

## 5.I. Recipient Activity I: Information Dissemination/Communication Strategies

*Develop and evaluate strategies for communicating information generated by an environmental public health tracking (surveillance) network and related program activities to diverse audiences.*

### 5.I.1. Results and Accomplishments

The Alameda County Pilot Project provided CEHTP with an excellent opportunity to explore methods and issues for communicating information developed by an EPHTN using real project results. Our stakeholder Advisory Group (AG) approach enabled us to directly try out and gain feedback on explaining/describing tracking information with a representative audience of stakeholders. The AG also recommended effective communication and dissemination strategies for multiple audiences and assisted CEHTP staff in prioritizing activities specific to the pilot project.

#### **Communicating Tracking Information to Pilot Project Advisory Group**

The facilitation of an AG input process for the Alameda County Pilot Project required that we develop strategies and materials to communicate project activities and findings to a diverse audience (see SECTION 5.i - Recipient Activity i: Demonstration Project on p115 for more detail on the AG process). Using the AG meeting setting, our strategy for communicating tracking information in a manner that would be relevant and accessible to a diverse audience was to:

- Begin by asking participants to think about and discuss their needs, issues, activities, and concerns around the specific topic (e.g. asthma). This leads participants to consider the topic in a personally relevant manner.
- Provide background information or training to enable better understanding of the specific topic. For example, before discussing the asthma findings, we did a brief training on asthma and its relationship with the environment, basic statistics concepts (e.g. statistical significance), and the methods used to generate the findings (e.g. density estimation). See SECTION 5.g - Recipient Activity g: Increasing Capacity to Implement EPHT on p99 for further discussion and APPENDIX P: Capacity Building Presentations for the Alameda County Pilot Project Advisory Group for examples of presentations.
- Present the topic in a manner that is accessible to all audience members. This includes considering language/vocabulary, providing scientific interpretation of results, highlighting major points of interest; and presenting information only to the level of detail needed by the group to provide useful feedback and not overloading them with less-relevant information. See

APPENDIX W: Agendas, Meeting Evaluations, and Select Materials for the Alameda County Pilot Project Advisory Group Meetings for examples of presentations.

- Facilitate group discussions after presenting the topic to answer questions, get feedback, and revisit issues around utility of information and so forth. This immediate engagement reinforces learned concepts.
- Repeat training topics (e.g. basic statistics) at each meeting to reinforce concepts. This was particularly important given the approximately four-month time period between meetings.

Health education and technical staff worked together to develop and present information with the goal of being comprehensible to a diverse audience, as well as instructive regarding methods used, limitations, interpretation of findings, and caveats. We also benefited from feedback from Pacific Institute staff (an NGO partner), who were particularly able to anticipate AG needs, questions, and areas of confusion. Through this process, several technical areas were identified which required discussion before the group members as a whole would be able to meaningfully participate in the process. These included:

- The medical background related to the health outcomes (e.g. What is preterm birth? How does it affect families?)
- A review of what is known about environmental hazards related to these outcomes, and why we are concerned about them
- How we measure rates, percents, and/or odds ratios
- The meaning and importance of confidence intervals and statistical testing
- Ways of representing data using maps, bar charts, etc.

Generally, staff took a capacity building approach to these issues, focusing on how information could be used for advocacy and how terminology becomes important when discussing health and environmental data. For an example of a presentation incorporating these approaches, please see APPENDIX X: Alameda County Pilot Project Birth Outcomes Findings

This was an intensive process that required a combination of time, skill, and willingness from project staff. While neither changes in participant knowledge nor the presentation materials themselves have been evaluated, participation and feedback from the group indicate a good grasp of the material and suggests that this approach was likely effective (see APPENDIX W: Agendas, Meeting Evaluations, and Select Materials for the Alameda County Pilot Project Advisory Group Meetings for meeting evaluation results).

The products from these communication processes have been modified and used to communicate pilot project information to our Planning Consortium, other EPHT grantees, and a number of other stakeholder organizations. The presentations are continually developed and refined as we address new topics, gain a better understanding of the capabilities and limitations of EPHT, and learn more about the needs and interests of our stakeholders. These presentations may be modified or separated into modular components in the future to serve as distance-learning and outreach tools.

