A Sustainability Workbook for Environmental Justice Communities:

Lessons from the Leaders in Environmental Action Pilot (LEAP) Initiative

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PART 1: INTRODUCTION

From 2009 to 2012, four community organizations in South Carolina participated in the Leaders in Environmental Action Pilots (LEAP) initiative, a cooperative agreement between the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) Region 4 office. The purpose of the LEAP initiative is to build the capacity of grassroots organizations to advance environmental justice, community revitalization and sustainability in their communities.

As defined by EPA, sustainability is based on a simple principle: everything we need for our survival and well-being depends, directly or indirectly, on our natural environment. Sustainability creates and maintains the conditions where humans and nature can exist in productive harmony and allows present and future generations to fulfill their social and economic needs. By protecting the natural environment, we also protect human health.[1]

Over three years, the following four community groups received technical and financial assistance to overcome organizational and community challenges. A requirement of the assistance was that the organizations had to use their monies to address at least one of the following regulations: the Clean Water Act, the Clean Air Act or the Solid Waste Disposal Act.

- The **Community Development Improvement Corporation (CDIC)** works in partnership with the Graniteville Community Coalition (GCC) on economic growth, community development and brownfields redevelopment in the Graniteville, Vaucluse

Environmental Justice in South Carolina

In 2007, the South Carolina legislature passed a law that created the South Carolina Environmental Justice Advisory Committee. Environmental justice, as defined in the law, is "the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin or income with respect to the development, implementation and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies." In other words, no matter where a person lives, how much money they make, or how much power they have to enact change, that person is entitled to a healthy, clean and safe community.

Often, environmental justice communities are underserved communities of color, tribal areas or low-income neighborhoods that face a combination of environmental problems, including brownfields, Superfund sites, waste dumps, and poor air and water quality.

The Advisory Committee included 13 state agencies and three academic institutions. The Committee gathered information on current community conditions in four areas of South Carolina that were determined to be in most need of revitalization. The Committee then identified community priorities by facilitating listening sessions and developing subcommittees in the areas of health, education and awareness, policy, and revitalization and reuse. The Committee also inventoried revitalization resources available from South Carolina agencies and reported findings and recommendations to the Legislature and the Governor.

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[1] United States Environmental Protection Agency, Basic Information, What is Sustainability? http://www.epa.gov/sustainability/basicinfo.htm, Accessed November 16, 2012.

and Warrenville communities in Aiken County. CDIC also works to build housing and spur economic revitalization in other communities throughout South Carolina.

- **The Imani Group** works continually to seek the elimination of SCARS (sexism, ageism, classism and racism) in the global community. The Imani Group collaborates with agencies, communities and organizations to develop and implement holistic programs to heal those SCARS. The work is primarily focused in the Central Savannah River Area (CSRA) of South Carolina and Georgia, but also on a state, national and international level. The organization's programs focus on criminal justice, environmental, economic and social justice, and youth leadership development. It is led by a Board of Directors composed of community, business, faith-based, political and youth members.

- The **Lowcountry Alliance for Model Communities (LAMC)** advocates for the neighborhoods of Accabee, Chicora/Cherokee, Union Heights, Howard Heights, Windsor Place, Five Mile and Liberty Hill in North Charleston, a community northwest of the coastal town of Charleston. LAMC advocates for environmental justice and promotes community development, education, employment, quality housing and community involvement. LAMC's work focuses on the local impact of the expansion of the Port of Charleston (the nation's fourth busiest container port), as well as the redevelopment and revitalization of neighborhoods in North Charleston.

- **A Place for Hope** advocates for the Blackmon Road community, an unincorporated area near Rock Hill. The group addresses basic needs of community residents, including access to potable running water and a sanitary sewer system.

Through the LEAP project, DHEC and EPA provided workshops on organizational development, environmental justice, sustainability and EPA's Environmental Justice Collaborative Problem-Solving (CPS) model. The LEAP initiative also arranged forums and meetings to help the pilots build relationships with federal, state and local agencies and identify resources. Most importantly, LEAP provided opportunities for the four community groups to share their experiences, challenges and accomplishments with each other on their paths to achieving environmental justice and sustainability.

Purpose of the Workbook

This workbook shares the LEAP initiative's knowledge and resources with grassroots community organizations in South Carolina and across the country who are working on tough environmental issues in disadvantaged communities. It is intended to serve as a guide and a source of inspiration for organizations grappling with complex issues in their communities. The workbook includes the following four sections:

LAMC VISTA volunteers Amanda Sellers and Nia Richardson

- **PART 1: INTRODUCTION** describes the activities of the LEAP initiative, the pilot communities and the CPS model, and presents the purpose and organization of the workbook.

- **PART 2: EXPERIENCES OF THE LEAP INITIATIVE** shares the experiences and work accomplished by the four LEAP communities.

- **PART 3: THE COLLABORATIVE PROBLEM-SOLVING MODEL** highlights how the LEAP communities used collaborative problem-solving tools throughout their projects.

- **PART 4: RESOURCE TOOLKIT** shares key resources used and in some cases created by the LEAP communities.

The Avondale Mill and the canal in Graniteville, one of the sites considered by the CDIC for revitalization

Because the CPS model was an important part of LEAP, this workbook can be used as a companion to EPA's June 2008 *Environmental Justice Collaborative Problem-Solving Model Handbook*.

Experiences of the LEAP Initiative

Part 2 of this workbook shares the experiences of the LEAP initiative, the pilot organizations and their communities.

Communities facing environmental justice challenges require active engagement by state environmental and health agencies and EPA. The LEAP initiative represents a major step forward by creating a collaborative effort between a state health and environmental agency and the federal government to invest in communities at the grassroots level and strengthen the capacity of local organizations to tackle local environmental, public health and economic challenges. In addition, by working together as a

community of practice, the four LEAP organizations were able to make progress in their individual communities. These achievements included:

- Building and managing their own organizations more effectively.
- Creating and strengthening relationships, partnerships and improving collaboration with residents, non-profit groups and government agencies, even with limited resources.
- Growing grassroots support within their communities.
- Making their communities healthier, safer, stronger and more resilient.

The Collaborative Problem-Solving Model

Part 3 of this workbook highlights the ways in which the LEAP communities used the tools of EPA's Collaborative Problem-Solving (CPS) model.

Much of the success achieved by the four LEAP communities is due to their ability to pull together community members and elected faith, civic and business leaders and work together on solutions that benefit everyone. They were able to build relationships with decision-makers and key stakeholders that positioned them to be part of a bigger conversation. They were also able to look within their own organizations to improve organizational development, create stronger boards and evolve their organizations' missions when they were outdated or ineffective. Each of these attributes complements the tools of the CPS model.

EPA's Collaborative Problem-Solving Model

In June 2008, EPA published a handbook that encourages the use of the CPS model as a resource for environmental justice challenges. The handbook defines and describes the model and discusses its use in Spartanburg, South Carolina, by ReGenesis, a community-based organization.

The handbook is available here: http://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/resources/publications/grants/cps-manual-12-27-06.pdf.

The CPS model has seven elements. The model can be used in any community where a group of citizens and community leaders are committed to working together to bring about positive change, environmental restoration and community revitalization. The LEAP communities show how organizations with different capacities adapted the CPS model to address their specific challenges.

In this workbook, the stories from the LEAP projects tend to overlap, sometimes addressing two or more CPS model tools simultaneously. The discussion of each CPS model element concludes with a worksheet template for readers to use in assessing and planning their own projects (in aggregate in Appendix A).

Resource Toolkit

Part 4 of this workbook lists resources that LEAP participants found useful. Some of these resources were created *by* the LEAP participants to educate community members about local environmental concerns and potential community-based solutions.

Karen Sprayberry from DHEC on the importance of collaborative problem-solving:

"When I go to other environmental justice gatherings, I hear these stories and it amazes me how there is no collaboration and willingness to partner. These communities are not here to hinder development. They want jobs as much as anyone else. They want to see their communities revitalized – they just want input into [the process]."

PART 2: EXPERIENCES OF THE LEAP INITIATIVE

In 2009, EPA entered into a cooperative agreement with DHEC to fund the LEAP initiative. LEAP's three-year term ended on September 30, 2012. Over the course of three years, each pilot received $25,000 to help deliver services more effectively to their communities. The remaining grant funds were allocated towards programmatic and operational expenses. One of the most beneficial expenses covered was the hiring of graduate school-level student interns to assist with implementation. There were two interns hired over the three-year project period. They were responsible for assisting the project manager as well as ensuring each pilot group's invoices were correct and processed, preparing quarterly reports, and supporting other administrative activities. The second intern, hired during the last year of the project, was also responsible for creating a project documentary. The interns were able to gain valuable community engagement and organizing experience while serving as the administrative contacts for the project.

EPA and DHEC also found that the LEAP initiative strengthened the relationship between the agencies. Structuring the initiative as a cooperative agreement rather than a traditional grant program helped foster this outcome. The cooperative agreement also allowed EPA to engage "on the ground" with diverse community groups over a significant period of time. Both agencies gained insights delivering technical assistance to small grassroots organizations working on complex environmental justice, economic and social concerns in disadvantaged communities.

Project Goals

For DHEC, the overarching goals of the LEAP initiative were to:

1. Replicate, on a state level, the Federal Interagency Working Group on Environmental Justice's multi-agency collaborative approach to addressing environmental justice problems. The ReGenesis project in Spartanburg served as a model.
2. Provide seed money to eligible candidates in environmental justice communities in South Carolina to help them build capacity to address their environmental, revitalization and overall quality of life concerns.
3. Partner with environmental justice communities and help them address local environmental and social justice concerns in a collaborative, problem-solving spirit.
4. Identify additional resources to redevelop and revitalize communities participating in the pilots.

During the three-year period, each pilot was responsible for conducting the following activities:

1. Identifying environmental and social justice issues and concerns within their community.
2. Prioritizing and beginning to address environmental and social justice concerns.
3. Identifying opportunities to receive input from residents and other groups on community concerns and needs.
4. Striving to empower stakeholders in public participation activities.
5. Using collaborative problem-solving approaches.

6. Leveraging federal, state and private resources to address the environmental and social justice issues within the community.
7. Developing a sustainable program that will continue beyond the LEAP project.
8. Partnering with DHEC and other stakeholders.
9. Evaluating their process.

LEAP Technical Assistance and Support

The LEAP project convened four major events for the pilot communities with facilitation services provided by DHEC or EPA's Technical Assistance Services for Communities (TASC) program. The first event, the LEAP Kick-off Conference, took place from May 13 to 15, 2010, at the C.C. Woodson Recreational Center in Spartanburg (day one) and the Spartanburg Housing Authority (day two). The conference provided information on building strong community-based organizations, problem solving, and skills and techniques to support collaboration as well as a visioning exercise for each of the pilots. The conference also included a bus tour of the Arkwright and Forest Park communities in Spartanburg to focus on the successful work of the ReGenesis organization, which used collaborative problem solving and partnerships to resolve long-standing environmental justice issues and catalyze broader community investment and revitalization.

