

ECO-UNESCO

Ireland's Leading Environmental Education Youth Organisation



STRATEGIC PLAN

2025 - 2028



ECO-UNESCO

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Welcome

Since ECO-UNESCO was established in 1986, it has developed and grown into a vibrant and dynamic organisation. ECO-UNESCO has created a wide range of innovative programmes and services for young people, aimed at developing their understanding and knowledge of our natural environment, helping to promote their personal development, build their confidence and self-esteem, empowering and enabling them to become active citizens.

ECO-UNESCO is delighted to present the new Strategic Plan 2025-2028. This plan recognises the need for accelerated action to tackle environmental issues and looks to build a world where all young people are empowered to take commensurate environmental action. By building knowledge and skills and developing young people as global citizens, they can take an active role as change agents in protecting and restoring our natural environment.

We have developed this Strategic Plan to help map the future direction of the organisation. During this process, we have consulted with a wide range of stakeholders including ECO-UNESCO young people, staff, youth leaders, teachers, government departments and agencies, international agencies including UNESCO, key networks and key funders. This Strategic plan builds on the strengths of the organisation, focusing our work on what we do well. We are a forerunner in innovative environmental education and youth programmes and have worked with over 100,000 young people who have protected their environment through youth action.

This strategy is underpinned by a range of national and international frameworks supporting environmental protection, education and youth development. The UN Sustainable Development Goals provides a global framework and a road map to become more sustainable. The UNESCO ESDfor2030 framework demonstrates the key role of education in all forms in addressing the challenges of climate change and biodiversity loss, providing a road map for all nations to incorporate education for sustainable development into formal, non-formal and informal education, prioritising young people as key partners and agents of change.

Nationally this plan is underpinned by the National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development – supporting the key role of education in achieving sustainability, the Irish Aid Global Citizenship Education Strategy, Climate Action Plans and the National Strategy for Youth Work and related services amongst others.

ECO-UNESCO is now at the important stage of implementing this strategy, led by the senior management team. We would like to thank everyone who participated and contributed during the consultation process. We would like to thank our funders who support our work, without them the change we seek would not be possible.

We are very excited for the next 3 years and look forward to engaging with all who work in ECO-UNESCO, our Board, our member organisations and with all stakeholders who support us in achieving the ambitions in this plan. Most importantly, we look forward to ensuring this plan delivers for our young people and the natural environment.



Niall Jennings

Chairperson



Elaine Nevin

National Director

Our Vision, Mission, Values

Vision

Every young person is empowered to protect and restore the environment.

