



Canadian Environmental Assessment Act

Federal Coordination: An Overview



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Federal Coordination: An Overview

Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency
www.ceaa-acee.gc.ca

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Note to Readers

**Note regarding
the *Federal
Coordination
Regulations***

This document provides an overview of the legislated obligations for federal coordination under the [*Canadian Environmental Assessment Act*](#) (as amended in 2003 by Bill C-9) and the [*Regulations Respecting the Coordination by Federal Authorities of Environmental Assessment Procedures and Requirements*](#) (April 1997).

New regulations regarding federal coordination are expected to be developed in the near future. Once the new regulations are in force, this guide will be revised to reflect their content.

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Guide Overview

Purpose of guide

This guide has been prepared by the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency (the Agency) to provide an overview of the legislative requirements for federal coordination under the [Canadian Environmental Assessment Act](#) (the Act) and its regulations.

Specifically, this guide gives an introduction to:

- the fundamentals of federal coordination;
 - the [Regulations Respecting the Coordination by Federal Authorities of Environmental Assessment Procedures and Requirements](#) (commonly known as the *Federal Coordination Regulations*); and
 - the role of the federal environmental assessment coordinator.
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Intended users of guide

This guide is primarily to assist [federal authorities](#) who will be participating in federal environmental assessments under the Act, but are not familiar with the federal coordination requirements.

This guide may also be of interest to:

- Agency staff who may be involved in federal coordination;
 - environmental assessment practitioners and consultants involved in projects undergoing federal environmental assessments; and
 - the public or other parties interested in a federal project or environmental assessment.
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Focus of guide

This guide is intended to provide a foundation for the Agency's more detailed guidance on federal coordination.

If you are already familiar with the general principles of federal coordination, the [Federal Coordination Regulations](#)* and the federal environmental assessment coordinator, but would like direction on the specific requirements of the Act and Regulations, please see the Agency's [related guidance](#).

* *Note:* Throughout this guide, the common name “*Federal Coordination Regulations*” is used when referring to the [Regulations Respecting the Coordination by Federal Authorities of Environmental Assessment Procedures and Requirements](#), SOR 97/181, April 8, 1997.

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Related guidance

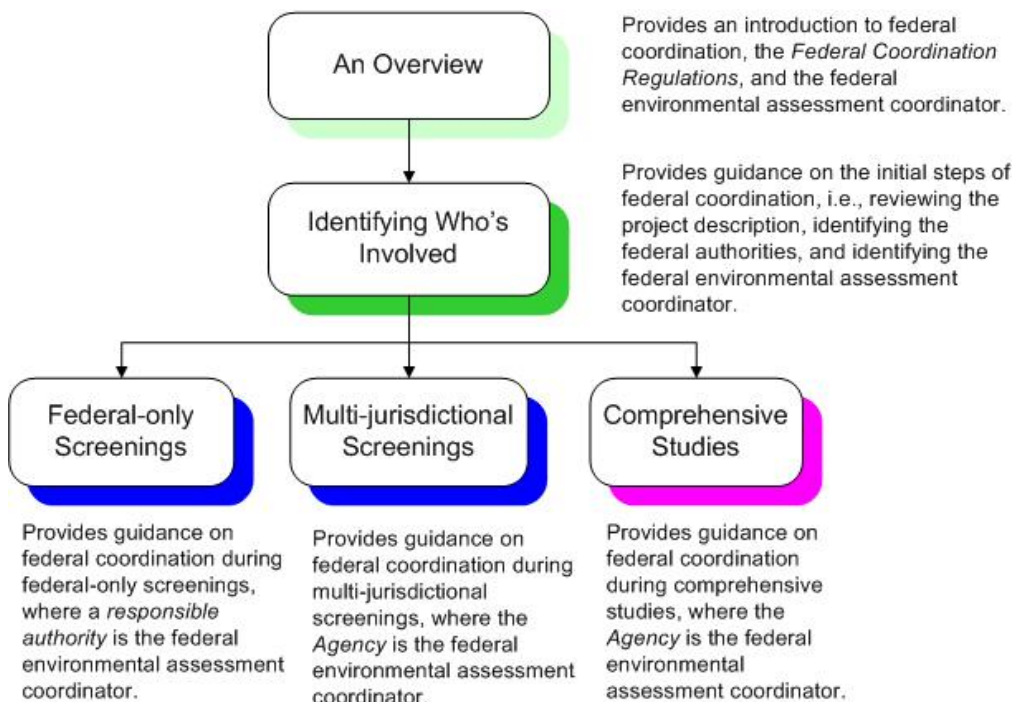
Details on the initiation of federal coordination and how it is implemented throughout an environmental assessment are presented in the Agency’s more detailed guides:

- [Federal Coordination: Identifying Who’s Involved](#);
- [Federal Coordination: Federal-only Screenings](#);
- [Federal Coordination: Multi-jurisdictional Screenings](#); and
- [Federal Coordination: Comprehensive Studies](#).

