

Summary of Input from ECOS for OCIR's FY 2023-2024 National Program Guidance

Process for Soliciting Early Input

Name of Organization	Venue	Date
Environmental Council of the States	Monthly calls and email correspondence	Submitted on October 18

Highlights of Early Input

The Environmental Council of the States (ECOS) provided input on five main areas related to OCIR's National Program Guidance:

1. **NEPPS: PPAs/PPGs**

ECOS recommends:

- EPA increase STAG funding and support flexibility in state program implementation. STAG funding for categorical grants has been generally flatlined over the last 19 years. Increased federal funding and flexibility in the use of federal funds in program implementation is important to continued success in delivering results.
- EPA to support state efforts to seek adequate funding for delegated program and infrastructure investments, support flexibility in implementing programs, collaborate through E- Enterprise for the Environment, and jointly work to modernize our technology infrastructure to enable all parties to continue to improve outcomes for all people.
- EPA support establishment of electronic collaborative forums between regions and states to streamline annual grant workplan development and negotiations (i.e., SharePoint sites).
- OCIR to annually gather from regions examples of flexibility included in PPAs and PPGs and share these examples of flexibilities broadly with states and regions, either by webinars or other means, which could accelerate consideration of innovative practices.
 - One example of a flexibility a number of states employ is the Alternative Compliance Monitoring Systems (ACMS). ECOS suggests that having a list of approved state ACMS approaches may make it easier for other states to adopt similar strategies to direct resources to priority compliance activities

2. **E-Enterprise: New Technology, Infrastructure and Electronic Platforms**

ECOS recommends:

- EPA to continue collaboration through E- Enterprise for the Environment and to support investments in technology infrastructure and state pilot projects that will accelerate the adoption of more efficient tools to meet our shared goals.
 - States appreciate EPA's promoting the use of [E-Enterprise Workload Tradeoffs¹](#) to adjust grant workplans that focus on collaborative efforts related to work modernization.
 - States encourage OCIR to provide outreach and support to EPA Regional Offices to support the use of this tool as states negotiate their grant workplans with regions.

¹ Draft FY 2022-2026 EPA Strategic Plan, pg 90

- Continued joint governance, coordination, and investment in data solutions to improve the multi-directional interoperability between state and federal databases. These modernization efforts can lead to reduced duplication, improved data quality, and less burdensome processes. Some examples:
 - Modernization of drinking water information managed via Safe Drinking Water Information System (SDWIS):
 - Modernization of Clean water and air information now managed through the Integrated Compliance Information System (ICIS)

3. Evidence Act

ECOS recommends:

- EPA to work closely together with states as it develops an “ideal future state” and as it identifies “opportunities for improvements to EPA’s grant program monitoring and tools...” under the Grant Commitments Met Learning Agenda priority area² of the draft FY22-26 Strategic Plan.
- EPA should consider states as stakeholders when assessing the pilot data collection tool and in planning to extend the pilot data collection tool more broadly.
- A holistic approach to data collection, considering potential new information needed alongside what reporting may no longer be needed, what information is not being utilized that could stop being collected, and what information EPA may already collect that could be shared more broadly.
- Conducting a complete review of needed and under-utilized information to allow resources to be better directed where they may be most effective.

4. Title VI/Civil Rights Compliance

ECOS recommends:

- EPA to plan for outreach and training for state staff in addition to EPA regional and headquarter staff.
 - In 2021, EPA responded to the Office of Inspector General of its plans to move to proactive Title VI/Civil Rights compliance reviews and to clarify through guidance how it will evaluate Title VI permitting and cumulative impacts when evaluating programs where EPA funds are provided
- EPA learn about state efforts to use data from the communities they serve in their decision-making process to promote equity and about state-led environmental justice mapping tools.
 - The ECOS Environmental Justice Workgroup is an example of one forum where EPA may gain insights into state experiences as it seeks to provide effective civil rights programs.

5. Agency Measures

ECOS recommends:

- EPA continue to focus measures on environmental outcomes rather than outputs such as the number of inspections or evaluations.

Next Steps

- AO-OCIR and the EPA regions will consider the early input recommendations received from ECOS in developing the OCIR FY 2023-2024 National Program Guidance.

² Draft FY 2022-2026 EPA Strategic Plan, pg 103