

REQUEST FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST (CONSULTING SERVICES – FIRMS SELECTION)

REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA

RESILAND: Armenia Resilient Landscape Project

Grant No.: **P179988**

Assignment Title: **Organization for the Implementation and Management of the Khor Virap State Sanctuary Business Plan**

Reference No. **AM-EPIU-516073-CS-CQS**

(as per Procurement Plan):

The Republic of Armenia has received financing from the World Bank (the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (“IBRD”), acting as an Implementing Agency of the Global Environment Facility (“GEF”) and as administrator of the Multi-Donor Trust Fund for Supporting Armenia Resilient Landscapes Project and International Development Association (“IDA”), acting as administrator of the Multi-Donor Trust Fund for Supporting Armenia Resilient Landscapes Project) toward the cost of the RESILAND: Armenia Resilient Landscape Project, and intends to apply part of the proceeds for consulting services.

The objective of the present assignment is to coordinate and manage all components of the Business Plan of Khor Virap State Sanctuary, ensuring financial sustainability, overseeing conservation and monitoring activities, managing tourism services and visitor infrastructure, coordinating partnerships with stakeholders. This business plan was developed under the frames of Project as a financially sustainable management model that includes:

- Nature-based tourism
- Wetland restoration & biodiversity monitoring
- Environmental education
- Community engagement & local economic development

The Project implementation plan includes Khor Virap wetland restoration intended to enhance habitat and its ecosystem services, support species and increase attractiveness of the site for sustainable ecotouristic visitation.

For effective adoption and implementation of the business plan, it is necessary to engage a consulting firm to support the implementation, coordination and operationalization of the Khor Virap Business Plan during a transitional period, while ensuring progressive transfer of functions and capacity to the Khosrov Forest State Sanctuary SNCO., in particular, the activities of the Wetlandcenter and a number of interconnected sub-components.

The assignment is designed as a transitional arrangement. The Consultant shall implement a Training-of-Trainers (ToT) program for at least two (2) designated counterpart staff members of the Khosrov Forest State Sanctuary SNCO, identified by the Client. The objective of the program shall be to equip the counterpart staff with the knowledge, skills and practical experience necessary to independently manage and operate the activities implemented under the Business Plan following completion of the assignment.

The duration of the assignment/contract is 6 months with possibility of extension subject to performance and project needs.

The detailed Terms of Reference (TOR) for the assignment are attached to this request for expressions of interest in Annex A.

The Environmental Project Implementation Unit now invites eligible consulting firms (“Consultants”) to indicate their interest in providing the Services. Interested Consultants should provide information demonstrating that they have the required qualifications and relevant experience to perform the Services.

QUALIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

The Consultant must demonstrate the following:

- Demonstrated experience advising on and deploying commercial management systems (point-of-sale/ticketing software, booking aggregators, and synchronization between booking aggregators and internal systems), including familiarity with cash, cashless and transfer-based payment system implementation, and procurement of computer and audio-visual equipment; operational capacity in Armenian (English an asset). At least 1–2 completed or ongoing assignments of management-system implementation.
- Previous experience in designing and delivering training programs for tourist guides, including training on service-quality standards, will be considered a strong asset.
- Demonstrated experience providing marketing strategy, brand book development, and social media management (SMM) services, including management of digital advertising.
- Demonstrated experience in video and photo production, including production of promotional films and short-form video content (reels).
- Ability to mobilize a multidisciplinary team covering tourism operations, biodiversity/wetland monitoring, financial management and marketing/communications, and to deploy all key personnel within 30 days of contract signing.

Key Experts, whose requirements are specified in the TOR, will not be evaluated at this stage.

The attention of interested Consultants is drawn to Section III, paragraphs, 3.14, 3.16, and 3.17 of the World Bank’s “Procurement Regulations for IPF Borrowers” September 2023 (“Procurement Regulations”), setting forth the World Bank’s policy on conflict of interest.

