



U.S. Environmental Protection Agency National Environmental Youth Advisory Council

Meeting Summary

On July 17, 2024, the National Environmental Youth Advisory Council (NEYAC) met virtually. See appendix A for the meeting agenda and appendix B for a list of the NEYAC members present. The draft recommendations discussed at the meeting are in appendix C.

For questions regarding NEYAC, please contact the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA, or Agency) Designated Federal Official (DFO) Carissa Cyran at cyran.carissa@epa.gov.

Welcome: Logistics and Agenda Overview

Carissa Cyran | DFO, EPA Office of Public Engagement and Environmental Education

Carissa Cyran welcomed members and viewers from across the country and summarized the charge questions. She explained that, as DFO, her role is to serve as a liaison between EPA and NEYAC and to ensure that all provisions in the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) are met.

Further, Carissa Cyran noted that public comment periods are required by FACA, but nobody had registered by the July 10 deadline to provide public comment at this meeting.

Carissa Cyran said that the meeting summary will be available on the [NEYAC website](#) within 90 days of the meeting. She gave an overview of the meeting agenda (found in appendix A).

Call to Order and Introductions

Carissa Cyran | DFO, EPA Office of Public Engagement and Environmental Education

Carissa Cyran took roll call (see appendix B for members present) and called the meeting to order.

Opening Remarks

Dan Utech | Chief of Staff, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Dan Utech said he was pleased to join the NEYAC's second public meeting and to hear the council's deliberations on their charge questions, which centered around environmental justice, climate change, food loss and waste, and recycling. He commended the member's progress, and on behalf of the Administrator Regan and the entire EPA, he thanked members for their work. He said their input is

invaluable to the EPA, and he hopes the members are also learning more about the EPA and the range of issues the Agency works on.

Summary of Recommendation for Environmental Justice and Youth

NEYAC Workgroup Members | Emmanuel Alcantar, Alex Angerman, Osasenaga Idahor, Lisette Perez, and Page Tsirigotis

Lisette Perez read the environmental justice charge question, which asked:

(EJ1) What barriers to awareness or access exist to empowering and connecting with youth in Communities with EJ concerns for Agency resources and outreach (such as environmental leadership, careers, internships, etc.)? What approaches, processes, or strategies would the NEYAC recommend that would enhance awareness and access?

Lisette Perez shared the following recommendations:

EJ1.1 Enhance digital outreach and engagement

EJ1.2 Engage schools and youth organizations

Ej1.3 Develop user-friendly online resources

(See appendix C for sub-recommendations associated with each of the NEYAC major recommendations.)

Alex Angerman shared NEYAC recommendations related to the question:

(EJ2) How can the EPA engage youth in environmental sustainability? How can young people actively promote innovation and implement sustainable ideas? How would you identify youth's vision for a just and sustainable future?

Alex Angerman said the NEYAC recommends that EPA

EJ2.1 Highlight individual youth climate stories

EJ2.2 Expand youth engagement and education in sustainability

EJ2.3 Develop a national EPA "climate ideas" conference for youth to share their ideas

Page Tsirigotis presented EPA's third charge question:

(EJ3) How should EPA work with corresponding state, local, and/or Tribal governments to ensure desired on-the-ground impacts and efforts to advance environmental justice come to fruition? What do youth consider as reliable and impactful engagement and indicators of success?

Page Tsirigotis said the recommendations are to

EJ3.1 Develop continuous outreach and ongoing programming, not just one-off events

EJ3.2 Launch assessment outreach programs before and after events to assess quantitative and qualitative impact

EJ3.3 Facilitate youth engagement in environmental decision-making. She shared various sub-recommendations

Osasenaga Idahor shared recommendations on the following charge question:

(EJ4) What best practices, technologies, and/or platforms are best positioned to connect youth to environmental resources EPA has available, including but not limited to, green space access/preservation, cleanup efforts, grant opportunities, and policy-developing opportunities, particularly for communities with EJ Concerns?

Osasenaga Idahor said that to address this charge, EPA should

EJ4.1 Create edutainment programs

EJ4.2 Increase its physical presence and regional office visibility,

EJ4.3 Use social media effectively. He presented a number of ways that EPA could achieve these ends.

Finally, Emmanuel Alcantar presented recommendations on the following question:

(EJ5) What topics relating to Environmental Justice are most urgent to youth?

Recommendations are for

EJ5.1 Green jobs and educational opportunities

EJ5.2 Clean air and water

EJ5.3 Mobility (that is, vehicles and transit opportunities)

EJ5.4 Protections for ecosystems and communities in “sacrifice zones.”

NEYAC Co-Chair Kiera O’Brien and NEYAC Co-Vice-Chair Asada Rashidi facilitated discussion on this initial set of charges.

