



Iman Lalani Laidlaw Summer 2 Reflection

Project Summary

This summer I interned at the organization Youth4Nature (Y4N). Y4N is a youth-led non-profit organization that works to educate, empower and mobilize youth to lead on solutions for the ecological and climate crises. Its three-fold mission is to mobilize decision-makers, elevate youth voices and build their capacity to be stewards of our environment. The organization has six active working regions in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Europe and Central Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, North America and West Asia. During my time at Y4N I worked in their private sector taskforce which aims at challenging the profit-motive, the notion that people, the planet and profit are on the same level, as well as ecological modernization, the idea that green growth and tech utopianism are appropriate ways to achieve environmental sustainability.

As an intern in their private sector task force, I led the creation of their private sector toolkit. The goal of the toolkit is to educate the youth on the environmental impacts of the private sector as well as empower youth to be a part of the solution. The toolkit was split into four thematic areas, manufacturing, agriculture and food systems, the energy transition and social justice. Within each of these sections I presented statistics, the environmental problems they pose, what individuals can do to alleviate these problems and the role the private sector is playing in tackling these issues. As I was aware that the private sector invokes feelings and worry and concern for many youth, I decided to end the toolkit with advice from youth professionals that have had experience working to improve the sustainability of the private sector.

Responsibilities

My responsibilities included planning the toolkit, conducting primary research for the toolkit by creating and sending out a survey, conducting secondary research for the toolkit, writing the toolkit, interviewing youth professionals, meeting weekly with the private sector taskforce, sharing updates on the toolkit and participating in brainstorm sessions at the bi-weekly synergy meetings, reaching out to various Y4N team members for help with the toolkit's formatting and publication as well as planning and hosting a virtual toolkit launch and dialogue event.

Week-to-Week Progress

In my first week, I met with the private sector task force to decipher which thematic areas we will include in the toolkit. I also watched a series of training videos to learn about Y4N, its mission, past projects, and what they expect from their interns. I completed a concept note for the toolkit which required me to pitch the project, provide details on its audience, purpose, scale and outcomes, state which Y4N goals it will help achieve, create a timeline for its completion and fill out a budget proposal form. I then revised the concept note following the full team meeting where I received feedback on it. I also gathered preliminary sources for my secondary research on each thematic area.

I spent the second week drafting the questions for the survey. I also sent the survey to the private sector taskforce team for feedback. I then collaborated with the communications team to



create the social media posts advertising the survey. I also researched and wrote up the manufacturing section of the toolkit.

In my third week, I sent out the survey and monitored its responses. I also researched and wrote up the agriculture and food systems section as well as the energy transition section of the toolkit. I then reached out to the communications team to finalize the formatting of the toolkit as well as the social media posts for the launch event.

In my fourth week, I incorporated the 42 survey responses into the introduction section of the toolkit. I also researched and wrote up the social justice section of the toolkit and used the feedback I had received on my writing so far to edit the previous sections. Then I began planning the zoom launch event by making a presentation that summarizes the goals and content of the toolkit and creating discussion questions for the dialogue segment of the event.

In my fifth week, I conducted four interviews with youth professionals where they shared what inspired them to pursue a career in sustainable development, advice for youth that may feel overwhelmed by the environmental impacts of the private sector as well as information about their educational and career journeys. I then created transcripts for these interviews and incorporated their key points into the advice section of the toolkit. I also delegated responsibilities for the launch event and finalized the event presentation.

In my sixth week, I proofread the toolkit, incorporated more feedback that I had received and created a glossary page of key terms. I also sent out the finalized version of the toolkit to the



interviewees for them to review before publication as well as incorporated their suggested changes. I then created a feedback form for attendees of the event to complete.

A few weeks later, I hosted the launch and dialogue event after which the toolkit was published on Y4N's website and social media. Leading up to the launch event the private sector task force and I had a run-through of the event. Moreover, following the event, we had a reflection, evaluation and debrief session on the process of creating the toolkit as well as the event itself using the responses from the feedback form.

Project Outcomes

The outcomes of this project include the published toolkit on Y4N's website and social media as well as the launch and dialogue event that was hosted on zoom and published on YouTube. Now that the toolkit is available online it is widely accessible to youth across the globe, it is also in the process of being translated into Spanish so that it can reach more readers. I hope that this toolkit serves as an informative and educational resource for youth looking to learn more about the environmental impact of the private sector. I also hope that it empowers youth to be a part of the solution, demand change and transparency from corporations as well as make changes in their daily lives to reduce their own ecological footprints.

Leadership Skills

During my time at Youth4Nature, I was able to develop my leadership skills. As I was the project manager for the toolkit I learned how to effectively delegate responsibilities to my fellow

colleagues, this helped to enhance my communication skills. I was also required to have effective time management skills to ensure that the toolkit was completed in time for the launch event. Working on these skills helped me to achieve my SMART goal of creating a comprehensive and educational private sector toolkit for youth on the environmental impacts of the private sector within 8 weeks. The toolkit also underwent several revisions and received feedback from various parties, this required me to be adaptable and open-minded to changes. Over the two months, I also felt my confidence, public speaking, presentation and project management skills, improve as I had to present updates at the bi-weekly team meetings, lead the toolkit launch and dialogue event as well as conduct interviews with working professionals. Developing these skills helped me to achieve my SMART goal of making 3-5 meaningful connections with professionals working in the sustainability sector. Since the end of my internship, I have been able to maintain these connections by setting up coffee chats.

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