



San Diego County Air Pollution Control District

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN 2022 - 2025

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In collaboration with: Pueblo Planning



San Diego County
**Air Pollution
Control District**

Introduction

The Public Participation Plan 2022 – 2025 for the San Diego County Air Pollution Control District (the District) is the guiding document for developing and implementing public participation across its many functions and programs that improve air quality.

Developed through close engagement with the community—particularly those who are disproportionately impacted by air quality issues—this plan outlines how the District will honor principles of community engagement through a comprehensive set of goals and strategies that are based on the community's priorities for meaningful and robust public participation.

BACKGROUND

The District is a government agency guided by its Governing Board that regulates sources of air pollution within San Diego County. The District has over 100 different rules applying to specific types of industries & equipment that achieve emission reductions by setting emissions standards. The District's key programs are designed to effectively implement the air quality management process and support the mission to improve air quality to protect public health and the environment..

The Engineering Division evaluates and issues air quality permits to ensure that proposed new or modified commercial and industrial equipment and operations comply with air pollution control laws. Permits are required for operations or equipment capable of emitting air contaminants. Engineering also prepares stationary source emission inventories, implements air toxic emissions inventory and control programs, and evaluates special projects that may impact air quality.

The Monitoring & Technical Services Division maintains the ambient air monitoring network and records air quality readings and forecasts on a 24-hour phone message line (858) 586-2800 and on the District's website under Current Air Quality. Agricultural burn permit holders can also find out whether air quality conditions permit or prohibit open burning. Monitoring also performs and witnesses laboratory and field testing of stationary sources of air pollution.

The District's Compliance Division ensures that regulated sources operate in compliance with permit conditions and all applicable regulations. Field staff inspect both permitted and non-permitted sources of air contaminants and investigate citizen complaints on air quality matters. In addition, this division helps the industry understand and comply with District rules and state law. Advisories are sent when new rules are adopted to explain the new requirements to all those affected. Formal training and individual assistance are also provided.

The Rule Development Division prepares long-term regional plans to reduce unhealthful pollution levels and develop air quality rules. Specific strategies and control measures are developed and implemented to achieve clean air standards set by the federal and state governments. It also participates with transportation agencies to ensure regional transportation projects are designed to achieve air quality standards.

The Grants & Incentives Division administers a number of state and local funding programs to reduce emissions, primarily from mobile sources. These programs follow strict state guidelines for eligibility, cost-effectiveness and selection and require strict accountability and transparency to ensure proper and effective use of public funds.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the Public Participation Plan is to guide the District in maximizing its responsiveness to the public, organizing its participation efforts, and ensuring the public is involved in the District's processes and key issues related to air quality. The District is increasing opportunities for transparency by increasing public outreach and engagement through an equity lens to reach the diverse San Diego community and stakeholders. Essentially, these efforts will make it easier for the public—particularly the communities that are disproportionately impacted by air quality issues—to understand the District's work, how and when to engage with the District, and to be informed of the District's projects and plans.

PROCESS

The process to develop the Public Participation Plan occurred from Summer 2021 through Winter 2022. It involved a multi-pronged public participation and planning approach with a strong equity lens to engage communities that are disproportionately impacted by air quality issues. With support from the consulting team of MIG, Inc. and Pueblo Planning, the District established partnerships with five community-based organizations (CBOs) to reach diverse communities throughout the region that are known to be disproportionately impacted by air quality issues, and/or have had limited or no contact with the District.



Each CBO offered connections to different parts of the region and impacted groups. The CBO partners included the following organizations::

- Bayside Community Center
- Casa Familiar
- El Cajon Collaborative
- Environmental Health Coalition
- Vista Community Clinic



The process involved the following activities:



CBO INTERVIEWS: One-on-one interviews with each CBO at the beginning of the process established the working relationship with the District and initial ideas for engaging each CBO's communities.



