



**Arnold I. Palacios**  
Governor

**David M. Apatang**  
Lieutenant Governor

**COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS**  
**OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR**

**DIRECTIVE NO. 2023-008**

**SUBJECT:** Establishing the position of Special Assistant for Climate Policy and Planning within the Office of the Governor to head the operation and administration of a Climate Policy and Planning Program.

**AUTHORITY:** NMI Const. art. III, § 1 provides that “[t]he executive power of the Commonwealth shall be vested in a governor who shall be responsible for the faithful execution of the law;” and NMI Const. art. III § 14 grants the governor the power to “at any time require information in writing or otherwise from the head of any administrative department, office or agency of the Commonwealth;” and 1 CMC § 2052 provides that the “Governor may employ staff as required to assist the office of the Governor in performing its functions[.]”

**WHEREAS,** the earth’s climate is warming and changing faster than at any point in recorded history as anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions blanket the planet and trap the sun’s heat, leading to disruptions in weather patterns and the balance of nature;

**WHEREAS,** the climate crisis has led to extreme weather events, disasters, and conflicts all over the planet, damaging infrastructure, human health, ecosystems, and social systems, and impairing the delivery of essential services to communities throughout the world, including the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands;

**WHEREAS,** small island communities like the Northern Marianas stand on the frontlines of the climate crisis, acutely vulnerable to the far-reaching effects of a changing climate, and uniquely positioned to offer innovative solutions for climate adaptation, mitigation, and resiliency;

**WHEREAS,** the people of the Northern Marianas have keenly experienced the impacts of climate change in recent years, with more severe and more frequent typhoons leaving a path of destruction across the archipelago, from Typhoon Soudelor in 2015, to Typhoon Mangkhut and Super Typhoon Yutu in 2018, and Typhoon Mawar in 2023;

**WHEREAS,** the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands is increasingly vulnerable to other serious climate-related threats, including drought, flooding, wildfire, sea level rise, coastal erosion, invasive species, declines in human health, and loss of biodiversity;

**WHEREAS**, climate change is a global problem that demands cooperation across sectors, communities, and scales;

**WHEREAS**, if no substantive action is taken to reduce greenhouse gas emissions on a global scale, climate change is expected to further severely disrupt delicate ecosystems and many areas of life and society, and to exacerbate existing challenges and inequities confronting communities today;

**WHEREAS**, President Joseph R. Biden signed into law the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 (IRA), the nation's most significant investment in clean energy and climate solutions, providing \$370 billion to address the existential threats posed by the climate crisis, drive critical investments to frontline communities, and further secure America's role as a leader and innovator in the global clean energy economy;

**WHEREAS**, the IRA includes \$5 billion for the Climate Pollution Reduction Grants (CPRG) program, including funds set aside specifically for the territories, to support comprehensive plans and priority actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and other air pollutants;

**WHEREAS**, in implementing the CPRG and many other programs under the IRA, the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) aims to achieve three main objectives: (1) tackle damaging climate pollution while supporting the creation of good jobs and lowering energy costs for families; (2) accelerate work to address environmental injustice and empower community-driven solutions in overburdened neighborhoods; and (3) deliver cleaner air by reducing harmful air pollution in places where people live, work, play, and go to school;

**WHEREAS**, in pursuing and implementing grants under the CPRG and other climate-related programs, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, along with the rest of the United States, will be well-positioned to address climate threats, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, resolve historic environmental injustices and inequities within communities, and transition to a clean energy, low carbon economy that will spur innovation, growth, and resiliency;

**NOW THEREFORE, I, ARNOLD I. PALACIOS**, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and in order to achieve effective and efficient government administration that serves the interests of the Commonwealth and its people, hereby direct the following:

**Establishment of the Climate Policy and Planning Program**

- A. Within the Office of the Governor, there is established a Climate Policy and Planning (CPP) Program which shall be headed by a Special Assistant for Climate Policy and Planning appointed by and serving at the pleasure of the Governor. The Special Assistant shall:

1. Assist the Governor and the Commonwealth government to perform and carry out functions and duties necessary for the Commonwealth to develop and implement plans, policies, and strategies to address climate-related threats and inequities, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and move the Northern Mariana Islands to a clean energy, low carbon economy;
  2. Manage and lead the Commonwealth's efforts to apply for federal grants and coordinate the use of funding available for climate and clean energy initiatives, including the Climate Pollution Reduction Grants program under the Inflation Reduction Act, and shall receive assistance and cooperation from the Office of Grants Management and the Office of Planning and Development to ensure compliance with all grant requirements, including but not limited to the timely submission of plans, reports, and data;
  3. Engage with stakeholders in the Commonwealth in the public and private sectors to develop plans, policies, strategies, and projects to achieve the Commonwealth's climate and clean energy priorities consistent with the objectives outlined in the IRA, including the CPRG program;
  4. Develop and issue subgrants or subawards, and employ or contract the personnel and technical expertise necessary to advance the goals and objectives of the CPP Program, subject to availability of authorized funding;
  5. Report to the Governor on a regular basis and as directed by the Governor on the status of the CPP program, plans, and projects and advise the Governor on actions necessary, including executive orders, legislation, regulations, or other initiatives, for further development of the CPP program.
- B. All departments and agencies of the Executive Branch, including the Office of Grants Management, the Office of Planning and Development, and the Bureau of Environmental and Coastal Quality, as well as public corporations and autonomous agencies, are directed or otherwise requested to cooperate and coordinate with the Special Assistant for Climate Policy and Planning and the CPP Program and shall lend support to the work of the CPP Program to the greatest possible extent without compromising existing responsibilities of the departments and agencies.
- C. The CPP Program may be allocated funds appropriated to the Office of the Governor or from available federal grants or other sources available to the Commonwealth to fund personnel, operations, capital expenses and projects.

- D. The Special Assistant, with the approval of the Governor, may make internal organizational arrangements to the CPP Program as may be administratively necessary to fulfill the purpose, duties and responsibilities outlined in this Directive.
- E. This Directive is effective immediately. The CPP Program and the position of Special Assistant shall continue in existence for so long as the CPP Program and the Special Assistant are needed to ensure the Commonwealth's participation in the relevant grant funding of the IRA and its programs.

SIGNED AND PROMULGATED on this 21<sup>st</sup> day of September, 2023.

  
**ARNOLD I. PALACIOS**  
Governor