WHAT WE'VE DONE SO FAR

The Cancer Free Economy Network (CFEN) began in 2014 when NGO’s, universities, and health and environmental funders came together to work on solving the complex issue of toxic chemicals. CFEN was founded on the premise that transforming an entrenched system requires a concerted effort from a wide set of actors across various sectors. We believe that there are many excellent strategies, tools, organizations and leaders already doing good work, and that our work within CFEN can help to create the changes we wish to see.

We started with defining the system to change (toxic chemicals), developing shared principles and long term goals, and identifying places to intervene. Allies working on different parts of the problem developed a broad, shared understanding of the system and dynamics causing the current problems associated with toxic chemicals and health.

This early mapping work has informed both our structure and our chosen strategies.
In 2016, CFEN created an asset map to enable Network participants to build on expertise and resources available within the Network and track the Network’s growth. The project also showed how CFEN is impacting member organizations and the communities they work in by capturing qualitative data on the value of participating in CFEN. Current members have access to this interactive online map and find it valuable to connect with other allies along similar strategic focus areas, geographic locations and collaborative interests.
COMMUNICATIONS HUB

CHANGING THE STORY ABOUT HOW WE PREVENT CANCER AND PROTECT OUR COMMUNITIES

The Communications Hub assists the network - and the broader movement - in understanding how to be as effective and impactful as possible in our communications strategies.

KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Partnered with the Lightbox Collaborative and Lake Research to conduct a national survey, linguistic analysis, and focus groups, culminating in the development of a Messaging and Communications Guide, “How to Talk About Cancer and Toxic Chemicals.” The guide has been instrumental in supporting network members and their partners in creating consistent and effective messaging that activates people to take action against cancer-causing chemicals;
- Disseminated our learnings through trainings and webinars for network members and allies.
- Working with the Center for Story-Based Strategy to develop compelling narratives around cancer and disease prevention through an environmental/toxics lens; and
- Partnering with Story of Stuff Project to create shareable assets to engage the general public.

HEALTH & SCIENCE NODE

BUILDING A BASE OF COMMITTED HEALTH PROFESSIONALS, SCIENTISTS AND CANCER ADVOCATES

The Health & Science Node is the “go to place” in the network for scientific data, fact sheets and customized information about chemicals and cancer.

KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

1. Recruiting Influential Allies:
   
   Dr. Margaret Kripke, Co-Chair of the 2010 Presidential Panel assessing the war on cancer for President Obama, was recruited to serve as an ambassador to the most well regarded and largest professional research association.
HEALTH & SCIENCE NODE - Continued

As a result of Dr. Kripke’s diplomacy, there was a break-out panel at the 2017 annual meeting of the American Association of Cancer Researchers (AACR), which was attended by 150 members of the Association. Thanks to the positive feedback from those present, AACR then agreed to host a full 2-day meeting on environmental causes of cancer. This is significant because, while a host of scientists from Harvard, UCSF, MD Anderson, and UMass are involved in CFEN and believe the science that says up to one-third of all cancers are caused by routine exposure to low levels of chemicals, this is still a minority view within the scientific and medical community. Until this changes, all the other Nodes/Hubs will be faced with a headwind of skepticism from those they are trying to influence.

2. Communications:

Building on the multi-phase research effort led by CFEN’s Communications hub to change the public-facing narrative about cancer and toxic chemicals, the Health Node supported research and messaging on cancer/environment in the SW Pennsylvania region, where air pollution and other environmental hazards subject people who live there with high cancer risk relative to other cities. This research was turned into a supplemental messaging guide and training for advocates in that region.

