

Request for Proposals to Provide Services Necessary to Develop a Climate Action Plan for Chatham County, NC

Purpose

Chatham County is seeking a qualified consultant to develop a Climate Action Plan (CAP) that will guide the County in its efforts to address climate change and its impacts. Firms submitting proposals must have a proven track record in preparing CAPs for government entities and/or community – wide strategic plans with similar requirements. Proposals shall include recommendations to address equity and inclusivity in the development of the plan, in the plan recommendations, and in benchmarking measures.

The project is anticipated to take no more than twelve months. The selected consultant will be required to provide a specific timeline for all tasks that will be mutually agreed upon by the County, within 30 days of award. The project will include a robust public engagement process and involve numerous meetings with various stakeholders, culminating in final approval of the CAP by the Chatham County Board of Commissioners.

Background

Chatham County has a rich agricultural history and an abundance of natural beauty. Most of the County's land area is rural. However, there are three towns, Goldston, Pittsboro, and Siler City, with town limits completely within Chatham's borders, and two towns, Apex and Cary, whose town limits span both Chatham and Wake Counties. There is a developing residential corridor in the Northeast and two industrial megasites. The County has seen unprecedented population growth and development over the last five to ten years and is expected to continue growing strongly in the coming decades.

The County has a Climate Change Advisory Committee (CCAC) composed of county residents with interest and expertise in topics related to reducing the County's impact on climate change and mitigating the effects of climate change in Chatham. Based on a recommendation by the CCAC, Chatham County's Board of Commissioners held a joint climate retreat with members of the CCAC in the fall of 2025. County staff and Central Pines Regional Council organized a series of expert speakers over the course of two days to discuss the impacts we are seeing now related to climate change and what potential future effects might be. Central Pines then led several facilitated discussions and exercises to develop priorities for addressing climate change in the County.

The CCAC took the information gathered in the retreat and developed the sectors and general format for a CAP. The Scope of Services section of this RFP reflects the work the CCAC did to synthesize the information from the retreat.

Scope of Services

The review of proposals will focus in part on the expertise, experience, and understanding of the project evidenced by the project team. The final scope of services will be negotiated with the chosen consultant prior to the beginning of the project. County staff, including interns, may be able to assist with some of these tasks, reducing the time and/or cost of the project. Consultants are not limited to the components presented here and are encouraged to expand on the components suggested and the approach they would take to develop the CAP report and required documents. A general description includes:

1. **Project Coordination** – The County expects the consultant to work closely with County staff throughout the course of the project. The selected firm will work with the Sustainability Director and a project oversight group which will include county staff and advisory board representatives. The consultant will conduct meetings with stakeholders, advisory boards, other groups, and with the public through open forums to gather essential input and feedback. The consultant shall meet with County staff regularly on a schedule that is to be determined and will provide status reports to ensure the project remains on schedule and to keep stakeholders apprised of the progress in preparing the CAP.
2. **Review of Similar CAPs** – The consultant shall prepare an analysis that compares and analyzes the CAPs of communities of similar size and density as Chatham County. This will be shared with the project oversight group at the beginning of the project as a way to see how other communities have approached climate action planning.
3. **Review of Existing Plans** – The consultant shall conduct a review of existing the County’s plans that are relevant to the CAP. This review is necessary because the Chatham County CAP must integrate, support, coordinate and strategize actions consistent with existing plans already in place. These plans include, but are not necessarily limited to, Plan Chatham (the County’s comprehensive plan), the Unified Development Ordinance, and the Farmland Preservation Plan.
4. **Climate Action Inventory** – The consultant shall review existing information and create an inventory of previously completed/on-going sustainability/climate mitigation projects performed by Chatham County government. County staff will assist the consultant with compiling this information.

5. **Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions inventories** - The consultant shall review the County's existing GHG inventory reports. The County has developed GHG inventories approximately every five years since 2010 for both County government operations and the county-wide community. The most recent Inventory was based on data from 2023 and 2024. The consultant does not need to complete an additional GHG inventory for the CAP, but the data, analyses, and findings from these plans should be used to inform the recommended plan actions.
6. **Community Engagement Plan** - The consultant shall develop a Community Engagement Plan designed to get feedback on analysis, alternatives, and/or decisions and to assess opportunities for greater collective community climate action within Chatham County. The Community Engagement Plan should be designed to obtain input from a broad range of Chatham County stakeholders, and should include suggestions to include varied groups of stakeholders that may not have historically had input into County environmental or climate deliberations.
7. **Community Engagement** - The consultant shall implement the above-described Community Engagement Plan to conduct stakeholder meetings (the number and timing to be determined after consultation with County staff). The purpose of the stakeholder meetings will be to obtain input on issues such as how residents experience climate change, and possible solutions to mitigate further impacts. This may include discussion of extreme weather events, rising electricity costs, health concerns, and other topics that may be suggested by County staff and advisory committee members.
8. **Vision and Goals Statement** - The consultant shall develop a draft vision and goals statement to guide the CAP development effort.
9. **Purpose/Scope and Methodology** . The consultant shall clearly outline the purpose, scope, and methodology used in developing the CAP.
10. **Alignment with State Climate Goals** - The consultant shall ensure that the CAP reflects an alignment of climate actions with North Carolina state-level climate action goals (e.g. Executive Order 80)
11. **Challenges and Opportunities** - The consultant shall ensure the CAP includes a concise review of Chatham County's challenges and opportunities in meeting GHG reduction and climate adaptation goals.
12. **Goals, Strategies and Action Items** - The consultant shall ensure that the CAP includes a comprehensive menu of strategies and action items for both Chatham County operations and the community to meet measurable GHG reduction objectives (targets) and climate adaptation goals. Goals, strategies

and action items for implementation should be developed based on the following sectors (in alphabetical order):

