

## **Additional Qs and As from EPA's CPRG Grantee Training on Interagency Coordination and Meaningful Engagement with Communities**

*Note: This document provides answers to additional questions that were not answered during the live webinar due to time constraints, as well as supplemental extended answers to some questions answered during the webinar.*

**Q1: There are almost 500 municipalities in our Metropolitan Planning Organization. Is it practical to contact all and get their feedback? Are there any suggested ways to narrow down the number of potential participants for better engagement?**

The lead organization for an MSA should collaborate with other jurisdictions in their MSA to the extent possible and should consider the entire MSA region in developing deliverables, even if not all areas participate. Using established communication channels (*newsletters, websites, email lists, etc.*), standing meetings, or existing committees to coordinate could be reasonable approaches to working with the member municipalities. Other methods could include holding regular community member meetings, publishing a Request for Information, or establishing an advisory committee. There is no requirement that every jurisdiction in an MSA actively participate in the planning process, but we encourage lead organizations to provide a range of opportunities for participation.

**Q2: How much responsibility do we hold in engaging municipalities that do not want to participate? Do we need to demonstrate an effort to reach out?**

For MSAs: The lead organization for an MSA should collaborate with other jurisdictions in their MSA to the extent possible and should consider the entire MSA region in developing deliverables, even if not all areas participate. There is no requirement that every jurisdiction in an MSA actively participate.

For States: State agencies are expected to coordinate with municipalities and air pollution control agencies as much as possible in the development of key CPRG planning grant deliverables. The interagency collaboration process is intended to result in the identification and inclusion of measures in the state Priority Climate Action Plan (PCAP) and Comprehensive Climate Action Plan (CCAP) that can be implemented by collaborating entities. States must include priority measures that are implementable by municipalities in the PCAP and must make the PCAP available to other entities for their use in developing an implementation grant application.

Grant recipients may document their outreach efforts, including any challenges, in the quarterly progress reports submitted to EPA.

**Q3: Is EPA using "community engagement" in these slides to refer both to engagement with other agencies and with members of the public?**

Community engagement is a holistic process that aims to incorporate the varying degrees of views and input from community members that would be impacted by your project. Impacted community members can include a wide variety of parties, such as other local agencies and community members, but will ultimately depend on the extent of your project's impact in the area. In these slides, Interagency and Intergovernmental Coordination refers to the requirement for lead organizations for states and MSAs to engage and collaborate with air pollution control agencies, municipalities, and tribes within their jurisdiction.

## **Additional Qs and As from EPA's CPRG Grantee Training on Interagency Coordination and Meaningful Engagement with Communities**

**Q4: How is EPA measuring meaningful engagement? How can we demonstrate empowerment? What are the expected metrics/deliverables to demonstrate that engagement with Low-Income and Disadvantaged Communities (LIDAC) is meaningful?**

EPA expects to provide additional resources to eligible entities on how to meaningfully engage with community members and partners, which will also incorporate engagement strategies that can be utilized as a reference. In demonstrating meaningful engagement and empowerment through community capacity building, we encourage grantees to also harness and capitalize on community expertise through authentic and consistent channels of communication. Some tactics to accomplish this can include establishing an advisory committee that will feed input directly to project managers as well as providing readily accessible information to community members.

Metrics/deliverables to demonstrate that engagement with LIDAC members is meaningful include but are not limited to:

- Demonstrating early and frequent community engagement with those most impacted by project actions;
- Establishing a feedback loop of effective communication with residents, leaders, and representatives of LIDACs that identifies and addresses community priorities;
- Demonstrating an effective process of transparency through varying approaches, which may include in-person and virtual meetings, public websites, listservs, and social media;

**Q5: Does engaging LIDAC communities for this project mean engaging the municipality, or engaging the public in those municipalities? Who is the "right" community representative?**

Engaging members of LIDACs refers to engaging the public within the municipalities. EPA defines LIDAC communities as:

- Any Census tract that is included as disadvantaged in the Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool (CEJST); and/or,
- Any census block group that is at or above the 90th percentile for any of EJScreen's Supplemental Indexes when compared to the nation or state, and/or
- Any geographic area within Tribal lands and indigenous areas as included in EJScreen.

EPA expects to provide additional resources to grantees on best practices for meaningfully engaging with community members and interested parties. These resources will describe several engagement strategies that can be utilized as a reference. When determining which members of the community to engage with, it is crucial to first determine the extent of your project and which community members will be most impacted. Engaging with community members directly provides opportunities to participate in activities and decisions that could impact their environment or health. Prioritizing community concerns using various approaches, such as leveraging existing relationships with community partners and organizations, can help foster the success and effectiveness of your project.

## **Additional Qs and As from EPA's CPRG Grantee Training on Interagency Coordination and Meaningful Engagement with Communities**

**Q6: The "entities that are essential to the decision-making process" seem to me to be public agencies, because they are the ones who will lead any follow-up efforts to apply for funding to implement projects highlighted in the PCAP/CCAP. Am I interpreting that correctly? And if so, how does EPA expect feedback from other stakeholders - particularly community members - to influence the PCAP/CCAP given that EPA does not seem to be offering any opportunities for community groups to apply for implementation funds?**

The entities that are essential to the decision-making process extend beyond public agencies and should also include community members and other impacted parties. Feedback from community members, partners, and interested parties should be considered by states and municipalities leading the development of Priority Climate Action Plans. These lead organizations should employ strategies such as establishing transparent, consistent, and meaningful lines of communication with members of the community; consulting with an advisory committee with community members; or holding public hearings to solicit input. The EPA expects to provide additional resources to grantees on strategies for meaningful engagement with community members, partners, and interested parties.

**Q7: It will be a significant challenge to complete this level of public engagement in the timeframe of the PCAP. Are we able to re-coup pre-award costs so that we can get started right away?**

As noted in the [Frequently Asked Questions document](#) on the CPRG website, State and MSA recipients of CPRG planning grants may incur allowable "pre-award" project costs beginning on June 1, 2023, even if grant funds are not formally awarded until after that date. Tribal and Territory recipients of CPRG planning grants may incur allowable "pre-award" project costs beginning on June 15, 2023, even if grants are not formally awarded until after that date. All costs incurred before EPA makes the award are at the recipient's risk. EPA is under no obligation to reimburse such costs if for any reason the recipient does not receive a Federal award, or if the Federal award is less than anticipated and inadequate to cover such costs. Such pre-award costs are allowable pursuant to EPA grant regulations at 2 CFR 1500.9.

**Q8: Will there be additional opportunities to receive assistance from EPA on this topic?**

EPA will hold an additional training for CPRG trainings on meaningful engagement on August 30, 2023. In addition, meaningful engagement will be one of the topics covered in EPA's upcoming Technical Assistance Forums; we encourage CPRG planning grantees to participate in the forums to receive additional technical support from EPA as well as learn from each other. Registration information will be available soon.