

Energy Equity for Renters

GRANT OVERVIEW AND APPLICATION

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Office of Sustainability, Equity, and Economic Development Strategies (SEEDS)

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Please note that the application contained in this document was submitted as an online form. This document has been re-formatted for PDF and to comply with accessibility guidelines. The text of the application has not been altered. An overview of the Energy Equity for Renters program has been included for context.

Grant Overview

Granting Party

Founded in 1980, the American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy (ACEEE) is a non-profit research organization based in Washington DC whose mission is to combat climate change by developing policies that reduce energy waste by using energy more efficiently. ACEEE is non-partisan and collaborates with business, governments, academia, philanthropy, and environmental justice groups to work towards scaling up policies that improve energy efficiency. Past technical assistance through the Energy Equity for Renters program has gone to the Bay Area Regional Energy Network, the city of Cambridge, MA, Duluth, MN, Portland, OR, and Tacoma, WA. Additional information on this program can be found at <https://www.aceee.org/energy-equity-for-renters>.

Technical Assistance Overview (from the grant application paperwork)

Dramatically reducing greenhouse gas emissions from residential buildings is vital for tackling climate change. Rental homes present an added challenge: They are less energy-efficient than others, on average, consuming 15% more energy per square foot than owner-occupied homes. They are less energy-efficient than others, on average, consuming 15% more energy per square foot than owner-occupied homes, resulting in needlessly high energy bills for renters. Nearly one-third have high energy burdens, meaning they spend more than 6% of their income on energy costs. ACEEE's Energy Equity for Renters initiative is tackling the challenge of reducing energy waste in rental housing. Our goal: protect the climate, reduce energy costs, and preserve affordable neighborhoods.

Participants (from the grant application paperwork)

The American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy (ACEEE) is offering no-cost technical assistance services to up to 10 local governments and community-based organizations (CBOs) that primarily serve disadvantaged communities and/or individuals. This opportunity will be focused on those seeking to improve the energy efficiency of rental housing while also preserving and/or expanding housing affordability. While either local governments or CBOs may apply for technical assistance, any proposed work must involve CBOs working alongside local governments to ensure that any policies and programs supported as a result of this work are community driven.

Alachua County's Grant Application

Question 1

Please describe the rental energy efficiency policy and/or program that the proposed technical assistance will help advance.

The Alachua County Energy Efficiency Program (ACEEP) is designed to help lower utility bills for Alachua County residents by creating a fund to improve the energy efficiency of rental units. Participating units can request home upgrades ranging from better attic insulation to more energy efficient electrical appliances such as refrigerators and air conditioners. Only renters who make 50% or less of Area Median Income (AMI) for Alachua County can qualify for the program.

Participants can receive up to \$15,000 per rental unit. Participating property owners are asked to commit to maintaining the affordability of the unit for a length of time depending on their chosen award amount (a maximum of 7 years). Removing the home from the affordable housing rental market before the end of the affordability commitment will require a refund of the award amount. Because the affordability commitment is a payback condition, the award is considered a zero-interest, forgivable loan and takes the form of a lien on the property until the end of the commitment period.

Small landlords in Qualified Census Tracts are also able to apply and receive funding for their units even before they have tenants, in order to bring additional affordable housing units onto the market. In these cases, landlords must commit to having their rental units available to rent within 3 months of program participation, and work with the local Public Housing Authority to ensure the first tenants they lease the property to are doing so with a Section 8 voucher.

ACEEP started in January 2023 and is in its second pilot (which included programmatic updates) that began in September 2023.

Question 2

How do you envision our technical assistance services being used to advance your planned or active work?

Currently, ACEEP funds are underutilized. \$3 million in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding (now Revenue Recovery dollars) were set aside for the program. After almost one year of the program, only around \$100,000 has been disbursed. The program is in danger of being discontinued.

Alachua County staff has done extensive due diligence in working to improve the program, including networking with other municipal government employees with similar programs from nearby Sarasota, FL to Lincoln, NE. The programs in these locations, while very similar, have had no problem moving funding and attracting landlords to their programs. We do not know why our program has not seem similar success.

