



Charter of the

TRIBAL EXCHANGE NETWORK GROUP (TXG)

Approved: November 2021

BACKGROUND

The **Environmental Information Exchange Network** (“Exchange Network” or “EN”) is a partner-driven, collaborative information network that facilitates data sharing among tribes, states, territories, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The goal of the Exchange Network is to foster better environmental management and decision-making through access to timely, high-quality environmental information. The shared governance principles and reusable technology solutions and standards of EN are fundamental to the E-Enterprise for the Environment (EE) initiative, aimed at further modernizing and streamlining environmental business processes, and advancing collaborations among EN and EE partners. The shared governing structure allows for tribes, states, territories, and EPA to collectively address issues and concerns of their constituents to improve access to environmental information. The Tribal Governance Group (TGG) formed in 2008 as an ad hoc committee focused on supporting tribal involvement in the EN by advocating for adequate grant funding opportunities to build capacity for tribal programs.

The results of the TGG’s 2018 *Tribal Needs Assessment* identified a need for more adequate training and support for tribal programs to enhance the data management and information technology skills needed to implement successful, sustainable projects. In 2021, the TGG renamed itself the **Tribal Exchange Network Group** in order to better align its name to this purpose, and focus their efforts on addressing the issues faced by tribes in ways that build and sustain tribal capacity and promote tribal sovereignty.

The Tribal Exchange Network Group (TXG) is one of several Tribal Partnership Groups identified by the US EPA. Members are tribal staff experienced with environmental data reporting and management systems and information technology issues relevant to tribes who volunteer to serve on the TXG. The TXG is an independent body that works alongside other EPA-sponsored Tribal Partnership Groups and EE governance efforts. The activities of the TXG are supported through funds made available by EPA’s Office of Mission Support, in the form of a cooperative agreement with an outside entity operating as the “Project Administrator.” The structure and responsibilities of the TXG and its members are established by, and conducted in accordance to, this Charter.

ARTICLE I: MISSION & PURPOSE

The *mission* of the Tribal Exchange Network Group (TXG) is to support tribes’ management, analysis, and sharing of their environmental data, so they can use this data to advocate for their interests in order to preserve tribal lifeways, maintain cultural integrity, and enhance tribal members’ sense of place.

The purpose of the TXG is to:

- promote tribal sovereignty by empowering tribes to make informed environmental decisions;
- facilitate access to training, resources, and tools for improving data management and exchange solutions; and
- communicate and collaborate with US EPA, EN, and EE partners to increase understanding of the unique tribal cultural values and environmental concerns.

ARTICLE II: GROUP STRUCTURE & MEMBERSHIP

The TXG strives for diversity of geographical representation, as well as technical expertise among its members. Nominations and/or requests for new members are accepted on an on-going basis via the TXG website (www.tribalexchangenetwork.org), and TXG members actively recruit other tribal staff during all outreach and engagement activities. TXG members serve as volunteers and commit to undertaking TXG work plan activities at their discretion.

Membership Criteria

1. Members must be an employee or direct affiliate (e.g. member of a tribe's environmental or governmental board, etc.) of a tribe or tribal organization and may not be employees of companies who are or may be contracted to do work under the EN.
2. Members should have a working knowledge of tribal issues relating to the EN.
3. Members must have written approval of their supervisor to participate, as documented on the Membership Application Form.
4. Prospective members are required to submit the TXG Member Application, which must be approved by consensus of the current TXG membership.
5. Guests, advisors, observers, and other non-members may be invited to attend TXG meetings as needed, and with approval of the TXG Chair(s).

Executive Officers

A Chair and a Vice-Chair shall be designated by consensus of the TXG. These officers will be nominated and confirmed on an annual basis during the annual review of this Charter. The Chair and Vice-Chair retain executive authority on behalf of the TXG as outlined in Article IV.

ARTICLE III: ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

All project administration responsibilities, including completion of deliverables outlined in the EPA cooperative agreement work plan, will fall to the Project Administrator, or an approved designee. The Project Administrator shall attend TXG meetings for the purposes of coordination, logistical support, and note-taking, however, the Project Administrator shall not be considered a formal member.

To the extent possible, the TXG will work with the Project Administrator to ensure fulfillment of tasks outlined in both the EPA cooperative agreement work plan and the TXG Annual Work Plan. The TXG will work with EPA OMS to provide feedback and guidance on the development of the EPA cooperative agreement work plan activities as needed.

