



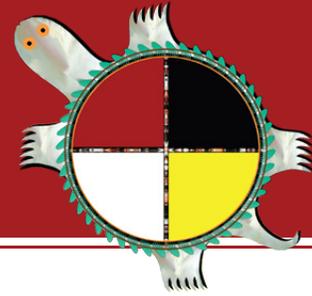
# TRIBAL STRATEGY: PARTNERSHIP TO SUPPORT ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION AND DECISION-MAKING IN INDIAN COUNTRY AND ALASKA NATIVE VILLAGES

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Office of Environmental Information



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Members of the Absentee Shawnee Tribe conducting soil sampling activities at a contaminated site.



The "Sleeping Chief" on the Nez Perce Reservation.

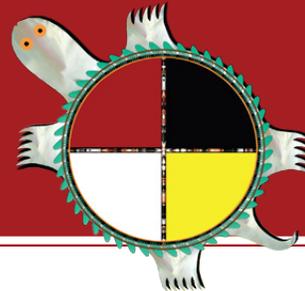
# List of Acronyms



<b>AIEO</b>	EPA American Indian Environmental Office
<b>ANV</b>	Alaska Native Village
<b>ENLC</b>	Exchange Network Leadership Council
<b>EO</b>	Executive Order
<b>HIC</b>	Headquarters Indian Program Coordinators (also known as Tribal Program Coordinators)
<b>IM</b>	Information Management
<b>IPPC</b>	Indian Program Policy Council
<b>IT</b>	Information Technology
<b>NCAI</b>	National Congress of American Indians
<b>NOB</b>	Network Operations Board
<b>NPRG</b>	Network Partnership Resources Group
<b>NTAA</b>	National Tribal Air Association
<b>NTC</b>	National Tribal Caucus
<b>NTG</b>	Network Technology Group
<b>NTOC</b>	National Tribal Operations Committee
<b>OEI</b>	EPA Office of Environmental Information
<b>OMB</b>	Office of Management and Budget
<b>OSWER</b>	EPA Office of Solid Waste and Emergency Response
<b>QAPP</b>	Quality Assurance Project Plan
<b>RENC</b>	Regional Exchange Network Coordinator
<b>RIC</b>	Regional Indian Program Coordinator
<b>TGG</b>	Tribal Governance Group
<b>TRI</b>	Toxics Release Inventory
<b>TSC</b>	Tribal Science Council
<b>USET</b>	United South and Eastern Tribes



# Executive Summary



The purpose of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Office of Environmental Information (OEI) Tribal Strategy is to maximize the quality and utility of information and analytical tools available for making well-informed decisions in Indian country and other tribal lands. The OEI Tribal Strategy is intended to support: EPA's mission to protect human health and the environment, while recognizing the unique needs of Indian Tribes (including Alaska Native Villages (ANV)); OEI's work with EPA programs, Regional offices and tribes on the importance of environmental data and how these data can be used to support tribal priorities; tribal self-governance; and the relationships between EPA and tribes.

The OEI Tribal Strategy represents a commitment to demonstrate OEI's long-range plan to collaborate, coordinate and consult with tribal officials when developing policies that have tribal implications, in accordance with Executive Order (EO) 13175 – Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments (November 9, 2000) and EPA's Policy on Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribes (May 4, 2011).

OEI will work with tribes to implement this Strategy through the following goals:

- **Goal 1:** Strengthen Government-to-Government Relationships with Tribes and Tribal Partners
- **Goal 2:** Strengthen Tribal Capacity to Collect, Analyze and Share Data and Information
- **Goal 3:** Facilitate the Collection and Analysis of Quality<sup>1</sup> Tribal Data<sup>2</sup>
- **Goal 4:** Expand the Use of Tribal Data and Analytical Tools

