



Getting Started with GAP: New Staff Toolkit

This document is designed to help new tribal environmental staff understand the typical activities of the Indian Environmental General Assistance Program (GAP) in the first year and throughout their GAP career.

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Where to Begin

There's so much to learn about how a GAP grant operates, it can be hard to know where to begin. We hope this New Staff Toolkit will help new GAP staff get oriented. *Many activities besides those listed below are possible under a GAP grant, and activities do not necessarily need to be completed in this order.*

Suggested Administrative Activities

Start by becoming familiar with our [Region 10 GAP Program](#) page and other resources on the [Region 10 Tribal Programs](#) website. This [YouTube video](#) from EPA's Region 9 also provides an excellent overview of GAP and GAP-eligible activities.

Next steps: review key documents, arrange introductory meetings, get organized, attend trainings, build a network, work with tribal leaders, and prepare to apply for next year's GAP grant.

Review Key Documents

- Review the tribe or consortium's grant agreement and [EPA's Grant Terms and Conditions](#).
- Review the tribe/consortium's work plan, budget, and progress reports.



- Review any existing plans, such as the [EPA-Tribal Environmental Plan \(ETEP\)](#), Integrated Solid Waste Management Plan, and [Quality Assurance Project Plan \(QAPP\)](#).
- Review the 2022 [Guidance on the Award and Management of General Assistance Agreements for Tribes and Intertribal Consortia](#) and the associated [GAP Capacity Indicators](#).
- Review the [legal provisions and policies governing the GAP grant](#).
- If the tribe or consortium has a PPG, review EPA's [Performance Partnership Grants for Tribes in Region 10 page](#).

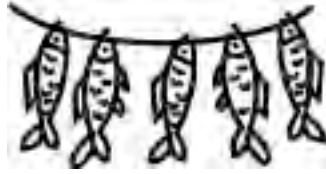
Contact your [EPA Tribal Coordinator](#) for assistance if you have trouble locating any of these documents.

Please subscribe to the [Region 10 Tribal Info Box](#) for the latest national and regional news, grant deadlines, and a calendar of upcoming events, and add Communications@region10toc.net to your contacts to ensure that the emails come to your inbox, rather than to your junk folder.

Arrange Introductory Meetings

Within the first 2 weeks of employment:

- Request time to discuss the environmental program with the governing body of the tribe/consortium and the Tribal Administrator. Successfully managing federal grants such as GAP requires an understanding of Tribal Council/Board expectations and priorities, as well as the policies and procedures that apply to your employment.
- Meet with the tribe/consortium's [EPA Tribal Coordinator](#), Tribal Administrator, and Financial Officer to discuss the grant's current status and each person's role.
 - Identify work plan activities and deliverables that need to be completed.
 - Obtain all necessary [forms and reports](#) and add critical due dates to your calendar. It can be helpful to use a whiteboard so all GAP staff can see upcoming activities.
 - Determine the current balance and how much money remains in the tribe's GAP account. Are there any outstanding expenses that need to be drawn down? If the tribe has a large balance, discuss the options.
 - Arrange to meet with the Tribal Administrator and Financial Officer monthly before Tribal Council/Board meetings to discuss the status of the budget and work plan tasks.

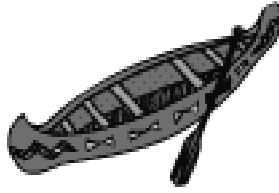


Get Organized

- Develop a system for filing GAP documents and deliverables. Keep both paper and computer records and ensure that everyone who needs access to those files can find them. Back up files regularly.
- Develop an email address unique to the tribe/consortium. Avoid using personal email for GAP work.
- Start a monthly budget to keep track of expenses. Following in an optional spreadsheet:
 - [GAP Basic Budget Spreadsheet \(xlsx\)](#) (22.26 KB)
- Carefully document any changes the tribe/consortium wants to make to the work plan and budget. Discuss these changes with the Tribal Council/Board and your EPA Tribal Coordinator. If this is a new topic for the tribe, update the EPA-Tribal Environmental Plan.
- With the Tribal Council and Administrator, develop or update a staff manual that describes the tribe/consortium's environmental program. The manual might include key contacts, critical deadlines, important user names and passwords, how to submit a grant on [Grants.gov](#), who completes the drawdowns in ASAP, etc.

