

SEJCA / COVID-19 Project Summaries 2020

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has selected 10 organizations to each receive up to \$200,000 through the State Environmental Justice Collaborative Problem-Solving Cooperative Agreement (SEJCA) Program. The SEJCA Program provides funding to support eligible entities to work collaboratively with underserved communities to understand, promote and integrate approaches to provide meaningful and measurable improvements to public health and/or the environment in those communities. For purposes of the RFA, the term “underserved community” referred to a community with environmental justice concerns and/or vulnerable populations, including minority, low income, rural, tribal, indigenous, and homeless populations. Selected grantees are expected to work with underserved communities and community organizations within disproportionately impacted areas to achieve meaningful and measurable results during the award funding period. To support the nationwide effort against the COVID-19 (Novel Coronavirus) pandemic, EPA gave special consideration to applications proposing actions to address the impacts of COVID-19 on communities with environmental justice concerns. Eligible entities included state, tribal, and local governments.

1)

Recipient: California Office of Planning & Research - Strategic Growth Council

Applicant Type: State Government

Project Title: Partners Advancing Climate Equity (PACE)

Project Location: Communities such as Fresno, Bakersfield, Stockton, and Riverside that rank within the top 95-100 percentile for demographic indicators as well as PM 2.5, Ozone, traffic proximity, and other EJ indices within the EJ Screen tool.

Project Partners: Local Government Commission (LGC); Climate Resolve; Urban Permaculture Institute; Greenlining Institute; and Movement Strategy Center

Environmental Statute(s): Clean Air Act, Section 103(b)(3)

Project Type: Training, research and investigations

Partners Advancing Climate Equity (PACE) is a training and technical assistance (TA) program focused on building capacity within environmental justice communities throughout California to address environmental issues as well as the disproportionate impacts of COVID-19. This project will specifically address the Clean Air Act, Section 103(b)(3) through training and technical assistance focused on taking action to address air quality and COVID-19 - a respiratory disease that has been shown to disproportionately impact individuals with greater air pollution exposure. 20-25 participants from underserved communities throughout the State of California will be selected for the program. This project empowers community leaders from environmental justice (EJ) communities throughout California to build long-term capacity and become effective drivers of change through a two-phase training and technical assistance program called Partners Advancing Climate Equity (PACE). Phase one involves providing training on principles of environmental justice, equitable community development,

and COVID response to a cohort of cross-sector community leaders. Phase two involves supporting participants in training others in their community using the PACE curriculum, while receiving direct technical assistance to advance community-identified priorities. Beyond developing a replicable curriculum and training program, the goal of PACE is to equip EJ communities across California to sustain community-led action on environmental and health equity. The project will use indicators such as CalEnviroScreen, Healthy Places Index, and the California Climate Change and Health Vulnerabilities Index to select program participants.

2)

Recipient: New Mexico Environment Department

Applicant Type: State Government

Project Title: Navajo Gallup Water Supply Project

Project Location: Northwestern New Mexico, Navajo Nation

Project Partners: San Juan Collage; Ute Mountain Ute Tribe; Navajo Tribal Utility Authority

Environmental Statute(s): Safe Drinking Water Act, Section 1442(c)(3)

Project Type: Training, education, employment, safe drinking water

The need for safe drinking water in this region is underscored by the number of public water systems with Safe Drinking Water Act violations (over 5,100 health-based violations in past 10 years) and the lack of potable running water for many communities. Approximately 86% of public water systems in the state serve populations under 1,000 where the lack of skilled operators and knowledgeable board members are often tied to noncompliance with public health standards. One of the most common contributors to noncompliance at small water utilities is the lack of a certified operator. Through a new partnership with San Juan College and other entities in the Four Corners region, The New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) is developing a workforce recruitment and training program (workforce program) for drinking water and wastewater treatment plant operators. Recruitment is aimed at two area populations – youth and unemployed workers from local industries (such as oil and gas sector). The workforce program will bring these individuals into a well-paying, professional career field benefiting their communities by providing highly qualified operators to deliver safe and reliable drinking water and protect regional water sources by maintaining wastewater systems. By partnering with area high schools and other education programs, the workforce program will introduce students to the water utility field. Partnering with local water associations will provide hands-on training and internships geared towards further training at San Juan College. Working through the College’s Center for Workforce Development, underemployed and unemployed adults are provided with a pathway to job retraining.

