

DESCRIPTION

A mailing list is a tool that contains contact information regarding interested parties. It is usually in an electronic format, such as a database, and sorted in “fields” by last name, title, organization, city, state, region, or special interest. An organized and updated mailing list that encompasses the entire community can play an important role in the *Community Involvement Plan*.

REQUIRED ACTIVITY?

No.

MAKING IT WORK

WHEN TO USE

The mailing list of interested parties should be developed at the beginning of community involvement for a site. The more quickly names and addresses can be combined into a formal list, the easier it will be when a mass mailing is required. This tool is most effective when it is:


- Organized in an electronic format that allows sorting on any field;
- Based on current, verified, and standardized information;
- Easily updated;
- Expandable; and
- Able to produce mailing labels with ease.

HOW TO USE

You can create a new mailing list, but it may be possible to obtain a mailing list from a local public interest group or combine lists from several public interest groups or governmental units. Resources for creating a mailing list and producing a mass mailing include private sector printing/copying services and business centers operated by the U.S. Postal Service.

There are numerous vendors from which a Region can purchase mailing lists; however, they vary greatly in both the quality and cost. A U.S. Post Office Business Center can provide a list of quality vendors (see below for more information on Post Office Business Centers). In general, CICs should look for vendors that:

- Update their databases quarterly (at least);
- Can provide a quality list quickly;
- Can narrow the list to the exact geographic areas desired by the CIC;
- Can provide electronic (e-mail or CD-ROMs) or label versions of the list;
- Can provide updates electronically (e.g. download them from an website); and
- Put their lists through the U.S. Postal Service’s National Change of Address (NCOA) file (helps keep the list clean).

 [See Community Involvement Plans, Tab 7](#)

Mailing List

CICs may also want to inquire if the vendor provides lists that use the ZIP+4 Zip Codes (e.g. 00000+1234), and delivery point barcode information (the barcode at the bottom of the envelope). The cost of the lists vary, but in general, companies charge per person. For example, a company may charge \$0.15 per person for a list with 2001 - 5000 people (\$300.15 - \$750.00) and \$0.10 per person for a list with 5001 - 25,000 people (\$500.10 - \$2,500.00).

This approach is useful if a Region does not have the time, personnel, or expertise to develop their own mailing list, since a good vendor can provide a list quickly and in the format preferred by the Region. A purchased mailing list will provide all of the necessary postal information to help ensure that it is mailed quickly and to the correct person. The vendor may provide the mailing list in either electronic form or in hard-copy labels.

There are some drawbacks to going outside for mailing services. The Regions are responsible for ensuring that they receive updates/corrections to the mailing list from the vendor or from returned mail, and a high rate of returned mail can be expected if the vendor does not frequently update the lists.

A CIC can create his/her own mail lists using the Internet and a word processing software program (e.g. WordPerfect). By using various mapping websites (or a computer program like LandView), a CIC can narrow a search for names and addresses to specific streets surrounding the site. The cost is the time of either a CIC or a support staff person, and website information that is not updated frequently can be out-of-date. There is usually a high return rate the first time a mailing is done; however, the CIC can easily replace the old address with a new one on the returned card. The CIC could also put "John Doe" or "Current Resident" on the card when mailing it out to lower returns.

The U.S. Post Office's Address List Management System (ALMS) may be a good option. ALMS is a mailing list management program comprised of the three components: a software module used to access the USPS Address File database; an interface that allows users to create personal files; and a USPS Barcode module. The ALMS software module used to access the USPS Address File database contains addresses, phone numbers, finance numbers, and other information for all postal facilities. It is available for use independent of the ALMS software program. A personal file allows ALMS system users to focus on specific areas of the country (e.g. a specific Superfund site). For more information, Regions should contact the National Customer Support Center at 1-800-238-3150.

Saturation mailing allows CICs to send a mailing to every resident on a carrier's route without using a complete mailing address. Using a mapping program, a CIC must identify the boundaries of the mailing audience by street names. The CIC must then find the ZIP codes for those areas in order to ultimately identify the carrier routes. Once a CIC has identified the carrier routes he/she needs to send a mailing, it is necessary to work with the local post office to find the necessary route code and the descriptive prefix (e.g. carrier route, highway contract route, rural route). A CIC also needs the last two digits of a five digit ZIP Code. These three items compose the "identifier" for the mailing labels. The major cost of this method is the time needed for a staff person to arrange the logistics.

Post Office Business Centers can be found in every state and offer free one-on-one consultation on every aspect of a mailing. It is strongly advised that a CIC work with his/her mail room when designing a bulk mailing to create the best mailing pieces and to ensure that any specific EPA requirements are met. CICs should always check with the Regional mail room or the post office to ensure they have the correct postage. CICs also should inquire if they need a bulk-mailing permit to help reduce mailing costs.

If a CIC mails a piece that has a reply card (called a Business Reply Mail or BRM) for the citizen, he/she must take a sample of it to the local Post Office for approval. BRMs allow CICs to receive First-Class Mail back from citizens with the postage being charged to EPA. EPA will only have to pay for the cards that are returned. CICs must apply for a BRM permit for distributing business reply cards, envelopes or labels and there is an annual fee of \$300.00.

The Post Office will layout the BRM post card with the permit number, the barcodes, horizontal bars, etc., but the CIC must ensure that the post cards are addressed correctly with the complete address. Each Region must set up their own account with the post office.

Tips

- Contact companies that specialize in renting or selling lists of names and addresses of people grouped by specific characteristics.
- Investigate the possibility of getting free mailing lists from the U.S. Postal Service, the IRS, or local organizations, such as the Chamber of Commerce.
- Keep the list updated.
- Identify the group or groups of people that you want to reach. Think about distinguishing characteristics such as zip code, school district, profession, and group memberships.
- Ask the U.S. Postal Service business center for private mail list service companies.
- Consider adding fields to your list to track the date the mailing was sent, the date a response was received, and the method of response (*e.g.*, mail, E-mail, telephone, fax).

RELATED TOOLS/RESOURCES IN THE TOOLKIT

- [Community Involvement Plan, Tab 7](#)
- [Community Visioning Process, Tab 9](#)
- [Exhibits, Tab 13](#)
- [Electronic Mail, Tab 10](#)
- [Informal Activities, Tab 20](#)
- [LandView, Tab 10](#)
- [Media, Tab 25](#)
- [Public Meetings, Tab 32](#)
- [Special Events, Tab 38](#)

Mailing List