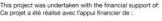


NET-ZERO AND YOU(TH)

Apathy is Boring Research and Development Team 2023







LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Few threats strike us as so big and, consequently, so insurmountable in the 21st century as our need to mitigate and address the effects of over 100 years of human activity altering the climate around us.

In the summer of 2023, we saw air quality warnings as smoke from wildfires in northern Quebec and Nova Scotia blanketed the east coast of North America for weeks. Extreme heat hit southern Europe and the southwestern US, leaving millions vulnerable. News reports warned of significant reductions in Antarctic ice as sea temperatures have increased alarmingly. The Secretary General of the United Nations harkened to this new period by welcoming in an era of "global boiling."

Meanwhile, we see high levels of inflation and an affordability crisis that is acutely affecting young people in Canada who are trying to get their start and creating a seemingly competing and parallel crisis. Economies and governments are still attempting to recover from a global pandemic that hasn't entirely ended with any finality, even as global public health emergency declarations lapse.

You'd be hard-pressed to find any items more central to the long-term feasibility of a democracy than the capacity and the credibility to meaningfully solve our biggest challenges. What else could democracy be for than to provide the governance necessary to uphold, first and foremost, the public good? Our current challenges are existential in more ways than one.

Nadia Urbannati wrote, "Effective representation [...] means that we need to believe that our votes bring forward our world conceptions and claims". Without this, our democracy faces an increasingly inhospitable planet and a crisis of legitimacy with citizens, particularly among youth.

Youth are increasingly urgent in the call to tackle the climate crisis, an urgency yet to be matched by their

elected representatives. Despite efforts to address the problem's urgency, solutions have no meaningful impact. Global greenhouse gasses are at an all time high³, and climate change's effects are already being felt worldwide.

The scientific consensus is clear: we need to reach netzero carbon emissions as soon as possible. This report, compiled by Apathy is Boring's Research team, Erika de Torres and Melina Duckett, with the research support of Abacus Data, attempts to demystify and outline the current gap between the urgency felt by many young people in Canada and their capacity, skills, and desire to be a part of the solution through organizing around specific policies and public persuasion.

Getting to Net Zero will take coordination on a global scale unlike any we've ever seen. It will take private and public sector collaboration to implement strategies to drastically reduce and capture carbon emissions through innovation and regulation. It will take the public to demand that they do it.

More than ever, we need to remember that democracy is the power of the people - we are each **responsible** for our collective self-governance. We must insist on an equal voice and persuade others to join us through shows of solidarity, hope, and hard work. If we listen to one another, we can **persuade** ourselves and others of what is possible and play a role in bringing the change we need. Deep canvassing allows us to understand ourselves better and find common ground that can serve as a foundation for institutional action.

The capacity to create this change is ours alone. The credibility of our solutions grows exponentially the more we understand they are possible. This report is a starting point. We hope the young people who engage in this work will only build up and out from here.

Sam Reusch, Executive Director of Apathy is Boring

 $^{^1}$ PWC, UNICEF and Generation Unlimited (2022). "The Net Zero Generation: Why the world needs to upskill young people to enable the net-zero transition." Online. https://www.pwc.com/qx/en/issues/upskilling/the-net-zero-generation-unicef-generation-unlimited.pdf

² S.C. (2021). Canadian Net Zero Emissions Accountability Act. c.22 Online: https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/c-19.3/FullText.html

³ Forster et al. (2023). "Indicators of Global Climate Change 2022: annual update of large-scale indicators of the state of the climate system and human influence". Sur ligne. https://essd.copernicus.org/articles/15/2295/2023/ (EN)

INTRODUCTION

As part of Apathy is Boring's mandate to engage youth in democracy, we partnered with the Net Zero Advisory Body and Environment and Climate Change Canada to create a new program that supports youth understanding and knowledge about Net-Zero called "Net Zero and You(th)." While Apathy is Boring is an expert in youth and democracy work, there is an opportunity for this organization to play a "really key connection role in bringing ... different facets of social justice together" (Focus Group Participant, 2023).

