

**NEW ENGLAND GRASSROOTS
ENVIRONMENT FUND**
Small Grants Program Application

Please email the application to your program officer or mail a hard copy to:
P.O. Box 1057 / Montpelier, VT 05601

We copy all applications for our grantmaking committee members. Please print the application single-sided, please don't staple materials together, and please don't use any folders or binders.

DATE: September 15, 2009

CONTACT PERSON: Amelia Rose

(please list one person who will be available to answer questions)

NAME OF APPLICANT ORGANIZATION: Environmental Justice League of Rhode Island

ADDRESS: 1192 Westminster St.
Providence, RI 02909

PRIMARY PHONE #: (401) 383-7441

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AMOUNT OF THIS REQUEST: \$2500

TOTAL PROJECT BUDGET: \$2500

TOTAL CURRENT ORGANIZATIONAL BUDGET: \$89,000

TOTAL AMOUNT YOUR ORGANIZATION SPENT LAST YEAR: \$0 (first year of organization)

NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES, FULL AND/OR PART-TIME: 1 full time, 1 part-time

PROJECT PROPOSAL SUMMARY *(No more than 3 sentences – please start with, "To..."):*

To engage largely Spanish-speaking residents of the Olneyville and Silver Lake neighborhoods of Providence to increase awareness of recycling and sustainable consumption using culturally-appropriate outreach and education methods. The City of Providence will be launching its "Green Up" campaign in November 2009, establishing a "No Bin, No Barrel" policy for the first time in Providence in order to increase the city's current, abysmal, 9% recycling rate. The Environmental Justice League of Rhode Island (EJ League) will partner with the Action Committee of English for Action (EFA) to engage community residents on the issue of recycling in order to head off foreseeable resistance and misunderstanding about the need for this new city-wide policy and encourage participation, leading to increased community participation in other city-wide environmental initiatives as well.

HOW DID YOU HEAR ABOUT NEGEF?

Through my previous employer, Toxics Action Center.

CHECK ONE OF THE FOLLOWING THAT BEST APPLIES TO YOUR ORGANIZATION:

Ad Hoc group

Ad Hoc group with fiscal agent *(name of agent):* _____

X Incorporated as a nonprofit in your state (with fiscal agent, Childhood Lead Action Project)

501(c)(3) status with the IRS

If you are an ad hoc group and do not have a checking account or fiscal agent, you will need to set up an account or agent upon receipt of a grant. You do NOT need to have an account or agent when you apply.

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PROJECT NARRATIVE & BUDGET *(no more than 2 pages please)*

1. Give a brief description of your proposed project. Be sure to include background of the issue.

Currently the recycling rate in Providence stands at 9%--the second lowest rate in the state of Rhode Island, after Woonsocket. Participation in recycling rates often correlates with income level, and in Providence, with each individual neighborhood. Olneyville and Silver Lake are two areas of the city with high concentrations of residents whose primary language is Spanish, and many residents are first-generation immigrants to the United States. There is also a high rate of rental units versus owner-occupied units, encouraging the perception, accurate or not, that renters do not have much of a stake in keeping up their homes or participating in community efforts like recycling, and therefore choose not to participate.

At the same time, the current rate of consumption and disposal in Rhode Island, no different from the rest of the country, is creating serious concerns over where we will be able to put our trash over time. The Central Landfill in Johnston, the state's only functioning landfill, is rapidly reaching capacity with a projected lifespan of only another 20 years. Legislative proposals to lift Rhode Island's current ban on waste incinerators, and redefine waste-to-energy incinerators as "renewable energy" is putting the future of the ban in jeopardy. Other alternatives, such as paying to send our trash out of state, are equally untenable. Reducing consumption and creating a robust recycling system, with widespread participation especially from our most populous city, is the only true solution.

Our project would head off foreseeable resistance and misunderstandings to the new "no bin, no barrel" policy in two neighborhoods where increased outreach, education, and sensitivity to the community's language and cultural norms would be invaluable to increase resident participation. Legitimate concerns over the prospect of trash accumulating curbside, creating unpleasant odors and attracting pests and rodents, in low-income areas of the city are important to address. Also, we recognize that in order to increase recycling participation, residents need to both feel part of a larger community effort, and need to see how the issue directly affects their lives. These will be the overriding themes in our project, as we attempt to make our efforts fun and relevant, while building community in the process.

