

AIR QUALITY RESEARCH PROGRAM

**Texas Commission on Environmental Quality
Contract Number 582-22-20017
Awarded to The University of Texas at Austin**

**Quarterly Report
December 1, 2025-February 28, 2026**

Submitted to

**Jocelyn Mellberg
Texas Commission on Environmental Quality
12100 Park 35 Circle
Austin, TX 78753**

Prepared by

**David T. Allen, Principal Investigator
Center for Energy and Environmental Systems Analysis
The University of Texas at Austin
3925 W. Braker Lane, WPR 3.340
Austin, TX 78759**

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Texas Air Quality Research Program

Quarterly Report

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OVERVIEW

The goals of the State of Texas Air Quality Research Program (AQRP) are:

- (i) to support scientific research related to Texas air quality, in the areas of emissions inventory development, atmospheric chemistry, meteorology, and air quality modeling,
- (ii) to integrate AQRP research with the work of other organizations, and
- (iii) to communicate the results of AQRP research to air quality decision-makers and stakeholders.

PROGRAM ACTIVITIES FOR THE QUARTER

Between December 1, 2025, and February 28, 2026, the AQRP program efforts were focused primarily on the proposal submission process and the beginning of the proposal review process. All proposals were submitted by January 27, 2026, to the AQRP Program Manager. No exceptions were made to the proposal deadline. A summary list of all proposals will be provided in a future quarterly report. The proposals are currently confidential until awards are announced.

The AQRP actively managed the receipt of proposals from applicants and promptly addressed questions and provided clarifications to assist applicants in submitting complete and accurate proposals. A dedicated communication channel was maintained to handle inquiries efficiently. All received proposals were systematically collected and sorted. This process involved logging submissions, verifying completeness, and categorizing proposals for review. The team ensured that each proposal met the necessary criteria before proceeding to the evaluation stage. Proposals were granted AQRP internal Proposal Number IDs in the order they were received. Thirty-one (31) proposals were submitted initially, but two Principal Investigators (PIs) formally withdrew their applications due to various issues related to contractual compliance or the PI departing their home institution.

The AQRP also coordinated the Independent Technical Advisory Committee (ITAC) proposal assignments and rankings. The ITAC members met remotely on February 27, 2026, to begin discussion of the preliminary technical rankings of all twenty-nine (29) proposals received in response to the request for proposals. Additional meetings are scheduled in March to complete the preliminary ranking process and finalize the recommendation to TCEQ. Meetings are scheduled for March 2 and March 9. The Advisory Council will meet remotely in late March and April 2026 to discuss proposal selections.

The Financial Status Report section of this report includes accounting through February 2026. This includes the approved carry-forward funds, \$15,584.65 into Administration and \$60,678.27 into Subaward Contract (direct funding for RFP awards). TCEQ initiated the amendment process to formally approve the carry forward and expected execution is March 2026.

Throughout the reporting period, the AQRP Program Manager communicated regularly with the TCEQ regarding program requirements.

BACKGROUND

Section 387.010 of House Bill (HB) 1796 (81st Legislative Session), directs the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) to establish the Texas Air Quality Research Program (AQRP). The University of Texas at Austin (UT) was selected by TCEQ to administer the program. A contract for the administration of the AQRP was established between TCEQ and UT. Consistent with the provisions in HB 1796, up to 10% of the available funding is to be used for program administration; the remainder (90%) of the available funding is to be used for research projects, individual project management activities, and meeting expenses associated with an Independent Technical Advisory Committee (ITAC). The AQRP contract was extended for the 2026-2027 biennium and funding of \$750,000 per year was awarded, plus the approved carry forward in the amount of \$15,584.65 into Administration and \$60,678.27 into Subaward Contract (direct funding for RFP awards).

RESEARCH PROJECT CYCLE

The Research Program is implemented through a nine-step cycle each biennium. The steps in the cycle are described from project concept generation to final project evaluation for a single project cycle.

