

Clean Cities Coalition Designation Guide

August 2022



U. S. Department of Energy

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Clean Cities Designation Guide

I. Introduction

Welcome to Clean Cities! As a coalition undertakes the process of being designated by the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), it will be joining more than 75 coalitions across the country actively participating in DOE's voluntary, locally based effort to build partnerships to advance affordable, efficient, and clean transportation fuels and technologies. Since its inception in 1993, Clean Cities has played a key role nationwide in advancing the use of alternative fuels, advanced vehicles, energy efficient mobility systems, and other fuel-saving strategies.

This Designation Guide provides detailed information about developing, implementing, and sustaining Clean Cities coalitions. The Guide includes step-by-step details on the process of assessing local markets for alternative fuels and advanced vehicles, establishing partnerships, developing a strategic Program Plan, and choosing a coalition director. Coalition directors are responsible for creating and executing strategy, directing day-to-day activities, and working with the organization's board or stakeholder committee. While the coalition director acts as the main point of contact with DOE, DOE also maintains periodic contact with coalition leadership and the host organization management¹.

Each coalition is fully responsible for completing the process to earn designation. This involves two stages: Apprentice Designation and Full Designation:

Apprentice Designation: Achieving this level requires the coalition seeking designation to submit a short proposal with letters from at least nine stakeholders representing various businesses, government agencies, or other organizations, pledging their commitments to actively champion the coalition's mission and work. An apprentice coalition also names an acting coalition director.

Full Designation: Achieving full designation requires a comprehensive, strategic, four-year Program Plan. This plan will spell out a much broader range of commitments from the coalition and associated stakeholders. The detailed plan will outline education plans, technical assistance, and other strategies to overcome market barriers and adopt best practices for organizational excellence that ensure the long-term sustainability of the coalition itself.

II. Clean Cities Background

Clean Cities and the Energy Policy Act:

DOE established the network of voluntary Clean Cities coalitions in response to the Energy Policy Act (EPAAct) of 1992, (Public Law 102-486). Congress passed EPAAct to address the country's increasing dependence on petroleum. EPAAct also included mandates for federal,

¹ Coalitions have categorized themselves into different types, depending on their organizational structures and relationship to host organizations. These types are hosted in government, hosted in a nonprofit, standalone nonprofit, hosted in regional planning organization, and hosted in a university. The relationship between a host organization and the coalition varies across the country. Typically, the coalition director is an employee of the host organization, and the coalition benefits from the resources available at the host organization.

state, and alternative fuel provider fleets to purchase alternative fuel vehicles (AFVs). Options for alternative fuel provider fleets included ethanol²; propane; electric vehicles (EVs); biodiesel³; compressed natural gas (CNG); liquefied natural gas (LNG); and hydrogen. This portfolio has been expanded on multiple occasions and now includes a wide range of fuels, vehicle technologies, strategies, and behaviors. Details of this portfolio of fuels, technologies, and strategies are on the Clean Cities Coalition Network website: <https://cleancities.energy.gov/>.

III. Clean Cities Today **Current Clean Cities Coalitions**

More than 75 Clean Cities coalitions currently have full designation status. Collectively, they are supported by more than 20,000 stakeholders from governments, private sector, and their communities. Even more coalitions are progressing through apprentice and full designation stages. The Clean Cities website includes a map showing all fully designated coalitions, and contact information for coalition directors.

Management

DOE's Vehicle Technologies Office, headquartered in Washington, D.C., houses the Clean Cities Coalition Network, which falls under the Technology Integration (TI) Program. Regional managers, based at the National Energy Technology Laboratory (NETL) serve as primary contacts for individual coalitions, organized by regions.

DOE oversees TI activities by:

- Establishing TI priorities and program direction, which includes planning, budgeting, and creating synergies with other DOE programs.
- Providing strategic direction for a strong national network of Clean Cities coalitions.
- Leveraging funding, developing tools and providing technical assistance, holding training workshops, and working with industry and others to address technical issues.
- Assisting with planning and conducting special national-level events, including an annual Clean Cities Coalition Director Training Workshop that provides training for coalition directors and an opportunity to share expertise, success stories, and lessons learned.

Program and Technical Support

Staff from DOE national laboratories provide technical expertise and project management to the VTO TI team and Clean Cities coalitions across the country.