Our primary barrier seems to be qualifying rental units for the program, either because the landlord does not respond to our outreach or the tenant does not. Very often we will have one of these two qualified, but will be unable to contact (or hear back from) the other and so are unable to proceed. Because similar programs are so popular in other locations, we believe our outreach materials may not be communicating the details of the program in a clear, concise, and compelling way.

To better sell our program to potential participants, we are very interested in the following technical assistance:

- Support community and stakeholder engagement processes with deliverables such as summaries of best and emerging practices, lists of survey questions, and guidance for identifying and contacting rental property owners and residents.

We are open to the possibility that it is not just our outreach, but the program itself that needs an overhaul. We have been asked to explore several options for what an expanded program might look like, including expanding into the City of Gainesville, or negotiating individual contracts with much larger landlords. For this reason, we are also requesting technical assistance to:

- Guide quantitative and qualitative research assessing rental housing and renters' most pressing needs.

Question 3

Please outline the scope of technical assistance work you are requesting from ACEEE. This should outline specific tasks and the timing of those tasks for all involved parties (local government, CBO(s), ACEEE, and other partners). Activities may begin and end at any point between February 2024 and June 2025. For examples of the technical assistance work we may be able to provide see our technical assistance overview.

Phase 1: Identify reasons for program difficulties

Meeting this goal requires two parts: identification of stakeholders, and community engagement with those stakeholders. Identifying stakeholders will require a database be compiled of eligible rental units throughout the County, including the names and contact information of property owners.* Once stakeholders have been identified, we need to conduct outreach with these stakeholders to determine whether their lack of participation in the program is simply because they have not heard of the program, or whether there are larger concerns about the program that has prevented their participation. The County is interested in conducting similar meetings with tenant groups and local community leaders.

We are also very interested in (and anticipate feedback around) the idea of expanding the program, particularly to residents within the Gainesville City limits.

Specific deliverables from Goal 1 would include:

1. A database, preferably compatible with mapping software, of qualified rental units, including contact information for property owners. (Note: It's unclear from the Technical Assistance Overview whether this falls into the available technical expertise. If not, we would also be happy with resources that could point us to where this data exists, so that we can compile it ourselves.)
2. Guidance for identifying and contacting rental property owners and residents
3. Survey questions for landlords and tenants
4. An outreach strategy for landlords and tenants, including workshopping the best ways to facilitate/mediate engagement sessions

*Such a database was planned for the original program. The Alachua County Board of County Commissioners approved new ordinances which would require rental units to meet certain energy efficiency standards, obtain rental licenses, and get periodic inspections of their rental properties to

ensure compliance with energy efficiency programs and building codes more broadly. The State of Florida subsequently passed legislation prohibiting this type of program and database development was discontinued. There is discussion now on whether a different program could achieve the same objectives, but it seems unlikely to be complete within the timeline proposed below.

Phase 2: Develop a strategy for improving program performance

Depending on the results of Goal 1, we will need to develop a new strategy for ACEEP to get as many low-income rental units upgraded with energy efficiency improvements as possible. While the exact details of the new strategy will depend on the results of our community engagement efforts, any program updates will require the below deliverables:

1. Analyze community engagement results to identify trends and opportunities
2. Vet community suggestions against feasibility (include appropriate stakeholders)
3. Identify outreach opportunities with greatest return on investment
4. Facilitate meetings between relevant stakeholders refine and finalize
5. Present final strategy to Board of County Commissioners for approval. *(County staff would like ACEEE staff to play a leading role in this presentation if possible.)*

Phase 3: Implement the improved program

While final implementation logistics will depend on the final strategy, the following deliverables will be required regardless of those final decisions (based on two rounds of pilot implementation):

1. New outreach materials describing the program updates, likely including the website, brochures, presentation slides, and fliers.
2. New legal paperwork, including new contract language (addressing the new scope of work), new application paperwork, and updated mortgage documents.
3. Facilitate internal County staff meetings as needed to adjust to shifts in duties

Timeline (primary actors in parentheses)

