

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

REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA
RESILAND: Armenia Resilient Landscape Project
Grant No.: TF0C4647, TF0C4643

Assignment Title: Consulting Services on providing technical assistance for reviewing existing guidelines for development of and management of ecotourism

Reference No. (as per Procurement Plan): AM-EPIU-496879-CS-CQS

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 primary objective of this consulting services (“the Services”) is to providing technical assistance for reviewing existing guidelines for development of and management of ecotourism:

Review current state of ecotourism in Armenia, identify social, economic and environmental and legal constrains for its sustainable development.

Provide technical assistance for reviewing guidelines; provide practicable recommendations to streamline governance, enhance policy coherence, and reduce institutional conflicts.

To elaborate “Sustainable Ecotourism Development and Management Plan” within the project target territories for 10 years period.

The duration of the assignment/contract is 7 months.

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 Consulting Firm must demonstrate the following:

- Proven experience in policy analysis and institutional assessments.
- Proven experiences in stakeholders' engagements projects and gender analysis.
- Proven experiences of Armenia's environmental and institutional context.
- Strong understanding of ecotourism sector in Armenia.
- Strong understanding of natural resources sustainable management and conservation.
- Strong understanding in biodiversity and business connection.
- Minimum of **5 years of experiences** in conducting institutional assessments and policy analysis in the field of ecotourism.
- Experience working on programs/projects funded by international organizations such as the World Bank will be considered an asset.
- Experience working with the Government of Armenia will be considered as an asset.
- A multidisciplinary team with expertise in ecologist, ecotourism specialist, zoologist, birds specialists, botanists, forestry, environmental law, business and institutional development.
- Team with an excellent oral and written communication skills in English and Armenian.
- Ability to work and coordinate team independently with minimal supervision.

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 June 24, 2025, 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

For

Consulting Services on

Providing technical assistance for reviewing existing guidelines for development of and management of ecotourism

1. Introduction and Background

The objectives of the RESILAND: Armenia Resilient Landscape Project are: (i) to increase the area under sustainable landscape management in Selected Locations and (ii) to promote sustainable economic activities to communities in Targeted Landscapes in Armenia. RESILAND Armenia follows an integrated landscapes approach to restore forests and wetlands and will rely on four key issues: (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 and their respective subcomponents. Under its main three components, the project will finance consulting services, non-consulting services, goods, equipment, training, workshops, as well as small works.

The Project four Components include:

Component 1: Institutional Capacity and Policy Development.

Component 2: Landscape Restoration

Component 3: Promoting Communities' Benefits.

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

2. Project Implementation Arrangements

The Environmental Project Implementation Unit (EPIU), a State agency under the Ministry of Environment, will provide overall management of the Project preparation and implementation activities aimed at achievement of the planned results.

3. Objectives of the Assignment

The primary objective of this assignment is to providing technical assistance for reviewing existing guidelines for development of and management of ecotourism:

Review current state of ecotourism in Armenia, identify social, economic and environmental and legal constrains for its sustainable development.

Provide technical assistance for reviewing guidelines; provide practicable recommendations to streamline governance, enhance policy coherence, and reduce institutional conflicts.

To elaborate “Sustainable Ecotourism Development and Management Plan” within the project target territories for 10 years period.

4. Scope of Services

The contractor will undertake the following tasks:

Task 4.1- Review current state of ecotourism in Armenia, identify social, economic and environmental and legal constrains for its sustainable development.

- ❖ To conduct field trips and accumulate field data (**ecological, biological, geographical, environmental data**) on the target territories (forest, “Hayantar” SNCO, Specially Protected Nature Area (SPNA), wetland and mining areas) within the project target communities:
 - Photo, video materials
 - GPS coordinates and Maps (with KMZs files)
 - Video (3-5 min length made by drones: 1m close & birds flying heights)
 - Presentation via CANVA on field trips data
 - To accumulate ecological data, weather extremes, climate change etc.
 - To provide biodiversity data such as indigenous flora and fauna, valuable (edible, medicinal, aromatic, decorative, CWR etc.), endangered flora and fauna etc.
 - To provide geographical, GIS, cadastral data in the perspective of logistic and infrastructure development.
- ❖ To asses of current ecotourism practices in Armenia: evaluate existing ecotourism sites, their management practices, visitor impacts, economic benefits, and challenges.
- ❖ To identify ecotourism development potential, to define trends and to develop novel ecotourism destinations within the project target territories
 - in respect with environmental peculiarities, ecosystem services, cultural services,
 - in respect with the socio-economic condition and development tendency,
 - in respect with the **professional ecotourism** tendency (monitoring of essential biodiversity through elaborated ecotrails: bioblitz for indigenous, valuable, endangered, vulnerable species, biodiversity hotspot, paleractic grassland trails, buffer zones near the forest/protected areas etc.),
 - in respect with the logistic and infrastructure potential,
 - in respect with local and international market opportunities and digital technologies.