National Energy Technology Laboratory **Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and Morgantown, West Virginia**

² Ethanol is considered an alternative fuel as a blend of 85% or more of ethanol with gasoline (E85)

³ Biodiesel is considered an alternative fuel in pure (B100) form. Blend level indicated by "B" followed by a number signifying percentage of biodiesel blended with regular diesel, e.g., B20 refers to a blend of 20% biodiesel and 80% petroleum diesel.

NETL regional managers offer guidance to coalition directors in their regions, monitor regional coalition activities, and foster relationships among coalition directors in neighboring states by:

- Providing a conduit for communication between TI headquarters and coalitions, including monthly regional calls and annual regional meetings.
- Sustaining and strengthening the region-wide network of coalitions and identifying the specific needs of the regions and states that they serve.
- Educating new and existing coalition directors.
- Reviewing Program Plans of potential new coalitions.

[National Renewable Energy Laboratory](#) **Golden, Colorado**

The National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) provides technical expertise and project management and supports TI by:

- Evaluating coalition and stakeholder needs and strategically responding with accessible resources using multiple delivery platforms crafted for targeted audiences.
- Maintaining the Clean Cities website with up-to-date information about activities and accomplishments, partnerships and projects, and news and events.
- Equipping the Coalition Toolbox with Clean Cities-specific training and resources.
- Managing a suite of more than 50 Clean Cities University courses covering alternative fuels and advanced vehicle deployment, laws and regulations, and topics related to coalition administration to help build coalitions and support stakeholders.
- Managing the Technical Response Service (TRS), a rapid technical assistance service available to coalition directors, staff, stakeholders, and the general public.
- Connecting coalitions through the Peer-to-Peer program, which pairs coalition directors to tackle specific ideas, projects, or challenges.
- Maintaining the [Alternative Fuels Data Center](#), designed to efficiently deliver key information stakeholders need to implement TI priorities.
- Providing technical assistance to coalitions, stakeholders, and industry and serving as a resource for particularly challenging technical questions and projects.

[Oak Ridge National Laboratory](#) **Oak Ridge, Tennessee**

Oak Ridge National Laboratory provides data, analyses, and insight into the transportation industry, supporting TI by:

- Conducting research on fuel economy, providing consumer information, and publishing and distributing the annual Fuel Economy Guide.
- Maintaining the [FuelEconomy.gov](#) website.
- Providing technical assistance to DOE, Clean Cities coalitions, and consumers.

[Argonne National Laboratory](#) **Argonne, Illinois**

Argonne National Laboratory provides technical expertise, develops transportation modeling tools, and supports TI by:

- Maintaining the Alternative Fuel Life-Cycle Environmental and Economic Transportation (AFLEET) tool for coalition directors and fleet managers to estimate petroleum use, greenhouse gas emissions, air pollutant emissions, and cost of ownership of light- and heavy-duty vehicles, and off-road equipment.
- Developing the Heavy-Duty Vehicle Emissions Calculator to provide decision makers with information on the costs and benefits of alternative fuel vehicles.
- Maintaining IdleBox, [an outreach toolkit containing marketing products and technical information](#) developed for coalition directors to assist fleet managers and consumers with adopting idle reduction best practices and technologies.
- Managing the Renewable Natural Gas and Ports Working Groups, providing technical support, resources, and communication products for interested coalition directors.
- Managing the Clean Cities University Workforce Development Program, which provides stipends for college students to assist competitively selected Clean Cities coalitions with event planning, communications, and analysis.
- Managing the Advanced Vehicle Technology Competition series, providing students with real-world training following multi-year vehicle development through design, integrate, and refine efficient mobility solutions.

Geographic Scope of New Coalitions – Statewide with Local Staff and Stakeholders:

The original Clean Cities coalition model was based on on-the-ground staff who have local expertise and capabilities to build relationships and collaborate with stakeholders in the areas they serve. The strength and impact of this model holds true today.

Over time, experience has demonstrated the benefits of statewide coalitions. Statewide scope communicates the intent to serve all communities, including rural and smaller communities. Organized activity at a state level allows for streamlined decision making, stakeholder organization, and funding. Statewide coverage enables coalitions to achieve scale to attract funding and remain sustainable over a longer term.

