

### INCORPORATING YOUTH VOICE INTO THE MWEE

Encouraging youth voice during a MWEE is important for instilling confidence in students and supporting students as they become environmental stewards in their communities. Giving your students the opportunity to make decisions throughout the MWEE helps them believe in their own abilities, realize their voices matter in the community, and apply innovation and creativity to tackle real issues. Here are some ideas to help you work youth voice into each of the essential elements:

#### ISSUE DEFINITION

- Encourage students to generate or add to supporting questions based on their previous knowledge, lived experience, and interest that help them develop potential answers to the driving question and shape investigations.
- Support students reaching out to local experts who can share more about a local issue. Students can develop their own interview questions and facilitate the dialogue.

#### OUTDOOR FIELD EXPERIENCES

- Provide space for students to design their own inquiries and experiments to conduct during field experiences.
- Encourage students to identify the equipment and resources that they need to conduct field investigations and, when appropriate, design data collection protocols.

#### SYNTHESIS AND CONCLUSIONS

- Highlight student talents by encouraging a variety of formats for demonstrating their understanding of the issue.
- Give students the opportunity to share and debate their evidence and conclusions with their peers.

#### ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION PROJECTS

- Provide opportunities for students to present their findings to a meaningful audience, such as schools or local or state decision makers.
- Provide time and space for all students to be a part of designing and choosing an action project.
- Support students in identifying how they can use their skills and interests to plan and implement an action project.

#### OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- Ask students questions instead of providing answers.
- Create a safe space where everyone is comfortable contributing, including using techniques to encourage introverted youth to share their perspectives.
- Set up a speaking and decision-making system. Democratic or consensus practices often work well.
- Welcome and proactively incorporate multiple perspectives.
- Be prepared to remind students to always connect back to the driving question when developing supporting questions and brainstorming solutions. For many students, the opportunity to direct their own learning may be new, so they might need a little practice.