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# Care Local Partnerships Healthy Communities: Promising Practices (draft)

Environmental Protection Agency

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**CARE**  
LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS. HEALTHY COMMUNITIES.

# Promising Practices



Recycle Junk Vehicles  
for Your Community  
**CARE** **MECCP**  
LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS. HEALTHY COMMUNITIES.

DRAFT



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# Introduction

## CARE Program Overview

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Community Action for a Renewed Environment (CARE) program is a competitive grant program that offers communities an innovative way to address the risks from multiple sources of pollution in their environment. The CARE program awarded its first series of grants in 2005; to date there are 68 CARE communities.

CARE grantees follow a series of four steps to successfully complete their CARE project:

**1. Join together to form a broad-based partnership dedicated to reducing toxics in their**

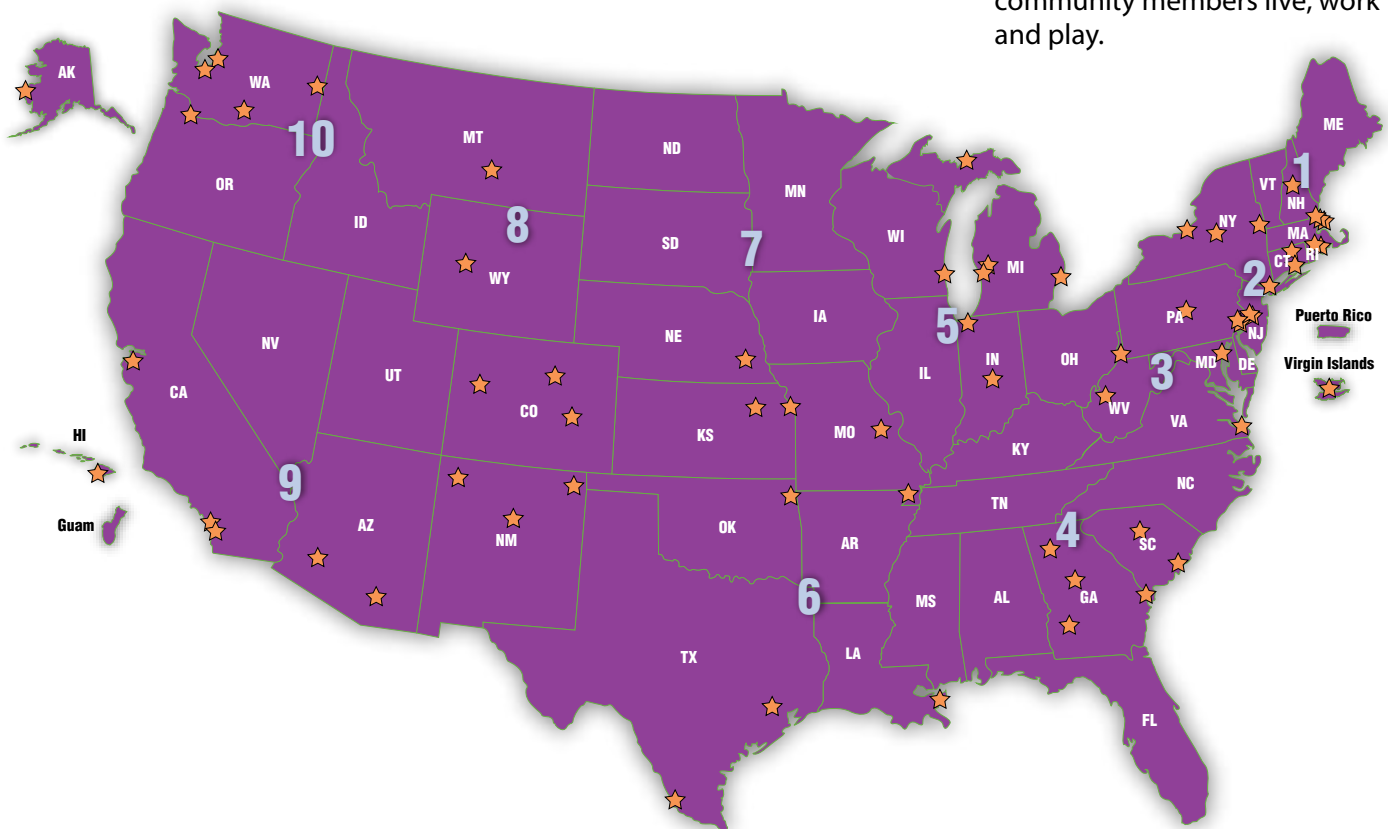
**local environment.** Partners may include non-profit groups, community organizations, businesses, schools, and state, Tribal and local government agencies, EPA, and other federal agencies.