For these reasons, DOE strongly encourages all new coalitions to make provisions for statewide coverage. DOE also strongly encourages coalitions to create an operating structure that provides for on-the-ground resources and autonomy in local decision-making.

DOE expects coalitions to maintain consistent momentum in progressing toward and achieving full designation within one to two years. Some steps of the process, including assembling a diverse core group of stakeholders, assessing the local market for alternative fuels, drafting, and revising the Program Plan, and preparing for and conducting a webinar for DOE, can each take months.

The time it takes to achieve full designation depends on the coalition's willingness to incorporate DOE's feedback, and how quickly the coalition can make any recommended revisions to its program plan. This comprehensive process is designed to ensure that the coalition is well-positioned to play an important role in achieving Clean Cities' goals of advancing affordable, efficient, and clean transportation fuels, energy efficient mobility systems, and other fuel-saving technologies and practices.

IV. Secure Apprenticeship Coalition Designation

Achieving apprentice coalition designation requires identifying a core of nine to fifteen stakeholders who commit⁴ to actively serving the coalition on its board or advisory committee. This group provides support and guidance to the acting coalition director to advance through the process. Stakeholders include representatives from governments, private entities, and community members whose interests, goals and vision align with the Clean Cities mission.

Collectively, stakeholders are a large part of the coalition and champions of its mission. They are individuals from a variety of organizations, offering different perspectives, resources, skills, and connections. All are united in their strong support of the coalition and the Clean Cities mission. They are committed to actively educating the broader community about the coalition's work and building the coalition's capacity to deliver impact.

Stakeholders generally include:

- Federal, state, and local government officials and/or leaders from executive and legislative agencies and bodies
- Utilities and other alternative fuel providers, including distributors, producers, wholesalers, and retailers
- Alternative fuel vehicle and engine manufacturers, dealers and/or technicians
- Fueling/charging equipment makers, suppliers, installers
- Trade associations
- Private and government fleets, including goods movement, people movement, vocational and services that use light-, medium-, and/or heavy-duty vehicles, on and/or off-road
- Educational organizations and institutions
- Environmental organizations
- Community-based organizations, advocates, and leaders, including people from historically marginalized communities that may be overburdened by pollution and/or lack access to clean mobility
- Foundations/funders
- Local business leaders
- Others who offer valuable skills, expertise, and connections.

Examples of involvement include:

- Actively supporting strategic planning (especially, in the near term) by helping to develop and execute the Program Plan
- Attending coalition meetings and participating in coalition events
- Purchasing AFVs, idle reduction equipment, and advanced vehicle technologies
- Using alternative fuels such as electricity, biodiesel, ethanol, natural gas, propane, and hydrogen
- Investing in alternative fueling or charging infrastructure
- Undertaking Energy Efficient Mobility Systems (EEMS) projects that enable an affordable, efficient, safe, and accessible transportation future
- Helping to educate and engage a wide variety of groups, businesses, agencies, community members, and other individuals who share interests, concerns, and support for the broader mission

⁴ By proving letters of commitment

- Helping to raise and diversify revenue streams for the coalition, and connect the coalition director with potential funding sources
- Helping develop coalition programs designed to deliver mission-related impacts
- Serving as members of coalition committees and boards.

The coalition advisory committee or board of directors needs to elect a president or chair from among its members. With support of the coalition director, the president chairs meetings and otherwise provides leadership to help hold the group accountable to fulfilling commitments to actively support of and guidance to the coalition. The coalition director will work with the president and members to support these efforts. The president also may assume additional public leadership roles, as needed, from time to time.

The coalition's proposal for apprentice designation also should speak to plans to form a limited number of carefully chosen mission-aligned committees or working groups made up of stakeholders. These will provide additional capacity and support for both coalition programs and operations. Examples include but are not limited to:

- Development (Fundraising and Other Revenue Streams)
- Fleet Service/Support (Education, Analysis to Facilitate Adoption of Fuels/Vehicles)
- Fueling/Charging Facilities/Infrastructure Planning and Development
- Policy
- Communications.

In its proposal for apprentice designation, the coalition must identify an acting coalition director⁵. The acting coalition director should be a professional with access to community decision-makers. This person is also the primary contact with DOE and the Clean Cities Coalition Network. At this stage, their primary responsibility is developing the proposal for apprentice designation. Once this status is achieved, the coalition may choose a permanent coalition director, or continue with the acting coalition director until achieving full designation⁶.