The focus of each of these guides is summarized in [Figure 1](#).

**Figure 1:
Federal
coordination
guide series**

Figure 1: Federal Coordination Guide Series



Disclaimer

This guide is intended for information purposes only. It should not be perceived as a substitute for the [Canadian Environmental Assessment Act](#) or the [Federal Coordination Regulations](#). In the event of any inconsistency between this guide and the Act or Regulations, the latter would prevail. Individuals with specific questions about the legislation are urged to seek legal advice.

Additional guidance

If, after consulting this guide, you need further advice or information on federal coordination, please contact the [Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency office](#) in your region.

Part 1. Federal Coordination

Introduction to Part 1

Part 1 of this guide provides the following:

- an introduction to the fundamentals of federal coordination;
 - an introduction to the fundamentals of coordination for multi-jurisdictional environmental assessments; and
 - a summary of the main coordination activities for a typical environmental assessment.
-

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1.1 Introduction to Federal Coordination

Federal coordination

The goal of federal coordination is to ensure that the activities and obligations of federal authorities, and possibly other parties, involved in an environmental assessment are carried out in an efficient manner.

Why federal coordination must be conducted

The purposes of the Act stipulate that the environmental assessment process should involve the appropriate parties, and should be efficient, coordinated and cooperative.

Specifically, [section 4](#) states that one of the Act's purposes is:

to ensure that responsible authorities carry out their responsibilities in a coordinated manner with a view to eliminating unnecessary duplication in the environmental assessment process.

Requirements for federal coordination

To assist in meeting the purpose of the Act, certain legislated requirements have been included in the Act and its regulations. Primarily:

- When there are two or more responsible authorities in relation to a project, the Act requires that they consult with one another to determine how they can perform their duties and functions in compliance with the Act and its regulations ([subsection 12\(1\)](#)).
- If there is a disagreement between the federal authorities, the Agency may advise the responsible authorities and other federal authorities of their powers, duties and functions under the Act. The Agency should also advise the disagreeing parties of the manner in which those powers, duties and functions may be determined and allocated among them ([subsection 12\(2\)](#)).
- Every federal authority that is in possession of specialist or expert information or knowledge with respect to a project shall, if requested, make available that information or knowledge to the responsible authority or to a mediator or a review panel. This is a requirement under the Act's [subsection 12\(3\)](#).
- The [federal environmental assessment coordinator](#) role was established under the Act, creating an obligation to implement certain coordination activities ([section 12.1](#)). As well, the Act requires federal authorities to comply with the requests and determinations of the federal environmental assessment coordinator ([section 12.5](#)).

- The [*Federal Coordination Regulations*](#) were established under the Act, making certain coordination activities a regulatory requirement for federal authorities who are, or may be, involved in an environmental assessment.
-

Benefits of federal coordination

The participation of various federal authorities must be coordinated so federal environmental assessments can be conducted with more certainty, efficiency, predictability and timeliness.

For example:

- More than one federal department or agency may have a decision-making role for a proposed project which requires an environmental assessment. Coordinating the parties during the environmental assessment process will ensure that only one environmental assessment is conducted, and that there will be a more consistent outcome during the decision-making process.
 - Other federal departments may have a responsibility to identify relevant environmental considerations or offer expert advice to the responsible authority. Identifying these parties early in the environmental assessment process will ensure more timely input of specialist advice, and a more thorough, high-quality environmental assessment.
-

When federal coordination is required

Federal coordination will be required when one or more of the following situations occur.

When an environmental assessment may involve:

- more than one responsible authority;
- one or more expert federal authority; or
- a project that is subject to an environmental assessment by another jurisdiction. (Such projects may require a multi-jurisdictional environmental assessment.)

Regardless of the number of federal authorities or other jurisdictions, some form of federal coordination is required for every proposed project that is likely to trigger an environmental assessment under the Act.

Coordination will require the identification of all interested federal authorities and ensure that all parties are working together to produce an effective and efficient environmental assessment process in accordance with all applicable legislation.

When federal coordination is conducted

Federal coordination activities must begin as early as possible, that is, once a project description is received and a federal authority believes that an environmental assessment may be required under the Act.

