

Youth Civic Challenge

“Youth Civic Challenge empowers aspiring young people to lead transformative initiatives in their local communities and beyond. This positive, engaging, and immersive civics program has the potential to strengthen our democracy.”

RALPH NADER | AMERICAN MUSEUM OF TORT LAW



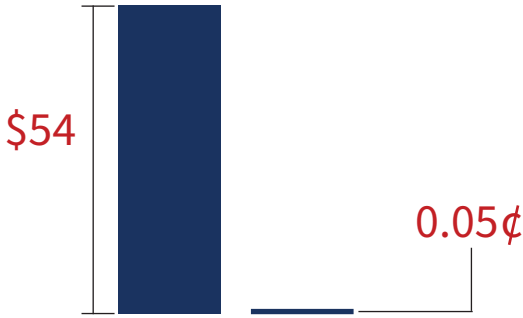
We want to do for civics what First Robotics did for STEM; to INFORM, ACTIVATE & INSPIRE young people to work together to create their future.

YC² fosters STEM skills through hands-on civic projects, applying data analysis, modeling, and systems thinking to real-world problems, enhancing critical reasoning and tech literacy.

CIVIC LEARNING IN AN AI WORLD

- How to make decisions with imperfect information.
- Using tools to detect misinformation
- Knowing whom to trust.
- The importance of selecting and curating models.
- When is it worth pain, to obtain more information.
- To understand and be less fearful of change.

THE NEED



- Money spent annually per child on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM).
- Money spent annually per child on civics education.

Source: “Science, Technology, Engineering, & Mathematics Education: Actions Needed to Better Assess the Federal Investment,” U.S. Government Accountability Office, March 23, 2018, <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-18-290>.

PARTICIPANT SKILL GAINS

Public Speaking Skills	College Readiness	Time Management
Leadership Development	Career Exploration	Teamwork & Collaboration
Networking Opportunities	Civic Engagement	Cultural Awareness
Critical Thinking & Problem-solving	Enhanced Writing Skills	Self-Discipline & Responsibility

PROGRAM OUTCOMES

- INCREASED CIVIC PARTICIPATION
Civics broadly defined as community engagement.
- INCREASED COMMUNITY UNDERSTANDING
Engage kids in a deeper understanding of their zip codes.
- TARGETED FOCUS
Enhanced engagement in public forums and community discussions to increase awareness of the issues affecting THEIR communities.
- ENHANCED PUBLIC DISCLOSURE
Improve dialogue quality on key policy issues.
- EMPOWERED CITIZENRY
Deeper understanding of political processes and critical thinking, debate, and advocacy skills.
- POLICY IMPACT
Development of citizen-driven policy proposals.
- COMMUNITY BUILDING
Strengthened community networks and grassroots collaborative projects.

THE ROADMAP

YC² empowers you to become leaders and innovators, blending Civics and STEM skills for dynamic real-world impact. Understanding civics means you can shape policies, advocate for change, and improve communities. Mastering STEM gives you tools for solving today's complex challenges. YC² ignites your passion, prepares you for tomorrow's workforce, and makes you a confident, informed change maker in your community!



TEAMBUILDING; SKILLS BUILDING & MODELING



LEGO® SERIOUS PLAY® METHOD is a facilitative process where participants use LEGO bricks to build representations of their ideas and perspectives, enabling richer dialogue and exploration of complex topics. When applied to civic issues, LSPM can help participants visualize problems, explore solutions, and understand diverse viewpoints in a concrete and hands-on manner.

YOUTH-DIRECTED PROJECTS



YC² Youth-Driven Projects empower you to act on issues you care deeply about. Work collaboratively with peers nationwide, design creative solutions, and see your ideas transform communities. Gain real-world experience, build leadership and teamwork skills, and become part of a movement of young change makers who aren't just dreaming about change—they're making it happen right now.

STRATEGIC THINKING TOOLS



YC² Strategic Thinking Tools unlock your potential as an innovative thinker and effective leader. Master the Twelve Lenses to sharpen your skills in analyzing complex data, uncovering historical patterns, navigating economic dynamics, and appreciating cultural and local contexts. These powerful frameworks prepare you for academic excellence, real-world problem solving, impactful civic engagement, and making thoughtful decisions in your daily life.

LENSES



METACOGNITION
Develop deeper self-awareness; understand how your thinking, beliefs, and cultural biases shape your decisions and influence your world view.



PARTICULARITY
Examine how specific choices, events, and ideas uniquely shape communities, cultures, and your own role in shaping America's story.



DATA LITERACY
Empower yourself to critically interpret data, understanding patterns, biases, and insights hidden within numbers to guide informed civic actions.



