



# Okanogan Youth Corps (OYC)

Recommendations for creating a community-  
centered, youth climate corps that serves the  
Methow and Okanogan Valleys

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The Methow River - courtesy of usgs.com

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

All around the world, the impacts of climate change are becoming more and more prevalent with each passing season. Many people have little experience in the efforts required to become resilient against these impacts, and many communities are struggling to keep up with the changing patterns. Climate change does not only affect the physical environment of a community but also highlights the stark socioeconomic differences that are often found within it. It upends social work and general economic vitality as members of a community need time to prepare themselves for immediate threats that they face.

This has been evident in the Methow and Okanogan Valleys for the past several years. Wildfires especially have been major challenges that these communities have had to face and have caused many to adapt their ways of living. This challenge threatens both physical homes and wellbeing, as well as mental health and wellbeing. Similarly, as temperatures continue to rise due to global warming, and the wage gap between the rich and poor continues to grow, there has been a decrease in food security and water availability. It is evident that the major issues the Methow and Okanogan Valleys are facing are rampant wildfires, food insecurity, water insecurity, and a lack of infrastructure around ways to weatherize homes and protect all members of the community.

To address these major issues, the idea for a youth community climate corps was created by a small group of local organizations including Room One, Methow at Home, Fire Adapted Methow Valley, Methow Ready, the Independent Learning Center, Sustainability Pathways, and Western Washington University. Their goal is to make opportunities for youth to engage in place-based learning, hands-on community work experience, and sustainability-focused job training possible. Specifically, the young people will engage in fire mitigation, food and water security, and weatherization work in the communities in order to make them more resilient against climate change.

A major focus in the creation of this corps is to ensure that it encompasses the four pillars of sustainability within its structure. These four pillars include ecological health, economic vitality, equity/social justice, and human health. These four facets of sustainability ensure that all people in a community can be resilient in the face of climate change. It is important that the work participants engage within the youth corps address all of these facets.

After research and design, this project goes into depth about a recommended scaffolded youth corps that engages youth of the Valley. Conducting paid work in small groups and learning from place-based lessons, the young people will be led by Americorps volunteers as crew leads. This program should be built around the idea of uplifting the voices of future generations and creating more equitable opportunities for the young people who live in the Methow and Okanogan Valleys.

There is a need for youth engagement at the nexus of social justice and climate action. As climate change is rapidly accelerating and communities are being affected in both environmental and social spheres, it is important to create an outlet for youth to feel they are participating in the solution, gaining job skills, and engaging with their community while also participating in projects that improve the lives of those around them.



The Methow Valley viewed from Lost River Road, Mazama, WA

# INTRODUCTION

As seen by Western Washington University and the students in the Campus Sustainability Planning Studio, sustainability ensures human health, economic vitality, social justice, and ecological health for future generations. Methods to achieve this are learned from the past, and the opinions and wellbeing of all are taken into consideration when carrying out sustainable planning and action.

The OYC is intended to aid in sustainability efforts throughout the Methow and Okanogan Valleys. It will support the work of the initial stakeholders listed in the Executive Summary. Many vulnerable people, including the elderly, those who live in poverty, and those who live in off-grid situations, have little access to supportive amenities. Initially, the work of the youth corps will focus on the social and economic needs of the community as this work is both more difficult to design and has a greater impact on individuals in the community. This work will include home weatherization, food security, and fire mitigation work. Eventually, the youth corps will participate in conservation and restoration work around the communities and the backcountry. This includes the water security work that was previously identified. However, this work is not an initial priority due to the high density of corps that already focus on restoration work.

The youth corps is being created to also provide opportunities for youth to engage in place-based learning, hands-on community work experience, and sustainability-focused job training. The direct benefits for youth also contribute to the sustainability of the Methow and Okanogan Valley communities. The issues identified in the youth community are that young people do not have many opportunities for employment, job and life skills, or place-based learning and engagement. The educational aspect of the youth corps is designed to address these issues. As the youth participate in the program, there will be lessons around topics such as native ecology, local history, place-based knowledge, understanding the different ways of knowing, how to have a job, how to be involved in the sustainability field, and other topics similar to these.

This educational and mentorship aspect of the program overlaps with the Sustainability Pathways program that is run through Western Washington University. Sustainability Pathways seeks to provide local youth with employment opportunities with organizations that are engaged with one or more of the four pillars of sustainability. The goal of the program is to help youth learn valuable job and life skills while also preparing them to emerge into the Green Economy and directly enter the workforce to give back to their communities. Participants will take classes through Western Washington University while also participating in compensated local work. The Okanogan Youth Corps will be closely tied with Sustainability Pathways as their two missions overlap.

There are many youth climate corps that exist within the United States that have been in operation for many years and are doing great work to improve their communities. For inspiration and information, the youth corps that were researched to inform decisions about a corps in the valleys were: The San Juan Youth Conservation Corps, Duwamish Valley Youth Corps, Mile High Youth Corps, Wildsight Youth Climate Corps, Vermont Youth Conservation Corps, Northwest Youth Corps, and the Rocky Mountain Youth Corps. These programs were chosen because they are all well-established and have many of the same work and educational aspects that are being considered for the Okanogan Youth Corps. It was evident that the work that these

youth corps are doing improves the communities and positively impacts the young people that participate. With a strong research base and community support, the plans for the creation of a youth climate corps seemed like a logical and necessary step in helping increase and preserve the sustainability of the county. Also, there is an emerging possibility that the Biden administration will implement a National Civilian Climate Corps which will put the OYC into a national context and could provide funding opportunities for the OYC (Rott, 2021).