**2. Identify problems and solutions.** Working together, this stakeholder group assesses toxics problems in their community and considers options for reducing risks. EPA technical assistance is available to support this process.

**3. Implement solutions and reduce risks.** The partnership identifies the combination of programs that best meet

the community's needs. EPA funding helps to implement these projects, and the community begins improving its environment. Throughout the process the partnership continues to reassess risks and its priorities.

**4. Become self sustaining.** The community now develops new ways to attract funding and partners into their broad-based collaborative to build on its success. New problem assessments are completed and new solutions identified. As a result, the partnership becomes self-sustaining, and continues to improve its environment where community members live, work and play.



This map shows the locations of the 2005, 2006, 2007, and 2008 CARE communities.

Two types of grants are awarded, Level I and Level II grants. Level I grants are awarded to communities to help them complete Steps 1 and 2 of the CARE process. Communities that have completed Steps 1 and 2, either with the assistance of a CARE grant or through other means, are eligible to receive a Level II grant. Level II grantees work on Steps 3 and 4, ultimately creating a sustainable program that can continue to address toxic risks in their communities.

### *Promising Practices Report Structure*

This CARE Promising Practices Report is a resource for CARE communities and other communities working to address their toxic risks in a similar manner. As communities work through the CARE process, they encounter challenges with each step. Aligned with the four steps of the CARE process, the *Promising Practices* section of this report highlights specific challenges communities faced when trying to implement the CARE process and the actions they took to address them and successfully administer their CARE project. In the *Looking Forward* section, common themes and challenges of the CARE process are highlighted. It also addresses how EPA can use these promising practices to help other communities meet

their own goals and how these lessons learned can potentially shape future CARE program goals and strategies. In an effort to provide supplementary support to communities, additional resources are included to help communities find out more information about the CARE program and other CARE communities.

This report is a living document and will be updated as new information becomes available. The CARE program looks to continually build upon this report by highlighting the successes of additional CARE communities. This report is not a comprehensive list of successful practices among CARE communities, but rather provides examples that other communities can replicate and adapt for their own projects. All CARE communities have been successful in various aspects of their projects. The examples provided herein show creative techniques communities have used to ensure successful projects. Many communities face similar challenges; however each one may have a slightly different way of responding to the challenge effectively based on the nature of that community.

When communities engaging in the CARE process encounter difficulties, they can look to this report to provide guidance and suggestions on strategies that have been successful in other

communities. The CARE Promising Practices Report is intended to facilitate the exchange of ideas among communities seeking to address their environmental health issues.

# Promising Practices

## CARE Step 1: Joining Together

**Join together to form a broad-based partnership dedicated to reducing toxics in their local environment.** Partners may include non-profit groups, community organizations, businesses, schools, and state, Tribal and local government agencies, EPA, and other federal agencies.