February 2024

- Familiarize ACEEE technical assistants with ACEEP and relevant stakeholders *(all partners)*
- Develop Phase 1 outreach strategy, budget, and timeline *(County staff, ACEEE, others as interested)*
- Present strategy and timeline to Board of County Commissioners for approval *(County staff, ACEEE, others to answer Board questions as needed)*
- Begin database planning (if available through technical assistance) *(all partners)*

March 2024

- Construct and finalize survey *(all partners)* and outreach strategy *(CWC, Rebuilding Together, ACEEE)*. Get in-person events scheduled on appropriate calendars as needed, including County calendars and facility calendars *(County staff)*.
- Develop personalized guidance for identifying and contacting rental property owners and residents for Alachua County residents *(ACEEE)*

April 2024

- Distribute survey *(County staff, Rebuilding Together, CWC)*

- Begin other outreach as determined by the outreach strategy (*County staff, Rebuilding Together, CWC*)
- [By end of the month] Begin analysis of survey results (*ACEEE*)

May 2024

- Conclude community outreach (*County staff, Rebuilding Together, CWC*)
- [By end of the month] Finalize analysis of survey and outreach results, including identification of options with high return on investment (*ACEEE*)

June 2024

- Develop draft of program updates based on ACEEE recommendations (*all partners*)
- Conduct outreach with relevant stakeholders to give comments on draft, including for feasibility given County processes and staffing constraints (*all partners*)
- [By end of the month] Present on recommended program updates to Board for approval (*County staff, ACEEE, others as needed to answer Board questions*)

July 2024 [Pending Board approval]

- Updates and development of required paperwork and internal processes (*County staff*)
- Soft start to updated program (*Rebuilding Together, CWC*)
- Development of new outreach materials based on program updates and outreach strategy (*County staff, CWC*)
- Development of plan for success metric tracking (*all partners*)
- Hold regular meetings to workshop bugs in implementation (*all partners*)

August 2024

- Full start to new program (*Rebuilding Together, CWC*)
- Implement outreach strategy with new materials (*County staff, Rebuilding Together, CWC*)
- Hold regular meetings to workshop bugs in implementation (*all partners*)

September 2024 – December 2024

- Hold regular meetings to workshop bugs in implementation (*all partners*)*
 - **Prior experience tells us that the summer is a difficult time to find contractors. We request that our ACEEE team be available in the months after the summer is over to check in and help with barriers we encounter to implementation, as projects will likely pick up in that time.*

Question 4

Please describe any funding and/or information challenges you face in completing the work outlined in the scope of work.

Funding challenges

Should ACEEP receive full funding, we will receive a total of \$3 million for implementation. However, the Board of County Commissioners has made it clear that we will need to demonstrate a strong interest from the community in continuing the program in order to receive the funding. We are currently on our second pilot.

Information challenges

- Because Alachua County does not currently require all landlords to have a rental license, we face large barriers in our outreach efforts to identify rental housing, and to get good, usable contact information for landlords when we do identify that housing.
- Alachua County has had difficulty identifying and subcontracting with local contractors willing and able to do small jobs like those that are part of this program. Oftentimes the longest delays are due to our inability to get a quote in a timely manner for the upgrades landlords are interested in. We are not sure how to best identify these contractors to get them signed up for our program.

Question 5

Please share information demonstrating local government leadership's commitment to establishing the policy or program the technical assistance is meant to support in the response box below. Examples include (but are not limited to) adopted policies or resolutions, letters of support from policymakers, or allocation of funding to specific projects.

Prior Board Motions:

- December 6, 2022: Approval of pilot program work plan. Approval of contract between Rebuilding North Central Florida and Alachua County for the purpose of administering the program. ~\$337,000 is allocated to the pilot program, with an additional amount up to \$3 million set aside for the successful completion of the pilot.
- June 27, 2023: Update to water heater requirements and extension of the program beyond August 2023.
- September 26, 2023: Approval of recommended program updates, and commencement of a second pilot program. An additional \$500,000 is allocated to the program (totaling ~\$837,000 for the two pilots), with an additional amount up to \$3 million set aside for the successful completion of the pilot.

