



COMMISSION FOR
ENVIRONMENTAL
COOPERATION

COMISIÓN PARA
LA COOPERACIÓN
AMBIENTAL

COMMISSION
DE COOPÉRATION
ENVIRONNEMENTALE

2026 CEC Generation of Environmental Leaders Program

Participation Guidelines

Please read these guidelines carefully. By participating in the Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC) Generation of Environmental Leaders Program, you attest that you understand the Program guidelines and agree to abide by its rules and requirements.

The Generation of Environmental Leaders Program (GELP) invites youth¹ in Canada, Mexico and the United States, to submit their solutions² *“to act now to support North American communities and preserve our shared waters, lands, and air.”*³

The selected North American youth will experience a year-long mentorship, receive C\$15K in seed funding and contribute to a dynamic community of knowledge sharing and collaboration, as well as the chance to present their solutions to North America’s top environmental officials and receive unique networking opportunities.

About the CEC

The Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC) focuses on strengthening the protection of the environment and fosters sustainable development across North America—for the benefit of all, today and into the future. The CEC facilitates knowledge exchange, develops resources and tools and promotes inclusive and diverse public engagement. Since its creation in 1994, the CEC has been a unique example of regional collaboration.

¹ Youth part of a team such as, but not exclusively, youth-led organizations, youth-led associations, nongovernmental organizations, and not-for-profit youth-led organizations, teams of youth innovators, or entrepreneurs interested in building their businesses.

² The CEC defines solution as a practical, effective, and sustainable resolution to an identified environmental problem or issue. It involves the ideation and the development of an innovative solution designed to mitigate or address the root causes of environmental challenges. Solutions should be context-specific, considering the unique characteristics of the community or region targeted by the solution.

³ See [CEC’s Strategic Pillars](#).

The CEC was established by the governments of Canada, Mexico and the United States 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 operates in accordance with the Environmental Cooperation Agreement (ECA), which entered into force at the same time as the CUSMA/T-MEC/USMCA trade agreement.

Find out more at: www.cec.org

CEC Generation of Environmental Leaders Program steps

Solution Submission: Participants must submit their solution by filling out the appropriate [online form](#) by **1st February 2026, 23:59 local time**.

Submission Evaluation: All submissions are evaluated by an external evaluation panel with five weighted [criteria](#) (see below). The 15 submissions (five per country) that best meet the Program requirements will be approved and sent to government officials from Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC), Mexico's Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (Semarnat) and the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

Selected Youth Leaders Announced: Government officials from the three North American countries will select one solution per country, based on established [criteria](#) (see below).

Solution Presentation: Two team representatives per selected solution will be invited to the annual 2026 CEC Council Session to be held in the summer of 2026 in Ottawa, Canada. Both team representatives will present their team's solution to the environment ministers of Canada, Mexico and the United States. Both will also be required to attend the in-person preparatory Council presentation mentorship sessions in Canada to be able to take part in the presentation of their solution.

Program Outcomes Presentation: One team representative per country **may** be invited to attend the 2027 Council Session, to be held in the United States, to present on their team's experience and outcomes from the program. Additionally, the team representative from the host country (United States) may be invited to introduce the 2027 GELP cohort during the Council Session.

Program scope: The two team representatives taking part in the program will participate in a year-long mentorship, receiving advice from experts to help advance their solution. In addition, a total amount of C\$15,000 will be allocated to each of the three selected solutions (one per country).