*In Step 1 of the CARE process, Level I grantees strengthen and develop partnerships with additional organizations in their community to access the resources and expertise necessary to successfully complete their CARE project. While forming effective partnerships (also referred to as their collaborative), many communities develop solutions to overcome the challenges they encounter and successfully form broad-based partnerships.*

### CHALLENGE: DECLINE IN PROJECT MOMENTUM AND PARTICIPATION

### PROMISING PRACTICE USED TO OVERCOME THE CHALLENGE

The International District Housing Alliance (IDHA) is a non-profit organization in greater Seattle, Washington dedicated to improving the lives of residents in the International District. They have used several strategies to combat declining partnership participation. IDHA created an advisory committee with specific roles for key project stakeholders. This ensured that members would understand both the importance of the CARE project, and their connection to ensuring the project's success. In order to keep certain partners engaged, IDHA met with them individually to learn about their needs and objectives

### INTERNATIONAL DISTRICT HOUSING ALLIANCE

CARE Grant: Level I and II  
Location: Seattle, Washington  
Community Served: Multi-cultural, urban

so IDHA could provide them with the reinforcement to stick with the project. Partnering with a local university, the collaborative used students to convene focus groups and surveys to obtain partner feedback and evaluate the strength of partnerships. These tactics helped IDHA solidify current partnerships and increased the number of partnering organizations from nineteen to 30 by the end of their Level I grant.



*The International District Housing Alliance (IDHA)*



## CHALLENGE: LACK OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

### PROMISING PRACTICE USED TO OVERCOME THE CHALLENGE

In order to increase community involvement in their CARE project, Harambee House, a community-based organization focused on environmental justice and community development, has used several techniques to attract community members to CARE meetings. Providing free food and childcare were crucial in getting community members to attend initial meetings, but they also did something to ensure the long-term involvement of residents—they targeted youth for involvement. Toward this end, Harambee House held a community retreat to encourage community members of all ages to participate in a charrette.



*Harambee House, Inc.*

#### HARAMBEE HOUSE, INC.

CARE Grant: Level I and II  
Location: Savannah, Georgia  
Community Served: Urban

On the retreat, participants were asked what environmental actions they would take in their community if they were King or Queen for a day. This charrette process was an interesting and engaging way to get community members, specifically young people, to think about the environmental issues most important in their community. Developing a strong relationship with the community allowed Harambee House to meet their challenges and eventually secure a Level II grant.

## CHALLENGE: COMMUNITY INDIFFERENCE TOWARD ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

### PROMISING PRACTICE USED TO OVERCOME THE CHALLENGE

The Philadelphia Clean Air Council is working to reduce pollution from the land, air, and water in Philadelphia port areas by addressing local issues such as asthma. As an environmental organization, they had to make special efforts to involve local residents. The Council sent more than 100 letters to community leaders in Philadelphia port communities along the Delaware River soliciting interest in the CARE partnership. The letters explained the pollution issues in the area and the dangers these threats pose to the community. They then asked for the community's help in addressing the issues as part of the CARE coalition. All letters were followed up with a phone call to stress to community representatives the importance of having community representation in the CARE project. The Council knew that these neighborhood representatives were focused on other high priority issues, such as crime and education, and asked them to give whatever time they could. This approach proved successful, and many community members joined the partnership to support the CARE project.

#### THE PHILADELPHIA CLEAN AIR COUNCIL

CARE Grant: Level I  
Location: Philadelphia, Pennsylvania  
Community Served: Urban port

# CARE Step 2: Identifying Problems & Solutions



**Identify problems and solutions.** Working together, the CARE stakeholder group assesses toxics problems in their community and considers options for reducing risks. EPA technical assistance is available to support this process.

