



*Building a healthy and
climate-resilient community
together*

EMPOWER COALITION BACKGROUND

The EMPOWER Coalition, led by NKwanda Jah, was formed in 2022 to bring together representatives from the Alachua County neighborhoods of Springhill/Sugarhill, Duval, and SWAG, nonprofit organizations Greater Duval Neighborhood Association, Southwest Advocacy Group, Cultural Arts Coalition, Community Weatherization Coalition and Rebuilding Together North Central Florida, the Alachua County NAACP Environmental and Climate Justice Committee, Alachua County, the City of Gainesville, Santa Fe College, Alachua County Public Schools, CareerSource North Central Florida and Solar Impact. We have been meeting monthly since May of 2022 to work together to benefit our community.

These partners collaborated on successful grant applications to the Department of Energy Local Energy Action Program (LEAP) in 2021 and in 2023. These grants have provided over two years of technical assistance from a team of experts from the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) since July of 2022, exploring the potential to reduce energy bills for low-income residents through expanded energy efficiency, weatherization, and solar energy and the development of a green jobs pipeline accessible to underserved communities in Alachua County. It is the intention of the EMPOWER Coalition partners to continue to work together to advance these goals.

EMPOWER PROJECT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Through this shared vision, combined efforts, and pure hard work, the EMPOWER Project team has produced many accomplishments, including:

- Sustained community outreach efforts starting with a kickoff meeting in early 2023 followed by broader community meetings in 2024 and on-going engagement with representatives of our partner neighborhoods of Springhill/Sugarhill, Duval, and SWAG.
- Organized a Green Jobs Pipeline Roundtable Discussion in 2022 focused on creating a “green jobs pipeline” to link programs in public schools’ curriculum with vocational training programs, internships, employment, and business and entrepreneurship opportunities.
- Organized monthly Weatherization Coordination meetings that bring together local service providers, resulting in the: creation of a guide to help residents seeking weatherization services; identification of bottlenecks in the provision of services provision; creation of Weatherization Technician Certification modules at Santa Fe College.
- Obtained a \$10,000 grant for green jobs development from Jobs for the Future (JFF), making the team eligible for future rounds of more funding.
- Obtained an Energy Efficiency for Renters grant for technical assistance to improve the functioning of the Alachua County Energy Efficiency Program.
- Designed an innovative solar lease model that fits within the restrictive regulations of the state but also, if funded, will provide significant and long-lasting benefits to our current partner communities and other communities as we seek to expand our outreach.
- Obtained a grant from a private donor to support a pilot project to create a community-managed Community Benefits Fund (CBF) to install a solar array on a County building and generate funds to support the CBF over the long-term.

- Submitted applications for nine grants with funding ranging from \$50,000 to \$35.7 million. Other grant proposals are also in preparation.
- Nominated NKwanda Jäh for the 2024 Dr. Espanola Jackson Energy Justice award, which she won in a landslide election.

SUPPORTERS OF THE EMPOWER COALITION

For over two years, a diverse group of organizations, led by the NAACP ECJC, has come together with a common purpose, accomplishing some impressive goals in the process. Our collaborative efforts have not only brought about tangible results but have also strengthened our sense of unity and shared mission.

The EMPOWER Coalition believes that, with your support, we can strengthen and expand our partnerships, allowing us to build on our successes, reach more neighborhoods, and achieve even greater things.

The undersigned organizations that support the work of the EMPOWER Coalition are listed below.

Organization	Signature	Date
NKwanda Jah, Chairperson Environmental & Climate Justice Committee Alachua County NAACP	<u>NKwanda Jah</u>	2-10-2025
RD Bonnaghan, Executive Director Rebuilding Together NCF	<u>RD Bonnaghan</u>	2-10-2025
Alane Humrich, Program Director Community Weatherization Coalition	<u>Alane Humrich</u>	2-10-2025
NKwanda Jah, Executive Director Cultural Arts Coalition	<u>NKwanda Jah</u>	2-10-2025
Monica Frazier, President Springhill Neighborhood Assn	<u>Monica Frazier</u>	2-20-2025
Sheila Waldon, President Sugarhill Reunion	<u>Sheila W. Waldon</u>	2-26-25
Andrew Miles, Ex. Dir. Greater Duval Neighborhood Assn	<u>Andrew Miles</u>	2-11-2025
Dorothy Benson, Chair Southwest Advocacy Group Board	<u>Dorothy Benson</u>	2-11-2025
Betty Campbell, Member Southwest Advocacy Group Board	<u>Betty Campbell</u>	2-20-2025
Barry Jacobson, Board Chair Solar Impact, Inc.	<u>Barry M Jacobson</u>	2-11-2025
Phyllis Marty, CEO CareerSource N Central FL	<u>Phyllis Marty</u>	3-3-2025

SUPPORTERS OF THE EMPOWER COALITION (continued)

Organization	Signature	Date
Danielle Dorley Energy and Sustainability Manager Facilities Services Santa Fe College	<i>Danielle Dorley</i>	3-10-2025
Theresa Spurling-Wood Director of Energy Systems-Building Services Alachua County Public Schools	<i>Theresa Spurling-Wood</i>	
Chuck Chestnut, Chair Board of County Commissioners Alachua County FL		
Harvey Ward Mayor City of Gainesville FL		