



Technical Assistance Needs Assessment

Description

The Technical Assistance Needs Assessment (TANA) is a site-specific process to identify whether a community requires additional support from EPA in order to understand technical information and enable meaningful community involvement in the Superfund decision-making process. Members of the community are interviewed in order to get their views on how the community is receiving technical information about a site; whether the community needs additional assistance in order to understand and respond to site-related technical information; and whether there are organizations in the community that are interested or involved in site-related issues and capable of acting as an appropriate conduit for technical assistance services to the affected community. The TANA process produces a blueprint for designing a coordinated effort to meet the community's needs for additional technical assistance while minimizing the overlap of services provided by the remedial project manager (RPM) or on-scene coordinator (OSC), community involvement coordinator (CIC), external partners, and EPA grants and contracts.

Required Activity

No. TANAs are not required by statute or regulation, but they are strongly recommended whenever a community may require additional technical assistance. The TANA can be conducted concurrently with the initial **Community Interviews** administered for development of a **Community Involvement Plan (CIP)** or at a later date if the technical assistance needs of the community cannot be adequately defined by community members at that time.

Additionally, the CIC can conduct a TANA 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 technical assistance

mechanisms. The TANA will help ensure the community's needs for technical assistance are defined as early in the community engagement process as possible.

Making it Work

Why

A TANA will help the CIC and the RPM or OSC determine the technical assistance needs of a community affected by a given site. This assessment will provide the Agency with a detailed record of potentially unmet technical assistance needs and provide a working document from which the most appropriate forms of informal and formal technical assistance can be identified and provided to the community.

Informal technical assistance generally is provided by the EPA Site Team, and may include fact sheets, availability sessions, workshops, trainings, etc. One example of informal technical assistance would be the creation of a fish advisory fact sheet produced by the CIC and translated appropriately for the impacted community. This resource would provide technical information to community members on how to limit or avoid eating certain species of fish in order to reduce potential health risks. This technical assistance would be provided by the EPA and would not require an external partner or use of an EPA funding vehicle (e.g., grant or contract).

Formal technical assistance generally is provided by an independent technical expert (and sometimes, a mediator or facilitator) working with a community organization through an EPA program or funding vehicle—e.g., Technical Assistance Grant (TAG), Technical Assistance Services for Communities (TASC) contract, Technical Assistance Plan (TAP), or Conflict Prevention and Resolution Services (CPRS) contract—or through an external partner such as a university or nonprofit organization.



The summary document generated through the TANA process will serve as a blueprint for designing a coordinated effort to address the technical assistance needs of the community. This document will help EPA identify appropriate technical assistance resources, and determine if technical assistance needs can be met and how these needs will be addressed effectively and efficiently.

Objectives for conducting the TANA include the following:

- Help the EPA Site Team and external partners to determine collaboratively the current and anticipated technical assistance needs of a community and formulate effective methods to address these needs.
- Identify unaddressed technical assistance needs relating to the remedial/removal activities occurring at a given site, including non-advocacy information assistance and expertise; community education needs; organizational capacity-building assistance; and mediation or conflict resolution services.
- Expand the conversation on environmentalism by giving a voice to community stakeholders who have not had a chance to fully engage in the Superfund cleanup process and who may have unaddressed technical assistance needs.
- Ensure the technical assistance needs of Native American communities are appropriately addressed given tribal communities typically must consider a much broader range of environmental effects and risks when impacted by a Superfund site.
- Generate a summary document that will serve as a blueprint for addressing the technical assistance needs of a community.
- Increase internal EPA communication and collaboration between CICs, RPMs, OSCs, Regional TAG coordinators, TASC work assignment managers, attorneys, and CPRS contract managers.
- Enhance opportunities for EPA to partner with other organizations (e.g., National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS) Superfund Research Program grantees, and nonprofits providing capacity building assistance) with the shared goal of addressing a community's technical assistance needs.

