

## **Industrial Technical Assistance Providers Cooperate To Serve Industry**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The Industrial Technical Assistance Providers (ITAP) is a new association of organizations in the Pacific Northwest. ITAP seeks to help industry take better advantage of the wide range of programs and services available to assist them in improving energy efficiency, pollution prevention, and productivity. Cooperation and coordination among ITAP's participants, in turn, helps them to better carry out their respective missions. This paper describes ITAP's development as an organization and how its participants interact.

### **Introduction -- The Problem**

In the Pacific Northwest more than 30 public organizations, as well as many utilities, vendors, and consultants, help industries improve energy efficiency, minimize pollution, and enhance productivity. This fact was compelling to the Executive Director of the Industrial Customers of Northwest Utilities (ICNU), an industrial trade organization. He pointed out that his member industries have neither the time nor inclination to sort out and keep track of all the services available--cooperation among serving organizations would be beneficial.

It can also be asserted that increased communication among organizations will improve each organization's effectiveness. Examples of situations that already require cooperation between assistance providers include:

- A number of ITAP participant organizations provide technical hotline and on-site assessment services to help industrial plants looking for opportunities for energy efficiency (E2), pollution prevention (P2), and productivity enhancement. If the energy and environmental experts participate in cross-training and become familiar with each other's programs, E2 experts can more effectively identify opportunities for P2 programs and make appropriate referrals, and visa versa.
- Portland General Electric (PGE) works with its industrial end-users to ensure their competitiveness and promote customer loyalty. PGE needs to draw upon the services of other energy service providers to supplement its staff's expertise.
- The Northwest Partnership for Environmental Technology Education is a community college-based effort to train specialists to work in industry. Assistance providers and enforcement officials employed by the states must support this training.
- Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) has a business listing of energy service providers. BPA needs the help of other organizations to help industry become aware of the listing and use it effectively.

These insights led a core group of service providers to assert that industrial plants are missing opportunities that could significantly improve their competitive position. This also implies that organizations with a public purpose mission are not being as successful as they could be, and that private service providers could be getting more business.

## **Methodology -- Building an Organization**

In the fall of 1997, a number of industrial service providers began considering if and how they might work better together. The group consisted of representatives from Washington State University (WSU), Oregon State University (OSU), BPA, and ICNU. In January 1998, they convened a "roundtable" to explore cooperation among industrial service providers.

The resources for the convening effort derived from work that was already budgeted or funded within each organization. OSU and WSU had received funding from the U.S. Department of Energy to promote state, regional, and national industrial assistance programs within their states. BPA's facilitation efforts were budgeted as part of a commitment to promote energy market transformation in the Northwest.

The core group identified about 20 respected professionals who could represent energy, environmental, and economic development organizations. Invitations were crafted describing the problem (described above) and who was invited. Each invitee was personally contacted. The initial roundtable was limited to public service providers from Washington and Oregon in order to limit the group size and ensure plenty of interactions. This approach proved successful; seventeen of the twenty people invited came or sent representatives. An organizational development specialist facilitated the discussion. Other than a free box lunch, each organization represented paid its own way.

Subsequent roundtables were convened in April, July, and September of 1998 to explore opportunities for cooperation and move toward a defined organization. Additional organizations were invited to participate at each roundtable. Care was taken to brief them ahead of time.

July 15, 1998, was the date set to come together as an organization--to "crystallize." A long dialog explored the diverse concerns of the group: industrial competitiveness, energy efficiency, pollution prevention, education, economic development, geographic considerations, profit, and public purpose agendas. Eventually the group chose a surprisingly simple statement as a mission:

*We cooperate to promote sustainable industrial competitiveness for the Northwest.*

Thus, participants agreed to "cooperate"--a defining aspect of the group. They focused on "industrial competitiveness" because that is what motivates industries. The public purpose orientation was reflected in the terms "sustainable" and "for the Northwest." The group chose the name "Industrial Technical Assistance Providers" (ITAP). The acronym implies that "I" can "TAP" into a breadth and depth of expertise and services that participating organizations collectively offer.

## Results

ITAP is a relatively new organization, still developing working relationships between participants. An executive committee governs ITAP, meeting monthly via conference call. ITAP has no dues. The only requirement for inclusion in the resource directory is endorsement of the mission, and participation in ITAP activities.

