

Young People and The Future of Our Climate

ACE

Alliance for Climate Education Strategic Plan: 2017-2020

●●● OUR PURPOSE

Hi, we're ACE.
Nice to meet you!

Our mission is to educate young people on the science of climate change and empower them to take action.



We cannot afford to let another generation graduate from high school misinformed about the climate crisis and what it means for their future.

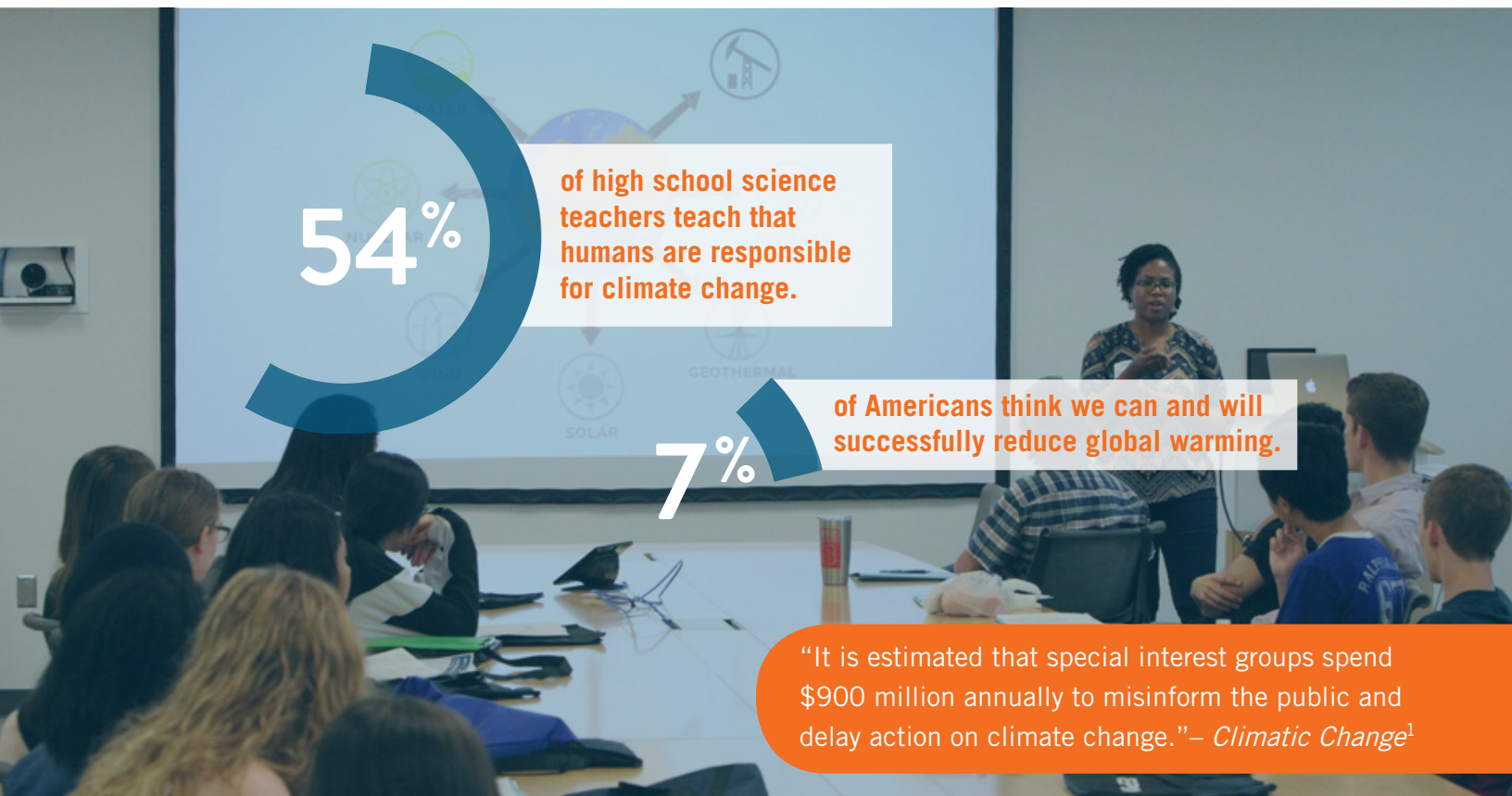
What's needed now is a nation of climate-literate young people, equipped to take action, and inspired to lead the way in creating the world we all deserve.

