



CEC
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REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Creation and Execution of a Public Awareness Strategy to Communicate the Importance of Responsible Purchasing of Wood Products, Sustainable Forest Management, and the Fight against Illegal Logging in North America

for the project

Advancing Responsible Purchasing of Wood Products



**Commission for Environmental Cooperation
2025**

I. Overview

The Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC) is requesting proposals from prospective consultants for the implementation of activity 2 of the project, “Advancing Responsible Purchasing of Wood Products.” This activity involves the creation, execution, optimization, and reporting of a public awareness strategy—tailored to each country (Canada, Mexico and the United States) and made available in all three languages,¹ to communicate the importance of responsible purchasing of wood products, sustainable forest management (SFM), and the fight against illegal logging across North America. This includes recognizing the impact on forest communities, ecosystems and Indigenous communities, and raising awareness of civic participation that can be used to identify illegal logging practices in North America and the applicable sanctions.

The Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC) was established in 1994 by the governments of Canada, Mexico and the United States, through the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation, a parallel environmental agreement to NAFTA. As of 2020, the CEC is recognized and maintained by the Environmental Cooperation Agreement, parallel to the new Free Trade Agreement of North America. 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.

The CEC is governed and funded equally by the Government of Canada through Environment and Climate Change Canada, the Government of the United States of Mexico, through the Secretaría de Medio Ambiente y Recursos Naturales, and the Government of the United States of America through the Environmental Protection Agency.

The CEC Council, its governing body, approved the project, entitled “Advancing Responsible Purchasing of Wood Products”, as part of the CEC’s Operational Plan for 2023, with the purpose of increasing the understanding of wood product consumers in the three countries, supporting sustainable forest management, and contributing to the fight against illegal logging: through their purchasing power and by encouraging the responsible purchasing of wood products. For a complete description of the project, including tasks and related budget, please visit the CEC website at: <http://www.cec.org/files/documents/operational_plans/cec-responsible-purchasing-of-wood-products.pdf>.

II. Terms of Reference

A. Overview and Scope

Illegal logging, and the trade in illegally logged timber, are domestic, regional, and global issues. They have negative economic, environmental, and social impacts, including—but not limited to—forest degradation, loss of traditional homelands for Indigenous and tribal communities, and the creation of unfair market conditions that disadvantage legal and sustainable sources of wood and wood products.

¹ Necessary translations will be provided by the CEC.

The project, “Advancing Responsible Purchasing of Wood Products,” will deepen knowledge of the extent, risks, and awareness of illegal logging within each country’s forest product supply chains. It will increase the understanding of wood product consumers and of how they can support sustainable forest management and contribute to the fight against illegal logging through their purchasing power and by the responsible purchasing of wood products. The project will also encourage the use of key mechanisms for civic participation in environmental protection to address complaints and by informing consumers of the consequences of purchasing illegal timber (applicable fines and penalties).

The first activity of the project consisted in elaborating a trinational assessment of the current state of knowledge and public awareness surrounding sustainable forest management and illegal logging in Canada, Mexico, and the United States. This led to the production of the report: *Trinational Context of Sustainable Forest Management and Illegal Logging: State of Knowledge and Consumer Awareness in North America*. The report contributes to a better understanding of the current level of consumer awareness among different groups in the supply chain and helps identify gaps in existing awareness-raising initiatives.

Building on the findings of the report, activity two of the project aims to address gaps in consumers’ knowledge and awareness through tailored awareness campaigns for each of the three countries, emphasizing the impact of illegal logging on forest and Indigenous communities, ecosystems, and providing information on surveillance actions in which the public can participate. The goal is to empower consumers across the supply chain who purchase wood products and enable them to become agents of change.

Activity two consists in the creation, execution, optimization, and reporting of a tailored public awareness strategy, targeting wood product consumers in the three countries and considering the recommendations provided in the report *Trinational Context of Sustainable Forest Management and Illegal Logging: State of Knowledge and Consumer Awareness in North America* (provided in Annex 1).