Sometimes, the acting coalition director will emerge from the original group of stakeholders. In other cases, the coalition may decide to hire or contract with this person from outside the organization. The person also may be an employee of a government agency, nonprofit, business, or other host organization who is assigned to spearhead development of the designation proposal and staff Clean Cities activities through the apprentice level.

The application for designation as an apprentice coalition must include:

- Cover Letter: One- or two-page signed by the leader of the stakeholders' group⁷ and acting coalition director

⁵ Coalition director, is a generic title DOE uses to refer to the individual who serves as the main point of contact for the coalition, typically the person who is responsible for managing coalition staff. The coalition and host organization, if applicable, may choose whatever title they deem most appropriate for the individual.

⁶ Suggested job duties and qualifications for the permanent coalition director are included in the section focused on the process to seek full designation.

⁷ For a stand-alone nonprofit, this will be the president of the board of directors. In a coalition hosted by an organization, this will be the chair or other leader of the steering or stakeholder committee, an active advisory group without legal governing authority.

- Narrative (three to five pages):
 - At least nine⁸ named stakeholders
 - Discussion of specific commitments that stakeholders are making that collectively address the external programs and activities to accelerate markets and internal efforts to create a strong, long-lasting organization or program
 - Acting coalition director name, background, and relevant experience
- Attached letters of commitment from all stakeholders (Model letter is available from DOE.)
- Attached resume of the acting coalition director

DOE support staff will work with and advise the coalition on developing this application. Multiple iterations of the application may be required before DOE approval. Once approved, the coalition gains status as a DOE-designated apprentice coalition. Apprentice coalitions may have the opportunity to attend Clean Cities training workshops, receive technical assistance, and attend Clean Cities regional meetings. Apprentice coalitions and contact information will also be added to the Clean Cities website, with apprentice classification.

V. **Secure Full Coalition Designation**

Full designation is the second and final stage of the designation process. To achieve this, the coalition submits, and DOE approves, a broad, four-year strategic Program Plan. At a high level, this Plan becomes the coalition's roadmap to successfully accelerating strong, sustainable markets for alternative fuels, vehicle technologies, and efficient transportation systems. It also spells out details of how the coalition will achieve long-term sustainability, based on best practices for organizational excellence.

A full list of required application elements is included in Section VI. Critical elements include a current snapshot of the AFV market, process to select the permanent coalition director, commitments from a broad array of stakeholders, planned programs and activities to help accelerate markets, specific goals over the first four years, plans to operate the coalition and build internal organizational capacity based on best practices for excellence, sustainability, and mission impact.

AFV Market Snapshot:

The Market Snapshot needs to capture the current number and type of AFVs, the amount of alternative fuels used and produced, idle reduction technologies employed, fuel economy measures, and EEMS efforts. Discussion of markets must encompass the coalition's territory and speak to differences in markets in various parts of the state's territory.

Four-Year Goals Including Annual Metrics

In setting four-year goals, the coalition should be mindful of Clean Cities' overall goal to achieve year-over-year 17% or greater gains in petroleum reduction and year-over-year

⁸ DOE recommends nine to 15 members of the board, steering or similar committee as a best practice for effective governance and management of this group. There is no limit to the number of stakeholders that can be listed as supportive. Additional stakeholder can fill valuable committee roles.

20% greenhouse gas emissions reduction, with longer-term goals for a fundamental shift toward a low, and eventually zero net carbon transportation sector.

Stakeholder Commitments:

This will build on commitments made by the initial core group of stakeholders. DOE does not prescribe a specific number and type of commitments. However, they should encompass and effectively represent the coalition territory, and include entities in a wide range of communities, including those historically marginalized and overburdened. Commitments should also come from a wide range of stakeholder types – various fleets, local and state officials, utilities, and others (see Section IV). They should speak to plans to deploy vehicles and technology, overcome market barriers to deployment, help fund or raise funding for the coalition, and others that help increase sustainable transportation and build the near- and long-term capacity of the coalition to advance its mission.

