

# COMMUNITY GRANTS PROGRAM



## CASE STUDY

### GrowNYC's Environmental Programs Create Rainwater Harvesting and Learning Garden Systems for New York City Residents

GrowNYC was originally created in 1970 as the Council on the Environment of New York City (CENYC) and has since grown into a leading sustainability resource for New Yorkers. GrowNYC provides free and accessible tools and services for anyone in order to improve the city and the environment by recycling, sustainability, nutrition education, gardening, local grocer and farmer support, and by developing environmental education among New York City classrooms and neighborhoods.

Project partner, Gowanus Canal Conservancy (GCC), actively stewards 11 bioswales in Gowanus (Brooklyn, New York) in order to mitigate the combined sewer overflows (CSO) that plague Gowanus Canal. GCC is a community based organization that serves as the environmental steward for the Gowanus Canal Watershed.

#### Challenge

GrowNYC sought to address one of New York City's most pressing water pollution issues during 2015 and 2016 - combined sewer overflows (CSO).

#### Solution

With assistance provided by the New York State Pollution Prevention Institute (NYSP2I) at the Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT), GrowNYC sought to train residents in rainwater harvesting and storm-water management throughout the city to improve overall water quality. GrowNYC conducted two projects to educate people in the community about rainwater harvesting. The goal of both, at Governors Island (2015) and Gowanus Canal (2016), was to inspire residents to create their own harvesting systems at home.

At Governors Island, over a two year period, GrowNYC worked to export their rainwater harvesting infrastructure and educational outreach. GrowNYC also installed a water flow meter for display purposes, reprinted the green infrastructure manual (originally created with NYSP2I funding), and developed a new rainwater harvesting handout designed for children.

In 2015, GrowNYC staff members also installed and maintained infrastructure components of the Governors Island Teaching Garden, provided tours of the space, workshops on rainwater capture, storm water overflow, and fresh water usage, as well as workshops on the benefit of consuming local food versus industrial foods, air pollution, and greenhouse gases.

In 2016, Grow NYC partnered with GCC to capture rainfall at their nursery site. Their goals were to reduce runoff in the Gowanus Canal during storms, harvest this water for the use of nursery plants, and inspire visitors to create their own harvesting systems at home. GCC used a modular water harvesting system so the unit could move to other locations throughout the watershed. This system captured excess rain water to show residents how it's done, as well as to support the growth of the neighborhood farms.

#### CHALLENGE

- GrowNYC sought to address one of New York City's most pressing water pollution issues during 2015 and 2016 - combined sewer overflows

#### SOLUTION

- GrowNYC worked to export their rainwater harvesting infrastructure to local residents
- GrowNYC sought to train residents in rainwater harvesting and storm-water management throughout the city to improve overall water quality

#### RESULTS

- At three separate Governors Island Teaching Garden events, there were a total of 104 attendees. Since the event, the Green Infrastructure Toolkit has received 2,000 visits on the website, along with 1,063 downloads
- The Rainwater harvesting and Gowanus Canal Conservancy (GCC) workshops included: 13 workshops led by GrowNYC, 50 Pollution Prevention GCC Education workshops, 27 Pollution Prevention GCC walking tours, and 69 Pollution Prevention GCC volunteer stewardship events

Gowanus Canal



CONSERVANCY



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## TESTIMONIAL

### Results

GrowNYC held three separate Governors Island Teaching Garden events for a total of 104 attendees. Since the event, the Green Infrastructure Toolkit has been viewed over 2,000 times the website with over 1,000 downloads. Newsletters were sent out by email to 11,941 individuals with a 17.7% open-rate. The pre-surveys soon became a requirement for school registration and 3,000 student pre-surveys were established. GrowNYC staff handed out 450 marketing materials (including flyers and manuals).

The Governors Rainwater Harvesting and GCC workshops included: 13 workshops led by GrowNYC, 50 Pollution Prevention GCC Education workshops (Composting, Native Plant and Tree Stewardship), 27 Pollution Prevention GCC walking tours, and 69 Pollution Prevention GCC volunteer stewardship events. Today, 14,000 students, parents, and others have visited the Gowanus site to learn about how to implement and adopt pollution prevention practices such as collecting rainwater, eating locally, and composting.



Photo Credits: GrowNYC

### Resources

Website

Facebook

Twitter

Instagram

<https://www.grownyc.org/>

<https://www.facebook.com/GrowNYC/>

<https://twitter.com/GrowNYC>

<https://www.instagram.com/grownyc/?hl=en>

"Participants surveyed had an increased rate of knowledge after the event. Additionally, the grant from NYSP2I allowed us to create education materials such as the pamphlet and poster boards that we will continue to use to educate future volunteers and attendees."

- Kate Giessel,

Government Relations and Contracts Manager  
GrowNYC

"The rainwater system, manual and handouts provided by this grant all added value to the Governors Island Teaching Garden, enhancing visitors' experiences. These enhancements will be useful for years to come making the project outcome an excellent one."

- Lenny Librizzi

Former Director of Rainwater Harvesting  
GrowNYC

## NYSP2I PARTNERS

R·I·T

 Rensselaer



University at Buffalo

The State University of New York



New York Manufacturing Extension Partnership

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