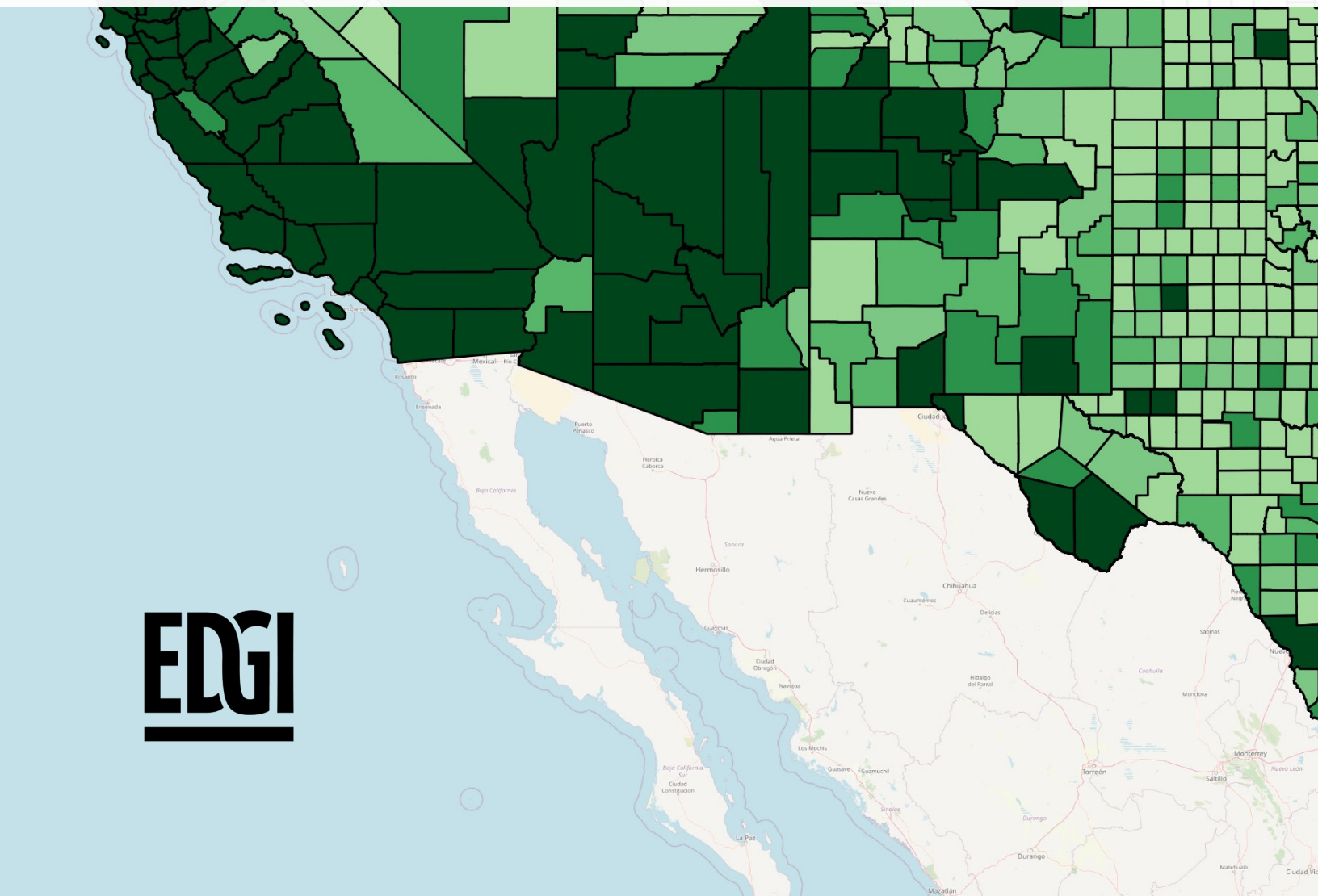


The Cost of Cuts to EPA's Environmental Justice Grants



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The [Environmental Data & Governance Initiative](#) (EDGI) is a North American network with members from numerous academic institutions and nonprofit or grassroots organizations, as well as caring and committed volunteers and employees who come from a broad spectrum of work and life backgrounds. EDGI promotes open and accessible government data and information along with evidence-based policymaking.

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*We would like to acknowledge the many contributions of our collaborative partners, some of whom choose to remain anonymous at this time.

Key Findings

This report highlights the benefits of environmental justice grants the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) awarded under the Inflation Reduction Act and other Congressional Appropriations that the EPA Administrator [intends to cancel](#) or has already canceled or revoked. It highlights the wide-ranging and fundamental efforts that environmental justice as a practice entails—from upgrading aging sewer lines to workforce development training, K-12 STEM education, and wildfire resilience. As the [Center for American Progress puts it](#), "Denying states, cities, and communities across the country funds to implement projects that reduce pollution and energy costs and protect them from more extreme weather puts Americans' health and jobs at risk while driving up household energy bills."

We collate the grants into a map interface and place each grantee or project in geographic space. Then we overlay Census data, Congressional district data, and estimated economic benefit to aid in analysis of the economic impact of cutting and clawing back the awards. The map is updated periodically when additional information becomes available. As of publication date we believe it encompasses nearly all of the vulnerable grants.

Economic Impacts

We find that EPA environmental justice grants represent at least \$6.4 billion in economic opportunity and 65,000 jobs. These economic impacts are more or less evenly distributed across the political spectrum, with roughly the equivalent amount of money per person being invested in Republican and Democratic Congressional districts.

Impacts by Project Type

The majority of environmental justice grants for clean air, respiratory health, clean water, infrastructure, and education projects are located in areas with the highest need for environmental interventions (20% of communities nationally with the highest levels for key indicators for air pollution, water pollution, critical service gaps, unemployment, and education according to EJScreen: Environmental Justice Screening and Mapping Tool V2.3, 2024, referred to as EJScreen). This reflects community members' understanding of and intent to address real needs in their communities using funds from EPA environmental justice grants. We found the following:

- Over two-thirds ($\frac{2}{3}$) of clean air projects (69%) are in places with the worst air quality in the country
- Over four-fifths ($\frac{4}{5}$) of asthma or respiratory health projects (81%) are in places with the worst air quality in the country
- Approximately three-quarters ($\frac{3}{4}$) of clean water projects (74%) are in places with the worst water quality in the country
- Three-fifths ($\frac{3}{5}$) of infrastructure projects (60%) are in places with the largest critical service gaps in the country
- Three-fifths ($\frac{3}{5}$) of education projects (60%) are in places where levels of high school completion, employment status, and English proficiency are among the lowest in the country

As these environmental and economic issues continue, the communities that they affect have had little or no relief. The persistent lack of redress and present denial of legally mandated remedial funding is not only harmful to the economy, but also represents a divestment in communities most harmed by environmental pollution.

