I. Project Information*

Project Director	Angela Chalk
Project Title	Community Ownership Model for the Design of Nature-Based Solutions Along the North Claiborne Corridor
Project Location	New Orleans, Louisiana
Project Summary	Our project proposed to convene community-based organizations and a network of engaged residents in at-risk communities, partners across local government agencies, and technical experts in the fields of engineering, landscape architecture, and valuation to develop a replicable, scaleable, community ownership model of envisioning, designing and implementing nature-based solutions (NBS) along the North Claiborne Avenue Corridor. This area includes under-resourced communities connected along the Corridor and is an economic, social, historical, and cultural thoroughfare. It is also a major hurricane evacuation route for Orleans, St. Bernard and Plaquemines parishes. Rainstorm events often lead to flooding for communities along this Corridor and negatively impact the quality of life of its community members. We have a collective of four community organizations and we have an established network of engaged residents educated about NBS who are experts in identifying the effects of climate hazards in their neighborhoods. By collaborating with community organizations in the Water Wise Collective, these residents have envisioned 120 NBS priority projects that seek to alleviate flooding, reduce urban heat island effect and beautify their communities. By securing technical experts, we will determine which priority projects will be the most impactful by using engineering data analysis, scaling up as necessary, and prepare those projects to be shovel ready by generating designs and construction documents. Additionally, because many of these identified priority projects are located on government-owned land, we will continue to build bridges and partnerships with government stakeholders and agencies to secure funding for the implementation of the NBS priority projects.

II. Executive Summary

To support bridging knowledge to action, the GRP seeks to develop products that are widely accessible and useful to communities, academics, non-governmental organizations, and public and private decision-makers. GRP Executive Summaries are designed to communicate, in clear and non-technical language, what issues GRP has supported, what was done, and what was achieved.

Responses must be written in complete sentences rather than in bullet point.

1. What problem are you addressing, and why does it matter? (up to 100 words) *

Briefly describe the issue your project is tackling. Why is this problem significant to the Gulf region, its communities, ecosystems, or systems of practice?

This project convened community-based organizations and engaged residents in at-risk communities, local government partners, and technical experts in engineering, landscape architecture, and valuation to develop a replicable, scaleable, community ownership model of envisioning, designing and implementing nature-based solutions with engineering evidence along the North Claiborne Avenue Corridor. The mission is to advance green infrastructure through education and project implementation to alleviate major flooding issues, reduce urban heat island effect, and improve quality of life. Water Wise collective convened its Visioning Session Committee to co-lead the efforts, ensuring that resident expertise, interests, and vision for solutions in their neighborhoods are prioritized.

2. What did you do? (up to 500 words) *

Summarize your key activities and outputs during this period (or planned for the project). Program activities are the actions a program takes (e.g., conducting field research, holding workshops, analyzing data, providing training, building partnerships), while outputs are the direct, tangible products or results of those actions (e.g., number of partnerships established, models created, workshops held, students trained).

We implemented a community-centered process of green infrastructure (GI) planning and design grounded in the Spectrum of Community Engagement to Ownership. We accomplished this through the Visioning Session Committee (VSC), a resident-led committee of existing Water Wise Neighborhood Champions network members. These residents had already received foundational GI education and were prepared to deepen their technical knowledge, build leadership and advocacy skills, and represent community interests in planning for GI projects, which historically has been led by government with minimal community involvement.

We established the VSC to formalize resident leadership in advancing GI, co-lead creation and advancement of technical processes, including engineering analysis, landscape design, and valuation, and ensure that resident expertise and priorities were centered. Across three iterative phases, the VSC met twice monthly working closely with the grant administrative team to shape engagement strategies, refine technical processes, and guide resident input into flood investigations and design efforts.

Phase 1 focused on technical learning and process development. VSC members (3 per neighborhood, 18 total) participated in a learning journey on hydrology and hydraulics (H&H) modeling and necessary data inputs; flood investigation methodology; tools to support GI visioning, project planning, and project preparation; and defining how to partner effectively with engineers. The VSC piloted the flood investigation process in the Treme neighborhood, identified flooding hotspots, participated in a multi-stakeholder GI tour, participated in meetings with engineers, and contributed to the development and release of an initial engineering RFP. We took a VSC research trip to Amsterdam to observe large-scale, innovative, government-led GI initiatives.