B. Description of Services

The consultant shall coordinate with the CEC’s designated contacts to accomplish the following activities, subtasks, and deliverables:

Activity 2	Drawing on the findings from the report, <i>Trinational Context of Sustainable Forest Management and Illegal Logging: State of Knowledge and Consumer Awareness in North America</i> (provided in Annex 1), create, execute, optimize, and report on a public awareness strategy —tailored to each country and made available in all three languages—targeting wood product consumers in Canada, Mexico and the United States, on the importance of responsible purchasing of wood products, SFM and the fight against illegal logging, and considering aspects such as language barriers and the need for differentiation by gender and age.
Output(s)	• (A) Workshop(s) on effective public awareness campaigns for the targeted sector, engaging a broad range of actors—including youth, women, and Indigenous People—is conducted to inform the development of the strategy. • A public awareness strategy—tailored to each country and made available in all three languages, including target audiences, key messages, calls to action, campaign(s) identity and materials, as well as supporting communication tools for relevant partners—is developed and implemented. • A monitoring and evaluation process is established and implemented, providing data-driven insights and actionable recommendations that

	improve the impact and effectiveness of the public awareness strategy throughout its implementation.	
Expected results, performance measures	Key messages and public awareness campaign materials tailored to each country are made available in the three languages to communicate the importance of responsible purchasing of wood products, sustainable forest management, and the fight against illegal logging in North America, including the recognition of the impact on forest communities, ecosystems and Indigenous communities, and to raise awareness of the civic participation mechanisms that can be used to identify illegal logging practices in North America and the applicable sanctions.	
Baseline (current status), if known	Sustainable forestry and consumption initiatives exist at the national, regional, and international levels (e.g., Sustainable Wood for a Sustainable Future Initiative (a FAO, ITTO, CIFOR initiative partnership). Numerous companies, NGOs, and third-parties market forest certification standards and also have their own public awareness and outreach campaigns.	
Target (by project end)	• Communication tools and materials conveying the importance of SFM, the status of illegal logging, and the responsible purchasing of wood products are disseminated and made available to the public in the three languages. • Target audiences possess an increased awareness of the importance of SFM, for responsible purchasing of wood products,² and of the penalties applicable when purchasing wood of illegal origin, as well as of the status of illegal logging and how to contribute to the fight against illegal forest products.	
Subtask 2.0	The consultant will receive the full trilateral assessment of the current state of knowledge and public awareness surrounding SFM and illegal logging in Canada, Mexico, and the United States from the CEC. The consultant will meet with the CEC team to gather additional information needed to prepare a draft public awareness strategy. Based on this, the consultant will develop a draft public awareness strategy.	When: At the signature of the contract and ending no later than 6 February.
Subtask 2.1	The consultant will conduct a workshop(s) to gather and validate information on effective public awareness campaigns for the targeted sector, to inform the development of the final campaign strategy. During the workshop(s), the consultant team will review their draft proposal and engage with key actors to identify the factors that contributed to the success of previous campaigns, lessons learned, and best practices for influencing consumer behavior. Workshop participants could include relevant experts, government representatives, NGOs, members of the Participatory Environmental Monitoring Committees (CVAP), representatives of Indigenous groups, youth, women, academia, consumer groups, retailers, industry associations, communication/public relation firms, etc.	When: Starting at the signature of the contract and ending no later than 6 February 2026.

² It should be noted that due to the complexities of the wood trade and the different legislations/governance frameworks, there is no one global mark that designates legal timber. This is an extremely sensitive issue and thus there is a need to respect sovereign laws of each country. Moreover, while third-party certification is one tool, it is not the only tool to determine legality nor is it a market access requirement in any of the three countries. Therefore, public awareness campaigns should be developed carefully, with an eye to these sensitivities and ensuring that public governmental funds (CEC funds) used for this project are not subsidizing the promotion activities of third-market certification bodies, which should be undertaken with their own marketing funds.

	Due to limited project funds, the workshop will be held virtually.	
Subtask 2.2	Based on the recommendations provided in the report <i>Trinational Context of Sustainable Forest Management and Illegal Logging: State of Knowledge and Consumer Awareness in North America</i> and subtask 2.0 and 2.1, the consultant will create a public awareness campaign strategy —tailored to each country and made available in all three languages—including a target audience, channels, key messages, calls to action, campaign identity and materials, and supporting communication material for relevant partners (see guidelines provided in Annex 1).	When: Starting at the signature of the contract and ending no later than 27 March 2026.
Subtask 2.3	The consultant will develop a monitoring and evaluation process to measure the impact and effectiveness of the public awareness strategy.	When: Starting at the signature of the contract and ending on 27 March 2026.
Subtask 2.4	The consultant will execute the tailored public awareness campaign strategy. Among other implementation channels to be suggested by the consultant, it is expected that the consultant will identify and build a relationship with key individuals, groups and organizations to activate/implement the campaign(s).	When: 30 March 2026 to 25 October 2026.
Subtask 2.5	The consultant will monitor and evaluate the impact and effectiveness of the public awareness strategy, providing ongoing reports and recommendations for optimization throughout its implementation.	When: April to October 2026.

