

2010–2015 Communications Strategy

Commission for Environmental Cooperation

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Introduction

The Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC) supports cooperative actions on the part of Canada, Mexico and the United States that produce tangible environmental results. Effective communication of those results to strategically targeted audiences is integral to the Commission's overall success. Specifically, the CEC's ability to successfully implement the goals and objectives set out by the Council depends in large part on the extent to which good communication practices generate visibility and support for its work, and for the value and relevance of its activities, to communities, partners, and key audiences throughout North America. The CEC also has an obligation to communicate the *bigger picture*—how and the extent to which the Commission is meeting the priorities, and environmental goals and objectives established by the CEC's Council and the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation (NAAEC, or the *Agreement*).

This Communications Strategy is a direct result of the Council's recognition of the role of effective communications and responding to input from the public, both of which are key to promoting public awareness of the work of the CEC. The Council has also directed the Secretariat to identify innovative and cost-effective means of building public awareness.

A primary goal of this Communications Strategy is to raise awareness of the Council's priorities that underlay the CEC's 2010–2015 Strategic Plan—*healthy communities and ecosystems, climate change – low-carbon economy, and greening the economy in North America*—and the evidence of progress in support of those priorities. Individual project communication plans include specific tasks to communicate purpose, progress and outcomes to targeted stakeholders, relevant audiences, and participants. This strategy also identifies general approaches to communicating other important aspects of the CEC's work, including its Citizen Submissions on Enforcement Matters process, independent Secretariat reports under Article 13 of the Agreement as well as other mandates under the Agreement. In the same manner, CEC communication efforts support specific work of the Council and JPAC, including public meetings.

The general communication tactics described in this strategy are intended to serve as a guideline for CEC outreach efforts; specific tactics, techniques and communication channels are defined as part of targeted implementation plans. Given the importance of using cost-effective and innovative communications tools to reach diverse audiences across three countries, social media and other online/electronic tools present important opportunities. Addendum C provides additional information on the CEC's use social media and electronic networks. The CEC will nevertheless continue to reach out, using traditional tools such as print and radio, to people and groups in remote locations, including indigenous and other communities who may not have Internet access or are otherwise disadvantaged.

Communications Roles and Opportunities

The NAAEC describes three constituent bodies that comprise the Commission—Council, the Joint Public Advisory Committee (JPAC), and the Secretariat. Each has distinct roles and corresponding responsibilities that extend to communications priorities, needs and activities. The Council’s communications role is focused on the Commission’s overall direction, governance and accomplishments. JPAC’s mandate is to advise the Council on North American Environmental matters using approaches that promote public participation and transparency on CEC matters. The Secretariat has responsibility for certain specific obligations under the Agreement (mainly Articles 13, 14 and 15), providing technical and administrative support to the Council, and convening and coordinating experts and officials from the three Parties to the Agreement and other partners to carry-out the cooperative work of the CEC in accordance with Operational Plans as approved by the Council. The Secretariat’s communications role centers on the development and dissemination of all communications products produced by the Secretariat regarding the work of all of CEC’s constituent bodies, including the dissemination and communication of accomplishments that stem from the trilateral, cooperative work program.

The goal of this communications strategy is to maximize the impact of all three of the Commission’s voices to reinforce the communications objectives and to ensure they reinforce and support each other while maintaining their individual roles and responsibilities. In addition to the specific communications tactics listed below as part of this Communications Strategy, there are number of more general roles and opportunities to promote further collaboration between the Council, JPAC and the Secretariat. In some cases, these also extend to other partners, including government agencies not directly affiliated with the Council, nongovernmental environmental groups and CEC grant recipients.

These roles and opportunities include:

Council members/representatives

- Promote results of CEC projects by redistributing CEC outreach/media materials and have government experts and officials speak to media and stakeholders;
- Participate—either at events or through quotes in news releases—in announcements regarding CEC grant announcements;
- Promote CEC events, especially the annual Council session, through events calendars, website banners and media announcements; and
- Respond to media inquiries regarding country-specific aspects of CEC projects or national policy matters.

JPAC members

- Develop and execute a JPAC communications plan to promote awareness of JPAC’s mandate and public engagement in the work of the CEC and its project priorities;
- Promote JPAC-hosted public sessions and develop related outreach materials and announcements;
- Engage members of the public in online discussion forums (i.e., social media networks) and other fora;
- Reflect the input of the public in Advice to Council where it is applicable/appropriate;

- Help identify and promote projects under the North American Partnership for Environmental Community Action (NAPECA); and
- Act as ambassadors for public participation in CEC projects.