ECONOMIC LITERACY
Gain insights into markets, supply chains, and financial systems, learning how economic forces shape communities and your personal opportunities.



NARRATIVE CONSTRUCTION
Understand how powerful stories influence society; learn to construct and share compelling narratives that drive meaningful conversations and actions.



ARCS OF CHANGE
Recognize patterns of societal evolution; identify transformative ideas, understand their rise and decline, and prepare to lead future innovations.



LOCALITY
Value geographic and cultural diversity; discover how local history, environment, and traditions uniquely influence community identity and civic decisions.



CONSEQUENTIAL THINKING
Master predictive thinking by clearly distinguishing between causes, coincidences, correlations, and consequences to effectively anticipate outcomes of decisions.



INTERACTION
Discover how systems connect; learn to strategically align ideas and actions, enhancing effectiveness and intentional impacts in your community.



EMERGENCE
Explore how interactions among diverse elements create unexpected outcomes, enabling innovative approaches to complex civic and social challenges.



VALUING
Clarify what truly matters; go beyond numbers to thoughtfully assess the human and ethical impacts of decisions you make.



CREATING
Unlock your creative potential; confidently identify opportunities, innovate solutions, and shape the next transformative ideas within your community context.

CIVIC LITERACY



Through a combination of ancient wisdom, contemporary insights, and lessons from history, the YC² program will give you the power to achieve what past generations could only imagine. Ultimately, YC² will help you create a world genuinely embodying the founding promise of “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” for everyone, by promoting resilience in understanding the world, agency in acting in it, and a realization of a just, vibrant, and thriving world.

LESSONS FROM HISTORY



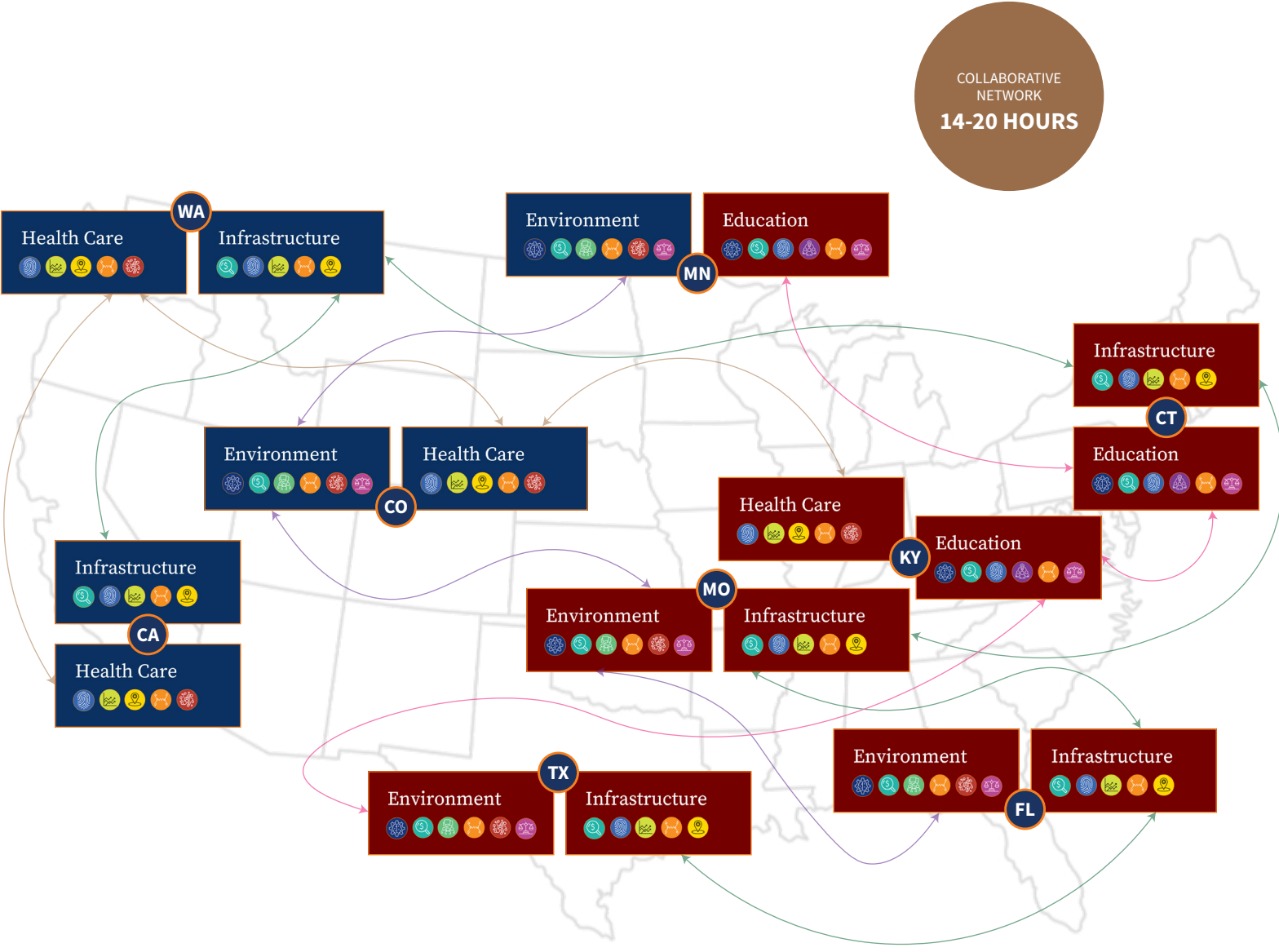
History should not be seen as dusty lessons from the past, but as vital lenses for understanding how decisions echo into our present. History is filled with pivotal choices and ideas whose consequences shape your world today. By critically examining these historical moments, you'll begin to see patterns that influence your present situation, helping you make more informed choices about your future.

