



Request for Proposals

Long-Term Impact Assessment

for the project

Youth Innovation Challenge

Commission for Environmental Cooperation

2022

The Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC) is requesting proposals from prospective consultants to carry out the long-term impact assessment of the CEC's annual Youth Innovation Challenge (YIC).

The Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC) was established in 1994 by the governments of Canada, Mexico and the United States (U.S.) through the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation, a parallel environmental agreement to the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). As of 2020, the CEC is recognized and maintained by the Environmental Cooperation Agreement (ECA) in parallel with the new free trade agreement of North America (USMCA-CUSMA-T-MEC). The CEC brings together governments, Indigenous peoples, and a wide range of stakeholders, including the general public, youth, nongovernmental organizations, academia, vulnerable and marginalized groups, and the business sector, to facilitate effective cooperation and public participation conserve, protect, and enhance the North American environment in support of sustainable development for the benefit of present and future generations. The CEC is governed and funded equally by the three Parties of the Government of Canada through Environment and Climate Change Canada, the Government of the United States of Mexico through the Secretaría de Medio Ambiente y Recursos Naturales, and the Government of the United States of America through the Environmental Protection Agency. Find out more at: <www.cec.org>.

Since 2017, the CEC has hosted an annual Youth Innovation Challenge 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 prize includes seed funding for their enterprise and networking opportunities. Since 2020, a one-year mentorship program has also been included as part of the prize. For a complete description of the Youth Innovation Challenge, please visit the CEC website at: <<http://www.cec.org/youth-initiatives/2022-cec-youth-innovation-challenge/>>

To participate in the Challenge, innovators and entrepreneurs between the ages of 18 and 30 are asked to submit their solutions, which are then evaluated by the CEC and its network of experts. Broadly, the competition serves as an opportunity to support and highlight innovative solutions. Each year the challenge focuses on specific themes linked to innovation, sustainability, and entrepreneurship. The themes for recent challenges have supported issue areas related to recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, environmental justice, and social entrepreneurship.

The Youth Innovation Challenge has proven to be one of CEC's campaigns that helps increase the visibility of the CEC, ensures youth engagement, and brings media attention.

Acknowledging the value of the YIC for the CEC's engagement of youth, as well as its alignment with the goals set forth in the CEC 2021–2022 Youth Engagement Plan, a long-term impact assessment is desired that will measure the Challenge's impact to date and identify potential opportunities for its future. Furthermore, as the Challenge is now entering its seventh year, this assessment is being designed to align better with the format and scope of similar competitions hosted by other organizations in order to yield more impact. These aspects include such areas as the evaluation process, seed funding allocation, partnership opportunities (e.g., with the private sector), additional networking opportunities within other areas of CEC's work, the mentorship program (including its funding), and evolving communications needs and opportunities.

Terms of Reference

The general objective of this long-term impact assessment is to evaluate the impact of the Youth Innovation Challenge since its inception in 2017. Aspects to be included in the evaluation are:

- Evaluate the overall impact of CEC's seed funding and other efforts over the years to support winning solutions under the Youth Innovation Challenge.
- Assess the efficiency of the processes including the call for submissions, the evaluation and selection phases, presentation opportunities, and post-challenge reporting of the mentorship program (this should consider inputs from relevant units within the CEC Secretariat.)
- Assess the effectiveness of communication tools (submission platform, social media, website etc.).
- Provide recommendations for relevant and appropriate networking opportunities.
- Conduct a cost-benefit analysis, considering results from the assessments listed above versus the program's impact.
- Assess whether access to the Challenge is equitable with respect to Diverse and Inclusive Stakeholder Engagement and Public Participation.
- Provide recommendations on areas for improvement of the Youth Innovation Challenge (considering the CEC 2021–2025 Strategic Plan).
 - Recommendations should include the potential for partnership with external groups (e.g., civil society, academia, international organizations, private sector, Indigenous groups, marginalized and vulnerable groups, etc.)

These recommendations should also consider criteria to select the themes for future calls for submissions.

In the course of the assessment, the consultant should:

1. Analyze the intended impacts of each Youth Innovation Challenge theme. Devise a way to aggregate the impacts of the individual proposed solutions (for each theme) as they relate to the general impact of the Challenge.
 - Assess how each call for submissions and the solutions that were supported align with the Challenge theme.

2. Carry out a qualitative study to evaluate the efficiency of internal CEC processes and provide information on how the beneficiaries (i.e., funded projects) perceived different aspects of the Challenge.
 - Key areas for evaluation include clarity, transparency, simplicity, responsiveness to questions, etc. during Youth Innovation Challenge processes. The assessment should take into consideration a meaningful sample of both selected and rejected Youth Innovation Challenge submissions.
 - Research approaches should include surveys, interviews, or other methodologies for obtaining information and opinions of Youth Innovation Challenge submitters, regardless of funding status (applicants selected or rejected).
 - Surveys/interviews/other methodologies should include representatives of the CEC Parties and Secretariat staff who participated in defining key aspects of the Challenge (e.g., budgets, themes, selection process, etc.)