- 1) The project cycle is initiated by developing (in year 1) or updating (in subsequent years) the research priorities. The Air Quality Research Program (AQRP) Director, in consultation with the Independent Technical Advisory Committee (ITAC), the Advisory Council (the Council) and the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ), develop research priorities; the research priorities are released along with a Request for Proposals (RFP).
- 2) Project proposals relevant to the research priorities are solicited. The RFP will be found at <https://aqrp.ceesa.utexas.edu/research/request-for-proposals> once released.
- 3) The ITAC performs a scientific and technical evaluation of the proposals.
- 4) The project proposals and ITAC recommendations are forwarded to TCEQ. TCEQ evaluates the project recommendations from the ITAC and comments on the relevancy of the projects to the State of Texas's air quality research needs.
- 5) The recommendations from the ITAC and TCEQ are presented to the Council and the Council selects the proposals to be funded.
- 6) All Principal investigators are notified of the status of their proposals, either intent to fund, not funded, or contingent (not funded at this time but being held for possible reconsideration if funding becomes available).
- 7) Intent-to-fund projects are assigned an AQRP Project Manager at UT Austin and a Project Liaison at TCEQ. The AQRP Project Manager is responsible for ensuring that project objectives are achieved in a timely manner and that effective communication is maintained among investigators involved in multi-institution projects. The AQRP Project Manager has responsibility for documenting progress toward project measures of success for each project. The AQRP Project Manager works with the researchers, and the TCEQ, to create an approved work plan for the project.

The AQRP Project Manager also works with the researchers, TCEQ, and the Program's Quality Assurance officer to develop an approved Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) and Work Plan for each project. Subaward Agreements are issued. The AQRP Project Manager reviews monthly, annual, and final reports from the researchers and works with the researchers to address deficiencies.

- 8) The project findings are communicated through multiple mechanisms. Final reports are posted to the AQRP web site (<https://aqrp.ceesa.utexas.edu/>); and a biennial research conference/data workshop is held.

During this period, the AQRP performed steps 2, 3, and partially step 4.

Independent Technical Advisory Committee

The Air Quality Research Program (AQRP) funding is to be used primarily for research projects, and one of three groups responsible for selecting the projects is the Independent Technical Advisory Committee (ITAC). The ITAC is composed of between 9 and 15 individuals with scientific expertise relevant to the AQRP. The ITAC is charged with recommending technical approaches, establishing research priorities, and reviewing, commenting, and advising on all projects to ensure that the projects facilitate air quality improvement in Texas. Members of the ITAC consist of the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) Air Quality Deputy Director (or designee), and representatives with air quality expertise from research institutions with extensive expertise in air quality research in Texas. The members of the ITAC are listed in Table 1. The members of the ITAC are drawn from Texas universities active in air quality research, national laboratories that have participated in air quality studies in Texas, and institutions that have expertise not available in Texas and that have participated in air quality studies in Texas.

The ITAC membership is intentionally drawn from air quality researchers who have experience in Texas. These researchers and their colleagues will likely have interest in responding to the requests for research proposals issued by the AQRP. This raises potential confidentiality and conflict of interest issues, and the contract between TCEQ and the University of Texas at Austin requires that the AQRP maintain and implement an appropriate written policy on conflict of interest. Specifically, for the ITAC, all members are required to certify:

Confidentiality: As a member of Independent Technical Advisory Committee (ITAC), I understand that I will have access to proposals submitted to the Air Quality Research Program (AQRP). Subject to any legal requirements, I agree to keep the information in these proposals confidential until the selection process is completed and it is appropriate to release information to the public. I understand that there may be certain information that comes to me in my role as a member of ITAC that retains its confidential nature even after the process is concluded. I also understand that I will review said proposals and may have access to the reviews made by other ITAC members. I agree to keep these reviews and the identity of the reviewers confidential until such time as this information is released to the public. (NOTE: For the reviews and reviewers, this information may never be released.)

Conflict of Interest: As a member of ITAC, I agree that I will not evaluate, comment on, or vote on proposals in which I or my home institution is involved, including but not limited to, any financial interest, or in which I have another form of conflict of interest. I understand that ITAC members with conflicts of interest must leave the meeting room or the conference line when a proposal with which they have a conflict is discussed, voted on, or otherwise being considered. I understand that I must recuse myself from participating in or attempting to influence at any time the ITAC's or the AQRP Council's consideration or decision concerning such proposals. I agree to bring any issues concerning a possible conflict of interest to the attention of the Director of the AQRP or the TCEQ Air Quality Deputy Director. If there is a question of interpretation regarding whether a conflict of interest exists, I agree that the decision regarding whether a conflict of interest exists will be made by the Director of the Air Quality Research Program or the TCEQ Air Quality Deputy Director.

