

Exchange Network Forum

Thursday, April 11, 2024

1:00 to 2:00 PM ET

Welcome

Alex O'Neill, EPA Office of Information Management (OIM), Office of Mission Support (OMS)

- Alex O'Neill welcomed participants to the meeting and noted that the format is designed to be an open meeting to encourage interaction between participants.
- The Exchange Network is making progress toward reinvigorating partnerships and wants to continue to address key needs around data exchanges.
- Alex reviewed the agenda with participants.
 - Meet your Exchange Network Regional Coordinator (Region 7's Carmen Quizon and Cassandra Krul)
 - This meeting will begin a new series that includes hearing from Regional Exchange Network Coordinators. This will be a standing part of the agenda going forward.
 - The intent is to highlight environmental programs with EPA regional staff who manage EN-related projects.
 - Update on the FY24 Exchange Network Solicitation Notice, including upcoming webinars.
 - Feedback on session topics for E2i Sessions.

Meet Your EN Coordinator: Region 7

Carmen Quizon and Cassandra Krul, EPA Region 7

- Carmen Quizon and Cassandra Krul introduced themselves:
 - Carmen has been in Region 7 a little over a year. She has a background in Grants Management, organizational development, and does analysis of the Employee Viewpoint Survey data. She is transitioning into the role held previously by Cassandra Krul. Before EPA, she also worked on grants for AmeriCorps and USDA.
 - Cassandra has been in Region 7 for five and a half years. She is also the VISTA Program Coordinator and Senior Grants Project Officer. She is moving to the Environmental Justice Division where she will continue working on grants.
- Region 7 represents four states and nine tribal nations.
- Region 7 has eight open grants and has had 69 total grants since 2002. These include the following types of grants:
 - Integrated Compliance Information System
 - Water Quality Exchange
 - Underground Injection Control
 - Virtual Exchange Service

- Safe Drinking Water Information System
- Open Data Projects
- Advanced Water Quality Monitoring
- Region 7 provided an overview of a grant awarded to the Nebraska State Fire Marshall:
 - The grant was awarded in 2022 and is a partnership grant between the NSFEM and North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality.
 - The intent is to modernize the exchange of data between states and EPA using web-based technologies to maintain the latest available data sets on underground storage tanks. This will enhance decision-making in protecting water quality and improve emergency response capabilities.
 - Rosemary Hatton works for NSFEM. They are working with OCIO and technical computer experts to make their database usable so that EPA can access it. OCIO has been doing the technical work on the database that was last updated in the 1990s.
 - The following successes and challenges were noted:
 - Successes
 - Upgraded to Java/Tomcat versions
 - Tacked outdated/vulnerable technologies with upgrades
 - Converted application to Spring/Hibernate for more robust capabilities and better look/feel
 - VES connector is returning data from simple queries
 - CAT environment is close to being ready for Client Testing
 - Challenges
 - Database logs continue to fill up and it is not clear why, DBAs are concerned about the database being a resource hog.
 - Assistance is welcome from anyone who may be able to determine why Tenable Nessus scan are overloading the database logs.

FY24 EN Grant Solicitation Notice

Alex O'Neill, EPA OIM, OMS

- The FY24 EN Grants Solicitation Notice is live and applications are due no later than May 22nd, 2024 at 11:59 PM Eastern.
- There are several upcoming webinars that will dive deeper into the grant process on April 25th, 30th and May 2nd at 3 PM ET. The latter webinar will be specifically geared toward Tribes.
- The EN Grant Program leads, Erin McGowan and Aimee Awad, are happy to answer questions.
- Instrumentalities are an organization created by or pursuant to state or tribal statute and operated for public purposes.
- Generally, an instrumentality performs governmental functions, but does not have the full powers of a government, such as police authority, taxation, and eminent domain.
- There are certain requirements that instrumentalities must follow, and these will be explained in the upcoming EN Grant webinars.

- Eligible entities for EN grants are outlined in Section 3 A of the solicitation notice. This includes States, U.S. Territories, Federally Recognized Tribes and Alaska Native Villages, Inter-tribal Consortia of Federally Recognized Tribes, and Instrumentalities of a State or Tribe.
- Ineligible entities have the option partner with an eligible entity, provided that the lead applicant (formal EN partner) meets the specifications outlined in Sections III-A, III-D, and IV-B and the partnership is not formed from agencies within a single state, territorial, or tribal government. The eligible entity could then share funds with your organization via a subaward. See additional subaward information under Section II-A.
- The EN grant program expects to award approximately \$10,500,000 in 25-35 assistance agreements.
- There are three primary funding areas this year:
 - EN Funding Area 1: Increased Data Access and Innovative Business Processes
 - EN Funding Area 2: Eliminate paper submittals and expand e-reporting
 - EN Funding Area 3: Augment the information management capacity of EN partners
- Projects may fall under one or more EN project opportunities.
- If you are proposing your own project, you must identify which EN Funding Area will be supported.
- Project opportunities are specific project write-ups providing potential applicants with the information needed to design a proposal for a data exchange, data service, or project type.
- These write-ups are available in SN Appendices A-C. Each includes a description, suggested project activities, estimated costs, and helpful links/resources.

