

Concept Note

YSO Summit

1st Edition

A Platform for Alignment

7th December 2026
Iconic Hotel

www.nationalyouthcouncil.go.ke/yso-summit/

MINISTRY OF YOUTH AFFAIRS, CREATIVE ECONOMY AND SPORTS
REPUBLIC OF KENYA

NATIONAL YOUTH COUNCIL KENYA
Amplifying the Youth Voice

The Evolution

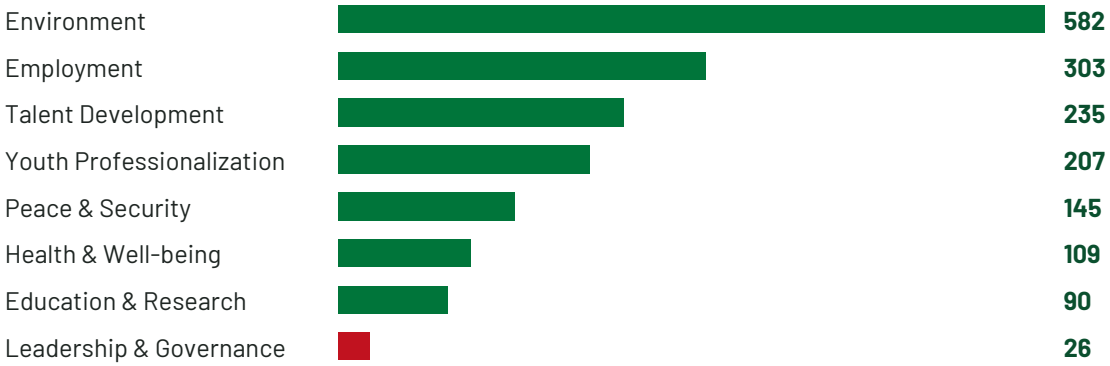
The National Youth Council (NYC) is established by the National Youth Council Act (2009). A state corporation under the Ministry of Youth Affairs, Creative Economy, and Sports, it is mandated to amplify youth voices including but not limited to regulating and coordinating youth initiatives, mobilizing resources to support youth programmes, promoting research on youth issues and acting as a voice and bridge between government, the private sector, and civil society. Through campaigns and programs, NYC empowers young people and fosters their association, participation, and representation in political, social, and economic spheres of life.

NYC's coordination mandate starts with knowing who is doing youth work, where, and on what. Through the national YSO registration and coordination process, the Council has built a register that has grown into a national network.

As of October 2026, more than **1,800** Youth Serving Organizations were registered with NYC. That rapid growth reflects a sector increasingly eager to be recognized, connected and counted as part of a national youth development effort. The momentum has not been uniform, however, with periods of strong uptake followed by quieter ones. This pattern suggests that many YSOs are drawn in by moments of visibility and opportunity rather than by a steady, ongoing relationship with a national coordinating structure. Willingness to belong is clearly there, what is missing is a consistent, shared space where YSOs can engage regularly with one another, with government and with partners, and see the value of remaining actively connected long after registration.

The concentration of YSOs in Nairobi and other urban centers, against only a handful in many rural, arid and coastal counties, leaves some of the country's most underserved young people with the least access to organized youth support. Alongside a network that is overwhelmingly youth-led, this uneven spread shows both the reach and the gaps of the sector. It underscores the need for a coordinated space that steers support towards underserved counties and amplifies the voices of the young people driving this work.

YSOs are also organizing around thematic Sector Working Groups (SWGs). Environment draws the most organizations (582), followed by:



Number of YSOs by Sector Working Group

Appetite for structured collaboration is strong: **92.8% of YSOs have expressed interest in joining an SWG**. The register still shows a gap in formalization. Only **581 YSOs hold registration certificates, against 1,186 without**, which means roughly one in three is fully certified. This evolution from scattered initiatives to a registered national network sets the stage for the Inaugural YSO Summit.