For example, once a project description is received by a federal authority, the [Federal Coordination Regulations](#) require the notification of other federal authorities that may be involved in, or have expert information related to, the proposed project if it may require an environmental assessment under the Act.

The federal coordination activities should continue throughout the environmental assessment, until the completion of any follow-up program.

Benefits of early coordination

Early attention to coordination will contribute to a more effective and timely environmental assessment by clearly identifying, at the outset, the:

- key tasks and responsibilities for the federal environmental assessment coordinator and other parties;
- other federal authorities whose participation will require coordination;
- potential coordination issues that may arise later in the environmental assessment, thus avoiding delays and duplication of effort; and
- appropriate level of effort required for coordination in the environmental assessment.

Who conducts federal coordination?

All federal authorities should participate in the activities of federal coordination for an environmental assessment that they have triggered or for which they possess expert information.

However, it is the [federal environmental assessment coordinator](#) who has the actual role of ensuring the coordination of federal authorities, and facilitating communication and cooperation among them and with other participants.

The role of the federal environmental assessment coordinator can be assumed by a responsible authority or the Agency, depending on the situation.

For more information about the federal environmental assessment coordinator, please refer to this guide's [Part 3. The Federal Environmental Assessment Coordinator](#).

How federal coordination is conducted

Details regarding how the federal coordination process is initiated and how it is implemented throughout an environmental assessment are presented in the Agency's more detailed [related guidance](#) entitled:

- [*Federal Coordination: Identifying Who's Involved*](#);
 - [*Federal Coordination: Federal-only Screenings*](#);
 - [*Federal Coordination: Multi-jurisdictional Screenings*](#); and
 - [*Federal Coordination: Comprehensive Studies*](#).
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1.2 Introduction to Multi-jurisdictional Coordination

Multi-jurisdictional environmental assessment

A multi-jurisdictional environmental assessment is possible when a project triggers an environmental assessment under the [Canadian Environmental Assessment Act](#) and is also subject to an environmental assessment by another jurisdiction, such as a provincial, territorial or foreign government, or an Aboriginal self-governing body.

For example, each year in Canada, approximately 160 projects require both a federal and a provincial environmental assessment.

An example of such a project would be a proposed mine that requires a federal environmental assessment due to its potential impact on a matter of federal jurisdiction (e.g., fish habitat), but also requires a provincial environmental assessment due to the province's jurisdiction over natural resources (e.g., mining).

Definition of jurisdiction

According to the Act, ([subsection 12\(5\)](#)) "jurisdiction" means:

- (a) *the government of a province;*
 - (b) *an agency or a body that is established pursuant to the legislation of a province and that has powers, duties or functions in relation to an assessment of the environmental effects of a project;*
 - (c) *a body that is established pursuant to a land claims agreement referred to in section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982 and that has powers, duties or functions in relation to an assessment of the environmental effects of a project; or*
 - (d) *a governing body that is established pursuant to legislation that relates to the self-government of Indians and that has powers, duties or functions in relation to an assessment of the environmental effects of a project.*
-

Requirement to cooperate and coordinate with other jurisdictions

The Act ([section 4](#)) specifically states that one of its purposes is:

to promote cooperation and coordinated action between federal and provincial governments with respect to environmental assessment processes for projects;

This purpose statement signals the importance of cooperation and coordination between federal and provincial governments when both levels of government are required, through their respective legislation, to conduct an environmental assessment of a project.

This goal of cooperation and coordination can be applied to any multi-jurisdictional environmental assessment, not just federal–provincial assessments.

Furthermore, under the Act, ([subsection 12\(4\)](#)), when a screening or comprehensive study of a project is to be conducted, and another jurisdiction also has a responsibility to conduct an assessment of the environmental effects of the project in whole or in part, the responsible authority may cooperate with the other jurisdiction to ensure that both parties meet their assessment obligations for the project.

Goal of multi-jurisdictional coordination

The goal of a multi-jurisdictional environmental assessment is to avoid duplicative assessments while respecting the constitutional powers and statutory responsibilities of each level of government.

Harmonizing federal–provincial or territorial environmental assessments

The 1998 [Canada-wide Accord on Environmental Harmonization](#) and its [Sub-agreement on Environmental Assessment](#), signed by all provinces and territories except Quebec, provide the foundation for a cooperative approach when both levels of government have environmental assessment responsibilities.

Under the [Sub-agreement on Environmental Assessment](#), bilateral agreements are in place with several provinces. To see the existing [federal–provincial or territorial environmental assessment agreements](#), please refer to the Agency’s Web site.

