

National Dialogue Listening Session Suggestions			
Listening Session	Identified Themes	Specific Suggestions	Related Theme
Environmental and Community Groups	<p>1. Information transparency is of major importance to the environmental and community group representatives. They believe EPA should make as much information available as possible (e.g., the Administrator's appointment book, the rulemaking process, the scientific basis of policy decisions, information product development process, and how information is being used).</p> <p>2. Improve access to data and the right to know.</p> <p>3. Expansion of data collection is a key concern.</p> <p>4. EPA should work with other federal agencies to ensure coordination of high quality, comprehensive data: to facilitate inter-agency data-sharing, a shared facility ID number and corporate ID number are very important.</p> <p>5. The use of a rigorous, transparent scientific approach is compromised due to political influence and pressures.</p> <p>6. Information outreach was recognized as an essential ingredient to information access. EPA should proactively push information out to the public and other stakeholder groups, and should work to build demand for its information.</p> <p>7. EPA's libraries, collections, and librarians are an essential ingredient of a successful information access policy.</p>	The National Dialogue should work with EPA scientists to create a safe space to provide input.	2
		Information on EPA's meetings and conversations with non-EPA individuals and organizations: EPA should make as much information (of all types) available as possible. The public and others should know who the Administrator is talking to and what the issues are. EPA post, in a database, every meeting they have with people outside the Agency.	1
		Conflict of Interest (COI) disclosure: The environmental representatives would like to see full disclosure of conflicts of interest by EPA staff and appointees.	1
		Transparent rulemakings: Pre-decisional draft documents be released after certain period of time. Their goal is for informational documents to be made available before they go to OMB – i.e., once EPA comes to its final analysis, this information should be public.	1
		Transparency in how information is being used: The environmental representatives would like information on how information is being used, collected, and disseminated. This includes making draft documents of reports (not just those involved in rulemakings) available.	1
		Publication policy: EPA needs a publication policy that includes a scientific peer review process that does not constitute a de facto policy review.	1
		Common data keys are required to facilitate data integration: A federal "Facility ID Number" and a "Corporate ID Number" should be mandated by law to accompany data collected by any regulated entity	4
		Disclosure of the scientific basis of policy decisions: See a summary statement characterizing the scientific basis of EPA decisions and actions informed by science. This should include data, information on peer review, a minority report from scientists with dissenting opinions (if applicable), and a description of how the agency addressed differences of opinion. The name of each official and employee who participated in the decision should also be included. This is critical to showing how information is used.	5
		Access to work published by EPA scientists, even when published outside of the Agency: There is concern that EPA scientists are prohibited from publishing certain papers, that their names have been kept off the papers, clearance processes are too long, and that policy reviews (not just scientific peer reviews) are conducted on these papers	2
		A clear media policy: The environmental representatives requested a comprehensive media policy that is consistent across all Program and Regional Offices.	4
		To increase access and ensure scientists can speak freely, there should be a Scientist Bill of Rights that states that: a) Scientists should have the right to speak freely about issues as long as they say they are speaking for themselves. b) Scientists should be able to respond to requests from the press in a time-sensitive manner without having someone on phone checking on what they say. c) EPA should hold training sessions to clarify policies and clearly explain rights of employees.	2
		Facility information and risk data: EPA needs to take a more proactive approach in ensuring that facility data be kept up-to-date and accurate.	4
		Report on the Environment (ROE) and indicators information: Have more compatible indicators data across time and at federal and state levels. One participant stated that EPA should make a wholesale commitment to collecting data, and suggested looking to Canada and Mexico for examples of committing to collecting comprehensive data. Indicators information on school environments was called out as an important issue. EPA should position itself to be the primary portal for all federal environmental indicators information and to be actively engaged with other federal agencies to develop a complete ROE and turn it into an on-going, real-time mechanism.	4
		Information on EPA enforcement actions: Want to know what EPA is doing regarding enforcement actions.	3
		Information on what to do in emergencies: More information is needed on who is responsible for pushing out information to the public on what to do in emergencies and who to go to for assistance. More coordination is needed among agencies, and a task force or working group should be established to develop an action plan for the next emergency.	3
		Data on GHG, air emissions, chemical emissions	3
