Frequently Asked Questions about
NW Air Data Exchange System

from Ecology's Air Quality Program

Grant Proposal

Q: What is the purpose of this grant proposal?

A: This is a proposal to replace the Department of Ecology's (Ecology's) current air quality data acquisition, storage, and reporting systems (Telemetry System). The replacement would be an Internet-based system that would share ambient air quality data on EPA's Central Data Exchange (Network Node system). The new system funded by this grant would allow for expansion of monitoring sites, accommodate new technologies in telecommunications, and provide flexibility in access to data by staff and the public.

Q: Who submitted the proposal?

A: Ecology submitted it to EPA.

Q: How much money was requested?

A: We applied for a total project amount of $750,000.

Q: What does the grant money buy?

A: It will pay for the cost of connecting to a Network Node system, software and hardware to get data to the node, equipment and technology to acquire data, system development, some staff time, and contractors.

Q: Are there any time limits on the grant?

A: Yes. We have 24 months from the time we get the grant money to get our data on the Network Node.

Q: When will we know if we get the grant?

A: Ecology is submitting the final application package to EPA by May 31, and we expect to be notified of EPA's decision by mid-summer. The decision is subject to congressional approval.

Q: How likely is it that we will receive the grant?

A: There is a high likelihood that we will receive the grant, as long as the final grant application does not differ substantively from the grant pre-proposal.

Q: If the grant is successful, when would we receive the money?

A: We would probably not receive the money before October 2004.

Q: How much flexibility is there in use of the grant money?

A: There are strict requirements for spending this grant money. We are required to follow state of Washington and Ecology Information Technology standards, as well as ECOS Environmental Data Standards Council standards.

Q: Where can I find information about the pre-proposal and other elements of the grant application?

A: Visit Ecology's web site for this grant application at https://fortress.wa.gov/ecy/aqp/AirHome/aqpNetworkChallenge.shtml .

Q: What is a Network Node system?

A: A Network Node system is an environmental information web service, in which a collection of data is kept at a single memory location (the "node"). A node enables users to exchange information more easily, both in requesting information and in fulfilling information requests. Data will reside in the data collection and reporting system as it does currently, and from there will be placed on a node.

Q: Who will use the node?

A: Federal, state, and local agencies and Tribes could all use the node for information exchange. Partnerships could exist in two forms:

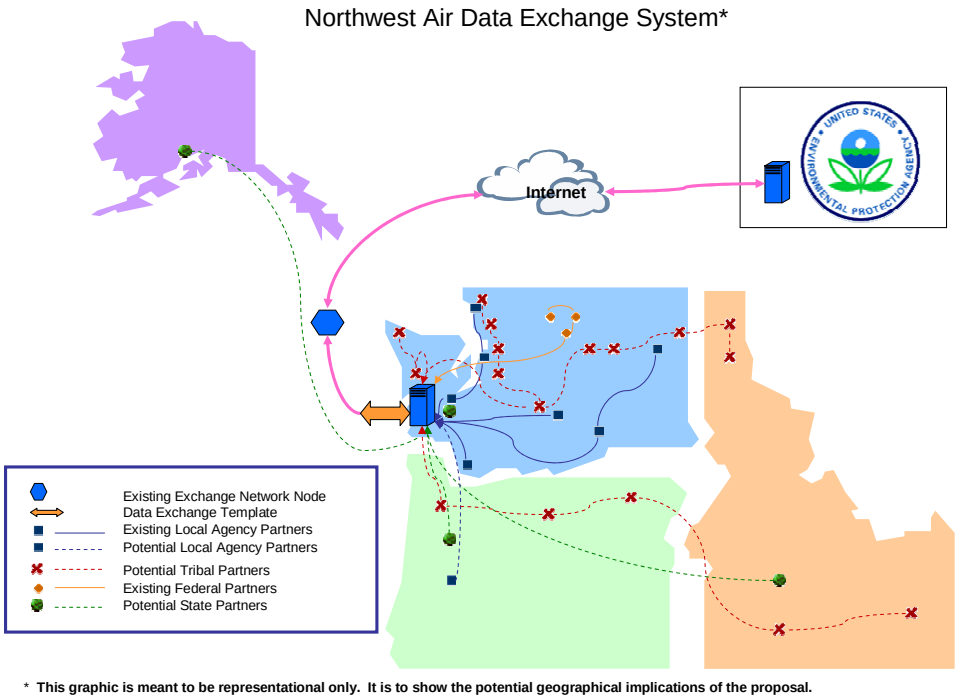
- those who have their data collected and stored on a central data collection system and reported to the network; and
- those who wish only to have access to data or share data on the network.

