

Collaboration and Public Participation Center of Expertise FY 2021-2025 Strategic Plan

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) collaborates with a purpose: to deliver creative, sustainable solutions to increasingly complex challenges while meeting the needs of multiple, often competing interests in the communities we serve. Changing climate and demographic patterns are increasing demands on an aging infrastructure portfolio, making it increasingly difficult to achieve the various USACE missions. These challenges require innovative, holistic responses that are best developed through collaboration with stakeholders who each contribute a part of the solution. USACE must thus increase its capacity to collaborate effectively with its stakeholders, from the general public to community groups, to state, local, and federal agencies, to national or local advocacy groups, to sovereign tribes and nations.

The USACE Collaboration and Public Participation Center of Expertise (CPCX) develops the collaborative capacity and capability of the agency, improving the ability of staff to work together effectively both internally and externally. CPCX is comprised of an interdisciplinary team of experts who focus on collaborative processes such as public participation, stakeholder and partner engagement, risk communication, facilitation, conflict resolution, teambuilding, virtual collaboration, and collaborative technologies.¹ This strategic plan (the third since designation of the CX in 2008²) outlines the focus and direction of the Center of Expertise to 2025.

¹ For purposes of readability, the terms ‘collaboration’ and ‘collaborative processes’ are used throughout this document in place of listing these additional terms. Collaboration means to work with internal and external stakeholders and the public in each aspect of the decision including sharing information, exploring options and potential solutions, and seeking agreement on decisions and actions.

² MG Don T. Riley. Memo (17 October 2008): Designation of the USACE Conflict Resolution & Public Participation Center of Expertise at the Institute for Water Resources.

Mission

Improve the outcomes of USACE missions by supporting collaborative processes and ensuring that the interests of partners, stakeholders, and the public are addressed.

Vision

CPCX is highly valued throughout all USACE mission areas for advancing a culture of collaboration that improves U.S. water resources management.

Goals

These five goals are mutually supportive in achieving the CPCX vision and mission. Goal 5 is a center management goal designed to enable the achievement of the first four goals.

1. ***Build the collaborative capability*** of USACE staff and partners to enable effective convening of, and participation in, collaborative processes.
2. ***Provide direct support*** to increase the success of collaborative processes.
3. ***Catalyze effective use of collaboration*** agency-wide through proactive engagement with USACE leadership.
4. ***Deliver innovative collaborative processes, tools and techniques*** to address water resources management challenges.
5. ***Manage resources*** to ensure high quality team performance and raise awareness of CPCX services.

Benefits

A growing body of research and evidence, both quantitative and qualitative, demonstrates that well-executed collaborative processes save time and money, improve project outcomes, and improve short- and long-term governance.³ Through implementation of this strategic plan, CPCX helps achieve these benefits for USACE:

³ Environmental Collaboration and Conflict Resolution (ECCR): Enhancing Agency Efficiency and Making Government Accountable to the People; A Report from the Federal Forum on Environmental Collaboration and Conflict Resolution https://ceq.doe.gov/docs/nepa-practice/ECCR_Benefits_Recommendations_Report_%205-02-018.pdf

- Save time and money – Using collaborative processes can produce cost savings and more timely decisions for taxpayers and federal agencies, compared to litigation and other conventional processes.
- Improve outcomes – Using a collaborative process results in more creative and durable solutions to entrenched disagreements by increasing understanding among stakeholders that leads to sustainable agreements. Agreements reached through collaborative processes in turn lead to more effective implementation of decisions, as well as economic and environmental benefits.
- Improve relationships between the government and stakeholders - Relationships improved through collaborative processes can lead to more broadly acceptable solutions and better-informed agency decisions.

Core Values

The values that underlie the collaboration work we support include impartiality, fairness, transparency, and democratic practice. We promote collaboration that is impactful, effective, and efficient.

The values that we bring to this work include an ethic of service, continual learning, honesty, trustworthiness, and diligence.

