**Category: Obligation to Facilitate Public Participation in Environmental Decision-Making**

**Sub-Category: Public Participation Platforms or Bodies**

**Name of Good Practice: Community Advisory Groups**

Key Words: Access to Information, Community Organisations, Hazardous Waste, Local Community, Participation

Implementing Actors: National Ministry: Environmental Protection Agency; Local Community: Various

Location: United States of America

Description: The purpose of a Community Advisory Group (CAG) is to provide a public forum for community members to present and discuss their needs and concerns relating to the U.S. government’s program to clean up uncontrolled or abandoned hazardous waste sites. CAGs can assist the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in making better decisions on how to clean up a hazardous waste site by providing the EPA with community preferences for site cleanup and remediation. CAGs also allow the community to access, on a regular and consistent basis, information about a contaminated site. The EPA recommends that membership in a CAG reflects the composition of the community near the site and the diversity of racial, ethnic and economic interests in the community. CAG members participate in meetings, provide data and information to EPA on site issues, and share information received from the EPA with their fellow community members. The CAG hosts regular meetings open to the community and maintains a repository of documents and materials about the site that are accessible to the public. CAG meetings are announced publicly to encourage maximum participation of community members.

There are currently 66 active CAGs nationwide, according to the EPA’s website. Some CAGs also have their own websites, where they post, among other things, information about meetings with the EPA, public events relating to the clean-up sites in the community, and notices for CAG public meetings. For example, the CAG for the Newtown Creek site in Brooklyn, New York, one of the most polluted waterways in the United States, provides a wealth of information on the clean-up process for Newtown Creek; posts notes, videos, and summaries of all information the EPA shares with the CAG; and gives notice of upcoming public meetings.

Further Information: The EPA’s website on CAGs is at <http://www.epa.gov/superfund/community/cag/>. Two examples of websites for CAGs, both operating in New York City, are [www.newtowncreekcag.wordpress.com](http://www.newtowncreekcag.wordpress.com) and [www.gowanuscag.org/](http://www.gowanuscag.org/).