## Participation

As shown in Table 1, about two dozen organizations participate in ITAP. Most of these organizations serve industry directly. Some ITAP participants serve industry exclusively, like the Washington Technology Center. For others, such as the WSU Energy Program, industry is part of a more diverse market.

**Table 1. Active ITAP Participants\***

Bonneville Power Administration (BPA)	City of Portland Energy Office (PEO)
Eugene Water & Electric Board (EWEB)	Industrial Customers of Northwest Utilities (ICNU)
Northwest Energy Efficiency Alliance (NEEA)	NW Partnership for Environmental Technology Education (NWPETE)
Northwest Pulp & Paper Association (NPPA)	Oregon Office of Energy (OOE)
Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (ODEQ)	Oregon Manufacturing Extension Partnership (OMEP)
Oregon State University (OSU)	Pacific Northwest National Laboratory (PNNL)
Pacific Northwest Pollution Prevention Resource Center (NWPPRC)	Portland General Electric (PGE)
Tacoma Public Utilities (TPU)	U.S. DOE's Regional Resource Center for Innovation (RRCI)
U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) Seattle Regional Support Office	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region 10
Washington Department of Ecology (WDOE)	Washington Manufacturing Services (WMS)
Washington State University Cooperative Extension Energy Program (WSU)	The Washington Technology Center (WTC)

\*Some of these organizations have not yet met the membership requirement of attending two meetings, but did actively participate in formation of ITAP.

Individual ITAP participants have established their own clientele and expertise. Table 2 shows examples of the services that ITAP collectively offers.

**Table 2. Partial List of Services Offered by ITAP Participants**

<b>Pollution prevention technical assistance</b> NWPPRC, ODEQ, WDOE, PEO	<b>Assistance in adopting modern technologies and business practices</b> OMEP, WMS, PNNL
<b>Energy loans</b> OOE	<b>Access to federal programs (e.g., NICE<sup>3</sup>, Inventions and Innovations, Industries of the Future, Energy Star, Climate Wise)</b> PNNL, PEO, WSU, OSU, OOE, DOE, EPA
<b>Access to state grants</b> WTC, ODEQ	<b>Access to state university researchers and facilities</b> WSU, OSU, WTC
<b>Business Energy Tax Credit information</b> OOE, ODEQ	<b>Conduct research, develop tools and provide training for industrial clients</b> WSU, OSU, PNNL, PEO
<b>Licensing for manufacture of existing and new technologies</b> PNNL	<b>Access to government-owned facilities for proprietary R&amp;D</b> PNNL
<b>Staff exchanges</b> PNNL	<b>Environmental workforce development in community and technical colleges</b> NWPETE
<b>Awards for sustainable industrial practices</b> PEO, PGE, ODEQ, WDOE	<b>A web-page listing of Northwest energy businesses</b> BPA
<b>A hotline for questions regarding industrial technologies</b> WSU	<b>Technical and market information for service providers</b> NWPPRC, BPA, WSU, PNNL, EPA

One image used to describe ITAP is the spider web. You can enter it at any point, through any of its participants or the central referral phone number. That's why it has been important to develop tools for cooperation.

### **Tools for Cooperation**

A priority during ITAP's first year has been to develop the following tools for cooperation:

- **Listserv:** ITAP operates a listserv that is open to all interested parties. It allows blanket inquiries and announcements to other ITAP participants. Typically, these

communications result in follow-up calls or personal e-mail exchanges. A second listserv is available only to the six members of the ITAP Executive Committee.

- **Resource Directory:** ITAP is developing a resource directory that describes the services and experience of participant organizations.
- **Website:** The resource directory and other information about ITAP will be placed on a website: [www.omep.org/itap](http://www.omep.org/itap)
- **Referral Hotline:** ITAP has a referral telephone number (800) 872-3568. This is the number of the Energy Ideas Clearinghouse, a hotline funded by the Northwest Energy Efficiency Alliance. This allows ITAP participants and industry easy access to the ITAP network, along with Clearinghouse services.

All of these tools are currently being developed and maintained using available funding and resources of the participants. ITAP will probably need its own source of funding in the future to maintain these services, and thus a grant will be pursued.

Meetings also promote cooperation. While participation at the first few roundtables was excellent, it has been increasingly difficult to inspire people to spend a day of their time to meet on a regular basis. ITAP is thus experimenting with short meetings in association with other regional events. Setting up video teleconferences is also being considered. The use of a bridge line, where all the callers pay their own phone bill, has worked well for the Executive Committee.