LEAP Project Chronology:

- August 31, 2009 – Notice of Award
- February 29, 2010 – Request for Proposal (RFP) Deadline for Prospective LEAP Participants
- May 13-15, 2010 – LEAP Kick-off Conference
- July 2010 – Pilots submitted LEAP work plans
- Dec 1-2, 2010 – LEAP Environmental, Economic and Social Sustainability Summit
- May 12-13, 2011 – From Values to Victory LEAP Workshop

For the second event, EPA Region 4 hosted an Environmental Justice LEAP Summit on December 1 and 2, 2010, at the University of South Carolina in Aiken. The purpose of the summit was to bring federal and state agencies together with the academic community to identify resources and assistance they could offer each pilot. During the summit, each pilot had an hour to provide a presentation to the agency and academic representatives. The gathering offered an opportunity for dialogue and relationship building between the pilots and the representatives gathered as potential partners. In addition, sustainability workshops covering topics such as "Effective Public Participation," "Affordable Housing," "Grant Opportunities" and "Public Health" were offered to pilot participants. The summit ended with a tour of the closed Avondale Mill in the Graniteville community in Aiken County.

The third event took place on May 12 and 13, 2011, in North Charleston at North Charleston City Hall. The event was entitled "From Values to Victory" and included updates from the pilots, speakers from Benefit Bank and DHEC, and a bus tour of the North Charleston area. Nathaniel Smith, founder and

convener of the Partnership for Southern Equity, led the discussion on day two, which focused on moving from equality to equity.

For the fourth event, DHEC hosted a final workshop on May 3 and 4, 2012, at its headquarters in Columbia. During the workshop, the pilots discussed the importance of serving as ambassadors to other communities in South Carolina facing public health, environmental justice and community development challenges. Each pilot gave a 30-minute presentation on their accomplishments. The workshop also offered a presentation on the use of logic models to evaluate an organization's work and effectiveness as well as presentations on best practices for sustaining projects, programs and organizations.

LEAP participants and project leaders participate in the December 2, 2010 EPA Region 4 Environmental Justice LEAP Summit at the University of South Carolina in Aiken.

Overview of the Pilot Communities

DHEC selected the four pilot organizations through a competitive process, based on each organization's work on social and environmental justice in South Carolina communities.

- The **Community Development Improvement Corporation (CDIC)** works in partnership with the **Graniteville Community Coalition (GCC)** in the Graniteville, Vaucluse and Warrenville communities in Aiken County.

- **The Imani Group** is based in Aiken County. The organization, which has a global focus, advocates for criminal justice, environmental justice, social justice and youth leadership development and

is led by a Board of Directors composed of community, business, faith-based, political and youth members.

- The **Lowcountry Alliance for Model Cities (LAMC)** advocates for the neighborhoods of Accabee, Chicora/Cherokee, Union Heights, Howard Heights, Windsor Place, Five Mile and Liberty Hill in North Charleston, which is located northwest of the coastal city of Charleston.

- **A Place for Hope** advocates for the Blackmon Road community, an African-American neighborhood located one mile outside of the Rock Hill city limits. Rock Hill is located about 25 miles southwest of Charlotte, North Carolina, along the I-77 corridor.

The Community Development Improvement Corporation (CDIC) in partnership with the Graniteville Community Coalition (GCC)

Community Background: Aiken County (population 151,800) is in the western part of the state along the Savannah River. At least fifteen large brownfield sites are located in the unincorporated communities of Graniteville, Vauclause and Warrenville. These sites encompass more than 250 acres, including more than 35 underground storage tanks.

In 2005, a train derailment in Graniteville resulted in a chlorine spill that killed nine people. The chlorine impacted community health and damaged the Avondale Mill, a site that already had soil and water contamination. When the mill closed two years later, it left 1.5 million square feet of abandoned land. In addition, the mill ran the drinking water system for the community. It was also abandoned when the mill closed. GCC founder and Graniteville resident Louisiana Wright-Sanders described the domino-like effect of the train derailment: "The employment situation was impacted because of the shutdown of the mills that resulted from the spill. We're losing some of our resident small businesses. Roads are in disrepair and there is a need for work on housing."

Organization's Purpose: CDIC works throughout South Carolina on housing, economic development and growth. The group has become deeply involved in brownfields redevelopment under the leadership of Director Reggie Barner and Brownfields Project Coordinator Lasima Turmon. At the onset of the LEAP initiative, CDIC had been awarded federal stimulus funding for brownfields assessments at and around the Avondale Mill. However, the organization operated like a business and had limited community engagement experience. CDIC's typical method of communicating with the community was to make a business decision and inform the community liaison. The liaison would then let the community know the outcome.

LEAP Project Activities: The Graniteville Community Coalition (GCC), a community organization without formal non-profit status, had extensive community engagement experience. The organization partnered with CDIC to apply for LEAP funding. This was an exercise in trust for both organizations. A third organization, the GVW Community Investment Corporation (GVWCIC), also became a major project collaborator.

At the onset of the LEAP project, CDIC wanted to convene a series of design workshops, also called charrettes, with the public. Working with GCC and GVWCIC, CDIC put together a 2010 effort called Granite Vision. An evening workshop brought together other community organizations working in Graniteville. At the meeting, the organizations presented on everything they had been doing and where LEAP resources were going. The event was a success. As stated by Louisian Wright-Sanders, "Members of Bethlehem Baptist Church were vocal complainers, but had not gotten involved in the project. The Pastor cancelled Bible Study the night of the meeting and told church members to instead go and participate in the meeting." Following this meeting, a daytime workshop was held with citizens, experts from the county, the Council of Governments, steering committee members and board members.

In July 2011, CDIC staff, GVWCIC board members and LEAP project leaders took a trip to Valley, Alabama, for a textile mill revitalization workshop. There, they realized that Graniteville was "with all its issues … a lucky mill community. There were three communities at the workshop … one had absentee mills that were torn down and only one was saved so that the city could buy it and restore it. That was an eye-opener – we have a great opportunity in that our mills are still here," Remembered Lasima Turmon.

In late 2011, the Urban Land Institute engaged with the project organizations. ULI is a nonprofit whose mission is to provide leadership in the responsible use of land and in creating and sustaining thriving communities worldwide. Over two days in October 2011, CDIC, GVWCIC and community leaders met with Urban Land Institute staff. GCC participated as one of the focus group interviewees. When Institute staff presented their recommendations at the end of the workshop, the most significant finding was that Aiken County officials had no presence in the community. It was also noted that the mill historically took care of the community, especially in terms of the drinking water system, and that the gap left by the mill's closing had not yet been filled by the county. In June 2012, the Urban Land Institute worked with CDIC to conduct a phase II visioning session and DHEC brought in Clemson University's School of Planning, Development, Preservation and Landscape Architecture. This partnership has been so effective that a group of graduate students chose CDIC-owned properties along Horse Creek as a year-long focus project. A third Urban Land Institute workshop is scheduled for late 2012. In response to some of the recommendations that came out of these sessions, CDIC and GVWCIC board members met with Aiken County council members and invited them to hold a council meeting in Graniteville. After initial resistance, the council agreed. The session went so well that the state legislative delegation also decided to hold a meeting in Graniteville.

CDIC, with support from GCC and GVWCIC, also used some of the LEAP funding to commission a documentary about Graniteville and held a preview party in an old mill. A local designer donated her time and decorated the inside of the building with huge swaths of colored fabric. Over 400 people attended. Project leaders noted that not only was the attendance astounding, but that attendees also represented a cross-section of the community. The documentary showed that Graniteville is a part of a revitalization movement and energized the community. A later, second showing of the documentary in Augusta, Georgia (just across the Savannah River) drew about 500 attendees. The documentary was a success, in part, because GCC members offered their historical knowledge and connections to the project, participating in interviews and recruiting other community members to participate as well.

Project Accomplishments: CDIC and GCC's pilot efforts were successful for four reasons. First, the collaboration with the Urban Land Institute and Clemson University would not have been possible without the support of the LEAP initiative. Similarly, the visioning process that spurred so many other collaborations around the Graniteville area would never have happened without an outside expert that understood urban redevelopment challenges and the need for substantive community input and had the ability to facilitate such an event.

Second, CDIC is a community development corporation. At the beginning, CDIC did not believe that residents were interested in the status of the mill property and redevelopment opportunities. Because of the LEAP funding, CDIC and GCC were able to engage effectively with the community. The organizations report that, while misinformation still circulates about the redevelopment projects, CDIC and GCC are now aware of the misinformation and can address it.

Third, project partners worked hard to engage the county council. This shift in approach – going to the people instead of expecting the people to come to them – is a remarkable outcome from the project.

Fourth, the project nurtured a collaboration between GCC's public health work and the brownfields assessment process in the Graniteville community. The GRACE study, already underway at the onset of the LEAP project, is a partnership with the University of Maryland's School of Public Health and the University of South Carolina in Columbia to establish a community health clinic to screen local residents for the long-term impacts of the train derailment and chlorine spill on their respiratory systems and general health status. While GCC leads this project, it has received additional attention because of the CDIC-GCC- LEAP partnership and has illustrated the need for brownfield revitalization efforts to include community health facilities. Another documentary led by the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) is now underway. It will highlight four communities, including Graniteville, and highlight the connections between brownfields cleanup and improving community health.

The Imani Group

Community Background and Organization's Purpose: Located in Graniteville in Aiken County, the Imani Group is a grassroots organization working on addressing environmental justice, social justice, criminal justice and youth leadership at the state, national and international levels using networks and collaborative partnerships. It provides services to several communities along the Savannah River in South Carolina and Georgia that are part of the Central Savannah River Area (CSRA). With support from the LEAP initiative, The Imani Group worked to educate residents about contaminated drinking water and is organizing an environmental justice coalition and training the next generation of environmental stewards. With a small salaried staff, the organization relies heavily on volunteers and collaborative partnerships. Executive Director Reverend Brendolyn Jenkins-Boseman used the LEAP experience to strengthen The Imani Group's organizational capacity to stretch resources – in her words, "to take two fish and five loaves and feed the people." Reverend Jenkins–Boseman has coined the phrase "full-service activism" to symbolize positive measurable outcomes of their work, from education to employment to empowerment.

LEAP Project Activities: As a LEAP pilot, one of The Imani Group's initial goals was to educate community residents regarding radium in ground water, a little-known environmental concern. Radium is a radioactive element that occurs naturally in rocks, soils and ground water. People who drink water with excessive levels of radium over time have an increased risk of getting certain types of cancer. DHEC found unsafe levels of radium at several sites in the CSRA. Initially, The Imani Group hoped to help residents test for radium contamination in their private wells and provide education and possible treatment technologies to well owners. However, the organization confronted a major technical obstacle: all work performed or funded by EPA that involves data collection requires an approved Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP). A QAPP serves as a blueprint for collecting, analyzing and reporting environmental data and information that will influence a specific decision or use. The Imani Group turned to EPA and DHEC for help developing the QAPP. Unfortunately, both agencies were unable to provide assistance for technical reasons. Despite this setback, The Imani Group shared information about radium testing at several community meetings. At the same time, the City of Aiken began including radium advisories in residential water bills, reinforcing awareness of the radium issue.

