

2015-2020 Strategic Plan

USACE Collaboration and Public Participation Center of Expertise



Collaboration and Public Participation Center of Expertise FY 2015-2020 Strategic Plan

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) collaborates with a purpose: to deliver creative and sustainable solutions to increasingly complex challenges while meeting the needs of multiple, often competing interests in the communities we serve. Conflict resolution, collaboration, and public participation skills are required to achieve the varied missions of the Corps. They are promoted in the Corps' strategic plan, environmental principles, watershed approach and principles of Integrated Water Resources Management.

The Corps' Collaboration and Public Participation Center of Expertise (CPCX) develops the collaborative capacity of the agency, improving the ability of staff to work together effectively both internally and externally. This strategic plan (the second since designation of the CX in 2008¹) outlines the focus and direction of the Center of Expertise to 2020.

Mission

CPCX's mission is to enable Corps staff to anticipate, prevent, and manage water-related conflicts through collaboration² while ensuring that the interests of the public are addressed in a fair and transparent manner.

Vision

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

Goals

These four goals are mutually supportive in achieving the overall vision and mission of the center:

1. Build the collaborative capacity of Corps staff and partners to enable effective convening of, and participation in, collaborative processes.
2. Provide direct support to increase the success of collaborative processes conducted by the Corps and its partners.
3. Advise Corps leadership in designing, implementing and investing in effective collaboration.
4. Establish the Corps as a thought-leader in collaboration to address future challenges.

¹ MG Don T. Riley. Memo (17 October 2008): Designation of the Corps Conflict Resolution & Public Participation Expertise (CX) at IWR.

² For purposes of readability, the terms 'collaboration' and 'collaborative processes' are used to encompass a wide range of participatory processes rather than listing such processes separately, e.g., conflict resolution, public participation, civic engagement, and so forth. 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.

Outcomes

As these goals are achieved, the following outcomes will be realized within the agency and the communities we serve:

1. A high level of trust and credibility exists between the Corps and the public;
2. Corps staff gain a high degree of satisfaction from being public servants;
3. Collective understanding of problems is improved;
4. A wide range of interests are addressed and reflected in solutions;
5. Solutions are accepted, reducing controversy and litigation risks;
6. Solutions are reached on-time and within budget;
7. An empowered public takes actions that address identified problems, risks, and opportunities within their community;
8. Solutions are high quality, innovative, and sustainable.

Core Values

CPCX staff strives to enact these values in collaborative work with our partners and members of the public we serve, in our relationships within the Corps, and in our interactions within our team:

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.

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

To accomplish this goal, CPCX will continue its integrated program of training, peer learning, and mentoring that will enable Corps 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 (HQ) staff about the challenges they face and their need for support and training.

Means and Strategies

Identify staff needs through the following activities and consolidate this information to develop the annual work plan:

- Periodic Collaborative Capacity Assessment
- Quarterly and field review group meetings with Major Subordinate Command (MSC) Liaisons
- Engagement in collaborative aspects of various pilot studies
- Periodic meetings with Public Involvement Specialists
- Engagement with HQ business line managers
- Annual Environmental Collaboration and Conflict Resolution (ECCR) report
- Evaluation and feedback from CPCX trainings

Metrics

- CPCX will incorporate feedback from at least seven different sources of information into its work plan.

Objective 1.2: Build awareness of collaborative tools and techniques and their effective uses within the Corps.

Means and Strategies

Information sharing activities will publicize best practices in collaboration from both inside and outside the Corps. Research activities will link indicators of collaborative effectiveness. Through consultation services we will demonstrate the use of collaborative tools first-hand and expose Corps staff to different tools that can be applied to other collaboration challenges. Training activities (see objective 1.5) will expose Corps staff to collaborative tools and techniques. CPCX will publish and distribute papers, pamphlets, and other materials to highlight collaborative processes. CPCX staff will regularly deliver presentations, webinars, and briefings to build awareness.

Metrics

- On an annual basis, CPCX will familiarize 1100 people to collaborative tools and techniques through a variety of information sharing activities.

Objective 1.3: Strengthen information exchange about collaborative processes across the Corps and with external partners.

