

YEW
2025

BEST PRACTICES SUMMARY

What Businesses Need to Know: Young Innovators Shaping Business



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Introduction

This 2025 Youth Engagement Week (YEW) Best Practices Summary builds on the reflections, knowledge and lessons shared during the Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC) 2025 YEW webinar “*What Businesses Need to Know: Young Innovators Shaping Business.*” This webinar focused on how youth intra- and entrepreneurs are reshaping business practices across North America by driving innovation, sustainability and equity within and alongside private sector organizations.

The **2025 YEW**, held under the theme “*Youth Breaking Silos,*” featured a three-part webinar series designed to elevate youth perspectives from Canada, Mexico and the United States, highlighting the importance of collaboration between young leaders and the organizations that support them. Each webinar was facilitated by a young leader with experience in one of three focus areas: Indigenous and Traditional Ecological Knowledge, youth intra/entrepreneurship and community resilience. Alongside these facilitators, youth speakers and representatives from youth-supportive organizations shared their lived experiences and reflected on the role of youth-led initiatives in advancing environmental protection and sustainable development.

This summary synthesizes key messages and takeaways drawn from the facilitator’s experiences, the speakers’ contributions and the dialogue with the public. It also highlights best practices for youth engaging in this field, as well as for organizations seeking to support and collaborate with them. Through these activities, the CEC seeks to ensure that the voices, experiences and priorities of youth meaningfully contribute to North American environmental conversations.



Facilitators

To ensure that each session was grounded in lived experience and youth leadership, the CEC launched an open call to select the facilitators for the 2025 YEW webinar series. In collaboration with the CEC, facilitators selected speakers through an open call, helping to ensure diverse perspectives from across North America. As well as moderating the discussions, they also played a key role in shaping content, fostering meaningful intergenerational dialogues and contributing to the development of this summary.

The three outstanding facilitators were:



Léla Eromobor
Webinar facilitated:
“What Businesses Need to Know: Young Innovators Shaping Business”



Franklin Velasco García
Webinar facilitated:
“Traditional Environmental Stewardship for the Next Generations”



Ana Valeria Medina López
Webinar facilitated:
“Ripples of Change: Youth Local Action for Resilient Communities”

Léla Eromobor is a social impact professional who helps communities build inclusive and sustainable solutions. She has worked with youth and in women-led initiatives to launch projects that support gender equality, entrepreneurship and environmental responsibility. Her work focuses on turning ideas into action, whether by mentoring change-makers or applying design thinking to tackle context-specific barriers. Léla has also supported organizations in expanding their digital access to improve how they serve their communities. In her role as a facilitator for the 2025 YEW, she brought her commitment to helping emerging leaders transform their vision and boundless energy into concrete and lasting impact.



Webinar's Topic

This webinar explored the role of youth in intra- and entrepreneurship, as drivers of innovation within the private sector and beyond. Intrapreneurship is grounded in an organizational strategy that encourages employees to identify opportunities for innovation and lead internal initiatives as entrepreneurs would. Entrepreneurship, in turn, is understood as the planning and risk assessment involved in independently operating a business or enterprise.¹ Through these two pathways, the webinar highlighted how youth can act as agents of change within the private sector, aligning business objectives with positive social and environmental outcomes.

Building on these discussions, the presentations also showcased how businesses can gain a competitive advantage by establishing programs and processes that meaningfully engage youth, helping them understand organizational missions early on while empowering them to innovate in areas such as sustainability. The session further emphasized that companies benefit from cultivating diverse and intergenerational teams, which fosters more resilient decision-making and strengthens a culture of continuous innovation: key elements for remaining competitive in fast-changing markets.

¹ Entrepreneurship vs. Intrapreneurship: Cultivating Innovation in Business, Park University, 2024

Summaries of the Presentations



Immanuel Tablas & Starr Zhang Bombardier

Immanuel and Starr shared their personal career journeys and how those paths led them to working in the field of sustainability at Bombardier. Their presentation highlighted the range of opportunities available to early-career professionals, emphasizing that sustainability can be embedded in many roles—even for employees who are not formally part of a Sustainability team. Bombardier’s rotational career accelerator and internship programs were provided as examples of entrepreneurial opportunities available to early-career employees, illustrating how the company supports exploration, growth and innovative thinking.

“Often it’s hard to break out of the mold that’s been built, so having someone come in with a fresh mindset helps a lot because sometimes they’ll mention things that you might not have thought of before.”