Attend Trainings

- Complete EPA's online [Grants Management Training for Applicants and Recipients](#).
- Review EPA Region 10's [webinars page](#). Request resources as needed.
- Consider attending the Region 10 [Tribal Environmental Leaders Summit](#), typically held in the spring.
- Seek in-person and online trainings on [EPA Region 10's Training and Technical Assistance for Tribes page](#).
- Alaska grantees may wish to consider attending [the Alaska GAP Workshop](#), the [Alaska Tribal Conference on Environmental Management](#), and the [Alaska Forum on the Environment](#). These events are typically held in Anchorage in the winter.



Build a Network

There is so much to know and do in GAP, having a strong support network is essential.

- Reach out to the Tribal Council/Board, Tribal Administrator to inform them about GAP, ask questions, and receive guidance.
- Reach out to the [consortia](#) and other tribes to get advice and collaborate on projects.
- Connect with environmental experts at trainings and conferences to inform the tribe/consortium's environmental activities.
- Talk with your [EPA Tribal Coordinator](#) about visiting another tribe with a successful GAP grant.
- Ask your [EPA Tribal Coordinator](#) for help when needed.

Work with Tribal Leaders

- The Tribal Council/Board is the responsible party as the grant recipient. Regularly brief the members on grant progress and request assistance when needed.
- Consult with the Council/Board on any changes to the work plan and budget.
- In the first and second quarters, work with the Council/Board to develop or update the environmental priorities in the tribe's ETEP.
- In October/November, review the new [funding announcement](#) in detail and update the Tribal Council/Board. Seek feedback on next year's budget and work plan activities.
- Keep Tribal Council/Board members informed about [consultation opportunities](#) with EPA.

Prepare to Apply for Next Year's GAP Grant

- Check the tribe/consortium's registration on [Sam.gov](#). When does it expire? Work with the Tribal Administrator to update the registration *at least a month before the expiration date*. The [Procurement Technical Assistance Center](#) in your state can provide assistance.
- Check the tribe/consortium's [Grants.gov](#) registration. Is it up to date? Who is the authorized representative who can submit the grant application? [Learn more about registering](#).
- Develop a seasonal calendar to map out when work plan activities can best be completed, planning around important tribal events, subsistence activities, and even weather. For example, holding a community outreach event during commercial fishing season or taking water samples in wintertime may not be doable.



Environmental Activities

Some environmental activities to consider in the first year include:

- Conducting an [environmental assessment](#) to determine the environmental priorities of tribal leaders and community members and inform work plan activities.
- Attending environmental trainings needed to complete work plan activities. Many opportunities can be found on [EPA Region 10's Training and Technical Assistance for Tribes page](#).
- Completing the 40-hour HAZWOPER training if managing solid waste.
- If testing is a priority for the tribe, including training on sampling and/or development of a [Quality Assurance Project Plan \(QAPP\)](#) in the GAP application.
- For other ideas, review the [GAP Guidance](#) chat with your [EPA Tribal Coordinator](#), contact [EPA Tribal Specialists](#), and network with other grantees.

What's a fiscal year?

Many GAP grants operate on the fiscal year, which begins October 1 and ends September 30. For example, Fiscal Year 2023 (FY23) begins October 1, 2022 and ends September 30, 2023.

Quarter 1: October 1-December 31

Quarter 3: April 1-June 30

Quarter 2: January 1-March 31

Quarter 4: July 1-September 30



Looking Ahead

Below are some of the administrative and environmental tasks that GAP grantees often undertake after completing the activities listed above.

Administrative Activities

- Review the ETEP annually and update as needed. Consider other environmental activities the tribe could undertake to achieve the goals in the ETEP.
- At the end of the grant cycle, submit final closeout reporting. (The grant cycle for most PPGs is 5 years. The grant cycle for most GAP grants is 4 years.) Create a file for all grant documents and store for 3 years in a location easily accessible to GAP staff.
- Seek funding from other organizations and agencies. Find federal funding opportunities on [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov).

