



## **PROGRAM HANDBOOK**

Updated: July 2023



## Definitions

**AK C-PACER Program Handbook** – the program handbook is adopted by local governments to explain to Property Owners the basic rules of the program and how to apply.

**AK C-PACER Program Guide for Local Governments** – this guide provides instruction to local governments looking to establish and administer a C-PACER program using the AK C-PACER program documents and administrative platform.

**Alaska Building Energy Efficiency Standard** – The Alaska Housing Finance Corporation’s Building Energy Efficiency Standard (BEES) was established by the State of Alaska to promote the construction of energy efficient buildings. More information can be found on [the AHFC website](#).

**Alaska C-PACER (“AK C-PACER”)** – an administrative platform, including all requisite template documents to establish and operate a C-PACE program, that any eligible local government choosing to establish a C-PACER program in Alaska can adopt.

**C-PACER** – commercial property assessed clean energy and resilience program.

**C-PACER Act** – HB 80 was signed into law August 2017 and amended by HB 227 in June 2022, codified at [AS 29.55.100 - .165](#). It allows local governments to establish and administer C-PACER programs.

**C-PACER Assessment** – an assessment imposed by a local government at the request of a Property Owner who obtains financing for an Eligible Improvement pursuant to the C-PACER Act.

**C-PACER Lien** – the C-PACER Assessment is a lien on the property as provided in the C-PACER Act which shall run with the improved property and is prior and paramount to all liens except municipal tax liens and special assessments

**C-PACER Project** – the construction, installation, or modification of Eligible Improvements financed pursuant to the C-PACER Act.

**Capital Provider** – a third-party provider of C-PACER financing.

**Capital Provider Contract** – the contract executed by the local government and the C-PACER capital provider that describes the servicing of the C-PACER assessment.

**Eligible Improvement** – an Energy and/or Resilience Improvement Project as described in the C-PACER Act.

**Eligible Property** – a property that may be considered for financing pursuant to the C-PACER Act and the applicable local government’s C-PACER Ordinance and Resolution.

**Energy Improvement Project** – a C-PACER Project designed to reduce energy consumption or demand, energy costs, or emissions affecting local air quality, including a product, device, or interacting group of products or devices that use energy technology to generate electricity, provide thermal energy, or regulate temperature.

**Independent Project Auditor** – an independent third-party not otherwise engaged in the C-PACER Project who holds one of the professional certifications described in the “Technical Requirements.”

**Notice of Contractual Assessment Lien** – the document recorded in the land records of the jurisdiction where a C-PACER project is located that provides notice of the imposition of the C-PACER Assessment on the property receiving the Eligible Improvement.

**Ordinance to Approve a C-PACER Program** – the non-codified ordinance approving a Program Report setting forth the terms and conditions of a C-PACER Program.

**Ordinance to Establish a C-PACER Program** – codified ordinance incorporating the previously enacted Resolution and Intent and Ordinance to Approve a C-PACER Program, establishing the C-PACER program in a particular jurisdiction.

**Owner Contract** – executed by the local government and the owner of an Eligible Property that specifies the terms of the C-PACER Assessment and financing.

**Program Report** – publicly available report describing the terms of a C-PACER program, as specified in the C-PACER Act.

**Renewable Energy** has the meaning given in [AS 42.45.350\(5\)](#).

**Resilience Improvement Project** – a C-PACER Project to improve building resilience including but not limited to projects for seismic improvements, stormwater management, flood mitigation and protection, fire hardening, fire or wind resistance, erosion management, snow load management, microgrids for energy storage and backup power generation, water or wastewater efficiency including reuse and energy recovery, electric vehicle charging stations, retrofitting that improves the envelope, structure, or systems of the building, or any other improvement project approved by a local government as a resilience improvement project.

**Resolution of Intent** – a legislative action taken pursuant to the C-PACER Act that establishes that the financing of Eligible Improvements through assessments serves a valid public purpose.

