



YMCA Green Network

Making Sustainability Part of Everyday YMCA Life



PRESENTER & FACILITATOR: ELEANOR BLAIR

VICE PRESIDENT, STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS & CONNECTIONS, FIRST COAST YMCA
GREEN NETWORK NORTH AMERICA STRATEGIST



Our Purpose

Developed by a group of YMCAs in North America, to empower and support YMCAs in building green practices, resulting in improved operational efficiency and a more sustainable future.



OUR JOURNEY SO FAR



2022

VISION 2030 ADOPTION

Sustainable Planet becomes one of the four global pillars of Vision 2030.



2009–2024+

GLOBAL ADVOCACY & YOUTH LEADERSHIP

15+ years of youth participation and advocacy at UN Climate Change Conferences (COP).



OCT 2024

GLOBAL ACCELERATOR SUMMIT – MOMBASA

Movement leaders come together to shape priorities and accelerate sustainable impact.



2025

GLOBAL STRATEGIC PRIORITIES FRAMEWORK

Developed with EY and global contributors. Seven priorities across three impact areas.



2025

GREEN NETWORK PILOT – NORTH AMERICA

A collaborative network mobilizing YMCAs across the U.S. and Canada to advance sustainability.



2026–2030

REGIONAL SCALING & GLOBAL IMPACT

Expanding Green Networks region by region to build a globally connected movement.

YMCA Green Network

Resource Efficiency & Resilience

- Implementing energy-efficient audits and upgrades reduces costs, prepares YMCAs for environmental emergencies and meets standards in a variety of municipalities.

Wellbeing

- Optimizing the built environment for the health and wellness of its end users.

Youth Leadership & Education

- Youth engagement in sustainability fosters environmental values and stewardship as well as supports STEM and workforce development programs.

Community Partnerships & Environmental Action

- Collaborating with local groups enables YMCAs to support environmental resilience, volunteerism and secure funding.



YMCA Green Ecosystem

COMMITMENT

Vision, Strategy & Alignment

ENGAGEMENT

Staff, Volunteers & Community Partners

PROGRAMS

YMCA Programs, Community Education & Events

PROPERTY

Buildings, Sites & Transportation

ADVANCEMENT

Financial & Government Supports



COMMITMENT

Kathy Kuras
Chief Executive Officer

YMCA OF GREATER AUSTIN

Vision, Strategy & Alignment

Define your YMCA's Green vision, goals and sustainability strategies. Develop a Green Action Plan

ADVANCEMENT

Samantha Apodaca

Grants Director

YMCA OF GREATER AUSTIN

Financial & Government Supports

Secure funding and advocate
for private or government
support to advance your
sustainability initiatives

Funding Strategy

Helping YMCAs move sustainability priorities into action.

Assessment → Planning → Strategy → Funding → Implementation

- ✓ Identify sustainability priorities through the YMCA Sustainability Action Planning Toolkit
- ✓ Navigate planning, partnerships, funding opportunities and how to access them
- ✓ Determine the right path for your project
- ✓ Access practical grant resources

Resources Available

- Advancement Guide
- Grant Analysis Workbook
- Planning Grant Guide
- Project Grant Guide
- Sustainability Funding & Research Workbook Template



PROPERTY



Alex Versluis

Senior Vice President, Property & Development
Management

YMCA OF GREATER TORONTO

Buildings, Sites & Transportation

Understand your YMCA's
current infrastructure and
emissions output and outline
areas of opportunity to
increase efficiency



PROPERTY AUDITS & ACTIONS

Assess. Plan. Act. Build Resilience.



**A. Property and
Energy Audits**



**B. Energy Efficiency
Actions**



**C. Efficient Transportation
Actions**



D. Waste Audit



E. Water Audit



F. Resilience Hub Audit



G. Biodiversity Audit



**H. New Development
Planning**

PROGRAMS

Amy Wolf

Environmental Sustainability Director

YMCA OF THE ROCKIES

Community Education & Events

Identify opportunities to build eco-friendly components into existing programs and partner to create new programs that align with your YMCA and community partners' goals