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Background

EPA has long made grants to communities under the auspices of environmental justice. For instance, its Environmental Justice Small Grants Program (EJSG) has awarded more than \$37 million to over 1,500 community-based organizations, tribal governments, and Native American organizations working with communities facing environmental justice issues since 1994. EJSG has supported efforts to address environmental and public health priorities. The program survived the first Trump administration, even while other environmental justice efforts were undermined. The Biden administration's Justice40 initiative¹ and the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) and Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) created opportunities to invest in communities in a transformative way. As a result of the IRA and BIL, EPA created many funding programs. Efforts such as the Community Change Grants and the Thriving Communities programs (grants and Technical Assistance Centers) are two of the largest funding opportunities that came out of the Biden EPA, and most of the grants in these categories were still in process when Donald Trump took office. Yet, the second Trump administration's regressive backlash against communities of color (alongside attacks on initiatives for diversity, equity, and inclusion) has manifested in targeting these grants in a legally dubious manner. Paired with deregulation, which results in more pollution specifically in low-income and communities of color, attempting to claw back grants is another way the Trump administration is materially harming marginalized communities.

Because of Mr. Zeldin and his EPA's [campaign to reframe EPA environmental justice grants in terms of waste](#), it is necessary to examine and highlight their value. These are generational investments in communities of many different kinds, across the U.S., toward a variety of purposes, from infrastructure to education to public health and beyond, and must be understood as such.

However, lawsuits challenging EPA's actions are ongoing and some of them have found some success. The grants, appropriated by Congress under IRA and other legislation, are legally mandated, and on June 17, 2025, a [federal judge found](#) the termination of *some* of these generational investments unlawful. We agree with [Philanthropy Northwest CEO Jill](#)

¹ The Justice 40 Initiative was a federal program to benefit communities deemed "disadvantaged" in one or more of the following areas: climate change impacts, clean energy and energy efficiency development, clean transit, affordable and sustainable housing, training and workforce development, remediation and reduction of legacy pollution, and the development of critical clean water and wastewater infrastructure.

[Nishi](#) that, “communities most impacted by environmental harm deserve access to the resources committed to them by federal law.” We are hopeful that they will be reimplemented.

To this end, we map the EPA environmental justice grants that have lost funding or are at risk of being cancelled or clawed back. Mapping these grants illustrates their wide geographic reach. Grant recipients have already [lost access to funds](#), received notices of termination, or found themselves uncertain of their status. Putting grants on a map also allows us to examine EPA environmental justice grants’ intended impacts, along with the environmental risks and socioeconomic characteristics of that community. We examine how many projects are intended to address different categories of impact (e.g., air quality),² and whether grants address environmental risks and socioeconomic burdens in their respective location or community.

² Categories are derived from EJScreen (2024)

Methodology

All mapping and analyses were conducted using Jupyter Notebooks in the Google Colab environment and ESRI's ArcGIS Pro software. Programming tools are available in [this Github repo](#).

Refining the List of Grants

We acquired [a list of EPA grants made under the IRA](#). We then filtered them to grants under the purview of EPA's Office of Environmental Justice and External Civil Rights. This resulted in ~315 grants. We then joined this list with the [list of grants EPA made available to the Senate Environment and Public Works \(EPW\) committee](#) regarding IRA-funded and other environmental justice grants it intends to cancel. The EPW list contains additional information about the financial status of each grant, including the amount of funding remaining. While the initial list of ~315 grants included project descriptions, those from the EPW list did not. We used [usaspending.gov](#) to look up project descriptions for these. In the process of doing so, we corrected three grant identifiers that had been improperly digitized from the screenshots EPA shared with EPW. Before conducting the project type impact analysis, we gleaned any project descriptions that remained missing from a website associated with the grant recipient. We used 10 grant project summaries from [epa.gov](#) where full descriptions were absent.

The combined list resulted in a final list of 510 grants. We geocoded the additional ~200 grants from the EPW list by searching for the street address of each grant recipient organization and then translating addresses into latitude and longitude coordinates. This automated process initially produced some errors, which we attempted to correct manually. It is important to note that each point on the map represents a "place of performance" where a grant recipient organization is headquartered, which is not necessarily the community where the funding would be spent. This being the case, we distributed funding across the population of the county (or Parish in Louisiana), making the assumption that without isolating community-specific benefit, generalizing to a larger geographic scale was appropriate. For Thriving Communities grants, which pertain to an EPA region or the nation variously, we similarly distributed the value across the respective geographic area.

From here, we removed grants with \$0 remaining to be allocated, except for 2 grants with \$0 but with award dates post-inauguration, in February 2025. We also removed grants

described as "financially closed" and with award dates prior to the start of the second Trump administration. We further removed a handful of duplicate grants, while adding one known missing grant (the one awarded to Climate Justice Alliance).³ This left us with 398 grants, 82 of which originated from the list released to EPW.

Economic Analysis

The [methodology](#) for the estimated economic impacts involves using an impact multiplier based on one used for [NIH grants](#) (see Fig. 1). What this means is that for every dollar EPA allocates to communities, we estimate that there is at least \$2.56 worth of value created for regional economies as communities spend those funds to purchase equipment, begin construction projects (which requires paying workers), and hire staff (who then spend the money on groceries, goods, and bills). This economic multiplier is relatively conservative among a range of possible values identified in studies of similar programs (Fig. 1) and likely an underestimate of the total economic impacts were a broader array of health and other benefits included. Nonetheless, we use \$2.56 as the multiplier for this analysis for the sake of simplicity and because there is strong evidentiary support that it should not be any lower. We distribute this return on investment geographically according to the location of grants within commuting catchment areas, using a [methodology based on Census data](#) originally developed to better predict the spread of COVID and also employed in [SCIMaP's](#) view of impacts to cuts in federal health spending. Finally, a jobs multiplier is applied based on [U.S. employment research](#) by the Economic Policy Institute, and again reflects a "low to middle of the road" number. Here, the assumption is that every \$1 million in economic impact creates about 10.5 jobs.