Consultants may associate with other firms to enhance their qualifications, but should indicate clearly whether the association is in the form of a joint venture and/or a sub-consultancy. In the case of a joint venture, all the partners in the joint venture shall be jointly and severally liable for the entire contract, if selected.

A Consultant will be selected in accordance with the Consultant Qualification Selection method set out in the Procurement Regulations.

Further information can be obtained at the address below during office hours (09:00-18:00).

Expressions of interest must be delivered in a written form to the address below via e-mail NO later than by July 3, 2026, 18:00.

Environmental Project Implementation Unit
Attn: Armen Yesoyan (Acting Director of EPIU)
65A Tigran Mets Ave., 3rd fl.
Yerevan 0008, Armenia
Tel: +374 96 693 911
E-mail: resiland.epiu@gmail.com

ANNEX A

RESILAND: ARMENIA RESILIENT LANDSCAPES PROJECT (P179988)

Terms of Reference (ToR)

for

Organization for the Implementation and Management of the Khor Virap State Sanctuary Business Plan

1. Introduction/ Background

The objectives of the RESILAND: Armenia Resilient Landscape Project (the Project) are to: (i) increase the area under sustainable landscape management in Selected Locations and (ii) promote sustainable economic activities to communities in Targeted Landscapes in Armenia. The project is co-financed by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and Multi-Donor Trust Fund for Supporting Armenia Resilient Landscapes. Project is implemented by the Environmental Project Implementation Unit of the Ministry of Environment of Armenia (EPIU). International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) acts as an Implementing Agency of GEF and

International Development Association (IDA) acts as an administrator of the Multi-Donor Trust Fund for Supporting Armenia Resilient Landscapes Project.

The Project follows an integrated landscapes approach to restore forests and wetlands and focuses on four key areas of intervention: (i) reduction of forest fragmentation and increase in density of tree cover by restoring the forest land degraded due to mining and by forest enrichment planting; (ii) improving management of neglected and abandoned wetlands, (iii) increasing community economic benefits, and (iv) strengthen the institutional foundation for the sustainable management of landscapes, creating green jobs, and increasing community benefits. Project activities are grouped into four interrelated components as follows:

Component 1: Institutional Capacity and Policy Development.

Component 2: Landscape Restoration

Component 3: Promoting Communities' Benefits.

Component 4: Project Management, Monitoring & Evaluation, and Communication.

EPIU ("the Client") seeks services of a consultant company ("the Consultant") to undertake tasks described in the present TOR.

The Khor Virap State Sanctuary is one of the protected areas of the Republic of Armenia and is administered under the "Khosrov Forest" State Sanctuary State Non-Commercial Organization (SNCO), operating under the Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Armenia.

In accordance with the Government of the Republic of Armenia Decision No. 925-N dated December 30, 2002, the mandate of the "Khosrov Forest" State Sanctuary SNCO includes ensuring the scientific study, conservation, protection, inventory, monitoring and maintenance of natural ecosystems, landscapes, biodiversity and natural heritage within the territories of the "Khosrov Forest" State Sanctuary, as well as the "Khor Virap" and "Goravan Sands" State Sanctuaries.

Within this institutional framework, the Khor Virap State Sanctuary is managed under the governance and administrative structure of the "Khosrov Forest" State Sanctuary SNCO, which is responsible for conservation oversight and overall management.

At present, while the Sanctuary is under state administration, its operational capacity particularly in relation to visitor services, financial management and implementation of sustainable nature-based tourism activities remains limited. The "RESILAND: Armenia Resilient Landscapes" Project supports strengthening of these functions through the development and operationalization of a Business Plan for the Khor Virap State Sanctuary.

The Business Plan envisions the development of nature-based tourism, environmental education and community engagement activities. To support these objectives, a set of visitor infrastructure is being established and/or planned, including a Wetland Center, designated trails (Selfie Trail, Birdwatching Trail, and Hiking Trail), as well as biodiversity monitoring systems such as camera traps, passive acoustic monitoring devices and data management tools.