## **Developing Communication/Dissemination Strategies for Pilot Project**

As the first group to see the results of the Alameda County Pilot Project analyses and as representatives of stakeholders at large, the AG played an integral role in developing the communication and outreach strategy for the pilot project. We used the AG meeting process to solicit guidance from the group, following the steps below:

1. Determine general needs and direction for communication/dissemination strategy.
2. Use mock materials to revise and focus direction.
3. Develop approach and revisit roles and responsibilities.
4. Engage group in brainstorming and further prioritization of activities.
5. Finalize communication and dissemination strategy.

### **1) Determine general needs and direction for communication/dissemination strategy:**

During the AG meetings, participants described needs and considerations for outreach and dissemination of pilot project findings. For complete notes, see APPENDIX G: Alameda County Pilot Project – Summary and Complete Meeting Notes.

#### **Modes of dissemination to reach multiple audiences:**

- Access to information is a challenge cited by the AG. Generally, the Internet is seen as a good medium for information dissemination, but it is important to recognize that technical barriers exist for some audiences. A solution to this would be to create downloadable materials that are easy to print and reproduce. This way, an organization whose target audience does not have the capacity to access or use the Internet can distribute materials to these individuals in hard copy formats.

#### **Comprehensible materials:**

- The AG emphasized the need for materials written in a language and literacy-appropriate manner. Additionally, translation of descriptions and scientific interpretations of findings into lay language would make the information more understandable to a range of audiences.

#### **Useful formats:**

- The AG identified formats for disseminating pilot project findings that would be useful to multiple audiences:
  - Adaptable modules
  - Fact sheets for lay, medical, and scientific audiences
  - Brochures
  - Maps, charts, and tables
  - Reports

- Scientific interpretation in lay language

The AG also noted that information presented formats comparable to those describing other communities, information highlighting disparities, and information presented in a social/economic/environmental context would be useful.

## **2) Use mock materials to revise and focus direction:**

Based on suggestions from the AG to develop materials for lay audiences, medical professionals, and mixed audiences, we created mock materials for the group (see APPENDIX Y: Alameda County Pilot Project – Mock Birth Outcomes Brochure and Fact Sheet). This process illustrated the difficulty of creating materials without a specific purpose in mind, particularly for an organization (such as ours) not directly involved with the target audience or activity.

Presented with this reality, the AG was able to modify its suggestions and recommended that we prioritize development of a web-based dissemination strategy, including that of a GIS interface and downloadable, pre-made modules on the specific findings. They also suggested providing many options for the maps (e.g. density estimation maps, maps with rates by zip code, etc.) These formats and options would be useful to a variety of stakeholders and facilitate easy incorporation of findings into materials to fit the specific needs of individual organizations. The AG also recommended that we develop a capacity-building component in conjunction with the dissemination strategy. In addition to providing technical assistance to access and understand the information, it would be important to provide training on using the information for public health action. Training sessions would be an ideal method to build capacity.

This input was the impetus behind our partnership with Urban Strategies Council/InfoOakland, a local NGO and information networking consortium, to develop a county-wide interactive GIS interface and data warehouse that would display the pilot project results (see Web-Based Dissemination Strategies, below). For further discussion on the development of the partnership, see SECTION 5.c - Recipient Activity c: Develop Partnerships on p65.

## **3) Develop approach and revisit roles/responsibilities:**

Once the direction of the dissemination strategy was determined, our program staff and the AG assessed the project timeline, available internal and external resources and capacities, and individual and group priorities. This activity was important for determining a realistic dissemination plan and for clarifying expectations for dissemination and use of the pilot project results.

While the common goal was to produce, disseminate, and utilize scientifically valid and community-relevant data to improve public health, it became clear through the meeting process that each group has its own expertise and responsibility along this spectrum of data to action. In summary:

- We have the expertise and responsibility to produce scientifically valid and community-relevant data, to ensure that the information is presented and disseminated in a community accessible manner (by involving stakeholders in the development process), and to communicate to stakeholders how they can access the information.
- Urban Strategies Council/InfoOakland has the expertise and responsibility to present and disseminate data in a community-accessible manner, as well as to provide technical assistance and capacity-building to community groups to access, understand, and use the information for action.
- The AG members have the expertise and responsibility to guide our program and Urban Strategies Council/InfoOakland on what they consider to be useful information and the most appropriate methods of presentation and dissemination. Once available, it is also each member's responsibility to decide if, when, and how to use the information for public health action.