The values that underlie our work as a team include a positive attitude, encouragement, and teamwork.

CPCX staff strives to enact these values in collaborative work with our partners and members of the public we serve, in our relationships within USACE, and in our interactions within our team. These values align with, and leverage, the Army values of loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, and personal courage.

Goal 1. Build the collaborative capability of USACE staff and partners to enable effective convening of, and participation in, collaborative processes.

CPCX will continue to integrate training, peer learning, and mentoring that will enable USACE staff and partners to strengthen their knowledge, skills, and abilities to lead and participate effectively in collaborative processes.

Objective 1.1: Use a variety of means to learn from field and Headquarters staff about their challenges and need for support and training.

Means and Strategies

CPCX will prioritize, design, and implement capability-building activities that rely on understanding USACE challenges and needs. The following activities will help identify agency collaborative capability needs:

- Periodic Collaborative Capacity Assessment
- Regular meetings with Major Subordinate Command (MSC) Liaisons
- Pilots of collaborative techniques
- Periodic meetings with Public Involvement Specialists
- Input from the Collaboration and Public Participation Community of Practice
- Engagement with HQ business line managers
- Annual use of Environmental Collaboration and Conflict Resolution in USACE report
- Evaluation and feedback from CPCX trainings

Metrics and Targets

- CPCX will use input from the above activities to revise or initiate new capability-building activities at least 10 times annually.

Objective 1.2: Strengthen information exchange about collaborative tools, techniques, benefits, and requirements across USACE and with external partners.

Means and Strategies

The Collaboration and Public Participation Community of Practice (Collaboration CoP) is the primary means for staff across USACE with interest in collaborative processes to share information, experiences, and perspectives. CPCX will support the Collaboration CoP by organizing knowledge exchanges, providing ongoing opportunities for professional

development, and encouraging CoP members to engage in CoP activities and learn from each other. CPCX will also continuously recruit new CoP members. A Collaboration CoP Steering Committee will guide the activities of the CoP and information exchange efforts.

Types of information exchanged will include best practices, lessons learned, challenges that need to be addressed, regulatory or policy requirements, costs and benefits, and new approaches and tools (such as virtual engagement methods) to help USACE collaborate both internally and externally. CPCX will synthesize and distill insights about best practices for collaborative processes and rely on MSC Liaisons, Public Involvement Specialists, and other members of the Collaboration CoP to contribute information from their perspectives.

Information sharing methods include webinars, workshops, Collaboration CoP listserv emails, briefings, newsletters, pamphlets, publications, and web platforms (e.g. Collaboration CoP SharePoint and CPCX website). Training and technical assistance (see Objectives 1.5, 2.1, and 4.2) will also result in information sharing on collaborative processes and tools.

To improve shared learning and knowledge transfer, CPCX will also collaborate with federal conflict resolution centers, states, locals, Tribes, universities, and the private sector. Furthermore, CPCX will share information with USACE-HQ and ASA (CW) staff, as well as senior leaders in Districts and MSCs.

Metrics and Targets

CPCX will annually:

- Deliver and/or support a minimum of 20 opportunities that enable information exchange among at least 750 USACE staff on collaborative processes, tools, techniques, benefits, and requirements.
- Support a minimum of six opportunities for information exchange with external partners on collaborative processes.
- With the Collaboration CoP Steering Committee, develop and implement a work plan to strengthen engagement within the CoP.

Objective 1.3: Build collaborative capacity of USACE staff through design and delivery of training.

Means and Strategies

Using a needs assessment (Objective 1.1) to identify appropriate activities, CPCX will develop, revamp or maintain, and facilitate courses on various collaborative processes. CPCX will integrate collaborative process skills into trainings and career development plans from other CoPs or business lines.⁴ Types of training include webinars, in-person courses, on demand modules, and university courses. CPCX will promote certification for higher-level training, such as the John S. McCain III National Center for Environmental Conflict Resolution (NCECR)'s Certificate in Environmental Collaboration.