# Contents

<b>Definitions.....</b>	<b>i</b>
<b>I. Introduction .....</b>	<b>i</b>
About C-PACER .....	i
 <b>II. Benefits of C-PACER Financing.....</b>	<b>ii</b>
Benefits of C-PACER for Property Owners and Developers.....	ii
 Benefits of C-PACER for Local Governments.....	ii
 Benefits of C-PACER for Capital Providers.....	ii
 Benefits of C-PACER for Existing Mortgage Holders.....	iii
 Benefits of C-PACER for Contractors, Architects, Building Engineers.....	iii
 <b>III. C-PACER Financing Program Rules.....</b>	<b>iii</b>
1. Establishment of a C-PACER Program .....	iii
2. Role of the Program Administrator .....	iii
3. Eligibility Requirements.....	iv
4. Technical Requirements .....	v
5. Financing Requirements.....	v
 <b>IV. Application Process.....</b>	<b>vi</b>
1. Application Documents .....	viii
2. Closing Documents .....	viii
3. Billing and Collection of Assessments .....	viii
4. Delinquency and Enforcement .....	viii
5. Program Fees.....	ix
6. Templates of Closing Documents .....	ix
7. Local Government Has No Liability or Financial Responsibility .....	ix
8. Post-Completion Items .....	ix

9. Quality Assurance and Anti-Fraud Measures .....	ix
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# I. Introduction

## About C-PACER

The Alaska PACER statute (“PACER Act”) allows owners of eligible commercial property (“Property Owners”) to obtain long-term financing from qualified private capital providers (“Capital Providers”) for:

- a) energy projects (“EP”) designed to reduce energy consumption or demand, energy costs, or emissions affecting local air quality, including a product, device, or interacting group of products or devices that use energy technology to generate electricity, provide thermal energy, or regulate temperature; or
- b) resilience projects (“RP”) that improve building resilience, including seismic improvements, stormwater management, flood mitigation and protection, fire hardening, fire or wind resistance, erosion management, snow load management, microgrids for energy storage and backup power generation, water or wastewater efficiency including reuse and energy recovery, electric vehicle charging stations, retrofitting that improves the envelope, structure, or systems of the building, and any other improvement project approved by a local government as a resilience improvement project.

To obtain the funds for an EP or a RP, a Property Owner enters into a contract with the Local Government where the property is located to impose an assessment on the eligible property that receives the improvement to repay the financing.

Over 30 states and hundreds of local governments have adopted legislation like C-PACER. According to PACENation, through 2022, cumulative nationwide C-PACER financing exceeded \$4 billion in private investment across 2,900 projects, creating over 52,000 job-years.

This Program Handbook (Handbook) was developed as a guide for the AK C-PACER program platform. This Handbook contains information about:

- Eligibility requirements for properties and projects in Alaska.
- The process for applying for C-PACER project approval.

Local Governments administer a Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy and Resilience financing program under Alaska Statutes 29.55.100 et seq. as amended by HB227 in 2022. The amendments renamed the program the “Municipal Property Assessed Clean Energy and Resilience Act.” Accordingly, this Handbook abbreviates the name as “C-PACER.”

References to sections of the Alaska Statutes (AS) are indicated by “AS [Title].[Chapter].[Section].”

## II. Benefits of C-PACER Financing

C-PACER financing offers benefits to property owners, developers, capital providers, government entities, mortgage lien holders, and building professionals.

### Benefits of C-PACER for Property Owners and Developers

C-PACER is an alternative source of financing to make cost- and energy-saving improvements to commercial buildings of all types, including retail, industrial, agricultural, and multifamily properties.

- **Smaller down payments.** One of the biggest barriers to installing clean energy and resilience upgrades is the sizeable down payment. C-PACER financing reduces the amount of the down payment. For retrofit projects, C-PACER financing typically covers 100% of the cost of the improvement. In new construction projects, C-PACER financing may cover qualified costs (described in the Handbook) up to 25% of the market value of the property.
- **Longer repayment periods.** C-PACER payments are made over the average useful life of the improvements, up to 30 years.
- **Lower interest rates.** The interest rate on C-PACER financing can be substantially lower than rate for subordinate debt or preferred equity. Note that interest rates are at the discretion of the capital provider based on their underwriting process.
- **Cash flow benefits.** Smaller down payments, longer repayment periods, and lower interest rates all contribute to improved project cash flow.
- **Increased property value.** Installing eligible improvements can increase property value by reducing operating costs.
- **Transferable upon sale.** If a Property Owner sells the property before the C-PACER financing is repaid, the C-PACER lien and assessment transfer to the new Owner.
- **Commercial leases may allow the installment payments to be passed through to tenants.** Depending on the terms of a commercial net lease, C-PACER payments may be passed through to the tenant that benefits from the energy cost savings.

