



Engaging your community with air quality data

Smart low-cost air quality monitoring projects create abundant new data that can be placed into the public domain for community members to access and use.

Open air quality data has the potential to educate and empower people, supporting them to make changes to their lifestyle and habits in ways that can improve local air quality, while also reducing their own exposure to air pollution.

Making data open and accessible does not automatically translate into community engagement and impact. To achieve genuinely impactful engagement of community with air quality data, a more proactive approach is required. This involves leveraging new data resources through the active participation of community members in well-designed and well-resourced programs and activities. Local governments can design and deliver such activities, and this can form a major part of the impact created by an air quality sensing project.

Designing and delivering an effective program for community engagement with air quality data requires the allocation of time and resources that must be justified in terms of the benefits that can be achieved, both for your organisation and for your community.

BENEFITS OF COMMUNITY DATA ACTIVATION

Air quality is an issue that affects our everyday environment, at the local scales at which we live, work, and play, making it a relevant concern to the health and well-being of the entire community. This creates a strong incentive for personal engagement with air quality data, and a role for local government to proactively support that engagement.



The benefits of community engagement



Leveraging more value from your data

Consider how you can most effectively leverage that data to create the greatest possible value.



Support citizen empowerment through improved education and literacy

Improved knowledge and understanding, combined with practical skills, can empower people to make their voices heard and to take effective action on an issue that is important to them.



Improved accessibility and inclusion

Inclusive engagement with people from a diversity of social, cultural, and economic groups supports the needs of more vulnerable and disadvantaged people, aligning with your organisation's social impact policy.



Target a specific audience for focused impact

Focus on engaging a specific target audience and creating change where it matters most. There may be a particular group, defined by geography or socio-economic factors, that is either responsible for contributing to localised air pollution (e.g. car use), or is at particular risk from exposure to poor air quality.



Support innovation and the local knowledge economy

Open data can be used by a diversity of people and organisations to support local innovation. For example, data used by businesses and start-ups, providing new services or improving customer experience.



Support citizen-led advocacy and environmental justice

Citizens who are educated and empowered to speak up on air quality issues can become advocates for change.



Support future participative engagement with air quality

Actively include community members in discussion about local air quality and collection of air quality data to establish a grass-roots network that may form the foundation for more participative initiatives in the future.



Establish a social license to intervene on air quality

Build literacy and broad awareness of the topic. This creates a social license for local government to intervene on air quality issues, such as creating new policy or infrastructure that directly addresses air quality.



Further reading

For detailed guidance on this topic refer to the OPENAIR Best Practice Guide chapter *Engaging your community with air quality data*.

For more information on citizen science refer to the Best Practice Guide chapter *Citizen sensing*. The Best Practice Guide chapter *Participative design practice* discusses participative approaches local governments can use.

FIND OUT MORE AND ACCESS OPENAIR RESOURCES

This factsheet is part of a suite of resources designed to support local government action on air quality through the use of smart low-cost sensing technologies. It is the first Australian project of its kind. Check the project website for resources and updates on post project collaborations: www.openair.org.au



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Image: Demonstrating an air quality visualisation app that can be used by community members to support clean air wayfinding.
Source: Creative Commons

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