



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
Washington, DC 20460

OFFICE OF
RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

August 13, 2021

Dear State or Local Agency Representatives,

To inform the development of our research plans for fiscal years 2023-2026, EPA's Office of Research and Development (ORD) invites you to participate in a virtual listening session to help us better understand the concerns facing your state or local environmental or health agency with respect to cumulative impacts (we also plan to hold separate listening sessions with tribes). The purpose of these sessions is to give states and local agencies the opportunity to convey concerns and research interests early in EPA's research planning process. Your input can help inform the research needed to better protect human health and the environment in ways that assess and account for cumulative impacts.

There will be two State/Local Agency Listening Sessions held virtually on September 16 from 2-4 pm ET (for states in EPA Regions 1-5) and September 23 from 1-3 pm ET (for states in EPA Regions 6-10). Details of the listening sessions are in the attached flyer; please register [here for September 16](#) or [here for September 23](#) and see the guiding questions below.

EPA's mission is to protect human health and the environment. This mission is accomplished, in part, through EPA's ability to characterize and manage the risks to humans and the environment from multiple exposures to chemical and non-chemical stressors to minimize adverse impacts on health, well-being and environmental quality, and enhance positive impacts of decisions and actions. As EPA prioritizes addressing conditions in underserved, overburdened communities, its challenge is to better understand how lifespan exposures to chemical and non-chemical stressors lead to adverse impacts to communities and how to reverse these impacts and prevent further harm.

EPA ORD provides critical science to better address the increasingly complex environmental challenges of the 21st century, including cumulative impacts and multiple stressors. Our leading-edge research informs Agency decisions and supports the emerging needs of our state and tribal partners.

Addressing cumulative impacts includes research that considers and accounts for how persistent poverty, inequality, and stressors from the built, social, and natural environment affect exposure and response to environmental pollutants. In line with the 2009 National Academies of Science publication, *Science and Decisions Advancing Risk Assessment* (often referred to as the NAS "Silver Book"), assessments for management of cumulative impacts start with the decision context. It will be essential to identify critical decisions and determine how those decisions may add to or subtract from baseline conditions, including how baseline conditions themselves may change because of other factors, such as land use change and climate change. Cumulative impact assessments provide information on how decisions could affect marginal and total changes to human health and wellbeing.

We look forward to your participation and to your input, which will be taken under consideration during the development of ORD's fiscal years 2023-2026 research plans. If you cannot attend the listening sessions, we

invite you to email written comments to Lisa Matthews (Matthews.Lisa@epa.gov) and Erin McCabe (McCabe.Erin@epa.gov) by September 24, 2021.

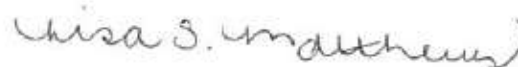
For more information on EPA's research programs, please visit epa.gov/research/national-research-programs.

For questions or additional information, please contact Lisa Matthews.

Sincerely,



Maureen Gwinn
National Program Director
Sustainable and Healthy Communities Research
Program
US EPA Office of Research and Development



Lisa Matthews
Senior Advisor and State Liaison
US EPA Office of Research and Development

Below are some guiding questions that might help you prepare for the listening session; however, do not feel limited to these.

Guiding Questions for States/Local Agencies

1. What does the issue of cumulative impacts mean to you?
 - a. Does your state or local agency have a formal definition of cumulative impacts or what characteristics are considered associated with the topic (e.g., chemical only, including non-chemical stressors, timescale, impacts both positive and negative)?
 - b. What is your state's or local agency's major priorities or concerns with respect to cumulative impacts (e.g., what are the types of cumulative impacts or stressors that are of the greatest concern)?
2. Are there challenges in addressing cumulative impacts that your state or local agency faces where additional knowledge or scientific discovery could be helpful?
Challenges could include the following:
 - a. Ambient air quality and deposition and human and ecosystem exposures to criteria pollutants and air toxics, along with stressors from the built and social environment and climate change.
 - b. Sources and exposure and hazard information for chemicals (including safer alternatives), chemical mixtures, and emerging materials and technologies.
 - c. Health disparities and differing sensitivity within populations and communities, including those with environmental justice and equity concerns.
 - d. Multiple stressors affecting communities during incident response.
 - e. Resiliency of communities to the cumulative impacts of contamination, climate change, and other chemical and nonchemical stressors that affect health and the environment.
 - f. Ambient water quality and exposures to chemical mixtures of criteria pollutants.

- g. Risk management for exposure to groups of regulated and unregulated disinfection byproducts (DBPs) and opportunistic pathogens in drinking water.
 - h. Cumulative risk assessment methodologies and analysis tools.
3. What are the decisions your state or local agency makes regarding disadvantaged communities and the challenges they face from exposure to multiple non-chemical (e.g., built/social environment) and chemical stressors? How can EPA's research support those decisions?