Project Accomplishments: At this point in the LEAP project, The Imani Group decided that it needed to focus on its areas of strengths rather than technical challenges that strained its capacities. As the QAPP process continued, the organization focused on forming a statewide initiative called the South Carolina Environmental Justice Advocacy Coalition (SCEJAC). The goal is to create an advocacy coalition of environmental justice organizations, faith-based groups, and community and civic organizations. The coalition will address environmental, education and employment concerns. With LEAP's support, including the community-building tools and resources offered at the LEAP trainings, The Imani Group launched the first two SCEJAC meetings on August 4, 2012, in Columbia and September 29, 2012, in Camden. A third meeting was scheduled for November 8, 2012. The Imani Group plans to hold meetings around the state to coincide with trainings and workshops already established by other organizations. The Imani Group's Executive Director Reverend Jenkins-Boseman successfully completed the EPA Fundamentals Train-the-Trainer course in June 2012 and will be able to provide the course to SCEJAC and other interested organizations. This collaborative model presents a unique co-creative process that results in synergies and win-win outcomes for all parties involved.

LEAP also provided guidance, training and advice on collaborative problem solving and visioning, and building stronger organizations. As a result, The Imani Group strengthened its skills delivering community education. In particular, the organization's work on youth development and job training has experienced great growth. For example, The Imani Group's SHARP Sisters (Sisters Honoring African Rites of Passage) program, a rites of passage program for teenage girls in the community, assisted in organizing a mission trip for young adults and youth to go to New Orleans to participate in rebuilding projects in the Lower Ninth Ward.

With a contract from EPA's TASC program, The Imani Group also successfully trained 62 individuals for careers at the U.S. Department of Energy's Savannah River Site (SRS) through EPA's Superfund Job Training Initiative, a program designed to provide career opportunities for residents throughout the CSRA. SRS is a nuclear materials storage facility that occupies 310 square miles in Aiken, Allendale and Barnwell counties in South Carolina adjacent to the Savannah River. The Department of Energy operates

the site, which secures, processes and recycles nuclear materials, including spent nuclear fuel. The residents living around the site in Allendale and Barnwell Counties are predominantly low income and African-American. The community suffers from chronic underemployment and unemployment. Allendale County suffers from some of the highest unemployment in the nation. With unemployment officially at almost 23 percent, Reverend Jenkins-Boseman believes that the county's unemployment rate is actually closer to 35 to 40 percent.

Over three years as a LEAP pilot, The Imani Group has also gained better outreach skills. "We started treating the community as co-partners and co-creators," said Reverend Jenkins-Boseman. "Rather than just giving, we empowered." She also added that caring for people is a critical part of delivering services: "People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care. Therefore, our work is holistic and transformative." The Imani Group has also strengthened its partnerships with EPA, DHEC and other federal, state and international agencies. Reverend Jenkins-Boseman has participated as a delegate with the Peace Development Fund's BASE Initiative in the past three United Nations Conferences of the Parties on Climate Change. At COP15 in Copenhagen, Denmark, COP16 in Cancun, Mexico, and COP17 in Durban, South Africa, she represented the communities that she serves. The LEAP process, she noted, "empowered us to be full partners at the world's table."

The Lowcountry Alliance for Model Communities (LAMC)

Community Background and Organization's Purpose: The Lowcountry Alliance for Model Communities is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization that officially formed in 2005. The organization's Board consists of the neighborhood presidents and representatives of seven historically African-American neighborhoods in North Charleston: Accabee, Chicora/Cherokee, Five Mile, Howard Heights, Liberty Hill, Windsor and Union Heights.

LAMC formed as a result of growing frustrations with traditional community organizing and the South Carolina State Port Authority's (SCSPA's) public involvement efforts regarding its proposed terminal and port access road. The SCSPA's consultants were seeking immediate reaction to their 700-page Draft

Flyer advertising "A Day of Neighborly Need" as part of the LAMC LEAP project

Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). Most if not all of LAMC's constituency are low-to-moderate-income lay people – individuals without expertise in environmental science, transportation planning/engineering or public administration. LAMC provided the means of translating "expert knowledge" and enhancing community dialogue. Throughout the environmental review process, LAMC representatives were able to demonstrate that their communities shouldered a disproportionate share of the Charleston area's air, water and land-based pollution. A later environmental justice assessment determined that the LAMC study area met the criteria for an environment justice population.

LAMC was an active participant during the DEIS permitting process, carefully reviewing the DEIS statement and meeting with elected officials, permitting agencies, the City, SCSPA and the South Carolina Department of Transportation on numerous occasions. With neighborhood input, LAMC and the City prioritized environmental impacts and negotiated a workable mitigation strategy that maximizes community benefits and minimizes undesirable environment impacts. Many of the plan's goals and policies address issues of concern to LAMC residents, such as vacant and dilapidated properties, affordable housing, open space, gentrification and neighborhood preservation, education, job creation and economic development. As a result, the City of North Charleston, LAMC and SCSPA developed a $4.1-million Community Mitigation Plan (CMP), the first of its kind in South Carolina and the nation under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

SCSPA also has committed to provide resources to establish a permanent air monitor in LAMC communities. SCDHEC has worked with SCSPA, LAMC and the City of North Charleston to bring local stakeholders together at air monitoring meetings to establish a broad-based, multi-sector collaborative partnership to assist with determining the placement of a permanent monitor and discuss related air pollution and environmental health issues. In 2009, LAMC, the City and SCSPA received EPA's Environmental Justice Award for Collaborative Partnerships for their efforts. Concurrent with actively participating in the DEIS process, LAMC members successfully advocated for the closure of a nearby incinerator and served on several industry Citizen Advisory Boards and Charleston County's Green Ribbon Committee.

LEAP Project Activities: In 2010, LAMC became one of the LEAP initiative's grant recipients. Coordinated by the City of North Charleston's CMP Project Manager Wannetta Mallette, the grant gave LAMC the resources to strengthen their organization and work toward their vision statement: "*to provide environmental security to LAMC residents for years to come. Residents are actively engaged in the redevelopment and revitalization of their neighborhoods; benefit from newly created for-profit opportunities; and celebrate their rich cultural heritage*." LAMC used the funds to build its capacity by hiring two AmeriCorps VISTA volunteers and beginning the search to hire an Executive Director. The VISTA workers assisted with grant writing, development of the LAMC model block affordable housing strategy and implementation of the LAMC Revitalization Plan.

In addition, LAMC also used a portion of LEAP funding for a board assessment conducted by the South Carolina Association of Community Development Corporations. Many of the board members are lay people with little experience or expertise with serving on a board and its fundraising, fiscal compliance and succession planning responsibilities.

Project Accomplishments: Without the much-needed LEAP funds, LAMC could not have continued to serve its constituents in a competent and consistent manner nor accomplish its future goals of implementing the CMP. LAMC now serves as the primary local liaison between elected officials, public agencies, planners, private developers, regulatory agencies and industry within the community. LAMC's goals to bring about social change include enhancing citizen participation and activism, increasing public and private sector investment, and developing community leaders. LAMC is working to increase community leadership through education and outreach. In the words of CMP Project Manager Wannetta Mallette, LEAP "has given LAMC the tools and resources to become a true community developer."

A Place for Hope

Community Background: A Place for Hope, now led by Executive Director Mary Hoppmann, advocates for the Blackmon Road Community, an unincorporated African-American neighborhood about one mile outside of Rock Hill city limits. The City of Rock Hill is a vibrant, historic community with approximately 67,000 residents located about 25 miles southwest of Charlotte, North Carolina, along the Interstate 77 corridor. The Blackmon Road neighborhood faces significant challenges. Residents have never had properly functioning water and sewer infrastructure. The neighborhood also sits adjacent to a former city landfill. Poverty, poorly constructed and inadequate housing, and social problems have long plagued the community.

Organization's Purpose: A Place for Hope opened in 2001 with the mission of improving quality of life for neighborhood residents. During its first few years, the organization galvanized efforts to clean up trash, remove shacks and squatters, and drastically reduce crime. A Place for Hope also brought in a mobile neighborhood center that housed social services such as a food pantry, utility bill-paying, a clothing closet and some youth programming. In the last three years, the organization's advocacy has led to installation of streetlights, a playground, a garden and a washhouse with showers and laundry facilities.

Today – and at the start of the LEAP initiative – the organization serves about 70 community residents and relatives of residents. Executive Director Mary Hoppmann describes the community as having "lots of transition and lots of family instability and all the effects of generational poverty." The neighborhood consists of about 15 homes. The organization's goals were therefore to conduct a thorough environmental assessment, engage the community through outreach events and develop community capacities.

However, the challenges confronting these goals were significant. In 2007, municipal water and sewer infrastructure was extended to the community center with a $500,000 Community Development Block Grant administered by the Catawba Council of Governments. The project ended up costing $850,000 due to the difficulty of running pipes through area bedrock. At the completion of the project, it was estimated that it would cost over $2 million to extend municipal water and sewer lines to the rest of the community. Even more funds would be necessary to bring homes up to code and modern plumbing standards. The city and county are built on bedrock (hence the name Rock Hill) and significant areas of

the Blackmon Road community would need to be dynamited to make room for water and sewer pipes. In addition, because of the legacy of generational poverty, attempts to help residents advocate for themselves have failed. It was uncertain if the resources from the LEAP initiative could make a difference in the face of such significant challenges.

LEAP Project Activities: LEAP funding provided $11,000 to hire a contractor who completed an environmental assessment. The contractor developed a short list of innovative solutions that would bring the community up to modern standards, including composting toilets, constructed wetlands and engineered septic systems (a new technology used in situations where digging is impossible). The remaining problem was how to transport waste out of the community, because septic lines need to be buried underground. The assessment also found that constructed wetlands require long-term management by an agency with a waste management permit, something that was outside of the county's capacities. Additionally, constructed wetlands must be located in low-lying areas and would likely need permission from several

Children participating in A Place for Hope's youth programming

landowners who would be asked to give up some of their land. Engineered septic systems do not require this level of management, but tend to be very expensive ($25,000+ per system).

As a result, A Place for Hope's project leaders initially believed that installing composting toilets was a workable solution. This did not work out, for two reasons. First, while the environmental assessment provided definitive information that installing traditional water and sewer infrastructure was not possible, it also found that composting toilets are not acceptable under South Carolina state regulations.[2] Second, residents were not interested in this solution, believing that composting toilets would not work as well as regular toilets. Another option, to relocate housing closer to the washhouse, was also not favored by the residents.

A Place for Hope used several outreach strategies during the project to build trust and community solidarity: increased family activities, more communication between residents, staff and board members, regular community meetings, and programming in adult education, leadership, critical thinking and financial literacy. To date, some progress has been made. In the words of Executive

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[2] Please see http://dhecnet/eqc/envhlth/docs/owm_policy_013.pdf for more information.

Director Mary Hoppmann, "the project was not as successful at building community capacity as we had hoped. But undoing the effects of generational poverty can't happen in three years. In a way, we were putting expectations on the adults that were not realistic. And we now see that the best way to build community capacity may be by focusing more on the children and trying to change the future of the next generation."