- Agriculture
- Built Environment/Energy and Energy Efficiency
- Community Resiliency
- Land Use Planning
- Natural Eco-systems
- Transportation
- Waste and Water Management

13. **Most Impactful Climate Actions** - The consultant shall ensure the CAP identifies the most impactful climate actions/initiatives for both community and County operations. For example, the CAP may indicate 3-5 specific actions the County could take to address climate change.
14. **Methodology for Implementation, Evaluation, and Updating** - The consultant shall ensure the CAP presents a methodology for implementation of plan actions, evaluation of progress towards plan goals, and updating the plan/strategies on a recurring basis.
15. **Accessible, Readable and Functional Plan** - The consultant shall deliver a plan that is accessible, readable and functional to a wide audience – utilizing infographics and language that aids in outreach and education related to the CAP.
16. **Public/Private Partnerships** - The consultant shall ensure the CAP identifies opportunities for further community engagement, including the development of public/private partnerships,
17. **Equity Considerations** - The consultant shall identify equity issues as part of CAP implementation, and in consideration of all goals, strategies, and action items in all sectors
18. **Benchmarking and Tracking Metrics** - The consultant shall recommend benchmarking and tracking metrics for the goals, strategies and action items to enable transparent and straightforward monitoring of plan progress.
19. **Public-Facing CAP Dashboard** - The consultant shall develop a public-facing CAP dashboard that can be updated by County staff and will track progress on the Plan's actions and goals. The dashboard should be compatible with the County's existing Information Hub.
20. **Climate Action Funding Plan** - The consultant shall develop a Climate Action Funding Plan that includes:

- a. Recommendations for the level of effort required to accomplish goals, strategies, and action items identified in the Chatham County CAP. This would include parameters such as operational and capital funding, implementation time, required staff, etc.
- b. A list of currently available funding and financing mechanisms the County could use to implement the action items in the plan. This would include State and Federal funding, grants, loans, etc.

Climate Action Plan Report

The CAP report shall include an evaluation and analysis of the findings of the planning process as detailed in the Scope of Work. The report shall contain elements necessary to meet the County's short-term, mid-term, and long-term mitigation strategy. The inclusion of creative, innovative strategies for climate mitigation strategies is desired.

At a minimum it shall include:

- An executive summary that outlines the process taken to create the report as well as summarizing the research and findings, with a prioritized list of recommendations, goals and findings.
- A summary of previously completed climate mitigation work performed by the County.
- A summary of the community engagement process.
- A graphic-rich, reader friendly action plan containing a prioritized list of recommendations of the most impactful action items that will mitigate our emissions and adapt to a changing climate.
- Charts, graphs, maps and other data as needed to support the plan and its presentation to appropriate audiences.
- A financial plan outlining the fiscal impact of each recommendation, as well as a recommended operational budget.

Presentations

The consultant will present updates of findings during the course of the planning effort at appropriate intervals. Upon completion of the final CAP report, the consultant will prepare a PowerPoint presentation of major findings and present this information to the Chatham County Board of Commissioners at one of their regular meetings.

Submittal Response Requirements

1. A cover letter identifying the firm, or firms proposed for a team approach for the project. (Maximum of one page in length.)
2. Qualifications of the firm. Submittals must include a firm overview and brief description of the firm's history. A project organizational chart and description may be included. Key members of the project team should be included in the organizational chart. Clearly identify the prime contractor and any sub-contractors, if relevant, and the general roles of each on the project. Note all MBE and HUB participation in this project.
3. Briefly describe the firm's experience in developing CAPs. Provide summary examples of CAP projects for local governments with which the firm has worked.
4. Describe the firm's experience and success utilizing innovative public engagement strategies designed to engage diverse, marginalized and underrepresented audiences with climate action planning.
5. Provide an explanation of how the consultant will adhere to the scope of work including a proposed work timeline that appropriately meets the goals of this project. This narrative should include an explanation of the following:
 - a. An indication of your understanding of the project,
 - b. Descriptions of similar projects that the firm has completed.
6. Provide an identification of the roles and responsibilities of all team members with the firm including:
 - a) Team organization including an identification of the lead consultant and project manager, key personnel that will be working on the project, the role of any proposed consultants, etc.
 - b) A statement of qualifications for all team members including resumes and educational background. One-page resumes of all key personnel should be provided (one page per person). The office locations of each team member should be specified on the résumés. The submittal should, as a part of the information provided for subcontractors, include the names, locations, and general roles of the project team members.
 - c) A description of the current workload for identified individuals.
7. A minimum of three references for similar projects including:

- a) The name and date of the project
- b) The location of the client
- c) A contact name including relevant contact information
- d) At least one of these references should be able to describe the proposed project manager's experience and qualifications.

Chatham County may contact these references, and the information obtained may be considered in the evaluation of the proposal.