



Summary of Technical Assistance

Overview

Technical assistance is the provision of services designed to increase a community's understanding of the science, regulations and policy related to environmental issues and EPA actions at Superfund sites. Several types of technical assistance resources enable communities to better understand local environmental issues and participate in decision-making at Superfund sites. This tool briefly summarizes eight technical assistance resources: Technical Assistance Needs Assessment, Technical Assistance Grant, Technical Assistance Services for Communities, Conflict Prevention and Resolution Center, Partners in Technical Assistance Program, Technical Assistance Plan, Pediatric Environmental Health Specialty Units, and Technical Assistance for Public Participation.

Why This Is Important

This activity is important because EPA is committed to community involvement in site decisions at Superfund sites. Technical assistance sometimes is necessary to enable community members to understand technical site issues so they can participate in site decisions in a meaningful way. It is strongly recommended that community involvement coordinators (CICs) become familiar with the technical assistance resources available so that they can engage communities in a discussion about their technical assistance needs and the services available to them.

EPA is not required to provide technical assistance to communities, but the National Oil and Hazardous Substances Pollution Contingency Plan (NCP) in 40 CFR §300.430(c)(2)(iv) requires “informing the community of the availability of technical assistance grants.” This is required for facilities listed on the National Priorities List (NPL) or sites proposed for the NPL, where a response action under the Comprehensive Emergency Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA) is underway.

This and all tools in the Community Involvement Toolkit should be used in conjunction with the [*Community Involvement Handbook*](#), which provides guidance to EPA staff on how EPA typically plans and implements community involvement activities at Superfund sites.

Implementation

Communities should be informed about the availability of technical assistance early in the cleanup process so that they can take full advantage of the services available to them. A variety of technical assistance resources may be available to help communities with the following:

- Reviewing, interpreting, and explaining Superfund cleanup decision documents.
- Reviewing, interpreting, and explaining other site-related technical and scientific reports.
- Providing information about site-related basic science, environmental policy, and related resources.
- Helping the community understand health risks.
- Helping the community identify reasonably anticipated future land uses to inform cleanup actions and understand how land use can impact cleanups.
- Preparing outreach materials.
- Presenting educational programs on site-related technical issues or subjects.
- Helping to resolve conflicts among stakeholders.
- Organizing and facilitating planning discussions (or design charrettes involving community stakeholders) about [*reuse and redevelopment planning*](#) for properties impacted by environmental problems.
- Supporting formation and capacity-building of community groups.
- Providing neutral facilitation, mediation assistance, and alternative dispute resolution.

Below are the technical assistance resources that site team members should consider for Superfund



communities. In addition, Attachment 1 provides a comparison of the technical assistance resources.

Technical Assistance Needs Assessment

The [*Technical Assistance Needs Assessment*](#) (TANA) tool describes a site-specific process used to identify additional support that a community may require in order to understand technical information and participate meaningfully in the Superfund decision-making process. A TANA helps EPA determine what technical assistance resources and information the Agency can provide to meet community needs.

The TANA can be conducted concurrently with community interviews when developing or updating a [*community involvement plan*](#) (CIP) or at any time during the Superfund cleanup process if it becomes evident that the technical assistance needs of the community are not being effectively addressed through existing mechanisms. The TANA will help ensure the community's needs for technical assistance are defined as early as possible in the community engagement process.

Refer to the [TANA website](#) for more information.

Technical Assistance Grant

EPA's [*Technical Assistance Grant*](#) (TAG) program provides funds to qualified community groups to contract with independent technical advisors who will explain technical information, Superfund program plans, and site-specific documents to communities affected by an NPL site. A technical advisor can help the community voice its concerns, which enables them to participate substantively in site decisions. A TAG technical advisor also can assist communities with technical information related to redevelopment and the reuse potential of the site, public health concerns and relocation options, if applicable. A portion of TAG funds may be used to publish newsletters, obtain relevant supplies and equipment, and contract with a grant administrator. Grants of up to \$50,000 per site are available. Additional TAG funds may be provided for complex sites, but only one TAG at a time is allowed for each Superfund site.