Mission

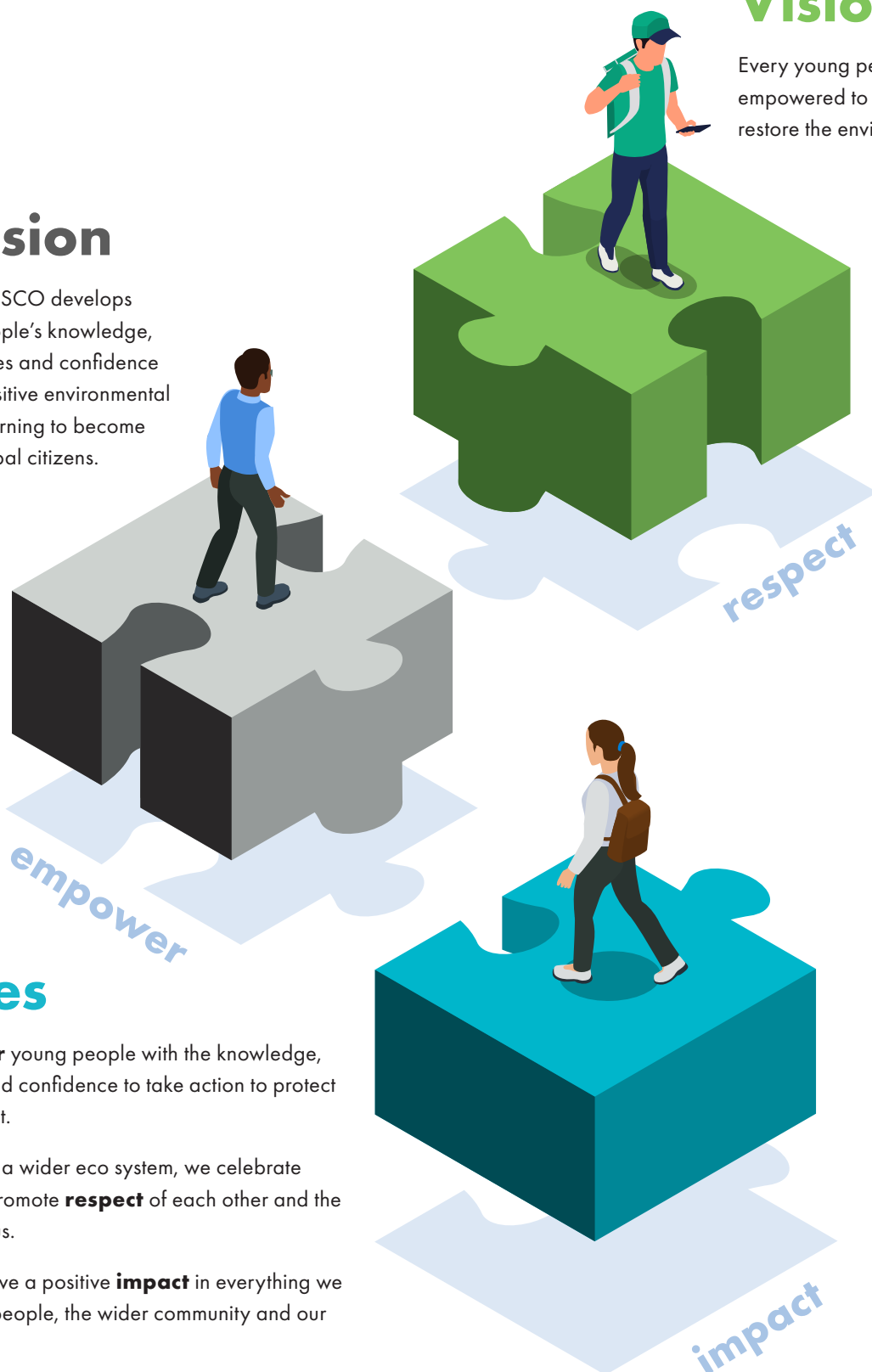
ECO-UNESCO develops young people's knowledge, skills, values and confidence to take positive environmental action, learning to become active global citizens.

Values

We **empower** young people with the knowledge, skills, values and confidence to take action to protect the environment.

We are part of a wider eco system, we celebrate diversity and promote **respect** of each other and the world around us.

We strive to have a positive **impact** in everything we do, for young people, the wider community and our environment.



Who We Are

When ECO-UNESCO was established in 1986, it was difficult to predict the extent of the global crises that now exist because of the adverse effects of human behaviour on our environment, biodiversity and climate change. These critical issues are the defining challenges of our time. As a result, there is an internationally recognised, immediate need to conserve, protect and regenerate our natural environment.

In ECO-UNESCO, our mission to engage, educate, inspire, empower and support young people to act has never been more important.

Our research shows that young people have increasingly high levels of concern about the climate crisis and are experiencing fear, sadness and anxiety*. Young people are clearly stating that they want the skills, knowledge and opportunities to take action to protect our environment. Environmental education and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) plays a vital role in ensuring young people are empowered to do so.

With over 1.1 million young people (aged between 10-25) in Ireland, they are both a key stakeholder and a critical part of the solution. There is a real need to engage and empower young people for the present and their future.

We are a member of UNESCO's Education for Sustainable Development for 2030 Global Network (ESDfor2030 Net) which builds upon UNESCO's worldwide community of practice on ESD, forged out of the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development in 2005. This network aims to facilitate and accelerate the implementation of the ESD for 2030 framework to deliver all 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) among a wide range of education stakeholders.

Our strategic focus is to have the maximum positive impact on the lives of young people, both directly through our programmes, and indirectly through educating educators and collaborating with other key partners, SDG Ambassadors and Champions.



OUR CURRENT IMPACT AND REACH

We work with thousands of young people every year across the island of Ireland and positively impact their lives by giving them environmental skills and empowering them to conserve, protect and regenerate our natural environment.

+65,000

Young People took part in our Young Environmentalist Awards since 1999

+12,000

Young People annually

40

years of owning the environmental education landscape

Hear what our young people and mentors have to say about the impact of our programmes:

"I am more aware of environmental, political and humanitarian issues and am vocal about educating people on it."

-Youth for Sustainable Development Participant

"I feel as though I'm capable of making a difference after participating."

