



# EPA's Environmental Justice Collaborative Problem-Solving Model



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# Welcome Message

**I**n just a short time, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's *Environmental Justice Collaborative Problem-Solving (CPS) Program* has grown and evolved. The backbone of this exciting new program is the Environmental Justice Collaborative Problem-Solving Model (CPS Model).

EPA's *Environmental Justice Collaborative Problem-Solving Model* is a handbook for all stakeholders to understand the basic tenets of the CPS Model and, through practical examples, it describes how the CPS Model is used to address environmental and/or public health issues in distressed communities.

The Office of Environmental Justice presents an overview of the CPS Model in this publication in order to share this dynamic approach with all environmental justice stakeholders. We invite you to explore the CPS Model and see how it can work for your community.

Barry E. Hill, Director  
Office of Environmental Justice

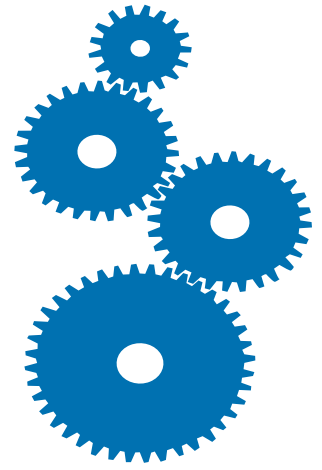


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# Chapter 1: Introduction



In 2004, the Office of Environmental Justice (OEJ) of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) developed a grant program to provide direct financial and technical assistance to selected community-based organizations. OEJ established a cooperative agreement program around the framework of the Environmental Justice Collaborative Problem-Solving Model (CPS Model). The concepts of collaborative problem-solving were initially examined by EPA and other federal agencies through the Federal Interagency Working Group (IWG) on Environmental Justice after gathering accomplishments and many lessons learned from the IWG's 30 demonstration projects in communities around the country. Since then, OEJ has developed the CPS Model into an effective approach to addressing local environmental and/or public health issues in a collaborative manner with various stakeholders such as communities, industry, academic institutions, and others.

Through OEJ, EPA created the CPS Model as part of its ongoing commitment to ensure environmental justice for all communities, including low-income and/or minority communities. Ensuring environmental justice means not only protecting human health and the environment for everyone, but also ensuring that all people are treated fairly and given the opportunity to participate meaningfully in the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.

Environmental and/or public health issues arise in urban, rural, and tribal communities that are environmentally, economically, and socially distressed. Situations where community residents are exposed disproportionately to environmental harms and risks require the application of science (both physical and social), environmental and civil rights law, public policy, urban planning, and other academic disciplines pertaining to community health, community development, natural resource management, and dispute resolution. These situations, more often than not, fall outside of the regulatory or programmatic responsibilities of any single governmental agency. It is virtually impossible for any single organization, institution, or sector of society, no matter how large or well established, to adequately address the environmental and/or public health problems experienced by communities.

Considerable progress has been made since Executive Order 12898 (*Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations*, issued on February 11, 1994) to address environmental and/or public health conditions in communities around the country. Despite this progress, however, some communities still lack the means to address the complex, interrelated factors related to environmental justice, such as environmental, public health, economic, and social concerns. Thus, OEJ began exploring the use of collaborative problem-solving to provide a systematic approach for communities to build partnerships with other stakeholders to improve their environmental and/or public health conditions in local areas.



The EPA's *Environmental Justice Collaborative Problem-Solving Model* is designed to give readers a basic understanding of the CPS Model and how it can be used to address local environmental and/or public health issues. This booklet will provide an overview of the CPS Model and its relationship to the Environmental Justice Collaborative Problem-Solving

Cooperative Agreement Program (EJ CPS Program) and how some communities are already using the CPS Model successfully around the United States. A basic overview of the CPS Model is discussed in Chapter 3, followed by several sections devoted to each of the CPS Model's seven elements.

This publication is intended for a diverse audience of environmental justice stakeholders, including: 1) community-based organizations, 2) federal, state, tribal and local governments, 3) industry, 4) non-governmental organizations, and 5) academia. It provides insights on how such entities can work together to use the CPS Model's techniques to address environmental and/or public health issues in local communities. In addition, this document can be used by EPA staff and members of the public who are interested in EPA's EJ CPS Program, which is further discussed in Chapter 5.



## Chapter 2:

# Collaborative Problem-Solving and Environmental Justice



**B**efore examining the CPS Model in great detail, this chapter discusses the concept of collaborative problem-solving and the need for partnership-building to address multi-stakeholder interests and concerns related to environmental justice.

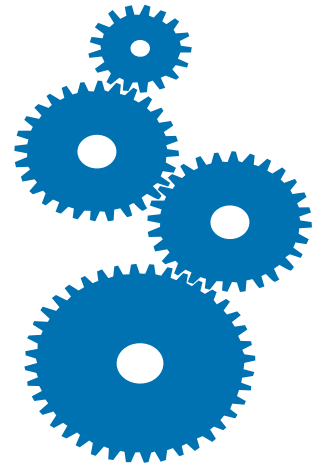
Collaborative problem-solving simply means that various stakeholders agree to work together to address a particular issue or concern. In situations involving environmental justice issues, stakeholders often have to reconcile divergent interests in order to address complex and interrelated environmental, public health, economic, and social problems in local communities. Many of these problems are deeply rooted and difficult to resolve without the concerted effort and active participation of all the stakeholders. When multiple stakeholders work together, they create a collective vision that reflects mutually beneficial goals for all parties. Such collaboration fosters the conditions that enable the parties to mobilize the resources necessary to realize stronger, more lasting solutions.

Collaborative problem-solving, in the context of environmental justice, involves proactive, strategic, and visionary community-based processes that bring together multiple parties from various stakeholder groups (e.g., community groups, all levels of government, industry, and academia) to develop solutions to address local environmental and/or public health issues. Partnerships and negotiations are required to achieve such a goal. Partnerships refer to arrangements by which different stakeholders work together to achieve a common goal. These partnerships can range from informal working relationships to very structured arrangements in which goals, membership, ground rules, and operating principles are clearly defined. Negotiations refer to processes, ranging from informal to formal, by which different stakeholders agree to come together and resolve disagreements.

The next chapter describes the CPS Model and its seven elements. The CPS Model is a flexible approach that can be applied to many situations that require collaboration but is particularly useful when dealing with environmental justice issues that are complex and involve many stakeholders, and where conflicts need to be resolved. There are many benefits to using the CPS Model. For instance, it provides a framework for leveraging the necessary human, social, intellectual, technical, legal, and financial resources to make long-term progress in communities disproportionately affected by environmental and/or public health issues. Also, the CPS Model encourages consensus-building processes and skills to help ensure successful collaborations and negotiations. Finally, it addresses the ongoing capacity-building needs of community-based organizations, as well as those of government, industry, academia, and civic organizations.

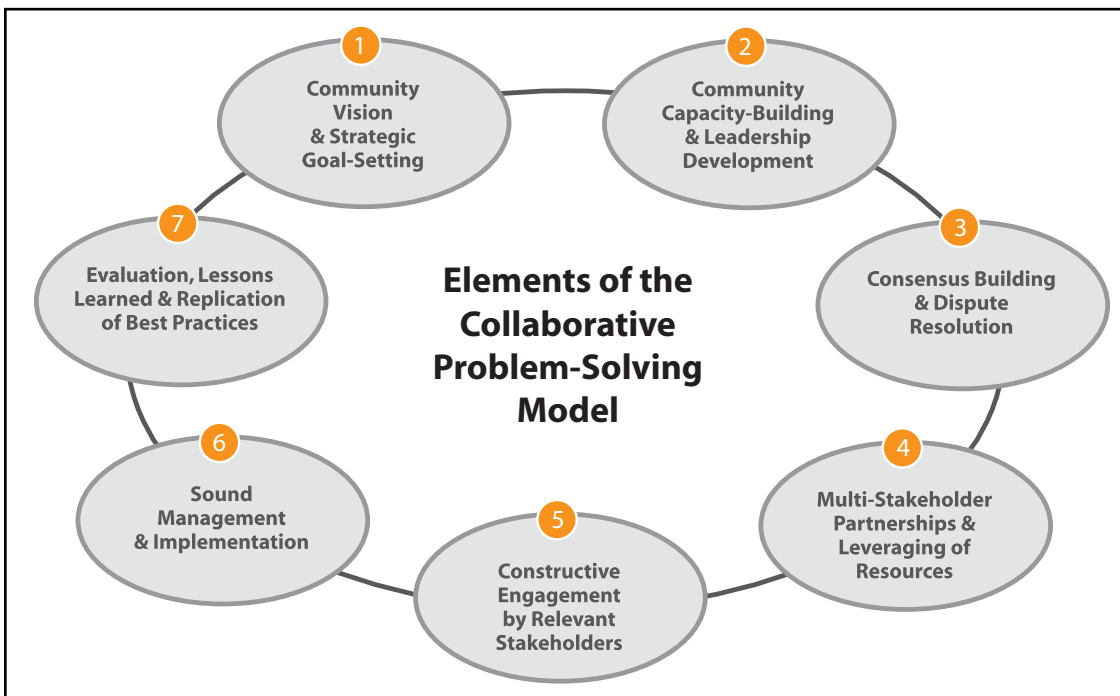


# Chapter 3: The Collaborative Problem-Solving Model



The CPS Model represents a systematic, community-based approach for stakeholders to achieve lasting solutions to local environmental and/or public health issues or concerns. It provides the framework for the CPS Program, which is discussed in Chapter 5.