ENGAGEMENT

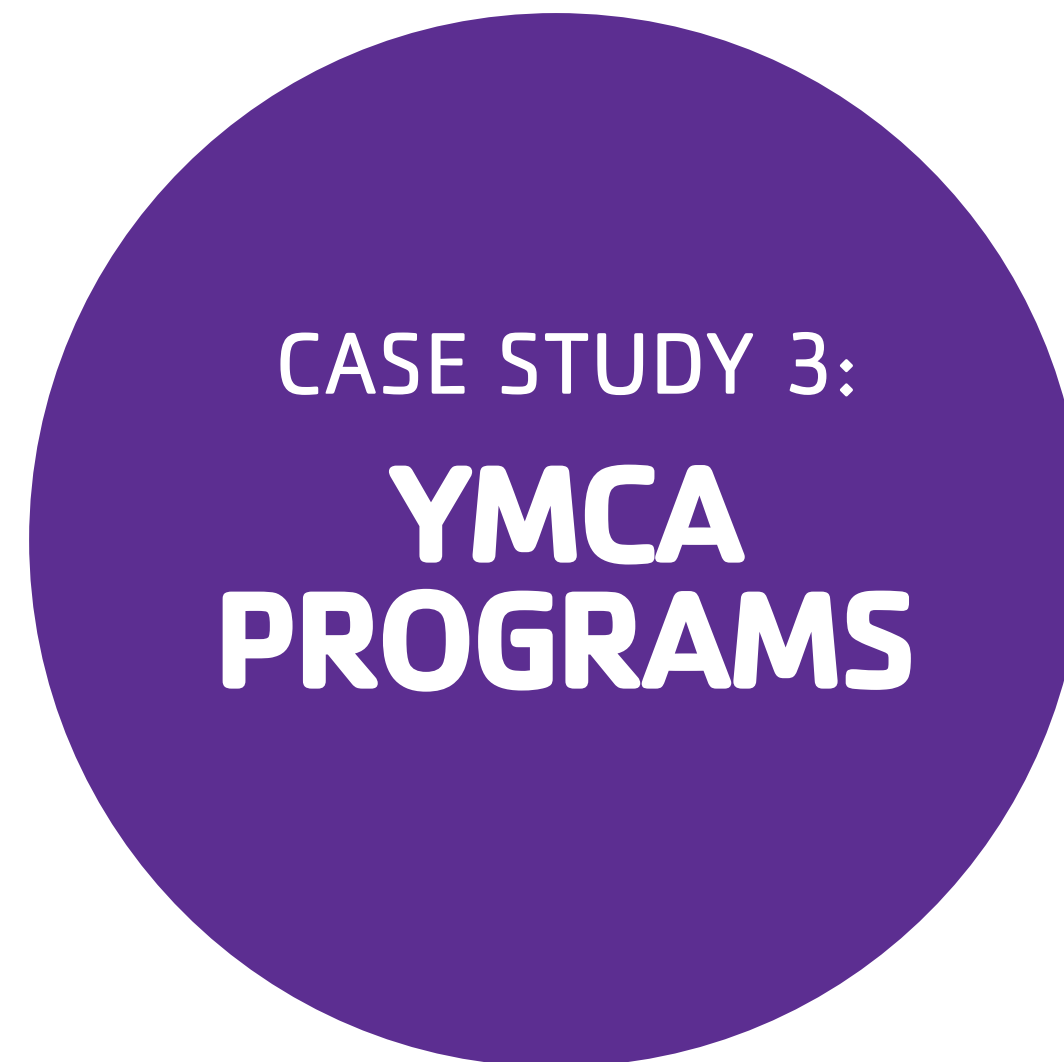
Eleanor Blair

Vice President, Strategic Communications
& Connections

YMCA OF FLORIDA'S FIRST COAST

Staff, Volunteers & Community Partners

Engage staff and volunteers at all levels and develop relationships and collaborations with community partners. Prioritize inviting young people as collaborators.





CASE STUDY 1: **ADVANCEMENT**

Financial Support

Secure funding and advocate for private or government support to advance your sustainability initiatives

CLIMATE ACTION
FUNDING
YMCA of Scotland



Taylor Smith
Climate Fund Project Manager



YMCA SCOTLAND NATIONAL CLIMATE ACTION PROJECT

YourMeaningfulClimateAction

WHO WE ARE?

YMCA Scotland, the
National voice for 23 local
YMCAs across Scotland,
supporting over 14,000
young people every week

Federated structure

80% of our YMCAs work in
communities with the
highest level of social,
economic, health and
educational needs



PARTNERS



Cupar
Dumfries
Edinburgh
Glenrothes
Kilmarnock
Kirkcaldy
Renfrew
Tollcross (Glasgow)



THE UNIVERSITY
of EDINBURGH

OUTCOME
SHIFT



Keep Scotland
Beautiful

YMCA

Here for young people
Here for communities
Here for you

WORLD
YMCA

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Local

- Public Health approach to Climate Action intervention project development
- Eight local YMCAs co-designing projects with young people and community members to meet their specific needs
- Community Climate Action plans

PROJECT OVERVIEW

National

- Scaling best practice
- Policy shift - engaging in local and national climate strategies
- Global Partnerships
- Evaluation

EVALUATION TEAM

- Catherine Mitchell, Quality & Impact Team, YMCA England & Wales
- Kelly Bradshaw-Walsh, Co-leader of World YMCA global Learning, Innovation & Impact
- Shakil Karim, Pillar Lead for Sustainable Planet at World YMCA



FUNDER

Funding comes directly from the sale of National Lottery tickets. Every time someone plays the lottery in the UK, a % of the ticket price goes into a central 'Good Causes' pot



Funds community projects that help people connect, grow and build a better future. Focusing on supporting people facing poverty, disadvantage or discrimination

FUNDER JOURNEY

- Co-design
- No programme delivery outcomes in Year 1
- Example programmes
- Full application, additional questions, online meetings



**THANK
YOU**

YourMeaningfulClimateAction



CASE STUDY 2:

ENGAGEMENT

Staff, Volunteers & Community Partners

Engage staff and volunteers at all levels and develop relationships and collaborations with community partners. Prioritize inviting young people as collaborators.