Metrics and Targets

CPCX will annually:

- Deliver and/or fund at least 12 trainings.
- Deliver courses to at least three other CoPs or business lines.
- Infuse collaboration content into existing courses or career development plans from at least three other CoPs or business lines.

Goal 2. Provide direct support to increase the success of collaborative processes.

CPCX will provide collaboration services to USACE Districts, MSCs, and HQ across all mission areas. Such services include assistance with public participation, stakeholder and partner engagement, risk communication, facilitation, conflict resolution, teambuilding, virtual collaboration, and collaborative technologies. CPCX staff will directly support projects or will enable access to experts from its broader network of internal and external experts. This network includes MSC Liaisons, District Public Involvement Specialists, facilitators, and external collaboration experts from other federal agencies or the private sector. CPCX will also expand this network of experts so that USACE staff have quick access to the best support possible.

⁴ When referenced through this plan, CoPs and business lines refer to: Public Affairs, Planning, Program and Project Management, Engineering and Construction, Operations, Emergency Management, Natural Resources Management, Flood Risk Management, Interagency and International Services, Tribal Affairs, and Regulatory.

Objective 2.1: Provide assistance

Means and Strategies

CPCX will continue to improve its process for responding to requests for assistance. Decision criteria will be used to evaluate requests and determine the appropriate support mechanism, ensuring an efficient assessment of needs for each request. While most CPCX services will be provided by request, CPCX will proactively offer its expertise to HQ, MSCs, or Districts on high-profile or controversial issues that could benefit from collaborative solutions (see Objective 3.2).

Metrics and Targets

- CPCX will respond to requests for assistance within three days.
- CPCX will complete the intake process for each request that will consist of more than one engagement.
- Public Involvement Specialists, MSC Liaisons, and facilitators from CPCX's internal and external network will provide assistance to the field at least 50 times annually.

Objective 2.2: Strengthen and expand the network of skilled professionals available to assist in collaborative services.

Means and Strategies

CPCX will continue to build the District Public Involvement Specialists program and provide ongoing opportunities to advance skills through training, mentorship, coaching, and peer support in dealing with collaboration challenges. These opportunities will be formalized in a new career development roadmap. CPCX will support the Public Involvement Specialists as they provide direct services at Districts within and beyond their MSC. The Public Involvement Specialists will increase awareness of, and demand for, their skills and work with like-minded staff and leaders to promote District collaborative capabilities. Public Involvement Specialists will work towards District recognition of their value as measured by dedicated funding and inclusion in individual performance plans and position descriptions.

In addition to the Public Involvement Specialists, CPCX will continue to expand and develop mechanisms for Districts to identify and engage internal and external collaboration experts. CPCX will support Districts' use of the agency-level MOA with NCECR and will enable other ways for Districts to engage expertise such as through contracting mechanisms, DoD's

roster of neutrals, and USACE's network of facilitators, including the *Find a Facilitator Database*.

Metrics and Targets

- By 2025, the Public Involvement Specialists will support all 38 Districts with Civil Works programs, and will represent the following categories: planning, engineering and construction, operations and maintenance, emergency management, project management, natural resource management, and regulatory.
- Annually each Public Involvement Specialist will host trainings in their MSC, brief staff and leadership, and provide technical advice to District projects.
- Annually CPCX will support at least three Districts to engage collaboration expertise using MOA's, contracts, or facilitation networks beyond CPCX and the Public Involvement Specialists.
- 75% of PI specialists will receive 100 hours of funding from their District and will include their responsibilities in their Individual Development Plans and Position Descriptions.

Goal 3. Catalyze effective use of collaboration agency-wide through proactive engagement with USACE leadership.

CPCX will work with USACE senior staff and leadership to influence the use of collaboration to better achieve agency missions. Through engagement with HQ, CPCX will review or draft policies and procedures that relate to collaboration and advise HQ on current national and international trends or issues in public participation, conflict resolution, and collaborative governance. CPCX will also provide input related to investments in collaboration. CPCX will serve as a liaison with other agencies, attend required interagency gatherings, and contribute to relevant interagency reports.