There are seven elements in the CPS Model. These elements can be used in distressed communities where people are committed to working together to bring about positive change. Each element is discussed in detail in the sections that follow.



These elements are cross-cutting and interdependent and should be utilized in a proactive, strategic, and iterative manner. Determining which elements to undertake, and in what order, can vary greatly, however, depending upon the unique facts and circumstances surrounding each environmental and/or public health issue. Not all the elements are required to be used in every situation. Rather, the CPS Model and its seven elements can be viewed as a “tool box” filled with different tools that can be used as needed.

The CPS Model has been used successfully in many situations around the country. The seven elements can help pave the way for anyone interested in bringing environmental justice to their community. For instance, Chapter 4 describes how the CPS Model was used effectively in Spartanburg, South Carolina, where a community-based organization

called ReGenesis brought together the community, government, and industry to overcome tremendous obstacles to realize a vision of addressing long-standing local environmental, public health, and socio-economic ills. In doing so, all the stakeholders took part in improving the community's quality of life and creating the potential for economic growth and sustainability. Each of the sections that follow refers to the ReGenesis example. Furthermore, Chapter 5 briefly describes how the CPS Model is being applied by other communities through the EJ CPS Program.

## CPS Element 1 - Issue Identification, Community Vision, and Strategic Goal-Setting

The first element involves identifying the problem, such as environmental contamination; envisioning possible solutions; and then setting goals to achieve those solutions.

### 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 community plans and goals.
- Involve community residents in planning and goal-setting (e.g., forums, workshops).

Situations in which community residents are exposed disproportionately to environmental risks and harms invariably involve complex issues. Community-based organizations should think strategically to ensure that their community's limited resources are mobilized effectively to achieving priority goals. Involving the broader community in strategic planning activities usually leads to greater clarity in setting goals, establishing common understanding and trust, and honing the ability to act collectively. Strategies should not only address the problem but also lead to greater community capacity, viable partnerships, and more resources being leveraged.

Most organizations or partnerships start with an awareness of a problem. People come together when they realize that something is wrong. At some point, individual concerns transform into an organized community effort to address those concerns. The concerns can include "substantive issues," such as the high incidence of asthma or higher than normal rates of lead poisoning in children. They also

can include "process issues," such as lack of meaningful involvement in the decision-making processes of government or industry.

Collaborative problem-solving seeks to move beyond identifying environmental and/or public health problems to formulating viable strategies to address and resolve them. This goal is realized by: 1) creating a vision that articulates the desired outcomes to be achieved, and 2) developing a strategy that identifies the actions needed to produce such results.

In a visioning process, the participants think about what they want their community to eventually look like. In essence, the community visualizes what their own version of a

healthy and sustainable community might be. Focus groups, leadership forums, retreats, and planning charettes can be used to accomplish this process. The visioning process helps to establish the community's goals. They serve as the basis for subsequent planning and action. Ideally, the vision should reflect the aspirations of the whole community rather than a small group of individuals.

Using stories or images can effectively communicate a community's goals to others. Stories or images also can help all stakeholders understand the community's environmental and/or public health concerns.

Goals should be based on a community's vision of a healthy and sustainable community. They are formulated as specific solutions or desired outcomes to the particular public health and/or environmental problems identified. Goals should be strategic and accomplish several objectives simultaneously. Through a visioning process, community organizations develop a vision of their aspirations of a healthy and sustainable community. Specific goals in areas such as environmental cleanup, transportation, economic development, housing, public safety, green space development, and health/medical care are components of that vision. For instance, here is ReGenesis' goal statement with several components:

**Overarching goal:** The goal of the ReGenesis Redevelopment Project in the Arkwright-Forest Park communities of Spartanburg's South Side is to prepare a plan of action for this 500-acre site, which has been adversely affected by pollutants from industry and landfills.

- **Environmental objective:** To provide a healthy and safe community that is free of air and water pollution caused by industrial facilities and landfill sites.
- **Housing objective:** To provide good housing conditions for existing and potential new residents. Where relocations are deemed necessary in order to clean up industrial pollution, relocation housing should be made available within the immediate area.
- **Community objective:** To provide community facilities which will not only serve the immediate ReGenesis neighborhoods, but will also have a regional benefit drawing diverse populations and interests.
- **Transportation objective:** To enhance the community with improved vehicular and pedestrian access - especially emergency services - as well as local and regional access for shopping and employment opportunities.
- **Infrastructure objective:** To provide the same high level of service for power, water, sewer, and telephone as are prevalent in Spartanburg neighborhoods.

- **Economic objective:** To ensure stable economic growth with a sound environment to improve economic conditions for residents.
- **Implementation objective:** To establish an implementation strategy to ensure that the Redevelopment Plan is carried out in a timely fashion.

**Techniques to identify issues, create a vision, and set goals:**

- Build upon existing leadership and expertise in the affected community.
- Conduct local outreach, education, fact-finding, and assessment.
- Involve affected residents early to identify issues and concerns.
- Identify potential partners from all stakeholder groups.
- Build upon a strong understanding of community history and practices.
- Build upon a clearly articulated community vision of its goals.
- Employ tools for involving affected residents in planning project activities.

Collaboration between different stakeholder groups, government agencies, and academic disciplines is critical to coalescing a community's vision and goals. Mapping tools, like Geographic Information Systems (GIS), represent one way to foster such collaboration. GIS enables stakeholders to appreciate the conditions and issues of the particular community. Once the information is compiled and configured, GIS maps can also become effective tools for integrated problem-solving. GIS tools allow for the simultaneous examination of the physical and social environments, as well as the natural and human-made environments. GIS tools also help to overcome fragmentation by promoting integrated approaches to problem-solving across different agencies and disciplines.

Community groups also should pay close attention to power imbalances during the process of setting goals. For instance, more powerful groups often exert pressure to further their own agendas. "Who sets the agenda?" is an important question. It speaks to the issue of ensuring that the community defines its own problems, understands its own vision and interests, and develops its own agendas and strategies. Likewise, community-based organizations should realize that non-community stakeholder groups and outside experts will provide good ideas and needed information. Finally, the community group should not underestimate the value

of building strategic relationships with potential partners early on. These relationships can come into play later when such partners are needed to help implement a vision.

Planning charettes are effective tools for bringing together community residents, government leaders, and experts to translate the community's aspirations into realistic visions. In addition to a structured schedule and an open process for participation, the charette includes three defined mechanisms: 1) idea generation; 2) decision making; and 3) problem-solving. In Chapter 4, ReGenesis used a charette exercise sponsored by the Department of Energy to engage all of Spartanburg's stakeholders, particularly the local residents, in a visioning process to shape their new community (see page 26).

## CPS Element 2 - Community Capacity Building and Leadership Development

The second element calls for what's known as community "capacity building," which means finding a way to provide interested parties such as residents with the skills, information, and resources they need to achieve their goals.

Once a community-based organization has identified an environmental and/or public health concern, it must:

- Educate itself about the issue
- Gather appropriate information about the issue
- Conduct assessments regarding the causes of and potential solutions to the problem
- Identify and mobilize persons and organizations who can provide technical assistance
- Educate residents about the problem and involve them in formulating solutions and strategies

Community-based organizations devote considerable time and resources to educating community residents on a multitude of issues. They provide awareness and understanding not only of the environmental and/or public health issues at stake, but also the government policies and programs, industry practices, potential solutions, remedies, and other areas of concern.

Community education activities often focus on the scientific, legal, and policy aspects of environmental and/or public health impacts. When community residents develop a greater understanding of their own environmental and/or public health concerns, they have a better understanding of the options available to address these concerns. As a result, they acquire a greater capacity to meaningfully engage in negotiations or participate in other decision-making processes.

However, building community capacity also includes addressing organizational development and management issues. Just how well a community-based organization is managed affects the overall success of a community-based collaboration with other stakeholders.