All members of the ITAC agree to abide by these conflicts of interest and confidentiality provisions prior to participating in the review of proposals. Table 1 shows the accepted ITAC members.

Table 1. Independent Technical Advisory Committee Members

Name	Title	Institution
David Allen	Professor and Director, AQRP	The University of Texas at Austin
Doug Boyer	Senior Air Quality Project Manager	TCEQ, Office of Air
Brad Pierce	Director, Space Science and Engineering Center	Univ. of Wisconsin-Madison
Don Collins	Professor	University of California, Riverside
Joost de Gouw	Research Physicist, Cooperative Institute for Research in Environmental Sciences (CIRES) Senior Scientist and Fellow	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), University of Colorado Boulder
James Nolan	Technical Specialist	TCEQ, Office of Air
Lea Hildebrandt Ruiz	Associate Professor	The University of Texas at Austin
Rebecca Sheesley	Associate Professor	Baylor University
William Vizuite	Professor	University of North Carolina
Yuxuan Wang	Associate Professor of Atmospheric Chemistry	University of Houston
Greg Yarwood	Principal	Ramboll
Renyi Zhang	Distinguished Professor of Atmospheric Sciences, Harold J. Haynes Chair in Geosciences	Texas A&M University

TCEQ Relevancy Review

The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) reviews proposals for relevancy to the State's air quality research needs. TCEQ approval is required for a project to receive funding from the Program.

Advisory Council

The final group responsible for selecting Air Quality Research Program (AQRP) research projects is the Advisory Council (the Council). The Council consists of between 7 and 11 members. Two Council members with relevant scientific expertise are nominated by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ). As defined in the AQRP contract, up to four members of the Council can be county judges from the Houston-Galveston-Brazoria (HGB) and Dallas-Fort Worth (DFW) non-attainment counties. Additional members should have a general background in air quality and business practices, and can include elected officials, business community representatives, environmental group representatives, and members of the general public. The Council's responsibilities are to attend meetings with TCEQ Management and the AQRP to understand the statewide project goals for the funding period, to select for funding the projects reviewed by the Independent Technical Advisory Committee (ITAC) and ranked by the TCEQ, and to assist with the presentation of project final results at locations throughout the state.

Table 2. Advisory Council Members

NAME	TITLE	INSTITUTION
Dan Baker	Senior Partner	Environmental Reaction Engineering Experts (E REX)
Beata Czader	Senior Technical Specialist	TCEQ, Office of Air
Andrew De Candis	Clean Cities & Clean Vehicles and H-GAC Cities Co-Director	Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC)
Lyle Hufstetler	Clean Cities Coordinator	Alamo Area Council of Governments (AACOG)
Chris Klaus	Senior Program Manager	North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG)
Lindley Anderson	Senior Technical Specialist	TCEQ, Office of Air
Cyrus Reed	Conservation Director	Sierra Club

FINANCIAL STATUS REPORT

The Air Quality Research Program (AQRP) contract was extended for FY 26-27 for \$750,000 per year plus the carry forward of \$76,262.92. Funds were distributed across several different reporting categories as required under the contract with TCEQ. The reporting categories are listed below in detail.

Program Administration: Limited to 10% of the overall funding per fiscal year. This category includes all staffing, materials and supplies, and equipment needed to administer the overall AQRP. It also includes the costs for the Council meetings.

ITAC: These funds are to cover the costs, largely travel expenses, for the Independent Technical Advisory Committee (ITAC) meetings.

Project Management: Limited to 8.5% of the funds allocated for Contractual budget category. Each research project is assigned a Project Manager to ensure that project objectives are achieved in a timely manner and that effective communication is maintained among investigators in multi-institution projects. These funds are to support the staffing and performance of project management.

