

U.S. EPA Climate Pollution Reduction Grant

Outreach and Engagement Plan for the San Diego Region

SANDAG

February 2024

DRAFT

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Introduction

Project Overview

The San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) was awarded a Climate Pollution Reduction Grant (CPRG) by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to develop a Priority Climate Action Plan (PCAP), Comprehensive Climate Action Plan (CCAP), and Status Report.

Through this process, in collaboration with regional partners and stakeholders, we will identify policies and strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and other forms of harmful air pollution in the region. Also, by completing the PCAP, the region becomes eligible to apply for future funding through the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to implement these projects. We estimate that the PCAP will be completed in early 2024, the CCAP in 2025, and the Status Report in 2027.

Outreach and Engagement Goals

Informing, collaborating with, and gathering feedback from community members, local jurisdictions, and climate stakeholders is a critical part of developing the PCAP, CCAP, and Status Report. The goals of our public participation efforts are to:

- Raise awareness about the project and climate action planning
- Collect meaningful input from community members and stakeholders
- Involve and consult communities who have been historically underserved and underrepresented or subject to discrimination, and
- Build trusting relationships with the public and seek their approval of the strategies proposed in our climate action plans

This outreach plan outlines activities and strategies to accomplish these goals and coincides with the step-by-step process we will follow to develop the PCAP, CCAP, and Status Report.

Background and Past Efforts

Regional Context

The San Diego region includes 19 local governments, 17 sovereign tribal nations, and 7 military bases. This is a highly diverse and unique setting to plan and deliver climate action policies, projects, and programs. The environmental landscape across San Diego is equally varied—the region includes six climate zones, diverse topography, and is a global biodiversity hotspot.

U.S. EPA Best Practices

The EPA has provided numerous technical resources to support grant awardees; for the PCAP, CCAP, and Status Report, we have shaped our plan according to the best practices for meaningful engagement they have identified:

- Build upon existing outreach and engagement practices

- Identify concerns of the community and potential community-driven solutions
- Leverage and strengthen existing partnerships
- Manage and resolve conflict throughout the engagement process
- Create and implement a community engagement strategy
- Gather feedback to evaluate the effectiveness of the outreach and engagement strategy
- Drive the process to maintain ongoing engagement

Climate Outreach in Our Region to Date

SANDAG has historically conducted outreach and engagement using various tactics. In developing the 2021 Regional Transportation Plan (Regional Plan), which includes policies and implementation actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, SANDAG gathered input from the public on their key climate priorities.

Our staff also continually presents to and consults with our Working Groups and Policy Advisory Committees which discuss land use, climate, and environmental projects. Through these groups, SANDAG has established working relationships with elected officials and staff members from local cities and the County, other government agencies, community-based organizations, and other groups that will directly support this work.

Additionally, 18 of the local jurisdictions in the region—17 cities and the County of San Diego—have some type of sustainability plan or Climate Action Plan (CAP) in place. In developing these plans, local governments conducted extensive climate-related outreach and engagement through a variety of methods, and as stakeholders of this project, 12 of the local governments in the region provided reports and examples describing their climate outreach efforts to date. SANDAG reviewed these materials and summarized this information in Appendix A below.

Some of the common methods or approaches to outreach and engagement include pop-ups at local events such as farmers markets and street fairs; community surveys and interactive posters either online or in-person at events; and staff presentations or workshops at official meetings, such as city council meetings. Local governments also developed a wide suite of outreach materials, including newsletters, social media posts, fliers, and websites to engage with the public. Feedback from community members varied somewhat by location, but in general, climate action priorities that we've heard so far are to:

- Reduce air pollution through decarbonization
- Reduce vehicle miles traveled and increase transit options
- Expand electrical vehicle charging infrastructure
- Expand the amount of trees and green spaces
- Create more biking and walking plans and facilities
- Increase solar and other renewable energy installations

Key Stakeholders

There are numerous groups and organizations with stake in the PCAP, CCAP, and Status Report. The following is a non-exhaustive list of key audiences:

- Local Governments
 - Elected officials
 - Local government staff
- Regional Agencies
 - San Diego County Air Pollution Control District (SDCAPCD)
 - Caltrans District 11
 - Transit Operators: MTS and NCTD
 - Port of San Diego
 - San Diego County Regional Airport Authority (SDCRAA)
 - Padre Dam Joint Powers Authority
- Community Choice Aggregators and Utilities
 - San Diego Community Power
 - Clean Energy Alliance
 - San Diego Gas & Electric
- Tribal Nations
- Academia
- Business and Labor Organizations
- Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)
 - Community-Based Organizations (CBOs)
 - Environmental and Social Advocacy groups and non-profits
- Members of the Public/San Diego Residents

Key Messages

The following are key messages for the project in general:

- A Climate Action Plan describes the strategies a government agency will use to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. This plan usually guides climate policy and planning efforts in a specific city or community—in this case, ours will apply to the entire region.
- This plan will support climate action work already being done by many of the cities and the County.
- Getting our region on the same page with climate planning will make us all more competitive to apply for climate project funding together.
- The project will take place over a 4-year period, ending in 2027.

