

**SOUTHERN ECONOMIC ADVANCEMENT PROJECT**



**Community Voice in  
Federal Funds**

**OUR DOLLARS  
OUR DREAMS**  
AN INITIATIVE OF SEAP

**SEAP**

**JANUARY 2024**



# ABOUT SEAP

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SEAP is your partner and resource. We amplify the efforts of existing organizations and networks that work towards broadening economic power and building a more equitable future. Broadening economic power brings attention to how race, class and gender intersect social and economic policy in the South. We explore policy ideas designed to address these connections directly. SEAP focuses on 12 Southern states and marginalized/vulnerable populations within the region.



## ABOUT OUR DOLLARS, OUR DREAMS

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Our Dollars, Our Dreams is an initiative of SEAP that empowers Southern communities to take ownership of the billions in federal funding currently available. To help communities secure public dollars to build a better future, the campaign provides:

- Research on equity efforts
- Technical assistance to help partners secure funds
- Connections between partners to share best practices

Have a project idea you'd like to talk through? Please contact [liza@theseap.org](mailto:liza@theseap.org).

## OVERVIEW

The new [Climate Pollution Reduction Grants](#) (CPRG) provide \$250 million in planning grants and \$4.6 billion in implementation grants to states, local governments, tribes, and territories to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and other air pollution. CPRG is administered by the US Environmental Protection Agency with funding from the Inflation Reduction Act and is part of the Justice40 Initiative to advance environmental justice.

In 2024 and 2025, state and large Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs) are in the planning grant phase to identify high priority actions for reducing emissions. They will create Priority Climate Action Plans by March 2024 and Comprehensive Climate Action Plans by mid-2025. These two plans must include community engagement as described below.

### **PUBLIC AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT**

State and metropolitan area lead organizations must involve stakeholder groups and the public in the process for developing the PCAP and CCAP. Potential stakeholders include urban, rural, and underserved or disadvantaged communities as well as the general public, governmental entities, federally recognized tribes, Port Authorities, labor organizations, community and faith-based organizations, and private sector and industry representatives. The workplan should:

- Describe how public and stakeholder engagement would be conducted (such as through a combination of in-person and/or virtual meetings with reasonable opportunities to provide input on preliminary products);
- Discuss how information on the PCAP and CCAP development processes will be made available to the public in a transparent manner, such as through in-person and virtual meetings, public websites, listservs, and social media;
- Describe the approach to identifying low-income and disadvantaged communities, conducting meaningful engagement including communicating with low income and disadvantaged communities about emissions reductions in those areas, and identifying their priorities; and,
- Describe an approach for early and frequent engagement with low-income and disadvantaged communities and how that engagement will inform the low-income and disadvantaged communities benefits analysis.

Source: [Climate Pollution Reduction Grants Program: Formula Grants for Planning, Program Guidance for States, Municipalities, and Air Pollution Control Agencies](#). March 1, 2023



# ENGAGEMENT IN ACTION: PIMA COUNTY, AZ

Pima County, Arizona designed a [multi-pronged approach](#) to community engagement for their climate action plans. Pima County Department of Environmental Quality leads the effort in partnership with Tucson, South Tucson, the Tohono O’Odham Nation, and Oro Valley.