Secretariat

- Develop and implement an overall Communications Strategy on behalf of the Commission to coordinate communication efforts from all three constituent bodies;
- Develop general and specific communications messages in collaboration with government experts and officials, JPAC members and others; and
- Support the Council, JPAC and partners in their communications efforts concerning CEC-related activity and accomplishments;

Partners

- Share information with the CEC regarding their work, including texts, website links, photos, etc.;
- Promote their efforts and accomplishments under CEC projects and grants as part of a North American collaboration using an information kit provided by the CEC, including “About the CEC” templates, facts sheets and CEC logos; and
- Include links to the CEC website for their stakeholders to learn more about CEC work.

Communication Goals

- ***Increase awareness***
General - To increase awareness of the Commission, its *role*, value and purpose.
Specific - This includes awareness of the Council's priorities for trilateral cooperation and the project-level results of current and past noteworthy CEC cooperative work.
- ***Enhance reputation.*** Enable the CEC to be seen by key audiences as a credible and valuable trilateral organization that works in partnership with governments, civil society and businesses to develop innovative North American solutions to regional and global environmental challenges.

Audiences: Canada, Mexico and the United States

The CEC is a transparent organization and makes information about its activities available to interested members of the public in a variety of ways, including through our website. To maximize communication efforts in support of CEC priorities and the projects and activities around them, however, this strategy seeks to target key people and groups who should be informed about ongoing work and outcomes as well as to provide input and participate directly. The following list includes some of the CEC’s key audiences; specific communication plans identify more narrower target audiences or other groups according to outreach goals defined as part of those initiatives or campaigns.

- Government officials and experts, especially those not directly involved with CEC and from other agencies besides Environment Canada/SEMARNAT/EPA but need to be informed about CEC activities and results.

- Industry and private sector representatives involved in sectors relevant to CEC priorities (e.g., chemicals management, sustainable beef production, etc.)
- Indigenous peoples in North America
- Community groups, including NAPECA grant applicants/recipients
- Researchers and academics, as well as students, who can contribute to and benefit from CEC projects and information.
- Journalists and bloggers covering environmental as well as green economy/trade issues.

Measurable Outcomes

The Secretariat's communication team will report every three months on measurable outcomes based on the list below as well as specific communications activities outlined in individual project communications plans. Note that all metrics are expressed in annual increments. See Addendum C for additional information about measurement.

- Establish baseline measures for public and stakeholder awareness of the Commission's activities.
- Obtain 10 third-party (industry, NGO, academic) endorsements related to CEC projects.
- Meet with and brief 30 top-tier organizations and associations on Commission initiatives in the three countries.
- Increase number of direct communications and information exchange with interested partners and collaborating center by 15 percent.
- Increase number of unique visitors to CEC website by 10 percent.
- Increase number of Facebook and Twitter followers by 100 percent.
- Increase listserv (subscribers to CEC information) by 25 percent.
- Increase webcast participation by 25 percent.
- Obtain media coverage that presents the Commission's messages.

Communication Strategies

1. CEC Core Messages: Communicate CEC role, value and purpose using innovative and cost-effective tools for communicating regularly with consistent messaging and using key projects to illustrate successes.
2. CEC Project Stories and Successes: Develop compelling messaging and materials for key CEC projects to ensure maximum understanding and readiness for communications internally and externally.
3. CEC Stakeholder Engagement: Build relationships with governments, NGOs and industry stakeholders by engaging collaboratively on project implementation, outreach and communications efforts.

Communication Messages

The CEC's core messages must reflect the CEC's overall role, value and purpose. The consistent use of messages by CEC staff, project partners, stakeholders, internally and externally, in publications and materials, meetings and all events, helps to ensure the CEC is accurately represented.

Mission Statement (as established when CEC was created):

The CEC facilitates cooperation and public participation to foster conservation, protection and enhancement of the North American environment for the benefit of present and future generations, in the context of increasing economic, trade and social links among Canada, Mexico and the United States.

Wordmark: Three countries. One environment.

Tagline (website): Connecting people and places to protect North America’s environment

Core Message

The Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC) is an intergovernmental organization created by Canada, Mexico and the United States to protect the environment of North America and the health of its citizens. The CEC brings together governments, civil society and businesses to develop innovative North American solutions to global environmental challenges.

Strategic Priority Messages

The CEC’s strategic priorities align with the top North American environmental concerns. The three priorities are Healthy Communities and Ecosystems; Climate Change – Low-Carbon Economy; and Greening the Economy in North America.