Rachel Billiot-Bruleigh urged the inclusion of water quality standards in EJ5.2. She also suggested a fourth point EJ5.4, which is to avoid false climate solutions and instead to ensure protections in sacrifice zones, as well as to provide support to people in those communities through grants for grassroots efforts. She wanted recognition of the intrinsic rights of nature, especially in vulnerable ecosystems that face threats from corporate interests.

Summary of Recommendation for Climate, Clean Air, and Environmental Justice **NEYAC Workgroup Members | Nick Blumenthal, Wawa Gatheru, and Asada Rashidi**

Nick Blumenthal shared draft recommendations and sub-recommendations that address the following charge question:

(CC1) Is the Agency's regulatory process sufficiently transparent for meaningful, effective engagement with youth, EJ, and other communities?

Nick Blumenthal said that EPA should

CC1.1 Enhance transparency through detailed information sharing

CC1.2 Strengthen community engagement

CC1.3 Empower youth and diverse community participation

He provided additional sub-recommendations. (The reader is reminded to see appendix C for these details for these and other overarching recommendations.)

Wawa Gatheru shared draft recommendations for the second charge question in this area:

*(CC2) What are areas of interest to youth communities that EPA should engage on?
What are the most pressing issues in your communities that the Agency should focus on
or prioritize?*

These recommendations were to

CC2.1 Strengthen climate change education

CC2.2 Foster green job opportunities

CC2.3 Enhance access to grants and funding for environmental projects

Regarding the following charge:

*(CC3) What does success look like for NEYAC? What data or metrics would the group use
(if any) to identify successful outcomes of the NEYAC engagement?*

Asada Rashidi said the EPA should

CC3.1 Encourage scholarship programs and environmental careers

CC3.2 Quantify its influence on policy through clear performance metrics

CC3.3 Organize a national conference and resources to start sustainability groups in schools

NEYAC Co-Chairs Gabriel Nagel and Kiera O'Brien facilitated the discussion.

Nick Blumenthal asked the workgroup to clarify what it means by developing skills sets for environmental action regarding careers, particularly whether the recommendation referred to the government sector or other sectors. Gabriel Nagel replied that it refers to opportunities in the private sector, academia, and elsewhere, as it could benefit all fields.

Osasenaga Idahor requested expanding a sub-recommendation on climate change education to include support for those who may not be pursuing environmental studies specifically and may be pursuing issues related to environmental justice.

Kristy Drutman suggested also including opportunities for those who are not pursuing college degrees but would like access to technical training such as through trade schools.

Gabriel Nagel suggested the phrasing "establishing scholarships for students in fields of and related to climate and environmental justice." Rachel Billiot-Bruleigh suggested that the scholarship application process could allow for explaining how any area of study or interdisciplinary activities could be relevant. Gabriel Nagel said that language would be adjusted on sub-recommendation CC3.1, and he will look more into the phrasing of CC2.1

Summary of Recommendation for Addressing Food Waste at Home and Abroad: A Case for Circular and Sustainable Materials Management Systems

[NEYAC Workgroup Members](#) | Nick Blumenthal, Meghana Kunapareddy, Lisette Perez, and Page Tsirigotis

Page Tsirigotis presented draft recommendations relating to the following charge:

(CE1) How can EPA and its partners (e.g., state or local governments, non-profit organizations, industry groups or academia) more effectively engage young people to help reduce food waste at home and abroad?

Page Tsirigotis shared the following overarching recommendations:

CE1.1 Enhance school and educational outreach

CE1.2 Experiment with social media outreach campaigns

CE1.3 Change the narrative around food

Page Tsirigotis also shared the associated sub-recommendations.

The second charge question in this section is:

(CE2) How can EPA's efforts to manage food (as a material) in the most sustainable and efficient way be improved to benefit and work for youth?

Page Tsirigotis shared the following recommendations for EPA, each of which had several sub-recommendations:

CE2.1 Enhance community partnerships

CE2.2 Provide skill-based training and opportunities

CE2.3 Build trusted partnerships

The next charge question is

(CE3) How can outreach and education on making the most of food and preventing food from going to waste at home be most effective in disadvantaged communities?

Major recommendations on the charge question, shared by Meghana Kunapareddy, were as follows:

CE3.1 Build connections to food

CE3.2 Enhance community engagement and trusted partnerships

CE3.3 Address food deserts & their consequences

Meghana Kunapareddy shared associated sub-recommendations, as well.

Rachel Billiot-Bruleigh shared the final charge question and associated recommendations, which were as follows:

(CE4) What roles can food retailers and food service providers play in helping young people and those living in disadvantaged communities waste less at home?

CE4.1 Plastic Pollution & Reliable Recycling
CE4.2 Grant Programs & Community Building
CE 4.3 Utilizing A.I.

Gabriel Nagel invited member comments. Page Tsirigotis suggested combining recommendations for 2.3 and 3.2. Alexandra Angerman suggested focusing less on consumerism and the individual and more on corporations, particularly in sections 1 and 2.

