

Attachment 3 – Green Partners Youth Environmental Leadership Project Ideas

Through the Green Partners grant program, Hennepin County contracts with organizations to help the county educate, engage, and motivate residents to become environmental stewards and make positive behavior changes, such as taking action to prevent waste, separate organic waste and recycle, reduce household hazardous waste, care for trees, protect birds, bats, and pollinators, and improve water quality.

Hennepin County is seeking Youth Environmental Leadership projects that include activities like those described below. **These are not the only project ideas that will be funded.** Any project that meets the criteria listed in the Green Partners Youth Environmental Leadership guidelines will be considered. Visit hennepin.us/greenpartners to read about projects funded in the previous grant round and visit hennepin.us/environmentaleducation to access education resources.

County priority topics of interest include:

Preventing waste and recycling

Preventing waste

- **Replace disposables, packaging waste, and single use plastics:** Ask youth to assess the packaging for items they purchase and the disposable, “convenience” items they commonly use. Encourage youth to purchase items with less plastic and less packaging. Provide tips and tools to replace those items with reusable items. See Hennepin County’s [top 10 list of disposal items to replace with reusables](#), [the Plastic Free Challenge](#), and the [reducing waste activity guide](#) for ideas for youth to learn about the issue and engage others in taking action.
- **Reuse and repair:** Encourage youth to repair their items and teach others to repair. Train youth as fixers and host a fix-it event at your school or in your community. Engage youth in researching the reuse and repair circular economy and learning about associated green jobs. See ReUse MN’s [repair](#) and Hennepin County [Fix-It Clinic](#) websites for ideas.
- **Make buying used cool:** Engage youth in examining their purchasing choices and identifying items they could purchase used. Share information about reuse stores and purchasing strategies. Host an youth-led eco-fashion show or swap event. Consider a theme for the swap, such as books, collectables, electronics, clothes, or school supplies to engage others in the community. View the county’s [reducing waste activity guides](#) and learn about the [Choose to Reuse website](#).
- **Reduce food waste:** Encourage youth to engage in meal planning, properly store food, and preserve food before it spoils. See the Hennepin County [food waste activity guides](#), [food storage advice](#), and the [Stop Food Waste Challenge](#) for ideas. Ask youth to try [new activities to reduce food waste](#) and share challenges, creative tips, and advice with others through youth-led workshops. Utilize tools like the [FoodKeeper](#) app, Eureka Recycling’s [Food Storage Tips](#), Save the Food’s [interactive food storage guide](#), and the University of Minnesota Extension’s guide on [preserving food safely](#).

Recycling waste

- **Recycling:** Encourage recycling at school, at home, and on the go. Have youth contact your city recycling coordinator to find out what the recycling trends are your area (see the list of city recycling coordinators at hennepin.us/recycling). Educate youth about recycling, where waste goes, and how to teach others about recycling. Work with youth to organize community workshops or table at community events to educate others about recycling. See the Hennepin County [recycling presentation](#), the [Recycling Exists](#) website, and [recycling activity guide](#) for ideas.
- **Composting and organics recycling:** Educate youth about the composting process, organic waste, and how to minimize contamination. Engage youth in composting and encourage youth to sign their families' up for curbside organics recycling, build a backyard compost bin, or use a drop-off site for their organic waste. Create a community education campaign and help families sign up for curbside organics recycling in their city, where available. See hennepin.us/organics, [tips for getting started with organics recycling](#), and [organics recycling activity guides](#) for ideas.

Household hazardous waste

- **Properly dispose of household hazardous waste and other special wastes:** Educate youth about the [dangers of household hazardous waste](#). Organize a tour of Hennepin County's [Brooklyn Park drop-off facility](#) for youth to see waste management in action. Provide information about retail drop-off sites for items such as, electronics, plastic bags, and more. Create a youth-led campaign to encourage community members to drop-off their household's hazardous waste at a [county drop-off site](#) or county-sponsored community [collection event](#). Promote the [Green Disposal Guide](#) to find the best way to recycle, reuse, or dispose of items from your home. Grantees are not allowed to collect household hazardous waste or host collection events.
- **Identify and choose the least hazardous options:** Educate youth about the [dangers of household hazardous waste](#). Reserve our [Household Hazardous Waste education kit](#) to view mock samples of household products and read labels, learn about look-a-like products that can be hazardous, and conduct an investigation into green products. [Tour a drop-off facility](#) to learn how hazardous materials are collected and recycled. Host youth-led workshops for community members to learn about hazardous household wastes and make green cleaners to take home. See the [green cleaning recipes](#) and [hazardous waste activities guide](#) for ideas.