PHILIPPINES COALITION GLOBAL SOLUTIONS PARTNERSHIP

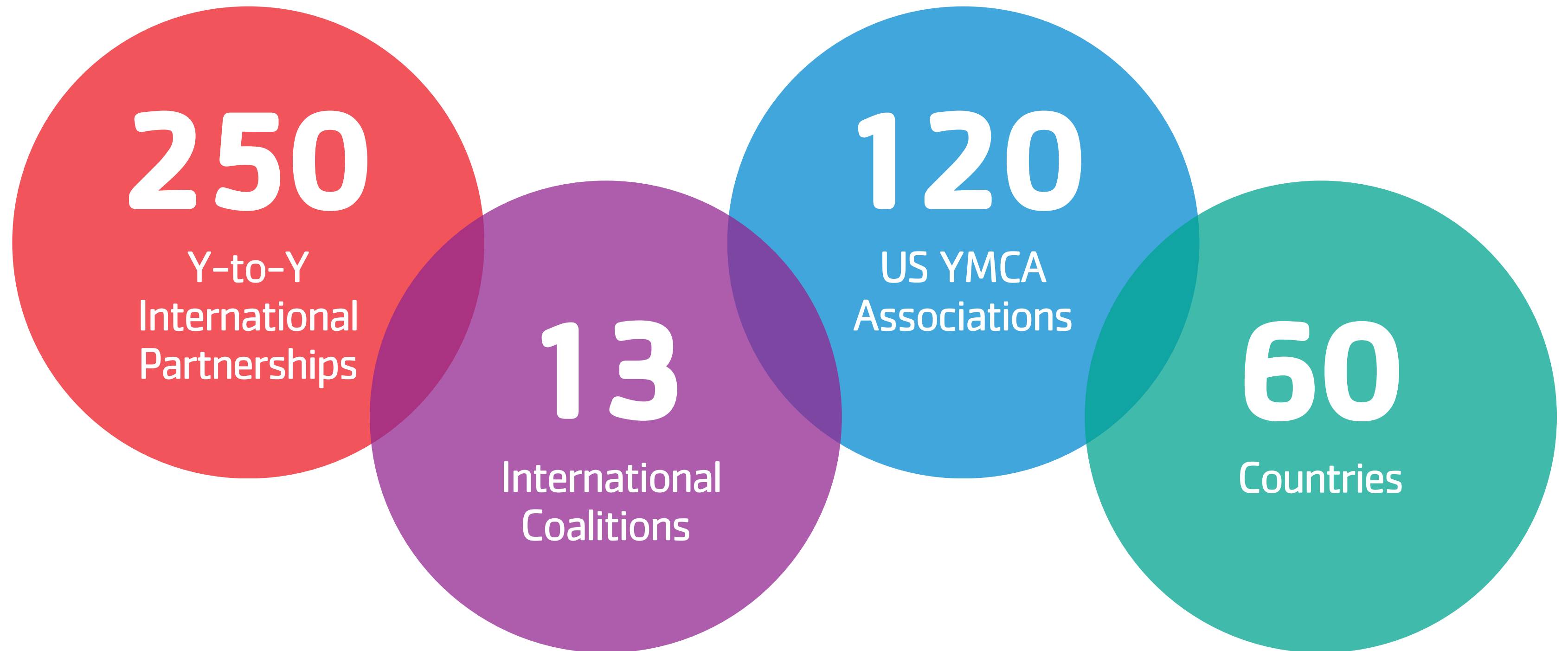


Ianne Christine Aquino
National Program Secretary
YMCA of the Philippines



Eleanor Blair
Vice President of Strategic Communications
YMCA of Florida's First Coast

Existing Y-to-Y Partnerships & Coalitions



Philippines Coalition

- YMCA National Office of the Philippines
- 18 YMCAs including YMCA of Albay , YMCA of San Pablo City, YMCA of Makati
- US YMCAs
 - YMCA of South Hampton Roads, Virginia
 - YMCA of Florida's First Coast, Florida
 - YMCA of Ann Arbor, Michigan
 - YMCA of Metro Atlanta, Georgia
 - YMCA of Long Island, New York
 - Wapakoneta YMCA, Ohio
 - Woodson YMCA, Wisconsin
 - Gateway Region YMCA, Missouri
 - National YMCA Asian Pacific Islander Leadership Network



Engagement Steps

- **LISTEN FIRST**
- **CO-CREATE A SHARED VISION**
- **CLARIFY ROLES & COMMITMENTS**
- **ENGAGE CONTINUOUSLY**
- **MEASURE, SHARE & SUSTAIN**



LISTEN FIRST

Youth Led Solutions

Philippines Coalition Global Team



CO-CREATE A SHARED VISION

OUR VISION

To amplify youth solutions that positively impact local and global sustainability, the development of just and equitable communities, and the well-being of all people.