Task 4.2- Provide technical assistance for reviewing guidelines for development of and management of ecotourism

- ❖ To investigate legal, environmental, social and economic constrains of ecotourism development, to provide technical assistance to study gaps in policy as well as any institutional conflicts limiting the sustainable development and community-based

management of ecotourism defined by the Ecotourism Committee of Ministry of Economy. Throughout the services to ensure close collaborative working environment with all relevant institutions of the Environmental Ministry, EoM (Hayantar SNCO, Forest Policy Department, "Hydrometeorology and Monitoring Center" SNCO, Environmental Protection and Mining Inspection Body, Forest Committee etc.).

- ❖ The additional proposals or/and suggestions provided by EoM during the advisory /collaborative work with EoM will be considered primary objective of this task and will not be unhit subject for extra payment.
- ❖ To identify key gaps in the current ecotourism management system, including policy weaknesses, regulatory constraints, environmental impacts, and lack of infrastructure or community involvement.
- ❖ To provide technical assistance to streamline governance, enhance policy coherence, and reduce institutional conflicts,
 - To develop comprehensive and practicable guidelines for ecotourism sustainable management and development focusing on:
 - Eco-Friendly Practices,
 - Environmental Footprint across the value chain of Ecotourism Services,
 - Support Local Communities,
 - Promote Sustainable Accommodations,
 - Provide Environmental-friendly Transportation models,
 - Sustainable Certification Programs,
 - Responsible tourism frameworks,
 - Community-engagement and benefit-sharing ecotourism models,
 - Clustering ecotourism models (e.g. clustering different value chains, or clustering different eco-sights, or clustering interdisciplinary areas for instance cultural and nature heritage, or/and combining eco-agro tourism sites),
 - Sustainable visitor management and carrying capacity assessment.
- ❖ To elaborate operational guideline for the economic valorization of the forest/wetland biodiversity ecosystem and cultural services to promote community based and sustainable ecotourism development.
 - ❖ To provide technical assistance for developing legal framework and policy for the development of ecotourism outlining social, economic and environmental conservation benefits within the target communities.
 - ❖ Examine international best practices, operational guideline in sustainable ecotourism management and development, focusing on:
 - Eco-Friendly Practices,
 - Environmental Footprint across the value chain of Ecotourism Services,
 - Support Local Communities,
 - Promote Sustainable Accommodations,

- Provide Environmental-friendly Transportation models,
- Sustainable Certification Programs,
- Responsible tourism frameworks and Community-Based Ecotourism models,
- Clustering models etc.
- ❖ To provide technical assistance to review policies required for the development of ecotourism management in Armenia.
- ❖ To provide technical assistance on policy development for establishing regulations and penalties to ensure compliance.
- ❖ To develop comprehensive policies and regulations to guide ecotourism activities, ensuring the sustainable management of SPNAs and equitable distribution of economic benefits.
- ❖ Develop a clear roadmap for integrating the guidelines into national tourism policies and action plans, including recommendations for institutional responsibilities, funding mechanisms, and phased implementation strategies.

Task 4.3- To elaborate “Sustainable Ecotourism Development and Management Plan” within the project target territories for 10 years period.

- ❖ To formulate of an ecotourism strategy tailored to each target areas (forest, wetlands).
- ❖ To provide relevant strategies to enhance programs, tools, infrastructures, equipment to promote community involvement into the sustainable ecotourism.
- ❖ To develop a mechanism for the involvement all of the relevant stakeholders into the strategic planning for sustainable community based ecotourism development.
- ❖ To provide market analysis, business development plan, responsible investments and operating guideline for the development of “Armenian National Ecotourism”:
- To provide safety, infrastructure, and accessibility standards
- To provide monitoring and evaluation mechanisms

Task 4.4 - Capacity Building Plan

- ❖ To ensure the all relevant stakeholders, including government agencies, local communities, NGOs, private sector representatives’ involvement into the strategic planning for sustainable and community-based ecotourism development.
- ❖ To conduct consultations, focus group discussions, and workshops to gather insights and recommendations.
- ❖ To elaborate a comprehensive capacity-building plan and tailored made trainings for relevant authorities based on the assessment finding.

