



# Youth Climate Action Fund: Activating Young People in Driving Climate Solutions

## Situation:

With 84 percent of youth around the world reporting that they are worried about the threat that climate change poses to people and the planet, Mayor Satya Rhodes-Conway announced in March of 2024 that Madison would join Bloomberg Philanthropies' new Youth Climate Action Fund, which provided technical assistance and funding for 100 Mayors to activate tens of thousands of young people ages of 15 – 24 years to design, produce, and govern urgent climate solutions in cities across the globe. Madison joined the Fund alongside other cities from around the world, which together span 38 countries across six continents, representing over 62 million residents.

## Response:

Through the Fund, Madison received \$50,000 to distribute \$5,000 micro-grants through their youth-led program By Youth For Youth (BYFY). In partnership with United Way of Dane County and UW-Madison Extension through BYFY, Madison has already distributed nearly \$1,000,000 to over 500 youth-led projects over the past 30 years. The Youth Climate Action Fund allows BYFY to amplify and accelerate youth-led ideas to tackle climate change. From mobilizing tree-planting to launching recycling or waste reduction initiatives to participating in mitigation planning or preparedness programs, efforts stemming from the new Youth Climate Action Fund will advance critical community goals such as meeting de-carbonization commitments or reducing consumption-based emissions.



The City of Madison partnered with Dane County Extension to provide oversight of youth recruitment, meetings, and agendas, and United Way of Dane County to serve as the fiscal agent. Staff organized guest speaker panels with climate change leaders and local organizations so youth could learn more about the City's Sustainability Plan and opportunities for systemic impact. The youth then individually reviewed, evaluated, and ranked each proposal, deliberated the merits of each proposal as a group, and then recommended funding. In August, an Awards Ceremony was hosted to celebrate all the grant awardees and Youth Climate Action Fund accomplishments.

## Results:

From May - August 2024, the youth members served as a diverse grant review committee for the Youth Climate Action Fund. They received twelve applications and distributed \$5,000 each to eight youth-led and youth-implemented climate initiatives that aligned with the City of Madison's [Sustainability Plan](#). Projects awarded were required to involve at least one of the priorities: (1) quality, affordable housing, (2) resilient city design & infrastructure, (3) renewable energy & de-carbonization, (4) sustainable transportation, (5) clean, abundant water, (6) zero waste, (7) healthy ecosystems, and (8) vibrant green economy. Awarded organizations include: Sustain Dane, UW-Madison's Wisconsin Energy Institute, UW-Madison's Earth Partnership & Indigenous Arts and Sciences Program, the Food Recovery network, Madison Metropolitan School District's East High School, and the Dane County Youth Environmental Committee.

"The next generation will have to continue and accelerate programs designed to improve community resilience in the face of a changed world," said Mayor Satya Rhodes-Conway when announcing the City of Madison and its partners' participation in the Youth Climate Action Fund. "When we equip young people with knowledge, support, and capacity; reduce arbitrary barriers to participating in solving complex problems; and say yes to young people's ideas, good things happen. Investing in young people as agents of change, as individuals capable of solving complex problems, as people who have ideas that are worth listening to and acting upon, will support a future of hope."

*"I'm passionate about community service and local government. I believe small actions can lead to meaningful change in tackling climate change within my community."*  
- Olivia, YCAF youth committee member

*"As a lover of the outdoors, the impacts of climate change have always been on the forefront of my mind and I am passionate about using my youth voice to demand change in any way that I can."*  
- Reya, YCAF youth committee member

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