

# **REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS**

**Workshop and Technical Briefs on Best Practices in Conservation,  
Restoration and Management of Blue Carbon Habitats in North  
America**

for the project  
**Enhancing Co-Benefits of Marine Protected Areas**



**Commission for Environmental Cooperation**

**2023**

## I. Overview

The Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC) is requesting proposals from prospective consultants related to the preparation and facilitation of a three-part workshop on blue carbon, along with the development of technical briefs. The workshop is proposed to take place using a format that will include an introductory virtual meeting, an in-person workshop with field visit, and a follow-up virtual meeting. The three-part workshop would take place over a period of several weeks in late 2023 to early 2024.

The goal of the workshop is to convene the North American blue carbon community of practice to exchange information and case studies on best practices in conservation, restoration and management, while integrating and benefiting from Indigenous perspectives. The workshop will provide an opportunity for participants from Canada, Mexico and the United States to benefit from different local perspectives, learn from each other's experience, have the opportunity to network and discuss emerging approaches, trends or tools of use in their work.

The technical briefs will help inform coastal conservation practitioners on the restoration, enhancement, and conservation of blue carbon habitats, their consideration in Marine Protected Areas (MPA) and Other Effective area-based Conservation Measures (OECM) management decisions, and share best practices and lessons learned.

Based on previous CEC blue carbon-related work, the consultant would be expected to:

- Prepare a concept note for a North American three-part blue carbon workshop and help identify experts and Indigenous representatives (1-2 per country) who would present best practices and/or case studies during the workshop;
- Develop well-researched technical briefs on current knowledge and best practices for the following themes (to be discussed and confirmed):
  - o Blue Carbon Ecosystems as Nature-based Solutions for Marine and Coastal Climate Adaptation,
  - o Blue Carbon and Climate Change Mitigation: Quantification Approaches,
  - o Blue Carbon Ecosystems as part of MPA and OECM Management,
  - o Indigenous Leadership in Blue Carbon Conservation and Restoration;
- Provide input to the list of workshop participants identified by the CEC Project Steering Committee, as needed;
- Design the three-part workshop format and agenda to organize discussion around the themes identified, focusing on best practices;
- Contribute to the design of a one-day field trip within the in-person workshop;
- Revise the content of the technical briefs, based on feedback or exchanges held during the workshop and input from consulted experts;
- Prepare a final workshop report, including best practices identified, and submit the content of final technical briefs for layout.

The Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC) was established in 1994 by the governments of Canada, the United Mexican States (Mexico), and the United States of America (United States) through the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation, a side agreement concluded in connection with the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). As of 2020, the CEC operates in accordance with the Environmental Cooperation Agreement, which entered into force at the same time as the new trade agreement known as CUSMA, T-

MEC and USMCA in each of these three countries, respectively. The CEC brings together a wide range of actors, including the general public, Indigenous people, youth, nongovernmental organizations, academia, and the business sector, to seek solutions to protect North America's shared environment while supporting sustainable development, for the benefit of present and future generations. Find out more at: [www.cec.org](http://www.cec.org).

## **II. Terms of Reference**

### **A. Overview and Scope**

New marine protected areas (MPAs) and Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures (OECMs), and the management of existing MPAs and OECMs in Canada, Mexico and the United States, are increasingly required to ensure the integration of climate adaptation and mitigation considerations, including knowledge of blue carbon as co-benefits. This requires new approaches and tools to ensure these considerations are integrated into new MPA and OECM designs from the beginning and part of ongoing management.

Sharing how this is being developed and integrated in each country for establishment, management, and enhancement of MPAs (including how knowledge on biodiversity and blue carbon is being woven together for decision-making) could facilitate the adoption of common methodologies and tools across the three countries.

The CEC implemented [two blue carbon projects](#) from 2013–2017 to improve blue carbon data, mapping, and approaches to reducing emissions and protecting current blue carbon sequestration and storage across the continent. These two projects also created an ad hoc North American community of practice on blue carbon, through regular workshops, meetings, and the exchange of information. Since 2019, blue carbon-related activities have been integrated into the CEC's longstanding work on marine and coastal conservation. In 2020, the CEC held a series of workshops to help reignite collaboration in the North American region on topics related to blue carbon. The workshops [highlighted](#) a number of knowledge gaps and priority areas for continued work at the regional level.

