

Cultural Activities & EPA Indian Environmental General Assistance Program Funding

Facilitating Environmental Protection Through Culture in Region 9

INTRODUCTION

EPA recognizes the value that TEK (Traditional Ecological Knowledge) or IK (Indigenous Knowledge), adds to the protection of human health and the environment. Additionally, Indian Environmental General Assistance Program (GAP) eligible activities may include culturally relevant environmental education and outreach and certain aspects of natural resource vulnerability assessments, among other potential activities. Many GAP allowable activities simultaneously protect the environment and help preserve culture.

TIPS FOR DRAFTING A GAP ELIGIBLE COMMITMENT

1. Connect the work with an EPA environmental program – air quality, water quality, climate change, etc.
2. Check that the activity is a priority in the Tribe's most updated Tribal Environmental Plan.
3. Consider making multi-year plans that build on each other. You can use your EPA Tribal Environmental Plan as a strategic planning tool.

WORKPLAN COMMITMENT EXAMPLES

Below are some example commitments that include cultural activities and/or TEK. The below list of workplan examples is non-exhaustive. The [2022 GAP Guidance](#) and supporting documents has even more examples. See the tips in the section above on how to draft a GAP eligible commitment and work with your Project Officer to develop needed commitments.

- Tribe will use existing **cultural knowledge stories and history** for the development of **Tribal Beneficial Uses** for water quality.
- Tribe will gather **cultural knowledge stories from elders** to teach the community about environmental protection.
- Tribe will build capacity of their environmental program through a **multi-year traditional species planning** project. In Year 1, Tribe will research traditional plant species that prevent erosion and flooding, improve water quality, prevent fire and/or assist with soil remediation. In Year 2, Tribe will draft a multi-year plan to plant traditional species. This information will be included as a major part of a climate change mitigation plan.
- Tribe will hold a **cultural burning/prescribed burning workshop** to teach the community about why fire can be beneficial for environmental quality.
- Tribe will develop capacity in GIS through **mapping** areas that need focused environmental protection, including **culturally sensitive sites**.
- Tribe will work on a community plan to protect native resources used for cultural purposes from **pesticide exposure**.
- Tribe will attend quarterly **meetings with local government agencies** to discuss projects that will affect both environmental quality and cultural resources.
- Tribe will conduct a **baseline needs assessment** that is informed by traditional ecological knowledge/indigenous knowledge.

Please work with your Project Officer to determine appropriate deliverables for commitments related to TEK. Also note that your GAP Project Officer may ask for more details within the commitments to better

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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, USDA – Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), USDA – Forest Service (FS), the [Tribal Historic Preservation Offices and Tribal Heritage Grants](#) and the [California Native American Heritage Commission](#).

There is currently a Federal Government Workgroup on TEK and [Guidance for Federal Departments and Agencies on Indigenous Knowledge](#).

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.