Project Accomplishments: At the conclusion of the LEAP grant, the Blackmon Road neighborhood is still without water and sewer infrastructure. In fact, the last community meeting on August 30, 2012, left everyone feeling like "we are right where we started." Project leaders are also frustrated with the residents' mindset that says "someone should fix our problems for us." However, one major success and a list of unexpected successes show that organizational and community perspectives are evolving.

First, LEAP funding allowed for the successful completion of a formal environmental assessment to determine conclusively the community's options for accessing water and sewer infrastructure. This gave residents comprehensive data and knowledge never available before – information on the neighborhood's underlying soil and bedrock and possible technologies that could work in this setting. The study also confirmed that installing traditional water and sewer infrastructure would only be possible at an exorbitant price.

Second, the leadership of A Place for Hope changed during the project; the organization transitioned to a new Executive Director. This leadership shift was accompanied by a shift in organizational philosophy, from being primarily a social work organization to being a resource center aimed at helping residents help themselves. The organization's staff and Board of Directors realized there were other social services such as food pantries and charities available to residents and that A Place for Hope did not need to provide those services. At the same time, the organization realized that simply providing services to the residents was not helping them to grow and change or catalyzing a sense of empowerment. Instead, A Place for Hope offered to connect residents to those services (for example, providing a phone, fax machine and computer).

Unfortunately, this shift in mission meant that many residents stopped coming for support. In the last few months, the organization has evolved further. Today, after a reflective evaluation, A Place for Hope is rebranding itself as a youth development center, with a special board meeting on October 1, 2012, held to discuss the future efforts of the organization. The board is creating a new mission statement and plans to focus most of the organization's efforts on children and youth. A strong board, which has benefited from the organizational and board development resources provided through LEAP, has been critical to this evolution.

The LEAP process gave the organization the strength and resources to know when it was time to evolve and how to go about such an evolution. The transition described above (and still in progress) is a critical step to growing as an organization and re-imagining its relationship with the community.

PART 3: THE COLLABORATIVE PROBLEM-SOLVING MODEL

Collaborative Problem-Solving Element 1: Issue Identification, Community Vision and Strategic Goal Setting

What Is the Community Need?

Like many communities, the LEAP participants face complex and interrelated environmental, economic and social challenges.

People in a community may come together because they are concerned and angry about a problem, such as a high rate of birth defects, the building of a development without neighborhood input, or concerns about pollution in well water. People also come together when they believe that a problem is too complex for one community organization, one grant or one local leader to solve.

What Is the CPS Element?

The CPS model calls this step **"Issue Identification."** Once the problem is identified and people have come together to discuss it, the community can begin to create a **"Community Vision"** for a healthier, stronger, safer and more resilient community. This vision should include ideas from the entire community, not just those with money, power or political influence. Finally, based on those ideas, the community must decide how to organize itself to solve the problem. **"Strategic Goal-Setting"** is about getting organized so that the entire community works toward the same goal. When possible, goals should meet several needs at the same time. Goals should start with an action word like "educate," "improve" or "build" to show that the project has forward energy and momentum. The work plan template at the end of this section can help grassroots organizations with issue identification, community visioning and strategic goal setting.

CPS Element 1 at a Glance

- Build upon existing leadership and experience in the community.
- Involve community residents early in identifying concerns.
- Identify partners.
- Build on existing community plans and goals.
- Involve community residents in planning and goal setting (e.g., community meetings, workshops).

Source: EPA's *June 2008 Environmental Justice CPS model*

What Were the LEAP Experiences?

The pilots faced many challenges in identifying the primary issues facing their communities, creating visions for the future and setting goals. The table below summarizes each LEAP organization's plan to move forward. Each organization developed strategic approaches and outreach methods that they felt would work best in reaching the stakeholders in their communities.

> The CDIC/GCC pilot stated in its workplan that "Healthy, sustainable people are the building blocks of healthy, sustainable communities; with this project, CDIC and its partners (including the Graniteville Community Coalition) seek to nurture both."

	Issue	Goals
The Imani Group	Radium pollution in private wells (original issue) Need for shared learning and collaboration among organizations working on environmental justice and community revitalization (revised issue)	• Educate residents so that they know about radium pollution. • Provide free water testing. • Provide water filters. • Improve community health. • Build an environmental justice network in South Carolina.
A Place for Hope	Lack of safe, reliable, affordable potable water and sanitary sewer system in neighborhood	• Conduct an environmental assessment. • Encourage community participation. • Increase the ability of residents to help themselves. • Work with DHEC to identify best systems and where to apply for resources to build community sewage and drinking water systems.
Community Development and Improvement Corporation (CDIC) in partnership with the Graniteville Community Coalition (GCC)	Residents are not active in brownfields redevelopment or health assessment processes, nor the reclamation and reuse of local textile mills	• Develop Brownfields Community Oversight Team. • Develop Brownfields Steering Committee. • Conduct outreach to residents about brownfields, including health effects from train derailment and toxic spill. • Encourage community participation.
Lowcountry Alliance for Model Communities (LAMC)	Need for inclusion in planning for expansion of Port of Charleston and neighborhood revitalization, with focus on air and water quality	• Intervene in the NEPA review for the expansion of the Port of Charleston. • Support LAMC (maintain board transparency). • Maintain community pride. • Improve community health and safety and increase recreational activities.

LEAP Highlights: Identifying Community Issues in North Charleston

During the LAMC LEAP project, stakeholders identified several community needs and concerns. They recognized that many of these issues were connected and that working on one issue could help address other issues:

- Increase home ownership.
- Retain families and local seniors.
- Clean up and improve the appearance of the neighborhood.
- Address gentrification; maintain affordable housing.
- Participate in the NEPA process to lessen the impact of the expansion of the Port of Charleston on nearby communities.
- Work with the Federal Railroad Administration to address railroad safety concerns.
- Retain ethnic and cultural character.
- Increase community pride.
- Promote active, healthy lifestyles.
- Provide access to local rivers and creeks.
- Stem persistent local flooding.
- Preserve small, neighborhood-scale architecture and other unique physical features.
- Increase the use of spot zoning*.
- Improve access to buses and other public transit.
- Improve street lighting.
- Implement traffic calming projects to stop speeding through residential areas.
- Add more youth and afterschool programs.
- Improve employment and workforce opportunities.
- Address the lack of grocery and retail stores throughout the neighborhoods.

*Spot zoning occurs when a relatively small tract of land is zoned differently from its surroundings. For more information on Spot Zoning in South Carolina, see the Municipal Association of South Carolina's 2012 *Comprehensive Planning Guide for Local Governments*, available at: http://www.masc.sc/SiteCollectionDocuments/Land%20Use%20Planning/Comp%20Planning%20Guide.pdf.

What Are the Lessons Learned?

- **Through inclusive visioning activities, community members can meaningfully inform local planning, environmental permitting and community development processes.** CDIC and GCC held two successful community visioning sessions with the Urban Land Institute. Over 500 people participated in each session.

- **By engaging more fully with community members, it is possible for community organizations to mobilize broader citizen participation in civic life.** LAMC worked to get its board members on key local decision-making committees, such as the Green Ribbon Committee for Charleston, which is creating a vision for the city's future growth and development. The Committee also focuses on sustainability in the areas of solid waste management and energy use.

- **Developing and articulating a clear vision for action fosters community participation.** This includes more participation by local residents in community meetings, legislative hearings and local government decision-making. All of the pilots increased residents' participation in local decision-making.

- **By combining their energies, resources and efforts, community members can work to stop long-standing practices that negatively affect local quality of life**. For example, LAMC made progress in lessening train through-traffic and mitigating the environmental impact of a planned port expansion. Another example is the partnership between CDIC and GCC, which allowed GCC (which did not have non-profit status) to tap into CDIC's strong organizational capacities and CDIC to tap into GCC's deep ties to the community.

- **Collaboration and focus can result in major policy change.** LAMC achieved the first-ever NEPA Community Mitigation Plan in the history of NEPA, securing $4.1 million for the creation and implementation of a revitalization plan.

- **As part of project planning, set short-term milestones.** During the LEAP evaluation process, DHEC and EPA found that it would have been helpful to track specific milestones, even if they were small steps toward larger project goals.

LEAP Highlight: Community Visioning in Graniteville, Vaucluse and Warrenville

As part of their LEAP project, CDIC partnered with GCC to host two community visioning sessions. More than 500 participants attended each session. ULI facilitated the sessions.

These sessions provided a structured yet open process to generate new ideas, identify partners not already at the table, honor community history and practices, and make sure the community visioning process received input from a broad cross-section of the community.

Collaborative Problem-Solving Element 1:
Issue Identification, Community Vision and Strategic Goal Setting

This element of the CPS model begins with **"Issue Identification."** Once the problem is identified and people have come together to discuss it, the community can create a **"Community Vision"** for a healthier, stronger, safer and more resilient community. Finally, based on those ideas, the community must decide how to get organized to solve the problem. **"Strategic Goal-Setting"** is about getting organized so that the entire community is working toward the same goal. When possible, goals should meet several needs at the same time. Goals should start with an action word like "educate," "improve" or "build" to show that the project has forward energy and momentum.

1. **What is the overarching issue that the community is facing (e.g., health, safety or environmental concerns, economic issues, nuisance issues)? What are other community needs and concerns?**

2. **Describe how you plan to pull community members together to begin to discuss the issues and to create a community vision.**

3. **List the goals you have identified for your project. (Use action words like "educate," "improve" or "build.")**

Collaborative Problem-Solving Element 2: Community Capacity-Building and Leadership Development

What Is the Community Need?

When a community organization first becomes involved in a public health or environmental issue, it needs to gather information. The organization's members must educate themselves and then share and exchange information with the broader community. It then requires leadership, organization, and structure to solve problems through strategic actions that can bring about a new community vision.

What Is the CPS Element?

This element is about a community organization's members learning as much as possible about a problem and helping to educate the community regarding issues and potential solutions. This is called "community capacity-building" and it means bringing stakeholders, such as residents and other community groups, the tools to assess and address the problem. Having the right skills, information and resources will prepare community members to understand their options and possible solutions. It will also ensure the sharing of accurate, consistent information with the community.

CPS Element 2 at a Glance

- Build upon existing community efforts and activities.
- Ensure community leaders and members have the ability to participate in collaborative problem-solving processes.
- Provide training, mentoring, technical help and funding support.
- Nurture the leadership skills of key individuals in a project.
- Build trust among stakeholders.
- Conduct assessments about the causes of and potential solutions to the problem.
- Identify and mobilize persons and organizations that can provide technical assistance.

Source: EPA's June 2008 Environmental Justice CPS model

Very often, technical assessments are needed to gather information about the extent of land, air and water pollution. If these assessments have already been done, project leaders should obtain the results and work with state and federal agencies to interpret these results in a way that community members can understand. If the technical assessments have not been completed, project leaders should seek technical assistance through entities that can provide such services.

Leadership development is an important part of community capacity building. Investing in the leadership potential of community members means strengthening their ability to think critically and strategically, to create a vision, to communicate effectively and to build consensus. Many organizations do this by providing training and mentoring in collaborative problem-solving techniques.

