



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

MAY 18 2015

OFFICE OF
THE ADMINISTRATOR

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Progress in Advancing a New Era of Partnerships

FROM: A. Stanley Meiburg, Acting Deputy Administrator

TO: Assistant Administrators
Regional Administrators
Deputy Assistant Administrators
Deputy Regional Administrators

I am pleased to report that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has made significant progress in advancing a new era of partnerships as a result of some remarkable collaborations with our state and tribal partners. We now have the opportunity to take steps within each of our organizations to integrate new approaches to priorities, flexibilities and efficiencies into the EPA's work.

Partnerships are at the very foundation of our progress in protecting human health and the environment. Twenty years ago, on May 17, 1995, the EPA and the states signed a pivotal agreement establishing the National Environmental Performance Partnership System, a forward-thinking, flexible and outcome-focused approach to environmental protection. Since then the EPA, states and tribes have achieved notable success in implementing the National Environmental Performance Partnership System while navigating unforeseen challenges and witnessing dramatic advancements in tools and technologies. What has not changed is the need to continue to work collaboratively with our partners to further improve efficiency and achieve more programmatic and financial flexibility.

Last year EPA regions, national-program managers, states and tribal representatives collaborated to find ways to reduce the burdens associated with developing and implementing national-program-manager guidance on an annual basis and improve its strategic value. This effort resulted in a new two-year, national-program-manager-guidance process beginning in FY 2016. This process should increase state and tribal involvement in developing national priorities through earlier and more meaningful engagement, provide a clearer understanding of where flexibility is available and reduce administrative burden. Equally important, national-program managers are committing to issue many programmatic grant guidances on a two-year cycle. EPA regions, states and tribes will benefit from closer coordination among the national-program-manager guidances and programmatic grant guidances. Our new approach to developing national-program-manager and grant guidance should better shape discussions about how priorities can be implemented with flexibility in National Environmental Performance Partnership System agreements and state- and tribal-grant work plans. During the next year, we will assess the new process to ensure it is working as intended and make any necessary adjustments.

There are other important efforts underway. Regions are taking a fresh look at how regional and state managers review environmental priorities, available resources and program flexibilities to inform work negotiated in National Environmental Performance Partnership System agreements and state-grant work plans. The EPA is developing a Performance Partnership Grant Grants Policy Issuance to promote greater Performance Partnership Grant use and ensure consistent Performance Partnership Grant implementation and management. The EPA also has revised the existing Grants Policy Issuance 12-06 to encourage and support the use of multi-year grant work plans as an effective way to better align them with two-year national-program-manager and grant guidances and increase administrative efficiency. Taken together, these improvements will position the National Environmental Performance Partnership System to be more useful and effective for states, tribes and the EPA.

I am also excited about a helpful new resource developed by the Environmental Council of States, which enumerates examples of state requests for programmatic flexibilities from the EPA. It describes the specific flexibilities sought and the reasons for supporting or denying the request. This resource, available on the ECOS and EPA websites, is designed to increase awareness, spur state and EPA dialogue and stimulate thinking among states and across the agency about other ways to effectively use flexibility to carry out our joint responsibilities.

Finally, E-Enterprise for the Environment is our most promising new partnership opportunity to achieve and deliver process efficiencies, burden reduction and transparency unattainable 20 years ago. These efforts will enhance services to the regulated community and public, make for better program performance and improve environmental results. In a forthcoming memorandum, I will describe how we have incorporated E-Enterprise into the EPA's programmatic management and accountability framework.

Thanks to each of you for your full engagement in and support for these efforts. They offer great opportunities to work together with our partners to achieve a more effective and efficient environmental enterprise for our nation.

cc: Administrator
Acting Chief Financial Officer
Chief of Staff
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