All work is envisioned to be completed by **26 October 2026**.

C. Periodic Reporting Requirements

Throughout the project, the consultant will meet (monthly) and work in close collaboration with the CEC, the project's Steering Committee, and experts to gather information to support delivery of the work. The consultant may consult directly with other experts linked to the Steering Committee, as needed and in coordination with the CEC designated staff. However, the consultant shall report only to, and receive direction only from, the CEC designated 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, the CEC designated 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 will present monthly status reports to the CEC designated staff, and to the Steering Committee when requested by CEC, that summarize the following:

- progress in previous month;
- current status;
- anticipated progress in upcoming month;
- potential problems, with description of and reasons for any delays; and
- actions that should be taken by the CEC Secretariat to facilitate the project.

A copy of these reports is to be sent to the CEC designated staff by e-mail.

The consultant will work in their own offices.

D. Quality of Deliverables

The consultant will be responsible for providing deliverables of publishable quality (i.e., copy-edited prior to submission) in English and, when applicable, for the technical review and editing of the materials. Capacity to provide deliverables also in Spanish or French will be an asset (necessary translations will be provided by the CEC). Technical review and style correction required to ensure the quality of the materials will be the responsibility of the consultant. 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](#) if applicable, or in another format approved by the CEC, 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 reports or other materials under the project, the CEC will require 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 reside 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 and comply with sanitary regulations/restrictions within the three 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 group 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 be qualified, competent and experienced in the subject area.

Educational Background

- The consultant and key support personnel must hold a degree in communications, public relations, marketing, or a related field.
- Additional education or experience in communications, public relations or marketing with a focus on the environment, sustainability, and/or forestry, will be considered an asset.

Professional Experience

The consultant must demonstrate:

- At least 5 years of experience (within the past 10 years) in designing and implementing environmental awareness campaigns, with a focus on sustainability and/or sustainable forest management.
- Proven experience in collaborating with diverse actors (governments, NGOs, Indigenous groups, industry) and a strong understanding of the social, political, and cultural contexts within Canada, Mexico, and the United States.
- Experience in designing and implementing Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) frameworks to track and assess the effectiveness of public awareness campaigns.
- Proven ability to facilitate both virtual and in-person workshops with a wide range of actors, ensuring active engagement and knowledge exchange.

Key Skills and Expertise

The consultant must demonstrate:

- Expertise in using digital and traditional media tools to design and execute impactful environmental awareness campaigns.
- Strong experience with M&E tools to track campaign performance and assess impact in measurable ways.

- In-depth knowledge of forest certification standards (e.g., FSC, PEFC), related policies, and consumer behavior regarding responsible wood purchasing.
- Ability to integrate Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) and effectively address cultural differences in campaign strategies and messaging.
- Understanding of gender issues and the ability to apply a gender-sensitive approach within the campaign will be an asset.

Language Proficiency

- As the primary work will be in English, the consultant must have excellent writing skills and be fluent in both written and spoken English. Proficiency in Spanish and/or French is desirable.
- The ability to produce deliverables in Spanish and/or French will be an asset.

Demonstrated Experience

To demonstrate the qualifications mentioned above, the proposed consultant must provide a minimum of three (3) examples of completed projects. For each project, the consultant must provide:

- i. Client organization name, project title, and industry sector.
- ii. Client contact name and title.
- iii. Description of the project, involvement of proposed team members, deliverables expected, and methodologies used.
- iv. Lessons learned.

Geographical Presence

- Having a branch/subsidiary company or partners/associates or hiring subconsultants in at least two of the three countries (Canada, Mexico, and the United States) is required to minimize travel while ensuring a bilingual team in Spanish and English to carry out fieldwork in these countries.