3. Champion-building:

In 2018, our Node piloted “collaborative agreements” with three health-focused organizations to augment -- and in one case initiate -- their activity on environmental health links with cancer. With the National Medical Association (NMA) -- the largest organization representing African American physicians and their patients in the US -- we catalyzed a President’s letter published in its peer-reviewed journal, and supported NMA leaders in developing and passing a policy resolution in support of action on chemicals that contribute to cancer. We worked with the Bladder Cancer Advocacy Network (BCAN) to add environmental risk factors to their outreach and education program through several activities: a webinar on environmental links to bladder cancer, which reached several hundred BCAN members; a literature review and annotated bibliography on pollutants linked with bladder cancer, and a fact sheet for a lay audience -- all of which are now available on BCAN’s website. BCAN is excited about continuing the collaboration with additional webinars and engagement of their members who are increasingly aware of and concerned about environmental contributors to bladder cancer.
HEALTH & SCIENCE NODE - Continued

4. Convening cancer leaders:

The Health & Science Node secured a commitment from the American Association of Cancer Research (AACR) to convene a stand-alone multi-day meeting on environmental carcinogenesis: pathways to prevention -- the first meeting of its kind that AACR will have held -- scheduled for June 2019. Health/Science Node member Dr. Margaret Kripke is a co-chair of the meeting, and other members are involved in planning, presentations, and shaping publications.

5. Innovative workshop series:

With input from cancer biologists, toxicologists, chemicals testing experts and designers of green chemicals and safer materials, the Health & Science Node developed a proposal for a series of workshops to Leverage Cancer Research for the Design of Safer Materials and Products. The workshops envision connecting researchers from these fields and identify research priorities for scaling a transition away from toxic chemicals. We are thrilled that two Boards within the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine (NASEM) have expressed enthusiasm for hosting this process, which would bring high level expertise, credibility and impact to the work.

6. Informative Factsheets:

Created factsheets for each of CFEN’s seven priority categories of chemicals that can cause cancer in an effort to easily disseminate this important information.

MARKET SHIFT NODE
CREATING INCENTIVES FOR SAFER ALTERNATIVES AND BUILDING DEMAND IN THE MARKETPLACE

Market Shift Node is focused on transforming business to reduce exposures in impacted communities by changing the underlying incentives for companies to shift away from seven classes of cancer-causing chemicals to safer alternatives.

KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

1. Community Pilot Projects:

The Market Shift Node developed a seminal on-the-ground pilot project with Building Power Node in order to support communities most impacted by exposure to toxic chemicals. They chose two focus areas, one with the CA Healthy Nail Salon Collaborative working with mainly immigrant Vietnamese
workers and salon owners, and the other with Homewood Children’s Village to support child care providers in a low income African American community in Pittsburgh, PA. In Pittsburgh, one hundred community members completed the Children’s Environmental Health Network’s (CEHN) Eco-Healthy Child Care Curriculum (EHCC) and eighteen were trained as trainers in that curriculum.

2. Chemicals, Cancer and the Economy Training:

The Market Shift and Building Power Nodes created tested and delivered “Chemicals, Cancer and the Economy”, a multi-disciplinary training curriculum. See Building Power Accomplishments for more info.

3. PFAS Working Group:

Market Shift’s PFAS working group has focused on poly and perfluoroalkyl substances, used in a wide range of products. They are known for their remarkable persistence in our environment and our bodies. To date they have:

- Published two fact sheets (Purchasing fact sheet and Hazard Summary) targeted to public and private institutional purchasers, industry stakeholders (brands and suppliers of compostable food service ware products), and local and state government officials.
- Supported brands by identifying viable PFAS-free alternatives for paper and paperboard coated products as well as for rigid, recyclable alternatives.
- Highlighted supply chain challenges and potential solutions for PFAS-free compostable food ware by convening institutional purchasers, scientists, product manufacturers and certifying bodies for discussion.
- Disseminated resources through CFEN member websites, the Sustainable Packaging Coalition’s Impact conference, and webinar.
- Advanced safer alternatives to PFAS in fire fighting foam (technically referred to as Aqueous Fire Fighting Foam (AFFF)), in partnership with Toxic-Free Future and King County (Seattle, WA) by:
  - Drafting GreenScreen certification for AFFF products that meet safer chemical criteria;
  - King County sent a letter on its behalf, and five other institutional purchasers as well, to 24 manufacturers of AFFF;
  - Clean Production Action contacted 16 manufacturers of AFFF;
  - Two of the 10 manufacturers agreed to pilot their PFAS-free AFFF products according to GreenScreen Certified; and
  - Initiated GreenScreen hazard assessments of six chemicals commonly used in PFAS-free AFFF products.
MARKET SHIFT NODE - Continued