3)

Recipient: Health and Hospital Corporation of Marion County, IN

Applicant Type: County Government Agency

Project Title: Stay Home, Stay Safe (SH2)

Project Location: Marion County, IN

Project Partners: The Indiana Community Action Association, Inc. (IN-CAA); social service statewide coalition; Indiana Joint Asthma Coalition (InJAC); Indianapolis Oasis; and, MCPHD Rodent Control Program

Environmental Statute(s): Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act, Section 20(a), and Toxic Substances Control Act, Section 10(a).

Project Type: Public education and community outreach programs

The Health and Hospital Corporation of Marion County (HHECMSC) will implement the *Stay Home, Stay Safe* (SH2) program to address the needs of at-risk seniors, and other vulnerable individuals from minority, underserved populations within Marion County living in high risk conditions due to unhealthy indoor air quality while confined at home to avoid COVID-19. These individuals primarily live in disadvantaged areas with high rates of poverty and in housing that is older and/or poorly maintained. HHECMSC will perform home assessments, advise clients of risks found, and provide clients with toolkits that include the means to address the risks and prevent recurrence. The toolkit will include information on EPA-approved pesticides, disinfectants, and 'green cleaning' products, allowing participants to address their home's issues without exposure to dangerous toxins; recipes for making green cleaning products from readily available supplies, and samples of qualifying products. Partners will assist in identifying and referring program clients via their networks of contacts, allowing SH2 to present classes on indoor air quality (IAQ) and healthy homes to their senior clients, and MCPHD Rodent Control will collaborate with HHECMSC on production of a video to educate seniors and other vulnerable populations in eradication and prevention of rodent infestations that put seniors and families at risk for serious illnesses. Outputs include the rodent education video and toolkit containing informative fact sheets about EPA-approved pesticides, disinfectants, and green cleaning products. Outcomes include building relationships with new community groups, and empowerment of participants to take direct action to improve their indoor environment, protect and enhance the quality of their health and lives. The project is targeting 300 home assessments.

4)

Recipient: South Carolina Dept. of Health and Environment

Applicant Type: State Government

Project Title: Emergency Planning, and/or Investigations on Impacts of COVID-19 on Underserved Communities and Vulnerable Populations

Project Location: City of North Charleston; Charleston County, South Carolina; Eight neighborhoods are: Accabee, Chicora/Cherokee, Union Heights, Howard Heights, Windsor Place, Five Mile, Rosemont, and Liberty Hill

Project Partners: Arnold School of Public Health, University of South Carolina (USC); Lowcountry Alliance for Model Communities; Center for Coastal Environmental and Human Health, College of Charleston (COC); College of Behavioral, Social & Health Sciences, Clemson University (Clemson)

Environmental Statute(s): Clean Water Act, Section 104(b)(3)

Project Type: Public education, training

The South Carolina Department of Health and Environment (SC DHEC) and its partners will work together to develop a holistic Community-Managed Disaster Risk Reduction (CMDRR) training that will be piloted with participants from EJ communities around SC. Most of the participants (18) will be from 8 EJ neighborhoods that make up the Lowcountry Alliance for Model Communities (LAMC) in North Charleston, SC. The other 7 participants are part of SC DHEC's EJ Hub and represent 6 EJ communities from around the state. Participants will attend 4 face-to-face training workshops; they will receive CMDRR training on risk reduction, response and recovery during the three workshops; the 4th will be a train-the-trainer workshop. In between the three workshops, participants will complete assignments and attend virtual trainings. The overall goal is to empower EJ communities while building capacity to better prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters while strengthening community resiliency. Our training will focus on the following disasters: hurricanes, flooding, chemical releases, and pandemics. Participants will receive training on ways to better address: 1) unhealthy homes (mold); 2) food insecurities; and 3) disaster related energy/weatherization issues. Following the trainings, the curriculum will be converted into webinars and made available to others. Community Disaster drills and exercises will be part of the project.

