

## **Section 1: Overall Project Summary and Approach (45 possible points)**

### **a. Description of GHG Reduction Measures (20 possible points)**

The intent of the targets and recommendations identified here are to provide the greatest amount of GHG emission reductions and impact the largest number of people. The City of Omaha requests EPA assistance funds to implement GHG reduction measures contained in a PCAP developed under a CPRG planning grant. During the PCAP process, Douglas County, containing the City of Omaha, was identified as producing 42% of the regional GHG emissions for the larger Omaha-Council Bluffs Metropolitan area (9,055,122 MT CO<sub>2</sub>e per year; PCAP page 25).

The City of Omaha, NE is focusing on commercial and residential buildings, electric power, solar power, agricultural and natural lands, and other (policy and management) sectors described in the NOFO. Energize Omaha expands projects for improving energy efficiency for homeowners and expands projects for developing the workforce necessary for energy efficiency gains. Expanding the Energize Omaha programs addresses the residential buildings sector. Omaha Saves is an expansion of rebate programs to address commercial and residential buildings and electric power sectors. ReNew Omaha expands implementation of solar projects. Green Omaha increases the acres of land dedicated to urban afforestation and green infrastructure projects addressing the natural lands sector. Sustain Omaha, creates the Planning Department staffing and Grant Management in the department of Planning to ensure continued community engagement in the programs, monitor and track GHG emissions reductions over time, and ensure outcome accountability. All programs were created and chosen for this grant application with a focus on benefits to LIDAC communities.

**Home Energy and Workforce Development Program; Climate Solutions Challenge Grant Energize Omaha!**, will focus on building energy retrofits, energy efficiency, and weatherization improvements, available to homeowners as an offering through Omaha Public Power District (OPPD) and Metropolitan Utilities District (MUD) and free or discounted for LMI households with a focus on homes located in the Justice40 and LIDAC communities. The retrofit, energy efficiency, and weatherization projects are all ready to be scaled up. **The Energize Omaha! Workforce Development program** through MCC (Metro Community College) will provide energy audits and retrofit installations. This is an opportunity to train individuals to implement these programs and work with the utility and the unions to create good paying, sustainable jobs.

Addressing a significant risk of project success is the focus of specific workforce development strategies. For example, the city of Omaha currently has only four energy auditors who had to be trained in Santa Fe, NM at a significant cost to the city. In order to scale up weatherization, electrification, and solar projects, many more energy auditors and trained workers will be needed. One-year certification programs have been identified to ensure the workforce for energy audits, weatherization, and solar installations. The city anticipates 150 people can be trained per year (estimated 600 people over a four-year time period), with an anticipated goal that 100% of participants in their programs come from energy burdened communities. The city has identified partners which incorporate members from the Steamfitters & Plumbers local 464, IBEW Local 22, and Local 39 Heat and Frost Insulators Unions. Additionally, incorporating a bilingual education component encourages diverse participation in their programs. The workforce development project improves LIDAC community resilience with improved economic opportunities and decreased energy use.

**Omaha Climate Solutions Challenge:** Omaha has a great opportunity to become a hub for climate solutions and technology. Greater Omaha is home to the largest irrigation companies in North America, and due to its strategic position in the center of the United States, the largest railway company in the world, and two of the largest trucking companies. Omaha is home to a Fortune 500 engineering firm. Omaha is home to universities producing a tremendous amount of applied research related to climate preparedness, resource management, and public health research. With all the talented people in these industries, adding green jobs should be a priority resulting in growth of clean, sustainable industry investments. The City has the opportunity to lead with targeted programs and investments and has a plan to do so by initiating the Omaha Climate Solutions Challenge grant program. With this competitive funding opportunity, the City of Omaha plans to provide \$10 million via a Climate Solutions Challenge Award selected through an RFP process. Dollars awarded will be tied to a minimum proven recurring annual emissions reduction potential of the submission. The Climate Solutions Challenge Award will be open to any submission capable of meeting or exceeding the minimum recurring emissions reduction threshold, be capable of continued operation beyond the term of the grant through sustained market income or other funding sources, and be capable of being replicated within the region or beyond. Examples of solution potentials which will be encouraged include the formation of an agricultural waste or municipal waste zero emission gasification project producing hydrogen, biodiesel, or aviation fuel; or a program using renewable electricity and electrolysis to produce renewable fuels. If no viable submissions are received, funds will be returned to the EPA or the City of Omaha will work with the EPA to re-allocate resources towards measures included in this proposal.

**Tasks:** Identify LMI housing in need of energy efficiency and weatherization improvements.  
Provide training and certification for workforce development program participants.  
Conduct energy audits and recommend retrofit measures.  
Implement retrofit projects including insulation, window upgrades, and solar installation.  
Establish GHG emission reduction grant opportunity through the issue of an RFP via the City.

**Milestones:** MCC workforce development program graduates 150 participants by Q2 2025.  
Completion of energy audits for identified LMI homes by Q4 2025.  
Retrofit installations completed in at least 50% of identified homes by Q3 2027.  
520 homes participate in the weatherization program per year; 2600 homes completed by 2030.

**Potential Risks:** Financial constraints for homeowners or program funding  
Limited availability of trained workforce.  
Homeowners not interested in participating.  
Regulatory hurdles or permitting delays.  
No viable proposals come forth for the grant opportunity.

**Extent GHG emissions reductions might be affected by the risks:**

Receiving funding from the EPA will eliminate financial constraints for homeowners to participate in home energy retrofits and weatherization improvements while providing assistance to homeowners to navigate participation in the program. This will reduce GHG emissions by improving energy efficiency and promoting renewable energy adoption in low-income households which rely on fossil fuels for heating and electricity. The City of Omaha will manage the program along with managing contracts with partners and funding coordination and will work with OPPD and MUD to implement the program while

working with MCC on workforce training implementation related to energy efficiency and weatherization improvements. Community organizations will assist with outreach to homeowners.

Expansion of **OPPD Energy Rebate Programs, Omaha Saves!**, will provide enhanced rebates for residential and commercial customers increasing support for energy efficiency and low emission building upgrades, appliances, and equipment available to all homeowners while prioritizing LMI households including: attic insulation, window replacement, solar installation, HVAC Smart (single and multi-family), HVAC tune-up, Smart thermostats, Cool Smart, HVAC (business). All rebate increases are to increase cost savings for income-qualified community members with a focus on LIDAC communities.

**Tasks:** Promote rebate programs through marketing and outreach efforts.  
Process rebate applications and verify compliance with program requirements.  
Monitor program effectiveness and adjust offerings as needed.

**Milestones:** Launch expanded rebate programs by Q1 2025.  
Achieve a 20% increase in program participation by Q3 2026.  
Evaluate program outcomes and make recommendations for improvements by Q1 2028.  
3,000 thermostats are replaced each year for five years for a total of 15,000 Smart thermostats installed.  
208 homes participate in a weatherization rebate program, including insulation and high-efficiency windows each year for a total of 1,040 over five years.

**Potential Risks:** Lack of awareness among customers about rebate programs.  
Insufficient budget allocation for rebates.  
Difficulty in verifying compliance with program requirements.

**Extent GHG emissions reductions may be affected by the risks:** Without the workforce, emissions reductions will remain minimal. The City of Omaha has been able to achieve some reductions in GHG emissions without expansion of projects in this program. For example, the City has been able to weatherize ~100 households on average and it is anticipated this slow rate of conversion would continue without an expansion in the workforce.

Developing comprehensive marketing campaigns to raise awareness of rebate programs, allocating sufficient resources to accommodate participation, and implementing robust verification processes to ensure program integrity will ensure success of the program. This measure reduces GHG emissions by reducing energy consumption by incentivizing energy-efficient upgrades. This will improve building energy efficiency across all sectors, improve access to weatherization, high-efficiency appliances, and whole-home energy solutions, and incentivize fleet electrification. The City of Omaha will work with OPPD on program administration and promotion.