3. Assess the internal processes that inform the Challenge. Assessments can include internal content materials such as concept notes, guidelines, submission forms, etc.

4. Provide recommendations on areas for improvement of the existing Youth Innovation Challenge such as:
 - The project's impacts, internal processes, and performance measurements and indicators;
 - Objectives and goals of the mentorship program (as it relates to the CEC 2021-22 Youth Engagement Plan objectives including youth empowerment, equitable access to the Challenge, career development, and future opportunities);
 - How the CEC should define the criteria to select the themes for future calls for proposals.

5. Produce a comparative analysis and/or taxonomy of related direction, entrepreneurship, and innovation challenges that operate at the international or regional level. This should include evaluation of comparative funding, mentorship, networking, and communication opportunities.

The consultant shall coordinate with the Lead, Planning and Performance, to accomplish the following:

- Agree on the work plan and methodology to complete the activities listed above.
- Agree on the specific approach for the assessment.
- Review relevant documents and guidelines, conduct interviews, meetings or teleconferences with key participants, stakeholders, evaluators, winners, and submitters for this analysis.
- Review and verify preliminary findings (through consultations with officials of the CEC Secretariat, and with winners, evaluators, government officials and stakeholders, as appropriate), and then incorporate revisions into the analysis.
- Complete detailed review and assessment and prepare the final report.
- Develop recommendations as stated in the previous section.

Deliverables and milestones:

Deliverables	Date
Proposed work plan and methodology	5 December 2022
First draft report based on research assessing the performance of Youth Innovation Challenge grants with the measures described in the Overview and Scope	9 January 2023
Interim assessment report, including preliminary recommendations for improvement of the existing Youth Innovation Challenge, associated opportunities for partnership, and performance measures	13 January 2023
Final assessment report, integrating comments received from the Secretariat	6 February 2023

Quality of Deliverables

The consultant is responsible for providing deliverables **of publishable quality** (i.e., copy-edited prior to submission) in English and, when applicable, for the technical editing of the materials. The consultant will submit to the CEC Secretariat all written material (including complete drafts and final reports) in Microsoft Word file format, following the format of the CEC's [Report Template](#) and adhering to the precepts of the [Guidelines for CEC Documents and Information Products](#), as supplemented by the CEC's English [Style Guide](#). Supporting documents for tables, figures and maps will be submitted with the report in their original file format (e.g., Excel or ArcGIS). Note that all amounts shall be presented in metric units. The CEC Secretariat will be responsible, when applicable, for translation, printing, publication and distribution of products from this activity.

Upon delivery by the consultant of a final version of the report or other written materials under the project, the CEC reserves the right to a 15-business day period to review the document(s), notify the consultant of any potential issues or errors, and return the document(s) to the consultant for appropriate corrections, at no extra cost. In all cases, contract payments will be withheld if products submitted to the CEC fail to fulfill the quality and formatting requirements specified above. In the event that the consultant neglects to make the required corrections or if, following corrections, a deliverable remains unsatisfactory, the document shall be edited or revised by a third party designated by the Secretariat, the cost of which shall be deducted from the consultant's fees at a rate of C\$60 per hour.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the act of conveying someone else's original expression or creative ideas as one's own and can be a violation of copyright law. Neither intentional nor unintentional plagiarism is acceptable to the CEC. The consultant must follow good scholarly methodology in preparing reports and deliverables under the contract, including systematic referencing in footnotes or in-sentence references, for any secondary sources, quotations, data, etc., that do not originate with the author. Sources for tables and figures reproduced from other literature must be given in a "Source" attribution immediately below the table or figure. Failure to properly reference the source of such borrowed material constitutes plagiarism and will be considered a breach of contract. For further information, see [Guidelines for CEC Documents and Information Products](#).



In addition, for every written deliverable submitted, the Consultant must use iThenticate software, or an equivalent software approved by the Commission, to validate the written product in question and must forward the plagiarism review results to the CEC at the time of document submission. Contract payments will be retained if products do not fulfill these requirements.

Requirements

To be eligible for further consideration, all consultants must fulfill the following basic requirements.

The consultant, as well as all their personnel and subconsultants, must reside and be authorized to work legally in Canada, Mexico or the United States of America. If travel is required, the consultant must possess valid documentation to travel within these countries.

The consultant must possess competence and experience in:

Project evaluation
The conduct of participatory evaluations
Professional reporting

The consultant must be fluent in both written and spoken English; proficiency in Spanish and French is desirable.

The proposal should not exceed three (3) pages, exclusive of applicant resume or corporate brochures. It should include a detailed cost breakdown, including number of person/days of key and other personnel, direct and indirect costs, travel costs and applicable taxes.

Potential consultants must also submit any additional information that will assist the CEC Secretariat in the evaluation of their proposal, such as samples of previous work and letters of recommendation from previous assignments. This information is not subject to the three (3) page limit.