EN Grant Solicitation Question and Answers

Note: The following questions were answered in the chat during the EN Forum.

Q: Is it possible to move up the grants webinars next year? Our application was already due internally.

A: We will share your feedback on timing with the EN Grants Team and our management.

Q: Who is a Programmatic Contact? It would help to have actual, explicit examples of "programmatic involvement."

A: For programmatic contact question: A programmatic contact should be from an office within the grantee organization that is utilizing the information being produced, collected, or shared as a result of the proposed project. If your program owns and manages the data that is being used, a programmatic contact is not necessary. Just be sure to clearly state it is not an applicable role within your project narrative, and then explain in your justification that your program owns/manages the data.

Q: The "mandatory" tables are convoluted and have redundancies. Is it ok to simplify their formats?

A: The mandatory tables can be edited, but please be sure to provide the information requested in the Evaluation Criteria found on pages 17-21 of the Solicitation Notice

Q: Are there funds allocated specifically for tribes and tribal consortia? If so how much?

A: EPA remains committed to awarding at least 20% of the appropriated funds being used to award EN grants to tribes. The amount awarded to tribes may be greater than this, depending on the final

appropriated amount for grant programs, the number of applicants, proposed project budgets, the merit of tribal applications, and on the competitive review of all applications. In addition, EPA reserves the right to increase or decrease (including decreasing to zero) the total number and amount of awards under this set-aside, or change the ratio of assistance agreements awarded.

Q: When is the first 2024 progress reports due and is there a template for it?

A: Progress reports are due twice a year on October 31st and April 30th and are completed in the Central Data Exchange (CDX) database where a standard form is provided.

Q: Is there a "how-to" document or link I can follow that can walk me through this process, seeing as this will be my first progress report?

A: More information on how to register in CDX and when to submit reports can be found in the terms and conditions of your grant, which should have been included with your notice of award. Reference [Appendix A](#) for more information about performance reporting and the final performance report.

Environmental Information & Innovation (E2i) Sessions

Alex O'Neill, EPA OIM, OMS and Kurt Rakouskas, ECOS

- Alex O'Neill noted that meeting chairs, Eric Cleckler with the Alabama Department of Environmental Management and Jennifer Reyeher with the Muscogee (Creek) Nation presented on the last call.
- The dates and venue are locked in for the Environmental Information & Innovation National Meeting, or E2i. The meeting will take place in Kansas City, Missouri from September 17th to 19th.
- E2i builds on the Exchange Network and E-Enterprise meetings that have taken place over the past 20 years. Due to COVID-19, however, it has been almost 6 years since this community was able to gather in person.
- The theme for the meeting is *Reinvigorate, Collaborate, Innovate*.
- EPA, states, and tribes are cooperatively planning the meeting agenda and the intent is to gather input on this call to help inform the agenda.
- These meetings are a great platform for sharing solutions, talking through challenges, and interacting with other environmental protection professionals.
- If participants have a story to tell about an innovative program, data management solution, or collaborative partnership they are encouraged to share that information.
- The call for content was extended to next Friday, April 19.
- Abstracts may be provided for any of the following formats: Lightning Talks; Podium Presentations; Panel Discussions; Innovation Videos; and Workshops. A [form](#) is provided to submit ideas.
- Registration is expected to open in the second half of May once the agenda is finalized.
- Participants should sign up to receive Exchange Network Email Alerts to receive communication about the meeting and opportunities to get involved.

- To sign up, visit www.exchangenetwork.net/news and click the green sign-up button at the top of the page.
- A suggestion was made to include topics on Data Exchange using AI.
 - Alex and Kurt indicated that meeting participants who are currently active in AI are encouraged to volunteer to participate in a panel discussion.
 - Another participant noted that they would like to hear about other states that have developed a policy on AI use. He indicated Ohio is trying to develop a guiding policy of how to use it and it would be helpful to hear if other states are pursuing similar activities.
- Kurt Rakouskas of ECOS facilitated a meeting poll to gather input on topics participants are interested in including on the E2i agenda. The results of the poll are in [Appendix B](#).