**Solar Program, ReNew Omaha!** will create a comprehensive program to increase onsite renewable energy for residents, institutions, and businesses, prioritizing LMI households. Renew Omaha will include the following components:

**Residential solar group purchase campaign** with competitively bid contractor(s) offering base solar rates and sliding scale discounts to all program participants based on the total number of

households/KW sold through the program. Participants will be reached through a community-wide communication campaign and a series of 10 Power Hour presentations on solar benefits, rebates and incentives, resources available to community members, and the group purchase campaign program design. Community members will have the opportunity to sign up for a free, no obligation solar feasibility assessment including solar array cost proposal and payback illustration provided by the selected contractor(s). This program will include an income-qualified solar rebate of \$7,000 in addition to the program cost reduction benefits.

**Commercial solar group purchase campaign** with contractor(s) offering base solar rates and sliding scale discounts to participants based on the total number of KW sold through the program. Sites will be identified through outreach and engagement with key institutional and commercial properties with significant solar potential. These sites will be provided with a solar feasibility assessment and illustration of potential array financial performance and a presentation on solar benefits, resources available to community members, and the group purchase campaign program design.

**Henry Doorly Zoo Solar Arrays:** A keystone project included in the ReNew Omaha! commercial solar group purchase campaign with a total of 2 MW of solar arrays covering the public parking areas of the Henry Doorly Zoo (located in census tract 31055002500) to provide power for onsite use and shade for visitor parking, EV charging stations, and electrification of landscaping equipment and service vehicles for the zoo. As a substantial solar array, this project offers a robust seed project to start the commercial solar group purchase campaign and a requirement to illustrate local workforce training and employment opportunities by bidders for the commercial group purchase program. It will feature structured arrays over parking areas and represent a highly visible public solar project supporting solar PV interpretive opportunities.

**Solar Workforce Development:** ReNew Omaha! commercial solar group purchase campaign contractor(s) will be selected through a Request for Proposals which will include a requirement to outline opportunities for employment for those interested in entering the solar workforce. The ReNew Omaha commercial solar group purchase campaign bidding requirements for training and employment will have a focus on community members from Justice40 and LIDAC communities.

**Tasks:** Conducting site assessment and engineering design for solar array installation.

Secure permits and approvals for construction.

Install solar array and necessary infrastructure.

Retrofit landscaping equipment and service vehicles for electrification.

Explore future funding sources through the EERE (Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy) SETO (Solar Energy Technologies Office).

**Milestones:** Complete site assessment and design by Q4 2026.

Obtain all necessary permits by Q2 2027.

Installation of solar array and EV charging stations completed by Q3 2028.

Update zoning regulations to address renewable energy systems.

Annual participation in the residential solar program assumes 94 households participating annually for a total of 470 households over five years.

Annual participation in the commercial solar program (including the keystone project with Henry Doorly Zoo) assumes 50 participants per year for a total of 250 over 5 years.

**Potential Risks:** Delays in permitting process.

Technical challenges during installation.

**Extent GHG emissions reductions may be affected by the risks:** There is a very low risk reduction and gains will not occur with the zoo solar array. Similar to other projects, the reduction gains are dependent upon an increase in the workforce needed for solar installations.

Engaging with local authorities to expedite approvals, addressing technical issues with contractors, monitoring project budgets, and adjusting plans as needed will ensure success. The solar array and electrification of vehicles at Henry Doorly Zoo will directly reduce emissions associated with electricity consumption and fossil fuel use for transportation within the zoo premises. Through the grant period, the City will explore, identify, and establish funding mechanisms or approaches to enable the continued annual residential and commercial group purchase campaigns at the conclusion of the grant period.

**Native Species and Healthy Soil, Green Omaha!**, will create a comprehensive program to increase carbon sequestration and decrease heat island impacts through increases in tree canopy and native grassland coverage. When dark, dense surfaces bake in the intense summer heat, they absorb the heat, releasing the heat throughout the night. This means the city is unable to cool overnight leading to increased physiological stress and risk of death for city residents and infrastructure strain and damage. The Green Omaha program directly addresses the heat island effect by increasing tree canopy and replacing grass lawns with prairie plantings.

Keep Omaha Beautiful (KOB) and Grasslands Unlimited will plant trees and pollinator gardens in streetscapes, right-of-ways, and on vacant lots with a particular focus on heat island and LIDAC areas. Native Prairie program will partner with Omaha Public Schools (OPS) to establish and expand native prairie education and interpretive opportunities for students and community members. The program will identify existing acres on OPS and/or other public agency properties and convert them to native prairie installations. Grants and technical assistance to establish pollinator-friendly native plant landscapes or bee lawns on residential lawns in lieu of turf will be available. OPS is committed to placing 100% of their installations in LMI neighborhoods over the next five years, anticipating an expansion of these installations beyond 2030. The Nebraska Extension Office will support gardeners participating in Omaha's Urban Farm and Garden Registry, providing compost bins, pollinator seeds, and education. When urban areas use more prairie and forest plantings to replace existing grass or neglected weed spaces, many climate change goals can be addressed. Native plants have the capability of capturing and storing CO<sub>2</sub>, capturing and retaining water contributing to aquifer levels, decreasing the heat island effect, have the resiliency to withstand some drought conditions, can help support pollinator populations, and some plants can help remediate contaminated soils. Many CARP Climate Survey participants expressed a need for support, education, and encouragement in transitioning existing private and public spaces to native prairie and forest plantings.

Native Plant Nursery: Trees for Omaha, a partnership between Keep Omaha Beautiful and the City's Parks and Recreation Department will improve the resilience of the city's tree canopy by planting a diverse stock of native trees throughout the community. Through the development of a tree and native plant nursery, the City seeks to meet the demands and address the risks to project success if plants die

by providing potential replacement plants. Keep Omaha Beautiful is also prepared to assist with new plant demands through their established relationship with Great Plains Nursery (Weston, NE) to source trees and plants. Trees, pollinator gardens, bee lawns, and native prairie plantings will be focused in Justice40 and LIDAC communities.

**Tasks:** Identify suitable locations for tree and prairie plantings. When targeting a neighborhood, buy-in will be sought from a whole street to create a bigger prairie or urban forest.

Establish and maintain nursery programs for native plants. The nursery will develop a list of grasses, shrubs, and trees that are suitable.

Engage communities in pollinator habitat certification programs for planting initiatives. Give people information about how/when to water, when to prune, etc.

**Milestones:** Establish native plant nurseries by Q4 2025.

Plant trees and pollinator gardens in targeted neighborhoods by Q2 2026.

Expand program reach to additional communities by Q4 2026.

Remove regulatory barriers to allow cultivation of native prairie species.

500 trees will be planted each year for a total of 2,500 trees planted in five years.

75 acres of land will be converted each year for a total of 375 acres converted in five years.

**Potential Risks:** Lack of community engagement or interest.

Lack of tree or pollinator garden maintenance over time.

**Extent GHG emissions reductions may be affected by the risks:** Longer-term goals for GHG emission reductions may not be achieved without these projects.

The City will explore, identify, and establish funding mechanisms or approaches to enable the continued annual residential and commercial group purchase campaigns at the conclusion of the grant period.

PCAP measures include increasing the established tree canopy on non-agricultural land across all sectors and enhancing sustainable, native landscaping programs, habitats, and practices. Working with local nurseries to ensure a steady supply of native plants and engaging with community leaders and residents to promote participation in planting programs will ensure success of this program element. Keep Omaha Beautiful has secured 50% of the funding for the Trees for Omaha project. GHG emissions will be reduced by planting trees and native vegetation to sequester carbon dioxide from the atmosphere which will contribute to overall GHG reduction efforts.

**Sustain Omaha, Environment Planning Program Management** will establish a Planning Department, Staffing, and Grant Management within the Long-Range Division of the City of Omaha's Planning Department. The department will be responsible for managing the City's sustainability and climate action efforts, will work closely with and coordinate City departments in annual implementation of the City's Climate Action and Resilience Plan (CARP), and coordinate with partners in the implementation of managing the PCAP, CCAP, and other climate-action planning efforts. Staff will be responsible for coordinating regular city-wide and city operations GHG inventory updates. This department will create a public climate action planning and sustainability dashboard to monitor and report on climate action measures including PCAP and CCAP. This team will also be responsible for EPA CPRG grant management and reporting. This will serve two purposes – it will give the community and the City the opportunity to

measure progress against stated goals in addition to maintaining ongoing communications with the community.