LISTENING SESSIONS: The District co-hosted at least one listening session with each CBO that solicited participants' knowledge of and experiences with air quality issues and how they seek support. Each session was tailored to the respective community's engagement expectations, comfort levels, and support needs to meaningfully participate. Specific considerations included but were not limited to: language, in-person vs. virtual, time of day, incentives, and similar considerations. All sessions included simultaneous translation in at least one language depending upon each community's specific needs. Over one hundred (106) community members participated across seven (7) sessions.



CBO WORKSHOPS: Two (2) workshops with the CBO partners provided opportunities to tailor the process and discuss the outcomes. The first workshop occurred early in the process to define the objectives for the listening sessions and initial considerations for community engagement principles. The second workshop occurred after the listening sessions to debrief the outcomes and discuss how community priorities may be reflected in the District's future participation and communication efforts.



STAFF WORKSHOP: District staff participated in a workshop to review the outcomes of the listening sessions and CBO workshops and further inform the development of the plan.



PUBLIC REVIEW AND FEEDBACK LOOP: The District provided the Draft Public Participation Plan for a three-week public review and input period in March 2022. As part of this effort, the District completed a “feedback loop” with the CBO partners to ensure acknowledgment of the outcomes of the listening sessions and workshops in this plan. The resulting input informed the final draft.



PUBLIC WORKSHOPS: The District also conducted two public workshops during the public review period in March 2022 to present the Draft Public Participation Plan, answer questions, and collect public input.



GOVERNING BOARD: The The Board received an update on the emerging community priorities and goal areas at the midpoint in the process and provided direction on continued progress in developing this plan. The Board received and adopted the final draft in April 2022.

Overall, the experiences from and outcomes of these activities form the basis of this plan as outlined in the following section. Detailed materials and summaries of outcomes from these activities are on file with the District.



Plan Elements

The Public Participation Plan is comprised of specific elements that provide the District with an organizing structure for growing its capabilities and reach in the community through meaningful public participation.

The plan identifies principles for community engagement, community priorities, goals for major outcomes, and strategies for advancing its efforts in public participation. Together, these elements are necessary for the District to advance its practice in communicating and engaging with the community across its core functions and roles, particularly with those communities that are disproportionately impacted by air quality issues.

DEFINITIONS AND FRAMEWORK

Following are the definitions and functions of each plan element

Community Engagement Principles – As shared beliefs and ideals that guide the District’s approach to engaging the community, the principles represent a “code of conduct.”

Community Priorities – Based on the District’s initial engagement with the community, these priorities represent what is most important to the community in how the District continues to engage, communicate, and strengthen its public participation practices.

Goals – These statements of general direction represent what the District seeks as primary outcomes from this plan and its engagement efforts.

Strategies – Strategies provide the steps and “how to” in implementing the goals and achieving outcomes.

Metrics – Metrics are measurable indicators that help to track progress towards achieving the goals.

The framework diagram below illustrates the relationship among the plan elements.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PRINCIPLES

As shared beliefs and ideals that guide the District's approach to engaging the community, the community engagement principles represent a "code of conduct." Early in the process, the Governing Board identified the Principles for Popular Education (Freire) as a basis for defining the District's principles for community engagement. Through the engagement process with disadvantaged communities that are disproportionately impacted by air quality issues, community members provided additional and similar principles that it requested be part of the District's approach to engagement and air quality improvement. The resulting combined and tailored community engagement principles are embraced as shared beliefs and ideals among the District and the communities it serves.

The current distribution of resources is unjust, and change is possible if we invest in our most impacted communities.

Community participation and engagement should directly result in building trust and creating change: reducing harm and increasing health and benefit to the most impacted communities.

Community engagement should be prioritized for every topic addressed by APCD.

Lived experiences and cultural expectations among those who are most impacted by poor air quality are important to informing our current and future needs and solutions.

Engagement should be intentional, inclusive, trauma-informed, and transparent in respecting lived experiences.

Community members' time and contributions are valuable and should be respected in how engagement and participation are organized, conducted, and documented.

Participation and collaboration should occur in languages of engaged communities and in spaces and places that are frequented and trusted by community members who are most impacted by poor air quality.