For provinces or territories where there are no bilateral agreements, arrangements on a project-specific basis may prevent unnecessary duplication of effort consistent with the principle that a project should only undergo a single assessment.

How multi-jurisdictional coordination is conducted

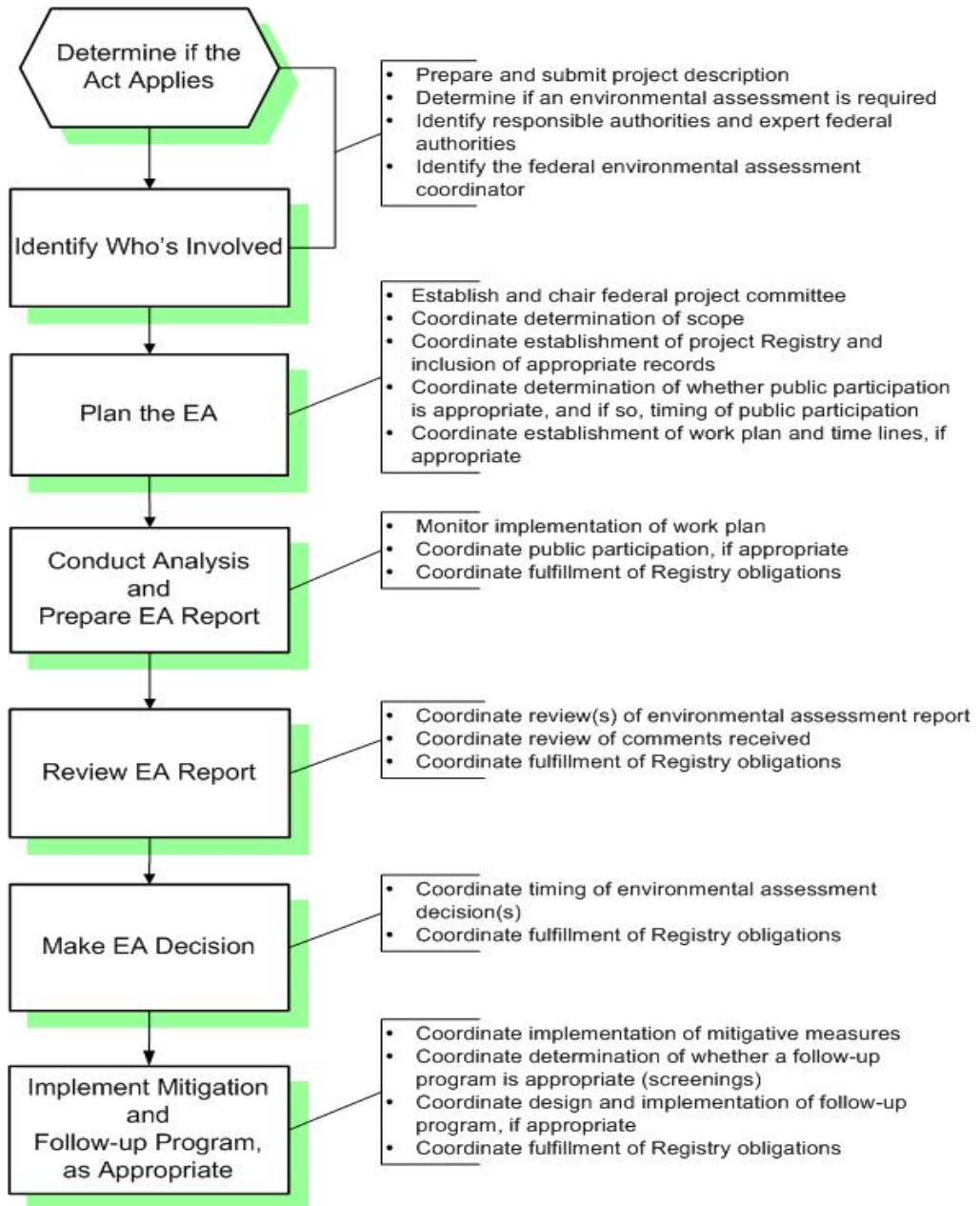
Details regarding how federal coordination is initiated and how it is implemented throughout a multi-jurisdictional environmental assessment are presented in the Agency's more detailed [related guidance](#) entitled:

- [*Federal Coordination: Federal-only Screenings*](#);
 - [*Federal Coordination: Multi-jurisdictional Screenings*](#); and
 - [*Federal Coordination: Comprehensive Studies*](#).
-

1.3 Federal Coordination for a Typical Environmental Assessment

Figure 2:
Federal
coordination
for a typical
environmental
assessment

Figure 2: Federal Coordination for a Typical Environmental Assessment



Part 2. The *Federal Coordination Regulations*

Introduction to Part 2 Part 2 of this guide provides an introduction to the *Federal Coordination Regulations*.