4. Proposal Submission

Prospective consultants should refer to the **Terms of Reference (Section II)** of this document 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, if applicable.

Proposals must be organized as indicated below and include the following information:

1. Knowledge and Understanding of Work

- Provide brief background information relevant to this project that will 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.

2. Work Plan and Schedule

- Provide a general work plan and schedule, as well as the proposed methodology for carrying out this project. The bidder must submit a work plan that demonstrates they can meet the requirements and timelines outlined in the Description of Services. The work plan must include:
 - An overview and understanding of project requirements.

- Breakdown of each project task; resources (human, financial, technical, or organizational support) available to help accomplish the results, and scheduling: a detailed description of timing and task allocation for each team member.
- The bidder's approach and a detailed description of the methodology, providing clear and logical explanation of data gathering and analysis.

3. Organization, Qualifications and Experience of Project Team

- Identify organization of Project Team, including project manager and country team leads for Canada, Mexico and the United States, where relevant;
- Provide a summary of qualifications and experience for each team member (including alternates) and any other relevant information (e.g., language proficiencies).

4. Allocation of Time (Hours) and Costs by Task and Team Member

- For each member of the project team, provide a detailed breakdown of assigned tasks, hours worked, and labor costs;
- Identify any other direct and indirect costs, including travel costs if applicable (include estimate for in person meetings taking place at any of the three countries) and applicable taxes;
- Clearly identify total hours worked under and the total cost (including taxes) of this project.

5. Added Value Within Identified Budget

- Identify any additional tasks or activities not specified within the terms of reference but that will be undertaken by the contractor at no additional cost.

Annex A: Letters of Recommendation and References

- Two letters of recommendation from previous assignments;
- Details and contact information for three or more references.

Annex B: Resumes for Each Team Member

- Résumés for all project team members.

Annex C: Examples of Previous Work

- Provide two samples of previous work.

Annexes D.1 and D.2: Declaration of Acceptance and Impartiality and Independence for Contract

- A copy of the completed and signed CEC form must be provided. Annex D.1 is used when the consulting entity is an individual and Annex D.2 is used when the consulting entity is an institution or company.

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 résumés, samples of previous work or corporate brochures.

C. Type of Contract to be Used for These Services

The CEC Secretariat intends to use its milestone-based contract for these services. A sample is available upon request.

All work within the contract must be completed **by 26 October 2026**.

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 by the CEC Secretariat according to the following criteria.

Evaluation Criteria	Maximum Point Rating
Understanding of project requirements	20
Suitability of the proposed approach and work plan	20
Consultant's experience and qualifications and competency of key personnel (as described in Section III, points 3 and 4)	40
Consultant's capacity to produce the deliverables in two of the three languages (English, French and Spanish)	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.

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 maximum budget for this activity is C\$160,000.00 (Canadian dollars), including professional fees and expenses. Any reimbursable expenses would be detailed in the CEC standard contract, available upon request.

In addition, the cost of using iThenticate software (US\$100) or other approved software to detect plagiarism should also be considered.

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 was 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 in the proposal, the consultant should indicate the total cost in Canadian dollars as well as the currency of choice, for comparison purposes, detailing the exchange rate used.

F. Basis of Payment

The consultant will be paid according to the table of activities, subtasks, and outcomes in the “Description of Services” and “Estimated level of resources required” sections above.

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 by **23:59 PM EST on 16 November 2025**. Proposals submitted after this deadline will not be considered.

Proposals must be submitted via e-mail to sgagnon@cec.org

Samantha Gagnon

Lead, Advisory Groups and Private Sector Engagement

sgagnon@cec.org

Proposal format must be in 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 CEC Secretariat intends to select the consultant and notify the applicants within a reasonable period following the proposal submission deadline.



Annex D.1 - SCHEDULE D (Individuals)

DECLARATION OF ACCEPTANCE, IMPARTIALITY AND INDEPENDENCE FOR CONTRACT

I, the undersigned,

Last Name: _____ First Name: _____

ACCEPTANCE

☐ hereby declare that I accept to serve as a 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: _____



**Annex D.2 - SCHEDULE D (Companies or Institutions)
CONSULTANT'S DECLARATION OF ACCEPTANCE AND
IMPARTIALITY AND INDEPENDENCE FOR CONTRACT**

I, the undersigned,

Last Name: _____ **First Name:** _____,

acting as the legal representative of _____

ACCEPTANCE

☐

hereby declare that _____ accepts to serve as a 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.)