Rules and Requirements

Eligibility

- Participants in the CEC Generation of Environmental Leaders Program must be between 18 and 35 years old on the date they upload their solution to the online platform.
- The solution must be uploaded by an individual who will act as the representative for the team of submitters. The individual submitting the solution should fulfill all eligibility requirements. The solution must specify at least two team members, including the team representative. Both team members must be between 18 and 35 years old.
- Participants must be part of a team such as, but not exclusively, youth-led organizations, youth-led associations, nongovernmental organizations, not-for-profit youth-led organizations, teams of youth innovators or entrepreneurs interested in building their businesses.
- Participants must be residents of Canada, Mexico or the United States.
- Participants must demonstrate that their solution can suitably address or respond to critical issues related to supporting North American communities and preserving our shared waters, lands and air.
- The Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC) staff, Youth Innovation Challenge winners, members of past Generation of Environmental Leaders Program selected teams, Traditional Ecological Knowledge Expert Group (TEKEG) and Joint Public Advisory Committee (JPAC) members, including their immediate family members, and Generation of Environmental Leaders Program evaluators or their immediate family members (siblings, children, grandchildren) are not eligible to apply.
- The two team representatives per country will present their solution at the 2026 CEC Council Session to be held in the summer of 2026 in Ottawa, Canada; therefore, participants must have a valid passport and necessary visas (if applicable) at the time of their submission.

How to Participate

Participants must submit their solutions to the online platform.

All submissions must include the following information for the two team representatives:

- Full name (as it appears in their passport)
- Email address
- Current city and country of residence
- Date of birth

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

Selected youth leaders must fulfill all [Program requirements](#) (see below).

Deadlines

- **Submission Deadline:** All fully completed submissions must be filled out in the online platform by 23:59 local time on **1st February 2026**. Submissions that are incomplete or submitted after this time will be considered ineligible.
- **Finalists Selection:** The external evaluation panel of experts will select 15 solutions (five per country) that qualify for the final selection of teams.
- **Youth Leaders Selection:** It is expected that the panel of evaluators will select one solution per country in April 2026.

Selected solutions

- One solution per country will be selected by a panel of evaluators from the federal governments of Canada, Mexico and the United States.
- The top solutions will be selected based on the [criteria](#) described below.
- The top solutions will be selected in April 2026. The team representatives for each top solution will be notified by email.

Mentorship Program

- Two team representatives per selected solution will be eligible and committed to attending the mentorship sessions enabling them to further develop their solution and receive direct guidance from an expert on differing elements of their solution, including how to pitch their solution to top environmental officials at the [2026 CEC Council Session](#) (see below) and other audiences.
- The two team representatives must attend all mentorship sessions organized by the CEC (approximately ten sessions throughout the year, including two sessions held in person in Canada during the Council Session and the remaining sessions held online). The date and time of these sessions will be established based on the availability of the youth leaders and will require a commitment of approximately 20 hours over the course of the year-long mentorship program.
- The selected teams will receive a [GELP Journey Map](#) which is a strategic guide designed to help them navigate the full structure of the program. This resource will support teams in tracking their progress, staying aligned with their goals, capturing key takeaways from the mentorship experience and amplifying their impact. The Journey Map will also include all the necessary templates and information required to fulfill the program's commitments and deliverables.
- At the end of the mentorship program, youth leaders will need to develop a tool (document, infographic, video, etc.) applying the knowledge acquired through the mentorship program that will be posted on the CEC website. The tool will be added to a repository accessible to other youth and future applicants to the Generation of Environmental Leaders Program.

Outreach activities

- The two team representatives of the three selected solutions will be invited to attend in person the **2026 CEC Council Session** to be held in the summer of 2026 in Ottawa, Canada. Both team representatives will present the team's solution to North America's top environmental officials at the Council Session and answer the period of questions. If there are other team members, they will be able to attend the Council Session virtually.
- One team representative per selected solution **may** be invited to attend the 2027 CEC Council Session, to be held in the summer of 2027 in the United States. During the session, the representative will present their team's experience in the program, including how their participation contributed to the advancement of their solution. Additionally, the team representative from the host country (United States) **may** be invited to introduce the 2027 GELP cohort during the Council Session.

For the attendance at the 2026 CEC Council Session (and potential attendance at the 2027 CEC Council Session), transportation and lodging, airport transfer expenses, and a daily stipend for food will be provided. As the CEC is committed to supporting people with disabilities, a case-by-case assessment of each team representative's needs will be conducted to support full participation in this event. The traveler is responsible for obtaining the necessary preliminary travel documents, such as a valid passport and travel visa (if applicable) and must cover the costs thereof.