### Benefits of C-PACER for Local Governments

C-PACER financing creates jobs by stimulating private investment. C-PACER financing comes entirely from the private sector, requiring no taxpayer funds. The financial risk is borne entirely by a private Capital Provider, and neither state nor local government is liable in the case of a payment default. By making it more affordable to improve commercial properties, the value of local building stock can increase. Energy and resilience upgrades create a more competitive environment for attracting new businesses by lowering energy costs and improving the structural soundness of buildings. Upgraded buildings may also generate higher property tax payments for the local government through higher property values. Finally, C-PACER programs can help local governments meet federal- or state-mandated energy standards as well as achieve local energy efficiency and resilience goals.

### Benefits of C-PACER for Capital Providers

Capital providers see in C-PACER a highly reliable, long-term investment. Requisite capital for C-PACER projects routinely run into the hundreds of thousands to millions of dollars. Through the seniority of the

property assessment, capital providers are secured by the value of the real estate and are repaid through a known repayment stream.

### **Benefits of C-PACER for Existing Mortgage Holders**

C-PACER financing requires the consent of all existing mortgage lien holders prior to closing. C-PACER projects boost net operating income by funding improvements that reduce a building's operating costs while charging a low annual repayment that is frequently less than the resulting energy savings. Increased cash flow improves debt service coverage and raises asset values. C-PACER financing offers lower interest rates than preferred equity or mezzanine debt, helping projects to fill gaps in the capital stack and achieve a lower overall blended cost of capital. Finally, in the unlikely event of default, C-PACER assessments are non-accelerating. Only delinquent installment payments are enforced through the C-PACER lien; the remaining future installments are paid by the Property Owner as they come due.

### **Benefits of C-PACER for Contractors, Architects, Building Engineers**

C-PACER financing enables Property Owners to afford more substantial energy and/or resilience improvement projects. C-PACER finances most hard and soft costs associated with the eligible improvements. For contractors, C-PACER financing is a way to pitch clients on deeper energy and resilience projects that might otherwise be value-engineered out of a building project.

## **III. C-PACER Financing Program Rules**

The Handbook establishes guidelines, eligibility, approval criteria, and an application checklist for the Local Government's C-PACER program ("Program"). The C-PACER Program enables financing for owners of commercial property ("Property Owners") for energy improvement projects and resilience improvement projects (each, an "Eligible Improvement") as described in the C-PACER Act and in this Handbook.

### **1. Establishment of a C-PACER Program**

Through an Ordinance, Local Governments establish a C-PACER Program for commercial properties within the Local Government's boundaries. Check <https://akcpacer.org/available-c-pacer-programs/> for availability in your area.

### **2. Role of the Program Administrator**

The Program Administrator will review the application (see Application Checklist in Exhibit A) for completeness, consistency, and possible errors. Several requirements require input and certification from qualified experts. The Program Administrator will confirm that the expert is appropriately credentialed and that their work satisfies the application requirements. The Program Administrator is not expected to independently re-calculate or re-do the work of the expert.

As part of Program operation, the Program Administrator will:

- Accept and review the Project Application to determine conformance with the Application Checklist (Exhibit A).
- Approve, conditionally approve, or disapprove the Project Application and communicate that decision to the applicant.

- If approved, execute (a) the Owner Contract, (b) the Capital Provider Contract, and (c) Notice of Contractual Assessment (“Notice of Contractual Assessment”) (Exhibit G).
- Record the Notice of Contractual Assessment.

### 3. Eligibility Requirements

All qualifying costs in a project application and approved by the Program Administrator constitute an “Eligible Project” (a “C-PACER Project” or “Project”). Property Owners may receive funding for their Eligible Improvements only from Capital Providers pursuant to a separate Financing Agreement negotiated between the Property Owner and Capital Provider (a “Financing Agreement”).