Following Phase 1, we hosted a Treme listening session and resident-guided walking tour with engineers, government officials, and community members. Feedback from residents, the Sewerage & Water Board New Orleans (SWBNO), and prospective engineers informed a refined scope of work for hiring an engineering firm and resulted in the decision to pursue neighborhood flood investigations through data collection and analysis rather than H&H modeling. This was due to the need to identify the causes of flooding rather than model flood possibilities based on assumptions.

Phase 2 involved hiring engineers to conduct flood investigations. VSC membership expanded to six residents per neighborhood (34 members). We hosted a series of community meetings in each neighborhood which involved an educational workshop, site tours, and final results presentation. Residents learned about the drainage system and provided input through a questionnaire developed by the VSC. Engineers gathered government data to cross reference with resident input, conduct data analysis, and share investigation findings outlining infrastructure issues,

potential solutions, and recommendations.

Phase 3 focused on design. Landscape architects were engaged to develop GI designs for resident-prioritized sites. VSC worked within their specific neighborhoods to support GI visioning sessions, design meetings, and feedback collection. HCS and Greater Treme Consortium partnered with the American Society of Landscape Architects to develop a GI project prioritization scorecard in Treme and 7th Ward. That involved a visioning session, neighborhood tour, and virtual meetings for residents to select priority sites for design. Final design presentations are scheduled in January.

3. What did you achieve? (up to 500 words) *

What were the outcomes or impacts of your work so far? What changed or advanced as a result of your activities—whether in knowledge, people, communities, policies, or systems? Outcomes and impacts are the changes that result from your work—such as increased knowledge, improved decision-making, strengthened community capacity, policy influence, or environmental improvements. For example, your work might lead to new coastal planning practices, or your engagement efforts might help communities better prepare for climate risks. Your education programs might have inspired students to pursue careers focused on Gulf issues or increased their commitment to staying and working in Gulf communities.

This work produced meaningful outcomes in building community capacity, advancing technical expertise, and laying the foundation for tangible infrastructure advancement across four neighborhoods. Water Wise Collective established and tested a replicable community committee-based model that moves residents to shared leadership and ownership in technically complex GI planning processes.

VSC members became well-informed, advocate leaders capable of engaging in technical conversations with engineers, government agencies, and elected officials. VSC members developed the skills to ask critical questions, create scopes of services for technical assistance providers, review and discuss engineering analysis, advocate for solutions to flood issues , and communicate community priorities to institutions and decision-makers. This committee has resulted in a strengthened pipeline of resident advocates and expanded the long-term capacity and sustainability of the Water Wise Collective's individual neighborhoods.

The project also advanced technical understanding and accountability. Four neighborhood flood investigations and design processes were launched. Three flood investigation reports have been completed, with a parallel H&H modeling effort underway in coordination with the City of New Orleans and the Bunny Friend Neighborhood Association. These investigations translated resident experiences of flooding into documented, engineer-verified evidence of infrastructure failures and solutions.

In Treme, the impact was immediate and concrete. Following Greater Treme Consortium and Treme residents documenting six major flooding events in six months in 2024, the Treme flood investigation identified severe drainage system blockages in resident-identified hotspots. These findings prompted action by the SWBNO, which conducted a full neighborhood drainage cleaning and removed over 900 tons of debris. The cleaning crew reported that drainage capacity had been effectively zero prior to the intervention. This outcome demonstrates a direct link between resident-led data collection, technical analysis, and institutional response.

Beyond immediate infrastructure improvements, the project shifted how engagement and planning occur. Water Wise and the CBO leaders and the VSC engaged residents earlier, more consistently, and more in depth than a government-led effort would have. The technical experts and government officials learned a great deal about effective community engagement, including

-how to facilitate and participate in community meetings in a meaningful and collaborative way,

-how to create materials and presentations that support multiple learning styles,
-how to communicate effectively with community members,
-Experiencing new ways to gather meaningful feedback from community members, and overall
-what it means to be in partnership and have greater accountability to community expertise.
Residents influenced not only site selection, but also the framing of technical questions and evaluation criteria.
Finally, the project produced concrete pathways toward implementation. GI designs for four neighborhoods are complete, in progress, or ready to begin, based on resident-prioritized sites and preferences. These designs position communities to pursue funding, advocate for implementation, and continue working with public agencies to advance equitable, community-driven green infrastructure solutions.
Overall, this work strengthened community leadership, improved technical decision-making, influenced agency action, laid the groundwork for long-term environmental and flood resilience driven by the people most affected, and positioned the Water Wise collective as an innovative leader in the field.

