

2022-23 ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE THRIVING COMMUNITIES TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CENTERS PROGRAM (EJ TCTAC)

Project Summaries by Geographic Area

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is announcing the selection of 17 selectees for the Environmental Justice Thriving Communities Technical Assistance Centers Program (EJ TCTACs or Program.) Seventeen organizations and their partners have been selected to receive a total of approximately \$177 million to establish a network of technical assistance centers (Centers) across the nation providing direct technical assistance, training, and capacity-building support to communities and organizations to advance environmental and energy justice priorities. With this critical investment, the Centers will provide training and other assistance to build capacity of local grassroots nonprofit organizations, tribal governments, and other similar community stakeholders in navigating federal, state, and private grant application systems such as Grants.gov and SAM.gov, writing stronger grant proposals, and effectively managing grant funding. In addition, these Centers will provide guidance on community engagement, meeting facilitation, and translation and interpretation services for limited English-speaking participants, thus removing barriers and improving accessibility to resources for communities with environmental justice concerns. Each of the Centers will also create and manage communication channels to ensure all communities have direct access to resources and information. Final awards are subject to administrative and legal reviews to verify compliance with applicable requirements.

EPA and the US Department of Energy (DOE) will cooperatively fund these 17 awards, which will feature 14 Regional Centers and 3 National Centers working collaboratively across the United States supporting communities. These 17 awards will be in the form of incrementally funded cooperative agreements where EPA and DOE staff will have substantial involvement in the oversight and implementation of the Program. The establishment of this Program and Centers is in direct response to feedback from communities and environmental justice leaders who have long called for technical assistance and capacity building support for communities and their partners as they work to access critical federal, state, and private resources and engage in decision-making that impacts them. The 17 Centers will provide comprehensive coverage for the entire United States through a network of over 160 partners including community-based organizations, additional academic institutions, and other stakeholders so more communities can access federal funding opportunities like those made available through President Biden's Inflation Reduction Act and Bipartisan Infrastructure Law as well as funding from states and private foundations.

All centers are currently scheduled to operate from June 2023 to June 2028.

For more information, visit: <https://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/environmental-justice-thriving-communities-technical-assistance-centers>.

EPA REGION 7

Recipient: Wichita State University (WSU)

Applicant Type: Institution of Higher Education

Award Amount: \$10,000,000

Title: *Promoting Environmental Justice in EPA Region 7 through a Thriving Communities Technical Assistance Center at the Environmental Finance Center at Wichita State University*

Location: EPA Region 7 (IA, KS, NE, MO, and 9 tribal nations)

Partners:

Center for Rural Affairs (nonprofit service provider)

Climate and Energy Project (nonprofit service provider) Community Engineering Corps (nonprofit service provider) Environmental Protection Network (nonprofit service provider) Iowa Environment Council (nonprofit service provider)

Kansas Rural Center (nonprofit service provider)

Kansas State University Engineering Extension (academic) Metropolitan Congregations United (faith-based)

Goals and Description:

The Environmental Finance Center (EFC) at Wichita State University (WSU) will establish and operate an Environmental Justice Thriving Communities Technical Assistance Center to build the capacity of individuals, organizations, and institutions who serve underserved and disadvantaged communities in Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, and Nebraska, and adjoining indigenous nations, to make meaningful advances towards environmental and energy equity at the local, state, regional, and federal levels. Through community engagement, trainings, technical assistance, applied research, tool development, community assessments, and more, the Center will build a community's ability to participate in environmental justice and energy justice decision-making at all levels of government, find and apply for grants, and engage with the private sector to be part of energy and infrastructure project design and development. The EFC at WSU is uniquely positioned to seamlessly set-up and conduct the business of an Environmental Justice Thriving Communities Technical Assistance Center. The EFC currently serves large, small, rural, remote, and tribal communities; nonprofits; businesses; local governments; and state and federal agencies across the Heartland. The establishment of the EJ TCTAC as part of the EFC WSU will advance its vision of thriving communities, empowered to take actions that enhance their environmental and financial health to improve the quality of life for everyone in EPA R7. The cornerstone of the EJ TCTAC's role is as a listener to underserved communities who have historically and systematically been disproportionately impacted by environmental, energy, climate, and public health adversities. Through an engagement and community assessment process the Center will learn from communities about their burdens, barriers, priorities, and opportunities, then respond to the unique community needs with training, assistance, support, and resources. The result will be an increase in a community's capacity to identify, apply for, and receive grants, and to lead efforts that improve environmental justice and energy justice outcomes. The EJ TCTAC will serve as a hub for information, training, resources, technical assistance (TA), and connection for addressing environmental justice and energy justice concerns in underserved communities in R7. Activities of the Center will include both 1) general services and 2) targeted community engagement and services. General Services include call-center availability to respond to requests for information or services (phone, email, online forms, direct messaging through social media, etc.), and provision of regular trainings on topics with wide interest. To start, grant trainings and civic engagement trainings will be provided in a variety of

locations and formats. Additional regular/general trainings will be added as capacity building topics are identified as commonly needed by a widespread audience. Call-center, general training, and requested TA will be accessible to all underserved communities who wish to engage. As specific community needs are identified, activities will shift toward coordinating TA through partners best suited to address each identified challenge or need.