³ Note that the TCTAC grant to the Climate Justice Alliance had already been [suspended](#) by the Biden administration in 2024. We include the amount in our overall estimates anyway, assuming that under normal circumstances it would've been re-allocated to another organization.

Range of Potential Return on Investment Values for EPA EJ Grants

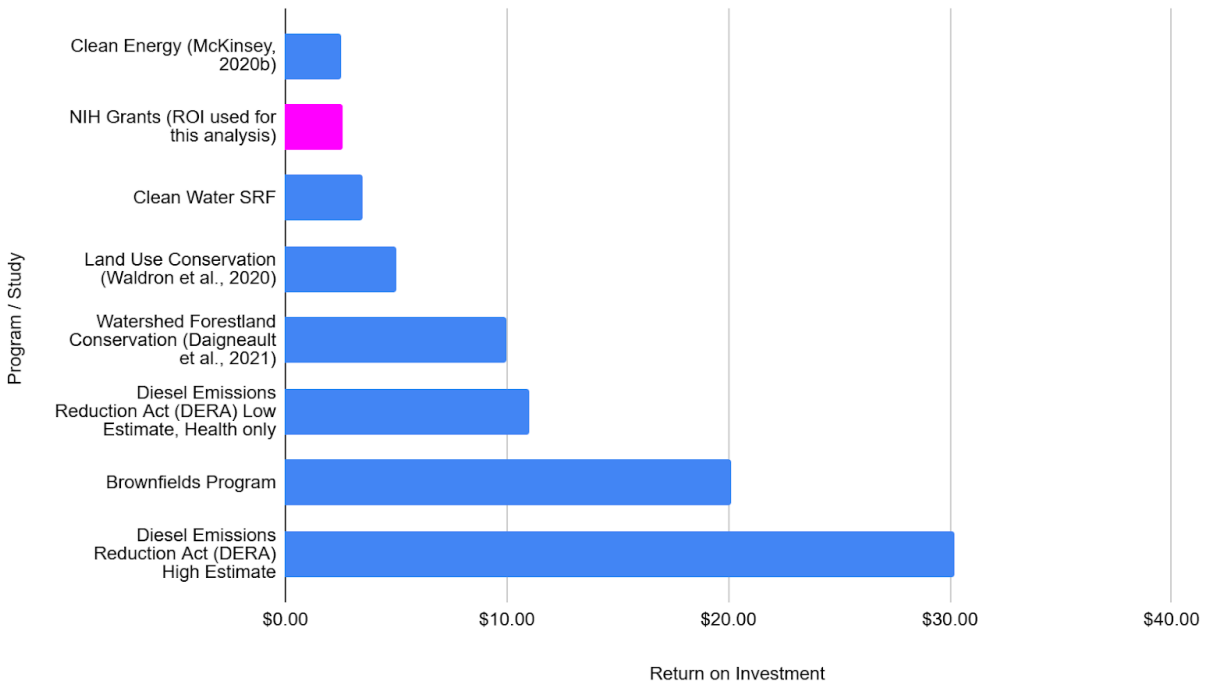


Figure 1. Economic impact multipliers by program. Return on investment (ROI) was used as a multiplier for grant funds to estimate “economic impact”, since the dollars received for a project then get amplified throughout communities. The ROIs for various program impact assessments were tabulated, and ultimately a lower (conservative) value was chosen for this study, highlighted in pink.

Project Description Analysis

We developed distinct, thematic categories containing key terms (Appendix), using an archived copy of the U.S. EPA's [EJScreen tool](#) as a theoretical framework and terminology from the grant project descriptions to develop data-driven codes. We then searched for each key term within each grant's project description, summarizing matches at the category level while counting the frequency of key term mentions within the text. The assumption is that the structure and intentionality of project descriptions contain the intended activities and outcomes of each project, such that if specific key terms are mentioned then they are likely relevant to the goals and intent of the project.

For instance, if the term “food desert” was found in a project description, we matched the grant with “critical infrastructure,” while key terms such as “ethylene oxide” or mentions of “air quality” would be associated with the top level category, “air quality”. Terms such as “asthma,” “cancer,” and “lead paint” would be summarized under “health concerns,” while

“drinking water” and “water testing” denote the “water quality” category, and so on. Each grant could be associated with any or all categories, but are limited to one count per category. In other words, the frequency of mentions for more than one key term within a single project description are counted separately, but only result in one count for that top level category. Note: Most project descriptions are incomplete due to character count constraints in Microsoft Excel, the software through which EPA shared info about projects, as well as in [usaspending.gov](https://www.usaspending.gov)'s database. Regional grant and grantmaking programs were considered as point-based for this part of the analysis. Also, our lists of key terms for each theme are not exhaustive. Hence, our results are undercounts.

Then, we calculated by category the number of projects located within the top 20% of communities nationally with the highest relative percentile levels for key EJScreen (2024) indicators. The following represent the combination of EJScreen indicators that were used for each category:

- Air Quality category: Nitrogen dioxide, Diesel particulate matter, Particulate matter 2.5, Toxic releases to air, Proximity to traffic, and Ozone
- Water Quality category: Wastewater discharge, Drinking water non-compliance, Underground storage tanks, Superfund proximity, Hazardous waste proximity, Risk Management Program (RMP) Facility proximity
- Infrastructure or Critical Service Gap category: Housing burden, Lack of health insurance, Limited broadband, Food desert, Transportation burden
- Education and Employment category: Less than high school completion, Unemployment rate, Low English proficiency

Finally, we compared how many projects were in high-burden Census tracts with the overall share of tracts that are high-burden based on the indicators above. We used the total number of Census tracts included in EJScreen (n=86,082).

