

2023 CALL FOR PROPOSALS

“Empowering Indigenous Peoples and Enhancing Climate Adaptation by Incorporating Indigenous Knowledge”

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 18 January 2024 and projects will start in June 2024.

What is NAPECA?

The CEC established NAPECA to promote shared responsibility and stewardship for the environment by engaging and partnering with tribal nations, Indigenous Peoples and communities, including Indigenous governments, councils and organizations, local communities, academia and registered nongovernmental organizations 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 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>.

This NAPECA grant cycle aims to support climate adaptation in North America by engaging and empowering communities, particularly Indigenous and local communities, in applying Indigenous Knowledge to strengthen community-based resilience to climate change. The CEC is calling for proposals from organizations to support environmental initiatives that will help North American communities enhance climate adaptation by working with Indigenous Peoples and local communities to recognize, apply, and protect traditional and Indigenous knowledge systems.

The CEC recognizes the importance of working with Indigenous Peoples and communities—the original guardians and caretakers of territories in Canada, Mexico and the United States and whose environmental knowledge and practices, and unique perspectives are increasingly recognized, both at local and international levels, in many places today. It also acknowledges the importance of self-determination for Indigenous communities over their land, and the distinct and valuable

contributions they can provide to environmental activities and the decision-making process¹ and supports the UN Declaration² that underlines respect and recognition for the human rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Given their thousands of years of experience conserving and managing the environment, Indigenous Peoples and communities have invaluable knowledge systems and practices that contribute to the sustainable management and preservation of resources and can help with meeting environmental challenges, including the climate change crisis.

What is Indigenous Knowledge?

Because Indigenous Peoples live in different environments and contexts specific to their countries, regions and histories, three definitions of Indigenous Knowledge that reflect diverse North American perspectives are proposed.

Definition by the Government of Canada³

There is no single definition of Indigenous Knowledge. For our purposes, we understand "Indigenous Knowledge" as a term that refers to a set of complex knowledge systems based on the worldviews of Indigenous Peoples. Indigenous Knowledge reflects the unique cultures, languages, values, histories, governance and legal systems of Indigenous Peoples. It is place-based, cumulative and dynamic. Indigenous knowledge systems involve living well with, and being in relationship with, the natural world. Indigenous knowledge systems build upon the experiences of earlier generations, inform the practice of current generations, and evolve in the context of contemporary society.

Definition by the Government of the United States⁴

Indigenous knowledge (hereafter, TEK) refers to the evolving knowledge acquired by Indigenous and local peoples over hundreds or thousands of years through direct contact with the environment. This knowledge is specific to a location and includes the relationships between plants, animals, natural phenomena, landscapes and timing of events that are used for lifeways, including but not limited to hunting, fishing, trapping, agriculture, and forestry. TEK is an accumulating body of knowledge, practice, and belief, evolving by adaptive processes and handed down through generations by cultural transmission, about the relationship of living beings (human and non-human) with one

¹ See <http://www.cec.org/files/documents/strategic_plans/cec-strategic-plan-2021-2025.pdf>.

² See <https://social.desa.un.org/sites/default/files/migrated/19/2018/11/UNDRIP_E_web.pdf>.

³ See <<https://www.canada.ca/en/impact-assessment-agency/programs/aboriginal-consultation-federal-environmental-assessment/indigenous-knowledge-policy-framework-initiative.html>>.

⁴ <<https://www.fws.gov/sites/default/files/documents/TEK-Fact-Sheet.pdf>> and <<https://www.whitehouse.gov/ostp/ostps-teams/climate-and-environment/indigenous-knowledge/>>.

another and with the environment. It encompasses the world view of Indigenous Peoples which includes ecology, spirituality, human and animal relationships, and more.