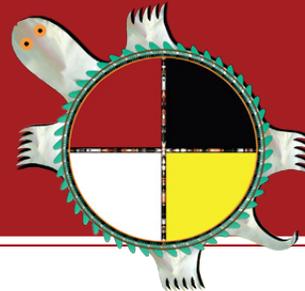
OEI is committed to measure progress toward achieving the goals and objectives outlined in the OEI Tribal Strategy and to continue outreach and consultation with tribes. The vehicle for reporting achievements and lessons learned is the Annual Accomplishments Reports, the first of which was the Fiscal Year 2010 OEI Tribal Accomplishments Report. OEI will use these reports to annually compile OEI tribal accomplishments that detail efforts and activities conducted in support of the Strategy. The Strategy will be revisited in five years based upon accomplishments made during this time and subsequent feedback from tribes.

<sup>1</sup> Quality: Sufficient, relevant, appropriate, reliable and desired data

<sup>2</sup> Tribal Data: Data on environmental conditions on tribal lands and surrounding areas that affect tribal lands



# Office of Environmental Information Tribal Strategy



OEI was established in Fiscal Year 2000 to centralize all information technology and information management (IT/IM) functions within a single organization at EPA. Established at the end of a decade of dramatic change in information technology and management, OEI is designed to be a center of excellence that advocates the use and management of information as a strategic resource to enhance public health and environmental protection. OEI continues to build programs that address the needs of all audiences and constituencies within the arena of IT/IM.

While OEI continues to coordinate with tribal governments, tribal consortia, and tribal-serving organizations (e.g., Exchange Network Tribal Governance Group (TGG), National Tribal Air Association (NTAA), Tribal Toxics Council, National Tribal Water Council, and Tribal Waste and Response Assistance Program) to ensure environmental information programs and services are built to maximize tribal benefit and participation, considerable work remains to meet this goal. This Strategy represents the foundation upon which OEI will build stronger communication with tribes<sup>3</sup> within every applicable environmental information program and service. The purpose of OEI's Tribal Strategy is to maximize the quality and utility of information and analytical tools available for making well-informed environmental decisions in Indian country<sup>4</sup>, ANVs and other tribal environmental resources of importance. To this end, the OEI Tribal Strategy will support the following:

1. The mission of EPA and federally recognized tribes to protect human health and the environment while recognizing the unique needs of Indian tribes, including ANVs.
2. OEI's work with EPA programs and Regional offices to identify and support tribal needs and engage in dialog with tribal governments on the importance of sharing environmental data; how these data can be used to support tribal priorities; addressing tribal communities' environmental and public health priorities; and how EPA can support both tribal governments and tribal communities in these areas. (See Appendix A: Life Cycle of Information: Context in which OEI and tribes work together.)
3. Tribal self-governance, to be consistent with the federal trust responsibility, and to strengthen the government-to-government relationships between tribal governments and EPA. The OEI Tribal Strategy seeks to fulfill OEI's responsibilities to develop a strategy responsive to the EPA Policy for the Administration of Environmental Programs on Indian Reservations (November 1984) and the Tribal Operations Action Memorandum (July 1994), which address working with federally recognized tribal governments.

The OEI Tribal Strategy also acknowledges OEI's responsibility to consult and coordinate with tribal officials to develop policies that have tribal implications in accordance with EO 13175 – Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments (November 2000) and EPA's Policy on Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribes (May 4, 2011). A White House Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies (November 5, 2009) primarily directed each agency to submit to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) a detailed plan of action to implement the policies and directives of EO 13175 and progress reports on the status of its plan. OEI, like all EPA media program and Regional offices, has designated a tribal consultation advisor to assist the office in identifying efforts appropriate for consultation and working with tribal leaders or their designees.

OEI developed this robust Strategy, in collaboration with tribal partners and EPA environmental program managers, which includes strategic outcomes, goals, objectives and accomplishments to guide mutual work. Subsequent annual accomplishments reports will derive from the OEI Tribal Strategy and guide programmatic and resource decisions.

<sup>3</sup> In this Strategy, "tribes and tribal partners" includes federally recognized Indian tribes and ANVs, tribal communities, key tribal organizations and tribal stakeholders, including, but not limited to: the TGG, United South and Eastern Tribes (USET), Northern Arizona University, Institute for Tribal Environmental Professionals (ITEP), and the National Tribal Caucus.

