

Superfund Community Advisory Group Toolkit for the Community



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PREFACE

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is committed to involving the public in decision-making during the Superfund process. EPA recognizes that when communities are engaged in decision making in a meaningful way, communities benefit, and the Agency makes more informed decisions. Interacting with communities in ways that promote trust and constructive dialogue is essential to successful community involvement.

Forming a Community Advisory Group (CAG) is one of the most effective ways a community can participate in environmental decisions. A CAG is a representative committee, task force, or board composed of community members and other stakeholders affected by a Superfund site. The CAG enhances public participation in the cleanup process and other environmental decision-making by providing a public forum where community representatives can discuss their diverse interests, needs, and concerns. Working with a CAG allows the EPA Superfund site team to hear from an inclusive group of individuals representing all significant stakeholder groups within a community. A CAG should represent the range of diverse views and perspectives of members of the community. CAGs also help ensure representation and participation of some populations that may be disproportionately affected by environmental issues and/or that have been overlooked in past efforts to participate in the Superfund decision-making process. CAGs can also facilitate the sharing of information, including the perspectives of community members with important institutional knowledge of site issues and practices.

Please note that EPA's recognition of a CAG should not be interpreted as constituting approval, authorization, or agreement by EPA with that CAG's statements or positions, nor does it imply that EPA has granted that CAG with any official authorities or privileges.

THE COMMUNITY ADVISORY GROUP TOOLKIT

This Toolkit provides information about CAGs and the recommended steps to establish and maintain a CAG for the Superfund site that affects members of your community. The Toolkit has two parts:

- [Part 1](#) provides the basic information for forming and maintaining a CAG (sections 1 through 9). It includes step-by-step information on organizing your CAG and suggestions about some of the major things to consider as you do so.
- [Part 2](#) is a collection of tools consisting of templates, tips, and examples to further assist you with specific parts of the process of forming a CAG (Tools A through H).

The information provided in Part 1 and the tools in Part 2 are cross-referenced to make the Toolkit easier to use.

How To Use the Toolkit

This Toolkit provides information about CAGs and the recommended steps to establish and maintain a CAG for the Superfund site that affects your community. Each section and corresponding tool address what to do at each specific point in the process of creating a CAG and suggests key activities to keep in mind as you organize your CAG.

The materials in this Toolkit can be adapted, combined, or reinvented to fit your CAG's specific needs. Deciding which tools to use and in what order will depend on your CAG's stage of development. Communities that are just beginning to consider forming a CAG may choose to use the materials in the order they appear in the Toolkit. Existing CAGs may find the materials focusing on how to incorporate, apply for status as a tax-exempt organization, or find and apply for additional funding to be more useful immediately.

Acronyms and Abbreviations

ADR alternative dispute resolution

CAG Community Advisory Group

CIC Community Involvement Coordinator

CPRC Conflict Prevention and Resolution Center

NPL National Priorities List

RPM remedial project manager

TAG Technical Assistance Grant

TASC Technical Assistance Services for Communities

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PART 1 – CAG BASICS

SECTION 1 – MEET THE COMMUNITY ADVISORY GROUP

The CAG is a way for people in the community to actively participate in the decision-making process at Superfund sites. Community members who are part of CAGs can learn more about their site, get up-to-date information about cleanup status, ask questions, help make site-related decisions, and discuss community concerns with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), state and tribal agencies, and other parties involved in the site cleanup or addressing other environmental concerns.

Full community participation and representation of all viewpoints are essential to the success of the CAG. However, it is not practical for everyone in the community to be a member of the CAG. The membership usually is made up of people who represent the various interests in the community, which may include:

- residents or owners of residential property near the site;
- those who may be affected directly by site releases;
- those who may be affected by releases from the site, even if they do not live nearby or own property near the site; and
- environmental and other experts from local universities.

In addition to the community itself, other groups are involved in making decisions about site cleanup and other environmental issues. These include EPA and other federal agencies; state, tribal, and local government organizations; facility owners; and others who are potentially responsible for the contamination at the site. These groups work closely with the CAG. In some cases, communities may choose to include representatives of local governments and potentially responsible parties as CAG members.

It is important to understand that CAGs are not decision-making bodies. EPA, by law, is responsible for all final decisions at a Superfund site. However, CAGs play a key role in helping EPA make more informed decisions by providing an independent forum for communicating the perspectives of the local community throughout the Superfund process. A CAG that is broadly representative of the affected community offers EPA a unique opportunity to hear the community's input and preferences in the decision-making process. In instances in which EPA's decision or response differs from a stated CAG preference regarding site cleanup, EPA accepts the responsibility of explaining its decision or response to CAG members.

See '[CAGs and the Superfund Process](#)' in [Section 3](#) for more information about the Superfund Cleanup process and activities CAGs can be involved in.

What Community Advisory Group Members Do

CAG members are responsible for learning about site issues. They attend and participate in all CAG meetings and share information regularly with their fellow community members. CAG members also review information concerning site cleanup plans and provide data and information to EPA on the community's issues and concerns about the site. A CAG member from Texas summed it up well when she observed that anyone who serves as a member of a CAG must be willing "to work a lot of nights, talking things over and figuring out what to do."

Being a member of a CAG is a major commitment. Members must be prepared to devote considerable time and effort for the CAG to be effective. While many community members may be interested, only a few may be able to make the necessary commitment.

What People in the Community Can Do To Help

Even if every community member cannot be a part of the CAG, every community member has an important role in the site cleanup process and can support the CAG and its activities. One of the best ways to get involved in and support the CAG is to attend its meetings and participate actively in discussions. People in the community can contribute to the work of the CAG in other ways as well.

Parents, Caregivers, and Long-Time Residents

Parents, caregivers, and long-time residents can help the CAG identify issues concerning children and the elderly, who are among the most vulnerable groups in a community. Long-time residents also can be excellent sources of historical information about the site, the surrounding community, and its residents.

Community Organizations

Community organizations, such as homeowner and neighborhood associations, tenant organizations, and senior citizens groups, can provide important support to CAGs. Local Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) and school boards, for example, can help the CAG work with the community's schools to inform and educate the residents about the site and the cleanup process.

Churches

Churches provide excellent ties to residents and may be particularly helpful in reaching some economically disadvantaged residents. Many churches contribute financial support to worthwhile community projects and nonprofit organizations and may provide space for CAGs to meet.

Environmental Groups

Local environmental groups can contribute their knowledge of environmental issues and their experience to the CAG.

Medical and Science Professionals

Local medical and public health professionals can provide technical expertise on health-related issues; they may be the first to observe the potential for health effects in their patients. Scientists and engineers also can offer their expertise to review technical information.

Business and Industry

Small businesses and local merchants or business associations can help get information out to the community. These groups also may be willing to donate low-cost printing services, office supplies, meeting space, or even refreshments for CAG meetings and other activities.

Major industries, large employers, and large businesses can contribute goods and services to the CAG. In fact, they often are eager to be “good corporate citizens” by supporting worthwhile community projects. Large companies and industrial plants may have technical experts who will donate expertise or services on a pro bono basis.

Many local public utility companies have active community relations programs with significant budgets for supporting community projects. Some utility companies encourage their employees, including engineers and other technical experts, to volunteer their time to support community activities such as CAGs.

Banks may be willing to underwrite some CAG operations and to support activities that, in effect, protect their investments in the community.

What Others Involved in Environmental Cleanup Can Do

Other groups involved in addressing environmental issues can support the CAG in several ways.

State, Tribal, and Local Governments

In some cases, the city or county government may provide administrative support for the CAG. Some local governments also may provide funding for activities or events sponsored by the CAG.

Representatives of state and tribal agencies often work closely with federal and local officials and may regularly attend CAG meetings. Some states also may have programs that would provide funds for CAG functions, such as hiring technical advisors.

Local elected officials can bring CAG issues before their councils, boards, and commissions. They often know of other programs and funding sources that CAGs can contact for additional resources and expertise.

U.S. EPA

As the federal regulatory agency responsible for hazardous waste remediation, U.S. EPA can work closely with CAGs. EPA Regional Office staff can attend CAG meetings to provide information about cleanup plans and activities and to discuss community questions and concerns. EPA also provides information and tools to assist communities in establishing CAGs and actively participating in the decision-making process.

The details discussed within this toolkit are specific to Superfund sites. While CAGs have the autonomy to address any environmental concern in their community, resources, including all funding opportunities, highlighted in this document, are specific to Superfund and may not be accessible or relevant to sites and communities addressed by other EPA cleanup programs. However, EPA, when appropriate, can facilitate conversations about non-Superfund-related issues if they pertain to the situation at the site or the community at large.

SECTION 2 – INVOLVING ALL SEGMENTS OF THE COMMUNITY

A presentation template for introducing the CAG to community members at public meetings is provided in [Tool A](#).

Participation by all segments in the community is important to the success of a CAG. Sometimes, CAGs may need to take special steps to ensure that all community members can participate. This is especially true in communities that are disproportionately impacted by the site. Involving all members of the community also can give the CAG more power to raise environmental justice issues with potentially responsible parties.

Encouraging Participation as Members of the CAG

Listed below are some ideas to help your community build a CAG that truly represents the community:

- **Learn more about all residents in your community.** Recognizing that your community is made up of diverse groups is a key step in ensuring that your CAG meaningfully engages with all community members. Conduct internet searches to learn who your neighbors are. Identify specific people or organizations within those communities to reach out to for more information and to discuss the CAG.
- **Hold community meetings with specific groups.** As you begin the process of forming a CAG, it is helpful to explain the issues the CAG will be working to solve and to encourage community members to participate, especially if you are concerned that specific sections of the community aren't represented or are hesitant to attend larger community meetings. Consider co-sponsoring a meeting with a trusted community group that supports the formation of the CAG. Schedule the meeting at a time convenient for most members of the community. Avoid scheduling conflicts with other community or cultural events. You may need to provide an interpreter for community members who have limited English proficiency or do not speak any English at all. EPA may be able to assist the CAG in procuring interpretation services.
- **Build partnerships with community activists and organizations.** Community activists are acutely aware of the ongoing issues in their communities. Ask for a meeting to discuss these issues. Explain how the CAG will work and how important their participation is to the residents they represent and to the overall environmental goals of the CAG.
- **Make a long-term commitment.** Don't expect instant acceptance. Build a relationship with the individuals and groups you contact and plan to continue working with them for a while. Be patient and respect each organization's decision-making process. Understand you will have to build credibility first, and that can take time.

