Applicant Information

1. What community will this proposed ETIPP project support (city and state, neighborhood, region, coalition, task force, etc.)?

   Sanibel Island, FL

2. Please list the names, titles, organizations, and email addresses for team members who will serve as key points of contact for your proposed ETIPP project and can commit to engaging in the activities listed in the application introduction. At minimum, please identify yourself (the applicant) and one point of contact for the project.

   What is the applicant's organization?

   City of Sanibel

3. Applicant's organization point of contact – Name:

   Ashlee Painter

4. Applicant's organization point of contact – Email:

   ashlee.painter@mysanibel.com

5. Applicant's organization point of contact – Title:

   Chief Resilience Officer

6. Applicant's organization point of contact – Organization:

   City of Sanibel

7. Project's primary point of contact (can be the same as the applicant) – Name:

   Ashlee Painter

8. Project's primary point of contact (can be the same as the applicant) – Email:

   ashlee.painter@mysanibel.com

9. Project's primary point of contact (can be the same as the applicant) – Title:

   Chief Resilience Officer

10. Project's primary point of contact (can be the same as the applicant) – Organization:

City of Sanibel

11. Project's secondary point of contact – Name:

    Dana A. Souza

12. Project's secondary point of contact – Email:

    dana.souza@mysanibel.com

13. Project's secondary point of contact – Title:

    City Manager

14. Project's secondary point of contact – Organization:

    City of Sanibel

15. Is the applying team interested in potentially receiving subcontracting funds for services rendered as part of the technical assistance delivery?

    Yes – X
    No

16. Please name the ETIPP Regional Partner point of contact you worked with to prepare your ETIPP application. Regional Partner organization:

    Southeast Sustainability Director's Network

17. Please name the ETIPP Regional Partner point of contact you worked with to prepare your ETIPP application. Point of contact's name:

    Jake Leech

18. Please name the ETIPP Regional Partner point of contact you worked with to prepare your ETIPP application. Description of your consultation:

    Consultation on Sanibel's participation in the ETIPP technical assistance program started informally in the summer of 2024 when Bob Moore from SanCap Resilience met with Mike Campton from NREL to discuss the opportunity. The meeting came about as a follow-up to the C2C Expert Match technical assistance awarded to SanCap Resilience to develop a stakeholder engagement process focused on energy resilience and sustainability planning for the community. The NREL consultants leading that Expert Match project (Chrissy Scarpitti and Sharon Smolinski) thought that ETIPP might be a perfect fit for Sanibel and a good next step to the Expert Match project and arranged the meeting. Following that meeting, Bob Moore met with the Sanibel City Manager, Dana Souza, to discuss having the city apply. Although there was interest, the city was fully committed to recovery projects from Hurricane Ian at the time and did not have the staffing capacity to take on the project and decided to reconsider applying in 2025.

Subsequently, on Friday, May 16, 2025, Sanibel City Manager, Dana Souza, and SanCap Resilience Chair, Bob Moore, met with Jake Leech and Catherine Mercier-Baggett from the Southeast Sustainability Director's Network (SSDN) to discuss the City of Sanibel applying for the ETIPP grant. The discussion included the following:

- *A general review of the two grant tracks and program changes that have occurred since the 2024 cohort.*
- *Sanibel participants described the overall challenges Sanibel has faced following catastrophic damage and storm surge inundation from Hurricane Ian in 2022 and storm surge inundation from Hurricanes Debby, Helene and Milton in 2024.*
- *Discussed the City's partnership with Sanibel's local electric utility, Lee County Electric Cooperative (LCEC) which is a not-for-profit electric distribution cooperative that purchases its power from Florida Power & Light (FPL).*
- *ETIPP's Regional Partner, SSDN underscored the importance of involving the local utility as a critical partner in the application process and in developing a Strategic Energy Plan for Sanibel.*
- *Discussed other potential community partners that will be supporting stakeholders in developing a Strategic Energy Plan.*
- *Discussed the new Chief Resilience Officer position approved by City Council in the FY25 city budget and the leadership role that person would play in the city's participation with the ETIPP technical assistance. At the time, the city was interviewing for the position. That position is now filled, and the city's new CRO, Ashlee Painter, will begin her work with the city July 21, 2025.*
- *Discussed how to manage the timelines of the application process and the required City Council approval prior to submitting this application.*
- *Discussed where Sanibel is in its energy resilience planning process and concluded that Sanibel should apply for assistance to develop a Strategic Energy Plan. While the City does not currently have a strategic energy plan, Sanibel and LCEC have actively discussed the threats future storms pose and energy resilience.*
- *Discussed Sanibel's recent participation in the 6-week E2C Cohort – Planning for Microgrids to Increase Energy Resilience, which concluded on June 16, 2025.*
- *Discussed how the City's participation in the cohort identified how microgrids could improve energy resilience in critical post-storm response and initial recovery periods, should the storm cause minor or major disruptions to the grid power supply.*
- *Discussed that the City will complete a Vulnerability Assessment in July 2025 and has been granted funds to develop an Adaptation Plan.*
- *At the conclusion of the meeting, ETIPP's Regional Partner, SSDN advised the City to apply for assistance to develop a Strategic Energy Plan and how Sanibel's geographic location and recent storm experiences are a good fit for the program.*
- *ETIPP's Regional Partner, SSDN recommended the City apply to be a subcontractor to receive funds for the delivery of services.*
- *The meeting concluded with agreement that the City would seek feedback on its application from SSDN prior to its submission, and SSDN staff offered to be available for questions that came up may arise as the City prepares the application.*

- *After the city completed the draft application, Jake Leach from SSDN reviewed the draft application and provided feedback that has been incorporated into the final application.*

Stakeholder Support:

19. Please list at least two stakeholders outside of your organization who will submit Stakeholder Support Forms on behalf of your ETIPP application. Ideally, these supporters should play a role in decision-making for your proposed project. Stakeholders could include community organizations, government leaders, local utilities, and many more.

    - *Lee County Electric Coop (LCEC)*
    - *Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation (SCCF)*
    - *Island Water Association (IWA)*
    - *SanCap Resilience*
    - *Sanibel-Captiva Chamber of Commerce*
    - *Committee of the Islands (COTI)*

Applicant Need:

20. Please describe the unique physical features of your coastal, remote, or island community, and how they shape your local energy challenges (e.g., aging infrastructure, high costs, frequent outages, etc.). (500 words)

    Sanibel is a barrier island community located on the Gulf coast of Southwest Florida. The City of Sanibel incorporated as a municipality in 1974 and is within Lee County. The island is connected to the mainland via the 3-mile Sanibel Causeway, that consists of 3 elevated spans and 2 islands created from dredge material during the causeway's construction.

    Sanibel's location makes it highly vulnerable to multiple naturally occurring hazards including, tropical storm events (hurricanes), flooding, storm surge, lightning strikes, wildfire and sea level rise. According to the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA's) National Risk Index Map, Lee County, where Sanibel is located, is ranked in the 99.5th percentile for overall risk exposure while "community resilience" is "very low" at 9.2% (FEMA 2023).

    Electric power to Sanibel is serviced by a single transmission line running over miles of open water and land leaving the island vulnerable to a systemwide outage related to the noted hazards. LCEC is a valued partner to the city, one that has made significant investment to improve the resilience of its distribution infrastructure, both organizations are actively discussing options to mitigate the risks to the electrical grid infrastructure on Sanibel .

    On Sept. 28, 2022, Hurricane Ian made landfall just north of Sanibel, and the island community. Sanibel experienced catastrophic damage from the near Category 5 strength winds and a storm surge of 8-12'. The storm caused extensive damage to homes, businesses, and critical infrastructure throughout the community. The island's overhead electric transmission line infrastructure was heavily damaged by the hurricane, and the single electric substation on Sanibel was also damaged.

While LCEC worked diligently to repair their on-island infrastructure, portions of Sanibel remained without electric power for approximately six weeks. The previously mentioned Sanibel Causeway was breached in 7 locations which significantly interrupted LCEC's ability to respond and begin repairing damages.

In 2024, while the community was continuing to recover from Hurricane Ian, the island experienced two more storm surge inundation events caused by Hurricanes Helene and Milton and partial storm surge inundation from Hurricane Debby. During those events, underground electrical equipment and ground mounted transformers were significantly damaged causing power outages. The lack of power hindered the City's ability to operate wastewater lift stations and required the City to move portable generators and vac truck frequently to keep the system functioning and to prevent sewer overflows. Residents were asked to delay their return to the island until power could be restored to the sanitary sewer system to mitigate the risk of overflows.

