

Administration and Funding Guidelines

EJ4Climate: Environmental Justice and Climate Resilience Grant Program

Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC)

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1. Background

Following the 2021 Leaders Summit on Climate Change, hosted by US President Biden, the White House [announced](#) a variety of new commitments to “...spur transformational innovations, conserve nature, build resilience, strengthen adaptation and drive economic growth for communities.” These commitments included an additional US\$1 million contribution to the CEC from the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to fund grants that will support underserved and vulnerable communities, and Indigenous communities, in Canada, Mexico, and the United States to prepare them for climate-related impacts. In order to ensure as many North American communities can benefit as possible, the CEC supplemented this contribution with an additional funding of US\$1 million to augment the impacts of this program.

This initiative will provide funding directly to community-based organizations to help them develop community-driven solutions to adapt to the impacts of climate change. Possible projects under the grant program could include addressing extreme weather impacts, including slow-evolving events, transitioning to clean energy and/or transportation systems, carrying out conservation or restoration works, or utilizing traditional ecological knowledge to address climate change impacts.

2. Eligibility

Eligible applicants include nonprofit and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), civil society groups, environmental groups, community-based associations, faith-based organizations, tribal nations, and Indigenous Peoples and communities.¹ Specifically, applicants should be a “community-based organization,” meaning a nongovernmental organization that has demonstrated effectiveness as a representative of a community or a significant segment of a community and that helps members of that community or segment obtain environmental, educational, or other social services. Universities and academic and public research institutions are not eligible to apply but may be involved by teaming up with community-based organizations to support their applications and serve as community partners. Grantees must be located in Canada, Mexico or the United States.²

This program supports underserved³ and vulnerable communities, Indigenous communities, low-income communities, and communities with heightened risk and increased sensitivity to climate change. These communities often already face greater exposure to/risks from climate impacts and have less capacity and fewer resources to cope with, adapt to, or recover from them. The degree of risk and sensitivity stems from physical, social, political, and/or economic factors, which interact with each other and are

¹ For organizations or associations having no legal registration, recourse to a fiscal sponsor may be necessary. Please contact us in case of any doubt.

² As an applicant, if you are not part of the community/ies where the project activities will take place, please provide a letter of support from an authorized representative or your main point of contact in this community/ies. This letter should explain how, as an external partner, you have been involved with the community/ies over time and how you will contribute to or promote the long-term emancipation of the community/ies. This requirement helps ensure that projects supported by this grant program are built and carried out by and for the communities involved.

³ Executive Order 13985, Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities through the Federal Government (Jan. 20, 2021) defines “underserved communities” as “populations sharing a particular characteristic, as well as geographic communities, that have been systematically denied a full opportunity to participate in aspects of economic, social, and civic life...”and includes individuals “such as Black, Latino, and Indigenous and Native American persons, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders and other persons of color; members of religious minorities; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) persons; persons with disabilities; persons who live in rural areas; and persons otherwise adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality.”

exacerbated by climate impacts. These factors include, but are not limited to, race, class, gender, sexual orientation and identification, national origin, and income inequality.⁴

This program seeks to support environmental justice⁵ by facilitating the involvement and empowerment of communities searching for innovative solutions and the development of partnerships to address their environmental and human health vulnerabilities, including those due to climate change impacts.

The grant program also seeks to foster climate resilience by improving the capacity of communities to prepare for, withstand, respond to, and recover from hazardous events or disturbances related to climate change, which pose risks to human and environmental health, cultural resources, the economy, and quality of life. These extreme events are expected to create further challenges to protecting human health and welfare and the environment, and impact the vulnerable and underserved, and Indigenous communities, disproportionately.

This program does not support businesses, private individuals, Universities and academic and public research institutions, or municipal, provincial/state, territorial and federal governments, except for tribal nations, and Indigenous Peoples and communities. However, proposals from qualified organizations partnering with the private sector, Universities and academic, or local government entities are eligible. Additionally, grants cannot be used to support potential applicants who are currently receiving or applying for funding from Environment and Climate Change Canada for their proposed projects.

