

CAGS 101: INTRODUCTION TO COMMUNITY ADVISORY GROUPS

What is a CAG?

- An organized diverse group of community members interested in the Colorado Smelter site.

- The focal point for information exchange among community members, the state and EPA about the site cleanup.

Benefits of Forming a CAG

- A diverse, community-led forum.

- Opportunity to build trust.

- Opportunity to build working relationships.

- Central point of contact between community and EPA.

- Better, more informed decisions about site cleanup and other environmental issues.

What the CAG Does

- Holds regular meetings.

- Reviews technical information about site cleanup.

- Connects with the community.

- Works with EPA and state officials to determine information needs.

- Meets with EPA and state officials to relay information on site issues.

What is Expected of a CAG Member

- Inform yourself about the issues discussed.

- Attend meetings.

- Be active in meetings (listen and speak).

- Observe CAG rules and procedures.

- Serve your term as a member.

What the Agencies Do

- Update the CAG on site developments.

- Furnish the CAG with technical documents for review and public comment.

- Carefully consider CAG input.

- Provide appropriate administrative support.

- Oversee clean-up, enforce environmental laws and regulations, make final decisions about site cleanup.

First Steps in Forming a CAG

- CAG information/kickoff meeting
- Selection of CAG members
- Write a mission statement
- Develop operating procedures
 - Meeting procedures
 - Ground rules for meetings
 - Agenda development/distribution
 - Meeting notification procedures
 - Recording and distribution of minutes
 - Communication procedures
 - Reporting to the community
 - Communication tools: Website, newsletter, e-mail blasts, etc.

Lessons Learned about CAGs

- Community must take initiative in formation and operation.
- Community Advisory Group must be inclusive with diverse community representation.
- Access to independent technical expertise important.
- Recognize what is possible and work within these limits.

Lessons Learned about CAGs

- Leaders must make a long-term commitment.
- Community Advisory Groups are more effective than public meetings.
- Need for additional resources is a common concern.

Characteristics of Effective Community Advisory Groups

- Operate as a data clearinghouse.
- Connect with the community.
- Receive any needed technical input.
- Are well organized with suitable operating procedures.
- Have a clearly defined mission.
- Collaborate and work well together; treat all people and parties with respect.
- Understand the role of the CAG.
- Use their energy well – work on issues that can be influenced by the CAG.
- Have open meetings that are well advertised.

Technical Assistance Services for Communities (TASC)

- TASC program provides technical help so communities can better understand the science, regulations, and policies of EPA actions.
- Services are provided through a national EPA contract. Under the contract, a contractor provides scientists, engineers and other professionals to review and explain information.

Technical Assistance Services for Communities (TASC)

What types of services does TASC provide?

- Community training (Super JTI).
- Educational presentations.
- Technical assistance and needs assessments.
- Reviewing and explaining technical information.
- Helping communities form CAGs.
- Facilitating community meetings.
- Developing information materials for communities.

Technical Assistance Grants (TAGs)

- EPA can award a TAG to qualified community groups for up to \$50,000.
- The community group must be incorporated as a 501(c)3 (non-profit status).
- The primary purpose of the TAG is to hire an independent technical advisor to interpret and comment on site related documents.
- Application process is competitive.

TAG Application Process

The total application and award process typically takes between five and six months.

1. The community group writes EPA a Letter of Intent.
2. EPA informs the rest of the community through advertisement in a local newspaper that your group is interested in a TAG.
3. Other interested groups have 30 days to coalesce with your group or write their own Letter of Intent if they choose to compete for the TAG funding.
4. After the initial 30-day period, interested groups will have another 30 days to submit applications.

Technical Assistance Grants (TAGs)

- TAG applicants must contribute 20% of the total project cost. Mostly done through in-kind services such as volunteer hours.
- Group will need to submit an application, scope of work, and budget detailing how funds will be used.
- Must share information from the technical advisor to the rest of the community.
- Only one TAG can be awarded to a Superfund Site.

For More Information Visit...

- **Superfund Community Involvement**
www.epa.gov/superfund/community
- **Community Advisory Groups**
www.epa.gov/superfund/community/cag
- **Technical Assistance Grants**
www.epa.gov/superfund/community/tag
- **Technical Assistance Services for Communities**
www.epa.gov/superfund/community/tasc