

## Ideas for Improving RTOC: Meeting Notes (2.5.18)

**Summary:** Notes from Group Brainstorm activity at “Strengthening RTOC” Special Session, Region 9 RTOC Meeting (Winter 2018). Small groups were asked to identify ideas for improving RTOC going forward. Those ideas were presented to the group and ultimately clustered together in the categories below by the RTOC Facilitators.

**Next Steps:** Issues have been forwarded to relevant RTOC organizers, work groups, and RIPSC to assess feasibility, barriers, and necessary information to implement identified changes.

### Brainstorm Notes: Clustered by Themes

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#### *TECH & COMMUNICATION*

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- INTERACTIVE
  - Use collaborative spaces
  - Communication – when new employees / new members reach out, respond to them
  - Use Zoom or other video conferencing service to share documents during virtual meetings
- WEBSITE
  - Better information sharing – RTOC – NTOC up and down the structure
  - Track concept follow-up
  - Easier website
  - Master schedule of RTOC
  - Archive RTOC agendas and documents
  - Too many emails – make it easier to access information / database

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#### *SESSIONS/MEETING THEMES*

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- TRIBAL CAUCUS
  - Facilitation for Tribal Caucuses (Funding, rotate tribal leaders, independent neutral facilitator?)
  - Tribal caucus – information sharing, breakout sessions for Regional reps
  - More time for tribes to assess without EPA, and less structured tribe-only time
  - Tribal caucus – information sharing, breakout sessions for Regional reps
- MEETING THEMES AND LOGISTICS
  - Meet face to face

- Frequency of in-person vs virtual meetings (no clear preference, but consideration)
- More media-specific RTOC meetings and cross-media relationship building
- Regional RTOC meetings at NTCA, intertribal council meetings
- More transparency on EPA side (e.g. have EPA people say how long they have been at EPA, use name tags)
- Emphasize recognition of tribal leaders
- Less talk, more action (“we keep talking about how to improve RTOC but nothing gets done”)
- SESSIONS
  - Interactive sessions – learning from others’ experience
  - Shorten procedural steps/aspects of meetings
  - Getting to know each other and our work – “Track 6” and mingles
  - More celebrations – stories of successes and challenges
  - Focus on how to implement change and resolutions affecting programs
- INDIVIDUAL ACTIONS
  - Use RTOC meetings to meet with Project Officer and use Project Officer to brainstorm and help contact with other federal agencies

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*TRAINING MATERIALS/ UNDERSTANDING EPA*

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- FOR NEW TRIBAL REPRESENTATIVES
  - Create a Fact Sheet and FAQs for new members
  - Communicate new tribal hires to EPA and vice versa
  - Info packets for new hires
  - Grant process is complex – need to explain it, make it simpler and more manageable
- UNDERSTANDING EPA
  - More explicit understanding of what EPA can and can’t do and explain EPA’s approach/thinking (e.g. how is it that EPA thinks of environment and culture separately)
  - Create EPA 101 – structure of the agency, acronyms, etc
  - Obtain national intention re RTOC
  - Give tribes clarity about what EPA R9 has authority to answer and who to talk to if R9 can’t answer. Give timely responses to inquiries.

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*CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS/ UNDERSTANDING TRIBES*

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- Core values – sensitivity to cultural issues and integration of cultural awareness. Caution – don’t have EPA define your culture
- “Liberally construed for the benefit of tribes”
- Include information on protecting tribal sovereignty in tribal financial management trainings

- Need to be the voice for environmental issues in Indian Country on a National level
- Be careful not to overaccommodate or be too broad and miss the point
- True connection – EPA needs to understand why things are done the way they are “on the ground” in Indian Country
- Tribes have personal/spiritual relationship with their natural resources

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### *WORKGROUPS*

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- Review of workgroups – some could be dissolved or merged
- Reinvigorate workgroups (e.g. create folders in One Drive)
- Use Adobe Connect for virtual WG meetings
- Redefine workgroup members and a guide for workgroup leaders
- Create a policy workgroup

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### *REPRESENTATIVES ROLE*

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- Attendees present and engaged
- Regional representatives should be conscientious about representing their regions
- Use our voices to speak up and do what’s right – tribes and EPA
- Put RTOC meetings in workplans to have time and resources for these
- Empower tribal staff to influence leaders (tribal and US)

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### *TRIBAL CONSULTATION*

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- Funding is stagnant, air funding is only available through GAP, make it more flexible
- Waters of U.S. and Gas rule – insufficient tribal representation and OGC involvement
- EPA’s Strategic Plan status? How were tribal comments addressed, will tribes get responses to their comments? Will there be performance measures?
- What is R9’s take on rollback of rules by the Administrator? What does Administrator mean when he says EPA is returning to “rule of law”?
- EPA should share information about national policy changes as they are developing
- Make sure tribal voices are heard in policy development and implementation