Q: Why use a Network Node rather than some other type of system?

A: Use of a Network Node system is a primary driver for EPA approval of the grant proposal. The reason for this is that the node enables standardization in the way data is formatted and submitted, which allows easier data sharing and greater flexibility in the way data is used. The system also encourages regional partnering.

Q: How does the node actually work?

A: The diagram below shows how the node system works.



* **This graphic is meant to be representational only. It is to show the potential geographical implications of the proposal.**

Q: What are the proposed features of the new system?

A: Proposed features include:

- A node system in which collected data is stored at a single location
- Cell or satellite data collection at up to 10 sites (includes training of partners)
- Cell or satellite data collection at existing sites where cost-effective
- An automated quality control process at 90% of sites
- New technologies (cellular, radio, satellite) at 10 sites to connect them to the data collection system
- Electronic strip charts at 100% of telemetered sites (includes operator training)
- Partnerships with other states, local agencies, Tribes, and other users if desired
- Notification to Tribes and assistance if requested
- Data flows from other agencies available on the Network Node
- Real-time ozone and $PM_{2.5}$ data submitted for inclusion on national databases and AIRNOW
- At least one “targeted” web site specific to a metropolitan area (e.g., Vancouver-Portland-Gorge or central Washington)

Q: How will the new system be implemented?

A: A technical work group will evaluate technical choices and identify requirements of the system. This group will make recommendations to an Executive Steering Committee made up of state and local staff. The Executive Steering Committee will provide policy direction and assist business users in determining priorities in system implementation. Ecology is already in the process of setting up this Steering Committee. Because this grant is a cooperative agreement, EPA will also have significant input on how the system is implemented.

Q: How will local agencies and other partners be able to participate?

A: Partners can participate on the Executive Steering Committee, the technical work group, in the requirements collection process and the Request for Quotations (RFP) process, and during user testing.

Q: What effect will this new system have on local air quality agencies?

A: Effects on local agencies are expected to be minimal. Ecology and local air agencies will work together to determine business requirements of the new system; however, many requirements are dictated by the pre-proposal. Depending on how the system is implemented, some work processes may change for both state and local staff. All users will be required to follow data standards, as well as Ecology and Department of Information Services Information Technology policies and guidelines.

Q: What are the benefits of this system?

A: Benefits of the new system include fewer site visits, more evenly distributed workload, quicker validation of data via electronic strip charts, electronic notification of elevated air pollutant levels for sensitive groups, automated operations, and increased data capacity.

Q: What won't this grant provide?

A: This grant does not provide unlimited money for data collection and reporting systems. It does not provide enough money for us to do everything we would like to do with the system. The grant money cannot be used for new equipment and technology in place of overall system development. It does not allow us much flexibility in the ways we get data to EPA.

Q: What happens next?

A: The next steps are to finalize the grant proposal, establish the Executive Steering Committee and technical work group, and begin requirements collection.

Q: Who can I contact with questions?

A: Contact the following people for specific information about this grant proposal:

Project Manager and IT Lead (computer applications): Kathy Sundberg, (360) 407-6844
Email: ksun461@ecy.wa.gov

Business Lead (monitoring): Mike Ragan, (360) 407-6877
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Contract Lead (contract compliance, funds disbursement): Kay Journey, (360) 407-6805
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Overall Project Administration: Phyllis Baas, (360) 407-6822
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If you need this information in an alternate format, please contact Tami Dahlgren at (360) 407-6800. If you are a person with a speech or hearing impairment, call 711, or 1-800-833-6388 for TTY.