There is also global support for this project as well. In 2015, the United Nations released seventeen Sustainable Development Goals. These goals encompass the four pillars of sustainability and call for global cooperation to meet their calls to action by 2030. The seventeen goals are as follows:

1. No Poverty
  2. Zero Hunger
  3. Good Health and Well-Being
  4. Quality Education
  5. Gender Equality
  6. Clean Water and Sanitation
  7. Affordable and Clean Energy
  8. Decent Work and Economic Growth
  9. Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure
  10. Reduced Inequalities
  11. Sustainable Cities and Communities
  12. Responsible Consumption and Production
  13. Climate Action
  14. Life Below Water
  15. Life on Land
  16. Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions
  17. Partnerships for the Goals
- (United Nations, n.d.)

The completion of these goals requires a global response on all levels of society. When designing the Okanogan Youth Corps, the global discourse surrounding sustainability was considered. To place itself within this global effort, the work that will be performed by the youth corps will address many of these goals. More information on this will be provided later within the Sustainable Development Goals section of this report.

Finally, it is important to note that initially, this youth corps will be developed and run in the Methow Valley as this is where initial stakeholders are located and where the infrastructure to support a corps is strongest. Extensions into the Okanogan Valley are critical, but will come later after the corps has been established and partners within the Okanogan Valley can be identified and contacted. This connection and extension should be the top priority to create equity between the work being done in the two valleys.



Cedar Creek Fire from Mazama, WA

# METHODOLOGY



Upon initial planning for the youth climate corps, it became evident that research needed to focus on both local resources and information from other youth climate corps. Locally, the research was focused on assessing what the needs of the Methow and Okanogan Valleys are, as identified by initial stakeholders as relating to their work; the greatest barrier to youth participation in the corps; and the general interest in and support for the creation and implementation of the corps. To create a scaffolded structure and plans for the youth corps, the other corps previously mentioned were selected as models for development and were researched extensively.

Outreach to the parties mentioned above included interviews and research about other corps models to inform recommendations for the structure and to engage youth interest in the program. The core stakeholders of this project were interviewed to learn about the needs of the Valley and assess their thoughts about whether a youth corps will be useful in helping with their organization’s goals and work. These interviews included conversations with Tracy Sprauer from Methow at Home, Kelly Edwards from Room One, Kelleigh McMillan from the Independent Learning Center (ILC), and Kat Heim from Fire Adapted Methow Valley (FAMV). These interviews were also performed to gain insight into other organizations and individuals who should be contacted to help identify barriers to participation in the corps.

The structure of the interview questions are as follows:

<b>Interview Questions:</b>	<b>Reason for asking:</b>
Do you think a youth climate corps would be effective in the Methow and Okanogan Valleys?	To identify the potential needs that the OYC could solve and if its services would be positively received.
What is your organization’s role in supporting the community?	Identify the organization’s role in the community and tailor the OYC’s services to support the organization’s efforts.
How are your organization’s practices aligned with sustainability?	Figure out what aspects of sustainability are best supported by the organization and what aspects they need support for.
What barriers exist that would prevent organization partnership or youth participation within the Methow and Okanogan Valleys?	Identify the different needs of the community and how the OYC could help.
Do you have any other ideas about what organizations/projects in the Valley that could be supported by a youth climate corps?	Help guide the OYC toward other beneficial partnerships with other organizations and increase the corps’ presence throughout the county.

Similarly, the other group of individuals that were interviewed were coordinators and directors of other youth corps models. Specifically, Kai Hoffman-Krull from The San Juan

Youth Climate Corps, Kyle Weatherhogg from the Vermont Youth Climate Corps, and Jesse Pyles from the Smokey House Center were contacted via email and interviewed. These interviews provided valuable information about the challenges people went through when

creating the corps. In this, these individuals provided recommendations regarding youth engagement barriers, corps sizing, funding, structure, and other working components that were considered necessary to make the recommendation for this project.



Mile High Youth Corps forestry work - <https://www.milehighyouthcorps.org/report/>

A youth focus survey was originally included in outreach to aid in understanding what it means to be a young person living in the Methow and Okanagan Valleys. It was deemed critical to hear if young people would be willing to join a youth corps, what ideas they have about its structure, and the barriers that might exist for them and their peers regarding participation in the program. This would also have been an opportunity to spread the word about the youth climate corps. This was not accomplished due to time constraints. The intended survey questions are located in the appendix. It is recommended that future project team members reach out to these young people to inform them about the possibility of the OYC and get their feedback.

Finally, in terms of online research, the other youth corps models previously listed were surveyed to see what aspects they included in their programs. This was done to help narrow down the important components of the corps (work, age brackets,

education, wages, etc.). From this research, assessments could be transferred to the developing OYC model so that the corps structure will best address the needs of these valleys. The components that were addressed are as follows: state/federal/local partnerships and funding, scaffolded age brackets, AmeriCorps leads, educational opportunities, local place-based learning, job training, and life skills. The results section of this report further explains the compilation of the components and the corps that were assessed.



Patterson Mountain - Winthrop, WA  
Katherine Carlson

## RESULTS

Full interview questions are included within the appendix of this document. What follows are the general takeaways from conversations with stakeholders and other corps leaders.