Under its current project, [Enhancing Co-Benefits of Marine Protected Areas](#), the CEC and its partner agencies from the three countries aim: 1) to continue to share best practices for coastal/marine climate change adaptation, and for the conservation and restoration of blue carbon and other critical habitats; 2) to increase and support Indigenous and community leadership in marine conservation; and 3) to strengthen seascape-level conservation in MPAs by increasing socio-ecological connectivity.

The present Request for Proposals (RFP) is intended to secure the services of a qualified consultant to facilitate a three-part workshop with blue carbon experts from the three countries to share best practices for the conservation and restoration of blue carbon habitats (objective 1), linking to marine protected area management and the use of blue carbon ecosystems as nature-based solutions for climate adaptation. Further, the workshop design and delivery will enhance the participation of Indigenous leaders and highlight Indigenous experiences related to the management of blue carbon habitats (objective 2). Finally, the activity will also contribute to networking and knowledge-sharing between MPA practitioners and blue carbon experts that may contribute to seascape-level conservation (objective 3).

### **B. Description of Services**

Under the guidance of the CEC's assigned personnel and in coordination with the CEC's designated contacts, the consultant will be expected to accomplish the following:

1. Research and Prepare Background Materials
  - 1.1. Prepare a concept note for the delivery of the three-part workshop that builds on previous reports and the work carried out under CEC projects, official government sources, as well as peer-reviewed literature, as applicable.
  - 1.2. In consultation with the CEC Project Steering Committee, prepare a draft list of possible case studies and resource persons who could be invited to deliver presentations and/or share their experience at the virtual or in-person components of the workshop.
  - 1.3. Based on peer-reviewed literature and relevant official documentation from the three countries, develop outlines for technical briefs on current knowledge and best practices in North America regarding the following themes (to be discussed and confirmed):
    - Blue Carbon Ecosystems as Nature-based Solutions for Marine and Coastal Climate Adaptation,
    - Blue Carbon and Climate Change Mitigation: Quantification Approaches,
    - Blue Carbon Ecosystems as part of MPA and OECM Management,
    - Indigenous Leadership in Blue Carbon Conservation and Restoration.The themes identified above may be adjusted based on feedback from the consultant and/or designated national contacts from the three countries.
2. Design the CEC North American three-part workshop on blue carbon
  - 2.1. Provide input to the list of participants identified by the CEC Project Steering Committee, as needed. Participants (approximately 25) will include experts from national governments as well as representatives from Indigenous and/or local communities involved in blue carbon conservation/restoration.
  - 2.2. Design the three-part workshop format and agenda to organize discussion around the themes described under 1.3, with the goal of promoting thoughtful exchanges and learning. The workshop is envisioned to be in-person but preceded and followed by shorter virtual meetings.
  - 2.3. Contribute to the design of a one-day field trip that would be part of the in-person workshop component (to be confirmed).
  - 2.4. Develop a pre-workshop survey, as needed, to engage participants and tailor content to audience.
  - 2.5. Develop a post-workshop survey, as needed, that would feed into the final workshop report.
3. Facilitate the three-part workshop on blue carbon (virtually and in a location in North America to be identified by the CEC)
  - 3.1. Coordinate ahead of time with speakers and participants for effective workshop delivery.
  - 3.2. Facilitate progression through the agenda, manage discussions, summarize key points, gather input and feedback from participants in Canada, Mexico, and the United States, inviting them to share knowledge and information that will feed into the technical briefs.
  - 3.3. Organize and facilitate smaller group discussions, as needed, on the themes identified in point 1.3.
4. Prepare and submit a workshop summary with key points discussed after each virtual and in-person workshop.
5. Prepare and submit a final workshop report, including best practices identified on the themes described under point 1.3.

6. Submit the final technical briefs, including feedback or inputs from the North American workshop and expert review, as appropriate.

### **Meeting Arrangements**

The CEC will arrange participants travel, event logistics and conferencing services (including interpretation) for the in-person part of the workshop, as well as online hosting for the virtual parts of the workshop. These costs will be borne by the CEC and should not be included in the budget breakdown submitted by the consultant.

### **C. Periodic Reporting Requirements**

Throughout the project, the consultant will work in close collaboration with the CEC, the Project Steering Committee, and experts to gather information to support delivery of the work. The consultant may consult directly with government officials and other experts, as needed. However, the consultant shall report only to, and receive direction only from designated CEC staff.