Basic management issues, such as organizational governance, financial management, and personnel policies, are critical. Any community-based organization that has matured to the point of adopting a proactive, strategic vision must address issues of organizational development.

### CPS Element 2 at a glance:

- Build upon community efforts/work.
- Identify ways to work with community needs.
- 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.

Community-based organizations require resources and training to focus on organizational development and management needs. Institutions such as universities, civic organiza-

### Techniques to boost community capacity building:

- Tailor specific capacity-building activities to community assets and project goals.
- Institute training, mentoring, and technical assistance activities.
- Provide training to those community representatives directly involved in collaborative problem-solving processes.
- Develop sustainable processes that ensure capacity building and leadership development for community residents in the future.

tions, and government agencies can help meet some of these organizational development and management needs, but the community-based organization should proactively develop its own independent organizational capacity and infrastructure.

Most importantly, leadership development is the key ingredient to community capacity building. Though the attributes are unique to each individual, the essential qualities of leadership strengthen a person's ability to think strategically, create a vision, manage processes, communicate effectively, build consensus, and achieve results. In many cases, it takes only one person to change the course of action in a community, and yet it is the task of the entire community to grow its own leaders to continue to serve as their champions. In the ReGenesis example in Chapter 4, the qualities of leadership are embodied in Harold Mitchell, who steadfastly brought his community to the table and built a vibrant partnership with government and industry to resolve the nagging environmental, health, economic, and social problems that plagued Spartanburg for decades (see page 21). By empowering the community—particular-

ly engaging the youth in leadership and job skills training—Spartanburg is assured of a new crop of leaders to sustain their future progress.

## CPS Element 3 - Consensus Building and Dispute Resolution

### 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.

The third element entails “consensus building” and “dispute resolution,” which means finding effective ways of making group decisions, involving all appropriate parties and, when necessary, resolving disagreements. This is perhaps one of the most complex and challenging elements in the CPS Model.

Even though this is presented as the third element in the Model, it represents an ongoing process that generally begins prior to visioning and goal-setting and continues throughout any collaboration.

**What is consensus building?** Collaborative problem-solving efforts involve decision making by consensus. Such processes encourage all participating stakeholders to seek common ground and derive mutual gains. Building consensus means seeking agreement among different and, often times, competing interests. In the collaborative problem-solving process, consensus building meets the



needs and interests of each member of the group and requires members to work together to seek creative solutions. While building consensus is important to reaching agreements, it also serves to create and strengthen the relationships that form the basis for current and future collaborations.

Collaborative problem-solving efforts involve decision making by consensus. Such processes encourage all participating stakeholders to first build and bridge trust in order to seek common ground and derive mutual gains. In the collaborative problem-solving process, consensus building meets the needs and interests of each member of the group and requires members to work together to seek creative solutions.

Using consensus-building processes to achieve common goals also has the secondary effect of enhancing the problem-solving capacity and leadership skills of the key players. Overcoming challenges involving extreme stress is like going through a “ring of fire,” from which an individual emerges stronger and clearer than before. Additionally, relationships among stakeholder groups are strengthened.

**What is dispute resolution?** Invariably, conflicts arise in some cases. Where there is disagreement, dispute resolution processes can be used to work through conflicts. A dispute happens when a conflict between different parties has reached an impasse. To resolve disputes, there is a full spectrum of techniques for which parties have varying levels of control over the process and outcomes, depending upon the particular process used. Dispute resolution processes are both adjudicative (e.g., litigation or arbitration) and consensual (e.g., mediation or negotiation) in nature.

The following dispute resolution processes support the consensus-building approach: 1) unassisted negotiation, 2) facilitation, 3) mediation, 4) neutral fact-finding, and 5) the use of an ombudsperson. These processes provide the parties with greater control over the process and outcomes. Communities and other stakeholders seeking to address adverse and disproportionate environmental and/or public health issues can benefit from a greater understanding of these processes. Such processes are often needed in cases involving disproportionate environmental and/or public health impacts

**Other essential components.** There are other important components to note in this element of the CPS Model. The first is to correctly assess the conflict at hand. Conflict assessments are structured analyses that can be used to make informed decisions prior to and/or during consensus-building and dispute resolution processes. While assessing the conflict, disagreements about facts or the interpretation of data may arise in virtually all situations involving disproportionate environmental and/or public health issues. When such disagreements occur, the stakeholders can jointly choose to use an expert or

#### Techniques to build consensus and resolve disputes:

- Design processes, both formal and informal, to ensure fair treatment and meaningful participation of all stakeholders.
- Promote the development of a common vision and goals among all partners.
- Utilize facilitators or mediators to assist in the communication and negotiation processes.
- Identify, nurture, and promote win/win scenarios and mutual gains.
- Utilize alternative dispute resolution techniques to resolve crystallized disputes.

team of experts to conduct fact-finding in a neutral manner. Another key component when coming to consensus is to factor in contingency conditions that ensure agreements are implemented or enforced. Such conditions can provide for monitoring of the agreement or can trigger certain activities to occur if certain circumstances arise.

The stronger and more effective the overall collaborative process is, the greater positive impact it will have on the group's ability to resolve disputes. Chapter 4 illustrates this point; ReGenesis and Rhodia, Inc. used a dispute resolution technique called a facilitated dialogue, which used a neutral third-party to assist in crystallizing the issues and finding mutually agreeable long term solutions (see page 27). The dispute involved community concerns about the Rhodia chemical manufacturing facility, which the community believed had caused environmental impacts and is located in the middle of a redevelopment area that the community's revitalization plans envisioned. The community and the company entered into a facilitated dialogue that produced several actions by the company, including ground water testing, odor control, emergency preparedness exercises, and support for community redevelopment efforts. Because this dialogue took place in the context of a well-developed community vision, the participants explored a wide range of options that addressed the community's concerns as well as the company's interests.

## CPS Element 4 - Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships and Leveraging of 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.

The fourth element involves creating partnerships with key stakeholders. Environmental justice efforts across the nation have produced some remarkable partnerships between communities, faith groups, philanthropic organizations, universities, all levels of government, business and industry, and academia. These partnerships seek to examine problems together, develop action plans, and bring together the resources necessary to achieve everyone's goals. But exactly which stakeholders come together and when/how is unique to each situation or circumstance, as evident in this section.

Partnerships consist of diverse individuals and organizations who agree to work together to achieve a common goal. Partnerships enable different groups to examine a problem together, leverage resources, or achieve a mutually agreed-upon goal. They represent an important mechanism for a community to achieve its short-term goals as well as its long-term vision of a healthy and sustainable community. In some cases, out of necessity, some partnerships are formed from the most unlikely of allies.

Multi-stakeholder partnerships, consisting of entities representing different sectors of society (e.g., community, government, business and industry, academia) enable these entities to access needed resources. In situations where community residents are

adversely and disproportionately exposed to environmental harms and risks, the various stakeholder groups might require different kinds of assistance to ensure their effective participation a collaborative problem-solving process. For example, community groups might need support in accessing government resources, while industry might need education on how to work effectively and proactively with communities. Well-designed partnerships are important vehicles for mobilizing the needed resources – human, institutional, technical, legal, and financial – to address a problem. In this way, partnerships are a critical part of a capacity-building strategy. Such partnerships enable community-based organizations to access individuals with needed expertise. Likewise, a government agency may enter into a partnership with a community-based organization to more effectively provide public information and services to the local community.

Building a successful partnership is a critical investment that requires vision, clearly defined goals, organizational capacity and commitment, individual leadership, technical expertise, financial resources, and, in some cases, use of a facilitator. Each partnership should be tailored to the community-based organization’s existing capacity, as well as the capacity of other stakeholders. Although many organizations may enter into a partnership, the effectiveness of that partnership usually depends on understandings and working relationships between individuals. When circumstances make for unfavorable working relationships (including the time, effort, and resources involved in maintaining it), a group should end the partnership.

Chapter 4 clearly demonstrates ReGenesis’ ability to develop multi-stakeholder partnerships and leverage the necessary resources in order to realize the community’s vision (see page 26). Also, ReGenesis and the city and county of Spartanburg formalized their agreement by signing a Memorandum of Understanding to establish a Community Development Task Force, thereby mobilizing the people and resources of local government agencies to focus attention on this community (see page 25).

### **Techniques for achieving well-structured multi-stakeholder collaborative partnerships:**

- Establish dialogues that lead to possible partnerships with all relevant stakeholders/parties, including the community, businesses, and government.
- Ensure clarity of common vision, goals, objectives, strategies, and actions among the partnership.
- Develop a clear, workable organizational structure and workplan to address communications and coordination needs of the collaborative partnership.
- Identify and recruit partners to address the resource needs of a project (e.g., human, institutional, technical, legal, and financial).
- Strengthen partnerships as new issues and relationships are understood.
- Add processes that allow for the inclusion of new partners as they emerge.

