CARE Framework

This Climate Action, Resilience and Equity (CARE) Framework was developed to help guide prioritization of climate-related projects for the County of Sonoma. It will be updated to reflect input from partners within and outside the County family, and to reflect new guidance, especially as it relates to federal, state, and regional grant priorities and criteria. Going forward, the CARE Framework can also help guide project development.

The CARE Framework is built around the County's policy priorities. Performance points are assigned based on how well a project achieves those priorities, with a total of 100 points possible for a project. Projects are ranked based on the County's cost to achieve that performance – County dollars spent per point achieved. In this way, the CARE Framework compares different types of climate action and resilience projects on a common scale.

There are three policy categories in the CARE Framework: the CARE category, the Strategic Alignment category, and the Strategic Leveraging category. Each category includes specific performance measures, as follows:

- **The CARE category** includes measures of project performance around climate mitigation, climate resilience, and climate equity. Because the Framework was developed to prioritize climate action and resiliency projects, it awards the majority of points (up to 75 out of 100) in the CARE category. Specific measures of project performance in this category include:
  - The magnitude, timeliness, certainty, and permanence of greenhouse gas reductions, as well as project co-benefits (such as energy security, public health and/or safety, and ecosystem health).
  - The degree to which the project reduces vulnerability climate hazards, including severity of potential exposures and sensitivities, and the adaptive capacity, before and after the project.
  - How fully the project implements goals and objectives of the Climate Action and Resilience (CAR) Pillar of the County's Strategic Plan (how direct and complete the implementation is).
  - Whether the CARE properties of the project were evaluated using a specific plan, tool or model (including how detailed and rigorous the evaluation, and how highly it prioritized the project).
  - How effectively the project integrates equitable community engagement, enhances equitable access to the project's benefits, and promotes just transition to future economic benefits.
- **The Strategic Alignment category** recognizes the value of projects that also support goals and objectives of the other four Pillars of the County's Strategic Plan. The CARE Framework awards up to 5 points depending on how directly and fully the project implements another Pillar's goals or objectives.
- **The Strategic Leveraging category** emphasizes the leveraging of current or future external resources. The Framework awards up to 20 points for:
  - Committed co-funding with non-county funds (bonus point for committed non-public funds).
  - The degree to which the project directly and essentially enables future implementation of the CAR Pillar, demonstrates significant and timely expected return on investment, and creates or promotes important partnerships.
  - Project design to maximize award of federal, state, or regional funding, including the extent and specificity of the alignment, and the likelihood of award (such as prior applicant success).

Points are awarded using defined scales and matrices. Where projects could have an adverse effect on CARE priorities, negative points are possible. Points for each category are summed to a total of 100 possible points, and divided into the County's cost for the project. Examples of scoring scales and matrices are provided below.

Example 1 – Resilience: To assess how well a project will improve resilience, the Framework evaluates the underlying vulnerability of the project's target area to relevant climate hazards. Vulnerability is based on the magnitude of potential impacts and the capacity of the target area to adapt to the threat. The types of hazards evaluated include (for example): wildfire, drought, extreme precipitation, flooding, and sea level rise.

Vulnerability Score Matrix						
	Extreme	5	5	4	3	2
Potential Impacts	Severe	5	4	3	2	1
	Significant	4	3	2	2	1
	Moderate	3	2	2	1	1
	Low	2	1	1	1	1
Adaptive Capacity Classification		Low 0 - 2	Low-Med 3 - 4	Med 5 - 6	Med-High 7 - 8	High 9 - 10

Example 2 – Climate Equity: One measure of climate equity performance is the degree to which the project improves access by underserved communities to the benefits/services embedded in the project. Points are awarded on a scale that rates the degree of improvement, and subtracts points for unequal outcomes.

Points Awarded	Equity Change	Access to Services/Benefits
5	Significant Improvement	Specifically and meaningfully increases access by vulnerable communities to a service or benefit that is important to the community
3	Moderate Improvement	Specifically increases access by vulnerable communities to a service or benefit that may or may not be important to the community
1	Minor Improvement	Generally increases access by vulnerable communities to a service or benefit
0	No Change	Does not increase access by vulnerable communities to a service or benefit
-3	Exacerbates Unequal Access	Reinforces modes of access to services or benefits that favor less vulnerable communities
-5	Disproportionate Negative	Results in exclusion of vulnerable communities from services/benefits, disproportionate loss of service, or disbenefits to vulnerable communities

Example 3 – CAR Pillar Alignment: The Framework assigns points based on how directly a project implements an objective in the Pillar, is aligned with Pillar goals, and the degree to which it accomplishes the objective/goal.

CAR Pillar Alignment Matrix					
	Fully	Significantly	Moderately	Minimally	Not at All
Directly Implements	10	7	5	2	0
Indirectly Implements	5	3	1	0	0
Is Generally Aligned	2	1	1	0	0
Is Unrelated	0	0	0	0	0
Adversely Affects	-10	-7	-5	-2	0

(Row labels under "Impact on Objectives")