- Healthy communities and ecosystems is focused on improving the environmental health of vulnerable communities, increasing the resilience of North America’s shared ecosystems at risk, enhancing environmental and wildlife enforcement, and managing chemicals of concern.
- Climate change and the transition to a low-carbon economy emphasizes collaborating on improving greenhouse gas emissions data and building stronger networks of experts and systems to share climate change information.
- Greening North America’s economy involves working with partners in the private sector to improve the environmental performance of small- and medium-size enterprises in areas such as the automobile sector, green building design, and the movement of e-waste.

Project-specific Messages

Specific messages related individual projects and other CEC activities (e.g., the Citizen Submissions process) are developed as part of separate communications plans to target specific audiences. These plans identify major milestones and communications opportunities, as well as techniques for measuring how well we are reaching those audiences.

Updated Boilerplate “About the Commission for Environmental Cooperation”

To align CEC’s role with the updated position, this updated boilerplate has been developed based on the core messages above. This will be used as a short description of the CEC in outreach materials, including news releases and fact sheets.

The Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC) is an intergovernmental organization that supports the cooperative environmental agenda of Canada, Mexico and the United States to green North America’s economy, address climate change through promoting a low-carbon economy and

protect its environment and the health of its citizens. The CEC is composed of three bodies: a Council representing the governments of the three member countries, a Joint Public Advisory Committee (JPAC) that advises the Council and serves as a liaison with the public, and a Secretariat that provides supports the Council and the JPAC and prepares independent reports. The CEC brings together governments, civil society, and businesses to develop innovative North American solutions to global environmental challenges. Find out more at: www.cec.org

This [project/event/initiative/meeting] was undertaken with the financial support of the Government of Canada through the Federal Department of Environment, the Government of the United States of America through the Environmental Protection Agency, and the Government of the United States of Mexico, through the Secretaría de Medio Ambiente y Recursos Naturales.

Communication Tactics

Strategy 1 Tactics: CEC Corporate Communications

- 1) Deploy new CEC positioning language online and in print based on 2010–2015 strategies and objectives, using corporate and project messages defined in this document.
- 2) Develop collaborative communications partnerships and practices to ensure consistent messaging related to the Secretariat, the Council, and JPAC.
- 3) Develop CEC role guidelines for partnership communication collaboration and update messages:
 - a) Develop “About CEC” boilerplate and core messages that reflect updated positioning and add to relevant communication materials (see drafts in Messages section—*subject to approval*).
 - b) Develop brand communication guidelines for partners to communicate about projects.
 - c) Incorporate updated core messages to reflect new position:
 - i) Web and online
 - ii) Printed materials
 - iii) In-person meetings
 - iv) Speakers at events
 - v) Event sponsorships
 - vi) Project fact sheets
 - vii) News releases
 - viii) E-newsletters
 - ix) Blog—CEC blog with monthly postings
 - x) Social media—Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook, Wikipedia (update related CEC policies)
- 4) Using a range of communication tools, promote and showcase CEC activities and accomplishments at CEC meetings as well as through participation at a defined number of appropriate environmental, climate and sustainability events, including:

[Green Expo](#), held annually around September in Mexico City

- i) [Society of Environmental Journalists](#), held annually in different locations in the United States around October
 - ii) [GLOBE 2012](#), held every two years in March in Vancouver, BC, Canada
 - iii) Other relevant events leading up to CEC Council meetings to be identified by the Secretariat with government communications staff (see 6) below)
- * Note: a complete and current communications opportunities calendar will be shared every two months with Council communications staff and JPAC members to ensure that participation at events is not duplicated and that strategically important events are not missed.
- 5) Develop and promote a series of live webcast discussions. These would be one-hour conversations with experts involved in CEC projects to highlight collaborative efforts under the new priorities. They would be moderated by CEC program managers and would feature online Q&A sessions with participants.
 - 6) Collaborate with Party communications officials and networks to enhance the Commission's profile and awareness:
 - a) Communicate proactively before, during and after annual Council Sessions.
 - b) Work with Council on appropriate announcements.
 - c) Obtain quotes from Council and governmental officials about CEC successes and innovative projects such as NAPECA.
 - d) Establish links between CEC initiatives and related Council websites in three countries.
 - e) Provide communications materials, include news release text, fact sheets, etc., to Council and government officials, include national advisory committees, to support outreach efforts on identified key projects (e.g., Big Bend-Río Bravo, vulnerable communities, e-waste and grasslands).
 - 7) Support JPAC communication activities to engage with interested publics on selected topics (e.g., e-waste, chemicals):
 - a) Work with JPAC to agree upon specific communications support for JPAC.
 - b) Collaborate with JPAC to create and execute communications plans for meetings, workshops and forums.
 - 8) Communicate highlights and successes from the quarterly updates:
 - a) Produce quarterly presentations with multi-media features, including audio and/or PowerPoint and/or video, as appropriate.
 - b) Develop a quarterly e-newsletter and distribute it by listserv to both internal and external audiences.
 - c) Explore webcast options.
 - d) Post presentations to the CEC website.
 - e) Communicate via social networking channels (Facebook, Twitter).
 - f) Explore promoting two-way communications, including—among other options—allowing comments on websites through existing social media tools.