In order to ensure effective initial implementation of the Business Plan, the Client intends to engage a consulting firm to support operational management and coordination of activities. This arrangement is designed as a transitional mechanism aimed at establishing functional systems and building capacity within the existing institutional structure.

The Consultant shall work in close coordination with the “Khosrov Forest” State Sanctuary SNCO and relevant stakeholders, while supporting gradual transfer of operational responsibilities to the Sanctuary administration during the course of the assignment. The long-term management responsibility shall remain with the state system under the Ministry of Environment.

*References: “Government of The Republic of Armenia Decision of the Republic of Armenia January 25, 2007 N 975-N on Establishing the "Khor Virap" State Sanctuary and Making Amendments and Changes to the Decision N 925-N of the Government of the Republic of Armenia of May 30, 2002”;

“Government of the Republic of Armenia December 30, 2002 N 925-N on Reorganization of the State Foundation "Khosrov State Reserve", Approval of the Regulations of the State Non-Commercial Organization "Khosrov Forest" and "Khosrov Forest" State Reserve”

“Khosrov Forest State Reserve Snco Articles of Association Part 1. General Provisions Section 4”.

2. Objective of the Assignment

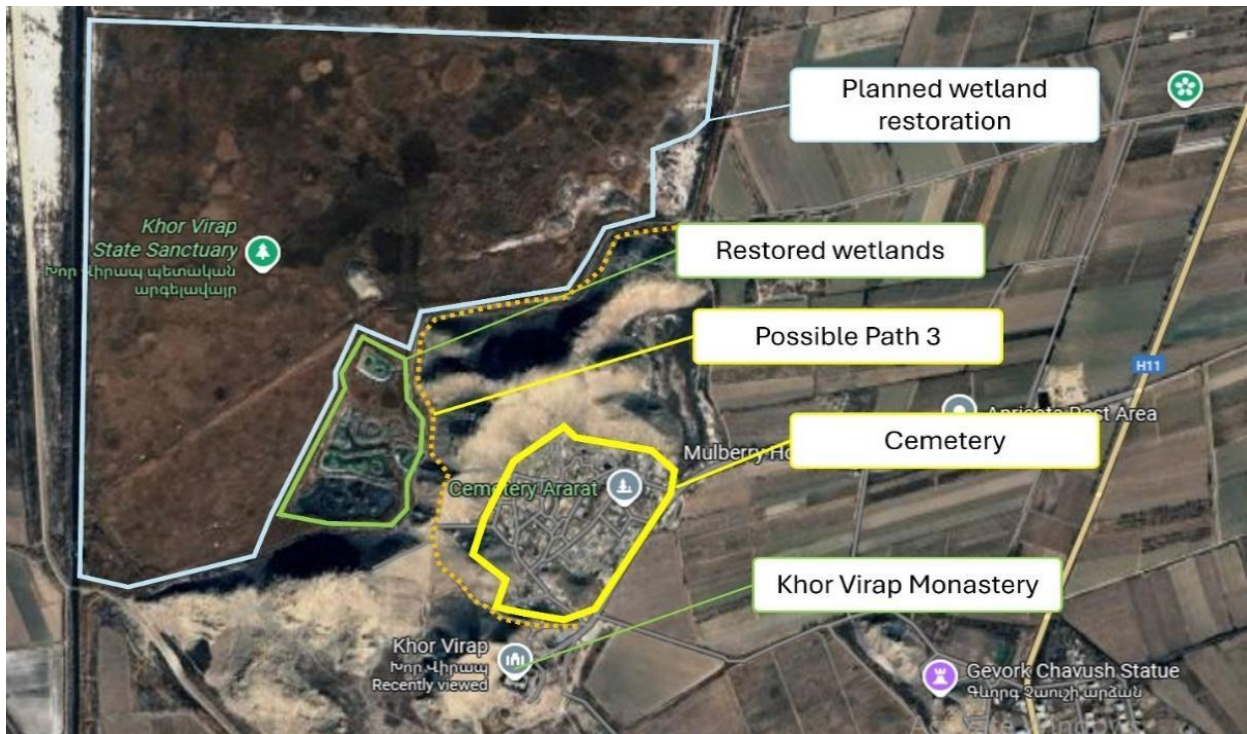
The objective of the present assignment is to coordinate and manage all components of the Business Plan of Khor Virap State Sanctuary, ensuring financial sustainability, overseeing conservation and monitoring activities, managing tourism services and visitor infrastructure, coordinating partnerships with stakeholders. This business plan was developed under the frames of Project as a financially sustainable management model that includes:

- Nature-based tourism
- Wetland restoration & biodiversity monitoring
- Environmental education
- Community engagement & local economic development

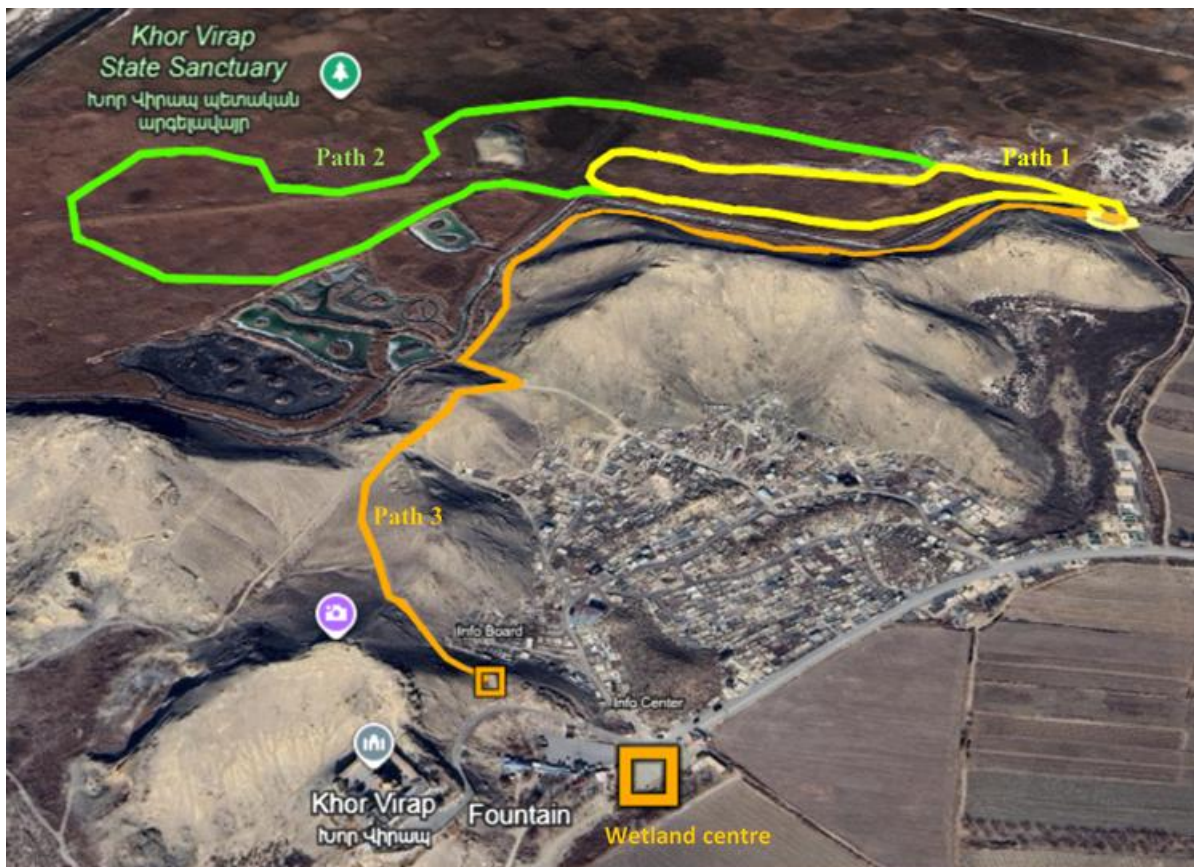
The Project implementation plan includes Khor Virap wetland restoration intended to enhance habitat and its ecosystem services, support species and increase attractiveness of the site for sustainable ecotouristic visitation.

