

Forest Carbon Project Development Consultancy

Terms of Reference

Location: Home-based (multiple visits to Suriname will be required)

Expected Start Date: August 2021

Expected Delivery Date: December 2022

Language: English

Background

Conservation International (CI) is a US non-profit, tax-exempt, private organization that works to spotlight and secure the critical benefits that nature provides to humanity. Building upon a strong foundation of science, partnership, and field demonstration, CI empowers societies to care for nature responsibly and sustainably. CI imagines a healthy, prosperous world in which societies are forever committed to caring for and valuing nature, for the long-term benefit of people and all life on Earth.

CI's Suriname program began in 1996 in recognition of the nation's rich natural capital and the need for nature-based development. CI's efforts helped to create the nation's largest protected area, the Central Suriname Nature Reserve (CSNR). Over the years, CI has improved livelihoods, driven sustainable practices, helped communities adapting to climate change and supported gender equality. CI has provided technical assistance to government enforcement and supported management planning at all project sites. To ensure longevity, CI has secured a range of sustainable financing solutions, including conservation trust funds, and is currently establishing a Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) project focusing on climate smart forestry. CI's vision is to amplify sustainable financing for nature through a centralized governance structure that improves access to funding and provides a transparent distribution of funding for forest management.

CI, the Surinamese Ministry of Spatial Planning and Environment (MoSP&E) and its technical institute The National Institute for Environment and Development in Suriname (NIMOS) as the Technical Coordinator of REDD+ in Suriname, the Foundation for Forest Management and Production Control (SBB) are working together on establishment of a national Climate Smart Forestry Program (CSF-P) as a tool to improve the mitigation against climate change, sustainable forest management, forest conservation efforts and socioeconomic conditions within the forest sector. Under this framework, the CSF-P is considering different climate finance sources, including the voluntary carbon market, and relevant carbon crediting standards to ensure positive social, environmental and biodiversity benefits. The ambition is that the CSF-P will cover all existing and future forestry concessions,

community forests and other forms of timber extraction related permits in the country.

The main source of forest-based emissions in Suriname is degradation due to logging, which, according to the latest Forest Reference Emission Level (FREL) was about 5,8 M tCO₂ emitted in 2020 and projected to increase to 7.1 M tCO₂ by 2024. This represents both as one of the biggest challenges to Suriname achieving its conditional Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under the Paris agreement, as well as its largest potential for emission reductions through the application of the reduced impact logging practices (RIL-C). The national CSF-P is intended to start demonstration activities in 2022 with the implementation of RIL-C in a first group of forest concessions.

Overview

The Consultancy's primary purpose is to provide technical and strategic advice and will support CI, the MoPS&E and SBB to successfully design and validate and verify the Suriname CSF-P, under the VCS standard as a grouped project. To ensure social and biodiversity benefits, the CSF-Program should meet CI, national REDD+ social and environmental safeguards and the Climate, Community & Biodiversity (CCB) standards. Consultancy activities include organization and participation of meetings with national stakeholders when required; carrying out further analysis; prepare work plans and monitoring protocols and plans; writing a Project Design Document (PDD) based on standard requirements and the Monitoring and Implementation Report (MIR). The support from the Consultancy will be carried out in total coordination with CI, the MoPS&E and the SBB.

The procedures to be applied should aim to meet and follow the latest version of the rules and requirements established in VCS, including but not limited to VCS Standard, VCS Program Guide, Program Definitions, VM0035 and its geographical module for Suriname, and associated tools. Most recent guidelines and standards from CCBS should be applied.

During the preparation of the PDD, the Consultancy will support CI, the MoPS&E and the SBB in the designing and collection of necessary data and information; provide technical direction and collaborate with CI's staff and local partners during technical meetings and decision-making processes. Results from technical analysis, PDD and MIR draft and final version must be delivered in English. Key documents that are required to be in the local language (e.g., CCBS' project benefits summary, should be translated to Dutch). Additionally, the Consultancy will support CI, the MoPS&E and the SBB during the validation process of the different standards considered, and support addressing findings reported by the Validation and Verification Bodie (VBB).

CI has already started a consultation process with the national government, 2 local communities and one forest company in charge of forest concessions. CI is also leading the development of the VM0035 geographical module for Suriname, and alignment of impact parameters to the national REDD+ FREL in collaboration with SBB.

The Consultancy might collaborate with a range of internal and external stakeholders. These include, among others:

- CI Suriname management and field teams.
- CI's technical support teams (e.g., conservation finance, policy, forestry, safeguards).
- The MoPS&E, SBB, the NIMOS/REDD+ Project Management Unit/, the academia and

- research centers and relevant ministers.
- Communities and private forestry concessionaires
- Verra Secretariat.
- Validation and Verification Bodies (VVBs).

Responsibilities

- Lead the PDD development process for a VCS grouped project, including the collection and analysis of all data and information required to successfully achieve project validation according to the latest requirements of the VCS and CBS. Ensure data collection and analysis represents most up-to-date scientific findings and best-practice approaches. This includes, among others:
 - General
 - Collation and analysis of key documentation to provide the necessary insights into the project background, implementation plans and arrangements, including compliance of the project with national and international laws and alignment with relevant national policies and the national REDD+ strategy and national systems.
 - Collate and analyze existing national biodiversity/forest inventory, forest inventories and monitoring data.
 - Define in collaboration with project partners the establishment criteria for determining the eligibility of forest concessions (instances) to be added in future verification events (critical to ensure how to scale the project).
 - Support CI, the MoSP&E and SBB during decision making process to establish policies that comply with VCS and CCBS.
 - Support CI and the government to integrate other activities under the national CSF-P and selection of associated VCS methodologies.
 - An analysis to determine how the VCS baselines can be aligned with other potential international carbon standards (synergies, gaps).
 - Support CI and its partners in preparing communication materials to be used to present the project to potential investors and off takers.
 - Accompany CI and the relevant stakeholders during the audit visit towards validation/Verification.
 - Provide support in responding to findings and questions from the relevant stakeholders, Standards or Registry.
 - Climate
 - Validate and improve current project spatial and temporal boundaries (project zone, accounting area, leakage belts, reference region, leakage considerations and management, crediting period, carbon pools and GHG emission sources where applicable).
 - Analysis of agents and drivers of deforestation/degradation and underlying causes and barriers to RIL-C implementation (Analysis on drivers of deforestation and forest degradation have been conducted under the national REDD+ process, consultant will use this as a base).
 - Describe the with and without project's baseline scenarios and additionality arguments (VCS's additionality tool).
 - Support the establishing project's baseline and provide quality control analysis.
 - Lead the designing of project risk and permanence management and mitigation