### Cooperative Initiatives

ITAP is currently engaged in four cooperative initiatives.

- The Pollution Prevention Resource Center has taken the lead in developing better working relationships between pollution prevention (P2) and energy efficiency (E2) service providers. Activities have included two presentations by E2 professionals at P2 roundtables, and a jointly developed “mind map” showing the resources available to serve an industrial client. The Washington Department of Ecology has also hosted presentations by the WSU Energy Program to improve their staff’s awareness of E2 issues and resources.
- BPA is facilitating a “collaborative dialog” to improve the business and service opportunities for the EPRI Motor System Resource Facility at OSU. ITAP participants will take part in a conference call to identify ideas for working together and to determine whether it is in their interest to visit the center to develop closer working relationships.
- The Northwest Energy Efficiency Alliance and PNNL are hosting a meeting during which ITAP participants can share information about their current involvement in federal programs and regional initiatives, in order to avoid duplication and cross-purposes.
- Various ITAP participants have invested their resources in developing ITAP conference presentations and information tables. These activities increase awareness of ITAP in the professional community and provide a showcase for individual ITAP

participant capabilities. The cost of conference booths and hosting a conference social hour can be shared among ITAP participant organizations.

These initiatives suggest that the first value-added function of ITAP is to improve the effectiveness of its own participants. Thus far, ITAP, as an organization, has not served a specific industrial plant directly. The occasional person-to-person referrals mostly go unreported. To work effectively with industry, ITAP needs to develop a working relationship with private sector consultants, vendors, utilities, and energy service companies.

As noted above, participation in ITAP was initially limited to public sector organizations as a way to limit the number of people involved and to achieve some coherency. Many of these organizations were found to have similar missions and programs, and thus increased cooperation was a fairly natural step.

The public organizations that currently make up ITAP generally serve to increase industries' awareness of opportunities for improved energy efficiency, pollution prevention, and productivity. These organizations support and in some cases help finance the implementation of these opportunities. They do this through technical assistance hotlines; development of publications, websites, and software tools; commercialization assistance; loans and grants; research and demonstration. They can then, and regularly do, make referrals to equipment vendors, consultants, and other private sector organizations for design and implementation, regardless of participation status in ITAP.

The more effectively the public sector organizations can cooperate, the more projects will be initiated, thus creating more business for private sector organizations. As more private sector organizations become involved with ITAP, referrals to them will be more plentiful and appropriate. There have already been discussions of a campaign to actively solicit this increased participation. While not underestimating the numerous details to be worked out regarding a significant expansion of ITAP into the private sector, we are optimistic that there are sufficient benefits for all involved that initial concerns and future obstacles will be overcome.

## Conclusion

ITAP is a relatively new organization undergoing a discovery process. This is influenced by the leadership of the Executive Committee, the readiness of the participants to take the next step, and current events. Five iterative steps describe this evolutionary process.

1. Define who we are and why. ITAP took this step in choosing a mission statement. ITAP needed to revisit this step when private sector professionals challenged how ITAP presents itself.
2. Develop services for participants. The immediate benefit for many ITAP participants is learning how to cooperate with each other. The resource directory (soon to be a Web page) and the listserv address this need, as will the upcoming program information-sharing event hosted by PNNL and NEEA.
3. Improve ITAP participant efficiency and effectiveness. In simple terms, this amounts to exchanging information. In this vein ITAP has initiated dialogs associated with: (1) E2 and P2 service providers, (2) the EPRI Motor System Resource Facility, and (3) ITAP participants who are involved in federal and regional programs.

4. Develop working relationships with the private sector. This is a necessary step because most energy businesses were not involved in forming ITAP. Lines of communication have been established. Specific arrangements will follow.
5. Directly serve industry. Part of the originating vision of ITAP was "one-stop" public service directly to industry. How this will happen and whether this concept still makes sense are open questions. The discovery process may reveal that other forms of service provider cooperation may more practically "promote sustainable industrial competitiveness".

One of ITAP's strengths, as well as one of its challenges, is that it does not depend on any one organization or grant for its support. Ongoing cooperation depends on developing personal rapport, and on participant investment of time and resources. ITAP will continue to evolve as the needs of its participants and the demands of industry change. It is anticipated that private sector participation will increase as ITAP demonstrates its ability to make a difference.

Once ITAP has developed a track record for success, it may serve as a model (or perhaps a seed-crystal) for similar efforts elsewhere.