5)

Recipient: Louisiana Dept-Office of Public Health

Applicant Type: State Government

Project Title: State Environmental Justice cooperative agreement program/COVID Project

Project Location: Orleans, Jefferson, East Baton Rouge and Caddo Parishes

Project Partners: New Orleans Health Department; Our Lady of the Lake, Children's Hospital; Louisiana Center for Health Equity; Green and Healthy Homes Initiative

Environmental Statute(s): Clean Air Act, Section 103(b)(3), Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act, Section 20(a), Toxic Substances Control Act, Section 10(a)

Project Type Assessment and data collection; Outreach

Along with being a risk factor for severe illness with COVID-19, asthma is of particular concern in EJ communities due to the unintended health impacts of stay-at-home orders for persons living in unhealthy homes. In order to mitigate the effect of prolonged adverse in-home exposures, this project aims to promote Healthy Homes in areas with a high burden of EJ concerns (especially related to indoor environments), asthma and COVID-19. While a largescale assessment to identify all qualifying census tracts will be undertaken as part of the project, smaller-scale analysis of the same has suggested four parishes (counties) for immediate outreach: Orleans, Jefferson, East Baton Rouge and Caddo. In Outreach Phase I, the organization will work with COVID-19 contact-tracers to collect data on asthma outcomes from all persons reached, and identify individuals interested in receiving Healthy Homes information. Trained Community Health Workers will then follow up with 'virtual home assessments' and provide education on asthma management and reducing in-home triggers. During Phase II, they will form partnerships with local community organizations, regional health department offices and Parish Health Units to implement Healthy Homes campaigns in the more remote, rural census tracts that have a high burden of COVID-19, asthma and EJ concerns, but lack sufficient internet access for virtual outreach. Through their core partners (listed) and other supporting partners, which include universities, medical schools, businesses and community grassroots organizations, this project not only supports long term initiatives for improving health and environmental outcomes in EJ communities but also policies that improve living conditions for vulnerable Louisianans. 50 virtual home assessments are targeted for the project.

6)

Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy

Applicant Type: State Government

Project Title: Pilot to development an Environmental Justice Community Resilience Plan designed to close communication lag times and promote community health and resiliency in Southwest Detroit/48217

Project Location: Southwest Detroit

Project Partners: University of Michigan, Great Lakes Environmental Law Center; Sierra Club; Original United Citizens of Southwest Detroit; and 48217 Air Monitoring Group.

Environmental Statue(s): Clean Air Act, Section 103(b)(3), Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act, Section 20(a): Toxic Substances Control Act, Section 10(a):

Project Type: Outreach, assessment and data collection

This project in Southwest Detroit will assist residents impacted by challenges faced in the area including air pollution linked to respiratory disease and high unemployment. Communities of color in Detroit, who have suffered alarming COVID-19 impacts, face EJ challenges that exacerbate virus vulnerability, including water shutoffs, air pollution linked to respiratory disease and other ailments, lack of access to healthy food, limited healthcare resources, and high unemployment. COVID-19 has challenged society as a whole to urgently determine how it is spread, who is at greatest risk, and what mitigation strategies work best. However, the extended lag time in translating knowledge into on-the-ground response in Detroit's EJ communities has led to disproportionate numbers of deaths there. This has reinforced the

need for those communities to be uniquely well prepared for emergencies. The project will pilot development of an EJ Community Resilience Plan designed to close communication lag times and promote community health and resiliency in Southwest Detroit/48217. As part of this pilot, the team will collaborate with residents and community leaders to: 1) Enhance Michigan's in-development EJ Screening Tool to equip officials and community partners with the tools to respond in an expedited fashion where pandemics and other emergencies are predicted to have the greatest impacts. 2) Establish protocols and action plans to immediately and rapidly notify vulnerable residents about public health risks and developing emergencies via the language, information media, and sources they trust most 3) Improve diagnostics/care by educating residents and their healthcare providers about the community's unique environmental health risks and 4) Set long-term resiliency strategies, addressing issues related to community transition, economic opportunities, and gaps in health care access. The project seeks to conduct 3 leadership listening sessions and 6-8 community conversations for approximately 40 community participants.

