youth Climate Action Fund Status Update
Prepared by: Nicholas Cloet, Sustainability Coordinator

A. Recommendations

THAT Council receive Staff Report OPS.25.025, entitled “Youth Climate Action Fund Status Update”.

B. Overview

The Town delivered Round 1 of the Youth Climate Action Fund (YCAF), providing up to \$6,600 each to eight youth-led climate action projects that took place in The Blue Mountains or elsewhere within Saugeen Ojibway Nation’s traditional territory. Two Round 1 recipients received extensions to complete their project work in early 2025 and unspent microgrant funds from all eight projects will be returned to the Youth Climate Action Fund. The Town is also currently delivering Round 2 of the Youth Climate Action Fund, providing up to \$7,000 CAD for each eligible youth-led climate action project within the same geographic area as Round 1. The Town received 15 applications and has selected 12 projects to receive funding.

C. Background

In early 2024, the Town was invited to participate in the Youth Climate Action Fund (YCAF), which provided 100 communities around the world with \$50,000 USD to deliver a climate action microgrant program for youth aged 15-24. As a small community, the Town established its eligible geography (where projects would need to be implemented) as the broader traditional territory of the Saugeen Ojibway Nation. The Town accepted this invitation and was able to support eight youth-led projects aligning with several Bold Actions within the Town’s Future Story sustainability plan, as well as with Grey County’s Going Green in Grey climate action plan.

Round 1 of the YCAF program had enough funding to support eight projects if each project received the maximum available amount of \$6,600, with the remaining funding available for the Town’s administrative costs. The staff time allocation and projections to fully deliver Round 1 was largely explored in [Staff Report CSOPS.24.079 Youth Climate Action Fund Update](#), with a brief update provided in the Analysis and Financial Impacts sections of this report.

In a decision at the December 2, 2025 Council meeting regarding [CSOPS.24.088 Youth Climate Action Fund Update - Additional Information](#), Council directed staff to pursue Round 2 of the YCAF program, provided the Grant Agreement between the Town and Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors received a legal review and satisfied the YCAF Project Team. These conditions were met – a legal review confirmed the Grant Agreement did not differ substantially from Round 1, save for outlining more concrete program requirements, and the Project Team’s review of the project requirements and Grant Agreement did not raise objections to continuing with Round 2.

The Town received \$100,000 USD to deliver Round 2 of the YCAF program, with \$15,000 USD for administrative costs (staff time and any expenditures), and \$85,000 USD for microgrant allocations. Round 2 is currently in progress, and an update is provided in the Analysis and Financial Impacts sections.

D. Analysis

Round 1 YCAF Program Completion Update

The total \$50,000 USD YCAF funding amount provided to the Town in Round 1 became \$66,565 CAD after the exchange rate, with \$13,313 (20%) available for administrative costs including staff time and event spending, and \$53,252 (80%) available to be distributed as microgrants.

The microgrant allocations and spending for the eight projects supported in Round 1 of the Town’s YCAF program are summarized in the following table. More descriptive information on each project’s activities is available at www.thebluemountains.ca/YCAF and in Attachment 1.

Project Title	Allocation (CAD)	Actual Spend (CAD)
Aki Guardians Climate Action	\$6,600.00	\$6,592.76
St. Mary’s Highschool Eco Team – The Bat Project	\$6,600.00	\$6,344.01
Remote sensing monitoring of the inland lakes in Bruce Peninsula National Park	\$6,600.00	\$6,600.00
Tiny Forest	\$6,600.00	\$6,600.00
Green Grey Blue Mini Series	\$6,600.00	\$6,600.00
Youth Climate, Sustainability and Engagement Summit	\$6,600.00	\$2,169.90
Natural pigment markers R&D	\$6,600.00	\$6,153.85
Events for Life Climate Action	\$6,000.00	\$3,677.05
Total Microgrant Allocations and Remaining Funds	\$52,200.00	\$44,737.57

Staff time allocations and projections to fully implement Round 1 of the program were outlined in [Staff Report CSOPS.24.079](#), which showed staff time in excess of the available YCAF administrative budget. At the completion of Round 1, staff time not covered by the YCAF admin budget is valued at approximately \$7,722.88 – representing the in-kind contribution of staff time (primarily Sustainability staff) to this important initiative. This amount is lower than the original projected value of \$8,157.12. While some staff time was required to support two project extensions and to complete a new final report in April 2025. Projects delayed by the Town's participation in YCAF Round 1 were discussed in earlier meetings of Council, and work to catch up on these files (in particular a corporate GHG inventory update) are underway.