The CEC cannot accept applications from an applicant whose employee or officer is an immediate family⁶ member of:

- An official of an Agreement for Environmental Cooperation (ECA) Party (i.e., the Government of Canada, the Government of the United States of America, or the Government of the United Mexican States), or who served in that position within the past year;
- An official of the CEC Secretariat or who served in that position within the past year;
- A present or past member (within the past year) of the CEC Joint Public Advisory Committee (JPAC); or
- A present or past member (within the past year) of the domestic advisory committees.

The following projects and activities are not eligible for funding:

- Activities for which the local, state/provincial or federal government is responsible (e.g., construction of roads, bridges, sewage treatment plants);
- Purchase of motor vehicles, property, or land;
- Renovations;
- Pursuing legal action;
- Projects dedicated exclusively to planning;
- Projects meant only to beautify an area;
- Lobbying or advocacy;
- Annual or regular organizational events/campaigns;

⁴ Taken in part from California's definition of "climate vulnerability" developed for its Integrated Climate Adaptation and Resiliency Program. Available at: https://opr.ca.gov/docs/20200720-Vulnerable_Communities.pdf

⁵ As additional support, the definitions of the concepts mentioned in this call for proposals can be found at: <http://www.cec.org/ej4climate/>.

⁶ "Immediate family" includes spouses, parents, siblings, and children.

- Expenses to attend general conferences; and
- Projects implemented outside the territory of the three ECA member countries.

3. Funding

The funding period for projects will be defined in the Call for Proposals for a given grant cycle.

The maximum amount awarded for projects will be specified in the Call for Proposals. Additional funds (where available) may be considered only for exceptional projects.

The CEC recognizes that a project can have a great impact at a low cost; therefore no minimum grant amount is established.

The CEC will not fund expenses related to travel in excess of 15 percent of the total grant amount.

Also, the CEC will not fund expenses related to overhead and administration (such as rent, telephone, fax, and photocopies) in excess of 15 percent of the total grant amount.

4. Grant Selection Criteria

Applicants will be evaluated based on the extent and quality to which they demonstrate that they:

- Address the focus area identified by the CEC Council in the Call for Proposals;
- Have or will strengthen the organizational capabilities and include other elements/resources to successfully perform the project and contribute to a continued and long-lasting impact once funding has concluded;
- Have a sound and clear implementation plan, involving the community-based/grassroots leadership, that identifies actors, actions, beneficiaries, goals, and tangible, measurable results that will be achieved at the community level within the timeframe;
- Will implement a project that could inspire or be replicated in other regions or communities; and
- Create formal or informal partnerships, collaborations or linkages among relevant stakeholders, such as different levels of government, local or indigenous communities, academia (and/or youth), non-governmental organizations, or the private sector, that respond to community-identified challenges.

Applications will be evaluated based on the quality and extent to which the applicant demonstrates:

- How the project integrates empowerment to support environmental justice and climate resilience.
- How and why the project will help protect human health and the environment more effectively, and help the urban community and ecosystems become more sustainable and resilient to extreme weather events.
- How the project will significantly benefit overburdened communities in urban areas, and the extent to which it engages and strengthens the capacities of these communities or ensures the meaningful participation of local residents in the design, planning, implementation/performance of the project.

- This includes evaluating the quality and extent to which the applicant demonstrates how it will engage and work with community-based organizations and other appropriate parties to enhance the effectiveness of the project.
- The extent of support and involvement of the local community, including the community-based/non-profit organizations, for the concept and project write-up.
- How the project will address the disproportionate and adverse human health, environmental, climate-related, and other cumulative impacts⁷ resulting from industrial, governmental, commercial, and/or other actions that have affected and/or currently affect the overburdened communities.

Applications may be given additional consideration if the applicant describes how the proposal will:

- Promote actions and policies that generate synergies between mitigation and adaptation and that contribute to the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- Align with the [CEC's 2021-2025 Strategic Plan](#).
- Identify areas of opportunity to confront climate change from a gender and intercultural perspective.

5. Program Management

Grant program management will consist of staff from the CEC Secretariat and a Selection Committee. The Selection Committee will consist of five members: one General Standing Committee (GSC) representative from each country, the Chair of the Joint Public Advisory Committee (JPAC), and the CEC Executive Director.

The Selection Committee will review a shortlist of grant applications prepared by the CEC Secretariat and make recommendations to the CEC Council's Alternate Representatives.

The final set of projects will be approved by the CEC Council.