Our strategy emerges from nearly a decade of experience educating and activating youth. To create this plan, we engaged high school students, educators, scientists, funders, and partners - over 50 stakeholders in total - who believe in the power of young people to meet this epic challenge. Between now and 2020, ACE will achieve the following goals:

1. Educate 3 million new youth on the science and solutions of climate change
2. Build a Youth Action Network that is 1 million strong
3. Train young people to be effective leaders in local campaigns
4. Amplify the stories of young climate leaders that convey urgency and hope

We will focus our efforts in strategic geographies, where there is the potential to reach a tipping point in support of climate action and where there is the greatest need for our work.

●●● THE CHALLENGE

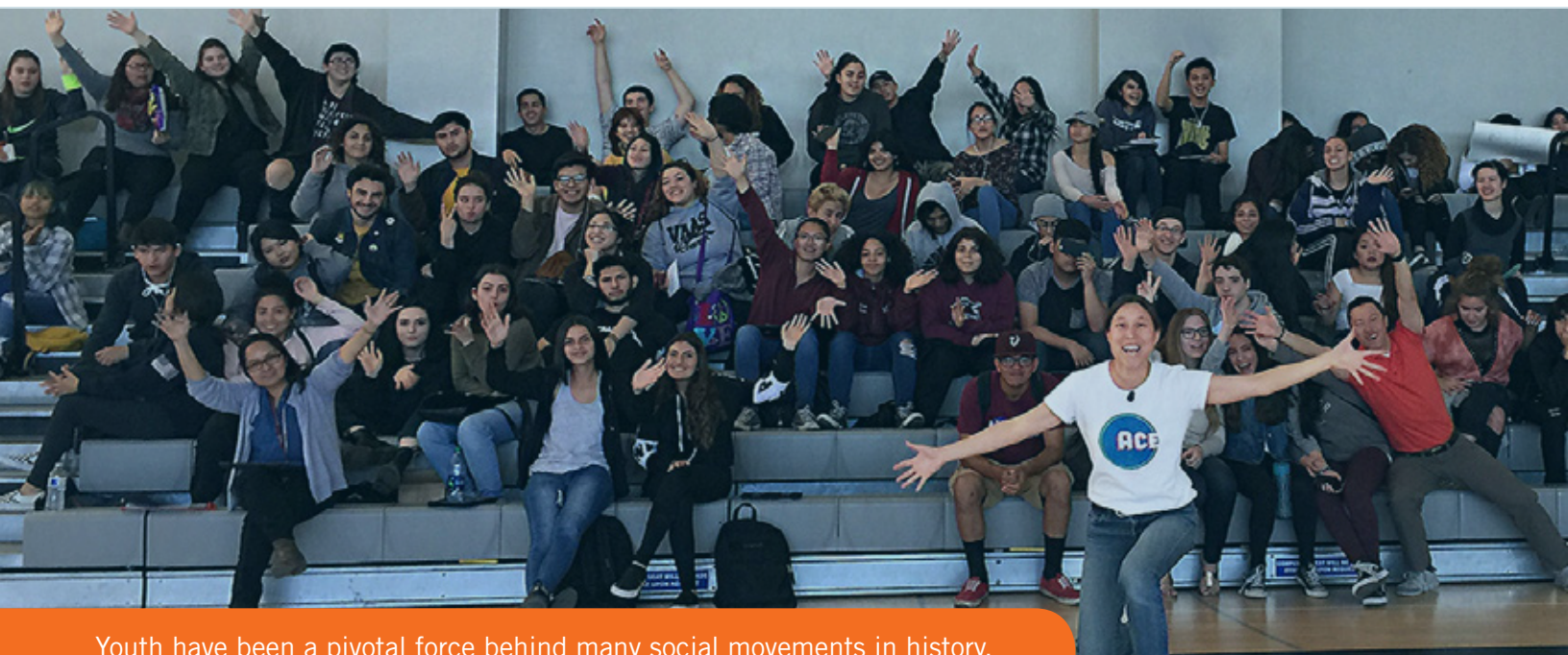


The facts about climate change have become tangled in a complex web of misinformation. For years, special interest groups have funded curricula designed to diminish the perceived risks of climate change.² Now, public funding for climate education is being cut, more states are pushing coordinated anti-science bills, and misinformation campaigns are spreading in the form of mass mailings of fake climate science to K-12 schools.³