Protecting natural resources

Environmental science

- **Traditional ecological knowledge:** Engage youth in learning about and applying traditional ecological knowledge to a current environmental issue, challenge, or opportunity in their community. Facilitate the development of a youth-led plan to share what they learned and engage others, perhaps younger children or community members, in applying what they learned. Indigenous elders should be involved in ways that respect their time, culture, and knowledge.
- **Community science:** Involve youth in collecting environmental scientific data to benefit the environment by helping scientists do research and get them engaged in specific actions related to the topic they are investigating. Help youth see the connection between the environmental problem they are investigating, the scientific data they are collecting, and what changes they can

make in their own life and in their community to protect the environment. Encourage youth to apply what they learn to motivate community members to act on an environmental issue they care about. [Learn more about community science opportunities](#) and [pollinator science](#).

- **Environmental systems:** Engage youth in exploring ecosystem dynamics, the interconnectedness of issues, and impacts humans have on the environment. Investigate the water cycle, food webs, carbon cycle, climate change, urban environmental issues, local ecosystems, and more. Help youth identify potential environmental consequences of our actions and solutions that address root causes. Youth-led community action projects related to what youth learn are encouraged.

Habitat and trees

- **Protect birds, bats, and pollinators:** Encourage youth to [make changes](#) in their community to protect pollinators, including creating habitat with [pollinator-friendly plants](#). Educate youth on plants, plants native to Hennepin County, and care for native plants. [Teach youth how to build and maintain a bird house](#). Organize a youth-led event to educate community members about the importance of [pollinators](#) and how to help [pollinators](#).
- **Care for trees:** Engage youth in conducting tree inventories at school or in their neighborhood. Educate youth about the benefits of trees and provide supervised, hands-on experience with tree planting and tree care. Work with youth to get involved in or organize a community tree planting event or advocate for more tree planting in their community. See hennepin.us/trees.

Water

- **Adopt a storm drain:** Educate youth about local water pollution sources and impacts, see Hennepin County's environmental education activity guide on [Protecting Land and Water](#). Engage youth in learning and about implementing solutions to protect water in their community and at home, like keeping leaves and trash out of our water. [Sign your group or neighbors up to adopt a storm drain](#) and receive reminders each season. Host a youth-led community clean-up event to pick-up litter around the neighborhood, school, park, or your local waterbody so that it does not enter storm drains, and ultimately our lakes and rivers. See the [maintain your drain and storm drain detectives activity guides](#) for ideas.
- **Reduce salt use to protect water:** Educate youth about water pollution sources and impacts, and the impacts of salt use on roads and sidewalks in the winter. Engage youth in learning and about implementing solutions to protect water from the overuse of salt at school, in their community, and at home. See the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency's [information and education links on salt pollution](#) and Hennepin County's environmental education activity guide on [Protecting Land and Water](#).

Projects that are not a good fit include projects to address structural barriers or infrastructure changes. Learn about resources for [recycling at organizations, businesses, multifamily buildings](#), and [schools](#) and support to install projects to [protect water and natural resources](#).

Green job pathways

A variety of pathways exist for youth to learn about and become qualified for green jobs.

- Introduction to and exploration of green jobs
 - Exposure to green jobs, environmental education, classroom lessons, degree programs, presentations from professionals in the field, field trips, job shadowing, youth-led research, academic credit, academic advising support, scholarships
- Leadership skills development in environmental initiatives
 - Professional development support, including training in group facilitation, environmental project management and work planning, budgeting, and public speaking, organizing, civic engagement, and advocacy experiences related to the environment.
- Job training and job skills development
 - Paid internships, apprenticeships, training, field opportunities, certifications for green jobs.
- Career development and job seeking support
 - Resume building, mock interviews, green career exploration, green job search skills, job placement support, communications skills, professional head shots, and more.
- Network building
 - Relationship building with local environmental leaders, peer networking and alumni gatherings, and mentorship by professionals in the field or community elders. Providing connections to educational institutions, businesses, organizations, government agencies to connect participants to the next step in the pathway toward employment in a green job.

Youth supports to reduce disparities

Organizations can provide support for youth workers through operational practices. Many of the strategies listed in this section address disparities related to employment, income, education, health, housing, transportation, and justice.

- Income/compensation for their time
- Opportunities for advancement
- Opportunities for pay increases
- Paid time off
- Flexible schedule
- Free programming
- Transportation support
- Meals or food support
- Health insurance
- Health and wellbeing support
- Childcare
- Cultural competency training for supervisors and staff
- Mentorship from professionals or community elders
- Peer networking opportunities