



## **Emerald Connections: Community-Centered Weatherization Plus Health Program**

### **Background**

Across the United States, Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) communities, immigrants, low-income communities, youth and elders are some of the most impacted by the climate and housing crisis, including the cost of energy and environmental health disparities.

Home weatherization, or the application of energy efficiency measures to a home, can help mitigate some of these impacts on communities. Yet, significant barriers often prevent the implementation of weatherization in homes in BIPOC and low-income households (<80% AMI or <200% FPL). These pre-weatherization barriers include roof repairs, electrical wiring upgrades, mold and moisture mitigation, vermiculite and asbestos mitigation, and exterior repairs (siding, trim, etc.).

The COVID pandemic, wildfires, flooding, and other impacts of climate change have exacerbated the many concerns that low-income residents deal with on a daily basis such as high energy costs and negative health outcomes due to poor indoor air quality . The Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) aims to reduce energy costs for low-income households by increasing the energy efficiency of their homes, and taking other measures to improve their health and safety. Many individuals are unaware of the WAP and the benefits it can provide. Increasing participation in the WAP program is one pathway to helping low-income households reduce their energy costs and improve their indoor environmental quality.



## Overview

[Emerald Cities Collaborative](#) was [awarded a grant](#) from the federal Department of Energy to launch a weatherization & healthy homes pilot program. The [Emerald Connections: Community-centered Weatherization Plus Health Program](#) builds on the existing WAP program to deliver more comprehensive home energy improvements to low-income households. Emerald Cities Collaborative recognizes the important role that community-based organizations (CBOs) and coalitions play when connecting deeply with community members, and through this program will support a CBO's effort to engage directly with community members regarding the program. This community engagement approach differs from the traditional building or residence level focus for weatherization assistance programs. The pilot seeks to deliver 60 comprehensive home energy upgrades (including single and multi-family) in one community within Essex County in Massachusetts. We will contract with a community-based organization (CBO) to develop and implement outreach, education and programming within the selected community. The pilot will include funding the cost of home repairs, energy efficiency, home electrification, and healthy homes interventions.

## Goals of Pilot

The pilot seeks to test a community-centered approach to weatherization. Most weatherization clients come to the program through referrals based on challenges with paying utilities or their inability to replace expensive heating or hot water heating equipment. This pilot will be partly evaluated by its potential for scaling a community-centered weatherization approach within disadvantaged communities across Essex County.

## Eligible Applicants

The criterion for community selection for the Emerald Connections program considers factors related to the community and the community-based organization (CBO) proposing to serve that community.

One community in Essex County MA will be selected based on three sets of criteria:

1. The capacity of a community-based organization or coalition proposing to serve a priority community,
2. The experience of the CBO or coalition with implementing programs of similar size and scope, and
3. The demographics and characteristics of the community itself.



## **Funding Available**

Up to \$180,000 over 3 years to the community-based organization or coalition for

- A. Start-up, and engagement program design - Months 1-12 - up to \$60,000
- B. Engagement program (community education, program recruitment) and case management between community members and WAP agency to reach the goal of 60 homes participating in the program - Months 13-36 - up to \$120,000

Final budget allocation will be determined by the final scope of work negotiated between Emerald Cities and the selected CBO.

## **Projected Scope of Work**

### Program Design (Months 1-12)

Based on community input and research, ECC (with support from the CBO and program team) will develop a program design that is consistent with weatherization plus health concepts and the needs of the community. The CBO will lead a participatory design process to uncover new strategies for reaching community members who have not been reached by current WAP programs. The design will include both outreach and enrollment strategies.

### Community Engagement Plan (Months 1-12)

The selected CBO will lead outreach and engagement in their community. The CBO will educate their community on energy efficiency, electrification and healthy homes best practices. The CBO will gather community input and feedback, both of which will be integrated in the program design and in the recruitment stage of the project.

1. The CBO will complete a partnership agreement with a detailed scope of work and contract for program design, outreach, and recruitment.
2. The CBO will develop culturally relevant strategies to reach the community through program design, education and listening.
  - a. ECC will collaborate with the CBO to align best practices from the weatherization and clean energy sectors.
3. The CBO will plan and conduct educational sessions to ground communities in the basic principles of energy efficiency, electrification and healthy homes.
4. The CBO will plan listening activities to gather information from community members about specific ideas for culturally responsive program design and community engagement.

### Program Implementation (Months 13-36)

With program design complete, the team will execute training, outreach and implementation of weatherization plus health measures. The project will consist of an ongoing process of recruitment, assessment and implementation of measures while continuously improving upon practices.