Appendix A: Exchange Network Grant Performance Reporting and Final Performance Report

Exchange Network grant award recipients must submit semi-annual progress reports to the EPA Regional Project Officer electronically through EPA's Central Data Exchange (CDX). To register for a CDX account, grantees must visit https://cdx.epa.gov/epa_home.asp and complete the steps required for registration. A training PowerPoint presentation is available for grantees submitting semi-annual progress reporting forms through CDX and can be found at <https://cdx.epa.gov/FAQ#IEPBQ1>. These progress reports must be submitted within one month of the end of each reporting period. The first reporting period is from the award issuance date to March 31, 2024, and the first report will be due to the EPA Regional Project Officer on April 30, 2024. Subsequent reports will be due every six months thereafter, until the project is completed, and the reporting periods will be as follows:

- 1) April 1 through September 30 (report due October 31) and
- 2) October 1 through March 31 (report due April 30).

At a minimum, semi-annual progress reports must include the following:

1. An update on the schedule and status of carrying out the project, including any problems encountered and suggestions to overcome them;
2. An explanation of expenditures to date, with expenditures linked to project results;
3. Information on each of the following areas:
 - a. a comparison of actual accomplishments with the anticipated outputs/outcomes specified in the assistance agreement work plan;
 - b. the reasons why anticipated outputs/outcomes were not met (if applicable); and
 - c. other pertinent information, including, when appropriate, analysis and explanation of cost overruns or high unit costs. The recipient agrees to notify EPA of problems, delays, or adverse conditions which materially impair the ability to meet the outputs/outcomes specified in the assistance agreement work plan.

If applicable, semi-annual reports must also address Subawards:

Subawards: The recipient must report on its subaward monitoring activities under 2 CFR 200.331(d).

Examples of items that must be reported if the pass-through entity has the information available are:

1. Summaries of results of reviews of financial and programmatic reports.
2. Summaries of findings from site visits and/or desk reviews to ensure effective subrecipient performance.
3. Environmental results the subrecipient achieved.
4. Summaries of audit findings and related pass-through entity management decisions.
5. Actions the pass-through entity has taken to correct deficiencies such as those specified at 2 CFR 200.331(e), 2 CFR 200.207 and the 2 CFR Part 200.338 Remedies for Noncompliance.

Grantees must submit semi-annual reports even when the grantee has not made progress during the reporting period.

In addition to the semi-annual progress reports, the award recipient must submit (electronically through CDX) a final report to the EPA Project Officer within 120 days after the expiration or termination of the approved project period. The final report shall document project activities over the entire project period and shall include information on each of the following areas:

1. a comparison of actual accomplishments with the anticipated outputs/outcomes specified in the assistance agreement work plan;
2. the reasons why anticipated outputs/outcomes were not met (if applicable); and
3. other pertinent information, including, when appropriate, analysis and explanation of cost overruns or high unit costs. The recipient agrees to notify EPA of problems, delays, or adverse conditions which materially impair the ability to meet the outputs/outcomes specified in the assistance agreement work plan.

If applicable, the Final Report must also address Subawards:

Subawards: The recipient must report on its subaward monitoring activities under 2 CFR 200.331(d).

Examples of items that must be reported if the pass-through entity has the information available

- are:
1. Summaries of results of reviews of financial and programmatic reports.
 2. Summaries of findings from site visits and/or desk reviews to ensure effective subrecipient performance.
 3. Environmental results the subrecipient achieved.
 4. Summaries of audit findings and related pass-through entity management decisions.
 5. Actions the pass-through entity has taken to correct deficiencies such as those specified at 2 CFR 200.331(e), 2 CFR 200.207 and the 2 CFR Part 200.338 Remedies for Noncompliance.

Appendix B: E2i Meeting Agenda Poll

What type of organization do you work for?

1. Tribal Agency (15%)
2. State Agency (62%)
3. U.S. EPA (16%)
4. Academia/NGO (0%)
5. Contractor (7%)
6. Other (0%)

Have you attended a prior iteration of this national meeting?

- Yes (36%)
- No (64%)
- Not sure (0%)

At E2i I hope to have opportunities to [insert topic]

- Throw the Tomcat log filling up question at an AI for ideas!
- What's new in data exchange
- Learn more about efforts in technology and process modernization that may impact partners.
- Networking
- learn new things that I might be able to leverage.
- Get a pulse on my states path
- See API's
- Data exchange using AI
- I have zero capacity to attend or participate in the E2i, though I'd love to. I'm busy administering grants and applying to them.
- Learn more about progress in implementing governance across the enterprise.
- Get ideas Networking
- Learn more about API, PostgreSQL, see other state dashboards Learn about how other states are approaching low code implementation. Power Platform in particular.
- ITRC EDM
- network
- Network. Strategize.
- Engage with other partners
- Network with other states.
- get feedback on my team's products
- Network
- Learn what's new and exciting about the Exchange network.
- See projects examples, federal partnership projects, workforce support.
- impress to EPA how much their direct reporting initiatives affect industry and states.
- Potentially AI and integrating into the states
- Learn as much as I can because I am new to the role but not new to TCEQ
- Meet people, network, batch data exchange, system upgrades
- Continued improved data exchange of transportation data (telematics)
- network, see demos
- API strategy
- Learn what other states are using as best practices to see if there is any areas we can improve on.
- Learn
- Network with other counter parts, learn about how technology has been used.
- See other state permitting programs