1,800+

Youth Serving Organizations registered with NYC as of October 2026

92.8%

of YSOs have expressed interest in joining a Sector Working Group

581

YSOs hold registration certificates, against 1,186 without

The Summit is a chance to:

- Turn registration into active coordination through the SWGs
- Close the certification gap
- Extend NYC's reach to under-represented counties
- Give the sector a shared platform to engage government, development partners and the private sector

The Challenge

YSOs are registered under different regimes, such as the Registrar of Societies, the NGOs Coordination Board/PBORA, county governments and community-based registration. They report to different bodies and rely on scattered, often short-term funding. As a result, many YSOs work on the same issues in the same counties without knowing about each other, which duplicates effort and competes for the same limited resources. Meanwhile, some young people and regions remain underserved.

NYC's own register shows the scale of the problem. Of the YSOs registered with the Council, only 581 hold registration certificates, compared with 1,186 without. Nearly one in six is based in Nairobi (295), while counties such as Lamu (9), Baringo (10) and Samburu (10) have barely any registered presence. Thematically, YSOs cluster heavily in environment (582) and employment (303), while critical areas such as leadership and governance attract only 26 organisations. Registration itself comes in bursts that follow active mobilisation, such as the 256 YSOs that registered in April 2026, and slows sharply without it. There is still no single, shared picture of who is doing what, where, and with what results. Without that picture, government, development partners and the private sector cannot target support effectively, and YSOs cannot build on each other's work.

The Pivot

The Inaugural YSO Summit marks a deliberate shift from scattered effort to a coordinated sector. For the first time, it brings YSOs, National and County Governments, the private sector and development partners into one room under a new coordination architecture. Each part of that architecture responds directly to the gaps the sector faces today:

Take Stock

The Summit will build a shared, evidence-based picture of the YSO sector: who is working where, on what, and with what results. It will also discuss issues affecting youth and mechanisms to address the emerging issues. It starts from NYC's register of YSOs across all 47 counties. Coverage gaps, such as under-represented counties and neglected thematic areas, will be mapped and tabled for joint action.

Deliverable: *A National YSO Sector Baseline Report.*

Build Structures

Participants will agree on common registration and reporting standards so that every YSO, whatever its regime, feeds into one national picture. The Summit will also formally launch the Sector Working Groups as active coordination platforms. This builds on the 92.8% of YSOs that have already signalled interest in joining one, and on a clear pathway to certification for the YSOs not yet certified.

Deliverable: *an SWG Charter and a common YSO Reporting Framework.*

Align Resources

The Summit will clarify who funds and delivers what across government, partners and the private sector. It will secure concrete commitments behind shared priorities, so that funding reaches gaps rather than duplicating effort.

Deliverable: *a Partner Commitments Register.*

NYC will establish the Annual YSO Summit and Awards Ceremony as a sustainable national platform for engagement, collaboration, recognition and strengthening of the YSO ecosystem. Each year, the Summit will:

- Update the sector baseline
- Review progress against the commitments made
- Recognise YSOs and partners whose work has delivered measurable impact for young people across Kenya through awards

The awards also give YSOs a strong incentive to register, report and take part actively in the SWGs which ties recognition directly to the coordination goals.

Context & Rationale

A sector at a turning point

Kenya is a youthful nation: the Constitution defines youth as persons aged 18 to 34, and the 2019 Census placed this group at close to a third of the population. Thousands of organizations serve them, yet there are three gaps that limit what the sector can achieve:

- **Fragmentation:** Organizations duplicate one another in some counties and leave young people underserved in others, including youth with disabilities and those in arid and semi-arid areas.
- **Weak Reporting and Uneven Compliance:** Few YSOs report regularly to NYC, formats differ, and awareness of youth policies and registration rules varies widely.
- **Scattered Funding:** Resources are spread across national funds, county budgets, partners and the private sector, with little clarity on who is responsible for what.

The Cost to Young People

When the sector is not aligned, young people pay the price: duplicated effort, missed opportunities and programmes that do not reach those who need them most.

The Imperative for an Inaugural Summit

Structures meant to close these gaps, such as sector working groups, are not yet working as intended, and declining donor funding makes alignment more urgent.

The summit is designed as an alignment process rather than a showcase: taking stock, agreeing on standards and structures, and committing to a shared way forward under NYC's coordination.

> *"The State shall take measures, including affirmative action programmes, to ensure that the youth ... have opportunities to associate, be represented and participate in political, social, economic and other spheres of life."*
>
> **Constitution of Kenya, 2010**
>
> Article 55

Building a Coordinated, Accountable & Sustainable Youth Sector.

