

Nomination Received by Council on Environmental Quality, Executive Office of the President  
For the CEQ NEPA Pilot Project Program  
<http://www.whitehouse.gov/administration/eop/ceq/initiatives/nepa/nepa-pilot-project-nominations>

**PART I. NOMINATOR**

<b>First Name:</b>	Charles
<b>Last Name:</b>	Bien
<b>Organization:</b>	Housing and Urban Development
<b>Project Title:</b>	Assessment Tools for Environmental Compliance (ATEC)
<b>Submitted by:</b>	Federal Agency
<b>Date Received:</b>	06/13/2011

**PART II. SHORT ANSWERS**

**I. What Federal agency or agencies will be involved in this pilot project?**

**HUD**

**II. What is the Federal action to which this NEPA pilot project applies?**

- **Executive Order 11990- Protection of Wetlands**
- **Executive Order 12898 - Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-income Populations**
- **Clean Air Act**
- **Coastal Barrier Resource Act**
- **National Historic Preservation Act**
- **Endangered Species Act**
- **Farmland Protection Policy Act**
- **Noise Control Act**
- **Safe Drinking Water Act**
- **Wild and Scenic Rivers Act**

**III. How will this pilot project reduce the costs and time needed to complete the NEPA process?**

**ATEC reduces the time it takes for grantees to complete reviews, because it provides one location where all they can find information to help complete their reviews. ATEC has training modules, guidance documents, checklists, databases and calculation tools. ATEC's Day Night Noise Levels and Acceptable Separation Distance Calculators allow grantees to conduct often confusing calculations in minutes. The Tribal Directory Assessment Tool provides grantees contact information of the THPO and tribal leadership with interest in their geographic interest.**

**IV. How will this pilot project ensure rigorous environmental protection?**

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**ATEC ensures that grantees are educated in all the environmental regulations that go into a HUD environmental review. Providing grantees with background information, regulations, databases and calculation tools to help them through the review process, and strengthen their reviews.**

**V. How will this pilot project improve the quality and transparency of agency decisionmaking?**

**ATEC facilitates better informed decision-making at the grantee level. ATEC improves the quality of grantee reviews, by providing them information needed to complete their environmental reviews.**

**VI. Will this pilot project develop best practices that can be replicated by other agencies or applied to other Federal actions or programs? Please describe?**

**Yes, other agencies can use ATEC as a model to get their grantees environmental review information. Providing this information online provides a simple “one-stop shop” for grantees to get environmental review information. Information provided through the calculators and databases are time savers for grantees and help them in preparing stronger environmental reviews.**

### **PART III. PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

*(See attachment on following page.)*

## Assessment Tools for Environmental Compliance (ATEC)

In response to the Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ) solicitation to Federal agencies to nominate pilot projects on March 17, 2011, the Department of Housing and Urban Development would like to submit our Assessment Tools for Environmental Compliance (ATEC). ATEC provides an efficient approach to NEPA implementation and accomplishes the goal of informed decision making. ATEC was implemented at the end of 2009.

The Assessment Tools for Environmental Compliance is a collection of web-based resources to ease the cost burden of meeting the myriad of environmental regulations required for HUD assistance. Some regulations are unique to HUD. This makes them more vulnerable to error and misinterpretation by those more familiar with National Environmental Policy Act assessments. The suite may be accessed through its portal at <http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/environment/atec.cfm>.

ATEC is a collection of guidance documents, calculators, checklists, and databases that addresses the "related federal laws and authorities." ATEC is intended to help grantees meet their compliance responsibilities and complete their environmental review with greater ease and efficiency. ATEC includes the following environmental regulations required for HUD assistance:

- Airport Clear Zones
- Air Quality
- Coastal Area Protection
- Endangered Species
- Environmental Justice
- Farmlands
- Explosive and Flammable Facilities
- Floodplain Management and Wetland Protection
- Hazardous Substances
- Historic Preservation
- Noise Abatement and Control
- Sole Source Aquifers
- Wild and Scenic Rivers



The suite of computer programs has been a tremendous success. HUD staff, grantees, and consultants have commented on the time savings and convenience ATEC offers. Ordinary citizens can use it to understand their environment better. With tools like the Day Night Noise Level

Calculator, developers can design site improvements based on standards and quantifiable outcomes to manage community noise. The Sound Transmission Classification Assessment Tool allows developers to figure out the ability of wall systems to protect interior spaces. Connections to the Native American people concerned about development in their area have been made easier through the Tribal Database. Exposure to hazardous facilities has been reduced with the Acceptable Separation Distance calculator. The All of these achieve HUD's goal of providing safe, suitable living environments.

**Day Night Noise Level Calculator**—The Department was in the vanguard of community noise advocacy and research that lead to the Noise Control Act of 1972. As a result, HUD created and maintains the only multi-modal noise evaluation tool in the public sphere. The latest iteration of the Noise Assessment Guidelines is the Day Night Noise Level (DNL) Calculator. This electronic application of the basic noise assessment equation codified in 24CFR51B reduces a manual process from hours to minutes, yet it is still completely compatible with the paper version. Coupled with the **Barrier Performance Module**, two tedious and sometimes confusing calculations are tremendously streamlined.

**Sound Transmission Classification Assessment Tool** – After a project's DNL is calculated, there might be a need to mitigate the noise level inside of the structure. STraCAT allows designers to enter information about wall, window, and door construction to give a combined attenuation for the structure. This combined attenuation will let the developer know if the components of the structure will meet HUD's required attenuation.

**Section 106 Agreement Database**—One of the best ways to begin project planning is to understand what has been found acceptable in the past. Compliance with Section 106 of the Historic Preservation Act is no exception. The Department has crafted a number of Programmatic Agreements and Memoranda of Understanding, but they were inconveniently scattered throughout the country in the field offices where they had been created. The Section 106 Agreement Database collects all the agreements available into one place so that precedents, trends, best practices, lessons learned, and creative solutions can be applied to new challenges and built upon for future needs.

**Tribal Directory Assessment Tool**—A tool like the Tribal Directory Assessment Tool (TDAT) has been needed for a long time. TDAT links the contact information of Tribal Historic Preservation Officers and tribal leadership with their geographic areas of interest in a searchable format. This unique communication tool dramatically improves the Section 106 consultation process by taking the guesswork out of finding the appropriate consulting parties and speeds the notification task.

**Basic 106 Training Module**—Compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act is complicated by strict requirements, extensive public outreach demands, and location-adapted parameters. To exacerbate the challenge, Section 106 only applies to federal projects, so there are many professionals who are unfamiliar with its requirements. HUD created a web-based tutorial called the Basic 106 Training Module to provide a baseline understanding of Section 106. Like all web-based applications, it is ready whenever questions arise or training time available. This has become our first level response to concerns about the 106 process.

**Acceptable Separation Distance Calculator**—Acceptable Separation Distance (ASD) is

the means by which we ensure that HUD-assisted properties are adequately buffered from hazardous facilities like fuel tanks and other potentially explosive or fire-prone uses. This is mandated by HUD regulation 24CFR51C. The ASD Calculator evaluates the needs of the project based on the proximity and type of the threat. It has a graphic interface that reduces input errors while communicating the minimum requirements.

There are other components of interest like the **Coastal Barrier Resources Act Training Module** that was extensively vetted through HUD program staff and the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration. Perhaps even more amazing than the creation of these tools is the fact that they were envisioned and incrementally developed over a three year using precious little year-end funds. ATEC demonstrates a successful application of vision and knowledge of user needs by experienced, professional, public servants.