



“SUSTAINABLE MOBILITY CAREER AWARENESS & INNOVATION CHALLENGE” 2025 Program Overview (#IyaiInnovation Challenge)

- 1. Program Manager:** **Introducing Youth to American Infrastructure, Inc.** (“iyai+”), is a national 501 (c) (3) nonprofit organization, (Tax ID: 82-4854602), located in Mobile, Alabama. Iyai was incorporated in 2018 and launched its first youth pilot program in 2019 at the historic, nationally recognized *Francis L. Cardozo Education Campus, TransSTEM Academy (District of Columbia Public Schools)*, established in 1991 as the first transportation studies academy in the Washington metropolitan area.
- 2. Mission and Work:** At “iyai+,” we believe that the critical infrastructure sectors directly impact all aspects of our lives, communities, and society. Our mission is to *motivate young people to choose infrastructure careers and become tomorrow’s infrastructure leaders, innovators, entrepreneurs, and skilled workforce* -- with specific emphasis on *increasing the interest, motivation, participation, and retention levels of historically under-represented youth*. In the United States, Presidential Policy Directive 21 (PPD-21) identifies **16 critical infrastructure sectors** (<https://www.cisa.gov>). And “people-readiness” is a well-documented, high-risk challenge facing our critical infrastructure sectors.

The “+” in “iyai+” is about the “**Values**” and “**Outcomes**” that inspire each of us – and guide our lives, actions, and decisions. Starting from a unique “**Community-Building**” lens – iyai+ programming is **cross-sectoral, and partnerships-based by design**. And, as importantly, **respects and values YOUTH VOICE** – the “lived” and “learned” experience of our youth participants. *Advancing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion is at the core of all aspects of our work*. Unlocking this potential is a big part of the solution to improving outcomes for all Americans and advancing American competitiveness. We also believe that our **increasingly interdependent world** requires re-thinking the “career-readiness” education, skills, experiences, and exposure necessary for the 21st century. For us that means working collaboratively – beyond a siloed, singular “sector” or “jobs-only” focus. Smartly working together on areas like transferable skills and portability -- to practically expand potential career opportunities – enrich personal and professional development, career-readiness, and earning potential.

Finally, we believe that **active “local” participation** is a powerful motivator and an important ingredient for success. Youth engagement with local employers, organized labor, professional associations, education/training providers and community-based organizations and resources re: “good” jobs and business opportunities. Coupled with a meaningful opportunity to address a community problem or opportunity -- can be a life-shaping experience.

In 2023, iyai+ significantly *expanded its annual programming* -- in terms of *program content* – addition of the “*Innovation Challenge*” and “*Critical Conversations*” components; *geographic reach and replicability* – multiple locations in the United States, participation by Canada’s largest public transportation operator; and the increased engagement of community-based stakeholders at both the national and local levels. Coupled with *young adult programming, 18 to 25 years* given the significant workforce shortages being experienced – most notably in essential, frontline positions.

[IMPORTANT NOTE: *iyai+’s 2025 annual Program is targeted for young adults, 18 to 25 years of age.* Requirements for programs with youth adolescents (“minors” under the age of 18 years) require a number of important precautionary measures which vary by State/locale, i.e., parental/guardian consent and releases, background checks and training for contractors and volunteers in contact with minor youth participants (both in-person and virtual), and other documentation. **Local Host Organizers are advised to IMMEDIATELY contact iyai+ (beverly@iyai.org) if you have an interest in tailoring a program appropriate for minors. And we will be pleased to work with you.]**

- 3. Our Approach:** At iyai+, we believe this important work starts with providing our program participants with **meaningful professional and personal development opportunities and “relationships” that can extend beyond a “one-time” event.** Career awareness and industry-specific navigational skills -- including a broader range of available resources, career-focused learning and experiential opportunities, access to industry professionals at all levels and related fields (i.e., role models, teachers, peers, potential mentors/buddies, coaches, and sponsors). Along with opportunities for greater active engagement and visibility – including volunteer and “paid” opportunities.


We respect and meaningfully incorporate “YOUTH VOICE” in all aspects of our work – tapping the considerable **knowledge and experience** of our youth -- including “**co-creation**” program development and implementation opportunities.


“Build on the Program Experience – and Stay Connected!” A couple of tips -- look at opportunities to encourage and support youth membership and participation opportunities in public, private sector, labor and employer-focused educational/training programs, grant and scholarship opportunities, and community volunteer activities. Intentionally, acquaint them with local, regional, State and national professional

associations, equity, philanthropic, and community-centered organizations. *Many have special, no and low cost opportunities for youth membership and participation.*

4. **2024 Program Overview:** The **“Sustainable Mobility Career Awareness & Innovation Challenge”** for youth (18-25 years of age) builds on *Iyai’s core infrastructure career awareness and “My Beloved Community” youth voice and active community engagement elements.*

The Program includes **three (3) distinct components**; and we strongly encourage youth participants to actively participate in all Program phases. At the same time, we recognize that daily demands may not make that possible. That said, we “record” our educational/training sessions and make them broadly available.

