

Draft
North American Air Working Group
Long-term Strategic Framework
for Air-related Activities of the
Commission for Environmental Cooperation

A Three-step Approach to Developing a Strategic Framework for Air-related Activities of the Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC)

This document is the first step of a three-step approach to develop a strategic framework that provides guidance to the CEC Council and Secretariat for carrying out mutually beneficial air-related activities. The three steps in this process are:

1. Identify strategic directions that can serve to guide air-related activities of the CEC Secretariat;
2. Provide advice and commentary regarding the development and implementation of the annual operational plan; and
3. Evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of implemented actions.

The framework is intended to promote greater understanding and effectiveness of CEC air-related activities and of the air quality programs in the three countries, with an emphasis on coordination, synergies, and complementarities across CEC air activities.

Identifying Strategic Directions for Air-related Activities of the CEC

In this first step, the North American Air Working Group (NAAWG) will identify goals, priority areas of action, and opportunities for the CEC Secretariat's air-related activities. The strategic directions presented herein are intended to guide decision-making and focus resources to successfully carry out CEC activities. These activities will support existing air quality agreements, programs and other air-related activities between and among Canada, Mexico, and the United States.

These strategic directions are intended to benefit from the input of a wide range of stakeholders. To this end, the draft document will be posted for public comment. In addition, the NAAWG intends that development of these directions be coordinated with the Joint Public Advisory Committee (JPAC). Accordingly, the NAAWG has invited JPAC to co-host a meeting in 2004 to engage the public in discussions about the air-related work of the CEC. Working together, the NAAWG and JPAC will seek comment on the draft strategic directions document from North American stakeholders from governmental and nongovernmental organizations, indigenous

groups, academia, the private sector, and the public. At the conclusion of this comment process, the NAAWG will review the input received, finalize the draft document, and present it to the CEC Council. The NAAWG, with further input from the public, may periodically revise the strategic directions as needed.

Providing Advice and Commentary

As a second step in the approach, strategic directions will be translated into advice and commentary regarding the annual CEC operational plan that is put into effect by the CEC Secretariat. The operational plan is intended to be a flexible tool designed to guide the evolution of projects and to provide interested parties with key information on the CEC's actions. Once endorsed by the Parties, the operational plan will be fully elaborated into specific actions or projects to be implemented by the CEC Secretariat.

Measuring and Evaluating Performance

Lastly, to determine the effectiveness and efficiency of implemented actions, a monitoring and evaluation process will be established. Evaluation and assessment will be accomplished through program reviews and updating of the strategic directions on an as-needed basis.

The North American Commission for Environmental Cooperation

The CEC was created pursuant to the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation (a.k.a., environmental side-agreement to the North American Free Trade Agreement, or NAFTA) to:

- Enhance cooperation on regional environmental issues affecting the three countries
- Undertake the collection and dissemination of environmental information and analysis
- Understand environment/economy/trade relationships better
- Solve problems of mutual concern
- Provide a forum for participation by the public related to environment and trade issues facing North America

Structure

The Council, the governing body of the CEC, is composed of the environment ministers (or the equivalent) of each country.

The JPAC is an advisory group whose responsibility is to provide the Council with advice on all matters within the scope of the CEC. JPAC is composed of five members from each of the three countries who are appointed by their respective governments.

The CEC Secretariat is composed of professional staff that implements initiatives and conducts research in core program areas on topics pertaining to the North American environment, environmental law and standards, and other environment/trade issues, in addition to processing citizen submissions on enforcement matters. The Secretariat provides technical and operational support to the CEC Council as well as to committees and groups established by the Council, such as the NAAWG.

The North American Air Working Group

The NAAWG was created in 2002, under CEC Council Resolution 02-04, to “provide advice and commentary to the Council on the development and implementation of the annual work plan for the Air Quality Program and for other CEC activities involving air issues.”

Composed of the senior air quality officials within the governments of the three countries, the NAAWG is well positioned to promote greater understanding and effectiveness of activities and programs related to air quality in each country. It plays an integral role in the development and implementation of the CEC’s air-related activities. By providing advice and commentary on the annual program (work) plan, the NAAWG will help define the work needed to realize specific goals and address issues of priority to all countries.

