



OPPORTUNITY TIMELINE

January 30.....Request for Applications released
February 13.....Webinar on the application process and evaluation criteria
February 21.....Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) released
March 30 by 11:59pm EST.....Applications due
June 20.....Notification of Application Determination

SUMMARY

WE ACT for Environmental Justice (also known as West Harlem Environmental Action) is now accepting applications from NYS organizations working to achieve environmental justice in their communities. A total of \$900,000 will be awarded to 18 grantees, each receiving \$50,000, which are intended to bolster the capacity of environmental justice (EJ) groups to broaden the impact and ensure the sustainability of their work in New York State. Applicants are expected to demonstrate that (1) their community-based organization is located in an environmental justice community in New York State and (2) their work focuses on supporting community engagement to achieve environmental justice and environmental improvement. Successful applicants will articulate a clear vision of how grant funds will further their work, including a description of expected results. **Completed applications must be submitted online by 11:59pm EST on March 30, 2020.** We anticipate that successful applications will be notified by June 20, 2020, with grant awards being disbursed by July 1-15, 2020.

OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

The New York State Department of Conservation (DEC) Office of Environmental Justice (OEJ), under the leadership of Governor Andrew Cuomo did create and release a request for applications seeking to advance environmental justice in NYS by making available \$1,000,000 to an established nonprofit administrator to provide streamlined capacity building grants directed at environmental justice community-based organizations. In October 2019, WE ACT for Environmental Justice was awarded this

grant and now seeks to help develop the administrative, technical, and programmatic capacity of grassroots and community-based organizations working to achieve environmental justice and sustainability in low-income communities, communities of color, or underserved communities across the state.

WE ACT for Environmental Justice is a 31-year old Northern Manhattan membership-based organization whose mission is to build healthy communities by ensuring that people of color and/or low income participate meaningfully in the creation of sound and fair environmental health and protection policies and practices. WE ACT is the lead organizer of the national Environmental Justice Leadership Forum on Climate Change, and has provided effective leadership in the development of New York City and northeast region environmental justice alliances to network, collaborate, and build capacity to impact environmental policy-making.

Environmental Justice Defined

For the purposes of this opportunity, environmental justice means the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people—regardless of race, color, or income—with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies. Fair treatment means (1) that no group of people, including a racial, ethnic, or socioeconomic group, should bear a disproportionate share of the negative environmental consequences resulting from industrial, municipal, and commercial operations or the execution of federal, state, local, and tribal programs and policies. (2) Those communities should share the benefits of green infrastructure, climate resilience, and jobs in the new green economy.

Environmental Justice Organizations

EJ organizations are those whose mission and/ or projects seek to effect environmental improvement in communities facing one or more environmental justice concerns, such as (but not limited to) toxic exposure, solid waste issues, hazardous waste exposure, insufficient green and open space, poor ambient and indoor air quality, energy insecurity, transit access, poor water quality, access to healthy foods, climate justice, community-based planning for land use, and/ or general environmental quality of life.

Purpose

The purpose of this EJ Capacity Building Grant Fund is to improve competencies and skills that can make EJ-focused community-based organizations more effective and sustainable in protecting environmental quality and public health in their communities. To this end, grants of \$50,000 will be awarded to 18 community-based organizations across NYS in the following areas:

- Advocacy, such as strengthening the ability of organizations to participate in public debates and government decision-making processes; issue-based campaigning; and methods of communications.
- Professional development, such as staff training and education; leadership development; and mentorship.
- Technical development, such as developing citizen science and crowd-sourced community problem-solving; performing environmental or health assessments; reviewing environmental impact statements and other technical documents; navigating environmental review and permitting procedures; and developing communication techniques for complex science and complex environments.
- Operational and administrative development, such as financial management; fundraising strategies and skill-building; creating and managing effective partnerships; membership development, and volunteer recruitment and management.
- Organizational development, such as institutional assessments and evaluation of effectiveness; strategic planning; board development; strengthening management systems; and succession planning.

Other areas of capacity-building may be considered, as well. Requests will be reviewed and evaluated by a Review Panel, whose expertise spans a range of disciplines and experiences (see “Review Panel Members” for more information on each of the panelists). A total of \$900,000 will be awarded to 18 successful applicants at \$50,000 each. Grants in other amounts will not be considered at this time. The project period for each grant will run for one year beginning on July 1, 2020 and conclude on June 30, 2021, with midterm reports due by 11:59pm EST on December 20, 2020 and final reports due by 11:59pm EST on August 31, 2021.

