

Superfund Technical Assistance Grants

Office of Emergency and Remedial Response
Hazardous Site Control Division (OS-220)

Quick Reference Fact Sheet

WHAT ARE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE GRANTS

Background of Program -- In 1980, the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA) -- otherwise known as "Superfund" -- established a trust fund for the cleanup of hazardous waste sites in the United States. CERCLA was amended and reauthorized when Congress passed the Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act (SARA) of 1986. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), working in concert with the States, is responsible for administering the Superfund program.

An important aspect of the Superfund program is citizen involvement at the local level in decision-making that relates to site-specific cleanup actions. For this reason, community outreach activities are underway at each of the 1,200 sites that are presently on, or proposed for listing on, the National Priorities List (NPL). The NPL is EPA's published list of the most serious abandoned or otherwise uncontrolled hazardous waste sites nationwide, which have been identified for possible remedial cleanup under Superfund.

Recognizing the importance of community involvement and the need for citizens living near NPL sites to be well-informed, Congress included provisions in SARA to establish a Technical Assistance Grant (TAG) Program intended to foster informed public involvement in decisions relating to site-specific cleanup strategies under Superfund.

In addition to regulatory and legal requirements, decisions concerning cleanup initiatives at NPL sites must take into account a range of technical considerations. These might include:

- Analytical profiles of conditions at the site;
- The nature of the wastes involved; and
- The kinds of technology available for performing the necessary cleanup actions.

The TAG Program provides funds for qualified citizens' groups to hire independent technical advisors to help them understand and comment on such technical factors in cleanup decisions affecting them.

Basic Provisions of the Technical Assistance Grants Program

- Grants of up to \$50,000 are available to community groups for the purpose of hiring technical advisors to help citizens understand and interpret site-related technical information.
- The group must cover 20 percent of the total costs of the project to be supported by TAG funds.
- The group must budget the expenditure of grant funds to cover the entire cleanup period (which averages six years).
- There may be only one TAG award per NPL site; however, the grant may be renewed.

USES OF TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE GRANTS

Citizen groups may use grant funds to hire technical advisors to help them understand information that already exists about the site or information developed during the Superfund cleanup process. Acceptable uses of these grant funds include payments to technical advisors for services such as:

- Reviewing site-related documents, whether produced by EPA or others;
- Meeting with the recipient group to explain technical information;
- Providing assistance to the grant recipient in communicating the group's site-related concerns;
- Disseminating interpretations of technical information to the community;
- Participating in site visits, when possible, to gain a better understanding of cleanup activities; and
- Traveling to meetings and hearings directly related to the situation at the site.

TAG funds may not be used to develop new information (for example, additional sampling) or to underwrite legal actions in any way, including the preparation of testimony or the hiring of expert witnesses.

You can obtain a complete list of eligible and ineligible uses of grant funds by contacting your EPA Regional Office or the Headquarters information number listed at the end of this pamphlet. In addition, this information is included in the EPA publication entitled *The Citizens' Guidance Manual for the Technical Assistance Grant Program* (OSWER Directive 9230.1-03), also available from your Regional EPA Office.

WHO MAY APPLY

As stated in the 1986 Superfund amendments, groups eligible to receive grants under the TAG program are those whose membership may be affected by a release or threatened release of toxic wastes at any facility listed on the NPL or proposed for listing, and where preliminary site work has begun. In general, eligible groups are groups of individuals who live near the site and whose health, economic well-being, or enjoyment of the environment are directly threatened. Any group applying for a TAG must be nonprofit and incorporated or working towards incorporation under applicable State laws. Applications are encouraged from:

- Groups that have a genuine interest in learning more about the technical aspects of a nearby hazardous waste site; and
- Groups that have, or intend to establish, an organization to manage a grant efficiently and effectively.

For example, such groups could be:

- Existing citizens' associations;
- Environmental or health advocacy groups; or
- Coalitions of such groups formed to deal with community concerns about the hazardous waste site and its impact on the surrounding area.

Groups that are not eligible for grant funds are:

- Potentially responsible parties: any individuals or companies (such as facility owners or operators, or transporters or generators of hazardous waste) potentially responsible for, or contributing to, the contamination problems at a Superfund site;
- Academic institutions;
- Political subdivisions; and
- Groups established and/or sustained by governmental entities (including emergency planning committees and some citizen advisory groups).

HOW TO APPLY FOR A GRANT

Requirements -- When applying for a TAG, a group must provide information to EPA (or to the State, if the State is administering the TAG program) to determine if the group meets specific administrative and management requirements. The application also must include a description of the group's history, goals, and plans for using the technical assistance funds. Factors that are particularly important in this evaluation process include:

- o The group's ability to manage the grant in compliance with EPA grant and procurement regulations;
- o The degree to which the group members' health, economic well-being, and enjoyment of the environment are adversely affected by a hazardous waste site;
- o The group's commitment and ability to share the information provided by the technical advisor with others in the community;
- o Broad representation of affected groups and individuals in the community; and;
- o Whether the applicant group is nonprofit and incorporated for TAG purposes. (Only incorporated groups may receive grants. Groups must either be incorporated specifically for the purpose of addressing site-related problems or incorporated for broader purposes if the group has a substantial history of involvement at the site.)

In general, a group must demonstrate that it is aware of the time commitment, resources, and dedication needed to successfully manage a TAG. Applicant groups should consult *The Citizens' Guidance Manual For The Technical Assistance Grant Program* for detailed instructions on how to present such information.

