



AMERICAN CLIMATE
LEADERSHIP AWARDS

Healthy Community Services

hcsnola.org

This guide offers a successful and stepwise model for you to replicate in your community. It is part of a series featuring the award-winning programs from the finalists of the American Climate Leadership Awards 2022 by ecoAmerica.

OVERVIEW

Residents were not waiting for the government to solve the issues of repetitive flooding caused by climate change and an aged infrastructure. Literally each time it rains, residents of New Orleans can expect homes, cars, and street flooding from more frequent, intense rainfall. The 3 E's method of **engaging, educating and empowering** residents to make incremental changes helps to mitigate the impacts of storm waters. It takes a community to be a community.

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

- 1. Organize:** Identify residents who are willing to become involved with creating change to the community's challenges. Formation of this group is usually organic or simply an individual who has identified a need. One person will develop into a committed core group. Celebrate the small wins. Build a positive brand that is known for working toward the common good of the community and not a single individual.
- 2. Identify Challenge/s:** Identify the issue that is negatively impacting the community. Be realistic with expectations. Change occurs incrementally. Work towards the established goal with clear objectives and timelines. Document everything, meeting dates, agendas, sign-in sheets, recordings of zoom sessions, meetings with policymakers and pictures of community events.
- 3. Determine Size & Scope of Project:** Visit other communities with similar challenges. Replicate/modify similar projects. Be specific about the size and scope of the project. Incremental changes bring significant impacts to communities.
- 4. Identify Funding:** Initial small community projects may be from fundraisers, local municipality funded sources. Consider sub-grant awards from 501 (c)(3) non-profit organizations. Your organization may need a fiscal sponsor until one's organization is identified as 501 (c)(3) non-profit organizations.

5. **Design Plans:** In the beginning most groups or organizations will have limited resources. Use the skills of people within the group. Work with universities or colleges, professional organizations that charge nominal fees or provide pro bono services.
6. **Implement Project:** Make it a true community project. Involve the community for a work-and-learn experience. Offer 2:1 volunteer hour for students. Monitor the weather for extreme heat or cold. Check with the local municipality for any necessary permits or fees.
7. **Build Trusted Networks:** Working with people with less than good intentions is a reality. Don't become confrontational but whoever is leading the project must be firm, impartial in their actions and rely on core decision makers of the group for guidance. Establish the roles and responsibilities of key decision makers. Establish collaborative relationships with other groups. Give to others as much as you receive from your collaborative partners.
8. **Leave Community With Tangible Assets:** Build a culture of trust with the community.
9. Work *with* communities by understanding social and cultural norms. Be respectful! Acknowledge everyone's contribution to the project. Remember to put "people first."

Healthy Community Services is an ACLA 2022 Finalist. For more information and replication guides, go to ecoAmerica.org.