

**RESPONSE TO COMMENTS**  
**FY 2023-2024 NATIONAL PROGRAM GUIDANCE**  
**OFFICE OF CONGRESSIONAL & INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS**

Comment	Commenter(s)	Location in Draft Guidance	National Program Offices Response	Action Taken in Final Guidance
<p>ECOS appreciates EPA’s commitment to work with states and tribal nations to find innovative approaches to achieving shared environmental priorities. E-Enterprise is one venue where state, tribes, and EPA practice joint governance on projects that seek to modernize the business of environmental protection.</p>	<p>ECOS</p>	<p>Page 2 (Section 1. Introduction)</p>	<p>OCIR’s FY 23-24 National Program Guidance recognizes the importance for incorporating E-Enterprise initiatives into state and tribal workplan activities and highlights the benefits of E-Enterprise workload tradeoffs. OCIR promotes the E-Enterprise Community Inventory Platform (EECIP) as a tool for sharing updated information and resources about specific EE-related projects. The EECIP is also an effective platform to share examples of flexibilities in PPAs/PPGs (p12)</p>	<p>No action taken</p>

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<p>It would be helpful if OCIR were to annually gather from regions examples of flexibility included in PPGs and PPAs and share these flexibilities broadly with states and regions through a written compilation as well as through a webinar or other means. Consolidated examples of PPA and PPG flexibilities adopted in state grant workplans could accelerate consideration of innovative practices. One example of a flexibility a number of states employ is Alternative Compliance Monitoring Systems (ACMS). Having a list of approved state ACMS approaches may make it less burdensome for other states to adopt similar strategies to direct resources to priority compliance activities. Promoting flexibilities states have included in PPAs and PPGs may lead other states to consider increasing the number of Categorical Grants they include in their PPGs and PPAs thereby reducing the number of individual state grants EPA must manage.</p>	ECOS	Page 11 (PPG Flexibilities)	<p>EPA appreciates ECOS' recommendation and specific example. OCIR's NPG cites the EECIP as a platform that can be used to share flexibilities states and tribes have successfully negotiated into their PPAs/PPGs. OCIR is exploring ways to share examples of flexibilities on a more regular, on-going basis. One way is through the use of a GIS story map posted to OCIR's website that will include PPG success stories from regions, states, and tribes. In addition, OCIR is coordinating with the E-Enterprise Regional Coordinators (EERCs) who work within their regions to support the use of the E-Enterprise Community Inventory Platform for this purpose. OCIR will also work closely with ECOS and the State Grants Subgroup to share ideas and solicit feedback on proposed approaches to sharing information on PPG flexibilities.</p>	No action taken

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<p>ECOS supports EPA’s steps toward a better understanding of current grant reporting and tracking processes across EPA. ECOS encourages EPA to take a holistic approach to data collection, considering potential new information needed alongside what reporting may no longer be needed, what information is not being utilized that could stop being collected, and what information EPA may already collect that could be shared more broadly. Collection, review, reporting, and management of data incurs costs to both states and EPA so conducting a complete review of needed and under-utilized information will allow resources to be better directed where they may be most effective. This review should also include expanded ability for information available in one system to more readily be available through and to other systems. Future data modernization efforts should include this holistic approach to data access to further reduce duplicate data entry and increase data transparency.</p>	<p>ECOS</p>	<p>Page 5 (Section II.B. Evidence Act)</p>	<p>EPA appreciates ECOS’s support for the efforts underway to achieve a better understanding of existing grant result tracking systems across EPA. In the first year of the Learning Agenda, OCIR’s workgroup conducted a comprehensive survey of regions and NPMs with over 400 responses regarding existing practices. Based on the survey, the workgroup is conducting further interviews with regional and NPM contacts to learn best practices and challenges in grant result tracking. The workgroup is operating alongside OMS to use this data to inform improved grant result tracking processes. The E-Enterprise Leadership Council has also been leveraged as a standing forum to share information and discuss the grant learning agenda (Oct 2021 meeting), which provides for a unique opportunity for EPA to collaborate with states and tribes.</p>	<p>No action taken</p>

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<p>States urge continued joint governance, coordination, and investment in data solutions to improve the multi-directional interoperability between state and federal databases. As examples, states encourage the modernization of drinking water information now managed through the Safe Drinking Water Information System (SDWIS) and of clean water and air information now managed through the Integrated Compliance Information System (ICIS). These modernization efforts can lead to reduced duplication, improved data quality, and less burdensome processes.</p>	<p>ECOS</p>	<p>Page 5 (Section II.B. (Evidence Act))</p>	<p>EPA concurs with states on the importance of continuing the joint governance, coordination, and investment in data solutions. The Office of E-Enterprise (OEE) also continues implementing ongoing SDWIS and ICIS projects.</p>	<p>No action taken</p>
<p>ECOS supports EPA's effort to implement the Evidence Act and is eager to coordinate and communicate with OCIR as the learning agenda progresses.</p>	<p>ECOS</p>	<p>Page 6 (Section II.B. Evidence Act)</p>	<p>EPA will continue to connect with ECOS on Evidence Act efforts and ensure regular communication with the states. Further, OEE is currently participating in a compliance learning agenda, led by OECA.</p>	<p>No action taken</p>