While the City of Sanibel was actively engaged in resilience planning prior to recent storm events, the impacts of those recent storms have underscored the vulnerability of critical infrastructure and has galvanized community support for resilience planning. Developing a Strategic Energy Plan for Sanibel, in partnership with LCEC and other community partners, is a critically important step in improving the community's resilience to natural events and mitigating the extent and duration of future electric outages.

Proposed Project:

24. Please describe the goals of your project. (250 words)

In 2023, the Sanibel City Council adopted the following Community Resiliency Strategic Goal:

"Build Sanibel's resilience to future threats from natural and manmade events by mitigating hazards, hardening infrastructure, encouraging the use of reliable, renewable energy sources, continually updating vulnerability, response, and recovery plans, and improving community education concerning building design, building codes, flood protection and the benefits of native vegetation."

For this project, Sanibel's goal is to develop a Strategic Energy Plan that is implementable and provides a roadmap to improving the resilience and sustainability of the island's electric infrastructure. Of particular importance is resilient power for critical operations such as water and sewer services, public safety, and other essential operations.

This project, along with Sanibel's completed Vulnerability Assessment, funded by Resilient Florida (DEP), will provide an understanding of the current electric system, as well as a preliminary assessment of the most promising and cost-effective system investments that may enhance the power system's resilience. The planning process may also identify investment options that could help mitigate peak demands and cost savings for the city and property owners. Most importantly, this project provides an opportunity to form a strong working relationship between the City, LCEC,

property owners, residents, and other key stakeholders to improve Sanibel's resilience and sustainability long into the future.

Other project goals include:

- *100% power availability for critical facilities and infrastructure following a natural disaster.*
- *Understanding how to maximize the use of existing built infrastructure for investment in renewable energy.*

25. What are the specific activities you envision ETIPP supporting during your technical assistance project? You may wish to provide some of the possible technical assistance activities you discussed with an ETIPP Regional Partner. (250 words)

The following activities are anticipated:

1. *Understanding Current Power System - This will include grid infrastructure, patterns and trends in power demand, outage trends specific to Sanibel vs. the full LCEC territory, existing DER resources in homes and businesses, smart meter capabilities that are not currently utilized, and existing plans for power system investment.*

2. *Community Education and Stakeholder Involvement – This will include public review of above steps and technology solutions, solicitation of stakeholder and community feedback, and amendments to plans based on that feedback.*

3. *Identify Vulnerabilities – This will include vulnerabilities in LCEC's assets and operations, the City's critical assets and operations, and the broader power supply system. (Note: the City is currently conducting a community-wide vulnerability assessment that can inform this planning process)*

3. *Identify Pathways to Resilience – This will include preliminary assessment of power system investments most likely to achieve Sanibel's goals and identify the sequences of activities required and desired over the next decade.*

4. *Implementation Planning – Develop a Strategic Energy Plan that can be supported by the community, the City Council and LCEC.*

5. *Identify priority projects and apply to the ETIPP's "Deep Dive Technical Assistance" support track for funding support to undertake the detailed planning that will be necessary for the first priority project.*

26. How will you use results from the activities described above to increase your community's energy resilience? (250 words)

The planning process to develop a Strategic Energy Plan will be a community-based process with authentic civic engagement. This means the activities listed above should yield actionable items that the community, elected officials and LCEC can support. Additionally, the strategic energy planning process will be used to develop a list of priority projects that are achievable. The

completed plan will also serve as the foundation for sourcing grant funds and encouraging investment in resilient energy projects.

As stated previously in this application, the City Council has adopted a strategic goal for Community Resilience, which includes, "…encouraging the use of reliable, renewable energy sources..." To help achieve greater community resilience, the City Council funded a Chief Resilience Officer (CRO) as a new staff position whose primary responsibility is to implement their strategic goal. The City has recently filled this position and the CRO will be responsible for leading the strategic energy planning process and for following up on the actionable items in the final plan.

Ultimately, the stated actions will be key in developing investment decisions over the coming decade(s), so a more resilient and sustainable power system is available to support the island community.

27. Who in your community will benefit from your proposed ETIPP project? How will they benefit? (250 words)

The goal of this project is to create a plan that will lead to widespread benefits across the community – to residents, businesses, nonprofit organizations.

