Exchange Network – What Is It?

The Environmental Information Exchange Network is an Internet-based approach to exchanging environmental data among partners (e.g., states and EPA). Using eCommerce technologies, data standards and agreed upon templates for packaging data, Exchange Network participants control and manage their own data, while making it available to partners via requests over a secure Internet connection.

This break-through concept

- Enables timely and accurate data exchange
- Reduces reporting and access burden
- Improves data quality.

It allows for timely access to integrated information – access to the right information at the right time.

Principles of the Exchange Network

The Exchange Network is built on a number of fundamental elements that support the principles that high-quality data should reside as close to its source as possible and flow using common tools available to all.
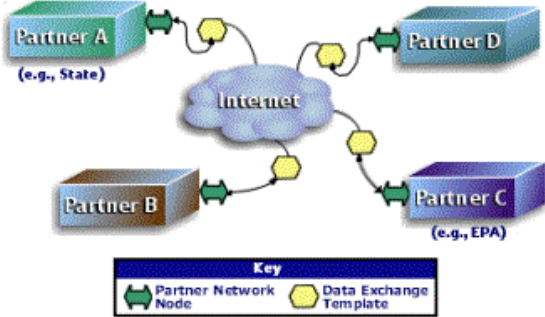
These elements include:

Data standards – documented agreements on representations, formats, and definitions of common data. Data standards allow partners to exchange information efficiently and accurately, as well as understand, interpret and use data appropriately. Data standards can be accessed at the Environmental Data Standards Council's website (www.epa.gov/edsc).

Data Exchange Templates (DETs) / Schemas – standardize the way in which information is shared between partners by identifying the relationships and context of information to be shared. Using DETs, schemas and eXtensible Markup Language (XML), the need to respond each time a partner makes an internal database change is eliminated.

Trading Partner Agreements (TPAs) – formal agreements that detail the what, how, and when data will be exchanged between partners. TPAs establish expectations and represent a "stationary" target to map and receive data with certainty.

Network Overview

Interested in Participating?

The Exchange Network website was launched to help all environmental partners – including EPA, states, tribes and territories – learn about and implement data exchanges. www.exchangenetwork.net is designed to:

- Educate all levels of partners on how to get started and participate in the Exchange Network
- Provide practical, how-to guidance on preparing for the Exchange Network
- Foster the use of the Exchange Network
- Provide a clearinghouse of resources related to information exchange.

Members of the Network Steering Board (NSB)

The NSB has two co-chairs (one EPA, one State), three EPA representatives and three State representatives. The current representatives on the NSB are:

Kim Nelson, CIO, EPA Chair
Bob Zimmerman, DE DNR, State Chair
Karen Bassett, PA DEP
Tom Curran, EPA, OAQPS
Tom Dunne, EPA, OSWER
Renee Martinez, NM ED
Stan Meiburg, EPA Region IV
Mitch West, OR DEQ

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EPA and States Working Together

In 1998, state environmental agencies, through the Environmental Council of the States (ECOS) and EPA, initiated a system-wide approach to address joint information management by forming a Work Group comprised of senior leaders. This group chartered the Network Steering Board (NSB) to oversee the implementation of the Exchange Network.

State/EPA
Information Management Workgroup

"*The states and EPA are committed to a partnership to build locally and nationally accessible, cohesive, and coherent environmental information systems that will ensure that both the public and regulators have access to the information needed to document environmental performance, understand environmental conditions, and make sound decisions that ensure environmental protection.* "

– State/EPA Vision, 1998