<sup>4</sup> Indian country, as defined in 40 CFR 71.2, means: "(a) all land within the limits of any Indian reservation under the jurisdiction of the United States Government, notwithstanding the issuance of any patent, and, including rights-of-way running through the reservation, (b) all dependent Indian communities within the borders of the United States whether within the original or subsequently acquired territory thereof, and whether within or without the limits of a state, and (c) all Indian allotments, the Indian titles to which have not been extinguished, including rights-of-way running through the same."



# OEI Tribal Strategy Vision



The vision that guides the OEI Tribal Strategy is:

*A future where tribes and EPA recognize information as a strategic resource and where both tribes and EPA have the information needed to understand how and where environmental challenges affect tribal lands and communities.*

To accomplish this vision, OEI will develop annual accomplishments reports on progress made toward achieving the OEI Tribal Strategy's desired goals and objectives, and stimulate greater information sharing, integration and analysis. OEI will use existing and new tools and services to:

- Consolidate information
- Report cross-jurisdictional information
- Analyze constituent information
- Publish data and information
- Better understand environmental conditions in a specific geographic location, within certain sectors and regions, across Indian country, or across the United States

OEI will work with tribes and tribal partners to identify tools and services available to support environmental program management, and environmental analysis and decision-making.



# Strategic Outcomes



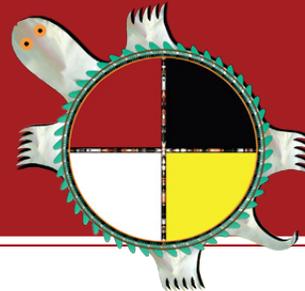
The OEI Tribal Strategy is a roadmap to achieving meaningful government-to-government consultation and sustainable collaboration with tribes and tribal partners. OEI developed five desired outcomes for this Strategy to be achieved within the next five years. This Strategy and the Strategic Outcomes will be reevaluated and updated after five years based upon accomplishments during this time and feedback from tribes. The five Strategic Outcomes are:

1. OEI and tribal governments recognize the importance of sharing data and share a commitment to continually improve information that is relevant to environmental decision-making.
2. OEI will demonstrate, through action, an increased understanding of tribal sovereignty and the diversity of tribal cultures in order to recognize the diversity of tribal data and data management priorities.
3. OEI and tribal governments will better understand the environmental challenges in Indian country and ANVs, and work with tribal governments, EPA Regional Exchange Network Coordinators (RENC), Regional Indian Program Coordinators (RIC), and tribal organizations to develop the needed informational infrastructure to protect human health and the environment in a collaborative way.
4. Tribes will receive value-added technical and programmatic support to increase their capacity to effectively collect, analyze, understand and share tribal and EPA environmental data on tribal lands.
5. OEI and tribal governments will recognize information as a strategic asset to support effective, proactive environmental decision-making.

These Strategic Outcomes are relatively broad, but are strengthened by a strong, specific and far-reaching set of goals and objectives that measure progress toward these mutual outcomes.



# Goals and Objectives



During the five-year timeframe of this Strategy, OEI will demonstrate action toward the strategic vision through the following goals and objectives:

## Goal 1: Strengthen Government-to-Government Relationships with Tribes and Tribal Partners

### Objectives:

- A. Designate and maintain a Tribal Program Coordinator within OEI.** OEI will designate and maintain a Tribal Program Coordinator as part of OEI's commitment to engage and consult with tribal governments on relevant data and information efforts. In addition, the Tribal Program Coordinator will be responsible for identifying and coordinating OEI-wide tribal efforts, as well as ensuring OEI's understanding and engagement in EPA tribal program activities and efforts. This will include working with OEI and EPA Regional counterparts (e.g., RICs, RENCs, Regional Toxics Release Inventory (TRI) Coordinators) to identify concerns and needs, where appropriate.
- B. Promote opportunities for raising cultural awareness within OEI, measure results, and adjust strategies, if necessary, to achieve measurable results.** OEI management and the Tribal Program Coordinator will:
- Increase awareness among management and staff about the commitment to engage tribal governments in OEI's relevant program activities;
  - Work with tribes to recognize and discuss the major differences between Western and Eastern tribes and the challenges they face, and understand the impact of these differences on OEI's efforts with tribal governments;
  - Inform staff and management of the federal trust responsibility and how this translates into tribal involvement in their relevant activities;
  - Encourage OEI staff to take the "Working Effectively with Tribal Governments" online training ([www.golearn.gov](http://www.golearn.gov)) to better understand the unique government-to-government relationship between the U.S. government and federally recognized tribes, and comprehend OEI's federal responsibility; and
  - Delineate the roles and responsibilities of all EPA Headquarters and Regional offices that work with tribal governments on the Environmental Information Exchange Network<sup>5</sup> (Exchange Network) and how they work together to achieve objectives.
- C. Strengthen partnerships with tribes and other tribal entities.** OEI will continue to expand and strengthen its collaboration with groups that broadly represent tribal governments in order to identify tribal data and analytical needs. OEI will work with these entities—as well as Headquarters and Regional Program Coordinators (e.g., RICs and RENCs) and tribal organizations—to seek input on OEI activities relevant to tribal governments and increase awareness of and seek feedback on new and ongoing efforts. OEI plans to leverage the Regional Program Coordinators' unique role in understanding particular tribal needs and concerns, and have the ability to directly reach out to tribes in both an outreach and technology/knowledge transfer capacity.

<sup>5</sup> Environmental Information Exchange Network – a partnership among states, tribes and EPA that is revolutionizing the exchange of environmental information, by sharing data efficiently and securely over the Internet at: [www.exchangenetwork.net](http://www.exchangenetwork.net)





## Goal 2: Strengthen Tribal Capacity to Collect, Analyze and Share Data and Information

### *Objectives:*

- A. Provide support to assist tribes in building tribal capacity to fully develop environmental data and information management responsibilities.** Such support will include using in-person meetings, Webinars, conference calls, EPA and OEI Regional Program Coordinators (e.g., RICs, RENCs, Regional Quality Managers), and collaboration with groups that broadly represent tribal governments.
- B. Promote opportunities for tribal technology and knowledge transfer, particularly with respect to the collection, sharing and analysis of quality, secure tribal and EPA data, information and tools, as well as best practices and lessons learned.** OEI will work with tribes and tribal partners to:
- Identify OEI programs that have tools and services to assist in technology and knowledge transfer to tribes in order to stimulate participation in the Exchange Network and other OEI programs;
  - Evaluate the feasibility of and possible approaches for conducting tribal baseline assessments;
  - Identify specific technical resources available for RENCs to work with grantees and potential grantees on the technical aspects of network integration;
  - Identify training needs and suitable approaches in the areas of quality assurance and/or quality management; and
  - Increase awareness of the various online and physical resources available to tribes and the public at large through the EPA National Library Network. OEI will use meetings, conferences and other opportunities to increase awareness among tribes about EPA's library services and repositories.
- C. Work with EPA RENCs, RICs and TGG to identify other tribal organizations and tribal government officials to promote tribal issues on the Exchange Network Leadership Council (ENLC), Network Operations Board (NOB), and other governance bodies.** OEI Headquarters will work with RENCs to expand dialogue with tribal organizations and tribal governments to ensure a diverse set of tribal needs and concerns are represented within the various Exchange Network governance bodies. OEI will work with TGG and the EPA Regions to identify future tribal representation on the leadership organizations.