The CEC Secretariat will forward draft deliverables to the project's Steering Committee and other experts, for their review and comment. The CEC Secretariat will arrange teleconferences with the consultant, designated CEC staff, and other experts on an as-needed basis. The goal of these meetings will be to present the products and assess progress on the project. The consultant is expected to be available for these calls, at mutually agreed times.

The consultant will work in his or her own offices. The consultant will inform the CEC of any potential problems and suggest solutions and actions that could be taken to facilitate the achievement of desired results.

### **Provisional timeline of expected deliverables (TBC)**

September 2023	Draft workshop concept note, possible case studies, potential resource persons and outlines for the technical briefs, for initial feedback from the CEC and Project Steering Committee
Early October 2023	Finalized workshop agendas and materials
Between mid-October 2023 and February 2024	Delivery of three-part workshop and workshop summaries
Mid-March 2024	Final workshop report and finalized technical briefs

### **D. Quality of Deliverables**

The consultant is responsible for providing deliverables of **publishable quality** (i.e., copy-edited prior to submission) in English and, when applicable, for the technical editing of the materials. The consultant will submit to the CEC Secretariat all written material (including complete drafts and final reports) in Microsoft Word, following the format of the CEC's [Report Template](#) and adhering to the precepts of the [Guidelines for CEC Documents and Information Products](#), as supplemented by the CEC's English [Style Guide](#). Supporting documents for tables, figures and maps will be submitted with the report in their original file format (e.g., Excel or ArcGIS). Note that all amounts shall be presented in metric units. The CEC Secretariat will be responsible, when applicable, for translation, printing, publication and distribution of products from this activity.

Upon delivery by the consultant of a final version of the report or other written materials under the project, the CEC reserves the right to a 15-business day period to review the document(s), notify the consultant of any potential issues or errors, and return the document(s) to the consultant for appropriate corrections, at no extra cost. In all cases, contract payments will be withheld if products submitted to the CEC fail to fulfill the quality and formatting requirements specified above. In the event that the consultant neglects to make the required corrections or if, following corrections, a deliverable remains unsatisfactory, the document shall be edited or revised by a third party designated by the Secretariat, the cost of which shall be deducted from the consultant's fees at a rate of C\$60 per hour.

## **E. Plagiarism**

Plagiarism is the act of conveying someone else's original expression or creative ideas as one's own and can be a violation of copyright law. Neither intentional nor unintentional plagiarism is acceptable to the CEC. The consultant must follow good scholarly methodology in preparing reports and deliverables under the contract, including systematic referencing in footnotes or in-sentence references, for any secondary sources, quotations, data, etc., that do not originate with the author. Sources for tables and figures reproduced from other literature must be given in a "Source" attribution immediately below the table or figure. Failure to properly reference the source of such borrowed material constitutes plagiarism and will be considered a breach of contract. For further information, see [Guidelines for CEC Documents and Information Products](#). In addition, for every written deliverable submitted, the Consultant must use iThenticate software, or an equivalent software approved by the Commission, to validate the written product in question and must forward the plagiarism review results to the CEC at the time of document submission. Contract payments will be retained if products do not fulfil these requirements.

# **III. Requirements and Proposal Evaluation**

## **A. Mandatory Requirements**

*To be eligible for further consideration, all consultants must fulfill the following basic requirements.*

### **1. In-country Ability**

The consultant, as well as all their personnel and subconsultants, must have their head of office at and be authorized to work legally in Canada, Mexico or the United States of America . If travel is required, the consultant must possess valid documentation to travel within these countries.

### **2. Key Personnel**

For the purposes of this RFP, the term "consultant" may refer to either a group or company or a single individual.

If a proposal is submitted by a consortium of individuals or institutions, a "lead" consultant should be designated to take responsibility for ensuring overall coordination, the coherence of activity outputs, and the integration of information and ideas.

### **3. Qualifications Required**

The consultant must possess demonstrated competence, knowledge and/or experience in:

- Science and management of marine and coastal areas, preferably with a focus on blue carbon ecosystems;

- Emerging and relevant issues for conservation, restoration and management of blue carbon ecosystems that are common to the three countries;
- Researching and compiling information, and producing concise and well-referenced reports;
- Planning and facilitating workshops with appropriate consideration to social and cultural differences across Canada, Mexico, and the United States.