*In Step 2 of the CARE process, Level I grantees identify and prioritize the pollution problems facing their communities. The CARE partnerships formed in Step 1 set pollution reduction goals and develop a strategy to meet their goals.*

## **CHALLENGE: BUILDING CONSENSUS WHILE FACING SOCIAL AND CULTURAL DIFFERENCES AMONG PARTNERS**

### **PROMISING PRACTICE USED TO OVERCOME THE CHALLENGE**

The DeKalb County Board of Health (CBH) works in a culturally diverse area. Their target area includes a large Muslim refugee population; their culture prevented women of this community from being active participants in the CARE process. Wanting to ensure that every member of the community was represented in the CARE process, DeKalb CBH tried to work with the men in the community to find creative solutions to this

#### **THE DEKALB COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH**

CARE Grant: Level I  
Location: DeKalb, Georgia  
Community Served: Urban refugee

problem. They also engaged the Empowerment Initiative, a partner organization, to help include the refugee community in the CARE process and make sure the needs of this group of community members is understood by all partners. While they recognize that there are limitations to their efforts, DeKalb CBH took the time to try to bridge cultural gaps as much as possible to engage a diverse group of stakeholders.

## **CHALLENGE: REACHING CONSENSUS ON PROJECT PRIORITIES**

### **PROMISING PRACTICE USED TO OVERCOME THE CHALLENGE**

The DeKalb County Board of Health has many active partners who could not agree on the most important environmental health issues facing the community. The grantee found success in overcoming the different priorities among its partners by firmly adhering to the CARE process, and clearly explaining to all members what the process entails. DeKalb CBH used the Protocol for Assessing Community Excellence in Environmental Health (PACE-EH) method to prioritize its environmental concerns to ensure that the opinions of their more outspoken partners did not outweigh concerns of the greater community. In addition, the project administered a survey to community members to better

understand their greatest priorities. Information collected in the survey was used to ensure that the project focused on the community-identified issues, not just the issues the partners thought were important to the community.

Oneida County, a former manufacturing area of upstate New York, also used the PACE-EH method to help build consensus and define project goals. At the beginning stages of the project, partners met monthly to share their concerns. During the meetings their concerns were recorded on flip charts and later organized into thematic groups and further defined. When a comprehensive list had been developed, partners prioritized issues based on their significance to the community as a whole. The project administered surveys to community members who were not part of these meetings in order to ensure they gathered the opinions and concerns of the entire community. From this process, Oneida County identified three classes of issues of greatest concern to the community on which to focus their efforts. Following the PACE-EH method allowed Oneida County to determine which environmental health issues were of greatest importance to residents so that they may be addressed as quickly as possible.

#### ONEIDA COUNTY

CARE Grant: Level I  
Location: Oneida County, New York  
Community Served:  
Rural, agricultural

#### RCAP SOLUTIONS, INC.

CARE Grant: Level I  
Location: Sullivan County,  
New Hampshire  
Community Served: Rural

### CHALLENGE: DEFINING PARTNER ROLES

#### PROMISING PRACTICE USED TO OVERCOME THE CHALLENGE

RCAP Solutions, Inc. is a non-profit community development corporation working to address the pollution issues caused by the local trash incinerator in Sullivan County, New Hampshire. There were many groups interested in this issue and at the beginning of the process each had its own solution and idea on how to implement it. Putting aside their differences, RCAP assigned roles and responsibilities to specific members. This ensured that all issues would be addressed, and there was a clear leader responsible for each item. Each of the project partners contributed tools and resources which helped the project move forward and identified a role for each project partner. For instance, Working on Waste and Antioch New England Institute provided access to additional funding sources, Antioch, Northeast Resource Recovery Association, and New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services brought resources and information, and local schools provided meeting space. The grantee recognized that each partner has a unique contribution to the CARE project.

### SUMMARY

Level I grantees focus on CARE Steps 1 and 2; following these steps helps ensure the communities are successful in their efforts to improve environmental health. These steps lay the foundation for pollution reduction projects in the future. Without a well-formed partnership or a well-grounded list of priority issues, a community cannot begin to effectively address its pollution concerns. Completing Steps 1 and 2 allows communities to progress to Steps 3 and 4 of the process, whether they proceed by receiving CARE Level II grant funding or finding other ways to financially sustain their program. Level II Cooperative Agreements are for communities that already have established broad-based collaborative partnerships and have completed environmental assessments as outlined in Steps 1 and 2 of the process. Level II grantees focus their efforts on CARE Steps 3 and 4.