We learn with our heads, our hearts, and our bodies. Participation and engagement should include providing the community with meaningful and accessible educational tools, resources, and information that are place-based and public health-focused to directly inform APCD's decisions and air quality improvements.

New ideas from the community should be prioritized, studied, documented, tracked, and accessible as knowledge that is part of APCD's decision-making.

APCD's decision-making process should include regular and ongoing communication and feedback with communities that are most impacted by poor air quality.



COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

During the community engagement process that informed development of this plan, the breadth of community input related to how the District should conduct public participation is summarized in four community priorities. These provide the foundation for how the District will strengthen its public participation practices.

Ongoing Trust & Relationship Building -

Priority 1: Build relationships and trust with the community, particularly those who have been disproportionately impacted by poor air quality.

Education & Empowerment -

Priority 2: Equip the community with meaningful and accessible educational tools, resources, and information so that the community is empowered to be an engaged partner in shaping APCD decisions and improving air quality.

Outreach & Communication -

Priority 3: Connect with community members, especially those most impacted by poor air quality, in places they frequent and trust, and provide clear and consistent opportunities to share information and receive community feedback.

Community Engagement -

Priority 4: Co-create and practice inclusive, accessible, trauma-informed, and transparent engagement in partnership with the community.

GOALS

Goals are statements of general direction and represent what the District seeks as primary outcomes from this plan and its engagement efforts. The goals also provide an organizing structure for its efforts to implement the strategies, or the “how to” in implementing the plan. Additionally, each goal includes a set of metrics, which are the indicators the District will track and measure over time to gauge its performance in achieving the goals.

Goal A - Build relationships and trust with the community, particularly those which have experienced disproportionate air quality impacts

Goal B - Equip the community with meaningful tools, resources, and information so that the community is empowered to be an engaged partner in APCD decision making

Goal C - Connect with community members in places they trust and provide consistent engagement opportunities

Goal D - Conduct community engagement that is inclusive, accessible, trauma-informed, and transparent

Goal E - Invest in an organizational culture and structure that supports proactive community engagement

Goal F - Establish partnerships with community-based organizations, government departments, and agencies to ensure community outreach is coordinated and demonstrates collaborative results

Strategy Matrix

The following pages include a strategy matrix for each goal. Each strategy is outlined with an anticipated timeline for completion.

Goal A - Build relationships and trust with the community, particularly those which have experienced disproportionate air quality impacts

Metrics

Increased number of partnerships
 Increased number of partnerships with diverse groups
 Increased number of touchpoints
 Increased information sharing with CBOs

Strategies		Timeline ¹		
		Short-Term	Mid-Term	Long-Term
<i>Strategy A.1</i>	Initiate a Convo series with CBOs to stay informed about community air quality concerns and continue to learn the local needs for meaningful engagement, including but not limited to the following CBOs: Bayside Community Center, Casa Familiar, El Cajon Collaborative, Environmental Health Coalition, Vista Community Clinic, and more.	X		
<i>Strategy A.2</i>	Partner with CBOs and other neighborhood partners to increase the agency's regular and frequent presence in the community by sharing space in their facilities for public meetings and communicating information.		X	
<i>Strategy A.3</i>	Establish a program for staff to provide information to CBOs, meet with their membership regularly and frequently in places that are familiar to the community.	X		
<i>Strategy A.4</i>	Establish a trackable protocol for timely response to community complaints and information requests submitted through all communication channels that explains next steps.	X		
<i>Strategy A.5</i>	Create a feedback loop to the community for every engagement process that explains how community input influenced APCD decisions.	X		
<i>Strategy A.6</i>	Initiate quarterly 1:1 listen and learn convos with CBOs to increase the District's capacity to acknowledge past and current harm and trauma that community members share, and methods to repair the relationships and establish trust with the community.	X		
<i>Strategy A.7</i>	Connect with CBOs during air quality incidents (e.g., wildfires, ship fire, etc.) to leverage their communication networks with impacted communities.	X		

¹ Short-Term: by the end of calendar year; Mid-Term: by 2024; Long-Term: by 2025.