**Tasks:** Integrate climate action planning into long-term City planning efforts.  
Develop and maintain public dashboard for tracking climate and sustainability metrics.  
Create a toolkit.

**Milestones:** Launch of public dashboard by Q1 2025 followed by regular, ongoing updates and progress reports.

**Potential Risks:** Technical challenges in dashboard development along with limited resources for ongoing maintenance and updates.

**Extent GHG emissions reductions may be affected by the risks:** The toolkit provides the mechanism for continued project participation including the number of new participants. Without this wrap around mechanism, persistence in reducing GHG emissions may not be achieved.

Each of the proposed GHG reduction measures aligns with priorities outlined in the PCAP and contributes to the goals of the CPRG by targeting key sectors and emission sources. These measures were selected as priorities based on their potential to achieve significant GHG emissions reductions and their alignment with community needs and priorities.

**Energize Omaha!** and **Omaha Saves!** addresses energy consumption in residential buildings which is a significant source of GHG emissions in urban areas. By targeting LMI households, the measure ensures equitable access to energy efficiency improvements and renewable energy technologies. Similarly, the expansion of OPPD rebate programs incentivizes energy-efficient upgrades across residential and commercial sectors, contributing to overall emissions reductions in the community.

**ReNew Omaha!** not only reduces emissions from onsite operations but also serves as a model for renewable energy adoption and sustainable practices.

**Green Omaha!** contributes to carbon sequestration efforts while enhancing biodiversity and community resilience to climate change impacts.

Finally, the **Sustain Omaha** measure of establishing Planning Department Staffing and Grant Management ensures effective coordination and monitoring of GHG reduction efforts, facilitating data-driven decision-making and accountability. By integrating climate action planning into long-term planning efforts and providing transparent reporting through a public dashboard, this measure will foster community engagement and ownership of climate goals.

Overall, the combination of these GHG reduction measures addresses multiple sectors and emission sources, leveraging diverse strategies to achieve meaningful emissions reductions and advance climate resilience in the City of Omaha. Decreases in GHG emissions, including VOCs, CO, PM 2.5, Ozone, Nitrous Oxides, and Sulfur Dioxide lead to measurable increases in people's health. Decreasing air pollution can lead to increases in lung function and cardiovascular health, decreases in morbidity and mortality rates,

and household health expenditures. A strength of this proposal is how the proposed projects go beyond GHG reductions by coupling outcomes in different sectors with single projects. By unifying outcomes under clearly defined campaigns, synergistic effects can be identified. Many of the projects include wrap-around services to ensure durability and persistence over time. For example, the toolkit serves as an information warehouse for individuals to pick a suite of solutions for their needs while also serving to engage disadvantaged individuals in the Justice 40 neighborhoods with education and workforce development opportunities. The first focus is on helping individuals reduce GHG emissions and then showing people employment possibilities, educating them on computer and app use, and encouraging a more engaged and connected neighborhood. The ripple effects don't lend themselves to clear quantifiable GHG reductions yet lead to a more robust community, capable of continuing improvement over time. The City of Omaha affirmatively declares that we will submit an MOA signed by all coalition members by July 1, 2024.

**b. Demonstration of Funding Need (10 possible points)**

The City of Omaha is committed to reducing GHG emissions as part of its broader sustainability initiatives. However, the implementation of GHG reduction measures requires substantial funding, which cannot be fully met by existing sources. While the City has diligently explored various funding avenues, including federal and non-federal grants, tax incentives, and other funding programs, there remains a critical gap that necessitates the allocation of EPA CPRG implementation funds.

Alternative funding resources are insufficient in tackling significant climate action change due to their limited scope, competitive nature, and budgetary constraints of private resources. The implementation of GHG reduction measures, such as upgrading infrastructure for renewable energy integration or improving resilience against climate impacts, entails significant upfront costs.

Given the limitations of existing funding sources, the allocation of EPA CPRG funds is imperative for Omaha's GHG reduction efforts since these resources offer several advantages: greater flexibility in addressing diverse GHG reduction measures, allowing the City of Omaha to tailor its initiatives to specific community needs and priorities; supplemental support which will ensure the comprehensive implementation of GHG reduction measures; long-term impact – CPRG funds can facilitate the transformative changes in the City of Omaha's energy infrastructure and resilience planning, resulting in long-term benefits for environmental sustainability and public health.

Recognizing the urgent need for action on climate change, the City of Omaha urges the allocation of EPA CPRG funds to accelerate its transition toward a resilient and sustainable future. Currently, the City of Omaha does not have a Climate Plan or actionable climate goals. With EPA funding now, the City of Omaha will reduce GHG emissions by 192,807.7 MT within the next five years. Allocation of EPA funds is critical to establishing a commitment to climate action and will jumpstart a transition toward a resilient, sustainable future. Additionally, by fully funding the Environmental Planning Office we can assure continued work toward key goals into the future.

**c. Transformative Impact (15 points)**

The proposed GHG reduction measures hold significant transformative potential in mitigating GHG emissions. Here's an analysis of how each measure contributes to transformative impacts:



**Smart thermostats:** By leveraging smart technology to optimize heating and cooling systems, these thermostats can significantly reduce energy usage (up to 12% reduction for heating and up to 15% for cooling) thus reducing GHG emissions and showcasing the pioneering nature of this technology. The City of Omaha proposes increasing the initial incentive from \$75 to \$100 and adding professional installation as an option (\$100 added cost) per device. The scalability and replicability of Smart thermostat programs across residential and commercial sectors make them an instrumental tool in accelerating the deployment of existing GHG emission reduction technologies. **The current estimate of GHG emission reductions as a result of this project is 32,283.8 tons of GHG over five years and 247,509.1 over 25 years.** This will reduce a customer's emissions via lower electricity usage while also reducing natural gas emissions for homes using natural gas for heating. While OPPD has an existing Smart thermostat program, adding to the incentive to cover the entire cost of purchase and eliminate installation obstacles makes saving money and lowering one's personal carbon footprint available to all customers.

**Residential Weatherization rebates:** Increase weatherization rebate incentives for both attic insulation and windows. Double attic insulation maximum from \$500 to \$1,000 and window replacement maximum incentive from \$1,000 to \$2,000. Investments in weatherization, such as adding attic insulation and installing high-efficiency windows offer tangible opportunities for GHG emission reductions. Achieving energy consumption reductions of up to 20% through insulation and up to 25%-30% through window replacements highlights the transformative impact of these measures. **The current estimate of GHG emission reductions over five years is 13,346.4 MT and over 25 years is 102,322.5 MT.** The scalability and replicability of weatherization rebate programs can lead to widespread adoption, particularly in areas where energy efficiency measures are not widely adopted.

**Energy Efficiency Assistance Programs:** Increasing the EEAP investment from \$2,500 per household to \$5,000 per household has the potential to double the amount of energy savings and carbon emission per home weatherization with energy efficiency retrofits at no cost to the household. The program includes a pre- and post-BPI audit that allows reporting of actual energy savings. The EEAP program post installation measure averages an approximately 18% reduction in energy savings (heating and cooling costs). **The current estimate of GHG emission reductions as a result of this project is 1,774.5 metric tons of GHG over five years and 13,604.1 over 25 years.** This existing program provides service to disadvantaged communities with 75% of existing program resources going to DAC designated communities throughout the region. Partners involved include Habitat for Humanity of Omaha, Project Houseworks, City of Omaha, Southeast Nebraska Community Action Partnership, Northeast Nebraska Community Action Partnership, Nebraska Department of Environment and Energy (NDEE), Community Action Partnership of Lancaster Saunders Counties, and Metropolitan Utilities District.

