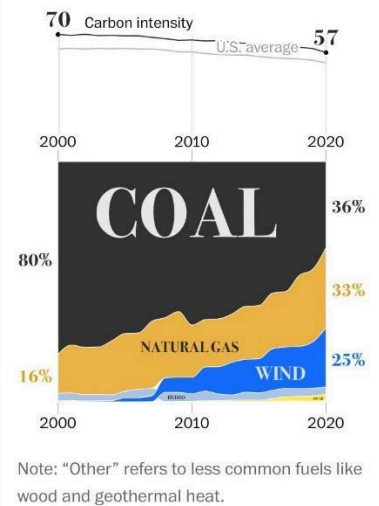


# Eastern Plains Renewable Energy Impact Study Request for Proposal

## 1. Background

The Eastern Plains region is experiencing considerable interest in the expansion of electric energy transmission lines and the development of utility scale renewable Solar, Wind, Hydrogen, Geothermal, Pyrolysis facilities, and advanced Nuclear energy generation projects (“Renewable Energy”). These initiatives are in line with Governor Polis’ Administration’s commitment to achieving 100% Renewable Energy by 2040, as outlined in the Roadmap to 100% Renewable Energy 2040 and Bold Climate Action Plan (2019). In addition, in 2023, the Colorado General Assembly passed Senate Bill 23-016, the Climate Action Plan to Reduce Pollution, which updated statewide greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reduction targets to 26% by 2025, 50% by 2030, 65% by 2035, 75% by 2040, 90% by 2045 and net-zero by 2050 from a 2005 baseline. This plan emphasizes investments in areas of the state that are conducive to the development of utility scale Renewable Energy projects. Despite recent progress, such as Colorado's ranking improvement to 40th in the country in carbon-intensive energy production, with 69% of the state's energy sourced from coal and natural gas as of 2020, there is still considerable work to be done. (Figure 1)

Colorado ranks 40th in the nation for carbon intensity from electricity generation. Its carbon intensity fell by 18% between 2000 and 2020.



Achieving this statewide goal necessitates the development of Renewable Energy projects in the Eastern Plains. However, the development of these systems could result in a combination of enduring positive and negative effects. This region has experienced numerous boom-and-bust economies in the past. Moreover, the construction of these projects necessitates a larger workforce than what is necessary for their long-term maintenance. Additionally, these projects will entail substantial capital investments by utility companies, which in turn raises questions regarding energy cost increases for the State's ratepayers as existing carbon plants are retired before the completion of their original anticipated debt service.

HB21-1266 establishes legislation to define “Disproportionately Impacted Communities” regarding environmental justice impacts from energy projects. Although this legislation targets carbon fuel projects, many communities in the Eastern Plains meet the criteria of this definition because large portions of the region’s citizens’ housing costs are over 30% of their income and are located in low-income census blocks. The potential increase in electricity costs from these industrial utility scale Renewable Energy projects is likely to disproportionately impact the region's low-income communities and could potentially hinder long-term economic and job growth.

HB23-1247 requires the Colorado Energy Office (“CEO”) to conduct studies to assess the use of reliable and affordable electricity technologies, including gas generation with carbon capture and storage, geothermal, clean hydrogen, advanced nuclear, wind, solar coupled with storage, long duration storage and transmission, to help support the development of rural economies and to create jobs in rural Colorado, in particular northwestern Colorado, the west end of Montrose County and southeastern Colorado (Kiowa, Prowers and Baca counties). In southeastern Colorado, the legislation directs the CEO to assess the potential for the development of advanced firm dispatchable technologies, long duration storage, and wind and solar. This impact study may assist in advancing these efforts.

## 2. Project Area

This study area encompasses the 18 counties of the Eastern Plains. All of these counties have either already experienced the development of or are currently developing utility scale renewable energy projects and expansion to electric energy transmission lines. It is important that communities in the region collaborate with the State to pursue value creating strategies that not only contribute to national energy independence and achieve climate goals but also provide protection against potential impacts and establish policies that yield lasting economic benefits.

The project areas represent a diverse range of communities across the 18-county region. Each county is represented by their Council of Governments who have appointed two board members to serve on the study advisory committee. Southeast Council of Governments (SECOG) is the fiscal agent and will be responsible for the execution of Professional Services with the selected Consultant Firm. The Colorado Energy Office, Department of Local Governments, and Colorado Department of Natural Resources have appointed liaisons to assist with the study and to serve on the Advisory Committee as detailed further below.