Overall, young people across Canada have climate change as a top issue they care about (Abacus Data, 2023); however, many young people across Canada need to familiarize themselves with net zero. There is an opportunity for youth-serving organizations to mobilize and partner with each other to create resources and programs to engage with net zero and ultimately support Canada in achieving net-zero goals by 2050.

Climate change just as likely seen as affecting others, as affecting self

Climate change is something that impacts my life directly

45%

Climate change is something that impact the lives of others more than my own

43%

I don't see any direct impacts in my life or the lives of others

13%

The intention of this report is to ensure Apathy is Boring gathers knowledge before creating programs: correctly identifying and analyzing the problems to tackle and helps ensure we are efficient with our time.

The Apathy is Boring team would like to thank all of our focus group and interview participants, Oksana Kishchuk from Abacus Data for conducting the survey analysis, and Jasmine Lee, for completing the literature review, which is embedded in this report. We hope that this report will be helpful for other organizations to mobilize their youth toward the pathway to net zero.

METHODOLOGY

The following report synthesizes a literature review, data collected and analyzed with Abacus Data, current strategies, and feedback from extensive focus groups and interviews with subject matter experts. Jasmine Lee conducted the literature review from May to June, covering net-zero methodologies and the current background of programs available around climate action and net-zero.

Data was collected by Abacus Data on May 2023, with 2,000 diverse youth from across Canada completing the survey. Survey questions engaged youth around climate change and their understanding of net zero and democracy.

Finally, from May to June 2023, Apathy is Boring conducted robust focus groups and interviews with youth and subject matter experts to obtain feedback about creating a new program and climate change and youth engagement. Feedback was recorded and coded by the Research and Development team, which then synthesized the literature review, data analysis and qualitative results.



Net-Zero and Climate Advocacy Methodologies Review

There is plenty of literature and evidence showcasing the leadership youth play when it comes to the climate movement. While there is limited research when it comes to linking youth specifically with net zero at the time of this writing, there is some that specifically links upskilling youth to reaching net zero (PWC, 2022).⁴

A. Net-Zero Methodologies

This section provides an overview of Canada's Net-Zero strategy and an international examination of existing tactics and proposed strategies to engage youth around net zero.

respond to societal needs and meet net zero emission goals (Net Zero Advisory Body, 2021). Their five foundational values include seizing the upside, putting people first, motivating and empowering Canadians, collaborating every step of the way, and recognizing and respecting regional differences and circumstances.

Canada's Net-Zero Strategy

Net-Zero refers to reducing greenhouse gas emissions to zero or as close to zero as possible while offsetting emissions where they still occur. On June 29, 2021, the *Canadian Net-Zero Accountability Act* became law and enshrined in legislation Canada's commitment to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050 (Canada, 2021).5

Canada's Net Zero Future provides a precise analysis of Canada's options, significant drivers within and outside Canada's control, and the conditions likely to influence success. Across all scenarios, nearly two-thirds of emissions reductions by 2030 rely on quickly and decisively scaling up proven technologies and existing policies.

Canada established the Net Zero Advisory Body as part of Canada's commitment to Net Zero. This organization lists foundational values and design principles for pathways to net zero (2021). A pathway captures all elements required to transform a system to better

Youth Familiarity with Net-Zero

survey completed by 2000 youth in partnership with Abacus Data (2023) shows that while young people are familiar with net-zero, more young people are familiar with terms like "climate change," "greenhouse gas emissions," and "environmental sustainability." Furthermore, 42% of young voters consider environmental issues a vital voting consideration.