MASTER SPEAKERS



YC² Master Speakers bring real-world wisdom directly to you, sharing insights from extraordinary life journeys, groundbreaking research, and practical experiences. Their powerful stories and firsthand lessons inspire creativity, deepen understanding, and ignite your passion for civic action. Engage with thought leaders who will challenge your perspectives, motivate your growth, and empower you to drive meaningful change in your community and beyond.

COLLABORATIVE NETWORK



The YC² Collaborative Youth Network connects you with passionate peers nationwide, amplifying your voice and ideas for greater impact. Collaborate on meaningful projects, exchange insights, and learn through real-world experiences and innovative research. This vibrant community inspires collective action, empowering you to think bigger, act boldly, and shape positive change together, transforming individual passion into shared solutions for your communities and beyond.

NATIONAL COMPETITION



The annual YC² State and National Competition brings youth teams together annually to showcase powerful civic projects, real-world solutions, and impactful collaborations. Compete, present your research, and highlight your collective actions to inspire others nationwide. Celebrate successes, share ideas, and amplify your voice on a larger stage, gaining valuable experience and recognition while driving meaningful change in your communities and beyond. Join, compete, inspire!

KEY TAKEAWAYS

YC² empowers youth participants by providing essential, real-world skills critical for success beyond high school. Through hands-on civic projects, you'll develop advanced critical thinking, effective communication, data analysis, leadership, and teamwork abilities highly valued by universities, trade schools, employers, and communities. YC²'s Strategic Thinking Tools enhance your capacity for informed decision-making, preparing you for diverse career paths, higher education, or entrepreneurial ventures. The Collaborative Youth Network connects you nationwide, fostering collaboration, innovation, and powerful networking opportunities. Engaging with Master Speakers offers mentorship from experienced leaders, expanding your vision and career horizons. State and National Competitions provide real-life learning, presenting opportunities to showcase achievements, build confidence, and amplify your voice and ideas. Educators, coaches, and officials support YC² as it prepares you with practical, lifelong skills, shaping confident graduates ready to succeed in the workforce, higher education, and civic life, committed to positively impacting their communities.

FUNDAMENTAL LESSONS FOR COLLECTIVE ACTION

Collective action means combining our voices and ideas to ignite meaningful change. In YC², you'll master teamwork skills, learning how collaboration magnifies your impact. You'll practice negotiating differences, crafting powerful strategies, and embracing empathy to unite diverse groups behind shared goals. Discover how collective problem-solving leads to innovative solutions and real-world achievements. Together, YC² participants tackle challenges, advocate passionately, and create lasting community improvements. You'll build confidence, leadership, and civic know-how, transforming enthusiasm into action. YC² proves that when young people come together with vision, courage, and commitment, there's no limit to what can be accomplished. Join the movement!

The YC² program strategically integrates three wheels - Skills for Collective Actions, Durable Skills and STEM Skills - creating a comprehensive evaluation framework. This holistic approach enables:

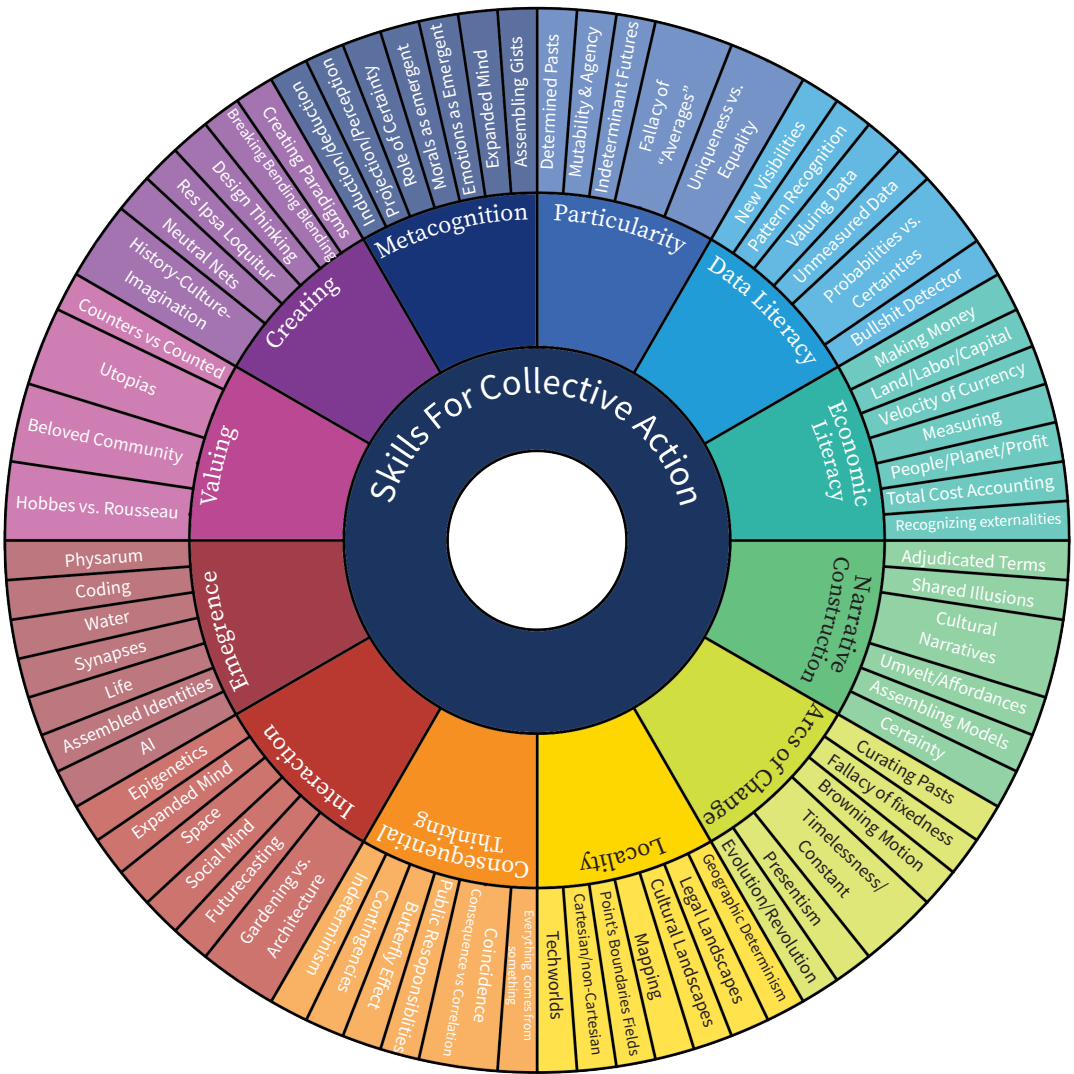
- Measurement of foundational durable skills essential to lifelong success.
- Assessment of competencies specifically needed for collective action.
- Evaluation of rigorous STEM skills within authentic civic contexts.

Each wheel provides YC² a structured, visual evaluation framework, clearly communicating program impacts to stakeholders, supporting continuous improvement, and reinforcing the overall mission of youth empowerment through civic education integrated with durable life skills, collective action capabilities, and STEM competencies.

Applying the theory and format used in the Durable Skills Wheel to the Skills for Collective Action and STEM Skills wheels for the YC² Program results in the following integrated approach:

SKILLS FOR COLLECTIVE ACTION WHEEL (YC² CONTEXT)

