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The Healthy Babies Initiative Awards Six Grants for Cities That Plan to Reduce Neurotoxic Exposures in Babies' Air, Food, and Environments

The winning cities submitted proposals that will equitably improve children's health and promote scalable resilience

WASHINGTON DC — Healthy Babies Bright Futures (HBBF) and the Mayors Innovation Project (MIP) are thrilled to announce the winners of the 2022 Healthy Babies Initiative. Awards were granted to the six cities whose proposals represented their ability to scale and tailor [one of five existing strategies](#) to equitably reduce neurotoxic exposures for babies with resilience co-benefits.

Six cities across the country were selected from an impressive pool of cities ranging from 6,000 to 560,000 residents. The winners will receive grants ranging from \$10,000 to \$20,000, as well as technical assistance to put their plans into action. These projects will each tackle an avenue of neurotoxic exposures to babies: reducing lead exposure and air toxics; increasing access to local, organic produce; or integrating neurotoxic exposure reduction into municipal environmentally preferable purchasing programs.

This year's recipients are:

- **Carlisle, PA** will increase access to healthy food by building a community garden in a large-scale workforce housing subdivision while establishing new pollinator habitat.
- **Holland, MI** will create a toolkit for cities to establish and implement equitable, non-toxic, and climate-friendly procurement policies.
- **Middleton, WI** will support stakeholder engagement and implementation planning necessary to incorporate lead and mold abatement and integrated pest management into a city retrofit program focusing on the decarbonization of affordable housing.
- **Petaluma, CA** will plant 125 native trees to reduce air toxics and promote cooling in a heavily urbanized area. Trees will be planted by a corp of teens being mentored in urban forestry.
- **South Portland, ME** will launch a "100 Resilient Yards" project to change the outdated social norm that values monoculture lawns requiring chemical inputs and instead transitioning peoples' yards to neurotoxic free spaces that support pollinator, vegetable, and rain gardens.



- **Steelton, PA** will build two organic community gardens where all produce will be freely available to community members along with urban agriculture education.

HBBF and MIP are committed to supporting these fantastic initiatives and sharing the learning broadly. In response to common challenges articulated by these proposals, HBBF and MIP will also launch a community of practice this summer to support city-initiated lead education and outreach campaigns for any interested municipality.

“Cities across the country are stepping up to measurably reduce exposures that harm the developing minds of their youngest residents,” said Kyra Naumoff Shields, PhD, HBBF’s Bright Cities Program Director. “These consistent efforts—and the dedicated leaders behind them—are what we absolutely need to provide a more equitable start in life for our leaders of tomorrow.”

“From updating procurement policies to combating food insecurity using municipal land, and beyond, U.S. mayors are working hard to keep their youngest residents safe from neurotoxic exposures,” said MIP Managing Director Katya Spear. “This cohort of cities will learn from each other and from past participants as they advance their innovative projects, creating new replicable models for other cities to learn from.”

One out of six children in the United States suffer from a neurodevelopmental disability, and there is strong evidence that links chemical exposures to neurodevelopmental delays. Though exposures to chemicals that harm the brain — from drinking water, food, air, soil and consumer products — are not the sole cause for these lifelong learning and developmental delays, they are among the most preventable.

About The Mayor’s Innovation Project: The Mayors Innovation Project (mayorsinnovation.org) is a national learning network for mayors committed to shared prosperity, environmental sustainability, and efficient democratic government.

About Healthy Babies Bright Futures: HBBF (hbbf.org) is an organization working to create and support initiatives that measurably reduce babies’ exposures to neurotoxic chemicals in the first one thousand days of development.

[Learn more about the 2021 Healthy Babies Initiative Cohort here.](#)