		Indoor environmental/air quality: There are zero data sets on Indoor Air Quality/Indoor Environmental Quality, and only a very few data sets on kids' health; there is room for a great deal more work in this area. Create an interagency task force on school environments	3
		Data comparisons across states: EPA can and should do more to assure that data collected from states are comparable, even though states don't like to see these comparisons. This could increase the amount of enforcements and site inspection data. EPA should require all states to use the same facility IDs.	4

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		Provide realistic data interpretations. In the ROE and other publications, EPA tends to emphasize progress made over time. People expect EPA to define and find the problems, otherwise they think that "no news is good news." EPA has to be more aggressive in acknowledging problems and finding solutions without worrying about political problems and stepping on toes.	5
		Information on, and improvements to, the FOIA process: Several participants noted that EPA's FOIA process has gone from moderate to poor in recent years. It is more formal than in the past, and it is more difficult to get through it smoothly. The process used to seem more cooperative, easier to get through; now it feels more like a legal process. While organizations such as OMB Watch can deal with this, individuals and less experienced groups may see it as a roadblock	1
		EPA needs to make both its actions and its data more transparent so that all constituents can understand its decisions and use the data developed by EPA. This is a key to access to environmental information.	1
		Scientific integrity: Part of this problem relates to OMB's control over EPA decisions.	5
		Data quality: Respondents believe that facility information has declined, there have been no improvements to Envirofacts, and that there is a huge gap in EPA's ability to deliver information to other agencies and to develop a better environmental picture across federal agencies	4
		Engage in a process to come up with access indicators by which EPA measures its performance, and reports on them publicly.	1
		Transparency – come up with Agency-wide expectations and standard operating procedures.	1
		Develop a panel of internal and external reviewers who can provide a critique of the Agency – this would be a more subjective review of perceptions about EPA and how to address these perceptions. The review could be institutionalized and be conducted on a regular time schedule.	5
		Timeliness of data – EPA has to get information relevant to environmental and health concerns out to the public more quickly than it does now, perhaps in stages that separate an initial release from the quality assurance and analytical activities needed to address Agency mission objectives. This goes for TRI, scientific reports, and other data and information products.	6
		Improve the transparency of processes by opening connections with other agencies (e.g., OMB) to show how decisions are being made. Make drafts available to clarify how issues are addressed and thereby increase faith in what EPA is doing.	1
		Open databases to search engines such as Google, so users can find the data inside the pages of TRI and other EPA databases.	2
		Make data available in XML formats; open databases to programmers who can take different pieces of data and integrate them with information collected by other agencies, such as Census data, and do things EPA hasn't had the time or inclination to do.	2
		All EPA databases should be made available on-line in a single-integrated database whereby all separate databases could be simultaneously queried. A generalized report writer, including program performance measure sample queries and broad statistical tools, should be provided to facilitate research.	2
		Short publications would be useful to help parents and school personnel negotiate on environmental issues in their schools. It would also be helpful for agencies to work together to create advisories specific to children's health.	3
		EPA Federal Data Portal: EPA should provide a means of assembling and publishing environmental data from all federal and state agencies.	2
		Federal Agency Data Jurisdictions. EPA should work with other federal agencies and the CIO Council to reorganize federal "data jurisdictions" and optimize data collection among federal agencies.	3
		EPA should reinstate all of its libraries, collections, and librarians....and not "just add back a couple work stations and a storage cabinet."	7
		EPA should create an advisory committee with heavy representation from internal and external users. The committee should provide guidance to EPA without fear of retribution, and help EPA ensure that its decisions about librarians/libraries are not made in a black box. EPA librarians should also be trained so that they can guide potential users of environmental information.	7
		EPA should develop proactive policies to ensure the Agency gets the right information out to the right stakeholders and that they understand how the information is relevant and how to use it. EPA should put more information out to the public, rather than expecting that the public will come to EPA or its Web site to find the information they need. (posting information in places where audiences are located, being cognizant of the digital divide issue (the Internet is good but not the only way to disseminate information), build demand for information – help the public understand how they can use environmental information and also instruct others (i.e., information intermediaries) how to educate the public)	6