Goal B - Equip the community with meaningful tools, resources, and information so that the community is empowered to be an engaged partner in APCD decision making

Metrics

Number of core collateral materials
 Number of core collateral materials in multiple languages
 Number of social media posts (Twitter, Facebook)
 Increased number of social media followers
 Increased APCD's email listserve
 Increase participation in APCD workshops

Strategies		Timeline ²		
		Short-term	Mid-term	Long-Term
<i>Strategy B.1</i>	Create a set of collateral materials that introduce the purpose and role of the agency in a manner that is welcoming, understandable, and accessible to the public.	X		
<i>Strategy B.2</i>	Ensure collateral and community participation materials respond to different communication styles and are developed in the five languages (Arabic, Chinese, Spanish, Tagalog, Vietnamese) and offered for public meetings upon request, and that include criteria for when information should be translated into multiple languages and/or beyond the five languages.		X	
<i>Strategy B.3</i>	Develop materials that introduce and explain technical air quality information that is free from jargon and that uses welcoming, relatable, accessible language and imagery that is contextualized to local geographies and culture, lived experiences and public health implications.		X	
<i>Strategy B.4</i>	Establish a community multilingual communication inquiry hotline that utilizes a variety of platforms and provides acknowledgment responses in a timely manner.		X	
<i>Strategy B.5</i>	Develop a dynamic digital map-based tool that contextualizes information geographically, connects with people's lived experiences, and can be used to stay informed and receive real-time responses.			X
<i>Strategy B.6</i>	Publish all opportunities for the public to be engaged with APCD activities, including but not limited to: rule development, rule 1210 public meetings, monthly Governing Board meetings, variance hearings, and more.	X		
<i>Strategy B.7</i>	Assess language access needs to determine translation methods and approach to address literacy inclusivity that will be required for a project or communications materials.	X		

² Short-Term: by the end of calendar year; Mid-Term: by 2024; Long-Term: by 2025.

Goal C - Connect with community members in places they trust and provide consistent engagement opportunities

Metrics

Increased meeting locations throughout the County

Increase advertising channels/places

Develop an outreach plan for APCD public communication

Strategies		Timeline ³		
		Short-Term	Mid-Term	Long-Term
<i>Strategy C.1</i>	Conduct outreach and engagement activities in places that are familiar and trusted, including but not limited to community events, neighborhood/association meetings, schools, faith-based organizations, and libraries.	X		
<i>Strategy C.2</i>	Advertising and promoting workshops strategically in places where those most impacted by poor air quality frequent.	X		
<i>Strategy C.3</i>	Advertise APCD's Complaint program in places visible to communities most impacted by air pollution	X		
<i>Strategy C.4</i>	Partner with CBOs to identify trusted and reliable communication channels to share information and connect with community members	X		

³ Short-Term: by the end of calendar year; Mid-Term: by 2024; Long-Term: by 2025.

Goal D - Conduct community engagement that is inclusive, accessible, trauma-informed, and transparent

Metrics

Increased participation in APCD Governing Board meetings, workshops and other public meetings
Develop an outreach plan and timelines for APCD public communication

Strategies		Timeline ⁴		
		Shor-Term	Mid-Term	Long-Term
<i>Strategy D.1</i>	Ensure community engagement is planned and launched in a timely manner in partnership with the community.	X		
<i>Strategy D.2</i>	Establish a set of standards for all planning processes that require clearly defining community engagement objectives, setting timelines, assessing barriers to engagement, and establishing feedback loops.	X		
<i>Strategy D.3</i>	Engage with local CBO partners to inform tailored community engagement strategies for APCD efforts prior to launching the process.		X	
<i>Strategy D.4</i>	Establish protocols to increase community accessibility to Governing Board meetings and Hearing Board meetings, including expanded permit notifications.	X		
<i>Strategy D.5</i>	Provide support to staff with developing engagement programs that result in accessible, inclusive, trauma-informed, and transparent community engagement outcomes.	X		

⁴ Short-Term: by the end of calendar year; Mid-Term: by 2024; Long-Term: by 2025.