Osasenaga Idahor returned to the issue of the circular economy and noted there are Good Samaritan laws in place that offer some protections to restaurants and organizations that redistribute food, but more can be done to let these businesses know they are protected, which would increase donations. He suggested adding language that urged requiring the donations of edible food, as well as doing outreach to businesses.

Gabriel Nagel suggested the NEYAC make changes to the document in real time. A member suggested language about keeping food waste out of landfills. Page Tsirigotis said that the addition may fit well in the AI section.

Alexandra Angerman said her suggestion to focus on large companies would fit in the social media section (CE1.2). Rachel Billiot-Bruleigh noted that sustainable options are not always available or affordable for some communities. Page Tsirigotis emphasized the power of social media. Gabriel Nagel suggested language and recommended more detail in CE1.2.

Gabriel Nagel shared draft language in response to the comment on food deserts and asked for feedback. Emmanuel Alcantar noted that enforcement regarding food donations may have a disproportionate impact on Latino communities. Osasenaga Idahor acknowledged the point and added that stratification would be necessary so that certain businesses are exempt.

Emmanuel Alcantar suggested adding text to the AI section about closing loopholes for landfills.

Emmanuel Alcantar turned the discussion to changes desired in previous sections. Page Tsirigotis asked EPA if there is a reason environmental grants don't already include individual students. Carissa Cyran said she did not know but would find out.

Emmanuel Alcantar asked if the Council had specific campaigns in mind for the recommendation on EPA's outreach effort. Gabriel Nagel suggested being more specific about social media efforts. Kristy Drutman said that communities should be able to apply for EPA storytelling grants.

In section CE3.2, Osasenaga Idahor recommended adding the point that EPA should implement lessons from its pre-event surveys prior to conducting outreach.

In EJ5.3, Emmanuel Alcantar suggested changing "mobility" to "transportation and mobility."

In EJ5.2, Rachel Billiot-Bruleigh said she would like stronger language on the importance of policy enforcement.

Page Tsirigotis again suggested differentiating CE2.3 and 3.2 or combining them. Emmanuel Alcantar said the last bullet in CE2.3 feels most distinctive to him. Moving that bullet to CE3.2 and cutting the others made sense to Page Tsirigotis.

Gabriel Nagel had been making edits directly into the draft on Google Docs, and he advised members that revised text appears in red. He asked members to look over the changes during break.

Deliberations and Vote on Recommendations for NEYAC members

Carissa Cyran explained that the Council would vote on each recommendation individually. She said that not every recommendation has to be submitted to EPA.

Gabriel Nagel and Kiera O'Brien facilitated the discussion.

Gabriel Nagel asked members if there were any changes or important points to raise. Kiera O'Brien replied that she noticed specific energy sources were named, and although she agrees with the intention, she prefers to keep the recommendations directed to EPA. Rachel Billiot-Bruleigh said she added the text based on lived experience but agreed to leave out specific names. There was support for keeping in the term "false solutions."

Osasenaga Idahor suggested clarification around how the bullets in the edutainment programs recommendations (EJ4.1) are related to edutainment. He said he is interested in retitling the section. Gabriel Nagel suggested Interactive Education Programs. Asada Rashidi suggested incorporating the concept of edutainment into the first bullet under that recommendation.

Page Tsigotis asked Kiera O'Brien if she noticed problematic language in EJ5.2. Kiera O'Brien objected to calling out gas-fired power plants but not to the underlying message. Emmanuel Alcantar said there is a need for stronger enforcement for existing gas-fired power plants, so he believes it is fair to name the source. Rachel Billiot-Bruleigh agreed with Emmanuel Alcantar and suggested adding another bullet point to highlight it. Alexandra Angerman suggested adding context to the new bullet point. Gabriel Nagel suggested having a longer conversation about it.

Gabriel Nagel reminded members that, for a recommendation to pass, it needs a majority of votes, which is eight members. He said he will put each recommendation in the chat, and the members will vote by sending a "thumbs-up."

During the discussion of EJ5.2, Kiera Obrien noted that several controversial changes to the language have been brought up at the last minute; she said she prefers ironing out the specific language in workgroup sessions.

The Council voted to pass all recommendations passed except for 4.3 Utilizing A.I. During the vote on this item, Kiera Obrien raised the issue of significant emissions associated with AI. Nick Blumenthal countered that some small companies are using it to address food waste. He suggested using "promote AI innovation." Colton Buckley opposed broad language, noting that U.S. security concerns must be addressed.

Closing Remarks

Rosemary Enobakhare | Deputy Chief of Staff for Strategy, Policy, and Strategic Engagement, EPA

Rosemary Enobakhare thanked the Council for their work on their first set of charge questions. She said Administrator Regan is committed to ensuring that young people have a seat at the table in the collective mission to ensure that future generations have access to clean environments.