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		EPA should be using information to build constituencies for its activities and empower those outside of the government process to become involved in environmental issues before they become large problems that the government must solve.	2
		It is important for EPA to keep a dialogue going with businesses – one of EPA's constituencies – in order to help them understand how they are dependent on ecosystem services	2
		Be an information advocate. OEI can educate others in EPA and change the culture within the Agency to show what transparency of information really means, and to increase awareness of the importance of transparency within the Agency. OEI could consider establishing indicators to measure information access. OEI should develop an intra-agency information dissemination initiative that builds information dissemination mechanisms into each program; additionally, EPA should work with the CIO Council to develop and participate in a similar effort across all federal agencies.	1,2
Industry Representatives	<p>1. Improved access to regulatory compliance information.</p> <p>2. Improved data quality and more information about the context of the data that are provided.</p> <p>3. "Smart," interactive compliance tools.</p> <p>4. Better knowledge of the information contained on www.epa.gov . Outreach could be improved through information intermediaries.</p> <p>5. Short information pieces: one-pagers, executive summaries, and fact sheets.</p> <p>6. Customized Web portals.</p> <p>7. Information and delivery systems that are customized to account for the different needs of large and small businesses.</p> <p>8. Interested in information on regulatory information and standards, compliance guidance, information describing level of data quality, databases, product safety, background and education materials, access to EPA staff, and budgetary information.</p>	EPA should provide information on the human health risks associated with certain products [e.g., Bisphenol A (BPA) in baby bottles], which they can pass on to their customers. They indicated that EPA needs to provide the proper context for this information – for example, when presenting emissions data, EPA should relate reported levels of pollutants to thresholds and permissible levels.	2,8
		EPA should adopt a proactive role and present "digested" information, such as data analyses and interpretations rather than raw data sets. Such information should be written in language that is easily understood by the average consumer.	2
		EPA should report on the Environment to provide examples of what other countries do and compare the U.S. state of the environment to that of other countries. He indicated that a lack of international context has led the public to believe that pollution levels in the U.S. are disproportionately high.	8
		EPA must place more emphasis on data quality and, if necessary, expand the deadline for the Chemical Assessment and Management Program (ChAMP).	2
		EPA should be transparent and document how it obtains data.	2
		EPA should seek input from its stakeholders in the development of new guidelines.	7
		EPA should work with its stakeholders to improve the manner in which data are collected and analyzed.	6
		EPA should use a set of predetermined criteria – or guidelines — to evaluate all data (similar to that of the ROE Criteria).	2
		EPA needs to focus its efforts on improving its data and restoring credibility with its stakeholders. EPA should also improve the turnaround time for the publication of its database and reports – however, they indicated EPA must do this without sacrificing the quality of the product. If EPA succeeds, people will pay closer attention to EPA, its data, and its views.	2
		Meta data should include the data's pedigree, including information on the purpose for which the data were collected and how the data can be used.	8
		EPA needs to improve direct access to its staff and to increase the transparency of its operations. They would like to have access to office organizational charts that allow them to identify and contact appropriate staff more readily. "One-click" access to staff contact information would increase transparency and improve stakeholder interaction with EPA.	8
		Interest in EPA's budget information and would like to know what the funding levels are for the various offices and specific programs.	8
		Prefer to obtain information in electronic format and stressed that technical information should be brief and to the point (i.e., fact sheets and executive summaries).	5
		EPA should create a portal to all the fact sheets and one-pagers sorted by category.	5
		Documents that are downloadable by section or chapter should also include the option to download the file as a whole.	4
		PDFs and older documents that did not exist in electronic formats and subsequently were scanned as picture files should be made searchable. This can be accomplished with optical character recognition (OCR) software.	4
		Documents that reflect EPA's official position on an issue should be labeled accordingly. One participant said that he frequently notes discrepancies and inconsistencies in EPA documents. This is confusing, especially in the context of regulatory guidance.	4
		All documents on www.epa.gov should be dated. Faced with different versions of a document, users should not be left to wonder which version is the most recent.	4
		The Agency needs to do a better job removing and archiving outdated documents and information.	4
		Add more search options to TRI Explorer. Currently, the database is only searchable by industry and 4-digit zip codes. Users would like to have more control on how to "slice and dice" the data if given more options.	4
