

## Notification of Environmental Justice Assessment on School Climate Plus Indoor Air Quality Grant Program

December 2, 2024

### WHAT

The Department of Health (DOH) received 2023-2025 legislative funding through [ESSB 5187](#)<sup>1</sup> to supplement the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI)'s Small School District Modernization (SSDM) grant program. The SSDM program includes support for updates to heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems in schools.

The DOH School Climate Plus Indoor Air Quality grant program is available to school districts that received SSDM 2021-2023 or 2023-2025 funding for HVAC improvements and that serve children and young people who are more vulnerable to extreme heat and wildfire smoke exposure.

Future funding may be available in the 2025-2027 biennium if approved by the legislature and the Governor.

The purpose of an environmental justice assessment is to identify:

- Who might be most impacted by an agency action
- Environmental benefits, harms, and health impacts of the action
- Ways to minimize or eliminate negative environmental impacts
- How to equitably distribute positive environmental impacts.

Visit our [Environmental Justice webpage](#) to learn more about Environmental Justice Assessments.

### WHY

School districts that serve communities at high risk for extreme heat and wildfire smoke exposures are often in rural, low-income communities where it may be difficult to secure funding for improvements like HVAC through voter-approved taxes. Extreme heat and wildfire smoke can increase the risk of negative health impacts for the below communities:<sup>2,3</sup>

- People with lung diseases, such as asthma or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), including chronic bronchitis, and emphysema.
- People with current or recent respiratory infections, such as COVID-19, pneumonia, acute bronchitis, bronchiolitis, colds, or flu.
- People with existing heart or circulatory problems, such as congestive heart failure or coronary artery disease.
- People with a prior history of heart attack or stroke.
- People with diabetes because they are more likely to have an undiagnosed cardiovascular disease.

<sup>1</sup> Engrossed Second Substitute House Bill 2023 Regular Session. Section 222(123), page 342. Effective Date: May 16, 2023. Website: <https://lawfilesexternal.wa.gov/biennium/2023-24/Pdf/Bills/Session%20Laws/Senate/5187-S.sl.pdf>. Accessed: 11/14/2024.

<sup>2</sup> US Centers for Disease Control & Prevention. Website: [People at Increased Risk for Heat-Related Illness | Extreme Heat | CDC](#). Accessed: 9/4/24.

<sup>3</sup> WA State Department of Health. Website: [Smoke from Fires | Washington State Department of Health](#). Accessed: 9/4/24.

- People 18 and younger because their lungs and airways are still developing, and they breathe more air per pound of body weight than adults.
- People older than 65 because they are more likely to have unrecognized heart or lung diseases.
- Pregnant people because both the pregnant person and fetus are at increased risk of health effects.
- People who smoke because they are more likely to already have lower lung function and lung diseases.
- People without access to air conditioning.
- Athletes who train or compete outdoors.
- Outdoor workers because they often spend more time outside and are exposed to smoke longer.
- People of color and tribal and indigenous people because of institutional and structural discrimination that often put these populations in challenging life circumstances and unhealthy environments.
- People with low income because they are more likely to have higher exposures and are less likely to have access to health care or to be able to afford interventions to reduce exposure.

DOH School Climate Plus Indoor Air Quality funds will help ensure that SSDM districts can provide children access to at least one facility with clean, cool air during extreme heat, wildfire smoke events, or a combination of both.

## WHO

Children and youth are specifically at risk and in need because they are more sensitive to health effects from extreme heat exposure and breathing in the fine particulate matter (PM2.5) of wildfire smoke. Students, staff and community members who are served by school buildings that are improved through a DOH School Climate Plus Indoor Air Quality grant program award are expected to receive the most benefit.

If you identify as a member of one or more of the communities identified above and would like to share your thoughts or connect with one of our staff, please email [airquality@doh.wa.gov](mailto:airquality@doh.wa.gov) or see how to get involved below.

## WHEN

See the Environmental Justice Assessment reporting and grant process timeline below. Community and Tribal engagement are expected to start in spring or summer 2025.

Date	Milestone
November 28, 2023	Schools Climate Plus Indoor Air Quality grant funding announced
November 2024	Start EJA process / Publish notification
Spring-Summer 2025	Opportunity for Community and Tribal input
June 2025	Finalize EJA Report
July 2025	Potential Announcement of 2025-2027 grant funds; dependent on approval by the legislature and Governor

These timelines and milestones may change. To stay current, please use the contact information provided below.

## HOW TO GET INVOLVED

For questions about the Schools Climate Plus Indoor Air Quality Grant Program or to engage in the Environmental Justice Assessment process, please contact staff at [airquality@doh.wa.gov](mailto:airquality@doh.wa.gov).



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