

2023 CALL FOR PROPOSALS

EJ4Climate: Environmental Justice and Climate Resilience Grant Program

The Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC) is accepting applications for projects under the EJ4Climate Grant Program on “Community empowerment strategies to improve resilience to extreme weather events in urban settings.” Proposals are due by 9 November 2023, and projects will start in April 2024.

What is the EJ4Climate Grant Program?

In 2021, the CEC established this grant program, with supplementary funding from the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), to fund projects that target underserved and vulnerable communities, and Indigenous communities, in Canada, Mexico, and the United States, to prepare them for climate-related impacts. This program provides funding directly to community-based organizations to help them develop community-driven solutions to adapt to the impacts of climate change.

Examples of recent EJ4Climate projects can be found at: <http://www.cec.org/ej4climate/>.

For this grant cycle, the CEC is calling for project proposals that will advance community-driven strategies in support of environmental justice and community resilience to the impacts of extreme weather events¹ in urban areas. In North America, approximately 80% of people live in urban areas², making urban environments the space and framework through which much of today’s climate change, and responses to it, unfolds and therefore could result in greater impacts.

The community-driven strategies will integrate empowerment as the main principle to support and enable communities and individuals to gain more influence and implement long-lasting solutions to strengthen resilience to extreme weather events and reduce the current disproportionate and adverse health, economic and social impacts. The climate crisis underscores the need for self-determination in climate action and the importance of engaging residents in urban areas in defining priority actions and implementing them to improve local conditions.

The EJ4Climate program supports underserved 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, or risks from, climate impacts and have less 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

¹ Extreme weather events include drought, floods, extreme temperatures, wildfires, etc. <http://www.cec.org/climate-change/improving-resilience-to-extreme-events-and-climate-impacts/>

² <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.URB.TOTL.IN.ZS?locations=XU> and https://cuentame.inegi.org.mx/poblacion/rur_urb.aspx?tema=P

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

This program seeks to support environmental justice³ 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. In Mexico, the concept of environmental justice is broader and entails, among other things, efforts to reach an equal distribution of environmental benefits and costs⁴.

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.

In compliance with the theme, projects will be implemented in overburdened communities⁵ in urban areas. Urban areas are understood as cities, towns and suburban or peri-urban areas⁶ who have greater vulnerability to environmental hazards. Possible projects under this grant program could include specific capacity building or training to address extreme weather impacts or utilizing traditional ecological knowledge to address climate change (e.g., using nature-based solutions to manage stormwater, promote cooling and enhance energy efficiency, ecosystem restoration, etc.). The empowerment of community members can also be made possible by giving them access to new partners and networks, and a voice in

³ As additional support, the definitions of the concepts mentioned in this call for proposals can be found at:

<http://www.cec.org/ej4climate/>.

⁴ Environmental justice entails obtaining a timely legal solution to a given environmental conflict, considering that all people must start from the same conditions to access environmental justice.

(https://www.dof.gob.mx/nota_detalle.php?codigo=5596232&fecha=07/07/2020#gsc.tab=0)

The Government has to promote greater social equity in the distribution of costs and benefits associated with environmental policy objectives. (<https://www.diputados.gob.mx/LeyesBiblio/pdf/LGEEPA.pdf>)

⁵ Minority, low-income, tribal, or Indigenous populations or geographic locations that potentially experience disproportionate environmental harms and risks.

<https://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/ej-2020->

[glossary#:~:text=Overburdened%20Community%20%2D%20Minority%2C%20low%2D,disproportionate%20environmental%20harms%20and%20risks](https://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/ej-2020-glossary#:~:text=Overburdened%20Community%20%2D%20Minority%2C%20low%2D,disproportionate%20environmental%20harms%20and%20risks)

In Mexico, it refers to communities with a precarious structure of opportunities that obstructs the full development of human potential derived from the lack of access to education, residence in inadequate housing, low monetary income and those derived from residence in inadequate localities.

⁶ In the World Cities Report 2022, the UN-Habitat refers to the Degree of Urbanization methodology that offers more nuance than the “urban” and “rural” binary that commonly categorizes the demographic classification of human settlements. Instead of those two categories, this approach proposes to analyze grid cells of one square kilometer (1 sq. km) as below:

1. Cities: settlements of at least 50,000 inhabitants in a high-density cluster of grid cells (greater than 1,500 inhabitants per sq. km).

2. Towns: settlements with between 5,000 and 50,000 that are either dense (with a density of at least 1,500 inhabitants per sq. km) or semi-dense (a density at least 300 inhabitants per sq. km).

3. Suburban or peri-urban areas: cells belonging to urban clusters but not part of a town.

https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2022/06/wcr_2022.pdf, p.35

decision-making associated with climate-related issues. The capacity to act implies community ownership of the solutions and project activities to be developed.

Other examples of projects include those that significantly integrate knowledge exchange with elders, the involvement of youth as agents of change and the leaders of overburdened communities in the implementation of the project.