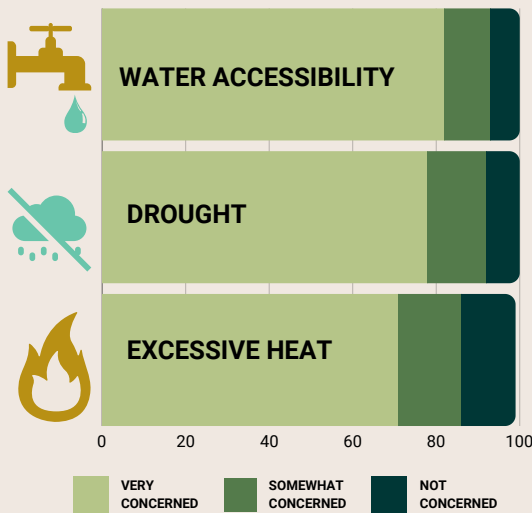
## KEY ELEMENTS

### 1. A resident survey and business survey

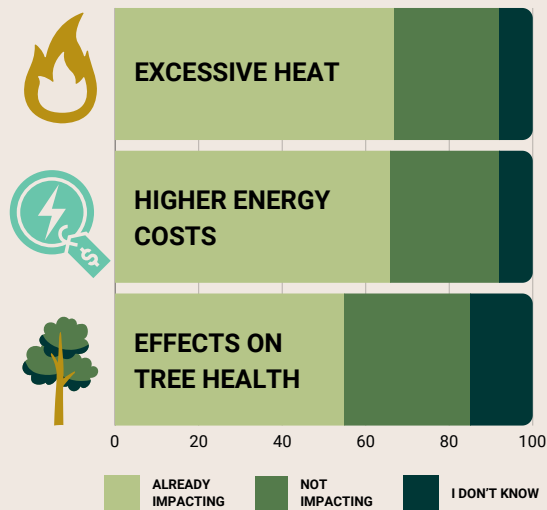
The County created [surveys](#) with pro bono assistance from scholars at the University of Arizona with the goals of both collecting data and providing education on climate action. Their intention was to gather information and priorities from residents and business owners, but also to provide information and education through the survey on ways that people can take action in their lives around complex issues of climate change. They relied on multiple choice answers to prompt thinking and also included open-ended questions to gather additional insights. The Department is a regulatory agency, which provided them with a list of permitted facilities to target with the business surveys.

## TOP SURVEY RESPONSES

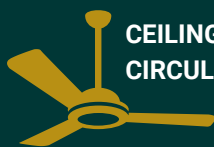
Q: How concerned are you about each of the following potential and known effects of climate change?



Q: Which of these are already impacting your life?



TWO OF THE TOP PARTICIPANT-REPORTED INDIVIDUAL ACTIONS TO REDUCE GHG EMISSIONS:



CEILING FANS TO CIRCULATE AIR



REDUCE WASTE BY REUSING AND/OR RECYCLING

## 2. Outreach grants to community organizations

The County solicited proposals from community-based organizations (CBOs) for innovative outreach ideas to assist in reaching low-income and traditionally under-served communities at a cost of \$20,000 or less. The County anticipated multiple benefits from this approach, including reaching hard-to-reach populations for their input and building relationships with CBOs so they can be voices for these communities throughout this multi-year process. Working with these CBOs was a new element of engagement for the Department—one they note they would definitely do again. Below is an overview of the CBOs engagements:

- **Direct Center for Independence, Inclusive Voices.** The organization will facilitate engagement among people with disabilities and adults aged 62 and over who have low incomes. They will hold focus groups, ask for input from callers to the Information & Referral Program, and contact all current and former participants to obtain input via phone. Staff will facilitate surveys for participants, and participants will be compensated for their time with a gift card.
- **YWCA Southern Arizona.** The YWCA will host an open house to share information on the County's climate plan; engage the community in a dialogue on climate and gather survey responses; provide a hands-on demonstration about climate-proofing homes; and offer workshops on heat, health, gardening, and other topics.
- **Youth Outdoor Experience.** The Youth for Green, Clean Communities will engage up to 100 individuals, primarily youth ages 12-18 and their families and teachers from Title 1-A schools, to inform the Climate Pollution Reduction Grant Program. The team will conduct one-on-one interviews and focus groups, host tables at community events, disseminate the County's survey, and provide existing data from prior efforts.
- **City of Tucson, Community Safety, Health & Wellness Program.** The team will elevate the voices of residents in 5 priority communities that have experienced high rates of violent crime and disinvestment. The program will reach over 500 residents through surveys, listening sessions, community report back meetings, and an ambassadors program among residents. The program will compensate participants for their lived experiences and advance leadership development and power-building.
- **Ishkashitaa Refugee Network.** The network will gain insights from refugees, asylum seekers, and asylees through surveys and one-on-one interviews at existing weekly programs. The data collection tools will recognize varying levels of English proficiency or literacy. The network will also hold a knowledge-sharing session to share results with stakeholders.

Read the results of the community-based organizations' outreach efforts [here](#).



### 3. Existing Data

The County was able to incorporate existing data from previous outreach efforts led by the City of Tucson for its climate action plan.