She said EPA has been tasked with deploying more than \$100 billion in resources from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and the Inflation Reduction Act, which presents a historic moment for EPA to invest in communities. She said their individual perspectives on solutions are invaluable to EPA. She said EPA is looking forward to reviewing the recommendations and finding ways to integrate them into the agencies policies and programs. She said EPA is ready to present a new set of charge questions. She thanked them again for their work on the Council and for their work in their communities.

Next Steps and Public Meeting Adjourns

Carissa Cyran | NEYAC DFO, EPA

Carissa Cyran thanked members for their work and for the recommendations. She said public comments are accepted through Wednesday, July 31, 2024.

The next meeting will be scheduled for the fall. At this meeting, the NEYAC will present their final recommendations and receive new charge questions.

Carissa Cyran adjourned the meeting.

Appendix A. Agenda



Official Meeting of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency National Environmental Youth Advisory Council

July 17, 2024
Virtual Meeting
12:00PM – 3:40PM EDT
Public Docket [EPA-HQ-OA-2024-0043](#)

All times in Eastern Standard Time

12:00PM – 12:05PM	Welcome: Logistics and Agenda Overview <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carissa Cyran, NEYAC Designated Federal Officer, EPA
12:05PM – 12:15PM	Call to Order and Introductions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carissa Cyran, NEYAC Designated Federal Officer, EPA
12:15PM – 12:20PM	Opening Remarks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dan Utech, Chief of Staff, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
12:20PM – 1:00PM	Summary of Recommendation for Environmental Justice and Youth <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presenters: <i>NEYAC Workgroup Members</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Lisette Perez, Alex Angerman, Page Tsirigotis, Osasenaga Idahor, and Emmanuel Alcantar</i> • <i>Q&A for the NEYAC members to ask questions on the proposed recommendations</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Facilitators: <i>NEYAC Co-Chair Kiera O'Brien and NEYAC Co-Vice-Chair Asada Rashidi</i>
1:00PM – 1:40PM	Summary of Recommendation for Climate, Clean Air, and Environmental Justice <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presenters: <i>NEYAC Workgroup Members</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Nick Blumenthal, Wawa Gatheru, and Asada Rashidi</i> • <i>Q&A for the NEYAC members to ask questions on the proposed recommendations</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Facilitators: <i>NEYAC Co-Chairs Gabriel Nagel and Kiera O'Brien</i>
1:40PM – 2:20PM	Summary of Recommendation for Addressing Food Waste at Home and Abroad: A Case for Circular and Sustainable Materials Management Systems <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presenters: <i>NEYAC Workgroup Members</i>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Page Tsirigotis, Lisette Perez, Meghana Kunapareddy, and Nick Blumenthal</i> ● <i>Q&A for the NEYAC members to ask questions on the proposed recommendations</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Facilitators: <i>NEYAC Co-Chair Gabriel Nagel and NEYAC Co-Vice-Chair Emmanuel Alcantar</i>
2:20PM – 2:40PM	20-minute Break
2:40PM – 3:30PM	Deliberations and Vote on Recommendations for NEYAC members <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Facilitators: <i>NEYAC Co-Chairs Gabriel Nagel and Kiera O'Brien</i>
3:30PM – 3:35PM	Closing Remarks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Rosemary Enobakhare, Deputy Chief of Staff for Strategy, Policy, and Strategic Engagement, EPA
3:35PM – 3:40PM	Next Steps and Public Meeting Adjourns <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Carissa Cyran, NEYAC Designated Federal Officer, EPA

Appendix B. NEYAC Members Present

Emmanuel Alcantar

Alexandra Angerman

Rachel Billiot-Bruleigh

Nick Blumenthal

Colton Buckley

Kristy Drutman

Wanjiku Gatheru

Osasenaga Idahor

Sophia Kianni

Meghana Kunapareddy

Gabriel Nagel

Kiera O'Brien

Lisette Perez

Asada Rashidi

Page Tsirigotis

Designated Federal Officer

Carissa Cyran

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Office of Public Engagement and Environmental Education