-Learning 2 Change Environmental Workshops participant

"Keep up the great work in keeping environmental issues at the forefront of Irish Education."

-Teacher YEA

"ECO-UNESCO made me believe that I can do things; that small things do make a difference, and that we can all make a difference"

-YSD Participant

"Actions speak louder than words, I encourage all youth to come and take part in this program as it is very insightful in regard to conserving and preserving the increasingly integrated global world."

-Green Youth Employability Participant.

"I've met many new people in a safe space and have been able to improve my confidence in making new friends and speaking in front of other people"

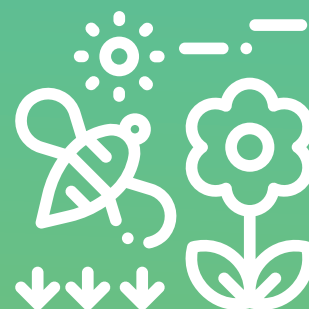
-ECO Choices

"It has improved my confidence a lot, everyone has been nothing but encouraging and supportive to all of my many, many mental health issues and I actually have friends now - that's cool"

-ECO Choices

"Knowing that I was playing my part in a project that was making the world a greener and better place to live in was my favourite part."

-YEA Participant.



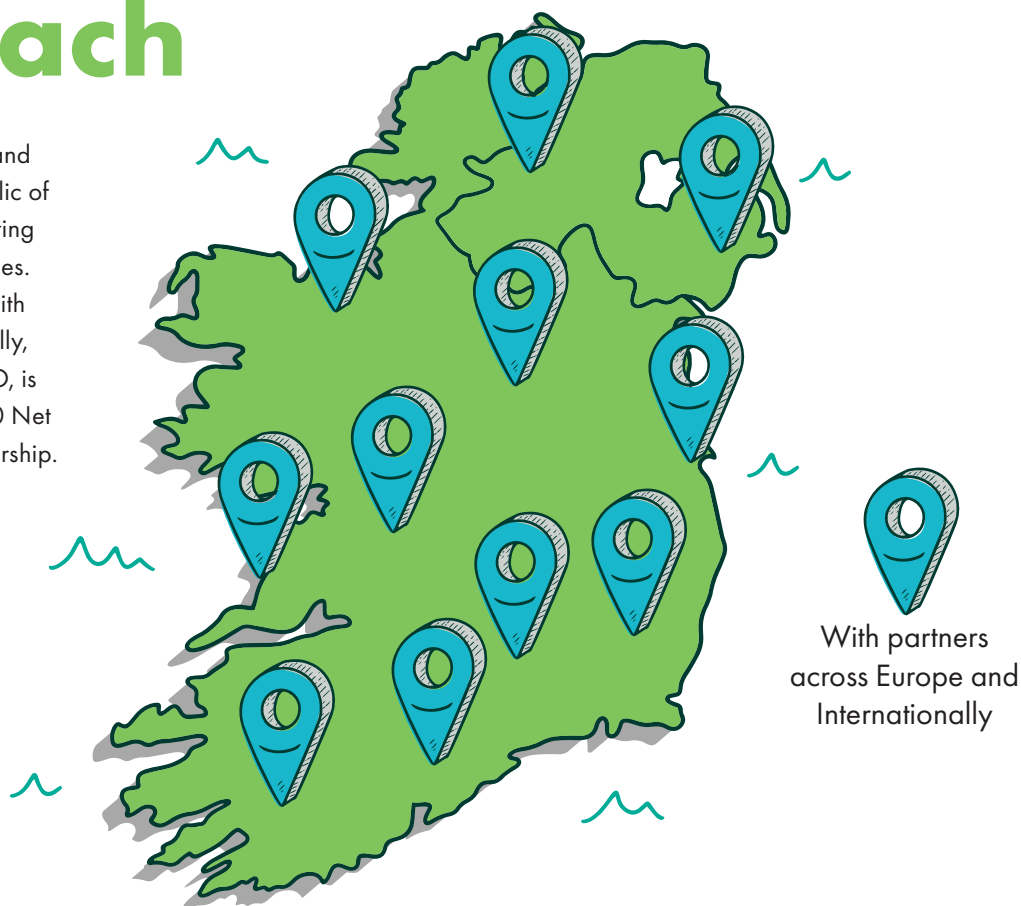
Our Approach

**THINK
GLOBALLY
ACT
LOCALLY**



Our Reach

ECO-UNESCO works across the island of Ireland with partners in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland delivering our range of programmes and services. In addition, ECO-UNESCO works with partners across Europe. Internationally, ECO-UNESCO works with UNESCO, is a member of UNESCO's ESDto2030 Net and their Greening Education Partnership.



