

Fairfax County Community-wide Energy and Climate Action Plan

Operating Guidelines and Rules of Order for the Task Force and District Focus Groups



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Operating Guidelines

Fairfax County is developing a Community-wide Energy and Climate Action Plan (CECAP) to set overall greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction targets, establish community-wide priorities and define a set of climate mitigation strategies and actions to achieve the County's mitigation goals. The final CECAP will be submitted to the County Board of Supervisors for approval in mid-2021.

These operating guidelines and rules of order include desired outcomes, guiding principles, and roles and responsibilities for the Task Force and Focus Groups.

Desired Outcomes

The key products of the CECAP development process include:

- Greenhouse gas inventory and emissions models and goals
- Climate mitigation actions and strategy options
- Impact analyses of climate mitigation actions and strategies
- CECAP technical report

The CECAP development process is intended to build community awareness of the CECAP effort, existing initiatives to reduce GHG emissions, and contributions that community members can make to emission reduction efforts. The development process will involve various actors including:

- Fairfax County CECAP Team, comprised of staff from the Fairfax County Government
- ICF, with partner DMV Strategic Advisors. The ICF team will support climate action planning, community engagement, and development of the final CECAP report as well as facilitation of meetings and key stakeholder engagement tasks throughout the project.
- Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG), which will support updating of the greenhouse gas inventory and development of emissions models and goals
- Energy and Climate Task Force (Task Force), comprised of 30 to 45 stakeholders and subject matter experts
- Focus Groups, which will represent each of Fairfax County's nine districts. Each Focus Group will be comprised of up to 15 district-level stakeholders and subject matter experts.

The development of the CECAP will rely on significant input and guidance from local stakeholders and technical experts. The Focus Groups will be a vital resource to the Task Force and for the core project team (Fairfax County, ICF, and COG) during the CECAP development process to ensure an inclusive and robust plan grounded in the needs and capacities of Fairfax County.

Guiding Principles

The following principles will guide the development of the CECAP.

- Goals and strategies are to be community-driven, informed by the broadest range of community stakeholders possible.
- Goals are to be science-based, aspirational, and achievable.
- The Task Force and Focus Groups should evaluate a variety of solutions and ideas, varying in time, scale and scope. Considering both short- and long-term outcomes will help make the CECAP an effective and lasting plan. In addition, projects that address climate action at small- and large-scales will provide Fairfax County with a broad range of options.
- An open line of communication between Focus Groups and the Task Force will be necessary to make the CECAP development process run smoothly.
- One-on-one conversations and interviews with key stakeholders may be conducted, if needed, to further draw upon specific expertise of individual members.
- All Task Force meetings and in-person meetings of the Focus Groups will be advertised and open to the public.

Task Force

Role and Responsibilities

The Task Force is ultimately responsible for developing a proposed CECAP for consideration by the Fairfax County Board.

In fulfilling this responsibility, the Task Force shall decide on key points relating to the four main elements of the CECAP development process:

- Greenhouse gas inventory and emissions models and goals
- Climate mitigation actions and strategy options
- Impact analyses of climate mitigation actions and strategies
- CECAP technical report

The Task Force shall consider the following in developing the proposed CECAP:

- The interests of the County as a whole, balancing stakeholder and district points of view;
- Observations and input from the Focus Groups, along with input from the ICF consultants, COG staff, and Fairfax general public comments to ensure a full and accurate representation of the views of all stakeholders and subject matter experts;
- Constraints, costs, and opportunities.

Meetings and Review Process

Task Force meetings will be held in-person either at ICF’s headquarters (9300 Lee Hwy, Fairfax, VA 22031) or at the Fairfax County Government Center. The draft key agenda items for each of the nine Task Force meetings are shown in Table 1 below.

Task Force meetings will be scheduled for three (3) hours. A final schedule of dates will be presented at the first Task Force meeting. It is anticipated that all meetings will be held on Friday mornings. Task Force meetings will be facilitated by Jay Fiset, DMV Strategic Advisors.