**4) Engage group in brainstorming and further prioritization of activities:**

As mentioned earlier in SECTION 5.i - Recipient Activity i: Demonstration Project on p115, the January 2005 AG meeting focused on the brainstorming and prioritizing outreach and dissemination approaches. In preparation for the completion of the InfoAlamedaCounty tool and the completion of the pilot project analyses, meeting participants were asked to contribute their expertise and creativity to develop strategies for outreach on both the InfoAlamedaCounty tool and the pilot project process and findings. Results from the discussion provide a framework for continued work on this issue.

The main activity for the meeting was for the AG to identify key audiences that would be interested in InfoAlamedaCounty and the pilot project findings. The AG then brainstormed strategies for each specific audience to (1) disseminate this information to them, (2) increase their capacity to use it, and (3) encourage involvement with and feedback to our program and InfoAlamedaCounty.

The group identified the following key audience types:

- General public
- Community-based organizations
- Regulatory/environmental agencies
- Schools/school districts
- Code enforcement agencies
- Foundations and funding agencies
- Land use/planning departments
- Local health providers
- Transportation agencies

- Non-profit organizations
- Elected officials
- Social clubs
- Faith-based organizations
- Academia
- Media
- Industry/business

For each audience type, participants discussed:

- Why the group might be interested in InfoAlamedaCounty/the project findings.
- What skills and background information the group would need to understand or use InfoAlamedaCounty/ the project findings.
- Which activities would be most effective in facilitating this group’s use of InfoAlamedaCounty/the project findings.

Results from the discussion are summarized in Table 4. This exercise highlighted the importance of developing strategies by audience due to the often distinct interests, needs, and capacities of the various stakeholders. We compiled and expanded upon this input to create a document summarizing these strategies by audience type (see APPENDIX Z: Alameda County Pilot Project – Outreach Strategies for Target Audiences). While we will not be able to implement many or all of the strategies, we envision that this document may be a useful general outreach and dissemination framework for members of the AG and for our program at large.

**Table 4: Advisory Group Recommendations on Outreach Strategies by Audience Type.**

<b>Audience</b>	<b>Why might they be interested</b>	<b>What would they need to know</b>	<b>Suggested outreach activities</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>CBOs and non-profits</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To get funding</li> <li>▪ To develop policies and programs</li> <li>▪ To educate their constituents</li> <li>▪ To serve as an organizing and campaign tool</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ What are the disparities in health and health issues in their area</li> <li>▪ How to interpret the results</li> <li>▪ How to use in their own work</li> <li>▪ How to work with other orgs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Group trainings</li> <li>▪ Steps include learning, engaging, dissemination, advocacy</li> <li>▪ Need a way to make tracking easier to understand (e.g. tool kit, graphs, narratives to make data interpretable by lay audience)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Need to create training “organizing 101” or “outreach 101” for those who are presenting and disseminating this info</li> </ul>
<b>Health care providers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Information on the conditions and quality of care in particular areas</li> <li>▪ As a tool for patient education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Knowledge that this tool and these findings exist</li> <li>▪ Ready made materials (maps, charts), since time to go through the site is scarce</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Develop materials for health providers</li> <li>▪ Support the development of patient education materials</li> <li>▪ Build outreach/training into continuing education processes</li> </ul>	

**CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH TRACKING PROGRAM**

<b>Audience</b>	<b>Why might they be interested</b>	<b>What would they need to know</b>	<b>Suggested outreach activities</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Regulatory and code enforcement agencies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To identify areas/hot spots to prioritize and increase enforcement activities</li> <li>▪ To prioritize projects (additional monitoring, measurement, remediation)</li> <li>▪ To reinforce and supplement existing info (e.g. TRI, CHAPIS)</li> <li>▪ This provides a larger community context through which they can view their data</li> <li>▪ To identify areas to target projects/funding initiatives for community education, other resources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ They already have the skills and background info</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Go through top agency officials</li> <li>▪ Small presentations</li> <li>▪ Summit</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Having this data puts public pressure that encourages industry to meet standards</li> <li>▪ This data will also highlight areas where people need education to protect and advocate for themselves</li> </ul>
<b>Land use / planning and transportation agencies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Communities and regulators want their involvement</li> <li>▪ Developers have a responsibility to build safe places to live</li> <li>▪ Developers have a responsibility to investigate the effects of the proposed development on residents' health</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Basic information about connection between the environment and health. They have the capacity to work with maps and data, just not health data</li> <li>▪ Educate them that they are the missing piece between communities and regulators</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Go through top agency officials</li> <li>▪ Summit for city/county reps on limited land and need for planning that promotes health</li> <li>▪ Small presentations to follow up based on specific interests</li> <li>▪ Get to developers through trade associations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ What is their mandate, what mandate makes this applicable?</li> </ul>
<b>Foundations and other funding agencies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To help set funding priorities</li> <li>▪ To identify "hot spots" near them</li> <li>▪ Organizations applying for funding may refer to this info- so foundations need to respect it when organizations refer to it as a source of information</li> <li>▪ To see the importance of programs that fund communities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ What is Tracking, how does it work, what data are available, where data came from</li> <li>▪ Information about the project and background (e.g. CDC funded, pilot)</li> <li>▪ Understand that InfoAlameda is a valid tool, contains valid information</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Informational presentation and demonstration</li> <li>▪ Help them see the importance of "community organizing" projects</li> <li>▪ Use this presentation as leverage to get funding from larger orgs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Foundations probably wouldn't use this directly</li> </ul>

**CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH TRACKING PROGRAM**

<b>Audience</b>	<b>Why might they be interested</b>	<b>What would they need to know</b>	<b>Suggested outreach activities</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Schools</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Use as an educational tool for classes and reports</li> <li>▪ Inform health services provided through school and school health staff</li> <li>▪ Can give support to Healthy Start schools and schools located near pollution sources</li> <li>▪ Provide information about their student population</li> <li>▪ Schools work with a large youth population</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ For adults: clear, understandable message and goals so they understand the importance of the issue</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Give information to the top officials (e.g. superintendents, principals)</li> <li>▪ If there is interest in informing other staff, then presentations on the site for staff</li> <li>▪ Help staff use site as a tool in the classroom as appropriate</li> <li>▪ Concise, focused fact sheets to give to school officials</li> <li>▪ Strategy to determine what time of activities they would really engage with (e.g. presentation, training)</li> <li>▪ Strategy to determine how they would want to use the tools/info</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ We need to build skills to do outreach to this constituency</li> </ul>
<b>Health departments</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Their mission is to protect public and environmental health</li> <li>▪ Better define conditions and problems</li> <li>▪ Good visualization tool for staff to prioritize activities based on location, age, etc.</li> <li>▪ County has EJ policies- this may support that work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Knowledge that information and data sources are valid and reliable</li> <li>▪ Permission from director to use time to be trained, etc</li> <li>▪ If specific software is needed, permission to install software</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Go through chain of command</li> <li>▪ Staff have a responsibility to adopt use of the tool once they are trained, so use a mini-project as part of the training to help the group begin using the tool</li> </ul>	
<b>General public</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Concerns about their family's well-being</li> <li>▪ Use as a tool to influence decisions re: planning, traffic, zoning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Access to and capacity to use computers and the internet</li> <li>▪ Knowledge about what kind of information is available</li> <li>▪ Understanding of statistics and terminology</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Best to outreach through groups, public meetings, and other civic venues (such as school meetings, church, library, neighborhood associations, and clubs)</li> <li>▪ Using media to develop stories</li> <li>▪ Paid ads</li> </ul>	

**CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH TRACKING PROGRAM**

<b>Audience</b>	<b>Why might they be interested</b>	<b>What would they need to know</b>	<b>Suggested outreach activities</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Elected officials</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Their constituencies are affected</li> <li>▪ Access to this info could help increase funding for their districts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Might have to be convinced</li> <li>▪ Build familiarity with the resource</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Connect with staff in officials' offices</li> <li>▪ Have prepared information to show to officials (e.g. maps and charts)</li> <li>▪ Have a series (e.g. "map of the month" ) to familiarize them with the info available</li> <li>▪ Tailor info ("branding", e.g. specific information for each district) and presenting info in ways that are easy to understand</li> </ul>	
<b>Media</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ News stories may have been better with info from InfoAlameda</li> <li>▪ Interest in InfoAlameda as a tool/resource, as opposed to being the story</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ How to access and use tools</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Feature stories to educate the public on findings and tools</li> <li>▪ Target media researchers to see this as a resource</li> <li>▪ Present to staff?</li> </ul>	
<b>Industry</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Less clear on why industry would seek out this info versus why others would want them to know this info (e.g. usefulness for advocacy groups as evidence in campaigns)</li> <li>▪ For chambers of commerce, this would be a great resource for them to get demographic and health info for a certain area</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Use data to convince businesses why they should work with neighbors to decrease pollution</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Meet with groups and present details</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ There are different types of industry- e.g. sustainable business alliance versus chemical groups</li> <li>▪ Concern about misuse of this info by this constituency</li> </ul>
<b>Academia</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Easy sell to researchers in this area- they would understand the usefulness of the tools and findings</li> <li>▪ Good resource, especially as a tool or part of course curriculum</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Presentations to undergrads and graduate students</li> <li>▪ Get departments to link their websites to InfoAlameda and CEHTP sites</li> </ul>	

## **5) Finalize communication/dissemination strategy:**

Building upon the thoughtful deliberation of the AG and re-examining the project timeline, resources, and available personnel, we determined a more realistic communication/dissemination strategy for the project period and cost extension period. With the completion of the InfoAlamedaCounty tool and corresponding CEHTP website (see the following segment), we plan to:

- Collaborate with Urban Strategies Council to develop an InfoAlamedaCounty training for mixed audiences and pilot-test the training with the AG. We will also use feedback from the AG to modify/enhance the site as feasible.
- Implement the training with staff from a range of Alameda County departments and use the participant feedback to evaluate the usefulness of the tool. This will enable us to explore the usefulness of this dissemination tool and the pilot project findings for local government agencies. Of particular interest is the utility of the site for informing the Healthy Homes program on potentially missed sub-populations and the site's ability to enhance exposure assessments by viewing data on environmental and socio-economic factors. Based on feedback, we will then modify InfoAlamedaCounty site (e.g. add selected community vulnerability indicators to the site) as feasible.
- Implement the training with community stakeholders and use the feedback from participants to evaluate the usefulness of the tool. We will recruit participants that have not been involved with the AG process or who discontinued participation early on in the process. This will enable us to explore the utility of this dissemination tool for lay audiences that have not had the benefit of participation in the project. Similar to our activities with established project participants, we will then modify InfoAlamedaCounty site as feasible based on feedback.

To further explore how to improve data dissemination for use in supporting public health action, we will expand our outreach and dissemination activities based on advisory group input. Potential activities include:

- Holding a “train the trainer” workshop to build capacity among advisory group members to present the pilot project findings and the InfoAlamedaCounty tool to a variety of audiences.
- Conducting a workshop to help stakeholders to interpret and use the data for specific public health activities.
- Convening a summit for community and agency leaders to present and discuss the findings and InfoAlamedaCounty.

In this manner, we will take advantage of the participation and expertise developed by the pilot project advisory group to determine if and how the outreach/dissemination strategies and the dissemination tools developed may be utilized to support public health action.