4. What's next? (up to 100 words) *

What are your next steps or priorities based on what you've learned? Share any anticipated shifts in direction, upcoming efforts, or recommendations for others working on similar issues.

We plan to:
Conduct the cost benefit analysis for priority projects using designs completed during this grant
Apply for clean water state revolving fund loans with SWB to fund the priority projects due to status of federal funding opportunities
Explore the legislative capital outlay process to fund GI projects
Continue and plan to include the VSC in future work
Continue flood monitoring in each neighborhood and advocate for the solutions proposed in the flood investigation reports
Host Strategic stormwater planning effort with SWB and City government based on progress and our deepened relationships.
Share results of the flood investigations

5. Activity Location *

Please fill out the following chart with the relevant locations for your project work using this form.

Progress__Annual_Report_Activity_Location (1).xlsx

Filename: Progress__Annual_Report_Activity_Location (1).xlsx.xlsx **Size:** 18.8 kB

6. Per your approved Data Management Plan, are you expected to submit data? *

Yes

Submit Data Management Project Personnel

Any project members who will be submitting data to GRIIDC must have their own account at GRIIDC that is linked to your current grant project. To facilitate GRIIDC account set-up and ensure you are prepared for the required Dataset Information Form (DIF) submission, the GRP will send the information in the below form to GRIIDC directly.

Key Personnel *

The project's Data Manager and any other key personnel who will be interacting with GRIIDC should be listed in the form below.

	Role of the Project Member	Full Name	Email	Organizational Affiliation
Key Personnel 1	Project Director	Dr. Angela Chalk	achalk.hcs@gmail.com	Healthy Community Services
Key Personnel 2	Project Co-Director	Kimberly Doley	kimberly@waterwisegulfsouth.org	Water Wise Gulf South
Key Personnel 3	Data Co-Lead	Anissa Hyde	ahyde@hcsnola.org	Healthy Community Services

Accounts can be requested later for individuals who are not listed in the form, but they will not be able to edit or upload datasets until they have an account.

1. Set up your GRIIDC Account *

1. Each data management project member should first set up their account at this link. https://grp.griidc.org/account
2. Each user should have their own account and accounts should not be shared. If a user already has an account but has forgotten their password, they can reset it here: https://grp.griidc.org/account/reset-password

2. Submit Dataset Information Form (DIF) *

1. All grant projects that will produce data should submit a dataset information form (DIF) within 6 months of the start of funding, even if your data will be archived elsewhere. This assists the GRP with monitoring future submissions.
2. DIF submission can be found at: https://grp.griidc.org/dif
3. Please submit a DIF for every dataset you anticipate will result from your project. They do not have to be exact, as they can be edited or deleted later depending on the actual project results. Additional DIFs can also be submitted later if more or different datasets result from your project.

Review DIF and Data Uploads *

Please confirm that you have added or edited any Dataset Information Forms (DIF) as necessary on the GRIIDC website and/or uploaded any datasets that have been finalized since your last progress report. Datasets must be publicly accessible and linked to GRIIDC by the end date in your full grant Period of Performance.

Yes, I can confirm

III. Progress Report Questions

Please feel free to expand on your answers from the Executive Summary.

1. Please revisit your proposal and review your goals and the outcomes you were seeking to achieve through this grant. How successful were you in meeting your goals? Please assess your success against the criteria you set in your proposal and use any combination of anecdotes, stories, graphs, charts, visuals as well as data to explain your success. Upload supporting files if you choose.*

Goal 1: Increasing the community's NBS expertise through offering our educational program in our neighborhoods and incorporating the principles of community ownership (according to the Spectrum for Community Engagement) into our WWWC model as we advance our NBS projects.

We achieved this through our learning journey with the VSC through several channels:
- the VSC meetings we hosted sharing information and tools we use for GI mapping and project planning such as Climate Smart Cities tool, White House Economic Justice Screening tools, and other maps to help us identify and record flood hot spot areas.
- the experts who presented to us,
- the engineers we engaged with and learned from to help us create a scope of work and ultimately from the engineers we hired
- Presentations from government officials from the City and SWBNO
- Presentation from SWBNO officials about the Deltares adaptation tool
- Walking and bus tours to showcase drainage infrastructure issues, potential GI sites, and completed GI projects to demonstrate what is possible.
- Community meetings discussing the project
- Gathering, collecting, and sharing feedback
- Discussions with committee members and experts