4. Safer Alternatives Accomplishments:

- Supported the SAFER States Network to convene a gathering in Tampa, FL of leaders from NGOs and foundations working on PFAS, leading to the launch of a strategic, coordinated, and integrated PFAS campaign.
- Created model legislation on food packaging and introduced it in five states, securing passage of two policies in Washington State to eliminate PFAS in paper food packaging and in firefighting foam.
- Trained the purchasing and sustainability staff of a Seattle-based food coop chain on the hazards of PFAS in food contact and availability of alternatives, and developed a plan with the Mind the Store campaign to get leading retailers, including Target, Amazon, Kroger, and others to include PFAS in their chemical policies.
- Collaborated with the Center for Environmental Health, City of San Francisco, and Responsible Purchasing Network to identify products that commonly contain PFAS in food packaging and disposable food service ware, and a wide range of commercially available alternatives to PFAS in these products.
- Initiated “GreenScreen” assessment discussions with several manufacturers researching and/or producing alternatives to PFAS in food service ware and packaging. The assessments provide a rigorous evaluation of alternatives to ensure that they are not equally or more toxic than the chemical they replace.

5. Supply Project:

Market Shift’s Supply Project conducted interviews and group discussions from CEOs of chemical supply companies to identify the obstacles and barriers to transitioning to safer alternatives where they exist. These interviews resulted in findings that will help inform our strategies and how we engage with these companies and their immediate customers moving forward. Findings were presented to network members and allies in a webinar.

BUILDING POWER NODE

SUPPORTING GRASSROOTS ACTION BY/FOR PEOPLE MOST AT RISK FROM CANCER-CAUSING CHEMICALS

The Building Power Node is a unique collaboration of leaders from labor unions, Latino environmental justice organizations, and immigrant worker advocates connecting disproportionately impacted communities (most directly and heavily exposed to toxic chemicals that cause cancer) with mainstream environmental health advocacy organizations.
BUILDING POWER NODE - Continued

KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Refined and tested the “Chemicals, Cancer and the Economy” training curriculum featuring seven chemical classes and information on health risks, with several grassroots organizations, planned a two and a half day train-the-trainer course for 18 advocate-trainers, and conducted 11 introductory presentations. The training has been translated into Spanish and soon Vietnamese.
- Hosted a community convergence in Pittsburgh, featuring a toxic tour looking at micro-local approaches to chemical exposure prevention;
- Developed four pilot training projects with Wind of the Spirit, Make the Road New York, A. Philip Randolph Institute, and NDLO.
- Developed factsheets on toxic exposure to mobilize Southeast Los Angeles (SELA) residents to comment on the draft environmental impact report on the I-710 corridor project, resulting in 631 comments and additional verbal and online comments collected through social media.
- Supported the development of a bilingual social media campaigns to raise awareness of toxics and health issues facing SELA communities.

POLICY & LEGAL HUB

APPLYING ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE PRINCIPLES AND PROTECTING PEOPLE FROM DANGEROUS CHEMICALS

The Policy & Legal Hub team brings its expertise to the center of CFEN strategic discussions. The Hub’s leaders produced a broad suite of relevant, actionable and ambitious projects that have the potential to significantly increase the Network’s impact, and have connected all CFEN Nodes with policy & legal experts.

KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Provides the Network with a monthly ‘digest’ of toxics-related policy and legal news, via the monthly CFEN newsletter.
- Surveyed CFEN participants to identify their policy and legal needs and priorities, to inform the hub’s working agenda.
- Conducting a comprehensive landscape analysis of policy and legal efforts to:
  1. Reduce racial disparities in cancer rates;
  2. Enforce existing chemical safety laws;
  3. Address the impacts of toxics produced by the energy industry;
  4. Promote transparency in the toxics industry; and
  5. Conduct an analysis of cancer advocacy group involvement in policy efforts to strengthen our democracy.