Means and Strategies

CPCX will facilitate the sharing of information, experiences, and perspectives among members of the Collaboration and Public Participation Community of Practice (CPP CoP). CPCX will also share information with the U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution (USIECR) roster of neutrals and other federal conflict resolution centers. Information sharing methods include webinars, workshops, publications, newsletters, online portals, case study database, sharepoint, and CPP CoP listserv emails.

Types of information exchanged will include best practices, lessons learned, challenges that need to be addressed, and new approaches and tools (such as virtual methods) to help the Corps collaborate both internally and externally. CPCX will synthesize and distill insights and advice about best practices for collaborative and participatory processes. CPCX will improve its system for collecting case descriptions, relying largely on the points of contact in divisions and districts and other members of the CPP CoP. These case examples will be a resource for the annual ECCR report to the Council on Environmental Quality, for training programs and reports on best practices, and for supporting Corps leadership (HQ and the Assistant Secretary of the Army) on special initiatives (see Objective 3.3).

Metrics

On an annual basis, CPCX will:

- Deliver and/or support a minimum of 20 opportunities that enable information exchange between at least 650 internal Corps staff on collaborative processes.
- Participate in a minimum of 8 opportunities that allow CPCX to exchange information with at least 20 external Corps partners on collaborative processes.

Objective 1.4: Grow and institutionalize the Public Involvement Specialists program.

Means and Strategies

CPCX will continue to convene the Public Involvement Specialists Cadre, providing ongoing support, opportunities for advancing skills, and peer support in dealing with public involvement challenges. The Cadre will increase awareness of, and demand for, their skills. They will also consider formal options to institutionalize the position by investigating how other agencies' conflict resolution centers operate, exploring position descriptions with Human Resources and investigating funding options.

Metrics

- By 2020, CPCX will support at least 30 Public Involvement Specialists, from across all eight divisions, and will have representation from 3 out of the following 5 categories: planning, engineering and construction, operations and maintenance, emergency management, and regulatory.
- On an annual basis, the Public Involvement Specialists Cadre will receive at least 35 requests for assistance.

Objective 1.5: Offer multiple types of collaboration training addressing Corps needs.

Means and Strategies

Using a needs assessment (Objective 1.1) to identify appropriate activities, CPCX will develop, revamp or maintain, and facilitate courses in Public Participation, Conflict Resolution, Risk Communication for Flood Risk Management, and Shared Vision Planning. Other topics may be added as separate courses or linked with existing courses relevant for

public engagement, collaboration and/or conflict resolution managed by Public Affairs, Planning, Engineering and Construction, Operations and Maintenance, Emergency Management, and Regulatory. Types of training include webinar, in-person, on demand, and university courses. CPCX will promote certification for higher-level training, such as the USIECR Certificate in Environmental Collaboration. Public engagement, collaboration, and conflict resolution skills will also be integrated into existing trainings from various business lines and communities of practice.

Metrics

On an annual basis, CPCX will:

- Deliver and/or fund at least 12 trainings.
- Use at least 4 different types of trainings to address Corps needs.
- Deliver courses to at least 3 out of the following 5 categories: planning, engineering and construction, operations and maintenance, emergency management, and regulatory.

Goal 2. Provide direct support to increase the success of collaborative processes conducted by the Corps and its partners.

To accomplish this goal, CPCX will continue to build awareness of how collaborative processes can make a difference to Corps districts, division, and HQ across all mission areas. CPCX staff and internal partners, supplemented by external collaboration experts, will provide consultation services including diagnosis, public participation process design, facilitation, and mediation.

Objective 2.1: Provide assistance by CPCX and our field partners (MSC Liaisons, District Public Involvement Specialists, and Facilitators) to field and HQ staff across all mission areas.

Means and Strategies

CPCX will continue to improve its process for responding to requests including criteria for assistance or referral to ensure an efficient assessment of needs for each request from the field and HQ. While most CPCX services will be provided by request, CPCX will proactively engage on high profile or controversial issues that could benefit from collaborative solutions.

CPCX will provide technical expertise and support to Corps programs, including the International Center for Integrated Water Resources Management.