This part outlines the purposes and applications of the Regulations and also provides references to additional guidance materials which offer details on how to implement the Regulations.

Contents of Part 2 This part contains the following section:

Section	Page
2.1 Introduction to the <i>Federal Coordination Regulations</i>	17

2.1 Introduction to the *Federal Coordination Regulations*

History of the Regulations

The [*Regulations Respecting the Coordination by Federal Authorities of Environmental Assessment Procedures and Requirements*](#), commonly known as the *Federal Coordination Regulations*, came into force on April 8, 1997.

Purposes of the Regulations

The [*Federal Coordination Regulations*](#) are integral to the environmental assessment process as they provide a regulatory framework to coordinate activities of federal government departments and agencies to ensure that:

- the environmental assessment activities of federal authorities are conducted in a timely and predictable way; and
- only one environmental assessment is conducted for each project.

Furthermore, the Regulations support efforts to harmonize the federal environmental assessment process with provincial environmental assessment processes by ensuring that federal assessment requirements are identified within specified time periods after a project description is received by the federal government.

Where the Regulations apply

Where the Regulations must be applied depends on the proposed location of the proposed project, as summarized below.

If the proposed project...	and the proposed project is to be carried out ...	then the Regulations...
may be subject to an environmental assessment under the <i>Canadian Environmental Assessment Act</i> ,	in Canada,	apply.
	outside Canada,	do not apply.

When the Regulations apply

Application of the Regulations should be considered for every proposed project that may trigger an environmental assessment under the Act.

The procedures set out in the Regulations are to be initiated once a project description is received by a federal authority to determine if there is potential for an:

- environmental assessment that may involve more than one responsible authority, or more than one expert federal authority; or an
 - environmental assessment that may involve a project that is subject to an environmental assessment by another jurisdiction.
-

Key provisions of the Regulations

The [*Federal Coordination Regulations*](#) establish clear procedures and time lines for a federal authority to:

- review a project description and determine whether it requires an environmental assessment under the Act;
 - notify the proponent of the decision regarding the need for an environmental assessment;
 - notify other federal authorities, and other jurisdictions if appropriate, that it is likely to require an environmental assessment for the project; and
 - respond, in a timely manner, to a project notification received from another federal authority.
-

Procedures set out in the Regulations

The Agency's guide entitled [*Federal Coordination: Identifying Who's Involved*](#), discusses in detail the procedures set out to initiate and implement the *Federal Coordination Regulations*.

Part 3. The Federal Environmental Assessment Coordinator

Introduction to Part 3 Part 3 of this guide provides an overview of the federal environmental assessment coordinator, including explanations of:

- what and who the federal environmental assessment coordinator is;
 - when and why the federal environmental assessment coordinator is required;
 - the role of the federal environmental assessment coordinator;
 - the duties and powers of the federal environmental assessment coordinator; and
 - the relationship of the federal environmental assessment coordinator and federal authorities.
-

Contents of Part 3 This part contains the following sections:

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3.1 Introduction to the Federal Environmental Assessment Coordinator

Federal environmental assessment coordinator

The federal environmental assessment coordinator is responsible for coordinating the involvement of various parties in an environmental assessment.

The federal environmental assessment coordinator helps to manage the environmental assessment process by ensuring that appropriate parties are communicating and cooperating. It also ensures that the environmental assessment process is progressing in a timely manner and in accordance with the Act.

Who the federal environmental assessment coordinator is

The Act specifies that the role of the federal environmental assessment coordinator will be assumed by either:

- a responsible authority; or
- the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency.

A responsible authority will normally be the federal environmental assessment coordinator for screenings that do not involve another jurisdiction. Where there is more than one responsible authority, the responsible authorities must choose which one will be the federal environmental assessment coordinator.

The Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency will normally be the federal environmental assessment coordinator for:

- screenings conducted in cooperation with another jurisdiction (i.e., provinces, Aboriginal self-governing bodies established by land claim agreements or by legislation, foreign states or international organizations); and
- comprehensive studies.

For details about selecting the federal environmental assessment coordinator, please refer to [Part 3. Identifying the Federal Environmental Assessment Coordinator](#) of the guide entitled *Federal Coordination: Identifying Who's Involved*.

When the federal environmental assessment coordinator is required

A federal environmental assessment coordinator is required for every screening or comprehensive study under the Act.