- ❖ To develop strategies to enhance institutional capacities and improve regulatory frameworks.
- ❖ To provide capacity building programs and tailored made trainings for biodiversity and business impacts their interconnections on ecotourism sustainable development.
- ❖ To provide roadmap of integration of trained ecotourism personnel into the workforce. (e.g. know-how to engage the multidisciplinary specialists in the trail construction process or/and other tourism infrastructure development, including botanists, zoologists and ecologists; conducting comprehensive territorial studies within the target territories to identify key stops along the route; as well as to limit environmental disturbances during any type of activity; etc)
- ❖ To engage local communities, civil societies, business representatives in ecotourism planning and decision-making processes, emphasizing the importance of preserving cultural heritage and natural resources for future generations.

Task 4.5- Gender Analysis

- ❖ Conduct a gender analysis and assess gender related issues in ecotourism policy and operating regulation in sustainable ecotourism management.
- ❖ Provide current status of gender analysis in ecotourism, discover gaps, and provide recommendations to meet the project gender action plan.

5. Deliverables and timeline

5.1 Inception Report (1 months after signing the contract):

- Detailed work plan, methodology and timeline
- Initial findings from desk review and site visits

5.2 Interim Report (4 months after signing the contract):

- Policy and Regulatory Framework Review
- Institutional and Operational Analysis
- Provide progress, updates and preliminary findings

5.3 Stakeholders Engagements and Capacity Building (SECB) Report (5 months after signing the contract)

- SECB plan to enhance institutional capacities
- Gender analysis and recommendations to meet the project gender action plan

5.4 Final Report (7months after signing the contract):

- Development of final policy analysis, recommendations and guidelines

- Sustainable Ecotourism Development and Management Plan
- Action plan for strengthening sustainable ecotourism management in target territories of Armenia

6. Duration of the assignment

The duration of the assignment is 7 months, starting from contract conclusion, including all deliverables and stakeholder engagements.

7. The Qualifications criteria of the Consulting firm are:

The Consulting Firm must have the technical expertise, resources, and experience necessary to successfully deliver the services outlined in this assignment.

The Consulting Firm must demonstrate the following:

- Proven experience in policy analysis and institutional assessments.
- Proven experiences in stakeholders' engagements projects and gender analysis.
- Proven experiences of Armenia's environmental and institutional context.
- Strong understanding of ecotourism sector in Armenia.
- Strong understanding of natural resources sustainable management and conservation.
- Strong understanding in biodiversity and business connection.
 - Minimum of **5 years of experiences** in conducting institutional assessments and policy analysis in the field of ecotourism.
- Experience working on programs/projects funded by international organizations such as the World Bank will be considered an asset.
- Experience working with the Government of Armenia will be considered as an asset.
- A multidisciplinary team with expertise in ecologist, ecotourism specialist, zoologist, birds specialists, botanists, forestry, environmental law, business and institutional development.
- Team with an excellent oral and written communication skills in English and Armenian.
 - Ability to work and coordinate team independently with minimal supervision.

The team should include the following experts:

- **Tourism/Ecotourism Specialist:** With expertise in sustainable tourism development, ecotourism business models, and conservation tourism.
- **Environmental Expert:** Focused on biodiversity conservation, environmental impact assessments, and protected area management.
- **Policy and Legal Expert:** Specializing in tourism policies, regulations, and governance frameworks.
- **Community Engagement Specialist:** Experienced in participatory approaches, stakeholder engagement, and benefit-sharing mechanisms.
- **Economic and Business Development Expert:** To assess the financial viability of ecotourism initiatives and develop sustainable business models.

8. Reporting and Deliverables

- Regular updates and progress reports will be submitted monthly based on scope of work and deliverables
- Reports should be submitted in English and Armenian.
- Reports should be submitted based on the timeline in deliverables.

9. Payment Schedule

1. 15% upon approval of the Inception Report.
2. 20% upon submission of the Interim Report.
3. 25% upon submission of the SECB Report.
4. 40% upon approval of the Final Report and delivery of the presentation.

10. Organizational aspects

All costs related to the capacity building, trainings/workshops/ focus group discussions, IT, office equipment, telecommunication, transportation, etc. shall be covered by the Consultant.