TAG recipient groups must share in project costs by providing resources equal to at least 20 percent of the

total project costs, usually through volunteer time and donated or in-kind services. A waiver to this requirement may be requested.

TAG funds cannot be used for travel expenses of group members, underwriting of legal actions, political activities or lobbying, social activities or fundraising, tuition or training for group members, or the creation of new information, such as soil and groundwater sampling or medical testing.

Community groups may qualify for a TAG if their community has been affected by a site on the NPL or a site that has been proposed for inclusion on the NPL where response actions have begun. A TAG recipient group must be incorporated as a nonprofit organization to receive TAG funds.

Organizations not eligible for a TAG are: potentially responsible parties (PRPs); universities and other academic institutions; city, county, and local governments, tribes, or other political subdivisions; and local groups affiliated with a national organization. Community groups established or sustained by these entities are also ineligible for TAGs.

Applying for and managing a TAG requires a significant commitment of time and a knowledge of grants management rules and regulations. For this reason, potential applicants should carefully consider the application process, grant management, and record-keeping requirements for TAG.

To obtain assistance, community members must send a letter to their EPA regional office indicating interest in applying for a TAG. Upon receipt of the letter, the regional TAG coordinator will contact the community to explain the formal application process.

Refer to the [TAG website](#) for more information.

Technical Assistance Services for Communities

The Technical Assistance Services for Communities (TASC) program provides services through a national EPA contract. The purpose of this contract is to provide supplemental, non-advocacy technical assistance services at no cost to communities. Under the contract, a contractor provides the services of scientists, engineers and other professionals to review and explain information to communities. TASC services are determined on a project-specific basis.



The TASC program benefits communities by explaining technical findings and answering community questions, helping people understand complex environmental issues, and supporting their active roles in protecting healthy communities and advancing environmental protection. The TASC program also can provide opportunities for environmental education, bring diverse groups together and help community members get more involved, and offer training to support environmental employment opportunities through the Superfund Job Training Initiative.

TASC services can include information assistance and expertise, community education, evaluation of information assistance needs and plan development, and assistance to help community members work together to participate effectively in environmental decision-making.

The TASC contract is managed by the Office of Land and Emergency Management (OLEM). OLEM staff work closely with the EPA regional TASC coordinator and the Superfund site team to determine if the assistance needed by the community is within the scope of the TASC contract.

Visit the [TASC website](#) for more information.

Conflict Prevention and Resolution Center

The Conflict Prevention and Resolution Center (CPRC) is EPA's primary resource for services and expertise in the areas of consensus-building, collaborative problem-solving, alternative dispute resolution (ADR), and environmental conflict resolution. CPRC has experienced staff who can advise on the most effective methods to prevent or manage conflicts in communities. The CPRC develops and implements Agency ADR policy, administers Agency-wide ADR programs, coordinates case management and evaluation, and provides support to program-specific ADR activities. Building on existing EPA ADR efforts, the CPRC helps other Agency offices develop effective ways to anticipate, prevent, and resolve disputes, and makes neutral third parties more readily available for those purposes.

The CPRC also provides assistance through a contract vehicle for neutral third-party facilitators and training that can improve community involvement activities, especially in difficult situations. All EPA headquar-

ters, regional, and field offices can use the Conflict Prevention and Resolution Services (CPRS) contract to obtain expert services in conflict or issues assessment, public participation or stakeholder involvement activities, consensus building and collaborative processes, and ADR processes. The CPRS contract also can be used to provide training in consensus building and dispute resolution and for assistance in evaluating stakeholder involvement and ADR programs or cases. To obtain assistance or determine if a project is within the scope of the contract, visit the [CPRC website](#).

Partners in Technical Assistance Program

Through EPA's Partners in Technical Assistance Program (PTAP), colleges, universities, and nonprofit organizations cooperate with EPA and provide voluntary technical assistance to communities. Services are provided by interested colleges, universities, or nonprofit partners currently enrolled in PTAP, with technical assistance coordinated between EPA and PTAP members. Depending on the community's technical assistance needs, PTAP services may include the following:

- Assessing the technical assistance needs of a community impacted by an environmental issue.
- Presenting outreach and educational programs on technical issues (e.g., health risks, basic science, environmental policy).
- Reviewing, interpreting, and explaining technical reports to community members.
- Providing capacity-building assistance to grassroots community organizations.
- Facilitating redevelopment planning efforts involving the community.