1. The CBO will lead outreach to low-income community members, particularly populations that have not been reached through existing weatherization programs. Technical training will be provided to the CBO.
2. The CBO will refer households in single-family (1-4 units) and multi-family (5+ units) buildings to Action, Inc. for program intake and support families as they navigate the process.
3. The CBO will engage with their community through existing gatherings, planned outreach, marketing, social media and one-on-one conversations.
4. The CBO will employ community engagement efforts by meeting community members where they are: churches, schools, community centers, markets, and on social media.

### Program Evaluation (Months 6-36)

Program evaluation is a key component of the pilot's goal to reach over 50% of eligible low-income households in a defined community in conjunction with achieving broader climate action goals. This includes measuring our success toward this goal and documenting what and why some things may have been missed, such as strategies and funding to recruit sufficient homes to the pilot. This will be an opportunity to document barriers to weatherization.

1. The CBO will collaborate with ECC and Cadeo Group to develop an evaluation of inputs as well as outputs to the WAP pipeline.
2. The CBO will conduct community evaluations of residents involved with the program.
  - a. This community-based evaluation strategy will improve the quantity and quality of information that we can gather, and provide qualitative information for program evaluation.
  - b. The CBO will facilitate the evaluation team's surveying of participants to understand if weatherization has led to improved comfort, improved health, decreased reliance on dirty or dangerous heat sources, reduced energy burdens, and decreased presence of mold, mildew, standing water, or pests.

## Application

Please limit submissions to 5 pages or 6-10 minutes if submitting a video recording.

### Organizational Capacity & Experience

Tell us about your organization or coalition, including details listed below.

- A. Your organization's mission and vision
- B. Connection to the targeted community, such as prior collaboration, cultural and language competencies
- C. Experience with community engagement, community organizing, service delivery, and grassroots advocacy
- D. Unique positionality to engage with community
- E. Capacity to accept funds and develop new or existing staff to successfully implement the pilot for the duration of 3 years

### Community Need

Tell us about the priority community, including details listed below.

- A. The demographics of the community
- B. The housing challenges, health impacts and energy burdens faced by the community: Interventions needed to improve housing conditions - repairs, reduce energy use, improve health conditions, renewable energy, etc. These pre-weatherization barriers include roof repairs, electrical wiring upgrades, mold and moisture mitigation, vermiculite and asbestos mitigation, and exterior repairs (siding, trim, etc.).
- C. The scale of the needs in the community that you are targeting. A rough estimate of the total size of the community and those that might be eligible for this program broken down by single family and multi-family households.
- D. How this pilot program could impact the community
- E. Desired outcomes for the community based on this program

After initial screening of applications (approximately 2-4 weeks), organizations will be asked to submit the below attachments to move forward to the second phase (interviews).

- A. 501(c)3 Status Letter or Grant Authorization Letter from Fiscal Sponsor
- B. 2022 Fiscal Year Organizational Budget
- C. List of Board of Directors with Affiliation
- D. List of Project Personnel

- E. Most recent audited financial statements (If unavailable, please provide Profit and Loss Statement or Balance Sheet)
- F. Scope of Work- The submitted application/transcribed interview can be used as a basis for your scope of work. Please provide a short scope of work outlining what you propose to accomplish using the grant award.

## APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

Please submit completed applications to [northeast@emeraldcities.org](mailto:northeast@emeraldcities.org) by March 10, 2023 at 5:00 P.M. EST with the subject line “Your Organization - Emerald Connections Application.” If you have questions about this program, we encourage you to reach out. We are happy to communicate via e-mail and/or to schedule a call with a member of the program team.

### Application Attachments

1. Eligible cities/towns



## **Attachment 1: Eligible cities/towns**

**Action, Inc.** is the Energy Services provider for the Emerald Connections program.

Below is a list of cities/towns in Essex County that Action, Inc. serves.

Community-based organizations and coalitions based in these locations are eligible to apply to become partners for the Emerald Connections program.

- Amesbury
- Beverly
- Boxford
- Danvers
- Essex
- Georgetown
- Gloucester
- Groveland
- Hamilton
- Haverhill
- Ipswich
- Lynn
- Lynnfield
- Manchester-by-the-sea
- Marblehead
- Merrimac
- Middleton
- Nahant
- Newbury
- Newburyport
- Peabody
- Rockport
- Rowley
- Salem
- Salisbury
- Saugus
- Swampscott
- Topsfield
- Wakefield
- Wenham
- West Newbury