

Summary:

DRAFT Wildfire Smoke Clean Air Centers for Vulnerable Populations Incentive Pilot Program Guidelines

June 2021

Background: California wildfires have increased in severity and intensity, particularly in the past few years. These fires also produce heavy smoke that has impacted nearly all of the state and blanketed communities for days or even weeks at a time, creating significant exposures to particulate matter and air toxics for the people in these communities. The Wildfire Smoke Clean Air Centers for Vulnerable Populations Incentive Pilot Program, which was established by Assembly Bill 836 (Wicks, Chapter 393, Statutes of 2019), provides funding of \$5,000,000 in total through a grant program to upgrade ventilation systems and to provide portable air cleaners to create a network of clean air centers. The clean air centers will provide vulnerable populations a respite from wildfires and other smoke events.

Grant Program Overview: The California Air Resources Board (CARB) developed grant guidelines in consultation with air districts, cities, counties, and other stakeholders to operate the grant program. The grant program allocates funding to three air districts (the Bay Area Air Quality Management District, the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, and the South Coast Air Quality Management District) and the California Air Pollution Control Officers Association (CAPCOA). Each of the three districts will use their allocated funding for projects in their jurisdiction according to the grant guidelines. CAPCOA will use its funding on behalf of all other air districts as described in grant guidelines.

This grant program is designed to support three types of projects to establish clean air centers as follows:

- 1) Upgrade the existing ventilation system of facilities.
- 2) Support the purchase of high-efficiency air filters for facilities whose ventilation systems are ready to be equipped with such air filters.
- 3) Provide funding for the purchase of portable air cleaners so that cities, counties, emergency management organizations, disaster relief organizations, and some air districts can deploy them as needed to create temporary clean air centers in communities when wildfire smoke events occur.

Eligible applicants include but are not limited to schools, community centers, senior centers, sport centers, and libraries. In addition to the above list, some air districts are eligible to apply to CAPCOA for funding for portable air cleaners. Applicants must show the evidence of high documented cumulative smoke burden for the facility location and the facility must be located in or serve a community with vulnerable

populations as according to the definitions in the guidelines. Air districts and CAPCOA will solicit proposals for funding to establish Clean Air Centers and develop evaluation criteria for applications, in consultation with CARB, that meet requirements in the Clean Air Center Guidelines. Priority will be given to applications that are best aligned with the goal of the grant program to provide respite from wildfire smoke to vulnerable populations.

As wildfire smoke events are difficult to predict, the best ways to assist vulnerable communities in different air districts may vary. The guidelines provide air districts and CAPCOA with the discretion and flexibility to create clean air centers that most effectively protect their vulnerable populations during wildfire smoke events while ensuring the centers meet minimum state requirements.

The Clean Air Centers Draft Guidelines document provides the program overview, eligibility requirements and program priorities, project requirements, grant application and award processes, and project completion and reporting requirements. All of these elements of the Clean Air Centers Draft Guidelines will be presented in the CARB workshops on June 15 and June 16, 2021.

Clean Air Centers Grant Program Timeline:

- June 2021: CARB finalizes the grant program guidelines
- July-September 2021: CARB signs grant agreements with air districts and CAPCOA
- Fall 2021: Air districts and CAPCOA implement application and review process; select funding recipients
- 2023: All projects are completed