

2021 CALL FOR PROPOSALS

EJ4Climate: Environmental Justice and Climate Resilience Grant Program

The Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC) is accepting applications for projects to fund under the EJ4Climate Grant Program. Proposals are due by 14 November 2021 and projects will start in February 2022.

What is the EJ4Climate Grant Program?

Initiated by the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the CEC established this new grant program to fund grants and cooperative agreements¹ that will work with underserved and vulnerable communities, and Indigenous communities, in Canada, Mexico, and the United States to prepare them for climate-related impacts. This program will provide funding directly to community-based organizations to help them develop community-driven solutions to adapt to the impacts of climate change.

For this inaugural grant cycle, the CEC is calling for initiatives that:

- Support community resilience to climate change and climate-related impacts;
- Yield tangible, equitable benefits for local communities by addressing or adapting to climate change impacts;
- Consider local knowledge and transform that knowledge into an innovative action or solution; and
- Build partnerships that respond to community-identified challenges.

Eligible applicants include nonprofit and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), civil society groups, environmental groups, community-based associations, tribal nations, and Indigenous Peoples and communities. 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.² Universities and academic and public research institutions are eligible to apply by teaming up with community-based organizations. Grantees must be located in Canada, Mexico or the United States.

¹ A cooperative agreement is a legal instrument of financial assistance that includes substantial CEC involvement in terms of project oversight and delivery.

² This can be demonstrated in a variety of ways, for example: by including news stories discussing the organization’s work, by providing references we can contact to verify the work of the organization, and by sharing testimonials from people in the community who have benefited from the organization and its work.

This program is targeted to underserved³ and vulnerable communities, including Indigenous communities, low-income communities, and communities with heightened risk and increased sensitivity to climate change and that have less capacity and fewer resources to cope with, adapt to, or recover from climate impacts. The degree of risk and sensitivity stems from physical (built and environmental), social, political, and/or economic factors, which interact with each other and are exacerbated by climate impacts. These factors include, but are not limited to, race, class, sexual orientation and identification, national origin, and income inequality.⁴

This program seeks to support environmental justice⁵ by facilitating the involvement of underserved and vulnerable communities in the search for solutions and the development of partnerships that address the unequal distribution of environmental vulnerabilities to climate change impacts. In Mexico, the concept of environmental equity (*equidad ambiental*) is analogous, and entails an equal distribution of environmental benefits and impacts.⁶

The 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 poses risks to human health, the environment, cultural resources, the economy, and quality of life. These changes are expected to create further challenges to protecting human health and welfare and the environment, and impact vulnerable and underserved, and Indigenous communities disproportionately.

Selection criteria

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

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.”

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 “Even though there is no internationally accepted definition, environmental justice broadly covers fair and inclusive engagements of all in the development, implementation and enforcement of environmental legislation. It, therefore, refers directly to access to environment-related goods, such as clean water and energy or safe urban areas, or to protection from negative environmental pressures, like air and water pollution or deforestation (distributional justice). It also translates into equal access to the decision-making process of environmental policies (procedural justice). Finally, it has been argued that environmental justice should also achieve a healthy environment for all (substantive justice).” OECD, “Session 7 Environmental justice and empowering women and youth,” p. 2, 2020 Global Forum on Environment <https://www.oecd.org/env/GFE-Gender-Issues-Note-Session-7.pdf> (internal citations omitted). See also US EPA Definition of Environmental Justice: “The fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.” <https://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice>.

⁶ General Law for Ecological Equilibrium and Environmental Protection (LGEEPA), Article 21 paragraph IV. Principles important to the advancement of environmental justice and equity are also included in the Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean, known as the Escazú Agreement. Available at: <https://www.cepal.org/en/escazuagreement>.

- Address the focus area identified by the CEC Council in the Call for Proposals;
- Have or will strengthen the capabilities and resources of the organization to successfully perform the project;
- Have a sound implementation plan that identifies actors, actions, beneficiaries, goals, and tangible, measurable results that will be achieved at the community level within the timeframe;
- Design a project that can be replicated in other regions or communities; and
- Have or propose creating formal or informal partnerships or linkages at the state, local or Indigenous community level, within the North American region.