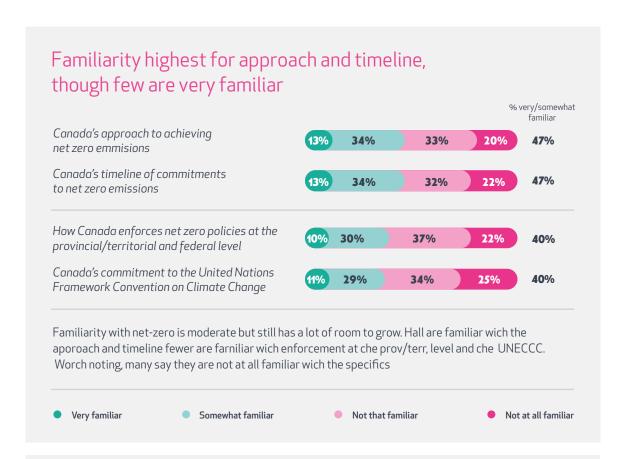
There is only some familiarity with net zero. This familiarity is highest regarding youth's understanding of the approach and timeline. Even so, the numbers gathered by Abacus Data (2023) show an opportunity to educate youth around net zero.

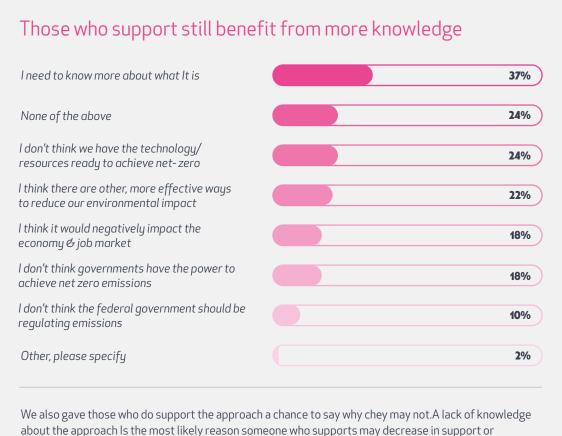
⁴ PWC, UNICEF and Generation Unlimited (2022). "The Net Zero Generation: Why the world needs to upskill young people to enable the net-zero transition." Sur le web. https://www.pwc.com/gx/en/issues/upskilling/the-net-zero-generation-unlimited.pdf

⁵ L.C. (2021). "Loi canadienne sur la responsabilité en matière de carboneutralité". https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/fra/lois/c-19.3/TexteComplet.html

⁶ Groupe consultatif pour la carboneutralité (2023). "Mandat complet." Sur le web: https://gcpc2050.ca/mandat-complet

⁷ Ibid.





become someone who opposes.

SO, WHAT ARE THESE STRATEGIES?

Key elements of Canada's Net-Zero strategy are summarized below:

Strengthening Climate Targets:

The strategy enhances Canada's emissions reduction targets to align with the Paris Agreement's goal of limiting global warming to below 2 degrees Celsius. This involves setting more ambitious short-term milestones and regularly updating targets based on the latest scientific research.

Clean Energy Transition:

The plan focuses on accelerating the transition to a clean energy economy. It emphasizes expanding renewable energy sources such as solar, wind, and hydroelectric power and advancements in energy storage technologies. Canada aims to increase the share of clean energy in its electricity generation mix and reduce reliance on fossil fuels.

Energy Efficiency and Conservation:

The strategy prioritizes energy efficiency measures across various sectors, including buildings, transportation, and industry. It involves promoting energy-efficient practices, improving building codes, and encouraging the adoption of energy-saving technologies. Canada aims to reduce energy waste and promote sustainable consumption patterns.

Carbon Pricing and Market Mechanisms:

The strategy supports using carbon pricing mechanisms to incentivize emissions reductions. It encourages the developing and implementing carbon markets and supports international cooperation on carbon pricing initiatives. The revenue generated from carbon pricing can be reinvested in clean technology and climate solutions.

Innovation and Research:

Canada's strategy emphasizes the importance of innovation and research in driving the transition to a net-zero economy. It promotes investments in clean technology development, supports research initiatives, and encourages collaboration between academia, industry, and government. The goal is to foster breakthroughs in carbon capture and storage, hydrogen production, and sustainable transportation

Nature-Based Solutions:

The strategy recognizes the role of nature-based solutions in sequestering carbon and preserving biodiversity. It emphasizes the importance of conserving and restoring ecosystems, including forests, wetlands, and coastal areas. Canada aims to expand protected areas, implement sustainable land management practices, and promote natural climate solutions.