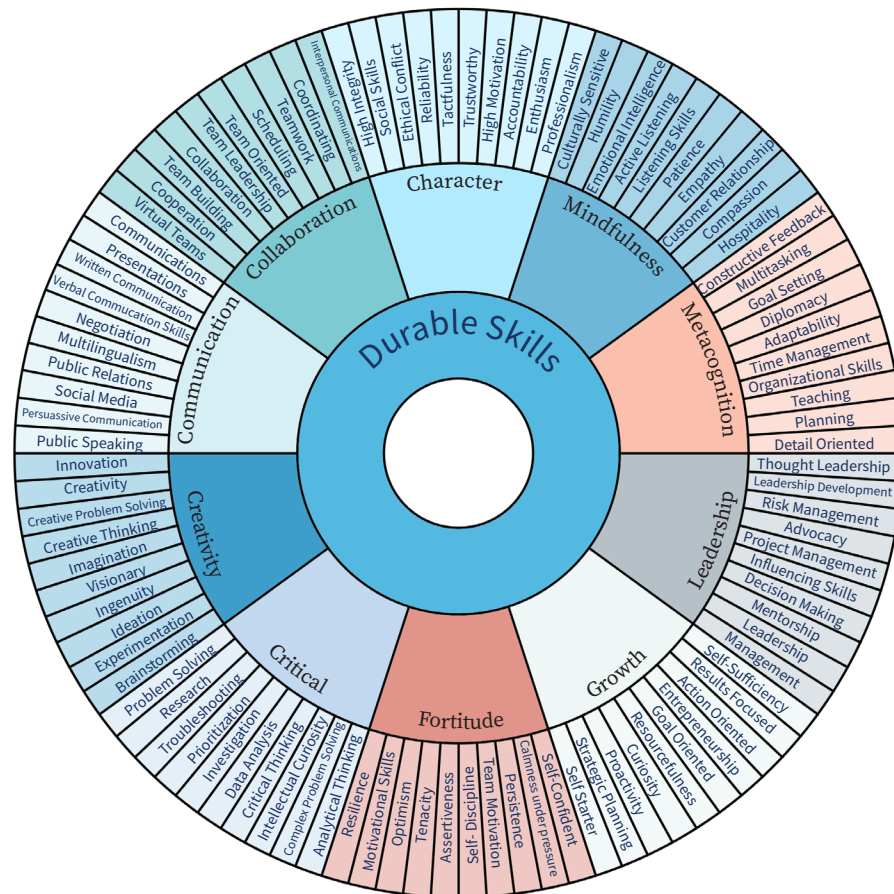
- Adapted for YC² to specifically illustrate the development of collaboration, consensus-building, and strategic civic action capabilities.
- Evaluates programmatic success in empowering youth for collective, impactful civic engagement, clearly displaying progress and readiness for civic leadership roles.



Collective Action empowers you to join forces, magnifying your voice and impact. In YC², you'll develop essential skills like teamwork, negotiation, empathy, and strategic thinking—tools critical for effective collaboration. Together, you'll turn bold ideas into action, address pressing community issues, and create lasting change. Learn to lead, inspire, and build powerful coalitions that shape a better future for everyone.

DURABLE SKILLS WHEEL

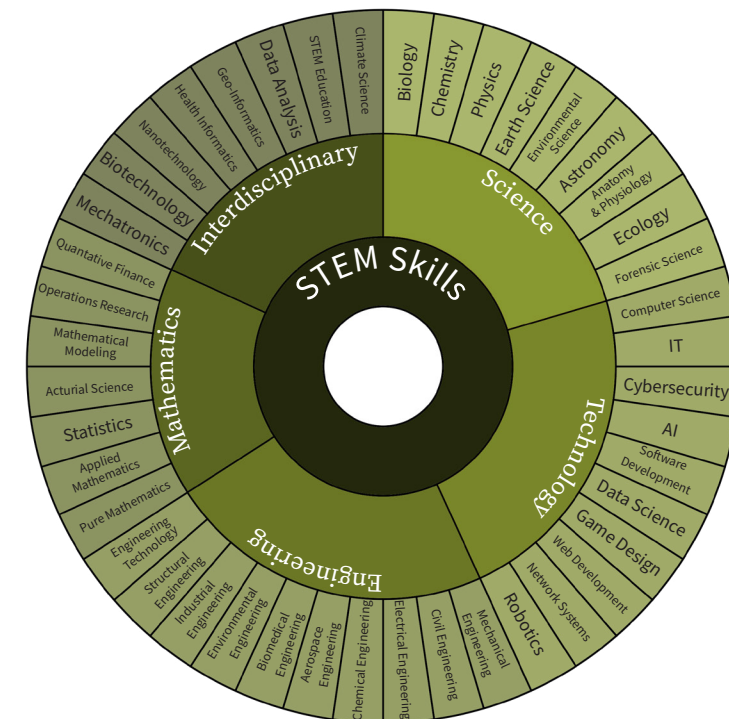
- Clearly maps transferable, essential life skills developed through YC² participation, facilitating holistic evaluation of youth preparedness for civic life and professional success post-high school.



The Durable Skills model matters because it equips you with superpowers like critical thinking, creativity, and leadership, essentials for shaping your future. In YC², these powerful, lasting skills help you thrive beyond the classroom, empowering you to solve real-world problems, communicate boldly, and become a resilient, mindful leader ready to ignite change and positively impact your community and the world.