CPCX will serve as a resource for special national or international initiatives or urgent issues that would benefit from collaborative solutions. These initiatives may be inter-organizational or internal to USACE, such as risk communication support for the dam and levee safety programs. To be most effective in these efforts, CPCX will leverage the resources within USACE to include the Public Affairs Office, Office of Counsel, and relevant expertise at HQ, MSCs, labs and Districts.

Objective 3.1: Support the development and implementation of policies, business processes, and platforms⁵ which facilitate collaboration in support of mission execution.

Means and Strategies

Support may include review of proposed or current policies, development of new policies or guidance, or review of collaboration policies in other agencies, and recommendations for USACE. CPCX will support collaboration within a variety of CoPs and business lines. The CPCX will seek to incorporate collaborative processes within USACE and other federal water policies and guidance.

CPCX will identify the most useful and user-friendly virtual collaboration platforms that will enable teams to be successful with both internal and external engagements. This will include working closely with the Corporate Information Office (CIO) and HQ to add capabilities to existing platforms or gain access to, and training for, additional platforms.

Metrics and Targets

- Annually CPCX will actively engage leadership to develop and/or implement at least one action in each of the following categories: incorporate collaborative processes into policy, guidance, or processes; fund collaboration support; and add capabilities to existing platforms or identify new collaborative platforms.

Objective 3.2: Support USACE leadership (ASA (CW) and HQ) on special initiatives and emerging or urgent issues that require collaboration.

Means and Strategies

CPCX will provide collaborative process expertise to USACE HQ to address urgent challenges that inevitably arise. Such challenges could include hot topic items such as brokered studies and virtual public involvement, or support to established and ongoing programs or projects that demand HQ attention. To ensure mutual awareness of challenges and opportunities for support, CPCX will regularly engage leaders at USACE HQ (see Objective 5.3), highlight current capabilities through upwards reporting, and monitor

⁵Platforms are defined as technologies, infrastructure, hardware, and structures.

potential areas of support via HQ PAO and MSC Liaisons.

Metrics and Targets

- Annually CPCX will proactively identify and engage on five hot topics or emerging issues such as the shift to virtual teams in response to COVID 19.

Objective 3.3: Assess USACE capability to collaborate with internal and external stakeholders on water resources planning and management objectives.

Means and Strategies

CPCX will work in partnership with MSC Liaisons to conduct periodic, organization-wide assessments of USACE collaborative capabilities. The assessment may cover staff skills, agency culture, and incentives, laws, and policies within Districts, MSCs, and HQ that support staff capability (knowledge and skills) and capacity (time and funding) to convene and participate in effective collaborative processes. CPCX will work with MSCs and HQ to use these results to develop and implement actions to improve collaboration at all levels.

CPCX will assess the effectiveness of its programs (e.g. Public Involvement Specialists, Grand Collaboration Challenge, pilots) and completed services such as various collaborative processes and trainings. CPCX will use the data to improve services and adjust investments in staff and work efforts to best serve USACE (see Center Management Goal 5).

Metrics and Targets

- CPCX will review prior assessments of USACE collaborative capacity and conduct a revised assessment at least once every five years.
- Annually CPCX will collect and assess feedback from participants of at least 75 percent of collaborative processes that CPCX and the Public Involvement Specialists support.

Objective 3.4: Serve as the USACE representative for external coordination and reporting on collaboration.

Means and Strategies

CPCX will continue the following roles:

- Lead the development of the use of Environmental Collaboration and Conflict Resolution in USACE report for the Office of Management and Budget and the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ).
- Serve as the liaison with other conflict resolution centers in the Army and other agencies.
- Serve as the lead for USACE interactions with NCECR.
- Lead USACE participation in national ECCR forums such as CEQ's quarterly ECCR forum.

Metrics and Targets

- Annually CPCX will complete, or participate in, each of the activities listed above.