## **CPS Element 5 - Constructive Engagement by Relevant Stakeholders**

The fifth element calls for an active, supportive role by other stakeholders, such as businesses, academia, civic organizations, and all levels of government. These relevant non-community stakeholder groups can play an important role in participating and assisting in the collaborative partnership. The possible roles that each of these stakeholder groups can play are outlined in this section.

Government agencies at the federal and state level can play many roles in collaborative problem-solving efforts. They can: 1) act as a convener or facilitator, 2) provide technical assistance, information, and organizational capacity, 3) assist in coordination and communications, 4) provide financial resources or services, 5) enforce applicable provisions of laws or regulations, 6) focus attention on a problem, and/or 7) provide legitimacy to an effort. For example, government agencies make regulatory and/or enforcement decisions, provide technical assistance and resources, and help ensure that all relevant stakeholders come to the table. Even though state and federal agencies play significant roles in the creation and development of certain partnerships, they cannot maintain a

#### CPS Element 5 at a glance:

- Identify where the 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.

high level of commitment to all partnerships indefinitely. Local government involvement is crucial for the sustainability of long-term efforts to address local environmental and/or public health issues. It is therefore important that community organizations seeking to resolve a problem formulate a clear strategy to foster proactive engagement by government agencies at the local, state, tribal, and/or federal levels. In the ReGenesis example, the federal, state, and local government each played a critical role to support the collaborative partnership and put vital improvements into motion (see page 23).

Historically, business and industry groups perceived themselves to be the object of allegations that their activities exposed community residents disproportionately to environmental and/or public health risks and harms. Nevertheless, this perception may be slowly changing as more companies see the benefits of being more open and proactively involved in the local community and that many misperceptions are rectified through changes in business policies and practices and increased communication with the

community. Chapter 4 provides positive accounts of how two businesses, Rhodia and Vigindustries, became unlikely but crucial supporters of the Spartanburg community's revitalization efforts (see pages 25 and 27).

Academic and civic organizations include universities, nonprofit public interest groups, faith-based organizations, labor organizations, and philanthropic organizations. They can be an invaluable asset in a collaborative problem-solving process and provide innumerable support to community-based organizations. For instance, universities and public interest groups can provide information, training, and technical assistance in many areas (e.g., research, issue analysis, organizational development, and facilitation), while foundations can provide financial resources. Academia and civic organizations can also play an intermediary role by linking communities to money, material goods, services, experts, and decision-makers. For this reason, government and philanthropic organizations have funded university-based programs to provide technical services to communities. In Spartanburg, technical outreach service centers provided ReGenesis with fact-finding assistance by analyzing and interpreting results for the community during its facilitated dialogue with Rhodia and EPA Region 4.

## CPS Element 6 - Sound Management and Implementation

The sixth element involves developing sound organization and management to produce results. This means developing and carrying out work plans with clear goals and a clear timeframe and giving responsibilities to various people. This element also involves choosing who will be a leader, spokesperson, or decision-maker within each group. Results-oriented activities include:

- Partnership design, which fosters consensus around a common vision, defines the role of partner organizations, and establishes clear operating procedures.
- Management plans, which ensure proper communications, coordination, and utilization of resources.
- Action plans, which include clear objectives, timelines, organizational commitments, and delegation of responsibilities.

Ensuring sound management is particularly challenging for community-based organizations that are working on projects to address specific environmental and/or public health issues. These organizations are often understaffed and underfunded and lack management systems and expertise. These organizations are often hard pressed to address day-to-day issues of organizational and staff development, governance, budget, administration, and personnel. Government and philanthropic assistance programs should focus their support on management and implementation matters when providing technical assistance, skills development, and financial resources to community-based organizations.

### 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.

### Techniques to Promote Sound Management and Implementation:

- Be visionary, but guard against setting unrealistic goals.
- Focus on tangible outcomes and improvements in community conditions.
- Develop strategies tailored to the community's assets and deficits.
- Design projects that build on the strengths and capacities of partners and resources.
- Ensure clear commitments from all partners.
- Develop a cogent and clearly visible organizational structure.
- Produce clearly defined, well-formulated action plans and timelines.
- Cluster and order tasks to promote the efficient use of time and resources.
- Develop plans and provide people to facilitate regular and productive meetings.
- Provide structures for coordination and communications.
- Build in space and time for training and capacity building of all partners.
- Build in evaluation from the very beginning.
- Identify and build on small successes.

Addressing management and implementation issues should start as early as possible in the collaborative problem-solving process. The lead in this process, such as a community-based organization, should make every effort to ensure continuing cooperation among different parties, maintaining partnership focus and momentum, and keeping key decision makers involved. Equally important considerations are the community-based organization's: 1) decisions about the issues it chooses to address, 2) strategies it seeks to pursue, and 3) collaborations it forms. To the extent possible, the organization should think carefully through these questions as part of its initial goal-setting and strategic planning process, not as an afterthought.

As noted in the case study in Chapter 4, the establishment of the Environmental Justice Partnership—the steering committee comprised of multiple stakeholders—not only shaped the process but is working effectively to implement the vision. Each stakeholder group has a seat at this table and has a vested interest in making sure that the vision is realized (see page 23).

## CPS Element 7 - Evaluation, Lessons Learned, and Replication of Best Practices

The seventh element calls for reviewing the lessons learned over time and deciding what is working or not working. Evaluation helps determine whether a program is achieving its goals. Evaluation is a valuable tool when undertaking any project, especially for

measuring results. In its broadest definition, evaluation is a systematic way to learn from past experience by assessing how well a project is working. It also helps move the project into the future by building on strengths and correcting problems. The ability to summarize progress in quantitative, qualitative, institutional, and social terms, as well as to incorporate lessons learned into a continuous process, is critical to sustaining the work. And finally, the project's best practices should be identified and communicated so that others can learn and use them.

Although presented as the last element in the CPS Model, evaluation should be incorporated from the very beginning of a project and woven in as an integral part of all its phases; doing so will make any

effort more effective and valuable to others. Not only will evaluation help projects make adjustments and stay on course, but it will also help provide more meaningful lessons learned. To replicate best practices broadly, lessons learned should be shared with the affected community residents, as well as other communities and stakeholders.

**Why is evaluation important?** Projects that incorporate evaluation from the very beginning are usually stronger projects, with a clearer idea of vision, goals, objectives, strategies, actions, and measures of success. Evaluation helps to clarify the project's underlying assumptions and causal relationships. In addition, evaluation can enable the participants to proactively identify opportunities and deficiencies and make adjustments as early as possible.

### 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 on successes.

Evaluation can help the projects meet two different but interrelated goals: 1) addressing the program development needs of community-based efforts and 2) addressing the accountability needs of the organizations that provide resources (i.e., financial and technical assistance) to such community-based efforts. Resource-providing organizations typically are concerned with responding to competing demands for investments and demonstrating investment results to their stakeholders. EPA is an example of such a resource-providing organization.

In the case of ReGenesis, evaluation comes in several forms, such as the regular meetings with its community advisory board as well as partner meetings and the Environmental Justice Partnership steering committee. Likewise, the ongoing facilitated dialogues among ReGenesis, Rhodia, and EPA Region 4 result in the development of an annual status report that evaluates their performance and achievements in terms of environment and health protection, job creation, and community revitalization. Moreover, ReGenesis manages several federal, state, and local grant projects, each of which requires evaluation mechanisms.

Proper evaluation requires appropriate and realistic measures of success. Measurement is the ongoing monitoring and reporting of project accomplishments against pre-established goals. A measure is the indicator used to gauge performance; it may be qualitative or quantitative. “Qualitative” refers to data or comparisons that are a narrative description of a change rather than numerical. “Quantitative” refers to data or comparisons based on numerical changes. It is important to distinguish “evaluation” from “measurement”, as well as to understand that they are closely related. Measurement seeks to record or track what is happening, and evaluation seeks to explain or diagnose what is happening.

**What are lessons learned and best practices, and why should these be shared?** A successful evaluation should be more than an information-gathering activity. It is only valuable if the results are communicated and they meaningfully impact decision making. The findings from an evaluation should be shared with project partners, so they can make informed decisions to improve project performance. Lessons learned are significant conclusions regarding activities and outcomes, both positive and negative, which had an impact on the project. Best practices refer to specific actions taken that helped make the project successful. Lessons learned should be shared with other community groups and interested stakeholders, so they can replicate best practices in their own efforts to address similar issues. Evaluation results are important elements in the overall process of analysis and feedback. The benefits extend beyond a specific project. They can be used to enhance ongoing and future program performance.