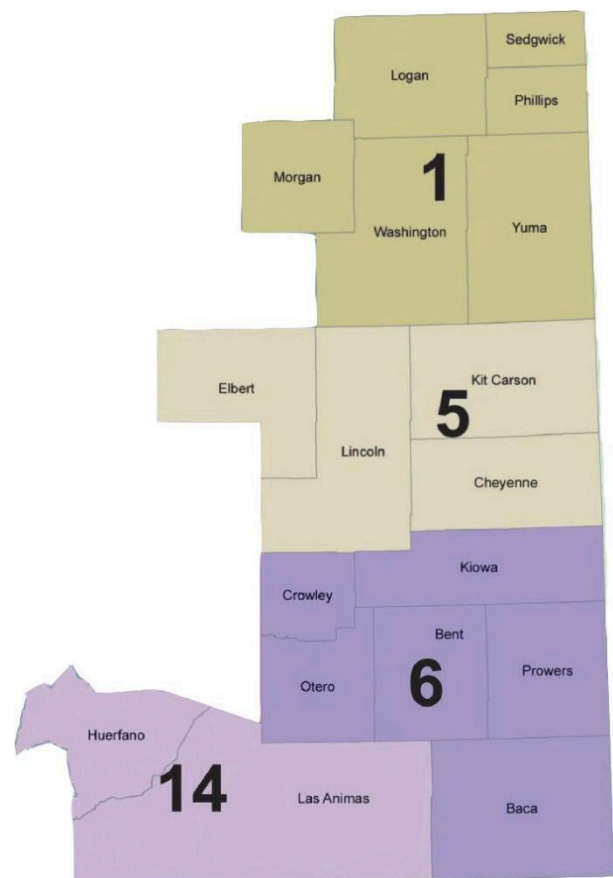
The following are the participating Council of Local Governments and Counties:

### Northeast Colorado Association of Local Governments

- Morgan County
- Logan County
- Phillip County
- Sedgwick County
- Washington County
- Yuma County

### East Central Council of Local Governments

- Cheyenne County
- Lincoln County
- Kit Carson County
- Elbert County



## **2. Project Area (cont'd)**

### **Southeast Council of Governments**

- Baca County
- Bent County
- Crowley County
- Otero County
- Kiowa County
- Prowers County

### **South Central Council of Governments**

- Huerfano County
- Las Animas County

## **3. Scope**

This study is critical for quantifying and mapping both existing and proposed utility scale Renewable Energy solar, wind, hydrogen, geothermal, pyrolysis facilities, and advanced nuclear projects. The study will require the analysis of existing projects as case studies to better illustrate their lasting environmental and economic impacts and capture rates in the region. Furthermore, the study is tasked with measuring energy production from future proposed projects and evaluating their contribution to the State's energy goals. The study should measure the carbon impacts for site development, transportation, material production, raw material extraction needs, and development costs versus the long-term carbon offsets to renewable energy production. The study should provide best practices for decommissioning sites, waste removal, recycling, and battery storage site impacts.

The study would also provide regional and local strategies for how to maximize the lasting positive economic impacts of these projects and initiatives, activate job creation and retention, impact taxes or property taxes, and identify key community development investments. The potential impacts and strategies outlined in the study will require further clarification and refinement based on input from the steering committee once a consultant is selected. Throughout the study the selected consultant shall be responsible for website updates and providing updated content. Upon the completion of the study, the rights, domain, and hosting of the website shall be transferred to SECOG.

Generally, the study shall explore the impacts of the following:

- Projections on Regional Renewable Energy production
- Job and economic growth
- Regional land use best practice regulations\*
- Community-based ownership models and community-based net metering
- Impacts to agriculture and ranching
- Workforce housing needs
- Transportation infrastructure impacts
- Wildlife impacts
- Projected carbon offset timelines

- Capital cost recovery
- State wide vs. study region energy cost increases
- Comparison of changes in energy costs based on energy sources across rural Colorado and neighboring States (urban vs. regional rural- cost analysis)
- Health and human service impacts
- Land fire mitigation
- Community development needs
- Solid waste disposal site needs
- Potential change water demands/drought resiliency
- Battery storage systems impacts
- Private property impacts, including property value and property tax
- Traditional energy (coal, oil, or natural gas) vs. renewable energy impact on State/Local property taxes assessments
- Regulations on facilities, production tax credits, and tax subsidies - Local, State, vs. Federal
- Other topics may be included by a majority vote of the Advisory Committee

*\* The impact study is intended to be an advisory document and not intended to create statewide regulations for utility scale renewable energy projects*

The selected consulting firm is responsible for creating a website platform to host the study, updating content throughout the study, and providing long-term material resources to the participating counties. The final plan shall be posted on the website and provide interactive resource information and mapping to help communities plan for the expansion of utility scale Renewable Energy projects and transmission.