Knowledge of and experience on blue carbon quantification/accounting methodologies is an asset.

The consultant must be fluent in both written and spoken English; proficiency in Spanish is an asset.

#### **4. Proposal Submission**

It is the intention of the CEC Secretariat to include the **Terms of Reference (Section II)** of this document) in the contract negotiated with the successful applicant. Therefore, prospective consultants should refer to these for more detailed information on the project and the services to be provided. Prospective consultants are requested not to reiterate the Terms of Reference in their submissions, but are invited to suggest modifications to enhance the proposal.

Proposals must include the following:

- A brief statement of interest and intent. This statement should be based upon and serve to demonstrate the consultant's experience and subject knowledge. The statement should address desired results; guidelines (parameters within which results are to be accomplished); resources (human, financial, technical, or organizational support available to help accomplish the results); and other aspects deemed applicable by the consultant. The purpose of this statement is to demonstrate not only the consultant's general and specific familiarity with the subject area, but also to highlight writing skills;
- A general work plan for carrying out this project;
- Proposed methodology;
- Suggested modifications to the Terms of Reference, and the reasons for such modifications;
- Resumes of the key personnel involved in the project;
- Detailed cost breakdown, including number of person/days of key and other personnel, direct and indirect costs, travel costs and applicable taxes;
- Description of relevant experience and any other relevant information;
- Two samples of previous work;
- Two letters of recommendation from previous assignments; and
- List of no less than three references.

#### **B. Other Information to be Provided**

Potential consultants are encouraged to submit any additional information that they believe will assist the CEC Secretariat in the evaluation of their proposal. However, the proposal should not exceed six (6) pages, exclusive of applicant resumes, samples of previous work or corporate brochures.

#### **C. Type of Contract to be Used for These Services**

The CEC Secretariat intends to use its standard milestone-based contract for these services. A sample is available upon request. If the contract is negotiated with a consortium, the CEC will

offer the consultants the option to have separate contracts between each consultant and the CEC.

All work within the contract must be completed by 31 March 2024.

#### **D. Selection Procedure**

The consultant deemed best qualified will be selected on the basis of a competitive process, in accordance with sections 2.5-2.7 of the [CEC Consultant Services Procurement Manual](#).

Proposals that the CEC Secretariat determines to be complete will be evaluated according to the procedure described below. Prospective consultants who submit proposals determined by the CEC Secretariat to be incomplete will be so notified in writing.

Each complete proposal that is submitted will be evaluated by the CEC Secretariat according to the following criteria, with a point rating assigned for each:

<b>Evaluation Criteria</b>	<b>Maximum Point Rating</b>
Understanding of project requirements, adequacy of work plan	20
Suitability of the proposed approach	20
Consultant's experience and qualifications and competency of key personnel	40
Consultant's ability to analytically approach the subject, and writing ability	10
Adequacy of budget	10
<i>Total</i>	100

A minimum score of 80 will be required for the prospective consultant's proposal to be eligible for further consideration. Cost efficiency will be taken into account in the evaluation.

Proposals in response to this request will be evaluated by the CEC designated staff and technical reviewers, who will form an Evaluation Committee. Each member of the Evaluation Committee will receive a copy of the proposals and will be asked to rate each proposal using the evaluation criteria and its maximum point ratings given above.

The CEC designated staff will arrange for a conference call/meeting among the members of the Evaluation Committee to discuss the ratings, arrive at final scores, and, subsequently, a ranking of all proposals. The strengths and weaknesses of each proposal, in terms of the evaluation criteria, will be noted and summarized. Once the selection has been made, each prospective consultant will be provided with their score—if requested—along with their comparative ranking. However, neither the evaluations nor the scores of other bidders will be provided.

#### **E. Estimated Level of Resources Required**

The budget for this activity is not expected to exceed thirty-five thousand Canadian dollars (C\$35,000), including professional fees and expenses.

For universities and nongovernmental organizations, note that the CEC accepts that overhead be charged for administration and other indirect costs up to 15% of the total value of the contract.



If the proposal were presented by a consultant established in Mexico, the applicable value-added tax will be 0%, in accordance with Article 29, section IV, paragraph a) of Mexico's VAT Act, as these are technical services that were engaged from abroad.

If a currency other than Canadian dollars is used, the consultant should indicate the total cost of the professional services in Canadian dollars as well as the currency of choice, for comparison purposes.