		EPA should improve its information delivery mechanisms to better serve the needs of its stakeholders.	7

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		EPA to develop "smart systems" to assist businesses with their reporting and compliance requirements. A "smart system" was described as an interactive software program that guides users through a number of steps and – based on user input – generates customized guidance or reports.	1,3		
		"Smart technologies" could enable a more targeted delivery of EPA's information products.	3		
		An increase EPA presence at localized conferences would be helpful.	1		
		EPA employ a "push" strategy to the disseminate environmental information. This would entail active outreach to business stakeholders through information intermediaries, trade associations, chambers of commerce, and targeted newsletters.	4		
		EPA's Web-based glossary is out of date, EPA could use wikis to work collaboratively with the public to update it.	7		
		Webcasts are a good tool to disseminate information	7		
		EPA to customize its listservs [https://lists.epa.gov/read/all_forums] so that users can tailor the information they wish to receive to their specific needs. Current listservs are overly generalized and mailings take too long to digest. In addition, the mailings should be short enough so that they are easily readable on a BlackBerry.	7		
		EPA include a list of the top ten things the Agency hears during the listening session and outline how it intends to respond to these concerns. The participants stressed that the final information strategy should be very clear about implementation and explicit about the allocation of resources to specific tasks, timelines for new procedures, and changes to staff job descriptions.	NA		
		Steel Industry	1. Improved data quality	Make sure that the information which was communicated by the TRI database contains sufficient contextual reference so that the data is meaningful to user.	2
			2. Contextual information accompanying datasets	There is one potential source of error in the current TRI web presentation. Currently waste material transported off site and placed in a secure landfill is treated the same as any localized emission. Also materials transported off site for recycle or reuse without any associated emissions are also treated as localized emissions. The participants suggested that aggregating these activities with actual reported emissions had the potential to misinform the community.	1
3. More public outreach and education					
4. Improve transparency of EPA models and methodologies	The addition of information on which entities and sectors report under TRI and which are exempt, would also show more clearly that some large public sources of emissions within a ZIP code are not reflected in a TRI search. The public needs to know that the published TRI database results only includes facilities required to report under TRI, and that there are other large emitters that are not required to report.		2,5		
5. Additional TRI release categories and sorting options	The public should know about a company's emission control activities and associated expenditures, and be informed about the amount of resulting emissions reductions and improved efficiencies.		2		
6. Linkages to compliance information and other EPA databases	EPA could add a general explanation about pollution reduction efforts and technologies and provide some general trend information.		2		
7. Addition of caveats and disclaimers	EPA's models often lack transparency and that the methodologies and underlying assumptions need to be made more transparent.		4		
8. EPA's role should be in educating the public about the release data contained in the TRI database to help clear up any misconceptions.	The RSEI analysis tool is too simplified. While the model distinguishes between the "relative importance" of different substances, such as, for example, benzene and nitrates, or zinc and lead, risks need to be weighted, defined, and interpreted more clearly in order to convey a meaningful message to the public.		4		
	NATA may not be "accurate"...the industry is concerned about the procedures used to develop risk factors without taking into consideration localized attenuation.		4		
	Participants expressed hope that through enhanced outreach the steel industry clarify the perception of the public.		3		
	The ECHO [Enforcement and Compliance History Online] database could be improved by adding a true "Compliance History", reporting not just rare non-compliance events, but actually report the overall percent compliance for a facility.		6		
	Lack of contextual information in TRI Data leaves the door open for misinterpretation of the data.		2		
	Add more interpretive information to the TRI database and improve its educational qualities		3,8		
	Some users, such as environmental advocacy groups, scientists, engineers, and others, would like to have increased access to raw data, but thought that it was important that all incoming data are vetted and not made public without some basic QA/QC. If raw data are to be published, it should be accompanied by appropriate caveats and disclaimers.	7			
News Media	1. EPA to provide environmental information in a clear, concise format. They want to have facts (not necessarily interpretations): metadata: and basic	Want to be able to access documentation and metadata in order to know what type of information EPA collects, how current it is, and its source, but are concerned that it is difficult to find metadata on www.epa.gov.	1		

