



# CEC YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

## 2023 Youth Participants' Recommendations Summary



CEC

# Rationale

Regional youth engagement is essential for addressing environmental challenges collaboratively. By involving young individuals from diverse backgrounds, the Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC) is tapping into a wealth of perspectives and innovative ideas. Youth engagement ensures that solutions are culturally relevant, fosters proactive problem-solving and empowers the next generation to play an active role in shaping sustainable futures. Engaging youth provides educational opportunities, encourages networking and collaboration and amplifies advocacy efforts, making environmental initiatives more inclusive, impactful and reflective of the priorities of the youth who will inherit the long-term consequences of today's decisions. In essence, regional youth engagement catalyzes positive change, contributing to a more sustainable and resilient future for our shared environment.

Amidst the landscape of North America, where more than 113 million youth aged 18-35, comprising over 8 million in Canada, 76 million in the United States and 29 million in Mexico<sup>1</sup>, meaningful youth engagement stands as a strong force for change. In November 2023, the CEC engaged nine youth representatives from Canada, Mexico and the United

States (three per country) to provide recommendations on meaningful regional youth engagement. The recommendations were co-written by the Youth Engagement Week participants and consider that youth will be the primary key actors and affected parties of future environmental policy and action. Emphasizing accessibility across North America, these recommendations are crafted to resonate with diverse youth voices. The considerations extend to the diverse spectrum of youth, recognizing the importance of inclusivity and representation, acknowledging the richness of perspectives and experiences within the youth demographic and emphasizing a strong commitment to prioritize marginalized and underrepresented youth.

The recommendations included in this document will inform the 2024–2026 CEC Youth Engagement Strategy, which will identify challenges and opportunities for youth engagement within the CEC and institutionalize youth engagement in CEC projects, decision-making spaces and advisory bodies. The strategy findings will improve preexisting activities, accelerate regional North American youth engagement and amplify North American youth representation globally.

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<sup>1</sup> Statistics Canada 2021: [link](#); United States Census Bureau 2020: [link](#); INEGI Mexico 2020: [link](#)



## CEC in the Youth Engagement Week Participants' Words

“ For us, the YEW participants, the Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC) holds significant importance as a platform that could actively involve and consider the perspectives of young individuals in addressing environmental challenges across Canada, Mexico and the United States—North American Collective. As a collaborative organization, the CEC provides a space for young voices to contribute to discussions and initiatives related to sustainable development, biodiversity, pollution prevention and other critical environmental issues in the North American region. This engagement offers youth the opportunity to shape policies, share insights and actively participate in fostering a more sustainable and environmentally conscious future. The CEC’s commitment to hearing and integrating youth voices reflects a dedication to inclusivity, ensuring that the concerns and ideas of the younger generation are integral to the decision-making processes that impact the shared environment of North America. ”



# Recommendations

The recommendations present a multifaceted approach to enhancing youth engagement within the CEC, acknowledging the unique strengths and perspectives that young individuals bring to the forefront of environmental initiatives. Recognizing the openness of the CEC Secretariat to youth voices, the recommendations outline four pillars of engagement for the CEC to be implemented in 2024–2025, which include Youth Leadership, Youth Outreach and Engagement, Youth Activities and Youth Enhancement within the Secretariat. Some of the recommendations, such as the Generation of Environmental Leaders Program and internship programs, have already been implemented, but these recommendations will further strengthen all CEC youth activities.





## Youth Leadership

### Recommendation 1

Establish a Youth Leadership Committee comprising three representatives per country (Canada, Mexico, United States). The committee will have two-year terms to ensure continuity and a steady flow of fresh ideas.

### Recommendation 2

Host an annual North American Youth Summit blending physical and virtual components for inclusivity, with keynote intergenerational speakers, interactive workshops and collaborative sessions addressing current youth and CEC priorities.

## Youth Outreach and Engagement

### Recommendation 1

Develop comprehensive research and needs assessment that will identify gaps in existing youth engagement initiatives and map regional variances to tailor the consultations to specific contexts and challenges faced by youth in different areas. Budgetary requirements encompass allocations for technology, mentorship and training, venue rentals, and outreach campaigns.

### Recommendation 2

Explore partnerships with NGOs, youth-led organizations, community partners and academic institutions will be crucial for shared resources and a more extensive reach.

### Recommendation 3

Co-create an inclusive and dynamic space for youth consultations, recognizing and valuing the indispensable contributions of young voices in shaping a sustainable and equitable future through the work of the CEC.

# Youth Activities

## Recommendation 1

Create a Youth Network platform for collaboration, idea exchange and community service.

## Recommendation 2

Restructure the former Youth Innovation Challenge (YIC) and ensure that the Generation of Environmental Leaders Program supports enhancing and broadening the Youth Innovation Challenge to engage a more diverse group of youth. The program should cater to various stages of youth development and entrepreneurship and integrate environmental events and seed funding to encourage innovative solutions. Example: a youth-led initiative focused on developing eco-friendly alternatives to single-use plastics could receive mentorship, seed funding and an opportunity to showcase their project at the annual Youth Summit.

## Recommendation 3

Create a Youth Fellowship Program, which will facilitate youth participation in international/North American climate agreements, complementary to existing climate negotiators' training. This two-year fellowship would be an opportunity for hired North American Youth to attend several conferences related to climate change/biodiversity and environmental protection as a youth negotiator. The target youth are new graduates or entry-level Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC), United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Secretaría del Medio Ambiente y Recursos Naturales (Semarnat) employees.