The NAAWG will pursue the mandate set forth by the Council Resolution 02-04 through the following steps:

- Identify strategic goals and priority areas for action for the CEC’s Air Quality Program and other air-related activities, and help concentrate the use of the CEC’s limited resources in those key areas.
- Provide advice to the CEC Council on air-related issues.
- Related to the Secretariat’s annual program (or work) plan: (1) provide advice and commentary to the CEC Secretariat, including the Air Quality Program Manager, during the annual CEC operational plan development process; (2) provide advice and commentary to the CEC Council on the development and implementation of the annual workplan for the Air Quality Program and for other CEC activities involving air issues; (3) assist in the execution of the program plan by providing experts to advise and comment on and/or participate in the development and implementation of specific projects; and 4) review and where necessary provide additional advice and commentary regarding the consistency of activities during their implementation with the CEC annual operational plan.
- Promote actions directed at tangible results and deliverables with quantitative and

qualitative targets that can be measured against agreed-upon indicators.

- Contribute to the involvement of stakeholders by providing opportunities for public participation to inform the NAAWG advice to the Secretariat and the Council.

Strategic Directions: Step 1

Vision

The most effective way to strengthen the overall capacity of air quality management is to improve the quality, comparability, and accessibility of air-related information across North America. Because of its linkages to the public, academia, the private sector, indigenous groups, nongovernmental organizations, and the governments of the three NAFTA countries, the CEC is uniquely suited to foster a greater awareness and understanding of air quality management systems in North America. It is also well positioned to support the development of cooperative partnerships among air quality management agencies and experts. In this context, the NAAWG will strive to help maximize the CEC's contribution by assessing and prioritizing the need to address specific issues, ensuring that efforts are concentrated in key areas, and helping to focus the use of the CEC's limited resources.

Goals

The NAAWG supports the following goals for air-related activities of the CEC:

1. Increase comparability and exchange of air-related environmental information among the three NAFTA countries through database development and networking, establishment of technical networks, and enhancement of data-collection capabilities. This includes promoting the exchange of information on criteria and methodologies used in establishing and implementing domestic environmental standards as well as on results achieved.
2. Enhance public access to air-related environmental information through development of common education tools, facilitation of information dissemination, and outreach. This includes supporting development of programs to raise public awareness about air pollution and its sources, and identifying and sharing information on best practices and other promising initiatives.
3. Facilitate coordination and cooperation between the three countries on air-related activities. This includes enhancing competencies and capacity-building in governments by providing venues to share experiences, facilitating training, coordinating workshops, and fostering professional relationships pertaining to air quality management systems,

improvement strategies, and related issues.

4. Perform comparative analyses and assessments on existing issues and perform forward-looking assessments of emerging air-related issues as identified by the NAAWG.

Priority Areas for Action

In achieving the aforementioned goals, the NAAWG supports the following six priority areas for action with respect to the CEC's air-related work:

1. Quantify emissions and concentrations from the energy and transportation sectors;
2. Identify and compare existing pollution prevention and technological options and air quality management strategies related to energy and transportation, including identification of existing implementation approaches;
3. Quantify impacts of air pollution on human health and the environment, including costs and benefits of emission control options;
4. Identify needs for air quality-related scientific research and technology development that the Parties may consider;
5. Identify key linkages between air-related issues and broader development and trade issues; and
6. Identify additional financial resources to support activities in the aforementioned areas.

Operation and Evaluation: Steps 2 and 3

In providing advice and commentary on the annual program (work) plan and evaluating results of implemented activities, the NAAWG will consider the following criteria:

- Urgency of the issue
- Clear binational or trinational priority
- Ability of the CEC Secretariat to undertake the activity
- Potential to produce desired results within a set time frame
- Efficient use of resources
- Coordination with other institutions, initiatives, and mechanisms

At the project level, the NAAWG will consider the following information provided by the Secretariat:

- Goals and objectives
- Background information
- Links to other CEC program activities
- Target completion date
- List of deliverables (draft and final)
- Proposed and actual budget
- Indicators to measure results and assess progress

- Plan for future action
- Contributions from other funding sources

Monitoring, measuring, and evaluating performances are critical elements to successful implementation of projects. The evaluation process will be carried out through periodic measurements and reviews of results against specific performance targets and will provide valuable information for determining whether projects are efficient and are having the desired effects. The process is intended to provide an opportunity to review objectives and redefine targets.

Summary

Because of its unique characteristics and trilateral organization, the CEC provides a foundation for efforts on air quality and other air-related issues that support existing endeavors among the three NAFTA countries. The NAAWG intends that this strategic framework will provide an approach to plan, implement, and assess these efforts of the CEC. The strategic directions, which may be revised periodically with input from the public, are meant to serve as a guide for a multi-year period, setting a consistent framework for prioritizing and carrying out actions.