EPA Environmental Justice Grants are Investments in Communities

The following map illustrates where grant recipients are located. The grants span community change, government-to-government, and technical assistance programs, with recipients including community-based organizations, non-profits, universities, and municipal and state governments. Nearly every single state is host to at least one grant

recipient. Even states such as Nebraska that do not host any grant recipients are nonetheless covered by the Thriving Communities Technical Assistance Center (TCTAC) program and organizations in these states could have received subgrants from the TCTACs. The map below—and our analysis—only considers primary grantees, many of whom did make or were poised to make awards to subgrantees in specific communities across the regions they cover. For instance, WE ACT for Environmental Justice, headquartered in NY, received a TCTAC grant that it then partially allocated (before funding was rescinded) to communities across EPA region 2—NY and NJ—and provided in-kind training in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Although we do not account for subgrantees' locations when we consider the type of issues projects are designed to address (e.g., air quality), we do partially account for this when we estimate the economic investments of these grants. We are unable to account for where subgrantees are (or would have been) located but we do allocate monies across communities in a region assuming that TCTACs like WE ACT's would have invested in subgrantees throughout their region. For example, for one TCTAC, the National Indian Health Board, we assumed the money they would have spent would have been allocated equally across tribal areas only (federally designated reservations specifically). We cannot determine exactly where grantees would have ultimately invested EPA funds (either to subgrantees or in delivering specific projects across a city, county, state, or region). But based on the significant amount of funding going to community-based organizations as well as the project objectives described for each grant, it is reasonable to assume these are local investments in people and infrastructure.

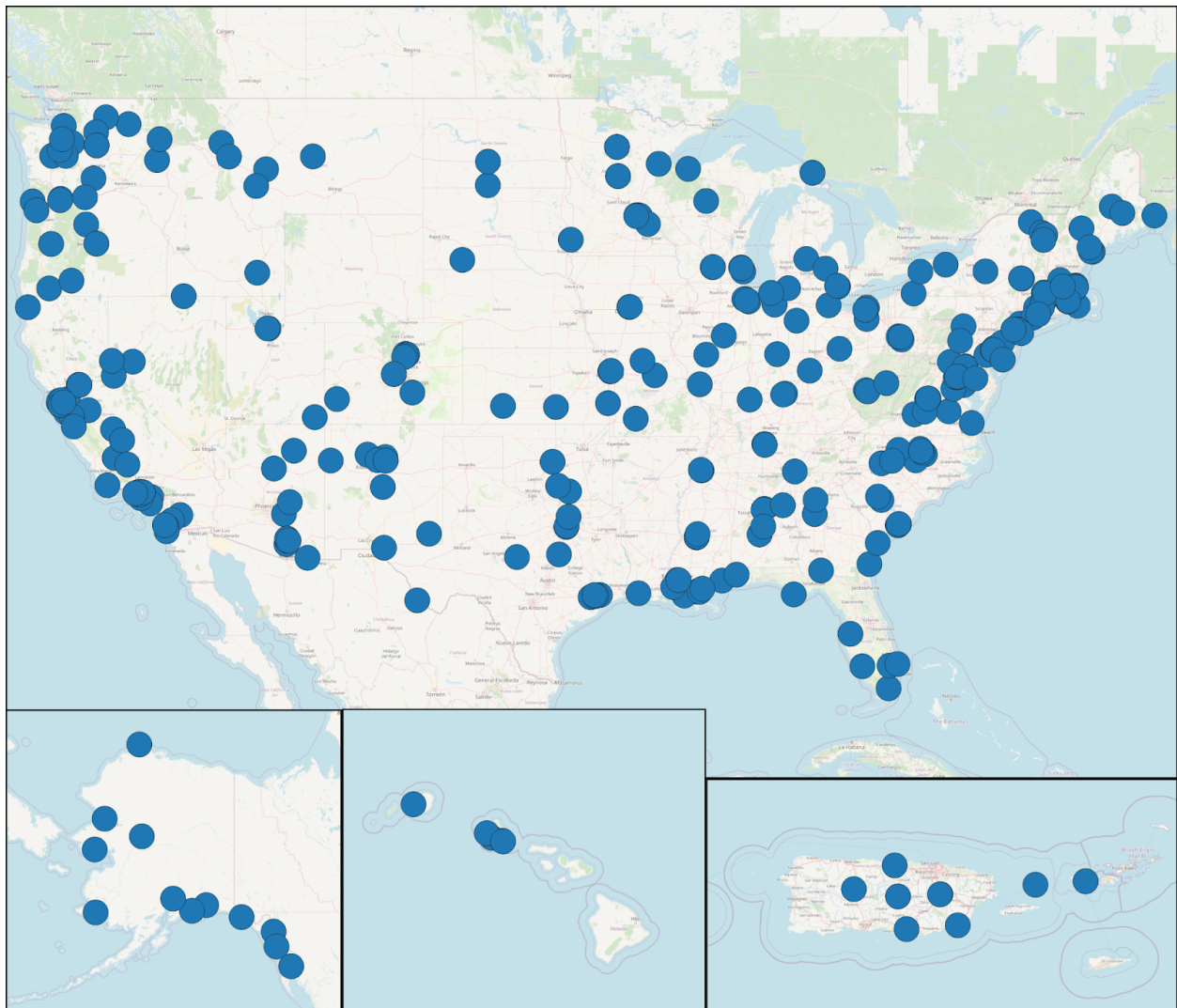


Figure 2. Map of primary grant recipients. Blue points correspond in most cases (except where we had other information) to the headquarters of the organizations that received EPA monies, which may or may not reflect the specific locations where the projects would be delivered. Not shown: grant recipients in Guam and American Samoa.

Economic Impacts

We estimate over \$6 billion in economic impacts nationwide from the \$2.5 billion EPA was set to allocate under its environmental justice grants programs. This translates into 65,000 jobs in sectors like education, infrastructure, and public health.⁴ These economic benefits

⁴ A multiplier that accounts for a broader array of health, environmental, infrastructural, or other benefits would demonstrate greater impact. For example, using a brownfields program infrastructure investment multiplier (\$20.13 for every dollar spent) results in as much as \$49.6 billion in economic impacts and over half a million jobs.

would touch every county in the U.S. and most territories, but some counties show more benefits than others.

