

Allegheny County Virtual Town Hall: Mon Valley Public Health and Welfare Funds & U.S. Steel Air Quality Settlement

Meeting Date/Time: February 18, 2025, 10:30 PM (42 minutes)

Location: Virtual (Zoom)

Overview and Purpose

Purpose of the Town Hall:

- Provide information on the Mon Valley Public Health and Welfare Funds, established under a settlement agreement with U.S. Steel following the 2018 Clairton Coke Works fire.
- Discuss the funds' administration by Allegheny County Economic Development (ACED) and the Allegheny County Health Department (ACHD).
- Share details about how community organizations in eligible Mon Valley municipalities can apply for funding, including an overview of previously awarded projects.
- Offer an opportunity for public input, comments, and questions.

Settlement Background:

- A lawsuit and subsequent settlement resulted in monetary allocations to address the negative impact of increased emissions from the Clairton Coke Works fire in 2018.
- Allegheny County administers \$2.25 million over five years (approx. \$450,000 per year) for eligible organizations. A separate \$2.25 million was allocated to a local foundation for similar programming.

Introductions and Opening Remarks

1. **Michael Carroll (Allegheny County Public Information Officer)**
 - Welcomed attendees, provided housekeeping details, and facilitated the meeting.
 - Encouraged respectful and on-topic comments from the public.
2. **Lauren Connelly (Director, Allegheny County Economic Development)**
 - Explained ACED's role in administering local, state, and federal grants.
 - Described ACED's mission to foster inclusive, resilient economic growth, and its emphasis on community engagement.
 - Emphasized the importance of public input in designing and refining the use of settlement funds.
3. **Dr. Iulia Vann (Director, Allegheny County Health Department)**
 - Provided an overview of ACHD's mission, focusing on public health priorities:
 - ☐ Physical health (reducing chronic diseases, improving access to care)
 - ☐ Behavioral/mental health (substance use disorder prevention, community well-being)
 - ☐ Environmental health (air quality, safe drinking water, healthy housing)

- Highlighted ACHD's commitment to listening sessions and collaboration with residents to improve public health outcomes in the Mon Valley.
- 4. **Nathan Wetzel (Manager, Housing Division, ACED)**
 - Outlined details of the settlement funds, including eligibility, focus areas, and geographic scope.
 - Stressed that funded projects must specifically benefit residents of these municipalities:
 - Braddock, Clairton, Dravosburg, Duquesne, East McKeesport, East Pittsburgh, Elizabeth Borough, Elizabeth Township, Glassport, Liberty, Lincoln, McKeesport, North Braddock, North Versailles, Pleasant Hills, Port Vue, Rankin, Versailles, Wall, West Elizabeth, West Mifflin.
 - Reviewed examples of projects funded in the first grant round (2024).

First Round (2024) Funded Projects – Examples

- Valley Clean Air: Distributed air purifiers and offered educational resources on reducing indoor air pollution.
- South Allegheny Fire & Emergency Services: Purchased AED defibrillators for community use to address cardiac emergencies.
- Steel Rivers Council of Governments (Duquesne): Provided household cleaning and wellness supplies to residents.
- Glassport Community Development Corporation: Established a community garden on vacant land for healthier lifestyles and community engagement.
- Helping Out Our People (HOOP): Offered trauma counseling and support services for victims of gun violence.
- Rainbow Kitchen Community Services: Provided casework and critical health supplies for community members in need.

Grant Application Details

Application Window:

- Second round opens March 24, 2025, for approximately two months (closing just before Memorial Day).

Who Can Apply:

- Registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations (no individuals or for-profit entities).
- Must serve at least one of the eligible Mon Valley communities listed above.
- Applicants cannot have been a party to legal action against U.S. Steel related to the Clairton Coke Works fire.

Eligible Projects:

- Must address public health/welfare, especially air quality or health outcomes impacted by the 2018 fire.
- May include supplies/equipment, direct services, educational outreach, and more—provided the project improves community health and quality of life.

