

## **Partnership and Stakeholder Engagement Strategy Superfund Task Force Recommendation 40**

EPA recently convened a Superfund Task Force (SFTF) that identified 42 recommendations to streamline and improve the Superfund process. Successful implementation of these recommendations requires strong strategic partnerships and meaningful engagement with stakeholders. Such strong partnerships and engagement will serve as the underpinnings of this strategy and the work going forward. Through this strategy, EPA will deploy an assortment of partnership building activities and engagement opportunities to increase collaboration with communities, local governments, states, tribes and stakeholders. New activities and opportunities will be combined with our traditional engagement activities to support the goals of the SFTF recommendations.

EPA recognizes the importance of meaningful participation of stakeholders, and will enhance engagement with local communities and stakeholders to ensure transparency, community buy-in, and more timely cleanup decisions. The approach outlined below is designed to be dynamic and adaptable and will evolve based on implementation results and ongoing input. EPA will build stronger strategic partnerships with communities and stakeholders to implement the SFTF recommendations. Establishing clear and effective communication and public engagement processes will help accelerate the pace of cleanups and encourage reuse while addressing risks to human health and the environment.

The following is EPA's broad approach to building a robust communications and engagement strategy that is inclusive of all stakeholders.

### **Ensuring Public Participation and Transparency**

Transparent and clear information and decision-making processes are essential to maintain public trust and involvement at Superfund site cleanups.

- ❖ EPA will maintain a web page to inform the public and a broad range of partners, stakeholders and tribes about the status and results of the SFTF recommendations, including ongoing updates on the status of Superfund sites targeted for immediate, intense action, and reuse opportunities and barriers. The web page also will feature information about events and opportunities for public participation, input and comment for the implementation of individual SFTF recommendations.
- ❖ EPA will develop and post factsheets, announcements and other information about the progress and results of the SFTF recommendations as they are implemented and completed.

- ❖ EPA will develop and deploy both traditional and digital mechanisms for outreach, information sharing, and seeking input/comments, making sure to translate information into a form that can be readily understood by communities.

### **Strengthening Partnerships, Public Participation and Tribal Engagement**

EPA will conduct a series of dialogues via meetings, webinars, and other fora to establish and strengthen partnerships and public engagement to implement the SFTF recommendations. The dialogues will evolve based on the results and feedback from our partners as the recommendations are being implemented. Initial dialogues and engagement processes will focus on:

#### ❖ **States:**

State environmental and public health agencies are partners and decision makers with EPA at almost every Superfund site. To maintain a strong working relationship with states during implementation of the SFTF recommendations, EPA is working closely with:

- ***Environmental Council of States (ECOS):*** ECOS has formed an ECOS-EPA Superfund Workgroup to work with EPA on implementing the SFTF recommendations. The workgroup holds monthly calls with EPA to discuss state comments on task force recommendations and provide state input on implementation moving forward.
- ***Association of State and Tribal Solid Waste Management Officials (ASTSWMO) –*** ASTSWMO has outlined six areas of the SFTF report that they would like to work with EPA on. EPA is working with ASTSWMO on an approach for providing ongoing state input as EPA implements the SFTF recommendations and will provide regular updates on this work to the ECOS SFTF workgroup.

#### ❖ **Tribal Governments:**

Many Superfund sites are located on or potentially impact tribal lands. EPA is working with the National Tribal Caucus to develop a regular engagement process during implementation of the recommendations and moving forward in the Superfund process.

- ❖ **Local Governments and Regional Authorities:** Local governments and regional authorities are also involved in the acquisition, cleanup, reuse, and long-term protectiveness of contaminated properties. However, such entities often have concerns about potential liability under Superfund, even when they did not cause or contribute to the contamination. Outreach will be conducted with local governments and regional authorities to get input for implementation of recommendations.

#### ❖ **Environmental and Community-based Organizations (including Environmental Justice):**

Making the link between community engagement and decision-making helps build higher levels of collaboration where government partners can work directly with communities, particularly with traditionally overburdened and underserved communities. Specific examples of engagement activities that can turn traditional outreach to dialogue include:

- Engage the National Environmental Justice Advisory Council to identify best practices for achieving results in communities with environmental justice concerns
- Engage environmental and community-based organizations in dialogues about the clean-up and reuse of sites.
- Support the engagement of communities to establish community goals for reuse and redevelopment through town halls or workshops
- Leverage Brownfields to Healthfields (B2H) initiatives and work with academic institutions that conduct place-based interventions.
- Develop a database of key contacts in communities working on job-training opportunities during clean-up and redevelopment.

❖ **Industry, Contractors, Potentially Responsible Parties (PRPs):**

Industry, contractors and PRPs all play critical roles in cleaning up Superfund sites. EPA will engage this stakeholder group to, in particular, get input on issues related to Goal 2, “Re-invigorating Responsible Party Cleanup and Reuse,” and Goal 3, “Encouraging Private Investment.” Utilizing tools and procedures to assist these parties in their efforts to clean up sites is helpful to all stakeholders.

❖ **Land Development, Financial and Banking Associations:**

Returning sites to communities after they have been cleaned up is a priority for the Superfund program. To successfully reuse or redevelop sites, property owners, local officials and financial institutions need to understand the opportunities and limitations of reusing/redeveloping Superfund sites. EPA will provide marketing packages, fact sheets, webinars, training and in-person meetings with developers, owners and financial institutions to accomplish this. The expected outcome is to ensure that these stakeholder groups have access to all of the information they need to pursue the purchase and reuse/redevelopments of sites.

❖ **Other Federal Agencies:**

Under CERCLA Section 120, federal facility sites must adhere to the same Superfund requirements as private sites. Executive Order 12580 gives the lead cleanup authority to Other Federal Agencies (OFAs) and, because they have this authority, partnering with them is imperative. EPA has reached out to the OFAs inviting them to engage on the SFTF recommendations and soliciting their views on how EPA can better engage and collaborate with them. The Department of Defense and the Department of Energy, in particular, have identified the recommendations which are priorities for them and EPA has had similar discussions with other agencies as well. EPA will continue to engage with OFAs through quarterly meetings and joint meetings with the states.