Goal 4. Deliver innovative collaborative processes, tools and techniques to address water resources management challenges

USACE projects and programs have benefitted from a tradition of investment in innovation that has established the agency as a leader in collaborative processes. To fulfill its role as the agency's tip of the spear in innovation and know-how for collaboration, CPCX will research, learn, develop, test, and deploy new and enhanced ideas, processes, tools, and techniques for collaborative processes. Examples include Shared Vision Planning for management of the Great Lakes, Applied Learning Environments (such as Multi-Hazard Tournaments) for Norfolk and Fort Worth Districts, tools to facilitate virtual, geospatially-based engagement such as Crowdscore Reporter at Chicago and Portland Districts, and the Collaborative Risk Informed Decision Analysis framework for the Mekong and Tizsa Rivers.

CPCX will both advance knowledge on the use and effectiveness of collaborative processes and facilitate the transition from "state-of-the-art" to "state-of-the-practice." Goal 4 objectives are based on the classic phases of research and development: research, test, deliver.

Objective 4.1: Research and develop knowledge, processes, tools, and techniques.

Means and Strategies

CPCX will identify collaborative approaches to further the mission of the USACE Civil Works program through literature reviews, through engagement with colleagues across USACE and partner organizations, and through independent research. CPCX will engage with scholars and experts through conferences, internships, independent studies, and involvement in academic and professional research projects. Drawing upon this broad array of sources, CPCX will identify and develop innovative processes, tools, and techniques to address challenges and leverage opportunities.

Metrics and Targets

CPCX will annually:

- Produce seven publications (research papers, white papers, book chapters, etc.) and present the results at conferences or workshops.
- Inform research using at least five different types of sources (e.g. research papers, field reviews, case studies analysis, internships, involvement in academic and professional research projects)

Objective 4.2: Field-test ideas, processes, tools and techniques.

Means and Strategies

By initiating pilots and analyzing case studies, CPCX will assess the efficacy of ideas, processes, tools and techniques identified and developed under Objective 4.1. CPCX will capture lessons about challenges and best practices for deployment in the field, including assessment of effectiveness and criteria for conditions of application, and revise these tools and techniques as appropriate.

Metrics and Targets

CPCX will annually:

- Pilot four different collaborative processes, tools, and techniques.
- Capture qualitative feedback and quantitative data for 100% of pilots and case studies to inform publications (Objective 4.1) and applications (Objective 4.3).

Objective 4.3: Deliver processes, tools and techniques to the field.

Means and Strategies

After field testing various ideas, processes, tools, and techniques, CPCX will deliver the successful applications to USACE Districts, MSCs, HQ, and other offices. CPCX will advise HQ and train agency staff on best practices to deploy these applications in the field. CPCX will monitor progress and provide guidance to support success. As this objective builds the agency's collaborative capabilities and entails direct support to the field and HQ, success will entail sharing these results when implementing the activities described under the above Goals 1, 2, and 3.

Metrics and Targets

CPCX will annually:

- Ensure four different types of innovative collaborative processes, tools, and techniques are applied in at least ten Districts.
- Capture qualitative feedback and quantitative data for 50% of field applications to inform publications (Objective 4.1).

Goal 5. Manage resources to ensure high quality team performance and raise awareness of CPCX services.

This internal, center management goal ensures a fully functioning and valued Center of Expertise that is able to achieve its mission and goals. This includes raising awareness of the availability and benefits of CPCX services and when they are helpful for assisting the field or HQ. Goal 5 also impels a team focus on right-sizing operations to ensure that CPCX staff have sufficient skills and expertise, access to adequate human resources, and funds available to achieve the above four goals.

Objective 5.1: Prioritize CPCX workload based on the goals of this strategic plan.

