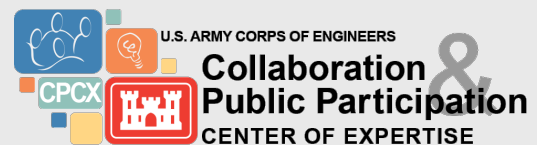
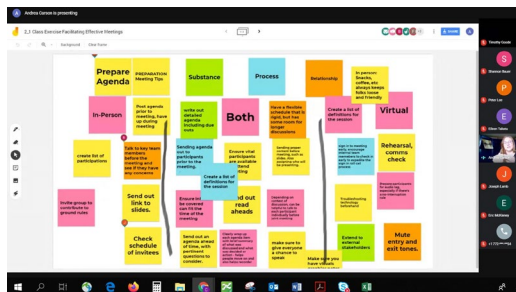
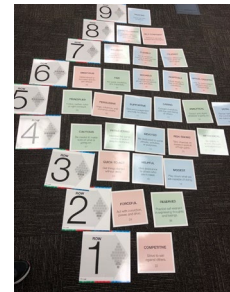


2026-2030 Strategic Plan

USACE Collaboration and Public Participation Center of Expertise



Collaboration and Public Participation Center of Expertise FY 2026-2030 Strategic Plan

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) collaborates with a purpose: to better solve increasingly complex engineering challenges and meet the needs of communities by incorporating the perspectives of stakeholders, rightsholders, and partners. To identify and characterize problems and solutions effectively, USACE must collaborate with the general public and community groups, with state, local, and federal agencies, with national and local non-governmental organizations, and with sovereign Tribes and nations.

USACE's Collaboration and Public Participation Center of Expertise (CPCX) develops the collaborative capacity and capability of agency staff to work together both internally and externally. CPCX comprises 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 fourth since the designation of CPCX in 2008², outlines the focus and direction of the center to 2030.

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, Vision, and Core Values

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: A culture of collaboration across USACE transforms water resources management.

Core values: These values align with, and leverage, the Army values of loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, and personal courage. *The values that underlie the collaboration work we support include **impartiality, fairness, and transparency.** We promote collaboration that is impactful, effective, and efficient. *The values that we bring to this work include an ethic of **service, trustworthiness, compassion, and diligence.****

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. ***Strengthen the collaborative capabilities*** of USACE staff and partners to effectively convene and participate in collaborative processes.
2. ***Provide direct support*** to increase the success of collaborative processes.
3. ***Engage with leadership*** to catalyze the effective use of collaboration across USACE.
4. ***Deliver collaborative processes, tools and techniques*** to address water resource management challenges.
5. ***Manage resources*** to accomplish the CPCX mission and raise awareness of CPCX services.

Benefits

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,

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

CPCX helps achieve the following benefits for USACE and the communities we serve:

- **Time and cost savings:** Collaborative processes can produce cost savings and more timely decisions for taxpayers and federal agencies compared to litigation and other conventional processes. Requesting input and addressing issues or disagreements early in the process reduces the risk of schedule slips later due to opposition or unforeseen obstacles that could derail a proposed action or solution. When parties work together collaboratively, they may also identify additional cost savings and leverage each other's resources.
- **Improved outcomes:** A collaborative process where technical expertise is integrated with local perspectives and mutual understanding results in more creative, acceptable, and durable solutions. Agreements reached through collaborative processes in turn lead to more effective implementation of decisions, as well as increased economic, social, and environmental benefits.
- **Improved governance:** Democratic governance is improved by building relationships and involving the people we serve in our work, creating more legitimate processes and products, ultimately leading to greater mutual understanding, durable public trust, and better-informed, sustainable agency decisions.

Evolving Needs in the Next Five Years

The following trends and external forces will shape CPCX's role in supporting collaboration across USACE over the next five years:

- Efforts to shrink government will likely reduce the federal role in water resource management. These changes will affect many resource agency partners and may result in states, locals, or contractors taking on greater roles. Within USACE, these changes will lead to both opportunities and challenges for collaboration internally and externally as USACE's roles and business processes evolve to achieve its mission in a changing environment.
- Evolving communication technologies are changing how USACE engages the public, manages relationships, and communicates risk. Because of these changes, the public has greater access to information and USACE has more ways to generate information and reach people. Additionally, artificial intelligence and social media are creating opportunities and challenges for public participation and collaboration. CPCX activities will help USACE address these evolving challenges and use these

tools successfully.

