



Technical Assistance Needs Assessment

Overview

The technical assistance needs assessment (TANA) is a site-specific tool 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 to get their views on how the community is receiving technical information about a site; to determine if the community needs additional assistance in order to understand and respond to site-related technical information; and to identify 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 meeting the community's needs for additional technical assistance while minimizing the overlap of services provided by the site team or external partners, or through EPA grants and contracts.

Why This Is Important

This activity is important because technical assistance helps communities understand site issues and participate in site decisions in a meaningful way. Conducting a TANA is strongly recommended whenever a community may require additional technical assistance, so that EPA can tailor its assistance to the specific needs of the community. 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. A TANA can be conducted 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.

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

A TANA will help the site team determine the technical assistance needs of a community affected by a site. The TANA 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 Superfund site team, and may include [fact sheets](#), [availability sessions](#), workshops, trainings, and other mechanisms. One example of informal technical assistance might be a fish advisory fact sheet that provides technical information to community members on how to reduce potential health risks by limiting or not eating certain species of fish present at the site. This is considered informal technical assistance because the fact sheet is provided by EPA and does not involve 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, EPA/PRP's technical assistance plan (TAP), or Conflict Prevention and Resolution Services (CPRS) contract—or through an external partner



such as a university or nonprofit organization. (Also see the [Summary of Technical Assistance](#) tool for an overview of EPA technical assistance resources.)

The TANA summary serves as a blueprint for designing a coordinated effort to address the technical assistance needs of the community. This document will help EPA determine the community's needs for technical assistance, identify appropriate technical assistance resources, and plan how these needs can be addressed effectively and efficiently.

Objectives for conducting the TANA are to:

- Help the site team and external partners 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 related to the remedial or removal activities occurring at the site, including non-advocacy information assistance and expertise, community education needs, organizational capacity-building assistance, and mediation or conflict resolution services.
- Ensure the most efficient use of EPA technical assistance funding vehicles (e.g., TASC contract, TAGs, CPRS contract).
- Avoid unnecessary duplication of technical assistance provided to a community through EPA funding vehicles and via university and nonprofit partners.
- Increase internal EPA communication and collaboration between community involvement coordinators (CICs), remedial project managers (RPMs), on-scene coordinators (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 Superfund Research Program grantees and nonprofits providing capacity-building assistance) with the shared goal of addressing a community's technical assistance needs.
- Give 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 that tribal communities typically experience a broader range of environmental effects and risks when impacted by a Superfund site.

When to Use

For most sites, informal technical assistance provided routinely in the course of community involvement activities will be sufficient to address the community's needs. However, when a community may have unmet technical assistance needs, a TANA should be conducted. A TANA 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.

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 burden placed on community members. However, the TANA can be conducted at any time following the community interviews. A TANA should be conducted when the CIP is revised and the requisite community interviews indicate that the community may have unaddressed technical needs.

The CIC should complete a TANA with selected interviewees to help determine the community's potential need for additional technical assistance if one or more of the following conditions exists:

- The site is complex and the community may need assistance understanding technical site issues.
- A specific request for technical assistance, such as inquiring about a TAG, requesting training, or asking for help convening a community advisory group (CAG) or similar group.
- Clear concern within the community about the characterization of the site, the risk assessment, or proposed remedies.
- Stated intention by the community or individuals of plans to submit comments to EPA.
- The receipt of numerous or significant comments, formally (as a result of the comment period) or informally (through phone calls or emails).
- 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.
- 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.

When is Informal Technical Assistance Appropriate?

The conditions or situations that suggest the need for informal technical assistance provided directly by EPA include:

- Obvious community interest to become involved in the process or to partner with EPA.
- Members of the community appear to understand the Superfund process and cleanup options, and do not express a need for assistance to understand technical issues related to the site.
- Clear or increased community interest in the site and EPA's role in the cleanup, as measured by an increase in the frequency of contacts from the community.
- Obvious community interest in understanding the Superfund process, remediation options, technical documents, and EPA's rationale for its decisions.
- News media coverage of the site and EPA's efforts.

How to Conduct a TANA

The CIC should meet with the RPM or OSC and other members of the site team prior to conducting a TANA to identify current and future areas in which community members may need technical assistance. RPMs and OSCs should accompany the CIC whenever possible to learn firsthand about the community members' needs and concerns.

How Should TANA Interviewees be Selected?

Generally, 15 to 25 community interviews should be conducted to develop the CIP. When the TANA is 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 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), 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 recipient group, CAG, or TASC group). The CIC

Example 1: When Informal Technical Assistance Was Sufficient

The EPA site team at a Superfund alternative approach (SAA) site in Pennsylvania determined that the community needed a better understanding of vapor intrusion issues at the site and that it could meet this need by providing additional informal technical assistance. EPA's site team was meeting regularly with a CAG during the early stages of the remedial investigation (RI). At the time, the CAG was considering requesting formal technical assistance in the form of an EPA/PRP's Technical Assistance Plan, 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 PRP held a series of information sessions open to the general public. These sessions introduced the community to the personnel who would be conducting the sampling, and answered their technical questions. The informal technical assistance provided at these information sessions not only helped community members understand vapor intrusion and EPA's sampling effort, it also helped EPA and the PRP obtain access for sampling to over 90 percent of the residences within the study area.

should try to ensure all affected stakeholder groups are represented in the TANA interviews and that those who have not had the opportunity to fully engage in the Superfund cleanup process also are interviewed. 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 others who might be able to define the community's technical assistance needs. Given the specific nature of the TANA, eight to 10 people should be interviewed. The interviews should be targeted to those individuals requesting additional support on technical issues (e.g., inquiring about site documents to review).