Additionally, through our community meetings related to the flood investigations and design processes, we were able to educate and involve residents more broadly beyond just the VSC.
Below is a list of engagements with residents:

Treme
1. October 2024 Multi-Stakeholder Storytelling Walking tour - 25 residents present (15 non-VSC residents), four engineering firms (eight engineers, two landscape architects), five government officials
2. Community Kick Off Meeting - Technical Learning Presentation on the Drainage System - approximately 45

people attended (20 non-VSC residents)

3. Engineer Led Drainage Infrastructure Issues Walking Tour for VSC Members - approximately 10 people attended

4. Flood Investigation Final Results Meeting - approximately 50 people attended (35 non-VSC residents)

5. Design Visioning Session - approximately 20 people attended (15 non-VSC residents)

6. Initial Design Presentation and Feedback Session - approximately 15 people attended (5 non-VSC residents)

7. Second Design Presentation and Feedback Session - approximately 15 people attended (5 non-VSC residents)

7th Ward

1. Community Kick Off Meeting - Technical Learning Presentation on the Drainage System - approximately 50 people attended (25 non-VSC residents)

2. Engineer Led Drainage Infrastructure Issues Walking Tour for VSC Members - approximately 20 people attended (12 non-VSC residents)

3. Flood Investigation Final Results Meeting - approximately 35 people attended (20 non-VSC residents)

4. Design Visioning Session - approximately 15 people attended (10 non-VSC residents)

5. Initial Design Presentation and Feedback Session - approximately 35 people attended (25 non-VSC residents)

ASLA

1. Bus Tour and Storytelling Session - 25 people attended (VSC. engineer and landscape architect participants)

2. Visioning Session for Treme and 7th Ward residents - 35 participants (20 non-VSC residents)

Video produced: https://youtu.be/0c_jbyy6FEU

Lower 9th Ward

1. Community Kick Off Meeting - Technical Learning Presentation on the Drainage System - approximately 20 people attended (15 non-VSC residents)

2. Engineer Led Drainage Infrastructure Issues Bus Tour - approximately 14 people attended (9 non-VSC residents)

3. Mapping and Site Selection Community Meeting - approximately 25 people attended (15 non-VSC residents)

4. Final Site Selection Meeting - approximately 18 participants (12 non-VSC residents)

5. Upcoming Bus Tour for VIsioning at Selected Sites

Upper 9th Ward

1. Community Kick Off Meeting - Technical Learning Presentation on the Drainage System - approximately 50 people attended (40 non-VSC residents)

2. Engineer Led Green Infrastructure/Potential Sites Tour - approximately 20 people attended (12 non-VSC residents)

3. Community GI Education and Mapping Meeting - approximately 35 people attended (20 non-VSC residents)

4. Upcoming Community Meeting to present results of Neighborhood Modeling and Mapping

Beyond the VSC members receiving education and training, the non VSC resident community members are now engaged and informed about stormwater management and drainage infrastructure overall. This has contributed to a greater technical understanding of the issues that we face and possible solutions more broadly across the community.

Goal 2: Consulting with technical experts and community experts to evaluate NBS priority projects using H&H models, economic valuation tools, and community prioritization.
While we did not ultimately conduct any H&H modeling, we learned about modeling, did an input analysis and mapping with the VSC, explored the possibility through meetings with engineering firms, creating a scope of work and receiving proposals from 4 firms. The level of detail and specificity we required was not conducive to modeling. We could have gotten a simple model for $35k-$60k which is what we budgeted for. However, through a suggestion from one of the firms, we decided to pursue a flood investigation to collect data from the government agencies and residents in the hot spot target areas the VSC identified and the engineering firm conducted an analysis to highlight the issues and outlined possible solutions. Unlike a model, this analysis and the solutions provided will go a long way towards support for securing funding and advocating for the City of New Orleans and SWBNO to solve some of the issues and implement some of the solutions outlined in our investigations.

Goal 3: With the data, we will choose the top three NBS priority projects in each of the 4 neighborhoods and take the selected projects through our process to be shovel ready for implementation. For each project, this process includes securing a design, construction plan, and a fact sheet with project specifications, location, projected costs of installation and maintenance, cost benefit analysis and other benefits (ecosystem service benefits, social health benefits, etc), as well as any other necessary analyses. We will compile the fact sheets into a project lookbook to present to our government partners and selected elected officials to show our readiness to apply for funding opportunities.

