

2022 CEC Youth Innovation Challenge

Participation Guidelines

Since 2017, the Commission for Environmental Cooperation has hosted the annual Youth Innovation Challenge, a contest that invites youth from Canada, Mexico and the United States to submit their innovative ideas and solutions for improving both the environment and the economy in North America.

The 2022 Youth Innovation Challenge, hosted by the Commission for Environmental Cooperation, invites North American youth, aged 18 to 30, to propose innovative, tangible, and youth-driven solutions to assist communities in their recovery after the COVID-19 pandemic and identify the intersection between human health and the environment.

This 6th annual challenge, under the theme ***Innovation towards COVID-19 Recovery: Inclusive Solutions for Resilient and Sustainable Communities***, encourages dynamic and creative young leaders to participate in actions, innovation, and transformation in the COVID-19 recovery of their communities. The commitment and collaborative vision of youth within their communities can play a key role in developing strategies to confront the social, environmental, public health, and economic crisis.

North American youth are invited to submit their solutions and compete for up to C\$15,000 per country in seed funding, a chance to present their solutions to North America's top environmental officials, and have access to mentorship and networking opportunities.

About the CEC

The Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC) was established in 1994 by the governments of Canada, the United Mexican States (Mexico), and the United States of America (United States) through the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation, a side agreement concluded in connection with the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). As of 2020, the CEC operates in accordance with the Agreement for Environmental Cooperation, which entered into force at the same time as the new trade agreement, known as CUSMA, T-MEC and USMCA in each of these three countries, respectively. The CEC brings together a wide range of stakeholders, including the general public, Indigenous people, youth, nongovernmental organizations, academia, and the business sector, to seek solutions to protect North America's shared environment while supporting sustainable development for the benefit of present and future generations.

The CEC is governed and funded equally by the Government of Canada through Environment and Climate Change Canada, the Government of Mexico through the *Secretaría de Medio Ambiente y Recursos Naturales*, and the Government of the United States through the Environmental Protection Agency. Find out more at: www.cec.org.

Please read these guidelines carefully. By participating in the Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC) Youth Innovation Challenge you attest that you understand these Challenge Guidelines and Criteria and agree to abide by their rules and requirements.

CEC Youth Innovation Challenge Steps

Solution Submission: Participants must create user accounts on the Submittable platform and share their solutions by filling out the appropriate online form by 31 March 2022, 23:59 local time.

Submission Evaluation: The external evaluation panel of experts will judge the submissions against four weighted criteria (see below). The 15 submissions that best meet Challenge requirements will be approved and sent to government officials from Environment and Climate Change Canada, Mexico's Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (Semarnat) and the United States Environmental Protection Agency.

Winners Announced: A panel of judges, composed of government officials from the three North American countries, will select up to two winners per country, based on established criteria (see below).

Solution Presentation: The submitter or team lead for each of the winning submissions will be invited to the annual CEC Council Session (date and location to be announced) to present their solution to the federal environment ministers of Canada, Mexico and the United States.

Innovation Launch: A total amount of C\$15,000 per country will be allocated for the winning solutions. Up to two (2) winning submissions per country will be selected. In addition, winners will receive technical advice from experts associated with the Commission for Environmental Cooperation to help advance their solution.

Rules and Requirements

Eligibility

- Participants in the CEC Youth Innovation Challenge must be between 18 to 30 years old on the date they upload their solution to the Submittable platform. The solution may be uploaded by an individual or a team of submitters. Submitters will be asked to submit a proof of age.
- Participants must be residents of Canada, Mexico or the United States. Submitters will be asked to submit a proof of residency.
- Participants must demonstrate that their innovative solution addresses or advances recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.
- By submitting a solution, participants confirm that they are the sole author or have obtained written permission from all team members who contributed to developing the solution before uploading it to the submission platform.
- Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC) staff, Joint Public Advisory Committee (JPAC) members, CEC, JPAC and TEKEG immediate family members, and Youth Innovation Challenge

judges or immediate family members of judges (siblings, children, grandchildren) are not eligible to enter.

How to Participate

Participants must create a user account in order to submit their solution on the Submittable platform.

All user accounts **MUST include**:

- First Name, Last Name
- Preferred email address
- Country

All submissions must be completed by filling every section of the online form.

The external evaluation panel will select the 15 solutions that best meet Challenge requirements for consideration by the panel of judges.

