



Fact Sheet

Community Air Action Planning: Pilot Program Overview

The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality's Community Air Action Planning is a pilot program designed to improve local air quality in historically overburdened areas through a collaborative process of 'community-led action'. Through the CAAP program, community-led action means using the program to create a pathway to empower communities with knowledge and data about their air and developing an approach to put those communities in a position to make decisions about how their air quality can be improved.

Background

Air pollution negatively [impacts human health](#). Cardiovascular disease, decreased lung function and asthma, and different forms of cancer are all health impacts that have been associated with exposure to air pollution. Breathing in different types of air pollution (e.g. wildfire smoke, air toxics, diesel particulate matter, etc.) has been shown to affect human health. Sensitive populations including children with developing respiratory systems, elderly people, and those disproportionately exposed to pollution, such as communities of color and lower income, are particularly impacted.

What is 'community-led action' and why does it matter for tackling air pollution?

Air pollution is caused from a wide range of activities from manufacturing and industrial processes to natural events such as wildfires to cars, trucks and buses to construction to household tasks like lawnmowing or even painting. This means that the local air quality of a given area is typically impacted by a variety of activities all at the same time. Most regulations and DEQ programs are built to address one activity at a time, making it challenging to address all of the activities all at once. Furthermore, this regulatory model does not offer an effective way of understanding how air pollution is experienced by communities and identify targeted air quality improvement actions that meet the unique needs of that community.

Community-led action is a process that involves community members playing an active role in decision-making and developing goals that shape action. A community-led action approach allows the lived experience of the community members to prioritize ways to improve air quality and address activities that cause air pollution all together.

Community Air Action Planning

The pilot program, Community Air Action Planning (CAAP), is being started with support through an [EPA grant](#). The grant provides funds to purchase monitoring devices to gather community-level air quality data. The grant also provides resources to support communities to engage with DEQ's Air Quality Division. The pilot will prioritize areas that have higher air pollution burden that impacts vulnerable populations such as low income

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and minority communities. DEQ hopes to create a framework for community-led air quality improvement that can be used in future work.

In the first phase of the pilot, DEQ will work closely with community-based organizations, state government agencies and local government organizations across Oregon through a 'co-design group' to develop the guiding principles of the program.

Using the co-design group's feedback, DEQ will lead a transparent process to partner with four communities throughout Oregon to participate in community-monitoring efforts. During community-monitoring efforts, DEQ will work with residents to use air quality monitoring instruments to measure levels of specific pollutants impacting the community. DEQ will also work closely with the community to understand the local air quality challenges by listening to their concerns such as hosting interactive workshops where the community can identify where they see dirty air or experience bad smelling air.

After a community-monitoring effort has ended, DEQ will work with community representatives in some of the selected areas to convene 'local air quality improvement boards' that will bring together important organizations in the area to collectively create actions plans that address local air quality concerns and advance the community's air quality goals.

The initial phase of the CAAP pilot program is anticipated to take place from Summer 2023 through Spring 2026. DEQ and project partners will evaluate the first phase of the pilot and potentially integrate lessons learned into a second phase of the program. Depending on the results and outcomes of the first phase of the pilot program, a second phase of the CAAP program will begin, no sooner than the second half of 2026.

Next steps

DEQ is in the process of launching a new pilot program intended to create a framework for community-led air quality improvement in historically overburdened areas. The CAAP framework is currently being developed and the process of selecting the four communities DEQ will work with is expected to begin in Spring 2024.

More information and contacts

For more information about the Community Air Action Planning pilot program, check out our webpage and contact us at CAAP@deq.oregon.gov.

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