Through this process, we will have preliminary designs for at least 3-5 projects in four of the neighborhoods. We have completed this design process in two of the neighborhoods and it is in progress in two of the neighborhoods. Once the designs are complete, Earth Economics will complete the cost benefit analysis and fact sheets for the potential sites.

Goal 4: we will continue to engage with our government partners and other stakeholders to demonstrate our success and work with them to advance them through the community engagement spectrum. Through our Citizens Government Academy, we will facilitate opportunities for stakeholders to interact, learn together, and work together more effectively.

All of the meetings listed in reference to Goal 1 included collaboration and presentations by a technical expert either an engineer or landscape architect. The community kick off meetings included presentations by government officials (the CIty of New Orleans and SWBNO). We had preparatory and planning meetings with the government officials to secure their support in presenting about the drainage system at the meetings and providing data and documentation to the engineers for the flood reports. Officials from SWBNO and the City of New Orleans also presented at the Flood Investigation FInal results meetings.

Additionally, as we selected sites for potential GI projects and hired landscape architects, we had to meet with the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development which owns many of the potential sites. Our longstanding relationship with officials based on other successful projects has made the process and communication seamless.

With very intentionally curated agendas, our community meetings created a spirit of collaboration among all stakeholders and residents appreciated learning from and having access to asking questions of these officials and receiving answers.

We rethought our community committee and called it the Visioning Session Committee rather than the Citizens Government Academy. This name is more in line with the Visioning Sessions held as part of the Water Wise Model and the roles the committee members would take as part of this project.

Optional File Upload

2. How has your work benefited your organization, professional field, community, or other stakeholders? *

Our work has benefited our organization, our collective, the VSC committee members, the water Wise neighborhood champions, the technical experts, the local city government, and the SWBNO. Ultimately, the entire city will benefit tangibly from the work that has been accomplished with this grant and we hope to share our experience as a model for other communities who seek to have community led efforts to solve issues that require the government to be involved in the solutions.

This grant allowed us to expand investment into our community groups:

1) VSC provided expanded Leadership opportunity for our community members in the following ways:
- technical learning through direct engagement with an engineers and landscape designers
- Access to/behind the scenes view into how government functions
participation in a formal, curated, facilitated learning process
- Opportunities for feedback and to see feedback incorporated in real ime
- Paid stipends to participants.

2) Water Wise Neighborhood Champion network had the benefit of seeing action and results from their visioning and seeing what it means to bring a project from vision to implementation. Additional benefits included:
- Deeper learning about GI and the drainage system
- Progress with the process that will ultimately bring investment to their neighborhoods such as tangible projects, further education, and continuation of visioning for future projects
- Results from investigations that can be used to advocate for resources and action in their neighborhoods.
3) Treme, 7th Ward, Bunny Friend, and Lower 9th Ward neighborhoods conducted flood investigations and we have been able determine infrastructure challenges through a questionnaire for residents to report flooding issues in their blocks and neighborhoods.

Additionally, it provided the SWBNO the evidence it needed to prioritize cleaning and maintaining its drainage infrastructure in an area that experiences extreme flooding.

We demonstrated to the CIty of New Orleans, elected officials, and SWBNO that we are significant contributors to the technical landscape and intellectual capital of this industry. We will have provided technical reports on the drainage infrastructure system in four neighborhoods in New Orleans. These reports can be used as evidence to apply for large scale funding for GI projects - a significant benefit to the City government and to the City as a whole.

We provided to three different engineering firms and two different landscape architecture firms an in-depth experience of how to successfully work with communities with community members taking the lead and how to communicate effectively so that community members can understand and meaningfully contribute to the projects and work being done.

3. Are there any other successes related more broadly to this project that you would like to share with us? *

More broadly, as a result of this project and the deliverables produced, HCS and the Water Wise Collective Team has positioned ourselves as an industry leader in the field. We are now at the level to compete for and have access to larger amounts of funding than we would have otherwise had access to as well as partnerships with government that we can call on to tap into greater resources. We can now point to a proven track record and portfolio of deliverables based on working with technical experts and managing a large amount of funding, resources, and numerous contracts people simultaneously.

Additionally, we have leveled the playing field for our community members to participate in creating and implementing solutions to issues they face whether flood related or otherwise. We have opened doors for them to have access to and meaningfully, technically, and substantively interact with any and all industry stakeholders that they would need to interact with to advocate for themselves and their neighborhood. We have demystified and decoded a process for them that they would not have otherwise had access to without a project like this.