At no point should interested applicants contact any member of the Review Panel in connection with this opportunity. Appropriate contact information for all inquiries related to this capacity-building opportunity can be found at the conclusion of this RFA.

ELIGIBILITY: WHO AND WHAT WE FUND

In keeping with our commitment to ensure a growing and thriving EJ movement in New York State, applications will be evaluated according to these criteria:

Eligible applicants are required to:

- Demonstrate that they are located in NYS, in environmental justice or underserved communities that experience disproportionate adverse environmental impacts); and their staff and boards are representative of the

communities in which they support community engagement. Applicants can identify EJ communities in the following ways:

- Refer to maps on DEC's website showing these areas:
<http://www.dec.ny.gov/public/911.html>.
- Refer to census tracts and block numbering areas which, as of the 2000 U.S. Census, had a poverty rate of at least 20 percent and an unemployment rate of at least 125 percent of the New York State unemployment rate.
- Refer to census tracts and block numbering areas which, as of the 2000 U.S. Census, had a poverty rate of at least two times the poverty rate for the county in which the tract is located.
- Refer to the Empire State Development Corporation's (ESDC) designated environmental zones. Maps of environmental zones in each county can be found on the ESDC Brownfield Redevelopment website at <http://www.esd.ny.gov/BusinessPrograms/BrownfieldCleanupTracts.html>.
Note: The ESDC has designated the Environmental Zones for the purpose of providing tax incentives for brownfield redevelopment. The Environmental Justice Capacity Building Grants ARE NOT related in any way to the Brownfield Redevelopment tax incentives. The link to the ESDC Brownfield Redevelopment website is provided here only as a reference to the Environmental Zone maps.
- Refer to other authoritative documentation demonstrating the community's low income population or minority population. Demonstrate low income or minority populations. The applicant must provide authoritative documentation to support their community demographics in a single pdf upload in the Grants Gateway. In this context, "authoritative documentation" means any map, report or document issued by a local, state or federal government agency.
- Have a demonstrated commitment to addressing exposure to environmental and/or public health problems of the residents of the community impacted by the multiple environmental harms and risks that are the focus of the affected community
- Have a demonstrated commitment to justice and equity in their organizational composition and demonstrate the policies in place that attend to this commitment;
 - Applicants are required to complete a diversity table and narrative form that makes this commitment clear;

- Hold legal status as an IRS-designated 501c3 charity registered with the Charities Bureau of the New York State Office of the Attorney General OR demonstrate fiscal sponsorship by such an organization and operating in full compliance with all applicable state and federal laws;
 - Applicants requiring a fiscal sponsor must upload a signed agreement between the sponsor and the applicant OR a letter signed by an officer or authorized representative of the fiscal sponsor attesting to an active sponsorship agreement between the sponsor and the applicant;
- Have a total annual revenue of no more than \$4 million based on the applicant's IRS Form 990 (line 12) filing from the previous year;
- Answer all application questions and upload all required and applicable supporting documents, which must be complete and viewable; and
- Have a written policy addressing sexual harassment prevention in the workplace and provide an annual sexual harassment training (that meets the [Department of Labor's model policy and training standards](#)) to all its employees.
- Comply with New York State's Minority/women Business Enterprises (M/WBE) and Equal Employment Opportunities (EEO) Requirements (if applicable). The Department is required to implement the provisions of New York State Executive Law Article 15-A and 5 NYCRR Parts 142-144 ("MWBE Regulations") for all State contracts with a value (1) in excess of \$25,000 for labor, services, equipment, materials, or any combination of the foregoing or (2) in excess of \$100,000 for real property renovations and construction. Applicants agree, in addition to any other nondiscrimination provision of the MCG and at no additional cost to the Department, to fully comply and cooperate with the Department in the implementation of New York State Executive Law Article 15-A. These requirements include equal employment opportunities for minority group members and women ("EEO") and contracting opportunities for certified minority and women owned business enterprises ("MWBEs"). Contractor's demonstration of "good faith efforts" pursuant to 5 NYCRR §142.8 shall be a part of these requirements. These provisions shall be deemed supplementary to, and not in lieu of, the nondiscrimination provisions required by New York State Executive Law Article 15 (the "Human Rights Law") or other applicable federal, state or local laws. Required M/WBE and EEO related forms can be found at <http://www.dec.ny.gov/about/48854.html>.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

Applications will be available online immediately following the informational webinar on February 13 at 2:00pm EST. Below you will find the application questions as they will

appear in the online application form, as well as the maximum number of points possible to achieve for each question (**bolded**). The **Review Panel** (see below) will evaluate each answer and provide a score that will inform the overall score for the application, the highest possible overall score being “100.”