Communicating Effectively about the Community Advisory Group's Work

Not all community members can make the necessary time commitment required of a CAG leader and/or member and may not be able to attend all meetings. However, every community member's support is needed for the CAG to do its job effectively. As a result, keeping all residents informed about the work of the CAG is very important.

Listed below are some tips for making sure information from the CAG gets to all residents in your community:

- **Set up a CAG Outreach Committee.** Have the committee look for the best ways to communicate with the entire community. This demonstrates the group’s commitment to working with all parts of the community.
- **Promote community empowerment.** Stress that each person has a voice and that every person can make a difference by working together to solve community problems.
- **Remember the “messenger” can be as important as the message.** People are more likely to listen to people and groups they already know and trust. A word from the minister on Sunday can be worth more than a story on the TV news. A flyer received from a trusted friend has instant credibility; the same information sent through the mail or received from a stranger might not.
- **Use networks the community already trusts.** Churches can be very effective in reaching various groups in the community. Community action agencies in most counties are experts at outreach to low-income families. Community health clinics, English-As-A-Second-Language programs, Boys and Girls Clubs, senior centers, and Head Start programs are excellent ways to reach low-income, minority, and other often hard-to-reach stakeholders in many communities.
- **Be culturally sensitive in preparing information to be distributed.** Avoid making assumptions or judgments about individuals and groups of people.
- **Use language that people can understand, and don’t talk down to people.** If you prepare material that includes illustrations or photos, make sure they include people of different ethnic and racial backgrounds, in different age groups, and with disabilities, as appropriate.
- **Distribute information in several ways.** Do not rely on a single organization, newspaper, radio station, blog, listserv, or group for getting important information out to community residents. Social media platforms like NextDoor, Facebook or Yahoo pages for neighborhood groups, and other Internet resources can be a good way to reach people in the community. Use them all. This helps make sure everyone has a chance to receive the information.
- **Enlist help from community organizations for translations.** If there is a significant foreign-language group in your area, there probably is at least one community-based organization that works on community issues affecting these residents. Contact the group and ask someone to provide input for your materials as well as possibly review and help translate those materials.

SECTION 3 – LET’S GET STARTED!

A CAG is a committee, task force, or board composed of residents of a community with a Superfund site or other environmental problems. A CAG serves as the focal point for the exchange of information among the local community, EPA, the state regulatory agency, and other pertinent federal and state agencies involved in the cleanup of the Superfund site. A CAG enhances public participation in the cleanup process and decision-making by providing a public forum where community members, EPA, and other agencies and entities can discuss their needs and concerns regarding the cleanup. This section provides a checklist of initial steps that will help you form a CAG. The sections that follow provide more detail on several of the steps outlined here.

Forming a Community Advisory Group

CAGs may be formed at any point in the site cleanup process. However, they are most effective when formed early, allowing the community more time to participate in and influence site activities and decisions. While EPA can provide ideas and assistance, it is up to community residents to decide if and how they want to form a CAG.

Generally, a core group of community residents with a strong interest in environmental issues takes the lead. Some communities build their CAG from an existing framework, while others start their groups from scratch. In certain situations, local governments take steps to form CAGs.

The process often begins with a well-publicized CAG Information Meeting. This meeting is held to discuss the purpose of a CAG, opportunities for membership, and terms for participation.

Choosing a Name

Decide what you will call your group. A CAG may be called a committee, a task force, a board, or an action group. You may choose to include the words “Community Advisory Group” in your name, but it is not required. The name you choose should reflect your community’s vision for the group.

Writing a Mission Statement

One of the first steps in forming a CAG is writing a mission statement. A mission statement is a short, to-the-point description of the overall goals and purposes of an organization.

A written mission statement can be distributed and discussed easily. It helps keep the community informed and educated about the CAG and provides a way to get community feedback at any point in the process. Be willing to revise the mission statement as issues and community concerns change. Details for developing a mission statement are outlined in [Section 4](#).

Determining Operating Procedures

As discussed further in [Section 5](#), establishing a basic structure for how the CAG will do its work is another important first step. Making these structure decisions early allows members to focus on other issues. Issues requiring immediate attention fall into two categories, short-term and long-term. Examples of two short-term issues are choosing a name and determining how many members should be on the CAG. Examples of more long-term issues are determining how often to hold meetings, how to ensure diverse community participation, and how to make necessary decisions.

Developing Effective Communications

It is important to decide how CAG members will communicate with each other. Decide how members will be reminded of upcoming meetings and how far in advance notice will be given. Will members receive an agenda in advance? Will they receive minutes, a record of what happened, after the meeting? How will they communicate with each other about issues that arise between scheduled meetings?

It also is important to determine how the CAG will communicate with the community at large. How will meetings be announced, and how will information be shared with the public? You may want to form an outreach committee to look for the best ways to keep the community-at-large informed. Additionally, EPA can help announce CAG meetings to the community.

A website, blog, etc., can also be beneficial tools to share information with other CAG members and the community. However, the decision to create and manage a CAG website is at the full discretion of the CAG. EPA is not responsible for administering websites for CAGs and is not liable for the content or accuracy of the information on a CAG's website, apart from posted documents originally produced by EPA. EPA is also not liable for costs associated with the creation or maintenance of a CAG's digital platform.

While it's not legally required, EPA strongly recommends CAGs maintain records of all documents, video recordings, correspondence, etc. they produce in a publicly accessible space for a minimum of 10 years. It is a good idea for each CAG to appoint one member to act as a spokesperson to the media. The spokesperson would be responsible for coordinating the release of information about the CAG and answering calls from reporters.

It also is helpful to determine the most important organizations you need to work with and select a liaison for each organization. These might include schools, businesses, environmental groups, or other concerned groups in the community.

CAG Website Disclaimer Language:

The below language, taken from a CAG in Region 3, is useful to include on a CAG website to ensure that all visitors are clear on the information provided and where it is coming from. This can be customized to fit your site.

Documents on this website are published to make the general public aware of issues pertaining to the Superfund site. Only documents created by the full CAG, such as meeting minutes and official CAG correspondence represent the official views of the CAG. All documents originating from other constituents, may contain views not necessarily endorsed by the CAG and therefore the CAG does not warranty the accuracy of these documents.

Incorporating and Securing Tax-Exempt Status

There are a variety of organizational structures for CAGs. Before deciding which structure to use, consider the following questions:

- Will your CAG have a board of directors?
- Is it necessary to develop a charter and written bylaws?
- How will the organization be funded?
- What actions must be taken to ensure the organization can receive and disperse funds?

Your CAG could exist for a long time, in some cases, several years. As a result, you need to consider whether to incorporate or secure tax-exempt status. It may be necessary to do both to qualify for certain types of government funding or to receive contributions or donations from some sources. See [Section 6](#) for an in-depth look at how to incorporate your CAG, and [Section 7](#) for how to secure tax-exempt status.

Managing an Effective CAG

[Tool B](#) provides two infographics to assist you in evaluating whether your CAG is operating in an effective manner and to help identify potential issues that may derail the success of your CAG.

When managed effectively, CAGs are highly beneficial to the success of Superfund cleanups. When a highly functioning CAG seeks to serve the diverse interests of the whole community and works with EPA to address the community's concerns regarding the Superfund site, it can be an effective advocate for the community during the cleanup decision-making process, as well as an effective resource for EPA. CAGs can ensure their success by following the steps outlined in this toolkit as well as seeking the support of the assigned EPA Community Involvement Coordinator (CIC) to help establish the CAG and facilitate its formation. (See the [“Ways EPA Can Help a CAG”](#) box below for further information on how CICs can assist your CAG).

An ineffectively managed CAG may compromise productivity and may not be able to serve as a reliable community resource. It is important to consistently evaluate the organizational health of your CAG to determine if it is operating effectively and successfully serving the community as well as to encourage the most successful collaboration with EPA. Two graphics are provided in [Tool B](#) to assist you with assessing the organizational health of your CAG. It is suggested that all members of the CAG take this assessment each year and the average of all CAG members' scores be used to assess the effectiveness. If it is found that action is required to help your CAG function effectively, the following steps should be taken:

- **Hold an internal CAG meeting.** Hold a meeting with all members of the CAG to discuss evaluation results, the issues facing the CAG, and brainstorm steps to take to fix these issues.
- **Contact the CIC for your site.** To facilitate productivity and help resolve any internal issues, EPA may be able to offer support or technical assistance to your CAG, including training, facilitation services, or organizational capacity-building assistance available through the [Technical Assistance Services for Communities](#) (TASC) or [Conflict Prevention and Resolution Center](#) (CPRC) contracts.
- **Develop a plan.** After meeting with the CAG and discussing intervention options with your CIC, develop a plan of action for improving the CAG's effectiveness. The plan should include:
 1. Specific steps to improve CAG performance and members responsible for overseeing each step, which may include updating your CAG's mission statement, operating procedures, etc.
 2. A timeline with goals for getting the group back on track.
 3. A list of services that EPA may be able to provide to help with this effort.
 4. An accessible resource to track progress towards your goals.
- **Meet more frequently.** More frequent internal CAG meetings will be useful to getting your CAG back on track. This is where a facilitator can be very useful, particularly if there are varying opinions on the issues facing the CAG.

Ultimately, after evaluating the organizational health of your CAG, your CAG may determine it's not a resource that works best for the community and may choose to dissolve or consolidate into a pre-existing community group or organization. The CIC for the site may be able to assist your group if consolidating with a pre-existing group is the best next step.