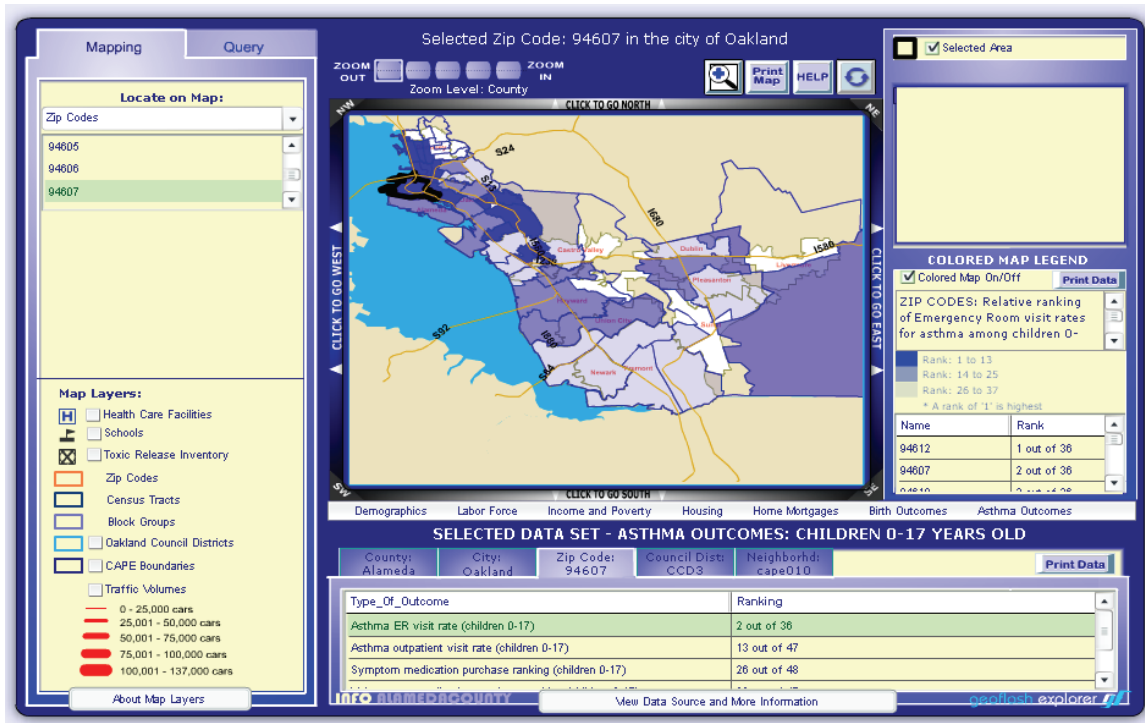
### **Web-Based Dissemination Strategies**

As described above, the AG suggested that we take a web-based approach for disseminating its Alameda County Pilot Project results. In September 2004, we established a partnership with

Urban Strategies Council/InfoOakland. Urban Strategies Council, a local NGO, coordinates a non-profit information networking consortium called InfoOakland and develops/maintains [www.InfoOakland.org](http://www.InfoOakland.org), a web-based interactive interface that provides demographic, housing, and other data to the public. Through the partnership, Urban Strategies Council developed a web-based interactive GIS interface to display the pilot project findings and other local-level data (see SECTION 5.c - Recipient Activity c: Develop Partnerships on p65 for a description of the partnership). This tool, housed at <http://www.infoalamedacounty.org>, enables lay audiences to easily access data from the Alameda County Pilot Project, demographic data, housing data, and more. We are also developing materials and content for our website (<http://www.catracking.com>), which will be linked to the InfoAlamedaCounty site. This complementary component to InfoAlamedaCounty will display selected maps, tables, and charts of project findings in a downloadable format, accompanied by interpretive narratives and caveats. The site will also list resources and contact information for questions or technical assistance from our staff.

**Dissemination on [www.InfoAlamedaCounty.org](http://www.InfoAlamedaCounty.org)**

**Figure 21: Screenshot of [www.InfoAlamedaCounty.org](http://www.InfoAlamedaCounty.org).**



As mentioned above, InfoOakland is a collaborative effort to develop information resources to promote equity and empowerment for low-income neighborhoods and communities of color in the city of Oakland through increased access to good data, assistance in data gathering and analysis, and collaboration to use data as an organizing tool and positive social change. InfoOakland (through Urban Strategies Council) also has a technical assistance and capacity building component, which the advisory group had previously cited as a need. The partnership

with Urban Strategies Council/InfoOakland was driven by the AG's interest in examining environmental health information along with socioeconomic and land use data, as well as the importance of ensuring community access to information and technical assistance.

See Figure 21 for a screen shot of <http://www.infoalamedacounty.org>.