**Property Owners** must be the legal record holder of the property receiving the eligible improvement and must be current on mortgage and property taxes, and not insolvent or in bankruptcy proceedings. See AS 29.55.110. A Property Owner may be any type of business, corporation, individual, or non-profit organization. If the applicant will become the Owner of the Property when the C-PACER financing closes, the application must include evidence showing the anticipated transfer will occur, for example, a title insurance policy documenting the conditions of sale and conveyance of the Property.

A leasehold interest on qualifying commercial Property is eligible for C-PACER financing with the consent of the fee owner of the commercial Property. All owners of the fee simple title to the subject Property must sign the final application.

**Eligible Properties** are privately-owned commercial or industrial properties, including agricultural property, or a multi-family real property (as defined by the local government), within the boundaries established by the local government that enacted the C-PACER ordinance.

**Eligible Projects** include:

- The new construction, or installation or modification of an Eligible Improvement permanently affixed to an Eligible Property, including projects for the adaptive reuse or gut rehabilitation of an eligible Property.
- The refinancing of projects on existing properties that have had Eligible Improvements installed and completed for no more than two (2) years prior to the expected closing date of the C-PACER refinancing.

**Eligible Improvements:** C-PACER financing is available for the following uses.

- a) Energy Projects (“EP”) designed to reduce energy consumption or demand, energy costs, or emissions affecting local air quality, including a product, device, or interacting group of products or devices that use energy technology to generate electricity, provide thermal energy, or regulate temperature; or
- b) Resilience Projects (“RP”) that improve building resilience, including seismic improvements, stormwater management, flood mitigation and protection, fire hardening, fire or wind resistance, erosion management, snow load management, microgrids for energy storage and backup power generation, water or wastewater efficiency including reuse and energy recovery, electric vehicle charging stations, retrofitting that improves the envelope, structure, or systems

of the building, and any other improvement project approved by a local government as a resilience improvement project.

- c) Appliances that provide significant energy or other utility savings and are functionally attached to the Property for the full length of the assessment may be eligible.

Certain items that are not permanently affixed to a property and are ineligible include:

- Shading devices, furniture, fire extinguishers.
- Cosmetic improvements such as painting, new carpeting.
- Non-commercial / industrial appliances such as microwaves, non-affixed lighting, and other items not affixed to the Property.

#### **4. Technical Requirements**

The C-PACER Act requires the Property Owner on which a C-PACER assessment is imposed to obtain for each proposed energy improvement project or building resilience improvement project,

- (A) a review of the energy, emissions, or resilience baseline conditions, as applicable; and
- (B) the projected reduction in energy costs, energy consumption or demand, or emissions affecting local air quality, or increase in resilience, as applicable.

This requirement is met by a Certificate of Eligible Improvements from a qualified project auditor. Exhibit E lists the minimum acceptable qualifications of a project auditor, and the auditor must supply evidence of those qualifications.

The project auditor will determine if the Application meets the requirements of the C-PACER statute and this Program Handbook, and the auditor must supply work papers explaining the basis for their certifications that are sufficient to satisfy the Program Administrator that program requirements are met.

Exhibit E includes a description of the baseline conditions and necessary documentation for an energy improvement project and a building resilience improvement project for:

- Retrofit of an existing building;
- New construction of a building; and
- Refinancing of a retrofit or new construction.

Property owners, developers, and project auditors should read the baseline and documentation requirements carefully because they are essential to approval of a C-PACER project.

#### **5. Financing Requirements**

The term of C-PACER financing is capped at the lesser of 30 years or the weighted average useful life of the eligible improvements.

The C-PACER financing amount may not exceed 25% of the “market value” of the Property at the time of program application. Market Value means the assessed value of the current tax year or the current or prospective appraised market value as determined by an Alaska certified appraiser.

Existing mortgage lien holders must be given 30 days’ notice prior to the closing of the C-PACER financing, and all mortgage lien holders must consent in writing to the assessment for the project to close. See AS 29.55.115. Exhibit C provides an acceptable template for the notice and consent. A mortgage lien holder has complete discretion to approve or disapprove of C-PACER financing. A Property Owner should consult with their Capital Provider before approaching an existing mortgage lien holder, as many traditional lenders are not familiar with C-PACER financing and may misunderstand how it functions.