The Secretariat will assist the Selection Committee during the entire proposal selection process, and will administer the grant funds through grants to organizations and groups.

5.1 Evaluation of the Program

In order to track grantees' progress and amplify their innovative ideas, the CEC Secretariat will host periodic webinars with grantees to discuss their work. The goal of these events is to share lessons learned with the hope that other communities across North America might find ways to launch similar projects to address similar challenges, tailoring the projects to the specific features of their environment and needs.

⁷ Factors that may indicate disproportionate and adverse impacts include: differential proximity and exposure to adverse environmental hazards; greater susceptibility to adverse effects from environmental hazards (due to causes such as age, chronic medical conditions, lack of health care access, or limited access to quality nutrition); unique environmental exposures because of practices linked to cultural background or socioeconomic status (for example, subsistence fishing or farming); cumulative effects from multiple stressors; reduced ability to effectively participate in decision-making processes (due to causes such as lack of or ineffective language access programs, lack of programs to make processes accessible to persons with disabilities, inability to access communication channels, or limited capacity to access technical and legal resources); and degraded physical infrastructure, such as poor housing, poorly maintained public buildings (e.g., schools), or lack of access to transportation.

Grantees must demonstrate, through periodic reporting, that they are implementing the activities set forth in their work plan, meaningfully involving the local community, meeting the stated objectives, and achieving the expected results.

Furthermore, an overall performance evaluation of the grant program will be conducted at the end of each grant cycle.

5.2 Official Languages

The official languages of the CEC are English, French, and Spanish, and proposals may be submitted in any of these languages. The proposals considered by the Selection Committee will be translated as appropriate and as requested by the Selection Committee.

6. Grant Application Timeline and Process

6.1. Summary of the Process

Once the Call for Proposals is issued, the deadline for submission of the proposals will be seven to eight weeks later. During this period, the CEC Secretariat may provide initial feedback to an applicant regarding the eligibility and completeness of the proposals. Proposals must be submitted electronically through the online application form available at

<http://www.grantinterface.com/Process/Apply?urlkey=cec>.

Only one application per organization per country will be considered. Once an application is submitted, the Secretariat will not provide oral or written feedback on its evaluation.

The first screening of proposals should be completed by the Secretariat, four to five weeks after the Call for Proposals closing date. The second review of proposals will be conducted by the Selection Committee. The final set of projects will be approved by the CEC Council.

6.2 Call for Proposals and Review Process

1. The CEC Secretariat will release a Call for Proposals that outlines eligibility criteria, provides information on how to apply, establishes grant selection timeline, and presents the required outline for the project proposals. This document will be sent to the Parties, JPAC, and CEC stakeholders, and made publicly available.
2. Applicants must submit their proposal electronically through the online application form by the due date and time indicated in the Call for Proposals.
3. The Secretariat will screen the proposals and prepare documentation for the Selection Committee. For each proposal submitted, the Secretariat will develop and manage a file. The Secretariat will review this documentation and will make a preliminary list of proposals based on the eligibility and grant selection criteria detailed above (Sections 2 and 4). Proposals retained after this first screening will be reviewed by the Selection Committee.
4. The Selection Committee will evaluate the detailed proposals based on how well they meet each of the selection criteria (as specified in Section 4, above).
5. The Selection Committee will then approve or decline the grant applications.
6. The final set of projects will be approved by the CEC Council.

7. The Secretariat will administer the grant funds.

Upon completion of this stage, grants will be publicly announced, including the possibility of Council announcing individual projects in the respective countries. Announcements will include: the name of the organization and its location, the name of the project, and an executive summary of the project goals, activities, and expected results.

6.3 Grant Distribution Process

Grants funds will be disbursed through installments specific to the nature of the project to ensure that funded projects proceed in a realistic time frame.

Grantees are required to submit to the Secretariat progress reports and financial statements that demonstrate how the funding is being used to generate tangible, measurable results. These reports and statements should be submitted according to the Payment and Reporting Schedule of the Funding Agreement. Payments are contingent on the receipt of satisfactory progress reports from the grantees and will be withheld if the conditions of the grant are not met. Approximately ten percent of the grant will be held back until of a satisfactory final report is received.

Final reports will be made publicly available.

7. Revision of the Administration and Funding Guidelines

Any modification to these Guidelines must be approved by the Council prior to its taking effect.