- Growing communities more frequently exposed to weather extremes, including floods, droughts, wildfires, hurricanes and storms, etc., will increase demand for USACE's emergency response, recovery and planning services, and affect agency priorities.
- To adapt to evolving government functions, communication methods, and water-related threats, USACE will need to lean on team building, risk communication and other collaborative skills to successfully work with those we serve, with other agencies, and internally within USACE.

The strategies for achieving CPCX's five goals have been revised and updated to address the foregoing trends and evolving conditions.

Goal 1. Strengthen the collaborative capabilities of USACE staff and partners to effectively convene and participate in collaborative processes.

A fundamental value that CPCX provides to USACE is to ensure the field can collaborate effectively to achieve the various USACE missions. For Goal 1, CPCX will lead training, peer learning, and mentoring to enable USACE staff and partners to strengthen their knowledge, skills, and abilities to lead and participate effectively in collaborative processes.

Objective 1.1: Identify USACE priority collaboration challenges and training needs.

Means and Strategies

For training to benefit the agency, it must address recognized agency needs and gaps. CPCX will conduct the following activities to help identify agency collaborative capability needs:

Through formal information collection:

- Periodic Collaborative Needs Assessment in partnership with MSC Liaisons
- Annual report on *Use of Environmental Collaboration and Conflict Resolution in USACE*
- Written evaluations from trainings we delivered

Through regular communications throughout the year:

- Regular meetings with Major Subordinate Command (MSC) Liaisons and the Collaboration CoP Steering Committee
- Monthly meetings with Public Involvement Specialists
- Input from the Collaboration and Public Participation Community of Practice

- Engagement with HQ business line managers

CPCX will work with the Collaboration CoP Steering Committee to use the results of these activities to develop and implement actions to improve collaboration at all levels.

Metrics and Targets

- CPCX will assess collaborative needs in USACE every five years.
- CPCX will use input from these activities to revise existing or initiate new capability-building activities immediately, when time and capacity exists, or at minimum in the annual update cycle (such as for ULC course materials).
- CPCX will use input from these activities to prioritize tasks for the next fiscal year.

Objective 1.2: Share information 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. The Collaboration CoP Steering Committee will guide the activities of the CoP workgroups to address collaboration and public participation priorities.

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, job aids, 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 leverage shared learning and knowledge transfer, CPCX may also collaborate with federal conflict management centers, state and local governments, Tribes, universities, and the private sector.

Metrics and Targets

CPCX will annually:

- Deliver and/or support a minimum of 20 opportunities that enable information exchange to at least 750 USACE staff on collaborative processes, tools, techniques, benefits, and requirements.
- Support a minimum of six opportunities that enable information exchange with external partners on collaborative processes, tools, techniques, benefits, and requirements.
- Leverage the Collaboration CoP Steering Committee to review and prioritize activities of the Collaboration CoP workgroups.

Objective 1.3: Design and deliver training to USACE staff on collaboration-related topics.

Means and Strategies

CPCX will develop, maintain, and deliver training content and courses on the range of topics that support collaborative processes and public participation, in alignment with identified needs (*Objective 1.1*). Training formats may include webinars, in-person and virtual courses, on-demand modules. CPCX will host our own trainings, incorporate material in trainings by other CoPs and business lines⁴ across the agency, and encourage inclusion of collaborative skills in USACE career development plans. CPCX will promote trainings by other hosts, including certification programs such as the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Certificate in Public Participation and the John S. McCain III National Center for Environmental Conflict Resolution (NCECR)'s Certificate in Environmental Collaboration.

Metrics and Targets

CPCX will annually:

- Lead or support delivery of at least 12 trainings hosted by the CPP CoP or ULC and

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.

other training centers.

- Provide training that targets or responds to requests from at least five CoPs, business lines, districts, and/or programs.
- Once every five years, review career development plans from across USACE and promote inclusion of collaboration content.
- Disseminate and promote the four CPP CoP *Professional Development Roadmaps* (Public Participation, Conflict Management, Facilitation, Risk Communication).

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

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

Objective 2.1: Provide direct support to the agency.

Means and Strategies

CPCX will respond promptly to requests for assistance, evaluate these requests, and determine the appropriate support mechanism. While most CPCX services will be provided by request, CPCX will proactively offer its expertise to all levels of the agency for high-profile, complex and/or contentious issues (see Objective 3.2). We will assess the effectiveness of CPCX support through structured feedback opportunities.