Goal E - Invest in an organizational culture and structure that supports proactive community engagement

Metrics

Reduced redundancies by creating protocols to streamline internal processes.

Increased customer service training.

Improved communication between divisions.

Strategies		Timeline ⁵		
		Shor-Term	Mid-Term	Long-Term
<i>Strategy E.1</i>	Develop a community engagement toolkit for staff to effectively communicate with the community.	X		
<i>Strategy E.2</i>	Revise internal communication protocols between divisions for community engagement efforts, tools, and best practices.		X	
<i>Strategy E.3</i>	Develop a process to share intra-agency efforts and so all APCD staff can effectively respond to public questions about different topics.		X	
<i>Strategy E.4</i>	Establish training course to introduce staff to the District's Community Engagement Checklist outreach methods, presentation practices, and facilitation tools.	X		

⁵ Short-Term: by the end of calendar year; Mid-Term: by 2024; Long-Term: by 2025.

Goal F - Establish partnerships with community-based organizations, government departments, and agencies to ensure community outreach is coordinated and demonstrates collaborative results

Metrics

Reduced overlapping communication efforts between partner agencies.

Increased engagement with government agencies.

Improved processes for distributing information and resources.

Strategies		Timeline ⁶		
		Shor-Term	Mid-Term	Long-Term
<i>Strategy F.1</i>	Evaluate an agency process that would regularly provide resources to community partners to support engagement efforts in their communities.		X	
<i>Strategy F.2</i>	Create channels of communication that facilitate improved and ongoing coordination internally at APCD and with other public agencies, departments, and organizations to ensure greater clarity of overlapping projects, initiatives and outreach efforts.	Ongoing		
<i>Strategy F.3</i>	Establish a process to partner with local CBOs that have a relationship with community members that are planned to be engaged to advise APCD staff initiating community engagement programs on information materials and methods that result in accessible, inclusive, safe and welcoming spaces, trauma-informed, and transparent outcomes.		X	

⁶ Short-Term: by the end of calendar year; Mid-Term: by 2024; Long-Term: by 2025.

IMPLEMENTATION TOOLS

During the engagement process that informed development of this plan, community members, CBO partners, Governing Board members and District staff identified a number of implementation tools that could support the District's efforts in designing and conducting robust and responsive public participation.

Community Workshop Checklist – Create a community workshop guide and checklist for staff to prepare and plan for community-specific needs such as language, time and location, childcare, and refreshments.

Satellite Hubs – Provide information in locations that are neighborhood accessible. This can include storefront satellite offices and CBO offices and facilities.

Governing Board Meetings – Increase public engagement and participation in APCD's budget process by holding budget-related Governing Board meetings in the evening.

APCD Multi-Media Campaign – Effectively communicates APCD's purpose through social media and communication applications that are used by target audiences.

Air Quality 101 Popular Education Materials and Course – Introduces the public to the role of the District in regional air quality planning, monitoring, and permitting.

APCD Air Quality 101 Video – A short, three-minute video that introduces APCD and how the community can participate and engage. The video may also be designed in small segments that could be extracted and shared through a multi-media campaign.

Complaint Program – Utilizes a variety of communication measures (app, email, online, phone call) for immediate follow-up response.

APCD Visitor Series – District staff attends CBO meetings, gatherings, and similar events to provide an overview of the agency and address questions, including quick responses on follow-up items or questions. (See Strategy A.3 and A.4)

Community Engagement Plan – Created for all new planning processes and projects.

Meeting and Workshop Venue Database – The list includes places throughout the County that respond to the characteristics and specific needs of local communities.

Database of Community Based Organizations – The database includes listings of CBOs and their communities and cultures served, outreach resources, preferred engagement methods, and more.

Multilingual Glossary of Terms – Includes definitions to technical terms using mindful, culturally appropriate, and accessible language that promote welcoming, relatable, and relevant communications and engagement with all communities.