CULTIVATING ACTION THROUGH RESPONSIBLE EDUCATION (C.A.R.E.) FOR CLIMATE

YMCA YOUTH-LED
SOLUTIONS

CLIMATE CHANGE:
DEBUNKING MYTHS,
STATING FACTS

SESSION 1

YMCA

YOUTH-LED
SOLUTIONS

ACTION ON
CLIMATE:
FOCUSING
ON SDGS AND
TREATIES



SESSION 2

YMCA YOUTH-LED
SOLUTIONS



ENVIRONMENTAL
AWARENESS SKILL

SESSION 3

YMCA YOUTH-LED
SOLUTIONS

ENVIRONMENTAL
ACTIVISM
AND CLIMATE ACTION
LEADERSHIP

SESSION 4

YMCA YOUTH-LED
SOLUTIONS

BENCHMARKING OF
GOOD PRACTICES
FOR CLIMATE ACTION

SESSION 5

YMCA YOUTH-LED
SOLUTIONS

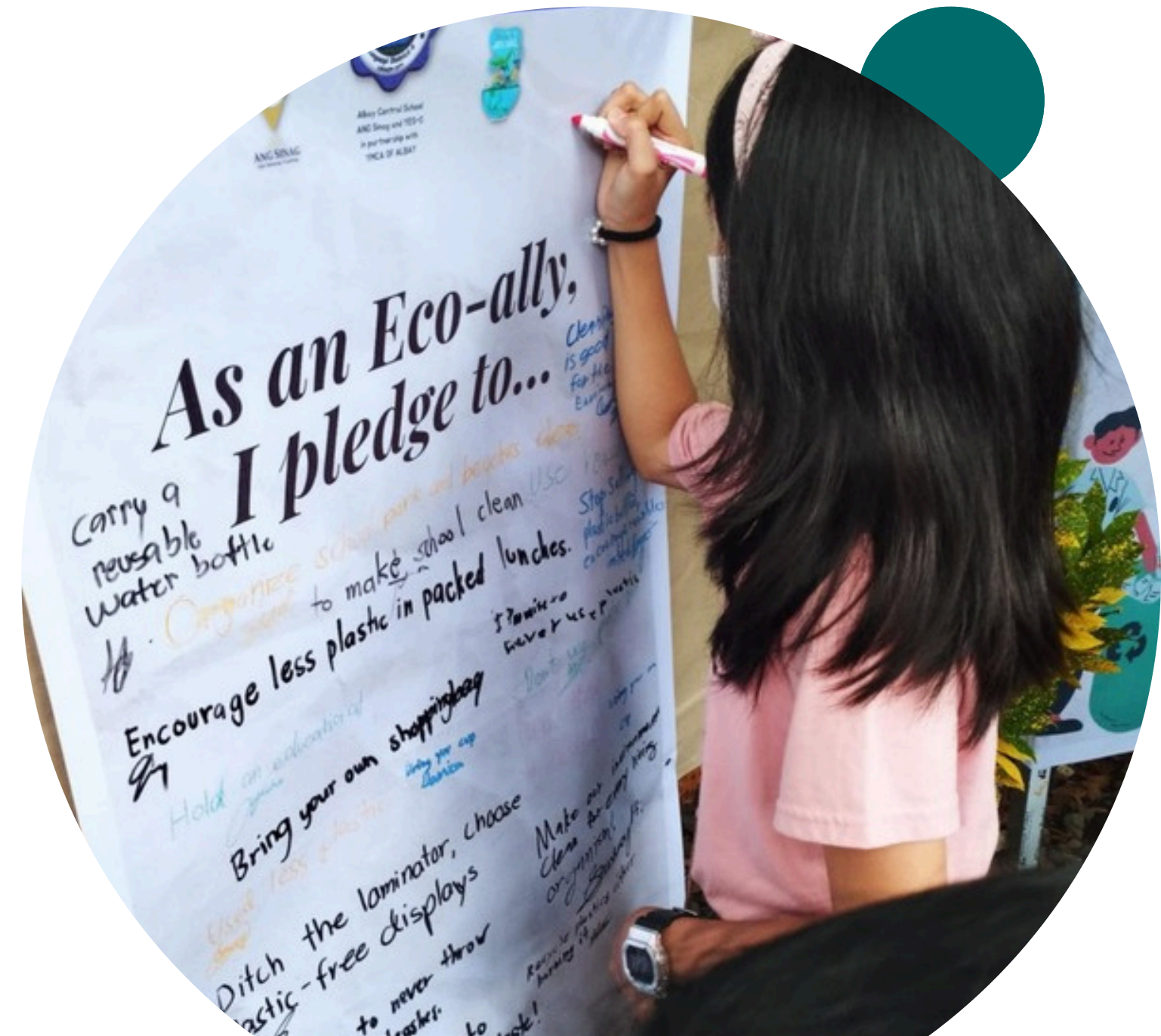
ACTION
PLANNING

SESSION 6

CLARIFY ROLES & COMMITMENT

Together, we made a commitment to collaborate in the C.A.R.E. for Climate action plan.

- Collectively, we set a goal to inspire and engage our youth in meaningful engagement activities
- Eco-Leaders taught curriculum to Eco-Allies
- Each YMCA focused on the Youth-Led Solutions Environmental Sustainability Project (C.A.R.E. for Climate)
- Tailor initiatives to fit local needs and contexts.