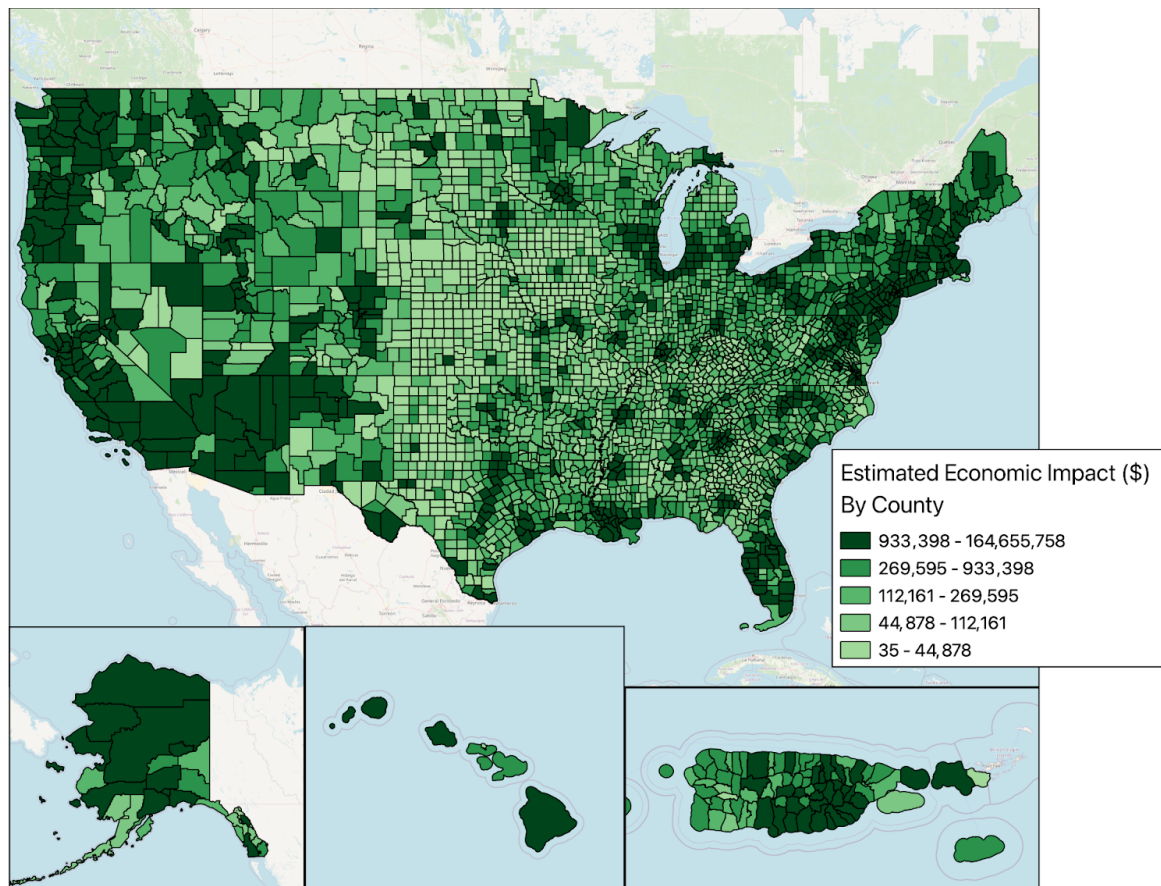


Figure 3. Estimated economic impact of EPA environmental justice grants by county. Choropleth maps depict the estimated economic impact using a return on investment multiplier of 2.56, where darker shade indicates more estimated economic impact. Most clusters of economic impact are centered around cities, with a few notable exceptions like the Southwest and the northern slope of Alaska.

These benefits are broadly distributed across party lines. They are not, [as some have claimed](#), pork barrel spending in Democratic districts of the U.S. House of Representatives or “cronyism” benefiting Democratic-allied organizations. As others have reported for other IRA investments, such as in [renewable energy](#), the benefits of EPA’s environmental justice grants would even reach people in places where political representatives initially voted against the funding. That said, the results indicate that districts represented by Democrats would have seen slightly more economic impact than those represented by Republicans (as of February 2025). Overall, each person living in congressional districts represented by Democrats would see about \$21 of economic impact and each person living in

congressional districts represented by Republicans would see about \$18 of economic impact (Fig. 4). A similar trend of parity plays out when considering political party and economic impacts in the U.S. Senate.

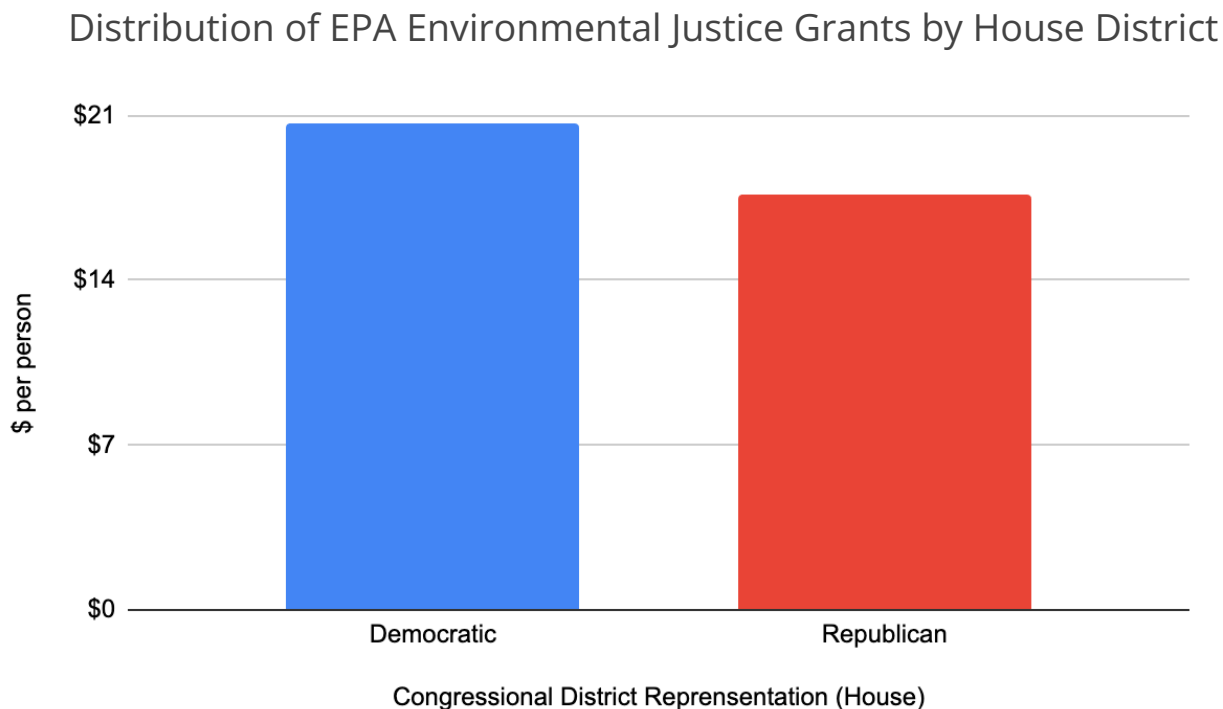


Figure 4. Estimated economic impact by Congressional District in the U.S. House of Representatives. The return on investment, calculated by estimated economic impact, by person across the U.S. and territories, summarized by political party.