## Recommendation 4

Develop a monthly feature called "Youth on the Spot," showcasing a young researcher within the CEC, providing insights into their work, and highlighting the organization's commitment to involving youth.

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# Youth Enhancement within the Secretariat

## Recommendation 1

Continuously include youth perspectives in all activities, units and directorates of the CEC Secretariat.

## Recommendation 2

Measure the results of youth engagement through performance measurement surveys before, after and during activities.

## Recommendation 3

Highlight youth collaborators and individuals within the CEC on social media and at staff meetings to recognize their contributions.

## Recommendation 4

Build a paid Internship Program to bring young perspectives to daily operations and projects. The interns will be engaged in different streams and formats to contribute to the CEC's goals.

The proposed initiatives collectively aim to create a holistic and sustained approach to youth engagement within the CEC to drive positive environmental change across North America.





## Additional notes

The information provided in this document is a concise summary of a comprehensive report that spans over 12 pages. The complete report includes an in-depth analysis of each recommendation, outlining the objectives to be achieved and the timeline set for their implementation in detail.

The report provides a thorough examination of the recommendations, taking into account any potential challenges and risks that may arise during the implementation process. It also highlights the benefits of implementing the recommendations, including increased engagement and improved organizational performance.

## Youth Engagement Week Participants

Canada

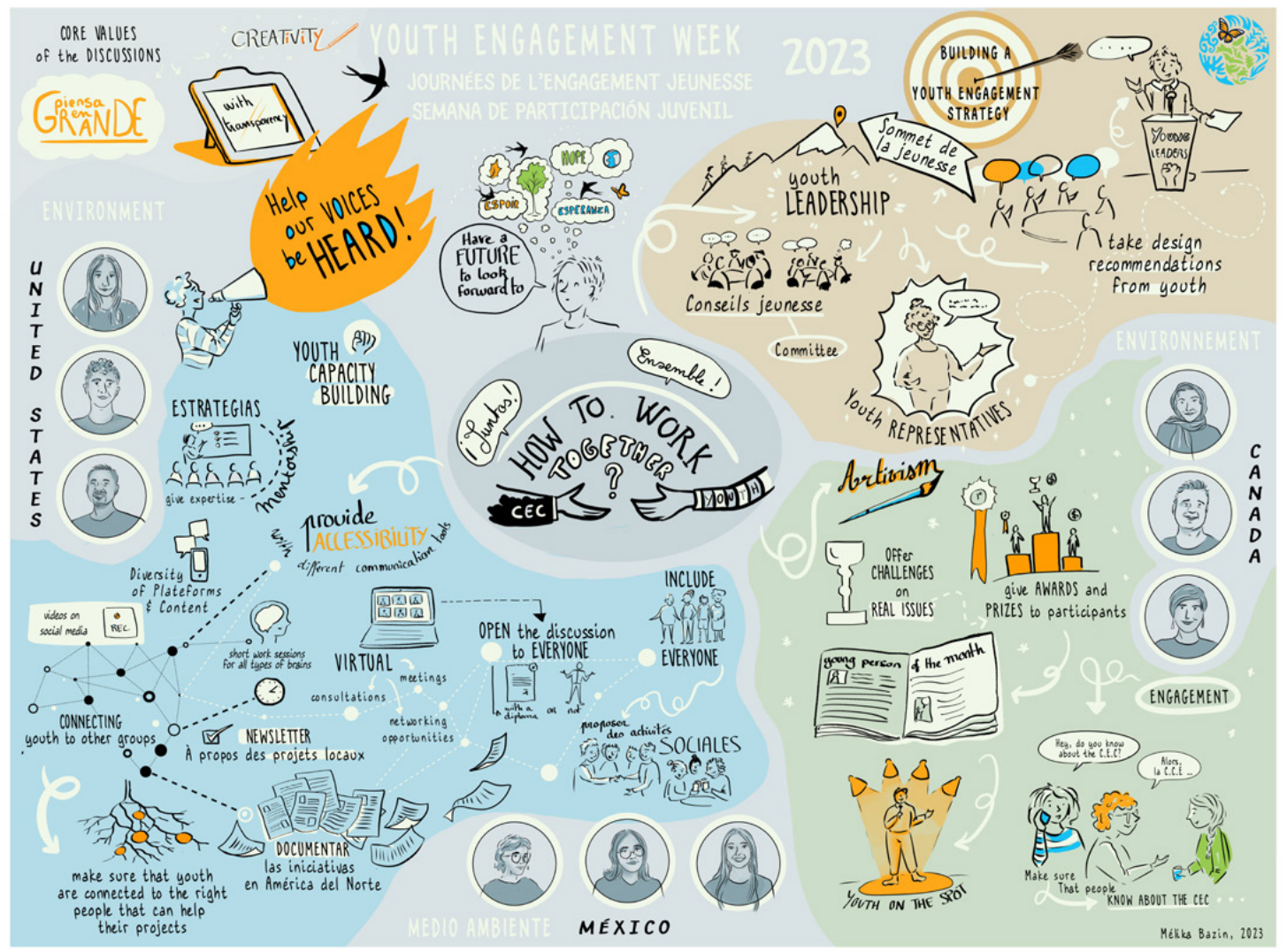
Graeme Hopkins  
Iman Berry  
Kwikws Elizabeth Peters

Mexico

Carlos Valdovinos Pérez  
Shurabe Mercado Guido  
Ximena Ramírez Muciño

United States

Agustín Ángel Bernabé  
Santiago Ramírez Ávila  
Teresa Doley



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[cec.org/youth](https://cec.org/youth)