Metrics and Targets

- CPCX will use a transparent process to respond to requests and manage activities to maintain consistency and trust with our internal and external audiences.
- CPCX's internal and external network (to include Public Involvement Specialists, MSC Liaisons, and facilitators from USACE, Udall, and contractors) will provide assistance to the field at least 50 times annually. Measurement of this metric will be captured by annual reporting (associated with the ECCR report to OMB/CEQ).

- CPCX will request feedback via a customer satisfaction survey 75% of the time.

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 to address collaboration challenges. CPCX will support the Public Involvement Specialists Cadre (Cadre) as they provide direct services within and beyond their district and region. Cadre members will increase awareness of, and demand for, their skills and improve district collaborative capacity through access to the Cadre's network of knowledge. Cadre members will foster district recognition of their value by securing dedicated funding and including their role in individual performance plans and position descriptions.

CPCX will expand and develop mechanisms for districts to identify and engage internal and external collaboration experts. Internally, through transdisciplinary workgroups, Collaboration CoP members will gain experience and awareness to better support their districts. CPCX will recruit members from across the enterprise to contribute to workgroup activities and join the internal network of USACE facilitators. Externally, CPCX will support districts in using IWR's interagency agreement with the Udall Foundation's National Center of Environmental Conflict Resolution (NCECR) and enable other ways for districts to engage expertise through contracting mechanisms.

Metrics and Targets

- By 2030, all 39 Civil Works Districts will have support from Public Involvement Specialists, drawing talent from a variety of key functional areas such as planning, engineering and construction, operations and maintenance, emergency management, project management, natural resource management, and regulatory.
- CPCX and, by extension, the Public Involvement Specialists, will maintain an active and supportive network that follows the requirements set forth in the Public Involvement Specialists Program Details document.
- CPCX will directly support districts to leverage collaboration expertise using MOAs, contracts, or facilitation networks beyond CPCX and USACE at least four times annually.

Goal 3. Engage with leadership to catalyze the effective use of collaboration across USACE.

CPCX will work with USACE leadership to promote the use of collaboration to better achieve agency missions. CPCX will review or draft processes and procedures that relate to collaboration and advise on current national and international issues in public participation, conflict resolution, multi-party collaboration and risk communication. CPCX will also provide input related to investments in collaboration. CPCX will actively engage as USACE's liaison with other agencies on collaboration and will prepare the annual report on USACE's Use of Environmental Collaboration and Conflict Resolution as required by CEQ and OMB.

CPCX will serve as a USACE resource for special national or international initiatives or urgent issues that would benefit from collaborative solutions. To be most effective in these efforts, CPCX will leverage the resources within and external to USACE to include the Public Affairs Office, Office of Counsel and relevant expertise at HQ, MSCs, centers, districts and other agencies.

Objective 3.1: Support the development and implementation of business processes, practices, procedures and platforms⁵ that improve collaboration.

Means and Strategies

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

To help USACE teams successfully engage internal and external partners, CPCX will work with USACE-IT and HQ when necessary to provide USACE staff with useful and user-friendly collaboration tools and processes that are identified under Goal 4 objectives.

Metrics and Targets

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

- Annually support agency leadership to develop and implement improved collaborative business practices, processes or 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 leaders to address urgent challenges, high-profile projects or enterprise-level needs for public involvement. To ensure mutual awareness of challenges and opportunities for support, CPCX will regularly engage USACE leaders (see Objective 5.3), highlight current capabilities through upwards reporting, and monitor potential areas of support via HQ PAO and MSC Liaisons.

Metrics and Targets

- Annually CPCX will engage on four urgent collaboration challenges in support of USACE leadership.

Objective 3.3: Serve as the USACE representative for external reporting and coordination 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 OMB and CEQ.
- Serve as the liaison with other conflict resolution centers in the Army and other agencies; lead USACE participation in national ECCR forums.

Metrics and Targets

- Annually CPCX will develop and submit USACE's report on Use of ECCR.
- By 2030 CPCX will modernize the ECCR report to increase efficiency and value for the agency.
- Annually CPCX will lead USACE participation in at least two inter-agency ECCR activities.

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

CPCX will research, learn, develop, test, and deploy new and enhanced ideas, processes, tools, and techniques for collaborative processes. Examples have included Shared Vision Planning, Applied Learning Environments (such as Multi-Hazard Tournaments), virtual engagement, and geospatial engagement techniques. 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.”

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

Means and Strategies

CPCX will identify collaborative approaches to further USACE missions through literature reviews, engagement with colleagues across USACE and partner organizations, and independent research. CPCX will engage with scholars and experts through conferences, details, independent studies, and involvement in academic and professional research projects. Drawing upon this broad array of sources, CPCX will identify, test, and develop innovative processes, tools, and techniques to address USACE’s collaboration challenges. Collaboration CoP workgroups may be resources for testing or piloting novel processes, tools, and techniques.