While the benefits of EPA’s environmental justice grants are geographically far-reaching in this sense, we found that they are also targeted to those in need. Over \$3 billion, or 48% of the economic impact we estimate from these grants, is expected to occur in areas the EPA had previously (as of December 2024) identified as “disadvantaged.”

Specifically, we find that communities with larger than average populations of people of color, and those where unemployment is relatively high, are targeted by these grants. This is a good outcome, given that we know environmental inequities are driven and reinforced by racism and systemic discrimination. Also, the grants would create jobs. We divided the roughly 240,000 Census block groups in the U.S. into quartiles, or four sets, of equal numbers of people, where the cutoffs were based on their relative characteristics as

described in the Census data.⁵ Then those quartiles of population were examined for their estimated economic impact and compared.

Census block groups are [relatively small geographic units](#) that encompass between 600 and 3,000 people. To illustrate, imagine lining up all these block groups based on Census values such as percent low-income, from 0 to 100, and then going through the first 60,000 (1/4 or 25% of the 240,000 total block groups), the second 60,000, etc. We can then look at the total dollar value of economic impact expected in each of those bunches of 60,000 and what share of all the estimated economic impact that is. Hypothetically, since each bunch of block groups is 25% of all block groups, we would expect the share of all economic impact in each bunch to be 25%—assuming the economic impact was distributed evenly across the country. But we found instead that slightly less of the impact is expected to accrue in whiter communities (lower percent people of color) and slightly more in communities of color. A similar pattern plays out with the percent unemployed, where areas of higher unemployment are helped slightly more than other areas. The 65,000 jobs we estimate would be generated by EPA’s grants would be especially meaningful in these communities.

Block Group People of Color (%)	Estimated Economic Impact in these Block Groups (\$)	Percent of Total Economic Impact
0-12	1,154,378,000	18%
12-31	1,592,591,000	25%
31-65	1,612,801,000	25%
65-100	1,870,053,000	30%

Table 1. Quartiles of estimated economic impact for race. Estimated economic impact from EPA environmental justice grants at the Census block group level and broken down by race (specifically, the Census measures that EPA’s EJScreen uses to calculate “percent people of color” in each Census block group. See: <https://zenodo.org/records/14767363>). Twenty-five percent of all block groups in the U.S. are more than 65% people of color, but these received a slightly greater proportion—30%—of the estimated economic impact from the environmental justice grants.

⁵ We used the measures “People of Color percent” and “unemployment rate” as reported in EJScreen version 2.3 and derived from the Census’s American Community Survey 2018-2022 5 year summary. See <https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2024-07/ejscreen-tech-doc-version-2-3.pdf>

Block Group Unemployment (%)	Estimated Economic Impact in these Block Groups (\$)	Percent of Total Economic Impact
0-.8	1,246,049,000	20%
.8-3.6	1,576,321,000	25%
3.6-7.8	1,667,839,000	26%
7.8-100	1,725,554,000	27%

Table 2. Quartiles of estimated economic impact for unemployment. Estimated economic impact from EPA environmental justice grants at the Census block group level and broken down by unemployment rate (as derived from the Census in EPA’s EJScreen. See: <https://zenodo.org/records/14767363>). Twenty-five percent of all block groups in the U.S. have greater than 7.8% unemployment, but these received a slightly greater proportion—27%—of the economic impact from the environmental justice grants.

Impact by Project Types

Our analysis of expected impacts by project type showed that grant projects goals overwhelmingly intended to prioritize impacts for which the recipient communities have a high pollution burden (EJScreen 2024).

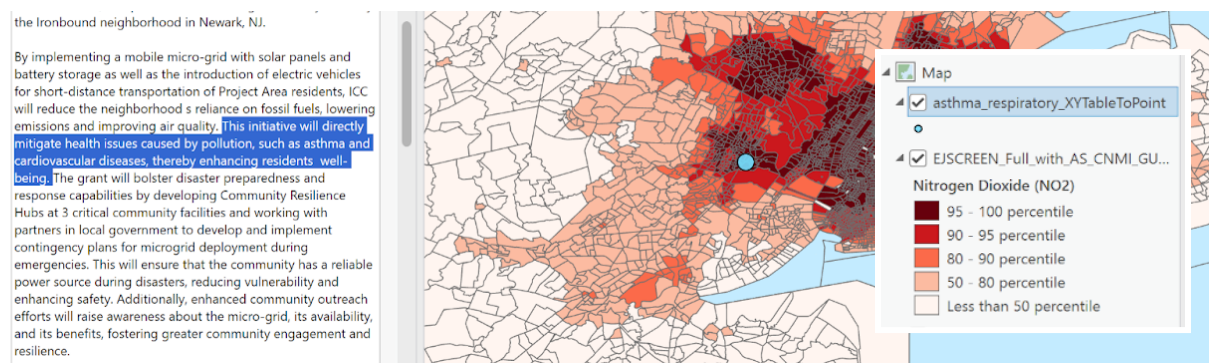


Figure 5. Newark impacts by nitrogen dioxide indicator in EJScreen. Within the 95th percentile nationally for nitrogen dioxide (EPA EJScreen 2024), a project description titled *Enhancing Community Resilience with Microgrid Technology* that is sited in Newark, New Jersey, reads, “This initiative will directly mitigate health issues caused by pollution, such as asthma and cardiovascular diseases, thereby enhancing residents' well-being.”