Environmental Activities

- Branch out to other environmental topics of importance to the tribe. Consult with the Tribal Council/Board, community members, other tribes, and [EPA Tribal Coordinator](#) to develop a plan.
- Complete sampling or QAPP training as needed.
 - Submit a QAPP to EPA for approval. Begin sampling once the QAPP is approved.
 - Gather results and decide on next steps.
 - For consortia, consider developing an umbrella QAPP for tribal members.
- If solid waste is a priority for the tribe:
 - Develop an [integrated solid waste management plan](#) or update the plan as needed.
 - Attend an 8-hour HAZWOPER refresher.
 - Consider coordinating with other tribes and organizations on backhaul and recycling.
- Begin participating in conferences, work groups, and committees and helping other tribes:
 - Share successes and lessons learned through presentations at workshops and conferences.
 - Join work groups on environmental issues of concern to the tribe.



- Participate in the [Region 10 Tribal Operations Committee](#).
- Engage with [tribal partnership groups](#).
- Participate in local and [federal advisory committees](#), such as a [Landscape Conservation Cooperative](#)
- Serve as a mentor for other tribes

Roles and Responsibilities in a GAP Grant

The Tribal Council:

- Is the responsible party for the grant.
- Reviews and approves personnel changes.
- Reviews staff performance as required in the tribe/consortium's Personnel Policies and Procedures.
- Reviews and approves the ETEP, work plans, and budgets.
- Reviews and signs Federal Financial Reports (FFRs/SF-425).
- Reviews reports and deliverables from GAP staff.

Tribal Administrators:

- With information from the GAP staff, complete drawdowns in ASAP (or direct staff to do so). The Terms and Conditions in the tribe/consortium's grant agreement explain drawdown requirements.
- Maintain user names, passwords, records, and files related to the grant.
- Ensure registration for SAM.gov and Grants.gov are up to date.
- Update Personnel Policies and Procedures as changes occur.
- Review the ETEP.
- Ensure completion of annual and final Federal Financial Reports, as well as grant closeouts.

Tribal Environmental Staff:

- Communicate frequently with EPA Tribal Coordinator and Tribal Council/Board.
- Develop or update the ETEP in coordination with the EPA Tribal Coordinator and submit to the Tribal Administrator and Council/Board for review.
- Develop, revise, and implement GAP work plans and budgets.
- Manage the GAP budget in coordination with the Tribal Administrator and/or Financial Officer.
- Submit reporting to EPA and the Council/Board, working as needed with the Tribal Administrator and/or Financial Officer.

EPA Tribal Coordinators:

- Coordinate, collaborate, and communicate with Tribal Councils on administrative and environmental issues.
- Help with pre-award project development, the grant application, changes to the work plan and budget after award, and challenges throughout the grant cycle.
- Advise on reporting, ETEPs, and other grant requirements.
- Connect tribal environmental staff to environmental and administrative resources.

Forms and Reports

One of the most important activities grantees need to complete is reporting. Here are some tips:

- Keep a daily log of activities to simplify progress reporting, which must clearly document progress made under each workplan commitment.
- Maintain records for all expenditures, program income, and other financial matters, which will make financial reporting easier at the end of the year.
- Complete all progress reports in sufficient detail, which will make it easier to complete the final performance report at the end of the project period.

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Form/Report	Due Date	Submit to:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quarter 2: Progress reports due July 30. Quarter 3: Progress reports due October 30. Quarter 4: Progress reports due January 30 	
EPA-Tribal Environmental Plan	Create (or update if needed) by September 30. An update is required every 3-5 years.	Tribal Coordinator , Tribal Council
Final Performance Report	Within 120 days of the end of the project period (typically every 4 years)	Tribal Coordinator , Tribal Council
Indirect Cost Rate Agreement or Proposal	Annually if the tribe has an indirect cost rate	Tribal Coordinator , Grants Specialist
Annual Audit (if grantee has more than 1 million in federal funds)	File annually within 9 months of the end of the fiscal year	Federal Audit Clearinghouse