### 4. Easy to Navigate [Webpage](#)

The Climate Action Plan lives on the Engage Pima platform, which is a new civic engagement tool for the County. The webpage for the plan has a project timeline, survey results, newsletter sign-up, and additional documents and information for transparency around the climate action plan. The County's communications team leads the Engage Pima platform, which was created by the vendor Zencity. Staff from the Department of Environmental Quality noted how much easier the survey process was with the new Engage Pima platform compared to prior engagement efforts.

## CHALLENGES: TRUST AND TIMELINES

Communities that have dealt with environmental injustices for decades and/or generations distrust government. The outreach grants to community-based organizations are an effort to gather insights through a trusted community organization and begin to build relationships and trust throughout the community.

The time frame provided by the federal government for these planning grants was quick; however, additional outreach efforts will be made for the comprehensive action plan and implementation grants. Each outreach effort builds on each other as data can inform future planning and relationships with community based organizations and communities grow.

### ADVICE FOR OTHER GOVERNMENTS

“Government officials need to stop talking at people, especially low-income people. Government can be of assistance—financial assistance and technical assistance—and a partner. We need to hear what communities have to say and then we need to actually try to implement that instead of just getting their input and then never acting on it. This is an opportunity, not regulatory—it's all carrots. We can use this money to help people who need it, build relationships and earn trust back, and make sure the benefits—energy savings, jobs, economic benefits—reach them.”

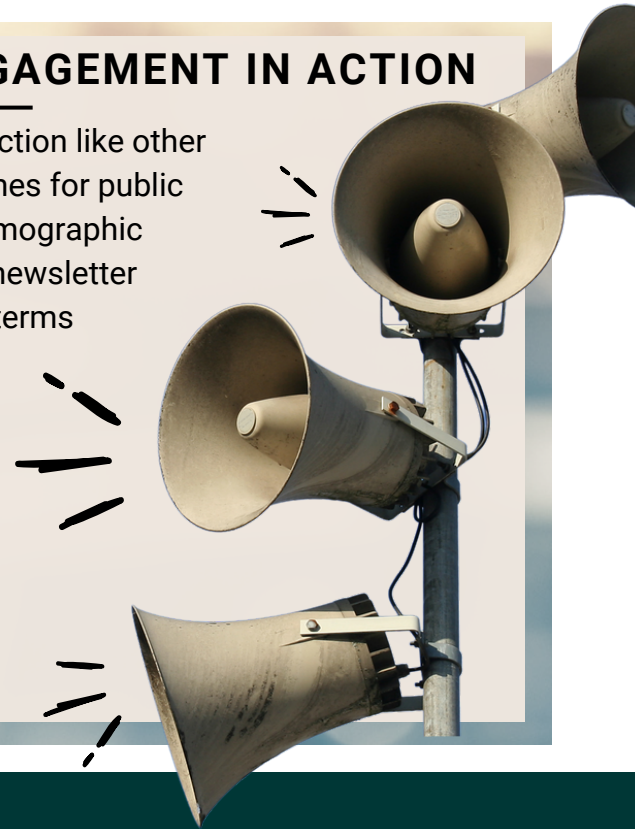
- Natalie Shepp, Pima County Department of Environmental Quality

## A FEW SOUTHERN EXAMPLES OF ENGAGEMENT IN ACTION

Louisville, KY's [survey](#) asked for priority areas for climate action like other governments' surveys, but also inquired about preferred times for public meetings, interest in child care for public meetings, and demographic characteristics. They gave the option of signing up for the newsletter within the survey and created a [website](#) with a glossary of terms and links to sustainability plans and studies for the city.

Miami-Dade County contracted with the CLEO Institute, a Florida-based climate nonprofit, to lead community outreach. Draft scope of services available [here](#).

Southeast Florida Regional Climate Change Compact provided [surveys](#) in multiple languages.



## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

It's not too late for community engagement! Even if state and local governments have completed their outreach for the Priority Climate Action Plan, they can do additional outreach for the Comprehensive Climate Action Plan and the implementation grants, as well.

Interested in more information, resources, and examples on community engagement and federal funds? Check out:

- SEAP's [ARP Community Engagement Guide](#)
- SEAP's [Community Engagement Examples for Sustainability Plans](#)
- SEAP and New Disabled South's [ARP in Action for the Disability Community](#)
- EPA's [Public Participation Guide](#)
- Our Dollars, Our Dreams, an initiative of SEAP: Contact [liza@theseap.org](mailto:liza@theseap.org) if you have a project idea you would like to talk through.