**Qualifying Costs** that can be paid for with C-PACER financing include:

- Materials and labor necessary for the eligible improvement project,
- Permit fees;
- Inspection fees;
- Financing and origination fees;
- Capitalized interest;
- Interest reserves;
- Program application and closing fees;
- Project development, architectural, and engineering fees;
- Escrow for prepaid property tax or insurance;
- Capitalized manufacturer’s warranty or maintenance agreement costs; and
- Any other fees or costs incurred by the Property Owner incident to the installation, modification, or improvement.<sup>1</sup>

## IV. Application Process

Property Owners should have a project in mind when they explore C-PACER financing. Property Owners may contact the Local Government or Program Administrator at any time with questions. Property Owners may also find it helpful to speak with a Capital Provider early in the design process for an estimate of the amount of financing available. Property Owners are free to work with any Capital Provider that will provide financing in accordance with the Program’s requirements.

After conferring with one or more Capital Providers, the Property Owner should define the Eligible Improvements. A Property Owner may engage an energy or resilience expert as a Project Auditor to advise during the design process. Each applicant will work with its own project development team to determine the final Project scope and qualifying costs.

The process of obtaining financing under the Program starts when a Property Owner approaches a Capital Provider. The Capital Provider will work with the Property Owner to collect various due diligence items. Once all the items have been received, reviewed, and approved by the Capital Provider, the parties will discuss financing terms.

A description of the C-PACER application process is as follows:

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<sup>1</sup> Examples of qualifying costs are structural improvements necessary to allow the installation of a solar PV array and electrical upgrades necessary to install an efficient HVAC system or efficient lighting.

- (1) The Property Owner and the Capital Provider prepare the Project Application, consisting of the Project Application Checklist and the supporting documents (see Exhibit A). Applicants should review the Project Application Checklist to assure that the documentation needed by the Program Administrator to verify compliance with the C-PACER Act and C-PACER Ordinance is available.
- (2) The Program Administrator will have 10 business days to review and approve the Project Application. If the Office has received an unusually high number of applications or review is delayed because of a *force majeure* event, the Office will notify the Property Owner that the application review will be delayed by no more than 10 additional business days.
- (3) The purpose of the Local Government's application review process is to confirm that the Project Application is complete, that no errors or internal inconsistencies are evident on the face of the Application, and that all attachments conform to the C-PACER Act, the Local Government Ordinance and the Handbook. ***Local Government approval does not constitute endorsement of any representations that may be made regarding the operation and any savings associated with the Eligible Improvements.*** The Local Government may request additional supporting documentation from the applicant. Incomplete Project Applications will be returned to the applicant, and the Program Administrator will notify the applicant about which items were not provided or are insufficient or inaccurate. If the Project Application and supporting documents comply with the Project Application Checklist, the Project Application will be approved, and the approval communicated in writing to the applicant.
- (4) The Project Application may be *conditionally* approved if the application is complete, but the mortgage lienholder consent is not yet available. Conditional approval will be treated the same as an approval with exceptions noted below.
- (5) Upon receipt of application approval, the Capital Provider will draft the Owner Contract, the Capital Provider Contract, and the Notice of Contractual Assessment Lien (Exhibit G). See AS 29.55.110(a) (2)-(3). At or before closing, at the request of the applicant, the designated and authorized official will sign these documents.
- (6) If the Project Application receives conditional approval, the Closing Documents executed by the Local Government will not be released from escrow unless and until all the written consents from mortgage lienholders have been received and executed in accordance with the C-PACER Act and C-PACER Ordinance.
- (7) At closing, the Local Government will record the Owner Contract, the Capital Provider Contract, and the Notice of Contractual Assessment Lien in the Office of the Register of Deeds for the Local Government. See AS 29.55.130. At the election of the applicant, the Local Government may delegate the recording of the Closing Documents to the applicant or its designee(s).
- (8) Following closing of the C-PACER financing and receipt of the proof of recording of the Notice of Contractual Assessment Lien, the Property Owner and its agents may initiate construction of the C-PACER project or otherwise fund the C-PACER financing in accordance with the agreements with the Capital Provider.