The lessons learned from Spartanburg have been shared in dozens of workshops around the country. Their story has been presented in various symposia and conferences, and

#### Techniques used in the evaluation process:

- Use a logic model to develop a “template” for the project plan.
- Define clear measures of success for project outputs and outcomes.
- Develop mechanisms to integrate the lessons into future efforts as new issues and challenges emerge.
- Share, publish, and disseminate lessons learned and best practices.

their successes have been documented and analyzed by others in numerous occasions – in print, media and over the Internet – including some peer-reviewed academic publications. And finally, ReGenesis has partnered with the University of South Carolina Upstate on an ambitious plan to design an academically based Environmental Justice Institute to systematically develop and disseminate best practices and lessons learned.



# Chapter 4:

## ReGenesis - A Practical Application of the CPS Model



*“When you have a situation where the local governments come to the table, when industry comes to the table, when the community is driving the effort, it's really hard not to be involved and be engaged and be excited about it because this is the type of thing that needs to happen in so many other places.”*

— Cynthia Peurifoy, EPA Region 4

This chapter presents the case study of a nonprofit, community organization called ReGenesis and its use of the CPS Model. This is a story about one partnership—with community groups, all levels of government, industry, and a university—working together to address the environmental and public health issues in Spartanburg, South Carolina.

Spartanburg is an “every community.” In general, this means that the environmental, public health, economic, and social challenges in Spartanburg can be found in any community facing similar neglect and degradation. What is unique is how this community was able to use the CPS Model to envision a brighter future, which they are closer to realizing each day.

This story is presented in chronological order to preserve the sequence of events, and the significant events are highlighted and referenced in terms of the CPS Model’s seven elements. This chapter shows how the CPS Model can be applied to any given situation in which collaborative problem-solving is used to address environmental and/or public health issues.

### Spartanburg, South Carolina



Located within Spartanburg County, the city of Spartanburg (population 40,000) has been profiting from a downtown renaissance, with a new hotel, new business ventures, and new goals for growth. However, less than 2 miles from the city center—literally, on the other side of the tracks—lie the Arkwright and Forest Park communities, with a combined population of about 5,000. These neighborhoods were established around textile mills and

#### Key players:

- Harold Mitchell and ReGenesis, Inc.
- City of Spartanburg, SC
- County of Spartanburg, SC
- SC Department of Health & Environmental Control
- EPA and other federal agencies
- Spartanburg Housing Authority
- University of SC Upstate
- Vigindustries, Inc. (a subsidiary of the Mosaic Company, formerly IMC Global)
- Rhodia, Inc.
- Tetra Tech EM, Inc.

industrial facilities, many of which have since closed—a place where residential neighborhoods and industry exist side by side, due to few zoning restrictions or land use controls in the 1970s.

Based on the 2000 U.S. Census, the poverty rate in Arkwright and Forest Park was 25 percent, and 10 percent of the population was unemployed. Residents of these predominantly low-income and African-American communities live among two hazardous waste sites and an active chemical manufacturing plant.

This area is, in many ways, just like many similar to other communities in the United States, where people of color or indigenous or low-income populations may be disproportionately exposed to environmental hazards. In these communities, environmental issues are often linked to other concerns such as: 1) lack of access to adequate healthcare, 2) public safety problems, 3) substandard housing, 4) transportation problems, 5) lack of economic development, 6) high rates of unemployment, and 7) lack of social services. In these neighborhoods, residents often feel helpless, and the broader community often seems indifferent, with no one willing or able to reverse the downward trend. Change requires new thinking, new strategies, new models—and new partnerships.

Today, the communities of Arkwright and Forest Park boast a new, \$2 million health center, brand new housing developments, and plans for a sports complex, a much-needed highway, green space, new job opportunities, and more.

## Identifying the Issues



Some of the seeds of the community's initial growth—and its decline—were planted in 1910, when a company called International Minerals & Chemicals (IMC) Global Inc. opened a fertilizer plant within one mile of more than 4,000 residents in the Arkwright community. Employing many residents from the nearby mill village, the plant operated until 1986. A year later and without a complete cleanup, IMC sold the 45-acre property. It was eventually acquired by another company to use as a storage warehouse for textile

mill parts. When the county condemned the property in 1999, the new company attempted to demolish the facility.

On a separate front, in 1954, the city opened a 30-acre solid waste landfill, known as the Arkwright Dump, within a quarter-mile of more than 200 residents. It operated with little supervision until it closed in 1972. Covered with only a thin layer of topsoil, barely concealing the municipal, medical, and automobile wastes buried beneath, the landfill was sold to a private citizen in 1976.

Environmental standards were not as rigorous in the old days, and no one questioned the fertilizer plant practices back then; no one wondered what was being thrown into the dump. But in the late 1990s, after a community resident named Harold Mitchell began to link neighborhood health concerns with the fertilizer plant practices, he requested that the federal government get involved because residents perceived that there were high rates of illnesses, miscarriages, stillbirths, and deaths, and that there was a relationship between those health issues and the environmental contamination that began to be uncovered.

Environmental and health issues were just some of the problems these communities faced over the years, however. Another major problem was the lack of economic development. So-called “urban renewal” efforts in the 1970s wiped out 70 black-owned businesses in the community. Homes and businesses were condemned and left in dilapidated conditions, and later used by drug dealers. Today, whole sections of the Arkwright and Forest Park area of town are still devoid of commercial development. In addition, much of the public housing was old and severely distressed, dating from the 1950s. Even recently, residents still lacked access to retail stores and play areas for children, and have been concerned about public safety.

As a result of these and other problems, potential new residents haven’t wanted to move to the area. And because they lacked the resources, current residents have been unable to move away. Despite these conditions, little was being done.



Harold Mitchell and his family are long-time residents of the Arkwright community, having lived there since 1931. His childhood home was located just a few feet from the IMC fertilizer plant. Based on his observations and his own health problems over the years, however, he began to feel that something was wrong in the community. But it was his father’s suffering and death from lymphoma at age 59 that catapulted Harold into action.

In 1996, he began talking to residents, asking questions informally, such as “How many people in your family have been sick or have died?” “What did they die of?” “Where did they live and work?” He organized his data in terms of the residents’ proximity to the radius of the fertilizer plant and found that many of the local residents were suffering from the same illnesses.

With his findings, Harold took his concerns to EPA in 1997. He was directed to EPA’s regional office in Atlanta. A representative from EPA’s Region 4 office conducted an initial site visit of the Arkwright Dump and the former IMC facility. Although no contaminants were found that would pose an immediate, short-term threat to human health or the environment, the physical evidence led EPA to conduct more investigations.



Harold conducted additional research on his own, using the “Freedom of Information Act” to obtain data, maps, and aerial photographs from the city and county. He also conducted Internet research on chemicals and their health effects.

Harold convened a community meeting in 1997 to present all of his information and concerns about the environmental problems. More than 100 local residents, including the city mayor, attended. Based on this information, people began to believe that their families’ illnesses and deaths may not be isolated cases.



Also at the meeting, a map was taped to the wall, showing the location of the two hazardous waste sites (Arkwright Dump and former IMC fertilizer plant) and the operating chemical plant (Rhodia, Inc.) in relationship to the community. Local government representatives who hadn’t really understood the proximity of the neighborhood to the facilities suddenly realized why people were so concerned.

In 1998, Harold founded a nonprofit community organization called ReGenesis to provide leadership and to represent neighborhood interests in cleaning up the contaminated sites and revitalizing the surrounding community. ReGenesis began by merging existing neighborhood associations in Arkwright and Forest Park.

To educate the community about the issues at hand, ReGenesis organized several workshops about toxic waste and about community revitalization. At the same time, Harold traveled to Washington, D.C. and also attended meetings at local universities to educate himself.

Between 1998 and 1999, EPA conducted additional tests of the fertilizer plant and the Arkwright Dump. At the former IMC property, EPA detected chemicals associated with fertilizer products, such as nitrate, fluoride, sulfate, and phosphorous, in the ground water. At the Arkwright Dump, EPA found dioxins as well as toxic heavy metal pollutants, such as mercury, lead, and cadmium. EPA designated both areas as Superfund sites, which are abandoned or uncontrolled hazardous waste sites that may need to be cleaned up if they pose current or future threats to human health or the environment. EPA earmarked \$100,000 for redevelopment planning at these sites.



