

# **Community Climate Action Grant Program**

## **Background and Instructions FY 2021-22**

Thank you for your interest in Orange County's Community Climate Action Grant Program!

### **Climate Action Fund Background:**

As part of the FY19-20 budget, the Board of Orange County Commissioners created the Orange County Climate Action Fund dedicated to accelerating climate change mitigation actions in Orange County. This decision was motivated in part to help the County meet the climate change mitigation goals set by the Commissioners in recent years.

The first round of Climate Action Fund projects were proposed by the Commission for the Environment and approved by the Commissioners. These included funding for solar projects for each of the school districts, a LED lighting campaign for lower-income residents, and additional funding to weatherize and preserve affordable housing.

The process for soliciting and selecting projects to receive funding is now being conducted through a formal grant program. For the 2021-22 funding cycle, an estimated \$268,332.50 in funding will be provided to support an expansion of climate change mitigation and resilience projects that build on Orange County's long history of sustainable actions. An additional \$268,332.50 in funding will be set aside to fund applications submitted under this grant program from either of Orange County's two public school districts.

Following the direction of the Board of Orange County Commissioners, Orange County is seeking applications for the FY21-22 funding cycle.

### **Grant Program Process Key Dates FY21-22:**

<b>DATE</b>	<b>ACTIVITY</b>
Friday May 14 <sup>th</sup> , 2021	Grant Application Opens
May 2021 – July 2021	Applications are Prepared*
Friday, July 23 <sup>rd</sup> , 5pm	Deadline for questions and technical assistance requests
Friday, July 30 <sup>th</sup> , 5pm	Application Deadline
July – September 2021	Application Review by Orange County Commission for the Environment and Human Relations Commission
September 2021	Complete scoring is sent to Board of Orange County Commissioners for their review and final approval
Fall 2021	Contracts Executed & Projects Begin

\*Please be sure to check the [Grant Project website](#) regularly for updates and for notice about participating in Application Q&A Sessions (to be recorded).

### **Eligibility:**

### **Orange County Climate Change Mitigation Goals:**

- On June 6<sup>th</sup> 2017, the Board of Orange County Commissioners passed a resolution to proportionally uphold the Paris Climate Agreement to **reduce greenhouse gas emissions between 26 and 28 percent by 2025** from 2005 levels.
- On September 5<sup>th</sup> 2017, the Board of Orange County Commissioners adopted a resolution to transition to a **100% renewable energy based economy by 2050**.

All public and non-profit entities are eligible to apply as well as small businesses whose gross revenues do not exceed \$3 million annually. All proposed projects must demonstrate a positive impact on Orange County's residents and environment as described in the scoring criteria. All funds awarded through this grant program should be spent in Orange County. Before funds can be distributed, successful applicants must have the legal standing to enter into a contractual funding agreement with Orange County. Such legal standing is not required at the time of application.

The Board of Orange County Commissioners (BOCC) intends to use the Climate Action Fund to support projects that would not be completed without funding assistance. Existing projects and programs may be eligible if the applicant can demonstrate that Climate Action Funding would significantly accelerate the pace or amplify the scope of the project or program. Projects that contain repairs and replacement of necessary technology or infrastructure must show both energy efficiency improvements and demonstrate that the project is unlikely to be funded through another funding mechanism within the next 5 years.

### **GARE Model**

Orange County follows the models and methods of the [Government Alliance for Race and Equity \(GARE\)](#) to ensure racial equity in projects and other initiatives. The application questions were informed by the GARE model, and applicants are encouraged to refer to this model as well when designing their projects.

### **Scoring Process and Technical Assistance:**

For the FY 21-22 funding round, there will be a single open application period during the Summer of 2021 with the aim of announcing project awards by the end of the September 2021.

In addition to the guidance and [online impact estimation tools provided](#), supporting staff will respond to applicants' requests for clarification or technical assistance if submitted before the posted deadline for questions.

Requests for technical assistance or disability accommodation in completing any portion of the application are welcome! Applicants are encouraged to ask for clarification and technical assistance as early as possible. Questions and requests should be directed to the Orange County Sustainability Coordinator, Brennan Bouma ([bbouma@orangecountync.gov](mailto:bbouma@orangecountync.gov)).