- 9) Promote the North American Partnership for Environmental Community Action (NAPECA):
 - a) Develop a detailed communication plan for NAPECA in collaboration with Council.
 - b) Use social media tools like Facebook to encourage online discussion about NAPECA, especially to share ideas on how actions can be replicated in other North American communities.
 - c) Create a suite of outreach materials designed to assist grant recipients in communicating their projects and accomplishments in a way that is consistent with CEC communications messages.

- 10) Undertake a public outreach campaign about the Citizen Submissions on Enforcement Matters process, in line with Council direction, and develop new submission tools and information for citizens.

- 11) Communicate selected projects
 - a) Communicate project successes:
 - i) Identify and profile on the CEC website six projects that best represent the CEC's strategic priorities.
 - ii) Launch a CEC blog and invite government experts, partners and CEC project managers to contribute project-related content.
 - iii) Develop an archive area on website to promote significant past projects.

 - b) Develop media relations plan for key projects:
 - i) Review projects and identify those with greatest media potential.
 - ii) Develop key messages, backgrounders, fact sheets, and media pitch.
 - iii) Conduct outreach to media to arrange introductions, one-on-ones and editorial board briefings as appropriate for major publication launches.
 - iv) Build an ongoing relationship with media and bloggers, (i.e., phone and e-mail updates, casual or social outreach, attend environmental journalist conferences, etc.).
 - v) Regularly communicate with news releases, opinion editorials (op-eds), and commentary on related issues in collaboration with JPAC and the Parties.

- 12) Promote the results of CEC projects as high-quality, consistent and reliable data and information for research, analysis, reporting and teaching using as a tool the cec.org-based *North American Environmental Atlas*. To support this outreach work the Secretariat will:
 - a) Develop one-page fact sheet and brochure;
 - b) Promote at scientific and academic events (e.g., National Conference on Geographic Education);
 - c) Communicate updates by e-mail to listserv, blog posts, social media (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube); and
 - d) Promote showcase examples from e-book in blog posts and social media monthly.

Strategy 2 Tactics: General Project Communications

CEC Communications Manager will work with project managers, government officials and experts as well as other partners to develop content.

- 1) Develop compelling narratives (400 words) for each of the projects.
- 2) Develop project summaries and profile on website, meetings, events, etc.

- 3) Develop and maintain communication plans for key projects to identify target audiences and messages, milestones and opportunities for outreach, as well as plans for measuring communications success.
- 4) Develop project stakeholder and partner list.
- 5) Develop partner communication guidelines.
- 6) Identify spokespeople—one for each language to speak at events and with media as approved.
- 7) Obtain quotes from community stakeholders positively affected by projects; incorporate these into materials.
- 8) Establish and maintain blog and newsletter content.
- 9) Leverage online and social media channels to communicate project milestones.
- 10) Develop media relations plans for selected projects.

Strategy 3 Tactics: Stakeholder Engagement

- 1) Conduct stakeholder opinion research on their interests (for example, with an e-mail survey using Survey Monkey) to align interests with communications.
- 2) Use website analytics (e.g., number of unique visitors, visitors flow, etc.) and social media participation data, combined with evaluation of information requests and other cost-effective tools, to evaluate stakeholder composition and awareness of CEC work. Use information where available from surveys and other audience evaluation exercises conducted by EPA/Environment Canada/SEMARNAT to compliment these data.
- 3) Develop current key stakeholder database for communications and tracking:
 - a) Explore adding customer relationship management system and e-mail distribution tool for tracking and analysis of engagement.
- 4) Proactively communicate and engage with key project personnel and key stakeholders to:
 - a) Identify five-to-10 projects with the best potential to represent the current impact of the CEC's work to focus stakeholder engagement communications;
 - b) Identify 30 priority stakeholders in Canada, Mexico and US to engage them in the targeted communications;
 - c) Identify compelling news hooks and maximize media coverage; and
 - d) Host CEC-sponsored events at relevant conferences.