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 (i.e., assistance reviewing EPA documents). The RPM and CIC conducted interviews to determine the community's technical assistance needs and begin identifying the most appropriate resources available. The community requested assistance reviewing the RI, human health risk assessment, and ecological risk assessment in order to identify key issues, and to assess remedial options and the future usability of the site. The community also requested a detailed analysis of the remedial alternatives proposed in the feasibility study, as well as technical assistance upon release of the record of decision and remedial design/remedial action report.

The CIC and RPM determined that informal technical assistance would not meet the community's needs, and coordinated a meeting with the Regional TASC Contracting Officer Representative (COR) and Regional TAG coordinator to determine the most appropriate vehicle to address these needs. The RPM, CIC, TASC COR, and Regional TAG coordinator believed a TAG would be the best mechanism because technical assistance was required throughout the Superfund cleanup process. The CIC, RPM, and Regional TAG coordinator discussed the TAG program with the community. The community applied for and received a TAG. It procured an independent technical advisor who acted as a key conduit for dispersing technical information to the broader community.

How Should the Interviews be Conducted?

The CIC should start each interview with introductions. Before asking the questions in the TANA questionnaire (see Attachment 1), outline the purpose of the TANA, explain 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. Also explain that EPA is

conducting the TANA so the Agency can allocate the limited resources available for technical assistance in a way that best meets the community's needs.

As with CIP community interviews, it is strongly suggested that EPA employees conduct the TANA interviews. If 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 questions in the TANA questionnaire.

Contractor support should be used judiciously. CICs can use contractors to prepare for and conduct the TANA. Contractor support can be used to document the interviews and summarize notes from interviews. The CIC usually is responsible for preparing the final TANA summary document (see Attachment 2).

How Should the TANA Summary be Prepared and Technical Assistance Coordinated?

The CIC should promptly thank the interviewees, preferably in writing, and start summarizing the interviews and drafting the TANA summary document. The summary document should be succinct (limited to four to six pages), and follow the format shown in Attachment 2.

Before sharing the TANA summary with the community, the CIC should talk with the RPM or OSC and appropriate members of the site team about what has been learned. Once the CIC, RPM or 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.

If appropriate, the CIC can 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 EPA, which specifies that one benefit of the PTAP program is access to TANA documents generated for a remedial or removal site. PTAP members interested in providing non-advocacy technical assistance should contact the CIC responsible for the TANA.



The CIC should then meet with the RPM or OSC, and regional technical assistance liaisons (i.e., TASC COR, Regional TAG coordinator) to 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. This may be accomplished through a single vehicle or a multi-faceted approach (e.g., a mixture of informal technical assistance provided by the EPA site team, and formal technical assistance provided through an EPA funding vehicle or by an external partner).

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 COR or contractor, Regional TAG coordinator, 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

- Conduct TANA interviews with the site's RPM or OSC to help ensure the technical needs of the community are accurately represented.
- Ensure that all affected stakeholder groups are represented in the TANA interviews and have the opportunity to engage in the Superfund cleanup process.
- Compile TANA interviews into a summary document as soon as possible following the final interview. Others present during the interviews should assist in summarizing the interviews and preparing the TANA summary.

Attachments

- Attachment 1: *Technical Assistance Needs Assessment Questionnaire*
- Attachment 2: *Technical Assistance Needs Assessment Summary Document Outline*





Attachment 1: Technical Assistance Needs Assessment Questionnaire

Technical Assistance Needs Assessment (TANA) Questionnaire

Submitted questions with ICR for the Technical Assistance Needs Assessments at Superfund Remedial or Removal Sites

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 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., technical assistance grant (TAG), technical assistance to brownfields (TAB), EPA/potentially responsible party technical assistance plan (TAP), or technical assistance services for communities (TASC))?
 - 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?
 - e. Are there particular community members or stakeholders affected by the site who may need additional assistance understanding site information? 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 2: Technical Assistance Needs Assessment Summary Document Outline

Technical Assistance Needs Assessment Summary for (Community Name)

Prepared by:

Name: _____

Office/Organization: _____

Phone #: _____ Email: _____

Issue Statement:

Explain the reason for conducting a technical assistance needs assessment (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 community involvement plan (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., community involvement coordinators, Technical Assistance Services for Communities work assignment managers, Regional Technical Assistance Grant 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 or 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.

Community Issues and Need for Technical Assistance

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.



Identifying Technical Assistance Providers

1. Consult the *Summary of Technical Assistance* tool 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