

Administration and Funding Guidelines

North American Partnership for Environmental Community Action (NAPECA) of the Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC)

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1. Background

Canada, Mexico and the United States have had a rich history of cooperation on the environment. With the prospect of increased trade due to the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), they negotiated the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation (NAAEC), which came into force at the same time as NAFTA in 1994. Since 2020, the CEC has been operating in accordance with the Agreement on Environmental Cooperation (ECA), the successor to the NAAEC, which entered into force at the same time as the CUSMA/T-MEC/USMCA, the renegotiated North American free trade agreement. The provisions of the ECA allow for the continued operation of the CEC in support of sustainable development for the benefit of present and future generations. Together, the environmental provisions of both agreements mark the determination of the three countries (the Parties) to ensure that economic growth and liberalization of trade would not displace ongoing cooperation and continuous improvement in the environmental performance of each country.

Recognizing that ecosystems do not follow political boundaries but rather often cross state, provincial and national borders, and that individual investments made by each country can achieve greater success if a shared sense of environmental responsibility and stewardship across North America is developed, the CEC Council had established a grant program, the North American Partnership for Environmental Community Action (NAPECA) already in 2010, and which continues now under the ECA.

The NAPECA program seeks to support efforts at the grassroots-level, which will be flexible, diverse, that can improve access to resources provided by the Parties through the CEC for small, hands-on community-level partnerships, and that will address the strategic priorities set by the CEC Council. Projects can include, but are not limited to building capacity, sponsoring pilot projects, transferring innovative technologies, conducting outreach or education, sharing best practices, training environmental leaders, engaging youth on environmental activities, reducing risks to the environment, and many other kinds of nonregulatory efforts.

The Council may direct support for specific topics in any given grant cycle. Selected topics will be outlined in the Call for Proposals.

2. Eligibility

NAPECA's objective is to empower and build the capacity of local peoples and organizations to improve their health and environmental quality. For this reason, priority will be given to action-driven projects with dynamic community involvement, implemented by local groups or organizations.

Applicants eligible to apply for the NAPECA program include registered¹ nonprofit and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), environmental groups and community-based associations, academic institutions, tribal nations, and Indigenous Peoples and Communities. Grantees 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. However, proposals from qualified organizations partnering with the private sector or local government are eligible. Additionally, NAPECA will not 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, officer, or any other member of the applicant's contractors or delegated authority is also:

¹ At the time to apply, applicants are asked to upload a certificate of nonprofit status issued by the competent authority of their region or country.

- A present or past official (within the past year²) 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 family³ member of any of the above.

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.

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 countries.

3. Funding

The funding period for projects will be defined in the Call for Proposals for a given grant cycle.

The maximum amount awarded for projects will also be specified in the Call for Proposals.

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

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

Also, 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.

² "Within the past year" refers to the 12 months preceding the deadline of the Call for Proposals.

³ "Immediate family" includes persons closely related through marriage, birth, or adoption such as spouses, common-law partners, parents, adoptive parents, siblings, stepsiblings, children, and adopted children.

4. Grant Selection Criteria

The NAPECA grant program is designed to support projects that:

- Address the focus area identified by the Council in the Call for Proposals.
- Include a sound implementation plan that identifies actors, actions, beneficiaries and partners, goals, measurable objectives with timelines and expected results;
- Achieve tangible and measurable positive results for the environment at the community level, within the timeframe of NAPECA support;
- Can be replicated in other regions or communities;
- Create formal or informal partnerships or linkages at the national, state/province and/or territory, local or indigenous community level, within the North American region;
- Leverage or demonstrate opportunity to leverage other resources (human, material, or financial) to achieve greater impact, scalability, replicability and sustainability of the project and its results; and
- Are presented on time and through the established process.

5. NAPECA Management

NAPECA management will consist of staff from the CEC Secretariat and a Selection Committee. The Selection Committee will consist of five members: one General Standing Committee (GSC) representative from each country, the Chair of the Joint Public Advisory Committee (JPAC), and the CEC Executive Director.