- plans; biodiversity, carbon and social monitoring plan/protocols and alignment with CI safeguards (this in collaboration with CI and national team). The monitoring systems will be aligned with the national MRV.
- Calculating the project's GHG emission reduction over the monitoring period and the potential over the crediting period.
- Community and private forestry sector
 - Ensure alignment of project activities and interventions with national forest regulations, CCB, CI safeguards and national REDD+ safeguards system (a study on REDD+ Environment and Social Framework has been conducted and an ESMF-structure is proposed), requirements including, Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) requirements, safety and health plans, grievance mechanism, benefits sharing and other safeguards.
 - Identification of baseline and project scenario community and private sector impacts
 - Development of community and private sector project monitoring protocols and socio-economic impact assessment attributed to project.
 - Participate when necessary, during stakeholder consultation meetings and workshops.
 - Biodiversity
 - Collate and analyze existing CI and national biodiversity inventory and monitoring data.
 - Support the alignment of project activities and interventions with CCB, CI safeguards and national REDD+ safeguards system requirements, including identification High Conservation Value (HCV) areas.
 - Identification of baseline and project scenario biodiversity impacts.
 - Confirm alignment of CI monitoring approaches with CCB requirements and provide adjustments where necessary.
- Spend substantial time on site working with partners in Suriname for consultations/workshops/ data gathering, and collaborate with and train, where necessary, on specific issues regarding future validation and verification process.
 - Review or develop the following plans and policies following all the requirements of the relevant CCB Standard and VCS documents, as required for verification and on-going project implementation, including:
 - Gather and organize evidence to demonstrate compliance with standards requirements.
 - Address any findings and provide support on the accuracy review performed by Verra as part of the registration process.

Deliverables

Key deliverables are listed below. It is recognized that interim deliverables will also be required:

- Detailed project workplan identifying tasks, interdependencies, stakeholder responsibilities/roles and milestones/deliverables, by 15 business days after the signature of the services agreement.

- Grouped Project PDD and MIR for first crediting period using the joint VCS and CCB template to be submitted to VERRA. Including translation of relevant document and Appendix into Dutch.
 - by August 2022 (start validation and verification process)
- All supporting documentation to demonstrate compliance with the standards' requirement, national regulations and frameworks, including CI and National REDD+ safeguards, including but not limited to:
 - Risk mitigation plans,
 - Emission reductions calculation / methodology workbooks,
 - Biodiversity and community monitoring plans,
 - AFOLU Non-Permanence Risk Tool (VCS),
 - Health and Safety Plan,
 - Equal opportunity policy,
 - Grievance resolution mechanism,
 - Summary of the benefits in local language,
 - Etc.
- Reports regarding results of validation/Verification process.

Qualifications & Competencies

This consultancy is open to firms that meet the following requirements:

- Prior experience and familiarity with the designing and validation of landscape and project level forest conservation, improve forest management and rural development projects.
- 6+ years' experience in the assessment, development and implementation of forestry and land-use projects, preferably for the carbon markets under the VCS and CCB Standards.
- Proven track record of successfully developing, validating, and verifying REDD+ projects under the VCS and CCB Standard.
- Work experience in the conservation and forestry sector in countries in Latin America.
- Experts involved have a master's degree in forestry, environmental and social science, geography, conservation, climate change, carbon credits, REDD+ result-based payments or related fields. It is desirable if at least one team member is a local expert of the Suriname context, or an expert with strong knowledge of the forestry sector in the Guiana Shield.
- Professional experience in leading project management and project reporting.
- Ability to travel to project sites, as required, for extended periods.

Applications

Interested firms must submit the following documents and information to demonstrate their qualifications, experience, and skills:

- CV of the consultant firm and of each member of the team.
- Cover letter demonstrating the individual and/or organization's competencies and experience with similar projects, and any experience in Suriname.
- A narrative proposal for delivering the services as per this Terms of Reference (ToR) including:
 - 1) Draft workplan/timeline for completion of the scope of work.

- 2) Detailed budget and accompanying budget narrative. The budget should include an overall summary by cost category as well as an activity-based budget for each of the deliverables stated in the section above.

Interested firms can submit clarification question by **July 26, 2021** and prepare and submitted a technical and financial proposal to jgoedschalk@conservation.org by **August 2, 2021**.

Successful applicants will receive written notice informing that CI intends to engage in further negotiations with respect to a potential contract, during which details of the contract will be discussed including development of detailed work plans.

Applications will be evaluated against the following criteria:

- Personal qualifications (30)
- Experience with similar assignments (40points)
- Proposal, timeline, and cost (30points)

Any resultant contract will be subject to the terms and conditions of Conservation International. This is a request for proposal only and does not obligate CI to execute a contract nor does it commit CI to pay any costs incurred in the preparation and submission of the proposals.