Technical assistance needs are determined through a formal TANA. Depending on the community's needs and the interest of PTAP partners, technical assistance may not always be provided by a PTAP partner. Rather, based on the results of the TANA, technical assistance sometimes may be provided by EPA or through EPA grants or contracts. In certain circumstances (e.g., technical assistance needs are urgent or the community's needs are limited and easily defined), a formal TANA may not be required. Most community groups affected by a Superfund removal or remedial site are eligible for PTAP assistance.



To obtain assistance:

- The Superfund site team conducts a TANA to determine unaddressed technical assistance needs of the community, which results in preparation of a publicly available summary report.
- The summary report is distributed to all PTAP partners, if appropriate. Interested PTAP partners will contact the EPA person responsible for the TANA.
- Assistance will be coordinated and delivered collaboratively by EPA and an interested PTAP partner.

Visit the [PTAP website](#) for more information. In addition to PTAP, the EPA Region 4 office has a [College/Underserved Community Partnership Program \(CUPP\)](#) for additional services.

Technical Assistance Plan

An EPA/PRP's Technical Assistance Plan (TAP) is funded by potentially responsible parties through provisions in a negotiated settlement agreement. This is unlike other forms of community technical assistance that are funded by EPA or other government entities. A TAP enables community groups to retain the services of an independent technical advisor and provides resources for a group to help other community members learn about site decisions. TAP provisions ensure that communities affected by such settlements have an opportunity to receive technical assistance that is at least equivalent to what other communities receive under the TAG program. PRPs usually are responsible for implementing a TAP. EPA retains a strong oversight role.

This is a requirement established by EPA policy, not by regulation or statute. Moreover, it is only required for settlements using the Superfund Alternative Approach (SAA) and is discretionary for other types of settlements. EPA's SAA guidance calls for the inclusion of TAP provisions in all SAA settlements for RI/FS, RD, or RD/RA.

The transmittal memorandum and updated guidance issued 9/28/2012, [Updated Superfund Response and Settlement Approach for Sites using the SAA \(SAA Guidance\)](#) updates and supersedes the 2004 *Revised Response Selection and Settlement Approach for Superfund Alternative Sites*. The guidance ensures consistency between the use of Superfund authority

at sites listed on the National Priorities List (NPL) and at sites with SAA agreements.

Any regional case team that is negotiating an SAA settlement and is considering the omission or substantive modification of a TAP provision must obtain EPA Headquarters (HQ) approval before doing so. Although not required for non-SAA settlements, TAPs can sometimes be a viable option for ensuring sufficient community engagement at NPL sites as well.

Prior to the 2012 updated SAA Guidance, an [Interim Guidance: Providing Communities with Opportunities for Independent Technical Assistance in Superfund Settlements \(issued 9/3/2009\)](#) detailed an overview of how TAPs have typically been implemented, as well as guidance to regions on negotiating a settlement provision for a TAP. The interim guidance included six attachments that provided direction on TAP in Superfund settlements.

The interim guidance stated: "TAPs are consistent with, and effectively build on, other Superfund community involvement efforts. For example, the National Oil and Hazardous Substances Pollution Contingency Plan (commonly known as the NCP) tasks EPA with ensuring that communities have appropriate opportunities for involvement in many site-related decisions. See, e.g., 40 CFR §300.430(c). In cases where PRPs conduct the cleanup, the NCP provides for PRP participation in the community involvement program at EPA's discretion. See 40 CFR §300.430(c)(3). In addition, both the model Consent Decree (CD) for Remedial Design/Remedial Action (RD/RA) and the model Administrative Order on Consent (AOC) for Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study (RI/FS) contain provisions that obligate PRPs to support community involvement efforts."