Discrepancies in CAG Members' Opinions of CAG Effectiveness

It is likely that there will be differences in opinions of CAG effectiveness. Therefore, it is important to continuously analyze and discuss members' opinions on CAG effectiveness. Holding regular meetings to discuss this ensures continuous improvement in the function of the CAG and can help avoid major breakdowns in effectiveness.

Working with the EPA

EPA has the discretion to evaluate your CAG's operations and can independently determine that your CAG no longer functions as a useful vehicle for community involvement and can withdraw its support for your CAG. EPA may re-visit support for your CAG if it successfully reestablishes and commits to collaborating with EPA. Alternatively, EPA may suggest that your CAG be reorganized into smaller working groups, technical committees, or a larger group of stakeholders that would comprise a "roundtable."

However, the CAG belongs to the community, so whether and how to reorganize is ultimately the CAG's decision. It is also the CAG's decision whether they want or need to be recognized by EPA as the site's CAG. The CAG could continue to exist as an NGO and still be active, however, they would no longer be that conduit between EPA and the community. EPA would continue its community involvement work without going through or involving the former CAG.

As mentioned in [Section 1](#), even though EPA CAGs perform activities specific to Superfund sites, EPA can facilitate conversations about non-Superfund topics, as appropriate, if they are pertinent to the situation at a site.

Ways EPA Can Help a CAG

EPA may be able to provide CAGs with a variety of support, depending on the needs of the community, including:

- **Technical Assistance:** EPA programs such as the Technical Assistance Grants (TAG) and Technical Assistance Services for Communities (TASC), discussed in [Section 8](#), may be able to provide CAGs with the technical assistance they need to better understand complicated concepts.
- **Facilitation or Capacity-Building Assistance:** As discussed in [Section 8](#), EPA may be able to provide facilitation services or organizational capacity-building assistance through TASC or the CPRC contract.
- **Training:** As discussed in [Section 8](#), EPA can provide training or prepare briefing materials for CAG members tailored to the specific needs of the CAG, including training on capacity-building, leadership skills, and technical issues facing the site.
- **Administrative Support:** Resources permitting, EPA may be able to offer some administrative assistance to the CAG. Support may include arranging for meeting space; preparing and distributing meeting related documents; helping to announce CAG meetings to the community; helping with other forms of outreach through a variety of media channels; and documenting or facilitating CAG meetings.
- **Translation or Interpretation Support:** EPA may be able to assist with providing translation and interpretation support for meetings and documents, as well as, translating outreach materials and CAG meeting summaries, in cases where there is a significant non-English speaking population in the community.

CAGs and the Superfund Process

Since a CAG is a way for the community to participate in the Superfund process, it is important that CAG members have a basic understanding of the cleanup process and the activities they can be involved in. The table below outlines opportunities where CAGs can participate in the cleanup process. For more information on the Superfund cleanup process and its specific phases, visit the [Superfund Cleanup Process page](#) on the EPA website.

Opportunities for CAGs to Participate in the Cleanup Process

Superfund Phase	Superfund Activities Conducted	Opportunities for the CAG to Participate
Preliminary Assessment/Site Inspection (PA/SI)	Provide community with information about the site and the Superfund process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess community interest in the site. Provide EPA with the scope and history of the site's contamination. Work with EPA to inform community about EPA's schedule of field activities.
National Priorities List (NPL) Site Listing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Announce the proposed site listing on the NPL. Conduct a public comment period on the proposed site listing. Publish the site listing notice in Federal Register. 	Provide comments on EPA's proposed site listing on EPA's NPL.
Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study (RI/FS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determine the nature and extent of contamination, evaluate human health and ecological risk (RI). Evaluate cleanup alternatives (FS) Prepare the Community Involvement Plan (CIP). Develop the Proposed Plan, which describes site cleanup plans. Conduct public comment period on the Proposed Plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apply for a Technical Assistance Grant (TAG) or other forms of technical assistance. Inquire about TASC support. Participate in community interviews conducted by EPA. Provide comments on the proposed plan.
Record of Decision (ROD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Issue the ROD. Update the CIP to ensure consistency with the ROD. Post-ROD Significant Changes/ROD Amendment. Issue an explanation of significant differences (ESD). Conduct public comment period. Develop responsiveness summary. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide a forum for discussion of the ROD. Work with TAG or TASC recipient group to understand technical issues related to the site. Ensure that the responsiveness summary addresses comments submitted by community and CAG. Ensure the community is aware of any ROD changes.
Remedial Design/Remedial Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop the final design. Prepare for and conduct the bulk of the site cleanup. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Serve as a reliable information source for the community about the cleanup, potential reuse options, final design, and plans for the RA. Work with EPA to track activities and identify next steps for the site.
Operations and Maintenance (O&M)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor the performance of the remedy to ensure that cleanups provide long-term protection of human health and the environment. Conduct Five-Year Reviews. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide a forum for the community to monitor performance of the remedy. CAG members <i>may</i> be asked to participate in community interviews for the five-year review, as needed (<i>EPA has the discretion to lead the five-year review community interview process, which may or may not include the CAG</i>). Review and comment on EPA's five-year review report, as appropriate.
NPL Deletion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete all site work. Request public comments on the upcoming deletion of the site from NPL. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide a forum for community discussion of the upcoming site deletion. Provide comments on the upcoming deletion.

SECTION 4 – WRITING A MISSION STATEMENT

A mission statement is a short, to-the-point description of the overall goals and purposes of an organization. The mission statement brings a clear focus to an organization, allowing members to see how their actions support the goals and purposes of their organization.

Developing the Mission Statement

There are four primary questions CAGs must answer in writing a mission statement:

- **What** function does the CAG perform?
- For **whom** does the CAG perform this function?
- **How** does the CAG go about filling this function?
- **Why** does this CAG exist?

What

Choose topics or issues to focus on that are particularly important to the CAG. If a particular type of remedial action is not the best choice for your community, then one function of the CAG might be to bring other remedial options to the discussion table.

Who

Identify who the CAG represents and the primary concerns of the community. This might include identifying the ages, incomes, and ethnic groups in the community.

How

List how the CAG can achieve its goals. Is the CAG's function to educate the public? Solicit opinions? Monitor the hazardous waste cleanup process? Other functions or roles?

Why

Identify why the CAG will perform the functions it has selected. List these driving forces and rank them to help you allocate resources and determine the direction your CAG will take.

Writing the Mission Statement

You are now ready to put the mission statement on paper. Write a statement in one sentence or a short paragraph that answers the what, who, how, and why questions from above. Then list a set of specific priorities for the CAG. Discuss the statement and priorities and make adjustments until all members feel comfortable and agree on the CAG's mission statement and priorities.

Examples of Community Advisory Group Mission Statements

Following are examples of the mission statements developed by four CAGs around the country. They may be helpful references as you develop the mission statement for your CAG.

Example 1:

To provide community input into the conduct of the Focused Feasibility Study to ensure the remedy for the [Redacted name] Superfund site is protective of human health and the environment and is implemented in a timely manner.

Example 2:

This Task Force is to: Develop a process to gather early, direct, and meaningful comments; serve as a public forum for community interests to present and discuss their needs and concerns related to the Superfund decision-making process with appropriate federal and state agencies; Provide a public service to the rest of the community by representing the community in discussions regarding the site and by relaying information from the discussions back to the rest of the community; Participate in the decision-making process.

Example 3:

To establish a single and complete source of all available documentation and background material; serve as the official point of contact with federal EPA and state DOE agents; develop a public information mechanism for rumor control and apprehension retardant; perform technical analyses and reviews of reports and proposals; submit recommendations to the Board of County Commissioners for formal action plans by county government; review available literature and propose alternative courses of action for EPA consideration.

Example 4:

To ensure that the community will be included in the proper and complete cleanup of the [Redacted Name] Superfund site, the Community Advisory Board will be educated, aware and informed and will serve as an intermediary between EPA, the state Department of Health and Environmental Control (SCDHEC), site response contractors and the community-at-large.

Presenting the Mission Statement to the Community

It is important that the CAG mission statement is understood by and acceptable to the diverse segments of your community. Make copies of the mission statement and distribute them to the community. Provide an opportunity to discuss the CAG and its mission statement at a public meeting.

Be willing to revise the mission statement over time as issues and community concerns change.

SECTION 5 – DEVELOPING OPERATING PROCEDURES

See [Tool C](#) for a suggested operating procedures format.

Written operating procedures explain how the group will be organized, how it will make decisions, resolve disputes, communicate, and conduct business. Developing operating procedures provides the basic structure for how the CAG will do its work and promotes organizational continuity over time. It is a good idea to make these basic structure decisions early.

Choosing a Name

One of the first things to consider is what you are going to call the CAG. Some communities choose the name Community Advisory Group while others call themselves task forces, boards, or action groups.

Membership

How many people do you want on the CAG? Most CAGs have about 20 members, but it is important to consider what size group will work well for you. Do you want a board? If so, how will the board be selected (for example, by nominating committee, survey, or another method)? How will you ensure the CAG represents all interests?

Leadership

Will you have a chairperson, co-chairpersons, or an executive board? How will leadership be selected? For how long will individual leaders serve? What will be the duties and responsibilities of the CAG leaders?

Meetings

See [Tool D](#) for templates and examples to help you with planning and advertising your CAG meetings.

Determine how often the CAG will meet and the procedures for announcing and publicizing meetings. Select a meeting place that is convenient and neutral. You may want to vary the meeting time and meeting days to enable all community residents to attend several meetings.

Be sure the CAG meets often enough to maintain interest and momentum, but not so often that meetings become non-productive or irrelevant. Some CAGs meet on a regular monthly or bimonthly basis and allow for additional meetings as issues arise. Decide whether the entire community should be invited to all the meetings. For example, the CAG may meet monthly, with an entire community meeting each quarter.