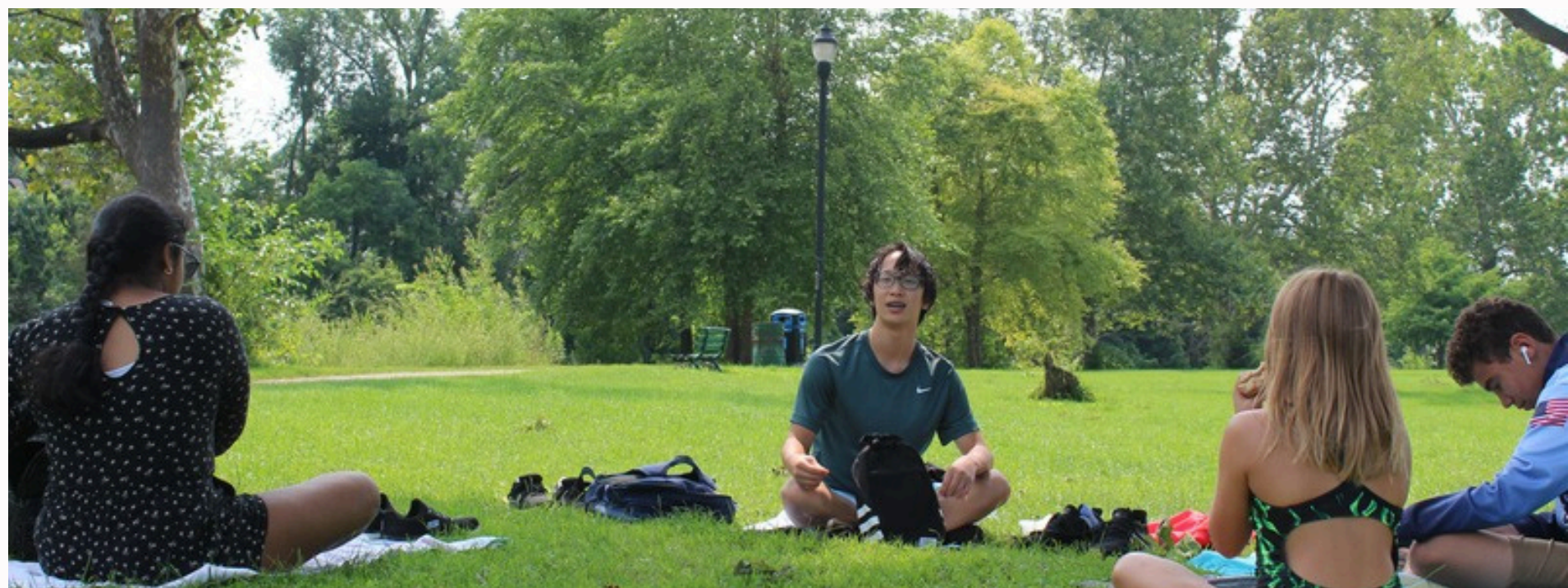


YMCA OF FLORIDA'S FIRST COAST





ANN ARBOR YMCA



SAN PABLO CITY YMCA





ALBAY YMCA



2025

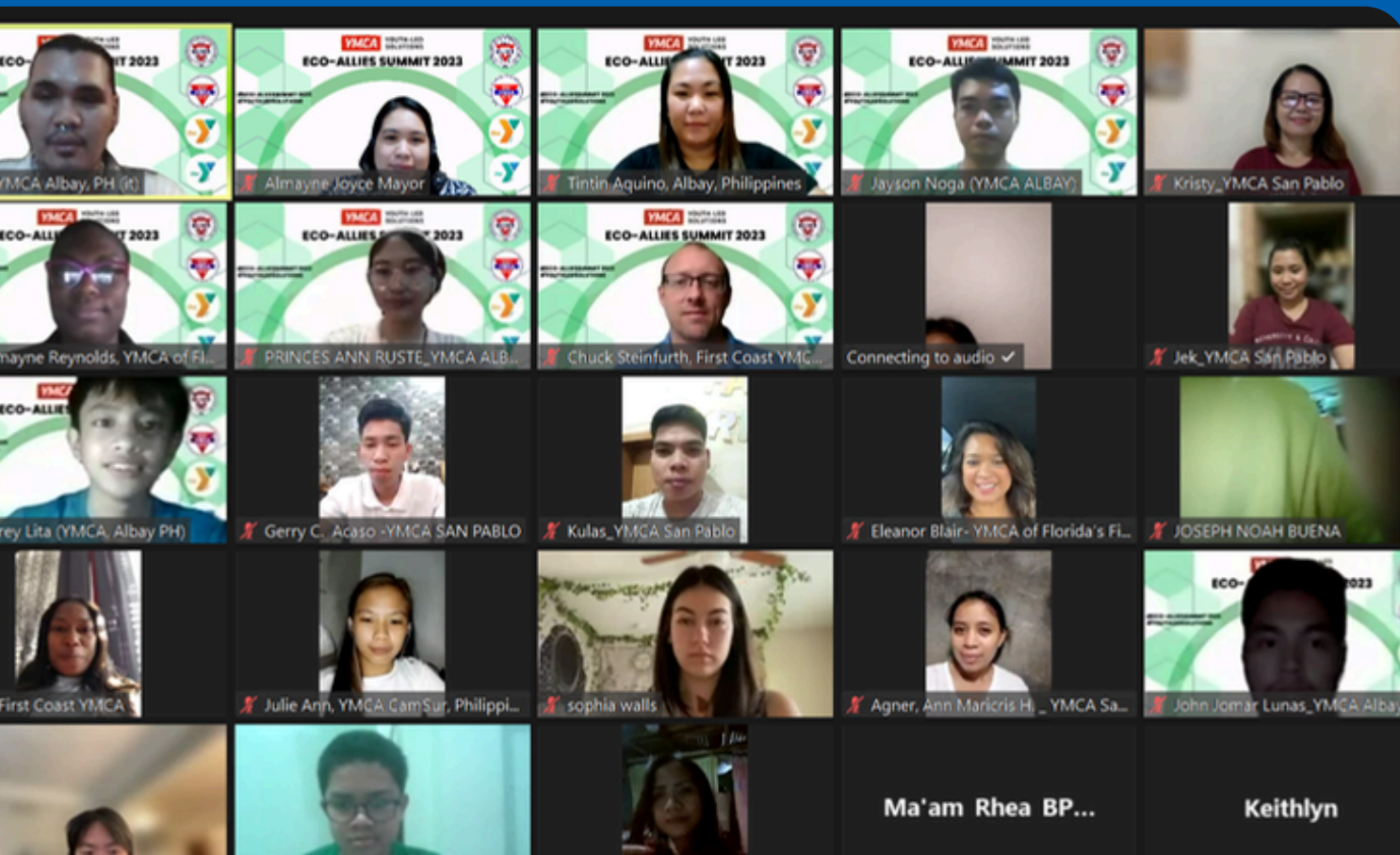
ENGAGE CONTINUOUSLY

- 4 Rounds of Youth Led Solutions Collaboration
- Albay YMCA– UN Int’l Org. for Migration Environmental Project
- First Coast –YMCA Green Network of North America
- Shared C.A.R.E. for Climate across the globe



**We are passionate people
who share a vision.**

Empowering and supporting YMCAs who are
committed to a sustainable future.



PHILIPPINES COALITION

2024 YMCA of Florida's First Coast Camp Immokalee hosts International Camp Counselor



2025 and 2026 YMCA of Philippines Hosted FIRST EVER Overnight Camp



MEASURE, SHARE & SUSTAIN

Key Areas to strengthen our global network and continue to drive positive change.

