



BAY AREA AIR QUALITY
MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

James Cary Smith Community Grant Program

*Year One Evaluation: Endpoint Report
(2022 – 2023)*

November 2023

This report was developed by RDA Consulting under contract with the
Bay Area Air Quality Management District



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Grant Program Overview



James Cary Smith Community Grant Program

The Air District's Community Grant Program provides funding to uplift local efforts that foster authentic community participation and capacity building to improve the air quality and health of impacted communities.

Jim Smith was the Air District's former Community Outreach Manager. Mr. Smith passed away in 2015 from ALS, and this program extends his vision of a more engaged and empowered community.





Refocused Grant Program 2021+

In 2021, the Air District's Community Engagement Division restructured the Community Grant Program to better meet grantees' needs while advancing the agency's efforts to increase the equitable distribution of Air District funding.

- **Increased funding** per grant for up to \$100,000 per year.
- Provided **multi-year** grants for eligible grantees, which allows the potential for funding up to three years.
- Provided **capacity building resources**, such as: *workshops on air quality data, peer-led learning sessions, translated resources, Google group for grantee-to-grantee communication.*
- Provided a **technical assistance provider** for: *coaching and support on grant reports, invoicing, and project strategies.*



Year 1 by the numbers

33

Organizations received a grant award

\$89,938

Average grant award in Year 1

18

Cities and census-designated areas are served through grant funds

\$2.97 million

Total awarded grant funds in Year 1 across the 33 grant-funded organizations

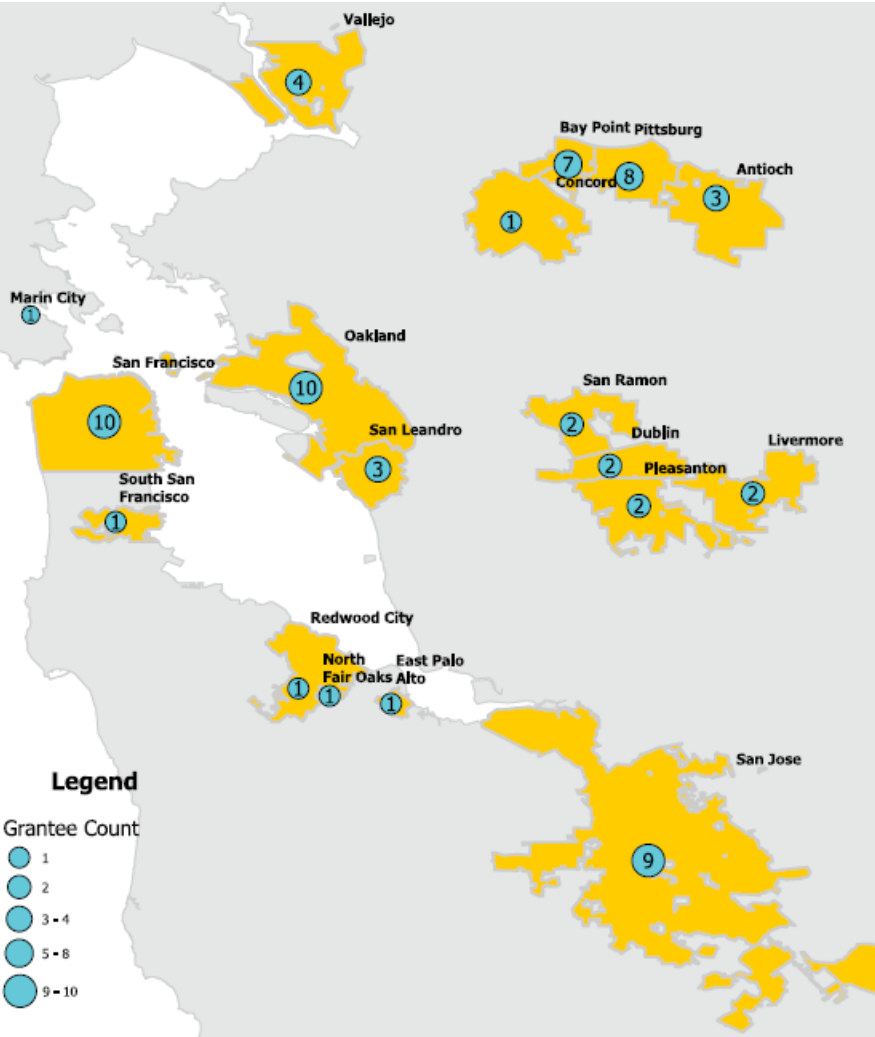
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Of the nine Bay Area counties are reached through grant funds

Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Solano

Year 1 Grantees

- Acterra: Action for a Healthy Planet
- Bayview YMCA
- Bike East Bay
- Breathe California
- Brightline Defense
- Citizen Air Monitoring Network
- Communities for a Better Environment
- Community Climate Solutions
- Earth Team
- Greenaction for Health & Environmental Justice
- Higher Ground
- Neighborhood Development Corp
- HOPE Collaborative
- International Children Assistance Network
- La Clínica de La Raza
- Latinos United for a New America
- Livable City
- Marin City Climate Resilience and Health Justice
- Mycelium Youth Network
- Rise South City
- Rose Foundation for Communities and the Environment
- San Francisco Transit Riders
- San Leandro 2050
- Sequoia Foundation
- Silicon Valley Bicycle Coalition
- South of Market Community Action Network (SOMCAN)
- Strategic Energy Innovations
- Sustainable Contra Costa
- TransForm
- Tri-Valley Air Quality Climate Alliance
- Urban Habitat
- Valley Verde
- White Pony Express
- Youth UpRising



The Community Grant Program is building the capacity of community members across the Bay Area to fully engage with the Air District.

Grantees are building local capacity through:

Strengthening
Organizational
Capacity

Advocacy

Civic
Participation

Building
Coalitions &
Strategic
Partnerships

Community
Education

Youth
Leadership
Development

Addressing
Additional
Community
Concerns



Year 1 Program Findings

2022 - 2023



Grant funding is leveraging local capacity and expertise



Increased funding amplifies capacity-building efforts within and across EJ communities



Grant funds are reaching and impacting diverse communities



Grant funding is leveraging **local capacity and expertise**

Grant funding was used to support positions at **24 organizations:**

- 11 full-time jobs
- 54 part-time jobs
- 102 paid internships
- Volunteer stipends
- Temporary jobs

Nineteen grantees reported using program funds to **hire or provide financial compensation to at least 155 people who live within the Environmental Justice neighborhoods and communities** reached through the grant-funded programs.



Increased funding amplifies capacity-building efforts **within and across EJ communities**

In contrast to prior years, **the provision of larger grant awards** has enabled community-based organizations to develop, implement, or expand regional projects.

Regional projects align local capacity building efforts within and across EJ Communities, advancing the Air District's mission of protecting and improving air quality.



Grant funds are **reaching and impacting diverse communities**

Capacity building efforts in Environmental Justice communities reach individual community members, community-based organizations, and local businesses.

Grantees developed and implemented unique strategies to build the capacity of community members in seven of the nine Bay Area counties, including:

- ❖ In **low-income communities**
- ❖ Trainings in **linguistically diverse communities**
- ❖ Programs serving **young people**, including high-school aged and transitional-aged youth
- ❖ Partnerships with other **community-based organizations and/or local businesses**



Grant funds are reaching and impacting diverse communities

The realigned grant program is also reaching many organizations led by people of color: 70% of grantees reported at least one head of the organization is a person of color.

Grantees Reporting Heads of Organization as White or BIPOC

Organizational
Leadership
(n = 27)



Only White Head of Organization (n = 8)

At least One Person of Color as Head of Organization (n = 19)



Grant funds are **reaching and impacting diverse communities**

“[Our organization] is led by all femmes of color and we recruit from EJ communities, and all youth are BIPOC and from frontline communities. We’re trying to shift power structures and really trying to increase awareness and imagination in redesigning the world.”

- Focus group participant, 2022

Focus group participants whose organizational leadership are BIPOC expressed:

- **Funding BIPOC leaders** is an important form of advancing equity and shifting imbalances in grant funding.
- Having leadership and employees **who are from the communities in which they work** is important to how they advance equity.