The EJ League will partner with the Action Committee (the Committee), an ad-hoc group affiliated with English for Action (EFA), an adult literacy, English as a Second Language, and education organization located in the Olneyville neighborhood of Providence. EFA is located in one of the most impoverished parts of the city. Fifty-seven percent of Olneyville residents are Latino and 41% live below the federal poverty line. Many EFA students and members also live in the nearby Silver Lake neighborhood, where 42% of the population is Latino and 28% live below the poverty line. EFA is the only adult education organization in the community, where 52% of adults age 25 and over lack a high school diploma. The Committee is an extracurricular group of students and community members that meets regularly to discuss and take action on pressing issues affecting immigrants in Rhode Island. The Committee is interested in engaging its members and the wider community on issues of environmental health and sustainability. Members of the Committee recognize the disparate impact of environmental burdens that fall on their community, while knowledge about the environment and its relationship to health and quality of life remains low. A partnership between the Action Committee and the EJ League combines the best of both organizations, offering a chance to engage residents on an environmental issue that directly impacts their daily lives through an established and trusted network in the community.

2. If your project is successful, what changes will occur in your community and its environment? Please include a timeline/steps for its completion.

In this project, over the course of several months from December 2009 to July 2010, we will:

- Develop short, paid training sessions to build capacity among 15 neighborhood leaders and members of EFA's Action Committee to become recycling trainers themselves, to lead at least 2 sessions each for friends and neighbors in their homes, on their block, and for other community organizations
- Create Spanish-language materials to encourage recycling participation
- Conduct a door-to-door outreach campaign to talk to residents about recycling and other waste disposal issues, including improvements they would suggest for the collection of electronic waste and household hazardous waste
- Work with the City of Providence Department of Public Works to develop additional materials that would encourage and increase recycling participation, such as refrigerator magnets that list appropriate contact information for recycling, household hazardous waste, electronic waste, and large item disposal
- Work with other community partners to plan community events in the neighborhoods, as appropriate

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- Evaluate our outreach efforts through surveys or other measures to identify effective methods that have encouraged actual participation in recycling

We recognize that much of the responsibility for the new “No Bin, No Barrel” policy is on the City of Providence’s shoulders, in terms of publicity, distributing materials, and finding forums to promote the benefits of this policy change. While that is true, we see this project as part of a longer-term strategy to identify and develop environmental leaders in parts of the city that are the least represented in the state’s environmental community. The development of training sessions for EFA and other community members, especially, to become recycling experts and therefore a resource for their neighbors, will encourage an ownership over the process and make a significant impact on people’s personal sense that they are and can be environmental leaders.

By connecting with residents on an issue like recycling that impacts them on a daily basis, we can also engage them in other conversations on a variety of environmental issues affecting their communities, and encourage their involvement with other advocacy and grassroots organizing efforts of the EJ League. For instance, the EJ League is currently being funded by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) through their Community Action for a Renewed Environment (CARE) program to identify sources of toxics in Providence and work with stakeholders to develop a city-wide action plan to reduce toxic exposure to residents. Recycling, household hazardous waste disposal, and electronic waste disposal is one area the CARE Alliance is exploring as a possible priority issue for the city. Long-term solutions and system changes on these issues are complex. In the short-term it is important to begin by building a dialogue in our neighborhoods about potential solutions and an awareness of these issues as problems, which this project will do.

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3. Project Budget

- Itemize anticipated expenses and income for this Project Proposal. Also note in-kind services (donated materials and/or labor) you may receive for this proposal.
- Please specify what expenses will be covered with NEGEF's funds (underline, **bold**, *italicize*, or * those items).