The following are key messages for the Priority Climate Action Plan:

- People in our region are being impacted by climate change and air pollution now; hotter and more frequent heat waves, prolonged droughts, more destructive wildfires, air pollution, more extreme rain and flooding, rising sea levels, and destructive storm surges all threaten our residents' health and

quality of life. We need solutions to these problems, which is why we're working on this Plan.

- Completing a Priority Climate Action Plan will allow the region to apply for more climate action grant money and to get more projects done sooner (\$4.6 billion available).
- The Priority Climate Action Plan (PCAP) outlines greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reduction measures that can be put into action *quickly and efficiently* throughout the region.
- To develop the PCAP, we are collaborating with the public and various climate-concerned stakeholders throughout the region (e.g., local governments, CBOs, advocacy groups, etc.) to understand all of the region's communities' climate concerns and needs.
- The PCAP is due March 1, 2024.

The following are key messages for the Comprehensive Climate Action Plan:

- The Comprehensive Climate Action Plan (CCAP) is an updated and more detailed version of the PCAP.
- The CCAP will go into more detail about sources of GHG emissions, creating near- and long-term goals for reducing GHG emissions, and will also include more detailed strategies to accomplish these goals.
- The CCAP is estimated to be complete in mid-2025.

The following are key messages for the Status Report:

- The Status Report will describe our progress toward delivering the action items in the CCAP, as well as any updated analyses or estimates related to the CCAP, and next steps to continue making the CCAP a reality.

Strategies and Methods

This section lists five strategies for conducting outreach and engagement throughout the development of the PCAP, CCAP, and Status Report. Below each strategy is a description of the approach and/or methods planned to accomplish it and the outreach goals mentioned above.

1. Leverage existing relationships and activities to conduct equity-focused community outreach and engagement.

- Utilize trusted messengers within social equity communities to facilitate outreach: we have set aside funding from the EPA grant award to contract with Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) who are part of our CBO Outreach network. These include twelve organizations who represent communities in the San Diego region who are historically underserved, underrepresented, and/or subject to discrimination. CBO assistance will include:

- Identification public outreach and community engagement events/opportunities
- Support for creation of outreach and engagement materials
- Staffing public outreach and community engagement
- Prioritize engagement in communities that have not had the opportunity to participate in previous climate action planning efforts due to financial, socioeconomic, or other constraints. Partnering with CBOs will be key to conduct this engagement.
- Partner with local governments in the region conducting outreach and engagement at local events in their communities. Examples include Climate Action Plan outreach efforts in several jurisdictions, as well the County of San Diego's Regional Decarbonization Framework outreach.
- Build upon past efforts and information we've already gathered from the public (i.e., through local government efforts). Share these findings and update or add to this information as needed.

2. Gather public input on climate action planning to document community-defined priorities and inform development of the PCAP, CCAP, and Status Report.

- Develop outreach and engagement materials in accessible language using a variety of formats, including both digital and printed versions. All materials will also abide by the SANDAG Language Assistance Plan and will be developed in different languages as identified (see Assessment section below). Materials may include:
 - A webpage on the SANDAG website
 - Social media content
 - Fact sheets/one-pagers
 - Multimedia presentations
 - A Frequently Asked Questions document
 - Newsletter articles
 - Poster boards to display at events (can include interactive elements)
- Utilize social media to engage a wide audience across the region, such as the SANDAG Facebook, X, Instagram, and LinkedIn pages.
- Participate in local/regional events as available to conduct pop-up outreach. Example events include Earth Day fairs, resource fairs, food distributions, farmer's markets, etc.
- Host meetings and/or workshops virtually as needed to supplement in-person outreach.

3. Collaborate with interagency stakeholders to build and maintain relationships.

- Host monthly virtual discussions with staff from local cities, County of San Diego, public agencies like SDCAPCD, SDCRAA, MTS, and NCTD, and other stakeholder entities such as community choice aggregators, utility providers,

interested tribal nations, and other groups participating in the SANDAG PCAP, CCAP and Status Report.

