> # Working to Make a Visible Difference in Communities
> ## Fiscal Year 2016 Annual Action Plan

In support of the Cross-Agency Strategy, Working to Make a Visible Difference in Communities, this Annual Action Plan includes four tasks for FY 2016. These tasks build on and complete efforts in the FY2015 action plan. Through these actions, we will better support the efforts of communities, especially those that are environmentally overburdened, underserved, and economically distressed (including Tribal communities and indigenous peoples), in ways that support children's health, resiliency, local economic development, community empowerment, and leverage other Federal agency resources. The only new focus area in this year's action plan is communicating the value and outcomes of EPA's work in communities.

1. **Continue to provide coordinated and targeted technical expertise and resources to the 50 focus communities to help address environmental and public health challenges, and identify lessons learned and best practices that will guide the agencies work in communities going forward. (Leads: Office of Policy and Region 10)**

   A. Continue implementation of workplans developed with focus communities in FY2015.
   B. Work with NPMs and programs to understand and convey the availability and flexibility of resources (including contract dollars, access to contract mechanisms, grants, funds, or staff time) to support new and ongoing work in the 50 focus communities in FY 2016.
   C. Help communities secure resources from other Federal partners to continue or implement initial work done using EPA resources (e.g., Federal Interagency Working Group on Environmental Justice). Ensure all communities are aware of the range of relevant federal funding opportunities, offering training such as webinars and sessions at existing conferences.
   D. By September 30, 2016, Regions and Programs will provide a final report that documents the key lessons and best practices learned from this effort, provides examples of the resources leveraged and visible improvements made in these communities, and identifies recommendations that will guide the Agency's communities work in the future.

2. **Support community-based work agency wide through the Community Resource Network and Agency accountability mechanisms (Leads: Office of Policy, OSWER, OECA, Region 4, and Region 7)**

The Agency will build on successful creation of the Community Resource Network (CRN) in FY2015 and will focus on the following actions:

   A. Continue to share lessons learned across Programs and Regions and identify best practices and tools that should be replicated and potentially scaled-up in Regions and relevant programs. By September 30, 2016, consider efforts under tasks 1.D, 2.A and other CRN work to provide policy recommendations EPA can adopt to best support all communities' efforts to address environmental and public health challenges.
   B. By March, 2016, select two best practices from 2.A that will be applied and evaluated in Regions and relevant programs in FY 16, the results of which will inform development of recommendations in 2.A.

C. Work with the National Program Managers to incorporate support for community-based work into the FY 2017 Addendums to the FY 2016-2017 National Program Manager Guidances, and seek opportunities to do so in other institutional accountability mechanisms.

D. By September 2016, create a long term operating and management plan for sustaining the Community Resource Network over time.

E. By September 2016, conduct at least two EPA staff trainings to build greater capacity and expertise for community-based work. Trainings will include community involvement core competencies such as: Conflict management, cultural competency, democratic collaborative decision making, situational assessment, environmental justice, technical assistance best practices, working with tribal/indigenous people, collaborative leadership, and public involvement.

F. By June 2016, building on the work of the CRN Measures Team, EPA will complete development of a reporting system/database tool based upon the "Flexible Framework for Measurement of EPA's Community-Based Initiatives." Priority will be placed on use of existing databases and reporting systems to minimize creation of new information collection burdens on EPA staff. The Measures Team will coordinate across NPMs and Regions to collect and highlight community level data such as project outcomes leveraged resources, partnerships, geospatial maps, grants, technical assistance and training, community feedback, and other community support activities.

G. Improve the accessibility of federal and state resources for communities through policy, training, facilitation, and tools to better connect communities to the multitude of agency and other federal resources.
      i. By May 1, 2016, finalize the second phase of the community resources webpage;
      ii. By September 30, 2016, deliver GIWiz 2.0 and initiate the Waste Management wizard.

3. **Support more communities in their efforts 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. EPA will seek to incorporate the use of monitoring tools into EPA negotiated enforcement settlements and EPA-issued permits and encourage monitoring tools in state-issued permits, in at least two, and up to five, environmentally burdened communities per Region, which may include MVD community projects. As part of the Next Generation Compliance initiative, OECA will ask the Regions semi-annually about Next Gen settlements that incorporate monitoring. OECA has also developed a NPDES Compendium of Next Gen Examples, which includes permit examples, and is in the process of creating Compendiums for the CAA and RCRA. We will update these Compendiums at least once annually by sharing them with Regions and state media associations to find updated examples of permits, settlements, and rules that incorporate Next Gen Compliance.

B. The Agency will continue its efforts to promote greater understanding of the opportunity for, and significance of the monitoring data to communities, including communities

where monitors are included in settlement agreements or permits, by providing technical assistance and support directly or through contract vehicles (e.g., TASC) to these communities; and by building partnerships with external organizations (e.g., universities) to support environmental education and citizen science tools. EPA has asked NEJAC for feedback on the format of monitoring data and how it can be best utilized by communities. Their advice and recommendations will help to guide Agency policies and approaches.

C. Leverage the work of the Community Resource Network to design outreach and communications materials, and training that will help guide communities in using and interpreting monitoring data; and collaborate with our State, local, and Tribal Partners, as needed, to facilitate the successful implementation of monitoring tools in these communities; and pilot the training or technical assistance efforts in two overburdened communities by mid-FY16. The Community Resource Network will also be provided with the NEJAC's advice and recommendations on how EPA can best provide environmental data in a way that is a meaningful and relevant to communities and empowers them to improve environmental conditions in their communities.

D. Depending on availability of funding/resources, EPA will purchase air and water monitoring equipment, support citizen science tools for overburdened communities, and develop the legal and policy structures to loan sensor and monitoring equipment to communities. Regions will then provide communities with sensors along with technical guidance on their appropriate use. OECA will continue to work with ORD on the development of monitoring technologies and share lessons learned from the deployment of monitors.

4. **Tell the stories of EPA making a visible difference in communities internally and externally. (Leads: Office of Policy, Office of Public Affairs, and Region 1)**

A. Collaborate with OPA and regional public affairs directors to ensure proactive and coordinated efforts to tell the stories of MVD focus communities.
B. Use a broad suite of communications channels (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, video, conferences, Rotary club meetings, schools events, etc.) to get our messages to specific audiences in an effective manner. Products will feature strong visual elements, such as photographs, story maps (using data from GeoPlatform and Geo Grants), charts, etc.
C. Target media and community-organizations that provide outreach specifically to underserved and overburdened communities to amplify releases and announcements.
D. Share results from community-based work, failures as well as successes and lessons learned, internally and externally (via the CRN, brown-bags, all-hands, webinars, conferences, blog posts, etc.) to increase awareness and inform future efforts.
E. Recruit local officials, community group representatives and other third party spokespeople to tell stories of EPA making a visible difference to external and internal audiences.
F. Consult with external stakeholders, with a focus on community-based organizations to better understand messages and methods of communication that both reach and resonate with target audiences.