Emerging Impacts

***How grantees are building capacity in
Environmental Justice communities***

Grantees are building local capacity through:

Strengthening
Organizational
Capacity

Advocacy

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Partnerships

Community
Education

Youth
Leadership
Development

Addressing
Additional
Community
Concerns



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Strengthening Organizational Capacity

Expanding program reach and informing program strategy

Grantees are...

- ❖ Increasing staff skills, improving resources within the organization, and updating curricula for community education and leadership projects
- ❖ Increasing their presence and visibility among community members and organizations to strengthen their reach and partnerships
- ❖ Gathering data through surveys, focus groups, and needs assessments to identify gaps in knowledge and community barriers
- ❖ Using data to develop strategies and workplans aligned to the needs of community members



Strengthening Organizational Capacity: Quotes

Expanding program reach and informing program strategy

“Our visibility is much increased, and we have grown our community capital and act as a resource to residents and the City as a partner. As a result we are planning our next project which will be a joint resilience focused project with the involvement of a diverse array of nonprofit and community-based organizations.”

-San Leandro 2050

“Our own staff and those of our partner organizations have also learned an incredible amount about these issues and expanded their leadership skills to effectively engage with government agencies and officials.”

- Greenaction for Health & Environmental Justice

“The JCS grant has helped ICAN staff sharpen their data analysis skills...based on those insights, [staff] try to make recommendations to improve the program.”

- International Children Assistance Network (ICAN)



Advocacy

Building community members' advocacy skills and facilitating engagement with decision makers

Grantees are...

- ❖ Preparing community members to attend public meetings and share public comment, join local boards and commissions, access and follow agendas, and navigate government websites
- ❖ Facilitating conversations between community members and government representatives at local, regional, and state agencies to influence and advocate for policy changes



Advocacy: Quotes

Building community members' advocacy skills and facilitating engagement with decision makers

“Our project builds capacity in environmental justice communities by sharing tools for community members to identify their environmental justice experiences and to feel empowered to voice these concerns and experiences in environmental decision-making spaces. For example, we show how to navigate the Air District website, access the meeting calendar to join public meetings, follow agendas and make public comments on both agenda and non-agenda items.”

- Brightline Defense

SVBC has a bottom-up approach to all our work where we focus on building people power in our communities and create stronger local teams – instead of staff directly advocating for projects and policies...While our work focuses on advocating for better bicycle infrastructure and policies – the skills imparted through advocacy efforts help residents get one step closer to becoming active and engaged citizens.”

- Silicon Valley Bicycle Coalition

“In year 1 we have built capacity through: a) Providing a platform for community members to voice their opinions; b) Raising awareness on the lived experience of residents in the Bayview Hunters Point Neighborhood; c) Facilitating a dialogue between community members and decision-makers.

- San Francisco
Transit Riders



Advocacy: Highlights

Building community members' advocacy skills and facilitating engagement with decision makers

- ❖ Preparation for engagement in AB 617 Community Steering Committees
- ❖ Leading walking tours with City Council to share walkability & transit concerns
- ❖ Closing concrete crushing operation at concrete plant
- ❖ Changing school practices on days with poor air quality
- ❖ Updating city ordinances & smoking signage in public parks
- ❖ Protected bikeway projects approved



Civic Participation

Preparing community members to engage in decision-making processes

Grantees are...

- ❖ Building community members' capacity to engage in environmental justice efforts with increased confidence and skills
- ❖ Amplifying the voices of those often excluded
- ❖ Training community leaders
- ❖ Improving the environmental health of local communities and neighborhoods



Civic Participation: Quotes

Preparing community members to engage in decision-making processes

"There are more residents in the Tenderloin, English-speaking as well as monolingual Spanish-speaking, that are familiar with the role and responsibilities of the Air District as well as how to contact the Air District in case of a complaint or question. There are more Chinese-speaking residents of San Francisco who are familiar with air quality, environmental justice and the role and responsibilities of the Air District as well as the Spare the Air program as it notifies residents in many languages."

- Brightline Defense

"Family members, friends, teachers, and peers had the opportunity to engage in community improvement projects because of this grant. Building investment among community members of all ages is a critical component to ensuring lasting change."