#### **F. Basis of Payment Required**

The consultant will be paid by milestones.

Payment shall be made only for *bona fide* consultant fees and legitimate expenses incurred in accordance with the contract for professional services, and only upon receipt and documented acceptance by the Secretariat of statement(s) of account/invoice(s) from the consultant. Settlement of invoices that are acceptable for payment will normally be made 30 days from the date of receipt by the Commission.

#### **G. Financial and Other Confidential Information**

For this proposal, the CEC Secretariat will not require the submission of any confidential information nor will the CEC Secretariat require information regarding insurance, bonding financial status, or company ownership.

#### **H. Conflict of Interest**

"Conflict of interest" means, but is not limited to, a situation where a consultant's personal interest is sufficiently connected with professional duties under the contract, such that it results in a reasonable apprehension that said personal interest may influence the exercise of professional responsibilities under the contract. For example, a direct conflict of interest exists when the consultant is also a CEC government official or is related to or closely affiliated with a CEC government official, CEC staff member or third party involved with the performance of the services.

The consultant will inform the CEC Secretariat of any circumstance that existed prior to the execution of this contract, or that could manifest during the performance of this contract, which could constitute a conflict of interest. The consultant will complete and sign, on behalf of all his or her personnel, the attached *Declaration of Acceptance and Impartiality and Independence* (see Annex). The Consultant will also take note of the [CEC Consultant Services Procurement Manual](#).

#### **I. Deadlines for Proposal Submission and Decision**

The proposal, including all relevant attachments, must be received by the CEC Secretariat offices by **17:00 EST on 15 September 2023**. Proposals submitted after this deadline will not be considered.

**Proposals must be submitted via e-mail to cboydmichaud@cec.org.** Proposal format may be in Microsoft Word or Adobe PDF format. Once the proposal has been submitted electronically, the CEC will confirm receipt within three business days. If receipt is not confirmed by e-mail within this time, **applicants must contact the CEC**. The contact person is:

Catherine Boyd Michaud  
Project Lead, Ecosystems Unit  
Commission for Environmental Cooperation  
700 de la Gauchetière St. West, Suite 1620  
Montreal, QC, Canada H3B 5M2  
Tel: 514-350-4300; Fax: 514-350-4314

The CEC Secretariat intends to select the consultant and notify the applicants within a reasonable period of time following the proposal submission deadline.

ANNEX (see also Schedule D in CEC standard contract)

## CONSULTANT'S DECLARATION OF ACCEPTANCE AND IMPARTIALITY AND INDEPENDENCE FOR CONTRACT

I, the undersigned,

Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_ First Name: \_\_\_\_\_

### ACCEPTANCE

☐

hereby declare that I accept to serve as consultant in the subject contract.

### IMPARTIALITY AND INDEPENDENCE

*(If you accept to serve as a consultant, please check one of the two following boxes. The choice of which box to check will be determined after you have taken into account, inter alia, whether there exists any past or present relationship, direct or indirect, with any of the Parties to the Environmental Cooperation Agreement (ECA) or their Commission for Environmental Cooperation ("CEC") representatives, Secretariat staff, and/or third parties involved in the performance of this contract, whether financial, professional, familial, or of another kind and whether the nature of any such relationship is such that disclosure is called for pursuant to the criteria set out below. Any doubt should be resolved in favor of disclosure.)*

☐

**I am impartial and independent** with respect to the ECA Parties and their CEC representatives, CEC Secretariat staff, and third parties involved in the performance of this contract, and intend to remain so; to the best of my knowledge, there are no facts or circumstances, past or present that need be disclosed because they are likely to give rise to justifiable doubts as to my impartiality or independence, and that may constitute a conflict of interest.

**OR**

☐

**I am impartial and independent** with respect to the ECA Parties and their CEC representatives, Secretariat staff, and/or third parties involved in the performance of this contract, and intend to remain so; **however**, I wish to call your attention to the following facts or circumstances which I hereafter disclose because they might be of such a nature as to give rise to justifiable doubts as to my impartiality or independence, and that may constitute a conflict of interest. Where facts or circumstances exist that might give rise to the latter such doubts, I may set out measures I intend to take to mitigate or eliminate any doubts regarding my impartiality and independence, and/or a possible conflict of interest. (Use separate sheet and attach.)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_