We found that of the 198 projects for which air quality was a priority, 137 of them (69%) were slated to take place within the 20% of communities nationally with the highest risk for factors of air pollution (Table 3). These air pollutants (e.g., nitrogen dioxide, air toxics, ozone, particulate matter) are monitored and regulated because they are [known to contribute to acute and chronic health conditions and diseases](#) such as the development of cancers and asthma in children and other vulnerable populations (Dockery et al. 1993). Out of the 154 projects which focused on improving water quality, 114 of them would have

been in communities with the greatest water quality risks. Similar to air pollutants, these water quality measures are in place to monitor for water conditions that can promote acute and chronic health conditions and diseases including cancer, reproductive issues, immune suppression, and pathogenic illnesses.

Project Type Category	Projects in High-Burden Tracts	Total Project Description Category Matches	% of Projects within High-Burden Tracts
Air Quality	137	198	69%
Water Quality	114	154	74%
Education	201	338	60%
Infrastructure	116	193	60%
Respiratory Health	42	52	81%

Table 3. Categories of Project. Frequencies and percentages of EPA environmental justice grant projects categorized by top-level category within high-burden Census tracts in EJScreen.

Similarly, every category showed a large share of projects (at or over 60%) in Census tracts that are currently the most imperiled for environmental justice (Table 3). A grant project titled *Springfield Community Gardens 2040 Collaborative Farming Forward* that promotes training and resources for urban and rural farmers in Springfield, Missouri, demonstrates how a project that matched with infrastructure key terms such as “agriculture” was slated to take place in a region identified by the USDA as a food desert (Fig. 6).

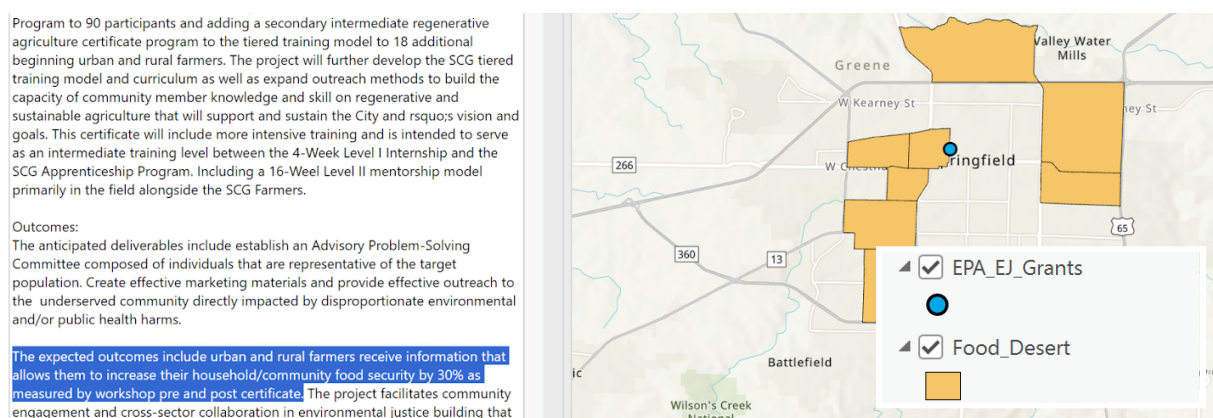


Figure 6. Food Deserts. In an area identified by the USDA as a food desert (EPA EJScreen 2024), the intended outcomes of the project description titled *Springfield Community Gardens 2040 Collaborative Farming Forward* that is sited in Springfield, Missouri, read, “Urban and rural farmers receive information that allows them to increase their household/community food security by 30% as measured by workshop pre and post certificate.”

The frequency of occurrence of key terms in grant project descriptions reveals other insights (Fig. 7).