- Earth Team

"Far too often, government agencies have gone in and conducted one-off engagement sessions with these communities... As such we are increasing the capacity of our 4 geographies to be more equipped to participate in projects, policies and plans concerning transportation needs and to receive funding for mobility improvements."

- Silicon Valley Bicycle Coalition



Building Coalitions & Strategic Partnerships

Building capacity across many groups to leverage collective strategy and power

Grantees are...

- ❖ Forming strategic partnerships with aligned organizations to share resources and increase reach
- ❖ Connecting educators, young people, and aligned organizations to form partnerships
- ❖ Collaborating with community residents and existing groups to form coalitions



Building Coalitions & Strategic Partnerships: Quotes

Building capacity across many groups to leverage collective strategy and power

"[We] provided Skyline [High School] with a new set of partners to work with for future collaborations. Since COVID, Skyline and schools alike struggled with maintaining meaningful collaborations with community partners, so these past couple of years have been developed to building back up those partnerships. SF's participation in the coordination of the capstone interview fair during fall semester, and welcoming partners back for the capstone presentations in spring semester, generated new and lasting partnerships for Skyline."

- Sequoia Foundation

"[We] strengthened partnerships with others working in parallel areas (homelessness, food insecurity transportation, Urban Forest, low-income health services). We have more formal partnerships with Bethel Church and City of San Leandro and developed new ones with Davis Street community clinic, Homegrown Habitat, Common Ground, and SL Food Sovereignty."

- San Leandro 2050



Community Education

Increasing knowledge around environmental justice and generating community interest to address air quality concerns

Grantees are...

- ❖ Providing information to community members about environmental justice principles with an intersectional lens
- ❖ Using a variety of methods: Hosting workshops, trainings, watch parties, or leading a cohort through skill & leadership development
- ❖ Increasing awareness about air quality among community members and interest in continued engagement



Community Education: Quotes

Increasing knowledge around environmental justice and generating community interest to address air quality concerns

“From our informational sessions, focus groups, garden visits, and evaluation forms, we have seen a shift in our community – from vague interest to excitement in learning to compost at home or having Valley Verde as a community space and resource to mitigate food waste from landfills and receive free compost in the process. This shift in interest over the past year is a clear indication that our work has made a difference in increasing community confidence in their ability and access to play an active role in community environmental sustainability efforts.”

- Valley Verde

“We were able to get the wheels turning in community members’ minds about what is going on environmentally and how it may be impacting the health of the community and the individuals living in it, as well as future generations.”

- Bayview YMCA

“... The training illustrated the connections between mobility justice and environmental justice by showing how redlining impacted the infrastructure of cities, and that redlined communities were intentionally in industrial areas, suffered from poor air quality...By using the past to understand the present, participants learned how to identify the differences in their own neighborhoods and how to advocate for specific changes that would address these numerous inequities...”

- Bike East Bay



Community Education

Highlights

21

Organizations led trainings and workshops for community members

2

Organizations shared data about teachers engaged in community education efforts

4

Organizations shared data about seniors engaged in community education efforts

10

Organizations shared data about youth engaged in community education efforts



Youth Leadership Development

Preparing young people to be informed and engaged leaders who participate in environmental justice advocacy

Grantees are...

- ❖ Developing young people's skills through trainings, projects, and internship programs
- ❖ Building young people's capacity to work thoughtfully and collaboratively towards environmental justice solutions
- ❖ Facilitating young people's connections with established leaders and environmental justice organizations
- ❖ Helping young people establish themselves as environmental justice leaders and advocates in their communities



Youth Leadership Development: Quotes

“The youth involved in the Environmental Science Academy... learned that air pollution kills, understood the connections between air quality and why Marin City has the highest asthma rate in the county, and were instilled with a desire to continue learning and making a difference... Huge changes were seen in youth – in their confidence and self-esteem in knowing their voice matters.”

- Marin City Climate Resilience and Health Justice

“Youth examined how environmental justice and its intersecting issues of race, housing and climate-vulnerabilities are considered in Oakland's General Plan.”

