

Columbus Youth Climate Action Fund

Program Overview

With 84 percent of youth around the world reporting they are worried climate change threatens people and the environment, Bloomberg Philanthropies launched the **Youth Climate Action Fund** in 2024 to help empower the next generation of climate leaders.

As a Bloomberg Sustainable City, Columbus received \$50,000 and funded 10 microgrant projects in the inaugural year! In 2025, Columbus is now offering up to **\$100,000** to fund youth groups seeking to address climate change and its impacts on our community.

Vision:

Empower a new generation of climate leaders!

Award:

Microgrants of \$1,000 - \$5,000 to support youth-led climate action projects

Eligibility:

Youth groups ages 15 - 24 in Columbus

New projects that support the Columbus Climate Action Plan.

Apply:

Visit the [Youth Climate Action Fund](#) to download an application. Submit by June 30, 2025 to make sure funds are still available!



Members of the Society for Ecological Restoration at OSU and other project partners celebrate after a day of invasive plant removal.

Microgrants are available to youth groups (ages 15 – 24) in amounts of \$1,000 - \$5,000 to implement new projects that support one of the following program areas in our **Columbus Climate Action Plan**:

- **Empowering the community the “Columbus Way:”** Builds or supports community collaboration, education, awareness, leadership related to climate action.
- **Sustainable Neighborhoods and Ecosystems:** Supports climate resilient neighborhoods or a healthy environment.
- **Buildings and Energy:** Promotes renewable energy or energy efficiency in residential, commercial or community buildings.
- **Transportation:** Supports mode shift to bikes, scooters and public transportation or promotes zero-emission vehicles.
- **Waste Reduction:** Reduces waste generated or sent to the landfill.

Projects can be focused on climate mitigation (reducing pollution), climate resilience (adapting to the impacts of climate change), or climate engagement (getting people educated or involved).

EXAMPLE PROJECTS

- **Tree and native species planting**
- **Recycling, composting, and other waste reduction projects**
- **Climate education programs**
- **Public art and awareness campaigns**
- **Biking, walking and pollution-free transportation initiatives**

Be creative! As youth leaders, we’re looking to you for new ideas for the future!



Members of the Knowlton Conservation Corps build planter boxes for a rooftop native plants garden and for a local elementary school.

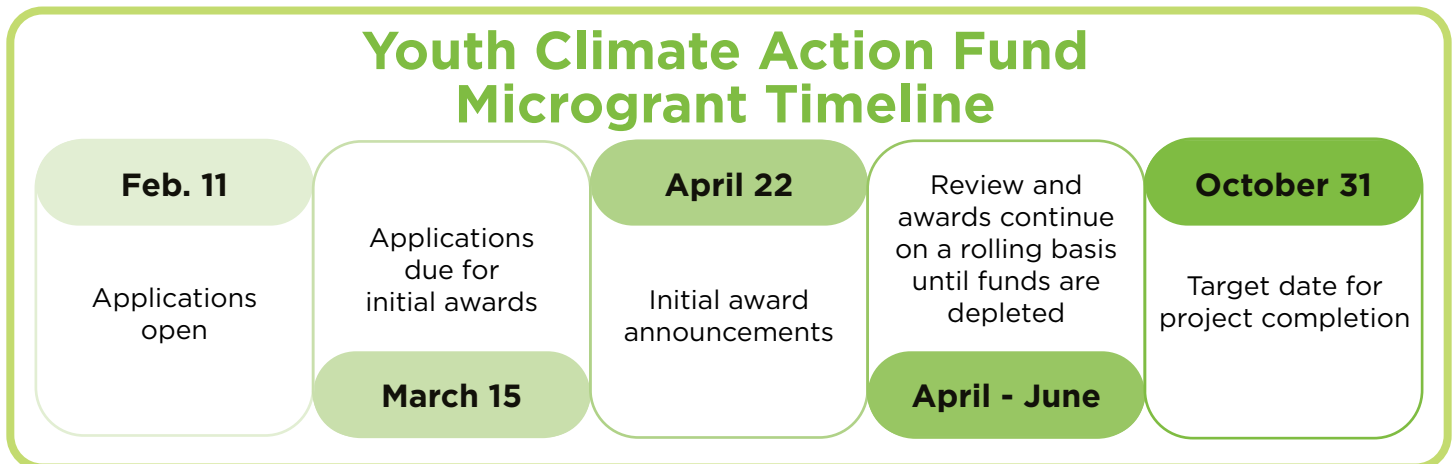


The Nak Muay Naturalists install planter boxes in a new community garden.