- 4 Years (2022-2025) of Collaboration
- Create meaningful connections
- Find way to scale the work

Total Results:

- Direct and Indirect Beneficiaries: **67,982**
- Trees Planted: **9,070**
- Coral of Opportunity: **490**
- Recycled Plastic Bottles: **3,000**
- Engaged Community Partners: **60**



2024

WORLD YMCA SUMMIT • MOMBASA, KENYA

Youth-Led Solutions Impact Award



WORLD
YMCA
IMPACT AWARDS

Youth-Led Solutions Impact Award

YMCA Global Solutions Team

YMCA of Albay, YMCA of San Pablo,
YMCA of Florida's First Coast, YMCA Ann Arbor

Mombasa, Kenya, 2024

Thank You

PHILIPPINES COALITION GLOBAL TEAM





CASE STUDY 3: **Y PROGRAMS**

Community Education & Events

Identify opportunities to build eco-friendly components into existing programs and partner to create new programs that align with your YMCA and community partners' goals

AFRICAN ALLIANCE OF YMCAS: CLIMATE GAMES

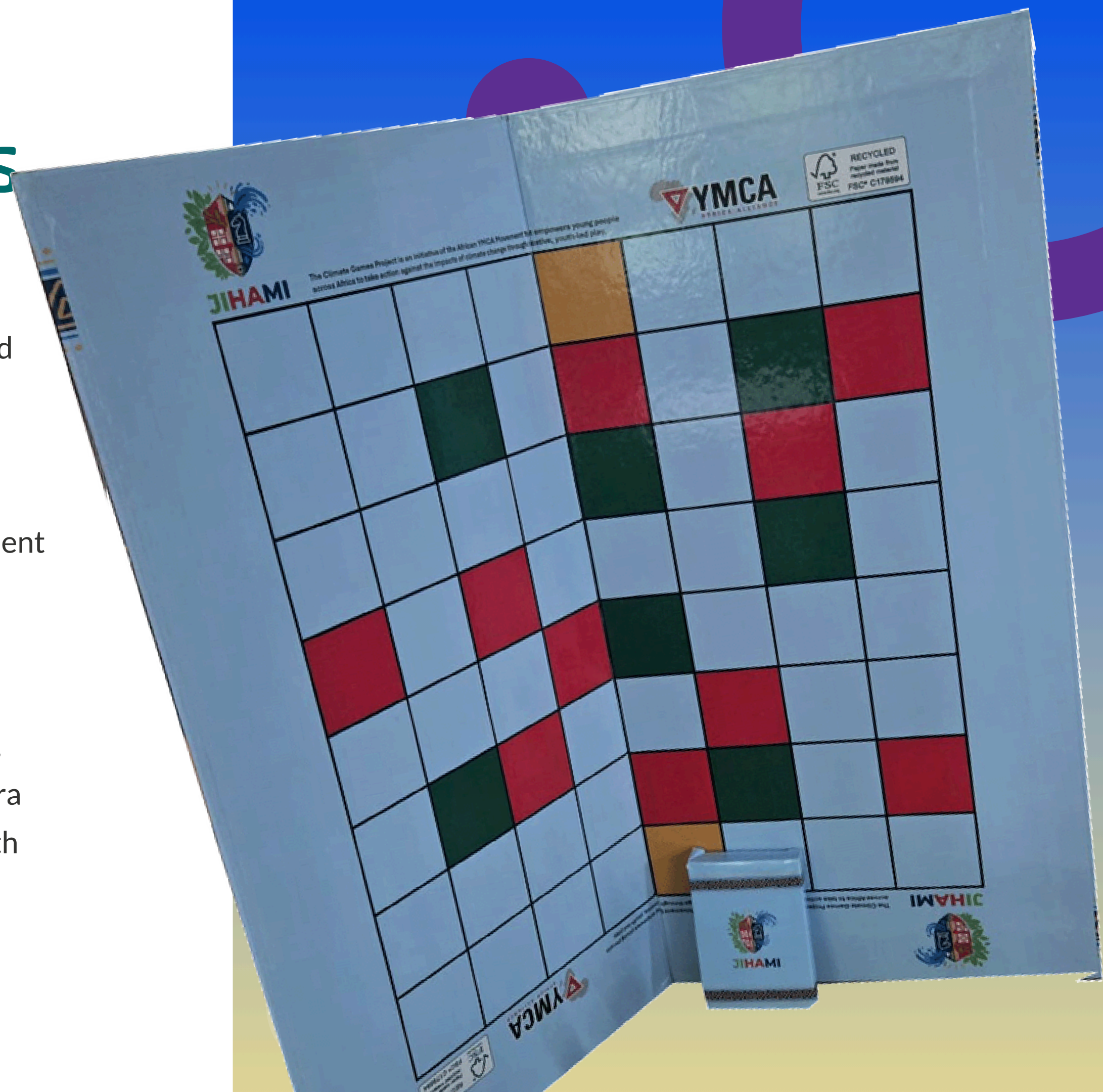


Lloyd Wamai
Programme and Innovation
Management Executive

The Climate Games

- Youth-led innovation initiative
- Focus on link between climate change, lost or altered livelihoods, and the resultant justice involvement
- Primarily focused on Adaptation to Climate Change
- Targets justice-involved and at-risk youth
- Uses game design and play as learning and engagement tools

Implemented in Kenya, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Madagascar, South Sudan, Cameroon, Nigeria, Niger, Benin, Togo, Ghana, The Gambia, Benin, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Germany (Baden) and Facilitated dialogue with policy leaders in the countries





The Climate Games

- Based on the Fail fast, fail early, Fail cheap framework. (Amy Chang, Lean Impact)
 - So, The first year (2025) was a prototype
- 3450 youth reached in the first 3 months of engagement
 - 8 new, unique games created by young YMCA Game creators
 - 35+ structured experiments carried out to test the games
 - 100+ validated learnings derived



LET'S PLAY
FOR THE PLANET

- Prototyped in November 2025 as a continental unifier
- Implemented in Kenya, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Madagascar, South Sudan, Cameroon, Nigeria, Niger, Benin, Togo, Ghana, The Gambia, Benin, Liberia, Sierra Leone
- Facilitated dialogue with policy leaders
- Total Festival Participants: 980 (53% Female)