- Learn more about database management, more on sharing air quality data, networking, learning more about data management in general.
- network and learn about ways entities have used EN grant funding
- Dunno
- Networking
- Network
- Listen and understand the needs of those using EN
- Learn more about VES
- Learn about other state successes in data exchange and meet colleagues who work in the same space
- Networking
- PostgreSQL
- network
- Network
- Learn...
- Network
- Network
- Network

What session formats do you find most useful or helpful?

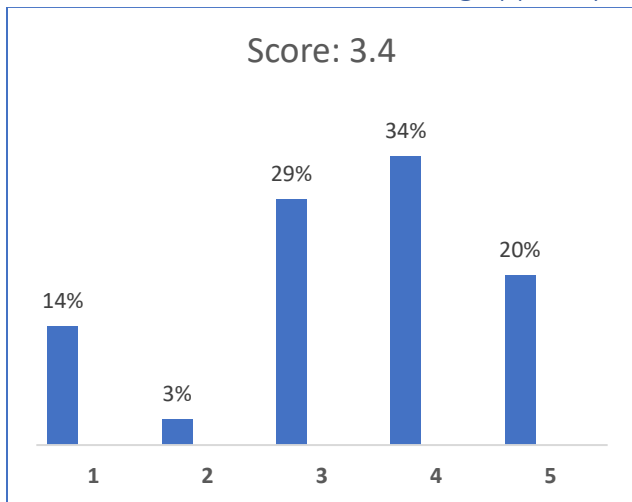
The results are listed in the order of preference:

1. Interactive Discussions
2. Project Presentations
3. Networking Sessions
4. Panel Discussions
5. Lightning Talks
6. Keynote Speakers

If portions of the meeting were enabled for virtual attendance via webinar, I would most likely:

- Attend in person (31%)
- Attend virtually (33%)
- Depends on availability of travel funding (31%)
- Not sure (4%)

How valuable is a mobile meeting app for your meeting experience? (on a scale of 1-5)



Are you interested in opportunities for communities of practice to meet and have discussions around particular software or service platforms (i.e. R-Studio, document management systems, other low-code platforms)? If so, what topics would you suggest?

- ArcGIS, telematics
- FME,SQL, postgresSQL,API
- EQuIS
- Visualization tools
- EPA's TADA package
- Power apps. Low code platforms second for EPA platforms
- Navigating IT contracts with cloud vendors in the government sector.
- EPA platforms
- YES! Low Code, Windsor nVIRO.
- RStudio, ESRI products
- API basics
- Data services, applications, or platforms made available by EPA
- Data warehousing
- SQL to data visualization techniques/examples (R shiny, e.g.)
- R, Python
- geospatial community
- R, Document management system
- Just not familiar with this. I'm a lab nerd so in person training is offered.
- Microsoft Power Platform
- GIS, PowerBI
- R markdown and automated reporting
- Windsor products
- R-Studio
- Storage Tank permitting systems.
- XML schemas
- R, Python, GIS, spatial data
- R Coding, R- Studio. Use a great deal for air quality analysis.
- We have one RStudio app calculator that would be interesting.
- SQL database design
- EDM, PowerApps and Dynamics

Are there specific types of networking opportunities you would like to see at E2i?

- Shuffleboard
- Team building event
- Colored flags on name tags. If I have a green tag, talk to me about x, yellow tag talk to me about y
- Walking tour and restaurant
- Happy hour events
- meeting app with individual's photos, name tags, food events
- Restaurants
- Breakout rooms with facilitators
- Walking tour, speed dating/networking, #hashtags for social media
- Happy Hour
- Facilitators to guide topics at networking dinners
- Rooms set aside for specific topics during the networking time.
- Beg, Intermediate, Advance name tag labels
- Networking over meals.
- Rooms set aside for specific topics. Maybe a facilitator to keep the rowdy folks in control.
- After conference events
- Multiple venues/approaches to cultivating community.
- Breakfasts, showcases, evening events.
- Specific EN partner groups? States, Tribes, EPA break outs?
- Coffee and lunch breaks that are long enough to have a meaningful conversations. break out sessions
- Practical how-to type sessions
- Time/space to meet other members of this committee!
- Focus Groups for specific topic. Example R Coding breakout session.