EPA EJ Grants Project Impacts by Category

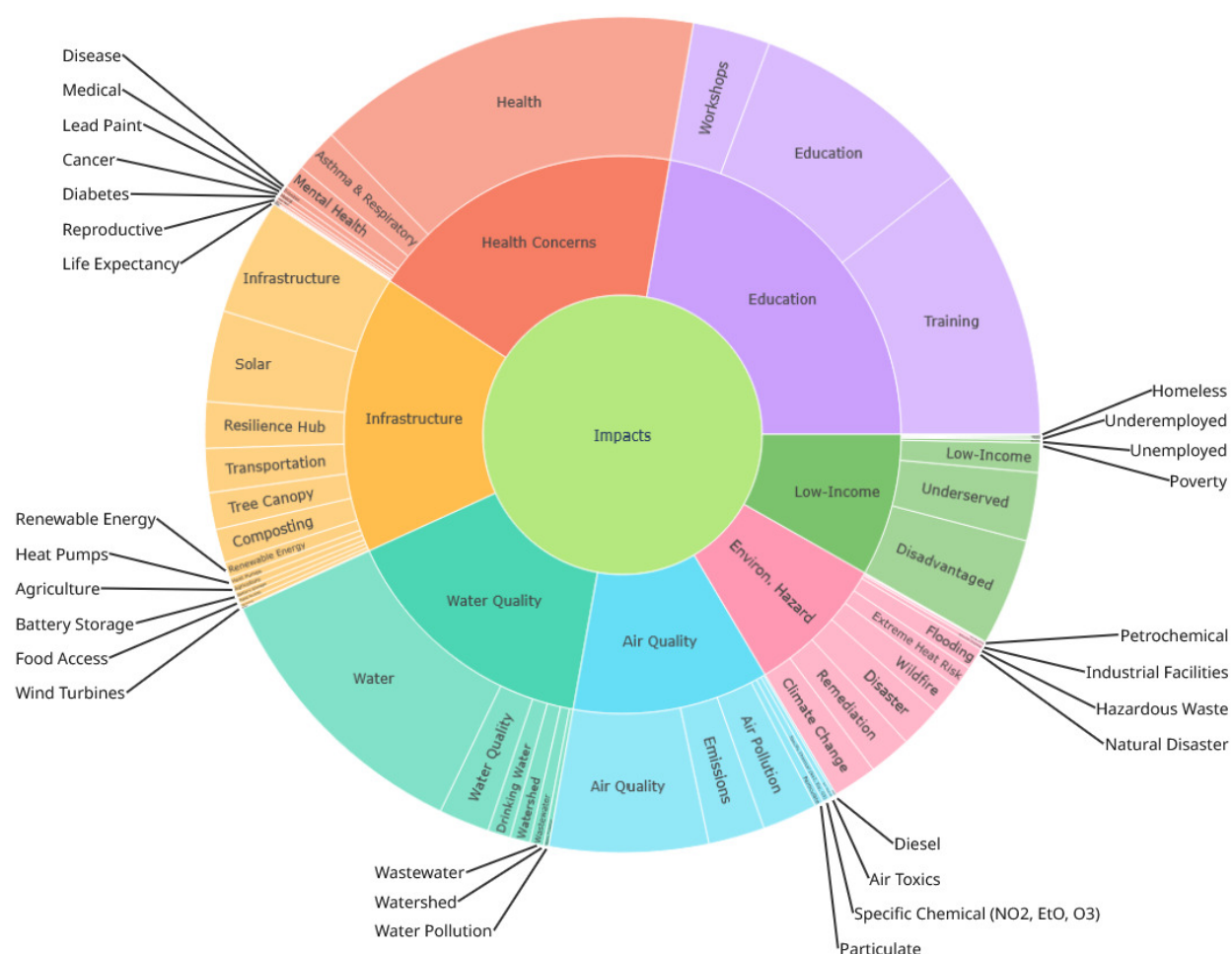


Figure 7. Key Terms. [This sunburst plot](#) summarizes the composition of top level indicator categories, by total frequency of key term matches. The size of each category wedge and each key term wedge reflects the frequency of that term's usage in all grant project descriptions. Using the linked plot, hovering over or clicking on each category will bring up more information about frequencies and thematic breakdowns by key terms. Note: some terms were merged before plotting for greater legibility (e.g., mentions of nitrogen dioxide, ethylene oxide, and ozone were merged as mentions of "Specific Chemicals: (NO₂, EtO, O₃)").

Environmental education, community workshops, and training were popular themes among projects, with 338 grant projects offering these in some form. Two hundred and one of those education-related projects (60%) were set to take place in communities where rates of less than high-school completion, unemployment, and low English proficiency are highest in the country (Table 3). Many projects (193) were also investments in infrastructure, and 116 of them (60%) would occur in places with the greatest gaps in critical infrastructure (e.g., transportation or housing burden, limited broadband access).

Looking within top level categories, we also compared projects which were categorized by specific key terms. For example, 42 of the 52 projects (81%) which identified “asthma” and “respiratory health” as priorities in their descriptions were within the top 20% of communities most burdened nationally for any of the air pollution indicators.

Project Type Category	High-Burden Tracts	% of Tracts that are High-Burden	% of Projects within High-Burden Tracts	Percentage Point Difference
Air Quality	46,036	54%	69%	+15
Water Quality	52,155	61%	74%	+13
Education	33,288	39%	60%	+21
Infrastructure	41,978	49%	60%	+11
Respiratory Health	46,036	54%	81%	+27

Table 4. EPA’s environmental justice grants were targeted to places in need. This table compares the percentage of projects located in high-burden Census tracts to the percentage of high-burden tracts in the U.S. overall. High-burden Census tracts are defined as those in the top 20% (≥80th percentile) for key EJScreen (2024) indicators within each category.

When comparing the percentage of projects located within high-burden Census tracts to how many high-burden Census tracts there are nationally (Table 4), it is clear that these EPA environmental justice grant projects would be disproportionately located in high-burden areas. For example, 69% of air quality projects were in tracts that have the highest levels of different air pollutants, which account for 54% of all tracts in the U.S. In other words, if EPA had allocated projects randomly, we would expect 54% of them to be in areas highly burdened by air quality problems. Instead, a disproportionate number of projects—69%—are in such areas. This pattern was evident for all other comparisons of categories and indicators, with percentage point differences ranging from 11 for projects intended to address infrastructure gaps and indicators of critical service gaps, to 27 for projects intended to address respiratory health and indicators of air quality. These results further bear out the finding that there are more EPA environmental justice grant projects in places with some of the highest levels for each category of indicators.

More Investments Needed

We find that EPA environmental justice grants represent at least \$6.4 billion in economic opportunity and 65,000 jobs directed toward communities where funds would have the greatest impact. While we aim to quantify the fallout resulting from these terminations, the true measure of what is lost goes beyond the dollar amounts and the numbers. More research is needed to convey community stories and perspectives, as well as detailing the public health, environmental, and infrastructural costs of federal cuts to EPA's environmental justice grants.

EPA's environmental justice grants made with IRA funds legislated by Congress are necessary, but in reality they are not enough to address the need. For instance, 46,036 Census tracts—or more than half—have relatively high measures for air pollutants. Yet EPA funded only 198 air quality improvement projects in 137 of these 46,036 tracts (0.3%). The same can be said for the index of water quality factors, for which 52,155 Census tracts have high measures compared to the rest of the country. We identified just 154 projects that address water quality, 114 of which were in high-burden tracts (0.2%). This is minimal even accounting for the fact that each project will likely benefit multiple tracts.

In stark contrast to empty accusations of wastefulness, our findings show these grants were intentionally distributed according to specific priorities identified by local residents, and highlight the targeted nature of these investments. While EPA's grants were allocated appropriately (i.e., to places in need), they did not go to all the places in need. Congress allocated far too little money and EPA made far too few grants. In this sense, the grants that were awarded are especially valuable. We could think of these as pilot projects that would have been proof-of-concept for much larger programs. There are too many places with terrible air and water quality in the country and we need proportionate investments to address this. Beyond restoring the grants' Congressionally mandated funds, greater investment is needed to address the interconnected environmental and public health burdens that disproportionately impact low-income communities and people of color.

Appendix

Thematic Category	Key Terms
Air Quality	air pollution, air toxics, air quality, diesel, emissions, ethylene oxide, nitrogen dioxide, ozone, particulate
Education	education, training, workshops
Environmental Hazard	brownfield, clean-up, climate change, disaster, extreme heat, flooding, hazardous waste, heat risk, industrial facilities, natural disaster, petrochemical, remediation, superfund, wildfire
Health Concerns	asthma, cancer, diabetes, disease, health, lead paint, life expectancy, medical, mental health, reproductive, respiratory
Infrastructure	agriculture, battery storage, canopy trees, compost, composting, farming, food access, food desert, food justice, food waste, heat pumps, infrastructure, planting trees, recycling, renewable energy, resilience hub, shelter, solar, transportation, tree canopy, tree planting, wind turbines
Low-income	disadvantaged, homeless, low-income, poverty, underserved, underemployed, unemployed
Water Quality	drinking water, wastewater, water, water pollution, water quality, watershed, water testing

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