Question 6

How do you expect the initiative(s) will affect housing affordability in your community? Please be as detailed as possible.

The high energy burden of low-income households is a major factor undermining the affordability of housing in our community. In our municipal seat, low-income residents pay an average of 22% of their income for utility bills, compared to only 5% for the population as a whole.¹ The majority of Florida's renter households have low incomes and face high housing cost burdens, with trends showing that housing costs are consuming an increasing share of low-income families' take-home pay.² About one million rental households in the state are considered to be low income, defined as those who make no more than 60% of the area's median income. Of these households, about 71% paid more than 40% of their total income in housing expenses (rent plus utilities) in 2011. This represents a 60% increase over the number of similarly cost-burdened households in the year 2000.

Our program seeks to expand access to energy efficiency and weatherization services for low-income renters in our county. The Community Weatherization Coalition (CWC), a DBA of RTNCF, has reached over 1,800 homes in the county, both homeowners and renters, with its volunteer-led services. The

County has invested \$78,590 and has set aside an additional \$3 million to expand the Alachua County Energy Efficiency Program to RTNCF/CWC. CWC staff and volunteers spend 2-4 hours working together with households to inspect the inside and outside of the home, major appliances, and plumbing, cleaning refrigerator coils and HVAC filters, adjusting temperature settings for thermostat and water heater, and installing needed energy-efficient light bulbs, water-saving aerators and showerheads, carbon monoxide detectors, AC and water heater pipe insulation, and draft stoppers. Rigorous research focused on homes who received the CWC tune-up alone found that, on average, one year later, they were using 9% less water (conserving 6,200 gallons) and 10.6% less energy (1,657 kWh saved).³ This translated to an average savings of \$255 per home per year in utility bills. Moreover, the savings grew to 15-20% 3-5 years later as residents implemented more changes based on their learning.

Depending on the need, savings for the homes served will result from different combinations of weatherization and energy efficiency measures in each home. Combined weatherization and energy efficiency measures produce an average energy savings of 22-25% in Florida.⁴

Table 1: Energy Efficiency Costs and Savings

Measure	Avg Est Cost per Household	Est % Savings
Conservation Education	\$1000	10% ^{4,5}
Seal Air Leaks and Ducts	\$900	4 - 9% ⁵
Refrigerator replacement	\$700-\$1400	9% ⁶
HVAC Repair	\$200-1200	24% ⁷
High-efficiency water heater installation	\$1700	10% - 20% ⁸
Heat pump hybrid water heater installation	\$2600	65% ⁹
Attic insulation	\$2000	9% (+ sealing air leaks) ¹⁰
Low-flow toilet installation	\$425	Save water and save energy (pump)
Blower door and duct testing	\$330-350	Diagnostic Test: diagnose needed measures
Mini-split AC installation	\$4500-6500	33% ¹¹ - 60% ¹²
HVAC replacement	\$6500	20% ¹³ - 50% ¹⁴

Question 6 References, including Table 1

¹ Taylor NW. 2007. "Housing Energy Efficiency and Affordability Issues Affecting Low-Income Residents in Gainesville, Florida." MS Thesis. *Housing Energy Efficiency and Affordability Issues Affecting Low-Income Residents in Gainesville, Florida*, University of Florida.

² Holt L, Jamison M, Kury T, Phillips M, Jarrett L, Jones P, Miller C, Kipp Searcy J, Taylor N, Chasar D, Nelson J, Sonne J, and Vieira R. 2015. *Florida Multifamily Efficiency Opportunities Study*. Tallahassee: Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS), https://ccmedia.fdacs.gov/content/download/60388/file/MFEOpportunities_FinalReport_1-9-15.pdf.