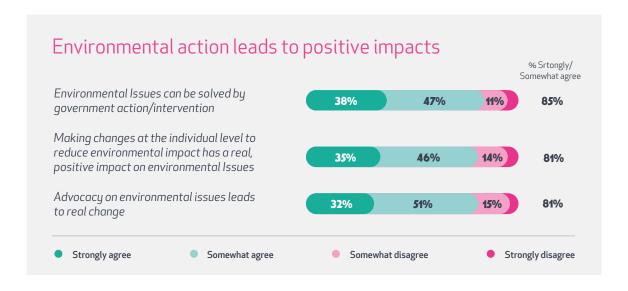
Just Transition and Indigenous Partnerships:

The strategy acknowledges the need for a just transition that supports affected workers and communities during the shift to a low-carbon economy. It emphasizes the inclusion and engagement of Indigenous communities in decision-making processes and recognizes their rights and knowledge in achieving net-zero emissions.

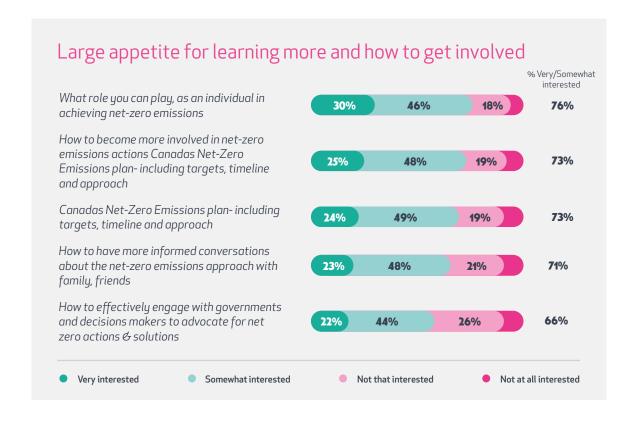


Existing Youth Engagement Tactics

Many youth strongly or somewhat agree that environmental action leads to positive impacts. Unlike some other issues, environmental activism is seen as accessible and inclusive. The real gap is that young people must learn the approach or their specific role (Abacus Data, 2023).



29% of youth are currently involved in initiatives relating to net zero. Another 46% are not involved but interested (Abacus Data, 2023). There is a considerable appetite for youth to learn more about what roles to play, how to get more involved and how to effectively engage decision-makers to advocate for net-zero actions and solutions (Abacus Data, 2023).



Most resources surrounding youth engagement in Net-Zero issues focus on elevating youth voices, emphasizing intersectionality and youth involvement in decision-making.

44

I feel like intersectionality is what's missing in a lot of net zero conversation. It tends to be very siloed off by only policy and climate folks, which is not what Net Zero should be. And if we're talking about just transition, if we're talking about moving away from fossil fuels, we need every sector and every social gap that exists involved in this conversation

- Focus Group Participant, 2023

77

In addition, sources acknowledge the potential of **upskilling youth** and providing additional funding and programs to enable **climate-specific education**, thus **empowering youth** to participate meaningfully in the Net-Zero discussion space (PWC, 2022).

As part of our focus groups, we spoke with several youth organizations who gave feedback on these resources and solutions. The feedback provided was coded and incorporated into the following existing youth engagement tactics to illustrate points further:



Youth-Led Movements and Activism:

Youth-led movements like Fridays for the Future and Extinction Rebellion have gained global recognition for mobilizing young people and advocating for urgent climate action. Through protests, strikes, and demonstrations, these movements have effectively raised awareness, captured media attention, and pushed for policy changes.

Youth Climate Summits and Conferences:

Organizing youth-focused climate summits and conferences provide platforms for young people to network, share ideas, and collaborate on climate solutions. These events unite youth activists, scientists, policymakers, and industry leaders to foster dialogue, knowledge exchange, and action planning.