Mile High Youth Corp -  
<https://www.milehighyouthcorps.org/report/>

It is important to note that the individuals who were interviewed are stakeholders within the production of the OYC. This indicates that there is possible bias within their responses as they were initial creators of the idea of the corps and are willing to be some of the first organizations to utilize the services of the OYC. Additionally, when asking these organizations about the greatest needs of the Methow and Okanogan Valleys, it is obvious that their responses will reflect what they see in the specific work that they perform. The four main sections of OYC work were compiled by the initial meeting of the core stakeholders, however, each organization has further

input as to the needs of the community.

Regarding questions about the greatest needs of the Valley, the compiled responses from interviews with stakeholders are listed below as well as brief descriptions about how the OYC will address the needs expressed (these will be described in more detail in the recommendations):

- Many 60-100-year-olds are aging in place who need support and help such as preparedness, outreach, and information, and check-ins.
  - Through community work, especially weatherization of homes, the OYC will help Methow at Home without outreach and action.
- The majority of local climate work has been a response rather than preparedness for the future-- especially evident in the summer of 2021.
  - There is a lot of preparedness work that happens in the Methow Valley, though it flies under the radar and goes unnoticed. The OYC can help bring these initiatives to light and inform the community about the benefits of the work being done. Weatherization, food & water security work, and especially equitable wildfire risk mitigation efforts will all be critical to being prepared for the impacts of climate change. The OYC will work with local organizations that specialize in these areas to address this on both public and private lands. Additionally, the forthcoming Climate

Action Plan from Resilient Methow will inform the work that the youth corps can engage with to be prepared for the changing climate.

- More support for healthy food security, access, education, and distribution.
  - OYC food and water security work within the community directly addresses this through aiding organizations that already engage in this work. There is also a future possibility of OYC work within the community garden plan and report that is being developed.
- Creating a culture of reciprocity in the Valley; bridging socioeconomic divides; and learning how to live in a thriving rural community.
  - Because the OYC is composed of youth from both the Methow and Okanogan Valleys and the work is all about giving back to the community, the sentiment of the corps will help foster a sense of reciprocity within the Valley. It will also help build strong connections between the two valleys, which is something that many have expressed as something they would like to see. Additionally, bringing together youth from different socioeconomic backgrounds to help serve all people in the Methow Valley contributes to a stronger sense of community and connection across social barriers. Social isolation is an existing need of the Methow Valley, where youth live on large plots of land without neighbors and have very limited interaction with the rest of the public. The OYC will help to better connect those youth with the rest of the community and enhance their sense of belonging.
- Need to address native population and their forced exit.
  - The educational aspect of the corps model will be focused on place-based knowledge with an emphasis on indigenous history and issues within the Valleys.
- Greater infrastructure for public transportation and affordable housing.
  - The work within the OYC will not directly address these issues, but with the possibility of more people entering the Valley to live and work through AmeriCorps, there will be more of a heightened need to address the housing and transportation crises that the Valley is experiencing.
- More energy efficiency in individual homes.
  - Weatherization work will help address this as energy efficiency is an important aspect of home readiness and also provides more equity in cost-efficient energy usage. Methow at Home helps 191 individual households, so working with them will include energy efficiency work in many of these members. The Mile High Youth Corps helped their clients save 580,000 kWhrs in 2019 (Person, 2021).
- Water access, availability, and dispersal.
  - This is a complex issue in the Methow and Okanogan Valleys. Water availability is threatened by many things, one of the largest being

wildfires. In completing fire mitigation work, the OYC will also be helping to preserve the major water sources such as Patterson Lake. In the future, there will also be room for the jobs of the OYC to expand into more direct water security work with future partners.

Similarly, listed below are the barriers to youth participation in the OYC that were identified in interviews with initial stakeholders. This question was asked with the hope that organizations that are directly involved in social work within the community will have the best idea as to the difficulties that youth face. Room One was especially helpful in identifying these barriers as they work with youth in the Valley regularly. These barriers are:

- Youth have to have an income of some kind, so compensation is necessary for youth participation.
  - In the creation of the OYC, the need for compensation has been taken into account. The youth who participate will be compensated.
- Access and awareness of the issues that the OYC will address.
  - Many young people do not have the proper network to hear about various projects and initiatives that are being set in the Valley. The administrators of the OYC will work with engaged youth such as members of the Youth Leadership Council to help spread the word to their peers before the initial launch of the corps. It is also recommended that in the future OYC partners with local schools to help spread the word and create connections that could aid youth in multiple sectors. People may not want to be identified as an environmentalist with the work they engage in. The OYC will help participants understand that the work revolves around environmentalism, but does not necessarily have to be identified as such.
- A lack of mentorship within a professional setting.
  - The educational aspect of the OYC will work with Sustainability Pathways to help youth gain job, life, and professional skills to help address the lack of mentorship in the Valleys.
- Transportation.
  - Many young people do not have a reliable means of transportation and therefore cannot physically attend daily work. There is not a solution for this, but this is a major barrier that should be addressed in future work in the development of the OYC.
- General poverty.
  - As stated above, the OYC administrators will work with local entities such as the Methow Valley School District and Room One to create accessible pathways to participation in the OYC. Additionally, compensation for youth work will help with this issue.

In online research of the other youth corps programs that were chosen as models, fifteen factors were surveyed. The chart below is the compilation of those factors and the different corps that possessed the factors that were monitored.