- ³ Schmink M, Ott E, Jarrett L, Sampson A, Bruce M, and Humrich A. July 2018. *Engaging Communities for Energy and Water Savings: Improving Measurement and Effectiveness of Energy/Water Audits for Low-Income Neighborhoods*. <https://communityweatherization.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/CWC-DEED-Grant-Final-Report-July-2018.pdf>.
- ⁴ Wilson E, Christensen C, Horowitz S, Robertson J, and Maguire J. 2017. *Energy Efficiency Potential in the U.S. Single-Family Housing Stock*. Denver: National Renewable Energy Laboratory, Technical Report NREL/TP-5500-68670, Energy Efficiency Potential in the U.S. Single-Family Housing Stock (nrel.gov); see also Florida Residential Energy Efficiency Potential (nrel.gov).
- ⁵ Chau AD, Schmink M, Taylor NW, and Jarrett LM. August 2023. Energy Efficiency and Conservation Programs for Low-Income and Minority Homes, *Proceedings of International Structural Engineering and Construction* (https://www.isec-society.org/ISEC_PRESS/ISEC_12/xml/HOS-02.xml), ISSN 2644-108X, Vol. 10(1), ISEC Press. Doi: 10.14455/ISEC.2023.10(1).HOS-02.
- ⁶ Hamilton SD, Roth KW, Brodrick J. 2003. Improved duct sealing. *AHRAE Journal* 45: 5: 64-65, <https://www.proquest.com/openview/acdff36e0d2c6686352d65c2cbe48bb/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=41118>
- ⁷ Energy.gov. Purchasing and Maintaining Refrigerators and Freezers. N.d. *Energy Saver*. <https://www.energy.gov/energysaver/purchasing-and-maintaining-refrigerators-and-freezers#:~:text=Why%20ENERGY%20STAR%2DCertified%20Refrigerators,federal%20minimum%20energy%20efficiency%20standard>.
- ⁸ Neme C, Proctor J, Nadel S. February 1999. Energy Savings Potential from Addressing Residential Air Conditioner and Heat Pump Installation Problems. <https://www.aceee.org/research-report/a992>
- ⁹ U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. N.d. High Efficiency Water Heaters. [energystar.gov. https://www.energystar.gov/ia/new_homes/features/WaterHtrs_062906.pdf](https://www.energystar.gov/ia/new_homes/features/WaterHtrs_062906.pdf)
- ¹⁰ *ibid*
- ¹¹ U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Department of Energy. N.d. Methodology for Estimating Energy Savings from Cost-Effective Air Sealing and Insulating. [energystar.gov. https://www.energystar.gov/saveathome/seal_insulate/methodology](https://www.energystar.gov/saveathome/seal_insulate/methodology)
- ¹² Sutherland K, Parker D, Martin E. 2016. Evaluation of Mini-Split Heat Pumps as Full System Retrofits in a Hot-Humid Climate. https://www.aceee.org/files/proceedings/2016/data/papers/1_162.pdf
- ¹³ U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Department of Energy. N.d. Ductless Heating and Cooling. [energystar.gov. https://www.energystar.gov/products/ductless_heating_cooling](https://www.energystar.gov/products/ductless_heating_cooling)
- ¹⁴ U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Department of Energy. N.d. When is it time to replace? [energystar.gov. https://www.energystar.gov/saveathome/heating_cooling/replace](https://www.energystar.gov/saveathome/heating_cooling/replace)
- ¹⁵ Office of Energy Efficiency & Renewable Energy. N.d. Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning (HVAC). U.S. Department of Energy Building Technologies Office. <https://rpsec.energy.gov/tech-solutions/hvac>

Question 7

What are other potential impacts of the policies and/or programs? Please be as detailed as possible.

Alachua County is one partner of a larger grassroots initiative, called the EMPOWER project, designed to ensure that our local low-income communities are not left behind in the green energy revolution. The EMPOWER project includes the County, the City of Gainesville, local non-profit partners, a local, employee-owned solar provider, and leadership from local community groups. Our partner communities have expressed a strong interest in energy efficiency upgrades as a practical, equitable way to bring down energy costs in their communities. There is also a strong belief in these communities that green energy initiatives are a pathway to green jobs and a stronger, more resilient economic future. EMPOWER team members regularly cite ACEEP in grant applications as a demonstration that we have the infrastructure and expertise to manage additional program funds for energy efficiency. Should the program be discontinued due to failure to launch, we believe it would be much more difficult for us to demonstrate to potential funders that we have capacity to manage funds in this way.