- Both team representatives for each top-selected solution must acknowledge their agreement to participate in the **2026 CEC Council Session** not later than one week following notification of the selection of their solution in order to remain eligible to receive transportation and lodging, airport transfer expenses and a daily stipend for food.

Seed funding

- One of the team representatives (on behalf of their team) for the selected solution per country will receive C\$15,000 in seed funding. This funding may be used to develop solution tools, cover the cost of design and layout for promotional materials, prototype, travel to pitch meetings, travel to communities where the solution will be implemented, expenses related to the development of workshops or other expenses approved in advance by the CEC. The CEC will provide a mentorship session on budget development.
- A member of the team to act as signing authority will need to be identified for each of the three selected solutions, and a contract must be signed in order for the seed funding to be disbursed.
- The seed funding will be disbursed in two payments. Part of the seed funding should be used to cover additional training to help strengthen the solution and/or to partially or fully cover the costs of attending a regional or international conference to present the solution. Reports will be sent to a representative at the CEC Secretariat.

Reporting and communication

- The selected three solutions will receive broad recognition and exposure through wide multi-platform distribution, including on the CEC website and other social media sites.
- Selected youth leaders will need to share with the CEC any information on participation in events promoting their solution.
- Selected youth leaders will share raw materials, such as pictures and videos, with the CEC in order to promote their participation through wide multi-platform distribution.
- Selected youth leaders will participate in the 2027 GELP campaign either by sharing a written testimony or a video highlighting their current participation.
- Selected youth leaders will have to create two reports: a midterm report 90 calendar days after the first disbursement of the seed funding, and a concluding report 180 calendar days after the first disbursement. Reports will be sent to a representative at the CEC Secretariat.
- Selected youth leaders must add a media report to their concluding report, which includes all promotional materials they created.

Judging

- Solutions must address the theme and have a direct impact on North American communities and their environment.⁴
- Solutions must demonstrate that they actively contribute to supporting North American communities and preserve our shared waters, lands and air.
- Solutions must demonstrate a strong impact on communities with a strong case that facilitates long-term sustainability.
- Solutions will be evaluated according to the following criteria: impact and community engagement (40%), feasibility (25%), alignment with the CEC's Strategic Pillars and the Program theme (15%), identification of problem/issue (10%) and innovation (10%).
- Solutions must have been developed by youth aged 18 to 35 in Canada, Mexico or the United States.
- Any submissions containing vulgarity, nudity, discrimination, 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

The CEC defines a solution as a practical, effective and sustainable resolution to an identified environmental problem or issue. It involves the conceptualization and development of an innovative solution designed to mitigate or address the root causes of environmental challenges. Solutions should be context-specific, considering the unique characteristics of the

⁴ *Act now to support North American communities and preserve our shared waters, lands, and air.*

community or region targeted by the solution. For solutions that are already being implemented, proof of the generated impact and feasibility should be provided with documents such as reports with data, and for solutions not yet implemented, potential impact and feasibility should be clearly outlined through concrete examples of activities and/or possible outcomes. During the selection process, the CEC will ensure a diverse and inclusive representation of teams.

Submitted solutions will be judged according to the following criteria:

- **Impact and community engagement (40%)**

The CEC defines impact and community engagement as tangible, positive effects that the solution has on the environment and community. The impact can be measured in terms of the changes, improvements or outcomes resulting from the solution's activities. It encompasses both short-term and long-term effects that contribute to the overall goal of addressing environmental challenges and fostering sustainability. For the community to be engaged, the solution should actively involve and empower community members in the planning, implementation and decision-making processes of the solution to foster collaboration, build local support and ensure that the solution aligns with the needs and priorities of the community, which will facilitate the local appropriation.