- Ensure the most efficient utilization of EPA technical assistance funding vehicles (e.g., TASC contracts, TAGs, CPRS contracts, etc.)
- Avoid unnecessary duplication of technical assistance provided to a community through EPA funding vehicles and via university and nonprofit partners.

When

For most sites, informal technical assistance will be sufficient to address the community's needs. However, when a community may have unmet technical assistance needs, a TANA should be conducted. TANAs can be conducted at any time but are most effective when completed early in the Superfund cleanup process. Community interviews conducted to develop the CIP include questions that help the EPA Site Team begin to identify technical assistance needs of the community and to assess whether a formal TANA also should be conducted concurrently with the interviews or soon thereafter.

When is informal technical assistance sufficient in lieu of a formal TANA?

The conditions or situations that suggest the need for informal technical assistance provided directly by EPA (often in the form of fact sheets, workshops, availability sessions, etc.) include:

- Obvious community interest to become involved in the process or to partner with EPA.
- Lack of or limited expertise or understanding within the community about the Superfund process and cleanup options.
- Clear or increased community interest in the site and EPA's role in the cleanup, measured by an increase in the frequency of contacts from the community.
- Obvious community interest to understand the Superfund process, remediation options, technical documents, and EPA's rationale for its decisions.
- Media coverage of the site and EPA's efforts at the site.

When does a CIC conduct a TANA?

If one or more of the following conditions become evident during the initial community interviews or later during the Superfund process, the CIC should complete a TANA with selected interviewees to help determine the community's potential need for additional technical assistance:



Example 1: When Informal Technical Assistance is Sufficient

For example, the EPA Site Team at a Superfund Alternative Approach (SAA) Site in Pennsylvania determined that the community needed additional assistance to understand vapor intrusion issues at the site and that providing additional informal technical assistance would be sufficient and also the most appropriate way to meet these needs. The EPA Site Team was meeting regularly with a Community Advisory Group (CAG) during the beginning stages of the Remedial Investigation (RI). At the time, the CAG was considering requesting formal technical assistance in the form of a TAP, but had not yet begun the application process. When discussing upcoming vapor intrusion sampling with the CAG, it became apparent that the community had extensive questions and concerns about vapor intrusion, how the investigation would be conducted, and the potential impact that the investigation might have on the community. To address these concerns, the EPA Site Team and representatives from the Potentially Responsible Party (PRP) held a series of three Vapor Intrusion Information Sessions. These sessions were open to the general public, introduced the community to personnel who would be conducting the sampling, and technical questions from the public were answered. The informal technical assistance provided at these information sessions helped EPA and the PRP obtain access for sampling to over 90% of the residences within the study area while also addressing the technical assistance needs of the community.

- Stated intention by the community or individuals of plans to submit comments to EPA.
- The receipt of numerous or significant comments, both formal (as a result of the comment period) and informal (through phone calls or emails).
- Significant media coverage of the site and EPA's efforts at the site.
- It becomes evident that some community stakeholders have not been given the chance to fully engage in the Superfund cleanup process and the TANA will provide an opportunity to expand the conversation on environmentalism.
- The technical assistance needs of the community are significant and complex.

Whenever appropriate and possible, a TANA can be conducted concurrently with the CIP community interviews if the technical needs of the community are known at that time. Conducting the TANA concurrently with the CIP community interviews can help minimize EPA staff time, defray costs and reduce the administrative/time burden placed on community members. (See Community Interviews tool.) However, the TANA can be conducted at any time following the community interviews. Additionally, when the CIP is revised and the requisite community interviews indicate that the community may have unaddressed technical needs, a TANA should be conducted.

How

Prior to conducting a TANA, the CIC should meet with the site RPM or OSC and other members of the Site Team to identify current and future areas in which community members may express a need for technical assistance. The interviews associated with the TANA may be one of the first opportunities EPA has to engage with community members one-on-one. RPMs and OSCs are required to accompany the CIC, to learn firsthand about the community member's concerns.