The EMPOWER team is concerned with creating real, long-term change for these communities which addresses the root causes of poverty and inequalities that have long plagued these neighborhoods. Our grant applications range from new energy efficiency funding to solar programming, all underlain with the promise of more and better green jobs. The EMPOWER team has significant momentum right now, having developed a County's Green Jobs Advisory Council (GJAC) in October 2022 that has brought Alachua County Public Schools, Santa Fe College, and Career Source to the table to seek ways to expand access to training and support for these underserved communities, with the goal of creating a pipeline from public school through college to employment. GJAC has overseen the successful proposal for a Jobs for the Future Quality Green Jobs Regional Challenge grant currently underway, placed low-income youth interns with energy efficiency employers, created a new Weatherization Technician certification program at Santa Fe College, and developed plans for outreach programs to advertise quality green jobs to public school children and their parents in local neighborhoods, schools, and other youth programs.

GJAC is focused on providing high-quality jobs and shared economic opportunity to low-income and disadvantaged communities through: outreach to low-income and disadvantaged communities to raise awareness of the opportunities; recruitment of workers for pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs; and targeted training and support to workers from low-income and disadvantaged communities including transportation assistance, childcare assistance, and other support services as well as job placement assistance, financial counseling, and other support services.

All of these programs are being developed with the understanding that, along with other local initiatives, Alachua County is committed long-term to energy efficiency improvements and creating a local marketplace for graduates of these programs to find work. Alachua County staff have played key roles in helping to develop these programs, and the \$3 million dollars promised for ACEEP is a central theme in these conversations. We believe ACEEP is critical for maintaining the grassroots momentum for these larger initiatives, and for generating and maintaining a marketplace for graduates of the green jobs pipeline.

Question 8

(While helpful for our technical assistance work, the following question is informational and will not affect ACEEE's decision to provide technical assistance to an applicant.) For those that are pursuing or have secured federal funding to support their efforts to improve rental housing energy efficiency: Please identify the funding you are seeking or have secured and share any resources or other support you may need to carry out this federally-funded work.

Secured Federal Funding/Resources

- ~\$837,000 in Revenue Recovery dollars, previously American Rescue Plan Act dollars
- Department of Energy National Renewable Energy Laboratory Technical Assistance through the Communities LEAP Pilot Program

Pending Federal Funding Applications (under development or awaiting award announcement)

- Department of Energy National Renewable Energy Laboratory Technical Assistance through the Communities LEAP 2nd Cohort
- Community Power Accelerator Grant
- Community Energy Innovation Prize: Clean Energy Ecosystem Track
- Department of Energy Solve It Prize

- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s Environmental and Climate Justice Community Change Grants Program
- Weatherization Assistance Program Enhancement and Innovation

Non-Federal Funding

- Jobs for the Future Quality Green Jobs (Phase 1) (secured)
- Jobs for the Future Quality Green Jobs (Phase 2) (application pending)

Question 9

Please provide an in-depth description of the past and current relationship between the local government and community-based organization (CBO) partner(s) listed at the beginning of this application.

Rebuilding Together North Central Florida and their local DBA Community Weatherization Coalition are currently subcontractors with Alachua County Board of County Commissioners for the purpose of implementing the Alachua County Energy Efficiency Program (ACEEP). The contract for this program began in December 2022, with contract amendments which are described in more detail in Question 5.

In addition, both organizations are members of the EMPOWER coalition. This group is a coalition of government, non-profit, private, educational, and community organizations which was formed to apply for (and which successfully received) U.S. Department of Energy technical assistance through the Communities LEAP Pilot Program. The EMPOWER coalition has used that technical assistance to conduct engagement events with three priority, low-income neighborhoods and develop community-supported strategies for bringing the benefits of solar energy and energy efficiency to these neighborhoods. While our application to Solar for All was deemed ineligible (we proposed too high a percentage of energy efficiency improvements and not enough solar grants), we are using the project idea for that proposal to continue to apply for similar grants.