- Mycelium Youth Network

“By employing youth as paid environmental professionals, we are able to support the prioritization of efforts that are often neglected in favor of paying jobs like retail and childcare. Participating interns receive compensation for the time they spend learning about and studying issues of air quality, sustainable transportation, and human health.”

- Earth Team

“By introducing students to the CalEnviroScreen tool, students were able to see what air quality looked like throughout California, and specifically observe and reflect on the air quality of their community and its surroundings... We were able to see how the [program] increased students' motivation to take actions for the environment and learn more about green careers.”

- Strategic Energy Innovations



Youth Leadership Development

By the Numbers

57

School events and visits through grant-funded projects

71

Youth-focused events and family/youth fairs were led across four grantees

16

Community-Based Organizations were engaged by a grantee focused on youth leadership development

21

Parks and nature events were led across three grantees



Addressing Additional Community Concerns

Improving health & building on the strengths of communities

Grantees are...

- ❖ Improving the health of community members living in environmental justice communities
- ❖ Engaging in a diversity of health promotion activities and direct service provision
- ❖ Addressing inequalities by reaching vulnerable, disadvantaged community members



Addressing Additional Community Concerns: Quotes

“Our events have not only provided valuable information to the community but also distributed over 25 air filters and induction cooktops. This tangible support has further enhanced our impact and helped improve the living conditions of the recipients.”

- Community Climate Solutions

“...Last year, [we] served over 120,000 individuals ... The data clearly indicates that we have made a difference in the lives of our hungry neighbors through the provision of fresh, healthy food and that we have impacted air quality through the diversion of perfectly good food from landfill – to plates and bowls!”

- White Pony Express



Addressing Additional Community Concerns: *Highlights*

Grantees wove in other activities in innovative ways.

6

Pop-up bike repair events were hosted at high schools

60

Youth and seniors received pre-loaded Clipper cards

115

Box fan filter units, air filters, and induction cooktops were distributed to low-income households

424

Water quality tests performed

3,131

Pieces of litter removed



Grant Program Recommendations



Key Successes

- ❖ Grant managers provided helpful support, responsive communication, and useful resources.
- ❖ Grant managers responded to feedback to provide more consistent communication, tailor workshops and materials, and improve the reporting and contracting process over the duration of the grant year.



Areas for Improvement

- ❖ Single-year grant awards pose challenges to grantee program sustainability and increases administrative burden for both grantees and the Air District.
- ❖ Grantees' greatest unmet need is for peer-to-peer collaboration with other grantees to share tools and resources and to form meaningful collaboration and partnerships.



Appendix

Evaluation
Methodology



Purpose & Evaluation Questions

The Air District's Community Engagement Team contracted with RDA Consulting ("RDA") to evaluate the refocused James Cary Smith Community Grant Program and the ways in which the program meets its aims. The Community Engagement Team was particularly interested in understanding how the grant program supports communities of color and communities disproportionately burdened by air pollution, or Environmental Justice (EJ) communities.

- ❖ To what extent does the James Cary Smith grant reach EJ communities?
- ❖ How have changes to the James Cary Smith Community Grant Program over time affected grant applicants, grantees, and Environmental Justice communities?
- ❖ How does the James Cary Smith Community Grant Program support grantees to foster authentic community participation in Air District planning activities and to address air pollution?



Data Collection & Methodology

Evaluation Phase	Type of data collection	Date	No. of participants
Baseline	Application Materials	March 2022 – July 2022	45 applications
	Kickoff Polls	March 2022 & April 2022	40 participants from 33 organizations
	Questionnaire	May 2022	31 organizations
Midpoint	Focus Groups	August 2022	7 Focus Groups with 32 organizations
Endpoint	Questionnaire	March 2023	33 organizations
	Quarter 4 Grantee Reports	March – June 2023	27 organizations
Ongoing	<i>Evaluation Check-ins</i>	January 2022 – June 2023	



About RDA Consulting

Established in Oakland, CA in 1984

Employee-owned social purpose corporation



Support agencies, providers, and systems across the public safety net to better serve structurally-marginalized populations



Research and collaborate to respond to complex challenges at system, organization, and program levels