

## 2003 Showcase in Excellence Awards Recipient

### Environmental and Enhancement Group – Arizona Department of Transportation



ADOT's Environmental and Enhancement Group (EEG) works to protect and improve the state's magnificent visual, natural, and cultural treasures.

#### Company Information:

*Highest Ranking Official:*  
Victor Mendez, Director

*Contact Person:*  
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Group Manager  
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*Type of work:* ADOT EEG works as part of the development process to anticipate and minimize environmental impacts from transportation projects, and provides funding to selected projects to beautify and enhance roads and their surroundings.

*EEG Workforce:* 40 employees

#### Testimonial of Value of Arizona State Quality Awards Program

The Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) has always been committed to the highest possible quality programs within our organization. The Arizona State Quality Awards Program enhances our quality efforts through encouragement, information sharing, and recognition opportunities.



**Victor Mendez**  
ADOT Director

#### Highlights of Organizational Process:

##### *Preparing for Quality*

The EEG Quality Improvement Program began with a staff retreat in 2000. Staff identified and began work on high priority issues associated with the multiple reviews required for an ADOT environmental review. Critical issues included communication, quality of service from consultants, workload, scheduling, and project management. In addition to its own staff work, the EEG also surveyed all internal ADOT customers to determine desired service improvements.

##### *Implementing Quality*

Using the survey and retreat results as a starting point, EEG worked to implement a number of operational improvements

##### **Centralized Data Bases**

A sophisticated database maintains information regarding the number of projects, responsible staff, due dates, concerns and the current status of the project for each specialty (air, water, hazardous materials, biology, cultural preservation, etc.).

##### **Improved Communication, Education, and Training**

- EEG developed a number of outreach and training programs, including
- free monthly "brown bag" lunch presentations on selected topics for consultants, staff, and others
- "on-the-road" sessions with key ADOT District staff
- EEG website ([www.adotenvironmental.com](http://www.adotenvironmental.com))
- Training videos, seminars, and conference presentations

##### **Streamlined Paperwork and Simplified Procedures**

EEG staff reengineered procedures for clarity and efficiency, including standard application forms, and streamlined reviews.

### **Cooperative Interagency Initiatives**

EEG optimizes performance by collaborating with its multiple partner agencies to improve processes and enhance results.

- Working with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to control highway noise, EEG initiated a series of successful demonstration projects for rubberized asphalt.
- Facilitated by EEG, the Arizona Game and Fish Department and the US Army Corps of Engineers has implemented a unique "in lieu" program, in which the costs of low-impact habitat restorations are replaced by equivalent financial awards to small private or volunteer organizations performing high-impact environmental protection projects.
- In situations where external partner review delayed approvals, EEG "outsourced" staff to those agencies who are dedicated to providing services to ADOT. ADOT staff now work within the Army Corps of Engineers and the Arizona State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). A contract position at the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) is being created.
- Working with each of 21 tribal communities within Arizona on an individual basis, EEG staff developed trust and rapport that enables streamlined approaches to Tribal review of EEG technical submittals.
- ADOT's EEG developed Geographic Information System (GIS) and other electronic data management systems for cultural resources, hazardous materials, and noise issues, which have been both approved and used by its partners.
- EEG has developed a process with FHWA to grant approval for local governments to bid and administer Transportation Enhancement projects.

### ***Results of Quality***

ADOT's primary function is to provide transportation services. EEG aids in providing these services by assuring environmental protection, assisting compliance with regulatory requirements, and, simplifying and streamlining environmental reviews. The transportation enhancement function enables compliance and proactive environmental enhancements to proceed, throughout the state, in partnership with other local government entities. Quality efforts have demonstrably improved those services.

- Improved procedures have reduced review times by more than two weeks, with an estimated savings of half a million dollars annually.
- EEG partnerships within ADOT, with partner government agencies, and with consultants are stronger, based on enhanced communication, streamlined procedures, training, and shared resources. Improved scheduling and minimized misunderstanding have been the result.
- Improved processes increased the annual number of EEG reviews completed by 46.8% within the last three years - from 117 to 220 per year.
- More than 800 persons have attended brown bag training in the last three years.
- Electronic data systems link sites throughout Arizona directly to information on biology, noise, cultural resources, and hazardous materials. Pre-identification of potential environmental issues minimizes environmental review time and helps ADOT avoid purchasing right-of-way where environmental impacts could delay or increase costs of construction. Automated, linked information allows reviews to proceed with minimal travel, costs, disturbance, human exposure, and liability. More than 1000 cultural resource reports are on-line, while hazardous materials reviews use aerial photographs and a video log system (covering over 6000 miles), along with GIS and Geographical Positioning System (GPS) information, to review nearly 250 sites annually.
- Positive results from the noise-reducing pilot programs resulted in ADOT's 2002 commitment to rubberized asphalt for the entire urban freeway system, reducing noise pollution by at least 4 decibels. Approximately 115 miles of regional freeways will be covered with rubberized asphalt, at a cost of approximately \$34 million.

EEG staff members have set new standards in a variety of disciplines, and results have been used to benchmark not only Arizona State efforts, but also efforts inside the FHWA (website and biology), California (rubberized asphalt), Alaska (materials sources), and Utah (historic preservation).