The Town's final report to the YCAF program included a summary of Round 1 microgrant and administrative spending as presented in this staff report. It also asked communities to rate their readiness for youth engagement after Round 1; for example, the Town's ability to reach young audiences, and the ability to create a supportive and inclusive environment for youth to participate. Through the YCAF program, the Town is identifying key contacts and building its reputation with youth, and will be in position to meaningfully engage youth when it is time to update The Blue Mountains Future Story in 2027.

Round 2 YCAF Program Progress Update

Round 2 of the Town's YCAF program provided 100,000 USD for the full program, with the Town receiving \$139,767.50 CAD after the exchange rate. The program allowed up to 15% (instead of 20% in Round 1) for administrative costs, amounting to \$20,965.13, and \$118,802.38 (85%) was available for microgrant allocations – enough to support 17 projects seeking the maximum amount of \$7,000 CAD.

The program attracted 15 applications, and the Selection Committee ultimately selected 12 of these projects to receive funding.

The Round 2 Selection Committee was comprised of the following members:

- Nicholas Cloet, Sustainability Coordinator
- Jennifer Murley, CEO, Blue Mountains Public Library
- Megan Myles, Climate Change Communications & Engagement Coordinator, Grey County
- Jaden Slowiak, Grade 12 student at Georgian Bay Community School and recipient of a Round 1 microgrant (Tiny Forest project)

Brenna Agnew, Accounting Analyst, and Mayor Andrea Matrosovs were initially on the Selection Committee, however due to lack of capacity were unable to evaluate proposals and were instead kept informed.

The following table briefly identifies and describes the selected projects, which have until October 31, 2025 to fully implement. In cases where there is a strong demonstrated need for an extension, additional time may be granted at the Town's discretion to no later than December 15, 2025. Projects have been assigned numbers in Round 2 for ease of reference.

#	Project Title & Brief Description	Allocation
1	<p>Living Snow Fence (St. Mary's High School 'Eco Club', Owen Sound)</p> <p>Youth will seek a willing landowner (prioritizing TBM, though not limited to the Town) to plant a living snow fence near the roadside. This project will help improve adaptation and road safety that may be affected by extreme winter weather and wind, exacerbated by climate change.</p>	\$7,000.00
2	<p>Wiarton Bike Bus (Peninsula Shores - Ontario Federation of Home and School Associations)</p> <p>Youth will run numerous bike-to-school events for students and parents, as well as a bike repair workshop, with the goal to encourage more cycling and active transportation habits among students. Training on bike safety and engagement of adult supporters will enhance safety of this initiative.</p>	\$4,000.00
3	<p>Community Gardens & Urban Farming (St. Mary's High School 'Green Industries' students, Owen Sound)</p> <p>Students will assist in the design, installation and planting of several new community garden spaces at St. Mary's High School. Students will explore vegetable gardens, pollinator and flower gardens, and will learn about and implement First Nations cultivation methods. The project will engage diverse student volunteers and invest in tools for ongoing garden upkeep.</p>	\$7,000.00
4	<p>Water & Woods: Reviving Nature Through Cleanup & Reforestation (Water Speaks Alliance, with Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority)</p> <p>Youth will work with NVCA to restore a section of the Nottawasaga River within The Blue Mountains boundaries following NVCA's 4-step river restoration procedure, enhancing stream health and resilience to climate change. A volunteer riparian planting event will engage community members and educate participants.</p>	\$7,000.00
5	<p>Earthkeepers (Hillcrest Elementary School and Owen Sound District Secondary School)</p> <p>Students at OSDSS will procure and develop new educational materials suitable for engaging younger students at Hillcrest Elementary on climate change, sustainability, outdoor education and Indigenous teachings. Earthkeepers is a model of mentorship and peer learning between different ages of students that will build educator and youth leadership capacity.</p>	\$7,000.00