Unfortunately, these efforts are working. A recent report in *Science* showed that only half of science teachers teach that humans are responsible for climate change and 31% of science teachers give mixed messages to students about the causes of climate change.⁴

Americans also don't hear or talk about climate change enough, and when they do, it is often presented in terrifying terms that make it overwhelming to imagine solutions. For example, the proportion of Americans who discuss climate change with their friends and family has declined from 40 percent to 26 percent over the past seven years.⁵ This silence creates a false impression that the American populace does not care about the topic even though over two-thirds of Americans are concerned.⁶ Perhaps the biggest barrier to engaging this majority is a lack of hope. Many simply do not believe that their own actions will make a difference or that elected decision-makers will respond. Only seven percent believe "we can and will successfully reduce global warming."⁷

●●● THE OPPORTUNITY



Youth have been a pivotal force behind many social movements in history.

Through the mire of confusion and doubt, ACE shines a light on the untapped potential for youth to catalyze a stronger, more inclusive, more vibrant climate movement. Millennials represent more than a quarter of the US population.⁸ They are also the demographic most concerned about climate change and support significant action by government to counteract it.⁹ Youth have been a pivotal force behind many social movements in history.

They have the ability to shift the prevailing narrative, from one that is distant and polarized, to a story of hope and urgency based on the rights of future generations to thrive.

The injustices stemming from climate change extend to every corner of society. On the community level and across the globe, the causes and impacts from burning fossil fuels exacerbate many of the world's most pressing issues, from health and inequality, to geopolitical conflict and access to jobs.

Young people understand this unfairness. When given the opportunity to lead, young people intuitively make these connections and help build a more expansive movement. This plan charts a course to bring more youth into the movement and empower more young leaders to bring much-needed influence now.



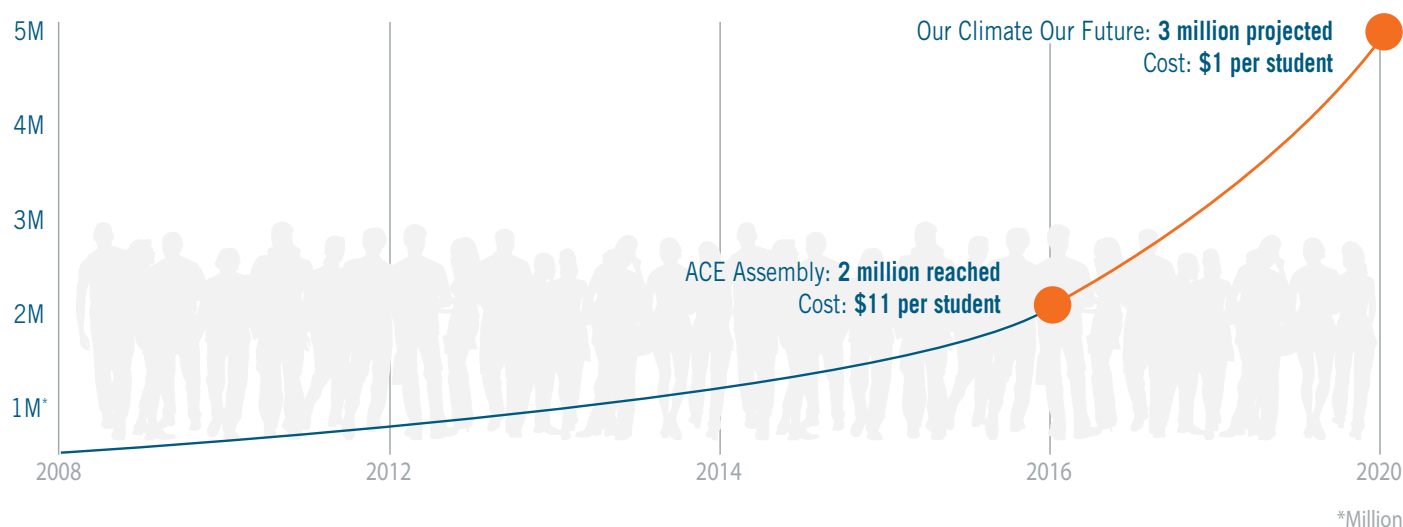
●●● EDUCATE A GENERATION

To meet the challenge, young people need to understand how climate change impacts their future, and translate this knowledge into constructive action. In the United States today, 76 percent of Americans say that schools should teach children about the causes, consequences, and potential solutions to global warming.¹⁰ However 75 percent of teens, or around 30 million youth, lack a basic understanding of climate change.¹¹ To address this challenge, ACE will pursue the following goals over the next three years:

Strengthen our dynamic, highly engaging education platform that links the science, solutions, and justice implications of climate change

Our Climate Our Future is a powerful online, multi-media climate education experience that is modeled after the award-winning ACE Assembly. This digital platform, initially released in 2016, is proven effective at educating youth on the fundamentals of climate science and inspiring them to take action within their own lives. In the first year of our strategic plan, we will create new resources for Our Climate Our Future to meet the expressed needs of our teacher network, including Spanish subtitles and multimedia content that make tangible connections between climate change and local impacts.

Students Educated



Educate 3 million new youth in the parts of the country that need it most

ACE has developed a unique capability to efficiently distribute Our Climate Our Future to targeted geographies through collaborative partnerships and paid marketing. In the coming years, we will apply this strength to reach communities where public will can reach a tipping point. This capacity also allows us to conduct innovative research on how to engage new communities through message testing and in rapid response to climate disasters.

●●● GEOGRAPHIC STRATEGY

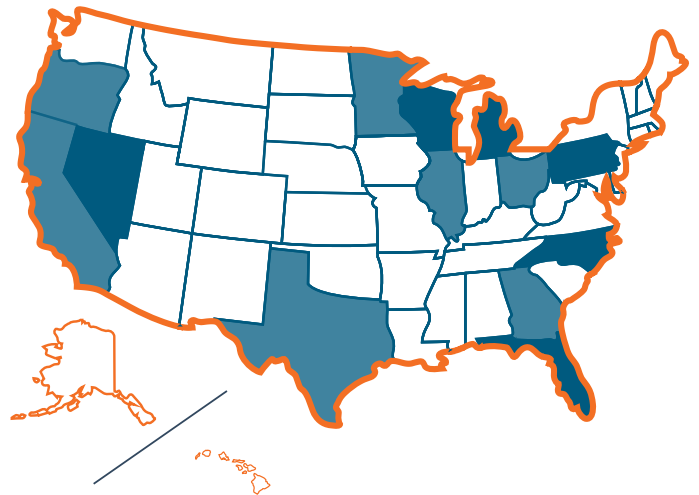
We have invested in research and modeling to identify regions that have the greatest potential to reach a tipping point in support of climate action. Factors in the analysis include:

- States with potential for meaningful influence from increased youth civic engagement
- Regions at greatest risk of impacts from climate change
- Regions at greatest risk of impacts from the extraction and burning of fossil fuels
- States with opportunities for deep partnership on climate movement initiatives
- States that have active anti-science education policy efforts underway
- States where ACE already has a presence, including a substantial youth and teacher list

As we implement our strategic plan, we will continue to refine our target geographies based on further analysis and input from partners and funders. Below is a sketch of different regions currently in consideration.

Tier 1: Key States

This tier represents the regions where we think public opinion could reach a tipping point by 2020. These geographies will receive a majority of the overall budget for outreach this year, with reevaluation in years two and three. Key States could include: **Florida, Michigan, Nevada, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin.**



Tier 2: Emerging Opportunities

This tier represents geographies that partners, funders, and the climate movement have indicated have growing need for our work. We will reserve about 20% of the overall outreach budget this year for these geographies. Emerging Opportunities could include: **California, Georgia, Illinois, Minnesota, Ohio, Oregon, Texas.**

Tier 3: National Reach

This tier represents a strategy that ensures we reach as many young people as possible with our programs, and support teachers in all 50 states. We will adjust our targets and allocation to this tier based on funding and partner support.

“Without ACE, I would not be going to protests, speaking out, and taking action.”

