

### **Mission & Major Accomplishments\* 4000 characters**

Please describe your group's focus, mission and major accomplishments (if any). What has been the impact of your activities? What is the issue your organization is addressing, and why is it important?

EEECHO's mission is to support the efforts of communities seeking a better quality of life, through equity based, holistic approaches. Our mission is centered on the concept that justice and inclusion in policy and decision making are essential in community planning, development and sustainability. Our work is focused in the Gulf Coast region of the U.S., which is disproportionately impacted by climate change, particularly coastal and inland flooding. The majority of our work is in Mississippi, where our organization is based. Mississippi is so economically depressed that governments and regulators habitually permit any toxic developments regardless of detrimental social and economic impacts.

Our major accomplishments include:

1.) Temporarily halting development of staging and laydown area for military shipments by the Port of Gulfport. The Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality issued a permit for the project back in August 2019, giving the port the green light to move forward. The development would have encroached on critical wetlands that are protecting two historically important African America communities (Turkey Creek and Forest Heights) in Gulfport from further flooding. It also risked further contamination from the property which is a former fertilizer plant. EEECHO helped secure an attorney and scientific experts who have worked together to file an appeal, hoping to stop any future development.

2) Running a series of Town Hall Meetings and a wetlands site visit for residents and youth in Turkey Creek and Forest Heights. Thanks to a partnership with the Thriving Earth Exchange of the American Geophysical Union, EEECHO has been matched with a team of pro bono scientific experts. They are:

- Chris Anderson, Associate Professor at Auburn University. Chris's research examines the effects of human activities on a wide range of aquatic and riparian ecosystems.
- Gianna Cothren, Associate professor in Civil & Environmental Engineering at the University of New Orleans with expertise in Coastal Restoration Sustainability & Environmentalism.
- Renee Colini from the Northern Gulf of Mexico Sentinel Site Cooperative Coordinator at the Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium..

These experts worked with EEECHO to develop a curriculum on engineering with nature, importance of wetlands and sea level rise. Students from ADD NAME xxx school benefited from the lectures and site visit.

3) Helping residents prepare for disasters. Gulfport was severely impacted by Hurricane Katrina, and remains extremely vulnerable to sea level rise and flooding. EEECHO received an Honorable Mention by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, Individual and Community Preparedness Division, for its holistic approach to community preparedness in Harrison County. EEECHO worked with local groups to hold roundtable discussions, training classes and workshops on topics ranging from natural and man-made disasters, financial preparedness, health, and nutrition.

4.) Established a community garden on 34<sup>th</sup> Street in Gulfport. It is near a low-income community. Gulfport has only 3 grocery stores per 10,000 residents as opposed to 4.5 convenience stores per 10,000 residents. The community benefits from a variety of fresh vegetables in the garden. We also have a fresh herb garden and fruit orchard with lemon, apple and orange trees in North Gulfport. A group of master gardeners run the garden and it is funded through donations from local businesses and churches.

5.) Provided 14 local Gulfport churches financial literacy trainings, mental and physical health and wellness education, Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR), community disaster, emergency and crisis preparedness training. The financial literacy training was facilitated by local bank representatives and a financial literacy expert. The CPR training was provided by EEECHO's Health Director/Community Engagement Coordinator, Yolanda Edwards, who is a Bachelors Registered Nurse. The community disaster and crisis preparedness training were completed by first responders, including Gulfport Police and Fire Departments.

3.) prompted changes to MS Department of Environmental Quality's (MDEQ) proposed statutes under the Clean Power Plan on Startups, Shutdowns and Malfunctions (SSM). MDEQ had proposed to change malfunction to maintenance, require a shorter time for emergency emissions notifications and allow less lenient self-reporting.

4.) prompted changes in MDEQ biomass/wood pellets plant permit applications; with the most significant to require emissions compliance testing every 24 months rather than only once after start-up.