The TXG will use its five-year Strategic Plan to inform its direction and activities, including development of the TXG Annual Work Plan, which outlines assignments and commitments for TXG members, including and a schedule of activities planned for the year. It is established during the annual meeting, and updated or revised as needed throughout the year. The TXG Annual Work Plan is separate from the EPA cooperative agreement work plan, but is developed under consideration of the EPA cooperative agreement work plan to avoid possible conflicts or negative impacts with expected outcomes. The Project Administrator will provide support to the TXG Annual Work Plan where appropriate, and as time and resources allows.

The TXG Chair(s) shall:

- set the agenda for all TXG meeting proceedings;
- facilitate all TXG meeting proceedings;
- serve as the primary point of contact for the TXG with outside entities and the Project Administrator;
- have executive and signatory authority on behalf of the TXG as outlined in Article II.

The TXG Vice-Chair shall fulfill the responsibilities of the Chair in the event of the Chair's absence or at the request of the Chair.

The TXG operates as a group of volunteers, and it is understood that members participate in all activities as their schedules allow. Members shall notify the Chair(s) if their participation will be limited, interrupted, or discontinued.

General expectations of members are outlined below, and in the TXG Member Application Form, available via the TXG website. Members will be encouraged to:

- participate in developing and implementing the TXG work plan and Strategic Plan and its associated activities, including attending official meeting proceedings;
- participate on other EE/EN governance and workgroups;
- engage with regional partners such as RTOC, Regional EN Coordinators, grantees, and others to communicate relevant activities of the EN and TXG;
- provide mentoring support to other tribes;
- report back to the TXG on these activities during monthly calls, or as needed.

The views represented by the TXG shall not be considered representative of any individual member, tribe, or entity other than the TXG.

ARTICLE IV: PROCEDURES

The TXG will follow the procedures outlined below for all activities.

Meeting Schedule:

At least one annual face-to-face meeting will be conducted and scheduled according to member availability.

Monthly meetings via teleconference will be conducted on a regular schedule as determined by the TXG members.

TXG will schedule regular calls and meetings with US EPA partners to ensure ongoing communication and coordination.

Additional meetings may be called when necessary, as determined by the TXG members.

Meeting Procedures:

TXG Members and Project Administrator will come prepared and will participate fully in meeting proceedings. Formal meetings with less than half of the tribal members present will be cancelled or rescheduled.

Agendas for meetings will be prepared by the Chair and Vice-Chair with input from all members. Meeting agendas and items for review will be distributed by the Project Administrator to the full group one week prior to the meeting.

The Project Administrator will prepare and distribute summary notes and recordings from all meetings within 10 business days. Meeting notes will provide brief highlights, organized by topic, with action items, deadlines, and responsible parties specified. Recordings of meetings will be archived in an online repository for one year and are accessible only to TXG members and the Project Administrator.

Decision-making:

All decisions requiring a member vote will be conducted via digital polling. Members should respond to any requests for voting on issues by the stated deadline (at least one business week provided); final decisions will be made based on the total votes received.

Decisions that warrant voting will include: changes to TXG annual work plan assignments or deadlines, Strategic Plan, and Charter. Determination of other issues requiring a vote will be made by the TXG Chair and Vice-Chair.

TXG members are encouraged to provide input and feedback to help guide the work of the Project Administrator in carrying out the activities of EPA's tribal support co-operative agreement.

Representation to Outside Entities

Individual TXG members may represent the group to other entities in their role as official members, and in accordance with the TXG mission and purpose.

TXG Written Communication

All official TXG communication, documents, letters, or other materials portraying the TXG as authors will be provided to the group for review by the members with a one-week deadline to respond (no response is equal to concurrence), following this the TXG Chair or Vice-Chair will prepare final communication.

Revisions to Charter

The TXG Charter will be reviewed by TXG members annually. All proposed changes shall be approved by TXG consensus.

ARTICLE VI: CHARTER APPROVAL

We, the members of the TXG, hereby approve the above articles of this Charter through consensus of the members present, on November 9, 2021.

Frank Harjo, Muscogee Nation, *TXG Chair*

Bruce Jones, Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission, *TXG Vice-Chair*

Angie Reed, Penobscot Indian Nation

April Hathcoat, Cherokee Nation

BryAnna Vaughan, Bishop Paiute Tribe

Darold Wallick, Pala Band of Mission Indians

Leonard Bruce, Gila River Indian Community

Lisa Gover, Campo Band of Mission Indians