# CARE Step 3: Implementing Solutions & Reducing Risk



**Implement solutions and reduce risks.** The partnership identifies the combination of programs that best meet the community's needs. EPA funding helps to implement these projects, and the community begins improving its environment. Throughout the process, the partnership continues to reassess risks and its priorities.

*In Step 3 of the CARE process, Level I and II grantees put their knowledge and plans into action. They use the support developed through their partnerships to implement the solutions to their pollution issues. The partnerships also measure the results of their activities to understand how successful they are at reducing risk.*

## **CHALLENGE: REACHING A LARGE PART OF THE COMMUNITY**

### **PROMISING PRACTICE USED TO OVERCOME THE CHALLENGE**

Penn State University is working in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania to reduce human exposure to pesticide pollutants in the home, air, and water. Since the target community is large, the grantee needed to find effective ways to raise awareness of pesticide issues and educate the public about alternative integrative pest management (IPM) solutions. The partnership found many creative ways of doing this beginning with a press event attended by EPA's Region 3 Administrator and Philadelphia area press to kick off its project. This press event highlighted their Safer Pest Management:

#### **PENN STATE UNIVERSITY**

CARE Grant: Level II  
Location: State College, Pennsylvania  
Community Served: Urban residential

IPM Information Fair. With free admission, the fair attracted more than 500 residents and six health care organizations that were trained on pests, pesticide use, and IPM issues. To further expand the reach of these training programs, the CARE partnership will use the "train the trainer" model; when the core group of trainers conducts outreach to other environmental health organizations or interested parties, their training methods then allow these organizations to replicate the training they received for other stakeholders.

## **CHALLENGE: UNDERSTANDING BASELINE COMMUNITY HEALTH CONDITIONS**

### **PROMISING PRACTICE USED TO OVERCOME THE CHALLENGE**

The Rocky Mountain College Montana Indian Country CARE project faced a lack of data regarding the causes of asthma in their community. In order to fill this data gap, the CARE partnership began working with the Tribal health department, the environmental health department, public health nurses, and schools to try to understand the causes of asthma. After determining that there were various unknown contributing factors, the project

#### **MONTANA INDIAN COUNTRY**

Grant: CARE Level II  
Location: Billings, Montana  
Community Served: Rural, Tribal



Montana Indian Country

used the *Promotora* (a community outreach worker) model to reach community members and gain valuable insight into environment and health related data. Their *Promotora* is an elderly woman who grew up in the community and is respected by Tribal members. She was trained by the project to go door-to-door in the community to conduct a healthy homes inspection, survey residents on their asthma conditions, and provide educational materials on asthma. She is able to communicate better with community members and elicit information that other sources could not provide. The data she collected will help identify the causes for asthma conditions in the community.

## CHALLENGE: MEASURING PROGRAM BENEFITS

### PROMISING PRACTICE USED TO OVERCOME THE CHALLENGE

The Boston Public Health Commission is an organization with experience addressing public health issues in an urban area. The Commission's Safe Shops program is dedicated to improving safety and environmental practices of auto body and repair shops in the Boston area. When the Safe Shops initiative began, 175 auto shops were inspected. After outreach was conducted and more than 400 auto shop workers were trained, the project conducted follow-up inspections at 102 of these facilities to determine if any made improvements to their health and safety practices. The project also received 57 surveys completed by shop workers to understand how they were able to implement best practices in their shop. This

## BOSTON PUBLIC HEALTH COMMISSION

CARE Grant: Level II  
Location: Boston, Massachusetts  
Community Served: Urban, diverse, low-income

process allowed the Public Health Commission to develop statistics to show that program implementation was successful. For example, there was a 30% increase in the number of employees reporting proper use of best work practices. This example shows the importance of developing baseline numbers before implementing solutions, so that there is a basis of comparison against which to measure the program's success.