Please note that, unless otherwise indicated, all questions require an answer and that incomplete applications will be automatically eliminated from consideration, even if the applicant receives email confirmation that the application was “successfully received.”

Organizational Information

1. Name of Organization or Fiscal Sponsor Requesting Funds
2. Employment Identification Number (EIN) of Requesting Organization
3. Organization’s Mission Statement (*500 characters*)
4. Organization’s Current Operating Budget? (Please enter in U.S. whole dollar amounts—e.g., \$1,500,000)
5. Name and Contact Information for this Application (*250 characters*)
6. Name of Individual(s) Authorized to Sign Organizational Agreements/ Contracts (*250 characters*)
7. How did you hear about this opportunity?

Application Information

8. What makes your organization an environmental justice organization? (Please be sure to include information about the geographical context of your work and the populations served or benefiting from your work.) (*4,000 characters*) (**15 Points**)
9. Please describe how your organization’s efforts to ensure the constituencies described in the last question are empowered in leadership and decision-making within your organization. (*2,000 characters*) (**5 Points**)
10. Please tell us how long your organization has been doing this type of work and describe key accomplishments of which you are proud. (*2,000 characters*) (**5 Points**)
11. What was your annual operating budget in 2019? (*20 characters*) (**0 Points**)
12. Do you have other sources of revenue that will be used to implement your capacity-building plans? (*2,000 characters*) (**0 Points**)

13. Which of the following best captures the area of capacity you are seeking to build? Advocacy, professional development, technical development, operational and administrative development, or organizational development. (If more than one of these areas applies to your request, please select “Other” from the drop-down menu and manually write in which areas pertain to your application.) (100 characters if “Other”) (0 Points)
14. Tell us how your organization is interested in building its capacity. Explain how you would use an EJ Capacity Building grant to build your capacity: Will you use funds to increase your program quality, your organization’s financial stability, or expand your organization? Be as specific as possible. Why is building this particular capacity your priority right now? (4,000 characters) (25 Points)
15. Your funding request should justify the \$50,000 grant award. To help us understand your work in local context, what are the most significant challenges you face in achieving environmental justice in your local community? (Please be as specific as possible) (4,000 characters) (15 Points)
16. What will you be able to accomplish as a result of increasing this capacity—i.e. how will you define “success” with this grant funding? (4,000 characters) (15 Points)
17. Please provide a basic description of your organization’s activities (the things you do to bring about change), your **short-term outcomes** (the things you hope to accomplish in the next 6 months to 2 years), and your **long-term results** (the systemic problems you want to help solve). (4,000 characters) (20 Points)

Required Attachments

- The most recent IRS letter documenting the requesting organization’s 501(c)(3) status; AND
 - Signed letter of agreement between fiscal sponsor and supported entity, if applicable
- Most recently audited financial statement (no older than 2017)
- Most up-to-date Form 990
- List of Key Staff with Brief Biographical Sketches
- Up-to-date Board of Directors List, including titles and affiliations
- Current EJ Capacity Building Budget (you are welcome to use your own format or download and complete our template)
- 2020 Organizational Budget that includes the purpose and amount of funding and whether or not funding is pending or committed)
- Diversity Table and Narrative (see downloadable form)

Please note that there will be an informational webinar on this opportunity on February 13 at 2:00pm EST. Interested applicants will have an opportunity to pose questions related to this opportunity during that session. Otherwise, all questions and concerns related to this Request for Applications should be sent to Matt Deen, EJ Capacity Building Grant Program Coordinator, at matt@weact.org. As noted above, at no point should interested applicants contact any members of the Review Panel in connection with this opportunity.

Review Panel Members

WE ACT is led by co-founder *Peggy Shepard*, Executive Director, a West Harlem resident, known for organizing and engaging residents in community-based planning and campaigns to address environmental protection and environmental health policy locally and nationally. She serves on the NYC Waterfront Management Advisory Board, the NYC Sustainability Advisory Board, the NYC Climate Advisory Board for Local Law 97, the NYS EJ and Just Transition Working Group. She is a former chair of the National EJ Advisory Council to the US EPA. Awards include Jane Jacobs Medal from the Rockefeller Foundation, the 10th Annual Heinz Award For the Environment, and Dean's Distinguished Service Award from Columbia Mailman School of Public Health, and Honorary Doctorates from Smith College and Lawrence University.

