♻EPA

Community XL Project:
City of Columbus

POLICY
ECONOMICS
INNOVATION

WHAT IS PROJECT XL?
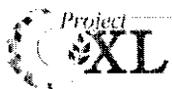
Project XL, which stands for "eXcellence and Leadership," is a national initiative created by the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) that tests innovative ways of achieving better and more cost-effective public health and environmental protection. Project XL for Communities encourages public sector and community organizations to coma forward with new approaches to demonstrate community-designed and directed strategies for achieving improved environmental quality consistent with community economic goals. The information and lessons learned from Project XL are being used to assist EPA in redesigning its current regulatory and policy-setting approaches. Project XL encourages testing of cleaner, cheaper, and smarter ways to attain environmental results superior to those achieved under current regulations and policies, in conjunction with greater accountability to stakeholders. It is vital that each project tests new ideas with the potential for wide application and broad environmental benefits. As of September 2000, over forty pilot experiments are being implemented and several additional projects are in various stages of development.

SUMMARY OF THE COLUMBUS PROJECT

The City of Columbus Division of Water will provide $300,000 per year for fifteen years to the Columbus Health Department to implement a comprehensive Lead-Safe Columbus Program (LSCP) designed to identify and reduce lead hazards. This program will serve as an alternative to the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) Lead and Copper Rule requirements for testing and replacing Lead Service Line (LSLs). The Program's interventions are targeted to children who are at most risk for lead poisoning. Flexibility provided to the City Water Division from US EPA and Ohio EPA (OEPA) drinking water regulations to suspend LSL testing and replacement for up to three years, allows funds to be transferred to the LSCP. This XL project, EPA's 43rd, was signed on September 26, 2000.

SUPERIOR ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE

The additional funding provided by the City Water Division will significantly enhance the Health Department's Lead Safe Columbus Program. The LSCP will be responsible for the following activities:

.   Medical case management will be provided for all lead-poisoned children, including: supplying educational brochures along with free blood lead screening and probe screens within the community, testing of all children under six residing in a home where tap water exceeded the State and Federal lead limit, and conducting lead hazard risk assessments.

▸   Public education/outreach activities will be directed towards identified high-risk areas and include the following components: peer-based parent education; education for parents of lead-poisoned children; training for local remodelers, renovators, painters, do-it-yourselfers and property maintenance staff; training of property owners, realtors, 1st time home buyers, financial institutions, neighborhood groups, and non-profit housing organizations; and a training module targeted at management, monitoring and maintenance training for property owners and their maintenance crews which will be designed to enable property owners to effectively manage, monitor and maintain their lead-safe housing.

▸ $100,000 in Lead Hazard Abatement Grants annually for low-cost abatements to low- and moderate-income families.

In addition to providing increased resources to the City's LSCP an alternative drinking water treatment technique will be implemented. Under Federal and State drinking water regulations, if lead levels in drinking water rise above the limit established by US

EPA and OEPA. the City must begin testing LSLs immediately and replacing those lines that contribute high levels of lead. The alternative to LSL testing and replacement involves closer coordination between the City, OEPA and US EPA on water treatment changes and quick access to state and national water treatment experts, and is expected to provide the same long-term benefit of protecting the citizens of Columbus as would LSL testing and replacement.

FLEXIBILITY

The Columbus Division of Water may need to make changes to the City's drinking water treatment in the future. The City believes that it is unlikely that these changes will cause a temporary rise in drinking water lead levels, but does recognize that the possibility of an increase cannot be ruled out. In the event of an increase in lead levels above the Federal and State limit regulatory flexibility will be provided under the SDWA. This flexibility will be conditioned on the City's commitment to provide resources to the Lead Safe Columbus Program and it's additional commitment to tackle water treatment issues aggressively.

STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT

Stakeholder involvement is integral to XL projects. The goal of Project XL stakeholder involvement is a collaborative working relationship between sponsors-the organization that has proposed an alternative approach -and stakeholders – those people who believe that they or their community will be affected by an XL project. To this end the project sponsors conducted extensive outreach to local and national stakeholders and public meetings of interested stakeholders were held in Columbus on May 16 and June 27, 2000.

APPROACHES TO BE TESTED

· Can alternative multi-media approaches to controlling lead, which allow the City to use some of its drinking water resources to reduce exposure to household lead paint and dust, be more efficient?

CONTACTS

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FOR ELECTRONIC INFORMATION

More information about this XL Project, or the Project XL Program, is available on the Internet at http://www.epa.gov/projectxl under "Information on Specific XL Projects," or via Project XL's Information Line at 202-260-5754.