The process for applying for technical assistance under a TAP is similar to the TAG application process. Most groups eligible for a TAG and for support through the TASC program also are eligible to apply for TAP services. Eligibility often is stated in the settlement's statement of work. However, since the arrangement for independent technical service is through the PRP rather than through a government grant, there are fewer regulations that the community group must comply with to be eligible for and receive a TAP. An eligible community group should be able to demonstrate that it represents the diversity of local interests and must demonstrate its ability to adequately and judiciously manage TAP-related responsibilities.



Groups are typically not eligible to receive TAP services if the group is a PRP for the site or is established or supported by a PRP, a national organization, an academic institution, a political subdivision, or a tribal government.

Pediatric Environmental Health Specialty Units

[Pediatric Environmental Health Specialty Units](#) (PEHSU) are a network of experts in children's environmental health designed to ensure that communities have access to special medical knowledge and resources to help protect children from environmental hazards. Members of the PEHSU network also work with federal, state, and local agencies to address children's environmental health issues in homes, schools, and communities. The basic services of the PEHSU network include the following:

- Community Education and Outreach
 - Raising awareness about environmental conditions that may harm children.
 - Guidance on preventing or reducing harmful environmental exposures in everyday situations.
 - Providing practical advice on helping children cope and recover during and after environmental crises.
- Training Health Professionals
 - Conducting seminars and conferences.
 - Publishing peer-reviewed articles that raise environmental health literacy.
 - Translating health care research into medical practice.
- Consultation and Referral
 - Evaluating suspected toxic exposures.
 - Identifying and interpreting appropriate diagnostic tests.
 - Providing referrals to specialty care.

EPA helps fund PEHSU through the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) and can recommend its use to families. However, each unit has discretion to provide services based on its budget and the focus of the issue.

Any child faced with a health risk due to a natural or man-made environmental hazard is eligible for services. To obtain assistance:

- Parents should visit the [PEHSU website](#) to find a unit in their area.

- Parents are encouraged to work with their primary care doctor for PEHSU consultation.

Visit the [PEHSU website](#) for more information.

Technical Assistance for Public Participation

The Department of Defense (DoD) funds the Technical Assistance for Public Participation (TAPP) program to support the technical assistance needs of its technical review committees (TRC) or restoration advisory boards (RABs). DoD establishes TRCs and RABs to promote community involvement and discuss environmental cleanup at a specific property currently or formerly owned by DoD, where DoD oversees the environmental cleanup process. TAPP support helps improve community members' understanding of the conditions and related cleanup efforts at a DoD cleanup site. Any RAB or TRC with three or more community members is eligible to apply. Applicants must certify that the request represents the wishes of the majority of the community members of the RAB or TRC. Applicants also must demonstrate that the technical expertise included in the proposed TAPP project is not available through the federal, state, or local agencies responsible for overseeing the cleanup at the site. Community members of a TRC or RAB may submit a request for TAPP assistance to the installation commander of the site. More information about TAPP is available in the [Defense Environmental Restoration Program \(DERP\) Management Manual](#) and the [Restoration Advisory Board Rule Handbook](#).

Attachment

- Attachment 1: *Matrix of Technical Assistance Resources*



Attachment 1: Matrix of Technical Assistance Resources

The matrix provides a quick comparison of the technical assistance resources for Superfund communities.

Resource	Type of Technical Assistance										
	Provide Basic Scientific Program & Policy Information	Read & Explain Technical Reports	Research & Explain Technical Reports	Research & Explain Technical Issues	Community Outreach & Involvement	Training on Environmental Issues	Reuse and Redevelopment Planning	Support Formation of Groups	Build Capacity of Groups	Neutral Facilitation & Mediation Services	Conflict Prevention and Resolution Services
Technical Assistance Needs Assistance (TANA)	✓				✓			✓	✓		
Technical Assistance Grant (TAG)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓		
Technical Assistance Services for Communities (TASC)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Conflict Prevention and Resolution Center (CPRC)						✓		✓		✓	✓
Partners in Technical Assistance Program (PTAP)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Technical Assistance Plan (TAP)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		
Pediatric Environmental Health Specialty Units (PEHSU)				✓	✓						
Technical Assistance for Public Participation (TAPP)		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					