## Building the Partnership and the Supportive Role of Government

A meeting in August 2000 was a major turning point for the development of the project partnerships. More than 100 people, including representatives from federal agencies, the city, the county, businesses, universities, and ReGenesis, came together to discuss the issues. It was a group of people that had never come together before. There were uneasy relationships among many of these parties. For instance, the city and county of Spartanburg were reluctant at first because they didn't know how the community was going to react during the meeting and whether they would be blamed or sued for the conditions that existed in these neighborhoods. But because Harold felt that the residents didn't have time for rallies and protests and civil disobedience, he explained the communities' concerns in a calm and organized manner.

At this breakthrough meeting, the community presented ideas of what its residents had envisioned for themselves, and government officials talked about what they could provide to the community. The more everyone talked, the more the groups realized that goals such as improving public health, eradicating crime, improving housing, and creating jobs were actions everyone wanted.

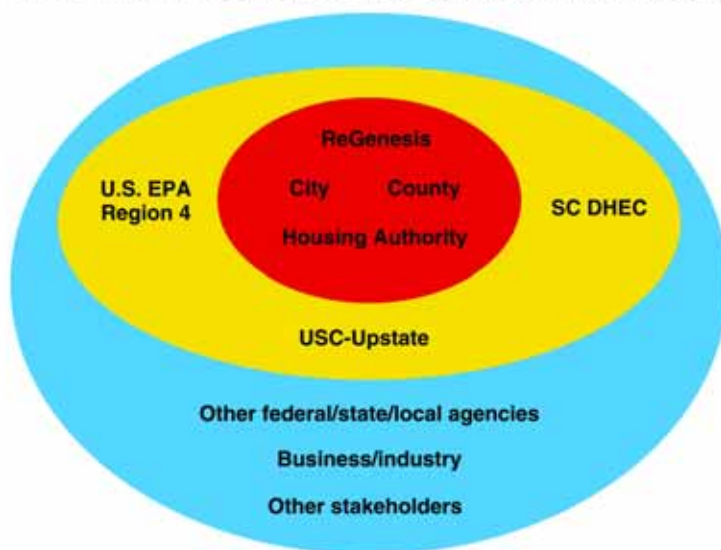
It was at this time that EPA suggested an organizational structure for the project. This resulted in a mutual agreement among the city, the county, ReGenesis, EPA Region 4, the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control, and later the Spartanburg Housing Authority and the University of South Carolina Upstate, to serve as a steering committee on an equal representation basis. This was the beginning of the ReGenesis Environmental Justice Partnership.

With EPA Region 4's help, ReGenesis was also designated as one of the first 15 national demonstration projects of the Federal Interagency Working Group on Environmental Justice in 2000, which gave ReGenesis access to resources, advice, and information. This Working Group was established by Executive Order 12898 and consists of 11 federal agencies (see page 1). With this designation, the doors to funding were opened, and federal, state, and local agencies began to take notice of the gravity of the situation in Spartanburg.

*"Maybe the environmental justice mantel woke us all up. Maybe it put a pressure on us to change the way we do business."*

— Bill Barnet,  
Mayor of Spartanburg

### ReGenesis Environmental Justice Partnership



By trial and error and through advice from others, Harold learned that many different agencies offered something ReGenesis could use, but he had to be sure to seek the right kind of help from each agency. He began identifying agencies whose purpose matched what ReGenesis needed and sought to bring them on as partners. He also realized that ReGenesis did not have the people, resources, or ability to do everything alone, so other partners helped out in areas that ReGenesis lacked. In addition, as a nonprofit organization, ReGenesis was not eligible to apply for or administer certain kinds of grants, but the city and county could.

*“Harold was out in front, but he needed that support, and it was, I think, government’s responsibility to help him with that.”*

— Jim Hartmann,  
former Spartanburg County Manager

## Addressing Problem Areas: Brownfields and Superfund Sites

In another important milestone for the partnership, EPA suggested that some of the problem areas in Spartanburg be designated as “brownfields.” A brownfield is an abandoned, idled, or under-used industrial and commercial property where expansion or redevelopment is complicated by real or perceived environmental contamination. EPA’s Brownfields Program helps clean up these areas and assists in attracting reinvestment.

Together, ReGenesis and Spartanburg County received \$200,000 in brownfields assessment grants from EPA and, ultimately, six sites in the ReGenesis project area—including the old Arkwright Mill and several dump sites—have been designated as brownfields for assessment and redevelopment. As a result, contamination was found at the mill and dump sites, and additional grants from the federal, state, and local government have been secured to facilitate their cleanup. The South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control has committed nearly \$490,000 towards brownfields redevelopment.

*“It may offer jobs for the community. It also improves property values for the community. So it really affects a lot of ways, economically as well as just community spirit-wise, to have some of the potential problems addressed and revitalized.”*

— Gail Jeter, Brownfields Coordinator,  
South Carolina Department of Health &  
Environmental Control

The federal Department of Housing and Urban Development also awarded an \$848,000 grant to ReGenesis and the city. This money was earmarked to help buy up “problem properties” such as the brownfields sites and take control of how they are redeveloped. The money has been used to test for lead-based paint and asbestos at the mill site and to pay for initial studies before building a new plant at that location.

In addition, the city of Spartanburg entered into an agreement with EPA Region 4 and has spent approximately \$1.2 million to assess the nature and extent of contamination at the Arkwright Dump site, evaluate the potential risks to human health and the environment, and evaluate cleanup alternatives.

As a result of this agreement, the city conducted ground water monitoring at the Arkwright Dump, and plans to conduct ground water remediation and install a cover to contain the contaminated soils. The city also volunteered to arrange and fund a technical advisor for the Arkwright Dump site to work with the community to more effectively involve people in the Superfund process.

But things weren't always as easy as they sound. Like any project, the stakeholders had their own interests and didn't always work well together. As mentioned earlier, the city feared that it might be held responsible for the Arkwright Dump site—and the cost to clean it up. The same was true for the county because it felt that investing in and rebuilding the community was going to take a lot more money than what it was ready to commit.

*“After the first meeting, it was clear to me that there was an expectation being built. I was very nervous that that expectation would include funding from the county government, which, just frankly, was not there in any substantial form.”*

— Jim Hartmann,  
former Spartanburg County Manager

Ultimately, the county established a Community Development Task Force with representatives from many county departments and agencies to take a more comprehensive approach to community development concerns, such as demolishing abandoned housing. To formalize their relationship—and to spell out each partners' specific roles and responsibilities—the city, county, and ReGenesis signed a Memorandum of Understanding. Formal agreements such as this solidify relationships so that partners are clear on their level of participation, while also ensuring that the partnership will remain intact.

In 1999, the former IMC site changed hands once again. Vigindustries, a subsidiary of IMC, now the Mosaic Company, purchased back the fertilizer plant. Vigindustries is now working with EPA and state officials to properly clean up the site. In addition to using a deconstruction plan developed with nearby residents, the company placed air monitors around the property at ReGenesis' request. It pitched in \$50,000 for a technical advisor for its site. The company also and committed \$1 million to cover EPA oversight costs and nearly \$2 million for the assessment and remediation of its site.



## A Vision for a New Spartanburg

In 2001, the community visioning process began, in the form of design charettes, funded in part by a Department of Energy grant. A charrette is a creative brainstorming meeting often used to work through difficult planning challenges confronting communities. Charettes involve listening to problems and ideas, defining needs, envisioning new ideas, and literally, drawing and sketching. Several design charettes were held in Spartanburg, resulting in drawings for a parkway, a community park, shopping areas, an entertainment center, a job training center, a technology center, and more.



*“I said, ‘Hey, just dream. Just think outside the box for a second and go back to what we once had—before urban renewal— and just picture the commercial, retail, housing, parks, and things of that nature.’ And then they began to come up with a concept for the new housing and things that they could have if they had a safe neighborhood once again.”*

— Harold Mitchell, ReGenesis

Since then, 2003 brought a new wave of partnerships and improvements. With a \$650,000 grant from the federal Department of Health and Human Services, ReGenesis opened a small, temporary Community Health Center. Astoundingly, it saw more than 2,000 patients within the first 90 days of operation. It was a breakthrough for this medically underserved community.

In 2005, the Spartanburg Regional Healthcare System and the ReGenesis Community Health Center formed a relationship to bring healthcare closer to residents of Arkwright and Forest Park. The Community Health Center relocated to a state-of-the-art facility donated by the University of South Carolina Upstate. This location is three times larger than the old site, allowing for more patient visits and services. Everyone involved agrees that the availability of health services is one of the most vital aspects of uplifting the community.



With all of these positive changes in Arkwright and Forest Park, the community was on the road to becoming a place where people actually wanted to live.



## Building Trust and Resolving Conflicts Through Facilitated Dialogue

But one other issue remained to be addressed. Sharing a fenceline with a handful of residents, Rhodia, Inc. is an operating chemical plant located on 35 acres in the Arkwright Community. When a South Carolina businessman purchased this site in the 1970s, he told residents he would be building apartments. Instead, he built a chemical warehouse, later changing it into a chemical manufacturing plant. Rhodia purchased this plant in 1998 and makes ingredients for home and health care products.