- Conduct in-person and/or virtual staff presentations at SANDAG meetings, such as the Board of Directors, Policy Advisory Committees, and Working Groups to share information and gather input from local government/public agency staff and elected officials.

4. Engage tribal nations in the region to understand the climate needs of their communities and identify opportunities for alignment.

- Engage tribal nations in the region through the SANDAG Tribal Transportation Working Group and the Tribal Task Force, or other opportunities as available (e.g., EPA Region 9 Tribal Conference).
- Offer informational presentations at meetings of the Southern California Tribal Chairmen's Association as available.

5. Consult with Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and advocacy groups who are working in the San Diego region climate space to harness their expertise.

- Participate in NGO-led meetings, such as Climate Collaborative meetings or workshops, to share information and collaborate with climate stakeholders throughout the region.
- Engage climate advocacy groups, including but not limited to Climate Action Campaign and other environmental groups, to gain input on measures and climate action policies.
- Establish a Climate Readiness Table to involve community representatives and advocacy groups in developing the PCAP, CCAP, and Status Report.

Assessment of Outreach and Engagement Process

Reporting and Success Tracking

To track and report on engagement activities, SANDAG staff will establish metrics for and assess key performance indicators (such as number of participants, email opens, etc.) as well as maintain a spreadsheet database to log events, presentations, online outreach, and other efforts. Importantly, staff will also keep a record of feedback received from stakeholders and the public at each of these activities through the database and/or meeting minutes. This record will be used to report out on feedback received to regional stakeholders, EPA, or other interested parties. Finally, this Outreach and Engagement Plan will be periodically updated as subsequent deliverables including the CCAP and Status Report are prepared. This will provide the opportunity to update and improve the Plan as the project progresses.

Accessibility and Transparency

Anticipating barriers to participation and forming strategies to mitigate and reduce it, wherever possible, will help enable successful implementation of this Outreach

and Engagement Plan. The EPA has provided several useful strategies and methods to remove such barriers, such as developing accessible, effective, and inclusive methods of community engagement and decision-making.

To align with this recommendation, SANDAG will develop materials using conversational language in both print and digital formats, to accommodate those who may not have access to smartphones or the internet. All materials will also be developed in accordance with SANDAG’s Language Assistance Plan, which describes the various languages and settings in which translation and/or interpretation should be provided. SANDAG also seeks to limit the burden on the public and stakeholders when conducting outreach and engagement by providing flexible input opportunities; for example, through online surveys that can be accessed at any time or providing food and other amenities if events occur during evenings.

As described in the section above, reporting will also be a tool for transparency and trust building with the community. SANDAG will keep track of engagement activities, including feedback received, and will share with stakeholders and the public how their input has shaped decision making in the PCAP, CCAP, and/or Status Report.

Timeline

In general, the activities described in this Outreach and Engagement Plan will align with major milestones throughout the 4-year project period. In addition to regular monthly meetings with regional stakeholders participating in the PCAP, an estimated outreach and engagement schedule is below:

DATE	ACTION
2023	
September	Present to Social Equity Working Group – project introduction
October	Draft Outreach and Engagement Plan
	Conduct stakeholder outreach at EPA Region 9 Tribal Conference
	Conduct public outreach at EV Day
November	Present to Mobility WGs – project introduction
December	Climate Table workshop #1 – measures and future funding
2024	
January	Climate Readiness Table meeting – draft PCAP, Phase II project ideas
March	Publish PCAP to SANDAG website and submit to EPA
	Social media post – share completed PCAP
	Local governments share updates via newsletters/email blasts (TBD)
April	Conduct public outreach at San Diego EarthFest (April 20 th)

April - June	Start introducing/gathering input on CCAP in conjunction with Regional Plan 2025 outreach
October - November	Conduct public outreach at events as available (e.g., EV Day 2024) to inform CCAP measure selection
December	Review Outreach & Engagement Plan and update as needed
2025	
Q1 – Q2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present to Working Groups - Draft CCAP • Review Outreach & Engagement Plan and update as needed
Q2 – Q3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present to Policy Advisory Committee - Final CCAP • Publish CCAP and project updates to SANDAG website • Present to Board of Directors – Final CCAP
2026	
Specific Dates TBD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review Outreach & Engagement Plan and update as needed
2027	
Specific Dates TBD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present to Transportation and Regional Planning Committee – Assessment of Implementation Status & Next Steps and Status Report • Publish Next Steps and Status Report to SANDAG website