

2025 CALL FOR PROPOSALS

“Community-based Circular Economy Strategies to Improve Local Well-being and the Environment”

The Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC) is accepting applications for projects to fund under the North American Partnership for Environmental Community Action (NAPECA). Proposals must be submitted by 1 December 2025, and projects will start in May 2026.

What is NAPECA?

The CEC established NAPECA to promote shared responsibility and stewardship for the environment by engaging and partnering with local and Indigenous communities, registered nongovernmental organizations and academia in Canada, Mexico and the United States. Since 2010, NAPECA has been instrumental in fostering collaborative efforts to address pressing environmental challenges while promoting sustainable development and fostering cross-border cooperation. Through NAPECA, the CEC encourages innovation and model environmental initiatives that will help build long-term partnerships to improve environmental conditions at the community level and support local priorities.

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

For this grant cycle, the CEC is calling for proposals from organizations to support projects that will help North American communities implement circular economy initiatives and strategies to improve local well-being and the environment.

The way resources are being extracted, used and then disposed of in the current linear economy model is putting pressure on natural systems, communities and public health.¹ A circular economy shifts toward sustainable production and consumption patterns by improving management and efficient use of materials and resources throughout their life cycles (from extraction to recovery).

¹Source: <https://www.canada.ca/en/services/environment/conservation/sustainability/circular-economy.html>

This shift opens the door to new economic and environmental opportunities, as well as secures a more sustainable and resilient economic future for our communities.²

What is Circular Economy?

The Ellen MacArthur Foundation, an undeniable leader in this field, defines circular economy (CE) as a system where materials never become waste and nature is regenerated.³ Circularity is about re-thinking how we extract resources, how we design and make products, how we distribute them, how we use them, how we reuse, share, repair, repurpose, and recycle them, and how we replenish our natural capital by carefully balancing the three dimensions of sustainability (environmental, social and economic).⁴

Thus, CE systems can contribute to addressing environmental challenges at the local level, as well as impacting the North American region and beyond, by reducing extraction and retaining and recovering as much value as possible from resources. CE has the potential to improve the environment (prevention of pollution, protection of biodiversity, supporting resilience/adaptation) and the economy (through job creation, innovation and competitiveness, affordability and cost saving)—hence, considering the well-being of all community members.

Public participation is crucial to the implementation of CE solutions in an inclusive and sustainable manner. Communities have been affected by negative environmental and health impacts that were caused by a non-circular economy.⁵ A community-based approach that involves community members and organizations can ensure that CE initiatives and strategies address locally identified issues, respond to communities' unique needs and priorities, benefit their well-being, and enable long-term meaningful changes in lifestyles and cultures.⁶

Possible projects under this call for proposals

Potential projects supported under this grant cycle must propose CE initiatives or strategies to be implemented at the community level as well as align with the definition provided above. For example: developing zero waste strategies or plans to reduce or eliminate single-use items; repurposing of municipal, industrial, agricultural or construction waste at the highest value possible; finding innovative ways of collecting and reusing plastics found in waterbodies and other natural

² CEC Strategic Plan 2021–2025 under the pillar: Circular Economy and Sustainable Materials Management https://www.cec.org/files/documents/strategic_plans/cec-strategic-plan-2021-2025.pdf

³ Source: <https://www.ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/>

⁴ As additional support, the definitions of the concepts mentioned in this call for proposals and other resources can be found at: <https://www.cec.org/grant-programs/north-american-partnership-for-environmental-community-action/>

⁵ Source: <https://www.epa.gov/circulareconomy/what-circular-economy>

⁶ Velenturf, Anne and Purnell, Phil. (2021). Principles for a Sustainable Circular Economy. Sustainable Production and Consumption, Volume 27, Pages 1437–1457, ISSN 2352–5509, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.spc.2021.02.018>.

environments; forming food recovery networks; implementing community action to share, reuse or repair—like creating community repair cafés or sharing hubs; establishing circular procurement frameworks; designing CE roadmaps; supporting innovation and the design and commercialization of circular products; and building communities of practice. The type of project activities put forward may include, but are not limited to, carrying out community awareness campaigns or educational programs, creating information resources, sharing best practices, training and capacity building, networking and implementing pilot projects.