Timeline

The City will make an initial round of awards on Earth Day 2025 to applicants who demonstrate implementation-ready projects. Applications will remain open until funds are depleted. To ensure availability of funds and sufficient time for project completion, applicants are encouraged to submit applications as early as possible. Applicants not selected for funding can receive feedback and re-submit their applications if funding is still available.



Eligibility Requirements

Grants are available to youth-led and youth-serving organizations and groups. Youth-serving organizations are those that provide programs and resources intentionally designed to meet the needs of young people. At least three youth between the ages of 15 and 24 must lead and participate in the project planning, proposal writing, and project execution.

Eligible groups/organizations must either:

- Be incorporated as a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization, with a bank account to receive funds, OR
- Designate an incorporated non-profit 501(c)(3) fiscal sponsor, with a bank account to receive funds.

If you have a project idea but are having trouble finding a fiscal sponsor, please contact us for assistance in finding a match.

Grant Project Requirements

- Projects must be **new** and support the **Columbus Climate Action Plan**.
- Youth (**ages 15-24**) must lead and implement the project. However, the project can include and impact youth and adult residents of all ages.
- No more than three microgrants may be awarded to the same grantee.
- Improvements to buildings or other infrastructure cannot exceed 50% of the project budget.
- Projects should target completion by **October 31, 2025**, but with approval, may be extended until the end of 2025.
- Grant recipients must submit regular reports and documentation of expenditures.

Scoring Criteria and Funding Priorities

Applications will be scored by a committee that includes city staff, young leaders, and members of the environmental community in Columbus.

Scoring Criterion	Description	Point Value
Community impact and Climate Action Plan support	Demonstrates clear impacts and benefits in support of Climate Action Plan priorities.	5
Project planning and feasibility	Demonstrates clear action plan, results, and how they will be achieved. Demonstrates the group has the capacity to implement and manage the project.	10
Budget rationale	Clearly describes costs and how they were determined; costs appear reasonable for the project as presented.	5



Members of Columbus State Community College's Sustainability Group plant native trees on campus.

Equity and Environmental Justice

Priority will be given to projects that benefit communities disproportionately impacted by climate change. These include communities of color, low-income residents, and other neighborhoods experiencing the most severe effects of heat, flooding, drought, and air pollution.

Bonus points

Up to 2 bonus points may be awarded for new/creative/innovative solutions or approaches to climate change.

Guidance for Developing Your Project

Big changes start with small actions that grow over time. Think about how you can make a change in the spaces where you live, work, or go to school! If you would like to extend your project into another community, seek out leaders there to collaborate on your project proposal. Projects should be led by youth who are members of the community in which the project is taking place.

Consider your capacity to accomplish the project. Here are some questions to help guide you:

- Can you manage the project with the resources available to your group? Do you need to seek out additional resources?
- Do you have the skills and experience to accomplish the project? If not, can you find mentors who may be able to assist?
- Do you have enough time to accomplish the project? If not, could you modify the concept to fit within the program timeframe?
- Are any approvals necessary to implement your project? Can they be obtained before or soon after application submittal?
- Is there long-term maintenance required, and if so, who will manage and pay for it?

Eligible and Ineligible Expenses

Eligible grant costs include:

- Project supplies and materials, including rental and purchase of items directly needed to carry out the project, such as equipment, tools, art supplies, or technology.
- Costs for organizing community events, workshops, or educational sessions, including venue rental, printing of materials for participants, and basic refreshments.
- Costs for any necessary permits to implement the project in accordance with local regulations.
- Reasonable ground travel expenses for youth participants or team members directly involved in project implementation.
- Promotional materials to raise awareness about the project, encourage engagement from stakeholders and the greater community, and share project results including photography, editorial support, and videography.
- Reasonable fees for training and mentorship offered in workshops with youth participants
- Project sponsorship costs that local NGOs, civic groups, neighborhood clubs, schools or other organizations may charge for receiving a microgrant on behalf of youth project leads. The costs should be no more than 15% of the microgrant value.
- Funds to enable youth participation such as bus fare, per diems for food or gift cards. These costs should comprise a minimal portion of the project budget.

Ineligible project expenses include projects already ongoing; services covered by existing city initiatives; speaker honorariums and speaker fees; indirect costs like rent or utilities; nonprofit incorporation fees; scholarships; direct support to individuals or families; partisan political organizations, candidates, fundraisers, or projects; legislative advocacy or lobbying activities; capital campaigns, endowments, or endowed chairs.



Student group OHI/O develops and leads a climate hackathon for high school students

For more information, contact us at ycaf@columbus.gov or 614-645-6992.

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