Model Corps	Funding				Partnerships			Scaffolded Age Brackets	Local Partnerships to Start?	AmeriCorps Leads	Non-AmeriCorps Leads	Educational Opportunities	Place-based Learning	Job Training	Life Skills
	Public	Private	State	Federal	Local	State	Federal								
San Juan Youth Conservation Corps		X	X		X	X	X		X		X	X	X	X	X
Duwamish Valley Youth Corp			X		X	X	X		X		X	X	X	X	
Mile High Youth Corp	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X		X		X	X
Wildsight Youth Climate Corp												X	X	X	X
Vermont Youth Conservation Corps	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X		X	X	X	X
Northwest Youth Corp	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X		X	X	X	X
Rocky Mountain Youth Corps	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X		X	X	X	X

Figure 1 shows the compiled research that compares the aspects that were surveyed and the model corps that contained each aspect in their program. As a note, some information was unavailable in the research of these corps, so some rows are blank.

It is interesting to note that all of the youth corps include educational and job-training aspects to their structures. This informed the decision to make place-based education a central part of the youth corps program. The same reasoning applies to the inclusion of life skills training for the young people who participate. Interestingly, not many youth corps included scaffolded age brackets in their structures nor options for public and federal funding. One of the major reasons for this research was to gauge how other organizations were initially started, and surprisingly not many started with local partners. In conversations with other corps directors, those who started with local partners quickly expanded to more general and wide-ranging partners to secure more concrete funding.

When talking with directors and employees of other youth corps, the scope of the interview questions was a bit different for each organization as they have different specialties and focuses. The major takeaways from a conversation with Kai Hoffman-Krull from the San Juan Youth Conservation Corps (SJYCC) were mostly around funding tips and

recommendations. He explained that initial funding is difficult to come by. The SJYCC was able to gain this funding from a local funder who was looking to jumpstart economic relief from COVID-19. He emphasized that grants are not a sustainable means of funding as they are often temporary and the scramble to continually apply for the next grant is not a stable way to operate an organization. Service fees, large contracts from partners, and local organization support are generally the most reliable and sustainable methods for funding. If the OYC does have to apply for grant funding, it is important to identify the characteristics that make this particular youth corps special and different from other youth and general climate corps. This is an important piece of information to take into consideration when initially applying for grants, especially state- or federal-level grants. Kai also mentioned that the use of AmeriCorps leads will give the OYC a competitive advantage in grant applications as it will reduce costs as AmeriCorps is a federal program.

The conversation with Kyle Weatherhogg, a member of the administration of the Vermont Youth Conservation Corps (VYCC), included information about the Healthcare Share program. This is a program in which the youth corps grows fruits and vegetables and delivers them to local hospital dietitians to give to patients to promote healthy eating. These vegetables are given out weekly to members of the community as well as hospital patients to help those who cannot afford to buy vegetables or other healthy food. This is a central program in the VYCC and is an interesting concept to consider adding to the OYC programming down the line. Kyle also provided great information about the AmeriCorps leads they employ at VYCC. Individuals from the AmeriCorps Vista were employed initially to help develop the VYCC and starting in 2017, the VYCC has had AmeriCorps positions as both crew leaders and crew members. This program has been great because it provides funding through AmeriCorps. This is something that the OYC is looking to develop, so it is worth looking into AmeriCorps Vista positions to aid in the development of an AmeriCorps Program.



Mile High Youth Corps community engagement - <https://www.milehighyouthcorps.org/report/>

Jesse Pyles, the executive director of the Smokey House Center located in Danby, VT, was contacted because there are great food security and youth programs at Smokey House. They have created a Food Security Partnership which relies on partnerships with local farms to bring food for weekly farm stands within the community as well as options for CSA boxes. They also have a Community Farm Project which leases land to new farmers and helps people to get up



and running as a small local farm. Youth help with the growing and distributing of the products of these programs at Smokey House. These are programs that could be adapted as projects for the OYC. Jesse mentioned that key partners in the success of the Smokey House youth program were schools, food banks, other farms in the region, public health entities, and Veterans Affairs. These were all great resources to build the infrastructure of the youth program there and to help engage the young people. Youth who participated in the program were paid and received academic credit through the local school as there was an in-depth educational aspect to the program as well as life and job skill training. To fund this youth program, Smokey House secured both state and federal funding, with particular emphasis on funding from the Department of Labor as their services focused on agriculture and conservation. These funding sources are important to consider and should be taken into account with the creation of the OYC. For full corps director interview questions, see the appendix.

It is critical to talk with the young people themselves as to whether they agree with the results of the interviews. This has the potential to eliminate the aforementioned biases as conversations with the young people would most likely yield more realistic responses around youth interest and the success of the corps within the valleys. There is great work being done to center youth voices at the Independent Learning Center (ILC). In the future, it would be helpful to partner with the ILC to learn what they have gathered from youth and what they have found to be the best ways to engage young people to give their opinions and ideas. From there, a partnership with the Methow Valley School District will also be critical to learn more about barriers to youth participation and ways to engage young people. These entities already work with youth and are very successful, so it would be wise to learn from and work with them. Also, the Okanogan County Fire District 6 has a youth mentorship program and is hoping to expand its mentor services once a new training facility is built. This would be another great future partnership.



SaTeekhWa Trail in Winthrop, WA

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The proposed recommendation of the Okanogan Youth Corps includes the corps structure, proposed funding structures, as well as recommendations on how to move the project forward in the future. The recommendations for the corps include key elements and components in existing corps models that can go on to serve the Methow and Okanogan communities. In addition, the climate corps aims to ensure that the needs of the Methow and Okanogan Valleys are met and to prevent youth from experiencing barriers that would stop them from participating. When thinking about the structure of the corps, tasks for corps members have been organized into the following: fire mitigation with Fire Adapted Methow Valley and eventually the Conservation District and Department of Natural Resources; weatherization with Methow at Home, Room One, and Fire Adapted Methow Valley; water and energy conservation with Methow at Home, Western Washington University, and eventually local food-focused organizations such as Red Shed, Classroom in Bloom, and the Cove. Educational aspects will be run through Sustainability Pathways, the Independent Learning Center, and led by AmeriCorps volunteers. A scaffolded approach will help the corps address each one of the tenets, again in the type of work that each age can handle. The 5-week structure is recommended to allow youth to be tuned in long enough without getting burned out or tired. Furthermore, there is still a large portion of summer left for youth to enjoy after their time in the corps is complete.