When it may be appropriate hold Private CAG Meetings:

The entire community does not need to be involved in all CAG meetings. It is reasonable to hold private meetings in the following cases:

- Monthly CAG member meetings.
- CAG Board of Director's meetings.
- Meetings to discuss CAG-specific issues, unrelated to the community, such as how to get a CAG functioning more effectively.

You also will want to decide what rules of procedure to use to guide your meetings. [*Robert's Rules of Order*](#) has long been the definitive source on parliamentary procedure. *Cannon's Concise Guide to Rules of Order* is another, and there are others, but *Robert's Rules* is, by far, the most widely used guide.

See [Tool E](#) for a summary of Robert's Rules of Order

Resolving Issues

Determine how to resolve issues within the CAG. Will issues be resolved by consensus or majority rule? Set out a decision-making strategy, a process for setting agendas, taking minutes, and for setting ground rules to live by.

SECTION 6 – INCORPORATING YOUR COMMUNITY ADVISORY GROUP

This section provides information to help you determine if your CAG should incorporate. This information will help you start considering the broad issues involved, but it is not a substitute for getting advice from legal and financial specialists to ensure that you make the most effective decisions for your CAG. Note that it is not necessary to incorporate to form a CAG.

What Is Incorporation?

Incorporation is a process through which an organization is granted legal status and is recognized as an entity under state law. An incorporated organization has the legal right and power to enter into contracts, own property, borrow money, and mortgage its property. It continues to exist legally, even if the founders, officers, or directors change.

What Does Incorporation Mean for Your CAG?

By incorporating, your CAG adopts a widely recognized structure and certain operating procedures required by state law. In addition, if you incorporate, it is important to identify your group as a nonprofit organization.

The process for incorporating varies from state to state. Consult the corporate law of your state government for the specific requirements and steps you must follow.

Advantages of Incorporating Your CAG

One of the most important advantages of incorporating as a nonprofit organization is that it can help your group qualify for financial assistance from federal, state, public, or private sources. For example, groups formed at Superfund sites must be nonprofit organizations to be eligible for a [TAG](#). This grant provides funds for hiring an independent adviser who can offer independent technical advice and expertise to help the CAG participate in the decision-making process. (See [Section 8](#) for more information on TAGs.)

Incorporating also has other advantages. For example, banks and other financial institutions often view nonprofit organizations favorably. Incorporation also shields officers, board members, and the employees of a corporation from liability from debts incurred by or legal judgments against the corporation. Consult an attorney for more information on the legal and financial benefits of incorporating your group as a nonprofit organization.

Legal and Financial Implications for CAG Officers and Board Members

The corporate laws in each state include provisions defining the responsibilities and obligations of the corporation's officers and directors. Directors and officers of a corporation have a legal duty to the corporation. They may not mix their personal affairs with those of the corporation or act in a way that is detrimental to it.

Corporate bylaws must designate an officer or employee responsible for financial reporting and tax payment. That individual can be held personally responsible if he or she fails to file or pay taxes. Consult the corporate law of your state for additional information.

Incorporating your CAG as a nonprofit organization does not exempt the group from taxation. The group must file a corporate tax return (U.S. Internal Revenue Service Form 1120) with the federal government, ***even if it takes in no revenue***. The only nonprofit organizations that do not have to file a corporate tax return are those that are recognized by the U.S. Internal Revenue Service (IRS) as “tax-exempt.” Filing for tax-exempt status is a separate process. (See [Section 7](#) for more information on securing tax-exempt status.)

Most states also require nonprofit corporations to file corporate income tax returns, even if the nonprofit organization has no revenue. Some states impose a minimum tax on any corporation, even a nonprofit one, that is not recognized as tax-exempt by the IRS. Not all states impose a minimum tax. Requirements and definitions vary widely among the states, so it is important to find out what your state requires.

Procedures for Chartering a Nonprofit Corporation

For your convenience, [Tool F](#) outlines the steps to take to incorporate your group.

Setting up a nonprofit corporation is similar, but not identical, to incorporating a for-profit business. While the specifics vary by state, the following are some general rules:

Arranging for Incorporators

The people who will sign their names to the legal documents creating the corporation are called the “incorporators.” Some states require a specific number of incorporators. States usually require that incorporators be adults (at least 18 or 21 years old depending on the state) and that a majority be citizens of the United States. The incorporators are recognized as the founders of the corporation.

Selecting a Board of Directors

The incorporators must establish a board of trustees or directors. The minimum number of directors (usually three) is specified by law. Again, legal qualifications are minimal: directors usually must be adults under state law, and some or all of them must be U.S. citizens. Incorporators may be named as directors at the time of incorporation but are required to serve only until the first annual meeting of the corporation. At this meeting, additional directors may be elected, or a new board may be selected.

Drafting Articles of Incorporation

The prescribed format for Articles of Incorporation is set out in state corporate law. Generally, these laws require that the Articles of Incorporation include:

- the title and number of the state law that governs incorporation of a nonprofit organization (available from the state’s Secretary of State);
- the name of the organization to be incorporated;
- a statement of the purpose (mission statement) of the organization, indicating the charitable, educational, social, religious, or other beneficial, nonprofit goal the corporation intends to achieve and stating that financial gains from the corporation’s activities will not be distributed as dividends or profit shares to directors, officers, or members of the organization;
- the location of the corporation’s office, the place from which activities will be directed and where records will be kept;
- names and home addresses of people named as directors;
- a statement noting that incorporators meet whatever requirements are stipulated in the state’s corporation law; and,
- signatures and addresses of the incorporators (signatures may have to be notarized). Additional legal statements may be required by some states.

Filing the Certificate and Fee Payments

The Articles of Incorporation, other required documents, and filing fees must be submitted to the state agency responsible for granting corporate charters. In most states, this is the Secretary of State, state corporation commission, or a similar agency.

Notice of Acceptance and Filing

The appropriate state agency will acknowledge receipt of your application. As soon as this certificate is issued, the corporation legally exists and can start operating.

SECTION 7 – SECURING TAX-EXEMPT STATUS

This section provides information to help you consider whether your CAG should seek tax-exempt status. It complements the information about incorporation in Section 6. While this information will help you start considering the broad issues involved, it is not a substitute for getting advice from legal and financial specialists.

What is Tax-Exempt Status?

Section 501(c) of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code exempts from taxation certain types of organizations that serve a special and useful purpose. Virtually all nonprofit corporations, except churches and church-related groups, must apply to the IRS for recognition of their tax-exempt status. Unless they obtain tax-exempt status from the IRS, nonprofit corporations must file a corporate tax return (IRS Form 1120) with the federal government each year, even if the group takes in no revenue.

It also may be necessary to file applications with state and local authorities to obtain exemption from state and local taxes. However, this designation usually is automatic based on the IRS ruling.

Advantages of Tax-Exempt Status

There are several distinct advantages to securing tax-exempt status from the IRS:

- Once tax-exempt status is formally recognized by the IRS, the income and assets of the nonprofit corporation are free from federal taxation and, usually, from state and local taxation, too.
- Certain classifications of tax-exempt status provide the nonprofit corporation with legal authority to accept contributions, and permit contributors to deduct their donations from income tax.
- A tax-exempt, nonprofit corporation also may apply to the U.S. Postal Service for a special permit for lower rate postal privileges.

Tax-Exempt Classifications Under the Internal Revenue Code

Section 501(c) of the Internal Revenue Code includes more than 20 classifications of organizations eligible for tax-exempt status. Most of them do not pertain to CAGs. The most appropriate classification for CAGs is designation as a charitable organization as defined under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. This classification allows the organization to solicit financial support from the public and to receive government grants and support from public and private foundations.

Nonprofit corporations must meet several standards to qualify for tax-exempt status under Section 501(c)(3):

The organization must organize and operate exclusively for one or more of the special purposes specified under Section 501(c). These include religious, educational, charitable, scientific, or literary purposes; testing for public safety; or other specific purposes outlined in the law.

- None of the net earnings or revenues of the organization can be distributed for the private benefit of individuals or shareholders.
- The organization cannot engage in lobbying (defined as attempting to influence legislation) as a substantial part of its activities.
- Participation in political campaigns or on behalf of any candidate is strictly prohibited.

- A nonprofit corporation must provide evidence that it meets these criteria in its bylaws and Articles of Incorporation. It also must demonstrate that the eligibility criteria are met by documenting its actual operations and activities in annual filings with the IRS.

How To Secure Tax-Exempt Status for Your CAG

For your convenience, [Tool G](#) outlines the steps to take to secure tax-exempt status for your group.

To obtain tax-exempt status, it is necessary to apply to the IRS for an advance (temporary) or a definitive (permanent) ruling.

Advance Ruling: If your CAG is just getting off the ground, you may seek an advance ruling from the IRS, which grants temporary tax-exempt status that is valid for two or three years, while you get organized. In your application, the IRS will require you to describe the operations of your nonprofit corporation in sufficient detail to allow them to determine if the proposed activities clearly will meet the requirements for tax exemption. The application form provides space to describe the activities the CAG anticipates, its sources of funding, and the kinds of expenditures expected.

During the time covered by the advance ruling, the CAG is considered a tax-exempt organization and is expected to demonstrate by its record that it is operating in a way that meets IRS requirements for charitable organizations under Section 501(c)(3). Then, you can apply for a definitive (permanent) ruling. If the organization's record during the period of the advance ruling does not support its claim, it will be held liable retroactively for some taxes, although income from contributions during that time will not be affected.

Definitive Ruling: If your CAG has been in operation for several months, you may apply for a definitive ruling, which grants permanent tax-exempt status. In your application, the IRS will require you to supply detailed information about your organization's operations to demonstrate that it meets the eligibility requirements enumerated under Section 501(c)(3).

SECTION 8 – COMMUNITY ADVISORY GROUPS AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

To make informed decisions, CAGs need access to reliable technical advice and expertise. Although experts may exist in some CAGs, most groups will need to engage the services of an independent technical advisor. Receiving good technical advice is fundamental to an effective CAG.

