



Staff Report

Operations – Sustainability & Solid Waste

Report To: COW - Operations, Planning and Building Services
Meeting Date: April 7, 2026
Report Number: OPS.26.016
Title: Youth Climate Action Fund Completion of Round 2
Prepared by: Nicholas Cloet, Sustainability Coordinator

A. Recommendations

THAT Council receive Staff Report OPS.26.016, entitled “Youth Climate Action Fund Completion of Round 2”.

B. Overview

The Blue Mountains was one of 100 communities around the world to receive funding from the Youth Climate Action Fund (YCAF) in 2024 and 2025 (Round 1 and Round 2), allowing the Town to distribute microgrants to youth-led climate change initiatives within the Town and broadly across the traditional territory of the Saugeen Ojibway Nation. This report summarizes the project activities funded by the Town’s YCAF Round 2 program and outlines the Town’s administrative contributions to delivering the program for this period. This report also includes summary statistics of the combined Round 1 and Round 2 YCAF programs to describe the overall impact of the program.

C. Background

Round 1 of the YCAF program was delivered in 2024 with final reporting in early 2025. Round 1 provided the Town with a total of \$65,565 CAD (\$50,000 USD), including \$13,313 CAD (\$10,000 USD) for program expenditures including Town staff time, and \$53,252 CAD (\$40,000 USD) for microgrants. Ultimately, the Town awarded \$52,200 CAD to eight (8) eligible youth-led projects with actual spending on microgrant projects totaling \$44,737.57 CAD. Staff Report [OPS.25.025 Youth Climate Action Fund Status Update](#) summarized the results of Round 1 and identified the selected projects for Round 2.

Round 2 of the YCAF program was delivered in 2025 with final reporting to be completed in early 2026. Round 2 provided the Town with a total of \$139,767.50 CAD (\$100,000 USD), with \$20,965.13 CAD (\$15,000 USD) originally made available for program expenditures including Town staff time, and \$118,802.38 CAD (\$85,000 USD) available for microgrants. Ultimately, the Town awarded \$79,346.29 CAD (\$56,770 USD) to thirteen (13) eligible youth-led projects in Round 2. Final microgrant recipient reports, including actual spending, were largely submitted

to the Town by the deadline of January 31, 2026 with two late submissions received in early February. As described further in the Financial Impacts section, the Round 2 budget was altered by the YCAF program to enable a single return transfer of unspent funds for both Rounds 1 and 2 combined.

The Town submitted a full program summary report to the YCAF program on February 13, 2026. Confirmation of the financial reporting, including funds spent and unspent funds to be returned, was provided to the Town by the YCAF program on March 3, 2026.

A simple table of recipient projects is provided in the Analysis section with more detailed outlines of each recipient project in Attachment 1. YCAF program spending and unspent funds to be returned are summarized in the Analysis and Financial Impacts sections.

D. Analysis

Round 2 Microgrant Recipients, Staff Time and Spending

Round 2 of the YCAF program supported 13 youth-led projects. Staff Report [OPS.25.025 Youth Climate Action Fund Status Update](#) listed 12 projects, and the thirteenth was considered and approved, with YCAF program permission, in September 2025.

The following table summarizes the Round 2 project recipients, with more detail on the activities, outputs and outcomes of these projects available in Attachment 1: Summary of YCAF Round 2 Projects. Note that #1: Living Snow Fence, was re-scoped by the student group with the guidance of their teacher, as the original project concept would have relied on heavy machinery and professional services to plant larger tree stock, with minimal opportunities for youth involvement. This adjustment, and the new project focusing on enhancing urban habitat for native bird species, are detailed in Attachment 1.

Per the following table, the Round 2 YCAF program engaged 89 youth leads with a larger impact on youth of all ages (up to 24) of approximately 1,346 individual youth. Youth engaged in a wide variety of activities to take action on climate change, including art and expression, public and peer education, building and installing bird houses and insect hotels, community gardening, tree planting, and more. Eligible expenditures for these project activities totaled \$69,035.29 CAD, with funds spent on a variety of goods and services to support project implementation, and in many cases a 15% administration fee was also retained by the sponsoring organization for supervisory and administrative support.

In an adjustment detailed in the Financial Impacts section, the Town was asked to claim all unspent funds in Round 1 for administrative costs, with the same amount removed from the administrative budget in Round 2. This also expanded the Round 2 microgrant budget by the same amount. As a result, the Round 2 microgrant budget increased to \$127,328.18 CAD and the Round 2 administration budget decreased to \$12,439.31 CAD. After accounting for spending by each project, total unallocated (not awarded) and unspent microgrant funds sum to a total of \$58,293.22 CAD.