Once the FY 2021 application period closes, the Orange County Commission for the Environment (CFE) and the Human Relations Commission (HRC) will review and score all eligible projects using a formula that prioritizes social justice and racial equity. The CFE and HRC will consult with other experts or advisory boards on any or all submitted applications for the purposes of ensuring diversity and inclusion and to reinforce their scoring decisions. Upon request, comments from the reviewers on an application will be made available to the Board of Orange County Commissioners and/or to the party who submitted the application.

The CFE will deliver a rank-ordered list of their recommended projects and scores to the Board of Orange County Commissioners who will make the final funding decisions. In this process, the CFE and HRC may recommend full or partial funding for their recommended projects.

### **Scoring Criteria:**

Projects will be assessed by the CFE based primarily on the following criteria. Example metrics that can be used to assign scores under the criteria are listed below each one. Not all example metrics will apply to each project.

Application reviewers will pay close attention to any objective and authoritative evidence supporting a proposed project. As you complete your application, please describe how your proposed programs align with evidence-based approaches to addressing climate change.

Note: The CFE and HRC may recommend a shift in the weight of the scoring on the following criteria. Final decisions on any change to these weights will be made by the Board of County Commissioners and will be posted on the grant program webpage and communicated to any known applicants.

The current criteria and scoring for all projects is as follows:

**1. Social Justice and Racial Equity (0 to 5pts):**

Low-income households have fewer resources to help them avoid or adapt to the impacts of climate change, and communities of color are often most-heavily impacted by the disruptions of climate change. Both socioeconomic status and racial identity are key factors that will be used to target and track the positive impacts of these programs. It should be noted that socio-economic status and race should be tracked separately since it should not be assumed that County residents below the poverty line are people of color.

**Example metrics:**

- Low-income or marginalized communities/households were engaged in the creation of this project.
- Low-income or marginalized communities/households benefit most directly.
- Racial minorities will be hired and/or are essential to the completion of the project.
- Any negative side effects of the project do not impact any low-income or marginalized communities/households.

**2. Emissions reduced (0 to 4 pts):**

This criterion rewards projects which reduce the most emissions as well as those that reduce emissions within Orange County (e.g.- transportation, carbon farming), instead of at a power plant as all of these are outside of the County except for UNC's co-gen plant which regularly only powers a portion of the UNC campus.

**Example metrics:**

- A significant amount of Greenhouse gas emissions will be reduced within Orange County as a result of this project.
- Greenhouse gas emissions reductions are directly attributable to the project.

**3. Efficient use of Funds (0 to 4 pts):**

This criterion measures the relative impact per dollar of investment from the Climate Action Fund, as well as how. Some example metrics include:

**Example metrics:**

- Impact per grant dollar.
- Generated cost savings over a reasonable payback period.
- Acceleration or expansion of existing programs that already show positive impact.
- Leveraging other funding sources.
- The proposed project positions the applicant for future funding from other sources.

**4. Capacity of Applicant (0 to 3 pts):**

**Example metrics:**

- Applicant has the expertise to complete the project, and shows understanding of what is needed to accomplish the project goals.
- Applicant has done similar projects or has collaborators with direct experience in the project field.

**5. Local Economic Development (0 to 3 pts):**

Reducing climate change impacts can also increase and diversify local economic development. Transitioning to renewable energy and clean technologies is a huge market opportunity and the County Commissioners want to reward projects that emphasize local investment. Some example metrics include:

**Example metrics:**

- Number of Orange County residents employed by the applicant organization.
- % of project materials that are sourced within Orange County/The Triangle/North Carolina.

**6. Amount and Duration of Engagement (0 to 3 pts):**

This criterion measures the extent to which projects effectively educate on climate change impacts, mitigation, and/or resilience, and increase community awareness and engagement with climate change efforts. Some example metrics include:

**Example metrics:**

- Number of people reached.
- Retention of new knowledge or attitude after project completion.
- Likelihood of impacted audience continuing engagement with climate change efforts.

**7. Time to complete (0 to 3 pts):**

**Example metric:**

- Project can be completed or show clear positive impacts within two years or less.

**Reporting and Monitoring**

Applicants that receive funding are required to submit quarterly written progress reports. Funded projects will be monitored for progress and performance, financial and administrative management, and compliance with the terms of Performance Agreement(s). Monitoring may involve site and/or office visit(s).