The initial relationship between Rhodia and ReGenesis was not friendly. Many residents in the community felt strongly that having a chemical manufacturing facility in the neighborhood was incompatible with plans to improve their quality of life. Rhodia, however, didn't want to move because it felt that it had a right to stay in the community. Also, the company felt its facility was not causing any adverse impacts on public health or the environment.

Ultimately, because both sides wanted to avoid hostility and an expensive legal debate, they agreed to use an approach known as a “facilitated dialogue.” A facilitated dialogue is a form of “dispute resolution,” which is often more civil and productive than a lawsuit. In this case, it involved using an independent third-party facilitator.

*“My role was to be an honest broker, to make sure that I represented the interests of Rhodia, ReGenesis, and EPA Region 4 in this dialogue. I think they both realized there was no other way to resolve the issues between them. The only way to resolve the issues was for them to sit down at the table and talk, but they were unwilling to have that dialogue unless there was someone there who they viewed and both respected as an honest broker to make sure that both sides were given an equal voice and given a fair say in how the resolution of those issues was arrived at.”*

— Tim Fields, Tetra Tech EM, Inc.



The facilitated dialogue has resulted in improved noise and odor control, enhanced health and safety procedures, new air and ground water monitoring, job creation for members of the community, new emergency preparedness procedures, and facility beautification. These changes have come about over several years as a result of weekly telephone conferences and frequent face-to-face meetings.

*“You just cannot short-circuit this process. You can’t speed it up. It’s not a six-month process. No matter how much you want it to be a short process, you just have to sit down, and it takes time. And it takes a lot of dedication, and it takes a lot of effort—to build that trust.”*

— Jim Trafton, Rhodia Plant Manager

For a facilitated dialogue to be successful, three critical factors are needed: an organization, like ReGenesis, that can unite and speak for the community; a company, like Rhodia, willing to be a good neighbor; and supportive government officials such as those in EPA Region 4 who are willing to be part of the dialogue to help resolve the issues.

## Collaborative Problem-Solving in Action

Ultimately, through the collaborative effort of more than 200 agencies, the ReGenesis project has acquired \$141 million in funds as of 2006. And the work continues. The ReGenesis partners still meet frequently. In fact, different subcommittees—dealing with specific issues such as transportation or housing—meet as often as twice a week to present updates on current projects and talk about plans for the future. The work in Spartanburg is still moving forward with a vision.

Along with the Spartanburg Housing Authority, ReGenesis is currently a partner in a \$102 million housing project grant, known as “Hope VI.” The Hope VI grant is being used to remove old public housing units, some of which had become a haven for drug dealers, and replace them with brand new homes.

**Before**



**After**



*“As a result, we committed to removing 184 distressed public housing units and coming back with over 500 units in the community of both rental and home ownership... [W]hat’s especially amazing to me is the fact that we’re taking such a large area that’s deteriorated and there’s been ill health concerns, and other types of issues, and turning it around and making it a completely new neighborhood—completely changing the face of that particular environment and bringing something back that’s so healthy and that’s going to draw so many people to it. It’s just amazing to be a part of that.”*

— Roy Johnson, Spartanburg Housing Authority

ReGenesis is also encouraging the participation of minority and women-owned businesses in the demolition of an old housing complex and the construction of new, safer subdivisions. The organization has also been providing job training in vocational skills to formerly unemployed residents. As a result, job creation has been an essential part of the effort to revitalize the entire community.



*“This is a long-term project—not only to deal with the brownfield issues or the environmental issues of this specific site, but to really take this to a much different level; to have a vision that’s not just about fixing a brownfield site or an environmental problem, but rather, to open up an area to economic development, to create a new set of expectations for a community. So we’re focused on rebuilding our neighborhoods, rebuilding our job market, getting people to really believe that this is a community into which they should invest jobs and dollars.”*

— Bill Barnet, Mayor of Spartanburg

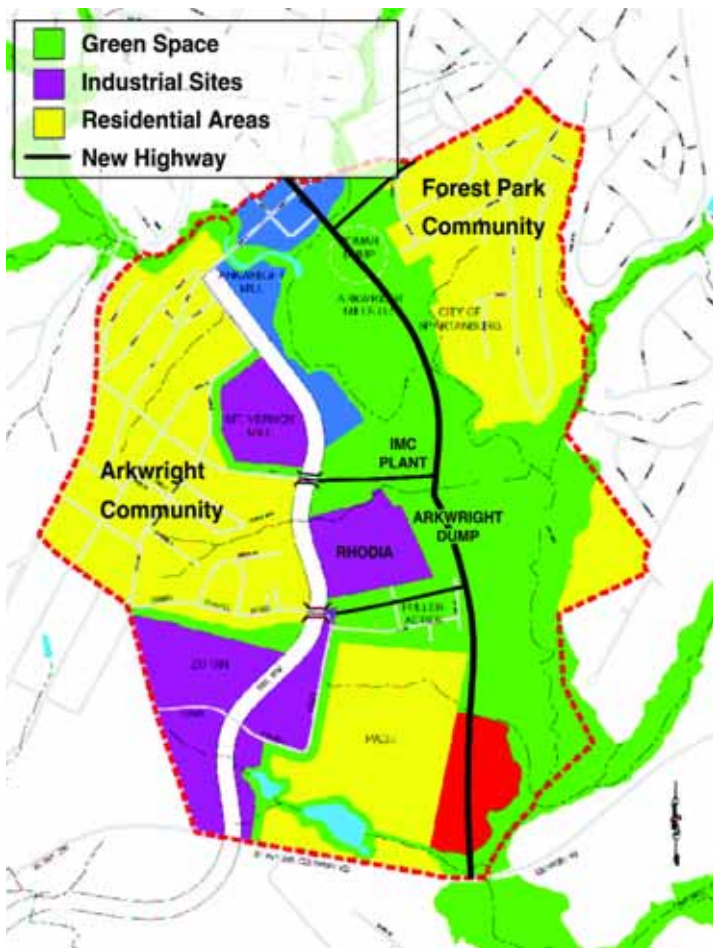
## Building a Brighter Future for Spartanburg

A \$2 million appropriation from Congress to the South Carolina Department of Transportation is funding the studies and initial construction of the new Matthew Perry Parkway. This two-mile long roadway will open up 500 acres of currently unused land for commercial and residential development. It will also connect two new neighborhoods and provide emergency access to Rhodia and the existing community, whose main access road is often blocked by the railroad.

There is also much progress on another front. The former IMC site—just across the road from Harold’s childhood home—is undergoing a significant environmental cleanup. Vigindustries, the property owner, is in the process of cleaning it up and is also working with ReGenesis to develop plans for the future use of the property—and other nearby properties—to benefit the local community. As part of a large-scale effort to restore and preserve green space in Spartanburg, plans involve designing a world-class golf course along the new parkway. This project will be a successful reuse of the two cleaned up Superfund sites and six Brownfield sites.

*“I personally first met Harold Mitchell in the EPA Region 4 Office in Atlanta. He explained the project in detail, and there I made a commitment to him that we could probably work this property into the development of that community. [T]he ReGenesis Project only reinforces my experience throughout my career, and that is industries within communities must be in touch with those communities. They must be actively involved in those communities. They need to be good neighbors.”*

— Ozzie Morris, President, Vigindustries



Proposed Redevelopment of Project Area

At the same time, the community has become a model for the National Diabetes Collaborative for working to prevent the disease and provide nutrition counseling. In fact, the community health center now provides services to more than 14,000 patients who didn't previously have a medical home.

Looking into the future, ReGenesis is developing an Environmental Justice Institute and has partnered with the University of South Carolina Upstate to form an international center for research, education, and training on environmental issues, focusing on the impact of environmental contamination on communities. It will also bring the "Spartanburg story" to people around the world.

## Summary

The ReGenesis and its partners and stakeholders continue to forge ahead with its vision for the community. The way that this Spartanburg community developed its vision and is bringing all its stakeholders together to realize it, despite all odds and obstacles, is a prime example of how the CPS Model works. Here is a synopsis of the seven elements in terms of ReGenesis' experience:

**Element 1: Issue Identification, Community Vision and Strategic Goal-Setting** – For example, Harold Mitchell initially identified health issues and brought them to the attention of EPA and state and local officials. The residents of Arkwright and Forest Park developed a vision to improve the community. And, through the use of charettes, the stakeholders and partners crystallized that vision and developed strategic goals.