| # | Round 2 Microgrant Project Title | Youth Leads (15-24) | Youth Engaged (<25 yrs) | Allocation (total microgrant budget \$127,328.18) | Spent |
|--|---|---------------------|-------------------------|---|-------------|
| 1 | Bird Habitat Project (formerly the Living Snow Fence project) | 2 | 10 | \$7,000 | \$2,396.66 |
| 2 | Wiarnton Bike Bus | 3 | 104 | \$4,000 | \$3,527.43 |
| 3 | Community Gardens & Urban Farming | 3 | 40 | \$7,000 | \$7,000 |
| 4 | Water & Woods: Reviving Nature Through Cleanup & Reforestation | 1 | 14 | \$7,000 | \$6,859.03 |
| 5 | Earthkeepers | 6 | 461 | \$7,000 | \$6,545.88 |
| 6 | EcoFlow | 1 | 20 | \$7,000 | \$7,000 |
| 7 | Get Our Festivals Clean | 3 | 250 | \$7,000 | \$5,444.40 |
| 8 | Backyard Bird House project | 21 | 50 | \$4,950 | \$3,298.51 |
| 9 | Butterfly Garden and Insect Hotels | 20 | 80 | \$4,850 | \$4,432.33 |
| 10 | Endangered Species Mural | 3 | 160 | \$5,500 | \$2,534.43 |
| 11 | Pollinator Engagement and Education / "Creating a BUZZ around climate change" | 3 | 8 | \$6,996.29 | \$6,996.29 |
| 12 | Community Gardens Food Security Service and Education | 2 | 4 | \$7,000 | \$7,000 |
| 13 | Secondary School Students at Youth Climate Action Conference 4.0 | 19 | 145 | \$6,000 | \$6,000 |
| Total Round 2 Microgrant Awards | | 89 | 1,346 | \$79,346.29 | \$69,035.29 |
| Unspent Microgrant Award Funds | | | | | \$10,311.33 |
| Unallocated Microgrant Funds | | | | \$47,981.89 | |
| Total Unallocated and Unspent Funds | | | | \$58,293.22 | |

Staff time to deliver Round 2 was approximately 258.75 total staff hours, 32% more efficient than the final count of 379.5 hours required to deliver Round 1. The experience of delivering Round 1 and the ability to build upon existing relationships and communications templates improved efficiency; however, many of the same project delivery commitments and a larger number of projects meant that this was still a significant contribution for the Town in Round 2.

Program spending in Round 2 totaled \$1,066.17 for expenditures including: promotions on Spotify; stipends for Round 1 youth leads who created an Instagram Reel promotion for the Town; a stipend for a Round 1 youth leader to participate on the Selection Committee to review, score and select microgrant recipients; and refreshments and other expenditures for four grant-writing workshops and presentations including a guest speaker on civic engagement, Dr. Kate Graham, at a YCAF workshop held at Georgian Bay Community School.

Combined Outcomes for YCAF Round 1 and Round 2

The following overall benefits have been realized through the Town's delivery of two years of the YCAF program:

- The program funded 21 projects supporting local climate change priorities identified in the Town's Future Story and Grey County's Going Green in Grey, on topics such as: biodiversity, pollinator gardens and tree planting; investigating sustainable options such as local plant-based inks and compostable feminine hygiene products; involving youth in educating and mentoring younger students on topics of climate change and environmental sustainability; active transportation; and more. Several projects incorporated First Nations knowledge and/or have included youth leaders from Saugeen Ojibway Nation.
- Selected projects were awarded \$123,621.29 CAD in microgrants, with \$114,206.47 CAD in grant money spent on equipment and supplies, professional services, printing, advertising, venue space, refreshments, and more from local and regional providers.
- More than 105 youth between 15 and 24 years of age took on leadership responsibilities, with activities that included brainstorming and developing project proposals; coordinating project activities; and participating in the projects by developing communications, giving presentations, building or planting things, and expressing themselves through artwork, newsletters and videos. Many projects included younger youth and engaged adults as participants, mentors, or volunteers, further expanding the reach of these projects. Tracking of all-ages youth engagement (24 years or younger) in Round 1 was inconsistent, but available counts suggest that almost 1,500 youth of 24 years of age or younger were engaged in both Round 1 and Round 2 activities.
- Staff time spent running the program and other minor expenditures were compensated for by the YCAF program to a total of approximately \$33,832.79 CAD for Rounds 1 and 2 (see Financial Impacts section). The approximate value of all staff time and program spending required for these rounds is estimated at \$38,102.15 CAD, meaning the value of the Town's in-kind contribution for both rounds of the program is estimated to be at least \$4,269.36 CAD in value.
- Several projects were implemented within the Town's borders with direct benefits to Town residents, organizations, and the local environment. In Round 1, six of the eight projects had activities within The Blue Mountains, and in Round 2, six of the thirteen projects had activities within The Blue Mountains. Several more projects have had

broader benefits that may support the Town’s sustainability goals or local youth over the longer term.

- The program was an opportunity for the Town to develop and strengthen relationships with youth-supporting organizations and non-profit organizations in The Blue Mountains and across the region. As youth engagement is a strategic priority for the Town, these connections and the experience of working with them may assist the Town in supporting new youth engagement for other municipal initiatives in future years.

The Town received generous in-kind support from Grey County to reach regional partners and youth with promotions, to assist in the scoring and selection process, run a successful grant writing workshop in Owen Sound, and to support some projects in implementing beyond the Town’s borders. County staff also provided advice on project team meetings to help guide implementation of the program. As an organization that naturally engages across the broader region, Grey County’s support was important for the YCAF program’s success.