Metrics

On an annual basis:

- CPCX will respond to a minimum of 40 Requests for Assistance.
- Facilitators in the Find a Facilitator Database, MSC Liaisons, and Public Involvement Specialists will provide assistance to the field at least 40 times.

Objective 2.2: Build awareness of the benefits of, and requirements for, collaborative processes.

Means and Strategies

Many Corps staff may benefit from a greater understanding of regulatory or policy requirements for collaborative processes or the benefits these processes may bring. Information sharing activities will publicize best practices in collaboration from both inside and outside the Corps. Consultation services will demonstrate the benefits of collaborative tools that can be applied to other collaboration challenges facing Corps staff. Training activities - from face-to-face to virtual classes - will expose Corps staff to requirements and guidance for convening and participating in collaborative processes. CPCX will publish and distribute papers, pamphlets, and other materials to highlight collaborative processes, their benefits, and available training and resources. CPCX staff will regularly deliver presentations, webinars and briefings to build awareness.

Metrics

- On an annual basis, CPCX will ensure that at least 25 opportunities and/or sources of information are made available to explain the benefit of, or requirements for, collaborative processes.

Objective 2.3: Strengthen and expand the network of skilled Corps professionals available to assist in collaborative services.

Means and Strategies

The CPCX will expand the CPP CoP across the Corps. This CoP is comprised of individuals with a wealth of experience and interest in situation assessments, process design, facilitation, risk communication, Shared Vision Planning, and other collaborative processes. Training, peer learning, and coaching programs will strengthen the membership of the CoP and provide ongoing opportunities for professional development for its members. CPCX will also continue to expand and develop the Corps *Find a Facilitator Database* to increase internal accessibility of qualified facilitators for staff.

Metrics

On an annual basis, CPCX will:

- *Expand* the network of skilled Corps professionals available to assist in collaborative services by increasing the CPP CoP membership by at least 1%; adding 3 professionals to the *Find a Facilitator Database*; and by maintaining at least 20 members in the Public Involvement Specialists Cadre.
- *Strengthen* the network of skilled Corps professionals available to assist in collaborative services by ensuring that the CPP CoP Steering Committee executes at least five tasks identified in their annual work plan; by training or funding the trainings of at least 500 Corps staff; and by providing at least 1 training to each member of the Public Involvement Specialists Cadre.

Goal 3. Advise Corps leadership in designing, implementing, and investing in effective collaboration.

When requested, 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

guidance for investments in collaboration. CPCX will serve as a liaison with other agencies, will attend required interagency gatherings, and will contribute to relevant interagency reports.

CPCX will also serve as a resource for special national or international initiatives on collaboration. These initiatives may be inter-organizational or internal to the Corps. To be most effective in these efforts, CPCX will leverage the full resources of the Corps by collaborating with the Public Affairs Office, Office of General Counsel, the Engineering Research and Development Center, and relevant sections of HQ, divisions, and districts.

Objective 3.1: Support Corps HQ in the development and implementation of policies, business processes, and platforms³ involving collaboration.

Means and Strategies

Support may include review of proposed or current policies, development of new policies or guidance, or studies on collaboration policies in other agencies and recommendations for the Corps. CPCX will support collaboration across CoPs such as Planning, Regulatory, Emergency Management, and Tribal affairs. CPCX will seek to incorporate collaborative processes within general Corps and federal water policies such as the Planning Guidance Notebook or the implementation guidance for the Principles and Guidelines.

CPCX also will seek to establish business processes to incentivize and reward collaboration as well as hold staff accountable, e.g., add a job performance rating for collaborative competencies. CPCX will investigate and improve policy and business processes that can be used to fund collaboration.

CPCX will continue to identify the best collaboration platforms available for both internal and external collaboration, and if insufficient will work with ACE-IT and HQ to acquire better platforms.

Metrics

On an annual basis, CPCX will:

- Proactively engage leadership in developing and/or implementing at least 1 opportunity in each of the following categories: incorporating collaborative processes into policy, guidance, or processes; incentivizing collaborative competencies; funding collaboration support; and utilizing/identifying collaborative platforms.
- Contact a representative from each business line at least 1 time each year to discuss ways in which CPCX can support collaborative processes in the business line.