Finally, we have created not only a model for a community led process but also a model for funders to demonstrate what direct investment into community can achieve and elements for communities to achieve it successfully.

4. What did you learn (positive or negative) as a result of this grant? What lessons would you share with other organizations or the field at large? *

We experienced significant learning both substantively related to technical expertise we gained from working with technical experts in the field conducting the flood investigations and the landscape architecture design process.

One lesson that we are realizing is that there was a lot of foundational work required to complete this project and our collective was primed to build this community model. Prior to 2023, the HCS, Water Wise, and the Community Based organizations that make up the Water Wise Collective had laid a foundation for the work we have accomplished with this grant. Over the past decade, the organic creation of the Water Wise Collective partnerships - Water Wise being invited into communities after leaders expressed interest in bringing GI to their neighborhoods - set the stage for establishing the Water Wise Model and building the highly engaged Water Wise Neighborhood Champion network of over 275 residents in six neighborhoods and growing.

In addition to this other factors contributed to our readiness to take on this project including:
- the CBO leaders live and work in the neighborhoods they serve which has served as a foundational element for a solid, trust-filled, ongoing relationship with the community members.
- Water Wise and its CBO leaders have already made investments into our communities providing education as well as tangible benefits such as projects, practical education opportunities around GI, and ongoing learning opportunities
-Water Wise collective is continually looking for new ways to grow leadership, build momentum, and movement build in our communities with an overall goal of continued investment and creating a circular economy.

Building a Community Model

Building a community model through a committee process has provided multiple benefits of a for the Water Wise Collective.

It has built our capacity to scale our work to expand the work we are doing in each neighborhood as well as the possibility to expand to other neighborhoods in New Orleans and potentially regionally. The tools we used to create the structure/container for the VSC are a necessary part of the foundation of that capacity. We used the following to structure and formalize the committee process successfully (with an attendance rate of over 90% for mandatory meetings and events):
1) Admin team agreed on logistics, goals, and tasks for the committee

2) CBO leaders conducted targeted outreach for participants in the committee

3) Hosted an Information session

4) Used a google form application process that explained the commitment, schedule, and timeline.

5) Secured a commitment from the accepted participants through an agreement between Water Wise and the committee members

6) Paid a monthly stipend for participation - based on attendance and providing feedback

7) Although each neighborhood had its own committee members who effectively functioned as a subcommittee of the larger Water Wise committee, Water Wise managed the administrative processes and logistics- communication, facilitation, tracking attendance, collecting and synthesizing feedback, making payments - to ensure streamlined implementation across all of the organizations

8) Feedback mechanisms (Collected feedback five times in phase 1 and increased that to collecting it after every meeting in Phase 2) allowing us to continually co-create with the community/VSC members.

Creating this model with the VSC has allowed us to increase community expertise and awareness thereby building the foundation of leadership. The collaborative way that we worked, the meetings we held, the trip to Amsterdam, the tours we've taken have provided an opportunity for team building and had the unintended effect of creating lasting connections among committee members resulting in additional collaborations amongst themselves.

GIving the committee members a front seat and co-creative roles in the process of advancing the investigations and GI project planning provided them with technical training and practical experience, built their confidence to be leaders and advocates in their communities, and provided them with a pathway to apply this learning to any other issue they would want to advocate for in their neighborhood. They had a the experience of hiring the experts they wanted to work with, shaping the flood investigation and the input collected from residents, insight and input into preparing for community meetings, participation in internal meetings with government officials and the technical experts to plan the community meetings, ability to provide feedback on the draft reports, designs, and other deliverables, and opportunity to speak with other residents about the project and what we were undertaking.

Organizational Readiness

We realized the importance of working as a collective of organizations to expand capacity and are able to do that effectively through creating systems and establishing processes.

We learned that a clearly and intentionally created container with goals and tasks explained, regularly scheduled meetings, clear channels of communication and clear logistics overall were key to our success for creating a community model. These formalities set out in an agreement to get a commitment along with the payment of

stipends greatly contributed to our success.

Laying the groundwork for this type of committee structure is important. The WWNC residents who became VSC members had already invested time and energy into becoming WWNCs, they showed genuine interest in learning and supporting their community. They were selected by the CBO leaders and invited to join the committee. The CBO leaders chose people who had already stood out as those who would be likely to commit.