Notification Procedures and Evaluation Criteria -- The 1986 Superfund amendments state that only one TAG may be awarded per site. To ensure that all eligible groups have equal access to technical assistance and an equal opportunity to compete for a single available grant (if a coalition of groups proves to be impossible), EPA has established a formal notification process, which includes the following steps:

- o Groups wishing to apply for a technical assistance grant must first submit to EPA a short letter stating their group's desire to apply and naming the site(s) involved. If site project work is already underway or scheduled to begin, EPA will provide formal notice through mailings, meetings, or other public notices to other interested parties that a grant for the site soon may be awarded.
- o Other potential applicants would then have 30 days to contact the original applicant to form a coalition.
- o If potential applicants are unable to form a coalition, they will notify EPA within this time period and EPA will accept separate applications from all interested groups for an additional 30-day period.
- o EPA would then award a grant to the application that best meets the requirements described above.

The maximum grant that can be awarded to any group is \$50,000. The actual amount depends on what the group intends to accomplish. A group's minimum contribution of 20 percent of the total costs of the technical assistance project can be covered with cash and/or "in-kind" contributions, such as office supplies or services provided by the group. These services might include, for example, publication of a newsletter or the time an accountant donates to managing the group's finances. The value of donated professional services is determined based on rates charged for similar work in the area.

In special cases where an applicant group intends to apply for a single grant covering multiple sites in close proximity to each other, EPA can allow a waiver of the \$50,000 grant limit. In such cases, however, the recipient cannot receive more than \$50,000 for each site to which it intends to apply funds (example: 3 sites x \$50,000 = maximum grant amount of \$150,000).

CHOOSING A TECHNICAL ADVISOR

When choosing a technical advisor, a group should consider the kind of technical advice the group needs most and whether a prospective advisor has the variety of skills necessary to provide all of the advice needed. Each technical advisor must have:

- Knowledge of hazardous or toxic waste issues;
- Academic training in relevant fields such as those listed above; and
- The ability to translate technical information into terms understandable to lay persons.

In addition, a technical advisor should have:

- Experience working on hazardous waste or toxic waste problems;
- Experience in making technical presentations and working with community groups; and
- Good writing skills.

Technical advisors will need specific knowledge of one or more of these subjects:

Chemistry: Analysis of the chemical constituents and properties of wastes at the site;

Toxicology: Evaluation of the potential effects of site contaminants upon human health and the environment;

Epidemiology: Evaluation of the pattern of human health effects potentially associated with site contaminants;

Hydrology and Hydrogeology: Evaluation of potential contamination of area surface water and ground-water wells from wastes at the site;

Soil Science: Evaluation of potential and existing soil contamination;

Limnology: Evaluation of the impact of site runoff upon the plant and animal life of nearby streams, lakes, and other bodies of water;

Meteorology: Assessment of background atmospheric conditions and the potential spread of contaminants released into the air by the site; and/or

Engineering: Analysis of the development and evaluation of remedial alternatives and the design and construction of proposed cleanup actions.

A grant recipient may choose to hire more than one technical advisor to obtain the combination of skills required at a particular site. For example, a group may be unable to find a single advisor experienced in both hydrology and epidemiology, two of the skills most needed at its site. Another approach would be to hire a consulting firm that has experience in all the needed areas. *The Citizens' Guidance Manual for the Technical Assistance Grant Program* identifies other issues that citizens' groups may wish to consider in hiring a technical advisor.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

For further information on the application process or any other aspect of the TAG program, please contact your EPA Regional Office or call the national information number, both of which are listed below. An application package is available free by calling the EPA Regional Office for your State (see map on back cover). Each application package includes all the necessary application and certification forms as well as a copy of *The Citizen's Guidance Manual For The Technical Assistance Grant Program*. This manual contains sample forms with detailed instructions to assist you in preparing a TAG application.

EPA Superfund Offices

EPA Headquarters

Office of Emergency & Remedial
Response
401 M Street, SW
Washington, DC 20460
(202) 382-2449

EPA Region 1

Emergency and Remedial
Response Division
John F. Kennedy Building
Boston, MA 02203
(617) 573-5701
*Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire,
Rhode Island, Vermont*

EPA Region 2

Superfund Branch
26 Federal Plaza
New York, NY 10278
(212) 264-4534
New Jersey, New York, Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands

EPA Region 3

Superfund Branch
841 Chestnut Building
Philadelphia, PA 19106
(215) 597-3239
*Delaware, District of Columbia, Maryland,
Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia*

EPA Region 4

Emergency and Remedial
Response Branch
345 Courtland Street, NE
Atlanta, GA 30365
(404) 347-2234
*Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi,
North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee*

EPA Region 5

Emergency and Remedial
Response Branch
230 S. Dearborn Street
Chicago, IL 60604
(312) 886-1660
*Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio,
Wisconsin*

EPA Region 6

Superfund Program Branch
Allied Bank Tower
1445 Ross Avenue
Dallas, TX 75202-2733
(214) 655-2200
Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas

EPA Region 7

Superfund Branch
726 Minnesota Avenue
Kansas City, KS 66101
(913) 236-2803
Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska

EPA Region 8

Waste Management Division
1 Denver Place
999 18th Street
Denver, CO 80202-2413
(303) 564-7040
*Colorado, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota,
Utah, Wyoming*

EPA Region 9**Superfund Programs Branch****215 Fremont Street****San Francisco, CA 94105****(415) 454-744-1766***Arizona, California, Guam, Hawaii, Nevada,
American Samoa***EPA Region 10****Superfund Branch****1200 6th Avenue****Seattle, WA 98101****(206) 442-0603***Idaho, Oregon, Washington, Alaska***Superfund/RCRA Hotline****(800) 424-9346 or 382-3000****in the Washington, DC, metropolitan area (for information on programs)****National Response Center (800) 424-8802****(to report releases of oil and hazardous substances)**

EPA Superfund Offices