What Were the LEAP Experiences?

LEAP participants faced challenges and enjoyed successes addressing community capacity building and leadership development:

- CDIC and GCC found success in hosting community events that brought people together to learn more about an issue – in this case, the revitalization of mill communities. The groups produced a documentary to help community members understand how abandoned mills could be revitalized to become vibrant spaces and local economic drivers. Introducing these ideas to the community was a big step toward an informed, engaged citizenry ready to learn about and support future activities. (See the "Community Engagement in Graniteville" text box)

- The Imani Group realized it needed to strengthen its Board of Directors through training and adding members with particular expertise to help implement the organization's vision. The organization's staff also learned to focus their energies on discrete tasks and to build staff competencies.

- LAMC already had a well-organized and well-informed stakeholder group prior to the LEAP project. Throughout the LEAP process, they continued to strengthen this group by organizing stakeholders around four specific areas crucial to revitalization: housing, economic development, education and environmental justice. LAMC's efforts were partly facilitated by the use of LEAP funding to support VISTA volunteers. They provided outreach and helped connect stakeholders with LAMC staff and elected officials.

- A Place for Hope employed many strategies to better inform the community. The organization formed a Healthy Housing Committee and held regular community meetings. A Place for Hope advertised its meetings by distributing flyers to homes. At one point during the LEAP process, a "phone tree" was used, with calls made to key residents who then shared project information with

the next person on the tree. The organization found that the phone tree was not effective. Some phones were lost and other pre-paid phones ran out of minutes.

In spite of these setbacks, A Place for Hope scored a major success in community capacity building. LEAP funding allowed for the successful completion of a formal engineering study to determine the Blackmon Road neighborhood's options for accessing public water and sewer infrastructure. This gave area residents conclusive data and knowledge regarding the area's soil and bedrock and technologies that could work in local conditions. The study also confirmed that conventional water and sewer infrastructure were not an option for the neighborhood, given the exorbitant cost. This technical assessment was a crucial step needed before the organization could move forward in its work.

LEAP Highlight: CDIC/GCC and Community Capacity Building

The CDIC/GCC pilot focused on citizen involvement and introducing community members to brownfields redevelopment. In this spirit, GCC was awarded $250,000 from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to fund a community-based participatory research project. This research involved sessions with 10 community members in which participants took pictures of their neighborhood and explained how the 2005 train derailment and chlorine spill affected them, their health and the environment. This process has involved members of the community who had not been engaged in the discussion about brownfields or mill redevelopment and opened the door for more community engagement.

What Are the Lessons Learned?

- **Technical assessments are important for improving a community's shared knowledge.** Often, hard data is needed for a project to move forward. However, in most cases, technical assessments require funding. For example, A Place for Hope was able to advance its work through an engineering assessment of water and sewer options. It was critical for all stakeholders to have information about the area's underlying soil and bedrock and water and sewer infrastructure technologies that could work in those conditions.

- **Community leadership development is a process.** While this is true in any community, in places that continue to endure generational poverty, leadership development is generally not something that can be achieved in just a few years' time. A Place for Hope experienced this firsthand: leadership classes were offered, but residents did not attend; community meetings took place, but had scattered, inconsistent attendance; resources were made available, including an engineering assessment, but residents continued to have difficulty finding their voice in the community and advocating for themselves. At the conclusion of the LEAP project, A Place for Hope recognizes that residents must take a hard look at composting toilet technology and then lobby for a change in South Carolina code that would allow them to install the technology. To date, local leadership has not yet developed and this option is not currently being pursued. However, A Place for Hope's new focus on youth leadership could change this dynamic.

- **Community capacity building can take the form of innovative social experiences.** An example is CDIC and GCC's success with the Graniteville documentary. The extraordinarily well attended screenings show that people respond to innovative ways to learn more about their communities.

> **LEAP participant and CDIC Brownfields Project Coordinator Lasima Turmon**
>
> "We spent a day walking through lagoons and old mill sites, and then we had a public meeting. Just two community members were present. That was my first experience with community engagement. We learned through meetings and reality checks that there was a lot of distrust, because people didn't know, weren't aware and didn't have time for the meetings.
>
> "[During the LEAP initiative], we had a goal of doing three major community meetings/visioning sessions as well as using media and social media. Using Facebook and Twitter was one of our largest successes. We had great response."

WORKSHEET 2

Collaborative Problem-Solving Element 2:
Community Capacity Building and Leadership Development

This element is about a community organization learning as much as it can about the problem and bringing that knowledge to the community at large. This is called "community capacity building"; it means bringing stakeholders such as residents and other community groups the tools to begin addressing the problem. Having the right skills, information and resources will prepare community members to understand their options and possible solutions. It will also ensure the sharing of accurate, consistent information throughout the community.

1. **List the information and resources needed to support the project. Indicate if the information or resource is currently available or if it needs to be developed or obtained.**

2. **Does your organization have the necessary skills and capacity to achieve the project's goals? If not, please list the steps you are taking to address these gaps.**

3. **Is a technical assessment needed? If so, please describe your plans for completing the assessment.**

Collaborative Problem-Solving Element 3: Consensus Building and Dispute Resolution

What Is the Community Need?

The involvement of multiple stakeholders in a project can highlight differences in individual values and how each stakeholder measures success. As a result, community-based organizations are often tasked with building consensus and solving disputes to identify shared values, goals and actions.

What Is this CPS Element?

CPS Element 3 offers ways to make group decisions, even when group members have different ideas. The tools in this element are useful throughout an entire project. Consensus-building and alternative dispute resolution is especially important.

CPS Element 3 at a Glance

- Ensure partnering organizations are treated fairly and can participate.
- Build trust.
- Establish a common set of ideas and plans to address concerns.
- Help organizations develop agreements.
- Resolve conflicts; use techniques like dispute resolution when necessary.

Source: EPA's June 2008 Environmental Justice CPS model

Consensus building means having community stakeholders working together to seek common ground. To build consensus in a group, participants must:

- Make sure everyone is treated fairly and allowed to participate in a meaningful way.
- Agree on a common vision.
- Work together to come up with creative solutions.

When group members do not agree on how to proceed, group leaders should ask questions like:

- Could you help us understand the reasons behind your opinion?
- What would be a strong case against what you just said?
- How might others see this issue?

When a dispute or conflict arises, and stakeholders cannot find common ground, a process called alternative dispute resolution is an option. Alternative dispute resolution often means bringing in an outside facilitator or mediator to help all parties work through the conflict.

What Were the LEAP Experiences?

The LEAP organizations all had to find ways to work through group conflict and build consensus:

- At the beginning of their project, A Place for Hope's board and staff were not trusted by the community. Residents felt as though their concerns and preferences had not been heard. The community also viewed the organization as a place to go to get something, not as a place to contribute to, or join forces with to bring about community improvements. As part of the work with LEAP, the project team held monthly meetings that served as listening sessions to build trust.

  One project-specific conflict centered on composting toilets. Following a technical assessment that ruled out traditional water and sewer infrastructure and proposed other alternatives, project leaders felt that composting toilets would be the best option for Blackmon Road residents. However, when residents considered the idea, they felt they were being offered an option that was inferior to regular toilets. In the end, the conflict became irrelevant because it was determined that South Carolina code does not allow composting toilets. Despite this setback, the LEAP process helped to connect A Place for Hope with DHEC, the South Carolina Environmental Justice Advisory Committee and the newly launched statewide Environmental Justice Network to assist them with this effort, should they decide to pursue a change in the state code that would allow households to have composting toilets.

> **Sample Ground Rules for Meetings**
>
> 1. Listen to one another. Treat each other with respect.
> 2. Each person gets a chance to talk.
> 3. One person talks at a time. Don't cut people off.
> 4. Speak for yourself. Don't try to speak for "your group."
> 5. It's OK to disagree. If you feel hurt, say so and say why.
> 6. Stick to the issue. No name-calling.
> 7. If you talk about people who are not here, don't say their names.
> 8. Some of the things we talk about will be very personal. We will not tell these stories to other people, unless we all say it is OK.
> 9. Help the facilitator keep things on track.
>
> *Source:* April 2012 *Twin Counties Visioning for a Better Life, A Discussion Guide for the Twin Counties Visioning and Strategic Plan Process*

LEAP participants and project leaders at an LAMC-sponsored event

- CDIC and GCC noted distrust between the towns of Graniteville, Vaucluse and Warrenville and the county government and suggested that the county council hold a meeting in Graniteville. At first, the council declined, but eventually agreed to a meeting held in February 2012. The meeting was well attended and county officials were able to communicate clearly with residents. The outcome was so positive that the county council is considering holding future meetings in the communities.

LEAP Highlight: A Place for Hope and a Changing Vision

At the beginning of the project, there was tension between residents and the organization's board. Lack of trust and communication were major factors. However, a series of Rural Café Listening Sessions opened up lines of communication. Board members realized decision-making was not possible without residents' input. At the same time, residents began to see A Place for Hope in the role of "technical support" and "referral assistance." Now, with A Place for Hope's new vision of youth empowerment, it looks to empower young residents as it facilitates trust-building between the organization and the community.

The table below highlights some of the conflicts the pilots faced and how the organizations met those challenges :

Conflict or Challenge	Action Taken
Lack of collaboration	Allowing other individuals and organizations to assume the lead role on certain projects.
Conflicts of interest by participating stakeholders	Developing a community code of ethics.
Mistrust by community	Emphasizing transparency (for example, conducting business openly and not behind closed doors) and community engagement opportunities. Increased family activities; increased communication between residents, board and staff; community meetings and different locations for the meetings.
Lack of political support and lack of media coverage	Convincing politicians of an issue's importance, value and purpose; engaging the media early in the process and self-publicizing project efforts.
Continuing racial and class inequality	Continuing to offer and encourage educational assistance; offering adult education, leadership, critical thinking and financial literacy programs.

What Are the Lessons Learned?

- **Conflict between an organization and its constituents is sometimes an indicator that the organization's mission needs to be reevaluated.** Through the LEAP process, A Place for Hope discovered that the organization's original mission – to provide social services – had become outdated and a source of tension with the community. In many ways, the original mission of the organization had been achieved: the community is now cleaner and safer, the washhouse is an important resource for residents, and streetlights have been installed.

- **The LEAP process increased trust between government agencies and established trust between agencies and the pilot communities.** In addition to the trust building locally between the LEAP organizations and other stakeholders, the LEAP process was instrumental in building trust between DHEC and the four pilot communities. All of the communities indicated that they now have a better understanding of DHEC's responsibilities. They also reported that they believe DHEC is available to help them when they need the agency's help. The LEAP organizations also built trust with EPA officials and realized that EPA is willing to invest in community capacity building at the local level.

Visit from EPA Administrator Lisa P. Jackson, U.S. Representative James E. Clyburn and Delegate Donna M. Christensen to the Savannah River Site and EPA's nationally recognized Superfund Job Training Initiative project at the site

Collaborative Problem-Solving Element 3:
Consensus Building and Dispute Resolution

Effective community engagement involves finding good ways to make group decisions, involving all relevant stakeholders and resolving disagreements, if necessary.

