

*U.S. EPA Climate Pollution Reduction Grant*

# Outreach and Engagement Plan

Last Updated: January 2025

**SANDAG**

# Contents

Contents.....	2
Introduction.....	3
Background.....	4
Key Stakeholders.....	6
Key Messages .....	7
Strategies and Methods.....	9
Assessment of Outreach and Engagement.....	12
Timeline.....	13

# 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 near-term regional climate plan, a comprehensive long-term vision for climate action, and a report on progress. These reports are referred to as the San Diego Regional Priority Climate Action Plan (PCAP), the San Diego Regional Climate Action Roadmap (Roadmap), and the Status Report, respectively.

Through these reports, 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. By completing the PCAP, the region becomes eligible to apply for funding from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to implement these projects. The PCAP will be completed in March 2024, the Roadmap by December 2025, and the Status Report by mid-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, Roadmap, 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 strategies and methods to accomplish these goals and aligns with the process we will follow to develop these reports.

# Background

## Regional Context

The San Diego region includes 19 local governments, 17 sovereign Tribal Nations, and 7 military bases, making for a highly diverse and unique setting to plan climate action policies, projects, and programs. The environmental landscape is equally varied—with six different climate zones and diverse topography, the San Diego region is a global biodiversity hotspot.

## U.S. EPA Best Practices

The EPA has provided numerous technical resources to support grant awardees, and 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

## Past Climate Outreach

SANDAG has conducted outreach and engagement for a variety of past climate-related efforts. In developing the 2021 Regional Transportation Plan (Regional Plan), SANDAG gathered input from the public on their climate priorities to inform policies and implementation actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

SANDAG staff also regularly present to and consult with our Working Groups and Policy Advisory Committees which discuss land use, transportation, climate, and other regional projects. Through these groups, SANDAG is able to engage elected officials and staff members from local cities and the County of San Diego, public agencies, community-based organizations, and other groups with stake in this work.

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

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 poster boards 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 variety 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, the region's 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 electric vehicle charging infrastructure
- Increase the number of trees and green spaces
- Create more biking and walking plans and facilities
- Increase solar and other renewable energy infrastructure

# Key Stakeholders

There are numerous groups and organizations with stake in the PCAP, Roadmap, 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 (SDAPCD)
  - 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 bullet points provide key information and sample messaging for the grant overall, as well as specific points for each of the reports being developed.

## Overarching Messages

- A Climate Action Plan describes strategies, including projects, programs, and policies 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 local 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.
- 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 creating the PCAP, Roadmap, and Status Report.

## PCAP

- 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 was completed in March 2024.

## Climate Action Roadmap

- The Climate Action Roadmap (Roadmap) is comprehensive vision for reducing GHGs in the region through 2050.
- The Roadmap 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 Roadmap will be complete by December 2025.

## **Status Report**

- The Status Report will describe our progress toward reducing GHG emissions, as well as any updated analyses or estimates related to the Roadmap and next steps to continue working on climate action in the region.



# Strategies and Methods

## Strategy 1

Inform and get input from the public using *existing* community relationships, events, and activities (meet people where they are).

### Methods

- Partner with local governments as available who are conducting climate outreach and engagement in their communities. Examples include Climate Action Plan (CAP) outreach efforts by cities/County, as well as outreach for the County's Regional Decarbonization Framework. This may include but is not limited to presentations at local civic body meetings (e.g., Town Councils, Planning Groups, Parks and Recreation Advisory Groups, etc.).
- Partner with local organizations including but not limited to non-profits, collaborative meetings, parent teacher associations, etc.
- Leverage 2025 Regional Plan outreach efforts as available to provide updates and gather input on Roadmap. Examples may include focus groups, open houses, workshops, community events, and public opinion surveys.
- Participate in local/regional events as available to conduct pop-up outreach. Example events include Earth Day fairs, resource fairs, farmer's markets, community clean-ups, etc.

## Strategy 2

Develop new materials and opportunities for outreach and engagement to learn the community's priorities for GHG reduction measures and other Roadmap elements.

### Methods

- Develop accessible outreach and engagement materials in a variety of formats (i.e., digital and printed versions). All materials should also abide by SANDAG's Language Assistance Plan. Materials could 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 (Should include interactive elements)
- Utilize social media to engage a wide audience across the region, such as the SANDAG Facebook, X, Instagram, and LinkedIn pages. If appropriate, collaborate on social media posts with CBOs and other outreach partners.
- Utilize trusted messengers within communities to facilitate outreach.

- Use funding from the EPA grant award to contract with Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) via SANDAG's CBO partner network. These include twelve organizations who represent communities in the San Diego region who are historically underserved, underrepresented, and/or subject to discrimination. CBO outreach could include:
  - Identification of public outreach and community engagement events/opportunities
  - Review of outreach and engagement materials
  - Conducting 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, generational, or other barriers. Partnering with CBOs will be key to help reach these communities, particularly youth and young people
- Establish a Regional Climate Table to involve community representatives, advocacy groups, local jurisdictions, and public agencies in developing EPA deliverables.