Education and Awareness Campaigns:

Educational initiatives targeting schools, universities, and youth organizations effectively raise awareness about climate change and the importance of net-zero solutions. These campaigns provide educational materials, workshops, and seminars that empower young people with knowledge and encourage them to take action. This is an important starting point for any program, as many people - not just young people - need training in climate literacy.

Youth Advisory Groups and Panels:

Establishing youth advisory groups or panels within government bodies, organizations, and institutions ensures youth perspectives are included in decision-making processes related to net-zero strategies. These groups offer valuable insights, ideas, and recommendations, bridging the gap between youth and policymakers.

Digital Engagement and Social Media:

Leveraging social media platforms has proven to be a powerful tool for engaging youth in climate action. Online campaigns, hashtags, and challenges enable young people to share their perspectives, mobilize support, and amplify their voices. Social media also facilitates the dissemination of information, educational content, and calls to action.

Innovation Challenges and Competitions:

Engaging youth through innovation challenges and competitions fosters creativity and problem-solving skills. Encouraging young people to develop sustainable solutions, technologies, and business models related to net-zero emissions gives them a sense of ownership. It empowers them to contribute to the transition.

Partnerships and Mentorship:

Collaborating with established organizations, businesses, and mentors helps young people navigate the complexities of climate action. Partnerships provide access to expertise, resources, and networks, while mentorship programs connect young individuals with experienced professionals who can guide and support their initiatives.

Capacity Building and Skill Development:

Offering training programs, workshops, and skill-building opportunities equips young people with the necessary tools to contribute effectively to net-zero efforts. This includes training in renewable energy, green entrepreneurship, policy advocacy, and sustainable development.



Advocacy Tactics

Grassroots Activism:

Youth can engage in grassroots activism by organizing rallies, marches, strikes, and demonstrations to raise awareness about the urgency of climate action and the importance of achieving net-zero emissions. By mobilizing their peers and the broader community, youth can draw attention to the issue and pressure decision-makers to prioritize climate action.

Digital Mobilization:

Through social media campaigns, online petitions, and viral challenges, young activists can spread their message, educate the public, and mobilize support for net-zero targets. Digital platforms also enable youth to connect with like-minded individuals and organizations nationwide, fostering collaboration and amplifying their collective voice.

Lobbying and Political Engagement:

Youth can directly engage with policymakers, elected officials, and government representatives to advocate for ambitious net-zero targets. This can involve writing letters, making phone calls, or scheduling meetings to express concerns and share perspectives on climate action. Youth can also participate in public consultations and engage with political processes to ensure their voices are heard in policy development.

Combining many of these advocacy strategies is Deep Canvassing, which has positively impacted various movements, including the climate movement. It is "an approach to conversations which is non-judgmental and invites people to open up about their real conflicted feelings on an issue. The canvasser shares vulnerably about their own life and asks curious questions to create mutual understanding grounded in lived experience (The New Conversation Initiative, 2023).8 This utilizes a mix of grassroots activism, capacity building and skill development, and educational awareness campaigns.

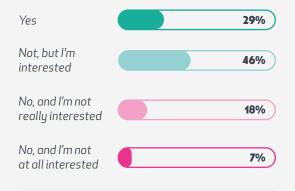
⁹ The New Conversation Initiative (2023). "What is Deep Canvassing?" Online. https://www.newconvo.org/what-is-deep-canvassing (EN)

DISCUSSION

After surveying youth, completing the literature review and obtaining qualitative data from focus groups and interviews, the data shows that many approaches and programs are already available when engaging youth in climate change and net zero. However, one focus group participant noted that "they're generally short-term and oversubscribed." While many youth are already involved in different programs related to the net-zero approach, there are still 46% are interested in becoming involved.

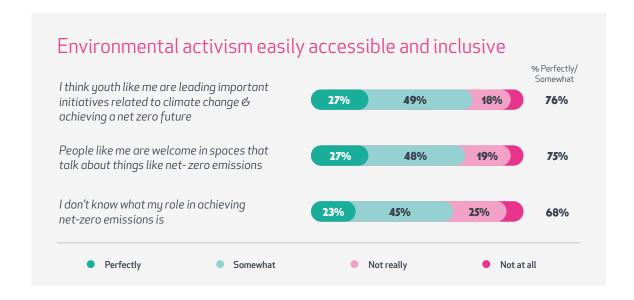
Furthermore, as illustrated in the environmental scan, many young people still need to learn of different facets of the climate movement, including net zero. Increasing knowledge, compounded with youth's eagerness to participate and become involved, necessitates different programs catering to youth.

