Making Sure Your TAG Gets Environmental Results

Instructions for Technical Assistance Grant (TAG) Applicants and Recipient Groups

A Technical Assistance Grant (TAG) provides money for activities that help your community participate in decision making at eligible Superfund sites. An initial TAG of up to $50,000 is available to qualified community groups to pay for independent technical advisors to interpret and communicate site-related documents and help citizens understand technical information about their site. Eligible sites must be on the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) National Priorities List (NPL) or proposed for the NPL where a response action has begun. The NPL is the list of the nation's most serious hazardous waste sites. Only one TAG is available for each site.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) *Environmental Results Policy* (EPA Order 5700.7) requires that all work funded by assistance agreements (including TAGs) further EPA's mission to protect human health and the environment. This fact sheet explains how your TAG can meet the requirements of this policy.

What am I required to do?

There are two places where you must address how your project is connected to EPA's mission:

First – The work plan included in your TAG application must specify the expected outputs and outcomes of your project that you believe will achieve environmental results.

Second – If you are awarded a TAG, you must discuss, in your quarterly progress reports, your progress towards meeting the outputs and outcomes in your work plan.

EPA's Superfund Program has set goals to support EPA's mission. Because TAGs are part of the Superfund Program, outputs and outcomes in your TAG application must reflect the Program goals. These goals include:

What are outputs and outcomes?

An output is an activity, effort or work product produced by your TAG group during the grant period. An outcome is the result or the effect of the output.

An example would be a Web site developed by a TAG group (an output) to give community members better understanding of the local Superfund site (an outcome).

A TAG group may not be able to achieve all the outcomes stated in its work plan, but the group must be able to report progress. Outcomes can be measured by numbers and statistics (called quantitative measures) or through descriptions (called qualitative measures). Use quantitative measures whenever possible to report outcomes.

- identifying and controlling unacceptable human exposures from site contamination.
- monitoring and controlling migration of contaminated ground water.
- identifying a suitable final remedy for site reuse.

(For more information on these goals see EPA Strategic Plan,
http://www.epa.gov/ocfopage/plan/2003sp.pdf, Goal 3, Objective 3.2, Subobjective 3.2.2)

Your TAG application

Work closely with your regional TAG coordinator as you begin working on the work plan in your TAG application. TAG work plans have always contained outputs and outcomes related to EPA's mission, but now they must be specifically identified as such. The work done under your TAG can help your community understand and comment on site technical documents. Your community can make the biggest impact on site decisions by commenting on site technical documents. EPA believes that these comments help create better solutions for site cleanup issues. Better cleanup solutions help EPA meet Superfund's targets.

Most TAG work plans involve activities that lead to the following expected project outputs and outcomes:

Activities/ Outputs	►	Outcomes
Organizing meetings, newsletters, website, etc to provide information to the whole community	► ►	Community learns about site cleanup procedures and decisions. Community *understands* the environmental conditions and cleanup activities at the site
Procuring technical advisor/advisors to provide information that helps the group understand specific site-related documents	►	community group gains a better understanding of technical issues at a site
Reviewing and commenting on site-related documents with input from the rest of the community, about concerns and preferences regarding site cleanup	►	Comments can influence EPA in decisions that need to be made at the site.
Technical advisor provides written reports or oral presentations to help the group and other community members interpret technical, scientific, health-related and/or site, reuse-related information associated with site cleanup plans/activities	►	Community *understands* the environmental conditions and cleanup activities at the site
Community provides comments on site-related documents	►	Community comments help in: • Assessing, monitoring and controlling unacceptable human exposures from site contamination. • Identifying a suitable reuse for site. • Changing, modifying or improving site assessments. • Identifying final remedy, based on community's desired reuse

The outputs and outcomes listed above are very general, but may be used as a guide. The work plan in your TAG application must be specific for your site and your community. Including well-defined outputs and outcomes in the work plan for your grant will help define, explain and communicate the purpose of your project to EPA. It also will provide your group with a well-thought-out list of activities, milestones, and goals to guide your TAG project.

Your Quarterly Progress Reports

After your TAG is awarded, tracking the progress of outputs and outcomes through quantitative and qualitative measurements will help you manage your project and assure both you and your EPA project officer that you are accomplishing your original purposes. You should discuss how you are meeting your project's outputs and outcomes in your TAG quarterly reports.

For example:

For meetings: [Output] Your group holds a community meeting to talk about a technical issue or a document. Your report should indicate that you had held a meeting (include the date, location and how you informed people) to introduce or explain technical issues to the rest of the community (be specific on what issues you discussed and if your technical advisor participated). You should describe who you invited (was it the whole community, a specific group/organization) and how many people attended.

[Outcome] Discuss how you think the meeting went, how it was received by the community and whether others found it helpful. Providing the number of people attending the meeting helps to show, in a countable way, how many people in the community may have a better understanding of the site issues as a result of attending the meeting. You might also consider asking participants in each meeting to complete a short (even one question) evaluation form asking them if, or how much, they thought their understanding of site issues had improved. This would allow you to report quantitatively (49 of 50 participants said their understanding of specific issues improved) regarding the outcome of the activity.

For web sites: [Output] Your group maintains a web site with site information. Your report should indicate the types of information presented on the site and when it was posted or updated.

[Outcome] Your report should include information about outcomes from the activity, which, for a web site could be increased understanding and awareness of site issues. You should report on the number of visitors (hits) on the TAG information on the site during the quarter. You also can track the number of email comments or questions, calls, or other inquiries your group receives in response to information provided on the site as evidence that the web site [output] increased awareness of site issues. You also could provide an area on the web site where users are invited to provide feedback to the webmaster and keep track of and report on the comments received as a way to gauge whether or how much the web site increased understanding, etc.

Where can I get more information?

To review *EPA's Policy for Environmental Results Under EPA Assistance Agreements* (EPA Order 5700.7) see: http://www.epa.gov/ogd/grants/award/5700.7.pdf

For more information on achieving environmental results see: http://www.epa.gov/ogd/

For information on EPA's Strategic Plans see: http://www.epa.gov/ocfopage/plan/plan.htm

For more information on the TAG program see:
http://www.epa.gov/superfund/community/tag/resource.htm

To contact the TAG Coordinator in your regions, see:
http://www.epa.gov/superfund/community/tag/contacts.htm