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MEDIA RELEASE

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY AWARDS GRANT TO REDUCE ENERGY USE
IN LOW INCOME HOUSEHOLDS**

RALEIGH, N.C., OCTOBER 12, 2016 – The Upper Coastal Plain Council of Governments (UCPCOG), the N.C. Clean Energy Technology Center (NCCETC) at N.C. State University, and the N.C. Sustainable Energy Association (NCSEA), in collaboration with six partners, have been awarded $477,202 to help low-income households in Edgecombe, Halifax, Nash, Northampton, and Wilson counties lower their energy burden and save money. This innovative project, funded by the U.S. Department of Energy, aims to help communities benefit from energy efficiency programs by utilities, local governments, and community service providers.

Many low-income households struggle to pay their energy bills because they often live in older, inefficient homes. According to UCPCOG's Planning Director, Ron Townley, "North Carolinians living in poverty spend a large proportion of their income providing energy for their homes. More than 288,000 North Carolina households with incomes at or below 50% of the Federal poverty level pay at least 35% of their income on home energy bills."

The *Powering Energy Efficiency & Impacts Framework* (PEEIF) project will allow communities to better understand the many benefits of energy efficiency and will provide awareness to money saving programs. "The PEEIF project provides a unique opportunity for UCPCOG and NCCETC to bring together local governments and community stakeholders with N.C. State's Center for Geospatial Analytics, the N.C. State Systems Optimization Lab, in addition to federal, state, nonprofit and utility partners to help low income households reduce their expenses by increasing energy efficiency," said Steve Kalland, NCCETC's Executive Director

The two-year PEEIF project will create a database of energy efficiency programs available within a utility service area in eastern North Carolina and merge it with energy use information from the utilities. "This will allow for data-driven analysis and a new collaboration between utilities, government agencies, and academic institutions, resulting in improved energy efficiency programs and increased energy efficiency among energy-intensive and low-income households." explained Achyut Shrestha, technical lead for NCCETC.

"Our goal is to offer residents' tools to help them better understand their energy usage and where improvements can be made. By collecting and analyzing utility data and providing resources to make improvements to their home's energy performance they can significantly lower their energy burdens." said Laura Langham, Energy Efficiency Program Manager for NCSEA.

The PEEIF project is one of only three awarded by the U.S. Department of Energy's Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy to encourage data driven local energy planning. Partners and the Federal Government hope the tools created through this effort will become a model replicated across the state and nation.

About the *Powering Energy Efficiency & Impacts Framework* Project Partners:

The **North Carolina Clean Energy Technology Center**, as part of the College of Engineering at North Carolina State University (NCSU), advances a sustainable energy economy by educating, demonstrating and providing support for clean energy technologies, practices, and policies.

Upper Coastal Plain Council of Governments (UCPCOG) is an U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) designated Economic Development District that serves as a local and regional lead planning, economic and community development organization. The Council Board and members include five counties and forty-one municipal governments.

The **Center for Geospatial Analytics (CGA)**, based in the College of Natural Resources at NCSU, is a go-to hub for actionable solutions to complex spatial problems, developing innovative research and visualizations that help stakeholders collaboratively discover, interpret, and communicate meaningful patterns in location-based data.

NC Sustainable Energy Association (NCSEA) is the leading North Carolina nonprofit devoted to supporting and attracting clean energy jobs, economic opportunities and affordable energy.

The **System Design Optimization Laboratory (SDOL)** part of the Department of Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering at NCSU, advances the state-of-the-art in engineering design theory by creating tools and methodologies that help designers interpret and analyze system interactions while minimizing performance tradeoffs inherent to complex systems.

NC Justice Center (NCJC) is a nonprofit organization created in 1996 to represent the interests of low income communities and individuals in the state.

Terracel Energy: *ResiSpeak* is a proprietary energy analysis software that compares utility usage to local weather and calculates home energy performance metrics. *ResiSpeak* records home improvement information and compares pre- and post-improvement energy use models to automatically measure energy savings.

University of South Carolina (USC) Department of Geography and School of Earth, Ocean, and Environment evaluates the differential electricity pricing of North Carolina utilities, and the use of numerous data variables to assess likely areas of energy vulnerability.

Vermont Law School (VLS), Institute for the Energy & the Environment (IEE) specializes in energy law and policies affecting renewable energy development and is primary author along with Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory on Regulator's Privacy Guide to Third-Party Data Access for Energy Efficiency report for the US DOE.