#### **4. Renewable Energy Advisory Committee**

The Renewable Energy Advisory Committee will be responsible for interacting with the consultant to achieve the goals of the study as listed above. Interviews and final selection of the Consultant will be completed by the Committee.

The consultant will be required to interact with the Committee regularly throughout the study.

- Coordinate to provide public input and outreach.
  - One in-person kick-off meeting is required with each respective COG region; followed by as needed virtual meetings for interim work and final presentation.
- Coordinated Meetings - Bi-Weekly to begin, moving to monthly and then quarterly until completion of the study.
- Review of Project Milestones - Tracking the items under the scope of work with deadlines to ensure work is progressing and/or scope of work items are completed per the schedule.
- Final Review of the Study and regional sign off on the completed study.

## 5. Proposal Submission Requirements

The SECOG is open to consideration of all creative and viable consulting services that are consistent with the objectives of this Request for Proposals (RFP). **Interested parties should review the contents and requirements of this RFP and submit their responses no later than 2:00 p.m. on September 30, 2025.**

Responses should be provided electronically in PDF format to SECOG Executive Director Stephanie Gonzales at [seced@seced.net](mailto:seced@seced.net). ***Please include in the subject line of the email - “RFP Submittal Eastern Plains Study” - to ensure we do not miss your submission.***

Questions can be directed to Michael Yerman at [Michael@myruralplanner.com](mailto:Michael@myruralplanner.com) and to SECOG Executive Director Stephanie Gonzales at [seced@seced.net](mailto:seced@seced.net) until September 12, 2025. All questions must be in writing.

On September 19, 2025, by 5pm responses to all questions and the scoring rubric will be made available on the <https://secog.colorado.gov/> under the RFP tab.

### **RFP responses should contain the following elements:**

#### **a. Cover Letter**

*The SECOG is seeking an introductory narrative. Please provide:*

- Background of your firm/project team and experience with Utility Scale Renewable Energy and Impact Study analysis
- Your firm’s ability to comply with the requirements of providing a web-based platform for the final study.
- Your experience working with similar communities and your familiarity with rural communities located in the Eastern Plains region.
- Your firm’s experience with rural planning and public engagement
- Please provide three specific and recent examples of impact studies in similar communities and the solutions you have implemented going forward.
- Please provide project experience and examples of past projects.
- The reasons why the Advisory Committee should select your firm/project team.

#### **b. Understanding & Approach:**

- Provide details concerning experience with public engagement and creating Impact Studies
- Describe your firm’s understanding of Renewable Energy Production, Energy transmission, economic development, data analysis, and energy market analysis.
- Describe your firm’s familiarity with Colorado State Climate Planning and Renewable Energy Planning
- Provide a detailed scope of work indicating key tasks and assumptions.
- Any other information your firm deems relevant to your team’s approach.

### **c. Project Schedule & Timeline**

- Provide a detailed schedule for project completion with milestones that will be achieved within the tentative timeline below. The SECOG is especially interested in project proposals that have a final completion date of December 31, 2026.

### **d. Team:**

- Show your proposed organization chart
- Describe the proposed team members
- Describe team member experience with projects of this kind
- Describe project team experience in developing plans, ability to work with youth, and engaging the municipal interests from previous examples applicable to this project
- Describe your team's experience with Utility Scale Renewable Energy production and data analysis
- Indicate team member availability to work on this project
- Indicate the location of team members performing work
- Describe your team's ability to provide a web based plan
- Provide two references from similar projects

### **e. Budget**

- Please provide a detailed budget, not to exceed \$500,000, that includes itemized costs for all aspects of planning and data collection for the final plan. The lowest responsible bid that meets or exceeds the requirements of this RFP will be considered.

## **6. Evaluation Criteria and Review Process**

The RFP selection recommendation, consisting of the Advisory Committee, will make finalist recommendations to the Board of SECOG. The Advisory Committee will conduct interviews and view formal presentations from the finalists. The Advisory Committee is tasked with the final selection of the consulting firm and making a recommendation for a Professional Service Contract with SECOG for their consideration and execution prior to work beginning.

