

Community Forum Session: Initiating Action

Facilitated by: Monica Robinson

**Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Environmental Justice Collaborative Problem Solving Model**  
**Topic: Illegal Dumping**

**Element 1: Issue Identification, Community Vision, and Strategic Goal Setting**

Issue identification

- Illegal dumping by community members.
- Many people in the neighborhood are first time homeowners and unfamiliar with the trash system and other services from the city; or they refuse to pay for these services.

Community vision

How will the community discuss issues and pull together to move forward?

- ➔ Establish ground rules, motivate people, identify barriers to participation, structure meetings

Goals and envision solutions – Use action keywords. Set the scene and structure to solve problems. One thing to keep in mind is that not everyone has transportation.

**Element 2: Community Capacity-Building and Leadership Development**

Get regular meeting attendance/get people interested

Safety – many do not feel comfortable going to a meeting at dark

Follow-through is important. Set (and repeatedly state) goals to people using calls, emails, texts, etc. Know the community and how they obtain knowledge (i.e. are there a lot of illiterate people?). Build on existing partnerships and create new ones. Hold people accountable.

What information is needed to start addressing an issue?

- Information on laws, policies, and penalties.
- Be familiar with existing advocates (if any).

What capacities do you have/need?

- Resident businesses and stakeholders
- A facilitator to handle outreach
- Technical assistance (hauling, soil testing, health impact research, maps, etc.)
- Know the policies on illegal dumping.
  - ➔ Story – ‘saw construction company dumping illegally – stopped them and they apologized profusely’.

**Element 3: Consensus building and dispute resolution**

By-laws for committees can be important because it lets you address absenteeism and disagreements.

- Some disagreements will remain.

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- How to deal with venting in meetings: let them vent, and then followed up later. Reach out / following through – manage the place and time for venting (make a particular place / space to vent).
- Perception is important. Be able to quickly talk about your organization, know acronyms / terms, etc. etc. Assure that buy-in is legitimate.
- Challenges to reaching consensus/agreement
  - ➔ Lack of full participation, backlash, negativity, sabotage (outside or inside group).
- Actions taken: hold everyone (internal / external) accountable and responsible for what they need to do. Time frames and time limits can help with this.
- Seek out outside folks that get things done.

### **Element 4: Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships and Leveraging of Resources**

Who needs to be at the table?

- Health department (local) give them a list of diseases caused by mosquitoes, request expanded list and literature to give out to people.
- The community.
- EPA (Federal government).
- Tami Thomas-Burton at EPA has agreed to be a contact at EPA.
- Recycling organizations (businesses).
- World Health Organization (WHO) (international). WHO has data and statistics; they test for Malaria, Dengue, West Nile Virus, etc. It would be helpful to have increased access to this information, keeping in mind that many people do not have internet access.
- Center for Disease Control (CDC) (federal). CDC has statistics on who's been affected in community; compare to other neighborhoods.
- Pharmaceutical companies (business).
- Code enforcement/police (local).
- Politicians (multiple levels).
- Public works (local).

### **Element 5: Constructive Engagement by Relevant Stakeholders**

Respect, attitudes, and perception

- ➔ Trust and transparency can often be an issue – often community doesn't trust governmental bodies.

Focus on the area where you want people involved

- Avoid problems of 'that's not in our jurisdiction' – identify community and other stakeholder groups that could be involved.
- Get information out and tell community / government what you're doing.
- Senior citizen homes – 'use as telephone tree; often get left out and usually the most vulnerable'.

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- Set up educational classes and seminars at schools. Get kids involved!

### **Element 6: Sound Management and Implementation**

Workplan – the “nuts and bolts”

- Establish actions, create timelines, document outcomes and celebrate successes.
- Set action steps (i.e. getting signs posted). Break action steps into timelines and put someone in charge / make them accountable.

### **Element 7: Evaluations, Lessons Learned, and Replication of Best Practices**

If you have documented events well, you should be able to see what is working / what needs to be improved upon.

Celebrate successes! Let momentum build.