1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., Mail Code: 1702A

Washington, DC 20460

Tel: 202-566-1353

Email: cyran.carissa@epa.gov

Appendix C. Draft Recommendations

National Environmental Youth Advisory Council

Draft Recommendations

Table of Contents

Part I: Climate Change	13
CC1. Is the Agency's regulatory process sufficiently transparent for meaningful, effective engagement with youth, EJ, and other communities?	13
CC2. What are areas of interest to youth communities that EPA should engage in? What are the most pressing issues in your communities that the Agency should focus on or prioritize?	13
CC3. What does success look like for NEYAC? What data or metrics would the group use (if any) to identify successful outcomes of the NEYAC engagement?.....	14
Part II: Environmental Justice	15
EJ1. What barriers to awareness or access exist to empowering and connecting with youth in Communities with EJ Concerns for Agency resources and outreach (such as environmental leadership, careers, internships, etc.)? What approaches, processes, or strategies would the NEYAC recommend that would enhance awareness and access?	15
EJ2. How can the EPA engage youth in environmental sustainability? How can young people actively promote innovation and implement sustainable ideas? How would you identify youth’s vision for a just and sustainable future?.....	16
EJ3. How should EPA work with corresponding state, local, and/or Tribal governments to ensure desired on-the-ground impacts and efforts to advance environmental justice come to fruition? What do youth consider as reliable and impactful engagement and indicators of success?	17
EJ4. What best practices, technologies, and/or platforms are best positioned to connect youth to environmental resources EPA has available, including but not limited to, green space access/preservation, cleanup efforts, grant opportunities, and policy-developing opportunities, particularly for communities with EJ Concerns?.....	17
EJ5. What topics relating to Environmental Justice are most urgent to youth?	18
Part III: Circular Economy	19
CE1. How can EPA and its partners (e.g., state or local governments, non-profit organizations, industry groups or academia) more effectively engage young people to help reduce food waste at home and abroad?	19
CE2. How can EPA's efforts to manage food (as a material) in the most sustainable and efficient way be improved to benefit and work for youth?	20

CE3. How can outreach and education on making the most of food and preventing food from going to waste at home be most effective in disadvantaged communities?21

CE4. What roles can food retailers and food service providers play in helping young people and those living in disadvantaged communities waste less at home?21

Part I: Climate Change

CC1. Is the Agency's regulatory process sufficiently transparent for meaningful, effective engagement with youth, EJ, and other communities?

CC.1.1 Enhance Transparency through Detailed Information Sharing

EPA should ensure the regulatory process is transparent and accessible by:

- Publishing detailed explanations of regulatory decisions in user-friendly formats, including the scientific bases, rationales, and expected impacts.
- Developing and maintaining easy-to-navigate online portals that provide information on regulatory proposals, public comment opportunities, and EPA activities.
- Providing straightforward guides that explain the EPA's regulatory processes and timelines to help demystify procedures for the public, especially youth and EJ communities.

CC.1.2 Strengthen Community Engagement

EPA should strengthen community engagement by:

- Implementing outreach efforts specifically designed for engaging EJ communities and youth, such as workshops, community meetings, and listening sessions.
- Prioritizing participation from communities most impacted by climate change by providing necessary resources, support, and incentives to enhance their ability to engage effectively.
- Setting up formal structures like advisory councils or working groups that facilitate continuous collaboration and dialogue between the EPA and community stakeholders.

CC.1.3 Empower Youth and Diverse Community Participation

EPA should empower youth and diverse community participation by:

- Creating youth advisory boards and leadership development programs that invite young individuals to partake in environmental decision-making.
- Holding regular meetings where advisory board members can provide input, review EPA proposals, and offer recommendations for addressing community concerns.
- Partnering with educational institutions to promote environmental education, awareness, and activism among young people.

CC2. What are areas of interest to youth communities that EPA should engage on? What are the most pressing issues in your communities that the Agency should focus on or prioritize?

CC.2.1 Strengthen Climate Change Education

EPA should focus on strengthening climate change education by:

- Encouraging states to require climate change education at all K-12 levels, emphasizing not only scientific aspects but also social and economic impacts, with a particular focus on EJ communities.
- Supporting the development of robust training programs for educators to deliver comprehensive climate change instruction effectively.
- Fostering partnerships with educational institutions to integrate climate change education into existing curricula and create new interdisciplinary learning opportunities.

CC.2.2 Foster Green Job Opportunities

EPA should foster green job opportunities by:

- Developing programs that outline clear career pathways in green jobs, tailored to meet the interests and skills of young people.
- Collaborating with educational and industry partners to provide training and skill development opportunities focused on emerging green technologies and sustainability practices.
- Involving youth in the policymaking process related to green jobs to ensure the programs meet their needs and expectations.

CC.2.3 Enhance Access to Grants and Funding for Environmental Projects

EPA should enhance access to grants and funding by:

- Expanding eligibility criteria for environmental grants to include individual students and youth-led groups, particularly those from underrepresented communities.
- Streamlining the grant application process to make it more accessible for young people, including guidance and support through application workshops.
- Offering a variety of funding levels tailored to different educational stages (elementary, middle, and high school) to support a wide range of environmental projects and innovations.

CC3. What does success look like for NEYAC? What data or metrics would the group use (if any) to identify successful outcomes of the NEYAC engagement?