Sources of Technical Assistance

CAGs may get technical assistance from several sources. At the city, county, state, or federal level, grants and contracts may be available to fund technical advisors. At the federal level, CAGs at sites listed on the NPL may qualify to apply for a grant to hire a technical advisor through the TAG program. For sites both listed and not listed on the NPL, EPA offers technical assistance through its TASC program.

Superfund Technical Assistance Grant Program

The TAG program was established to promote public involvement in Superfund site-specific cleanup strategies. Through the TAG program, grants of up to \$50,000 are provided to qualified community groups to hire independent technical advisors. The role of the technical advisor is to help community members understand and comment on site-related information, thereby ensuring public participation in cleanup decisions. CAGs must meet the same requirements as other groups to be eligible for a TAG.

Superfund TAG Program Requirements

CAGs and other community groups that want to apply for TAG must meet four basic requirements:

- The group applying for a TAG must be nonprofit and incorporated. (See Section 6 for more information on incorporation and Section 7 for details on how to secure tax-exempt status.)
- The group is required to contribute matching funds, whether in cash or in donated services or supplies, equal to 20 percent of the total project costs.
- The group must state what it intends to do with TAG funds.
- Only one TAG recipient may exist at a time for each Superfund site.

The following groups are *not* eligible for grant funds:

- Potentially responsible parties, which include individuals, municipalities, or companies (such as facility owners or operators, or transporters or generators of hazardous waste) potentially responsible for, or contributing to, the contamination problems at a Superfund site.
- Academic institutions.
- Political subdivisions.
- Groups, such as counties or cities, established or supported by the government.

The membership of the CAG cannot include government officials acting in their official capacity. For example, if the town mayor is a member of the CAG and represents the town in their official capacity as mayor, the group is not eligible for a TAG. However, if the town mayor is serving on the CAG as a concerned community member, the group is eligible for a TAG. The same reasoning applies to potentially responsible parties and other groups listed above as not eligible.

CAGs may take advantage of a TAG in three ways: (1) they may apply for a TAG themselves, (2) become part of a coalition applying for a TAG, or (3) work with a group that already has received a TAG.

To see if your CAG qualifies to apply for its own TAG, answer the following questions.

1. Is your site on EPA’s National Priorities List?

The NPL contains approximately 1,400 of the most serious hazardous waste sites across the nation. All of the sites are potential threats to the environment. TAGs are available only at proposed or final NPL sites.

2. Is your CAG a nonprofit corporation?

Any group applying for a TAG must be nonprofit and incorporated (that is, form a legal corporation) or be working toward incorporation under applicable state laws.

If your CAG is not currently a nonprofit corporation, there are steps you can take now to meet this qualification. See the section on “[Incorporating Your Community Advisory Group](#)” for more information.

3. Has a TAG already been awarded to another group for your site?

Only one Technical Assistance Grant may be awarded at a time for each NPL site.

4. Does your CAG receive financial or other support from any of the following groups?

Support from any of the following groups makes your CAG ineligible for a Technical Assistance Grant:

- Potentially responsible parties, which includes individuals, municipalities, or companies (such as facility owners or operators, or transporters or generators of hazardous waste) potentially responsible for, or contributing to, the contamination problems at a Superfund site.
- Academic institutions.
- Political subdivisions (such as counties or cities) or other groups established or supported by the government.

If the answers to questions 1 and 2 are “yes,” AND the answers to questions 3 and 4 are “no,” your CAG may qualify to apply for its own TAG. If your CAG does not qualify, consider joining a coalition to apply for a TAG or working with an existing TAG group.

Forming Coalitions To Apply for a TAG

Coalitions may be formed for different reasons. If several community groups exist in a community that has an NPL site and they all express an interest in applying for a TAG, EPA encourages the groups to form a coalition. If a CAG doesn’t qualify for a TAG, a working coalition could be formed with another community group that does meet the qualification criteria. The existence of a CAG doesn’t preclude the existence of other community groups at the same site.

Working with an Existing TAG Recipient

If a TAG already has been awarded to another community group, the CAG is encouraged to form a coalition with that group. CAGs and TAG groups should work together toward common goals with respect to site cleanup. One way to achieve this coordination is by having community members belong to both groups.

For example, the Jasper County EPA Superfund Citizen’s Task Force, the CAG at the Oronogo Duenweg Mining Belt Superfund site in Missouri, has a good working relationship with a separate group that has been

awarded a TAG. The constant flow of information between the two groups is provided by two members who belong to both.

In this case, the CAG also has its own technical advisor (paid for by the City of Joplin) who shares information with the TAG group's technical advisor.

Uses of TAGs

Community groups use TAG funds to hire technical advisors to help the group understand existing information about the site or information developed during the Superfund cleanup process.

Technical advisors may:

- review site-related documents, whether produced by EPA or others;
- meet with the TAG group to explain technical information;
- provide assistance in communicating the group's site-related concerns;
- interpret technical information for the community;
- participate in site visits, when possible, to gain a better understanding of cleanup activities;
- travel to meetings and hearings related to the situation at the site; and
- attend required health and safety training.

TAG funds may be used to hire someone to administer the grant. However, using funds in this manner reduces the amount of funds available for technical assistance and those costs become part of the current 20 percent cap on administrative costs. Grant groups considering this option should examine whether their grant administration methods could be met through volunteer efforts. Please note that the TAG regulation is being revised. Check with your TAG coordinators for further information.

You cannot use TAG funds to develop new information (for example, to conduct additional sampling) or, in any way, to support legal actions, including preparation of testimony or hiring of expert witnesses.

Technical Assistance Services for Communities

EPA's [TASC](#) program provides independent technical assistance through an EPA contract to help communities better understand the science, regulations, and policies of environmental issues and EPA actions. Under the TASC contract, a contractor can provide neutral facilitation or mediation services to a CAG at no cost to the community. TASC also can provide assistance and training on relevant technical issues. TASC technical assistance can be used to help the CAG itself (through use of its facilitation or capacity-building assistance or to educate members on technical issues). A CAG also can act as a conduit for providing technical assistance to the greater community.

TASC services are not a grant. There are no funds awarded to the recipients of the assistance services. These services are delivered under a contract that is funded, administered, and managed by EPA. To procure TASC services, contact your CIC.

Facilitation or Mediation Services and Organizational Training Assistance

A neutral facilitator in the context of a CAG is an independent party with no stakes in the outcomes of recommendations that a CAG makes. A neutral facilitator may be useful when a CAG is experiencing internal conflict, organizational or leadership issues, or other internal problems that affect the productivity of the CAG. A neutral facilitator treats all members of the CAG fairly and has experience in process design and conflict

resolution techniques. A neutral facilitator can help the CAG develop a mission statement, define clear roles for members, or mediate a meeting among other cohesion- and productivity-building actions.

If your CAG would benefit from having the services of a neutral facilitator or needs mediation assistance to resolve a conflict, talk to your EPA CIC. EPA's CIC may be able to help your CAG obtain assistance to address organizational issues or address potential problems through CPRC which provides a range of alternative dispute resolution (ADR) services. This includes neutral facilitation services and mediation services to help prevent or address potential conflict or to work through difficult situations. You also may be able to receive training for your CAG to help you build the organizational capacity to be effective.

Finding Other Sources of funding for Technical Assistance

Funding to hire a technical advisor may be available through not only EPA's programs but also other federal, state, and local sources.

For example, Citizens Working Group, the CAG at the Colorado School of Mines Research Institute hazardous waste removal action site in Golden, Colorado, wanted to hire a technical consultant. The group was not eligible for a TAG because the site is not on the NPL. No other sources of federal funding were available. The group was successful in obtaining the needed funds from the State of Colorado Department of Local Affairs, which provided support through its Mining and Energy Impacts Grant program.

The Jasper County EPA Superfund Citizen's Task Force, on the other hand, has a technical advisor who was hired by the City of Joplin to provide advice on EPA documents and actions.

CAG members and federal, state, and local government officials who work with your group may be able to suggest other sources of funding for technical assistance.

SECTION 9 – FINDING FUNDING FOR COMMUNITY ADVISORY GROUPS

Where can CAGs find funds to support their work? The answer may surprise you. While most people look first to the federal government or to national charitable foundations, most funding is found closer to home.

Local companies, major retailers, and even small businesses are potential contributors to CAGs. There also are voluntary service organizations and the scores of small, local foundations and corporate-giving programs eager to support worthwhile local programs.

Thinking locally is important because even getting funds from state and federal sources often depends on making contacts at the local level first. The key is to talk to people at the local level who can help you identify potential funding sources, and form partnerships with local agencies and organizations with direct access to potential funders.

Creating Local Partnerships

Without a doubt, the local community is the best source of funding and other support for CAG activities. Many local companies and organizations are eager to support worthwhile community projects financially or by donating space or services. When seeking support within the community for the CAG, look for:

- subsidiaries and local plants connected to major corporations;
- major employers;
- major retail outlets;
- major small businesses located in or serving the affected area;
- insurance companies, health maintenance organizations, and health care companies; and
- local foundations—such as your city’s “Community Foundation” or small foundations that restrict funding to local projects. The reference librarian at the local library can direct you to a listing of these.

Identifying Potential Funders

Chances are that one or more companies in your community come to mind immediately—and there probably are others. Ask around. Talk to people who can help you identify companies that may be potential funders, including:

- **CAG members themselves.** Does anyone on the CAG have ties to the potential funder or know someone who does?
- **Leaders from the Kiwanis Club, Lions, Rotary, and other local service organizations.** Many of these groups have close ties with the local business community and raise funds to support worthwhile community projects.
- **The local Chamber of Commerce.** Allows for the opportunity to talk with someone who can share their knowledge of the local business community.

Suggest coffee or ask for a short, informational meeting to introduce yourself and the CAG. Briefly explain what you are trying to accomplish. If you can, outline one or more specific projects for which you are seeking support.

It is equally important to ask for referrals and introductions to other prospects. Does your contact know any other organizations or companies that might support your CAG's work? Who is the key person with whom you should talk? Would they be willing to make a phone call or to introduce you to the people you need to talk to?