James Coleman, 18, South San Francisco, CA

●●● ELEVATE YOUTH INFLUENCE

Currently, support for climate action is polarized in our country, creating unproductive divisions. By enlisting youth at scale to join the movement, we will help break down perceived differences, illuminating the truth that everyone has a role to play in addressing the climate crisis. ACE will deploy the following strategies to help elevate the influence of young people in the movement:



Build a diverse and inclusive Action Network that is 1 million strong

Over the next three years, ACE will build the size and strength of its Youth Action Network, creating the largest youth-focused climate network in the country. We will actively invite youth to join our network through Our Climate Our Future viewership and direct social media marketing. Building on past success in running virtual climate action campaigns, we will use mobile, social media, gamification, and geo-targeting to broadcast calls-to-action in response to emerging opportunities on the regional and national level. Many in this network will show up for in-person advocacy. Others will be 'listeners' and have tremendous value through influencing social norms around climate change, creating a base of support for leaders, and shifting the broader public opinion towards being alarmed about the issue.

Train youth in target geographies with the skills to be leaders

In the past three years, ACE has developed and refined the Action Fellowship, a program that gives young people the knowledge, skills, and confidence to be effective climate leaders. In the coming years, we will expand the program into a National Action Fellowship, supporting more youth in new regions to lead. To achieve this scale, we are adapting in-person training resources into modular tools that can be used at a variety of events, as well as by partners within their local campaigns. The result will be a powerful network of youth leaders who are involved directly in local movement building.

Network Size By 2020: 1 Million



Current Network Size: 300K

●●● ELEVATE YOUTH INFLUENCE



Decentralized organizing in North Carolina

Our long term goal for capacity building in the movement is to empower young people with the resources to self-organize and collaborate directly with partners in their communities. Many of the resources we are developing to train young organizers are driven by direct youth input on what they need to mobilize their peers. In North Carolina, we are piloting this decentralized organizing strategy with a cohort of inspiring young leaders who are driven by the same vision as ACE: a world in which young people are actively involved in determining their own future.

Build capacity of partners to engage youth in 4-6 strategic states

ACE has always invested in deep partnerships across the fields of climate education and movement building. In the coming years, we are dedicating more resources toward supporting partners to authentically engage youth, with a focus on campaigns that concretely connect climate change to local concerns, such as economic revitalization, inequality, clean air and water, and sustainable food systems. We will work closely with partners in a handful of strategic regions to compel youth and their allies to show up in person to vote and support policies that advance the climate justice movement.

●●● CREATE A NEW NARRATIVE

ACE sees storytelling and interpersonal conversation as powerful tactics to build public support for climate action. Youth voices can depoliticize climate change, while dialogue between trusted friends and family breaks down misconceptions about the issue. The following are key strategies for creating a new narrative:

Cultivate and amplify the stories of young climate leaders that inspire others to act

Core to ACE's education and engagement work is telling authentic stories of young people. The fresh perspective youth bring is critical in influencing others to identify as climate advocates. In the coming years, we are growing our capacity to capture the true stories of National Action Fellows and youth working with partners. We will amplify these stories of struggle and victory on our education platform, throughout our virtual network, and within the media to shift the narrative on climate change.

Advance conversation campaigns that overcome the psychological and emotional barriers to personal climate action

