

Evaluation of AB 617's Community Participation and Community Benefits

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Context: Assembly Bill 617 is a statewide effort to protect the air quality and health of California's most disadvantaged communities. It has engaged a wide range of stakeholders, including community residents and organizations, local governments, Air Districts, the California Air Resources Board (CARB), industry, and other interested parties. To date it has been implemented in 15 communities across the state and also includes several statewide regulatory elements. AB 617 has promoted innovative approaches to air quality monitoring and management and collaboration between multiple stakeholders. To help all stakeholders meet the policy's goals, it will be valuable to assess how well they are being met and what can be done to improve this effort.

Goals:

1. Build on Dr. London's earlier research on the initial implementation of AB 617 statewide and in the San Joaquin Valley (see below).
2. Provide independent analysis of the innovations, challenges, and lessons learned from the attempts to meet the goals of improving community participation and air quality in disadvantaged communities.
3. Share findings and actionable recommendations in accessible formats to help all stakeholders better implement the policy.

Methods:

1. Intensive case studies of the four AB 617 communities in the San Joaquin Valley (Stockton, Fresno, Shafter, Arvin/ Lamont) and three cases (to be selected) from Year 1 implementation.
2. Data drawn from stakeholder interviews (CSCs, Air Districts, CARB), observation of CSC meetings and review of AB 617 reports and documents (such as Community Emissions Reduction Programs).
3. Statewide survey of all AB 617 stakeholders.

Outputs:

1. A policy report, set of community case studies, and a set of issue briefs in English and Spanish.
2. Presentation workshops for local, regional, and state officials, community organizations, and residents.
3. Research articles for environmental policy journals. (Co-authorship opportunities available).

Process:

- Statewide research design committee makes recommendations on the stakeholder survey and proposed case study sites: Fall 2022
- Research team presentations to potential case study site CSC to decide on their participation: Winter 2023
- Statewide survey: Winter 2023
- Case study research: Spring 2023- Spring 2024
- Report writing: Spring-Summer 2024
- Final presentations Fall 2024

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AB 617 research by Jonathan London and team: <https://tinyurl.com/5adahb46>