

# SEEA Process Bulletin 2026-4 - Developing a departmental policy for Strategic Environmental and Economic Assessment

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*This bulletin supersedes and replaces SEEA Process Bulletin 2024-3*

## Purpose

To strengthen the application of the [Cabinet Directive on Strategic Environmental and Economic Assessment](#), departments and agencies are encouraged to pre-establish their own internal policy for Strategic Environmental and Economic Assessment (SEEA) suited to their respective mandates and circumstances.

Articulating a departmental policy for SEEA is a good practice, but not a requirement. Smaller organizations, or those which rarely prepare Memoranda to Cabinet, funding requests, Treasury Board submissions, or regulatory proposals subject to the SEEA, may choose to operate without a pre-established organization-specific policy for SEEA provided they adhere to the Directive requirements.

## Recommended Elements

Organizations should consider identifying the following elements within their policy:

### 1. Enabling function

Each department and agency should identify the enabling function (group) responsible for overseeing the application of the SEEA within their respective organization. Where appropriate, organizations are encouraged to draw on existing resources and expertise related to the previous SEA Directive.

The enabling function will serve as a focal point for SEEA in their organization. They may also be responsible for developing departmental guidance on SEEA and supporting proposal leads within their organization to undertake Climate, Nature and Economy Lens (CNEL) assessments.

### 2. Proposal types classified as “routine” and/or “administrative”

Departments and agencies should develop a list of proposal types they consider exempt from completing a CNEL assessment under Section 2.2.2 of the SEEA. This exemption is not intended to be applied on a case-by-case basis, but rather, specific types or kinds of proposals should be pre-identified as either being routine (i.e. a predictable, ordinary item performed expertly by the proposal lead and guided by well-established procedure) or administrative matter with low likelihood of important environmental or economic effects. Note that organizations should avoid identifying the long-term renewal of policy, program, or funding authorities as a “routine” or “administrative” proposal type.

### 3. An organization-specific version of the CNEL reference template

Organizations may customize the generic CNEL reference template in certain areas to improve overall administration or to add additional, organization-specific questions to the analysis; however, no changes should be made to the pre-defined analytical questions. The ‘*Proposal Identification*’ and ‘*Approvals*’

sections of the CNEL reference template may be customized to align with organization-specific nomenclature and approval processes. Additional questions may be appended to any section or sub-sections of the CNEL, but the existing questions and their hierarchical numbering shall remain intact. Part D of the template may also be populated with customized questions to allow consideration of specific environmental and economic considerations of importance to the departmental mandate and circumstances that are not covered by the pre-existing sections.

#### 4. Identifying CNELs with environmental or economic impacts requiring review by ECCC or Finance Canada prior to finalization

Departments and agencies should determine who within their respective organization is responsible for identifying and submitting proposals to the SEEA Secretariat for review prior to finalization, where appropriate. Only a limited subset of proposals would be subject to such review by ECCC or Finance Canada, those identifying particular environmental or economic impacts.

#### 5. Approval process

Organizations are responsible for determining the appropriate level and sequence for sign-off of the CNEL (e.g., the position of the person approving on behalf of the group drafting the proposal to which the CNEL applies and the person approving on behalf of the organization's SEEA enabling function). The 'Approvals' section of the [CNEL reference template](#) may be customized to reflect an organization's preferred approval approach.

#### 6. Documentation

Per Section 3.5.2 of the SEEA, departments and agencies "must document and maintain a record of assessments completed under this Directive as well as exemptions exercised." As part of the organization-specific policy for SEEA, organizations should identify the group responsible for maintaining these records.

#### 7. Submitting completed CNEL assessments to the SEEA Secretariat

In line with the oversight role assigned to ECCC in the SEEA, ECCC will collect CNEL assessments that were completed and approved to monitor the overall health of the SEEA function. The organization-specific policy should identify the group responsible for forwarding completed CNELs to the SEEA Secretariat at ECCC.

#### 8. Public statements and reporting on SEEA practices

An organization's process for preparing and releasing public statements and publicly reporting on SEEA practices should be established in accordance with Section 5 of the SEEA.

### **Approval of the departmental policy**

It is recommended that organizations that prepare a departmental policy for SEEA seek appropriate internal approvals to ensure that it is incorporated into the organization's responsibility and accountability frameworks.

## **Additional Resources**

For additional resources and guidance, drafters should contact the SEEA experts within their department or agency. Questions from SEEA experts can be directed to the SEEA Secretariat at ECCC at [ees-seea@ec.gc.ca](mailto:ees-seea@ec.gc.ca).