Where We Go Next

- Game-design residency in Mwakirunge, Mombasa for at- risk youth living in the Mombasa Land-fill
- Setting up of Mobile Digital games grounded in youth livelihoods (We have recently locked in 20,000USD from HP Foundation and are looking for more investments to reach 20% of African Youth)
- Deeper engagement in Malawi and Burundi, as well as engagements with Incarceration facilities in Sierra Leone and Kenya
- Setting up a Game incubator hub at the AAYMCA (Long term) as a Model studio for game development with Developers and designers already being identified
- Setting up a Global, YMCA led Movement focusing on Gaming for Climate change Adaptation

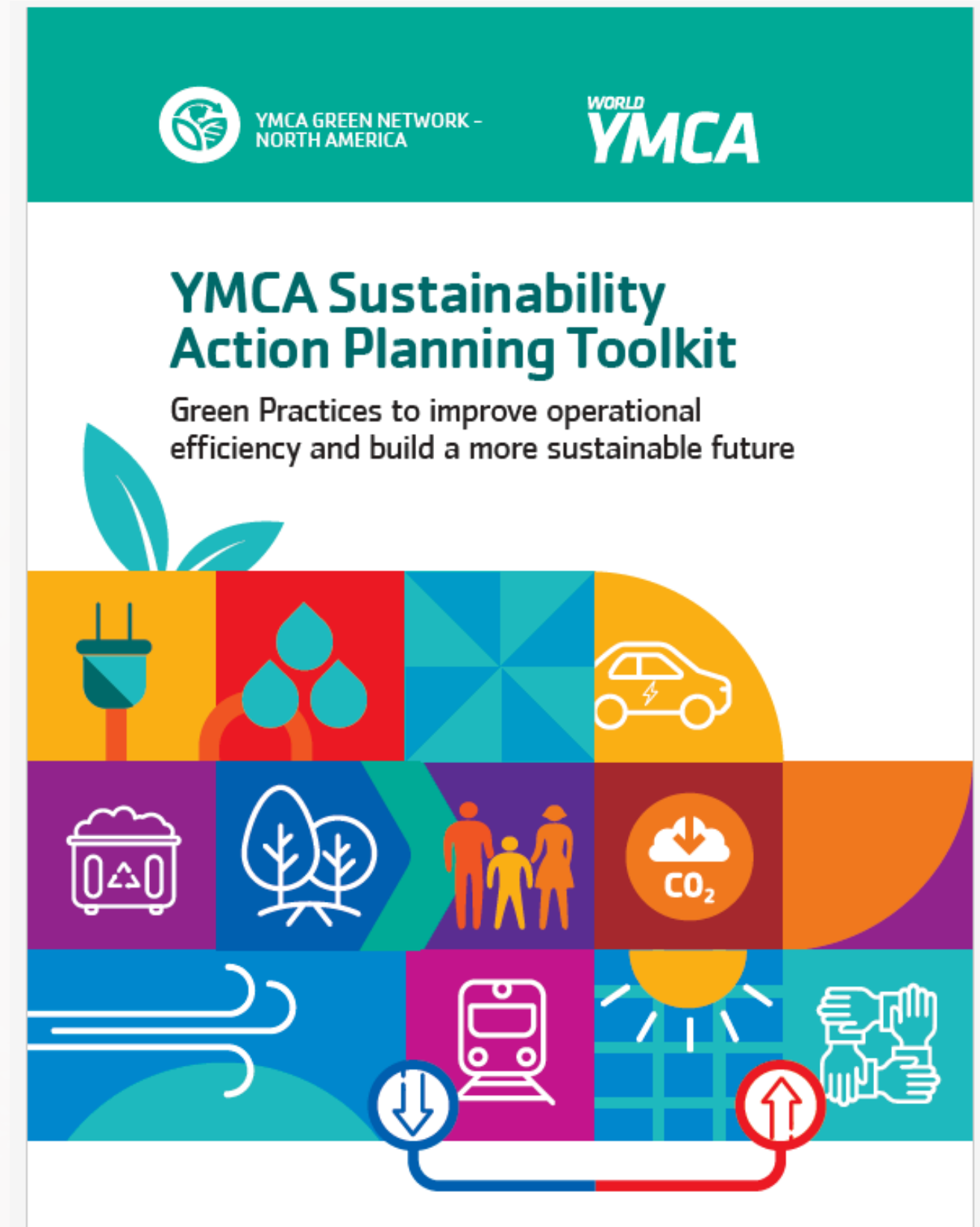


Where We Go Next

- Building research capabilities in partnership with Universities
- Hosting regular Game Jams in partnership with industry leaders like Games for Change etc
- Using evidence collected from the Games to contribute to global climate conversations in favour of the most marginalized and Justice involved youth

CONSIDER THIS....

Build Your Green Action Plan





Who Should Be On A Green Team?

Suggested Green Team Members include:

- CEO or Executive Sponsor
- Facilities / Property Leader
- Program Leader
- Development / Advancement Representative
- Marketing / Communications Representative
- Board Volunteer
- Young Person (recommended)
- Community Partner (optional)



THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSOR

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THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSOR



northwing
DIGITAL



Kyle Scott
Founder



Jake Leiby
Vice President of
Operations



You are the **Y.**
We help with the **How.**

NorthWing Digital · Proud Sponsor of the YMCA Green Network

Kyle Scott, Founder · Jake Leiby, VP of Operations



HOW WE HELP YMCAS



You strengthen communities. We strengthen your reach.

Connecting more families with your programs, services, and the impact you make every day.



Digital Strategy & Advertising

Targeted campaigns that fill programs and grow membership.



SEO & AI Optimization

Be the Y people find first in search and AI answers.



Google Ad Grant Management

Put your \$10K/month nonprofit ad grant to work.



Web Design & Development

A site that makes joining, giving, and registering easy.