☐

_____ **is 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 _____ impartiality or independence, and that may constitute a conflict of interest.

OR

☐

_____ **is 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 intends 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 _____ 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, _____ may set out measures it intends 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: _____



ANNEX 1 – FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CREATING AND EXECUTING A PUBLIC AWARENESS STRATEGY TO COMMUNICATE THE IMPORTANCE OF RESPONSIBLE PURCHASING OF WOOD PRODUCTS, SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT, AND THE FIGHT AGAINST ILLEGAL LOGGING IN NORTH AMERICA

In 2023, the Council of the Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC), its governing body, approved the project Advancing Responsible Purchasing of Wood Products, led by the Joint Public Advisory Committee (JPAC). The project aims to increase the understanding of wood product consumers in the three countries and how they can support sustainable forest management (SFM) and contribute to fight against illegal logging through their purchasing power and by the responsible purchasing of wood products.

The first phase (Activity 1) assessed current levels of consumer awareness across different groups in the supply chain and identified gaps in existing awareness-raising initiatives and resulted in the production of the report: *Trinational Context of Sustainable Forest Management and Illegal Logging: State of Knowledge and Consumer Awareness in North America*.

Building on these findings, the second phase (Activity 2) will develop a tailored public awareness campaign strategy emphasizing the impacts of illegal logging on forest communities, ecosystems, and Indigenous Peoples, while also providing information on participatory monitoring and law enforcement mechanisms available to the public.

The following section, based on Section 6 of the report *Trinational Context of Sustainable Forest Management and Illegal Logging: State of Knowledge and Consumer Awareness in North America*, presents the findings and recommendations of the consulting team responsible for Phase 1. These recommendations provide guidelines for developing the strategy.

The full report will be made available for the selected consultant's review.

6. Recommendations

Even though each country's context gives specific nuances to the situation of illegal logging and responsible purchasing a wood product, some cross-cutting themes point toward the potential benefits of a regional strategy. At the same time, each country needs to tailor the specific messaging that is communicated through this strategy to address the country's specific challenges. The specific messaging for each country is provided in the next sections and these have been validated through the online workshop held as part of this project which included representatives from each country. Additionally, the public needs to be brought into finding solutions by allowing participatory approaches to surveillance and enforcement.

6.1 Regional or cross-cutting recommendations

Feedback provided by interviewees and workshop participants noted the salient need for a strong and well-integrated public awareness campaign that capitalizes on the use of social media and

storytelling to potentially influence consumer behavior. The feedback also indicated a need to engage educational and research institutions, policy makers and certification program organizations. The following are cross-cutting recommendations that can inform a regional strategy that can be targeted at each country.

- Public awareness campaigns focusing on educating the public about traceability and origins of wood products.
- Provide information about what illegal logging is, chain of custody and the international systems of import and export, the impacts of illegal logging in local communities, Indigenous peoples, women, and the environment.
- Establish a clear connection between the consumer and forests through storytelling, labelling, etc. Share knowledge regarding the health, economic, and cultural benefits of sustainable forest management.
- Engage educational and research institutions
- Raise awareness among future professionals in the engineering, building, and forest sector.
- Work toward an integrated learning experience for students from an early age through experiential learning.
- Work with research entities such as universities to develop tracking and transportation that makes better use of emerging technologies.
- Lobby governments and policymakers to rethink policy in support of the sector through tax breaks and support for small landowners for forest management certifications.
- Target corporate buyers for procurement of wood products from sustainable and certified sources.
- Ensure public participation in surveillance and enforcement as appropriate in each country. Hotlines and online reporting platforms can provide anonymous ways for the public to engage in the solution.

6.2 Key Public Awareness Messages: Canada

Findings of this analysis indicate that there is a low level of concern and risk in Canada regarding major logging companies engaging in illegal operations. However, Canada's forest sector is complex, and it does experience issues such as the impact of climate change, a lack of diversity in its workforce, concerns about the loss of natural habitats, and an increasing need to engage Indigenous communities in governance models. Interviews with key actors (see Annex B) suggest that the main message that needs to be shared with consumers is one of increased education regarding sustainable forest management and the importance of safeguarding the chain of custody of wood products entering the country. These messages are outlined below:

- **“Power is in the Hands of the Consumer”:** This message appeals to the idea that the market is the driver for the forest sector. The consumer has the power to set trends and demand that distributors and retailers' stock and sell products that are legally sourced. The message also conveys a sense of power and agency.