What conflicts or disagreements has the community experienced?	What actions should be taken to resolve the conflicts or disagreements?

What challenges do you anticipate encountering before you arrive at consensus and agreement?	What actions can you take to create consensus?

What conflicts and disagreements remain?	What steps can you take to resolve outstanding conflicts and disagreements?

Collaborative Problem-Solving Element 4:
Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships and Leveraging of Resources

What Is the Community Need?

Community problems require partners who can bring good ideas and resources such as money, time, meeting space, knowledge, marketing and supplies to help solve a problem. Potential partners include local organizations, small businesses, residents, training centers, colleges and universities, government, and churches or other religious organizations.

What Is this CPS Element?

Multi-stakeholder partnerships are groups that represent different sectors of society such as business, government, education, community or public safety. As a project moves forward and new needs are identified, new partners should be invited to share their resources.

CPS Element 4 at a Glance

- Talk early and often with possible partners who need to be involved in addressing concerns.
- Create a common vision, goals and objectives among the partners.
- Develop a clear and workable plan to address identified issues.
- Identify and invite partners to share their resources (e.g., human, institutional, technical, legal, financial).
- Look for new partners to help address issues as new issues and needs are identified.

Source: EPA's June 2008 Environmental Justice CPS model

What Were the LEAP Experiences?

The four LEAP communities used different strategies to get input and participation from local resident and other stakeholders. They also aimed to build upon existing leadership and experts already in the community.

- The partnership between CDIC and GCC is an example of an effective collaboration. GCC did not have non-profit status and therefore was not eligible to receive LEAP funding. However, GCC had many ties to the community. CDIC, in turn, had not been able to engage the community in its redevelopment efforts. By working together, CDIC now has buy-in from the community and GCC's vision to revitalize Graniteville is closer to reality.

Reverend Jenkins-Boseman, The Imani Group:

"We started treating the community as co-partners and co-creators of meetings, rather than just giving them information. We are working on treating the community with respect, meeting in venues that are appropriate and providing amenities like linen and flowers. We began to be conscious about what we are serving at meetings, including healthier choices in our menus."

CDIC and GCC also brought together two groups of key stakeholders. The first was the Brownfields Steering Committee, which was responsible for getting information out to the community and met on a quarterly basis. The Committee was also the outreach arm for the second stakeholder group, the Brownfields Community Oversight Team. This Team met monthly and also participated in facilitated discussions with county council members and South Carolina state lawmakers in the communities of concern.

- LAMC, already organized around the Community Mitigation Plan, had effectively engaged neighborhood associations and councils for each of the impacted neighborhoods. The organization had also established committees addressing its four focus areas: housing, economic development, education and environmental justice.

- In the case of the Blackmon Road residents, A Place for Hope helped form a Healthy Housing Committee. Monthly meetings had themes such as "Community Priorities and Goals," "Exercise," "Mental Health and Housing," and "Summer Heat Preparedness." The Committee explored these themes to spark ideas for on-the-ground projects. This pilot organization also conducted a series of Rural Café Listening Sessions with community residents and board members.

The table on the following pages lists the stakeholders and partners for each LEAP project. The table includes local stakeholders (CPS Element 4) and stakeholders from outside the community (CPS Element 5).

Stakeholder or Partner	Sector	What Is their Role in the Project?
The Imani Group LEAP Project – South Carolina Environmental Justice Network		
The Imani Group	Nonprofit community organization	- Serves as administrative leader of the project (grant management, organizational management). - Keeps written records of project activities. - Presents information to the community.
South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control	State health and environmental agency	- Provides technical support to the emerging state environmental justice network. - Oversaw finances and grant administration.
South Carolina Environmental Justice Advisory Council	State legislative environmental justice advisory council	Provides technical support and resources to support the goals of the emerging state environmental justice network.
EPA Region 4 Office of Environmental Justice	Regional office of the federal government	Provides technical support, capacity-building support and grant support (where appropriately applied for) to the emerging state environmental justice network.

Stakeholder or Partner	Sector	What Is their Role in the Project?
LEAP pilot communities	Nonprofit community-based groups	• Actively participate in and support the emerging state environmental justice network. Hosts network meetings in local communities and helps grow and expand the network.
A Place for Hope LEAP Project		
Members of the community	Community residents	• Help to identify community issues and concerns. • Provide feedback. • Participate in neighborhood projects. • Serve as potential board members.
A Place for Hope	Nonprofit community organization	• Serves as administrative leader of the project (grant management, organizational management). • Keeps written records of project activities. • Presents information to the community.
South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control	Government: state-level agency	• Provides technical assistance. • Assists with grant management. • Helps share information with the community.
Healthy Housing Committee	Community	• Serves as a liaison between A Place for Hope and the community. • Becomes leaders in the community. • Provides/develops an implementation plan.
York County	Government: county-level	• Provides technical assistance. • Advocates for the community. • Provides municipal services. • Provides documentation for partnerships.
Council of Governments	Government: Regional	• Provides technical assistance. • Advocates for the community. • Provides municipal services. • Provides documentation for partnerships.
Community Development and Improvement Corporation (CDIC) and Graniteville Community Coalition (GCC) LEAP Project		
Brownfields Steering Committee	Community	• Meets on a quarterly basis. • Communicates information to the community. • Builds relationships among Aiken County Council, residents, local businesses, Aiken Technical College, The Imani Group, the Graniteville Community Coalition, CDIC, the Graniteville Vauclause Warrenville (GVW) Community Investment Corporation and the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control.

Stakeholder or Partner	Sector	What Is their Role in the Project?
Community Advocate	Community	• Serves as an advocate for the community.
CDIC	Community development corporation	• Serves as administrative leader of the project (grant management, organizational management).
GVW Community Investment Corporation	Nonprofit community development organization	• Responsible for the progress, monitoring and reporting of all brownfield-related activities, including assessment, remediation and redevelopment.
Aiken County	Government: county-level	• Provides technical assistance. • Advocates for the community. • Provides municipal services.
Community Environmental Company	Private-sector landowner	• Owns the brownfield.
South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control	State health and environmental agency	• Serves as liaison for resources to community.
Lowcountry Alliance for Model Communities (LAMC) LEAP Project		
Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance	Nonprofit faith-based community organization	• Provides support services and housing development. • Conducts congregational outreach.
South Carolina State Ports Authority	Government: state-level agency	• Oversees implementation of Community Mitigation Plan.
City of North Charleston	Government: local-level agency	• Assists with implementation of Community Mitigation Plan. • Provides technical assistance. • Helps with leveraging resources.
University of Maryland	School of Public Health	• Provides technical assistance. • Helps with leveraging resources. • Assists with public health research design elements.
South Carolina Department of Transportation	Government: state-level agency	• Assists with port access, traffic mitigation and transportation planning.
South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control	Government: state-level agency	• Provides coordination of environmental justice and public health issues.

What Are the Lessons Learned?

- **Stakeholders will not always share the same agenda.** As a result, it is important to establish the role of each stakeholder at the outset of the partnership.

- **Find local partners who understand the technical, policy and social implications of the project.** For example, LAMC encourages the neighborhood councils to designate someone within their organizations to keep abreast of local environmental issues, zoning changes and policy.

Participants at the third LEAP workshop

- **Community liaisons are invaluable in bringing the right people together**. In the case of the LEAP initiative, project leaders with DHEC effectively served the important role of bringing appropriate partners into the process and facilitating ongoing efforts.

Collaborative Problem-Solving Element 4:
Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships and Leveraging of Resources

An effective community engagement effort requires the support of people who can contribute ideas and resources. It is important to identify these individuals early in the engagement process, make contact and develop working relationships. Create a common vision, goals and objectives with the partners and a clear, workable plan to address identified issues.

Stakeholder or Partner	Sector	What Is their Role in this Effort?	Contact Information

Collaborative Problem-Solving Element 5: Constructive Engagement by Relevant Stakeholders

What Is the Community Need?

To tackle a complex community issue effectively, stakeholders from state and federal agencies, universities and nonprofits are often needed. This is particularly critical when the community is small, rural or underserved and may not have local stakeholders with appropriate expertise. Additionally, the presence of an outside organization sometimes provides a perspective that is difficult to see from within a community.

What Is this CPS Element?

CPS Element 5 looks at how stakeholders from outside the community can serve constructive roles in supporting community change. Some of the roles that these stakeholders can play include:

> **CPS Element 5 at a Glance**
>
> - Identify where government can support the efforts of the community to address issues through information resources, technical assistance, financial assistance, or even policy changes.
> - Seek support and cooperation from industry or business.
> - Use academic institutions for technical assistance such as research and analysis.
> - Engage civic organizations to help raise the community's awareness of the issues and mobilize support.
>
> *Source:* EPA's June 2008 Environmental Justice CPS model

- A **facilitator** to keep discussions going, help the group solve problems when they arise and bring legitimacy to the effort.

- A **technical assistance provider** to bring useful information to the discussion (e.g., data, mapping, survey results) and lend assistance outside the knowledge or experience of the group.

- A **communicator** to assist in circulating information within the group and assist in focusing the attention of decision-makers outside of the affected community on the problem.

- A **financial resource provider** to provide funding and financial services.

- An **enforcer** to ensure that laws and regulations are being followed.

What Were the LEAP Experiences?

The LEAP organizations excelled at engaging government representatives, businesses, civic organizations and academic organizations. When asked to reflect on their engagement experiences with stakeholders from outside the community, the LEAP communities shared the following reasons for doing so:

- To help find financial and in-kind resources, technical assistance and education for residents.

- To offer new perspectives about the problems, including health effects, and to find possible remediation solutions.

- To gain technical assistance, help share information, grow political capital and identify funding for leveraging opportunities.

- To help local officials fulfill their responsibilities to improve quality of life for all community residents.

- To provide legitimacy to their efforts by including local, state and federal officials as part of their stakeholder group.

Specific pilot project experiences are highlighted below.

- The Imani Group successfully convened a South Carolina Environmental Justice Coalition, averaging 80 attendees at each meeting. The group worked hard to bring federal agency stakeholders into their ongoing environmental justice advocacy regarding the Savannah River Site, a nuclear fuel storage site owned by the U.S. Department of Energy.

- CDIC and GCC's work with the Urban Land Institute would not have been possible without the support of the LEAP initiative. Without the visioning charrette that resulted from this partnership, it is likely that CDIC and GCC would not have attracted attention from the Aiken County Council to host a meeting in Graniteville and begin a constructive dialogue. In addition, CDIC, GCC and allies met with the county council and invited them to hold a council meeting in Graniteville. The meeting turned out to be a respectful dialogue with community members voicing their concerns to a receptive council.

Finally, the structure of the LEAP initiative itself tapped outside expertise. DHEC did a lot of legwork seeking resources and making contacts on behalf of the pilots. Additionally, all of the pilots participated in the December 2, 2010 LEAP Summit at the University of South Carolina in Aiken coordinated by the EPA Region 4's Environmental Justice Program. This event brought together federal and state agencies as well as academic institutions to identify resources and assistance they could offer each pilot. The gathering offered an opportunity for dialogue and significant relationship building between LEAP organizations and these other agencies.