Analytics & Tracking

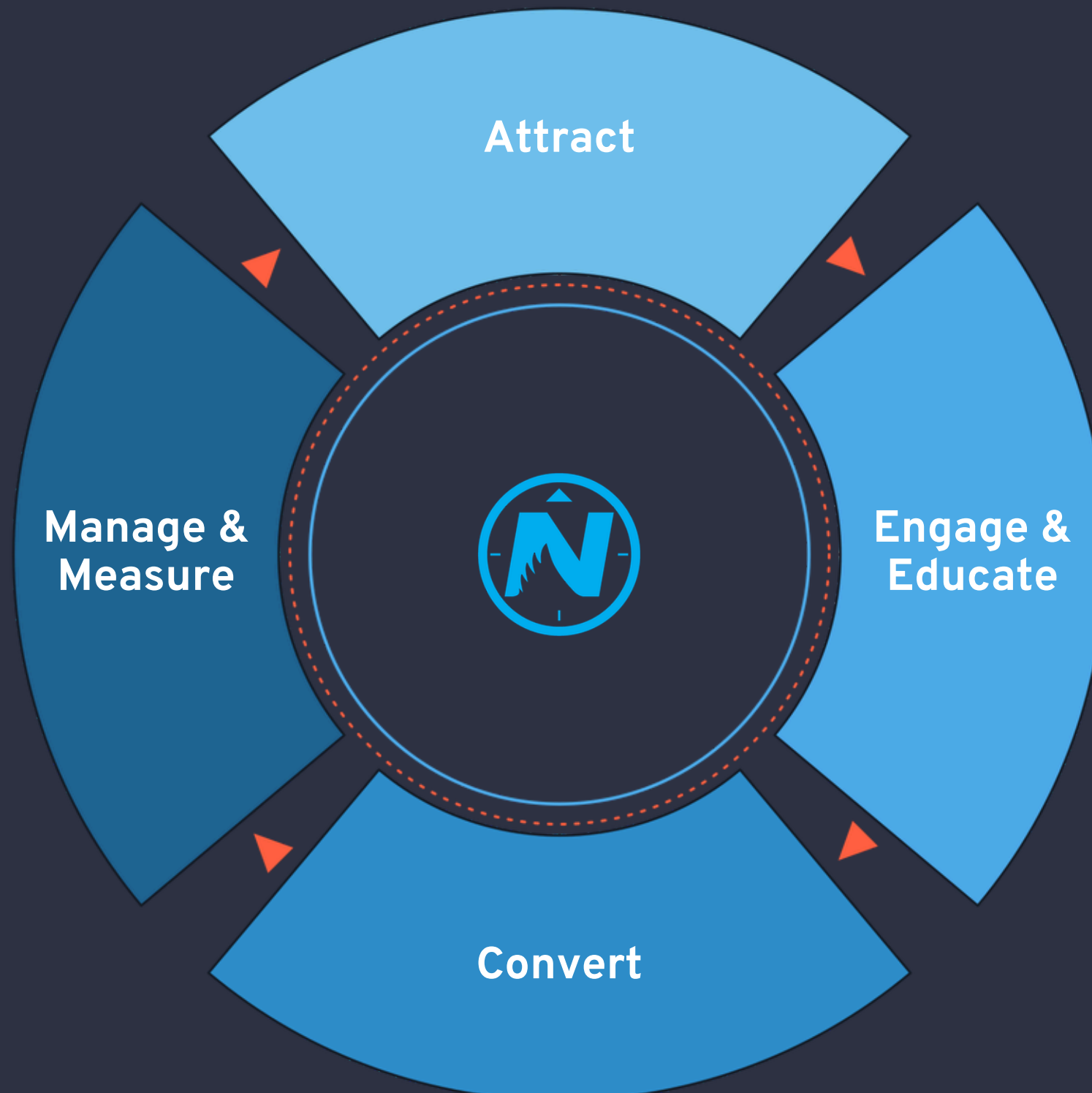
See what's working: signups, engagement, community impact.

THE NORTHWING FRAMEWORK

Your Y's Sustainability Story in Action



An Ongoing Cycle: What You Measure Becomes the Story that Earns Your Next Grant.



01

Attract

Get discovered. A landing page and social posts that surface the green work you're already doing.

02

Engage & Educate

Bring it to life. Stories, photos, and short video that help people understand the impact.

03

Convert

Turn interest into action. Volunteers, pledges, donations, and program sign-ups.

04

Manage & Measure

Keep it going and prove it. Track engagement, progress, and community impact.

Closing Remarks

- No Single Road Map.
- One Action- What will it be?
- Make sustainability part of everyday YMCA life.
- Essential to our mission and future of the communities we serve.



The greatest threat to our planet is the belief that someone else will save it.

-ROBERT SWAN



Sustainable Planet: Sub-Plenary & Breakout Session Schedule

WEDNESDAY, JULY 22

Sub-Plenary with Professor John Fernández, Massachusetts Institute of Technology

**Sustainability Within Reach: State of the Planet
and the YMCA Leading Communities Worldwide**

Time: 2:45pm – 4:15pm

Facilitator: Shakil Karim, World YMCA

Sponsor: Northwing Digital

WEDNESDAY, JULY 22

**Helping Communities Through Crisis: The
YMCA's Role in Disaster Response and Recovery**

Time: 5:00pm–6:15pm

**Facilitator: Alex Versluis, YMCA of Greater
Toronto**

THURSDAY, JULY 23

Building YMCA Spaces for the Future

Time: 11:15am–12:45pm

Facilitator: Kathy Kuras, Greater Austin YMCA

**Saving Energy, Lowering Costs &
Strengthening YMCA Facilities**

Time: 2:45pm – 4:15pm

Facilitator: Amy Wolf, YMCA of the Rockies

Thank you.

YMCA GREEN NETWORK