The Selection Committee will review a shortlist of grant applications prepared by the CEC Secretariat and make recommendations to the CEC Council.

The final set of projects will be approved by the CEC Council or the Alternate Representatives.

The Secretariat will assist the Selection Committee during the entire proposal selection process and will administer the grant funds.

5.1 Evaluation of the NAPECA Grant Program and Projects

A performance evaluation of the NAPECA grant program will be conducted periodically by an independent third party.

Grantees must demonstrate, through periodic reporting (progress and final reports, and financial statements), how the funding is being used and how they are implementing the project activities set forth in their work plan, meeting the stated objectives, and achieving the expected results. The Secretariat will share relevant updates with the CEC Council through the General Standing Committee.

5.2 Official Languages

The official languages of the CEC are English, French and Spanish, and proposals may be submitted in any of these languages. The proposals considered by the Selection Committee will be translated as appropriate and as requested by the Selection Committee.

6. Grant Application Timeline and Process

6.1. Summary of the Process

Once the Call for Proposals is issued, the deadline for submission (closing date) of the proposals will be five to seven weeks later. During this period, the CEC Secretariat may provide guidance to applicants regarding the eligibility of their organization, and the suitability to the Call for Proposals and completeness of their proposals. Proposals must be submitted electronically through the online application form available at <http://www.grantinterface.ca/Process/Apply?urlkey=cec>.

An organization may submit only one application per country (i.e., no more than three applications). Once an application is submitted, the Secretariat will not provide oral or written feedback on its evaluation.

The first screening of proposals should be completed by the Secretariat (with the support of a consultant team), five to six weeks after the Call for Proposals' closing date. The second review of proposals will be conducted by the Selection Committee. The final set of projects will be approved by the CEC Council or their Alternate Representatives.

6.2 Request for Proposals and Review Process

1. The CEC Secretariat will release a Call for Proposals that outlines eligibility criteria, provides information on how to apply, establishes grant selection timeline, and presents the required outline for the project proposals. This document will be sent to the Parties, JPAC and relevant CEC advisory bodies, and CEC key actors. It will also be made publicly available.
2. Grant applicants must submit their proposal electronically through the online application form. The list of questions to be answered, in addition to the due date and time to submit their proposal, are specified in the Call for Proposals.
3. Each proposal submitted will be managed and archived through the grant management platform. The Secretariat and a consultant team (comprising of reviewers from the three countries) will review submissions and make a shortlist of proposals based on the NAPECA eligibility and grant selection criteria detailed above (Sections 2 and 4). The shortlist of proposals retained after this first evaluation will be reviewed by the NAPECA Selection Committee.
4. The Selection Committee will evaluate the detailed proposals based on how well they meet each of the NAPECA selection criteria (as specified in Section 4, above) and make recommendations for finalists to the CEC Council.
5. The final set of projects will be approved by the CEC Council or the Alternate Representatives.
6. The Secretariat will administer the grant funds.

Upon completion of this stage, grants will be publicly announced, including the possibility of Council announcing individual projects in the respective countries. Announcements will include: the name of the organization and its location, the name of the project, the amount of the grant and an executive summary of the project goals, activities and expected results.

6.3 Grant Distribution Process

Grants will be disbursed through installments specific to the nature of the project to ensure that funded projects proceed in a realistic timeframe.

Grantees are required to submit to the Secretariat progress reports and financial statements that demonstrate how the funding is being used to generate tangible, measurable results. These reports and statements should be submitted according to the Payment and Reporting Schedule of the NAPECA Funding Agreement. Payments are contingent on the receipt of satisfactory progress reports from the grantees and will be withheld if the conditions of the grant are not met. Approximately ten percent of the grant will be held back until a satisfactory final report is received.

Final reports will be made publicly available.

7. Revision of the NAPECA Administration and Funding Guidelines

Any modifications to these Guidelines must be approved by the Council prior to their taking effect.