OUR PROGRAMMES

At ECO-UNESCO, we channel the passion, creativity and energy of young people into positive environmental action. Our wide range of programmes and services gives young people the skills, knowledge and opportunity to take sustainable action.

Using the principles of youth work and youth development, we provide Education for Sustainable Development through non formal and formal educational opportunities for young people. Each year our programmes, workshops, events and training, support and inspire environmental action at local level among young people, their peer groups, their communities and beyond.

Information on our full range of programmes and services can be found here: www.ecounesco.ie/whatwedo



1. Awards Programme

The Young Environmentalist Awards is an annual and all-island environmental awards programme that has recognised and rewarded 65,000 young people who raise environmental awareness and improve the environment.



2. Youth Programmes

We deliver a wide range of expert youth programmes, including Youth for Sustainable Development, ECO-Choices, Youth Climate Justice and ECO-Clubs for young people who want to learn more about the environment, sustainable development and meet like-minded young people.



3. Workshops and Training Programmes

We offer a wide range of expert, environmental workshops and training on key environmental issues to schools and youth organisations and are a QQI Accredited training centre.

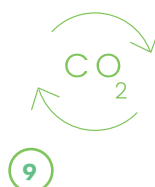
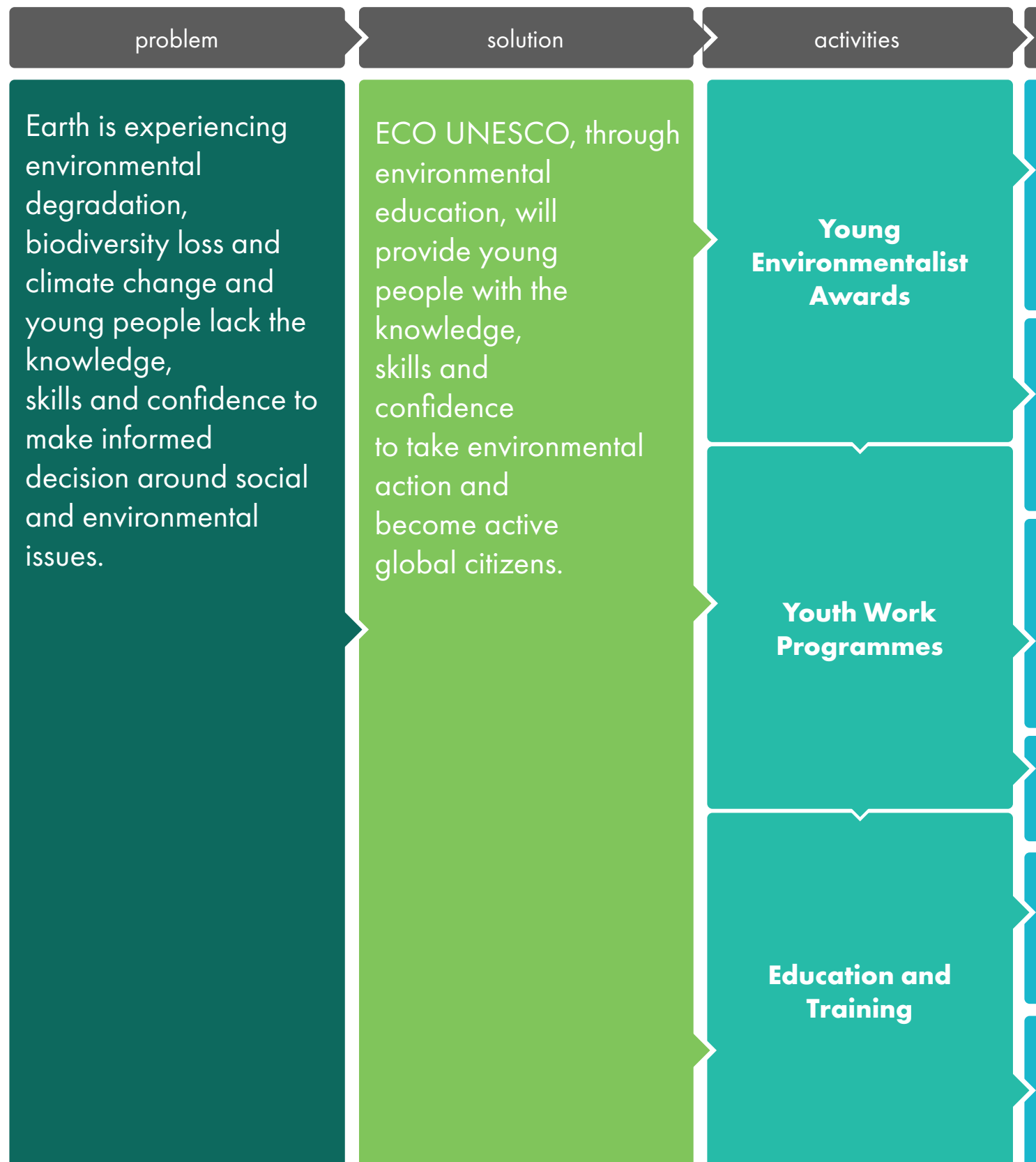