## Goal 3: Facilitate the Collection and Analysis of Quality Tribal Data

### *Objectives:*

- A. Promote data stewardship by ensuring appropriate management, control, maintenance and integrity of EPA data resources.** Wherever possible, tribal data should be appropriately flagged prior to entering EPA data systems to facilitate their distinction and use by EPA tools and users. OEI will also work with the RENCs, RICs, Regional Quality Assurance staff, and the TGG to identify opportunities for increasing technology and knowledge transfer of procedures, tools and training to assist tribes with data quality-related activities. In partnership with EPA Regions and tribal governments, such opportunities can enhance identification and collection of data to support tribal decision-making.
- B. Facilitate tribal data collection.** Work with RENCs, RICs and tribal partners to identify tribal data needs and barriers to tribal participation in the Exchange Network. Within EPA, identify Agency data needs and data gaps with respect to tribal programs.
- C. Improve the accessibility of EPA and tribal data and tools to the federal government, tribal governments and states by assessing EPA's available tribal data, and provide access to these data through existing or new tools.** OEI will work across EPA to identify opportunities to leverage existing or new tools to provide data to tribes, and to assist tribes and EPA in enhanced environmental and health decision-making.





## Goal 4: Expand the Use of Tribal Data and Analytical Tools

### **Objectives:**

- A. Increase technical training to facilitate additional data sharing and technology transfer.** In coordination with EPA Regions and tribes, OEI will work with RENCs, tribal governments and other tribal organizations to expand technology transfer, including best practices and lessons learned, regarding experience with the Exchange Network.
- B. Collaborate across EPA and work with tribes to identify data elements and tools that are vital to sound tribal decision-making based upon priorities identified by tribal governments.** OEI will work with tribes to evaluate and consider priorities identified by the National Tribal Caucus (NTC), the National-EPA Tribal Science Council (TSC), TGG and others. Feedback obtained through consultation, collaboration or outreach efforts will be used to assess how priorities relate to existing OEI and EPA efforts. Wherever possible, OEI will work across EPA Program Offices and Regions to determine whether these priorities can be addressed within existing EPA efforts or through greater internal collaboration.
- C. Invest to ensure appropriate consultation and communication with tribes and tribal partners across OEI offices and initiatives.** OEI will review and identify regulatory and non-regulatory efforts relevant to tribes and determine, in coordination with EPA Regional Coordinators, when consultation with tribal governments is warranted.
- Where tribal governments would benefit from increased communication and outreach, OEI will utilize the NTC and National-EPA TSC monthly calls, as well as calls with Headquarters Indian Program Coordinators (HIC, or also known as Indian Program Coordinators), RICs, and tribal partners to communicate these opportunities and seek feedback, where needed.
  - For OEI regulatory and other programmatic issues that may affect tribal interests, OEI will work with EPA Regions, tribal organizations, and EPA's American Indian Environmental Office (AIEO) to identify the most appropriate and effective approach for tribal consultation or review.
  - OEI will communicate directly with tribal leaders and their environmental departments and work with EPA Regions, tribal partners, and EPA's AIEO to ensure tribal leaders receive notification of these opportunities.
  - To increase communication and outreach, OEI will work with tribal partners and RICs to communicate feedback on any efforts.