**Solar Program Renew Omaha!** Increases in customer-owned solar energy will offset the usage of fossil fuels. Increased adoption of solar technologies can accelerate the deployment and market adoption of renewable energy solutions. **The current estimate of GHG emission reductions as a result of this project is 331,078.6 metric tons over a 25-year period.** The plan is to provide funding to increase the amount of each solar rebate from \$2,000 to \$7,000 per system. This increase in the solar rebate will put solar within reach of lower income communities. This effort will improve economic development, reduce emissions, and improve public health. Increasing funding for this program would be very efficient

as no additional staff, processes, or software are needed to implement this immediately. The solar array at the Henry Doorly Zoo which will provide power for onsite use and shade for visitor parking, EV charging stations, and electrification of landscaping equipment and service vehicles to the zoo will be a pioneering, highly visible public solar project that will result in GHG emission reductions.

**Native Species and Healthy Soil:** The City of Omaha will increase carbon sequestration and decrease heat island impacts through increases in tree canopy and native grassland coverage. Increasing the tree canopy will help mitigate the summer heat island effect by helping ease daytime high temperatures and help decrease overnight low temperatures. The cooling effect provided by trees reduces the need for air conditioning, decreasing energy consumption and lowering the strain on the electrical grid during peak demand periods. Increasing the tree canopy also reduces stormwater runoff by intercepting rainfall before it reaches the ground. Some trees, like White Birch, have the ability to phytoremediate lead from the soils. Native prairie vegetation requires less maintenance resulting in lower emissions from lawnmowers. Prairie plants support pollinators and have extensive root systems that sequester carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and improve soil structure and infiltration rates, allowing rainwater to penetrate the soil more effectively, reducing runoff and the risk of flooding. Native prairie grasses can help with lead abatement by preventing lead mobilization into the air or away from the contamination location. As a result, GHG emissions will be reduced thanks to the lifespan of trees lasting between 30 and 100 or more years. With prairie restorations, effects are greatest in the first 25 years. **The current estimate of GHG emission reductions as a result of these efforts is 2474.2 MT over five years and 19,118.1 over 25 years.** Another added benefit is educational opportunities in partnership with Omaha Public Schools to increase awareness of the benefits of trees and native grasses.

**Environmental Planning Management:** Establishing this planning department in the City of Omaha will be critical to overseeing all efforts in the CCAP to reduce GHG emissions in addition to managing Omaha's Climate Action Plan. Additional GHG reductions will be realized through the Climate Action Toolkit and promotion of engagement in household and business reduction actions. The Toolkit will provide a range of actions a household can take to align with CARP goals; when aligned completely, a household would reduce annual emissions by as much as 25-45% by 2030, reducing their home electric and natural gas emissions 4.4 MT, their vehicle use emissions 1.7 MT and their waste emissions 0.4 MT for a total household reduction of 6.4 MT annually. **The current estimate of GHG emission reductions as a result of these efforts is 26,250 over five years and 201,250 over 25 years.**

These strategies will have an impact on GHG reduction measures in the OPPD 13-county service area, which includes five counties in the Omaha-Council Bluffs MSA: Douglas, Sarpy, Washington, Saunders, and Cass; and eight additional impacted counties including Dodge, Burt, Dakota, Dixon, Nemaha, Otoe, Colfax, and Wayne. These strategies have the potential to create transformative opportunities and impacts that can lead to significant GHG emissions reductions. Investing in these initiatives is critical for achieving meaningful progress toward climate mitigation goals.

For projects focusing on homeowner participation and requiring workforce development, we anticipate participation increasing the most through years 2-10. Participation beyond year 10 becomes very challenging to quantify because it is dependent on previous participation rates. For example, once the solar array has been installed at the zoo, no further GHG reductions are anticipated, though other organizations may be inspired to implement a project of their own. The technologies used for proposed

projects are known, reliable, and field tested. The projects proposed for this grant have a high level of certainty in achieving the GHG reduction goals in the near term while anticipating continued long-term reductions.

## Section 2: Impact of GHG Reduction Measures (60 possible points)

### a. Magnitude of GHG Reductions from 2025 through 2030 (20 possible points)

<i>Program Name</i>	<i>Project Type</i>	<i>Total Cumulative GHG MT CO<sub>2</sub>-e Reductions (2025-2030)</i>	<i>Durability Rating (1-3)</i>
<b>Energize Omaha</b>	Home Electrification	13494.70	3
	Omaha Climate Solutions Challenge	60000.00	3
<b>Omaha Saves</b>	Smart Thermostats	32283.80	3
	Residential Weatherization Rebates	13346.40	3
	EEAP Expansion	1774.50	3
<b>ReNew Omaha Solar Program</b>	Residential Group Solar Purchase + Solar Rebate	6872.40	3
	Institutional and Commercial Group Purchase (Including Henry Doorly Zoo Project)	36312.00	3
<b>Green Omaha</b>	Tree Planting in Parks and Right of Way	23.20	3
	Native Grass Plantings in Parks and Right of Way	1935.00	3
	Omaha Lawns to Legumes	516.00	3
<b>Sustain Omaha</b>	Planning Department Staffing and Grants Management	26250.00	3

**Durability of Projects:** In order to communicate the durability of projects and whether project components are likely to contribute GHG emissions as they age, we are using a rating scale for sections 2a and 2b where:

1= Project components will require replacement in less than 10 years or increased maintenance

2= Project components are likely to require replacement or upgrading after 10-15 years  
 3= Project components have longer lifespans, lower maintenance, and are likely to result in the permanent reduction in GHG emissions.

**Extent to which the measures will result in a permanent reduction in cumulative GHG emissions:** The projects for each of the programs are highly likely to lead to permanent reductions in GHG with very few documented lifespan GHG emission changes.

b. **Magnitude of GHG Reductions from 2025 through 2050** (10 possible points)

Program Name	Project Type	Total Cumulative GHG MT CO2-e Reductions (2030-2050)	Durability Rating (1-3)
<b>Energize Omaha</b>	Home Electrification	103459.00	2
	Omaha Climate Solutions Challenge	520000.00	3
<b>Omaha Saves</b>	Smart Thermostats	247509.10	2
	Residential Weatherization Rebates	102322.50	3
	EEAP Expansion	13604.10	3
<b>ReNew Omaha Solar Program</b>	Residential Group Solar Purchase + Solar Rebate	52688.60	3
	Institutional and Commercial Group Purchase (Including Henry Dooly Zoo Project)	278390.00	3
<b>Green Omaha</b>	Tree Planting in Parks and Right of Way	327.10	2
	Native Grass Plantings in Parks and Right of Way	14835.00	2
	Omaha Lawns to Legumes	3956.00	3
<b>Sustain Omaha</b>	Planning Department Staffing and Grants Management	201250.00	3

**Durability of Projects:** Please see rating scale in section 2a.

**Extent to which the measures will result in a permanent reduction in cumulative GHG emissions:** The projects for each of the programs are highly likely to lead to permanent reductions in GHG with very few documented lifespan GHG emission changes.

c. **Cost Effectiveness of GHG Reductions** (15 possible points)

Program Name	Project Type	Quantified CPRG Reductions 2025-2030	Grant \$/ton 2025-2030	\$ Benefit to LIDAC	Quantified CPRG Reductions 2025-2050	Grant \$/ton 2025-2050
<b>Energize Omaha</b>	Home Electrification	13,170.8	\$1,235.70	\$16,268,223.00	100976.30	\$161.11
	Omaha Climate Solutions Challenge	60000.00	\$170.42	\$0.00	520000.00	\$19.66
<b>Omaha Saves</b>	Smart Thermostats	12913.50	\$92.93	\$720,000.00	99003.60	\$12.12
	Residential Weatherization Rebates	5646.60	\$194.81	\$220,000.00	43290.30	\$25.41
	EEAP Expansion	887.20	\$788.98	\$140,00.00	6802.10	\$102.91
<b>ReNew Omaha Solar Program</b>	Residential Group Solar Purchase + Solar Rebate	5549.40	\$680.25	\$3,400,000.00	42545.40	\$88.73
	Institutional and Commercial Group Purchase (Including Henry Doorly Zoo Project)	18201.60	\$273.33	\$280,000.00	139545.70	\$35.65

