

CITY OF PALM DESERT STAFF REPORT

MEETING DATE: September 26, 2024

PREPARED BY: Amy Lawrence, Deputy Director of Economic Development

SUBJECT: INFORMATIONAL REPORT ON THE COMPREHENSIVE CLIMATE ACTION PLAN

RECOMMENDATION:

Receive and file an update on the Comprehensive Climate Action Plan.

BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS:

In 2022, the City Council outlined Environmental Initiatives as one of eight priorities for the year. In response, staff drafted an Environmental Initiatives Plan (EIP) and strategy to replace the outdated Environmental Sustainability Plan and Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Inventory, which were adopted by the City Council in February 2010 and later updated as part of the Green for Life Program in September 2015. Two of the goals outlined in the EIP are to update the City's GHG Inventory and consider hiring a consultant to develop a formal environmental initiatives plan.

This year, the City was awarded \$118,000 in Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG) funding from the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) to hire a consultant to develop a climate action plan. As staff was preparing a report to formally inform the City Council of the grant award and seek direction on the process moving forward, in late June, staff was informed by the Coachella Valley Association of Governments (CVAG) that they were working on a regional Comprehensive Climate Action Plan (CCAP) for which the City would be a beneficiary of. Once the CCAP is completed, which is anticipated in the second quarter of 2025, the City will have an up-to-date GHG inventory and its own climate action plan. This will not only achieve the goals outlined in the EIP but will also make the City eligible for certain grant funding it may otherwise not qualify for.

Outlined below are details of CVAG's CCAP project and next steps for the EECBG funding.

Regional Comprehensive Climate Action Plan

Last year, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) awarded a Climate Pollution Reduction Grant (CPRG) to the Riverside-San Bernardino-Ontario Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), which includes the San Bernardino Council of Governments (SBCOG), Western Riverside Council of Governments (WRCOG), and CVAG. SBCOG, as the contracting agency, hired the consulting services of ICF to complete the deliverables associated with this grant, including a Priority Climate Action Plan (PCAP) and a Comprehensive Climate Action Plan (CCAP). The PCAP for the Riverside-San Bernardino-Ontario MSA was completed in March 2024, and the focus is now on completion of the CCAP for the CVAG region, due in summer/fall 2025. The completed PCAP is available on the [EPA's website](#).

To develop the CCAP, ICF is working with all jurisdictions in the CVAG region to gather data and information to complete individual plans, which will serve as subchapters in the regional CCAP. According to ICF, the plan will include:

- A 2023 GHG inventory for the region and each jurisdiction in CVAG.
- Forecasts of GHG emissions and reduction targets to 2030 and 2045.
- GHG reduction measures for each jurisdiction, building on current climate action planning where appropriate.
- An analysis of overall benefits, including benefits to low-income and disadvantaged communities.
- A workforce planning analysis.
- A review of authority to implement reduction measures.
- A plan to leverage federal funding (in addition to the CPRG).
- Community engagement on priorities for reduction measures.

Per the CPRG grant program requirements, the CCAP must include:

- **Comprehensive GHG Inventory** – Including all GHG emissions and sinks by category for six key sectors: electricity generation, industry, transportation, buildings, agriculture/natural and working lands, and waste management.
- **Quantified GHG Reduction Measures** – A full suite of measures from the GHG emission sectors to meet reduction targets.
- **Review of Authority to Implement** – An indication of existing statutory and regulatory authority, along with a schedule of milestones for action needed by key entities to obtain necessary authority.
- **GHG Emissions Projections** – Near-term (e.g., 2030-2035) and long-term (e.g., 2050) projections, including a "business-as-usual" scenario and a scenario where the CCAP is fully implemented.
- **Benefits Analysis** – Quantified estimates of co-pollutant reductions (e.g., PM2.5, NOx, SO2, VOCs, air toxics, etc.) and tracking and minimizing any potential negative effects of GHG reduction measures.
- **Intersection of other Funding** – Identification of funding programs that are available or have been secured to pursue CCAP objectives.
- **GHG Reduction Targets** – Economy-wide near-term and long-term reduction targets for each jurisdiction, consistent with U.S. commitments to reduce emissions 50-52% relative to 2005 levels by 2030 and reach net-zero emissions by 2050.
- **LIDAC Benefits Analysis** – Evaluation of the extent to which GHG reduction measures will deliver co-pollutant emissions reductions and other benefits to low-income and disadvantaged communities (LIDACs).
- **Workforce Planning Analysis** – An analysis of anticipated workforce shortages that could hinder the achievement the CCAP goals, and identification of solutions and partners equipped to address those challenges.

Next steps for ICF include identifying, developing, and selecting GHG reduction measures, which entails the following:

- Review of existing plans and previous climate action planning efforts
- Completion of sector-specific analysis
- Community and stakeholder engagement
- Identification of potential measures
- Prioritization and selection

Staff has already provided ICF with the utility data required for the GHG inventory. Additionally, staff has provided ICF with the City's draft list of potential GHG reduction measures, which was compiled by various City departments.

As required of the grant, ICF developed an 8-minute online GHG Emissions Community Survey in both English and Spanish to gather public input. Staff plans to share the surveys via social media, post on the City's Engage Palm Desert Environmental Initiatives page and send out via email once the City Council is made aware of this project. Links to the survey can be found here in [English](#) and [Spanish](#).

Staff recently informed the Resource Preservation and Enhancement Committee (RPEC) of this project and assured them that they would have opportunities to provide input on the plan, including reviewing the draft before it is finalized. Staff also clarified that RPEC members would be kept updated on any planned community engagement and, if needed, a special meeting would be called to request their input between regularly scheduled meetings due to the priority nature of this project.

For reference, ICF completed a similar multi-jurisdictional plan for the San Bernardino Council of Governments (SBCOG) in 2021. The [San Bernardino County Regional Greenhouse Gas Reduction Plan](#) is available for review.

EECBG Funding

The \$118,000 in EECBG funding that was awarded to the City for development of a climate action plan requires expenditure by September 2025. According to the DOE grant manager, the City has two options:

1. We can reallocate the funds to a different energy-related project (e.g., energy audits and retrofits, solar installation, etc.). Staff will be meeting with other departments to discuss project feasibility.
2. Request an extension for expenditure of the grant funding with the intention of hiring a consultant to build off of the City's subchapter in the regional CCAP to develop a more comprehensive plan, to include implementation, monitoring, and reporting.

Staff will continue working with CVAG and ICF to complete the CCAP and will return to the City Council to request direction on the best use of EECBG funds once more information is available.

Legal Review:

This report has been reviewed by the City Attorney's Office.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

There is no financial impact associated with this request.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Draft List of Potential GHG Reduction Measures