7)

Coyote Valley Band of Pomo Indians (CA)

Applicant Type: Indian/Native American Tribal Government

Project Title: Coyote Valley Emergency Preparedness and Disaster Resiliency Project.

Project Location: The entire Coyote Valley Band of Pomo Indians Reservation

Project Partners: Mendocino County Sheriff Office; Consolidated Tribal Health Project; Coyote Valley Retail Enterprises; Coyote Valley Economic Development Corporation; Coyote Valley Hospitality Corporation

Environmental Statute(s): Clean Air Act, Section 103(b)(3); Clean Water Act, Section 104(b)(3):

Project Type: Training and education

This project will serve the entire Coyote Valley community and its patrons, which includes tribal government offices, community buildings, sixty-three homes, two hundred fifty community members, several tribally owned businesses, and approximately two thousand five hundred patrons and staff that enter the reservation daily. The Coyote Valley Reservation is located in Redwood Valley in California. Grant funding will be used in order to develop the Coyote Valley Disaster Resiliency Plan, including planning and development for the Coyote Valley Emergency Operations Center. This program will focus on educating staff, leadership, and the community on resiliency in order to control and mitigate the amount of air and water pollution in times of disasters. Examples of possible disasters include pandemics such as COVID-19, wildfires, flooding, earthquakes, eco-system disasters, droughts, and riverbank collapse. The project will focus on creating sound collaborative partnerships with local agencies such as the sheriff, fire department, and local health care provider. Community outreach, input, and involvement will be essential to this project, and will result in the creation of a Community Emergency Response Team, which will provide direct community support when disaster strikes. Training of staff and the community will be ongoing with regular drills to prepare all involved for potential disasters and subsequent mitigation of air and water pollution. Outputs include 250 residents reached thru door-to-door outreach.

8)

City of Minneapolis Health Department

Applicant Type: City Government

Project Title: Safe Healthy Home Environments – SHHE

Project Location: North (55411 and 55412) and Southcentral (55404 and 55407) Minneapolis

Project Partners: The Neighborhood HUB; Children's Minnesota; and the University of Minnesota School of Nursing.

Environmental Statute(s): Clean Air Act, Section 103(b)(3), Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act, Section 20(a) and the Toxic Substances Control Act, Section 10(a).

Project Type: Education and training

The main objective of this project is to provide education on lead paint hazards, home-based asthma triggers and proper use of disinfectants in a home environment especially related to COVID-19. From November 2020 through October 2021, 100 youth will participate in workshops where they will receive training, mentorship, research coaching, and take part in hands-on-projects with partner organizations. Underserved communities and vulnerable populations are concentrated within certain geographic areas of the City of Minneapolis. Aspects of this program will be available to all residents of Minneapolis, but marketing of services will be targeted to two of the city's largest and most concentrated areas of underserved and vulnerable residents. Education will be provided in culturally appropriate formats ranging from in-person (physically distanced) conversations, print materials, video conferencing and web-based trainings. Materials will be reviewed by project partners (community non-profit, academic and medical) for evidence-based advice and community input. Activities and outputs include development of education content; delivery of workshops, community events, door-to-door education and small group events; and records of how many people viewed web content and participated in training. Target audiences are residents, property managers, tenant advocates and code enforcement officials in north and south-central Minneapolis, in neighborhoods of historically high disparities and exposure to pollutants in home environments. Short-term outcomes will be increased knowledge demonstrated by before and after testing. Intermediate outcomes will be warm handoffs to resources and survey of behavior changes. Long term outcomes will be embedding these educational messages into practices in city-provided training via homeownership classes, rental owner training, code enforcement, and community partner organizations.