Similarly, having these types of structures, processes, and formalities in place for Healthy Community Services and Water Wise and its community partners was also key to be ready to accept the large amount of funding for large grants.

Building Sustainability

An aspect of building an organization, a collective and a movement that often gets overlooked is building sustainability. It's something that has taken us a while to focus on as we have been building over the last decade. Creating the community model with the VSC has provided VSC members with foundational education, access to meaningful interaction and input into advancing GI in their communities from identifying the problem to creating and implementing the solutions. We provided practical education that went much deeper than a workshop or trying to just share information through internal meetings, meetings with community members, meetings with government officials, meetings with technical experts and providing technical tools and technical language to participate in substantive conversations with any industry stakeholder/expert.

Interrupting Government Bureaucracy - Community Taking Initiative

While we realize it is not our job to solve issues that are typically within the government's responsibility, this grant project allowed us to experiment with what happens if a group of concerned citizens interrupts the regular government process and have the resources to take initiative. Taking direct action ourselves to commission and hire experts, taking the steps to prepare, and inviting and involving the government along the way has removed the government excuse we often hear - we are overburdened and don't have the capacity to take this on. It has allowed us to move the government along in a way that allows them to respond rather than relying on them to take initiative or having to ask them to do something.

Additionally along those lines, we have found that we are very good stewards of the funding we receive. We have been able to accomplish with $1,000,000 in three neighborhoods what the City is accomplishing in one and we are making a significant investment directly into our communities with the funding rather than giving it to one firm. A

breakdown of our spending shows that we spent:
- 9.8% of this funding on stipends to the VSC members (with matching funds to include community members from other Water Wise neighborhoods not part of this grant)
- 4.8% on VSC participants travel to Amsterdam for a research trip
- 15% on admin funds for community organizations
- 12% on designs for the communities
- 18% on engineering flood investigations (12% of that to a local minority firm)
- 16.5% to minority contractors within the community (photography, data, financial services, facilitation and organizational administrative services).

We also learned that facilitating meetings in-house—while inviting technical experts to contribute as needed—can reduce costs by more than 80% compared to models where government agencies outsource meeting facilitation to technical consultants. This approach is critical to community ownership, as it ensures that trusted community-based organizations are empowered to lead engagement in their own neighborhoods and are appropriately compensated for their time and expertise.

Other valuable learning came from our trip to Amsterdam where we toured various types and scales of GI interventions, met with public utility and government officials, and learned about innovative solutions for flooding mitigation and prevention. We now have a similarly situated City, landscape, and system to compare and contrast to our system. The most relevant lessons were around the following topics:
- Successful infrastructure innovations;
- An example of government's role in coordinating efforts to advance and how government successfully works in that process;
- What comprehensive, collaborative strategies look like across government;
- Examples of government programs that facilitate community involvement, that foster both community and individual responsibility, that help set societal norms and factor in culture and behaviors,
- Communicating with the community and determining their level of participation in solving the issues.

Advice for other communities:
- Consider wellbeing, wellness, and mental health as priorities when doing community advocacy work. The amount of work to be done can be overwhelming, getting on the same page with a group of people can present lots of challenges and bring up friction, being met with bureaucratic obstacles is frustrating and daunting.
- Allow community work to go at the pace it needs to and consider the source and circumstances surrounding urgency.
- Creating processes, structures, and formalities and being prepared has allowed us to accomplish so much and given the community members a space to develop skills and meaningfully participate. The growth of committee members would likely not have had a space to occur without all of the structures we put in place.

5. How do you characterize your relationship with the GRP and what suggestions do you have for improvement? *

The relationship between HCS and GRP is mutually beneficial. HCS has had the opportunity to build organizational capacity through an analytical lens and apply that perspective as a supplement to the model of community engagement spectrum for decision making. Conversely, our colleagues at GRP have grown to appreciate, as well as incorporate, the traditional application of sciences by acknowledging qualitative lived experiences research as bonafide science based evidence. It's our hope that GRP continues to explore and expand upon its inclusion of community science projects such as this one into its portfolio

6. Please provide any other feedback or comments you have for the GRP. *

The opportunity to receive this grant funding and undertake this project has upleveled our work, solidified a foundation for scalability, and positioned and showcased HCS and the Water Wise Collective as the leader in community engagement, community education, and project implementation in the field of GI in New Orleans, regionally, and nationally. With most grants, we have to ideate and deliver on unproven concepts. Often when we get into the work of it, the experience goes quite differently than what we imagined. However, in those cases, we have already agreed to deliverables and invested funding into a pathway that may not be the best way forward. This grant gave us the opportunity to learn, explore, experiment with creating a process without having to commit to a specific outcome beyond the creation of the process. The experience was very valuable and a pivotal part of who HCS and the Water Wise Collective are becoming.