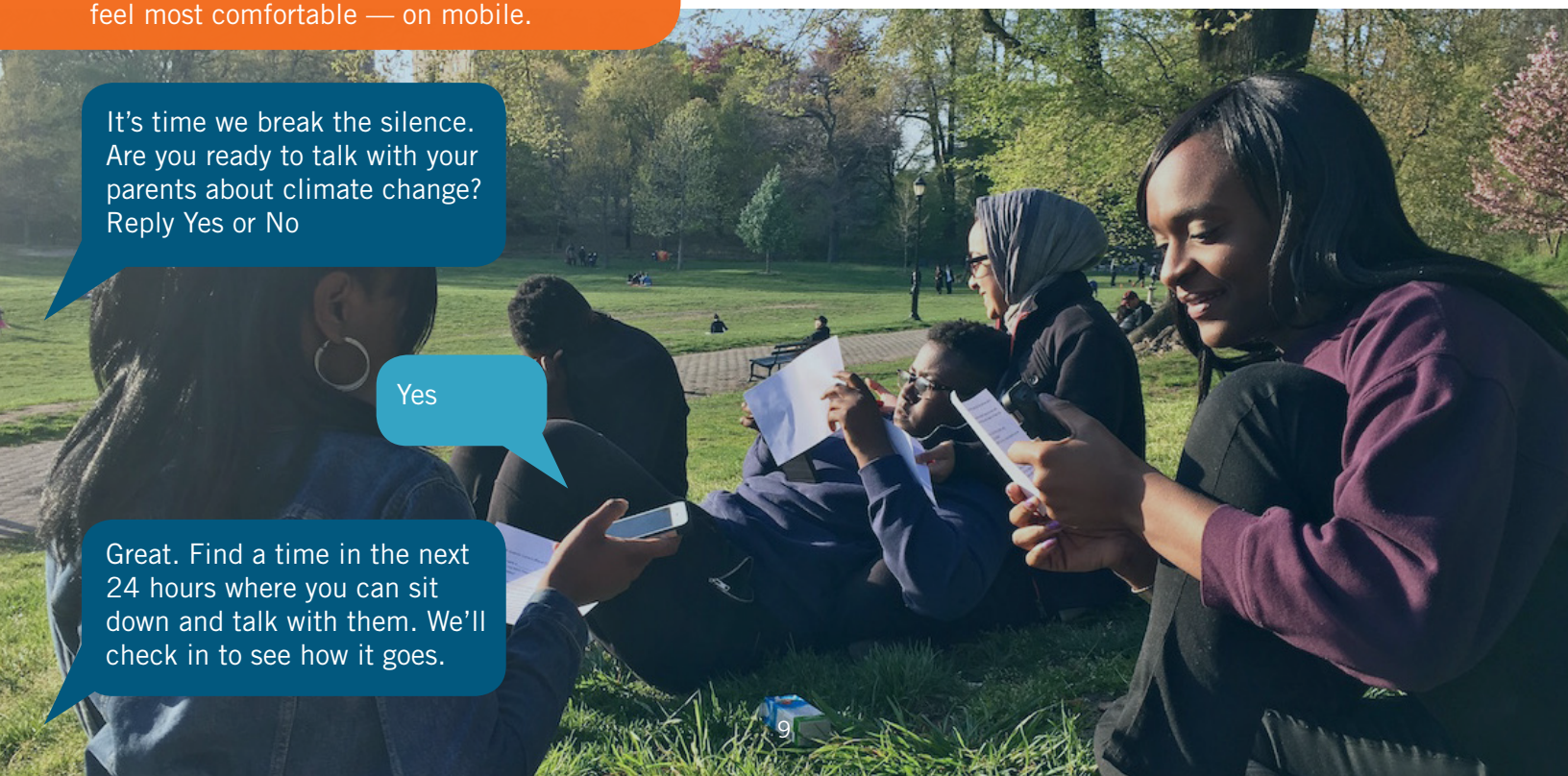
ACE recognizes that deep advocacy and organizing happen person-to-person. Building on the success of other talk campaigns¹² in promoting social change and leveraging recent learnings that ACE has gleaned through its own research, ACE will mobilize youth to engage their friends, families, and communities in conversations about climate change. We will support young people in having meaningful, personal conversations by sharing tools and tips to help navigate the discomfort and risks inherent in addressing difficult subjects.

We connect with young people where they feel most comfortable — on mobile.

It's time we break the silence. Are you ready to talk with your parents about climate change? Reply Yes or No

Yes

Great. Find a time in the next 24 hours where you can sit down and talk with them. We'll check in to see how it goes.



INSPIRE INVESTMENT

As ACE embarks on implementing our ambitious plan, we have long-term financial goals to ensure growth and stability well into the future. By 2020, ACE plans to grow our annual operating budget from \$1.8M to \$2.6M. Our key strategies to achieve this growth include:

Increase donor support

Research shows that in challenging economic times, organizations that have a robust individual donor base are more likely to remain resilient as corporations, government and foundation funders scale back giving.¹³ Further, on average, corporations and foundations undergo strategic planning processes every three to five years, often resulting in changing programmatic priorities. A healthy individual gifts program will help maintain ACE's financial security during these reassessment cycles.