- How does your solution benefit, address and/or respond to critical environmental issues in North America? How does your solution demonstrate direct impacts that support communities addressing these challenges?
- *Sub-question 1:* How are community members engaged in your solution? And how will they be engaged/impacted in the future?
- *Sub-question 2:* Does your solution integrate diverse members of your community who traditionally lack access to decision-making spaces or the necessary resources or capacities that would address the issue your solution is tackling?
- *Sub-question 3:* Approximately how many community members are being impacted or could potentially be impacted by your solution? How would you measure the impact of your solution in the community or communities?

- **Feasibility (25%)**

The CEC defines feasibility as the practicality and viability of implementing a particular solution. It involves a comprehensive assessment of various factors, including financial, technical, logistical and organizational considerations, to determine whether the proposed solution is realistic and achievable. A feasibility analysis helps evaluate the

potential challenges, risks, and opportunities associated with the solution, providing insights into its likelihood of success.

- How will you implement your solution, considering the feasibility and the availability of resources?
- How will you manage the financial resources along with the administrative matters? Please provide a brief description.
- What is the timeline envisioned to achieve the objectives? What are the short /medium/long-term objectives? Please provide a brief description.

- **Alignment with the CEC’s Strategic Pillars⁵ and the Program Theme⁶ (15%)**

The CEC defines alignment with the [CEC’s Strategic Pillars](#) and Program theme “*Act now to support North American communities and preserve our shared waters, lands and air*” as the degree to which the solution’s goals, activities and outcomes are consistent and harmonized with the overarching theme of the Program. It involves ensuring that every aspect of the solution is in sync with the core principles, objectives and values related to CEC’s Strategic Pillars.

CEC’s Strategic Pillars	
1 Clear Air, Land and Water , particularly addressing matters of mutual interest with respect to air quality and protection of the ozone layer.	4 Shared Ecosystems and Species , particularly the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity and protection of ecosystems.
2 Preventing and Reducing Pollution in the Marine Environment , particularly taking action to prevent and reduce marine litter, including plastic litter and microplastics, and addressing ship pollution.	5 Resilient Economies and Communities , including promoting environmental goods and services, improving environmental, economic and social performance, contributing to green growth and jobs and encouraging sustainable development.
3 Circular Economy and Sustainable Materials Management , particularly the use of flexible, voluntary mechanisms to protect the environment and natural resources, such as conservation and the sustainable use of those resources.	6 Effective Enforcement of Environmental Laws , including promoting public awareness of environmental laws and policies, and enforcement and compliance procedures.

- In what way does your solution align with the theme of the Program? How does it connect with part of the CEC’s Strategic Pillars?

⁵ See [CEC’s Strategic Pillars](#)

⁶ *Act now to support North American communities and preserve our shared waters, lands and air.*

- **Identification of problem/issue (10%)**

The CEC defines the identification of a problem or issue as the systematic process of recognizing, defining, and understanding specific challenges or concerns within the scope of your solution. It involves conducting thorough research and analysis to pinpoint the root causes and manifestations of environmental problems your solution aims to address. The clarity in identifying these issues serves as the foundational step to developing targeted and practical solutions.

- What is the issue your solution is addressing? What steps did you take to identify this issue and find a solution?
- Do you consider that your solution could have additional impacts on other environmental issues beyond its main objective?

- **Innovation (10%)**

The CEC defines innovation as the introduction of new ideas, methods or products that can bring about positive change and improvement. Regarding environmental problem-solving, innovation involves creatively addressing challenges to develop sustainable solutions. It requires a different way of thinking, embracing novel approaches and applying inventive thinking to make a meaningful environmental impact.

Here are some examples of innovation: new technical solutions, green infrastructures, circular economy initiatives, use of Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) and/or nature-based solutions, community engagement activities, environmental education activities, behavioral and/or transformative change activities, policy advocacy solutions and cross-disciplinary collaboration.

