

Cultural Activities & EPA Indian Environmental General Assistance Program

Funding in Region 9

Making the Connection between Environmental Protection and Culture

INTRODUCTION

Natural resources can have a strong connection to the culture of a tribe. Because of this, many cultural related activities might be eligible for inclusion in Indian Environmental General Assistance Program (GAP) work plans. GAP eligible activities may include culturally relevant environmental education and outreach and certain aspects of natural resource vulnerability assessments, among other potential activities. Some GAP allowable activities could simultaneously protect the environment and help preserve culture. Examples include: developing a water quality protection program to help ensure cultural practitioners are not put at undue risk while using waters for traditional purposes; protecting native reeds used for cultural purposes from pesticides; or consultation and coordination with entities for projects that will affect both environmental and cultural resources.

EXAMPLE CAPACITY BUILDING INDICATORS

Here is a non-exhaustive list of capacity building indicators from the [GAP Guidance](#) that could help your tribe develop a GAP work plan inclusive of cultural work:

- B.7.5: Documentation supporting the tribe's claim of interests to usual and accustomed areas and to cultural resources potentially affected by environmental protection activities.
- B.4.5: Written policies and procedures for protecting sensitive tribal environmental and human health data (e.g., traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) and cultural resources).
- B.2.5: Intergovernmental agreements (tribal, federal, state, local) necessary to implement the environmental program.
- B.6.3: Environmental Education/Outreach plans and (or) curricula
- C.3.14: Tribe has developed a climate change vulnerability/risk assessment.

If you are interested in developing a new capacity indicator, please contact the [EPA Region 9 TIPD Division Director](#).

EXAMPLE WORKPLAN COMMITMENTS

Here are some non-exhaustive language excerpts from approved Region 9 GAP work plans:

- To provide culturally relevant environmental education and outreach to the community.
- Conduct integrated community education and outreach based on EPA GAP aligned Tribal Environmental Plan (TEP) goals.
- Provide bi-weekly, year-around child and youth GAP aligned environmental education program activities, including cultural and TEK focused lessons.
- Develop integrated GAP aligned environmental outreach materials, including cultural and TEK focused information.
- Multi-tribal environmental educational outreach that encompasses the teaching of basic environmental science and traditional ecological knowledge.

Note that your GAP Project Officer may ask for more details within the commitments to better understand the connection between the cultural work and environmental capacity building (the statutory purpose of GAP).

RESOURCES BEYOND GAP

GAP funds may not be used to fund activities related to cultural resources that are unrelated to environmental protection, such as the repatriation of Native American cultural items. In some cases, it may make sense for a tribe to explore resources besides GAP, including BIA grants, the [Tribal Historic Preservation Offices and Tribal Heritage Grants](#) and the [California Native American Heritage Commission](#).

If you have any specific eligibility questions, please contact your [GAP Region 9 Project Officer](#). Tribes can also contact the [EPA Region 9 RTOC Co-Chair](#) directly with specific questions or concerns.