6.) Successfully petitioned the Mississippi Public Service Commission to rule in favor of South Mississippi's electrical ratepayers in challenging an energy rate hike to pay part of the cost for a failed carbon capture sequestration plant;

As a result of our work, residents have become more knowledgeable about the threats they face in relation to flooding, sea-level rise, wetlands depletion, health hazards and climate change. They are better able to speak and advocate for themselves. Working with residents, we are putting pressure on elected officials to halt toxic developments that have detrimental social and economic impacts, while finding solutions to the challenges we face.

**Work Plan\* 7500 characters**

**If awarded this grant, what specific activities will you undertake? What do you hope to accomplish? What are the ways you can try to measure this? Please include as much detail as possible. This is the section that often receives the most focus in our review.**

If awarded this grant, EEECHO plans to continue and expand its educational and training outreach and build our organizational and community capacity to bolster understanding of flooding, environmental pollution and climate change. We plan to do this by undertaking the following activities:

Continuing to appeal the Port Authority development. The permit appeal for the development is on May 12<sup>th</sup>, 2020 and will involve several of our scientific experts. EEECHO and the North Gulfport Community Land Trust are both appellants. As a coordinating partner, we will ensure that we are responsive to the needs of the attorney and scientists, and keep the residents informed on the work being done. We will bus residents to the appeal if appropriate.

Hosting a series of retreats and informational luncheon sessions to engage selected members of the Gulfport community – in particular faith leaders and elected officials - in the climate and environmental justice challenges that we face, including urban flooding.

Sponsoring a bus trip to the Capitol in Jackson, Mississippi to meet with legislators to discuss disproportionate permitting of toxic industries and developments in low income/ minority communities and the need for equity in representation on the MDEQ (Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality) Permit Board. There has never been an African American serving on the MDEQ Permit Board despite the impacts of MDEQ decisions on our residents. We hope that this objective will expose the issue and challenge them to respond.

Conducting capacity building workshops on climate change, environmental exposure and workforce development in order to help residents recognize and self-protect from harmful exposures and effects when possible and develop organizational capacity to advocate for policies that protect their health.

Conducting workforce development training for community members to acquire skills and certifications that will prepare them for employment in a variety of environmental careers. In particular, we seek to offer basic skills for non-traditional students who may need additional assistance before beginning technical training; and core environmental remediation training classes that include Hazardous Waste Operations and Emergency Response training.

Contributing to Higher Ground's leadership Council. We will contribute our expertise to the national work of the Council, and use the council as a means of getting national attention for our work.

**We will measure success through the following:** 1.) pre and post-tests; 2) surveys; 3.) changes in local zoning ordinances; 4.) specific legislation introduced; 5.) comparison of actual outcomes vs projected expectations; 6.) number of recruitments to assist; 7.) attendance sign-in; and 8.) changes in MDEQ proposals and/or processes

**Community Involvement\* 2000 characters**

Describe the communities or groups that benefit from your work. Does your board and staff composition reflect the communities served by your group?

EEECHO works across the Gulf Coast region. Our work on urban flooding is currently focused on Gulfport, MS. Here we are trying to protect from flooding two, historic African American communities: Turkey Creek, which dates to 1866, and Forest Heights, which was established exactly 100 years later. Both communities are remarkable in different ways. The first was settled by emancipated slaves, and contains numerous houses dating to the late 19th and early 20th Centuries, including shotgun-shacks and Craftsman Bungalows.

Forest Heights, located north of Turkey Creek (the waterway), is a housing subdivision created in 1966 by the National Council of Negro Women, with support from HUD and the Ford Foundation. About 200 hundred houses were built on 100 acres of land, and only married couples with children could purchase the mortgage-subsidized homes.

The two communities were severely impacted by Hurricane Katrina and the area is naturally prone to flooding, but more so now that industrial, commercial and transportation developments are encroaching on adjacent wetlands. The planned expansion of Hwy 49 which leads directly to Gulfport Harbor, would make future flooding even worse.

Our work with these two communities seeks to engage all residents, although our traditional emphasis is on working with students, women, and the elderly .

The staff and board of EEECHO reflect the communities we serve. Board members bring a vast background of diverse experiences, expertise, economic backgrounds and community services. Our Board members reside in Gulfport with the exception of our youth board member, who is a student at Mississippi State University in Starkville.

