



ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE COLLABORATIVE PROBLEM-SOLVING COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT PROGRAM



Project Profile:

Coalition for a Better Acre

On May 28, 2004, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) Office of Environmental Justice awarded 30 cooperative agreements to selected projects through its new Environmental Justice Collaborative Problem-Solving Cooperative Agreement Program. The Program awards cooperative agreements to affected local community-based organizations seeking to address environmental and/or public health concerns in their communities through constructive and collaborative problem-solving with other stakeholders such as state and local governments, industry, and other non-governmental organizations. Each of this year's 30 selected recipients were awarded \$100,000 for use over a three-year period. Using their program funding, the selected community-based organizations will assess and quantify their communities' environmental and/or public health concerns, build partnerships with other organizations, identify strategies, and work toward ensuring safe and healthy communities.

The Collaborative Problem-Solving Model:

Though diverse in location and goals, all of the projects conducted under the program will share a common thread—use of the Environmental Justice Collaborative Problem-Solving Model. The Model seeks to provide a framework for leveraging existing resources at the disposal of communities, organizations, and strategic partnerships and for identifying new potential resources and partners to address environmental and public health issues in a process that emphasizes “mutual gains” and the sustainability of proposed solutions through the involvement of multiple stakeholders. Collaborative problem-solving stresses moving beyond merely

identifying the issues to formulating viable strategies to address and resolve them. It is crucial that strategic goals address not only the problem at hand but also lead to greater community capacity, viable partnerships, and the leveraging of resources – institutional, technical, and financial.

Coalition for a Better Acre Project: “Environmental Justice in Lowell, MA”

The City of Lowell's aging housing stock faces many challenges due to poor indoor air quality, lead paint and lead contaminated soil, and proximity to brownfields. The city's rapid growth also puts a greater burden on solid waste treatment. The local affected community includes immigrant groups such as Brazilians, Cambodians, Hispanics and Africans. The Coalition for a Better Acre (CBA) received funding from EPA to undertake a project to address these issues as a means of improving the health and local environment of the city's multi-cultural neighborhoods. The purpose of the project is to reduce asthma rates and lead contamination and decrease the burden on solid waste treatment in the Acre community.

CBA will work with its partners to incorporate environmental and health considerations, and to involve disadvantaged communities in to the decision-making process of the city's 20-Year Master Plan for housing redevelopment and revitalization. CBA will also work with community residents to encourage their use of natural, non-toxic cleaning products and practices to reduce exposure to lead paint and decrease the incidence of asthma.



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Project Profile:

Pioneer Valley Project

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Pioneer Valley Project:

“Vietnamese Nail Salon Health Project”

The Pioneer Valley Project (PVP) is a multi-racial, community-based organization working to improve the quality of life in the Pioneer Valley of western Massachusetts. PVP received funding from EPA to undertake a project to address the environmental and public health issues in the local nail salon industry. The purpose of this project is to decrease the Vietnamese nail salon technicians' potential health risks from exposure to the harmful chemicals in nail care products.



Vietnamese-owned nail salons are a major source of employment for low-income Vietnamese women in Springfield, MA. There are approximately 300 salons in and around Springfield – about 50% of which are Vietnamese-owned. Nail technicians often work 10-12 hours each day in poorly ventilated rooms and are exposed to hazardous and volatile chemicals in nail care products. Common health ailments range from skin irritation and fungal, bacterial and viral infections to respiratory problems like asthma. Potential long-term exposure risks include damage to the nervous system, reproductive disorders, cancer and even death.

PVP will work with its partners to increase the community's capacity to engage in partnerships to achieve the following goals:

1. Raise the nail salon owners and workers' awareness about the hazardous chemicals in nail care products;
2. Help nail salon owners and workers make better decisions about the purchase and safe use of these products and equipment; and
3. Work with health care providers to properly identify and treat symptoms of chemical exposure.

PROJECT PARTNERS

Lead Partner:

Pioneer Valley Project

Other partners:

Vietnamese-American Civic Association
Springfield SW Community Health Clinic
Mercy Hospital - Vietnamese Health Project
Springfield Department of Health
Lower Pioneer Valley Education Collaborative
U-Mass Toxic Use Reduction Institute
MA Department of Occupational Safety
MA Department of Education
Dorchester Occupational Health Initiative
New Ecology

PVP and its partners will achieve these goals through the following activities and outputs:

1. Constructing a demonstration model nail care salon for training nail salon owners and workers as well as vocational students on the proper use of nail salon products and equipment,
2. Developing a replicable educational and technical assistance training program for nail salon owners and technicians.
3. Preparing a best practices guide and integrating it with other educational materials into programs run by the partners' respective organizations.
4. Forming a cooperative venture to purchase ventilation equipment, and chemical and emergency management response equipment and supplies at affordable prices.
5. Creating outreach materials to increase health care providers' awareness and ability to properly diagnose and treat patients admitted due to chemical exposure to nail care products.

For more information, contact Marla Hendriksson at (202) 564-1897 or hendriksson.marla@epa.gov.



PROJECT PARTNERS

Lead Partner:

Coalition for a Better Acre

Other Partners:

Center for Family, Work and Community (U-Mass Lowell)

Lowell Community Health Center

City of Lowell, Planning Department

The goals of the project are to raise the community's awareness of these environmental health issues and work with federal/state/local government officials to amend the Master Plan to include policies on sustainable economic development and community environmental health.

CBA and its partners plan to organize and conduct several Environmental Summits, workshops, and other outreach activities to raise the community's awareness and assist them in articulating their environmental health concerns in terms of the Master Plan.

The ultimate vision of the project is to:

(1) Increase and upgrade Lowell's stock of multi-family housing units thus improving indoor air quality, especially in rental units; and

(2) Reduce the solid waste generated by the city by increasing recycling rates and improving trash pick-up activities thus creating a healthier environment in residential neighborhoods with multi-family properties.

The project will also form an Environmental Summit Steering Committee which will draft a number of specific policy recommendations for amendments to the Master Plan. The recommendations will outline environmental criteria for development projects.

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