CASE

Cleveland Air Toxics Pilot Project

Challenge:

Air toxics are not as well known as pollutants such as ozone and particulates. Yet hundreds of these pollutants contribute to asthma and cancer, especially in urban areas. Regulations have achieved only partial success in reducing air toxics. For example, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) does not regulate indoor air quality. Thus, further progress will require voluntary as well as regulatory actions to cut emissions from diverse sources such as homes and schools (by eliminating exposure to secondhand tobacco smoke, radon, and other indoor pollutants), traffic congestion, diesel fleets and many others. Community-based approaches are essential for evaluating and prioritizing the best opportunities to reduce air toxics in a more integrated way.

Result:

EPA launched a nationwide pilot dialogue in Cleveland, Ohio in cooperation with the City of Cleveland and the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency. A multi-stakeholder group facilitated by the Consensus Building Institute sorted through information about the sources and risks associated with air toxics and reached consensus on a series of actions including retrofitting school buses, inventorying local toxic emissions and improving indoor air quality in schools. Local businesses, environmental advocates, and citizens are now managing the initiative and continue to work together to implement their action plan, while Cleveland's experience is serving as a model for other communities to address air toxics.

Participants

Alcoa
American Lung Association of Ohio
BP Products North America Inc.
Clean Air Conservancy
Cleveland Air Pollution Advisory Committee
Cleveland Department of Public Health
Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority
Cleveland Municipal School District
Cuyahoga Community College
Earth Day Coalition
Environmental Health Watch
First Energy
Neighborhood Centers Association
Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency
Ohio Air Quality Development Authority
Ohio Environmental Protection Agency
Ohio Public Interest Research Group
RPM/DayGlo
Sierra Club
Neighborhoods of Slavic Village, St. Clair Superior, Tremont
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

FACILITATORS

Patrick Field, Consensus Building Institute
Sandra Kaufman, Cleveland State University
Juliana Birkhoff, RESOLVE (Evaluator)

Issues

The Clean Air Act of 1990 identifies 188 substances as "air toxics" that may cause cancer or other serious health or environmental effects. These substances are found indoors and out, come from vehicles and buildings and result from industrial production, transportation and household activities. Air toxics tend to be found in varying mixes and concentrations on a very local basis and they are complicated and expensive to monitor and analyze.

Because of these challenges, in 1999 and 2000, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) sought to pilot new community-based approaches to identifying and addressing air toxics issues. EPA selected Cleveland, Ohio as the first pilot project city and committed support for analyzing the issues, facilitating a working group and funding pilot actions designed to reduce air toxics. The pilot was designed to test whether a locally driven, voluntary program could achieve three goals:

- **Reduce air toxics in a relatively short time frame**
- **Build capacity in the community to sustain and expand reduction activities in the future**
- **Create a model for action that can be replicated in other communities across the country**

Process

Before formal launch of the project, EPA laid the groundwork for a well-informed process. A report prepared for EPA identified 12 toxic "risk-drivers" that would provide benefits if they could be reduced. The report summarized available studies and information on air toxics for both indoor and outdoor sources and arrived at several preliminary findings regarding this short list of air toxics of concern.

The EPA team also prepared a detailed matrix outlining the various kinds of risk reduction projects that could be undertaken. It provided information on what these projects could achieve, why those results were important, and the costs, benefits, and potential resources available for the projects.

Concurrently, the facilitation team conducted a convening assessment to identify potential participants and familiarize them with the project. Based on this, a 30-member Working Group was established. Over the course of a year and half, the Working Group met monthly, reviewed the data provided and set priorities among actions that could reduce air toxics. Members of the Working Group began implementing some of the identified actions.

After about a year, the Working Group transitioned to local management through a cooperative agreement between EPA and the Northern Ohio chapter of the American Lung Association. The Working Group decided to expand the project to allow for future growth, and recognized this with a new name: the Cleveland Clean Air Century Campaign. The campaign was launched at a high-profile event in October of 2002.

Results

Six months into the project and before its formal conclusion, the Working Group spawned its first project – a joint effort between the Greater Cleveland Rapid Transit Administration (RTA) and BP. RTA retrofitted small buses serving the two participating neighborhoods to use ultra-low sulfur diesel fuel, cutting particulate emissions.

A year later, Working Group members were implementing actions identified by the Group, including school bus retrofits, household hazardous waste collection, indoor air quality improvements in schools, a local toxics emissions inventory, highway diesel fuel for off-road use, pollution prevention at auto refinishing shops, reduction of second-hand smoke exposure, and electroplaters toxics reductions.

The Cleveland project has been well documented through its stages, including a third-party evaluation. The project is considered a model for how other cities and town can use an integrated, community-based approach to address diverse and diffuse sources of air toxics.

Scientific/Technical Obstacles and Actions

OBSTACLE	ACTION
Lack of consistent, comprehensive data on sources of air toxics in pilot project neighborhoods	Consultant prepared review of available data and identified "risk drivers" for Working Group Review
Varying levels of technical expertise	Use of action-oriented analyses prepared for the Working Group
Risk of "paralysis by analysis"	Articulation of and buy-in on goals that included focus on early action

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