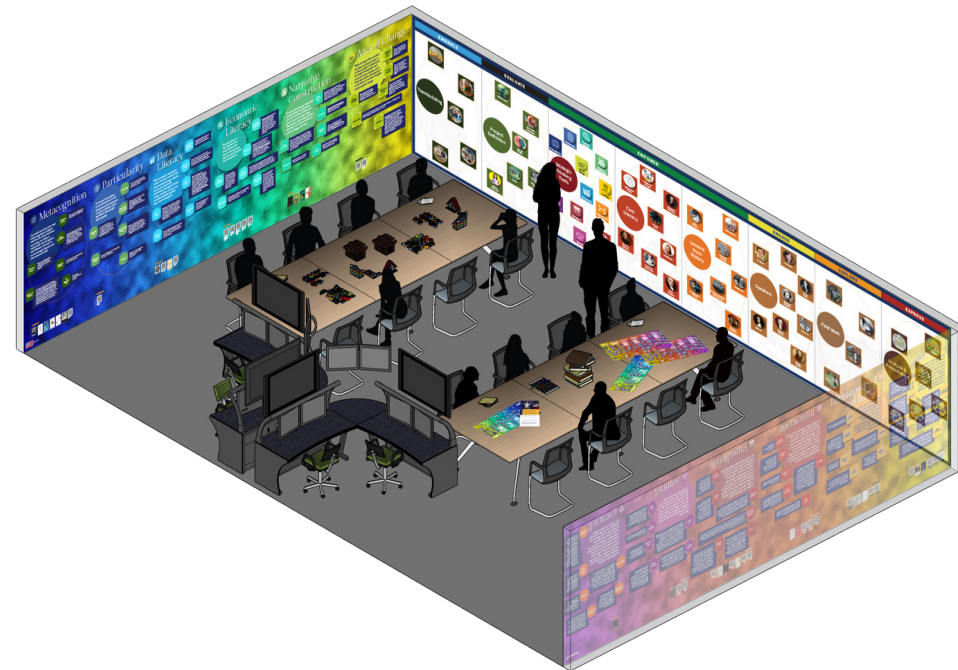
STEM SKILLS WHEEL (YC² CONTEXT)

- Applied similarly, this wheel evaluates STEM competencies as integral elements of the civic education experience, showcasing youth's ability to apply scientific, technological, and analytical skills in addressing community and policy challenges.
- STEM skills supercharge your ability to innovate and tackle real-life issues head-on. In YC², you'll sharpen your abilities in technology, data analysis, engineering design, and scientific thinking, equipping you to build powerful, evidence-based solutions. These dynamic skills prepare you to be a leader, ready to impact your community, shape smart policies, and confidently create a brighter, more sustainable future.



The YC² evaluation model integrates three key frameworks: the Durable Skills Wheel, YC² Skills for Collective Action, and the STEM Skills Wheel. Together, they assess youth development in foundational personal skills, effective collaboration, and technical STEM competencies. This comprehensive approach ensures students are well-prepared for civic engagement, collective action, and successful participation in modern workforce and academic environments.

It allows educators to assess and support students in building durable personal skills, technical STEM competencies, and the collaborative abilities necessary for fostering essential skills in youth, preparing them for active participation in civic life and the modern workforce. Also, supports our ability for continuous program improvement and a tool to clearly communicate outcomes to educators, students, stakeholders, and policymakers.



REQUIREMENTS

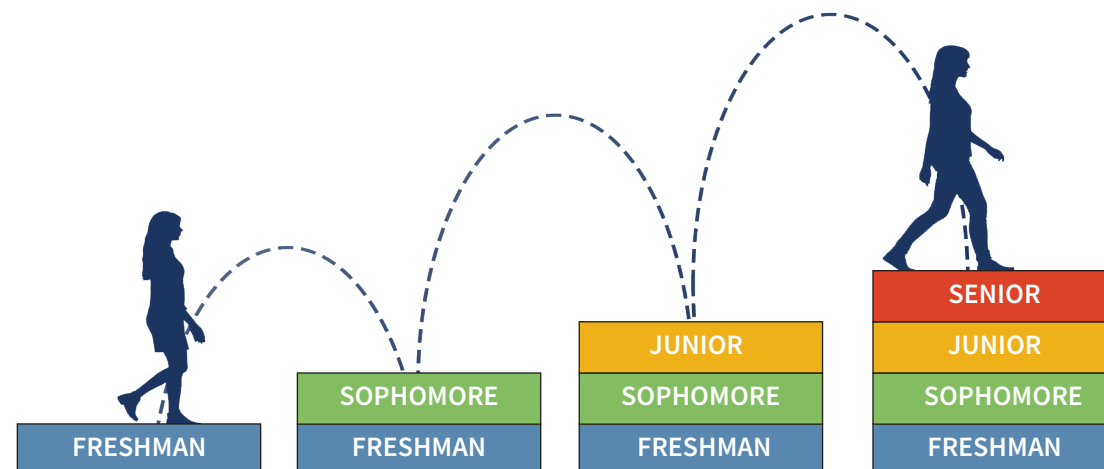
ENGAGEMENT 12 Students | 2 Coaches.