### **Finalist Selection criteria will include:**

1. Qualifications of proposed project team
2. Proposed scope of work and project process
3. Successful history and experience with three past projects in rural communities
4. Knowledge and experience with Renewable Energy Industry Projects
5. Demonstrated ability to work with local governments, businesses, and community engagement over a large regional area
6. Overall strength of project proposal

7. Ability to prepare web based information
8. Proposed Project Schedule
9. Proposed Budget
10. References

### **Finalist Interview Review Criteria**

The Advisory committee shall select up to three firms to participate in Finalist Interviews. Any selected finalist shall be deemed to have met the selection criteria above. Prior to finalist interviews, the advisory committee may provide feedback and ask for additional information to be provided during the interview process. The Advisory Committee reserves the right to select the most qualified firm based on the interviews. The Advisory Committee also reserves the right to ask any finalist to modify their final proposal to meet the needs to complete the Impact Study.

### **7. RFP TIMELINE**

August 15 , 2025	- RFP issued and advertised
<b>September 30, 2025</b>	<b>- Proposals due by 4 p.m.</b>
October 15, 2025	- Reference checks, staff review, and finalists recommendation to SECOG
October 16, 2025	- Notify Selected Finalists
October 24, 2025*	- Finalists to present and interview with the Advisory Committee. The Selection decision may occur the same day.
October 29 , 2025	- Notify selected Consultant. Begin drafting professional service contract.
November 26, 2025	-A professional service contract approved by SECOG’s Board will be executed at a regularly scheduled Board meeting once a final selection has been made.

### **8. PROJECT TIMELINE AND DELIVERABLES**

The following project timeline and deliverables may be modified by the selected consultant to ensure the best possible work product and final plan. All respondents should include a project timeline that meets or exceeds these milestones in their responses. All responses should include the required kick off public meetings with each of the 4 COGS, monthly advisory committee check-ins, an additional 4 check-in meetings with each individual COGS, and the proposed final public regional meeting for the presentation of the Plan. The provided timelines are being provided to serve as general guidance only and respondents are responsible for ensuring a complete timeline is included in their response to this RFP.

#### **Quarter 1 Fall 2025**

- Meetings with each of the four Council of Local Governments
- General existing conditions, establishment of mapping of existing Renewable Energy projects transmission, and case studies
- Project management and Advisory Committee check ins
- Establishment of website and outreach plan

#### **Quarter 2 Winter 2025**

- Begin research and analysis
- Carbon offset analysis
- Current and future energy production analysis
- Statewide energy needs analysis
- Future planned project mapping
- Identification of sensitive areas and areas for protection
- Community impact and needs analysis

#### **Quarter 3 Spring 2026**

- Development of impact analysis and offsets
- Preliminary recommendations
- Future regional needs analysis
- Best practice recommendations
- Economic development analysis
- Future energy production need forecasting
- Updates to website current with available research information

#### **Quarter 4 Summer 2026**

- Check in meeting with each individual COG on preliminary findings
- Final recommendations and analysis
- Refined best practices
- Impact Fee recommendations and offsets
- Mapping of future energy needs and possible energy production

#### **Quarter 5 Fall 2026**

- Final plan and website
- Public Presentation
- Final refinement of plan and publication



## 9. GENERAL CONDITIONS

### **Reserved Rights:**

*SECOG reserves the right to:*

- Modify or cancel the selection process or schedule at any time.
- Waive minor irregularities between proposals.
- Reject any and/or all responses to this RFP and seek new proposals when it is in the best interest of SECOG to do so.
- Seek clarification or additional information from respondents as it deems necessary to the evaluation of the response.
- Request any additional information or evidence from individual respondents.
- Judge the respondent's written or oral representations as to their veracity, substance and relevance to development of the Impact Study, including seeking and evaluating independent information on any project team.
- Incorporate this RFP and the selected team's response to this RFP as a part of any formal agreement between SECOG and the respondent.
- Issue revisions to the RFP or amend the scope of the RFP.
- SECOG is an equal opportunity employer with all RFP respondents.
- SECOG reserves the right to issue a future RFP if it deems that the firms responding do not meet the qualifications.
- Website will be the property of SECOG

**Hold Harmless:** By participation in this RFP process, respondents agree to hold harmless SECOG, their officers and employees from all claims, liabilities and costs related to all aspects of the responder selection process.

**Public Information:** All documents, conversations, correspondence, etc. between SECOG and respondents are public information subject to the laws and regulations that govern SECOG, unless specifically identified otherwise.

**Expenses:** All expenses related to any project team's response to this RFP, or other expenses incurred while the selection process is underway, are the sole obligation and responsibility of that project team.

We appreciate your interest and look forward to hearing from you.