- **“You Pay, You Decide” (Consumers can Send a Decisive Message to Producers Regarding Sustainable Practices):** Because consumers have the power to direct supply through concerted demand of sustainably, certified, and legal wood products, they are reminded that their purchasing decisions will set trends at the level of the producer and harvester. Consumer can pressure companies to ensure that they engage in socially responsible employment practices, respect for Indigenous peoples and their rights, gender equality, among others.
- **“Sustainable Practices Open the Door to Global Markets”:** Interviewees from certification bodies emphasized that industries benefit significantly from aligning with recognized sustainable practices and standards. This approach supports environmental and social goals while enhancing market access by adding value to products and meeting growing consumer expectations. Organizations that demonstrate legality, traceability and sustainability in their sourcing and production processes are increasingly favored in global markets. From the perspective of certification bodies, third-party verification not only supports business efforts to uphold sustainable and legal practices but also helps educate consumers through targeted awareness campaigns on responsible sourcing and production.

The literature review and interviews with key actors suggested that a strategy needs to **partner with local retailers and large institutions** for marketing and procurement campaigns. It would be advisable to partner with institutions such as educational entities, governments, and other public service organizations to secure commitment from these entities to **purchase** only legally and sustainably sourced wood products with clear proof of origin or certified. This would increase visibility and foster awareness among the public and consumers.

Additionally, partnerships between certifying entities and retailers can contribute significantly to the process of awareness raising among the end-users or end-consumers. As was stated before, the consumer has the power to drive demand for legally sourced wood products and an awareness campaign that meets them where they shop would be beneficial. Interviewed participants suggested providing **visible signage and labelling** at the store level. These labels can indicate which products are legally sourced and sustainably harvested, including certifications and labels. Additional signage could draw attention to the issue of illegal sourcing of wood products globally.

Finally, key actors indicated that campaigns need to include **audio visual components** and be shared through **social media**. Social media posts can be **images, posters, and short video clips** that highlight the negative repercussions of illegal wood harvesting and non-sustainable practices. Key actors suggested that stories appeal to audiences and their emotions and can potentially bring about behavioral changes.

Workshop and interview participants suggested that **the broad target group needs to be the consumer with a particular focus on young people**. They also acknowledged that finding the optimal timing for **media campaigns** will be a challenge. However, they suggested that it is important to avoid major holiday seasons such as summer and Christmas, as these are times

when advertising and media campaigns are already launched. They identified **late spring or early summer as a potentially optimal time for media campaigns** related to sustainable forest management and responsible purchasing of wood products.

6.3 Key Public Awareness Messages in Mexico

Based on identified knowledge gaps, program analysis, literature review, and interviews with key actors in Mexico, the following key messages and strategies are recommended to guide future public campaigns on sustainable forest management and illegal logging:

- **"Where Does Your Wood Come From? Demand Legal Timber":** This message invites consumers to question the origin of the wood products they buy. Like successful fair-trade campaigns like "Where does your food come from?", this message encourages personal responsibility and curiosity. Campaigns should pair it with practical tips: "Ask the seller if the wood has a harvesting permit," "Look at the label" or "Request an invoice with a verification code." Normalizing the act of asking about legality can push companies to proactively offer such proof. Visuals can strengthen the message, such as showing the wood supply chain and ending with: "If you don't know where it comes from, it might come from a destroyed forest." Studies show that many Mexican consumers remain unaware that illegal timber floods the market. This message aims to close that gap and empower people to act (Hernández T. & Hernández Flores, 2020).
- **"Your Choice Matters: Buy Wood with a Future ":** This positive message emphasizes the power of consumers to support forest conservation through responsible buying. The campaign could frame the purchase of sustainable or legally verified products as a concrete action that advances sustainability. For example: "By choosing sustainable wood, you protect forests, wildlife, and communities." Informational materials can highlight tangible benefits. One CONAFOR brochure notes that responsible purchases help conserve habitats, protect endangered species, and improve conditions for forest workers (Cabrera Palma, 2023). The phrase "Wood with a Future" communicates that the wood comes from forests managed to remain productive and healthy over time. Campaigns can also tie the message to intergenerational responsibility: "So our children can enjoy forests too." This approach follows leading international practices. This approach aligns with international best practices that encourage consumers to see responsible sourcing as a reflection of their environmental values.
- **"Don't be an accomplice: Illegal Logging Is a Federal Crime":** Given that visible consequences for illegal logging are rare, this message highlights the fact that it is a punishable crime. A strong campaign could say: "Buying illegal wood also supports a crime." While messaging should avoid blaming consumers directly, it must still build a sense of shared responsibility. Campaigns can mention that Mexican law punishes illegal logging with prison terms ranging from 2 to 15 years (Teposteco Rodríguez, 2022). They can also note that upcoming legal reforms could target unscrupulous retailers. Connecting illegal wood to organized crime, community violence, or corruption (as documented) generates strong public rejection. "Don't be an accomplice" evokes urgency and ethics—just as people wouldn't knowingly buy stolen goods, they shouldn't buy wood from