Within the corps, the member structure will be divided into three age brackets: 14-15-year-olds, 16-18-year-olds, and ages of 19 and older. Each age bracket will be assigned different tasks and will operate under age-appropriate working conditions. This includes factors such as appropriate work hours, the physicality/demand of tasks, education, and a sense of belonging within the community. Furthermore, each age bracket will be sorted into groups of 8-10 youth at the most that will be led by 1-2 AmeriCorps Leaders ranging between 20-24 years of age. These leaders may also be potential Sustainability Pathway students from Western Washington University or the Methow/Okanogan community. Each age bracket within the corps will be financially compensated for their time through grants, partnerships, donations, and other future funding partnerships. This pay scale is recommended to be a sliding scale that starts at minimum wage for the youngest bracket and increases with the age/rigor of the work. Younger groups will be involved in more community-centered type projects like community gardens while older brackets will be involved in more rigorous and technical work like fire mitigation and weatherization of homes. The average workday will vary between age brackets but all brackets will consist of some educational days while other days will solely be work tasks. By using a scaffolded age bracket system for the corps, this will both address the needs of the youth participants as well as the needs of the Valley.

Weatherization work will include helping community members, especially those who are served by Methow at Home, by fire-proofing their homes, doing work to maximize warmth and snow management, installing more energy and water-efficient appliances, and helping to educate residents on how to maximize these services. Fire mitigation work will include manual jobs such as removing unhealthy undergrowth and invasive species in the community and eventually the backcountry, but will also include tasks such as passing out air filters, educating community members about how to prepare their homes for fire, and advocating for sustainable forest management. Much of this work will be done through Fire Adapted Methow Valley. Food security work will include working with organizations to distribute healthy food to community members, work on future community gardens, and maybe eventually programs that are similar to

Healthcare Share that the Vermont Youth Conservation Corps hosts. Water security work ties in with fire mitigation work because many of the large bodies of water such as Patterson Lake are sources of potable water, but are often used for water collection when fighting fires, which reduces the water level and availability. Along with similar work to fire mitigation, water security work will also include working with local social organizations to identify which populations within the Valleys have the least access to clean water and will help these organizations do the footwork to make water more accessible.

To primarily launch the OYC, grants should be used to fund the program. Application for grants can be provided by the initial stakeholders, with some flexibility in each organization's



Vermont Youth Conservation Corps <https://www.vycc.org/vyccalumni/>

bandwidth to contribute in the given year. However, it is recommended that after the first few years of the program, funding should be shifted to a more permanent source and use grants to expand the scope of the program. By using AmeriCorps leads, the OYC would be able to receive funding and support.

One key partnership that has yet to be established is with the Methow Valley School District. By partnering with the MVSD, a working relationship can be

developed that will help both the OYC and the MVSD. This partnership benefits the MVSD by providing an opportunity for their students to engage in sustainability work and provide job skills for the future, as well as help the students engage in their community. The benefits of this relationship for the OYC are many, but the biggest is sourcing students from the MVSD, conducting focus groups, and being a partner for the schools to reach out to collaborate with. This working partnership is quintessential for the success of the Okanagan Youth Corps.

To move this project forward, it is recommended that conversations are held with more climate/community corps to gain more insight into the challenges of starting a corps as well as any recommendations they have. This will better help the program create the ideal OYC that will best serve the community by picking and choosing what fits best. Similarly, it is important to start the conversation with the Conservation District, Washington Department of Natural

Resources, and the Forest Service as soon as possible to build those relationships and start potential partnerships. These three entities are key factors in helping provide youth with experiences and potential training opportunities that will benefit them in the future.

Another step for future work with this program is to decide and finalize the name for the corps. Some aspects to consider when deciding on the name would be the targeted demographic, the targeted geographic scope of the program, and the community perception of the name. The current recommended name, The Okanogan Youth Corps, was chosen because the region that encompasses the Methow and Okanogan Valleys used to be referred to generally as the “Okanogan.” This general name was chosen to represent the youth corps because work will be primarily based in this area, but it also emphasizes a connection between these two valleys. Though very different, they are two parts of the same region; creating a connection between them is central to the community- and equity-centered work the youth corps will perform. Though work will initially take place in the Methow Valley, this name promises that a thriving, fully-fledged youth corps will be heavily involved in the entire region. It is encouraged, however, that future organizers of the OYC change the name if they see fit.

It is also highly recommended to hold a youth focus group to gain insight on what local youth of the area think of the OYC and have them help steer the direction of the program. This youth focus group can be in partnership with the Methow Valley School District and the counselors there.

The last main recommendation for future planners is to start looking for specific funding opportunities. Grants can be competitive, especially when there are so many youth corps already in existence. It is imperative that grant writing and applications begin as soon as possible.