Additionally, this type of direct investment in community has allowed us to demonstrate and have the experience of how to manage and expend a large amount of funding, shown us what good stewards we are of the resources we receive and the resources already within our community, built our expertise, expanded our capacity, and allowed us to invest in our community and community members in significant ways - leadership, technical evidence that supports the issues we had already identified and supports the case for GI projects in the sites we've selected, designs for future projects, and advocacy skills to present these in effective ways.

We are incredibly grateful and look forward to sharing the results of this grant and the opportunity to continue to work with GRP.

7. If applicable, please identify and describe the ways you or your organization leveraged GRP's grant (e.g., other funders, volunteers who worked on the program, in-kind donations etc.) Please specify the value and/or number/hours of volunteers if possible.

We received approximately $275,000 of value in volunteer time, matching funds, or in kind services that contributed to this grant..

A Water Wise grant from the Water Foundation provided matching funds which allowed us to include the two other Water Wise Collective neighborhoods in the Phases of the VSC.

- Funded six VSC members in Phase 1 of the VSC, approximately $20,400.
- Funded ten VSC members in Phase 2, approximately $17,500.
- Funded ten VSC members to go on the trip to Amsterdam - Approximately $40,000.

HCS provided matching funds for one contractor and two additional VSC members to come on the Amsterdam trip, approximately $7000.

Two Water Wise Collective organizations received support from the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) as recipients of their Legacy Project. The ASLA Legacy Project Committee leaders met with Water Wise and the 7th Ward and Treme CBO leaders to determine scope of support the ASLA Committee could provide. The fifteen plus member ASLA Committee came together with residents to provide support mapping out the possible sites for green infrastructure along the North Claiborne/I-10 Corridor and creating a scorecard for residents to select and score project sites, interventions, and amenities. This process included two in person community meetings (a bus tour and discussion with 7h ward and Treme VSC members), a visioning session with 7th Ward and Treme Water Wise Neighborhood Champions, a mix of zoom and in person preparation meetings for the community meetings, and a final zoom meeting in each neighborhood. Based on the number of committee members, number of meetings held, creating the scorecard, introducing the scorecard to residents and facilitating the application of the scorecard to the priority sites, presenting final results, providing the information and updates to the landscape architects hired in 7th Ward and Treme, the approximate value received is about $75,000.

Healthy Community Services and the Water Wise Collective explored the EPA's Water Technical Assistance program to receive technical engineering support to complete the documentation required for submitting a State Clean Water Revolving Fund Loan. Water Wise Collective members held four meetings with the EPA and the firm providing engineering technical assistance (TA) as well as a meeting with the City of New Orleans, SWBNO, the

EPA, and the engineering TA firm to share our intention to apply and secure a government partner to be the lead applicant. The approximate value of this initial exploratory process of support is about $10,000.

In parallel to this grant, the Upper 9th Ward Bunny Friend Neighborhood Association is working with the City of New Orleans on a FEMA Flood Mitigation Assistance Grant and received $80,000 to lead the community outreach efforts with its Community Steering Committee (an expansion and continuation of the Bunny Friend VSC as we went into Phase 3). This process is equivalent to and will produce almost the same deliverables as our Flood Investigations (they are working with an engineering firm on who will produce an H&H Model) and the Landscape Design Process.

Finally, we are receiving approximately $25,000 for valuation services from Earth Economics as a match from their Kresge Foundation funding to complete the cost benefit analyses and fact sheets based on the designs for the proposed GI projects.

8. NBS Project Plan and Design

Please submit your NBS Project Plan and Design. For more details, please refer to the RFA (pages 4 and 5).

Treme Schematic Designs.pdf

Filename: Treme Schematic Designs.pdf.pdf **Size:** 19.7 MB

8. NBS Post-Design Learning and Analysis Documentation

Please submit your NBS Post-Design Learning and Analysis Documentation. For more details, please refer to the RFA (pages 4 and 5).

NAS NBSPost-Design Learning and Analysis Document.docx

Filename: NAS NBSPost-Design Learning and Analysis Document.docx.docx **Size:** 10.9 kB