<b>Green Omaha</b>	Tree Planting in Parks and Right of Way	23.20	\$34,495.19	\$800,000.00	327.10	\$2,445.63
	Native Grass Plantings in Parks and RoW	1935.00	\$263.31	\$509,500.00	14835.00	\$34.34
	Omaha Lawns to Legumes	516.00	\$3,798.84	\$1,415,700.00	3956.00	\$495.50
<b>Sustain Omaha</b>	Planning Department Staffing and Grants Management	26250.00	\$55.43	\$1,455,050.50	201250.00	\$7.23

d. **Documentation of GHG Reduction Assumptions** (15 possible points). *Technical Appendix*

### **Section 3: Environmental Results – Outputs, Outcomes, and Performance Measures (30 possible points)**

a. **Expected Outputs and Outcomes** (10 possible points)

**The top three emissions sources for the City of Omaha are as follows: Electricity Consumption (42%), Mobile Combustion (32.2%), and Stationary Combustion (19.3%)** followed by Solid Waste (5.2%) and Wastewater (1.3%). Base year is 2022. The City of Omaha is not focusing on mobile combustion for this proposal. Douglas County makes up 42% of the total GHG emissions for the region. The City of Omaha comprises the majority of Douglas County. Emissions were calculated using the EPA Local Greenhouse Gas Inventory Tool (LGGIT). Total emissions are presented in metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent (MT CO<sub>2</sub>e).

**Electricity** consumption data was obtained for commercial, residential, and industrial use from the Omaha Public Power District (OPPD). Base year is 2022. OPPD data included emissions over the last seven years separated by both county and type in kWh.

**Smart thermostats** can significantly reduce energy usage (up to 12% reduction for heating and up to 15% for cooling) thus reducing GHG emissions. The current estimate of GHG emission reductions as a result of this project is 32,283.8 tons of GHG over five years and 247,509.1 over 25 years.

**Solar rebates:** Increases in customer-owned solar energy offsets the usage of fossil fuels. The current estimate of GHG emission reductions is 331,078.8 metric tons over a 25-year life span. The plan is to provide funding to increase the amount of each solar rebate from \$2,000 to \$7,000 per system. This increase in the solar rebate will put solar within closer reach of lower income communities. The

keystone project at the Henry Doorly Zoo, a substantial solar array over parking areas, will represent a highly visible solar project and serve as a catalyst to start the commercial solar group purchase campaign and will require bidders to illustrate local workforce training and employment opportunities.

**Energy Efficiency Assistance Programs:** The program includes a pre- and post-BPI audit that allows reporting of actual energy savings. The EEAP program post-installation measure averages an approximately 18% reduction in energy savings (heating and cooling costs). The current estimate of GHG emission reductions as a result of this project is 1774.5 metric tons of GHG over 5 years.

To track **stationary combustion**, data received from the Metropolitan Utilities District (MUD) was organized by zip code. Zip codes were sorted by county and entered into the appropriate county LGGIT tool. Base year for this data was 2022. The LGGIT tool requires stationary fuel consumption data to be entered in thousands of cubic feet (mcf). Where appropriate, data was converted from the units in which it was received into mcf to facilitate entry into the LGGIT tool. In instances where data was provided in MT CO<sub>2</sub>e, emissions were back calculated to mcf using the proportion of each gas found within MT CO<sub>2</sub>e, each respective gas' Global Warming Factor (GWP), a conversion from metric tons to kilograms, and finally to thousands of cubic feet using the Stationary Combustion Natural Gas EPA factors.

Stationary combustion is split into two categories: combustion associated with construction and combustion associated with existing buildings. Enhancements to building codes and local incentive programs must focus on high efficiency, whole-building systems that reduce or lower energy consumption (and thereby emissions) associated with machinery and systems like appliances and HVAC systems.

**Residential Weatherization rebates:** Investments in weatherization offer tangible opportunities for GHG emission reductions. The current estimate of GHG emission reductions over five years is 13,346.4 MT and over 25 years is 102,322.5 MT. Energy efficiency can be improved immediately by: increasing energy conservation efforts with investments concentrated in LIDAC neighborhoods; expanding/instituting rebate programs for purchase of high-efficiency appliances and home systems; increasing training availability and opportunities in renewable energy systems, building weatherization retrofitting, and high-efficiency systems installation and maintenance.

**Workforce Development Strategy:** Metro Community College and University of Nebraska-Omaha along with trade unions will provide training and development support for workforces used in energy efficiency, weatherization improvements, and the solar program. Workforce participants will graduate with a certification and will work as contractors for small and emerging businesses via trade unions.

**Omaha Climate Solutions Challenge:** With this competitive grant funding, re-granting opportunities will be available to start-up entities and small businesses to expand weatherization efforts and reduce GHG emissions. \$5,000 will be awarded per annual MT of GHG emissions that are reduced.

**Native Species and Healthy Soil:** The City's tree canopy and native grass land coverage will increase which will lead to increased carbon sequestration and decrease the impacts of urban heat islands.

The City of Omaha will track progress toward achieving these specific outcomes.

b. **Performance Measures and Plan** (10 possible points)

Energy efficiency can be improved immediately by: increasing energy conservation efforts with initial investments concentrated in LIDAC neighborhoods; implementing and expanding rebate programs for purchase of high-efficiency appliances and home systems; increasing training availability and opportunities in renewable energy systems, building weatherization retrofitting, and high-efficiency systems installation and maintenance.

To track progress toward achieving the expected outputs and outcomes for each GHG reduction measure, the City of Omaha will track and measure the following data:

**Smart thermostats** – demand response in addition to energy efficiency and GHG reductions

**Solar rebates** – total number of solar systems installed compared to previous years

**EEAP** – energy efficiency and GHG reductions

The City of Omaha will increase access to building energy alternatives and increase the share of the electric utility portfolio serving the community from 35% to 50% by 2030 by encouraging the development of alternative and renewable energy options across all sectors and encouraging conversion from onsite fossil fuel combustion to electrification or renewable fuels across all sectors. The City of Omaha will improve total city-wide building energy efficiency in all sectors by 5% for electricity and natural gas by 2030.

Energy conservation methods like switching to LED lights are driven by the industry and availability of viable technologies. Newer appliances that are EnergyStar rated and are more efficient can represent a significant cost burden on households. Existing incentive programs focus on minor energy repairs, minor weatherization projects, and minor exterior enhancements. This program could be expanded to include windows, insulation, and appliance and residential solar rebates. Working with local electric providers to enhance weatherization programs to include a rebate program to replace inefficient appliances for more efficient washers and dryers, water heaters, HVAC systems, and installation of solar systems can reduce energy consumption within buildings. Incentive and rebate programs could be tiered to serve specific geographic and income thresholds and then further expanded throughout the region.

The City of Omaha will reduce the share of the population living in energy poverty by improving access to weatherization, high-efficiency appliances, and whole-home energy solutions. Initial investments to enhance and increase weatherization and appliance rebate programs within LIDAC communities will reduce energy consumption and serve as a first step toward the development of whole-home systems. Rebate programs for energy-efficient appliances reduce the cost burden of retrofitting older homes and promote health benefits of appliances with fewer emissions. The rebate program will also provide long-term economic benefits through reduced operating costs of new appliances. While all residents could benefit from this program, vulnerable populations who typically live in older housing stock and have fewer resources for home improvements will benefit from an improved rebate program for energy efficient appliances and expanded weatherization.

**Workforce Development:** A National Renewal Energy Laboratory (NREL) presentation from February 2022, focused on a workforce needs analysis, stated that Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP)



grantees and subgrantees faced significant challenges in hiring and retaining field staff in positions critical to running and maintaining weatherization programs across the country, meaning the need is great to fill these positions with qualified talent. The goal is to train 150 per year over four years for a total of 600 community members trained in energy efficiency, weatherization, and solar-related job skills. The number one barrier to training organizations was lack of training capacity followed by funding. Key takeaways included the Midwest region facing the largest labor shortage and with the lowest capacity to accommodate production increases. The City of Omaha will collaborate with partners with expertise in job quality, labor standards, and workforce development to ensure that jobs created under this plan align with the eight "Good Jobs Principles" developed by the U.S. Department of Labor and Department of Commerce.

