

EPA REGION 3 FACT SHEET

PENNSYLVANIA RAPID RESPONSE TEAM (RRT)

FOR USE BY 2024 PRESIDENT-ELECT TRANSITION TEAM MEMBERS ONLY

ISSUE SUMMARY

IWG: The Interagency Working Group on Coal and Power Plant Communities and Economic Revitalization (Energy Communities - [IWG](#)) is administered by the U.S. Secretary of Energy and co-chaired by the Director of the National Economic Council, the National Climate Advisor, and the Senior Advisor to the President for Clean Energy Innovation and Implementation. The mission of the IWG is to drive funding and resources more quickly to help rebuild and diversify local economies facing a myriad of economic challenges. Eleven federal agencies participate in the IWG.

RRTs: A signature IWG program, the Rapid Response Teams ([RRTs](#)) strive to establish a network of assistance focused on a community or region. RRTs are driven by locally identified needs and connect federal, state, local, and outside expert resources to communities in need of the know-how or without staff resources to go after grant dollars.

RRTs engage with state and local officials across the political spectrum, community groups, labor unions, corporations, investors, colleges and universities, and philanthropic groups, to offer direct guidance about funding resources. This is facilitated by listening to communities and coordinating federal funding to spur investments toward economic revitalization efforts.

PA RRT & EPA REGION 3 LEADERSHIP: Region 3, based in Philadelphia, is leading the federal Rapid Response Team (RRT) for Pennsylvania to share federal funding opportunities available with communities affected by the energy transition. *Armstrong, Beaver, Fayette, Greene, Indiana, and Washington Counties* are the counties of initial focus because they face significant economic hardship due to anticipated or already closed coal power plants and manufacturing facilities. The PA RRT is one of six RRTs (Wyoming, the Four Corners, the Illinois Basin, Eastern Kentucky, Appalachian Ohio). A seventh in West Virginia is currently being organized.

STAFF: The project is led by Region 3's Chief of Staff and a Congressional Liaison in the Office of Public Affairs. The PA RRT is supported by a team at the EPA Office of Policy as well as leadership at the Department of Energy.

KEY POINTS

ESTABLISHED IN 2023: The PA RRT was established in October 2023. An in-person statewide conference was convened to kick off the program. Over 300 community leaders, including local, state, and federal representatives and elected officials were in attendance.

KEY PARTNERS in 2024 – Two essential relationships were forged in 2024 to help coordinate the activities of the PA RRT.

- **Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission (SPC)** – The economic development and grants staff at the *Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission* ([SPC](#)) provide direct support to the RRT. SPC engagement aligns with work already being done by this federally certified Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) which also serves as a Local Development District (LDD) and an Economic Development District (EDD). Staff have been instrumental in outreach, communications, and relationship development. The group is well known and highly regarded.
- **Southwest Pennsylvania Municipal Project Hub (SWPA)** - The executive director and outreach staff at the newly established *Southwest Pennsylvania Municipal Project Hub* ([SWPA](#)) have been instrumental in fostering relationships and sharing information. SWPA offers no-cost technical assistance to municipalities, schools, nonprofits, and other public entities to access and leverage federal funding for infrastructure, clean energy, and sustainable economic development projects. This team assesses community needs and identifies technical assistance services. As such, SWPA is a perfect

complement to the RRT with in-house support, technical assistance capabilities, contracted work, and referrals for federal grants, tax credits, and financing with philanthropic sources.

JUNE 2024 LISTENING SESSIONS HOSTED – Six county specific listening sessions (hybrid and virtual) were hosted to hear local concerns. These two-hour meetings attracted over 200 people. Attendees heard from EPA Region 3’s Chief of Staff, SPC’s Workforce Development Director, SWPA’s Executive Director, IWG leadership, and county representatives from economic development or planning offices. Robust question and answer sessions left attendees feeling optimistic about funding possibilities and the commitment federal and state agencies have made to local economic revitalization.

SEPTEMBER 2024 ON THE GROUND VISITS – Region 3’s Chief of Staff joined 6 county specific tours of facilities and communities across the RRT geography. This was an opportunity to see some of the conditions described at the June listening sessions. The visits resulted in several proactive responses to address systemic conditions which have been frustrating local officials.

FEDERAL, STATE, AND COUNTY CONTACT TEAMS ESTABLISHED IN 2024 – Two key teams have been created to provide guidance and direction for the RRT. A team of county points of contact are a fundamental group to share ideas and feedback on RRT events. County representatives were presenters during the June 2024 listening sessions and led on the ground tours with Region 3’s Chief of Staff. Moreover, a comprehensive group of federal and state agency representatives was established. Many of these federal and state representatives or their colleagues will present at the forthcoming PA RRT Opportunities Conference. Each group meets monthly to share information and provide insights.

RENEWED CONFIDENCE IN THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT – Since the establishment of the PA RRT in 2023, EPA Region 3 staff consistently receive positive feedback that the RRT is demonstrating a renewed federal commitment to communities who feel marginalized and forgotten when federal dollars are distributed, cracking a perception that investments are only made in big cities. Municipal and county officials are appreciative of the services offered by the RRT which they hope will eventually result in new jobs and infrastructure improvements for those communities.

ONGOING/UPCOMING REVIEWS FOR FY2025

OPPORTUNITIES CONFERENCE – An all-day *Virtual Opportunities Conference, Show Me the \$: Accessing Federal Funds* is being planned to share timely information on technical assistance, open or forthcoming grants, sources of matching funds, and community success stories. Federal and state agencies will address the primary issues raised at the June listening sessions.

PARTNERING WITH THE THREE RIVERS TASK FORCE – A task force led by the IWG focused on the three rivers area (Allegheny, Monongahela, Ohio Rivers) west of Pittsburgh was recently established. The RRT will continue to partner and support this task force in its work.

EXPANSION – The RRT hopes to replicate what is being done in Western Pennsylvania, in other coal-affected communities in Pennsylvania.

KEY EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Congress	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Industry	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> States	<input type="checkbox"/> Tribes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Media	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other Federal Agency
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NGO	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Municipal and County Governments	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public			

MOVING FORWARD

MAINTAIN MOMENTUM– Maintaining the momentum going into 2025 is a priority. This will include quarterly visits to the 6 western Pennsylvania counties, hosting the monthly partner meetings, resolving problems through new connections and funding sources, and ultimately expanding the RRT to other areas of Pennsylvania in need of support and investment.