# CARE Step 4: Becoming Self-Sustaining



**Become self sustaining.** The community now develops new ways to attract funding and partners into their broad-based collaborative to build on its success. New problem assessments are completed and new solutions identified. As a result, the partnership becomes self-sustaining, and continues to improve its environment where community members live, work, and play.

*In Step 4 of the CARE process, Level II grantees look for ways to continue building partnerships and acquire funding to continue the success of their project.*

## CHALLENGE: CONTINUING TO DEVELOP PARTNERSHIPS

### PROMISING PRACTICE USED TO OVERCOME THE CHALLENGE

The Groundwork Denver is a community action group dedicated to partnering with local organizations and promoting environmental justice. Their partnership, referred to as HAND (Healthy Air for Northeast Denver), had great success as a CARE Level II grantee. In order to continue the

#### GROUNDWORK DENVER

CARE Grant: Level II  
Location: Denver, Colorado  
Community Served: Urban, low-income



*HAND (Healthy Air for Northeast Denver)*

success under its CARE program, Groundwork Denver looked to continue building its partnership to meet future community needs. Toward this end, HAND developed an operating protocol aimed at encouraging representation in their partnership from communities, businesses, non-profits, and agencies. HAND received pro bono legal assistance to review and formalize this document. It sets forth a structure and ground rules for developing partnerships and working effectively with the partnership.

In California, the West Oakland Toxic Reduction Collaborative developed a Partnerin Agreement document to clearly define the goals of its partnership and continue adding valuable partners to their collaborative. New partners must sign this agreement to commit themselves to the success and goals of the project. This document allows partners to clearly understand their roles and responsibilities in this CARE partnership.

#### WEST OAKLAND ENVIRONMENTAL INDICATORS PROJECT

CARE Grant: Level II  
Location: Oakland, California  
Community Type: Urban

## CHALLENGE: IDENTIFYING ADDITIONAL FEDERAL FUNDING SOURCES

### PROMISING PRACTICE USED TO OVERCOME THE CHALLENGE

EPA's Brownfields program provides \$50,000 for each of the 10 EPA Regions to complete Targeted Brownfields Assessments in their Region. Through the EPA Regional offices, CARE communities can access this money to conduct Phase I and II environmental site assessments on brownfields, which are vacant or contaminated properties. Grace Hill, a non-profit organization dedicated to community development, is using this EPA funding to conduct an assessment on the proposed site of the Mary Meachum Freedom Crossing, a nationally recognized Underground Railroad site. By accessing this funding, the community can assess the extent of environmental contamination, which will allow them to move forward with site cleanup activities thus removing pollution from community properties.

#### GRACE HILL SETTLEMENT HOUSE

CARE Grant: Level II  
Location: St. Louis, Missouri  
Community Served: Urban

#### PACOIMA BEAUTIFUL

CARE Grant: Level I and II  
Location: Los Angeles, California  
Community Served: Urban, Multi-cultural

## CHALLENGE: SUSTAINING INTEREST IN ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

### PROMISING PRACTICE USED TO OVERCOME THE CHALLENGE

Pacoima Beautiful decided that one way to build long-term community capacity to continue improving the local environment was to produce several documents which would promote further discussions of toxic risk. They updated an Environmental Health Initiative Report to highlight recent activities and successes. A second document developed under the partnership was a Risk Data Report, a compilation of data on toxic risks in the community. These documents and others were distributed to partners and community members to show the importance of addressing toxic risk and demonstrate that the community still faces many issues. Pacoima Beautiful also developed resident workshop and tour curriculum packages to distribute to participating residents and students. These consist of lesson plans, maps, data and research, and art activities focused on the environmental issues in Los Angeles.