SCHEDULE (FLEXIBLE) 2 hours/day | 4 days/week | 21 weeks

SPACE 20' x 30' Classroom

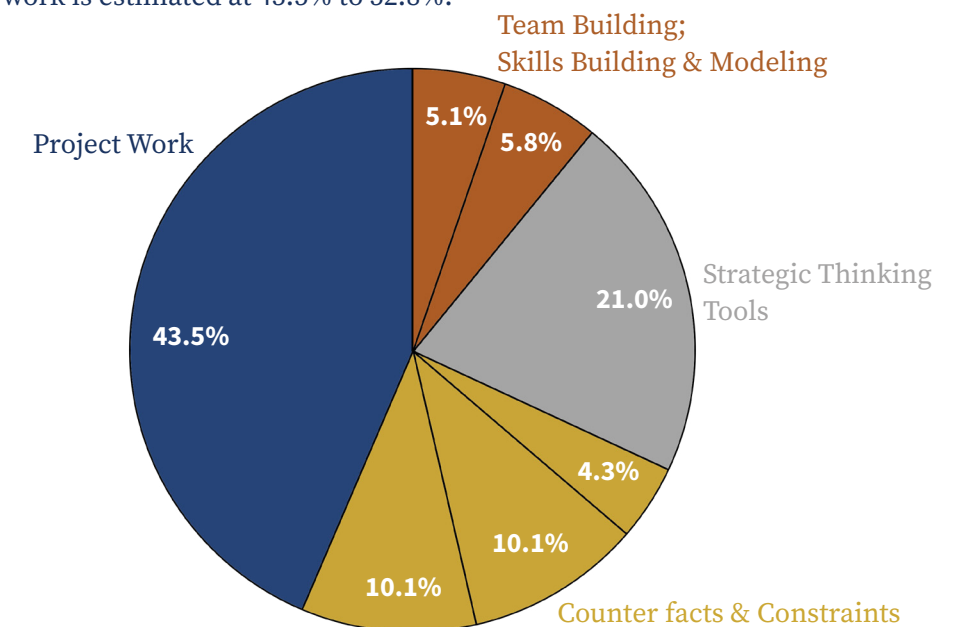
YC² is designed for maximum ease and flexibility, perfectly aligning with your busy schedule. Spend 2-4 hours daily over 20 weeks, meeting in-person or collaborating from home - your choice! Dedicated coaches guide each team (8-16 students).

TIMELINE

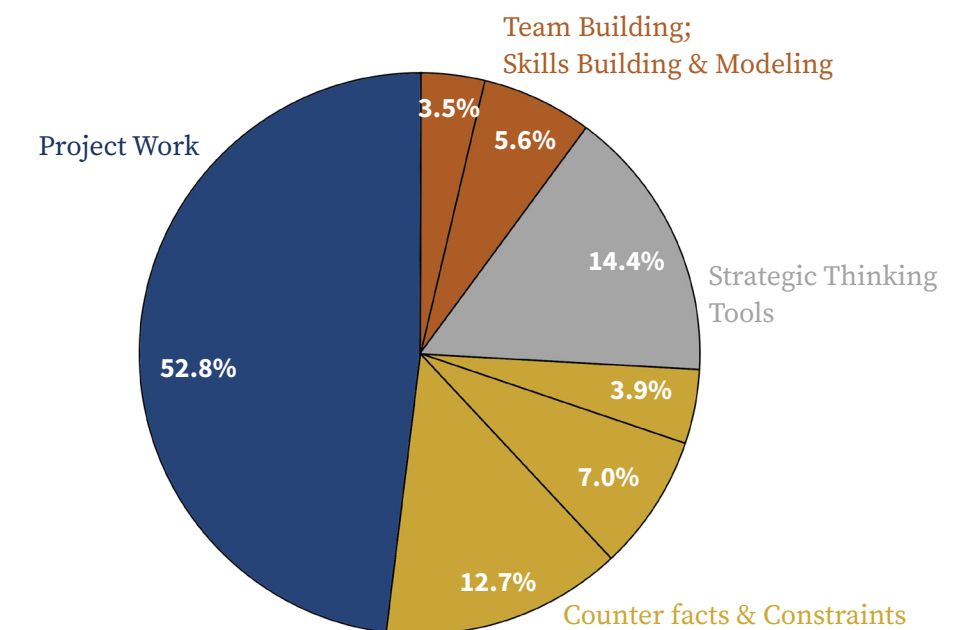


PROGRAM ENGAGEMENT

- Estimated hours per student in a 20-week session is 138 to 294.
- Average hours per week is 6.9 on the low and 14.7 hours on the high
- Direct civics education is 38% on the high and 45.5% on the low.
- Project work is estimated at 43.5% to 52.8%.