7	EcoFlow (Period Equity Alliance, with Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority) Period Equity Alliance is a non-profit organization that aims to improve access to period/menstrual products. The EcoFlow project will raise awareness of various options for sustainable period products through educational materials and a workshop, and will provide free access to compostable and other low-waste options via local and regional partners.	\$7,000.00
8	Get Our Festivals Clean (United Way of Bruce Grey, with Banditfest) The youth leads will run a climate tent at Banditfest (a for-youth by-youth music event), along with a climate change scavenger hunt and video interviews to ask youth about climate action. They will also take steps to improve the overall sustainability of the event and will document these efforts to improve the sustainability of future events.	\$7,000.00
9	Backyard Bird House project (Beaver Valley Community School and Grey Highlands Secondary School) Students at GHSS will design and build bird houses that are appropriate for providing habitat to threatened bird species, and will distribute these to students for installation in their communities. Youth leads will also run presentations on birds and will prepare informational signage. A bird feeder camera will also be installed in the schoolyard for students and their families to enjoy via livestream.	\$4,950.00
10	Butterfly Garden and Insect Hotels (Beaver Valley Community School and Georgian Bay Community School) Students at GBCS will work with younger BVCS students to build and install insect hotels and bat boxes on school grounds and for students to install at their homes. Students will learn about pollinators and will receive information and pollinator friendly plants to bring home. Students will also add pollinator-friendly plants to the school gardens.	\$4,850.00
11	Endangered Species Mural (Walkerton District Secondary School & BWDSB Outdoor Education Centre) Students will research endangered Ontario species and under the guidance of their art teacher will create a mural to raise awareness of these endangered species. The mural a permanent installation at the Bluewater Outdoor Education Centre in South Bruce Peninsula, which is a destination for many BWDSB students, and will be unveiled at a youth-led educational event.	\$5,500.00

13	Pollinator Engagement and Education for Town of the Blue Mountains “Creating a BUZZ around climate change” (Beaver Valley Outreach, with Pollinate TBM) Youth leads will aim to design and build several awareness-building installations, including a mural and sculpture, to raise awareness of pollinators and pollinator gardens in The Blue Mountains in partnership with Pollinate TBM. These installations aim for aesthetically pleasing, high-visibility and impact and permissions from some property owners has already been secured. Youth will also share information on pollinators and distribute native seeds and plants.	\$6,996.29
15	Community Gardens Food Security Service and Education (Canadian Mental Health Association Grey Bruce) Youth will co-design and help to install a new community area, featuring shade and seating space, at the CMHA Community Garden in Owen Sound. Youth leads will also identify educational content for presentations on local food and climate change that will be delivered to participants in the new space, and will explore other creative opportunities to educate and engage visitors at the site.	\$7,000.00
Total Round 2 Microgrant Awards		\$75,296.29

Most of the above project proposals required varying levels of assistance to ensure they were fully eligible for the YCAF program. Selection Committee members provided suggestions (optional tips to improve projects) and sometimes requests (mandatory updates to ensure eligibility) before deciding to select projects for funding. Three applications (#6, #12 and #14, missing from the above table) submitted incomplete proposals; for example, they may have included a worthwhile concept, but lacked a simple implementation plan and/or high-level budget. Unfortunately, these three applications were unable or unwilling to update their proposals for various reasons and therefore could not be considered for funding.

As implementation of Round 2 is still in progress, full accounting of staff time is not available; however, the table in the Financial Impacts section outlines that as of June 6, 2025, current staff time and spending had taken approximately 63% of the available administrative budget of \$20,965.13. As the most time-intensive activities are now complete – developing program information, promotions, grant-writing workshops, and processing Recipient Agreements – remaining activities are expected to stay within or close to the remainder of the administrative budget. These activities will include: convening youth leads and sponsoring organizations to learn about each other’s projects and running an end-of-year virtual meeting for participants; attending project events to show Town support; participating in bi-monthly YCAF webinars and advisory meetings; and supporting recipients’ final reporting to the YCAF program.

