
Oregon Environmental Public Health Tracking Project

Oregon Technical Advisory Group Charter

November 2006

Purpose and Activities

The Oregon Technical Advisory Group (OTAG) is a forum in which technical issues related to the development and implementation of the Oregon Environmental Public Health Tracking Network (Oregon EPHT Network) can be reviewed, discussed, and resolved by health, environmental, and technical experts. This group provides an avenue for open dialogue, communication, and coordination, both internally within the Oregon Department of Human Services, Public Health Division and externally with state and local health and environmental partners. OTAG will engage in the development of technical and program guidance in collaboration with work conducted by EPHT staff, the national EPHT Workgroups,[♦] the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

The OTAG will collaborate over the next five years (2006-2011) to provide guidance and recommendations on the development of network standards, data content (from both existing and to be developed data), architecture, and coordination of activities that contribute to the construction and implementation of the Oregon EPHT Network. The group will also work proactively and coordinate with existing and developing data systems to assure full functionality with EPHT.

Mission Statement

The purpose of the EPHT Program is to help develop a nationwide network of health and environmental data that will drive actions to improve the health of communities.

The OTAG will advise the Oregon EPHT program on the construction and implementation of an Oregon EPHT Network that is interoperable with national EPHT network standards and architecture, and also meets the needs of Oregon data providers and users.

Background and Rationale

In 2006, Congress appropriated funds to the CDC to implement a national network of people, data, and data systems related to environmental public health. A large portion of this funding was distributed to seventeen states, including Oregon, and one local health

[♦] National Workgroups: Standards and Network Architecture, Content, and Program Marketing and Outreach

department to build state EPHT Networks. This funding builds upon four years of planning by many of these same grantees, CDC and national partners.

The National EPHT Network will incorporate standardized data from multiple health, exposure, and hazard information systems from all grantee states. The Oregon EPHT Network will access data from Oregon sources and make those data available within Oregon and to the National EPHT Network. The Oregon EPHT Network will contain standardized core data that are CDC required core measures from November 2006, including, at a minimum, asthma and myocardial infarction hospitalizations, birth defects, blood lead levels, cancer, vital statistics, air ozone and particulate matter levels, and key drinking water contaminants.

Each state is required by the CDC to “establish a State technical advisory group including epidemiologists, informatics/information technology specialists, environmental professionals, communications specialists, laboratorians, and public health program officials to provide recommendations on implementing State EPHT Networks that are interoperable and compatible with the national network standards and architecture.” The formation of OTAG satisfies the CDC requirement, and also supports the EPHT program’s efforts to seek local input in the creation of the network. In this way, the OTAG continues the work of the EPHT Planning Consortium and Advisory Committee begun in the planning grant (2003-2006). The Oregon EPHT program will continue this effort throughout implementation because of the value added to the program.

General Operating Procedures

Representatives of the Office of Environmental Public Health and the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality will co-chair the OTAG. They will work with EPHT program staff on development of meeting agendas and convening the meetings. EPHT program staff are responsible for meeting logistics, notification of members and distribution of agendas, and the drafting and distribution of meeting minutes. OTAG information will be posted to the EPHT website.

OTAG members include epidemiologists, informatics/information technology specialists, environmental professionals, communications specialists, laboratorians, and public health program officials from state, county, and local organizations.

Membership selection is based on the skills noted above as well as representation from owners of data that form the core measures identified for the EPHT grant. Other members are individuals with relevant programmatic or technical knowledge who represent other partner organizations that were active during the planning grant.

The full OTAG is expected to convene twice each year. Meetings will be in Portland. Accommodations such as teleconferencing will be made for remote partners if necessary. OTAG Working Groups will meet monthly, or as determined by the groups to be necessary. Details on the procedures for the OTAG Working Groups are in Appendix A.

Charter Revisions

The Oregon Technical Advisory Group Charter is a working document. The Oregon EPHT program understands that OTAG members may want to add, delete, or make changes to the Charter. Changes may be suggested at the full OTAG meetings, and shall be approved by consensus.

Appendix A

OTAG Working Groups

Two OTAG working groups will initially be formed to discuss specific issues related to EPHT network implementation. These working groups consist of members of OTAG who self-select into the groups based on interest and/or expertise. One working group will focus on Systems, Logistics, Applications Management, and the other on Data Use and Network Content. Working groups will meet monthly, or as needed, as determined by the group. Teleconferencing and, if possible, application sharing technologies will be available.

The working groups will be co-facilitated by an EPHT staff member and an OTAG member chosen by the working group. EPHT staff responsibilities include meeting logistics, distribution of agendas, and the drafting and distribution of meeting minutes. Agendas are provided one week prior to a meeting. Agenda topics for the next meeting are made during the current working group meeting. The full OTAG provides guidance to these working groups, and discusses working group products. The working groups will report on their activities at the twice-yearly OTAG meetings. The working group leaders will be in routine communication with each other to coordinate processes and products. Details of the working groups are described below:

1. Systems, Logistics, and Applications Management (SLAM)

The purpose of SLAM is to provide advice and guidance for implementing the necessary systems and technologies to create an EPHT network in Oregon.

Operational Procedures:

OTAG, EPHT staff, and working group members will choose topics. In addition to the responsibilities described above, EPHT staff will provide background materials so that working group members can make informed decisions.

Examples of Potential Topics:

1. Review the vision and mission statements, timelines, etc. of the national Standards and Network Development, Network Architecture workgroup to identify issues/items that need to be discussed in this working group;
2. Survey current portals and health and environmental related applications used in the state that EPHT can use as a framework;
3. Discuss security roles;
4. Discuss ideas for a datamart (i.e. how the network stores and disseminates data);
5. Review Office of Information Services (OIS) rules and how they pertain to building and designing a network;
6. Discuss and identify a timeline for building the Network; and

7. Discuss use of an exchange network node and/or Public Health Information Network Messaging System (PHINMS) for pushing data to the National EPHT Network.

2. Data Use and Network Content (DUNC)

The purpose of DUNC is to provide advice and guidance for methods for analysis, visualization, and display of network data, and the data content of an EPHT Network in Oregon.

Operational Procedures:

OTAG, EPHT staff, and working group members will choose topics. In addition to the responsibilities described above, EPHT staff will provide background materials so that working group members can make informed decisions.

Examples of Potential Topics:

1. Discuss and identify network analysis, visualization, and reporting functions such as methods of analyses, maps, graphs, and tables;
2. Research materials that the National EPHT Content Workgroup has drafted;
3. Review and discuss what level of aggregation of specific network measures are desired, and draft related protocols;
4. Draft protocols for reviewing data before they are released; includes issues of quality assessment, quality control, confidentiality, and decision rules; and
5. Review existing systems in the state, such as VistaPH, a software program for securely viewing and conducting public health analyses.