What Are the Lessons Learned?

- **Coordinate with different departments within the same agency.** The pilots found that outside help can come from several different offices within the same agency.

- **Relevant stakeholders from outside of the community can play an important role as impartial information brokers.** An example is the role of the Urban Land Institute in the CDIC and GCC pilot.

Inviting outside groups into the community can refocus attention on the project at hand. In addition, it is often beneficial to invite outside groups to see a site so they can better understand the community and its concerns. An example is CDIC and GCC's successful effort to bring Aiken County Council's attention to the work taking place in Graniteville.

WORKSHEET 5

Collaborative Problem-Solving Element 5: Constructive Engagement by Relevant Stakeholders

A community can involve an individual, a neighborhood, an area of a municipality, or the entire municipality and include other stakeholders, such as businesses, academia and civic organizations and all levels of government. These stakeholder groups can play an important role in participating and assisting with building collaborative partnerships. An important step in organizing the engagement process is identifying the members of the community with common interests to build a broadly representative coalition.

1. **Describe the geographic area affected or potentially affected by the activities of your project.**

2. **Who are the members of the community and other stakeholder groups that participated or will participate in this project? Describe the role of each participant.**

3. **Are there members of the community or other stakeholder groups who are not willing to participate? Who are the stakeholders that declined to participate? Why would they not participate?**

4. **What are the issues or concerns raised by key stakeholders regarding the project?**

Collaborative Problem-Solving Element 6: Sound Management and Implementation

What Is the Community Need?

As discussed in Element 2, community organizations play a crucial role in educating a community. To do this effectively, the organization needs sufficient capacity. This means having enough staff or volunteers, time, structure and money to run a well-managed organization. It also means having an engaged and effective board. If an organization is not well managed, it can prevent the overall success of a project, turn away partners and lead to broken community relationships.

What Is this CPS Element?

CPS Element 6 is about making sure your community-based organization is well structured and managed. This can be challenging for grassroots organizations that rely heavily on volunteers. Sometimes, organizations are formed due to a pressing need or crisis – like a train derailment – with little time or energy to put management systems in place. However, grassroots organizations need to use their limited resources as efficiently as possible. Organizations should work toward:

CPS Element 6 at a Glance

- Seek clear results and improve community conditions
- Clarify commitments of each partner.
- Clarify plans and timelines.
- Use community's abilities and talents.
- Use strengths of partners.
- Identify and build upon small successes.
- Organize work to maximize time and resources.

Source: EPA's June 2008 Environmental Justice CPS model

LEAP participant:

"One of the things we are learning to do is not just be busy, but be effective. We are learning to measure moments of effectiveness."

- Writing work plans with clear goals, establishing timelines and assigning responsibilities.

- Building partnerships that clearly define the roles and responsibilities of each partner.

- Putting systems in place to handle organizational and staff development, budgets, administration and personnel. Sometimes this means finding partners to do some of these things.

- Setting up structures for communication within the organization as well as between the organization and other partners and stakeholders.

What Were the LEAP Experiences?

The pilots all did important work in the areas of organizational capacity building, including developing their boards. The organizations reflected on their experiences during the May 2012 LEAP Sustainability Summit. When asked if the LEAP initiative had made their organizations stronger, weaker or neither, the pilots unanimously said "stronger." The pilots' specific experiences are highlighted below.

- LAMC strengthened the organization by hiring two VISTA volunteers. They contributed over 5,000 hours to the organization, providing an estimated in-kind value of $100,000 in services.

  LAMC's success with the VISTA volunteers relied on finding candidates who were a good fit for the project. LAMC spent time evaluating resumes and looking for skill sets that matched the organization's needs. Because LAMC staff had spent time honing their organizational mission, they had a good sense of the kind of workers needed. Once LAMC brought the VISTA volunteers on board, it capitalized on the interests of the volunteers. For example, the volunteers wanted to gain experience doing outreach with social media. Lastly, LAMC used the VISTA volunteers as an outreach arm directly connected with the community. The "on the ground" presence of the volunteers meant that they could respond in a timely manner to requests for information, identify gaps quickly and observe the responsiveness of elected officials.

LAMC also used the resources provided by the LEAP initiative to develop its board. LAMC's board currently has seven members, five of whom are heads of neighborhood councils. In some cases, the board members had never served on a board and faced a steep technical and policy learning curve. LAMC staff worked with board members to

> **TASC consultant Vernice Miller-Travis on building organizational capacities:**
>
> **"Environmental justice organizations are often focused on communities in crisis and on responding to the crisis. While they aren't focused on long-term sustainability of the organization, the emergency eventually goes away yet the organization needs to continue."**

> **LEAP Participants and the Challenges of Board Development:**
>
> - "We had to do a reality-check with our board. It was full of friends and do-gooders, but we needed to move to a board that was well-functioning and developed."
>
> - "When our organization was first developed, we focused on having community presidents as board members, which made sense at the time. Now we think we need to bring certain skills, like legal knowledge, to the board. We are also reevaluating the board because some of our board members do not bring anything new."
>
> - "We have board members who take on roles to facilitate programs. We need to ask them to step off the board and begin to compensate them for their work."

> TASC consultant Vernice Miller-Travis on building organizational capacities:
>
> "Many environmental justice groups feel that professionalization is selling out. Many organizations are still hand-to-mouth and are still that way after 20 years. They can't move to the next level, because they believe that professionalizing is not true to their social justice mission. While that is legitimate, if you need to operate at a higher level than as a volunteer organization, then there are steps you need to take. Many environmental justice groups treat the transition like it's organic, but it's not. You create a group in response to a train derailment and associated illness, but if the next step is to establish a health clinic, then you need to think about transitioning. You need to figure out where you are trying to get to."

    communicate roles and responsibilities clearly. LAMC also spent time thinking through how to grow and mentor the organization's next set of leaders.

- A Place for Hope evolved rapidly as an organization during the LEAP process, with a new executive director and a rotation of the board as some members' terms came to an end. A Place for Hope capitalized on this change in leadership by using the time to reorganize, take stock and reconsider organizational goals. The rebranding of the organization, from social work center to resource center to youth support and leadership development center is an example of how organizations can use the sound management and implementation element to facilitate change.

Since LEAP's primary mission was to build the capacities of grassroots organizations, the project offered many management training sessions to the pilots. In fact, the LEAP workshops included resources and training in leadership development, accountability, board development, the transition process from volunteer-run to paid staff, financial management, succession and growth management, and sustaining volunteer and community engagement. DHEC also brought in representatives from specific programs, such as the South Carolina Department of Social Services' Project HOPE, which offers health-care education, training and certification programs to qualified applicants.

What Are the Lessons Learned?

- **Community capacity building and organizational capacity building are equally important.** If an organization is not able to take the time to develop good internal management practices, the work of community capacity building cannot be sustained.

- **There is a place in an organization for both vision and leadership.** Charismatic leaders are rare and important to maintaining an organization's momentum. Day-to-day leaders are good at managing and finding ways for an organization to thrive and grow.

- **Boards of Directors:**

  o Need to conduct executive director evaluations on a regular basis.

o Should have an odd number of members to help prevent deadlocks. For organizations with relatively small areas of focus, an 11-member board may be ideal. Community members should be on the board, especially because the environmental justice movement is about the challenges facing everyday people. At the same time, if community members do not have the necessary skills, board members from outside the community may also be needed.

o Need to have term limits enforced. It is important to bring new energy onto the board at regular intervals.

o Must be educated to understand their roles and responsibilities. This process is known as "board development."

- **Seek volunteers and interns that complement your organization.** An example is the care and effort taken by LAMC in the selection of their VISTA volunteers.

- **In the absence of planning, an organization will succumb to the "ricochet model" of organizational development.** When organizations are constantly reacting and bouncing from one issue to another instead of proactively planning, they lose energy and waste resources.

- **When transitioning from a volunteer organization to a staffed organization, there may be friction created because some people are paid and some people are not.** It is important to address this issue immediately and then find a way to make both staff and volunteers feel valued by the organization.

EPA Region 4's Sheryl Good and TASC consultant Vernice Miller-Travis on the importance of recognizing volunteers' efforts:

"You need to celebrate every victory, large and small, so everyone knows you're moving forward and not standing still. Have a community gathering and thank people for the ways that they help, because you can't compensate them. They need to know that you value them and the contributions they make.

"It matters and it's what makes the organization thrive. You need to think of creative ways to show people you appreciate them. Have a holiday luncheon, prepare special gifts, write personal thank-you notes. That's all people really want. They want to be acknowledged for what they have done."

Community members participating in an LAMC- sponsored event

I don't feel no ways tired,

I've come too far from where I started from.

Nobody told me that the road would be easy,

I don't believe He brought me this far to leave me.

– *From the gospel song "I Don't Feel No Ways Tired"*

- **Financial mismanagement can crush an organization.** Organizations need both a bookkeeper and an accountant. For organizations managing over $250,000 in annual income, an independent audit is also needed. If an organization is managing federal funds, it needs to be able to account for those funds separately. As an organization grows, a paid grants manager position may be necessary.

- **Organizations need to put a conflict of interest policy in place** so that people cannot move back and forth between being paid staff and board members.

LEAP Participants on the Challenges of Organizational Development:

- **"I love being surrounded by smart young people, but I had to sit down with my administrative assistant and give her negative feedback. I referred to her job description, which she was not fulfilling, and asked her to let me know her plan for improvement."**

- **"We need to put in place the right infrastructure and run the organization not like a mom-and-pop shop but like a business."**

- **"We have a number of visionaries, but the administrative paperwork gets lost in the process."**

- **"One of our biggest challenges is recognizing that we are a business with a social mission. We are not in the social mission business. We need to realize that, first, we need to operate as a business and then move forward with the mission of the organization."**

WORKSHEET 6

Collaborative Problem-Solving Element 6:
Sound Management and Implementation

Sound organization and management is important to produce results. This means developing and carrying out work plans with clear goals and clear timeframes and assigning responsibilities to the appropriate people.

1. **Did you develop an organizational strategic plan to guide the future work of your organization and chart its growth and development? Please describe the key elements of your organizational strategic plan.**

2. **Did you develop yearly action plans for your organization to outline future activities and goals? If so, please describe them.**

3. **How was progress in achieving the goals communicated to the community?**

4. **Does the organization have a plan for organizational development that includes reviewing governing documents, financial management procedures and personnel policies? Please describe what your plan entails.**

5. **Does the organization have a staff and board leadership development and succession plan in place? Please describe the key elements of your plan, or the challenges you face in planning for staff and board turnover?**

Collaborative Problem-Solving Element 7:
Evaluation, Lessons Learned and Replication of Best Practices

What Is the Community Need?

Throughout a project or initiative, project leaders need to know if what they are doing is working to meet their original vision and goals. They also need to assess if their original vision and goals are still adequate or if new information, changes in policy or new partners have changed the field of play.

What Is this CPS Element?

