

Global Youth Changemaker Lab (GYCL)

Program Overview

The Global Youth Changemaker Lab: Drive Real-World Community Impact.

A three-week program in social innovation. You'll use design thinking to develop creative solutions to local challenges, working directly with Edmonton community partners before delivering a final project pitch.



Social Innovation & Community Focus



Design Thinking Methodology



Partnerships with Local Organizations



Final Project Pitch Presentation



The Global Youth Changemaker Lab (GYCL) is a three-week, non-credit experiential program focused on social innovation, community engagement, and project-based learning. Students explore real social and community challenges, build practical tools for innovation, and develop a Changemaker Mindset rooted in empathy, collaboration, and creative problem-solving.

Through facilitated workshops, community partner interactions, cultural learning, and a final innovation showcase, students gain the skills and confidence to design meaningful, locally relevant solutions in both Canadian and global contexts. Students connect a local Alberta challenge to a broader global issue using the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as an analytical lens.

Who Should Participate

The Global Youth Changemaker Lab is designed for undergraduate students who want to strengthen their leadership, creativity, and problem-solving skills through hands-on, community-focused learning.

Ideal participants include students who:

- Are interested in social innovation, community development, or global issues
- Enjoy team-based work, creativity, and real-world challenges
- Want to develop communication, collaboration, and project-building skills
- Prefer experiential learning over traditional lecture-based classes

Program Fit & English Requirements

- A good fit for students who enjoy design thinking, prototyping, workshops, teamwork, and creating practical solutions to community challenges.
- English level: Recommended minimum IELTS 5.0 or equivalent to fully participate in interactive group activities.
- Ideal for students interested in addressing real-world issues through global frameworks such as the SDGs.

Program Highlights





Global Leadership Workshops

Daily workshops introduce students to frameworks in diplomacy, systems thinking, negotiation, crisis communication, and international cooperation.





SDG Innovation Challenge

Work in teams to explore a real Alberta community issue, link it to a global SDG challenge, and develop a prototype solution using tools from University of Alberta's Digital Scholarship Centre. Present your final project at the SDG Innovation Showcase.





Canadian & Community Context

Students explore the Canadian approach to global policy through community visits, Indigenous learning, and civic engagement at the Alberta Legislature.

Sample Daily Schedule (August 2–22, 2026)

A detailed schedule will be provided to participants closer to the program start date.



Week 1 — Foundations (August 2–9)

Goal: Build foundational skills, explore local context, and frame project challenges.

Sunday, August 2 — Orientation

- Check-in
- Welcome and orientation
- Campus tour and social activity

Monday, August 3 — HERITAGE DAY (No Workshops)

Students experience the Heritage Festival, one of Edmonton's largest cultural events, featuring:

- Global cultural pavilions
- Performances and demonstrations
- Food experiences
- Community engagement opportunities

Tuesday, August 4 — Global Challenges & SDGs

AM — Introduction to global challenges & SDG framework

PM — Alberta community issue exploration (local-to-global context)

Wednesday, August 5 — Issue Framing + DSC Orientation

AM — Team Creations, Problem framing & stakeholder perspectives

PM — DSC Orientation & Tour (makerspace introduction + safety)

Thursday, August 6 — DSC Training Day

AM — DSC Skill Workshop

PM — Practice session & integration of DSC skills into team planning

Friday, August 7 — Indigenous Learning & Issue Finalization

AM — Indigenous perspectives on well-being, equity & community

PM — Teams refine Local Issue + SDG Challenge Statement

Weekend: August 7–9 — Calgary and Banff Excursion

Two-day guided field experience:

- Environmental learning
- Canadian Rockies cultural exploration
- Group reflection activities

Week 2 — IDEATION, PROTOTYPING & TESTING (August 10–16)

Goal: Begin designing, prototyping, and testing early-stage ideas.

Monday, August 10 — Ideation Sp ⓘ

AM — Creativity & ideation workshop



PM – Team ideation aligned to SDG-relevant approaches

Tuesday, August 11 – Prototyping I

AM – Prototyping workshop

PM – Build Prototype v1 (DSC available for booked use)

Wednesday, August 12 – Prototyping II

AM – Feedback & refinement techniques

PM – Prototype refinement (DSC optional)

Thursday, August 13 – Intercultural Design

AM – Designing solutions across cultural contexts

PM – Prototype v2 development (DSC optional)

Friday, August 14 – Prototype Testing

AM – User testing with peers/community

PM – Insight gathering & refinement plan

Weekend: August 15–16

No scheduled instruction (optional local activities).

Week 3 – FINAL DEVELOPMENT & SDG INNOVATION SHOWCASE (August 17–22)

Goal: Finalize solutions, prepare presentations, and conclude the program.

Monday, August 17 – Pitch Development

AM – Pitching & storytelling workshop

PM – Team pitch drafting (DSC available for visuals/video)

Tuesday, August 18 – Refinement + SDG Review

AM – Prototype & pitch refinement

PM – SDG alignment review & final adjustments

Wednesday, August 19 – Rehearsals

AM – Pitch rehearsals

PM – Peer feedback & final polish

Thursday, August 20 – SDG Innovation Showcase

AM – Final presentations

PM – Reflection & certificates

Friday, August 21 – Departure Preparation

AM – Closing activities

PM – Check-out support & goodbyes

Saturday, August 22 – Departure ⓘ

Students depart Edmonton

Program Hours Summary

Accounting for the Heritage Day holiday

- Instructional Workshops: ~28–32 hours
- Team-Based Project Work: ~30–35 hours
- Community & Civic Engagement: ~20–24 hours
- Guided Excursion Learning: ~12–14 hours
- Capstone & Reflection: ~12–14 hours

Estimated Total Structured Hours: ~100–115 hours

Learning Outcomes



By the end of the Global Youth Changemaker Lab, participants will be able to:

1. Apply design-thinking processes to social and community challenges

Use empathy-building, problem definition, ideation, prototyping, and iteration to explore real-world issues and generate creative, practical solutions.

2. Demonstrate effective teamwork and collaborative project leadership

Work productively in multicultural teams, contribute to shared goals, manage tasks, and support group decision-making in a project-based environment.

3. Conduct basic user research and community-informed inquiry

Gather information through observation, discussion, and contextual analysis to understand diverse perspectives and the needs of people affected by a challenge.

4. Develop prototype-level solutions to address community impact goals

Create early-stage, testable versions of project ideas using visual tools, models, or storyboards, informed by user feedback and iterative testing.

5. Communicate ideas clearly and persuasively

Use storytelling, visual communication, and structured presentation techniques to share project ideas with peers, facilitators, and community audiences.

6. Demonstrate intercultural awareness and ethical engagement

Engage respectfully with diverse cultural perspectives, including Indigenous worldviews, and incorporate ethical considerations into proposed solutions.

7. Reflect on personal leadership strengths and growth areas

Analyze personal learning, leadership style, and contributions to the team, identifying ways to apply these insights to future academic or professional experiences.

8. Integrate learnings into a final innovation showcase presentation

Synthesize research, design-thinking processes, and user insights into a coherent project presentation that demonstrates the development and impact of the team's solution.