Objective 3.2: Assess the Corps' capacity to collaborate with internal and external stakeholders (including cost-share sponsors) on water resources planning and management objectives.

Means and Strategies

³Platforms are defined as technologies, infrastructure, tools, hardware, and structures.

CPCX will work in partnership with MSC Liaisons to conduct periodic organization-wide assessments of the Corps' collaborative capacity. The assessment may cover staff skills, agency culture and incentives, laws, and policies within districts, divisions, and HQ that support the Corps' capacity to convene and participate in effective collaboration processes. This assessment will elicit suggestions for capacity enhancements from the field and provide recommendations for how to build collaborative capacity.

CPCX will administer surveys of recently completed facilitated processes, facilitated meetings, conflict assessments, mediated processes, and trainings affiliated with Corps-led projects or initiatives, using tools developed and managed by USIECR. CPCX will house the data and disseminate results to project managers.

CPCX will conduct assessments of pilot projects (e.g. the Public Involvement in Flood Risk Management pilots) and other programs to enhance collaboration processes (e.g. the Public Involvement Specialists program).

Metrics

- CPCX will conduct the Collaborative Capacity Assessment Initiative (CCAI) and publish a report on the findings every 5 years.
- On an annual basis, CPCX will:
 - Distribute surveys to 75% of all collaborative processes that fit the established survey criteria and are facilitated/supported by Public Involvement Specialists, CPCX staff, or Requests for Assistance each year.
 - Conduct an analysis of the USIECR surveys distributed and summarize in an annual internal report as well as write a summary report based off of the evaluation of any pilot project supported by CPCX.

Objective 3.3: Serve as the Corps' representative for external coordination and reporting on collaboration.

Means and Strategies

CPCX will continue the following roles:

- Lead the development of the required annual Environmental Collaboration and Conflict Resolution report to 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 Corps interactions with USIECR.
- Lead Corps participation in national ECCR forums such as CEQ's quarterly ECCR forum.

Metrics

- On an annual basis, CPCX will complete, or participate in, each of the activities listed above.

Objective 3.4: Support Corps Leadership (Assistant Secretary of the Army & HQ) on relevant parts of special initiatives and emerging issues.

Means and Strategies

CPCX will continue to provide technical expertise and support, as requested, for national initiatives such as Actions for Change, Civil Works Transformation, Dam and Levee Safety, Resilience, Silver Jackets, Climate Preparedness, and the White House Memorandum on Transparency and Open Government.

Metrics

- On an annual basis, CPCX will respond to a minimum of 10 requests from Corps Leadership.

Goal 4. Establish the Corps as a thought-leader in collaboration to address future challenges.

Corps' projects and programs have benefitted from a tradition of investment in research and innovation that has established the Corps as a leader in collaboration in the water resources field. CPCX will continue to collaborate with colleagues in HQ and the field to identify opportunities and emerging water resources challenges, convene meetings or workshops to explore these challenges, discuss ideas for new tools and furthering the development of existing tools, and sponsor the development and pilot testing of tools that appear promising. Initiatives will modify and test Shared Vision Planning approaches in multiple contexts to advance new knowledge about ways to integrate multi-stakeholder involvement with modeling tools.

Objective 4.1: Develop innovative applications of technology in collaboration.

Means and Strategies

CPCX will continue to research and pilot the use of collaborative decision support and computer modeling tools in different contexts (e.g. the regulatory context) including different stages of collaborative processes (e.g. eliciting and responding to public comments, Shared Vision Planning, web-based dialogues). CPCX will investigate and test visualization techniques and ways to communicate uncertainty and risk. Efforts will include the establishment of best practices for what tools to apply in different collaborative decision making stages and contexts.

CPCX also will identify and pilot tools and approaches for the Corps to take advantage of "new media" (e.g. Web 2.0) in public participation, with particular attention to the challenges of planning or ecosystem restoration projects that involve large geographic areas and a diverse range of stakeholder groups.