*Earth Keepers Initiative*

## CHALLENGE: BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS WITH LOCAL BUSINESSES

### PROMISING PRACTICE USED TO OVERCOME THE CHALLENGE

Marquette, Michigan, located on Lake Superior, is addressing mercury issues in the Lake Superior Watershed. The Earth Keepers initiative is a coalition of faith communities in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. The CARE partnership, comprised of religious leaders and other partners, contacted a local dentist who invited them to speak at a local Dentist Business Association meeting. The partnerships used this opportunity to give the association an educational talk about one of the major sources of mercury in Lake Superior—mercury amalgam from dental practices. They also explained that tax credits were available to dentists to purchase mercury amalgam sorters that

#### EARTH KEEPERS

CARE Grant: Level II  
Location: Marquette, Michigan  
Community Served: Small lakeside town

would ensure mercury would not be released into the environment. Upon learning about the mercury issues, thirty local dentists switched their practices with the aid of the tax credits. Understanding the environmental impact of their practice as well as the financial assistance available to remedy the problem encouraged many dentists to work alongside Earth Keepers in protecting Lake Superior. This CARE project is helping to reduce the amount of mercury in Lake Superior.

## *SUMMARY*

Level II CARE grantees focus their efforts on Steps 3 and 4. Having already formed partnerships and assessed the toxics issues in their community (Steps 1 and 2), they are ready to begin addressing these issues. Once a community completes all four CARE steps, toxic pollution exposure should be successfully reduced or eliminated in the community. With continuous support and effort, the partnership will become self-sustaining so that the CARE process can be replicated to address additional pollution issues within the community.



## Looking Forward

CARE grants provide communities the resources and technical expertise necessary to solve some of their most difficult environmental challenges. While communities experience great successes in their projects—as this report shows—many face significant challenges along the way. EPA CARE program coordinators continuously try to provide communities with the resources they need to make the program successful. Creating diverse partnerships provides communities the foundation they need to access tools and resources in various segments of the community, such as business, or a community health organization. Many communities find that people are their most valuable asset; people can connect the CARE project to additional resources and also provide the volunteer support necessary to keep the project running smoothly.

Some of the most pressing challenges facing a large number of communities are issues with scientific data. While some communities have difficulty locating or accessing data relevant to their project, others are overwhelmed by the volume of technical data available to them and do not have the technical expertise to analyze it

or understand its implications for their community. EPA is working to address these issues through better coordination across EPA offices and with other federal agencies. EPA hopes to enable additional communities to develop promising practices of their own by helping to locate people who can provide or interpret data.

The CARE program awarded its first series of grants in 2005 and has made significant progress in four years of operation. EPA is committed to assessing and improving the program to ensure it meets the needs of communities most effectively. EPA realizes that all communities face challenges. Examining the most common challenges allows EPA to be ready to respond when other communities face these same types of issues in the future.

Documents like these are intended to facilitate the CARE process of sharing information on promising practices from one community to another. CARE communities can provide valuable information to one another on what works and what does not in addressing their challenges. When EPA learns about what is successful in one community, it can help another community facing a similar challenge to employ the promising practices.

By continuing to examine the challenges communities face and solutions for overcoming these challenges, EPA can improve the CARE program and make the CARE process more useful for all communities. This report is a first step in examining and addressing the difficulties CARE communities face when addressing their pollution issues. EPA will continue to work closely with communities to fully support their projects while making further improvements to the overall CARE program so that future communities can build on the successes and lessons learned of current CARE communities.

# Resources

## Basic CARE Information

Visit EPA's Web site:

<http://www.epa.gov/air/care/index.htm>

Call toll free at 1-877-CARE-909

Or write to:

CARE Program

US EPA (8001A)

1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW

Washington, DC 20460

## Contact Information for Featured Communities

### STEP 1

#### International District Housing Alliance

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### STEP 2

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### STEP 3

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#### **Montana Indian Country**

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### STEP 4

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