Deadlines

- **Submissions Deadline:** All fully completed submissions must be posted to the Submittable platform by 23:59 local time on 31 March 2022. Submissions that are incomplete or posted after this time will be ineligible.
- **Finalists Selection:** The external evaluation panel of experts will select 15 submissions that qualify for the final selection of winners.
- **Winners Selection:** It is expected that the panel of judges will select up to 2 winners per country by the end of May 2022.

Winning Submissions and Prizes

- Up to 2 submissions per country will be selected by a panel of judges from the federal governments of Canada, Mexico and the United States.
- The top submissions will be chosen based on the criteria described below.
- The top submissions will be determined by the end of May 2022. The individual or team lead for each top submission will be notified either by email or telephone.
- The individual or team lead for the top submissions will be invited to present their submission to North America's top environmental officials at the annual CEC Council Session (date and location to be announced).
- If attendance in person at the annual Council Session is possible, transportation and lodging, airport transfer expenses, and a daily stipend for food will be provided. Reimbursement for any required COVID testing for travel will be covered by the CEC. The traveler is responsible for ensuring they comply with vaccine and testing requirements as well as obtaining any necessary travel documents. The CEC will not cover costs related to any quarantine scenario.
- The invitation will be extended to the individual or team lead (one person) for each of the top submissions. The team lead may only transfer the invitation to another person within the team of submitters. The submitter or submission team members are the only people eligible to travel to the annual CEC Council Session (date and location to be announced).
- The individual or team lead for each top submission (or their proxy from the submission team) must acknowledge their agreement to participate in person to the annual CEC Council

Session no later than one week following notification of the selection of their submission in order to remain eligible to receive transportation and lodging, airport transfer expenses, and a daily stipend for food.

- The top submissions will receive broad recognition and exposure through wide multi-platform distribution, including on the CEC website and other social media sites.
- Winners will be eligible for one-on-one mentorship session(s) to further develop their solution and receive direct guidance from an expert on differing elements of their project and how to pitch their solution to the ministers and other audiences.

The individual or team lead (on behalf of their team) for the top submissions will receive up to C\$15,000 in seed funding per country (if two submissions per country are selected, each winner will receive C\$7,500 to get their initiative off the ground). This funding may be used to develop a prototype or training materials, travel to pitch meetings, cover the cost of design and layout for fundraising or other promotional materials, or other expenses approved in advance by the CEC. This money may not be used to purchase equipment. A signing authority will need to be identified for each winning individual or team submission and a contract signed in order for the seed funding to be disbursed. The seed funding will be disbursed in one payment, with a midterm reporting requirement 90 calendar days after disbursement and a concluding report requirement 180 calendar days after disbursement. Reports will be sent to a representative at the CEC Secretariat.

Judging

- Solutions must demonstrate entrepreneurship and direct impacts that support communities in addressing post-COVID-19 challenges in North America.
- Solutions must directly yield equitable environmental benefits and sustainable livelihoods for local communities.
- Solutions must consider local knowledge and transform that knowledge into an innovative action or solution.
- Solutions must demonstrate youth-led efforts to confront the social, environmental, public health, and economic crises with a commitment to the empowerment of rural, urban, or other community body or structures.
- Solutions should clearly identify the number of community members or organizations that will benefit from the solution, if applicable.
- Solutions could address one or several of the following aspects:
 - managing discarded protective equipment and other resources;
 - ensuring green economic activities;
 - promoting environmental education among community members;
 - contributing to environmental conservation and preservation;
 - promoting or enabling sustainable development;
 - safeguarding and preserving biocultural heritage;
 - reviving the social and solidarity economy; and
 - promoting innovative social transformation with a significant community participation component.
- Solutions must demonstrate a strong impact on communities while pairing a technological or social innovation with a strong business case.

- Solutions will be judged according to the following criteria: impact (40%), innovation (30%), feasibility and replicability (20%) and economic value (10%).
- Solutions must have been developed by youth aged 18-30 in Canada, Mexico or the United States.

Any submissions containing vulgarity, nudity, violence, defamatory language or any other subject matter deemed by the CEC to be inappropriate will be disqualified and given no further consideration.

Participants agree that the decisions of the panel of judges are final.

Evaluation Criteria

Submitted solutions will be judged using the following criteria: impact (40%), innovation (30%), feasibility and replicability (20%) and economic value (10%).