The federal environmental assessment coordinator role does not apply to mediations or assessments by review panels as the Act requires the Agency to provide administrative support for these types of assessments.

Timing of the federal environmental assessment coordinator

In terms of timing during an environmental assessment, the responsibilities of the federal environmental assessment coordinator are as follows.

Begin:

- for federal-only screenings, on determination, by a federal authority, that it is required to ensure the conduct of an environmental assessment of a project under the Act; and
- for comprehensive studies and multi-jurisdictional screenings, on receipt by a federal authority of a project description for a proposed project.

End:

- when the environmental assessment decision is made, and no follow-up program will be undertaken (screenings); or
 - on completion of any follow-up program undertaken for the project.
-

Why the federal environmental assessment coordinator is required

The Act established the role of the federal environmental assessment coordinator as a legislative solution for the difficulties that may arise when more than one party is involved in the environmental assessment of a project.

Such difficulties may include:

- inconsistent application or interpretation of the Act;
- duplication of effort; or
- poor communication or cooperation among federal authorities or other interested parties.

The federal environmental assessment coordinator also provides a primary point of contact or a “single federal window” during comprehensive studies or screenings.

What the federal environmental assessment coordinator does

Under the Act, the federal environmental assessment coordinator is given a role which is twofold:

- [coordinate the participation of federal authorities](#) in the environmental assessment process; and
 - [facilitate communication and cooperation among federal authorities and other participants.](#)
-

Coordinate participation of federal authorities

The federal environmental assessment coordinator has a role to coordinate the participation activities of federal authorities in the environmental assessment process for a project where a screening or comprehensive study is, or might be required. This includes the coordination of:

- the planning and analysis portion of a screening or comprehensive study;
- the preparation of a screening report or a comprehensive study report; and
- the design and implementation of a follow-up program.

Although the federal environmental assessment coordinator may play a role in coordinating these activities, the responsibility to ensure they are fulfilled remains with the responsible authority.

Facilitate communication and cooperation

For projects that undergo a screening or comprehensive study, that the federal environmental assessment coordinator has a role to facilitate communication and cooperation within the Government of Canada (i.e., among the federal authorities), and with other participants, such as:

- provinces;
 - Crown corporations;
 - harbour commissions and Canada port authorities;
 - prescribed authorities;
 - band councils;
 - Aboriginal self-governing bodies established under land claim agreements or under legislation;
 - foreign governments, including their state/provincial governments;
 - international organizations; and
 - project proponents, non-governmental organizations, citizens' groups, and individual Canadians.
-

How the federal environmental assessment coordinator completes the role

The Agency's [related guidance](#) discusses the activities the federal environmental assessment coordinator should undertake to fulfil the coordination role. Specifically, see the guides entitled:

- [*Federal Coordination: Federal-only Screenings*](#);
 - [*Federal Coordination: Multi-jurisdictional Screenings*](#); and
 - [*Federal Coordination: Comprehensive Studies*](#).
-

3.1.1 Federal Environmental Assessment Coordinator's Duties

Federal environmental assessment coordinator's duties

The coordinator serves as the principal point of contact within the federal government during an environmental assessment. This involves bringing together all federal authorities that may need to be involved and consolidating information requirements for the assessment.

Additionally, the federal environmental assessment coordinator is required to carry out the following five specific duties under the Act ([section 12.2](#)):

- [identify federal authorities](#);
- [coordinate federal authorities](#);
- [coordinate registry obligations](#);
- [ensure compliance and efficiency](#); and
- [coordinate with other jurisdictions](#).

Note: The Act allows for regulations to be made to specify or expand on the details of these duties. It is expected that regulations intended to replace the existing [Federal Coordination Regulations](#) will do this at a future date.

Duty 1: Identify federal authorities

Early in the process, the federal environmental assessment coordinator is required to ensure the identification of the federal authorities that are, or may be:

- responsible authorities; or
- in possession of specialist or expert information or knowledge with respect to the project (i.e., [expert federal authorities](#)).

For guidance, on how to identify the responsible authorities and expert federal authorities in accordance with the *Federal Coordination Regulations*, please refer to the guide entitled [Federal Coordination: Identifying Who's Involved](#).

**Duty 2:
Coordinate
federal
authorities**

Throughout the environmental assessment process, the federal environmental assessment coordinator is required to coordinate the involvement of the identified federal authorities (both the responsible authorities and the expert federal authorities).

The federal environmental assessment coordinator has specific [powers](#) under the Act to help facilitate the coordination of the federal authorities. These powers, discussed in section [3.1.2 Federal Environmental Assessment Coordinator's Powers](#) of this guide, include the ability to establish a [federal project committee](#), establish [time lines](#) for the assessment process, and determine [timing of public participation](#).