Introductions to other potential funders are extremely important because most local funding decisions are made based on personal relationships. While cold calls are not the recommended path forward, at times they may be necessary. It is, however, much better to talk to someone you know personally or to whom you have been personally referred and have them introduce you to the most appropriate contact.

Contacting Prospective Funders

Once you have identified a potential funder and an appropriate contact person, ask for a short introductory meeting to learn more about the company's giving programs. Be prepared to make a short but effective case that discusses the CAG's value to the community. Be specific. It is much easier to get funding for specific purposes than for general support. Describe one or more projects for which you are seeking support. For example, you might explain that the CAG wants to increase community participation in the decision-making process and is seeking \$500 to start a newsletter that will accomplish that goal.

Before the meeting, define specific questions you would like to ask your contact, including:

- Whether the company would consider a request for support.
- To whom should the request be directed?
- Is there an application to fill out or a specific proposal format you must use?
- When is the best time to apply?

Remember that non-cash support in the form of donated property, services, or volunteer hours can be as valuable as cash. Consider these options if they are offered instead of money.

In most cases, a complicated application usually is not required. However, you should prepare a short, written proposal that explains how your program will effectively address a critical problem. Preparing a good proposal is the single most important step you can take to attract funding for your CAG.

Funding from Federal and State Governments

For your convenience, [Tool H](#) of this Toolkit outlines how to write an effective proposal.

Federal and state funding sources are very limited, and often CAGs are not eligible to apply directly for most federal or state programs. The key to securing funding is to be flexible and creative in your approach to fundraising.

The best way to find and obtain federal and state funds is through local networking. Talk to people in the community who are likely to know about federal or state programs. The best prospects are local elected officials and their staff. Also, contact local agencies that work on the same kinds of issues as the CAG. The environmental engineering or environmental education departments of a local college or university also can provide potential leads.

Schedule a brief meeting to introduce these local contacts to the CAG. Ask if they know of any federal or state programs that address goals and objectives similar to yours. Ask for referrals. Are there project ideas that you can work on together as a team? Who else should you talk to? Would your contact help by introducing you to these other people?

Identifying Sources of Federal and State Funding

There are only a few federal and state programs that provide grants directly to local community organizations, and while CAGs are typically ineligible for this funding, certain local agencies are eligible to apply. CAGs are encouraged to identify and team up with eligible entities. This is an excellent opportunity to build strong working relationships with key local and state agencies.

For example, the [Department of Housing and Urban Development's Community Development Block Grant \(CDBG\) program](#) provides funds to promote urban development and provide decent housing and a suitable living environment. CDBG funds support a variety of community economic development and housing-related projects and provide economic opportunities for low and moderate-income people. Funds are awarded to metropolitan cities and urban counties, or to the states for rural areas. They, in turn, support projects undertaken by local governments and private "subgrantees." Generally, the city or county department of housing or community development is the local agency eligible for funding. Start by making contacts with people in these agencies.

In addition, consider contacting the below agencies for additional support in the following areas:

- **Housing and community development departments** can assist with promoting economic development and empowerment in designated areas with pervasive poverty, unemployment, and general duress.
- **Local health departments and social service agencies** can assist with health education or public health issues.
- Local community action agencies (e.g., community action or economic opportunity programs, boards, or commissions) and social service agencies may be able to receive funding to target low-income populations, and could assist with promoting community participation, and could be excellent partners in your environmental education and community outreach efforts.
- **Your state's surplus property agency** may be able to provide federal surplus property from fire trucks to office machines. Property must be used for public purposes.

National Foundations and Corporate Giving Programs

There are nearly 25,000 grants-making foundations in the United States. Competition for these grants can be stiff, and proposed projects usually must fall into specific categories.

Once again, it is on the local level that most of the action takes place. Large, well-known foundations and corporations have more money to give away and make larger grants, but they comprise only a small part of the foundation picture. The majority of foundations are quite small and limit giving to certain geographical areas. Most corporate giving programs restrict funding to projects in areas in which they maintain plants, and grants are made at the local-plant level rather than by the corporate headquarters.

An important factor to consider before exploring foundation funding is that this funding usually is restricted to nonprofit organizations with a 501(c)(3) designation from the IRS. Some corporate giving programs may have less stringent restrictions.

The key to accessing foundation and corporate funding is doing your homework. Again, the best place to start is by networking locally and asking people who may be familiar with potential funders. After that, the next best place is the [Foundation Directory Online \(FDO\)](#) available on [Candid.org](#). The FDO is an online database that provides available funding information to nonprofits.



PART 2 – COMMUNITY TOOLS

TOOL A – SLIDES AND SCRIPT NOTES FOR COMMUNITY PRESENTATION

The purpose of the presentation below is to introduce the audience to your CAG. This tool can be used to create a presentation for your community using your preferred presentation software. The text in the first row denotes text to be placed on each slide. Text in the “description” rows are suggested talking points for each slide.

To be effective, keep your remarks brief; 10-15 minutes is best. Encourage participants to ask questions and leave time for answering them. These slides are suggestions, so feel free to include additional information your community may find useful, as long as you stick to the 10-15 minute limit.

Slide 1

<p>Community Advisory Groups (CAGs): Our Voice in EPA Decisions</p> <p>[Presenter Name, Presentation Date]</p>
<p><u>Description</u></p> <p>This is the title slide of the presentation and should be up as community members enter the room.</p>

Slide 2

<p>What the Community Advisory Group Is</p> <p>A way for all parts of the community to participate actively in decisions about site cleanup and other environmental issues.</p>
<p><u>Description</u></p> <p>Explain what a CAG is and the mission of your CAG. If you have a formal mission statement, read it to your audience. If not, briefly state the purpose for which the CAG was formed. Discuss how many members you have, who they are, and how they were selected.</p>

Slide 3

<p>Why We Have One</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Have a real voice in decision-making.● Discuss full range of community concerns about cleanup.● Present community views and concerns to EPA, state and tribal agencies, and others.● Get up-to-date information about the status of cleanup and other activities at the site.
<p><u>Description</u></p> <p>Explain why it is important for the community to have a voice in decision-making. Name two or three of the most important issues or concerns that your CAG is working on.</p>

Slide 4

What We Do

- Hold meetings with community residents.
- Review technical information.
- Meet with EPA and state officials.
- Work together to solve environmental problems.

Description

Tell the audience where and how often you hold meetings with community residents. Tell them how to find out about future meetings. Explain the kinds of technical information you review and how you do that. For example, do some members of the CAG have technical expertise or experience with the site that helps you? Are there other technical experts you rely on? Do you meet or talk with EPA and state officials regularly?

Slide 5

Keys to Success

- Participation by all parts of the community.
- Open to all viewpoints.
- Patience and persistence.
- Support from the whole community.

Description

Tell the audience that it is very important for everyone to come to CAG meetings and express their views. Explain that, although the cleanup process can be long and complicated, the members of the CAG are committed to stick it out and will keep them informed each step of the way. Emphasize that the community's voice in the decisions is stronger when the whole community participates in the process.

Slide 6

What You Can Do

- Come to meetings and speak up.
- Encourage others to participate.
- Help us inform others about environmental problems and the cleanup process.
- Provide information and expertise.
- Provide financial or other support.

Description

This is the most important part of your message. Invite everyone to get involved and give them specific ideas about how they can support the CAG's work. Emphasize that the most important thing people can do is to come to meetings and express their opinion. Let them know every community member's view is important. Remind them where and when the next meeting will be held. Let them know how to reach you and other members if they cannot get to the meeting.

Suggest other ways for people to get involved. For example, long-time residents may have information about the site and its history that may be extremely useful. People who belong to civic and other organizations in the community may be able to help you spread the word about your meeting dates and times. Still others may be able to help you get the local newspaper or television station to write about the CAG's work.

Leave plenty of time for questions and comments from the audience. Make sure people know how to reach the CAG members to get more information.

TOOL B – CAG ORGANIZATIONAL HEALTH GRAPHICS

HOW IS YOUR CAG DOING?

A Guide to Assessing Your CAG's Organizational Health



It is important to periodically evaluate your CAG to ensure it's functioning in the most productive way possible and to maintain good relations with EPA. The table below provides examples for determining how your CAG is functioning. See the "Assessing Your CAG's Organizational Health" graphic to conduct an assessment of your CAG and how to improve your CAG's operations.

	MISSION	MEMBERSHIP	ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES	OPERATIONS	DOCUMENTATION	
<p><i>Read through the criteria in each row to determine if your CAG is functioning productively.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focuses on issues related to the Superfund site cleanup and its impact on the community. Serves as a conduit of information between EPA and the community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is representative of the diverse interests of the community. CAG leadership selection process and term limits are transparent and fair. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CAG leaders are aware of and agree to the substantial time commitment needed to manage the CAG. CAG leaders are chosen based on their ability to maintain the focus of the board and ensure that all sides of an issue are considered. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides comments during key points of the Superfund process. Regularly holds meetings. Effectively uses independent facilitation and technical support. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides reports and updates on site work to the broader community. Makes meeting minutes available to public and EPA. Is transparent about CAG operations and activities. Maintains all CAG records in a publicly accessible space. 	<p>Keep up the good work!</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lacks a clear mission. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decisions often made by a minority of individuals. Leadership selection process and term limits are unclear. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leadership often in hands of members with strongest viewpoints. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Often conducts extremely long meetings with little or no outcome. Purpose and expected outcome of meetings often unclear. Does not provide information to the community or keep them informed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CAG membership, bylaws, or operating procedures are not transparent or easily accessible. 	<p>Work is needed to become more effective.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members ignore mission. Mission is focused on non-Superfund initiatives. Take on issues outside of their mission at the behest of one or few members. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members do not agree on the vision for the CAG. Membership only reflects one group within the community. Selection process is controlled by existing members and not transparent. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Roles and responsibilities are not clearly defined. Leadership is not involved or present. Members are not held accountable. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Becomes involved with non-Superfund-related issues. Struggles with internal issues and power dynamics. Lacks an understanding of CAG role. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not keep a record of CAG membership, bylaws, or operating procedures. 	<p>Intervention is necessary.</p>

The information in this graphic was inspired by the TPC Skills Sheets for Participation Professionals: Recognizing Advisory Group Performance developed by Doug Sarno, The Participation Company.