Kenya's youth sector stands at a defining moment. With young people aged 18–34 making up close to a third of the population, and thousands of organizations working with them in every county, the sector has never had more energy or reach.

Yet that energy is spread thin: organizations duplicate one another, report in different ways and compete for scarce resources, while some young people are left out altogether.

The question for the sector is therefore not whether to work together, but how to align behind one direction.

Hence the theme, ***"Building a Coordinated, Accountable and Sustainable Youth Sector in Kenya"***, with the sub-theme ***"Taking stock, building structures and charting the way forward."*** It raises practical questions: What should a coordinated sector look like? Which standards will every actor hold accountable? Which commitments will make it last?

As the first summit of its kind, the Inaugural YSO Summit is designed to answer these questions together, under NYC's coordination, for today's young people and those to come.

One sector.
One voice.
One direction for Kenya's young people.

Inaugural YSO Summit 2026
National Youth Council

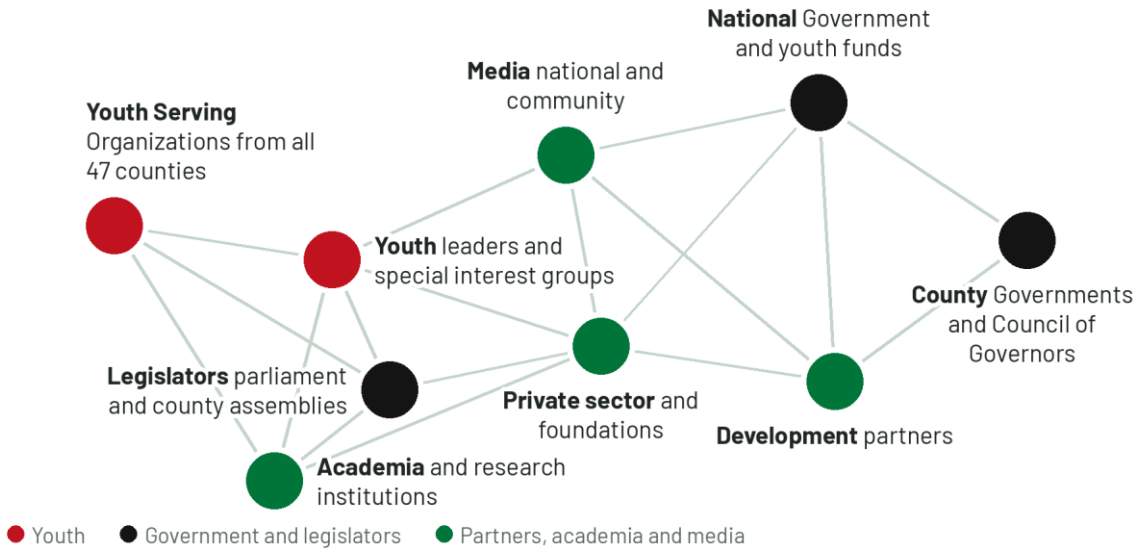
Summit Objectives

Through plenary dialogues, panel discussions, thematic breakouts, working group sessions and a YSO exhibition, the summit will take stock of the sector and agree on how it should work as one.

The Summit seeks to deliver the following outcomes:

1. **Take stock of the YSO sector:** map the work of YSOs across the country, including their focus areas, reach, achievements and challenges, to build a shared and evidence-based picture of the sector.
2. **Strengthen compliance and accountability:** reaffirm existing policies and regulations and agree on a standard framework and calendar for YSO reporting to NYC.
3. **Operationalize sector coordination structures:** launch the youth sector working groups and define the roles of National Government, County Governments, the private sector and YSOs, including funding the youth space.
4. **Chart the way forward:** set out practical steps for mainstreaming youth in national and county planning and budgeting, captured in a summit communiqué and a 12-month sector action plan.

Who to expect at the summit!



300

In person

1,000

Online

Thematic Areas

Track 1

Taking stock: who is doing what, where

The paradigm shift: Kenya has no single, reliable picture of how many YSOs exist, where they work, whom they reach and what they achieve. Without it, the sector duplicates effort in some counties and leaves young people underserved in others. A pre-summit mapping of YSOs will set the baseline and update the NYC register.