Addendum A: Media Relations Protocols and Best Practices

Earning news coverage can be an effective way to communicate with a broad audience, including governments, businesses, and the public. However, not all CEC announcements will merit or receive broad, national media coverage and efforts are needed to focus on pursuing regional and even local coverage. Likewise, technical and special interest publications and blogs are often the most likely to publish CEC-related information.

The Secretariat works to develop and maintain relationships with environmental journalists to ensure that they are aware of the CEC's work and to view the organization as a reliable and useful source of information. The Media and Outreach Officer has lead responsibility in developing and maintaining contacts with news media and coordinates all media outreach activities. In support of project-specific communication plans, where media coverage has been identified as appropriate CEC program staff must first consult with the Media and Outreach Officer to ensure the most appropriate spokesperson, messages, and media targets have been identified and agreed upon. The Media and Outreach Officer is also responsible for ensuring that delegated spokespersons have received appropriate training to ensure they understand their role and responsibilities.

Likewise, all media inquiries and interview requests must be directed to the Media and Outreach Officer. These requests will be evaluated to determine the most appropriate spokesperson and message. In all cases, these responses will focus on the cooperative trilateral work program of the CEC and will be *consistent with CEC communications strategies and messages as outlined in this document*. Where a journalist or media contact is seeking information regarding future trilateral efforts or national projects and policies, they will be directed to the appropriate communications staff from the corresponding government agency. A comprehensive Media Relations Policy is under development as part of the CEC's overall communications strategy.

Media Interviews

Media interviews can be effective in reaching large audiences. Secretariat staff members who may give interviews include the executive director, directors and other senior-level staff who have received the appropriate media training. It is essential that delegated spokespersons have a clear understanding of the communications objective and message, as well as the journalist's objective and needs, before engaging in a media interview.

Interview requests or even questions during an interview, regarding future trilateral efforts or national policies and efforts should be passed along to appropriate communications officers in each government.

Media briefings/Embargoed release of information

Media briefings in advance of major events or the release of major reports, often by teleconference, are a good opportunity to provide background information, often technical in nature, so journalists can better prepare their stories and subsequent research. These are generally combined with a planned distribution of embargoed publication and media-focused information. Such briefings may be held from shortly before to a few days in advance of the release of information or project output. The content and

schedule of an embargoed release will be determined in collaboration with participating and other Party officials as appropriate (deadlines for the notification of pending media releases and publications are referenced in both the standing Communications calendar as well as the procedures established in the Quality Assurance policy of the CEC).

Media Monitoring

The Secretariat subscribes to electronic clipping services and uses online search tools extensively. These are used both to monitor how the CEC is being covered, and also to gauge issues that are of interest to the media and public. The monitoring and analysis of media stories is a key tool in measuring the success of many initiatives.

Addendum B: Social Media and Electronic Networks

Social media networks, including Facebook, Twitter and a host of others, are increasingly important as communications tools. Governments, businesses and civil society organizations are turning to these networks as new channels for distributing information and communicating with specific audiences. But they are also using these networks as new mediums for opening, and sustaining, dialogues about projects, accomplishments and challenges.

The Secretariat has begun to participate in these networks by regularly posting information about projects and activities, including new publications, announcements and links to relevant information and resources from partners and others. Through the JPAC, the CEC is also taking advantage of these electronic spaces to encourage two-way communications through discussion groups, especially as part of public forums about key environmental issues in North America.

More information about how the CEC seeks to use these tools and networks is available in a *Social Media Policy and Guidebook*, which is under development and will be updated as part of the CEC's overall communications strategy.

Addendum C: Measurement and Evaluation

As noted in the Measurable Outcomes section above, the Secretariat is defining specific communications targets, both for corporate and specific project communications activities. Communication milestones and timelines, as well as measurable outcomes, for specific projects and activities will be addressed in separate communications plans.

Communications measurement at CEC can be categorized on two levels:

- Corporate—evaluating the corporate image or reputation
- Program—assessing how well communications support program activities

Communications measurement requires:

1. **Target outcomes.** Typically these would express broad communication objectives in more detail and in relation to planned/desired outcomes for selected audiences. Once completed and approved these should be reviewed in relation to project results as identified in the Operational Plan.
2. **Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).** Quantitative indicators that track progress in achieving target outcomes, or outputs. Indicators should reflect the practical capacity of the CEC. For example tracking public opinion on a regular basis through the use of opinion sampling is not practical in terms of available budget, whereas it is feasible to track media reports, web visits, and downloads.
3. **Measurement System.** Quantitative and qualitative tools to gather data needed for KPIs.

No single measurement system can be relied on to measure communications effectiveness at corporate, program and other levels. Instead, a combination of output, qualitative and quantitative measures is the best approach to measure the effectiveness of a communications program.