# Measuring Success



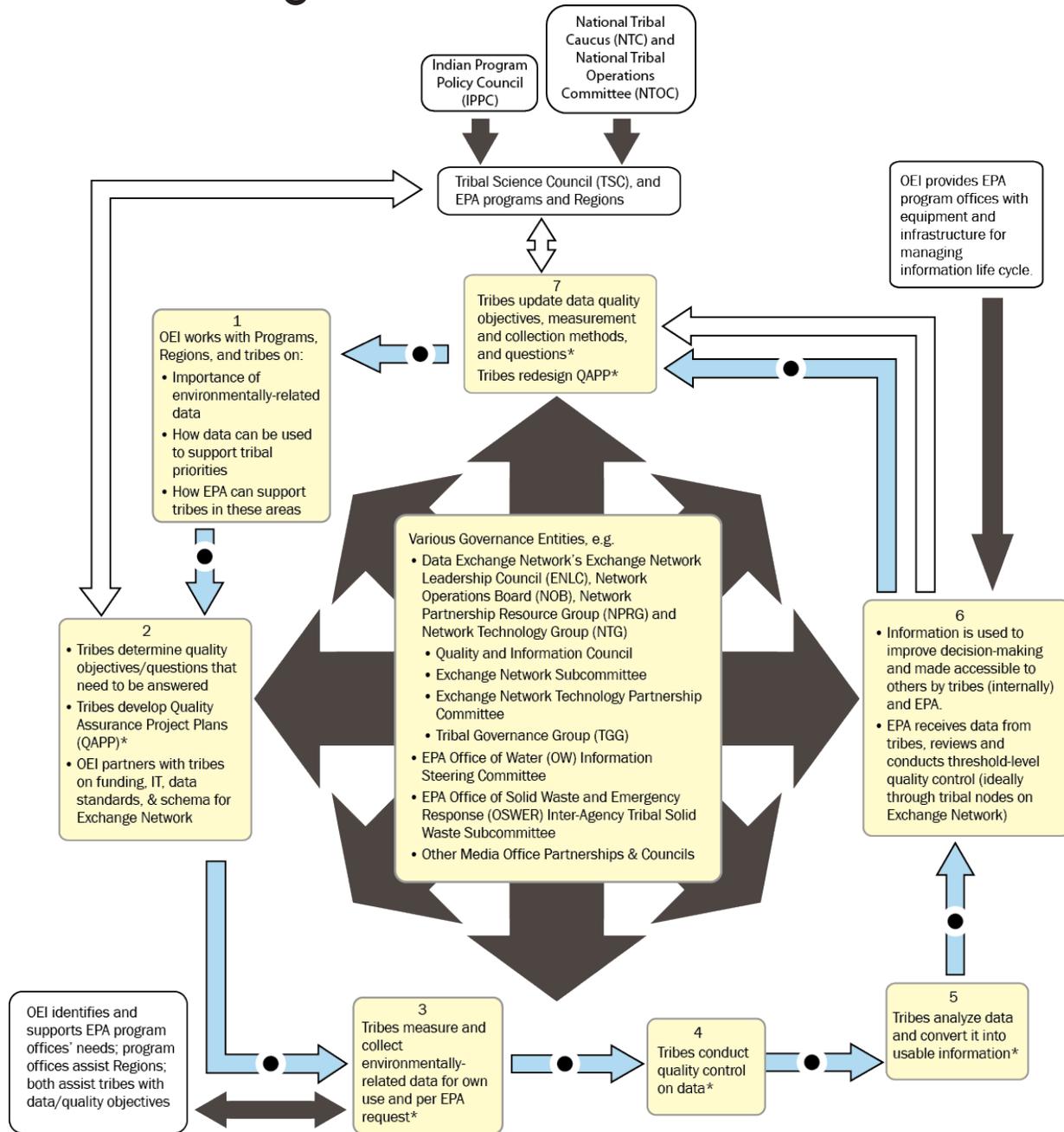
Fundamental to this Strategy is OEI's recognition, through word and action, that EPA's programs are stronger and more protective of the environment when they meet the needs of a broad, diverse universe of partners. Protection of human health and the environment requires raw data from this broad, diverse partnership, which when transformed into information, can allow all parties to make stronger, more inclusive decisions.

OEI is committed to making progress toward achieving the goals and objectives outlined in this Strategy, and to continue outreach and consultation with tribal partners. The vehicle for reporting on these achievements will be through the Annual Accomplishments Reports, the first of which is the Fiscal Year 2010 OEI Tribal Accomplishments Report.





## Life Cycle of Information: Context in which EPA's Office of Environmental Information and Tribes Work Together



- ■ Dialogue between EPA and tribes.
- Non-direct interaction with tribes.
- OEI provides support and interacts with tribes through Exchange Network.

\*Subject to grant requirements, CIO policies ([www.epa.gov/quality/qa\\_docs.html](http://www.epa.gov/quality/qa_docs.html)), and EPA Program Office approval (sometimes HQ/sometimes Regions)