EXPENSES	INCOME	IN-KIND SERVICES
*EJ League Staff salary— 35 hours @ \$33/hr = \$1155		Office and classroom space provided by EFA
*Stipends for Train-the-Trainer Workshop Participants— 15 participants @ \$50 for training plus commitment to conduct 2 outside sessions in community = \$750		Interpretation services provided by EFA
*Action Committee Coordinator stipend— 25 hours @ \$18/hr = \$450		
*Spanish-language materials development, printing, and copies by EFA Action Committee = \$145		
<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
<i>(total expenses)</i> = \$2500	<i>(total income)</i> +	<i>(total in-kind services)</i>

- **Principal sources of support (E.g. Membership dues, individual donations, grants, special events, etc.) Please list any grants that your group has received.**

Environmental Protection Agency, Community Action for a Renewed Environment (CARE)-- \$100,000 grant over two years (\$50,000 per year)

Brown University, Superfund Research Program--\$39,000 grant for one year

Brown University, Swearer Center for Public Service--\$1,000 grant for one year for collaboration with Community Environmental College

Please include the following attachments with your application form:

- A list of key volunteers, board of directors and current staff with affiliations, brief biosketches, and email addresses
- Financial statement for most recent completed year and budget for current year, if available
- List of local media with contact names and emails to whom we can send a press release
- Selected copies of group's newsletter, brochure, and/or press clippings, if appropriate

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APPLICANT PROFILE

1. What is the mission or the goals of your group?

The mission of the Environmental Justice League of Rhode Island is to develop environmental leaders in low-income communities and communities of color in order to create healthy and safe communities for all.

2. How long has your group been in existence? We officially incorporated in November 2007 and received our first grant to hire staff in November 2008. Before 2007, the EJ League was called the Environmental Justice Education Forum and was an ad hoc, all-volunteer group made up of residents as well as staff from local non-profit organizations.

3. What issue/issues got your group going? Two cases of public schools being sited on contaminated land was the galvanizing issue. Many of the current board members of the EJ League have backgrounds in lead poisoning prevention, asthma education and advocacy, and other community health issues.

4. How many people started the group? It was a group effort with about 15 core people starting the organization.

5. Is this the first time that the group's "founders" had been "activated"? No.

If not the first time, with what other issues had they been involved?

Many of the founders had been active on affordable housing issues, healthy housing, lead poisoning prevention, asthma, and other environmental health issues. However, more recently with the development of the actual EJ League with staff, most of the community members now being engaged have never been involved in activism or environmental activism before.

6. How many people are currently involved as the core group of leaders/workers?

Our current projects, the CARE Alliance and the Community Environmental College, actively engage approximately 50 people, both youth and adults.

7. Is this a membership organization? If so, how many members do you have?

We are actively developing our membership base, and will be spearheading a membership process in the coming year.

8. Do you have any paid staff?

Yes, we currently have 2 staff, though for the coming fiscal year (2009-2010) we are now in the process of securing additional funding to keep the second (part-time) staff person.

If yes, how many full-time equivalents?

One staff is full-time (35 hrs/week).

9. Approximately how many people in your community can be "activated" to support your issue – i.e., go to a meeting, sign a petition, call a selectperson, etc.? At this time, approximately 200 people could be activated.

10. Has the focus of your group broadened or changed at all since it first started?

If so, in what ways?

No, we cast the net wide in the beginning and are now narrowing our focus through community outreach and conversation.

11. Have any members of your group run for or been appointed to public office since they started working on your issue/issues? No. However 2 new EJ League participants chose to apply and were accepted to the New Voices training led by Ocean State Action, a short-term training program that teaches electoral campaign skills for individuals interested in one day running for office or managing campaigns for progressive candidates.

If so, for what office?

Elected or appointed?

12. Describe the size and make-up of your community.

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The vast majority of Rhode Island's non-white population lives in the state's urban centers, including Providence. Providence has a population of about 170,000 and is a "majority minority" city meaning over half the population is non-white. Olneyville and Silver Lake are two neighborhoods with poverty rates higher than or equal to the city's average of 29%. Both neighborhoods also have a high minority population, mostly comprised of Latino residents.