Question 10

How would you like to see these relationships grow in the future?

The Community Weatherization Coalition (CWC) has been at the front lines of residential energy efficiency in Alachua County for over a decade, running a primarily volunteer driven organization to help some of the County’s lowest income residents save on their utility bills. Despite an energy audit (“tune-up”) model which requires entering a resident’s home to directly make improvements, the CWC weathered the pandemic, relying on their strong community roots and creative leadership to develop Do-It-Yourself tune-up kits which are distributed by local libraries and other locations. They have served as the model for a similar program which is currently running in Sarasota County, FL, and are now working with the University of Florida’s county extension program to implement a pilot program to expand home energy efficiency programs to other counties throughout Florida.

If we are able to grow and maintain ACEEP, Rebuilding Together, the CWC, and the County have the opportunity make a real difference in the lives of our low-income residents, not just in reducing utility bills but also through quality-of-life improvements from our energy efficiency upgrades like new HVAC systems. As the County finalizes our Climate Action Plan, there is increasing concern about how rising temperatures are going to impact our most vulnerable residents, and ACEEP is the perfect program to offer direct, targeted help to these specific populations. We are the only program in Alachua County

offering this level of energy efficiency upgrades to tenants, a historically more marginalized group than homeowners.

Through our collective work with the EMPOWER Coalition, we envision this relationship growing into larger programs which, coupled with solar energy installations, can provide a secure, long-term funding source for energy efficiency improvements. We believe this can provide a model for how renewable energy and energy efficiency improvements are compatible tools for energy equity that will work not only in Alachua County, Sarasota County, and Florida more broadly, but across the country.

Question 11

ACEEE can provide some funding to compensate CBOs for their participation in work related to our technical assistance. Please share information about any of these funding needs.

Our CBO partners (Rebuilding Together NCF and CWC) are local non-profit service providers with small staffs, working primarily from grant- and contract-based funding sources. Each hour of their day requires assigning their work hours to a particular grant project. While a certain number of hours of their time are authorized under the ACEEP contract, it is anticipated that the time burden of the scope of work proposed in Question 3 above will exceed the hours currently allocated under that contract. Already outside circumstances have put a strain on their approved hours: Rebuilding Together and the CWC have had to devote considerable time to community outreach and engagement to recruit participants, due to the State of Florida's legislation preempting the County's ability to enforce our ordinance which would have required landlords to obtain rental licenses, thus giving us their names and contact information. Compensation for time devoted to ACEEE's technical assistance work would free up necessary time in staff's current schedules.

In addition, there is strong interest at the County in reaching out to additional CBOs in target communities, such as the Southwest Area Resource Center, in order to organize, advertise, and facilitate conversations in key neighborhoods. If at all possible, we would be interested in discussing the possibility of having these staff leaders and resident community leaders receive compensation for their time devoted to doing data collection, outreach, and other tasks related to the technical assistance we are requesting from ACEEE. This payment structure would be in line with current County policy in our equity policies and procedures.

Question 12

Please describe any current work being done by other organizations or groups that will affect the policy or program you are seeking to create and implement.

Our local utility's (Gainesville Regional Utilities) Low-income Energy Efficiency Program has served 2,237 low-income customers' homes since 2007. This program assists low-income homeowners (not currently renters) with home improvements that can lower their electric bills, prevent heat-related illness, and reduce energy use. Eligible participants work with GRU to determine the improvements that best suit their homes, such as upgrades to central air conditioning and heating systems, servicing central air conditioning systems, replacing room air conditioners with high-efficiency units, repairing leaky ducts, installing additional insulation, and replacing the water heater. Due to overwhelming demand, the LEEP+ program is currently closed to new applicants, indicating the pressing need for additional funding to continue reducing the energy burden of low-income households.