How should TANA interviewees be selected?

Generally, 15 to 25 community interviews should be conducted for developing the CIP. When the TANA is being conducted concurrently with the CIP community interviews, the CIC should identify interviewees by using the Community Interviews tool. If the preliminary questions in the community interviews suggest the need to conduct a TANA, the CIC may wish to conduct the TANA interviews

- Existence of a community group, either a formal group or a loosely organized group, interested in the cleanup of the site and/or its future use.
- A specific request for technical assistance, such as inquiring about a TAG, requesting training, or asking for help convening a CAG or similar group.
- Clear concern (both organized and unorganized) regarding the characterization of the site, the risk assessments or proposed remedies.

**Example 2: When Formal Technical Assistance Was Necessary**

The EPA Site Team at a National Priorities List (NPL) site in Rhode Island determined that the impacted community had unaddressed technical assistance needs (e.g., assistance reviewing EPA documents). The RPM and CIC for the site conducted interviews to determine what the community's technical assistance needs were and to start the process of identifying the most appropriate resources available. The community requested assistance reviewing the RI, Human Health Risk Assessment and the Ecological Risk Assessment in order to identify key issues, and to assess remedial options and the future usability of the site. In addition, the community requested a detailed analysis of the remedial alternatives proposed in the Feasibility Study, and technical assistance when the Record of Decision and Remedial Design/Remedial Action were released.

The CIC and RPM for the site determined that informal technical assistance would not be sufficient to meet the community's needs, and coordinated a meeting with the Regional TASC work assignment manager (WAM) and Regional TAG coordinator to determine the most appropriate vehicle to address the technical assistance needs of the community. The RPM, CIC, TASC WAM and TAG coordinator believed a TAG grant would be the best mechanism as the needs were long-term in nature with assistance required throughout the Superfund cleanup process. The CIC, RPM and Regional TAG coordinator met with the community, described the TAG program and discussed whether this vehicle would effectively address their technical assistance needs. The community applied for and received a TAG grant, has procured an independent technical advisor and has acted as a key conduit for dispersing technical information to the broader community.

and community members who have expressed a specific interest in, or knowledge of, the community's technical assistance needs (including but not limited to those participating in the site's TAG, CAG or TASC). The CIC should make every effort to ensure all affected stakeholder groups are represented in the TANA interviews and give a voice to those who have not had the opportunity to fully engage in the Superfund cleanup process.

If the TANA is being conducted after the CIP community interviews have been completed, the CIC may select interviewees from those participating in the original community interviews and include others who may be able to define the community's potential technical assistance needs. Given the specific nature of the TANA, eight to ten persons should be interviewed. If the TANA is conducted concurrently with the CIP community interviews, this number may be even greater. The interviews should be targeted towards those individuals requesting additional support on technical issues (e.g., inquiring about site documents to review).

How should the interviews be conducted?

The CIC should start each interview by introducing themselves and any others who have accompanied them. Before asking the questions in the TANA questionnaire (Attachment A), outline the purpose of the TANA, how long the interview is expected to take, and thank the interviewee for taking the time to participate. Explain that providing technical assistance is an important way that EPA can help communities participate meaningfully in the decisions that affect them, and that EPA is conducting the TANA so that the Agency can allocate the limited resources available for technical assistance in a way that best meets the community's needs.

As is true for CIP community interviews, it is strongly suggested that EPA employees conduct the TANA interviews. Whenever a contractor conducts the TANA interviews, EPA personnel should be present. If the TANA is conducted concurrently with the CIP community interviews, the interviewer should make a seamless transition to the formal TANA questionnaire, which is included as an attachment in the Community Interviews tool. The interviewer should ask each stakeholder a series of questions, with the responses being documented. The stakeholder interview process should incorporate additional questions or request supplemental information as needed.

with a smaller number of individuals who can help define the community's specific needs. TANA interviewees may include state and local government officials, a PRP representative (if applicable),



CICs can use contractor support to prepare for and conduct the TANA. The contractor support should be utilized judiciously and may be useful for documenting the interviews and summarizing notes from individual interviews. The CIC usually is responsible for summarizing the interviews into a final TANA summary document (Attachment B). For detailed guidelines on how to prepare for, conduct, and summarize community interviews, please refer to the Community Interviews tool.