Selection criteria

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

- Address the focus area identified by the CEC Council in the Call for Proposals;
- Outline the added value of implementing the project within an urban area and explain the possible impacts of performing activities in such context;
- 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 in support of 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.

Who should apply?

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.⁸ 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.⁹

Restrictions

This program does not provide support to 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 or local government entities are eligible. Additionally, grants cannot be

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.

⁸ For organizations or associations having no legal registration, recourse to a fiscal sponsor may be necessary. Please contact us in case of any doubt.

⁹ 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.

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 family¹⁰ member of:

- An official from any of the Parties to the Agreement on Environmental Cooperation (ECA) (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 one who has 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;
- Expenses to attend general conferences; and
- Projects implemented outside the territory of the three ECA member countries.

Funding

Projects are funded for a duration of 12 (twelve) to 24 (twenty-four) months.

The CEC encourages applicants to submit proposals up to C\$200,000 and will consider additional funds (where available) for exceptional projects.

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

¹⁰ “Immediate family” includes spouses, parents, siblings and children.

How are proposals evaluated?

Applicants should submit a proposal by the due date in electronic format through the online application portal, as described below.

Grant applications will be reviewed and approved or declined by the Selection Committee, based on the grant selection criteria detailed above.

Once an application is submitted, the Secretariat will not provide oral or written feedback on its evaluation.

A maximum of one application per organization per country will be considered.

Successful candidates will be required to enter into a funding agreement with the CEC before any contribution is made to their projects. Grant funds are disbursed based on progress reports and financial statements that demonstrate how the funding is being used to generate the intended results.

What are the key dates?

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| • Proposals due | 9 November 2023 (5:00 p.m. EST) |
| • Evaluation of grant applications and selection process | November 2023-February 2024 |
| • Official grants announcement | March 2024 |
| • Project implementation begins | April 2024 |

How to apply?

Proposals must be submitted in electronic format through the online application portal, available at <https://www.grantinterface.ca/Process/Apply?urlkey=cec>. **To submit a proposal, applicants must create an account and complete the form online** by providing the information described below.

1. Project lead contact information. First name, last name, telephone, and e-mail.

2. Organization contact information. Name, address, country, e-mail, phone number, website, Twitter, Facebook, etc.

3. Project title (Max. 15 words), Objectives and Results. Explain how the project will provide community-driven solutions to adapt to the impacts of climate change. Please describe: 1- the specific climate change-related impacts (including extreme weather events) in the urban area and the community/ies where the project will take place; 2- relevant environmental justice issues that the project will address; 3- how the project will integrate community empowerment strategies in support of environmental justice and climate resilience; 4- the objectives of the project, and desired results (Max. 600 words).

4. Budget requested. Total budget requested and its detailed breakdown (in Canadian dollars). Use the worksheet template to provide details of the project budget. Break this information into the following categories:

1. Salaries and benefits
2. Equipment and supplies
3. Travel¹¹
4. Consultant services (if applicable)
5. Overhead (not to exceed 15 percent)¹²
6. Other costs

5. Project duration. Number of months, project starting date and project end date (Maximum duration 12-24 months).

6. Geographic location of the project. Indicate the country or countries where the project will take place.

7. Beneficiaries. Describe the vulnerable and underserved community/ies that will benefit directly from the project, the target population, and number of individuals to be served (Max. 300 words).

8. Detailed work plan. Describe in detail the project's objectives, expected results and the performance indicators that will be used to measure these results. Results must be measurable and must be achieved within the timeframe of the grant. Also describe the main activities to be undertaken to meet the project objectives, including actors and the corresponding budgets and timelines. Use the template provided.

9. Partnerships. Please provide the names of any other organizations involved in the project, including partners and/or beneficiaries, and indicate what is their contribution to this project, if applicable (max. 200 words).

10. Other funding sources and/or leverage opportunities. List other funding sources (including the names of funders and the amounts provided) and/or leveraging opportunities (max. 100 words).

11. Innovation. Describe any innovative approach to be adopted in this project (max. 100 words).

12. Replicability/Scalability. Explain how this project could inspire or be replicated (or scaled up) in other North American communities (max. 100 words).

13. Sustainability. Explain if/how this project or its impacts could carry on successfully after the funding from this grant ends (max. 200 words).

14. Mission of the lead organization/ institution/group/community (max. 100 words).

15. Applicant Organization. Please upload a certificate of non-profit status of the applicant organization.

¹¹ The CEC will not fund expenses related to travel in excess of 15 percent of the total grant amount.

¹² 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.

If not certified or registered, it is not disqualifying, but recourse to a fiscal sponsor may be necessary. Please contact us in case of any doubt.

16. Letter of Support. (Required only if the applicant organization is 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.

17. Declaration of acceptance of Impartiality and Independence. Please print, sign, and upload the Declaration of Impartiality and Independence.

For more information or assistance regarding this grant application process, please contact: ej4climate@cec.org.