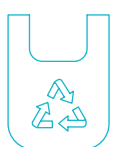
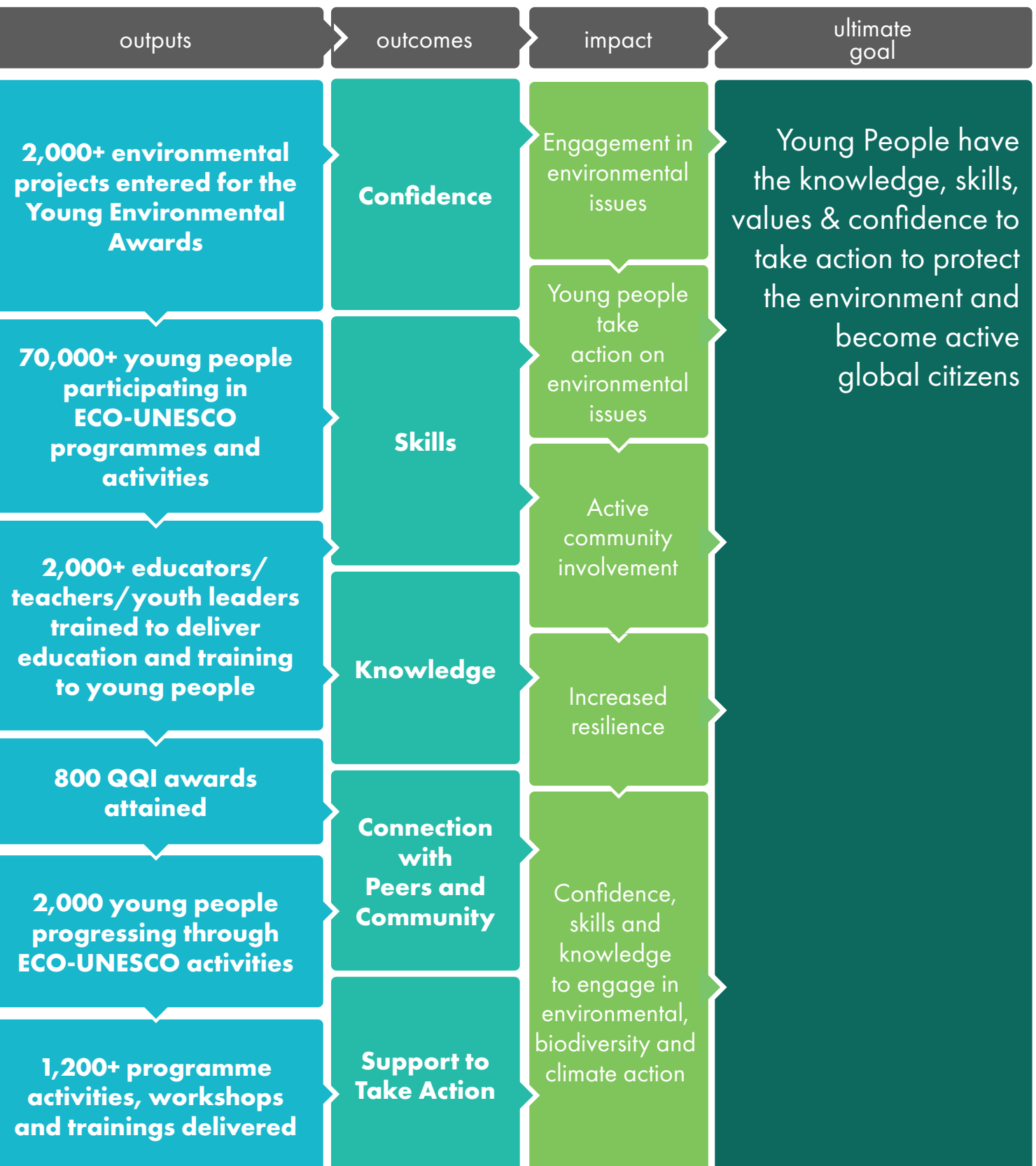
OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES



THEORY OF CHANGE 2025-2028

Our theory of change is rooted in the knowledge that young people have the power to make change and take action to protect the environment. Educating young people to have the skills, values and confidence to do so is at the core of our work.





01: OUR PEOPLE

ECO-UNESCO is a great place to work.

To ensure that our programmes have the greatest impact on young people and the environment, we will have a team who are passionate about their work and committed to our mission. Our people are our greatest resource to achieve our mission and to deliver this strategy. We will be an employer of choice that attracts and retains staff at every level. To achieve this, we will:

- Be a workplace that supports career growth and development
- Be recognised as a values-led organisation and secure workplace accreditation to demonstrate this.
- Continue to invest in the support and development of our staff to sustain our programme delivery, innovation and growth.
- Empower staff to deliver programmes to young people to the highest possible standards in a respectful manner.

By doing this, we will ensure that we have a significant impact on young people and on the environment.



02: OUR PROGRAMME DELIVERY

Deliver inclusive, quality, evidence-based, scientifically-informed programmes.

We want to ensure that young people across Ireland are enabled to learn more about, and engage in, environmental issues. Our programme delivery is the way in which we will provide young people with the knowledge, skills, values and confidence to take action to protect the environment and become active global citizens.

This strategy will focus on increasing the reach and depth of our full range of programmes across the island of Ireland. To achieve this, we will ensure that:

- Young people across the island of Ireland have access to our programmes.
- The Young Environmentalist Awards is the environmental flagship programme for young people, bringing young people together to take action.
- We enhance our delivery through innovative and new initiatives in environmental education.
- Young people as our future leaders and ambassadors learn to identify and harness cross-cutting opportunities in what we do.
- We train educators from a broad range of settings to deliver our programmes

We will further enhance the depth of our delivery by measuring the impact of our success through a comprehensive and informed monitoring and evaluation process with a focus on young people, educators and the environment.



03: PARTNERSHIP

Grow through strong strategic partnerships

We know that we cannot work in isolation to achieve our vision. We will take a lead role in partnering with other like-minded organisations to mobilise our collective resources to achieve change that is greater than the sum of our individual parts. This is central to our success and impact. We will work collaboratively with key external organisations, both existing and new networks.

To do this we will include:

- SDG Ambassadors and Champions, education providers and other key stakeholders to achieve our common goals.
- Develop a partnership approach with young people and educators and amplify the voice of young people.
- Further explore opportunities through our partnership with UNESCO

04: SUSTAINABILITY

Our governance and practices are authentic and eco centric.

In line with our vision and ethos, we will be a leader in sustainability in our own operations, governance and in-house practices.

Our organisation will be built on a strong, economic foundation which will support us to grow.

We will ensure we evaluate and further develop:

- Sustainable governance practices.
- Eco-centric and inclusive practices.
- Resilient income streams to ensure appropriate balance between government, fundraising and self-generated income.



05: INFLUENCE

ECO-UNESCO is recognised as the authority for environmental education in Ireland.

Building on over 40 years as leaders in the sector we will:

- Be the 'go-to' organisation for people seeking environmental education and ESD for youth.
- Demonstrate the impact of our programmes on young people and the positive impact on the environment.

06: ORGANISATION CAPACITY & STRENGTH

We are a high performing quality-assured organisation.

We recognise that to deliver this ambitious strategy we need to invest in our organisation's foundations to support future growth. To achieve this, we will:

- Meet the highest standards of governance, quality assurance, regulatory obligations and financial management.
- Have skilled competence at every level across the organisation to drive and support great performance.

How will we achieve our strategic goals?

Behind each of these goals we have developed a comprehensive operational action plan to deliver this strategy, with many of the actions intersecting a number of our strategic priorities. This operational plan sets key performance indicators to be achieved on a quarterly basis to ensure we focus on our mission and implement this strategy.









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