

PROFILE: Catalyst Miami

A Coastal Adaptation Case Story: Catalyst Miami's Community Leadership on the Environment, Advocacy, and Resilience (CLEAR) Program

CATALYST MIAMI

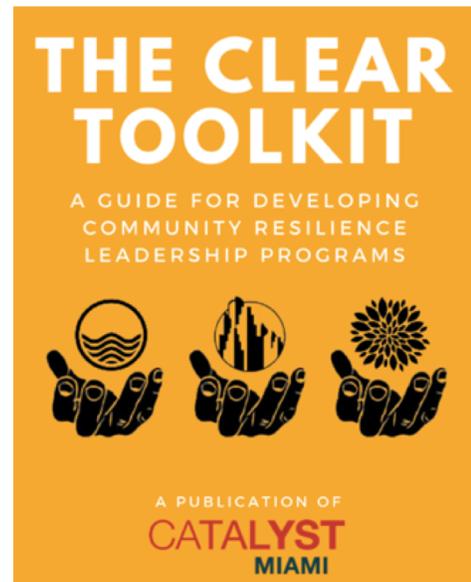
BACKGROUND:

Blue waters, warm weather, and vibrant culture.

Sea level rise, extreme heat, and displacement.

Climate change is altering the lens through which we view our world. In South Florida, the most iconic features of the region are threatened by climate change. In Miami-Dade County, most development is concentrated along the coastline and is at high risk from flooding and storm surge due to sea level rise and hurricanes. Proposed efforts to build more densely packed urban areas further inland and move infrastructure out of the path of sea level rise are likely to displace current residents in these areas, many of which are low-income communities of color. The ability to “move out of harm’s way” is tightly linked to income and wealth. These disparities are strong in Miami-Dade, one of the poorest counties in the United States.

Since 1996, Catalyst Miami has served the communities of Miami-Dade County with the mission to “identify and collectively solve issues adversely affecting low-wealth communities.” Climate change—both its impacts and proposed solutions—are having disproportionate impacts on these communities. Catalyst Miami has developed programs to address these complex challenges by elevating community-raised issues. A central part of the organization’s work is “making community voices heard and community expertise used in decision making” at both the local and state levels. The organization’s climate and community-focused work includes grassroots leadership and advocacy trainings and educational workshops.



PROGRAMS:

Catalyst Miami's CLEAR (Community Leadership on the Environment, Advocacy, and Resilience) program is a 10-week leadership training for community members to learn about climate change, understand its impacts on their communities, and discuss potential solutions. Climate change is discussed within the context of other issues facing the communities, such as poverty, racial discrimination, housing, health, and transportation. At the end of the 10-week program, graduates develop a proposal for a climate change project they would like to implement in their own communities. If the proposal is accepted, the project is eligible for funding from Catalyst Miami. The program aims to build advocacy and community organizing skills. Catalyst Miami developed the CLEAR toolkit to share strategies, successes, and lessons learned from the program. The toolkit provides activities and details elements that enable community members to participate.

“A primary goal is making community voices heard and community expertise used in decision making.”

- Zelalem Adefris, Catalyst Miami

Catalyst Miami also facilitates a Neighborhood-Based Resilience initiative that focuses on increasing community participation and engagement in preparing for and recovering from disasters. The organization has started to integrate climate change into their financial savings program by encouraging community members to save tax returns to invest in preparedness measures for hurricanes. The Disaster Preparedness Matched Savings Program was created to help low-income families build financial stability to better withstand extreme hurricanes and other disasters, offering a 1-to-1 match of savings.

Catalyst Miami's programs take climate change education to the next level by giving the power and resources to the community so that they may implement projects and strategies most relevant to them. Instead of adaptation projects being done to their communities, these projects are being facilitated and created by the communities of Miami-Dade County.

PARTNERS:

The CLEO Institute
The Miami Climate Alliance
The Miami Foundation
Florida International University
University of Miami
City of Miami Office of Resilience
Miami-Dade County Office of Resilience
Miami-Dade County Public Schools

FUNDING SOURCES

The Carrie Meek Foundation
Howard Johnson Foundation
Kresge Foundation
The Miami Foundation

REFERENCES & ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

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PROJECT CONTACT



Zelalem Adefris
Vice President of Policy and Advocacy
Catalyst Miami
Zelalema@catalystmiami.org

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