Task Force members were selected by the Board of Supervisors and represent a broad range of stakeholders, subject matter experts, community organizations, businesses, and institutions from across Fairfax County. One representative of each district Focus Group (i.e., the Liaison) sits on the Task Force.

Table 1: Summary of Engagement Activities and Technical Analysis Topics for the Task Force

Engagement Activities	Technical Analysis Topic(s)
Energy and Climate Task Force Meetings	
Task Force Meeting 1	Kickoff – Orientation and Overview: Task Force charter, operating guidelines, rules of order, meeting schedule and deliverables.
Task Force Meeting 2	Community-wide GHG inventory update, the Business-as-Usual (BAU) model, the three additional emission reduction models Vote on emission reduction goals
Task Force Meeting 3	Inventory update and emission reduction models Finalize emission reduction goals
Task Force Meeting 4	Draft climate mitigation action and strategy options
Task Force Meeting 5	Impact analyses of actions and strategies Endorse final list of mitigation actions and strategies Prioritization criteria/prioritize final actions/strategies
Task Force Meeting 6	Draft community engagement guide
Task Force Meeting 7	Finalize community outreach guide
Task Force Meeting 8	Draft CECAP report
Task Force Meeting 9	Finalize CECAP report

Rules of Order

Task Force members are expected to attend all meetings. The Task Force will be meeting up to ten times over the CECAP planning process. A member who is unable to attend a meeting for any reason is expected to notify points of contact from Fairfax County at least 24 hours in advance (apart from unexpected conflicts or emergencies). A decision on alternates will be made by the Task Force at the kickoff meeting. Members who miss more than two (2) meetings without notice may be subject to removal from the Task Force.

Members shall be respectful and productive during discussions and decision making. The meeting facilitator will be responsible for keeping meetings on-schedule and ensuring that desired meeting outcomes are achieved.

Decisions by the Task Force will be made, as necessary, by a simple majority vote. Once decisions have been made, the Task Force will move forward and not revisit past decisions.

Fairfax County will post Focus Group summaries on the Fairfax County CECAP Task Force webpage no later than three days prior to relevant Task Force meetings. All other meeting materials will be posted on the Fairfax County CECAP Task Force webpage as the materials are ready and at least one week prior to each Task Force meeting. Members are expected to review these materials prior to the meeting. Members may submit comments on materials in writing prior to meetings.

Notes will be taken and compiled after each meeting. Correspondence after meetings will include regular email updates from Fairfax County staff and internal file-sharing of relevant documents and materials.

As a public body, Task Force members must follow the law regarding public meetings and public records and comply with of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). Any meeting of three or more Task Force members in which public business is discussed (i.e., any discussion of CECAP) is considered a public meeting and must be advertised, open to the public, and have minutes taken. Any written records of CECAP among Task Force members, including emails and comments, are considered public records that may be requested under FOIA. Any email sent to a Fairfax County employee is FOIA-able.

Members of the public are invited to attend Task Force meetings as observers, not as participants.

Comments and statements posted to the website and notes taken at the meetings will not be attributed to specific individuals.

Focus Groups

Role and Responsibilities

The nine district-level Focus Groups are comprised of up to 15 stakeholders and subject matter experts from each of the districts within the County. These stakeholders were selected by the Board of Supervisors to represent a diversity of opinions, professional experience, and expertise. Focus Groups will each select one representative to serve on the Task Force (i.e., the Focus Group Liaison to the Task Force).

Focus Groups will act as the voice for their respective districts. As such, they are expected to consider a wide range of experiences and perspectives related to climate action and energy needs. It is imperative that they view the plan development process as a community effort. While Focus Groups are rooted in their respective districts, members should consider the needs and opportunities of the entire country to help create a strong and cohesive plan.

Focus Group members will provide input and analysis on the four main elements:

- Greenhouse gas inventory and emissions models and goals
- Climate mitigation actions and strategy options
- Community engagement guide
- CECAP technical report

Rules of Order

The Focus Groups will each hold one kick-off meeting to be oriented to the planning process and select a Liaison to the Task Force. The Liaison is responsible for consolidating the comments of Focus Group members into a summary reflecting a unified voice and attending the in-person meetings of the Task Force. The “unified voice” does not presume a singular opinion and agreement by all Focus Group members on all issues. As such, consolidation and summarization may include sharing individual comments should they differ from the majority view or if a majority view is not determined or clear.