- **Impact (40%)**

How does your solution contribute to community recovery in the context of COVID-19? Does it directly yield equitable environmental benefits and sustainable livelihoods for local communities? Does your solution consider local knowledge and transform that knowledge into an innovative action or solution? Does your solution address areas related to social, environmental, public health, and economic crises with a commitment to the empowerment of rural, urban, or other community structures?

If applicable, please clearly identify or provide estimates of how many community members or organizations will benefit from or be impacted by your solution.

- **Innovation (30%)**

How is your solution innovative? How does it differ from or improve current solutions?

- **Feasibility & Replicability (20%)**

How will you implement your solution, considering technological feasibility and community engagement and the availability of resources? Is your solution replicable and scalable?

- **Economic Value (10%)**

Is there a market for your solution or does it fill a specific niche? Does your solution have potential for economic growth and the creation of green jobs?

Additional Considerations

- Priority will be given to those solutions from young entrepreneurs and intrapreneurs (an entrepreneur within an existing organization) that demonstrate a direct impact on addressing systemic and structural barriers which limit equitable access to a healthy environment, particularly taking into consideration social and economic perspectives.

Submission Use and Copyright

- The submitter(s) will retain their solutions after submission, but submission grants the CEC unlimited rights to share the solutions with relevant government officials, evaluators, and CEC advisory bodies.
- The CEC reserves the right to use, without compensation to the submitter(s), all submitted solutions, and the names of the team members of the top submissions in any CEC-related promotional or advertising venture.
- The submitters agree to the possibility of broad multi-platform distribution of their work, including via Internet, video and print.
- The submitters will receive credit where possible.

Official Languages

- The official languages of the Youth Innovation Challenge are English, French, and Spanish. Participants may submit their solutions in any of these languages.

Liability

- By entering the **Youth Innovation Challenge**, each participant acknowledges and agrees that the CEC, its staff, and the panel of judges: (i) shall have no liability of any kind whatsoever with respect to this Challenge and/or the prizes, including travel (if applicable) to the annual CEC Council Session and seed funding; (ii) make no warranty, guarantee or representation of any kind concerning the prizes; (iii) disclaim any implied warranty; and (iv) are not liable for injury, loss or damage of any kind resulting from the participant's acceptance of these guidelines and legal requirements, or use of the prizes or otherwise from such participation in this Challenge. The CEC, its staff, and the panel of judges are not responsible for typographical or other errors in the offer or administration of this Challenge, including, but not limited to, errors in advertising, the official Challenge rules, the selection and announcement of winners, or the distribution of the prizes. The CEC, its staff, and the panel of judges are not responsible for any problems or technical malfunctions of any telephone network or lines, computer online systems or servers, computer software problems or traffic congestion on the Internet or at any website, and assume no liability for damage to any participant's or person's computer resulting from participation in the Challenge. Participants agree to release and hold harmless the CEC, its staff, and the panel of judges, from and against any claim or cause of action, including, but not limited to, personal injury, death, or damage to or loss of property arising from participation in the Challenge or receipt or use or misuse of any prize.

Negotiation

- Disputes resulting from the participation in this Challenge, or in the interpretation, validity, or enforceability of rules pertaining to this Challenge, shall be resolved by good-faith negotiation between the participant and the CEC.

Other

- Any solution submitted by a participant will not be construed as reflecting the views of the CEC or the governments of Canada, Mexico and the United States, nor do these Parties endorse any representations made in the solutions. Further, participants agree not to use the name or logos of any of the aforementioned Parties.
- Participants must follow all instructions or risk their solutions not being accepted.
- The CEC is not responsible for the cost of developing the solutions.
- The CEC will not return copies of the solutions. Participants are responsible for keeping a master copy of the solutions in a safe place.
- The CEC is not responsible for lost, late, misrouted, misappropriated, or damaged solutions.
- Participants must inform the CEC if their contact information, including residency, changes at any time between submission of their solutions and the announcement of the Challenge winners.
- The CEC retains the right to cancel the Challenge for any reason whatsoever, and without advance notice to the participants.
- The CEC retains the right to change the rules of this Challenge or any or all of the elements of the Challenge prizes for any reason whatsoever, by simple notification of such change on the Challenge submission platform, at <<http://cec.submittable.com>>.