

## Background

In June 1999, the Federal Interagency Working Group on Environmental Justice (IWG) began to develop the concept of an Integrated Federal Interagency Environmental Justice Action Agenda (Action Agenda) as a way of incorporating environmental justice in all policies, programs, and activities of Federal agencies.<sup>1</sup> Finalized in May 2000, the Action Agenda seeks to build dynamic and proactive partnerships that access the initiatives and resources of Federal agencies to improve the quality of life of minority and low-income communities that suffer disproportionate environmental impacts. These populations may include indigenous/tribal communities. The Action Agenda has four key components:

- Promote greater coordination and cooperation among Federal agencies;
- Make government more accessible and responsive to communities;
- Initiate environmental justice demonstration projects to develop integrated local problem-solving models for addressing community livability issues; and
- Ensure integration of environmental justice in policies, programs, and activities of Federal agencies.

A major focus of the Action Agenda in 2000 targeted the initiation and implementation of fifteen environmental justice interagency demonstration projects. These projects are using a collaborative problem-solving model to address a range of environmental justice issues taking place all across the United States and Puerto Rico. To better assess the value of the partnership approach being used in these projects, the EPA Office of Policy, Economics, and Innovation's Evaluation Support Division is undertaking an evaluation of this emerging collaborative model. The evaluation will consist of a series of demonstration project case studies that will be used to develop a deeper understanding of: -

- the effectiveness of multi-stakeholder collaborative partnerships to address environmental justice issues;
- the effectiveness of the Federal Interagency Approach as a component of these partnerships;<sup>2</sup> and
- key factors contributing to project success and challenges.

This effort should prove valuable on many different levels. First, the case studies will provide much needed data to Federal agencies on how to improve partnerships in the future and enhance their role in these partnerships. Second, the research will lend insight into the actions and activities that prove valuable to those projects selected for review. In addition, the case studies may even assist current project partners to fashion solutions to barriers that may be hindering project success. Finally, case studies will produce a template or evaluation framework that

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<sup>1</sup> The Federal Interagency Working Group on Environmental Justice (IWG) is responsible for ensuring that environmental justice is effectively incorporated into the policies, programs, and activities of Federal agencies. The IWG is chaired by the Environmental Protection Agency with formal representatives from eleven Federal agencies. To learn more see <http://es.epa.gov/oeca/main/ej/iwg/index.html>.

<sup>2</sup> The Federal Interagency Approach is the coordinated effort on behalf of federal agencies to more effectively leverage and provide resources to minority and low-income communities shouldering a disproportionate share of environmental burdens.

individual projects, as well as others seeking to apply this collaborative model, can use to complement their own self-evaluation efforts in the future.

This Evaluation Strategy describes the Evaluation Team's Guiding Principles for Evaluation, the Evaluation Framework, and other additional information related to the evaluation. The Evaluation Strategy was developed with input from members of EPA's National Environmental Justice Advisory Council, project participants, agency managers, and practitioners experienced in program evaluation.<sup>3</sup> The IWG Evaluation Team believes that through careful consultation and involvement of project participants in the evaluation effort, the results may prove valuable to a wide-range of audiences, including projects partners, communities, industry, and Federal, State, Tribal and local governments.

The Evaluation Strategy is a working document and is periodically updated to reflect changes in the Guiding Principles, Evaluation Framework, Timeline, etc. If you have any questions regarding this document or you would like to learn more, please contact Eric Marsh by email ([marsh.eric@epa.gov](mailto:marsh.eric@epa.gov)), or phone (202-260-2782).

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<sup>3</sup> Program evaluation is a systematic way to learn from past experience by assessing how well a program is working.