

Working to Make a Visible Difference in Communities

Fiscal Year 2015 Annual Action Plan

In support of the Cross-Agency Strategy, Working to Make a Visible Difference in Communities, this Annual Action Plan includes four transformative cross-agency actions the Agency will perform during FY 2015. Through these actions, we will better support the efforts of environmentally overburdened, underserved, and economically distressed communities (including tribes), with a particular focus on those that are vulnerable, such as children. These actions aim to focus the wide array of Agency and other federal resources to help these communities proactively address endemic and emerging environmental challenges in ways that build long-term sustainability.

1. Work through the Regions and across Programs to provide coordinated and targeted technical expertise and resources to 30-50 environmentally overburdened, underserved, and economically distressed communities (including where we have established relationships) to help address environmental and public health challenges, in ways that support local economic development, community empowerment, and leverage other federal agency resources. (Leads: Office of Policy and Region 10)

- A. By December 15, 2014, each Region, with the assistance of Programs, will identify 3 to 5 communities with multiple environmental problems for prioritized focus.
- B. By March 15, 2015, each Region, with the assistance of Programs, will support each selected community by:
 - i. Identifying environmental and public health challenges and goals in consultation with the community and local leaders; and
 - ii. Engaging relevant expertise and resources at EPA and other federal agencies to meet needs of community.
- C. By September 30, 2015, Regions and Programs will provide a status update, including lessons learned to date on implementing and achieving the plans and goals identified in this action, and brief summaries of expected improvements in these communities.

2. Build a new Community Resource Network (Leads: Office of Policy, OSWER, OECA, Region 4, and Region 7)

The Agency will build upon existing networking efforts to create a single agency-wide community resource network, with representation from Programs and Regions, which will, among other things, focus on the following actions:

- A. Support this Communities FY 15 Action Plan and build upon the community pilots and lessons learned from the FY12/13 Community KPI efforts, the former EJ Showcase Communities, and other similar efforts;
- B. Continue to share lessons learned across Programs and Regions and identify best practices and tools that should be replicated and potentially scaled-up for use in Regions and relevant programs;
- C. Identify and align, with modification if needed, community-focused resources (including grants) from across the Agency in order to make them more accessible and useful to communities; and

D. Create a user-friendly pathway to allow the placement of data from our communities work onto the GeoPlatform. This will allow for improved coordination among Programs and Regions so that the Agency can better serve the needs of communities.

3. Empower more communities to improve environmental outcomes by providing them with monitoring data on environmental conditions in their communities, and technical assistance on how to analyze, interpret, and leverage the data to address environmental problems. (Lead: Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance, Region 4)

A. By December 30, 2014, EPA will task a workgroup under NEJAC to advise Community Resource Network on community best practices, lessons learned and needs around monitoring, including useable formats for monitoring data.

B. By September 30, 2015, EPA will seek to incorporate the use of monitoring tools (e.g., air or water monitors) into negotiated enforcement settlements or EPA-issued permits in 1-2 environmentally overburdened communities per region. Programs and Regions will consider, as appropriate, the possibility of including monitors in enforcement agreements or permits in communities identified in Action 1. Regional/HQ Next Generation Compliance teams will help identify settlements and permits that are good candidates for the inclusion of monitoring requirements, and design model monitoring requirements for inclusion in enforcement agreements or permits.

C. By September 30, 2015, headquarters Programs and Regions will endeavor, as resources allow, to provide technical assistance directly or through contract vehicles (e.g., Technical Assistance Services for Communities (TASC) contract) to the communities in which monitors have been included in agreements or permits, in order to promote greater understanding of the significance of the monitoring data. The Community Resource Network will be important in helping design outreach and communications materials that will help guide communities on using the monitoring data. EPA will also collaborate with our State, local, and Tribal partners, as needed, to facilitate the successful implementation of the monitoring tools in these communities.

4. Leverage existing websites at EPA (Local Government Environmental Assistance Network; Community Action for Environmental Health) and HUD (National Resource Network) to better connect communities to EPA and other available Federal resources; and design and deliver an interactive, web-based tool to help communities apply green infrastructure approaches to solve local problems. (Leads: Region 1, Office of Policy, ORD, and OW)

A. By April 1, 2015, Region 1 and OP will finalize development of single landing page for communities on EPA's website.

B. By September 30, 2015, ORD, OP and OW will design a prototype of an interactive tool that will help communities with ready access to EPA's resources and tools related to green infrastructure/stormwater management/integrated planning, and evaluate feasibility of companion tool for sustainable materials management.