Metrics and Targets

CPCX will annually:

- Produce one to three publications (research papers, white papers, book chapters, etc.) or presentations on critical or emerging problems and promising collaborative approaches.
- Conduct one to three pilots with districts via the Collaboration CoP, Public Involvement Specialists or other networks to assess whether new processes, tools or techniques are relevant for the agency.

Objective 4.2: Deliver processes, tools, and techniques to the field.

Means and Strategies

CPCX will deliver processes, tools, and techniques to USACE districts, MSCs, HQ, and other

offices. Collaboration CoP workgroups may be resources to help disseminate new processes, tools and techniques across the agency. 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:

- Support a minimum of two districts to implement one to three new processes, tools, or techniques.

Goal 5. Manage resources to accomplish the CPCX mission 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: Distribute workload based on the priorities of this strategic plan and manage, document, and celebrate accomplishments.

Means and Strategies

CPCX team members will prioritize work based on the goals of this strategic plan and will coordinate workloads. Relevant goal leads will address requests for new CPCX assistance and assign team members to deliver services based on skills, abilities, and availability. Goal leads and contributing team members will track activities and accomplishments using metrics from this strategic plan.

CPCX team members will celebrate the benefits of collaboration and 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.

Metrics and Targets

- CPCX goal leads will track activities monthly and review and update resourcing, milestones, and deliverables at least quarterly.
- Goal 5 lead will conduct a mid-year review to make adjustments and celebrate accomplishments.
- CPCX will document accomplishments annually within eight weeks after the end of each year and use the results to inform the next year's work plan.
- CPCX will identify and publicize at least one accomplishment of a Collaboration CoP member each quarter.

Objective 5.2: Secure financial resources to accomplish the CPCX mission.

Means and Strategies

CPCX will work with IWR/WRC leadership, program leads, and USACE HQ to identify appropriate, reliable base funding streams for CPCX activities including supporting the extended team (e.g., working groups) outside of IWR/WRC. CPCX team members will also pursue reimbursable funding opportunities, including direct project support to districts and HQ programs.

Metrics and Targets

- Secure base funding from three funding streams per year that are at least \$75,000 for center management, the CPP CoP, ECCR report, and PI Specialists.
- Secure additional funding from reimbursable activities related to the CPCX mission.

Objective 5.3: Secure appropriate staff capacity and build staff expertise to accomplish the CPCX mission.

Means and Strategies

CPCX will assess its staffing needs to effectively manage the anticipated workload and use internal and external options to augment staff or to access specific skill sets from different parts of USACE or the private sector. Mechanisms to increase staff include using Public Involvement Specialists, temporary developmental assignments, fellowships, contracts, and Interagency Personnel Agreements. CPCX may also engage MSC Liaisons, HQ, and Public Affairs.

CPCX staff will continue to build individual expertise to best achieve the CPCX 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 assess its staffing capacity and capability needs quarterly.
- CPCX staff will participate in at least one collaboration skill-building opportunity annually.
- CPCX staff will acquire certifications in effective training, public participation and additional topics as appropriate (facilitation, collaboration, conflict resolution etc.).

Means and Strategies

CPCX will identify and pursue new opportunities to serve the USACE mission through multiple activities mentioned in Goals 1-4. CPCX will identify CoPs, business lines and areas of USACE activities with needs and opportunities for increased collaboration support. CPCX will work with leaders and advocates to develop products and find avenues to support those USACE activities.

CPCX will build awareness across USACE of CPCX's mission and capabilities (including Public Involvement Specialists) to increase use of CPCX by all those who would benefit. Outreach and promotion may be part of the activities associated with Goals 1 -4 (e.g., webinars, trainings) and will also include stand-alone awareness building efforts (e.g., regular briefs to new Commanders, SES'ers, and program leads). CPCX will ensure outreach materials are current and available for access by MSC Liaisons, Public Involvement Specialists and others in the Collaboration CoP.

Metrics and Targets

- At least annually, CPCX will update the Collaboration CoP SharePoint, the CPCX website, the CPCX brochure and other outreach materials.
- CPCX will support at least ten PI Specialists in delivering lunch-and-learn, mini-training, or informational briefs within their Districts.
- CPCX will annually pursue business development actions for three target business lines, Communities of Practice, or MSCs.
- CPCX shall sustain regular contact with HQ proponents via annual or accelerated engagements as mission needs dictate.