The electric power system underlies much of Sanibel's ability to rebound from hurricanes and other disasters. As such, all Sanibel stakeholders will benefit from a more resilient grid. First responders will benefit from having power during and immediately after disasters, enhancing search, rescue, and clean-up operations. Water and wastewater systems can resume operations promptly, allowing residents and businesses to return to the island as soon as conditions are safe, reducing property damage and accelerating business recovery. Establishing reliable shelter and cooling stations for use after evacuation orders are lifted can benefit all residents, and particularly more vulnerable portions of our community, including elderly and low-income individuals. The power utility could benefit as well from reduced damage to the grid and the ability to divert personnel and resources elsewhere following a disaster.

Some resilience investments – such as solar, batteries, and VPPs – could provide benefits in advance of disasters by improving grid reliability, reducing power demand peaks, and relieving grid congestion. This can reduce the cost of procured power and reduce the urgency for grid upgrades. This can benefit LCEC and all electricity customers. Moreover, shifting more rapidly to low-carbon power would benefit the whole regional community through reduced air pollution and by demonstrating a model for how other communities could work toward a more resilient and sustainable power system potentially while reducing taxpayer costs.

28. Who, if anyone, will be negatively impacted by the project? How would they be negatively affected? (250 words)

This project – the initial planning phase of achieving grid resilience – is not anticipated to have negative consequences for any party. Having a more resilient electric system that can support critical energy needs following a natural disaster and supplement peak load demands does not have a downside for any sector of the Sanibel community.

While, investments in resilient electric infrastructure may have significant up-front costs, the benefits will accrue over a much longer period of time and will serve to dramatically improve the system's resiliency and sustainability.

Additionally, some of Sanibel's supporting stakeholders have pointed out in the application process that it will be important for the City to site any new infrastructure in a way that is not detrimental to existing conservation lands. Sanibel has a long history of successful low-impact development and the same will hold true for the development of resilient energy projects.

29. How does your project plan to engage with community decision makers and stakeholders? (250 words)

Sanibel is fortunate to already have a commitment to including a high level of community engagement in all planning processes, that will continue with this proposed project, to ensure there is community support for the final Strategic Energy Plan.

Following Hurricane Ian, a citizen-led coalition, SanCap Resilience formed to support a resilient response to recovery and to promote long term planning for climate change adaptation and mitigation. It consists of concerned residents, local conservation, civic, business, and education organization, along with the City. SanCap Resilience has conducted community surveys, hosted educational events, compiled online resources, and facilitated knowledge sharing across the community. In 2023, SanCap Resilience was awarded a C2C Expert Match technical assistance grant from NREL to develop an energy resilience stakeholder engagement process, which provided the impetus for the city to apply to ETIPP. The city anticipates continued partnership from this coalition to support good community involvement.

In addition, the City is currently undertaking several other related planning tracks that all include a community engagement component. This includes a Vulnerability Assessment and subsequent Adaptation Plan funded by the FDEP, a Stormwater Master Plan, a Comprehensive Transportation Study, and an update to its Comprehensive Plan (land use plan), all with a focus, in part, on community resiliency. Community workshops are critically important to the development of any strategic initiative or comprehensive planning process. Sanibel is a community that is deeply committed to meaningful civic engagement that has established strong partnerships with stakeholders, including LCEC, that it can build upon.

30. Do you have or plan to seek other sources of funding or support to complement the technical assistance provided by ETIPP? Please describe them if so. (Answering "Yes" does not disqualify you from ETIPP support; rather it helps NREL plan for and coordinate with other assistance programs.) (250 words)

Currently, there are no other funding sources the City is seeking or can provide to support the development of the Strategic Energy Plan. Following Hurricane Ian, the City of Sanibel saw taxable property values reduced by 34%. Hurricanes Debby, Helene, and Milton slowed Sanibel's recovery in 2024. Since Hurricane Ian, taxable property values have slightly recovered (less than 5%), which limits Sanibel's ability to fund initiatives without grant support. All the previously referenced planning processes the City is undertaking have been funded with grant awards. The City of Sanibel is hopeful that ETIPP will view the development of a Strategic Energy Plan as a worthwhile

investment in Sanibel's recovery, knowing that the completed plan will be the foundation to aiding a community with improving energy resilience.