Action-focused reflection questions:

- What minimum information should every YSO share so the sector can see who is doing what, and where?
- Which counties and groups of young people are underserved, and how should the sector respond together?

Track 2

Compliance and accountability: standards that build trust

The paradigm shift: Compliance with youth policies and registration rules is uneven, and few YSOs report regularly to NYC. Accountability cannot rest on goodwill alone; it needs simple, shared standards and a reporting calendar that every organization can meet and that make reporting useful to YSOs as well as to government.

Action-focused reflection questions:

- What would make reporting to NYC useful for YSOs themselves, not only a compliance exercise?
- How can registration and reporting be simplified for small, youth-led groups without weakening accountability?

Track 3

Sector working groups: from paper to practice

The paradigm shift: Working groups should let YSOs plan jointly and speak with one voice, but most exist only on paper. Turning them into active platforms, organized by theme such as employment, skills, health, governance, climate and ICT, and linked to county structures, is the backbone of a coordinated sector.

Action-focused reflection questions:

- What should each working group deliver in its first 12 months?
- How should working groups connect national coordination with county-level action?

Track

4

Funding the youth space: clear roles, shared resources

The paradigm shift: Funding is scattered across national funds, county budgets, partners, the private sector and YSOs' own efforts, with little clarity on who does what. As donor support declines, the sector needs complementary roles and domestic resources aligned behind shared priorities rather than parallel projects.

Action-focused reflection questions:

- How can government, private sector and development partners align funding behind shared priorities?
- What domestic sources could sustain YSOs as donor funding declines?

Track

5

Mainstreaming the youth sector: youth as everyone's business

The paradigm shift: Youth issues are still treated as a stand-alone matter. Real change comes when youth priorities are built into national and county development plans, County Integrated Development Plans, budgets and sector strategies, so that every ministry, county and partner considers its impact on young people.

Action-focused reflection questions:

- What practical steps would get youth priorities into every CIDP and sector budget?
- How should progress on mainstreaming be measured and reported each year?

Expected Outcomes

- A shared, evidence-based picture of the YSO landscape, with organizations registered or updated in the NYC database.
- A validated reporting template and annual reporting calendar.
- Sector working groups launched with terms of reference and conveners.
- Agreed stakeholder roles, with initial partner commitments.
- The YSO Summit Communiqué and a 12-month Sector Action Plan.

Programme Structure

Date: 7th December 2026

Time	Session / Activity	Facilitator
08:00 – 08:30	**Arrival and Registration of Participants**	NYC Secretariat
08:30 – 08:45	**Welcome and Summit Overview** – Objectives, programme and breakout arrangements	NYC Secretariat
08:45 – 10:30	**YSO Thematic Breakout Discussions (parallel sessions)** • ***Taking Stock: Who Is Doing What, Where*** – mapping the reach, coverage and gaps of the YSO sector • ***Sector Working Groups: From Paper to Practice*** – making SWGs active, structured coordination platforms • ***Compliance and Accountability: Standards That Build Trust*** – registration, certification and common reporting standards • ***Funding the Youth Space: Clear Roles, Shared Resources*** – who funds and delivers what, and aligning resources to shared priorities	YSOs
10:30 – 11:00	**Health Break and Group Photo**	
11:00 – 13:00	**Official Remarks and Opening of the Summit**	• CEO, NYC • PS, State Department for Youth Affairs & Creative Economy • CS, Ministry of Youth Affairs, Creative Economy and Sports
13:00 – 14:00	**Lunch Break**	
14:00 – 15:00	**Civic Duty & Responsibility: The nexus of participation, cohesion and Accountability** Violent Extremism, Radicalization, goonism, Participation	NYC & Partners
15:00 – 16:00	**Emerging Issues: Employment & Skills, Health & Well-being, Climate Change** Employment & Skills, Health & Well-being, Climate Change	NYC & Partners
16:00 – 16:30	**Way Forward and Partner Commitments** – Communique	NYC Secretariat
16:30 – 17:30	**Cocktail Toast and Launch of YSO Awards**	NYC & Youth Agenda
17:30	**Closing Remarks and Vote of Thanks**	



Let's Build One Youth Sector.

Partner with us: sponsor the summit, provide technical support, co-convene sessions or announce commitments.

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