

The benefits of granting cooperating agency status include disclosure of relevant information early in the analytical process, receipt of technical expertise and staff support, avoidance of duplication with state, tribal and local procedures, and establishment of a mechanism for addressing intergovernmental issues. If a non-federal agency agrees to become a cooperating agency, agencies are encouraged to document (e.g., in a memorandum of agreement) their specific expectations, roles and responsibilities, including such issues as preparation of analysis, schedules, availability of pre-decisional information and other issues. Cooperating agencies are normally expected to use their own funds for routine activities, but to the extent available funds permit, the lead agency should fund or include in its budget requests funding for major activities or analyses that it requests from cooperating agencies. 40 C.F.R. §1501.6(b)(5).

Agencies are reminded that cooperating agency status neither enlarges nor diminishes the decisionmaking authority of either federal or non-federal entities. However, cooperating agency relationships with state, tribal and local agencies help to achieve the direction set forth in NEPA to work with other levels of government "to promote the general welfare, to create and maintain conditions under which man and nature can exist in productive harmony, and fulfill the social, economic, and other requirements of present and future generations of Americans." Considering NEPA's mandate and the authority granted in federal regulation to allow for cooperating agency status for state, tribal and local agencies, cooperator status for appropriate non-federal agencies should be routinely solicited.