**Omaha Climate Solutions Challenge:** Measures of success for this grant program include awarding \$500 per annual MT of GHG emissions reduced. Awards will only be given to projects that can illustrate successfully meeting that goal. Over the first five years of operation, the successful project would reduce 60,000 MT of emissions, providing an ROI of \$166 grant dollars per MT offset, and through 2050, it is projected to reduce 520,000 MT.

**Native Species and Healthy Soil:** Performance measures include increasing the established tree canopy on non-agricultural land across all sectors and enhancing sustainable, native landscaping programs, habitats and practices. Calculations for tree canopy increases are based on the USDA Forestry Service carbon sequestration rates per tree canopy acreage for the State of Nebraska totaling 23.2 MT of GHG reduction over five years. Calculations for native prairie replacement of turf are calculated based on a prairie restoration project in Illinois of 75 acres per year x 1.72 MT per acre for a total cumulative GHG reduction of 1935 MT over five years. Native prairie vegetation typically requires less maintenance, including mowing and fertilizing, compared to traditional turf grasses. Prairie plants have deep root systems that sequester carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, which helps mitigate climate change by storing carbon in the soil. Native prairie vegetation provides greater ground cover which creates more shade and reduces the absorption of solar radiation by the ground surface. The deep root systems of prairie plants can enhance soil moisture retention, which can reduce the urban heat island effect. This reduces surface runoff and the risk of flooding during heavy rainfall events. The dense root systems of prairie plants help stabilize soil and prevent erosion, which can reduce sedimentation in water bodies and improve water quality.

**c. Authorities, Implementation Timeline, and Milestones** (10 possible points)

Robert Laroco in the City of Omaha Planning Department is designated as project manager for the overall CARP as well as management of the CPRG grant, including the development and submission of the PCAP, CCAP, and status updates. These updates will be given to the City Council at a monthly meeting.

The City of Omaha Planning Department will be responsible for program management, funding coordination, and oversight of all elements of the plan. Collaboration with OPPD, MUD, MCC, Henry Doorly Zoo, local authorities in city government, Keep Omaha Beautiful, Omaha Public Schools (OPS), and contractors will ensure effective implementation. MCC will provide workforce development training and OPPD and MUD will implement energy retrofits and weatherization improvements with the newly trained workforce in addition to energy rebate programs.

### **Energize Omaha! Implementation Timeline**

**Preparation Phase (Months 1-6):** Develop program guidelines and training curriculum, coordinate with partners for program alignment, identify target communities and outreach strategies. Create grant guidelines and market grant opportunities.

**Execution Phase (Months 7-48):** Provide workforce training and certifications, assist homeowners in participation process, conduct energy audits and retrofit installations. RFP released and implementation of successful grant projects.

**Evaluation Phase (Months 49-60):** Assess program effectiveness and homeowner satisfaction, analyze energy savings and GHG reductions, prepare semi-annual and final reports for grant compliance. Evaluate challenge grant program and report for final compliance.

### **Omaha Saves! Implementation Timeline**

**Preparation Phase (Months 1-6):** Enhance rebate programs, develop marketing campaigns, finalize program guidelines.

**Execution Phase (Months 7-48):** Promote rebate programs, process applications and issue rebates, monitor program integrity.

**Evaluation Phase (Months 49-60):** Assess participation rates and cost savings, adjust program as needed based on feedback, prepare reports for grant compliance.

### **ReNew Omaha! Implementation Timeline**

**Preparation Phase (Months 1-12):** Develop program framework and bidding documents, identify residential and commercial participants, engage with local authorities for permits.

**Execution Phase (Months 13-50):** Conduct group purchase campaigns, install residential and commercial solar systems, begin Henry Doorly Zoo solar array project.

**Evaluation Phase (Months 51-60):** Assess solar adoption rates, monitor project budgets and timelines, prepare reports for grant compliance.

### **Green Omaha! Implementation Timeline**

**Preparation Phase (Months 1-12):** Develop nursery program and identify planting sites, engage with partners for collaboration, secure necessary approvals.

**Execution Phase (Months 13-50):** Plant trees, pollinator gardens, and native prairies, provide grants and assistance for residential lawn conversions, support gardeners participating in urban farming.

**Evaluation Phase (Months 51-60):** Assess impact on carbon sequestration and community resilience, analyze community engagement and participation, prepare reports for grant compliance.

### **Sustain Omaha! Office of Environmental Planning Implementation Timeline**

**Preparation Phase (Months 1-12):** Establish OEP and develop planning framework, coordinate with city departments for integration, engage with community partners for input.

**Execution Phase (Months 13-50):** Manage sustainability and climate action efforts, coordinate with partners on PCAP and CCAP implementation, develop public dashboard for monitoring and reporting.

**Evaluation Phase (Months 51-60):** Assess progress against goals, review effectiveness of climate action measures, plan for sustainability beyond grant period.

Throughout the implementation timeline, regular communication and collaboration between all parties involved will be essential. Semi-annual and final reports will be prepared for grant compliance, highlighting progress, challenges, and outcomes of each GHG reduction measure. These reports will serve as a basis for continuous improvement and future planning.

#### **Section 4: Low-Income and Disadvantaged Communities (35 possible points)**

##### **a. Community Benefits (25 possible points)**

The intent of the recommendations identified here are to provide the greatest amount of GHG emission reductions and impact the largest number of people. The City of Omaha and the regional MSA are working in collaboration as the relationship has been developed through the PCAP. Additional collaboration between the MSA and the state is also expected. Through the creation of the CCAP, additional collaboration will be explored in greater detail.

Climate equity is the goal of recognizing and addressing the unequal burdens made worse by climate change, while ensuring that all people share the benefits of climate protection efforts. Achieving equity means that all people – regardless of race, color, gender, age, sexuality, national origin, ability, or income – live in safe, healthy, fair communities.

Climate equity can be woven into the broader efforts to address the socioeconomic and physical impacts of climate change. It is a public health issue and the following principles were considered in the development of the CCAP:

**Engage.** Include people with diverse backgrounds and experience in community efforts to address climate change. Foster honest, meaningful conversation, meet people where they are already active (in schools and community centers), and involve leaders who are respected in the community. Indigenous and local knowledge can advance understanding of climate change effects and solutions. Amplify the voices of those who are most vulnerable, underserved, and overburdened.

**Share.** Connect communities with information and data that will help them prepare for climate impacts. Help communities access relevant resources to create grassroots solutions.

**Build.** Consider solutions based on equity that boost resilience while improving social and economic well-being, accessibility, and livelihoods. Solutions should include improving the efficiency of buildings, investing in low-carbon transportation networks, and adding green spaces in urban areas. These solutions can also promote additional benefits by mitigating the effects of urban heat islands, reducing air pollution, and strengthening community interaction.

**Prepare.** Climate equity includes the ways communities prepare for and respond to extreme climate events. Consider how overburdened and underserved groups have different needs during an emergency situation. Being ready to address those needs is a part of effective disaster response and good governance.

The burdens caused by past actions, inactions, and attitudes specific to climate disproportionately impact the most vulnerable people in our community. A commitment to an equitable, just, and inclusive approach to climate action is critical to the development and implementation of this plan.

The Energy and Affordable Housing Innovation Hub (The Hub) will focus on energy workforce and construction-related trades in combination with a residential weatherization and climate resiliency program serving low to moderate income families. The Hub will be a central location for education and training, proposed in North Omaha's Highlander neighborhood, where energy burden is high and vulnerable populations exceed the city-wide average by more than 5%. The Hub supports the Justice 40 initiative's goals in Omaha by serving LMI families in areas identified as disadvantaged and energy burdened according to the Climate on Economic Justice Screening Tool. The City of Omaha, University of Nebraska-Omaha, and Heartland Workforce Solutions will work together on the workforce development program component of this proposal. In addition, Modern Fortress, a structural insulated panel manufacturer is interested in activating their first line which could produce enough insulated panels to build four-five houses per month, which could be a game-changer for energy retrofits and new affordable homes. 600 individuals will attain training, certification, and support needed to enter the workforce to participate in solar programs, rebate programs, and weatherization programs while working with low to moderate income households to retrofit their homes.

