

## Getting started- Instructor Accompaniment

Once you have a team together, choosing an environmental issue or problem to tackle can be daunting. Here are a few tips to help you get started.

- Get your team together and brainstorm as many environmental problems as you can. This worksheet is a great way to get creative thoughts flowing. Don't worry about choosing feasible issues yet, simply write as many different problems as you can. Encourage students to be specific, for example climate change could be broken down into many different subtopics like more severe storms, warming ecosystems and habitats, or rising sea level.
- Make sure everyone participates. Focus more on coming up with 20 issues even if they overlap than trying to come up with a few really good issues off the bat.
- When asking questions about your top 4-6 issues encourage students to ask a couple questions about all the issues. Part way through ask them to use different question stems (What, When, How, Where, Why).
- When the group is discussing which issue they want to take on, remind them of the time and resources available. Encourage students to think creatively about how to answer their question and/or take action within these constraints. The more specific and locally based their focus, the easier this will be.
- If the group is having trouble deciding which issues to take on, they can do a short trial run no more than a few days, reflect and then make a final choice.
- While we try to focus students on issues that have a local impact and can be put into action, this doesn't mean their issue has to be exclusive to their community. For example, even though climate change is a global issue it has many local impacts that would inspire some great eco challenge projects.

## **Making a Plan Accompaniment**

Now that you have a topic, let's make a plan. Don't expect things to work perfectly the first time, revision and reflection are crucial parts to building strong projects.

- Not every Eco Challenge needs to have a question they are trying to answer, but having a question about the issue the group is looking at, is a great way to expand their understanding of the issue.
- Be sure to have students come up with a step-by-step plan for answering their question. This is another great opportunity to challenge students to think creatively. Give students time at this step to mull things over and experiment.
- Be specific, What are you doing or testing? How many times are you doing it?
- Be sure to include how you will share or demonstrate what you have learned. Great submissions to the eco challenge engage the rest of the school or community.
- Depending on your specific project, give your actions a trial or mock run. Reflect on how this went and revise your plan or project if necessary.

Now that you have a plan go out and give it a try!

Be sure to include ample reflection time as you proceed through this project. These questions below can be good discussion points throughout this process.

What have we learned so far?

How can we improve?

How can we best address our issue or answer our question?

What new questions do we have?