CC.3.1 Encourage Scholarship Programs and Environmental Careers

EPA should focus on preparing youth for future roles in environmental sectors by:

- Establishing scholarships specifically for students pursuing environmental studies, particularly those from underserved communities.
- Partnering with universities and organizations to offer internships and mentorships that provide practical experience in environmental careers.
- Developing an accessible database of career resources and opportunities in the environmental sector.

CC.3.2 Performance Metrics

EPA should quantify its influence on policy through clear performance metrics by:

- Tracking the number of NEYAC recommendations that are incorporated into local, state, or federal environmental bills.
- Monitoring the progression of these bills through legislative bodies and their eventual enactment into law.
- Evaluating the broader impact of these laws, such as changes in pollution levels, improvements in public health, and increased public awareness of environmental issues.

CC.3.3 National Conference and Resources to Start Sustainability Groups in School

EPA should boost visibility and effectiveness by:

- Organizing an annual EPA Summit that gathers young environmental leaders from across the country to share ideas, network, and learn from each other.
- Creating starter kits for students and teachers interested in establishing school-based sustainability groups, including guides, project ideas, and funding sources.
- Establishing a national network of school sustainability groups that can share successes, challenges, and best practices, facilitated by NEYAC.

Part II: Environmental Justice

[EJ1. What barriers to awareness or access exist to empowering and connecting with youth in Communities with EJ Concerns for Agency resources and outreach \(such as environmental leadership, careers, internships, etc.\)? What approaches, processes, or strategies would the NEYAC recommend that would enhance awareness and access?](#)

EJ.1.1 Enhance Digital Outreach and Engagement

EPA should enhance digital outreach and engagement by:

- Utilizing social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok to spread awareness of EPA resources and initiatives.
- Creating engaging content such as videos, infographics, and podcasts to educate and engage youth in environmental justice issues.
- Collaborating with social media influencers and youth advocates to amplify EPA's outreach efforts.

EJ.1.2 Engage Schools and Youth Organizations

EPA should engage schools and youth organizations by:

- Partnering with educational institutions to incorporate environmental justice education into curricula and extracurricular activities, offering guest lectures and educational materials.
- Building trust and relationships by engaging directly with community leaders and youth, attending local events, and gathering community feedback.
- Hosting virtual events and workshops focused on environmental justice topics, providing platforms for youth to learn and connect with EPA representatives.

EJ.1.3 Develop User-Friendly Online Resources

EPA should develop user-friendly online resources by:

- Creating interactive and accessible tools like interactive maps and toolkits to help youth navigate environmental justice issues and access EPA resources.
- Expanding language options and providing translation services to accommodate users from diverse linguistic backgrounds, enhancing accessibility.
- Engaging communities directly to gather input on the usability of tools like EJScreen, conducting usability testing, and implementing regular updates based on user feedback.

[EJ2. How can the EPA engage youth in environmental sustainability? How can young people actively promote innovation and implement sustainable ideas? How would you identify youth's vision for a just and sustainable future?](#)

EJ.2.1 Highlight Individual Youth Climate Stories

EPA should highlight individual youth climate stories by:

- Creating a digital campaign or filmmaking fellowship that features monthly stories of youth who have made significant environmental impacts.
- Collaborating with youth organizations and media platforms to spread these stories widely, ensuring they reach and inspire a diverse audience.
- Expanding on awards or recognitions like the President's Environmental Youth Award for innovative sustainability projects led by youth, providing them platforms at EPA events to share their experiences and achievements.

EJ.2.2 Expand Youth Engagement and Education in Sustainability

EPA should expand youth engagement and education by:

- Providing toolkits for starting sustainability clubs, integrating climate education into school curricula, and creating online platforms for students to collaborate and share achievements.
- Hosting environmental job fairs and collaborating with educational institutions and industry leaders to offer internships, apprenticeships, and mentorship programs.
- Establishing scholarships focused on environmental sustainability for students in environmental justice communities and organizing conferences where students can present projects and compete for funding.

EJ.2.3 Develop National EPA Climate Ideas Conference for Youth to Share Ideas

EPA should develop a national EPA climate ideas conference by:

- Organizing an annual conference where youth from across the country can present their sustainable solutions and projects.
- Including workshops and seminars led by experts in sustainability to educate and inspire participants.
- Providing networking opportunities with like-minded peers and mentors from the environmental sector.

EJ3. How should EPA work with corresponding state, local, and/or Tribal governments to ensure desired on-the-ground impacts and efforts to advance environmental justice come to fruition? What do youth consider as reliable and impactful engagement and indicators of success?

EJ.3.1 Develop Continuous Outreach/Programs, Not Just One-Off Events

EPA should develop continuous outreach programs by:

- Establishing long-term partnerships with community organizations, local schools, and Tribal councils to continuously assess and address environmental justice issues.
- Creating a series of workshops and seminars that address ongoing environmental challenges and engage community members in problem-solving.
- Implementing regular update meetings with communities to inform them of progress and gather feedback on EPA initiatives.