9)

Shelby County Office of Sustainability and Resilience

Applicant Type: County Government

Project Title: Supporting Safer Homes for Memphians: Addressing Equity and At-home Health Risks During a Global Pandemic

Project Location: North Memphis (38103, 38104, 38105, 38107, 38108, 38111, 38112 and 38122) South Memphis (38106, 38114 and 38126)

Project Partners: Black Millennials for Flint; Memphis Shelby County Lead-Safe Collaborative; Center for Transforming Communities; Green & Healthy Homes Initiative; City of Memphis Division of Housing & Community Development Lead Program; Methodist Le Bonheur Community Outreach; and Tennessee Department and Conservation Office of Policy and Sustainable Practices

Environmental Statute(s): *Solid Waste Disposal Act, Section 8001(a)* and the *Safe Drinking Water Act, Section 1442(c)(3)*

Project Type: Outreach, education, assessment, tool development

To support safer homes for Memphians while addressing equity and at-home health risks during a global pandemic, this project is advancing the shared aims of a multisector network that has worked together since 2014 on healthy homes, environmental justice, and racial equity initiatives in Memphis communities with high rates of childhood lead poisoning. The project will purposefully bring into leadership roles community organizations and residents of affected communities. Activities include: 1) Adaptation of the Black Millennials for Flint app for the Memphis market to identify potential lead-based paint, lead in water, and other home hazards. The app allows users to access community resources to address hazards, make self-referrals and track agency responses. 2) Assessment of environmental, structural, behavioral and COVID-19 related hazards in high-risk homes referred by partner organizations to the Master Home Environmentalist (MHE) program. Community residents, trained as MHEs to identify potential hazards and provide education, recommendations and supplies to reduce these hazards, will make referrals to Green & Healthy Homes Initiative for triage to agencies to reduce lead and other health/safety hazards in the home. 3) Outreach, education, and advocacy will be led by a multi-sector Advocacy Council composed of residents representing ZIP codes of focus and other partners. This group will convene to advocate, develop, and advance policies and legislation to reduce and remove lead hazards, while honoring and drawing upon both the experiences of minority communities and information gathered through the project.

10)

City of Toledo

Applicant Type: City Government

Project Title: Using Artificial Intelligence to Reduce Lead Exposure and Promote Environmental Justice

Project Location: Southside 43609, Junction Neighborhood 43607, North River 43604/43611, Old West End 43620, East Toledo 43605, Monroe–Auburn Neighborhood 43606/43620

Project Partners: City of Toledo; BlueConduit; Freshwater Future; University of Toledo; Toledo-Lucas County Health Department; Junction Coalition

Environmental Statute(s): Safe Drinking Water Act, Section 1442(c)(3) and Clean Water Act, Section 104(b)(3)

Project Type: Research, investigations, training, education and monitoring

This project, led by the City, combines the technical task of identifying lead lines with a community education effort. This project seeks to generate actionable data that will allow the City to accelerate the removal of lead service lines from its drinking water system, and develop and implement a public education campaign aimed at the most vulnerable communities so they can minimize their lead exposure as the city replaces its service lines. The City is engaged in a long-term project to replace all of these lines, but their continued presence poses a serious health risk to the community, especially for low-income and minority populations. The City, BlueConduit, Freshwater Future, The University of Toledo, Toledo-Lucas County Health Department and local partners designed this project with the goal of reducing lead exposure through well-tested, data-driven prioritization techniques. Using a machine learning predictive model, this project will assess home-by-home water service line material probabilities based on existing parcel and neighborhood-level data and a representative sample of water service lines in the city taken by the project team. These probabilities will guide which homes should receive targeted education, water filters and ultimately the prioritization of the lead service line (LSL) replacement program. Throughout the entirety of this project, stakeholder meetings will be held and educational materials will be created with a focus on these high-risk communities.