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Title: Resilient Vieques Energy Partnership Plan

Competitor Name: Community Through Colors

Organization: Community Through Colors

Organization Contact: Edgar Ruiz (oscar@sailrelief.team)

Organization Web Link: <https://communitythroughcolors.org/>

Organization 9-digit zip code: 89506-0000

Location of Primary Benefits: Vieques, Puerto Rico 00765

Description of Proposed Plan: The partnership between Community Through Colors and Cornell University aims to bolster the Vieques energy grid by combining solar energy with hydrogen fuel cells to create an innovative, resilient, and replicable energy solution. Our mission is to provide the rural and underserved community with clean and equitable power generation through hydrogen and solar to reduce energy burden, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, improve community health, and increase energy efficiency through the development of a microgrid and energy education programs.

[[Link to Video Pitch: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=47196VxiVBA>]]

PROJECT MEMBERS

Edgar Ruiz: Edgar Ruiz has served as the Executive Director of Community Through Colors since 2016, successfully overseeing the implementation of multiple USDA grants and project activities across the Caribbean. He is a military veteran with leadership and mentorship experience, focusing primarily on resilient community development, disaster response, renewable energy, and sustainable agriculture projects. Sr. Ruiz works to develop strong relationships within the communities he works, providing administrative assistance, technical support, and logistical aid to local organizations and individuals. He has led multiple efforts to deploy containerized solar microgrid systems to power clinics, schools, and emergency response technologies in Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria, including the design, development, and deployment of mobile solar trailers to first responders, and currently works as both the lead for local Vieques initiatives and the operations director for international solar organizations.

Beth Straight: Beth Straight joined the Community Through Colors team in 2021 and has since developed new partnerships with local and international organizations, actively recruited volunteers worldwide, tracked project activities under agreement guidelines, accessed federal funding and opportunities to equitably support disadvantaged communities, and enabled capacity growth in all active projects. She brings several years of experience working outreach, managing concurrent operations, and reporting, a complete skill set developed while working several years with Cornell University education programs and biochemistry research groups.

Héctor D. Abruña: Héctor Abruña is the Émile M. Chamot Professor in the Department of Chemistry and Chemical Biology at Cornell University where he leads a research team focusing on the development and characterization of new materials for fuel cells, especially in alkaline media, and battery applications. He was Chair of the Department from 2004-2008 and is currently Director of CABES (Center for Alkaline Based Energy Solutions), emc 2 (Energy Materials Center at Cornell) and the Abruña Energy Initiative. During his 40 years at Cornell, he has mentored over 130 graduate and Post-Doctoral researchers, published over 570 papers and delivered over 675 invited lectures world-wide. His interdisciplinary approach has earned him a national and international reputation in the field of electrochemistry. He is a member of the US National Academy of Sciences and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences as well as a recipient of numerous awards. Prof. Abruña is a native Puerto Rican and continues to support communities in the archipelago, including spearheading bilingual outreach programs in partnership with local universities and institutions to recruit and retain women and underrepresented minorities into science and research.

Other Partners: Edison Engineering