According to the U.S. Department of Energy and Environment (DOEE), "Energy efficiency is one of the easiest and most cost-effective ways to combat climate change, reduce energy costs for consumers, and improve the competitiveness of U.S. businesses. Energy efficiency is also a vital component in achieving net-zero emissions of carbon dioxide through decarbonization."

Residential energy efficiency is believed to have the greatest potential in CO2 reduction. "Residential energy GHG emissions total 1.82 million metric tons annually, approximately 42% of the city-wide building energy sector emissions," according to data provided by Pale Blue Dot for the city of Omaha's Climate Action Baseline and Strategic Goals. The report also identified the significant difference in energy efficiency in homes produced after 2000. National data suggests that newer homes use between 15% and 40% less energy than homes built prior to 1980. 80% of Omaha's housing stock was built prior to 2000. Thus, a retrofit and energy efficiency program is one of the most significant opportunities the city of Omaha has that will benefit renters and homeowners alike as well as align with significant GHG reduction goals.

National data from DOEE estimates a weatherized home on average reduces carbon dioxide emissions by one metric ton per home. Over the life of the weatherization measures implemented, it is estimated to reduce 53 metric tons of CO2 emissions per house (2010 data).

The solar industry has also seen advances that have led to an over 40% reduction in the cost of solar technology systems in the last decade. Nebraska is ranked 47<sup>th</sup> for total installed solar capacity with only .32% of the state's electricity coming from solar power, according to the City's Renewable Energy Potential Study. Providing solar options in conjunction with advanced weatherization approaches maximizes reduction in GHG emission and cost savings for households. Smart electrification practices and technology paired with renewable energy sources creates a pathway to carbon free electrification.

**b. Community Engagement (10 possible points)**

The public engagement process has leveraged the interest of the community through the City of Omaha engagement plan in coordination with MAPA at the broader regional level. Early engagement opportunities relied on virtual and multimedia platforms to allow the most access of materials to stakeholders, the general public, and especially the low-income and disadvantaged communities

identified during the process. The City of Omaha used existing opportunities to enhance and expand engagement efforts.

The City of Omaha released an initial survey in English and Spanish to increase awareness through social media, newsletters, and public websites. The survey has garnered over 2,000 responses. The survey captured details on potential and planned projects for inclusion in the PCAP, introducing the community to a number of climate and resiliency ideas and to consider the impact of these strategies within the community. A program website was developed by MAPA and the City of Omaha to educate people regarding planning efforts. Webinars have been presented to engage a wider audience. The City of Omaha has continued engagement efforts: several virtual and in-person open houses, Power Hour community information sessions, targeted outreach to institutions and businesses for participation in the Solar Group Purchase program which will include information and content around renewable energy's benefits and incentives, discounts, tax credits, and resources available, attendance at a local "Seed Swap" event, listening sessions with under-represented communities (the Urban Indian Health Coalition, the Fabric Lab, Girls, Inc. and others), and focus group workshops. Additional efforts to engage the community are being scheduled for spring and summer 2024, including education and outreach to Omaha's Urban Farm and Garden Registry and information included in the annual tree sale.

Public outreach efforts have included online outreach via websites promoting the regional planning effort (<https://mapacog.org/projects/cprg/>) and the City of Omaha's plan ([www.omacap.org](http://www.omacap.org)) in addition to partner websites (including OPPD). Content includes a plan overview and background, schedule, information on opportunities for public input (survey and community meetings), frequently asked questions, and a comment form. All content and graphics are ADA compliant and updates are ongoing as new information is available. Social media outlets have also been used to promote the survey and key milestones reached toward the regional goals. Press releases are sent to the media to promote opportunities for community comments in addition to communicating key milestones. Project flyers were distributed at community gathering spaces across Omaha – particularly in Justice 40 communities to promote opportunities for public input (including the survey and community meetings).

The City of Omaha is working with an executive committee to guide the process of developing the Climate Action and Resilience Plan. The group is responsible for identifying issues and providing community, infrastructure, and economic insights to the Planning Team. Representatives from the following organizations serve on the Executive Committee: City of Omaha, Metropolitan Area Planning Agency (MAPA), Metropolitan Utilities District (MUD), Omaha Public Power District (OPPD), University of Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC), Douglas County, and Omaha by Design.

Additionally, the City of Omaha is also working with Community Stakeholder Focus Groups, a group of identified stakeholders that serves as the voice of the community who provide input and feedback on the plan development and will be empowered to lead actions in their homes or workplaces.

Group listening sessions and one-on-one interviews are being held to deepen understanding of needs and build relationships to identify best ways to broaden engagement within the community. Justice 40 communities in Omaha have been and are anticipated to be disproportionately impacted by climate change. The goal of this engagement is to identify key Climate Engagement Champions who can support authentic communication within key communities. Targeted organizations include: Spark, Fabric Lab, Simple Foundation, Restoring Dignity, Refugee Empowerment Center, Latino Center of the Midlands,

Intercultural Senior Center, Disability Advisory Commission through the Omaha Mayor's Office, and Urban Indian Health Coalition.

Finally, youth engagement in the plan development is critical to the success of the plan and future climate justice concerns. Omaha's youth will ultimately be the community who reach the CARP's net zero goal. Youth engagement has occurred through the following organizations: Girls Inc., University of Nebraska Sustainability Summit, University of Northern Illinois Communications Small Group (in partnership with HDR), UNMC College of Public Health, and UNL College of Architecture. Kiewit Luminarium, Henry Doorly Zoo, Lauritzen Gardens, and Omaha Public Schools have all been engaged and will continue to be engaged in future planning efforts and implementation.

Elected officials from the City of Omaha have been actively engaged as the climate action plan has been developed, including participation in a community listening session. The City of Omaha will report on their community engagement and, as applicable, the strategy for mitigating environmental risks through the Community Action Toolkit.

### **Section 5: Job Quality (5 possible points)**

The following strategies will be implemented to ensure generation of high-quality jobs:

**Implement prevailing wage requirements:** Require contractors, subcontractors, and sub-awardees to pay workers the prevailing wage for their respective trades or professions. This ensures workers receive fair compensation for their labor and prevents wage exploitation.

**Promote union participation:** Encourage the use of unionized labor by prioritizing contractors and subcontractors who have agreed to labor union agreements. This ensures that workers have access to collective bargaining rights, fair wages, benefits, and workplace protections.

**Provide training and apprenticeship programs:** Invest in workforce development programs that offer training and apprenticeship opportunities for local residents, especially from low-income and disadvantaged communities. Partner with community colleges, vocational schools, labor unions, and apprenticeship programs to provide comprehensive training in relevant trades and skills needed for GHG reduction measures.

**Support Career Pathways:** Create pathways for career advancement and upward mobility within the green economy. Offer opportunities for skill development, certification, and advancement to help workers build sustainable careers in industries related to energy efficiency, renewable energy, construction, and environmental remediation.

**Ensure Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility:** Implement policies and practices to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion. Encourage the recruitment and retention of workers from underrepresented groups, including women, minorities, veterans, and people with disabilities. Take proactive measures to address barriers to entry and advancement faced by marginalized communities.

**Enforce Labor Standards and Worker Protections:** Require compliance with all relevant labor laws, regulations, and safety standards. Conduct regular monitoring and enforcement to ensure that contractors and subcontractors adhere to fair labor practices, occupational health and safety requirements, and anti-discrimination policies.

**Foster Worker Voice and Representation:** Establish mechanisms for worker participation, feedback, and representation in decision-making processes related to CPRG implementation. Promote worker empowerment through avenues such as worker councils, labor-management partnerships, and employee involvement programs.