EEECHO traditionally works with students, women, the elderly and traditionally underserved, environmental and climate vulnerable communities. Our major outreach is in the historic North Gulfport and Turkey Creek Communities which is populated by low income and/or African Americans.

**Year organization was founded\***

2014

**Area(s) of Emphasis\***

Please choose **up to three** issues that your organization and proposed project focuses on.

Environmental Education  
Habitat / Wilderness / Preservation  
\*Water Resources / Watershed Protection  
Land Management / Urban Sprawl / Open Space  
Climate Change & Energy  
Agriculture / Gardens / Food Security  
Sustainable Forestry  
\*Toxics & Environmental Health  
\*Environmental Justice  
Other

**Number of paid employees\***

Count part-time employees according to the amount of time they work. For example, if someone works 50% time, they are .5 employee.

0 paid employees, .2 contracted employee

**Volunteers\***

How many people volunteer for your organization during the year?  
Approximately 15- 20 volunteers

**Volunteer Hours\***

Collectively, how many hours per week do the volunteers work on average? It is ok to estimate hours. EEECHO's volunteers work approximately 120 volunteer hours per week.

**Board List\* -4000 characters**

List of board of directors, advisory board or steering committee members with affiliations. Board list should be for the applicant organization – not the fiscal sponsor. You may cut and paste the list into the box below, or attach a file.

**Board of Directors**

John Johnson  
Mattie Jordan  
Arthur Hawkins  
Sara Barnes  
Mayukh Datta  
\*Joel Birdsong  
\*Sister Martha Milner

- both recently deceased

**Staff and Volunteers List\* 4000**

List of key staff and/or volunteers with titles or very brief description of responsibilities. This list of staff or volunteers should be for the applicant organization – not the fiscal sponsor. You may cut and paste the list into the box below, or attach a file.

Ruth Y. Story, Co-founder/Executive Director, coordinates food drives and meals distribution, organizes physical and mental health workshops, secures meeting locations and distributes event promotional materials.

Kathy Egland, Co-founder/Program Director, completes grant applications, completes reports on grants, proposes budgets, develops and monitors progress on action plans, plans all programs- except health and mapping, participates in daily phone meetings from various partners and

working groups, drafts events promotional materials including media releases, plans meeting agendas for programs, plans meals for meeting participants.

Yolanda Edwards, BRN, Health Director/Community Engagement Coordinator, facilitates Community Engagement activities and trainings, coordinates health surveys, organizes asset and disamenities mapping, coordinates and facilitates develops social justice programs for health equity and education and facilitates health and wellness promotion activities.

Other volunteers and advisory board members who assist on a regular basis with all of EEECHO's events and advocacy:

Gordon Jackson  
Glen Cobb  
JoAnn Fields  
Evelyn Buckles  
Clancie McBride  
William Eglund  
Richard Kim Marsh  
Howard Page  
Pamela Spagner  
Corey Lombard  
Pamela Brown

**All of the following financial information should be for the applicant organization, not the fiscal sponsor.** To download a sample budget and financial statement, [click here](#). If you are using our sample template, upload it to the budget question below and skip the financial statement question.

**Previous Year's Expenses\***

What were your total expenses for the previous fiscal year?

**Is your organization's Previous Year's Expenses over \$75,000?\***

Yes

No x

**Budget\* 5000**

A budget is a projection of income and expenses for the organization. Please attach a budget for the current fiscal year (for applicant organization -- not fiscal sponsor). You may upload a Word, Excel or PDF document, or you may paste it into the box below. There is no need to do both.

**Please tell us what time period the budget covers.**

If you do not have a budget created, you may use our budget template [here](#).

**Financial Statements\* 5000**

Please attach a 990 Tax Form if it is from the past two years. If you don't have this form, then please use our financial statement template [here](#) to provide a financial statement for your most recent fiscal year.

Financial statements should include the actual income and actual expenses for the organization for the most recently completed fiscal year (for the applicant organization -- not the fiscal

sponsor). This is a report that documents what you actually raised and spent in the previous fiscal year for the organization.