

Grantee: ACE

Contact: Dwain Tyndal, Executive Director

Awarded: \$11,250

Background:

As a 25-year-old neighborhood-based, community-organizing nonprofit, Alternatives for Community and Environment (ACE) serves Roxbury residents in Nubian (formerly Dudley Square) ACE provides resource and tactical support to environmental justice organizations and movements that develop local community leaders in similar frontline Environmental Justice communities. ACE uses civil rights law and regulations to organize and legally defend the rights of all protected classes in environmental justice, housing and development, and public transit. ACE was established in 1993 to address environmental racism, pollution, and public health impacts that have plagued Roxbury for years. Our work often defended the rights of communities that have been historically discriminated against and economically marginalized and built the leadership and guidance from within these communities by creating platforms for leadership and guidance.

Work to be conducted under this grant award:

Neighborhood Organizing

ACE is building a neighborhood movement for community power. It includes close alliances with MA Senior Action Council, the most powerful coalition of neighborhood associations in Roxbury, and eight other tenant and condo associations. It also consists of a 25 person Google group and a commitment to use the Jimez principles to organize, tenant, coop and condo associations, as well as neighborhood associations. Our member leaders have asked us to conduct teach-ins. We are asking for assistance and the budget to achieve these teach-ins in a virtual environment, while we are in self-quarantine.

Public Health with the experts

ACE is working with doctoral candidates, graduate students, academics, advocacy groups, and public health commissions to build a movement that uses a legal and regulatory framework to address air quality and long-term environmental racism through a civil rights framework.

Grantee: Arise for Social Justice

Contact: Tanisha Arena, Executive Director

Awarded: \$11,250

Background:

Our constituency includes all low-income people in our geographic area, including all subsets of low-income people: poor and working class, people of color, poor and working class queer people, poor and working class women, poor and working class disabled people, et cetera, as well as allies from other classes. Our Board of Directors is composed of members elected at large and one member appointed from each campaign. The board meets at least monthly, doing governance and promoting the work of the organizational development committees and planning for the long-term needs of the organization. The Arise Advisory Board consists of donors who appreciate our work and want to help us build financial stability for Arise. The Advisory Board has no say in our political campaigns beyond its one representative to our Board of Directors. Our staff has almost always been drawn from our membership. All staff are affiliated with one or more of our campaigns. Staff meets weekly to review work plans and to hold each other accountable.

Our work on Housing and Homelessness includes our historic organizing of Springfield's Tent City in the early 2000's which led to increased shelter services for those facing the cold winter without a place to stay. More recently, our Housing Committee has compiled a report on vacant homes and blighted properties and those who own them, in hopes of spurring a conversation about how to utilize these homes to meet the needs of homeless families and individuals. This report drew praise from the Springfield City Council, and we are using it to encourage them to develop a Housing Task Force to study housing needs throughout Springfield, since most plans commissioned by the city have been done through the lens of market rate housing.

Work to be conducted under this grant award:

One of our current campaigns is for the regulation of mold, which is not part of the sanitary code in the state of Massachusetts. We are pushing for this regulation, which in the city of Springfield and in other black and brown communities has led to poor health outcomes, including asthma and other respiratory issues. As many poor and low-income folks live in residences that have mold issues with little to no recourse, we are focusing our campaigns on prevention and education about mold, its causes and ways to reduce spores in the home. Arise started a new committee, the Mold Action Committee, that also works with Science for The People, providing education, supplies and support.

The goal of our campaign is to address emergent health equity and housing needs and we are looking at housing, homelessness and environmental justice in our mold campaign and also thinking about people who have to shelter in place in unhealthy environments not suitable for human habitation, overcrowded shelters, and other unsanitary conditions. Even before COVID-19 disrupted lives, mold has been a silent disruptor in our community.

Grantee: Boston Affordable Housing Coalition (MA Alliance of HUD Tenants)

Contact: Michael Kane, Director

Awarded: \$11,250

Background:

The Mass Alliance of HUD Tenants (MAHT) empowers diverse lower-income residents of privately-owned, HUD or MassHousing apartment complexes to prevent displacement and preserve buildings at risk of loss to market conversion and/or substandard conditions as permanently affordable, safe and healthy homes. MAHT's strategy is to organize the unorganized tenants into independent unions at the building level; build power through areawide and national HUD tenant coalitions; and ensure that the most directly affected tenants lead in negotiations with owners, officials and allied campaigns.