This CPS element is about reviewing lessons learned over time and using those lessons to improve future work. Good recordkeeping is important to the evaluation process so that important details are not lost over time. Evaluation is about looking back, at what worked and did not work, and looking forward to build on project strengths and make corrections as needed. The CPS model notes that, although this tool is presented as the last element, evaluation should be woven throughout a project.

One of the greatest benefits of evaluation is that it is an opportunity to identify best practices – the parts of a project that were uniquely successful and *why* they were successful. In work that involves environmental justice or social justice, these best practices are the ideas worth sharing because they may be useful to other communities and stakeholders tackling similar challenges. In this way, the reach of the project is broadened and extended to other communities.

CPS Element 7 at a Glance

- Periodically evaluate progress.
- Use lessons learned as the project proceeds.
- Clearly describe measures of success.
- Document and share information and successes.

Source: EPA's June 2008 Environmental Justice CPS model

The Imani Group's Reverend Jenkins-Boseman on the success of the LEAP initiative:

"The seed has been planted. We just need to apply the fertilizer. Etched on a wall in Jerusalem are the words 'Forgetfulness leads to exile while remembrance is the secret of redemption.'

"Working with these partners, the work continues. It's not what I do, it's who I am. To find like-minded soldiers committed to a cause of making lives better makes the work that much better. We can apply ourselves to multiplying ourselves many times over. I am honored to work with all of you and the strengths you all bring. As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another."

What Were the LEAP Experiences?

One way to evaluate the work of the pilots is by identifying specific lessons learned using the lens of the CPS model. Another useful evaluation technique is to track categories of organizational impacts, such as:

1. Provided technical assistance, reports or policy analysis to the community in a way that is relevant to that community's particular challenges.

2. Created a task force, work group or committee to address specific concerns or seek solutions.

3. Presented a proposal for local adoption (such as a new plan, code or policy).

4. Supported efforts that led to the community's adoption of the organization's proposal.

5. Enabled a process that has catalyzed new physical developments that would not have taken place without the organization's involvement.

Each of the pilots caused incremental progress in their communities:

- A Place for Hope used a portion of its LEAP funding to hire an engineer who completed a much-needed report on the water and sewer infrastructure options available to the community. The organization also maintained the Healthy Housing Committee and held several community meetings for residents. The engineer's recommendations were not approved for local adoption for various reasons.

- The Imani Group's original focus – radium testing in private wells – was initiated because residents receive radium contamination advisories from the city's water department. The organization sought to conduct well sampling, but the effort stalled when technical skills to create a Quality Assurance Project Plan to guide data collection were not available and EPA and DHEC could not agree on appropriate standards for remedial action.

- CDIC's work with the Urban Land Institute is an excellent example of community-specific information gathering and community education.

- LAMC's work spurred the engagement of North Charleston neighborhoods in the NEPA review for the expansion of the Port of Charleston and resulted in funding for their Community Mitigation Plan. The organization is now working to create new development projects in the community.

LEAP provided evaluation training to all of the pilots. The pilots learned that environmental justice work is inherently hard to capture. They also learned about traditional evaluation framework tools (such as logic models).

LEAP also shared an analytical evaluation framework for assessing environmental justice outcomes developed by EPA with the pilots. Each pilot was given a paper, "Closing the Environmental Justice Gap: A Workshop on Advancing Evaluation Methods," from EPA's Office of Policy, Evaluation and Innovation. This paper offered several approaches to help the pilots measure and explain what they were trying to do, the steps taken and the accomplishments achieved.

Finally, from a project standpoint, the LEAP initiative was a measure of this question: can small amounts of capacity-building funding enact change in communities? The answer is emphatically yes.

> **Retired DHEC Community Liaison and State Environmental Justice Coordinator Nancy Whittle:**
>
> "Everybody can be great, because everybody can serve.
>
> You don't have to have a college degree to serve.
>
> You don't have to make your subject and your verb agree to serve. You don't have to know about Plato and Aristotle to serve. You don't have to know Einstein's theory of relativity to serve. You don't have to know the second theory of thermodynamics in physics to serve. You only need a heart full of grace, a soul generated by love."
>
> *– Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., "The Drum Major Instinct"*
> *Delivered at Ebenezer Baptist Church, Atlanta, Georgia, February 4, 1968*

What Are the Lessons Learned?

- **When evaluating outcomes, look for changes in ABC: Awareness, Behavior, Condition.** Document outcomes, no matter how insignificant or tangential they seem.

- **Funders want to know that a program has achieved its goals.** EPA, DHEC and other agencies have to justify every dollar they spend to achieve programmatic success. Good program design and evaluation are crucial. The agencies also need to ensure that the requirements of cooperative agreements are met.

- **Evaluation is key to knowing when it is time to evolve as an organization.** For example, A Place for Hope's reflective look at their organizational vision and mission found that the organization needed to grow in a new way.

- **The evaluation process should include how relationships have changed.** For example, are the ties between an organization and its partners stronger or weaker than in the past?

> **EPA Region 4's Sheryl Good on the DHEC-EPA collaboration:**
>
> "Our partners at DHEC courageously embraced a concept that the Office of Environmental Justice put out to advance the environmental justice goals of states.
>
> "You have met all of the goals and expectations that we set out, not only for yourselves, but for your pilot projects. I hope you all recognize the tremendous success of these pilots that are now models for all the other states. Part of the reason for the program is that we hear through NEJAC that you have to start with local government. We said okay let's reach out. We hear 'no' from other states, but here [in South Carolina] you have done it."

EPA's and DHEC's investment of $100,000 in the four LEAP communities catalyzed a great deal of progress in the four organizations. Some of this progress can be measured in tangible activities, services

and outcomes. Other progress has come in the form of new knowledge or new actions. Examples of these outcomes include better-informed residents, stronger boards, more receptive and accessible council members, and stronger relationships with state agencies.

The LEAP project experiences also confirm some important truths about measuring success in projects that involve environmental and social justice issues:

1. Projects of this nature are not linear (that is, they do not necessarily move purposefully from big problem to big solution). Often, these projects require a "doubling back" or reevaluation as more information is obtained. As community input is collected, for example, the project may alter its course. It is unrealistic to expect sequential, tidy successes.

2. Projects of this nature do not always result in a "big solution." The impacts of generational poverty, for example, are not a factor that can be easily undone in a community in one year, three years or 10 years. Projects such as the LEAP pilots demonstrate that successes should be acknowledged at many points along the journey and should not be limited to the goal of solving the big problem.

3. Projects of this nature often result in unexpected successes, not formally listed in a work plan as an "output" or an "outcome." LAMC achieving the country's first Community Mitigation Plan under NEPA is a powerful example. Again, projects such as the LEAP pilots need the freedom to acknowledge successes that may not have been identified in the initial work plan.

4. Projects of this nature are not always about the money. Many of the most significant accomplishments achieved by these groups were the new relationships formed, partnerships and collaborations established, and knowledge acquired. These developments proved to be far more valuable than the $25,000 that each group received from DHEC. The LEAP communities proved that sometimes progress can be made and community transformation achieved even in the face of limited resources.

Collaborative Problem-Solving Element 7:
Evaluation, Lessons Learned and Replication of Best Practices

Evaluation helps determine whether a project is achieving its goals. Findings from the evaluation should be shared with project partners, so they can make informed decisions to improve project performance.

List the evaluation techniques you will use.	What are the measures of success?	What mechanisms will be used to integrate lessons learned into existing practices and programs?

PART 4: RESOURCE TOOLKIT

Throughout the LEAP initiative, many resources were incorporated into project activities. These resources may prove useful to other communities facing similar challenges, so they are listed below with appropriate links to enable easy access. Starred resources are available in the workbook's Appendices section.

Collaborative Problem-Solving Model:

- EPA's Environmental Justice Collaborative Problem-Solving Model, June 2008, http://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/resources/publications/grants/cps-manual-12-27-06.pdf

Community Visioning and Strategic Planning:

- Twin Counties Visioning for a Better Life, A Discussion Guide for the Twin Counties Visioning and Strategic Plan Process, April 2012, Skeo Solutions, http://twincountiesvisioning.skeo.com/discussion-guide-twin-counties-visioning-and-strategic-plan-process
- South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control community involvement website, http://www.scdhec.gov/communityinvolvement
- Agendas from each of the four LEAP workshops*
    - May 13-15, 2010 - LEAP Kick-off Conference
    - December 2, 2010 - EPA Region 4 Environmental Justice LEAP Summit
    - May 2011 – Charleston Meeting
    - May 3-4, 2012 - Third LEAP Workshop
- A World Café Hosting Guide, 2007, The World Café Community Foundation, http://www.empowermentinstitute.net/lcd/lcd_files/World_Cafe_Hosting_Guide.pdf
- The Community Tool Box (Chapter 9 – Developing a Strategic Plan, Organizational Structure and Training System), University of Kansas, 2012, http://ctb.ku.edu/en/tablecontents/index.aspx

Environmental Justice:
- EPA Community Action for a Renewed Environment (CARE) Program, http://www.epa.gov/care
- Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) Brownfield/Land Reuse Community Health Initiative, http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/sites/brownfields
- Community-Based Federal Environmental Justice Resource Guide, August 2011, Federal Interagency Working Group on Environmental Justice, http://www.epa.gov/compliance/ej/resources/publications/interagency/resource-guide.pdf
- Closing the Environmental Justice Gap: A Workshop on Advancing Evaluation Methods, September 30, 2011, UCLA Luskin Center for Innovation, http://luskin.ucla.edu/sites/default/files/Pre-Workshop%20Briefing%20Paper-final.pdf
- Toolkit for Assessing Potential Allegations for Environmental Injustices, November 2004, United States Environmental Protection Agency, http://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/resources/policy/ej-toolkit.pdf

Examples of Best Practices in Outreach and Education:

- Newsletters, flyers, informational handouts from the pilots*

Funding Resources:

- LEAP Resource Guide, July 2011*

Mapping:

- EJView, http://epamap14.epa.gov/ejmap/entry.html

Multimedia:

- "Aerial America" series, Smithsonian Channel, http://www.smithsonianchannel.com/site/sn/show.do?episode=137670
- "Graniteville: Past, Present and Future" (trailer), http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8KUdh8EWxPM
- "Root Shock: How Tearing Up City Neighborhoods Hurts America, and What We Can Do About It," June 2004, Dr. Mindy Thompson Fullilove.

Non-profit Management:

- The Center for Nonprofit Leadership, http://cnlsierra.org
- South Carolina Association of Nonprofit Organizations, http://www.scanpo.org
  - Trainings and events, http://www.scanpo.org/events
  - Directors and officers insurance, http://www.scanpo.org/learn-and-join/purchasing-power-program
- South Carolina Community Development Organization, http://www.communitydevelopmentsc.org
- Institute for Conservation Leadership, http://www.icl.org
- The Environmental Support Center, http://envsc.org
- Dun & Bradstreet, DUNS, http://www.dnb.com

Project Resources:

- Work Plan Template*
- Quarterly Report Template*
- Meeting Agenda Template*
- PowerPoint Presentation: Collaboration*
- PowerPoint Presentation: From Values to Victory

Social Services:

- South Carolina Department of Social Services, Project HOPE, https://dss.sc.gov/projecthope