The Focus Group has an advisory role to the Task Force. The input provided from each Focus Group will be considered by Fairfax County staff, the consultants, and the CECAP Task Force as part of the decision-making process. There is no guarantee that Focus Group opinions will be incorporated in the CECAP.

Each district’s Focus Group will have the flexibility to determine its preferred method of operation. Options range from entirely virtual meetings (as initially proposed), to a hybrid approach that includes a mix of virtual and in-person meetings, to entirely in-person meetings.

A “virtual meeting” means that Focus Group work will be conducted independently and that all relevant materials for review and comment will be electronically distributed via BCC from the Liaison to Focus Group members and that members will electronically forward their comments only to the Liaison, not to other Focus Group members.

An “in-person meeting” means that Focus Group work will be conducted collaboratively during in-person meetings or emails sent other than BCC. For in-person meetings, Focus Group members must determine a meeting time, date, and place, and one Focus Group member must agree to take minutes of the meeting. Fairfax County staff will provide limited meeting support for in-person Focus Group meetings by: (a) assisting with finding a suitable meeting location, either at a Supervisor’s district office or at the Government Center; and (b) posting the meeting information on the CECAP website. As this process is evolving and is responsive to Supervisor and community feedback, the Focus Group role and operations may be further refined during the CECAP planning process.

Focus Group meetings conducted in person or electronically other than via BCC are subject to public meeting, public records, and FOIA requirements. A Focus Group meeting is considered public when three or more members of the group are discussing public business (i.e., any discussion of CECAP). Public meetings must be advertised, open to the public, and have minutes taken. Any written records of CECAP among Focus Group members, including emails and comments, are considered public records that may be requested under FOIA. Any email sent to a Fairfax County employee is also subject to FOIA requests.

The Focus Group may meet as many times as it wishes, as long as all meetings are conducted in accordance with applicable public meeting rules. Staff will post the meeting minutes for each in-person meeting on the CECAP website. Emails between Focus Group members are subject to FOIA if they are discussing public business.

Fairfax County staff will post meeting materials for all Focus Group meetings on the Fairfax County CECAP Task Force webpage two weeks prior to Task Force meetings. County staff will distribute the link and/or materials to the Focus Group members via BCC for those Focus Groups that have elected to operate virtually.

One week after distribution of the materials, Focus Group members will send comments on those materials via email to their designated Liaison (chosen at the kick-off meeting) or, the if the Focus Group chooses, will convey their comments during an in-person meeting. All comments sent to the Liaison by the Focus Group member should be those of the Focus Group member alone.

Whether the Focus Group chooses virtual, hybrid or exclusively in-person meetings, the Liaison will be responsible for summarizing member comments into a unified voice and for sending that written summary to Fairfax County staff at least three days prior to each Task Force meeting. The written summary will be posted to the public website. Comments and statements posted to the website and notes taken at meetings will not be attributed to specific individuals.

Timely review and input are expected by Focus Group members in order to adopt a CECAP on schedule. If review deadlines are missed, feedback from that Focus Group will not be included in the materials provided to the Task Force.

If a Focus Group member is unable to serve for the duration of the CECAP development process, it will be at the Supervisor's discretion to replace them.

Focus Group members are invited to attend Task Force meetings as observers, not as participants.

Table 2, below, shows the engagement activities expected of the Focus Groups.

Table 2: Summary of Engagement Activities and Technical Analysis Topics for the Focus Groups

Engagement Activities	Technical Analysis Topic(s)
District-level Focus Group Meetings/Engagement	
Focus Group Kick-Off Meetings	Kickoff - Orientation and overview, operating guidelines and rules of order
Focus Group Materials Review 1	GHG inventory and emission models
Focus Group Materials Review 2	Draft action and strategy options
Focus Group Materials Review 3	Draft community engagement guide
Focus Group Materials Review 4	Draft CECAP