For effective adoption and implementation of the business plan, it is necessary to engage a consulting firm to support the implementation, coordination and operationalization of the Khor Virap Business Plan during a transitional period, while ensuring progressive transfer of functions and capacity to the Khosrov Forest State Sanctuary SNCO., in particular, the activities of the Wetlandcenter and a number of interconnected sub-components.

The assignment is designed as a transitional arrangement. The Consultant shall implement a Training-of-Trainers (ToT) program for at least two (2) designated counterpart staff members of the Khosrov Forest State Sanctuary SNCO, identified by the Client. The objective of the program shall be to equip the counterpart staff with the knowledge, skills and practical experience necessary to independently manage and operate the activities implemented under the Business Plan following completion of the assignment.



Plan of the Khor Virap area



Main locations of touristic interest.

3. Scope of Services

The Consultant will be responsible for the following tasks:

3.1 Institutional Management

- Operate in accordance with the governance and management structure of the “Khosrov Forest” State Sanctuary SNCO, including its internal regulations and decision-making procedures, under

which the Khor Virap State Sanctuary is managed. The Consultant shall provide operational support for implementation of the Business Plan and shall not assume statutory functions assigned by law to the protected area administration. Ensure compliance with applicable national legislation, including laws on specially protected natural areas and on tourism.

- The Client shall designate at least two (2) counterpart staff members to work alongside the Consultant throughout the duration of the assignment. The Consultant shall ensure their active participation in operational management, visitor services, stakeholder engagement, financial administration, monitoring activities and reporting processes, with the objective of progressively transferring responsibilities and operational knowledge to the SNCO. These counterpart representatives shall be involved in day-to-day management, decision-making, capacity building activities and stakeholder coordination throughout the duration of the assignment, with a view to ensuring institutional continuity and full transfer of responsibilities upon contract completion
- The Consultant shall implement a Training-of-Trainers (ToT) program for at least two (2) designated counterpart staff members of the Khosrov Forest State Sanctuary SNCO, identified by the Client. The objective of the program shall be to equip the counterpart staff with the knowledge, skills and practical experience necessary to independently manage and operate the activities implemented under the Business Plan following completion of the assignment.

The ToT program shall combine formal training, on-the-job coaching, mentoring and joint implementation of activities.

The Consultant shall prepare training materials, maintain attendance records, document training outcomes and assess the readiness of the counterpart staff members to assume operational responsibilities. A summary of training activities, materials and knowledge-transfer results shall be included in the Final Handover Report.

- Ensure implementation of activities in alignment with the governance and management framework of the “Khosrov Forest” State Sanctuary SNCO, which is responsible for the administration of the Khor Virap State Sanctuary. The Consultant shall work in close coordination with the “Khosrov Forest” State Sanctuary SNCO and other relevant authorities while reporting also to the Client.
- Develop monthly accounting reports and annual workplans

3.2 Tourism & Visitor Infrastructure Management

The following elements are planned for the Khor Virap Wetlands State Sanctuary Visitor Infrastructure Complex:

- Khor Virap Wetland Center
- Trail 1: Selfie Trail
- Trail 2: Birdwatching Trail
- Trail 3: Hiking Trail

The Khor Virap Wetland Center should consistently implement the following main areas of activity:

1) Functions related to the development of nature/wildlife tourism:

- Providing information to visitors
- Organizing tourist routes
- Organizing excursions for schools and universities
- Ensuring the conservation of the area
- Uploading footage from surveillance cameras
- Creating and ensuring the screening of videos, photos and short films (including content on wetland ecosystem services and the biodiversity of Khor Virap)
- Publishing content on social media

- Managing and coordinating the daily operations of the Wetland Center
- Conducting (digital) ticket sales
- Providing visitor services
- Coordinating guided tours (visitor flows will be organized along 3 trails with trained guides), as well as providing practical/visual knowledge about wetlands
- Maintaining trails, signage, observation points, and recreation areas; appointing general maintenance staff and ensuring daily waste collection
- Ensuring minimal negative environmental impact

In the Wetland Center, tourists will be offered the following opportunities:

1. Take a guided tour on a walking trail
2. Take either the Selfie Trail or the Birdwatching Trail

The Wetland Center will have a simple infrastructure:

- A reception area, where the Wetland Center staff member and guide will be located
- A space for informational materials that visitors can read
- A screen with seating, presenting opportunities for birdwatching, wildlife observation, walking and nature exploration

The internal design of the Wetland center will include:

1. A reception area combined with a souvenir shop
2. A café
3. Office space for the center manager and two guides
4. Restrooms for the staff of Khor Virap State Sanctuary
5. A server area
6. A controlled access point (barrier) leading to the Selfie Trail and Birdwatching Trail

The Reception staff will provide visitors with the following information:

1. Self-guided Selfie Trail (without a guide)
2. Guided birdwatching excursions
3. Coffee and snack options (as part of packages)
4. Opportunities to view materials on wetland biodiversity
5. Opportunities to purchase souvenirs at the souvenir shop

A digital display panel will show dynamic videos of wildlife in the Khor Virap Sanctuary. These videos will be periodically replaced with short summaries on biodiversity status, number of visitors, number of visiting school groups, and, where applicable, the number of local households involved.

Visitors should be able to scan a QR code to access the wetland center's website.

The Wetland Center should have its own server space to provide Wi-Fi access for staff and visitors.

The final internal element of the Wetland Center is a turnstile (rotating barrier), which will allow tourists to access the Selfie Trail (1) independently or with a guide, the Birdwatching Trail (2).

2) **Functions related to the development of research:**

- Downloading data from the stream cameras
- Downloading data from the Passive Acoustic Monitoring systems
- Downloading data from Carbon Monitoring systems
- Submitting data to the research institutions according to the existing arrangements
-

3) **General functions:**

- Coordinate implementation of Business Plan activities, including:
 - Organizing and supervising daily operations of the Wetland Center and associated services,
 - Coordinating delivery of tourism services (guided tours, visitor flows, ticketing),
 - Ensuring maintenance of visitor infrastructure (trails, signage, observation points, facilities),
 - Coordinating biodiversity monitoring activities and data collection processes,

- Engaging and coordinating with stakeholders (local communities, service providers, research institutions),
- Ensuring alignment of all activities with the approved annual work plan and budget.
- Marketing and communication
 - Development and execution of a communication and branding strategy for the Khor Virap State Sanctuary
 - Management and regular updating of digital platforms (social media channels)
 - Preparation and dissemination of promotional and educational materials (digital and printed)
 - Coordination of outreach activities targeting visitors, schools, research institutions and tour operators
 - Promotion of the Sanctuary as a nature-based tourism destination

Monitoring and reporting on communication performance indicators (e.g., visitor engagement, online reach)

3.3 Financial Management

- Implement bookkeeping/accounting processes, maintain transparent accounting system
- The Consultant shall maintain all accounting records, financial data and supporting documentation related to the implementation of the Business Plan. All such records shall be made available to the Client.
- Mandatory manage revenue streams (visitor fees, tours, education, etc.) and create data collection repository based on them