## Strategy 3

Collaborate with interagency stakeholders to build and maintain relationships, get input on deliverable approach and content, and identify potential opportunities for collaboration.

### Methods

- Host regular monthly or bimonthly virtual discussions with staff from local cities, County of San Diego, public agencies like SDAPCD, SDCRAA, MTS, and NCTD, and other stakeholder entities such as community choice aggregators, utility providers, Tribal Nations, and other groups to discuss grant deliverables and/or related climate matters.
- 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.
- Convene sector-specific stakeholders to share progress and solicit technical feedback on EPA deliverables.
- Build upon past efforts and information we've already gathered from the public (i.e., through past local government CAP efforts). Compile these findings and update or add to this information as needed.

## Strategy 4

Engage Tribal Nations in the region to understand the climate needs of their communities and identify opportunities for alignment.

### Methods

- Engage Tribal Nations in the region through the SANDAG Tribal Transportation Working Group and the Tribal Task Force, one-on-one meetings with Tribes and Tribal coalitions (as needed/requested), or other opportunities as available (e.g., EPA Region 9 Tribal Conference).

- Present at meetings of the Southern California Tribal Chairmen's Association as requested and/or offer to present on EPA deliverables and progress.

## **Strategy 5**

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

### **Methods**

- Participate in NGO-led meetings, such as Regional Climate Collaborative meetings or other workshops as available/identified, to share information and collaborate with climate stakeholders throughout the region.
- Engage climate advocacy groups, including but not limited to Climate Action Campaign, Coastal Defenders, Youth 4 Climate, Climate Kids, and other environmental groups, to gain input on measures and climate action policies.
- Per Strategy 2 above, include NGOs and advocacy groups in Regional Climate Table workshops.

# Assessment of Outreach and Engagement

## Reporting and Success Tracking

To report on engagement activities, SANDAG staff will track key performance indicators (such as number of participants, email opens, etc.) and 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 each deliverable is prepared. This will provide an opportunity to update and improve the Plan as the project progresses.

## Accessibility and Transparency

Anticipating barriers to participation and developing strategies to mitigate and reduce them, 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 through accessible, effective, and inclusive methods of community engagement and decision-making.

To align with the EPA best practices, 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, online surveys that can be accessed at any time, or providing food 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 the PCAP/Roadmap/Status Report.

# Timeline

In general, the activities described in this Outreach and Engagement Plan will align with major milestones throughout the grant period. An estimated outreach and engagement schedule is below:

DATE	ACTION
<b>2023</b>	
Q3 (July – September)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monthly interagency meetings</li> <li>• Introduce project at SANDAG Working Groups</li> <li>• Begin drafting outreach and engagement plan</li> </ul>
Q4 (October – December)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monthly interagency meetings</li> <li>• Introduce project at SANDAG Working Groups</li> <li>• Hold first Regional Climate Table Workshop</li> </ul>
<b>2024</b>	
Q1 (January – March)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monthly interagency meetings</li> <li>• Hold second Regional Climate Table Workshop</li> <li>• Present PCAP at SANDAG Working Groups</li> <li>• Publish PCAP and submit to EPA</li> <li>• Begin contracting with CBOs for Roadmap outreach</li> </ul>
Q2 (April – June)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transition to bimonthly interagency meetings</li> <li>• Present PCAP and introduce Roadmap at SANDAG Policy Advisory Committee(s)</li> <li>• Publish draft outreach and engagement plan</li> </ul>
Q3 (July – September)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bimonthly interagency meetings</li> <li>• Hold 3<sup>rd</sup> Climate Table Workshop</li> <li>• Kick-off CBO Roadmap outreach</li> </ul>
Q4 (October – December)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bimonthly interagency meetings</li> <li>• Continue CBO Roadmap outreach</li> <li>• Gather technical input on draft GHG reduction measures</li> </ul>

DATE	ACTION
<b>2025</b>	
Q1 (January – March)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update outreach and engagement plan</li> <li>• Bimonthly interagency meetings</li> <li>• Continue CBO Roadmap outreach</li> <li>• Hold fourth Regional Climate Table Workshop</li> <li>• Present draft GHG reduction measures at SANDAG Working Groups</li> </ul>
Q2 (April – June)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bimonthly interagency meetings</li> <li>• Hold fifth Regional Climate Table Workshop</li> <li>• Publish draft Roadmap</li> <li>• Present draft Roadmap at SANDAG Working Groups and/or Policy Advisory Committees</li> </ul>
Q3 (July – September)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bimonthly interagency meetings</li> <li>• Update outreach and engagement plan</li> </ul>
Q4 (October – December)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bimonthly interagency meetings</li> <li>• Publish final Roadmap and submit to EPA</li> </ul>
<b>2026</b>	
TBD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review Outreach &amp; Engagement Plan and update as needed</li> </ul>
<b>2027</b>	
TBD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Present Status Report to Working Groups and Policy Advisory Committees</li> <li>• Publish Status Report and submit to EPA</li> </ul>