Since 1983, MAHT has organized tenants to save 12,600 homes as affordable housing, one building at a time, through tenant organizing and policy advocacy. including 1,400 resident-controlled apartments in eight Boston developments. Recent accomplishments include winning a preservation purchase of 97 apartments at Newcastle-Saranac in Lower Roxbury; preserving 171 low-incomeSection8 apartments for 20 years at Concord Houses in the gentrifying South End; and winning preservation and renovations of 80 at-risk apartments in Esperanza-Fort Hill Gardens in Roxbury.

Work to be conducted under this grant award:

During COVID, preventing mass evictions & displacement and housing the homeless are critical public health imperatives. We seek funding for MAHT's campaigns to increase housing subsidies and regulations to protect extremely low-income renters. These include:

- 1) Staffing the City Rent Subsidy Coalition to help Boston design & implement the \$5million/year City Rent Subsidy Program, to permanently house 500 homeless households
- 2) Leadership in Renters Rising Coalition to help pass an Emergency Moratorium on Evictions/Foreclosures and win state/federal subsidies to prevent mass evictions
- 3) Lifting the Statewide Ban on Tenant Protections to allow localities to take action.
- 4) Reducing Mass Rental Voucher Program rents from 40% to 30% of income for 9,600 Extremely Low Income MRVP tenants.
- 5) Pass model Anti-Bullying legislation for Elderly/Handicapped housing, MAHT proposal to Governors Commission on Prevention of Bullying in Senior Housing
- 6) Helping to lead HERO Coalition and other efforts to raise the Deeds Excise Tax and dedicate funds to expand MRVP

MAHT also seeks funds to inform HUD tenants how to immediately and urgently apply for rent reductions as thousands lose their jobs and incomes plummet, in the wake of new HUD guidance won by NAHT. MAHT will mobilize tenant volunteers to utilize the VAN database to contact 4,000 households in member HUD developments and broadly publicize tenants' rights to secure rent relief. Funds will also help NAHT advance federal policy solutions.

Grantee: GreenRoots, Inc.

Contact: Roseann Bongiovanni, Executive Director

Awarded: \$11,250

Background:

GreenRoots serves all of the City of Chelsea and the East Boston neighborhoods abutting Chelsea Creek. Chelsea is the state's smallest city and the 2nd most densely populated. Chelsea's population is approximately 45,000 (75% ethnic minorities; 24% below FPL.) East Boston demographics are similar (55,000; 65% ethnic minorities; 17% below FPL.) Chelsea and East Boston are frontline communities severely impacted by environmental injustice and shouldering the burden of regional benefits.

GreenRoots is resident-led and membership-based; members shape and implement our workplan. Every GreenRoots project is spearheaded by engaged and passionate residents furthering the vision of environmental and social justice. GreenRoots core leadership group has approximately 100 intergenerational, diverse members. More than 400 members participate regularly; GreenRoots' work positively impacts thousands of residents.

Our staff is: 100% bilingual Spanish/English; 80% live in Chelsea and East Boston; 80% identify as racial minorities; 80% are women or LGBTQ; all participated in GreenRoots activities before becoming employees. Of our 9-member Board of Directors: 66% live in Chelsea and East Boston; 56% are racial minorities. Board members represent a variety of expertise including environmental law, public health, academia, community activism, international grassroots social movements, youth and community organizing.

Work to be conducted under this grant award:

GreenRoots seeks funding to support critical anti-displacement work in the face of, and the eventual aftermath, of COVID19. In our low-income, frontline communities with waterfront property and easy access to downtown Boston, gentrification is ever-present. COVID19 and its economic reverberations raise new gentrification threats: developers and investors will buy homes from those struggling with mortgages; renters will be evicted; restaurateurs and franchisees will buy up struggling businesses; and workers will struggle to remain employed.

Funding will support GreenRoots to:

1. Continue leading on the Community-wide COVID19 response, linking health equity and housing needs to the greater community response. GreenRoots initiated what is now a daily conference call of at least 75 cross-sector stakeholders as well as 8 working groups. As community building organization, we are leading on multi-modal Neighbor Check-Ins, multilingual Communications and the development of the One Chelsea Fund.
2. Continue to coordinate Chelsea's Anti-Displacement Roundtable with a targeted focus on keeping residents in their homes in the financial aftermath of COVID19.
3. Continue GreenRoots' involvement in the Healthy Neighborhood Study. As data analysis continues, we hope to utilize new data as leverage in our anti-displacement work, matching policy responses to demonstrated needs.