- How is your solution innovative? How does it differ from current solutions?
- In which way do you consider your solution will complement current activities at the local level?

Additional Guidance

Applicants are asked to write their answers directly on the form. Providing external links for answering the questions is discouraged.

Program Requirements

Selected youth leaders must commit themselves to fulfilling the Program requirements:

- Attend **all** mentorship sessions.
- Present their solution in at least one regional or international conference.
- Participate in the 2027 GELP campaign by sharing a testimony or a video highlighting their current participation.
- Conduct a mentorship session for the 2027 cohort of youth leaders.

- Connect with other members of the 2026 cohort, for example by exchanging ideas and sharing experiences and networking opportunities.
- Provide at least one tool/document/training material to upload to the CEC webpage as a support resource for other youth leaders.
- Send a mid-term report and a concluding report to a representative of the CEC Secretariat.
- Prepare a short video describing their solution and share this video with a representative of the CEC Secretariat.

Important Considerations

Priority will be given to those solutions that have been developed with communities, including members of the community who traditionally lack access to decision-making spaces, training or capacity building and that demonstrate a direct impact (see [definition](#) above) on promoting equal access to a healthy environment, particularly from social perspectives.

Submission Use and Copyright

- The submitter(s) will retain the intellectual property rights to their solutions after submission. Nonetheless, the submission process grants the CEC unlimited rights to share the solutions through, but not limited to, social media, its website or other communications and publications.
- The CEC reserves the right to discuss and promote all submitted solutions and the names of the team members who submit the top solutions in any CEC-related promotional or advertising venture, without notification or compensation to the participants.
- The submitters agree to the possibility of broad multi-platform distribution of their work, including via the Internet, video and print.
- The submitters will receive credit for their contributions.

Official Languages

- The official languages of the Generation of Environmental Leaders Program are English, French and Spanish. Participants may submit their solutions in any of the three languages.

Liability

- By entering the Generation of Environmental Leaders Program, each participant acknowledges and agrees that the CEC, its staff and the panel of evaluators (i) shall have no liability of any kind whatsoever, with respect to this Program, including travel to the CEC Council Session and seed funding; (ii) makes no warranty, guarantee or representation of any kind concerning the activities and seed funding; (iii) disclaims any

implied warranty; and (iv) is 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 seed funding or otherwise from such participation in this Program. The CEC, its staff and the panel of judges are not responsible for typographical or other errors in the offer or administration of this Program, including, but not limited to, errors in advertising, the official Program rules, the selection and announcement of selected Youth Leaders or the distribution of the seed funding. The CEC, its staff, and the panel of evaluators 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 participant's or any person's computer resulting from participation in the Program. 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 Program or receipt or use or misuse of any activity and seed funding.

- The CEC is an international organization in Canada operating under the Headquarters Agreement Between the Government of Canada and the Commission for Environmental Cooperation. Nothing in this selection process, including participation in the Generation of Environmental Leaders Program and during the CEC Council Session, shall be deemed to be a waiver, express or implied, of any immunity from suit, legal process or execution, or of any privilege, exemption or other immunity, enjoyed or which may be enjoyed by the Commission pursuant to any applicable convention, agreement, law or decree, whether international or domestic.

Negotiation

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

Other

- Any solution submitted by a participant does not reflect 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 the CEC or any of the three countries, unless the appropriate permission has been warranted.
- 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 is not responsible for lost, late or misrouted solutions.

- Participants must inform the CEC if their contact information changes at any time between submitting their solutions and the announcement of the Program's selected Youth Leaders.
- The CEC retains the right to cancel the Program for any reason whatsoever, and without advance notice to the participants.
- The CEC retains the right to change the rules of this Program or any or all of the elements of the Program seed funding.

If you have any questions, or experience any barriers when accessing this information please contact: youth@cec.org

[CLICK HERE TO APPLY](#)

Thank you for your interest in the Commission for Environmental Cooperation's
Generation of Environmental Leaders Program!

We look forward to reading your application.