Cecil D. Corbin-Mark is the Deputy Director and Director of Policy Initiatives at WE ACT. Born and raised in Harlem's Hamilton Heights, he is the former Vice President of his neighborhood association, and the former Chair of the Landmarks Preservation Committee of Community Planning Board #9. Cecil co-chairs the statewide Just Green Coalition, which has been successful in advocating for NYS legislation on pesticides and toxic substances. He is chair of the new NYC EJ Advisory Board and a former and current member of numerous advisory boards and coalitions. Mr. Corbin-Mark holds a BA in political science from Hunter College, and an MS in political science at Oxford University in the U.K.

In addition to Ms. Shepard and Mr. Corbin-Mark, **the Review Panel** is composed of leaders and experts in the fields of environment, health, social justice, and philanthropy:

Sol Marie Alfonso-Jones is a Senior Program Officer for the Long Island Community Foundation, managing the Foundation's competitive grantmaking programs in the areas of Education, Environment, Youth Development, and other special community response projects. She has more than 25 years' experience in nonprofit management, community building, program development, and evaluation. Prior to LICF she worked at Sustainable Long Island where she directed the organization's community revitalization and brownfield redevelopment programs.

Ogonnaya Dotson-Newman is a program officer in the Environment program at The JPB Foundation. Ms. Dotson-Newman manages the environmental health portfolio focused on detoxifying natural systems and the build environment by eliminating indoor and outdoor pollutants. Most recently, she was the Assistant Director of Public Housing and Health based at the NYC Housing Authority and the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. She holds a Master's in Public Health with a focus on Environmental Health and a certificate in Health Geoinformatics. Ms. Dotson-Newman brings to the Review Panel years of experience in community-based participatory research, partnership and collaboration for organizing around complex environmental issues and environmental justice.

Arturo Garcia-Costas manages the New York Community Trust's national and New York City environmental grantmaking program. He came to the Trust from the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, where he oversaw the environmental justice grant program and chaired the State's Sea Level Rise Task Force Community Resilience Work Group.. He has also promoted sustainable development in the Americas with several nonprofits including the Natural Resources Defense Council and the Alliance to End Childhood Lead Poisoning. He earned a J.D. from Stanford Law School, where he focused on international and environmental law.

Donna U. Hope is an environmental engineering specialist and an advisor and advocate for diversity, equity, and inclusion within the environmental movement. Through her company, U-Hope consulting, Ms. Hope advises clients on matters related to energy efficiency, sustainability, and diversity, equity, and inclusion. She earned a BS and MS in Environmental Engineering from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI). Ms. Hope brings to the Review Panel insights into air quality assessment, water quality and infrastructure monitoring, soil and groundwater remediation, food equity and urban farming, and energy efficiency policy.

Dana McClure is an Environmental Program Specialist for the DEC's Office of Environmental Justice (OEJ), where she serves as the grant administrator for their competitive grant programs. She oversees the management of all grants including the application and review processes, documentation, release of funds and compliance. She enjoys working closely with all grantees during their project terms. Dana brings with her more than 15 years' experience in fundraising and special events. Prior to joining OEJ she provided key fundraising support to the Agricultural Stewardship Association and to the Corporation of Yaddo. Dana enjoys volunteering her time for Odyssey of the Mind and Lansingburgh's Vex Robotics competition. She earned her MBA from SUNY Empire State College where she was selected from her graduating class to present her capstone project to the incoming MBA students.

Jeff Jones assists grassroots organizations with political and media strategies through his Albany-based consulting firm, Jeff Jones Strategies. Along with being a seasoned consultant, Jeff is a long-time activist for social and environmental justice. He has worked on numerous environmental campaigns that include cleaning the Hudson River of PCBs, and mitigating pollution in urban and rural areas. Recently, he was one of the leaders of the successful effort to pass legislation in New York requiring all public schools to test drinking water for lead. Today, Jeff continues to combat climate change by working with organizations like WE ACT, Alliance for Clean Energy New York, League of Conservation Voters, John Brown Lives!, the Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy, and EcoViva.