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.

4. Quality of Life

We will foster a high quality of life for full-time and part-time residents of all ages and stages, while welcoming visitors.

F. Environmental Impacts

Youth-led projects supported by the Youth Climate Action Fund support the Goals and Bold Actions of The Blue Mountains Future Story, as well as community-wide climate change objectives outlined in Going Green in Grey – Grey County's climate change action plan. Climate change is an emergency, as declared by the Town in 2019, with more of the risks and impacts anticipated to be faced by younger populations. The YCAF provides youth with an opportunity to become directly involved, build capacity across the region and support the climate change and sustainability objectives of their communities, with strong encouragement to link their projects to The Blue Mountains.

G. Financial Impacts

Round 1 Financial Impacts

Total remaining unallocated and unspent microgrant funds for Round 1 total \$8,514.43, calculated as follows:

- Unallocated funds: \$53,252 (total available) - \$52,200 (total allocated) = \$1,052
- Unspent microgrant funds: \$52,200 (total allocated) - \$44,737.57 (total spent) = \$7,462.43

Unspent funds totaling \$7,462.43 CAD have been or will be returned to the Town by Round 1 recipient organizations that did not spend their full microgrant amounts, and the Town will return these unspent funds to the YCAF program as per the Grant Agreement signed between the Town and Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors. Total unallocated and unspent funds are equivalent to \$6,395.58 USD at the original 2024 exchange rate, and there will likely be a change in the Canadian dollar equivalent once these funds are returned at a new exchange rate.

Per communications with the YCAF program on June 6, 2025, the Town and Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors will save on the administrative burden to return funds by shifting this transfer to the end of Round 2, meaning only one return transfer for unspent funds will be required for both programs in early 2026.

Most of the \$13,313 CAD admin budget subsidized the Town's budgeted staff time, and expenditures on Town-led events and microgrant spending provided small boosts to the Town and regional economy.

Round 2 Financial Impacts

Round 2 of the YCAF program allowed up to 15% if the total grant amount (\$139,767.50 CAD) for administrative costs, amounting to \$20,965.13. Of this amount, \$1,066.17 has been spent on expenses including promotions, event expenses, and honoraria for youth who supported Round 2 activities – including a young Selection Committee member and a youth-created Round 2 promotion for social media. Further event- or promotion-related expenditures are unlikely to be incurred for the remainder of Round 2.

The following table shows an approximate hourly commitment and value of these hours so far (up to and including June 6, 2025), and the total YCAF admin budget used and remaining. As in Round 1, most of the administrative budget represents subsidizes budgeted staff time.

YCAF R2 Budget Item	Details	\$ Value	Hours
Program Expenditures	Promotions, event expenses, honoraria for youth support (social media ad, Selection Committee member)	\$1,066	N/A
Staff Time	Sustainability Coordinator program management and Communications support	\$12,078	206
Total Budget Used	See above	\$13,144 (63%)	
Remaining Budget	Upcoming activities including webinars with youth recipients, support with project implementation and final reporting as needed	\$7,821 (37%)	N/A

Staff will continue to balance time needed to deliver the YCAF program with time needed for other important projects.

H. In Consultation With

Brenna Agnew, Accounting Analyst

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.

J. Attached

1. Attachment 1 – YCAF Round 1 Project Activities

Respectfully submitted,

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Sustainability Coordinator

Jeffery Fletcher,
Manager of Sustainability & Solid Waste

Alan Pacheco
Director of Operations

For more information, please contact:
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Report Approval Details

Document Title:	OPS.25.025 Youth Climate Action Fund Status Update.docx
Attachments:	- Attachment 1 YCAF Round 1 Project Activities.pdf
Final Approval Date:	Jun 10, 2025

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

Jeff Fletcher - Jun 9, 2025 - 4:04 PM

Alan Pacheco - Jun 10, 2025 - 11:59 AM