Features of InfoAlamedaCounty include:

- Query function
- Address locator
- Print function for maps and tables
- Navigation not requiring a GIS toolbar
- Information displayed in maps and in tabular format
- "More information/data source" box
- Online tutorial
- Data dictionary

Information available on InfoAlamedaCounty includes:

- Data on demographics, housing, and labor
- Birth rate, teen pregnancy rate
- Pilot project birth outcomes (rates and smoothed surfaces for preterm birth and term low birthweight)
- Pilot project asthma outcomes (ranks and smoothed surfaces for range of indicators)
- Pilot project traffic volume data
- Location of schools
- Location of health clinics and hospitals
- Location of TRI sites
- Census tract, zip code, municipality, Oakland legislative districts, and Alameda County Department of Public Health-defined neighborhood boundaries
- Static "popular" maps

### **Dissemination on [www.catracking.org](http://www.catracking.org)**

The complementary, non-GIS CEHTP website will contain information and downloadable modules providing "pre-made analyses" of the data. The website and the modules will have the following components:

- Descriptions of statistical and environmental health-related terms.
- Background information on exposures and outcomes.

- Data sources and methods used.
- Interpretative narrative.
- Caveats to interpretation.
- Examples of how information might be used.
- Additional resources.
- Lists of contact information for questions and technical assistance.

Information on the site and materials will be written in lay language. The websites will link to InfoAlamedaCounty.org and provide an alternative method for accessing more detailed information on the pilot project results. See APPENDIX bb: Materials from www.InfoAlamedaCounty.org and Select Draft Materials for CEHTP Website for materials from both web-based dissemination tools.

### **Benefits of Partnership**

Through this collaboration, we have benefited from Urban Strategies Council/InfoOakland’s expertise in developing user-friendly interactive interfaces and working with various non-health related data, as well as their technical assistance capacity and established relationships with county-level agencies and communities. This was also an opportunity to demonstrate and explore dissemination of tracking data through a local data intermediary.

Urban Strategies Council/InfoOakland has benefited by gaining resources for expansion to a county-wide site. This partnership contributes resources to build local and organizational capacity, and the development of the InfoAlamedaCounty ensures that the pilot project data will remain with the community after the end of the project period in an accessible and useful format. As mentioned in an earlier section, the next step for this partnership is to develop and implement trainings on the InfoAlamedaCounty tool with three stakeholders groups: the Advisory Group, staff from various Alameda County departments, and community residents and representatives of CBOs who have not been involved in the pilot project process.

### **Summary of Issues in Communication and Dissemination of Tracking Information**

- Stakeholders want to understand the information, including:
  - Benefits and limitations of data sources and samples
  - Project results with the appropriate caveats and interpretations
  - Supplemental information and references to resources
  - Recommendations for preventative action
  - Policy issues
- Concepts can be difficult to present, such as:

- Rates, risks, and rankings
- Association versus causation
- Statistical certainty, and confidence intervals
- Non-representative samples, and sample size
- Key components of a communication and dissemination strategy include:
  - Modes of dissemination that are accessible to multiple audiences
  - Comprehensible materials
  - Relevant information
  - Usable formats of information
  - Capacity-building and technical assistance
- Necessary elements for communicating and disseminating data include:
  - Staff expertise and capacity
  - Local expertise and capacity
  - Meaningful participatory input process
  - Partnerships
  - Time
  - Resources

### **Examples of How Pilot Project Results Have Been Used**

- Project findings were used as examples to illustrate a number of teaching points in an environmental health data workshop targeted toward environmental justice organizations (See SECTION 5.g - Recipient Activity g: Increasing Capacity to Implement EPHT on p99).
- Analysis of birth outcomes and asthma data resulted in identification of populations at risk by geography, race/ethnicity, and income level.
- Asthma findings were used by community groups to provide comments on an Environmental Impact Report around a redevelopment site in West Oakland.
- Maps of asthma events prompted Kaiser Permanente health educators to investigate health education practices in regions of the county with good asthma outcomes.
- Asthma findings increased stakeholder understanding of access to care and quality of care issues in Alameda County.