 **Career Awareness** - with continued emphasis on addressing critical transportation/mobility/ other aligned infrastructure needs and increasing diversity. *Prioritizing opportunities in “essential” hard to fill positions and projected growth areas that are necessary for a “future-ready” workforce* and best-in-class transportation/infrastructure services and facilities. We kick off our July ‘virtual’ Grand Innovation Challenge weekend, with an interactive **“Career Awareness Trivia Contest” (individual winner).**

 **“virtual” Innovation Challenge** – an important *experiential* element of *iyai+’s professional and personal development youth programming* -- includes a **“virtual” North American Grand Challenge Competition.** This Program element directly engages team(s) of local youth in *community-based problem identification, analysis, and problem-solving.* The desired outcome for the “virtual” Grand Innovation Challenge – is achieving “equity-centered” sustainable mobility – transportation services, facilities, and cross-sectoral benefits,

Builds on the United Nation’s Sustainability Goals and national transportation programs and goals both in the U.S. and Canada to achieve *equity-centered “Sustainable Mobility”.* **Local Organizers are encouraged to tailor the areas of interest for their Innovation Challenge topic(s) to specific “high” area(s) of interest in their respective local area.** The more timely, relevant, results-focused, and potentially actionable the Challenge – the better!

 **Critical Conversations “Youth Voice Series”** – *“youth-centered” engagement and insights in identified area(s) of industrywide interest and importance.*

5. **The Program Advisory Committee (“PAC”)** is comprised of a designated representative(s) from each Local Organizer. Program Sponsors and National Advisors are also welcome to attend. This important Advisory Group **meets monthly with the iyai+ team** to

exchange ideas, provide Program input and suggestions, flag challenges and potential opportunities.

6. **Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)** to be completed by Local Host Organizers is provided as an attachment to this Program Overview. Direct any questions to the attention of Dr. Beverly Scott, beverly@iyai.org. *Ideally, the MOU should be executed by both parties well in advance of the early February onboarding sessions.*
7. **Code of Conduct:** Our expectation is that all organizers, sponsors, and participants in iyai+ programs will work to ensure a welcoming, respectful, inclusive, safe, accessible, and secure environment for all participants, *including a clear process to address and report a concern – whom to contact and how.*
8. **“virtual” Innovation Challenge Theme:** Achieving “Sustainable Mobility” within the context of a NEW “equity-centered” Normal! Detailed innovation Challenge instructions are provided during the Onboarding.
9. **“virtual” Grand Innovation Challenge Award Highlights:** . The Grand Challenge is planned for the latter part of July. [NOTE: Youth Innovation teams are anticipated to be comprised of 4-7 members.] **Identification of the local team advancing to the “virtual” Grand Innovation Challenge** is thirty (30) days in advance of the Grand Challenge.

Innovation Challenge Team Awards & Recognition

The 1st place team will receive \$1000 USD/team member.

The 2nd place team will receive \$500 USD/team member.

The 3rd place team will receive \$250 USD/team member.

Career Awareness Trivia Contest (Individual Award): \$1,000 USD/Individual

The Career Awareness Trivia Contest Winner, “virtual “Grand Innovation Winning Teams and Participants. All Local Organizers, youth participants, Sponsors, Advisors and program supporters are recognized at the **Program Recognition/Awards Program**.

General Innovation Challenge Evaluation Categories are broadly stated below. All Innovation topics will need to address one or more of the following broad categories.

- **Provide greater equity in accessibility and affordability to mobility that improves access to opportunities and daily necessities.**
- **Result in greener transportation options that reduce overall negative environmental and public health impacts (reduce, reuse, and recycle -- including life cycle considerations and future needs; GHG reduction and air quality improvements).**

- Actionable, innovative “people-readiness” and “workforce development” strategies, programs and plans specifically focused on addressing current workforce shortages in “essential” high needs positions and projected career growth areas.
- Innovative use of data and identification of important data “gaps”, improving ready access to useful information that enhances data analytics and critical thinking, use of new technologies that improve the transport/mobility network for all users; projects that advance proficiency in digitalization, computing, and cybersecurity hygiene practices.
- Collaborative, cross-sectoral, interdisciplinary approaches, and recommendations that reduce disparities, promote fairness, and foster expanded opportunities.
- Meaningfully engage and expand citizen/community participation – including meaningful “youth voice”.
- Provide greater transparency, ready and affordable access to public information re: transport/sustainable mobility career, educational, and training opportunities – “jobs” and “business” opportunities.

Each Local Team Challenge Entry includes the following:

- Team/Project Name and Logo.
- Team Members’ Contact Data, i.e., name, e-mail, age, city of residence, mailing address.
- A high-resolution headshot and brief Profile of each Team Member (2-3 paragraphs).
- Electronic submission of a **3-minute maximum smartphone video; and accompanying Abstract (maximum 5 pages)** which clearly identifies the proposed equity-centered sustainable mobility “Innovation” – including the overarching Purpose (need, value and benefits); major risk/mitigation considerations; Next Steps - implementation (operationalization) plans; Cost/Benefit considerations; proposed performance measures/metrics; replicability potential and scale; speed of implementation potential.