Grantee: Codman Square Neighborhood Development Corporation (CSNDC)

Contact: Gail Latimore, Executive Director

Awarded: \$11,250

Background:

Codman Square NDC serves low and moderate-income people and businesses in our South Dorchester service area. We focus on affordable housing development, both rental and homeownership, as well as community organizing, small business development, environmental justice and green jobs training, among other activities. Our constituents are integrally involved in shaping our work, directions and activities through Board participation, as well as participation on various committees, through our Resident Leadership Institute, as well as through real estate input committees.

We are very engaged in housing advocacy, now, as well as consistently in the past. We are active and lead members of the Right to the City Coalition, and are members of MACDC and CHAPA, and the National NeighborWorks Association, all of through which we regularly help shape housing advocacy and policy. We have mobilized hundreds of constituents over the past 3 years, to participate in housing-focused public hearings, marches and petition drives related to various housing policies.

Work to be conducted under this grant award:

We will continue our advocacy activities through Right to the City, MACDC, CHAPA and NNA. We also were just awarded funds, via the Male Engagement Network (MEN), that we, for the last 3 or so years, are a partner member in, with several other locally based nonprofits and activist groups, through the Innovative Stable Housing Initiative grant. Through the MEN, we work with men of color (MOC) to promote their health and socioeconomic well-being. Housing has emerged from the Network and it's MOC participants as a key need. Indeed, housing is a platform for, and foundation for success in all areas of life and a social determinant of health. We know that MOC have specific housing needs, especially within the context of this COVID crisis, and beyond. The ISHI grant calls for Codman Square NDC to take the lead in convening and strengthening the MEN collective's focus on housing advocacy and policy development for MOC, working closely with our partners and the MOC engaged in the initiative. This grant will help us fully launch this new collective advocacy initiative, that is specifically focused on MOC housing stability, and will support and expand that work, at both the new hire Coordinator level, as well as at the MOC participant engagement level.

Grantee: Lawrence CommunityWorks, Inc. (LCW)

Contact: Jessica Andors, Executive Director

Awarded: \$11,250

Background:

Lawrence CommunityWorks (LCW) was first formed to help the North Common, one of the poorest neighborhoods in Lawrence, MA, but its reach has since spread far beyond this one neighborhood. We have built affordable housing developments across the city and our youth and adult program participants come from every neighborhood in Lawrence and beyond. With all of our programs and projects, LCW's specific target population is the hardworking, low- and moderate-income, predominantly immigrant families and individuals who call the city home and have contributed to its steady growth and strong economic and civic progress over the last five to ten years. LCW has a fierce and long-term commitment to building the voices and strength of our members, and a well-deserved reputation for genuine resident investment in and ownership of organizational direction and activities. Members, who reflect the demographics of Lawrence, consistently serve on the LCW board, inform strategic conversations, and support other members in connecting to resources. Throughout LCW as a whole 72% of board members, 50% of management staff, 83% of full-time program staff, and 90% of LCW volunteers are Latinx. Most staff and board members live in Lawrence, and so do the vast majority of volunteers and members.

Work to be conducted under this grant award:

This proposal builds on a collaborative project - the Housing Stabilization Center (HSC) - piloted in early 2019 between LCW and Northeast Legal Aid (NLA) aimed at preventing at-risk individuals and families in Lawrence from becoming homeless, through a joint referral process to intensive counseling, landlord-tenant mediation, and legal support. This pilot was highly successful, with all 36 pilot participants' tenancies preserved and sustained, and only four cases reaching the court system.

We are seeking support from MSGA's grant funding opportunity, with the goal of continuing to build on the momentum of the HSC pilot program and incorporate a pre-planning period of information gathering, policy advocacy/education, and citywide alliance development. The overarching objective of the HSC is to alleviate the rising number of eviction cases being filed in the court systems and threat of homelessness that low-income working families and individuals are facing, thus increasing the efficiency of the housing court, reducing costs for landlords and improving participants' outcomes. The HSC is currently staffed with one FTE hybrid position that effectively marries the frontlines counseling and mediation work of a Housing Counselor with statewide advocacy for policy and legislation that protects tenants' rights and ensures housing stability in vulnerable communities. The goal of this initiative is to invest in pre-planning activities such as policy advocacy (attending public hearings, organizing for crucial legislation), incorporating tenants' rights education modules into existing LCW coaching and workshop curricula, and embarking on the early stages of local base-building efforts. One potential outcome of this planning period is to research and build local alliances in support of adopting the Community Preservation Act (CPA) in Lawrence.