DISTRIBUTION OF LOW HOURS BY COURSE ACTIVITY



DISTRIBUTION OF HIGH HOURS BY COURSE ACTIVITY

USING LENSES TO REFRAME ISSUES

EDUCATION

The U.S. News and World Report listed the average cost of one year of college tuition for the 2023–2024 school year as \$42,162 at private schools, \$23,630 for public, out-of-state schools, and \$10,662 for public, in-state schools (Economic Literacy), making affordability a major hurdle to students seeking a college education. One way to think about addressing this issue may be to reconsider if a college degree is truly necessary for a candidate to fulfill a posted job’s requirements and duties (Metacognition).

The quality of a student’s primary education is also directly affected by economics because local property taxes are used to fund public schools (Education Weekly, 2022), meaning that students in wealthier zip codes can attend better-funded schools than students in lower-income zip codes (Locality, Data Literacy, Consequential Thinking = cost of NOT getting an education).



RURAL VS. URBAN DIVIDE

In the present day, urban areas tend to have more wealth and economic opportunities than rural areas (Economic Literacy, Locality) and this divide will likely only worsen as cities continue to grow and more people move to urban areas (Consequential Thinking). A variety of factors can contribute to the decline of rural areas, such as a lack of jobs, poor access to healthcare, and limited educational opportunities (Interaction). Rural communities may have to invest in different industries to create jobs, such as tourism or the arts (Creativity).



UNCERTAIN FUTURES

Many factors contribute to young people’s uncertainty about the future (Arcs of Change). Media can sway people’s perceptions of whether the future is hopeless or something they can control (Narrative Construction). Some may be concerned about rising cost of living expenses (Economic Literacy) and others may fear that new technologies such as Artificial Intelligence may re-shape the job market (Consequential Thinking).



MENTAL HEALTH

According to the National Institute of Mental Health, 57.8 million Americans live with a mental illness as of 2021 (Data Literacy). This means that over 1 in 5 Americans have a mental illness. But with the term “mental illness” covering several different diagnoses that affect different people in different ways, different patients will have unique treatment needs (Particularity). Some people may be hesitant to seek the treatment they need due to lasting stigmas surrounding mental illness (Narrative construction) while others may not be able to afford the cost of a therapist or other mental health professional (Economic Literacy, Consequential Thinking).



SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH

The World Health Organization defines social determinants of health as non-medical factors that contribute to a person’s wellbeing (Data Literacy). This can include education level, income, social support, access to healthy foods, and access to affordable medical care. And how they interrelate (Interaction, and how those interactions depend on where you are - Landscapes) Different people may be supported in some of these determinants of health but not others (Particularity). However, many factors may interact and contribute to each other. For example, a person with low income is more likely to struggle with food insecurity and may be less likely to afford a secondary education (Interaction). Some zip codes have been shown to have much lower social determinants of health than others. Data from the University of Missouri shows that wealthy, predominantly white neighborhoods can have an average lifespan up to 15 years greater than underserved, predominantly black neighborhoods. (Locality, Data Literacy).



““Youth Civic Challenge” is a hands-on, real-world way to get teens involved in the world around them. It is a powerful models for civic engagement that belongs in every teen’s toolbox. The American Museum of Tort Law is proud to help shape a new generation of leaders who aren’t afraid to roll up their sleeves and create change where it matters most –right in their own backyards.”

Melissa Bird
Executive Director of the American Museum of Tort Law

“As a youth mentor, my experience with the “Youth Civic Challenge” was not only one of instruction but of immense learning. It expanded my self-efficacy in facing social challenges and granted me the skillset to turn the dream of progress into reality. By helping educate young people in my community on the lessons of civic advocacy, I came to better understand and pragmatically approach these same issues.”

Gabriel Duffany
Sophomore, Uconn

“As a mentor with the Youth Civic Challenge, I’ve seen firsthand how this transformative program inspires young people. The best part was watching them grow in confidence, develop critical thinking skills, and take action to step up and make a difference. I am looking forward to taking part in this program again this summer.”

Dylan Bird
Sophomore, St. Lawrence University

