



## How to Use This Manual



### Why was this Manual written?

This Manual is designed to support the new efforts that communities and neighborhoods across the nation are making to improve the environmental quality and health of the places where they live and work. Efforts to understand and improve air quality are a key part of this work to create healthy local environments. But many communities have found the work to understand and improve local air quality to be complex and difficult. Even regulatory agencies with expertise may have difficulty answering community questions regarding the combined impacts of releases from multiple sources. While some regulatory programs may consider combined impacts, permitting programs have usually been set up to deal with facilities on an individual basis and they cannot be easily used to answer community concerns about releases from multiple sources. Similarly, the available data on air quality, designed to support national, state, and tribal regulatory programs, is often too general to address the details of local air environments. This Manual was written to help communities overcome these difficulties and find answers to some of the basic questions about air quality that they have not been able to answer in the past.

### What does this Manual contain and how is it organized?

There are many different approaches that communities can take to get a better understanding of local air quality. Finding the approach that best matches your community's resources and goals will be a key to the success of your effort to improve air quality. Most of this Manual provides a detailed guide to using **risk-based screening**, one of the

**Organize**  
**Collect**  
**Analyze**  
**Mobilize**

## Chapter 1: How to Use This Manual

---

approaches to analyzing air quality. Chapters 3 through 12 of this Manual contain a step-by-step guide for using the risk-based screening approach.

If you are interested in learning more about the risk-based screening method, please go immediately to Chapter 3 for an overview of this method. If you decide that risk-based screening will help you reach your goals, then this Manual will provide a lot of the assistance that you will need.

If you don't know which approach would be best for your community to use to get a better understanding of local air quality or if you are just getting started in an effort to improve air quality, then Chapter 2 is designed to help you. Choosing the best approach for your community to take to understand your air quality and doing effective work to improve community air quality require **a partnership with adequate resources and a clear idea of what it wants to accomplish**. Chapter 2 explains how to form the partnership that you will need, clarify your goals, and, then, choose the approach for analyzing local air quality that best matches your resources and goals. If, after you have considered the different approaches outlined in Chapter 2, you decide that risk-based screening does meet your needs, then the remaining chapters of this Manual will be helpful. If you decide to use a different approach, then the Manual will refer you to other sources of information for help. Even if you use a different approach, you may still want to use some parts of this Manual as a resource for your work.

*Find the approach that best matches your community's resources and goals*

### **As an individual with concerns about air quality, how could I use this Manual to start working to improve air quality in my community?**

If you are an individual or a member of a community group or organization and you are interested in doing something to improve local air quality, you can use Chapter 2 to help you get a partnership started. Or, if you are not sure if there is enough interest in air quality to form a partnership, you, or you and your organization, could first follow one of the simpler approaches for collecting available information on local air quality described in Chapter 2 and use this information to help you better understand and explain the need to improve air quality. This will help you to get others interested in joining a partnership. Once you have a partnership and you have worked together to clarify your goals, you can study the options for understanding air quality presented in Chapter 2 (and others that you

can learn about) to decide which approach to take to improve local air quality.

### **We already have a partnership formed to work on air quality or another community health concern, so how could this Manual help us?**

If you already have a partnership formed that is interested in learning about and improving local air quality and you are clear on your goals, then you can go directly to the section in Chapter 2 that describes different options for understanding air quality to get help finding an approach that matches your goals and needs. We recommend reading the sections on partnership building and clarifying goals even if you already have a partnership and goals, since these sections raise issues and lessons learned from other partnership efforts to improve air quality that may help you strengthen your work.

If, after considering the alternatives, your partnership decides that the risk-based screening approach meets your needs, you can turn to Chapter 3 and use the help provided there and in the subsequent chapters to get started and complete a risk-based screening project.

### **If this Manual and all the work and resources needed to improve air quality look a bit overwhelming, how can I or my organization get started?**

As you begin to go through this Manual, one of your first reactions will probably be that the effort required to improve air quality is very complicated and looks as if it would require a whole lot of resources that you do not have. As a resident, the science and the scientific terminology may appear beyond your reach. If you are a professional working in government, industry, or academics, the work in a community may appear equally overwhelming. But before you abandon the idea of working on your air quality, consider the following.

Partnerships make things possible. With a partnership, tasks that seem impossible can get done. The truth is that none of us as an individual working alone has a chance to improve air quality. It is a complicated task that requires the efforts of a lot of people. But looking at the work to improve air quality as either an individual task you must do or as a task that someone else should do may be the problem. Like many of the things that are most important to us, improving air quality is a job that can only be accomplished by everyone working

*Partnerships  
make things  
possible*

## Chapter 1: How to Use This Manual

---

together. All the resources you need to improve air quality are available to your community. There are willing people with all the skills you need to complete the job. Even if the level of trust among residents, governments, and industry is not good, there are steps you can take and resources you can use to begin to change this. So don't let the size or any part of the task intimidate you. Once you get started you will find the help and resources that you need.

You may also worry about starting an effort that will end up being a draining experience for you, with countless meetings and a work load that you are not sure that you could handle. But partnership projects do not have to be draining. Of course they take work, but you will be



*Meeting of the community partners of the St. Louis North Side Clean Air Project.*

able to divide up the work to make it reasonable. And it will be up to you to set the schedule so you can, and should, set a reasonable pace for you and your community. Working to improve air quality can be a great opportunity to build your community, to meet new people, to learn new things, and to develop new relationships that your community will need in the future. Communities tackling important issues and building partnerships to find solutions are the essence of our democracy at work. Instead of seeing the work to improve air quality as draining, look at it as important work that will be challenging, exciting, and doable.

And you will not be alone. Community organizations and partnerships across the nation have begun to tackle the problem of local air quality, so you will have tremendous resources to draw on to help you make progress. What looks like an impossible task for a single community can look manageable if it is viewed as a joint effort of many communities working together. So plan time to learn about and share ideas with other communities working on similar air quality concerns. Watch for and plan to attend the national or regional meetings that are organized to bring people together to share ideas.

Finally, getting something done in a community always requires a few champions or leaders who can get things started and keep them going. Champions for these projects can come from anywhere. The only qualification seems to be a willingness to learn and a determination to make things happen. A resident, a leader of a community organization or church, an engineer in a local company, a small business owner, a local teacher, a government staffer—anyone can be a champion for an effort to improve local air quality. If you or your organization are willing to champion a partnership effort, you will need patience and persistence, since it takes time to accomplish something new, but, if you persist and don't get discouraged when you run into the inevitable problems that come with any new effort, you will find that your persistence will pay off. You will find that people do want to work together and that we can explain things to each other and make decisions together. And you will find that the process can be exciting, challenging, and rewarding. Most importantly, you will succeed in improving your air quality and you will make a real contribution to the health of your community and the health of your community's children. And when you have made some progress, share your experiences. In fact, you and your partners may find a way to turn your experiences into the next and improved version of this Manual.

*Communities  
tackling important  
issues and  
building  
partnerships to  
find solutions are  
the essence of  
our democracy  
at work*

# Chapter 1: How to Use This Manual

---