## 5.1.2. Challenges and Barriers

### CHALLENGES TO DEVELOPING AND IMPLEMENTING THE PILOT PROJECT DISSEMINATION STRATEGY:

- Limited resources and staff capacity restricted dissemination activities. Time and resources are also needed to evaluate the efficacy of the dissemination effort.
- Multiple audiences necessitate multiple modes of dissemination.
- Staff turnover in partner organizations delayed development of dissemination tools. Another barrier was the lack of familiarity of the software developer with health information and presentation issues.
- Managing the expectations of the AG and the staff with regard to what could actually be accomplished within the grant period with available resources was challenging.
- It was a challenge to disseminate the large quantities of information in a timely manner.

### CHALLENGES TO COMMUNICATING TRACKING INFORMATION FROM THE PILOT PROJECT:

- Concepts are already complex, so communicating them in lay language is even more difficult.
- Interpretation of data often needs to occur at two levels: what it means technically and what it means for a community's well-being.
- It is challenging to anticipate and create safeguards against misinterpretation and inappropriate use of data (by all stakeholders).

## 5.1.3. Lessons Learned

### ENABLING FACTORS:

- External guidance and review from our AG and partners helped to shape and prioritize our activities.
- Available resources allowed us to fund collaborations for dissemination.
- Capacity and expertise existed at the local level, of which we were able to take advantage through partnerships.
- Diverse and complementary staff skills facilitated the development and implementation of the dissemination strategy.

### LESSONS LEARNED/OUTCOMES:

- Collaborating with existing initiatives and utilizing external expertise reduces duplication of efforts and improves ability to respond to stakeholder needs.

- Information modules will allow stakeholders to tailor the information to their own needs, while including interpretation and caveats in these modules will decrease opportunities for misunderstanding and improper use of data
- The impact of the AG in the developing the Alameda County Pilot Project dissemination strategy speaks to the importance of active engagement of stakeholders to guide better communication of the information.
- Implementation of the dissemination strategy requires diverse and comprehensive programmatic capacity that includes health education, IT/GIS, epidemiology, statistics, etc. Furthermore, stakeholder capacity building needs may lie outside of programs' expertise.
- Presentations and discussions at Advisory Group meetings increased participants' understanding of environmental health issues and basic epidemiology, statistics, and map reading. The meetings and findings increased the AG's understanding of the status of birth outcomes, asthma, and traffic in Alameda County.
- Our partnership with Urban Strategies Council increased their capacity to display data, including health data, as well as their capacity to provide technical assistance and training to access, understand, and use data.
- The development of InfoAlamedaCounty increases public, CBO, NGO, and local agencies' ability to access information and to examine the status of communities (health, demographics, housing, location of schools and health clinics, etc.).

#### 5.1.4. Recommendations

- EPHT programs should have a set of guiding principles (see APPENDIX B: Guiding Principles for a working draft of guiding principles for our program) which mandates that scientific data should be collected, developed, and disseminated in an ethical, impartial, and trustworthy manner.
- EPHT programs should develop techniques for making health outcome tracking information available in a manner that supports the program evaluation and the public's right to know while protecting confidentially.
- EPHT programs should communicate timely, accessible, and useful health and environmental information to support research, policy evaluation and the public's right to know. This includes:
  - Identifying appropriate methods for making information useful for diverse audiences.
  - Initiating collaborations with multiple organizations to support active dissemination of environmental health information.
  - Supporting evidenced-based policies by using tracking information to evaluate the impact of laws, regulations and other initiatives.
- Issues for further consideration by EPHT programs:
  - What are the best ways to describe methods, strengths, limitations, caveats of tracking data, and EPHT?

- Is this type of communication/dissemination strategy possible on a large scale? Is it possible to maintain community-level specificity after expansion?
- What kinds of resources, staffing, and partnerships would it take to sustain this dissemination mechanism?
- How can EPHT programs best support use of the information? What methods are available to evaluate how tracking information is used?
- How can misuse or misinterpretation of data be prevented?
- Recommendations for future program activities:
  - Continue working with AG to explore steps, resources, and capacities needed to move stakeholders from being passive recipients of information to active information users.
  - Evaluate the efficacy of pilot project dissemination strategy with stakeholders who have not participated in the AG.
  - Continue to engage in dissemination activities that promote public access and ownership of information and that build capacity to understand and use information.
  - Encourage staff development around understanding and communicating methods, results, uses, and caveats of tracking information to diverse audiences in multiple formats.