Majority involved, interested in involvement



Just over a quarter are currently involved in supporting climate change, specifically actions related to the net-zero approach. For those who are not involved, there is a great deal of interest in becoming involved.

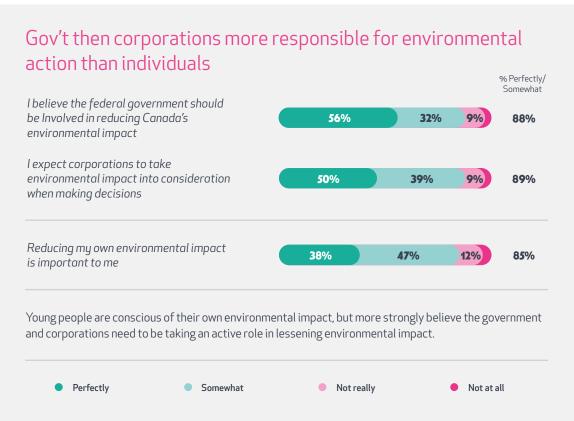
Current involvement vs. interest varies by demographic but combined is fairly consistent, those in SK/MB and Small gov't right are the least interested in getting involved.



Youth also see environmental activism as an area that is easily accessible and inclusive. Many youth see leadership in climate and net zero initiatives and feel welcome in spaces to talk about these issues. However, most youth do not know their roles in achieving net zero.

While many youth acknowledge that environmental action needs to have buy-in from everyone, including the individual; however, young people view governments as the most responsible for environmental action, with corporations second.





Gov't then corporations more responsible for environmental action than individuals



Nearly all young people give thought to environmental considerations in their daily lives, however it is more common to believe that government and companies are responsible for ensuring the environment is taking into account, not individual responsibility.

Part of the conversations with focus group participants also focused on political action. "Lay out how you can best engage with an administration or policymaker if it's civic if it's municipal, if it's provincial, or if it's national, how? How do those differ? How do we actually make a difference at those different levels?" (Focus Group Participant, 2023). Although many youth see governments as the most responsible, many youth do not know what actions to take to reach out to their elected officials.

everyday life

Organizations like Apathy is Boring can assist youth movements in moving beyond "clicktivism" and social media, beyond protests, into more decision-making spaces at different levels of government. Democracy organizations can complement the climate movement space by providing training for youth to be able to engage with governing institutions.

Overall, these results show the necessity of program opportunities for young people to engage with net zero, specifically by upskilling and increasing their knowledge. There is an appetite for it, and the next steps should be supporting youth-driven organizations to maximize their impact.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Youth continue to be at the forefront of climate movements, and the pathway to net zero should be no different. There are two avenues that organizations and governments can focus on to activate young people in net zero: increasing education and providing spaces for skills training. These skills include resilience, communication, networking and deep canvassing. To advance these goals, funding commitments to organizations already serving youth or youth themselves should continue growing.

Apathy is Boring, and other like-minded organizations focusing on democracy can help provide skills and knowledge specifically related to government and institutions, connecting it to net zero.

Program Recommendations

To engage with both democracy and net zero, upskilling youth must be a priority for organizations. In particular, creating a program to centre youth voices by providing skills in deep canvassing to develop skills in teamwork, resilience, communication and networking. Specifically, talking to their peers about net zero will create a more extensive network of youth equipped with a deeper understanding of it and working towards Canada's net-zero goals. Moreover, these skills can be utilized to mobilize youth to speak with their elected officials to share their stories and concerns.