Definition by the Government of Mexico⁵

Indigenous knowledge refers to bodies of knowledge, values, understandings and interpretations that constitute complex systems, closely related to the world views, territories, natural resources or assets of Indigenous Peoples and communities; ...collective in nature; ...acquired, inherited and practiced over the time and the spaces inhabited, and handed down through generations, in accordance with their own normative systems. It is the product of experiences, studies and practices within the community, comprehensive and interconnected, spanning various aspects of the lives of individuals and of a community, and forming part of the cultural heritage of Indigenous Peoples and communities as elements of their identity—therefore dynamic and constantly evolving, yet with collective property rights. This knowledge, sometimes shared with other peoples and communities, plays a critical role in decision-making and is essential in the development and the future of Indigenous Peoples and communities.

Possible projects under this call for proposals

The CEC will support projects and partnerships that are led by or promote the active participation of Indigenous governments, organizations, communities and individuals in recognition of their Indigenous rights and knowledge systems pertaining to environmental decision-making. The projects must be inclusive and foster Indigenous leadership and self-determination. They may also support the development of solutions adapted to the needs, priorities and systems prevailing in the communities where they are implemented. Indeed, applying Indigenous Knowledge also implies recognition of and respect for Indigenous knowledge systems⁶ and, in many cases, shared jurisdiction on environmental activities and decisions. This recognition includes ways of life, relations to the spirits and natural world, the gender-based roles, modes of knowledge transmission and decision-making, etc.

It is not a requirement that the proposed project necessarily be implemented in Indigenous communities. Rather, the requirement is that the project be implemented in collaboration and partnership with one or more Indigenous partners. In the case of partnerships between Indigenous communities and other organizations, the intention is to promote a dialogue of knowledge that

⁵ Definition provided by the *Instituto Nacional de Pueblos Indígenas de Mexico* (INPI)

⁶ McGregor, Deborah. 2021. Indigenous Knowledge Systems in Environmental Governance in Canada. KULA: Knowledge Creation, Dissemination, and Preservation Studies 5(1). <https://doi.org/10.18357/kula.148>

generates an interaction of respect and symmetry among actors with different knowledge systems.⁷ The “weaving” approach ensures that Indigenous science is brought together with western science through mutual respect, repatriation, relationship building, engagement activities, and the development of learning resources.⁸

Eligible projects could address such topics as the sustainable use of biodiversity and ecosystems through Indigenous knowledge and practices, reducing habitat loss to conserve biodiversity and land, strengthening climate action to achieve a low-carbon emission economy (considering scientific, technical and Indigenous Knowledge), improving air quality, improving community support networks to deal with times of crisis, and implementing nature-based solutions. Priority will be given to long-term environmental solutions that can demonstrate, through qualitative and/or quantitative indicators, a direct impact on communities, their well-being and health, their territories and capacities to address and adapt to the impacts of climate change.

Other project types can include, but are not limited to: participatory science and community research, conducting outreach or education, sharing good practices, capacity building and training environmental and community leaders, engaging youth and elders in environmental and knowledge transmission activities, supporting community discussions on climate change adaptation, vulnerability and risk assessment of climate change impacts, development of hazard maps, emergency and adaptation plans, development of tools to support climate change adaptation planning, and implementing small-scale adaptation options, such as planting native vegetation to support water retention, installing backflow water valves to reduce flooding, or practicing cultural burning and other solutions to reduce the risk to infrastructure from wildfire, etc.

Selection criteria

The NAPECA grant program will support projects that:

1. Focus on implementing community activities that will enhance climate adaptation through the respectful inclusion and protection of Indigenous Knowledge, and demonstrate recognition and respect of the traditional systems in place;
2. Participate in the empowerment of the community(ies) and Peoples involved and propose activities that will lead to community-driven change (e.g., capacity building for new decision-making and/or management skills, programs to increase environmental awareness, etc.);

⁷https://www.researchgate.net/publication/335314926_Los_Saberes_tradicionales_y_los_desafios_para_el_Dialogo_de_conocimientos

⁸ Environment and Climate Change Canada’s Indigenous Science Division: <https://www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/science-technology/indigenous-science.html#toc0>

