



U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
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Two Rhode Island Groups Awarded EPA Grant to Help Local Environment

BOSTON – Two Rhode Island organizations were among three groups in New England to receive EPA grant awards of \$30,000 each, to help communities directly address local environmental concerns. The R.I. awardees, Groundwork Rhode Island, and the Childhood Lead Action Project, were selected for EPA Environmental Justice Small Grant awards.

Groundwork Rhode Island was given the grant for a project in Central Falls, working closely with Central Falls High School, to develop a youth-based environmental program. The project, called Youth-Led Planning for Community Greening, will focus on stormwater management, green infrastructure, public green space, trees, and solid waste disposal. Students will receive training from professionals on design, master planning, and urban sustainability. They will do outreach to Central Falls residents and, based on community input, will design a community greening plan to develop three green infrastructure demonstration projects.

The Childhood Lead Action Project was awarded a grant for a project called the Lead-Safe Blackstone Valley that will work in three of Rhode Island's high risk communities to reduce the incidence of childhood lead poisoning, improve the safety of rental housing, and increase the capacity of Central Falls, Pawtucket, and Woonsocket residents to address lead issues. These cities have a high incidence of lead poisoning and are home to substantial low-income and minority populations.

“When the community takes part in protecting the environment, the changes are more sustainable,” said Deb Szaro, regional administrator of EPA’s New England office. “EPA provides funding so these communities can participate in protecting their own environments.”

EPA's Environmental Justice Small Grants provide critical support to organizations that otherwise lack the funding and resources to address the environmental challenges in their community. The 2017 grants will help organizations in 30 states, and Puerto Rico, carry out projects that will educate residents about environmental issues that may impact their health, collect data about local environmental conditions, and work collaboratively to address environmental justice challenges in their communities. Environmental justice means the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people, regardless of race or income, in the environmental decision-making process.

The grants support activities that not only address a range of community concerns, but also support activities that educate and empower youth and the next generation of leaders in STEM-related job sectors and environmental stewardship. Specific grant projects will focus on reducing exposure to lead and other water pollutants, developing green infrastructure and sustainable agriculture projects, implementing basic energy efficiency measures in low-income households, and increasing overall community resiliency.

Nationally, 36 non-profit and tribal organizations received a total of nearly \$1.2 million for projects that address environmental justice issues. The Environmental Justice Small Grants Program is designed to help communities understand and address exposure to multiple environmental harms and risks, and funds projects for up to \$30,000 a year.

The other New England grant went to the New Haven Urban Resources Initiative in Connecticut for a project that involves planting trees and taking care of community parks, as well as maintaining landscaped areas called “bioswales” that are designed to drain silt and pollution from surface water runoff. Tree plantings will be targeted for low tree canopy areas in underserved neighborhoods.

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More information about EPA's Environmental Justice Small Grants Program:

<https://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/environmental-justice-small-grants-program>