Means and Strategies

CPCX work will be prioritized based on the goals of this strategic plan and reflected in annual Program Management Plans. CPCX team members will coordinate workloads and follow through on commitments. Requests for CPCX services and team tasks will be coordinated, assigned for follow up, and regularly monitored. CPCX assignments will be based on skills, abilities, and available resources. Activities and accomplishments associated

with all five goals will be formally tracked using the strategic plan metrics. CPCX will review the year's accomplishments as part of an annual evaluation process and use the results to identify the next year's work plan.

Metrics and Targets

- CPCX will track activities on a monthly basis and review and revise resourcing, milestones and deliverables quarterly or when unanticipated requirements or changes in resourcing arise (whichever is more frequent).

Objective 5.2: Recognize and celebrate accomplishments.

Means and Strategies

CPCX team members will celebrate the benefits of collaboration – saving time and money and improving relationships and outcomes – and celebrate those who enable successful collaboration. CPCX will recognize outstanding accomplishments across the Collaboration CoP to motivate, inspire, and raise awareness of the value of collaboration skillsets and outcomes. Such recognition will occur on team calls and through regular CPCX information sharing methods as mentioned in Objective 1.2.

Metrics and Targets

- CPCX will produce an annual summary of accomplishments within two weeks of the end of year.
- CPCX will identify and publicize at least one accomplishment of a Collaboration CoP member each quarter.

Objective 5.3: Achieve appropriate funding, staff capacity, and staff expertise to accomplish the CPCX mission.

Means and Strategies

CPCX will work with IWR leadership and program leads, and with USACE HQ to identify appropriate, reliable funding streams for CPCX activities. Potential funding streams could include remaining items that support various directorates and business lines, recurring project and training-based work, and proposals for IWR's internal General Expenses funding. CPCX will also pursue supplemental funding requests and project-based work as appropriate.

In concert with developing and executing annual PMPs, CPCX will assess its staffing needs to effectively manage the anticipated workload and, if warranted, consider options to augment its capacity or capabilities. Mechanisms to increase staff include District-based support, developmental assignments, fellowships, contracts, and Interagency Personnel Agreements. These mechanisms may provide access to specific skill sets or experiences from different parts of USACE or the private sector. CPCX will also accomplish work through the MSC Liaisons and Public Involvement Specialists.

CPCX staff will continue to build individual expertise that supports the team goals. Opportunities include formal training, mentorship, and details within USACE or at other agencies. Staff will acquire professional certifications relevant to their specialties in collaborative processes and delivering training.

Metrics and Targets

- CPCX will identify and pursue three funding streams per year that are at least \$75,000 each and are part of annual work plan allocations.
- CPCX will assess its staffing capacity and capability needs quarterly.
- Each CPCX staff will participate in an annual skill-building opportunity to acquire the expertise needed to fully accomplish the CPCX mission.

Objective 5.4: Conduct outreach activities to raise awareness of CPCX services.

Means and Strategies

CPCX will raise awareness across USACE of its mission and resources so that different CoPs and business lines routinely consider and access CPCX services (including the Public Involvement Specialists) when needed. Outreach and promotion may include deliberate, discrete efforts, or occur naturally when conducting the activities associated with Goals 1-4. CPCX will ensure outreach materials are current and available to those across the Collaboration CoP who also disseminate CPCX information, especially the MSC Liaisons and Public Involvement Specialists.

Through regular engagement (see Goal 3) with USACE HQ staff, CPCX will build relationships to address the needs and challenges of USACE CoPs and business lines. CPCX will leverage prior outreach accomplishments and further improve connections with USACE CoPs and business lines. A focus will be on briefs as new leaders enter their positions and on

engagement when priority-changing events offer new opportunities for collaborative solutions. Opportunities to brief senior leaders may include the Commanders Course or Executive Governance Meetings.

Metrics and Targets

- CPCX will disseminate updated outreach materials including pamphlets, fact sheets, the Collaboration CoP SharePoint, and the CPCX website annually.
- CPCX will maintain regular contact with key HQ proponents through bi-monthly engagement.
- CPCX will brief key HQ senior leaders annually or within 6 months of them assuming their role.