## Change Orders

All change orders that result in a substantial alteration of C-PACER funded improvements are required to be pre-approved by the local government or its Program Administrator to confirm that the changes are consistent with the Program. The Property Owner shall provide the following documentation:

- Narrative description of the change in project scope and the reason for such a change;
- Revised C-PACER project budget;
- A letter from a project auditor certifying that the revised improvements are eligible for C-PACER financing; and
- Written approval of the change order by the Capital Provider.

## **1. Application Documents**

The Project Application must be submitted with the following documents (see accompanying file for Exhibits):

1. Project Application Checklist (Exhibit A)
2. Title Search.
3. Proof of Insurance, as required by See AS 29.55.110(15).
4. Certificate of Property's Financial Eligibility (Exhibit B).
5. Mortgage Lienholder(s) Consent (Exhibit C-1 and C-2).
6. Disclosure of Risks (Exhibit D).
7. Certificate of Eligible Improvements (Exhibit E).

## **2. Closing Documents**

The following documents require the signature of the Local Government and shall be part of the closing of any C-PACER transaction. Each document must be similar in substance to the templates appended to this Handbook, although it is expected that Property Owners and Capital Providers will negotiate variations tailored to their specific projects.

- Owner Contract (Exhibit G)
- Capital Provider Contract (Exhibit G)
- Notice of Contractual Assessment Lien (Exhibit G)

## **3. Billing and Collection of Assessments**

C-PACER Assessment payments are billed and collected by the local government in the same manner as property taxes. The local government, or its agent, will remit the payment to the Capital Provider (Exhibit G). See AS 29.55.110(a)(3).

## **4. Delinquency and Enforcement**

Assessment liens will be enforced as provided in AS 29.45.320 - 29.45.470 for enforcement of property tax liens. Assessment liens run with the land, and that portion of the assessment under the assessment contract that has not yet become due is not eliminated by foreclosure of a property tax lien or a C-PACER lien. The Local Government will enforce the C-PACER Lien through the same mechanism that it uses to enforce the liens for ad valorem property taxes.

## **5. Program Fees**

A local government may impose fees to offset the costs of administering a program. See AS 29.55.100(d). The Property Owner must pay this fee to the Local Government at the closing of the transaction between the Property Owner and the Capital Provider, and such payment is a condition precedent to recording. Visit each program's website for details.

**Note:** The administrative fees determined by Local Government and/or its Program Administrator cover the regular costs of the administration of the Program. These costs and expenses do not include any specialized or extraordinary professional services that may be necessary should the circumstances of a particular C-PACER project require them. The Property Owner for such C-PACER project shall be responsible for covering such expenses at cost.

## **6. Templates of Closing Documents**

The Program has adopted template Closing Documents in Exhibit G, the Owner Contract, the Capital Provider Contract, and Notice of Contractual Assessment Lien. A Property Owner and Capital Provider may adapt the forms to the needs of their particular transaction but must not modify or omit any material substantive terms contained in the forms.

## **7. Local Government Has No Liability or Financial Responsibility**

Neither the Local Government, its governing body, executives, or employees are personally liable as a result of exercising any rights or responsibilities granted under this Program. The Local Government shall not pledge, offer, or encumber its full faith and credit for any lien amount under the C-PACER program. No public funds may be used to repay any C-PACER financing obligation.

## **8. Post-Completion Items**

For each completed C-PACER improvement project, the Property Owner must submit verification from an auditor that the Project was properly completed and is operating as intended (Exhibit F). See AS 29.55.120(2).

Upon written confirmation from the capital provider that the C-PACER Assessment has been repaid in full, the local government will release the Assessment from the Property.

## **9. Quality Assurance and Anti-Fraud Measures**

The Local Government and its Program Administrator may audit a C-PACER application or closing documentation at any time. To the extent authorized by state and local law, the Local Government and its Program Administrator may request supplementary information from the Property Owner concerning eligibility for the C-PACER program, use of proceeds of C-PACER financing, and the performance of the C-PACER project for the purpose of quality assurance and anti-fraud.