How Is Your CAG Doing?

Assessing Your CAG's Organizational Health

Background

Answer the 'yes' or 'no' questions in the table below to assess the effectiveness of your CAG following the guidelines set in the *Guide to Assessing your CAG's Organizational Health* graphic. It is suggested that each member of the CAG take this assessment. See the **Results** section below to assess your results and the **What's Next** section to learn about next steps.

Scoring Instructions:

Give yourself one point for every "No" response to a question. Give yourself zero points for every "Yes" response to a question. Total your score and refer to the green, yellow, and red "Results" boxes below to learn what your score means for your CAG's organizational health.

Results:

Question #	Is My CAG Functioning Effectively?	Yes	No
1	Can each member clearly articulate the mission of the CAG?		
2	Have the last five issues handled by the CAG been related to the Superfund site cleanup and its impact on the community?		
3	Has the CAG served as a conduit of information between EPA and the community over the last 12 months?		
4	Are all groups within the community represented on the CAG?		
5	Do all CAG members feel that decisions are representative of the whole group?		
6	Do members of the community have a clear understanding of the activities the CAG is involved in?		
7	Did CAG meetings within the last year have a clear purpose and result in clear action items?		
8	Are meeting schedules and information posted and stored in a publicly accessible place (such as a public Facebook page, library community board, etc.) and kept for at least the duration of the Superfund cleanup effort?		
Score:			

Score: 0
Keep up the good work!

Score: 1-4
Work is needed to be more effective.

Score: 5-8
Intervention is necessary.

What's Next?

If results indicate that intervention is necessary to help your CAG function effectively, the below steps should be taken. For more information on recommended next steps, see the *Managing an Effective CAG* subsection in Section 3 of the *Superfund CAG Toolkit for the Community*.

- **Hold an internal CAG meeting** with all CAG members to discuss evaluation results, the issues facing the CAG, and brainstorm steps to fix these issues.
- **Contact the CIC for your site** for support or technical assistance to facilitate productivity and help resolve any internal issues.
- **Develop a plan** of action for improving the CAG's effectiveness based on discussions held at the CAG meeting and with the CIC.
- **Meet more frequently** to discuss getting your CAG back on track.

For more information on recommended next steps, see the Managing an Effective CAG subsection in Section 3 of the Superfund CAG Toolkit for the Community.

TOOL C – OPERATING PROCEDURES FOR YOUR CAG

***NOTE:** The following is a suggested format for use in preparing the Operating Procedures for your CAG. Each section contains several questions. The answers to these questions should be the information you include in each section of your procedures.*

Name and Duration

- What are you going to call the CAG?
- Will the CAG exist for a specific period of time?

Membership

- How many members will the CAG have?
- What, if any, are the special qualifications for membership?
- Should the CAG membership have a specified composition (e.g., members from particular areas or groups in the community)?
- How will members be chosen? Will elections be held? How often?
- For what term will members serve?
- How will vacancies be filled?
- What are the roles and responsibilities of CAG members?
- Under what circumstances would a member be replaced? What procedures would be used?

Leadership

- Will you have a chairperson or chairpersons?
- Will you have an executive board? If so, what will be its composition?
- How will leaders be chosen?
- For what term will leaders serve?
- What, if any, are the special qualifications for leadership positions?
- How will leadership vacancies be filled?
- What are the roles and responsibilities of the chairperson, board members, or other leaders?
- Under what circumstances would a leader be replaced? What procedures would be used?

Meetings

- When and how often will the CAG meet?
- Where will CAG meetings be held?
- How will meetings be announced and publicized?
- Will the public be invited to all meetings?
- Will you hold additional meetings for members only or other types of special meetings?
- What will be the basic format for meetings?
- Will you use Robert's Rules of Order or other procedures to govern meetings?
- How will records of the meetings be kept? Will meeting minutes be prepared?
- Will minutes be made available to the public? If so, where and when?

Resolving Issues

- How will members make decisions? By consensus? Majority rule? Some other means?
- Are there some decisions that can be made by the chairperson, the board, or some other subgroup of the total membership? If so, which ones? Under what circumstances?
- How can changes to operating procedures be made?

Example of Operating Procedures

Although there are many questions to be considered in formulating them, operating procedures do not have to be long or complicated. The following example of the Operating Procedures is based on those from an actual CAG.

The duration of the Community Advisory Group (CAG) will be three years, with renewal every three years unless the majority votes to discontinue. The CAG will meet no less than once every three months. The Board will consist of 15 members. Any member that misses two consecutive meetings will be replaced. Members will serve for a term of three years.

TOOL D – TEMPLATES AND EXAMPLES OF MATERIALS FOR CAG MEETINGS

The templates and examples below can be used for creating materials to organize and advertise your CAG meetings. The Agenda and Planning Worksheet can be copied and pasted into Word and bracketed items should be filled in with information about your meeting. The flyer example should be used as a guide for creating a flyer to advertise your meetings.

CAG Meeting Agenda

[Insert CAG Name or Graphic]

[Insert Date]

[Insert Time]

[Insert venue information if applicable]

via **[Insert Online Platform]**: **[insert meeting link]**

via Phone: **[Insert Call-in info]**

Draft Agenda (all times are approximate)

X:XX PM	[Insert Agenda Item]
X:XX PM	[Insert Agenda Item]
X:XX PM	[Insert Agenda Item]
X:XX PM	[Insert Agenda Item]
X:XX PM	[Insert Agenda Item]
X:XX PM	[Insert Agenda Item]
X:XX PM	[Adjourn]

Mission

[Insert CAG mission]

Ground Rules

[Insert CAG ground rules]

CAG Meeting Planning Worksheet

[Insert CAG Name]

One Week Prior to CAG Meeting

- Verify if there are any follow up items before the CAG meeting that need to be taken care of (Assignee)
- Send out an announcement notifying the public of the location and time of the CAG meeting (Assignee)
- Publish a notice in local papers of the location and time of the CAG meeting (Assignee)
- Send electronic copies of CAG materials (e.g., agenda) to be posted to the EPA Website (Assignee)
- Send out review materials to CAG members (Assignee)
 - Previous meeting minutes, next meeting agenda, and other docs for next meeting
- Make 15-20 copies of the CAG agenda to have available at the meeting (Assignee)

CAG Meeting

- Arrive at the CAG meeting location 30 minutes prior to the meeting (insert time) to make sure the room is in order (Assignee)
 - Set up a table outside of the meeting room with:
 - Name tags (alphabetized)
 - Blank name tags
 - Pens/markers
 - Copies of the CAG agenda and any other handouts
 - EPA mailing list sign up forms
 - EPA office brochures
 - Tables for support staff (2-5 people)
- During the CAG meeting (insert meeting time) (Assignee)
 - Take notes for meeting minutes (Assignee)
 - Note any EPA action items that are discussed during the meeting
- After the CAG meeting (Assignee)
 - Collect extra handouts and put them into the monthly folder
 - Collect meeting materials, including name tags, pens, markers, laser pointer, etc.

1-2 Days After the CAG Meeting

- Hold debrief call (insert call time) (Assignee)
 - Discuss CAG meeting (what went well, areas of improvement)
 - Discuss action items
 - Discuss next meeting agenda

Friday After CAG

- Post PDF of CAG presentations to the EPA website (Assignee)
- Distribute draft meeting minutes to [insert who should receive minutes] (Assignee)


CAG Meeting Flyer

Below is an example of a flyer to advertise CAG meetings for a fictional site. This can be used as a guide for creating a flyer for your own CAG meetings. Flyers can be developed in Word, PowerPoint, or other graphic design software.

Gloverdale Tannery Site

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

The Gloverdale Community Advisory Group Invites you to its Monthly Meetings



The Gloverdale Community Advisory Group, comprised of leaders and residents of the City of Gloverdale and Johns County, will begin meeting the third Thursday of each month. The purpose of the CAG is to provide input on the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and Gloverdale Tanning's work to investigate and clean up the contamination associated with the Gloverdale Tannery site. The first meeting will focus on providing the community an update of activities and a general question and answer session. The meetings are open to the public. We encourage anyone interested to attend!

Dates:
August 15
September 19
October 17
November 21
December 19

Times:
6:00-9:00 p.m.

Location:
Gloverdale Community Center
1234 Main Street
Gloverdale

Contacts for More Information:

Jane Smith
555-555-5555
jane.smith@email.com

Joe Jones
555-555-5551
joe.jones@email.com

EPA's toll-free line:
888-555-5555, ext: 123
9:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m., weekdays.

Site Website:
www.sitewebsite.com

TOOL E – A SUMMARY ROBERT’S RULES OF ORDER FOR MEETINGS

Robert’s Rules prioritizes meeting order and structure. Each meeting should be centered around an agenda that outlines the meeting priorities and schedule. A sample agenda might consist of: a reading of the previous meeting’s minutes or notes; report-outs from officers, boards, or committees; special orders such as time-sensitive business or elections; a discussion of unfinished business and general orders, and new business or motions.

Motions are procedural devices that bring about issues or ideas to be discussed during a meeting. They are presented to the group, debated, and then voted upon. According to Robert’s Rules, the steps to handle a motion are as follows:

1. Make a motion.
2. Have someone second the motion.
3. State the motion.
4. Debate the motion.
5. Put the motion to a vote.
6. Announce results of the vote.

Each meeting should also meet quorum, or minimum attendance, in order to conduct business on the behalf of a larger group. Quorum may vary from group to group but is typically decided upon during creation of the group.