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<p>To streamline annual grant workplan development, states recommend EPA support establishment of electronic collaborative forums between regions and states that can be used to develop and negotiate grant workplans such as through MAX and SharePoint. States in regions that utilize online collaboration platforms for PPA and PPG workplan negotiations have spoken very highly of them. States hope that online collaboration platforms such as the ones used by EPA Regions 1, 5, and 8 become an option for all states.</p>	<p>ECOS</p>	<p>Page 9 (Section IV. Flexibility and Grant Planning; Implementing PPGs)</p>	<p>EPA will continue to seek new and innovative ways to improve and streamline the annual work grant workplan development process. EPA will continue to support and encourage electronic collaborative forums between Regions and states that can be used to develop and negotiate grant workplans. EPA will continue to work in close partnership with ECOS on improving accessibility to utilize online collaboration platforms for PPA and PPG workplan negotiations.</p>	<p>Language added: Regions are encouraged to take full advantage of online collaboration platforms when negotiating PPGs. These platforms allow both EPA and the PPG recipient to work cohesively together and track progress towards finalizing workplans.</p>

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<p>ECOS supports EPA’s support of work on innovative solutions and offering greater flexibility in EPA state/tribal cooperative agreements, including PPGs and PPAs. States appreciate this acknowledgement to consider workload tradeoffs to further modernization goals and encourages OCIR to provide outreach and support to EPA Regional Offices to support use of this tool as states negotiate their grant workplans with regions. ECOS also encourages EPA to gather and share workload tradeoffs broadly to facilitate activities that maximize protection of human health and environment.</p>	ECOS	Page 12 (Section IV. Flexibility and Grant Planning; E-Enterprise and Workload Tradeoffs)	<p>OCIR will continue to work closely with E-Enterprise staff to gather and share workload tradeoff examples through the EECIP and resource documents. The EECIP is an effective platform for EPA and states to share examples of PPAs/PPGs.</p> <p>ECOS and the ECOS State Grants Subgroup to implement new and innovative ways to maximize flexibilities, and workload tradeoffs in EPA state/tribal cooperative agreements, including PPGs and PPAs.</p>	No action taken
<p>In addition to the priorities outlined above, states encourage EPA to continue to focus measures on environmental outcomes rather than outputs such as the number of inspections or evaluations.</p>	ECOS		OCIR uses both outcome and output metrics to track progress towards meeting agency priorities.	No action taken
<p>ECOS encourages EPA to adopt a culture of shared governance broadly and to reinforce this in rule development, system modernization work, consideration of major system upgrades such as with the Exchange Network, and other means.</p>	ECOS		OCIR will continue to coordinate with OCFO and OEE to support the key principle of shared governance, collaborating with States and Tribes, essential to E-Enterprise of the Environment.	No action taken

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<p>States also urge continued joint governance, coordination, and investment in data solutions to improve the multi-directional interoperability between state and federal databases. As examples, states encourage the modernization of drinking water information now managed through the Safe Drinking Water Information System (SDWIS) and of clean water and air information now managed through the Integrated Compliance Information System (ICIS). These modernization efforts can lead to reduced duplication, improved data quality, and less burdensome processes.</p>	<p>ECOS</p>		<p>OCIR will continue to coordinate with OCFO and OEE to support the key principle of shared governance – collaborating with States and Tribes, essential to E-Enterprise of the Environment. Specifically, the improvement of data systems used in common – such as supporting state and tribal participation in SDWIS and ICIS, is a focus of continuing EE coordination and work.</p>	<p>No action taken</p>
<p>In addition to the priorities outlined above, states encourage EPA to continue to focus measures on environmental outcomes rather than outputs such as the number of inspections or evaluations.</p>	<p>Small Business and Environmental Assistance Program</p>		<p>OCIR uses both outcome and output metrics to track progress towards meeting agency priorities.</p>	<p>No action taken</p>
<p>The document has hotlinks for various relevant topics and sites. This is good if the document will be strictly electronic. But because some may receive the document in a paper form, all hotlink URLs should be provided as reference either within the text itself, or be footnoted, and have then have the provided URL be hot-linked.</p>	<p>Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe</p>	<p>Throughout</p>	<p>OCIR appreciates the comment from the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe and will modify its National Program Guidance to accommodate readers without electronic access to this document.</p>	<p>OCIR provided URLs in the footnotes of the final guidance.</p>