Research Projects / Contractual: These are the funds available to support the research projects that are selected for funding.

Program Administration

Program Administration includes salaries and fringe benefits for UT staff overseeing the program, as well as materials and supplies, travel, equipment, and other expenses. This category allows indirect costs in the amount of 10% of salaries and wages.

Dr. David Allen, Principal Investigator and AQRP Director, is responsible for the overall administration of the AQRP. RoseAnna Goewey, AQRP Program Manager, assists Dr. Allen with program and grant management.

The University of Texas at Austin's federally negotiated fringe rates for full-time/benefits eligible employees is 30.5%. Rates are estimated to have a 0.5% increase for full/part-time benefits eligible employees in subsequent years.

Table 3: Administration Budget (2026-2027 Biennium)

BUDGET CATEGORY	BUDGET	EXPENSES	BALANCE
Personnel/Salary	\$87,092.27	\$23,254.34	\$63,837.93
Fringe Benefits	\$34,784.15	\$7,092.78	\$27,691.57
Supplies	\$3,769.00	\$117.45	\$3,651.55
Total Direct Costs	\$125,645.42	\$30,464.37	\$95,181.05
Authorized Indirect Costs (10% of Salaries and Wages)	\$8,709.23	\$2,325.44	\$6,383.79
Total Costs	\$134,354.65	\$32,789.81	\$101,564.84

ITAC

There are no ITAC expenditures in this reporting quarter. Table 4 details the 2026-2027 Biennium ITAC budget.

Table 4: ITAC Budget (2026-2027 Biennium)

BUDGET CATEGORY	BUDGET	EXPENSES	BALANCE
Travel	\$10,000.00	\$0.00	\$10,000.00
Supplies	\$1,250.00	\$0.00	\$1,250.00
Total Direct Costs	\$11,250.00	\$0.00	\$11,250.00
Total Costs	\$11,250.00	\$0.00	\$11,250.00

Project Management

Table 5 details the 2026-2027 Biennium Project Management Budget. Expenses include Project Manager salaries, fringes, required supplies, and associated Indirect Costs.

Table 5: Project Management Budget (2026-2027 Biennium)

BUDGET CATEGORY	BUDGET	EXPENSES	BALANCE
Personnel/Salary	\$102,105.00	\$4,367.34	\$97,737.66
Fringe Benefits	\$23,028.00	\$117.98	\$22,910.02
Supplies	\$8,038.00	\$0.00	\$8,038.00
Other	\$ 4,098.00	\$0.00	\$ 4,098.00
Total Direct Costs	\$137,269.00	\$1,794.11	\$135,474.89
Authorized Indirect Costs <i>(10% of Salaries and Wages)</i>	\$10,211.00	\$436.74	\$9,774.26
Total Costs	\$147,480.00	\$4,922.06	\$142,557.94

RESEARCH PROJECTS

Research projects have not been selected in this reporting quarter. Table 6 shows the 2026-2027 Biennium Research Project budget. The initial budget allocates \$1,222,500.00 for research projects. After the carry-forward budget was approved in December 2025, \$60,678.27 was allocated to research projects, bringing the grand total contractual budget to \$1,283,178.27.

Table 6: 2026-2027 Biennium Contractual/Research Project Budget

2026-2027 Total Contractual Funding		\$1,222,500.00		
2024-2025 Contractual Carry Forward		\$60,678.27		
TOTAL CONTRACTUAL BUDGET		<u>\$1,283,178.27</u>		
Project Number	Institution	Amount Awarded	Cumulative Expenditures	Remaining Balance
<i>PENDING</i>	<i>SUBAWARD HOLDING</i>	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
FY 26-27 Total Contractual Funding Awarded		\$0.00		
FY 26-27 Contractual Funds Expended (Init. Projects)			\$0.00	
FY Contractual Funds Remaining to be Spent				\$1,283,178.27
Total Contractual Funding		\$1,283,178.27		
Total Contractual Funding Awarded		\$0.00		
Total Contractual Funding Remaining to be Awarded		\$1,283,178.27		
Total Contractual Funds Expended to Date			\$0.00	
Total Contractual Funds Remaining to be Spent				\$1,283,178.27