

Overview of EPN and Its Capacity-Building Technical Assistance Work

The [Environmental Protection Network](https://environmentalprotectionnetwork.org) (EPN) was founded in January 2017 and now has more than 550 EPA alumni across the country volunteering their time to protect the integrity of EPA, human health, and the environment. EPN harnesses the expertise of former EPA staff to provide the unique perspective of former regulators with decades of historical knowledge and subject matter expertise on issues including air and water pollution, toxic substances, hazardous waste, and more.

Communities across the country, especially those in areas disproportionately impacted by pollution, must navigate a staggering array of government regulations, scientific data, public policies, etc., as they work to protect their environment and health. Hundreds of EPN volunteers—former EPA engineers, scientists, lawyers, permit writers, modelers, and others—want to be of service. EPN connects these volunteers to community groups, and other nonprofit organizations assisting them, so that they may offer to provide pro bono technical assistance, capacity building, and training, especially in communities suffering from environmental injustices.

Many of the volunteers in EPN's network worked collaboratively with communities and non-profit organizations during their decades at EPA. In their retirement, they are continuing to assist organizations more effectively and meaningfully participate in government decision-making by helping them navigate EPA, regulatory processes, the implications of federal policies and publicly available data, and accessing grants to support their work. The types of assistance that volunteers may provide include:

- Translating documents or regulatory processes into lay language
- Explaining and/or advising on how to navigate complicated regulatory or grants programs
- Helping to identify individual contacts at regulatory agencies
- Connecting groups with others in the EPN network for additional advice
- Sharing similar examples of situations that might provide lessons learned

The volunteers will engage internally with organizations to support and help advance their work, but they will not be available to play public-facing roles, including:

- Speaking to reporters on behalf of communities or NGOs
- Representing communities or NGOs before regulatory agencies or at public meetings
- Appearing as an expert witness

As volunteers, they do not accept financial compensation for any completed or future work.

Examples of the types of technical assistance volunteers have been able to offer over the last few months include:

- Technical support to a national NGO assisting a community in Alaska where local drinking water supplies have been heavily contaminated by PFAS from the use of firefighting foam at a local airport.
- Expertise in hazardous waste permitting for a national NGO representing a community in Ohio to identify issues with a draft renewal permit for an incinerator.
- Technical advice to a community group in Texas on the use of low-cost air monitors when they realized that neither the state nor EPA would accept the data they had been collecting. The volunteer was able to provide guidance on what data would be accepted and the best place to locate the monitors for the most effective readings.
- Identifying the correct protocols for gathering and sending water and ambient air samples for a Texas community group to see if a large refinery was violating EPA's benchmark target for long-term benzene exposure.

Please note:

- The technical assistance provided by volunteers to communities and/or nonprofits is in their individual and personal capacity.
- EPN facilitates, at no cost to such groups, the connection of groups with volunteers with specific expertise.
- The information and/or advice provided by a volunteer is strictly their own, and does not represent the views, opinions, or advice of EPN.
- EPN does not guarantee or accept responsibility for any advice, information, or opinion provided by the volunteer, and EPN does not guarantee a particular outcome.
- The community and/or nonprofit is encouraged to independently determine the validity of the technical assistance and determine the extent to which they will make use of it, and/or work with the expert.
- Volunteers offer their own individual expertise and recommendations.

For more information please contact EPN at info@environmentalprotectionnetwork.org or call 646-361-6928 to set up a time to learn more about our program or to speak to an expert in our network.