Participants in a meeting are also entitled to a variety of points and actions that are not motions. These can include, but are not limited to:

1. Point of order: Draws attention to a breach of rules, improper procedure etc.
2. Point of information: A participant may need to bring up an additional point or additional information so that other participants can make more informed votes.
3. Point of inquiry: A participant may use a point of inquiry to ask for clarification on an action or a subject matter.
4. Point of personal privilege: This is used to address the physical comfort of the meeting space such as temperature or noise level.

TOOL F – STEPS FOR INCORPORATING A CAG

1. Contact the state agency responsible for incorporation of nonprofit organizations.

In most states, the corporate division of the Secretary of State is responsible for incorporation of nonprofit organizations. Other states have corporate commissions or maintain corporate divisions in departments regulating commerce and business affairs. The appropriate state agency will provide information on state laws governing incorporation and tell you how to obtain legal forms and complete requirements for filing them.

2. Define the purpose of the corporation.

Writing a mission statement provides the basis of the organization's charter as a nonprofit corporation. This statement is essential for establishing the organization's identity as a nonprofit corporation.

3. Complete forms and draft other required documents.

- Arrange for incorporators.
- Select a board of directors.
- Draft a constitution or set of bylaws.
- Draft Articles of Incorporation.
- Draft other required documents.

It is a good idea to retain an attorney to help prepare and file your corporate charter or review your application package before you submit it to the state.

4. Submit paperwork and required fees to the state's incorporating agency.

Required fees vary from state to state, but generally, they are less than \$100. In some states, fees are considerably lower. Check with the state's incorporating agency, a local certified public accountant, or your attorney to find out the applicable fees in your state.

The incorporating agency eventually will return a certified copy of the certificate of incorporation. Once this certificate is issued, the corporation is in business and can begin operating.

TOOL G – PROCEDURE FOR SECURING TAX-EXEMPT STATUS FOR A CAG

Step-by-step instructions for securing tax-exempt status, as well as links for all required IRS forms, are provided below. If your group is unable to access electronic versions of the IRS form, contact your CIC for assistance.

- 1. Incorporate.** See [Section 6](#) for instructions on how to do this.
- 2. Apply for an Employer Identification Number (EIN).** Your CAG must have an EIN whether or not it has employees or plans to hire any. If your CAG does not already have an EIN, an [IRS Form SS-4, Application for Employer Identification Number](#) can be filed with the IRS to obtain one. This can be done at the same time you file an application for tax-exempt status.
- 3. Define the purpose of the organization.** A written mission statement is essential for establishing the organization's identity as a nonprofit corporation and obtaining tax-exempt status under federal and state law. For the purposes of qualifying for tax-exempt status, the statement should include:
 - Information on how the organization will meet the eligibility criteria to qualify for tax-exempt status under Section 501(c)(3), that is, how it will organize and operate exclusively for one or more of the special purposes specified under Section 501(c);
 - A statement that no part of the net earnings of revenues of the organization will be distributed for the private benefit of individuals or shareholders; and
 - A statement that the organization will not engage in lobbying (defined as attempting to influence legislation) as a substantial part of its activities and will not participate in any way in political campaign activities.
- 4. File form 1023 with the IRS.** You will need [IRS Form 1023, Application for Recognition of Exemption Under Section 501\(c\)\(3\) of the Internal Revenue Code](#), to apply for 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status. Form 1023 is around 30 pages long without the schedules and attachments. Among the required attachments are the corporation's Articles of Incorporations and bylaws. *Be sure to file the most recent version of the form.* The IRS estimates preparation time of over 100 hours for completion, and IRS approval can take anywhere from a few months to around a year, depending on the number of written follow-up questions the IRS has and how quickly you provide answers. Smaller nonprofits (with assets of \$250,000 or less and annual gross receipts of \$50,000 or less) may be eligible to file Form 1023-EZ. This form must be filed electronically. [Instructions and an eligibility form for the 1023-EZ are available on the IRS website.](#)
- 5. Be sure to include all necessary supporting documents.** It is always a good idea to have an attorney or accountant help prepare your application or review the documents before you submit them to the IRS.
- 6. Pay the necessary filing fees.** The IRS charges a user fee of \$600 for filing Form 1023 and \$275 for filing Form 1023-EZ.

[IRS Publication 557, Tax-Exempt Status for Your Organization](#), provides useful information for obtaining tax-exempt status. Many IRS publications and forms also are available on the [IRS website](#).

TOOL H – TIPS FOR WRITING A PROPOSAL

Finding funds to support the work of the CAG is essential to its long-term success. There are a variety of funding sources available to CAGs, ranging from local foundations and corporate giving programs to national charitable foundations and the federal government.

No matter what the source, getting funds usually requires developing a proposal in which you make a case for funding the organization as a whole or a specific project. Many grant programs will provide specific guidelines for preparing a proposal in their request for proposal (RFP) or solicitation notice. In these cases, it is imperative that you follow the specific guidelines laid out. If specific guidelines are not provided, the following outline can be used to prepare an effective proposal that helps promote your project. If guidelines are provided, the following tips can still be useful when preparing specific sections of your proposal as many programs require similar information.

Cover Letter

Prepare a cover letter on your CAG's letterhead. If you do not have printed stationery, you can create your own using a word processing software. If that is not possible, simply type the name and address of your CAG at the top of the page. Your cover letter should summarize your request in about three paragraphs or less. The opening paragraph should be a sentence or two indicating that the CAG is submitting the enclosed proposal.

The second paragraph is a short "sales pitch" to the prospective funder. This paragraph should answer the following questions:

- What is the name or title of your proposed project?
- What is the dollar amount you are requesting?
- What will the funding be used to do?
- Will the project result in the development of a specific "product?" If so, what?
- Specifically, what will the requested funds allow the CAG to do?
- What are the expected benefits to the community?
- What are the expected benefits to the funder?

In the closing paragraph, thank the funder for the opportunity to submit the proposal and offer to provide further information. Include a phone number and other contact information.

Proposal Summary or Narrative

The proposal summary describes the key points of the proposed project and is often the sole basis for judgment that gets a proposal to the next step in the review process. Answer the following questions in your summary:

- What do you plan to do?
- Why do you plan to do it?
- How will the proposed project address a documented need in the community?
- What benefits will result: to the CAG? ...to the community?
- What type of support or amount of funding are you requesting (for example, basic organizational support, money for a specific project, "seed money" to raise funds from other sources)?

Introduction

Provide a brief introduction of your CAG. This section should provide answers to the following questions:

- What is the name of the CAG?
- Does it have 501(c)(3) status from the Internal Revenue Service? (This designation is required by most grants-making organizations.)
- What is the overall purpose of the organization? (Use your Mission Statement.)
- When was your CAG formed?
- What is your basic organizational structure?
- Have you had significant accomplishments or prior successes that would add credibility to your request?

Problem Statement and Assessment of Need

Briefly describe the site, the affected community, and the specific aspects of the problem you plan to address. This section should provide answers to the following questions:

- Where is the site?
- What is the nature of the contamination and what conditions have resulted?
- How many people are affected?
- How are they affected?
- What is the specific problem you are trying to address with the requested funds?
- What are the reasons you have chosen to address this particular problem or aspect of the problem? Why do you need to address the problem or aspect of the problem?
- Who will benefit? How would you describe the affected community in terms of family size and composition? Are there many families with children? Are there many senior citizens? Are there many low-income people? Are there specific groups within the community that will benefit from the proposed project?

Program Objectives

In a sentence or two, tell what outcomes are expected in terms of achievable, measurable goals. This section should provide answers to the following questions:

- What do you hope to accomplish?
- What are the specific goals or outcomes from your proposed project?
- How will this project specifically address the problems identified in the Problem Statement and Assessment of Need?

Methods

This section summarizes what you plan to do and when you plan to do it. This section should provide answers to the following questions:

- What is your overall approach or project plan?
- Why did you choose this particular approach over other alternatives? (What factors affected your decision? Has the CAG or another similar organization had previous experiences that support your decision to do things in the manner you propose?)

- Who will manage the project? What is his/her position in the organization? Why is he/she qualified to manage the project?
- Why do you think the methods you chose will work?
- What specific activities or tasks will be necessary to accomplish your objectives?
- What is your timeline for accomplishing each objective?

Evaluation

Describe how you will evaluate your project. This section should provide answers to the following questions:

- What are the specific objectives or accomplishments for your project?
- What specific measures will you use to determine progress towards each objective or accomplishment?
- What information will you collect for each specific measure?
- Will you provide periodic progress reports to the funder? How often? What information will be included in each progress report?

Future Funding

Explain how your activities will be sustained once initial funding is exhausted. Most funders will not support a project that does not show any prospect for continuing beyond the initial grant period. This section should provide answers to the following questions:

- How do you plan to finance the project after the requested funding is used?
- Are there other sources of funding or support for the project? If so, what are they?
- Are you raising funds from other sources? From whom? How will fundraising be conducted?

Budget

Provide a detailed and realistic budget showing all expenditures necessary for the program. Use the following categories as a guide:

Item	Description
Personnel/Services	Labor costs, including the allocated portion of salaries of paid staff, if any, temporary help, consultants, or others working on the proposed project.
Rent	Office space or meeting space, if applicable.
Supplies	Office supplies and specific supplies necessary for the proposed project.
Equipment	Computer, fax machine, phone, slide projector, video player, if applicable. Include any special equipment to be purchased or leased specifically for the proposed project.
Printing	Copying, printing, duplicating slides, etc. for presentations.
Postage and Mailing	Postage, handling, shipping, and messenger services.
Website/Social Media	CAG website domain and management.
Travel	Local: mileage @ GSA approved rate/mile, taxis, app-based ride services, public transportation for travel necessary for the proposed project. Non-local: mileage @ rate/mile, rail or plane fares, lodging, and food costs for required out-of-town travel.
Telephone/Internet	Cost of a phone line, cell phone and cell phone service, long-distance calls, conference calls, fax, online services, and webinar services.
Other	Costs not included in other categories.