— IMMANUEL TABLAS



Yesenia Ochoa Acevedo Network of Young Innovators in Hydrogen (Red de Jóvenes Innovadores en el Hidrógeno)

Yesenia shared her journey as an independent researcher for green hydrogen as an energy storage alternative to lithium extraction. She advocates for youth engagement in this initiative through establishing the first student committee for hydrogen studies. Her experiences with gender and age discrimination articulated through the resistance to her initiatives highlighted the ideological barriers limiting youth from exercising their agency as innovators.

“I personally support systemic change because we know, if something is not working, it’s because it’s not correct.”²



Lorena James Nature for Justice

Lorena presented Nature for Justice’s “Growing American Farmer Prosperity” program, demonstrating how private sector actors can support regenerative agricultural practices and farm power restoration. Previous partnerships have assisted farmers in developing value-added products and have also fostered capacity building through community gatherings. These initiatives, along with intergenerational collaborations, are critical tools for resolving the systemic loss of Indigenous and Black farmsteads and contribute to equitable food systems for future generations.

“We’re really prioritizing the importance of intergenerational collaboration in all work across the globe whether you’re working in the private sector or public sector.”

² Translated from its original language, Spanish.



Best Practices

Drawing on the experiences and insights shared by our speakers through their work in youth intra- and entrepreneurship within the private sector and related organizations, the following best practices and recommendations were identified for future work.

Best Practices for Businesses

- + Allocate funding to support community gathering initiatives that facilitate cooperative discussions and knowledge sharing.
- + Consider critical review of established processes and suggestions for improvement from employees as markers of high-level performance.
- + Encourage autonomous decision-making by entrusting young professionals with higher-responsibility tasks and providing mentorship that prioritizes taking initiative over perfecting results.
- + Provide youth-led organizations with greater market access through partnerships to foster scalable impact within their communities.
- + Institutionalize intergenerational decision-making through rotational leadership and accelerator programs.
- + Invest in youth training, upskilling and mentorship, creating structured pathways for young professionals to develop technical leadership and entrepreneurial capacities.
- + Create enabling environments where youth can thrive, including psychological safety, flexible work structures and internal platforms to advance youth-driven ideas.
- + Promote youth-led innovation ecosystems by supporting incubators, innovation labs and including youth in advisory committees and networks that accelerate entrepreneurial initiatives.

Best Practices for Youth

- + Channel proactivity into personal projects and independent research to close the gap between formal studies and practice when professional avenues are limited.
- + Apply your efforts toward experimenting with innovative methods rather than conforming to industry norms.
- + Seek horizontal collaboration with peers to combine creative approaches and amplify collective impact.
- + Consider skepticism from industry leaders as an invitation to reinforce your expertise and refine your impact, rather than as a rejection of them.
- + Keep up with organizations tackling issues you are passionate about, to stay informed on emerging opportunities to get involved.
- + Hold a clear vision of the outcome you are working towards to sustain your drive without burning out.
- + Tune into multidisciplinary discussions and system-levels thinking to understand where your ideas fit on a macro level.

Photo by Lorena James

Personal Reflections

From the perspective of Léla Eromobor, the facilitator moderating this webinar, the webinar highlighted young individuals from different contexts who are exercising their full agency toward materializing their vision for climate resilience. Without ceding to inhibitions that might stem from a belief that experience measures the validity of one's expertise, they instead recognize fresh perspectives as assets for reworking solutions that could have been stagnant in the face of increased challenges.

Insights from the discussions also reinforced the understanding that creating meaningful change within the private sector doesn't require youth to begin with a fully defined career path, or a clear vision of outcomes. Rather, the speakers' experiences underscored the value of curiosity, creativity and initiative as starting points for youth engagement. The CEC recognizes that when organizations create space for young people to explore topics aligned with their interests, this helps to unlock innovative thinking and pathways for youth to contribute meaningfully to organizational transformation.





As part of the CEC Youth Engagement Strategy, the Youth Engagement Week is a recurring event designed to embrace youth perspectives in North America by fostering their active participation in the CEC's work. The YEW aims to create an enabling environment for youth from Canada, Mexico and the United States to engage in meaningful dialogues, contribute to environmental discussions at the regional level and collaborate on innovative solutions to address pressing environmental challenges. Through workshops, consultations and collaborative projects, the CEC Youth Engagement Week supports the development of an intergenerational network committed to sustainability and environmental stewardship.



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