3.4 Stakeholder & Partnership Coordination

- Engage:
 - Tour operators
 - Schools & universities
 - Local communities & SMEs
- Develop cooperation agreements
- Promote practices with relevant national environmental regulations and internationally recognized good practices in sustainable tourism and protected area management among local partners and communities

3.5 Communication & Promotion

- Develop branding and communication strategy
- Promote Khor Virap Wetlands as eco-tourism destination
- Develop educational and informational materials based on the collected data
- Maintain digital presence on various social platforms (Instagram, Facebook, Telegram, YouTube Channel (live), Video streaming Channel «Khor Virap Wetlands»), actively manage and update the website

3.6 YouTube Channel «Khor Virap Wetlands»

- The YouTube Channel «Khor Virap Wetlands» should demonstrate short clips about various wildlife of the Sanctuary, which will be compiled based on the video-footage from the camera-traps and manual capturing.

4. Expected Deliverables

The Consultant shall produce the following deliverables on the schedule indicated below. Report formats shall be developed and agreed upon with the Client within 30 days of contract signing.

<u>No.</u>	<u>Deliverable</u>	<u>Timing / Deadline</u>
<u>1</u>	D 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Inception Report including:</u> • <u>Detailed Work Plan and Budget for months 1–6</u> • <u>Proposed SOPs for all staff positions</u> • Financial Management System Setup Report • Monthly Progress Report 	<u>No later than 3 weeks from the date of contract signing</u>
<u>2</u>	D2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wetland center operational manual • Trail Management and Maintenance Plan • Stakeholder Engagement Plan • Branding and Communication Strategy • Monthly Progress Report 	<u>No later than 6 weeks from the date of contract signing</u>
<u>3</u>	D3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guide Training Programme • Visitor Services Launch Report • Digital Platforms – First Activation Report • Wildlife Video Content Report • YouTube Channel Launch Package • Monthly Progress Report 	<u>No later than 11 weeks from the date of contract signing</u>
<u>4</u>	D4 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educational and Informational Materials Package • Monthly Progress Report 	<u>No later than 12 weeks from the date of contract signing</u>
<u>5</u>	D5 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual Work Plan (Draft) • Cooperation Agreements (minimum 3) • Monthly Progress Report 	<u>No later than 18 weeks from the date of contract signing</u>
<u>6</u>	D6 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication Performance Report • Mid-Term Visitor Statistics Report • Monthly Progress Report 	<u>No later than 22 weeks from the date of contract signing</u>

Organizational-functional structure infographic

6. Duration

The total duration of the services is 6months with possibility of extension subject to performance and project needs.

7. Reporting & Supervision

The Consultant will report to the Client, while maintaining close coordination with Khosrov Forest State Sanctuary.

8. Schedule of Payments

This is a fixed-price (Lump Sum) contract. Payment shall be made solely upon written confirmation by the Client (EPIU) of acceptance of the respective deliverables set out in the table below. No advance payments are provided.

<u>Accepted Deliverable</u>	<u>Share (%)</u>	<u>Submission Deadline</u>
<u>Deliverable 1</u>	<u>15%</u>	<u>No later than 3 weeks from the date of contract signing</u>
<u>Deliverable 2</u>	<u>20%</u>	<u>No later than 6 weeks from the date of contract signing</u>
<u>Deliverable 3</u>	<u>20%</u>	<u>No later than 11 weeks from the date of contract signing</u>
<u>Deliverable 4</u>	<u>25%</u>	<u>No later than 12 weeks from the date of contract signing</u>
<u>Deliverable 5</u>	<u>10%</u>	<u>No later than 18 weeks from the date of contract signing</u>
<u>Deliverable 6</u>	<u>10%</u>	<u>No later than 22 weeks from the date of contract signing</u>

9. Qualification Requirements for the Consulting Firm

To be eligible for this assignment, the consulting firm shall demonstrate the following minimum qualifications:

Minimum Requirement

- Demonstrated experience advising on and deploying commercial management systems (point-of-sale/ticketing software, booking aggregators, and synchronization between booking aggregators and internal systems), including familiarity with cash, cashless and transfer-based payment system implementation, and procurement of computer and audio-visual equipment; operational capacity in Armenian (English an asset). At least 1–2 completed or ongoing assignments of management-system implementation.
- Previous experience in designing and delivering training programs for tourist guides, including training on service-quality standards, will be considered a strong asset.
- Demonstrated experience providing marketing strategy, brand book development, and social media management (SMM) services, including management of digital advertising.
- Demonstrated experience in video and photo production, including production of promotional films and short-form video content (reels).
- Ability to mobilize a multidisciplinary team covering tourism operations, biodiversity/wetland monitoring, financial management and marketing/communications, and to deploy all key personnel within 30 days of contract signing.

Key Personnel/staff

The Consultant's team shall consist of the following personnel, for whom the knowledge of Armenian would be an asset.

1. Manager/Team lead

Minimum requirements: university degree in tourism/hospitality management, environmental management, business administration or a related field; at least 1 year experience in managing business plan operations, including proven team-leadership and stakeholder-coordination experience; fluency in Armenian and working knowledge of English.

2. Public Relations & Communications Specialist

Minimum requirements: university degree in communications, marketing, journalism, public relations, or a related field; at least 1 year of experience in communications, digital marketing, or public outreach, preferably in tourism, environment, or NGO/public sector contexts; demonstrated experience managing social media platforms and website content; experience developing promotional and/or educational materials; fluency in Armenian; working knowledge of English.

3. Financial Specialist

Minimum requirements: university degree in finance, accounting, business administration, economics, or a related field; 1-3 years of relevant professional experience in financial management, bookkeeping, or project accounting; familiarity with donor-funded (especially World Bank Group products) or public-sector project financial procedures is an asset; strong attention to detail and ability to maintain transparent, audit-ready records; fluency in Armenian; working knowledge of English or Russian is an asset.

Required Institutional Capacity

The staffing structure, role definitions and Standard Operating Procedures presented below are indicative. The Consultant is encouraged to propose an optimized organizational-functional structure in the Technical Proposal and Inception Report, justified by operational needs and seasonal workload variation, and indicating peak-season and off-season staffing levels, subject to the Client's approval.

Manager, who should be responsible for:

- Coordination of activities
- Communication with the stakeholders
- Provide overall supervision of marketing and communication activities, ensuring effective promotion of the Sanctuary and consistency with approved strategies
- Oversee financial planning and management, including monitoring of revenues and expenditures and ensuring alignment with the approved budget, ensure that accounting systems and procedures are properly implemented and maintained, including timely preparation of financial records and reports

Wetland Center Officer, who should be responsible for:

- Providing information to the visitors
- Maintaining the area
- Developing reels and short videos
- Selling goods
- Coordinating work of trail guides
- Posting on social media
- Maintaining the website

Trail Guides, who should be responsible for:

- Guiding trails for tourists
- Guiding excursions for schoolkids
- Maintaining the area (Trail maintenance = signage, cleanliness, visitor safety)
- Downloading the video footage from the stream cameras
- Downloading data from the stream cameras
- Downloading data from the Passive Acoustic Monitoring systems
- Downloading data from Carbon Monitoring systems
- Submitting data to the research institutions according to the existing arrangements

**Number of guides (at least 2) to be proposed by Consultant and approved by Client*

Financial Manager / Accountant

- **Accounting**
- **Reporting**
- **Budget tracking**

2–3 groundskeepers/cleaners

The following Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) need to be implemented in the area:

- Daily work routines for the manager, Wetland center Wetland Center staff, and trail guides
- Weekly work routine for the manager
- Monthly work routines for the manager and Wetland center Wetland Center staff
- The work schedules must take into account seasonal workload variations