

## F. MRNY - Small Business Community Survey (W959)

September 14, 2010

- Grantee:** Make the Road New York (“MRNY” or the “Organization”)
- ESD Investment:** A grant of up to \$125,000 to be used for a portion of the cost to conduct a comprehensive study of the small business needs within the community, including creating a survey to assess the needs of small businesses on Roosevelt Avenue in Queens County.
- Project Location:** Jackson Heights, Elmhurst and Corona, Queens County
- NYS Empire Zone (or equivalent):** N/A
- Project Completion:** September 2010
- Grantee Contact:** Javier H. Valdes, Deputy Director  
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Phone: (718) 565-8500 x 4408 Fax: (718) 565-0646
- Project Team:**
- |                    |                       |
|--------------------|-----------------------|
| Project Management | Gregory E. Fitzgerald |
| Affirmative Action | Laverne Poole         |
| Environmental      | Soo Kang              |

### Project Description:

#### Background

Make the Road New York was founded in the fall of 2007 through a merger of the Latin American Integration Center and Make the Road by Walking, creating the largest participatory, democratic, low-income, immigrant organization in New York City. MRNY is a 7,000-person membership organization which is a catalyst for city, state and national public policy reform from the ground up. The Organization, through organizing and advocacy, combats the severe political and economic disenfranchisement suffered by low-income Latino immigrant and African American New Yorkers.

Primarily, MRNY works on seven critical community issues:

**Environmental and Housing Justice Project** – builds a strong membership base of environmental and tenant activists, develops grassroots leadership and organizes for safe, affordable housing and a healthy urban environment for low-income communities of color;

**Education Justice Project** – organizes and educates parents and caretakers about their children’s rights in school, engages parents in educational policy-making and budget advocacy, works to improve school performance, and promotes citywide and statewide educational equity;

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**Civil Rights and Immigrant Power Project** – combats the political vulnerability of low-income immigrants through grassroots leadership development, public policy advocacy and community organizing to enforce and expand the civil rights of immigrants and limited English-proficient New Yorkers;

**Workplace Justice Project** – organizes immigrant workers to win respect for workers' rights and dignity, and innovates ways to expand worker's rights, access opportunity, enforce labor laws, access living wages and paid sick days, health insurance, and organize in the workplace;

**GLOBE (Brooklyn) and PRYDE (Queens)** – combats institutional homophobia, job discrimination and hate crimes, and the harassment, isolation and invisibility of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people in low-income communities of color;

**Youth Power Project** – provides opportunities to engage in sustained, youth-led organizing efforts, as well as to ensure access to higher education; and

**Voter Power Project** – educates and mobilizes tens of thousands of low-income voters each year to participate in the democratic process.

MRNY has successfully fought for hundreds of millions of new dollars in public investment in housing code enforcement, affordable housing creation, the provision of translation and interpretation services at government agencies and public hospitals, public health programs targeting low-income communities of color, and the protection of civil rights. In 2009, MRNY achieved legal and legislative victories that had a lasting, positive impact in low-income communities and delivered vital services to thousands of community members:

- ❖ Won landmark civil rights complaints against the state's seven largest pharmacy chains, requiring translation and interpretation services at 3,000 pharmacies, and passed the *Language Access in Pharmacies Act* to require these services at every chain pharmacy in the city;
- ❖ Organized more than 600 small business owners to engage in state and national debates about the importance of universal health care, paid sick leave and financial reform;
- ❖ Catalyzed \$9 million of public investment to support parental and student leadership inside New York City's schools;
- ❖ Won more than \$9 million in illegally withheld wages and benefits for low-income immigrants and launched innovative, industry-focused labor law enforcement collaborations with the New York State Department of Labor;
- ❖ Launched a Community Workforce Development Program to provide job readiness, placement support, specialized job skills trainings, and small business and worker cooperative incubation;
- ❖ Helped 1,162 adults learn English, develop literacy and computer skills, earn a GED, or become citizens;

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- ❖ Became a citywide leader of the effort to combat hate crimes, organizing forums and mobilizations, designing legislation to improve hate crime reporting, and ensuring implementation of the *Respect for All* school curricula; and
- ❖ Ran a food pantry serving more than 19,000 people and provided assistance in accessing healthcare and public benefits to thousands more.

In an effort to further its mission, MRNY will survey the needs of the small businesses on Roosevelt Avenue, an important commercial corridor that spans several communities in Queens County. Specifically, the Organization will determine what sectors, type of products, number of employees, benefits offered, and cost of leases. Once the survey is completed, MRNY will create a plan of action to address these areas and also highlight the importance of investing in neighborhoods such as Jackson Heights, Corona and Elmhurst, which Roosevelt Avenue runs through.

### The Project

ESD funding will provide general support to conduct a comprehensive study of the small business needs on Roosevelt Avenue. The project will:

- ❖ Create a survey tool to assess the needs of small businesses on Roosevelt Avenue;
- ❖ Survey small businesses on Roosevelt Avenue from 70<sup>th</sup> Street to 110<sup>th</sup> Street and surrounding areas;
- ❖ Create a searchable database of the small businesses surveyed;
- ❖ Draft a report on the key findings from the research and the primary needs of small businesses;
- ❖ Facilitate a forum to present the findings with local elected officials, the Queens Chamber of Commerce, and small business owners; and
- ❖ Encourage small business owners to participate with MRNY on campaigns that are relevant to them, in particular to increase health care access to all workers.

The project will be coordinated by MRNY's deputy director. MRNY, in conjunction with several local small business owners, will develop the survey. MRNY's COO will create the database, and four staff organizers will coordinate the canvassing of small businesses. The co-executive director will supervise the entire project.

With the survey results, the Organization will work with small business leaders to analyze the data and create a plan of action. The findings will be presented in a forum to highlight not only the needs of the small business community in the neighborhoods, but create incentives for financial institutions, governments and others to invest and visit the area.

MRNY will create a searchable database of the businesses in the district and keep track of their progress for years to come. The Organization envisions issuing a report, with recommendations, on the state of small businesses in Queens. The project was started in November 2009 and is expected to be completed in September 2010.

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Upon completion of the project, the Grantee will furnish a final report describing the impact and effectiveness of the project.

Financing Uses	Amount	Financing Sources	Amount	Percent
Salaries and Fringe	\$240,000	ESD Grant	\$125,000	42%
Database	24,000	Organization Equity	175,000	58%
Small Business Forum	6,000			
Publishing	6,000			
Other than Personnel Services	24,000			
Total Project Costs	\$300,000	Total Project Financing	\$300,000	100%

**Statutory Basis – Community Projects Fund:**

The project was reappropriated in the 2010-2011 New York State budget. No residential relocation is required as there are no families or individuals residing on the site.

**Disclosure and Accountability Certifications:**

The Grantee has provided ESDC with the required Disclosure and Accountability Certifications. Grantee's certifications indicate that Grantee has no conflict of interest or good standing violations and, therefore, staff recommends that the Corporation authorize the grant to the Grantee as described in these materials.