

Earth Optimism Teen Video Competition

Ample documentation exists to show the ways in which Mother Nature – as manifested in wildlife movement, air quality and more – has responded to the world’s pandemic conditions. Likewise, human practices that contribute to climate change and environmental degradation (such as transportation and foodways) have been altered during this unprecedented time.

The goal of this project is for Affiliates to work with teens in their communities to document changes to their local environments (physical and social) as witnessed since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Changes to cities, coastlines, towns, parks, neighborhoods or even their own households qualify. For example, if teens have noticed cleaner beaches, more wildlife sightings, or greater visibility of skylines in their towns and cities, what are ways they can continue to support this positive change as communities begin to reopen and resume normal activity? How do these changes illuminate practices that teens want to carry forward, and inspire them to take action in the future, post-pandemic world?

What?

- Each participating Affiliate will receive a \$3000 award to work with teens to identify and describe these changes in their local environments, and relate them to the [UN’s Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs).
- Teens will be asked to create short videos to describe their observations, and how they would like to promote lessons and practices for a sustainable future. The videos will be submitted to a global competition and screening, sponsored by the [Global CoLab Network](#) in Washington, DC in 2021.
- The project relates to the Smithsonian’s [Earth Optimism](#) initiative, which aims to share stories of success that can inspire, be replicated and scaled. Earth Optimism celebrates a change in focus from problem to solution, from a sense of loss to one of hope, in the dialogue about conservation and sustainability.
- The repository of videos will also be kept by the Smithsonian as an archival record of how teens nationwide thought about this time in their own and the world’s histories, and used it to contemplate the futures they want to work toward.

Target audience

- Teens, aged 13-18
- All types of disciplines are represented in the SDGs – from science and humanities to civics and art. The project lends itself also to the use of technology for filming and editing.
- While a global competition is incentive, the underlying goal is to cultivate environmental leadership in youth.
- Potential target groups might include youth docents, volunteers or advisors; a collaboration with classes; scout groups or boys and girls clubs; local youth environmental clubs or chapters.

How?

- Affiliate partners design any variety of programs, online or in-person as appropriate for each site, to engage their teens.
- The project has three primary parts: to identify, describe and document changes in their environments; relate them to UN Sustainable Development Goals; and describe how their observations inform their thoughts for action in the future. These parts comprise the blueprint for student videos, which should be 2 minutes or shorter.
- Programs to encourage teen video creation can take any form. Ideas include weekly virtual meetings, training in storytelling and video production, collaboration with local classes, camps, community outreach workshops, etc. There is a great deal of flexibility in designing a teen program that respects the health and safety needs of Affiliate sites, states and communities.
- Affiliates have until the end of 2020 to execute the project, with the expectation of at least 10 videos being submitted from each participating site by the competition's closing in January 2021.
- If safe to do so, Affiliates are encouraged to hold a local screening of student videos, on-site or online, in addition to their submission to the competition.
- Working with the Smithsonian, Affiliate partners are responsible for securing release forms for all student videos and their content, so as to be eligible for the competition, and to be kept by the Smithsonian.

Learning objectives and video creation

- Video creation will provide opportunities for students to express their understanding of the scientific concepts underpinning sustainability issues and documentation of environmental changes, as well as the creative and storytelling skills required when communicating possible solutions.
- Videos will be accepted into the competition between October 2020 and January 2021 (Exact dates TBD). Parents and teachers can advise on projects but cannot have any hands-on involvement in the video creation. There is no limit to the number of videos that an Affiliate's teens can submit, and videos can be submitted by individuals or groups.
- Videos will be judged by a variety of professionals including Smithsonian scientists, environmental filmmakers, and youth advocates, using a pre-established rubric, to be distributed to all partners in summer 2020.
- All student videos must include recognition of the support of the Smithsonian Women's Committee in the form of a credit line at the end.
- Winners in the global competition will be recognized appropriately in 2021 as conditions permit, and Affiliate videos will be screened at a future Smithsonian Affiliations event.

- Winners and runners-up from the competition will have their videos featured on the Earth Optimism YouTube channel, and linked to social media channels for Earth Optimism and Smithsonian Affiliations.

Student opportunities

- In addition to the video competition, teens from the participating Affiliates will be invited to join the Smithsonian's Eco Teen Action Network, a community of like-minded, passionate youth who share strategies and mentor each other in developing community action plans around scalable conservation solutions.
- Affiliate teens have the opportunity to join peers from around the world, online through the Global CoLab Network, to share and amplify their work.
- They will be invited to write blogs and share their experiences on social media through the Smithsonian's Earth Optimism Initiative.

Budget, Timeline and Deliverables

- Each Affiliate partner will receive \$3000 total for this project.
- June 22: applications due.
- June 29: Affiliations and Earth Optimism team select 9 Affiliate partners to collaborate.
- July 31: Detailed plans for how youth will be recruited and engaged for the project, and a budget of Affiliate costs. Affiliate programming expenses can include equipment (cameras, laptops), software, supplies, honoraria for mentors or instructors, space rental (including online), and recruiting or marketing costs. (Funds cannot be used on food.) Upon receipt, first installment of \$1000 released to the Affiliate.
- Fall 2020: Periodic check-in calls for Affiliates and teens to be organized, to facilitate updates, support requests, and networking. Teens are invited to write blogs about their projects and join their peers in chatrooms online to further cultivate their peer networks.
- October 2020 – January 2021: Teen videos submitted to Global CoLab Network Competition. Upon submission of 10 videos and a final evaluation report including images, the second and final installment of \$2000 released to the Affiliate.
- Spring 2021: Winners in the global competition announced. Winners among Affiliate submissions identified and posted to Affiliations' and Earth Optimism's YouTube Channels and social media. Collaboration project featured in Affiliations' print or online media.

Online application will include:

Applicant Name

Affiliate Organization

Affiliate Address

Phone/Email of Primary Contact

Describe your current interaction with teen audiences. Please list notable accomplishments or initiatives in your work with this audience. *This could include advisory groups, clubs, volunteers, programs, partnerships with high schools or community groups, etc.*

Describe how your organization supports and advances the understanding of the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the key messages of the Smithsonian's Earth Optimism Initiative (through collections, exhibitions, personnel, education, partnerships, etc.)
<https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>
<https://earthoptimism.si.edu/>

Describe your capacity for recruiting and working with teens to generate student-created videos documenting community changes and their relationship to the UN Sustainable Development Goals as part of this project.

Please include ideas for programming as well as other partners or community groups that might be consulted to complete the project. How might you share the teens' work with your broader community?

If approved for funding, you agree to:

1. Submit a final narrative report up to three pages describing your project in detail. Student quotes and other anecdotes are highly encouraged.
2. Provide at least 5 images from your work with teen audiences, including captions and credit lines. Ensure that each minor featured in the images is covered by a photo permission form, so that images can be repurposed by the Smithsonian.
3. Submit statistical information on your program, including the number of students served as well as the range and types of schools/educational environments from which they came.
4. Agree to join at least one online discussion with your students and the Smithsonian to share ideas, updates and to network.
5. Follow Smithsonian Affiliations' guidance on social media and local press outreach about the collaboration, including recognition of the support of the Smithsonian Women's Committee.

To receive funding, your Affiliate organization must be registered in the System for Award Management (SAM) and able to accept ALL awards. If you are not sure if your organization is registered in SAM, please contact Natalie Wimberly, 202-633-3021.