13. Have you networked or shared information/resources with other groups? Yes.

If so, with whom and how did you find out about them? We connect with other community groups as much as possible, including English for Action as well as other community partners with connections in both Olneyville and Silver Lake. We also network with environmental health groups like Clean Water Action and Childhood Lead Action Project.

14. How have you gained knowledge about your issue?

Through conversations with city and state officials and staff, Clean Water Action; through our leadership of the CARE Alliance bringing various stakeholders together to discuss the issue; by visiting the Central Landfill and inviting speakers from RI Resource Recovery (the quasi-government agency that runs the landfill) to speak with our group.

15. If your organization is more than a year old, can you quantify any of your "successes"? Examples might be number of acres preserved, miles of trails, increase in recycling rates in town, toxic sites cleaned up, greenspaces/community gardens created, amount of money raised, legislation passed, etc.

In the Spring of this year we co-lead a campaign with Childhood Lead Action Project to successfully pass an amendment to the Industrial Properties Remediation and Reuse Act to raise the daily fines the RI Department of Environmental Management can impose on non-compliant polluters from \$1,000/day to \$25,000/day for every day the contamination is not cleaned up. This was in response to the Tiverton contamination case where 100 homes were built on top of coal gasification waste. The bill had been languishing for two years, held up by one powerful lobbyist on behalf of the responsible party, Southern Union Gas Company. This third year we targeted the lobbyist, and the strategy worked. The bill was the only environmental legislation passed this year by the RI General Assembly and sent to the Governor's office.

We also created the curriculum for a youth environmental justice program and led a pilot course this summer for 10 high school aged youth. They learned about various environmental issues and chose one to take action on, resulting in a 6-minute video on sustainable food systems and how to get healthier food in Providence neighborhoods. The youth will screen the video in their respective schools this Fall, reaching an estimated audience of 300 of their peers. We are planning to continue the course in the future, and we are developing a youth organizing internship program this year to hire two youth interns to conduct peer outreach and advocacy on healthy food and getting healthier options sold at corner stores.

16. What are the biggest challenges your community faces?

The biggest challenge our community faces is how to ensure economic well-being while not sacrificing our health and our environment. Rhode Island has the second highest unemployment rate in the nation, second only to Michigan. At the same time, we face a legacy of contamination left by the industries that made the state so economically-successful and prominent during the 19th and early 20th centuries. Rhode Island, and its capital city, Providence, is left with the question of how to revive our economy based on sustainable models and principles. The only way to do this is to build the environmental leadership of every community, especially those that are most vulnerable to environmental burdens and at the same time face the most economic hardship. It is more important than ever that community health not be relegated to the sidelines rather than fully integrated into our economic decisions. Doing otherwise allows fundamental disparities in health outcomes and environmental quality to persist creating higher hidden costs for our most marginalized communities to deal with. These include higher rates of diabetes due to lack of opportunities for physical activity or access to healthy food choices, higher rates of asthma hospitalizations and cases of lead poisoning, and missing out on future entrepreneurial and job opportunities in environmentally-sustainable sectors like residential weatherization, buildings materials reuse, and renewable energy.

17. What skills do you feel you and/or members of your group could use to help move your issue forward?

It would be helpful to see other leadership development models as we develop our train-the-trainer curriculums on recycling and sustainability, incorporating lessons on group facilitation methods, public speaking, and other similar skills.

Annual Budget: Environmental Justice League of Rhode Island
FY 2008-2009 (Oct. 1, 2008-Sept. 30, 2009)

EPA/CARE

Salary--full-time staff	30,000
Payroll Taxes	3,600
Health Benefits	3,600
Rent/Utilities	4,800
Program supplies/Computer	1,300
Travel	2,000
Printing/Postage	1,200
Telephone/Website/Internet	1,000
Fiscal Services/Interpreting Services	1,500
Unallocated	1,000
TOTAL:	50,000

Brown University Superfund Research Program

Salary--full-time staff	9,000
Fringe--full time staff	2,160
Salary--part-time staff	17,000
Fringe--part-time staff	4,080
Insurance	2,400
Phone and Internet	800
Ad Book	275
Software and Computer	1,500
EPA conference	1,200
Unallocated	585
TOTAL:	39,000