Grantee: Coalition for Social Justice

Contact: Deb Fastino, Executive Director

Awarded: \$11,250

Background:

The Coalition for Social Justice Education Fund was founded in 1994 to bring together people affected by and concerned about poverty to advocate for economic opportunity. We have developed a solid leadership core of dedicated activists who first joined the struggle for social justice through CSJ. We have developed an organizing staff who we have met through our work and who have been directly affected by the issues we work on. We have also recruited a group of volunteers who will participate in door-to-door outreach and phone banking, a larger group of over 500 people who will attend our public events, and a larger group of 3000 supporters, who can be counted on to call their elected officials.

We engage in ongoing outreach to people affected by poverty in Southeastern Massachusetts. We have base offices in Brockton, Fall River, New Bedford and Boston and chapters in Falmouth, Taunton and Attleboro. This includes regular door-to-door canvassing to families in 15 public housing developments, involving nearly 1000 members in learning and mobilizing around issues that affect them and taking action by signing petitions, calling their elected officials and writing letters. In the past 7 years, we have expanded our door-to-door canvassing to include low-income neighborhoods outside of public housing. These are people who have already been affected by a lack of affordable housing and are sensitive to the need for more options. Our public housing and neighborhood outreach is conducted in multiple languages, especially Spanish, Portuguese, Haitian-Creole, and Cape Verdean Creole. In addition, we contact thousands of people throughout the community by phone, providing information about issues that affect their lives and organizing them to call their elected officials to have a voice on these issues.

Work to be conducted under this grant award:

April-Mid May

- Get Out the Count efforts by contacting public housing residents.
- Mobilizing around a MA emergency paid sick time policy proposal guaranteeing at least 120 hours of job-protected paid sick time during the COVID-19 outbreak.
- Digital organizing tools to improve future outreach like online surveys and petitions to collect contact information

April - July Know Your Rights

- Education on sick leave benefits under new and existing state and federal laws.
- Education on federal eviction moratorium that passed under the CARES Act on Friday, March 27th, 2020 and ends on July 25th (120 days).

July – January

- Know Your Rights campaign about paid family and medical leave benefits starting 2021 since COVID-19 is likely to reemerge
- Information on new COVID-19 related rights or bills passed

Grantee: Worcester Interfaith

Contact: Isabel Gonzalez-Webster, Executive Director

Awarded: \$11,250

Background:

Founded in 1993, Worcester Interfaith (WI) is a multi-issue, multi-racial broad-based community organization, comprised of 30 institutions that reflect the religious, racial, ethnic & geographic diversity of the city. We build bridges across religious, socio-economic, racial & ethnic boundaries to achieve improvements in jobs, neighborhoods, public safety, education & youth and draw attention to the disproportionate ways these issues affect low-income, minority & newcomer residents.

Since 1993, we've leveraged tremendous change, securing community support & funding for neighborhood pools, parks & recreation, Community Schools, infrastructure improvements, workforce development, employment opportunities for youth & adults, while advocating for local & state policy changes. We work in partnership with congregations, nonprofits & 5 coalitions so we can engage the largest number of people possible, to affect long-lasting change. A year and a half ago, we realized that there was very little organizing happening in Worcester to build power among residents, tenants, and other proponents of affordable and sustainable housing. We formed a Central Massachusetts Affordable Housing Coalition to expand and deepen that work of building power, and to change dominant narratives about Worcester residents and housing access and to address the fact that over 50% of our renters and 1/3 of our home owners are cost burdened. We are actively organizing to pass legislation that promotes rent control and Eviction and Foreclosure Moratorium during COVID-19 that are currently in the MA House of Representatives. Since 47.9% of renters in Massachusetts are cost-burdened, we and our statewide partners know that these are to critical steps to enable renters and residents with low or modest incomes to stay in their homes.

Work to be conducted under this grant award:

We will launch a campaign to pass a local Community Preservation Act (CPA) ordinance. CPA provides funds to municipalities for housing, preservation and/or open space. Affordable housing advocates would serve on a committee alongside advocates for historic preservation and open spaces. This leadership opportunity would shift decision-making from longstanding establishments to the hands of our grassroots communal leaders. Passage of CPA in Worcester would allow us address lack of affordable housing and aging housing stock. Other cities have used these funds to improve existing housing stock as well as construct new units. Our residents are eager for additional resources to make their homes healthy and sustainable dwellings for the long term. Our organizing campaign will include education awareness of the community and our local officials, organizing residents to lobby city official for passage of the CPA and if that is not fruitful it would mean a ballot campaign where we would need to gather signatures from over 7,000 voters that will then go on the ballot for a vote. We will still need an education and marketing campaign and a lot of on the street organizing for this strategy.