The Blue Mountains Public Library CEO also supported the delivery of the YCAF program by assisting in the scoring and selection process, and jointly delivered a civic engagement and YCAF grant-writing presentation for high school students at Georgian Bay Community School (GBCS). Beaver Valley Outreach also used their direct presence at GBCS to promote the program and provided ongoing advice on program delivery. Three also supported Round 2 activities: Jaden Slowiak, a high school student at GBCS and Round 1 Tiny Forest youth lead, assisted in the scoring and selection of Round 2 microgrant recipients; and, Katie Stewart and Atticus Russwurm, local youth leaders who ran the Green Grey Blue video project in Round 1, created a social media promotion to encourage new proposals for Round 2.

Ultimately, the YCAF program was a broadly collaborative effort for the Town and its many partners. The program centered youth leadership and enabled youth-supporting organizations to forge new connections with young leaders, learners, creatives and changemakers, providing youth with the means to take meaningful action on climate change and demonstrating the capabilities and energy of youth to make a difference in their communities. The Town should endeavor to continue to enhance youth engagement and civic participation per the Community for Everyone section in the Town’s 2026-2027 Corporate Strategic Plan.

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 supported 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 program provided 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

Unspent funds to be returned at the end of Round 1 totaled \$8,080.50 CAD (\$6,069.62 USD). The unspent funding amount outlined in Staff Report [OPS.25.025 Youth Climate Action Fund Status Update](#) was overstated by \$433.93 CAD (\$325.95 USD) because one of the microgrant recipient final reports mistakenly understated their spending by that amount.

In June 2025, the YCAF program requested that the Town amalgamate unspent funds for both Round 1 and Round 2 to allow for one single return transfer at the end of Round 2. To facilitate this, the YCAF program allowed the Town to claim the unallocated and unspent Round 1 microgrant funds as additional Round 1 staff time, resulting in all available Round 1 funds being allocated (\$50,000 USD or \$66,565 CAD). The YCAF program then reduced the Round 2 administrative budget by a corresponding amount (rounded to the nearest \$100 – reducing the original \$15,000 USD to \$8,900 USD, which is \$12,439.31 CAD at the Round 2 exchange rate).

| YCAF Administrative Budget Period | Original Budget in USD | Change in Budget | Adjusted Budget in USD | Adjusted Budget in CAD | Exchange Rates |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------|------------------|------------------------|------------------------|----------------|
| Round 1 | \$10,000 | +\$6,069.62 | \$16,069.62 | \$21,393.49 | 0.751145497 |
| Round 2 | \$15,000 | -\$6,100.00 | \$8,900.00 | \$12,439.31 | 0.715474 |
| Total | \$25,000 | -\$30.38 | \$24,969.62 | \$33,832.79 | |

The total adjusted budget for the Town’s administrative burden for Rounds 1 and 2 of \$24,969.62 USD has been retained by the Town to compensate for staff time and expenditures necessary to run this program. In Canadian dollars, the total administrative funding retained by the Town is approximately \$33,832.79 CAD (\$21,393.49 at the Round 1 exchange rate of 0.751145497, and \$12,439.31 CAD at the Round 2 exchange rate of 0.715474).

The \$6,100 USD difference was also added to the total Round 2 microgrant budget, making \$91,100 USD available for applicants (\$127,328.18 CAD), instead of the original \$85,000 USD; however, the Town did not receive enough applications to make use of this additional microgrant room, and the intake period for new applications had long been closed when this adjustment was made.

Unspent funds to be returned to the YCAF program, comprised of unallocated microgrant funding and underspent microgrant award funds, comes to a total of \$58,293.22 CAD (\$41,708 USD – rounded up from \$41,707.29) as confirmed with the YCAF program. The following table briefly summarizes the amended budget amounts and spending in Round 2, which – as Round 1 was adjusted to be completely spent – represents the final accounting of spent and unspent funds in US and Canadian dollars for both rounds of the YCAF program.

| | Budget for Round 2, USD | Total spent in Round 2, USD | Budget for Round 2, CAD | Total spent in Round 2, CAD |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Admin | \$8,900.00 | \$8,900.00 | \$12,439.31 | \$12,439.31 |
| Microgrants | \$91,100.00 | \$49,392.71 | \$127,328.18 | \$69,034.95 |
| Total | \$100,000.00 | \$58,292.71 | \$139,767.48 | \$81,474.26 |
| Unspent – to be returned | | \$41,707.29 USD | | \$58,293.22 CAD |

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 sustainability@thebluemountains.ca.

J. Attached

Attachment 1: Summary of YCAF Round 2 Projects

Respectfully submitted,

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Alan Pacheco
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For more information, please contact:
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Report Approval Details

| | |
|----------------------|---|
| Document Title: | OPS.26.016 Youth Climate Action Fund Completion of Round 2.docx |
| Attachments: | - Attachment 1 Summary of YCAF Round 2 Projects.pdf |
| Final Approval Date: | Mar 26, 2026 |

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

Jeff Fletcher - Mar 23, 2026 - 3:56 PM

Alan Pacheco - Mar 26, 2026 - 2:17 PM