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	<p>information about EPA's roles, legislation, regulations, and programs. They would like to know the context and historical perspective for this information.</p> <p>2. The media need immediate access to environmental information – especially through direct contact with EPA staff. If they don't get a quick response, it may be too late to write their story.</p> <p>3. The media representatives focused heavily on the politicization of obtaining information from EPA. They are concerned that the Press Office is not responsive to their environmental questions and does not refer them to appropriate EPA experts.</p> <p>4. Increasingly, reporters are doing their own data analysis, and seek downloadable spreadsheets.</p> <p>5. Librarians, libraries, and reading rooms are all critical resources for these media representatives. They want a place to browse through recent EPA and other environmental publications, and place high value on the assistance they receive from librarians.</p> <p>6. These media representatives go to <a href="http://www.epa.gov">www.epa.gov</a> for general environmental information. However, they do not use the search engine since it provides too many hits that are not organized in a logical or easy-to-use way.</p> <p>7. While some media representatives use RSS feeds and blogs, they have concerns about the accuracy and timeliness of other new Web technologies, such as Wikis.</p>	EPA more frequently utilize a "drill down" approach on its web site, beginning with non-technical summary information, and ending with detailed, full text materials, including data and metadata as appropriate. It would be helpful if EPA provided background information on the environmental programs and issues that are the "news of the day."	1
		Have a need for the history and context of environmental data – how have air pollution levels changed over time? what levels are safe? what are the EPA standards? what do the data mean? what makes an issue important?	1
		EPA Press Office maintain a list of "pre-cleared" experts on various environmental issues and refer the media to the appropriate experts.	3
		EPA to provide more effective notification of EPA events. Other agencies (e.g., the Department of Justice) send daily or weekly emails describing scheduled agency speeches and activities.	1
		People like regional and local stories, it is getting more and more difficult to approach EPA to obtain information.	2
		Electronic version of the EPA phone book would be helpful.	2
		Risk Screening Environmental Indicators (RSEI) is a useful information product that could be even more helpful if it could be made more accessible and usable for non-technical users.	4
		Adding the capability to sort results by relevance and/or date in the <a href="http://www.epa.gov">www.epa.gov</a> search engine.	6
		The media representatives expressed concern about Wikis – they might be useful in a controlled community (e.g., <a href="http://www.realclimate.org/">http://www.realclimate.org/</a> ) or in a read-only version, but they can be difficult to keep up-to-date and to ensure accuracy	7
		Obtain information from librarians, who are trained to help people find the specific data they need. They also value the availability of a physical space within EPA (e.g., a library, reading room, or press room), where they can browse through written EPA materials, journals, and other recently published resources.	5
		EPA should fully verify its accuracy or provide detailed quality-related documentation.	2
		EPA should add disclaimers to all data and provide summary information on limitations and appropriate uses.	2
Federal, State and Local Agencies	<p>1. The information needs of these government representatives are strongly influenced by the constituents they serve. Topics of importance are difficult to predict and can change rapidly and frequently.</p> <p>2. These government officials are often intermediaries between EPA and the public. They stressed that EPA should provide clearly written, easy-to-understand information for non-English speakers and others with limited language skills.</p> <p>3. For their own environmental needs, these government representatives frequently use information that is applicable to local issues and concerns, and need data to be available at detailed levels (e.g., to the infrastructure level).</p> <p>4. Many of these government representatives (and their constituents) were unaware of EPA information</p>	The group desires information that they can give directly to their constituents. Such information needs to be simple since their constituents do not always have Internet access, have limited technical capabilities, and/or do not speak English.	2
		Provide clearly written narrative information in PDF format that is easy to distribute.	5
		Provide fact sheets and other basic information about general topics and regulations, including information framed in terms of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs).	5
		Provide Information for non-English speakers on the Web site and as other information products.	2,5
		Frequent use of creative visual aids, diagrams, pictures, pictograms (especially for those lacking sophisticated language skills).	5
		A "What's New" button on the home page that provides comprehensive information about environmental topics in the news. This could be updated daily.	4
		An "Ask an Expert" function, where Web site users email a question and a "real" person answers. Participants strongly agreed that such a service would encourage them to utilize EPA data and information.	4
		Provide menu-driven databases that enable users to drill down to find the information they want before they download the data. Several participants agreed that the Bureau of the Census database is a good example of such a data retrieval structure.	3
