

CITY OF CHARLOTTESVILLE, VIRGINIA
CITY COUNCIL AGENDA



Agenda Date:	May 1, 2023
Action Required:	Approvals
Presenter:	Kristel Riddervold, Environmental Sustainability Manager
Staff Contacts:	Emily Irvine Climate Program Specialist Kristel Riddervold, Environmental Sustainability Manager Stacey Smalls, Director of Public Works
Title:	2023 City Climate Protection Program – Program Support Grant with LEAP - \$78,833 (2nd reading)

Background

The City of Charlottesville’s Environmental Sustainability Division is proposing to provide already appropriated funds of \$78,833 to the Local Energy Alliance Program (LEAP) for support to the Climate Protection Program. The City has partnered with LEAP since its establishment, and this will be the ninth Program Support Grant.

Charlottesville has been involved with climate protection related efforts at the local level for over 15 years, beginning with the establishment of the Climate Protection Program following the City of Charlottesville’s 2006 commitment through the US Mayors Climate Protection Agreement to reduce communitywide greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. This focus and commitment were re-confirmed with the 2019 adoption of GHG emissions reduction goals and the approval of the Charlottesville Climate Action Plan in 2023.

Over 95% of Charlottesville’s GHG emissions are associated with non-municipal activities (the three largest sectors are residential buildings, commercial buildings, and transportation), indicating that success and progress in reducing our community’s emissions requires participation of the public and private sectors. Emissions-reducing actions are also associated with reduced energy usage, lower utility bills, greater comfort, and health benefits. As such, the Climate Protection Program has a focus on increasing the availability, accessibility, affordability, and awareness of programs and resources that support emission-reducing actions within the community. Successful efforts have routinely included an ongoing partnership with the Local Energy Alliance Program (LEAP) through a yearly program support agreement adjusted to the current needs of the City’s Climate Protection Program and the Charlottesville community.

LEAP, a Charlottesville-based 501c3 nonprofit, delivers energy efficiency solutions in Virginia to make homes safer, healthier, and more affordable, while also reducing energy usage and mitigating climate change. LEAP’s alliance model is a community-based, public-private partnership. LEAP’s

2022 Annual Report is attached.

LEAP leverages funding from various sources, including utility programs (e.g., Dominion Energy and Charlottesville Gas' low-income weatherization programs), grant opportunities, and the City-funded Home Energy Conservation Grant program – and braids them, where possible, to expand the services available to City residents and businesses. LEAP also harnesses the support of local nonprofits and other key stakeholders to increase awareness of relevant programs and educate community members about energy efficiency and renewable energy.

In 2022, LEAP connected residents with funded energy efficiency service programs and renewable energy programs (including Solarize Charlottesville) and launched a program to bring solar to low-income households, leveraging funding from Dominion Energy. LEAP brought energy efficiency services to 60 income and age-qualified households in the City of Charlottesville and installed solar on 22 homes. Annual reports reflecting LEAP's impact and reach are available at <http://leap-va.org/about/annual-reports>.

The passage of the Inflation Reduction Act will bring even more change to the funding landscape in the Commonwealth for energy efficiency and renewable energy services. With additional federal and state incentives and rebates, there will be an even greater need to connect City residents with fully-funded services and new programs. This is reflected in the proposed 2023 Program Support Agreement with LEAP.

Discussion

The proposed grant to LEAP provides ongoing support to the Climate Protection Program and continues the strategy to reduce energy consumption and associated greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, increase cost savings for residents, and contribute to the City's climate policy goals. As presented in the attached proposal, the ongoing partnership between LEAP and the City will continue a demonstrable, effective, and nimble model for delivering increased energy performance to the City's building sectors – in particular, its residential sector (owner-occupied and renter-occupied homes) at multiple income levels. LEAP continues to utilize City funds through these agreements to leverage and increase access for our residents to significant non-City funding sources to support increased levels of energy efficiency and renewable energy services implemented in Charlottesville.

City staff has closely coordinated with LEAP on the development of this proposal and appreciates the blend of activities aimed at engaging market-rate and low-income households, rental- and owner-occupied properties, new homeowners, and layering outreach on existing and trusted communication channels to reach target demographics. The proposed grant of \$78,833 to LEAP to implement the 2023 Climate Protection Program Support Agreement (attached) during the coming year will be used to support the City's Climate Action Plan and directly responds to various strategies and key action items in the Community Buildings and Energy sector, including:

- Strategy: Move New Construction closer to Net-Zero through increased levels of energy efficiency, incorporation of onsite renewable energy, and solar-ready building standards
 - Key Action: Develop recommended lists of solar-ready, EV-ready, and energy-efficiency design standards for residential new construction
- Strategy: Increase energy efficiency and onsite renewable energy use in existing buildings
 - Key Action: Education/Encouragement

- Key Action: Increase participation by low-income households in fully funded programs for energy efficiency improvements and solar energy systems
- Key Action: Develop and identify funding assistance programs designed for mid-income households
- Key Action: Develop and promote resource material specific to historic buildings

The attached Memorandum of Understanding provides a summary of the purposes of the funds, program parameters desired by the City, and reporting expectations.

Alignment with City Council's Vision and Strategic Plan

Approval of the Resolutions for the 2023 Climate Protection Program Support Grant aligns directly with Council's vision for Charlottesville to be A Green City with clean air and energy-efficient homes and buildings. It also contributes to the following goal/objective in the City's Strategic Plan:

Goal 3: A Beautiful and Sustainable Natural and Built Environment

Objective 3.4: Be responsible stewards of natural resources

Community Engagement

There have been and will continue to be numerous initiatives engaging various community audiences. Utilization of the resources offered through past support agreements and questions that City staff receive from community members seeking resources and information regarding improved energy use speak to community interest in these services. Additionally, public comments received during adoption of the new greenhouse gas reduction goals and development of the Climate Action Plan reflect the need for continued and increased levels of GHG emission reduction and climate adaptation actions.

Budgetary Impact

There is no additional budgetary impact to the City. Funding support for this program would come from funds that were previously appropriated as part of the Fiscal Year 2023 Gas Fund adopted budget within the Environmental Sustainability Division.

Recommendation

Staff recommends approval of the Resolutions.

Alternatives

If Council chooses not to proceed, other approaches to promote energy efficiency improvements in the residential and non-residential sectors will be examined.

Attachments

1. Annual Report 2022
2. 2023 CPP PSA Funding Resolution
3. 2023 CPP PSA Signature Resolution
4. 2023 CPP PSA MOU
5. 2023 LEAP PSA Proposal