Methow River next to Twisp Park - Twisp, WA

# MONITORING AND EVALUATIONS

The administrators of the OYC will track the number of youth that participate in the program, how many homes are weatherized, and where the youth are engaged in projects. This will ensure that data is organized and the corps' progress is accurately updated. The location of the projects will be represented by a map or list of homes that will also mark which homes have been helped. OYC admin will also check in with program partners and stakeholders after each session to see if their needs are being met and what can be improved. The corps will also check in with participating youth to get their feedback on the session, what they enjoyed, and how the program could be improved. The feedback from the program's crew leaders and volunteers will also be taken into account. Feedback from the participants is essential because that is the most effective way of directly addressing unmet interests or issues within the program structure. Finally, feedback from organizations utilizing the corps will be collected to help bring in beneficial data for grant writing and future strategic planning.

Administrators of the OYC will monitor funding timelines and check if deliverables are being met if grants are involved. This will ensure the financial success of the program over the long term. In addition, partner expectations must be clear and have a set due date so that the corps can mobilize and complete tasks on schedule. Lesson plans will be tracked as well as staging check-ins with educators across the county to ensure that the educational aspect is on schedule. Regarding the corps' operation, work hours will be documented after each 5-week interval. To best convey information to youth, the OYC aims to quantify the work being done, this, in turn, will help participating youth and stakeholders see that their work is impactful and easily traceable.

The administrators will also track content as the session progresses to collect material data of youth engagement in addition to structural and financial components that can be presented at the end of the session. Should the corps need a content inventory, the program leaders will have the material for it. In addition, key dates of major accomplishments will be tracked and celebrated at the end of the 5 weeks as an acknowledgment of the hard work that was put in by participating youth and volunteers.



Winter in the Methow Valley - Winthrop, WA

# BUDGET



Budgeting for the creation of the OYC is limited as there was not enough time or bandwidth to explore in-depth costs and many aspects of the initial budget are still somewhat unknown or in the process of being created. This section gives a general overview of what should be budgeted for as well as a rough estimate of how much each item might cost.

- Aspects that would need to be budgeted for include:
  - Wages for the youth that participate.
    - This will be at minimum wage (\$13.69) or higher.
  - Housing for those that are from outside the Valley (leaders).
    - Budgeting for this will depend on where the young people are housed. The mobile field station project report will have more information on what general housing costs are. It is worth considering putting participants in these tiny homes if there is space available.
  - Lunch food if the program provides lunches and snacks for participants.
    - This is estimated to be about \$20/person per day to provide lunch and snacks for a participant.
  - AmeriCorps volunteer living stipends.
    - This amount is unknown but could be easily found in future conversations with AmeriCorps when starting the partnership.
  - Insurance.
    - If AmeriCorps is involved, this would not be needed for individuals from AmeriCorps. This might be a case-to-case basis based on the different youth who participate. This is worth considering in future planning.
  - Pieces of training that are given by the Department of Natural Resources or the Forest Service.
    - This cost is unknown but could be easily discovered when forming partnerships with these entities.
  - Office/education space that the corps is based out of (somewhere in TwispWorks for example).
    - This information is unknown, but talking to local landowners and searching for available spaces could answer this question.
  - Work materials.
    - Ex: chainsaws (\$200), gardening tool kits (\$80 per kit), general tools (wheelbarrows (\$100), rakes (\$20), hoes (\$20), shears (\$15-50, depending on type), shovels (\$15)), work clothes for the youth who might not have any (\$200/person for a set of shirt, pants, shoes, hat, sunglasses, personal protection equipment).
  - Educational costs.
    - Where to host the class part of the corps.
    - Any class materials that might be needed such as whiteboards (\$50), pens (\$5 per packet), notebooks (\$5 per notebook), markers (\$5 per packet),

worksheets (which means paper (\$10 per ream) and a printer (about \$300), etc.

Funding for all of this will most likely initially come from small, local grants that the initial stakeholders can apply for. Eventually, in partnerships with larger, state-level entities such as the Conservation District, Department of Natural Resources, and other larger organizations, there will be more opportunities for steady, multi-year grants. Partnerships down the line with other organizations could also open up the opportunity for fee-for-service work, which will help pay for itself. On a federal level, AmeriCorps funding will help bolster the program if AmeriCorps members act as group leaders for the OYC. There might also be possible funding through the proposed National Civilian Climate Corps, as one of the suggested models for this is that it will support corps that already exist and add to the general infrastructure (Rott, 2021).



San Juan Youth Conservation Corps [https://2268663e-5bb0-46ce-8008-0e8793e13952.filesusr.com/ugd/7b152a\\_81bc5d5c7fc74832a1d31bc989a19703.pdf](https://2268663e-5bb0-46ce-8008-0e8793e13952.filesusr.com/ugd/7b152a_81bc5d5c7fc74832a1d31bc989a19703.pdf)



# SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

17 GOALS TO TRANSFORM OUR WORLD



UN Sustainability Goals - un.org

## SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

The United Nations published a list of seventeen Sustainable Development Goals that are an urgent call for action by all countries, both developed and developing, in a global partnership. They recognize that ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth – all while tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests" (United Nations, n.d.). It is important to place the OYC within the structure of the SDGs as it places the creation of this project in a global context. Global work on a local level is powerful and is what will help qualify the OYC when applying for various grants. The seventeen UN SDG's are as follows:

1. No Poverty
2. Zero Hunger
3. Good Health and Well-Being
4. Quality Education
5. Gender Equality
6. Clean Water and Sanitation
7. Affordable and Clean Energy
8. Decent Work and Economic Growth
9. Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure
10. Reduced Inequalities
11. Sustainable Cities and Communities
12. Responsible Consumption and Production
13. Climate Action
14. Life Below Water
15. Life on Land
16. Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions
17. Partnerships for the Goals.