		Databases where users can download data in Excel or copy/paste it into their own documents. This way they can easily send information to coworkers and collaborators.	3

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	<p>resources relevant to their jobs, suggesting a need for face-to-face marketing at the community level and “push” technologies.</p> <p>5. EPA serves two very different constituencies: lay people and technical professionals. This makes it difficult to adopt a “one-size fits all” format for environmental information, and participants noted that EPA should provide separate information adapted for different audiences.</p>	EPA Web pages are sometimes too busy – they are crammed with too much information, too many technical terms and obscure acronyms, and are difficult to navigate.	2
		EPA needs to increase awareness of its information products, perhaps by sending individuals into communities and adopting a face-to-face approach to outreach and marketing. Participants also emphasize the value of accessing environmental information through professional networking, and encourage EPA to support opportunities for peer-to-peer interaction.	4
		Environmental information for community members should be directly disseminated by means of familiar, trusted local information and communication venues such schools, hospitals, personal health care providers, businesses, and community-focused newspapers and radio stations. EPA could consider partnering with organizations such as these, with the Agency providing content and the partner providing input on customer needs and the means of distribution. In this context, participants stressed that EPA must be sensitive to cultural and linguistic issues.	5
Educators, Researchers, Librarians, and Students	<p>1. Participants tend to be intensive users of EPA data, and see a need for improved data acquisition and dissemination.</p> <p>2. Participants are very familiar with many of EPA’s databases and information applications, but encourage the Agency to conduct outreach and utilize “push” technologies to make the college and university communities more aware of its information resources.</p> <p>3. Researchers are strongly focused on establishment- and firm-level analyses, frequently integrated with economic, financial, or other non-environmental data.</p> <p>4. EPA has opportunities to adopt aggressive “push” approaches to familiarize the university community with its full portfolio of data and information applications.</p>	Session has a need for products and capabilities that already exist, including short summaries of environmental laws, topical summaries of EPA issues, lists of available models and analytical tools, and a terminology referencing system	1
		Group members stressed comprehensiveness of coverage over time and detailed, accurate facility level information	1
		EPA and its customers would benefit through improved citation and version control procedures for internally generated materials.	1
		Consistent, agency-wide procedures would help researchers to stay abreast and track updates, version releases, corrections, and other changes.	1
		EPA should provide easy-to-access, detailed “biographies” of its databases, scientific studies, and information products, enabling researchers and students to better assess the data’s suitability for a particular type of application.	1
		EPA should create portals to enable researchers, teachers, and students to more effectively locate and access data from other U.S. government agencies.	1
		Better, more accessible documentation of EPA data would help to improve its use in all contexts.	1
		There is a need for access to knowledgeable technical staff and/or other database users who could answer questions, help solve problems, or simply share experiences with regard to frequently used databases such as the Permit Compliance System (PCS), the Aerometric Information Retrieval System (AIRS), and TRI.	1
		EPA needs a dedicated staff for data interpretation.” While such interaction would be best if provided in real time; other venues such as blogs and user group newsletters were also mentioned as potentially helpful.	1
		EPA should adopt a higher profile when it releases databases or dataset updates, arguing that such events are worthy of press releases and related outreach.	1
		EPA needs to assure that corporate/facility ID numbers are consistent across all federal agencies. In this regard, it was recommended that EPA build upon systems and protocols already in use at the Department of Defense.	3
		Case studies, fact sheets, and decision guides are helpful to help students and other consumers with issues such as product selection and energy utilization.	1
		EPA should assure that educational materials are made available by means of both hardcopy and electronic channels.	1
		The Agency has information resources that they are not aware of, and suggest a more aggressive and varied effort to “push” data and information to applicable academic communities.	2
		EPA utilize a capability similar to Google Alert to make target users more aware of relevant aspects of its information portfolio.	2
		EPA should visit colleges and universities in order to make students, librarians, and educators more aware of the Agency’s information holdings, but also to learn more about how EPA data and information can be utilized in a research and educational context.	2
		EPA should remain vigilant for new technologies that can be harnessed to add value to existing datasets.	4
		EPA is well positioned to create virtual and/or actual workspaces through which individuals with similar (environmental and public health) interests can interact and share data and information.	4