EJ.3.2 Launch Assessment Outreach Programs Pre/Post Event to Assess Quantitative and Qualitative Impact

EPA should launch assessment outreach programs by:

- Developing and distributing pre-event surveys to understand community concerns and expectations.
- Conducting post-event evaluations to measure changes and impacts, using both surveys and focus groups to gather comprehensive feedback.
- Utilizing the data collected to refine and improve future initiatives, ensuring that the programs are responsive to the actual needs and concerns of the communities involved.

EJ.3.3 Facilitate Youth Engagement in Environmental Decision-Making

EPA should facilitate youth engagement by:

- Implementing youth advisory councils within EPA regional offices to enable young people to provide insights and perspectives on local environmental issues.
- Providing meaningful internships and volunteer roles that engage youth in hands-on projects and decision-making, offering real-world experience in environmental management and policy.
- Offering grants to support environmental restoration and sustainability projects led by youth.

EJ4. What best practices, technologies, and/or platforms are best positioned to connect youth to environmental resources EPA has available, including but not limited to, green space access/preservation, cleanup efforts, grant opportunities, and policy-developing opportunities, particularly for communities with EJ Concerns?

EJ.4.1 Edutainment Programs

EPA should create edutainment programs by:

- Creating short, engaging videos showcasing green space access, preservation efforts, and cleanup projects.

- Hosting competitions for youth to propose innovative environmental policies, with winners getting recognition and possible implementation.
- Centralizing website resources for easier access to EPA information and tools.

EJ.4.2 Increase Physical Presence and Regional Office Visibility

EPA should increase physical presence and regional office visibility by:

- Partnering with local initiatives to facilitate the creation of local environmental youth advisory councils.
- Supporting the formation of Local Environmental Youth Advisory Councils (LEYACs) to involve youth directly in policy-making and local environmental health responses.
- Increasing activities of regional offices in local environmental projects to foster community involvement and enhance visibility.

EJ.4.3 Effective Use of Social Media

EPA should effectively use social media by:

- Analyzing which social media platforms are most effective for engaging specific youth demographics, focusing efforts where the most impact can be achieved.
- Conducting live Q&A sessions on platforms most frequented by youth (YouTube, Instagram, TikTok) with EPA experts on topics like environmental justice and sustainability.
- Leveraging digital platforms and social media to connect with and mobilize youth, providing them with platforms to express their views and influence EPA initiatives.

EJ5. What topics relating to Environmental Justice are most urgent to youth?

EJ.5.1 Green Jobs and Educational Opportunities

EPA should emphasize green jobs and educational opportunities by:

- Emphasizing the importance of supporting workers transitioning from fossil fuel industries to clean energy sectors to prevent economic hardship and promote equity.
- Highlighting the significance of sustainable career paths that align with youth values and aspirations, focusing on local job creation and training opportunities.
- Enhancing awareness of what green jobs entail, such as roles in renewable energy sectors and sustainable agriculture and promoting entrepreneurship in environmental solutions.

EJ.5.2 Clean Air & Water

EPA should focus on clean air and water by:

- Advocating for stringent carbon standards for gas-fired power plants to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve air quality.
- Focusing on reducing high ozone levels that adversely affect youth health, emphasizing the need for immediate regulatory actions to safeguard long-term health.
- Increasing educational efforts to raise awareness among youth about the impacts of air pollution and the importance of stringent air quality standards.

EJ.5.3 Mobility

EPA should address mobility issues by:

- Implementing stricter emissions standards for larger vehicles and ensuring accurate assessments of low-emission technologies.
- Collaborating with cities to improve public transit systems, making them more reliable and accessible for young people.
- Supporting local and state initiatives to create pedestrian and bike-friendly zones through funding and policy advocacy and educating youth about the benefits of alternative transportation modes.

EJ.5.4 Protections for Sacrifice Zones

EPA should ensure protections for vulnerable ecosystems and communities in sacrifice zones by:

- Avoiding false climate solutions, such as LNG which come at significant costs to affected communities and ecosystems, and instead prioritizing solutions that do not put vulnerable communities and ecosystems at extreme risks
- Providing appropriate support for recovery in sacrifice zones and at-risk communities through grants for grassroots efforts, ending subsidies to extractive industries harming ecosystems and communities, and investing in sustainable alternatives.
- Recognizing and protecting the intrinsic rights of nature, especially in vulnerable ecosystems such as wetlands, prairies, and old-growth forests, which are critical to environmental health but are threatened by corporate interests and human activity.

Part III: Circular Economy

CE1. How can EPA and its partners (e.g., state or local governments, non-profit organizations, industry groups or academia) more effectively engage young people to help reduce food waste at home and abroad?