How to Apply:

- Complete a short application via Allegheny County’s online grant portal (link available on the ACED website).
- Clearly define project scope, goals, community benefits, budget, and timeline.
- Provide documentation of any other funding sources if applicable.

Public Comment Highlights

Comment 1:

- Expressed gratitude for the grant supporting Duquesne’s community wellness work.
- Appreciated learning from other funded projects to advise more local governments.

Comment 2:

- Thanked the County and Steel Rivers COG for their support.
- Voiced interest in future funding for city-wide health and infrastructure improvements, including continued efforts around water safety.

Comment 3:

- Commended the County for overseeing the distribution of funds and hosting the town hall.
- Encouraged more air-quality-focused programs and public health interventions.
- Offered to provide communities with technical assistance or project ideas.
- No additional comments or questions were raised once pre-registered and walk-in participants had been heard.

Additional Resources and Next Steps

Upcoming In-Person Session:

- Date: Thursday, February 20, 2025, in McKeesport (publicly advertised location).
- Will present the same information in an in-person setting for those who prefer face-to-face engagement.

Application Portal & Guidelines:

- Mon Valley Public Health and Welfare Funds Website
- Includes details about eligibility, project examples, deadlines, and the online application form.

Contact Information:

- Email: MVPH@alleghenycounty.us
- Phone: 412-350-1000

Social Media: Follow Allegheny County's official channels for updates.

Important Dates:

- March 24, 2025: Second-round application opens.
- Late May 2025: Application window closes (just before Memorial Day).

Conclusion

Allegheny County appreciates the community's input on using the Mon Valley Public Health and Welfare Funds.

The County and Health Department encourage all eligible nonprofits and community partners to apply for the next round of grants.

Public participation—through both comments and formal applications—remains critical to ensuring these funds improve air quality, public health, and overall well-being in the Mon Valley region.

Allegheny County Town Hall: Mon Valley Public Health and Welfare Funds & U.S. Steel Air Quality Settlement

Meeting Date/Time: February 20, 2025, 1:00PM– 3:00 PM

Location: 1101 Hartman St, McKeesport, PA 15132

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Public Comment Highlights

Comment 1:

- Ask if there were any restrictions that were not listed.

Comment 2:

- Underscored the importance of spotlighting communities that have historically been overburdened by pollution and other environmental hazards.
- Spoke about the easy application process
- Dr. Vann noted the need to broadly disseminate these data tools to ensure stakeholders at all levels—community groups, public agencies, and policymakers—have access to timely, accurate information. Widespread awareness and shared understanding of air quality issues foster stronger collaboration and more effective solutions.
- Dr. Vann highlighted the critical role of transparent air quality data in informing both immediate actions and long-term planning. The **2023 Air Quality Index Map** and the latest **Air Quality Report** serve as key resources for local organizations, healthcare providers, and residents.

Comment 3:

- **Clarify U.S. Steel’s Actions** – Clearly outline what U.S. Steel has done and its impact on the community.
- **Address Ineffective Communication** – Highlight the vague or misleading language that has been used to discuss these issues.
- **Provide Historical Context** – Walk through the history of U.S. Steel’s actions in the region and their consequences.
- **Ensure Transparency** – Clearly communicate how the Mon Valley Public Health Funds are being used to address these challenges.

Comment 4:

- Wanda expressed gratitude for the program and the air quality projects receiving funding.
- She also raised concerns about schools and municipalities being ineligible for funding.
- Jenn Saks responded, explaining that the requirement for organizations to be 501(c)(3) was outlined in the consent decree.
- Dr. Vann suggested that these organizations could collaborate with smaller groups, such as the AIU, to access funding opportunities.

Comment 5:

- Discussed a project called **Storybrook** and its objectives.
- Provided updates on **RDIC investments** and the development of new programs.
- **Lauren C.** acknowledged her familiarity with the project and stated she would follow up.

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