



# Building Sustainable Tribal Waste Management Programs Through Collaboration

To strengthen tribal capacity building and develop sustainable waste management programs, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) facilitates the National Tribal Waste Management Peer Matching Program. Peer matches are voluntary, structured opportunities for tribes and Alaska Native Villages who are working on similar issues to exchange experiences and practical knowledge through a mentoring program.

Peer matching can be a productive and cost-effective method for tribes to provide technical assistance to each other on a wide range of waste-related topics. Peer matching also supports collaboration and builds relationships among the tribes and with EPA.

## When is it appropriate to request support through the Peer Matching Program?

Peer matches work well when the tribe requesting a mentor:

- has identified a specific need, such as to develop an Integrated Waste Management Plan or solid waste enforcement codes, to construct and operate a transfer station, recycling facility or landfill, or to acquire best practices for pollution prevention or recycling programs;
- is approaching a key decision point in the design or implementation of a solution;
- has limited funding for travel or associated costs for formal training; or
- anticipates the project will be completed within a one-year timeframe.

## Who are the peer mentors?

Peer mentors are tribal environmental personnel who can provide expertise and experience to tribes requesting mentoring. Mentors volunteer to participate in the program. A mentor is not intended to take the place of a general contractor, consultant, or other services that are traditionally paid positions.

## PEER MATCHING SUCCESS STORY

### *Two Fellow Tribes Help Keweenaw Bay Indian Community (KBIC) Design a Transfer Station*



Lacking local and economically feasible waste disposal options, the Keweenaw Bay Indian Community needed a transfer station. Following an effort to develop an Integrated Waste Management Plan, the Keweenaw Bay Indian Community sought technical assistance from fellow tribes.

With help from EPA Region 5, the Bad River Band of Lake Superior Chippewa and Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa volunteered to assist Keweenaw Bay Indian Community with developing a transfer station on its reservation. The mentors committed their time and provided information on their own experiences with facility specifications and design, expenses and revenues, staffing, and recycling opportunities. EPA helped coordinate the effort and provided travel funding.

The peer match saved the Keweenaw Bay Indian Community considerable time and money, and built strong peer-to-peer relationships among the three participating tribes. With this effort as a foundation, Keweenaw Bay Indian Community opened its fully operational transfer station in the fall of 2014.

Photo courtesy of KBIC

### What is the EPA's role in the Peer Matching Program?

EPA Headquarters, in collaboration with EPA regions, facilitates matches and works with the matched tribes throughout the mentoring process. This may include facilitating communication and providing support as agreed upon by the tribes.

### How does the Peer Matching Program work?

Through a facilitated discussion, the mentor and the mentee work together to carefully analyze the waste management issues and develop viable options for action. In this way, peer matches capitalize on the knowledge and expertise of those working on environmental issues at the ground level, with the aim of enhancing protection of human health and the environment. As always, peer matches are voluntary.

### FUNDING FOR PEER MATCHES

Funding for travel for peer matches may be available through the Indian Environmental General Assistance Program or other programs.

For more information on funding, please visit the National Tribal Waste Management Peer Matching Program website at <https://www.epa.gov/tribal-lands> or email EPA at [tribalpeermatch@epa.gov](mailto:tribalpeermatch@epa.gov).

### What is the process for participating in the Peer Matching Program?

- 1** The tribe completes the Request for Participants Form at <https://www.epa.gov/tribal-lands>.
- 2** EPA confirms receipt of the request and may ask a few questions to further assess the needs of the tribe requesting assistance.
- 3** EPA identifies a tribal match between the tribe seeking the technical assistance (mentee) and a tribe with the appropriate expertise (mentor). EPA confirms the mentor tribe's availability to assist the tribe requesting assistance. EPA provides contact information to both tribes.
- 4** The tribes work collaboratively to define and address the needs of the tribe requesting assistance.
- 5** As requested, EPA provides facilitation (e.g., periodic conference calls and/or meetings) or other support to work towards project goals.



All matched tribes are expected to maintain regular communication and follow through with the volunteered commitment for assistance.

### For More Information

To participate in the program, learn more about program participants, review success stories, or find answers to frequently asked questions, please visit <https://www.epa.gov/tribal-lands> or contact the EPA at [tribalpeermatch@epa.gov](mailto:tribalpeermatch@epa.gov).