Opportunities to enter energy-related careers will be available to residents within energy-burdened communities at no cost. Energy auditors, quality control inspectors, crew leaders, retrofit installers, solar installers, and repair persons that serve the energy sector in HVAC and electrical support are high-paying jobs that are in high-demand across the region. The Hub will create equitable opportunities for residents in LMI areas to become equipped to serve in a workforce as subcontractors in partnership with weatherization grantees and market-rate partners that will be critical to the success of state-wide energy programs and achieving state, MSA and city-wide climate action goals.

A National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) training presentation from February 2022, focused on a workforce needs analysis, cites that Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) grantees and subgrantees faced significant challenges in hiring and retaining field staff in positions critical to running and maintaining weatherization programs across the country. The report focused on the high demand in the Midwest and Plains regions for retrofit installers/technicians, Crew Leaders, Energy Auditors, and Quality Control Inspectors. In addition to current shortages, NREL notes that the federal funding aligned with the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law through the DOE is pushing this demand with expectation of shortage gaps increasing by up to four times the current demand by 2024.

The study also shows that staff in grantee and subgrantee positions cite working conditions as among the top reasons for turnover in WAP-related fields. The study concluded that programs that worked with subcontractors had 60%-80% lower turnover rates and greater capacity to accommodate production increases. Certification for grantees and subgrantees were also noted as a challenge to future needs, with prerequisite requirements and time commitment among the top concerns. The number one barrier to training organizations was lack of training capacity followed by funding. Key takeaways included the Midwest region facing the largest labor shortage and with the lowest capacity to accommodate production increases.

The Hub will support training for community members across eastern Omaha to receive certifications and credit-aligned courses in partnership with local universities and community colleges, including access to the nationally accredited Building Performance Institute coursework which is supported and recognized by the Department of Energy as the first third-party organization licensed to deliver Home Energy Professional Certifications. The goal is to train between 600 community members.

Census tract 52, where workforce training will occur, has an average median income of \$37,222, nearly half the amount of the Omaha average household income. Over 40% of the persons in this census tract experience poverty. 6.5% of people in this census tract have a bachelor's degree or higher, which is less than a fifth of the average rate in Omaha. While specific unemployment data is not available for this census tract, information available in 2023 reflects North Omaha broadly has an unemployment rate of 6%, three times higher than the state-wide average.

The Hub's training facility will provide opportunities, at no cost, for individuals to receive onsite and virtual training to address the current gap in the weatherization and energy sector workforce. This supports the Justice 40 initiative's vision for providing equitable opportunities and investments in

energy-burdened communities and allows people seeking employment or upskilling to become a part of addressing challenges to affordable and healthy housing in their communities.

The goal of the workforce program collaboration in partnership with Metro Community College, Blair Freeman Construction, OPPD, MUD, Habitat for Humanity, Southeast Nebraska Community Action Partnership (SENCA), Northeast Nebraska Community Action Partnership (NENCAP), and Community Action Partnership of Lancaster and Saunders Counties (CAPLSC), would be to include homeowners in census tracts identified as energy burdened by the Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool to serve households at or below 80% of the area median income. Expanding program support to homeowners in this range would support homeowners in areas that have historically seen disinvestment and have been impacted by practices such as redlining. These homeowners struggle with home valuations still resulting from redlining and are vulnerable to displacement with little access to funds to reinvest in their homes.

The City of Omaha will collaborate with partners (including the state Department of Labor, labor unions, worker advocacy groups, and community-based organizations) with expertise in job quality, labor standards, and workforce development to ensure that jobs created under this plan align with the eight “Good Jobs Principles” developed by the U.S. Department of Labor and Department of Commerce which emphasize fair wages, benefits, workplace safety, training opportunities, career advancement, and other components of quality employment to create a framework for workers, businesses, labor unions, advocates, researchers, state and local governments, and federal agencies for a shared vision of job quality.

## **Section 6: Programmatic Capability and Past Performance (30 possible points)**

### **a. Past Performance (10 possible points)**

The City of Omaha maintains a successful relationship with multiple federal grant programs. Many grant funding programs successfully utilized planning grants before implementation of projects related to housing, lead paint stabilization. Projects have primarily been city-wide in focus or concentrated in Justice 40 census tracts. Funds have been spent responsibly and caused a positive impact in the Omaha community. Examples of these programs include the following:

- 1) <https://semspub.epa.gov/work/07/30024232.pdf> (U.S. EPA Lead Based Paint Stabilization);
- 2) [Maintaining a Superfund Database for the Omaha Lead Superfund Site;](#)
- 3) [Omaha Clean Solutions- Combined Sewer Overflow;](#)
- 4) [HUD- Choice Neighborhoods Program](#)
- 5) [2023 RAISE Grant- Planning Grant \(U.S. Department of Transportation\)](#)

The City of Omaha Planning department has administered a Lead Hazard Control Grant program since 1999, funded by HUD's Office of Lead Hazard Control and Healthy Homes. We are currently in our seventh grant period of performance. After completion of this grant, the City will have made over 1,100 housing units Lead safe with \$17.8 million in funding since the first grant in 1999.

The City of Omaha Planning department has also partnered with the EPA in multiple cooperative agreements since 2007, assisting with the Omaha Lead Superfund site. The City assisted with the Lead



Based Paint Stabilization component of the program from 2007 to 2015. The City completed LBP stabilization on over 1,200 properties during this time. In 2014, the City and EPA negotiated a new seven- year cooperative agreement for the City to transition over to complete management of all soil sampling and remediation efforts in 2016. That Cooperative agreement ended in December 2022. We are now in a second seven-year Cooperative agreement which started in 2023 and will be completed in 2029. Since the transition, the City has removed contaminated soil at over 500 properties. The City maintains a Superfund database that houses all the sampling data since the superfund program began. The City also maintains a public website which citizens can access to see the sampling histories in the Omaha Lead Superfund Site. Total funding has been over \$30 million since 2007.

The City of Omaha Public Works department, in partnership with the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources and the Nebraska Department of Energy and Environmental Quality worked collaboratively to meet the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) standards and develop and operate a regional wastewater collection system serving a population of over 700,000 residents. The CSO Program, a major water quality improvement program being led by the City of Omaha Public Works Department, will improve water quality in our local rivers and streams by capturing or treating 85% of the average annual combined sewage volume through a series of projects. Small and emerging small businesses (SEBs) received just under \$8 million in contracts and subcontracts. In addition, approximately \$13 million in construction subcontracts were awarded to minority and/or women-owned businesses as a part of the Federal Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) program, and all of the \$247M General Contractor construction contracts were awarded to local Omaha area businesses during that same time. In 2023 HUD approved Omaha's application to establish a \$20 M affordable housing loan pool focused within the City's NRSAs. The program addresses struggling neighborhoods with distressed public housing through a comprehensive approach focusing on people, housing, and the neighborhood.

**b. Reporting Requirements** (10 possible points)

The City of Omaha is currently in its seventh grant period of performance with HUD's Office of Lead Hazard Control. Additionally, the City of Omaha has partnered successfully with the EPA on multiple agreements since 2007 and recently entered into a new cooperative agreement with the EPA to transition over to complete management of all soil sampling and remediation efforts in 2016. As a recipient of Housing and Urban Development grants, such as CDBG, HOME, ESG, the City of Omaha completes the Consolidated Annual Performance Evaluation Report (CAPER) every year. 2023 CAPER highlights include: single family homes built for low-to-moderate income households, 476 owner-occupied homes were rehabilitated, 3 multi-family projects with 156 units will be completed in 2024. The City of Omaha submitted acceptable interim and final reports under the agreements listed above in addition to adequately reporting on its progress toward achieving the expected outputs and outcomes under those agreements in a timely manner.

**c. Staff Expertise** (10 possible points)

Robert Laroco, AICP and CFM City Planner, Floodplain Management Coordinator, has 15 years of experience in urban planning and project execution. His educational background includes an M.S. in urban and regional planning. Derek Miller, AICP Manager, has 23 years of experience in urban planning and project execution. Lisa Smith, AICP, GISP, has 18 years of experience in urban planning and project execution.