Stakeholders serving on the coalition board or advisory committee must document their commitments to serve the coalition and remain actively involved in the governing board or advisory committee. Many coalitions, including those with host organizations, form non-profit corporations with governing boards. These have proven valuable in helping the coalition raise additional funds to support coalition activities, achieve longer-term sustainability, and encourage ongoing stakeholder engagement. The plan must describe the process to select a president and potentially other officers.

Plan for Programs and Activities to Accelerate Market Adoption:

This Program Plan will set forth action steps to facilitate market growth. It's based on two elements: commitments made by stakeholders, and programs and activities of the coalition to leverage these commitments into broader action. An example is fleet programs such as education, coaching/technical assistance, peer mentoring, recognition, and/or certification. Other examples include public and consumer education, fuel and charging infrastructure development projects, policymaker and government official education, and others. A coalition seeking full designation will be able to access a vast library of information on successful Clean Cities programs from across the national network.

Building a strong reputation as a trusted resource is essential to the coalition's success. Therefore, the DOE requires coalitions to conduct Clean Cities related activities under their own name and brand to build identify, awareness of the coalition, and trust. This requirement for "doing business as" the coalition holds even if the coalition is hosted within another organization.

Coalition Director Selection Process:

One of the most important decisions is hiring or appointing a permanent coalition director. The Program Plan should discuss how the coalition will undertake and make this decision. Fundamentally, the process will depend on whether the coalition is independent or hosted by an organization. If hosted, DOE prefers a collaborative process between the coalition and host organization. Either way, the Program Plan should articulate qualifications and specific job responsibilities and attach a planned position posting. Guidance, including model job duties and postings, are available from DOE. This section should also speak to the

relationship between the coalition, host organization⁹, and the coalition director. DOE considers a full-time coalition director to be a best practice. If the coalition plans for a part-time director, the Plan should discuss the rationale, how the coalition will secure or provide additional staffing to equal at least one full-time equivalent of support. ***Note that DOE requires the coalition director's primary work location to be within the coalition's geographic territory.***

Operating Plans and Organizational Capacity Development:

The Plan should identify how coalition operations will align with strong standard operating procedures and best practices. Elements include how the coalition and coalition director will work together¹⁰ to provide strategic direction, as well as how the coalition director will manage day-to-day operations, finances, funding streams, and programs. The Plan should project goals for growth in coalition capacity over the four-year period. It should address plans, if any, to develop a legal nonprofit for the coalition.

Coalition Governance or Oversight:

If a coalition already is or plans to form a nonprofit, draft or final versions of articles of incorporation and bylaws must be referenced and attached. DOE can provide best practices for articles and bylaws, as well as models of other coalition bylaws. At a minimum, articles should articulate the coalition's mission. Bylaws should include composition of the board, how board directors are elected/replaced, frequency of meetings, budgeting process and other oversight responsibilities. If the coalition does not have a legal nonprofit and board, it still must retain a stakeholder committee that meets regularly and collaborates with the host organization to provide nonbinding oversight and guidance. In this case, the Plan must reference and include rules for the stakeholder committee. These include composition, frequency of meetings, and scope of guidance being provided to the coalition director. This portion of the Plan should also speak to DOE's preference for statewide scale, and how the coalition will work to provide on the ground resources where needed to serve and respond to local markets and stakeholder needs and guidance.

VI. Mandatory Components and Attachments of the Program Plan:

DOE requirements for the Program Plan:

- One- or Two-Page Cover Letter Signed by President (or Equivalent) of Coalition, Management of Host Organization (if applicable) and Acting or Permanent Coalition Director, Submitted on Coalition Letterhead
- Program Plan Narrative (estimated 15-20 pages, or longer, if needed):
 - Defined Coalition Territory (Note: DOE strongly prefers newly designated coalitions to be statewide.)
 - AFV Market Snapshot
 - Four Year Goals
 - Stakeholders and Their Commitments

⁹ If applicable

¹⁰ With host organization, if applicable

- Coalition Identity and Branding
 - Planned Programs and Activities that Comprise the Strategy to Achieve Goals
 - Discussion of Collaboration with Neighboring and Regional Coalitions
 - Permanent Coalition Director Selection Process (or Information About Coalition Director, if Selected Already)
 - Physical Work Location of the Coalition Director (Note: Must Lie Within Coalition Territory)
 - Operating Plans (Including Standard Operating Procedures or Policies and Procedures, Based on Best Practices for Excellence)
 - Plans/Goals to Develop Organizational Capacity
 - Plans to Grow/Serve Additional Local Areas of State Territory, as Needed
 - Coalition Governance or Oversight¹¹
- Attachments:
 - Letters of Commitment from Stakeholders
 - Coalition Board Articles and Bylaws or Stakeholder Committee Operating Rules
 - First Year Coalition Budget
 - Director Job Posting or Description
 - Bios of Coalition Board or Stakeholder Committee Members
 - Standard Operating Procedures or Policies and Procedures.