CE.1.1 School & Educational Outreach

EPA should enhance school and educational outreach by:

- Emphasizing the importance of early intervention in shaping food habits and attitudes through educational techniques like gameplay, storytelling, and hands-on participation.
- Creating resources for older youth groups to guide them through initiatives to prevent over-consumerism, showcase useful grocery shopping habits, teach about food safety and health, and engage in urban sharing.
- Encouraging youth to engage in urban sharing initiatives like communal gardens and food-sharing programs.

CE.1.2 Experiment with Social Media Outreach Campaigns

EPA should experiment with social media outreach campaigns by:

- Making information fun by creating apps or challenges that encourage group participation, such as workshops and competitions focused on reducing plastic usage.
- Creating challenges and workshops around EPA goals to get youth actively involved in EPA work, like a “Plastic-Free Week” challenge.
- Highlighting youth who complete challenges on social media with photos and stories to encourage participation and showcase success.

CE.1.3 Changing the Narrative Around Food

EPA should change the narrative around food by:

- Incorporating culturally significant foods into educational initiatives to form connections with food that holds personal and communal importance.
- Promoting the importance of eating in seasons with local plants and encouraging activities like community gardening and visiting farmers' markets.
- Developing educational docu-series that recognize and highlight local foods, native foods, and their connections to lands, people, and wildlife.

[CE2. How can EPA's efforts to manage food \(as a material\) in the most sustainable and efficient way be improved to benefit and work for youth?](#)

CE.2.1 A Physical Presence in Community Partnerships

EPA should enhance community partnerships by:

- Meeting youth where they are at by providing accessible opportunities for engagement and education in schools, parks, and online.
- Tailoring outreach programs to align with science education curricula and establishing educational initiatives in locations where youth frequent.
- Supporting Farm to School initiatives that bring locally produced foods into school cafeterias and incorporate food and agriculture education into the curriculum.

CE.2.2 Skill-based Training & Opportunities

EPA should provide skill-based training and opportunities by:

- Integrating hands-on activities into school curricula, such as field trips to local farms or community gardens.
- Organizing cooking demonstrations and workshops to demystify food preparation and highlight value-added products.
- Partnering with local businesses and organizations to offer internships, apprenticeships, and mentorship programs in the food industry.

CE.2.3 Community Building and Trusted Partnerships

EPA should build trusted partnerships by:

- Establishing connections with community members, grassroots organizations, and others that can have a direct impact on the community.

- Working with schools to establish gardens for hands-on learning environments that foster a sense of responsibility and connection to nature.
- Supporting sustainable agriculture initiatives in areas affected by environmental degradation and climate change.

CE3. How can outreach and education on making the most of food and preventing food from going to waste at home be most effective in disadvantaged communities?

CE.3.1 Building Connections to Food

EPA should build connections to food by:

- Increasing emotional connection to food through gardening and cooking activities that benefit human well-being and predict pro-environmental behaviors.
- Providing grants and financial incentives for local governments to develop and maintain composting and recycling facilities.
- Supporting sustainable agriculture initiatives that promote land restoration and traditional knowledge in modern agricultural techniques.

CE.3.2 Community Engagement & Trusted Partnerships

EPA should enhance community engagement by:

- Working directly with community-based organizations and schools to establish educational opportunities on children's health and food-related topics.
- Combining principles of sustainability, STEAM education, and cultural competency to ensure emotional connection and relevance to diverse backgrounds.
- Supporting initiatives for community and home gardens, especially with food plants that can handle the local climate.

CE.3.3 Addressing Food Deserts & Their Consequences

EPA should address food deserts by:

- Addressing legal and regulatory barriers hindering food donation and cultivation to encourage more sustainable practices.
- Educating communities on sustainable food management practices through school gardens, after-school programs, and partnerships with educational institutions.
- Supporting local food cooperatives and farmers markets to promote food sovereignty and circular economies.

CE4. What roles can food retailers and food service providers play in helping young people and those living in disadvantaged communities waste less at home?

CE.4.1 Plastic Pollution & Reliable Recycling

EPA should address plastic pollution by:

- Implementing bans on single-use plastics and promoting the adoption of sustainable packaging alternatives.
- Investing in recycling and composting infrastructure to improve waste management practices.
- Supporting grassroots initiatives aimed at addressing plastic pollution and promoting sustainable waste management.

CE.4.2 Grant Programs & Community Building

EPA should develop grant programs and community building initiatives by:

- Partnering with the private sector to target initiatives in reducing food waste/loss in disadvantaged communities.
- Establishing community kitchens where residents can cook and share meals using surplus food.
- Prioritizing grant applicants that represent youth-led, community-driven organizations, particularly in disadvantaged communities.

CE.4.3 Utilizing A.I.

EPA should leverage AI technology by:

- Using AI-powered systems to track food waste in restaurants and grocery stores.
- Optimizing inventory levels and dynamic pricing strategies to reduce food waste.
- Providing real-time data for effective food waste management practices.