**Duty 3:
Coordinate
Registry
obligations**

The federal environmental assessment coordinator is required to coordinate the fulfillment of the responsible authorities' Canadian Environmental Assessment Registry (the Registry) obligations throughout the environmental assessment process.

This specifically includes coordinating the:

- posting of appropriate records on the Registry's Internet site ([subsection 55.3\(1\)](#));
- maintenance of the project file from the beginning of the environmental assessment until the completion of any follow-up program ([paragraph 55.4\(1\)\(a\)](#)); and
- protection of third party information ([section 55.5](#)).

This is to ensure that duplicative and possibly inconsistent information about a project or environmental assessment is not posted on the Internet site or added to the project file.

Also, the Act specifies that the federal environmental assessment coordinator shall ensure that a copy of any record requested by the public is provided in a timely manner. This provision is to help ensure the facilitation of timely public access to records included in the Registry ([subsection 55\(3\)](#)).

The federal environmental assessment coordinator's tasks related to the Registry are described in more detail in the guide entitled [Canadian Environmental Assessment Registry](#).

**Duty 4:
Ensure
compliance and
efficiency**

Throughout the environmental assessment process, the federal environmental assessment coordinator is required to ensure that federal authorities fulfil their obligations under the Act in a timely manner (e.g., ensure that the environmental assessment is conducted as early as possible in the planning stages before irrevocable decisions are made).

For example, the federal environmental assessment coordinator may facilitate cooperation among the responsible authorities to ensure that a [work plan](#) is implemented according to the time lines set out for the environmental assessment.

**Duty 5:
Coordinate
with other
jurisdictions**

Throughout an environmental assessment involving other jurisdictions, the federal environmental assessment coordinator is required to act as the federal point of contact.

This requires coordinating the federal authorities' involvement with other jurisdictions and ensuring the timely exchange of information with those other jurisdictions.

**Additional
guidance**

For details on the activities and tools that may be used to implement the federal environmental assessment coordinator's duties, refer to the appropriate [related guidance](#):

- [Federal Coordination: Federal-only Screenings](#);
 - [Federal Coordination: Multi-jurisdictional Screenings](#); and
 - [Federal Coordination: Comprehensive Studies](#).
-

3.1.2 Federal Environmental Assessment Coordinator's Powers

Federal environmental assessment coordinator's powers

The Act empowers the federal environmental assessment coordinator to carry out specific activities that are intended to help fulfil certain [duties](#):

- [establish and chair a federal project committee](#);
 - [establish time lines for the assessment](#); and
 - [determine timing of any public participation](#).
-

Power 1: Establish and chair a federal project committee

To coordinate the involvement of responsible authorities and expert federal authorities, the federal environmental assessment coordinator may establish a [federal project committee](#).

The committee should be composed of the federal authorities that are, or may be:

- responsible authorities for the project; and
- expert federal authorities in possession of specialist or expert information or knowledge with respect to the project or its potential environmental effects.

Furthermore, the federal environmental assessment coordinator has the power to chair the federal project committee. The federal environmental assessment coordinator should convene meetings in consultation with the federal authorities and in accordance with any terms of reference drafted for the purpose of the committee.

**Power 2:
Establish time
lines for the
assessment**

To coordinate the federal authorities and ensure their obligations are fulfilled under the Act in a timely manner, the federal environmental assessment coordinator has the power to establish time lines in relation to the assessment. The federal environmental assessment coordinator must consult with the identified federal authorities when setting the time lines.

The time lines may be for portions of an assessment, as well as for the completion of the assessment. In many cases, they will be a component of an overall [work plan](#) developed for the management of the environmental assessment process.

These time lines must adhere to any deadlines set out in the Act or its regulations. Otherwise, they may vary according to the scope and nature of the project for which the environmental assessment is being conducted. For example, decisions on time lines should take into account the particular scientific and technical challenges associated with the assessment.

**Power 3:
Determine
timing of any
public
participation**

Where public participation is required (i.e., for a comprehensive study) or where public participation is determined to be appropriate (i.e., for a screening), the federal environmental assessment coordinator has the power to consult with the responsible authorities and determine the timing of the public participation.

For example, if a responsible authority determines that the public should be consulted during the scoping phase of a screening, the federal environmental assessment coordinator should consult with the federal authorities, and other jurisdictions if appropriate, to determine the timing of the public participation event during that phase.