VII. Plan Development and DOE Approval:

The Program Plan serves as the coalition's formal application to DOE for full designation status. DOE will work closely with and advise the coalition in developing a draft of the Program Plan for DOE review. Finalizing the Plan involves an extensive collaborative process between the coalition and DOE. This may require multiple iterations of the Plan before a final version can be approved. The coalition must maintain consistent progress and momentum toward full designation, preferably within one to two years.

Once DOE is satisfied with the coalition's Program Plan, it will conduct a two-hour interactive designation webinar. DOE will assist the coalition in preparing for and conducting the designation webinar, which includes equal parts presentation and discussion. A presentation template and examples are available.

The coalition's presentation team includes the following:

- Acting (or permanent) coalition director (mandatory)
- Acting or elected president of the coalition's board or stakeholder committee (mandatory)
- Management from coalition's host organization, if applicable (mandatory)
- Additional representatives from the coalition's board or stakeholders committee (encouraged)
- Any other key stakeholders, if desired.

¹¹ If the coalition is hosted by an organization, include a discussion of how the coalition board or stakeholder committee and host organization management will collaborate to provide clear and effective oversight.

DOE staff representatives will include:

- DOE headquarters leadership staff and support contractors
- NETL Clean Cities Regional Manager
- Other DOE management and VTO staff, as appropriate
- DOE national laboratory staff.

VIII. Stakeholders, Coalition Director, and Host Celebrate Designation

DOE encourages the coalition to hold an event to celebrate designation, including the commitments stakeholders are making. Part of this can be the formal signing of a memorandum of understanding that signifies stakeholders' commitments to work with each other, remain engaged, strengthen the coalition, and help it reach expressed goals. This event is a useful way to reward stakeholders for their hard work in obtaining full designation as a Clean Cities coalition. It's also a great networking event. DOE staff members are occasionally available to attend official signing ceremonies, depending upon budget constraints and travel restrictions.

IX. Re-designation

Every four years, each Clean Cities coalition will undertake the process of re-designation, which involves reviewing the commitments, goals, and action steps set forth in the Program Plan, renewing the MOU, and presenting a webinar to DOE. A Re-designation Guide, outlining the steps to take, is available on the Clean Cities website.

X. Sample Stakeholder Letter of Commitment

LETTERHEAD (Organization, Government, Company)

DATE

Mark S. Smith
Program Manager, Technology Integration
Vehicle Technologies Office, EE-3V
U.S. Department of Energy
1000 Independence Ave., SW
Washington, DC 20585

Dear Mr. Smith:

On behalf of (Name of organization), I commit my support for [Name of coalition] as we seek formal designation by the U.S. Department of Energy as a Clean Cities coalition. This letter details specific commitments (Name of organization) and I am making to serve the coalition and its mission in [Local/regional service area, e.g., state] to advance sustainable and equitable transportation.

First, I commit personally to serve as an active member on (Name of coalition's) (Advisory or governing board, as appropriate) to support (Name of coalition's) plans to deliver impact on the Clean Cities mission in (service area).

Second, (name of organization) makes the following commitments:

(Bullet point list that may include commitments such as becoming a dues-paying member, acquiring or using alternative fuels or advanced vehicles, deploying fueling or charging infrastructure, championing policies to overcome market barriers, actively participating in projects to advance equitable access to clean mobility solutions, reducing impacts from transportation related pollution, or similar efforts.)

(Name of organization) and I look forward to working with our coalition director, other coalition stakeholders, the U.S. Department of Energy, and others to achieve full Clean Cities designation. I understand this will require my time and energy. After the new coalition earns designation, I pledge to continue supporting the coalition and fulfill these commitments to advance the Clean Cities mission in [Coalition's service area].

Sincerely,

Name, Title
Organization, Government or Company