The consultant deemed best qualified will be selected on the basis of a competitive process, in accordance with sections 2.5-2.7 of the [CEC Consultant Services Procurement Manual](#).

The CEC Secretariat intends to use its standard milestone-based contract for these services. A sample is available upon request.

The consultant will be paid in the following manner:

- Upon signature of the contract and invoice
- Upon receipt and approval of deliverables and invoices

Payment shall be made only for *bona fide* consultant fees and legitimate expenses incurred in accordance with the contract for professional services, and only upon receipt and documented acceptance by the Secretariat of statement(s) of account/invoice(s) from the consultant. Settlement of invoices that are acceptable for payment will normally be made 30 days from the date of receipt by the Commission.

The budget for this activity will not exceed C\$15,000 (Canadian dollars), including professional fees and expenses. Reimbursable expenses are detailed in the CEC standard contract, available



upon request; in addition, the cost of using iThenticate software to detect plagiarism should also be considered.

For universities and nongovernmental organizations, note that the CEC accepts that overhead be charged for administration and other indirect costs up to 15% of the total value of the contract.

If the proposal were presented by a consultant established in Mexico, the applicable value-added tax will be 0%, in accordance with Article 29, section IV, paragraph a) of Mexico's VAT Act, as these are technical services that were engaged from abroad.

If a currency other than Canadian dollars is used, the consultant should indicate the total cost of the professional services in Canadian dollars as well as the currency of choice, for comparison purposes.

Conflict of Interest

"Conflict of interest" means, but is not limited to, a situation where a consultant's personal interest is sufficiently connected with professional duties under the contract, such that it results in a reasonable apprehension that said personal interest may influence the exercise of professional responsibilities under the contract. For example, a direct conflict of interest exists when the consultant is also a CEC government official, or is related to or closely affiliated with a CEC government official, CEC staff member or third party involved with the performance of the services.

The consultant will inform the CEC Secretariat of any circumstance that existed prior to the execution of this contract or that could manifest during the performance of this contract, which could constitute a conflict of interest. The consultant will complete and sign, on behalf of all his or her personnel, the attached *Declaration of Acceptance and Impartiality and Independence* (see Annex). The Consultant will also take note of the [CEC Consultant Services Procurement Manual](#).

Deadlines for Proposal Submission and Decision

Proposals, including all relevant attachments, must be received by the CEC Secretariat offices by **17:00 EST on 21 November 2022**. Those submitted after this deadline will not be considered.

Proposals must be submitted via e-mail to jacasis@cec.org. Proposals may be in Microsoft Word or Adobe PDF file format. Once the proposal has been submitted electronically, the CEC will confirm receipt within three business days. If receipt is not confirmed by e-mail within this time, **applicants must contact the CEC**. The contact person is:

José Antonio Casis
Planning and Performance, Lead
Commission for Environmental Cooperation
Tel: 514-350-4300; Fax: 514-350-4314

The CEC Secretariat intends to select the consultant and notify the applicants within a reasonable period following the proposal submission deadline.



ANNEX (see also Schedule D in CEC standard contract)

CONSULTANT'S DECLARATION OF ACCEPTANCE AND IMPARTIALITY AND INDEPENDENCE FOR CONTRACT

I, the undersigned,

Last Name: _____ First Name: _____

ACCEPTANCE

hereby declare that I accept to serve as consultant in the subject contract.

IMPARTIALITY AND INDEPENDENCE

(If you accept to serve as a consultant, please check one of the two following boxes. The choice of which box to check will be determined after you have taken into account, inter alia, whether there exists any past or present relationship, direct or indirect, with any of the Parties to the Environmental Cooperation Agreement (ECA) or their Commission for Environmental Cooperation ("CEC") representatives, Secretariat staff, and/or third parties involved in the performance of this contract, whether financial, professional, familial, or of another kind and whether the nature of any such relationship is such that disclosure is called for pursuant to the criteria set out below. Any doubt should be resolved in favor of disclosure.)

I am impartial and independent with respect to the ECA Parties and their CEC representatives, CEC Secretariat staff, and third parties involved in the performance of this contract, and intend to remain so; to the best of my knowledge, there are no facts or circumstances, past or present that need be disclosed because they are likely to give rise to justifiable doubts as to my impartiality or independence, and that may constitute a conflict of interest.

OR

I am impartial and independent with respect to the ECA Parties and their CEC representatives, Secretariat staff, and/or third parties involved in the performance of this contract, and intend to remain so; **however**, I wish to call your attention to the following facts or circumstances which I hereafter disclose because they might be of such a nature as to give rise to justifiable doubts as to my impartiality or independence, and that may constitute a conflict of interest. Where facts or circumstances exist that might give rise to the latter such doubts, I may set out measures I intend to take to mitigate or eliminate any doubts regarding my impartiality and independence, and/or a possible conflict of interest. (Use separate sheet and attach.)

Date: _____

Signature: _____