In the development of the OYC, the structure and type of work have been very intentional in framing the program around this framework produced by the UN. There are four main SDGs that the OYC will help meet; Zero Hunger, Good Health and Well-Being, Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure, and Climate Action.

The OYC will meet the Zero Hunger SDG by having food security as one of the four main tenets of the program. This will be reflected in the work the corps does with community gardens, disaster planning, and other work. The Clean Water and Sanitation SDG will be met through the water and energy conservation tenet. This is met through the corps work in installing conservation fixtures within private homes and throughout the community. The Climate Action SDG as well as the Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure SDGs will be addressed through the fire mitigation, water/energy conservation, and weatherization tenets. The final SDG, Well-Being, and Overall Health are addressed by all four of the OYC tenets, because having a healthy, happy, and holistic community and climate play a part in everybody's day-to-day life.



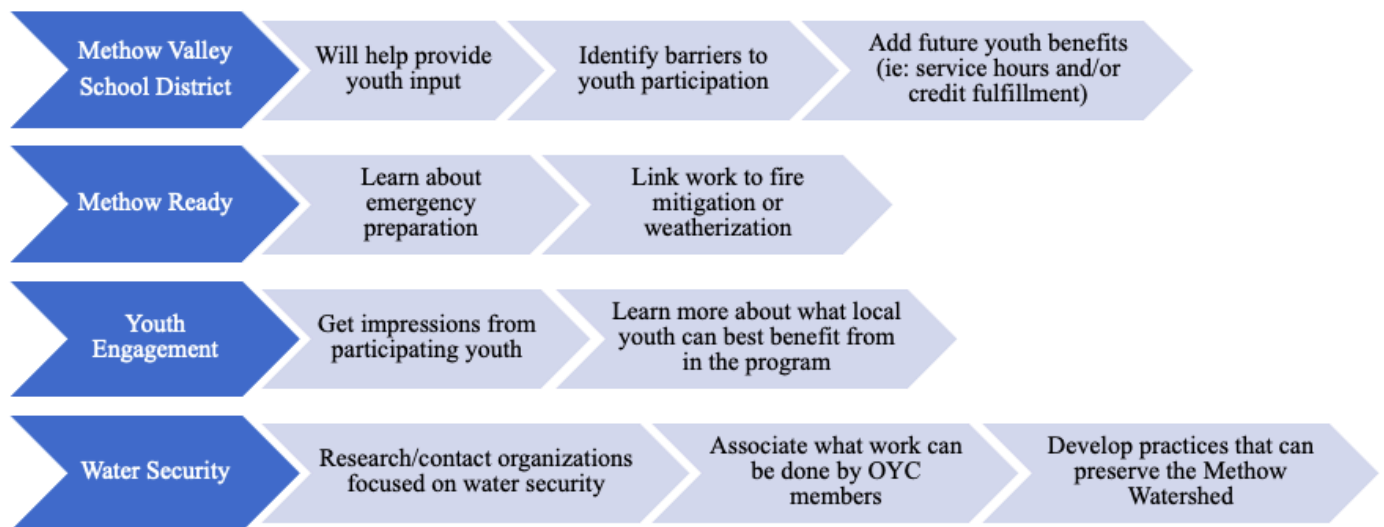
Controlled burn in Mazama, WA - Facebook: Cedar Creek and Delancy Fires 2021

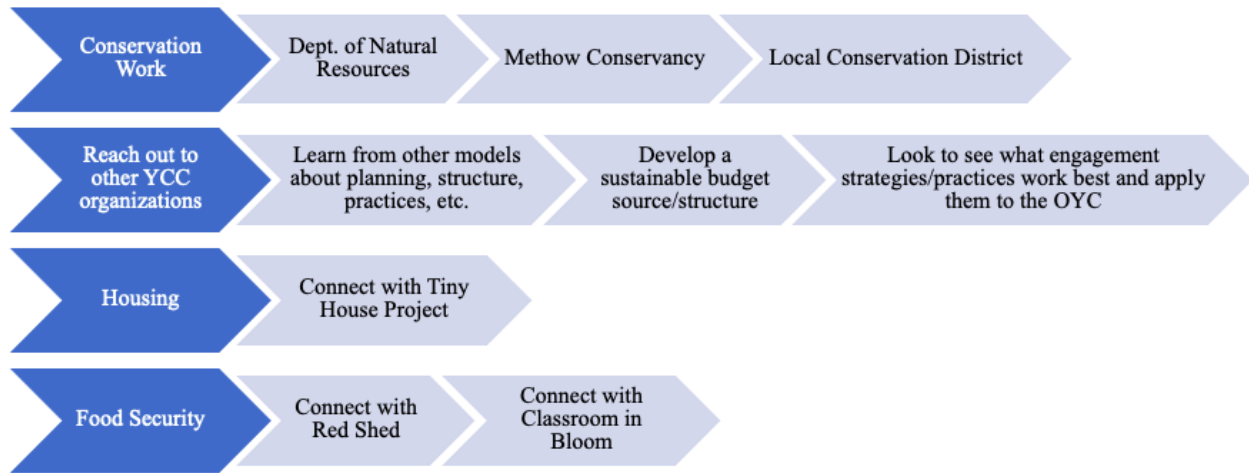
# CONCLUSION

In summary, the overall incentive to create a youth climate corps is that the needs previously stated within the Methow and Okanogan Valley are not being met. These needs include wildfire risk mitigation, food security, water conservation, and weatherization, and home hardening. Moreover, the corps is a chance for youth to engage with their community, learn valuable job and life skills, and receive compensation for their work. In addition, youth will gain education around place-based topics within the valleys. Along with creating a workforce, the OYC will directly meet the social, economic, and environmental needs of the Methow and Okanogan Valleys.