Selection criteria

The NAPECA grant program will receive proposals and support projects that:

- 1) Focus on implementing community-based CE initiatives or strategies that address local, specific and clearly defined environmental issue(s) related to an unsustainable use of raw materials, or sources of waste or pollution;
- 2) Are achieved at the community level where they provide tangible benefits (at the social, material and/or financial level) and promote the involvement of community members and organizations in one or more stages of the project, from its design to its implementation;
- 3) Propose solutions that demonstrate innovation in addressing environmental issue(s) and improving local well-being that could be replicated in other regions or communities;
- 4) Include an implementation plan that clearly identifies concrete and measurable objectives and results (through qualitative and/or quantitative indicators), specific actions/project activities, beneficiaries and actors, an approximate timeframe of implementation and a detailed budget. Most results must be suitable for reporting within the timeframe of NAPECA support (i.e., 12 to 24 months);
- 5) Are carried out by organizations that have the capabilities to successfully perform the project and can leverage other resources (human, material or financial) to achieve greater impact, replicability, scalability and sustainability of the project and its results, once funding has concluded;
- 6) Create formal or informal partnerships, collaborations or linkages among relevant key actors, such as different levels of government, local or Indigenous communities, academia, youth-led organizations, nongovernmental organizations, and the private sector within the North American region, generating the interconnections of key actors that are needed for circularity; and
- 7) Are submitted complete, on time and through the established process.

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

- Align with the [CEC's 2021–2025 Strategic Plan](#); and
- Integrate an intercultural perspective and promote the engagement of youth.

Who should apply?

Eligible applicants are tribal nations, Indigenous Peoples and communities, entities which are incorporated as nonprofit organizations, and academia in Canada, Mexico or the United States. Examples of eligible applicants include:

- Indigenous governments, councils and organizations;
- Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), environmental groups and community-based associations; and
- Universities, academic and public research institutions.

Applicants must be located in Canada, Mexico or the United States.

NAPECA does not support businesses, private individuals 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, as long as a major part of the project resources and benefits go toward the participating community/ies. Additionally, NAPECA grants cannot be used to support projects that are currently receiving or applying for financial support from Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC).

The CEC cannot accept applications from an applicant whose employee, officer or any other member of the applicant's contractors or delegated authority is also:

- A present or past official (within the past year⁷) 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);
- A present or past official (within the past year) of the CEC Secretariat;
- A present or past member (within the past year) of the CEC Joint Public Advisory Committee (JPAC);
- A present or past member (within the past year) of the domestic advisory committees; or
- An immediate family⁸ member of any of the above.

⁷ "Within the past year" refers to the 12 months preceding the deadline of the Call for Proposals.

⁸ "Immediate family" includes closely related through marriage, birth, or adoption such as spouses, common-law partners, parents, adoptive parents, siblings, step-siblings, children, and adopted children.

For greater clarity, the applicant's contractors or delegated authority include fiscal sponsors or any other entity with financial or decision-making control over the applicant.

Funding

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

The CEC will accept proposals for up to C\$150,000. The CEC recognizes that a project can have a great impact at a low cost; therefore, no minimum grant amount has been established.

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.

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.

How are proposals evaluated?

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

An organization may only submit one application per country (i.e., no more than three applications).

Grant applications will be reviewed and approved or declined by the Selection Committee, based on the grant selection criteria detailed above. Please note that, in the context of a Call for Proposals, the CEC generally supports 10 to 15 projects with a grant (in similar proportions across the three countries).

Applicants will be notified in writing of decisions about their proposal (to the email address provided in the online application portal). The Secretariat will not provide feedback on the evaluation, due to the high volume of proposals received.

The 2026–2028 NAPECA grant recipients will be publicly announced through the CEC's communication platforms.