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

- How and why their project will help protect human health and the environment, and help communities and ecosystems become more sustainable and resilient to the effects of climate change.
- How the project benefits underserved communities and the extent to which it engages with these communities to ensure the meaningful participation of local residents in the design, planning, and performance of the project.
- How the proposed project will address the environmental needs and concerns of local communities, including vulnerable and underserved communities or populations (as defined in the Guidelines), and other interested parties, groups, or populations.
 - 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 for the concept if the organization is not local.
- If relevant, the potential to support and/or create existing or new jobs that devote a substantial portion of their work to improving energy efficiency, addressing climate change, increasing the supply of renewable energy, and/or preventing, reducing, or cleaning up pollution.
- 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 underserved communities.

Applications will 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 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- Align with the CEC's 2021-2025 Strategic Plan.

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.

- Focus actions on areas of greatest poverty and climate vulnerability.
- Encourage the participation and belonging of the population to their communities and identify areas of opportunity to face climate change from a gender and intercultural perspective.

Possible projects under the grant program could include addressing extreme weather impacts, transitioning to clean energy and/or transportation systems, or utilizing traditional ecological knowledge to address climate change impacts. Project types can include, but are not limited to, capacity building, pilot projects, transfer of innovative technologies, conducting outreach or education, sharing best practices, communication and preparedness/response process improvements, training environmental and community leaders, engaging youth on environmental activities, reducing risks to the environment.

Restrictions

This program does not support businesses, private individuals, or municipal, provincial/state, territorial and federal governments. However, proposals from qualified organizations partnering with the private sector 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 family⁸ member of:

- An official of an Environmental Cooperation Agreement (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;

⁸ "Immediate family" includes spouses, parents, siblings, and children.

- 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.

How are proposals evaluated?

Applicants should submit a proposal by the due date in the format described below. The proposal must include: an executive summary; a detailed explanation of how the project proposal meets each of the grant criteria; and a comprehensive description of how the requested funding will be expended to implement the activities and achieve the desired results.

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 and cooperative agreement 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 | 14 November 2021 (5:00 p.m. EDT) |
| • Evaluation of grant applications | November-December 2021 |
| • Official grants announcement | 31 January 2022 |
| • Project implementation begins | February 2022 |

What is the format for the proposals?

A proposal **must include the following information:**

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

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

3. Project title, Objectives and Results. Explain how the project will provide community-driven solutions to adapt to the impacts of climate change. Describe the specific climate change-related impacts in your area, relevant environmental justice issues that the project will address, the objectives of the project, and desired results. (Max. 500 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. Travel⁹
4. Consultant services (if applicable),
5. Overhead (not to exceed 15 percent)¹⁰
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 be implemented.

7. Beneficiaries. Describe the vulnerable and underserved community/ies that will benefit directly from the project, the target population, and number of individuals served (Max. 200 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, if applicable.

⁹ The CEC will not fund expenses related to travel in excess of 15 percent of the total grant amount.

¹⁰ 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.

10. Other funding sources and/or leverage opportunities. List other funding sources 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 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. 100 words).

14. Mission of the lead organization/ institution/group/community (Max. 50 words).

15. Applicant Organization. Please upload a certificate of non-profit status of the applicant organization. If not certified or registered, it is not disqualifying, please make note of that.

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

How to apply?

Proposals must be submitted in electronic format through the online application portal, available at <http://www.grantinterface.com/Process/Apply?urlkey=cec>. **To submit a proposal, applicants must create an account and complete** the form by providing the information described above. Proposals can also be mailed or hand-delivered to the CEC Secretariat offices in Montreal, Canada, but application online is encouraged. The complete mailing address is as follows:

Commission for Environmental Cooperation
700 de la Gauchetière St. West, Suite 1620
Montréal, Québec H3B 5M2
Canada

For more information or assistance regarding this grant application process, please contact: Grant Programs Coordinator at (514) 350-4346, or by e-mail at: ej4climate@cec.org.