**Element 2: Community Capacity-Building and Leadership Development** – Through Harold's leadership and the support of partners and stakeholders, ReGenesis improved its capacity to represent the community in the ongoing dialogue and redevelopment activities. One result of this process is that more and more residents have signed up for city- or county-sponsored training to learn new job skills.

**Element 3: Consensus Building and Dispute Resolution** – Through the facilitated dialogue among ReGenesis, Rhodia, and EPA Region 4, these entities agree by consensus to make specific improvements in Spartanburg.

**Element 4: Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships and Leveraging of Resources** – Over time, ReGenesis successfully built the essential partnerships to revitalize Spartanburg. Through the partners, ReGenesis was and continues to be able to leverage much-needed resources through grants, technical assistance, and in-kind assistance.

**Element 5: Constructive Engagement by Relevant Stakeholders** – As the community’s representative, ReGenesis has been able to engage members of the community as well as industry, academia, and civic organizations, and all levels of government in order to work together to realize the community’s vision.

**Element 6: Sound Management and Implementation** – The Environmental Justice Partnership steering committee has built in the administrative, management, and coordination processes needed to ensure that the project activities are implemented as planned.

**Element 7: Evaluation, Lessons Learned, and Replication of Best Practices** – Evaluation processes have been instituted in the activities of steering committee, grant projects, and the facilitated dialogue. The lessons learned and best practices have been documented and shared across the country through speeches, presentations, training workshops, educational seminars, a video, and publications such as this one.

ReGenesis and its stakeholders and partners have made an indelible impact on Spartanburg for generations to come. Through the use of collaborative problem-solving, they are on their way to realizing the community’s vision to revitalize the community. Almost a decade has passed since Harold Mitchell began his quest and now, thanks to this amazing partnership among many stakeholders, Spartanburg has come a long way. Harold’s words best sum his experience with using the CPS Model:

*“The satisfaction out of this is looking back nine years ago and thinking I was like some of the other community members at the big public forums in Washington, not knowing where to go or who to turn to, to resolve the major issues in my community. But now, by being a part of the CPS process, we have a roadmap that other communities can use to find out what they need to do and with whom they need to engage, to turn around those complex issues that are impacting their communities.”*

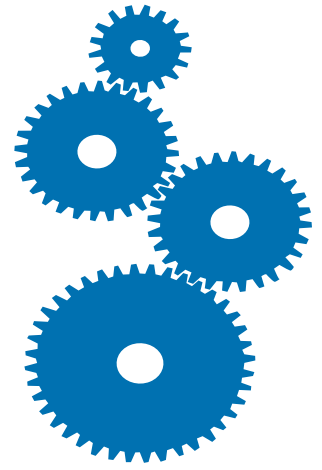
— Harold Mitchell, ReGenesis

Note: All the quotes mentioned in this case study were derived from a series of film interviews for an OEJ-produced training video entitled Environmental Justice: The Power of Partnerships – The Collaborative Problem-Solving Model at Work in Spartanburg, South Carolina, to be released in 2007.



# Chapter 5:

## The Environmental Justice Collaborative Problem-Solving Program



In 2003, OEJ launched the *Environmental Justice Collaborative Problem-Solving (CPS) Cooperative Agreement Program* to provide \$100,000 in financial assistance to local community-based organizations that wish to engage in collaborative problem-solving activities. Through this grant program, these organizations use tools that EPA and others have developed to find viable solutions for their community's environmental and/or public health issues/concerns. In addition, the CPS Program seeks to achieve certain goals, which include:

- **Empowerment:** Community-based organizations engage directly in collaborative problem-solving activities (e.g., partnership building, consensus building, negotiation, alternative dispute resolution) with other stakeholders to address environmental and/or public health issues.
- **Strategic Planning:** Community-based organizations understand the distinction between short-term and long-term environmental and/or public health outcomes, and plan and act accordingly.
- **Education:** Community-based organizations understand the potential links between the environment, public health, and good government, and sharing this knowledge with members of the community.
- **Good Government:** Community-based organizations engage the federal, state, or local governments as potential partners in collaborative problem-solving processes, which enables community residents to participate meaningfully in the government's environmental decision-making processes.
- **Sustainable Development:** Community-based organizations secure and wisely use resources (e.g., community-based, intellectual, social, technical, financial, and institutional) now and in the future. In doing so, ongoing benefits will be created through the continuation of collaborative problem-solving activities that provide others with valuable lessons learned.

### Examples Using the Seven Elements

OEJ developed the CPS Model as the framework for the CPS Program and help achieve the goals stated above. As stated in Chapter 2, the CPS Model can be applied to almost



any environmental justice circumstance. With the first round of CPS projects unfolding over the past two years, the grant recipients have had ample opportunities to put the CPS Model elements into practice. These selected community-based organizations and their partners have already realized many of their short-term goals by carefully applying the CPS Model's seven elements. Since each community's circumstances are unique, the elements were customized to suit their needs. Each grantee has also identified performance measures to track and evaluate their progress in meeting their goals. Here are some of the projects' best examples of using the CPS Model:

**Element 1: Issue Identification, Community Vision and Strategic Goal-Setting** – In Anahola, Hawaii, the *Anahola Homesteaders Council's* project (Project Imua) documented the environmental conditions and cleaned up the solid waste of a 20-acre brownfield in order to jump-start a larger vision of a comprehensive multi-purpose community center called Project Faith. This center will serve the social, economic, educational, and cultural needs of Hawaiians living on their homelands.

**Element 2: Community Capacity Building and Leadership Development** – *Pioneer Valley Project* in Springfield, Massachusetts, is working with local Vietnamese nail salons, vocational schools, and health care providers to address the issue of workers' risk of exposure to harmful chemicals in the nail care products. With their leadership, the partnership has not only built a model salon but will also develop and provide training on the use of proper protective gear and equipment and the proper handling and disposal of salon products. They are also working with local health care professionals to properly diagnose, communicate, and treat health symptoms resulting from exposure to these chemicals.

**Element 3: Consensus Building and Dispute Resolution** – When *West End Revitalization Association's* project documented high levels of contamination in local surface water in Mebane, North Carolina, this community-based organization brought this environmental and public health issue to the attention of the city, which is now working to correct this issue by providing basic amenities such as sewer and drinking water services.

**Element 4: Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships and Leveraging of Resources** – *Make the Road by Walking* formed a partnership with a local hospital and the city health department to publish a report and develop and disseminate outreach materials on indoor asthma triggers and barriers to proper asthma treatment in the Bushwick section of New York City.

**Element 5: Constructive Engagement by Relevant Stakeholders** – In Tacoma, Washington, the *Indochinese Cultural and Service Organization* engaged the community's youth and elders, other grassroots groups, and state and local government agencies in a project to



raise awareness about safe and sustainable shellfish harvesting and thereby reduced the incidence of shellfish poisoning among Tacoma and Pierce Counties' Asian and Pacific Islander residents.

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

*Neighbors Assisting Neighbors'* ambitious local cleanup project in six communities and one waterway in St. Louis, Missouri, removed and properly disposed of approximately 250 tons of bulk waste and 1,200 tires.

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

As part of its extensive project workplan and evaluation, *Pacoima Beautiful* in Los Angeles, California, developed a set of indicators of community sustainability to help guide efforts to address multiple community quality of life issues.



These are only some of the many significant ways in which the CPS Model has already touched the lives of several communities around the country. The potential to reach even more communities depends on the level of funding for the CPS Program.

## **Reflections of the CPS Program**

OEJ recently asked the CPS Program's current grantees for some reflections from their projects. In their own words, here is what they have to say about using the CPS Model:

- *"We created a vision of community health and sustainability, and developed strategies to achieve it."*
- *"We used innovative approaches to involve and educate our local community residents and youth."*
- *"We leveraged other resources using the partnerships we formed through this program, including partnerships with former adversaries."*
- *"We learned that environmental statutes can be a useful tool to solving our local issues."*
- *"We achieved tangible environmental and health improvements in our communities."*
- *"Government agencies played a critical role in supporting our community's efforts to form collaborative partnerships."*

## Chapter 6: Conclusion

**T**he CPS Model is a valuable tool to help distressed communities and other stakeholders work together to address their local environmental and/or public health issues in a positive, non-adversarial way. In particular, when stakeholders use the CPS Model's seven elements, they greatly enhance their ability to address these issues.

As presented in the ReGenesis case study in Chapter 4, the CPS Model can be viewed as a tool box from which several tools can be used to deal with specific situations. Indeed, each of the seven elements is a valuable tool in and of itself and has many facets, as described in Chapter 3. However, when these tools are used together in an iterative process, a collaborative partnership not only takes shape but can also be quite effective in dealing with the complex environmental, public health, economic, and social factors that often compound environmental justice issues.