The virtual Innovation Challenge event “live” Team Presentations are a total of 30 minutes, including a “15-minute maximum pitch “by the team. And allow time for a 15-minute Question & Answer period by the national Judges.

All Innovation Teams should plan to prepare and present in such a way that they address the following key elements.

- ✚ Articulate how the innovation/proposal aligns with the Innovation Challenge – considering the Evaluation Categories broadly stated above.

- ✚ Describe what the innovation is and how it is filling a need/gap in the “local” area -- particularly for underserved groups and vulnerable communities.
- ✚ Describe the impact (“value”) of the proposed initiative/innovation(s) on sustainable mobility considering the UN Sustainability Goals, and the Local Organizer’s respective national/local area sustainability and equity objectives, meaningful performance measures and metrics.
- ✚ Explain how the innovation is utilizing best available transport/mobility data (critical thinking and analysis), incorporates proficiency in digitalization, computing, information, and modern technologies – including important cybersecurity/hygiene considerations (as applicable).
- ✚ Risk (“SWOC”) Assessment: Identify major areas of risk and associated mitigation strategies.
- ✚ NEXT STEPS: Share your thinking and planning to date re: the scalability, speed, cost estimates to pilot proof of concept; and proposed Next Steps. And, from your perspective – how can your Local Host Sponsor/others in your area -- best assist Next Steps.

10. “Career Awareness” Virtual Trivia Contest: This is an **“Individual” Award open to ALL** (25 years of age and younger). The content for this Contest will be from Webinar, Lunch & Learn Speakers, and other highlighted resources. Links to iyai+ Career Awareness sessions and resources are posted. The virtual Career Awareness Trivia Contest is planned for **the Friday of Innovation Challenge weekend.**

11. Critical Conversations: Annually, the Local Organizers and Youth participants help to determine the area of major interest that will benefit significantly from a youth-centered perspective. This Program includes **Local Organizer Focus Groups, typically comprised of 4-12 youth.** This input is coupled with national Survey Data to help better understand and address the identified challenge/opportunity.

12. Communications, Outreach and Social Media: Share Your Story! And Make it a Point to Provide at least a Monthly iyai+ Website Update.

Let’s Make “Equity-Centered” Sustainable Mobility, and Community-Building Life Work that Continues “Beyond the Program.” One way to make this happen is through your organization and local partners – working together to spotlight and lift the work of our youth participants – their stories and their collective work on YOUR selected Innovation Challenge area. For our young adult programming, we broadly circulate Program materials to a broad audience for public information, career awareness, and educational purposes. The MOU includes standard releases.

- 13. Program Assessment:** At the conclusion of the Program, iyai+ prepares a **Program Evaluation Report** – which includes input from youth Program participants and Local Organizer Advisory Committee members.

Impact During and Beyond the Program. We need your help in this area. Tracking participants over time and assessing both immediate and longer-term Program Impact(s) is always challenging. And particularly so – for programming that is not part of a traditional educational/employer job-readiness program. What we know from our work and that of others is that “going deeper” with youth – *beyond a “one time event” makes a big difference!* Other key differentiators -- making the connection between “work” and meaningful “community outcomes”; exposing youth to directly relevant “job-readiness” preparation – **including real “workers”; professional and personal relationship and network building** -- with “**Buddies/Guides**” (mentors) – including exposure to career and life skills, “**SMEs**” (knowledgeable “content” and informational resources), **Professional Associations/Community Networks/VIPs**; and helping to “seed” important “**peer-peer**” **professional/personal development networks** – *ALL help to maintain contact and access to better information regarding Program impacts beyond the “immediate” program period.*

Program Goals and Outcomes

- **Increase Participant Knowledge** of Transport/Sustainable Mobility Careers
 - **Increase Participant Interest** in a Transport Sector/Sustainable Mobility Career
 - **Make the “Community-Building” Connection** between Transport/Sustainable Mobility Careers and the Opportunity to Positively Impact Outcomes for People/Households, Society
 - **Actively Engage Participants** in Addressing Important Local Transport/Sustainable Mobility Challenges
 - **Build/Strengthen Professional and Personal Relationships and Networks**
 - **Strengthen Participant Life Success Skills** – including building professional and personal relationships and networks that provide exposure and access to career information, resources, and future opportunities.
- 14. Iyai+ Dr. Juanita Jones-Abernathy “Community-Builder” Internship (“hybrid” work environment).** Iyai+ established this “paid” “Community-Builder internship opportunity in recognition of the extraordinary lifetime of civic activism and public service of the late Dr. Juanita Jones-Abernathy (Founding Iyai Board member). A historic civil rights leader together with her spouse, the late Rev. Ralph David Abernathy, Dr. Martin Luther King’s mentor and partner in the U.S. civil rights movement of the 1950’s and 60’s. The

“Community Builder” internship(s) will be competitively selected for the period January 2025 – September 2025; stipend range of \$15.00 - \$25.00 USD/hour.

The application period for these Internships will commence in November 2024 (rolling cycle through 2025).

- 15. Disclosure:** This Program Overview is periodically updated. If you have **general questions, please contact the iyai+ office for general information: Hope Davis, admin2@iyai.org** and she will direct your question to the appropriate team member.

