

- Ensuring capacity building for those community representatives directly involved in the collaborative problem-solving processes; and

- Developing processes that help ensure capacity building and leadership development of community residents in the future.

3. Consensus Building and Dispute Resolution

Collaborative problem-solving encourages all parties to seek to find common ground and derive “mutual gains” from participating in a consensus building process. More often than not, this will lead to greater capacity to address the community’s concerns and the eventual resolution of issues. Moreover, consensus building efforts often result in greater understanding and trust among different stakeholders that will lead to a greater capacity to address other issues. There also will be cases in which crystallized disputes require the use of a facilitator or mediator to help resolve such disputes. There exists a wide array of approaches within the area of dispute resolution—ranging from unassisted negotiation to arbitration—that communities can employ to best suit their needs. Several key steps a community can employ to achieve consensus building and successful dispute resolution are:

- Designing processes, both formal and informal, to help ensure fair treatment and meaningful participation of all collaborative problem-solving stakeholders;
- Instituting processes which promote the development of a common vision, and goals among all partners;
- Identifying, nurturing and promoting collaborations with win/win scenarios and the “mutual gains” approach;
- Promoting the use of facilitation or mediation to ensure understanding of the consensus building process; and
- Ensuring that existing or potential conflicts are resolved, where necessary, through the use of alternative dispute resolution techniques.

4. Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships, and Resource Mobilization

Building a successful partnership requires vision, clear problem identification, organizational capacity and commitment, individual leadership, use of technical resources, and, in some cases, use of a facilitator. This is an evolving process that grows with existing capacity on the part of the affected community as well as other stakeholder groups. Different stakeholder groups will require different assistance to ensure their effective

participation. For example, community groups may need support in accessing government resources while industry may need education on how to work effectively and proactively with communities. Well-structured partnerships assemble the needed capacity to resolve issues. They are important vehicles for creating a broad-based framework that mobilizes the resources necessary—human, institutional, technical, legal, and financial—to address a problem. In this way, they are a critical part of a capacity building strategy. Several ways to achieve well structured multi-stakeholder collaborative partnerships include:

- Establishing dialogues which lead to possible partnerships with all relevant stakeholders/parties, which invariably include the community, business, and government;
- Ensuring clarity of goals, objectives, and common vision among all members of the partnership;
- Developing a clear, workable organizational structure and workplan to address communications and coordination needs of the collaborative partnership;
- Identifying and recruiting partners to address the resource needs of a project (e.g., human, institutional, technical, legal, and financial);
- Strengthening partnerships as new issues and relationships are understood; and
- Establishing processes that allow for the inclusion of new partners as they emerge.

5. Supportive and Facilitative Role of Government

Environmental and public health government agencies can play an important role in addressing a community’s concerns because the agencies are invested with the statutory authority to address those issues. They make decisions of a regulatory nature, provide technical assistance and resources, and can help ensure that all relevant stakeholders come to the table. It is important that community organizations seeking to resolve a problem formulate a clear strategy to engage government agencies at the local, state, tribal, and/or Federal levels. Securing support from environmental and public health government regulatory agencies can be accomplished by:

- Securing commitments from multiple agencies, whether Federal, state, local, or tribal government agencies, as appropriate;
- Seeking to ensure interagency and intergovernmental cooperation and

coordination to address complex environmental and/or public health, housing, transportation, economic development, community revitalization, etc.; and

- Accessing and securing support for a specific community need that coincides with a current activity being conducted by an environmental and/or public health government agency.

6. Management and Implementation

Realizing a vision to address identified issues requires attention to three major areas: (1) Action plans; (2) management; and (3) partnership design. Plans to address these areas should be formulated and executed in ways that build upon the unique assets and challenges of specific communities and stakeholder partners. Action plans should include clear objectives, timelines, and delegation of responsibilities. Management plans should ensure proper communications, coordination, and utilization of resources. Well-formulated partnership designs should address the convening processes, the role of lead organizations, planning for regular meetings, and understanding ways to increase the capacity of partner organizations. As a result, all partners must articulate and follow through on commitments for the project to: (1) Address the identified issues thoroughly; (2) strengthen and maintain partnerships; and (3) realize the shared goals. Several ways that could accomplish a successful management plan include:

- Ensuring tangible outcomes and improvements in community conditions;
- Developing strategies tailored to the community’s assets and deficits;
- Designing projects to meet the strength of partnerships, resources and the capacity of the partners;
- Producing clearly defined, well-formulated action plans;
- Identifying and building upon small successes achieved along the way;
- Ensuring clear commitments on the part of all partners; and
- Clustering and ordering tasks to promote the efficient use of time and resources.

7. Framework, Lessons Learned, and Replication of Best Practices

Key to deepening and sustaining the work is the ability to sum up progress in quantitative, qualitative, institutional, and social terms, and to incorporate lessons learned into a continuous process. Formulating a plan for evaluating one’s work is an important element of success. Not only will it help the project implementation plan stay on