3. Include an integral implementation plan that identifies clearly concrete and measurable objectives and results, specific actions/project activities, beneficiaries and actors, and an estimate budget;
4. Achieve tangible and measurable positive environmental results, whether such outcomes benefit species, ecosystems, or sustainable development, or community preparedness/resilience to climate change. Most results must be suitable for reporting within the timeframe of NAPECA support (i.e., 12 to 24 months);
5. Could potentially be replicated in other regions or inspire other communities to implement initiatives that address similar issues but are tailored to their needs, priorities and realities;
6. Create formal or informal partnerships or collaborations that respond to community-identified challenges and priorities, respect and foster Indigenous knowledge and systems and recognize and respect Indigenous rights. This may be with local or other Indigenous Peoples and communities, academia (and/or youth), non-governmental organizations, the different levels of government, and the private sector within the North American region;
7. Leverage other resources (human, material, or financial) to achieve greater impact, replicability, and sustainability of the project and its results; and
8. Are presented on time and through the established process.

Who should apply?

Eligible applicants are tribal nations, Indigenous Peoples and communities, entities which are incorporated as non-profit 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. Additionally, NAPECA grants cannot be used for projects that are currently receiving financial support from Environment and Climate Change Canada.

The CEC cannot accept applications from an applicant whose employee or officer is, or an immediate family⁹ member of the employee or officer is:

- An official from any of the Parties to the Agreement on Environmental Cooperation (ECA) (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 the Traditional Ecological Knowledge Expert Group (TEKEG); or
- A present or past member (within the past year) of the United States National and Government Advisory Committees (US NAC and GAC).

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.

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\$185,000 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.

⁹ "Immediate family" includes spouses, parents, siblings, and children.

How are proposals evaluated?

Applicants should submit a proposal by the due date in electronic format through the online application portal, as described below. 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 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 | 18 January 2024 (5:00 p.m. EST) |
| • Evaluation of grant applications | January to April 2024 |
| • Official grants announcement | May 2024 |
| • Project implementation begins | June 2024 |
| • Projects maximum end date | June 2026 |

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 “Empowering Indigenous Peoples and Enhancing Climate Adaptation by Incorporating Indigenous Knowledge”: describe the problem/issue/opportunity to be addressed, the objectives, and desired results. (Max. 4,000 characters, including spaces).

- 4. Budget requested.** Total budget requested from NAPECA and its detailed breakdown (in Canadian dollars). Use the worksheet template to provide details of the project budget (only the portion that would be covered by the NAPECA grant). Break this information into the following categories:
 1. Salaries and benefits
 2. Equipment and supplies
 3. Travel (not to exceed 15 percent)¹⁰
 4. Consultant services (if applicable),
 5. Overhead (not to exceed 15 percent)¹¹
 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. Location of the project activities.** Indicate the name(s) of the city(ies), 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. Make sure that you describe the Indigenous Peoples or community(ies) involved and list their benefits in being involved in the project. (Max. 3,500 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 in which activities partners or collaborators are involved and what is their contribution to this project, if applicable. (Max. 1,500 characters, including spaces).

¹⁰ The CEC will not fund expenses related to travel in excess of 15 percent of the total grant amount.

¹¹ 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.

- 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. (Max. 750 characters, including spaces).
- 12. Replicability/Scalability.** Explain what makes this project a model environmental initiative and how it could inspire or be replicated (or scaled up) in other North American communities. (Max. 750 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. 1,500 characters, including spaces).
- 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) 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, as an external partner, you have been involved 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”¹² 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 contact: napeca@cec.org

¹² “The principle and right of ‘free, prior and informed consent’ demands that states and organizations of all kinds and at all levels obtain indigenous peoples’ authorization 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 be respected and that information on the likely impact of activities be disclosed in advance. Legitimate consultation measures ensure that activities or actions planned respond to indigenous peoples’ concerns and interests, thereby allowing a self-determined development process.” <https://www.fao.org/3/i1857e/i1857e.pdf>, p. 5