Metrics

- On an annual basis, CPCX will write at least 1 article/report, deliver at least 1 webinar, and present at least 1 IWR seminar on the applications and limitations of collaborative technologies explored within the year.

Objective 4.2: Conduct research and pilot innovative processes, tools and approaches to strengthen the Corps' ability to meet emerging issues and future challenges.

Means and Strategies

CPCX will identify and support the development of new tools and approaches to address emerging issues and future challenges with implications for how the Corps engages in collaboration. For example, adaptation to climate change and the related scientific uncertainty or increased consideration of energy-water linkages will likely increase the scale and complexity of collaboration and may create new opportunities for collaborative action among Corps partners, stakeholders and the public. Research will seek to identify indicators of effective collaboration that can help guide future investments in collaboration.

CPCX also will seek opportunities to keep our knowledge of literature and tools current by engaging with academic faculty and students, through mechanisms such as internships and independent studies, and involvement in thesis and dissertation projects.

Metrics

- CPCX staff will stay abreast of the work of academics and practitioners and will use this work to either a) share with the CPCX team and greater agency; b) incorporate into trainings and work that we do; or c) further inform the generation of new ideas.
- On an annual basis, CPCX will:
 - Develop and/or pilot 3 new ideas/approaches that will be shared via reports, articles, conferences, webinars, etc.
 - Support at least 1 academic project related to innovative processes, tools and approaches that could strengthen the Corps' ability to meet emerging issues and future challenges.

Measuring Outcomes and Long-term Impacts to the Corps

CPCX will develop an integrated system for evaluating its work.

At the macro-level, CPCX will measure success throughout the Corps by the extent of the following conditions:

- *CPCX supports Corps personnel facing collaboration challenges as they execute their mission.*
- *The Corps has a widely dispersed network of collaboration experts.*

Other indicators of CPCX's impact are:

- *The Corps respects, incorporates the views of, and responds to the needs of stakeholders.*
- *The Corps prioritizes and funds collaborative problem solving and public engagement in all mission areas.*
- *HQ, divisions, districts, and Centers of Expertise are better integrated.*

CPCX values learning and sharing best practices as we continually improve our capacity to accomplish our mission. We will measure our internal success by the extent of the following conditions:

- *CPCX engages on the most challenging issues confronting the Corps and its partners.*
- *CPCX secures sufficient funding and support to fulfill its mission.*
- *CPCX builds and utilizes internal Corps expertise and external partners to accomplish its mission.*

Appendix 1

Implementation: Using the Strategy to Sustain and Expand CPCX Capacity.

Implementation Goal 1: Prioritize CPCX workload based on the goals of this strategic plan.

Means and Strategies

Activities and accomplishments will be formally tracked during monthly team meetings using the strategic plan as a benchmark. At the end of each year 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.

Implementation Goal 2: Achieve the appropriate staffing level (both labor hours and skills) for the CPCX mission.

Means and Strategies

Each year CPCX will assess its staffing needs and, if warranted, consider options to augment its capacity with full time or temporary positions - either developmental assignments, fellows, contractors, or Interagency Personnel Agreements - to meet the goals for that year. These positions will contribute specific skill sets and experiences from HQ or the field or may be experts from the private sector. CPCX will also accomplish work through the MSC Liaisons and the Public Involvement Specialists.

CPCX staff will complete details at HQ, districts, and other agencies to maintain a situational awareness of Corps' and partners' needs. Staff will complete training each year to build expertise and will complete International Association of Public Participation and USIECR certifications.

Implementation Goal 3: Develop an outreach plan for each fiscal year.

Means and Strategies

CPCX will be promoted across the Corps to increase awareness and use of its services in different organizations and business lines. CPCX will build on its work in Planning, Public Affairs, and Flood Risk Management to establish or improve relationships with ACE-IT, Human Resources, Regulatory, Emergency Management, Operations, Military Programs, interagency partnerships, and Office of Counsel.

Outreach will occur via presentations and information in Corps newsletters, webinars, conferences, brown bag lunches, websites, videos, trainings, and informal and formal networking. Basic outreach materials will be improved and used in these avenues. The best kind of outreach occurs when CPCX demonstrates its value by directly helping a district or HQ accomplish their mission.