What are the key dates?

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| • Proposals due | 1 December 2025 (5:00 p.m. ET / 4:00 p.m. CT) |
| • Evaluation of grant applications | January to March 2026 |
| • Official grants announcement | April 2026 |
| • Project implementation begins | May 2026 |
| • Projects maximum end date | May 2028 |

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. 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, website, Facebook, etc.
- 3. Project title** (max. 15 words), **Objectives and Results.** Explain how the project addresses the topic “Community-based Circular Economy Strategies to Improve Local Well-being and the Environment.” Explain the environmental issue(s) to be addressed, outline the added value of implementing the project through a CE approach, and describe the project objectives and desired results (max. 5,000 characters, including spaces).
- 4. Budget requested.** Total budget requested from NAPECA and its detailed breakdown (in Canadian dollars using the exchange rate at the moment of the application). Use the worksheet template to provide details of the project budget (only the portion that would be covered by the NAPECA grant). Provide information for the following categories:
 1. Salaries and benefits
 2. Equipment and supplies
 3. Travel (not to exceed 15 percent)⁹
 4. Consultant services/Professional fees (if applicable)

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

5. Overhead (not to exceed 15 percent)¹⁰
 6. Other expenses
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5. **Project duration.** Number of months, project starting date and project ending date (minimum duration 12 months, maximum duration 24 months).
 6. **Geographic location of the project.** Indicate the country or countries where the project will be implemented (within North America).
 7. **Location of the project activities.** Indicate the name(s) of the city (cities), town(s) or community(ies) where the project activities will take place. Provide a postal code or a ZIP code if available (max. 500 characters, including spaces).
 8. **Beneficiaries.** Describe the community(ies) that will benefit directly from the project, the target population and number of individuals to be served (max. 3,000 characters, including spaces).
 9. **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 NAPECA support. 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.
 10. **Partnerships.** Please provide the names of any other organizations involved in the project, including partners and/or beneficiaries, if applicable. Indicate the activities, partners or collaborators involved and what will be their contribution to this project (max. 1,500 characters, including spaces).
 11. **Other funding sources and/or leverage opportunities.** List other funding sources (including the names of funders and the amounts provided) and/or leveraging opportunities (including human and material resources) to achieve greater impact, replicability and sustainability of the project (max. 750 characters, including spaces).
 12. **Innovation and replicability.** Explain how innovative the CE solutions put forward as part of this project are in addressing environmental issue(s) and improving local well-being and how it could be replicated (or scaled up) in other local or North American communities (max. 1500 characters, including spaces).
 13. **Sustainability.** Explain if/how this project or its impacts could carry on successfully after the funding from this grant ends (max. 1,000 characters, including spaces).

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.

- 14. Mission of the lead organization/institution/group/community** (max. 750 characters, including spaces).
- 15. Applicant organization.** Please upload a certificate of non-profit status of the applicant organization.
- 16. Letter of support.** (Required only if the applicant organization is not part of the local or Indigenous community(ies) where the project activities will take place, however it is encouraged since it can strengthen a proposal.) 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 you have been involved as an external partner with the community(ies) over time and how you will contribute to or promote the long-term empowerment of the community(ies). “Free, prior and informed consent”¹¹ is a principle that should be considered in the development of your project.
- 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 consult the FAQ section or contact us at: napeca@cec.org.

¹¹ “The principle and right of ‘free, prior and informed consent’ demands that states and organizations of all kinds and at all levels obtain the authorization of Indigenous Peoples before adopting and implementing projects, programs or legislative and administrative measures that may affect them. It emphasizes that Indigenous Peoples must be included in consultative processes, that the time requirements for these processes must be respected and that information on the likely impact of activities must be disclosed in advance. Legitimate consultation measures ensure that activities or actions planned respond to the concerns and interests Indigenous Peoples, thereby allowing a self-determined development process.” <https://www.fao.org/3/i1857e/i1857e.pdf>, p. 5