One of the Gainesville Community Reinvestment Area's (GCRA) Housing programs for designated areas of Gainesville is the Home Energy and Water Efficiency Initiative. In partnership with the CWC, home energy tune-ups are available to eligible property owners (homesteaders and landlords) and renters in order to lower the energy cost burden of district residents. The purpose of this program is to encourage safe, well-designed, high-quality housing to support the existing housing stock that provides housing options for long-term homeowners and renters. This program complements the ACEEP by providing services for renters in this designated district of the city. Both of these programs are collaborating together with RTNCF/CWC to coordinate service provision across the community.

Finally, as discussed in previous questions, Alachua County, Rebuilding Together NCF, and the CWC are part of the EMPOWER coalition, formed as part of our collective participation in the U.S. Department of Energy's Community's LEAP Pilot program. This coalition is working now to secure funding for a program that would use community solar energy leases to fund energy efficiency work in low-income communities, and could considerably expand the range and longevity of ACEEP should the program continue.

Question 13

What other partners (within or outside government) do you anticipate being involved in work on these policies or programs? Please describe their role in this work.

For the past decade, Alachua County, the City of Gainesville, and community partners have been working with utility partners to evaluate the energy burden of Gainesville neighborhoods to help us pinpoint which neighborhoods consistently use more energy, and to overlay this data against income data. The results have led to a series of interventions focused on reducing energy burdens, including the community-led development of a weatherization coalition that sprung from local faith-based groups, and City and County programming geared towards improving energy efficiency described above.

More recently, these partnerships have been strengthened by the EMPOWER Project as part of the LEAP Communities program. The diverse, cross-sector EMPOWER Coalition has brought together government, non-profit and private sector partners to work together over the past two years to address problems faced by residents of low-income communities and to expand access to energy efficiency and weatherization services, training and employment in quality green jobs, and an equitable transition to clean energy. Partners in the EMPOWER Coalition include:

- Alachua County Board of County Commissioners
- Alachua County Housing Programs
- Gainesville Community Reinvestment Area (GCRA)
- City of Hawthorne FL
- School Board of Alachua County FL
- CareerSource North Central Florida
- Santa Fe College
- Solar Impact, Inc.
- Rebuilding Together North Central Florida/Community Weatherization Coalition
- Alachua County NAACP Environmental & Climate Justice Committee
- Cultural Arts Coalition
- Springhill Neighborhood Association

- Greater Duval Neighborhood Association
- Southwest Advocacy Group

With support from Kearns & West, the Project EMPOWER Coalition is developing a comprehensive community engagement plan to ensure equitable access to and participation in the program, promoting community ownership at the most advanced phase of community engagement.¹ The NAACP ECJC is leading the community engagement effort, building on successful community engagement programs through the organization of six community forums since 2018 focused on key issues of energy, food, climate, housing, and equitable transitions to clean energy, most recently a Community Climate Summit in September 2023 attended by over 180 community members.

Renewable energy, energy burden, and green job opportunities are already part of the dialog with these priority communities as part of the LEAP Communities project. Responding to feedback from the community was instrumental in several recent decisions such as a successful effort to coordinate local weatherization service providers and to develop clearer access to information about the eligibility requirements and services offered by each. Similarly, community leaders' feedback led us to begin plans to use grant funds to support strategies to reach youth in their schools and after-school programs, and to develop and market new technical training programs in Weatherization Technician. These informal interactions have provided important groundwork in developing crucial trust and transparency for our work together in the Energy Future project in more formalized ways including community benefit agreements and participation in decision-making bodies.

¹ Facilitating Power, The Spectrum of Community Engagement to Ownership. 2019.
<https://movementstrategy.org/resources/the-spectrum-of-community-engagement-to-ownership/>

Question 14

Please upload any supporting documents and files for your application below. This includes any documents providing information to questions you chose not to respond to directly on the application form.

Alachua County uploaded Table 1 (under "Question 6" in this document) in response to this question.

Question 15

You may share any additional information that is relevant to your application in the response box below.

Alachua County uploaded the ACEEP Full Work Plan and a one-page overview of the EPA Solar for All grant application (grant not received—Alachua County's project was deemed ineligible) submitted in 2023. These documents are included as attachments to the agenda item.