This power is intended to prevent a responsible authority from duplicating the consultation efforts of other responsible authorities involved in the assessment. It also allows for the coordination of federal public participation activities with similar activities of another jurisdiction involved in the assessment.

**Additional
guidance**

For details on the activities and tools that may be used to implement the federal environmental assessment coordinator's powers, refer to the appropriate [related guidance](#):

- [Federal Coordination: Federal-only Screenings](#);
- [Federal Coordination: Multi-jurisdictional Screenings](#); and
- [Federal Coordination: Comprehensive Studies](#).

3.1.3 Federal Environmental Assessment Coordinator's Role in Relation to Federal Authorities

The principle of self-assessment

The federal environmental assessment coordinator's role focuses on the procedural and administrative aspects of environmental assessment without infringing on the principle of self-assessment. Each responsible authority remains accountable for the substantive and scientific aspects of the environmental assessments with which it is involved.

In other words, each responsible authority is still responsible for fulfilling its obligations under the Act, including ensuring that the environmental assessment is conducted, a report prepared, a decision made regarding a course of action with respect to the project, and mitigation implemented in accordance with the Act.

The concept of lead responsible authority

Prior to the Act providing for a federal environmental assessment coordinator, a "lead responsible authority" was often chosen in situations where more than one responsible authority triggered an environmental assessment for the same project.

Typically, the responsible authorities selected the responsible authority with the greatest interest in the project to assume the lead responsible authority role. The lead responsible authority then coordinated and facilitated the management and completion of the environmental assessment; however, it did not relieve the other responsible authorities of their duties under the Act.

With the establishment of the federal environmental assessment coordinator, the need for a lead responsible authority is eliminated. The federal environmental assessment coordinator will play a key role in ensuring that there is a "single federal window", and that there is communication and cooperation among all federal authorities to complete the environmental assessment process efficiently.

In some cases, one responsible authority may be designated to manage a particular aspect of the assessment, (e.g., the Registry's Internet site); however, that responsible authority will not be tasked to manage the whole of the environmental assessment process.

If there is only one responsible authority (federal-only)

For screenings where there is only one responsible authority and no other jurisdiction is involved, the federal environmental assessment coordinator and the responsible authority will be the same party.

For comprehensive studies where there is only one responsible authority and no other jurisdiction is involved, the federal environmental assessment coordinator will be the Agency.

In these cases, the coordination activities will be limited, but may involve seeking specialist or expert information or knowledge from other federal authorities.

If there is more than one responsible authority (federal-only)

For environmental assessments where there is more than one responsible authority involved in the project, the coordination needs will be more complex. Complexity will increase as the number of federal authorities involved in the project increases.

In cases where a responsible authority assumes the role of the federal environmental assessment coordinator, the responsibilities include promoting consensus and facilitating cooperation among the other federal authorities involved in the project, while also fulfilling its role as a responsible authority. This dual role may create challenges for the responsible authority, for example, in representing its own interests.

In certain situations, if it is necessary and the Agency is in agreement, a federal authority may wish to have the Agency assume the role of the coordinator for a federal-only screening, as is permitted under the Act [paragraph 12.4\(3\)\(a\)](#).

Note, however, that the role of federal environmental assessment coordinator cannot be assumed by any party other than the Agency or another responsible authority.

If there is more than one jurisdiction

For environmental assessments where there is more than one jurisdiction involved, the federal environmental assessment coordinator will be the Agency.

In these cases, the federal authorities will be required to comply with the federal environmental assessment coordinator (e.g., respond to requests and participate in the federal project committee); however, they will not be burdened with the duties of the coordination role.

Obligation to comply with the federal environmental assessment coordinator

Under the Act ([section 12.5](#)), every federal authority is required to respond to, and comply with, the federal environmental assessment coordinator's requests in a timely manner.

The federal authorities are also obliged to comply with determinations made by the federal environmental assessment coordinator in the course of carrying out [duties](#) or [powers](#) associated with the position. For example, a federal authority must comply with time lines set out for the conduct of the environmental assessment.

Dispute avoidance and resolution

The federal environmental assessment coordinator should ensure that each responsible authority's issues are resolved before a determination is made with respect to a course of action for an environmental assessment.

Anticipating potential problems and using federal project committees and work plans in appropriate situations may serve to avoid misunderstandings or disputes.

If disputes arise between departments, and there is agreement that the Agency may play a role in resolving a dispute, regional staff and/or the Agency's Facilitation and Dispute Resolution Manager will work with the affected parties to facilitate a resolution.

For more information about the Agency's role in dispute avoidance and dispute resolution, please contact the [Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency office](#) in your region.