How should the TANA summary be prepared and technical assistance coordinated?

The CIC should promptly thank the interviewees, preferably in writing, and start drafting the TANA summary document. If the RPM, OSC or others conducted some of the interviews, the TANA summary document should be drafted jointly. This will help ensure the views of community members are accurately reported. The summary document should be succinct (limited to 4-6 pages), and follow the format shown in Attachment B.

Before sharing the TANA summary with the community, the CIC should talk with the RPM/OSC and appropriate members of the Site Team about what has been learned. Once the CIC, RPM/ OSC, and appropriate members of the Site Team agree on the content of the TANA summary, it should be distributed to the community. The CIC should explore what additional informal technical assistance might be offered, whether there may be universities and nonprofits currently enrolled in the Partners in Technical Assistance Program (PTAP) that could meet the community's technical assistance needs, and whether additional forms of formal technical assistance may be necessary. (See Attachment C for a description and matrix of Superfund technical assistance services and programs.)

If appropriate, the CIC should share the TANA with universities and nonprofits currently enrolled in the PTAP. Universities and nonprofits can join the PTAP program at any time by signing a co-sponsorship agreement with the EPA, which specifies that one benefit of the PTAP program is access to TANA documents generated for a remedial/removal site. PTAP members interested in providing non-advocacy technical assistance should contact the CIC responsible for the TANA.

The CIC should then coordinate a meeting with the RPM or OSC, and Regional technical assistance

liaisons [e.g., TASC WAM, Regional TAG coordinator] to initiate the dialogue and determine the best way to address the technical assistance needs of the community. This group of people will review the TANA summary, determine whether the technical assistance needs of the community can be met, review the list of interested PTAP members, and determine how the technical assistance needs of the community can be addressed most efficiently—through a singular vehicle or a multi-faceted approach (e.g., mixture of informal technical assistance provided by the EPA Site Team, and through formal technical assistance provided by an EPA funding vehicle or through an external partner). By the end of this meeting, the group should identify the most appropriate vehicles for providing technical assistance.

Once the appropriate technical assistance providers are identified, the CIC should coordinate a technical assistance “kickoff” meeting with the EPA Site Team, the appropriate EPA technical assistance providers (e.g., TASC WAM and/or contractor, Regional TAG coordinator, and/or the appropriate PTAP partners) and the community to ensure all parties are fully aware of their roles in addressing the technical needs of the community.

Tips

- Conducting TANA interviews with the site's RPM or OSC will aid in ensuring the technical needs of the community are accurately represented.
- TANA interviews should be compiled into a summary document as soon as possible following the final interview. Others present during the interviews should assist in jointly drafting the appropriate summary documents.
- The CIC should ensure all affected stakeholder groups are represented in the TANA interviews and have the opportunity to engage in the Superfund cleanup process. The TANA process will, as a result, expand the conversation on environmentalism.

Attachments

- Attachment A—TANA Sample Questionnaire
- Attachment B—Sample TANA Summary Document Outline



Related Tools

- Community Involvement Plans
- Community Profiles
- Community Interviews



Attachment A: Technical Assistance Needs Assessment

Sample Questionnaire

Questions for community leaders, representatives of community groups and others who may be able to help define the community's potential technical assistance needs:

1. How have you been involved with the community during the Superfund cleanup process?
2. Does your organization have any current, past, or future responsibilities at the site?
3. How would you describe the community's relationship with the EPA and the state (if applicable) during the Superfund cleanup process?
4. Has the community been receiving sufficient technical information from EPA? Has this information been clear and easy-to-understand? If not, describe the areas where you believe the community may need assistance understanding and responding to information about the site.
5. From the community's perspective, what could prevent the Superfund cleanup process from moving forward? What could EPA potentially do to address this situation?
6. What are the issues or areas in which the community may require assistance in order to participate meaningfully in the Superfund decision-making process?
7. What type of assistance do you believe would be most helpful?
8. Are you aware of the types of technical assistance from EPA that may be available to the community? (If so, please tell me what you understand to be available to the community).
9. Has the community previously received technical assistance (e.g., TAG, TASC, TAB, TAP, or TOSC)?
 - a. If so, what community group received the assistance on behalf of the community?
 - b. What were the benefits and limitations of this assistance?
10. What are the existing organizations in the community that are involved in site issues or which tend to be the "go-to" groups for community members interested in site issues or related concerns?
 - a. Are these organizations representative of, or have the ability to reach, all parts of the affected community?
 - b. Are these groups effective in listening to the community and providing a voice to all segments of the community?
 - c. Do these organizations have a robust membership, have a defined strategic plan, request input from the broader community, or have an effective relationship with the local press?
 - d. Are there organizations within the community that have competing interests or are highly divisive?
 - e. Are there particular community members or stakeholders affected by the site who may need additional assistance understanding site information and what it may mean to them? Are these stakeholder groups reached by existing organizations that serve the broader community?
11. What other stakeholders would you recommend we speak with in completing this technical assistance needs assessment?
12. Is there any other pertinent information you would like to share with us at this time?





Attachment B: Technical Assistance Needs Assessment Summary Outline

Technical Assistance Needs Assessment Summary for (Community Name)

Prepared by:

Name: _____

Office/Organization: _____

Phone #: _____ Email: _____

Issue Statement:

Explain the reason for conducting a TANA and the problems or issues that can be addressed through technical assistance.

Part 1: Background Information

The information for this section will be derived from the CIP or the *Community Interviews* conducted for the CIP. This section should not exceed one page and will provide the necessary background information to parties responsible for allocating technical assistance (e.g. CICs, TASC work assignment managers, Regional TAG coordinators, university researchers, and capacity-building nonprofits).

1. Describe the impacted community, including historical, demographic, economic, social/cultural, geographic, and other pertinent information. (Include information specific to the site and the community it impacts. Such information should include but not be limited to: site history; demographics of the affected community; social, economic and cultural issues; overall concerns of the community; current phase of remedial/ removal work being conducted at the site; and preferred communication strategy for the broader community. (Much of this information may be derived from the *Community Profile* prepared as a section of the CIP.)
2. Summarize the key issues or problems preventing the community from participating meaningfully in the discussion and decision-making process for the Superfund site. Describe technical assistance that previously has been provided to the community.

Part 2: Potential Technical Assistance Recipient Groups

1. List and provide information on the group or groups that have been identified as a possible recipient of technical assistance services. Include the name of the group and contact information.
2. Briefly describe the organizational capacity of the group to receive technical assistance; the group's prior experience receiving technical assistance and any other pertinent information about the group.

Part 3: Community Issues and Technical Assistance Needs

Complete and include the simple TANA technical assistance matrix on the next page to identify the specific services that can address each of the community's technical assistance needs and match them with service providers.

Issues and Technical Assistance Needed

1. Identify each issue for which the community may need technical assistance. For each issue identified:
 - Describe the specific type of technical assistance that is needed.
 - List previous technical assistance received by the community.
 - Explain how the community would benefit from the technical assistance service proposed.



Technical Assistance Providers for Each Need Identified

1. Consult Attachment D, Superfund Technical Assistance Services and Programs Matrix, and identify the appropriate services or programs to meet community need.
2. Complete the TANA technical assistance matrix.

TANA Technical Assistance Matrix

Community Issue	Technical Assistance Need	Technical Assistance Services to Meet This Need	Technical Assistance Provider