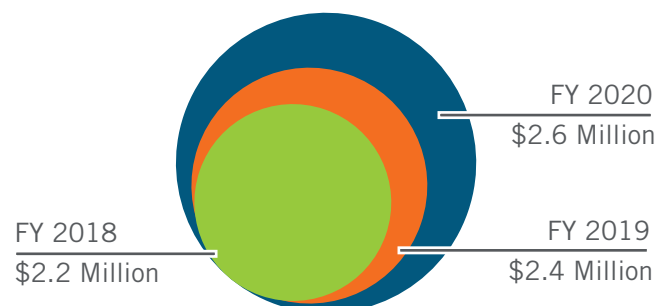
Deepen and expand funder relationships

ACE is grateful to the many institutional funders who are investing in our work. A handful of our funders are now supporting multi-year grants and formal collaborations with partner organizations, making it possible to achieve sustained impact. In the coming years, we will work closely with existing funders to find alignment in values and goals. We will also work

within the funding community to grow the overall investment in youth climate leadership, helping to channel more resources to communities most in need of youth influence.

Recruit board leadership

ACE is fortunate to have a passionate Board of Directors that is committed to the long-term success of the organization. As ACE expands our reach to new parts of the country in need of our work, we commit to recruiting Board leadership representative of the communities we will serve. At the same time, we will seek new members to support Board fundraising efforts to achieve our financial goals and programmatic impact.



●●● WHAT WE STAND FOR

ACE envisions a country where people from all racial, cultural, socioeconomic, and political backgrounds are actively engaged in creating equitable solutions to the climate crisis. With this plan, we will build youth power in the climate movement, increasing public pressure to elect leaders and advance policies that ensure a safe and prosperous future for all. Our work is grounded in the following principles:

YOUTH FOCUS

Our organization serves young people. We honor the right of youth to know about climate change, its causes and the radically different futures that will result from our action or inaction. We believe that teens and young adults can handle the truth and that we have a moral imperative to share the science, communicate the consequences, and generate the solutions with them.



EQUITY AND INCLUSION

At its core, climate change is an intergenerational justice issue. Those who will inherit the worst consequences did the least to cause it. Even today, climate change disproportionately impacts populations with the fewest resources to adapt. To the degree that we link the social and ecological aspects of climate change, we will build a stronger, more inclusive movement. Within ACE, we promote a culture that is conscious of the roles that race, power, and privilege play in our work with each other, our partners, and the youth we serve.

●●● WHAT WE STAND FOR

CHANGE THE STORY

We believe that the climate movement needs a new narrative – moving us from why we haven’t or can’t, to why we must and will; from what we expect to happen, to making the unexpected happen; from how we will survive, to ways that we can thrive. We know stories are powerful tools to inspire action. ACE works to elevate the examples of youth leadership in campaigns, initiatives, the media, and in conversations with family, to further accelerate change.



RESEARCH-DRIVEN IMPACT

ACE is grounded in science. Working with academic partners, we invest in focused research, evaluation, and refinement of our program and outreach strategies.¹⁴ This research strengthens our impact, and supports the broader movement’s need to better understand the unique role that young people play in influencing peers, parents, elected officials and popular culture.



THANK YOU

ACE is grateful for the time and resources invested by the Board of Directors to make this strategy possible:

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Founder
Spirit Bear Ventures

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NC WARN
NY Renews
Our Children's Trust
Overbrook Foundation

Pisces Foundation
Power Shift Network
The Salamander Fund
Sierra Student Coalition
Skoll Global Threats Fund
Ten Strands
The Story of Stuff
Vote Solar
Young People For
Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation

●●● OUR RESOLVE

ACE has emerged from this planning process with renewed resolve and a commitment to our vision that shines stronger than ever. We understand the challenge before us and are ready to press forward.

We re-dedicate ourselves to the work of uniting diverse youth around the desire to halt climate change, empowering them with the skills and network to take action, and the unwavering conviction that they can succeed.

We know that change happens when new voices are heard. When ACE elevates young voices, the narrative begins to shift. The lexicon starts to include words like “my community,” “our future,” and “unfair” – words that re-frame the climate crisis so that it becomes personal, visceral, and grounded.

We know that change happens when we activate new leaders. When we look through their eyes, we can begin to see the obstacles we face today not as an endgame, but as the threshold we must cross to move into a future that supports vibrant life, resilience, and thriving communities. This is the future we all deserve.

Please contact the following ACE team members to learn more about about our plan:

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FOOTNOTES

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