Deep canvassing is a method to invite individuals to open up about their experiences and feelings on an issue and to encourage reflection. Neighbours United successfully mobilized its community around climate issues in Trail, BC, resulting in concrete policy change (2022). With this case study in mind, youth can utilize their experiences and feelings through a non-judgmental and active listening approach to connect with people and institutions like governments and other organizations.

Deep canvassing allows youth to engage with the five foundational values of the Net Zero Advisory Body by utilizing a personal approach to conversations. It puts people first, motivates and empowers young Canadians, allows for collaboration, seizes the upsides, and recognizes the differences in experiences between regions (2022).¹⁰

Deep canvassing has been shown as an effective tool to mobilize and organize individuals toward their advocacy goals. It builds on many youth-led advocacy strategies described in the literature review. It provides a concrete call to action for many youth, going beyond "clicktivism" and participating in protests. It also builds youth skills in communication, deep and active listening, empathy and interpersonal skills, which are helpful beyond deep canvassing and highly employable. It can also help develop youth skills in civic engagement by developing skills to work with and interact with elected officials around issues they care about.

⁹ Yale Program on Climate Change Communication. (2022). "The Power of Listening: Deep Canvassing Increases Support for Climate CHange Action in Rural British Columbia." Online. https://climatecommunication.yale.edu/news-events/neighbors-united/

Net-Zero Advisory Body (2023). "Foundational values and Design Principles for Pathways to Net-Zero." Online. https://ehq-production-canada.s3.ca-central-1.amazonaws.com/301a44bfa3d196c044934e34a08cbbe7f8ccd3ae/original/1637260775/61f75394daa713f22a85c944207db9
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A successful program around net zero will incorporate the following elements:

- I. Education: using youth-friendly facilitation skills, educating youth participants in the following topics:
 - a background and primer around what net zero is, what the goals for 2050 are, and providing youth with a list of resources on the subject matter.
 - This component should also cover advanced civics knowledge, including a primer on different levels of government and their responsibilities to the environment.
 - Education around advocacy by creating stakeholder and decision-making maps.
- II. Training youth around deep canvassing and communicating net-zero effectively upskilling their communication and advocacy skills
- III. Developing an evergreen toolkit for youth to use as they talk to their peers, families, acquaintances and elected officials
- IV. Linking all the resources and training back to tangible skills on advocating for net zero locally, specifically, municipalities. A particular focus should be on deep canvassing with municipal decisionmakers or supporting a youth climate corps.
- V. Supports and finds avenues for collaboration with other climate movement organizations by linking youth to these organizations post-program.

Social Media and Online Resource Recommendations

The findings from the focus groups show that there should be a focus on education, with a mix of youth (audience) generated content.

 Education should remain a key focus for organizations. While many (90%) young people support net zero when explained and defined, most youth also acknowledge that they need to know more about it (Abacus, 2023).

- Suggested educational online resources: Net zero basics, institutional (levels of government) responsibilities to the environment
- II. Incorporate tangible solutions in any educational web-based content
 - "I think always including solutions in anything you do or tangible things that people can do is a really good way to set a foundation."
 - Solutions include connecting with elected officials, working with climate-related organizations, developing skills and knowledge to mobilize concerns, listening to podcasts or news sources, creating communities, and joining youth-led movements.
- III. Present content in an uplifting and regenerative manner to encourage hopefulness and creative thinking
 - "There's a lot of misinformation out there.
 Setting the facts straight and being clear about where emissions come from will support people to change their actions."
 - "A way to counter apathy is to talk about cool things happening and positive stories.
 Showcasing positive things that have happened or are happening, because often I think we just get inundated with the scary and the negative."
- IV. Incorporating youth already at the forefront of the movement to elaborate on their knowledge and expertise, along with a democracy-oriented call to action.
 - "User-generated content/recruitment: We try to build camaraderie amongst the participants using social media platforms, letting the youth be the experts on our platform. Letting them do takeovers, letting them make posts for us. They become the voice of our programs, and I think that's a great way to get people engaged in the program and to see themselves as potential participants and potential ambassadors...when we involve our participants and when they're the ones willing to speak about us, we find that's a great way to recruit for the program."





