EARLY SUMMARY OF HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2018-2019
TRIBAL CAPACITY AND NEEDS ASSESSMENT ON
ENVIRONMENTAL DATA COLLECTION AND
MANAGEMENT

EXCHANGE NETWORK TRIBAL GOVERNANCE GROUP (TGG)

INSTITUTE FOR TRIBAL ENVIRONMENTAL PROFESSIONALS (ITEP)

TRIBAL LANDS AND ENVIRONMENT FORUM, AUGUST 2019
BACKGROUND OF ASSESSMENT EFFORT

• **GOAL:** understand tribal needs and current capacity for environmental data management and collection activities

• Conducted by ITEP with guidance from the Exchange Network Tribal Governance Group (TGG)

• Questionnaire sent via email to all federally recognized tribes in ITEP’s listing of current email contacts, Spring 2018

• Online form closed July 2018

• Responses reviewed and summarized Fall 2018-Spring 2019
RESPONDENT SUMMARY

- 145 tribes/tribal organizations represented (some tribes with multiple respondents)
- Most respondents were staff or managers for tribal environmental programs
- Most respondents focused on with ambient water and air quality data
- ~60% had little or no prior knowledge of or experience with the EN, including the grant program, technology components, or governance
- >70% had not applied for an EN grant in the past (or were not aware of past EN grants received), despite the majority of them collecting and managing eligible data (eg. Air, water, waste, toxics).
DATA COLLECTION, MANAGEMENT AND SHARING

- Most respondents share data with EPA or other federal agencies, as well as internally (with other depts., leadership, community)
- ~30% share data with other jurisdictions (local/state) and the general public
- ~ 30% of tribal data management projects use spreadsheets to share and report data
- ~ 10% of tribal projects use the EN and its tools (ENSC, VES, nodes) to share and report data
- ~ 10 % of respondents do not currently share data using any mechanism
- ~ 75% indicated at least some access to a broadband or high-speed internet connection for their program activities
  - 25% of all respondents have unreliable and/or inconsistent connectivity
  - 10% reported only having access to dial-up or satellite technology
TOP DATA MANAGEMENT & TECHNOLOGY NEEDS

- More staff resources (environmental and IT)
- Training and support for staff managing data
- Some reported a need for increased IT infrastructure & support
RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES

• Improve access to, and support for, software tools and technology
• Enhance training and informational resources relevant to tribes for data management, statistics, QAPPs, and data analysis/interpretation
• More effective communication and outreach to tribes on the EN and how it can work for tribes
• Continue improvement to the grant program to help more tribes accomplish their data management goals
OTHER ISSUES IDENTIFIED

• Concerns regarding data sharing, including security and misuse
• Challenges due to lack of robust, dedicated IT support (staff) and infrastructure (internet connectivity unreliable)
• Lack of on-going operations and maintenance support for EN tools
• Limited technical capacity and staff resources impacts tribes’ abilities to quickly and effectively respond to EN grant solicitation
LIMITATIONS OF THE ASSESSMENT

• Questionnaire only sent to tribes via email

• Did not limit respondents to one per tribe resulted in some duplication of responses and some inconsistent/conflicting responses

• Complex or confusing wording on questionnaire made some results difficult to interpret with confidence.

• Significant portion of respondents (19%) represented Alaska Native Villages which may not necessarily be representative of Indian Country as a whole, but also highlighted some consistent needs for Alaska Villages that may differ from those in the Lower 48.
• Follow up with tribal respondents and other stakeholder groups to share summary of findings and conduct additional outreach

• Improve informational resources to support tribal respondents’ identified needs

• Work with EPA to identify innovative and appropriate ways to address tribal needs and continue to enhance tribal involvement in the EN
QUESTIONS?

Contact EN TGG at TGG@exchangethework.org

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