Throughout the development of the OYC, there were some important findings. To start, after interviewing Room One, Methow at Home, FAMV, and other stakeholders, there was a positive response to the development of a youth climate corps for the Methow and Okanogan Valleys. Another important finding was a large emphasis on the equity aspect of the corps. Equity is essential to initiate the youth corps, for it is important to start from a place that suits the needs of the community before progressing to conservation work. The most important finding of the OYC will be the input and interest of participating youth. While many positives come with the youth corps, there are broad issues that need to be resolved. Social justice and climate work are the largest issues that need to be addressed. In addition, there is a lack of a place-based curriculum which the OYC intends to resolve as well as improving youth contribution in mitigating the impacts of climate change. The methodology of the OYC consisted of stakeholder interviews, YCC director and coordinator interviews, YCC model research, and a detailed inventory. The recommended corps structure included components of education, job skills, compensation, and a sense of contribution to the community.

Future steps to be taken are outlined in the graphic below:





Thank you to all who engaged in conversation around the initial creation of the youth corps, supported work so far, and those who will continue to support through the years. We believe that the creation of this youth corps will greatly benefit the Methow and Okanogan Valleys. It will help create a safer, healthier, connected and more resilient community.

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# Appendix

## **Youth Survey Questions**

1. How old are you?
2. Do you think there will be youth interest in participating in the program? If so, would this interest be different for different groups of people?
3. What do you think are the greatest social injustices in the Methow and Okanogan Valleys? How would you go about ensuring a sense of equity?
4. What barriers exist for youth to participate in a youth climate corps? (Choose top 3)
5. Do you know of other barriers/restrictions for youth that we did not include?
6. What are your initial impressions on the implementation of a youth climate corps for the Methow and Okanogan Valleys?
7. After completing this survey, do you have an interest in participating in the climate corps?
8. Would you be interested in participating in a follow-up survey or focus group for the corps?
9. Any other comments?

## **General Stakeholder Interview Questions**

- 1) Do you think a youth climate corps would be effective in the Methow and Okanogan Valleys?
- 2) What is your organization's mission for supporting the community?
- 3) What needs of the Valley community have you identified?
  - a) How does your organization address those needs?
- 4) How are your organization's practices aligned with sustainability?
- 5) How do you think our youth corps could support your organization?
- 6) Do you have any other ideas about what organizations/projects in the Valley that could be supported by a youth climate corps?
- 7) How can your organization support the Valley in becoming more resilient to the growing impacts of climate change?
  - a) How is your organization addressing...
    - i) Fire mitigation?
    - ii) Weatherization?
    - iii) Food security?
  - b) Do you foresee a youth corps being able to aid in this work?
- 8) What barriers exist that would prevent youth participation in the corps?
- 9) What barriers exist that would prevent partnerships with organizations within the Methow and Okanogan Valleys?

## **Kai Hoffman-Krull Interview Questions**

- 1) Did you help design SJYCC? If so, what were the things that you had to consider when designing it?
- 2) How did you build your relationships with community and state partners?
- 3) What does your partnership with the NW Indian College look like?
- 4) Do you have any recommendations or thoughts about the best way to contact and engage stakeholders and partners? Could you go into detail?
- 5) What did you do in order to decide the jobs of the crew?
  - a) Assess the needs of the community that could be met by the work being done by the Youth Corps?
- 6) How is the program funded?
  - a) Public grants, private grants, state grants?
  - b) Do you get funding from the same entities each year?
- 7) How do you fund stipends for crew members?
- 8) What does the educational part of the program look like?
  - a) Is it sit-down learning?
  - b) Hands-on learning?
  - c) Life and job skills?
- 9) What has worked really well for the program, and what aspects have not been so great?

## **Kyle Weatherhogg Interview Questions**

1. I read about the healthcare share program on the VYCC website, but could you give me a general overview of what it is?
2. How have you been involved in it?
3. How do you track its success?
  - a. How successful has it been?
4. Do you know how the whole Healthcare Share program got started?

### **Scaffolded ages/AmeriCorps questions:**

1. How does the scaffolded approach with crews led by AmeriCorps work?
2. Are AmeriCorps members involved in any big programmatic planning, or more just direct crew leads?
3. How are AmeriCorps leaders different from Day Crew Leaders or Camping Crew Leaders?
4. Where do these other leaders come from?
5. It looks like there are Farm AmeriCorps Leaders and Farm AmeriCorps Members, are Americorps people not always crew leaders?

- a. How do they differentiate which position they want? Is this an internal AmeriCorps thing?
6. Do you know of any aspects of including AmeriCorps that were more difficult to implement than first thought?

#### Jesse Pyles Interview Questions

- 1) What is the mission of the Smokey House Center?
- 2) How do you measure success in terms of food security work?
- 3) Are there any voices in the community that are asking for more services?
  - a) What do they say?
- 4) What was the previous Smokey House program model?
- 5) How popular are your youth engagement programs?
  - a) How do you measure success here?
- 6) What have you found as major barriers to youth participation and engagement?
- 7) What life skills do youth work on within the program?
- 8) What does the educational aspect entail?
  - a) How did you connect with schools?
- 9) Do you hire out leaders?
- 10) What are your future plans for youth engagement?
- 11) How are programs funded?