unknown or illicit sources. Campaigns can include actionable steps: “If you suspect illegal logging, report it,” and provide specific channels such as hotlines or apps. This strategy empowers citizens to take part in enforcement and break the cycle of impunity.

- **“Support Communities, Protect Our Forests”:** In Mexico, the social dimension is critical: Indigenous and ejido communities manage 70 percent of the country’s forests, and millions of people depend on them. Campaigns should show how buying legal and community-sourced wood directly supports these local stewards. Success stories—like cooperatives that produce certified furniture—can help humanize the issue.
- A clear message that needs to come across in this context is that: **“Many communities rely on forests. When you buy legal wood, you help them thrive and give them reasons to protect their forests”**. This narrative can counter the misconception that all logging is destructive, distinguishing sustainable harvesting from illegal plunder. Evidence shows that community forest management is Mexico’s most effective conservation model, yet it faces unfair competition (Hernández T. & Hernández Flores, 2020). Sharing this with urban consumers can build empathy and national solidarity. Information should include data and language such as: “76% of Mexico’s legal timber comes from community forests. When you buy their products, you support rural jobs and sustainable development”. This message aligns with fair trade values and resonates with socially conscious consumers.

In addition to key messages, **campaigns should include continuous educational components**. These could take the form of **printed or digital guides**—e.g., “How to Identify Legal Wood”—with tips on recognizing official stamps, understanding legal documents, and knowing which species are restricted. Organizers could **offer workshops at home improvement expos or create engaging infographics and videos for social media**. One idea: **a short video** showing the path of legal wood (with traceability, permits, certification) versus illegal wood (with gaps and opacity), ending with the message: “You choose what you bring home.”

Campaigns could partner with retailers to display signage and green labels at the point of sale, ensuring that the message reaches buyers right when they decide. This tactic has been successful in other countries (Bartley & Koos, 2015). Finally, campaigns should enlist influencers and public figures focused on sustainability to amplify these messages, especially to younger audiences.

When crafting these key messages, communicators must support them with concrete data from Mexico to ensure credibility. For example, they can highlight that “illegal logging prevents more than P\$ 97 billion from entering the formal economy each year” (based on INECC’s high-estimate scenario), or that “14 million cubic meters of illegal timber cause annual fiscal and ecological losses.” They should also emphasize that “in 2018, Mexico imported eight times more timber than it produced” (28.9 million vs. 8.3 million m³), which underscores the country’s dependence on external sources and the potential inflow of wood with uncertain origin.

Raising consumer awareness in Mexico about SFM and illegal logging does more than close a knowledge gap—it unleashes one of the most powerful forces for change: informed demand. A market where consumers insist on legal and sustainable wood creates no space for illegal logging.

As a result, forests will receive better care, communities will benefit, and forest laws will become more effective. Mexico's institutions, academic sector, and civil society must rise to the challenge and take this message across the country—so that the next time someone buys a piece of furniture, a sheet of paper, or builds a home, they understand that choice helps decide the future of our forests.

To implement media campaigns related to sustainable forest management and responsible purchasing of wood products in Mexico, it is advisable to align them with the period when the Operational Guidelines of the Sustainable Forest Development for Well-being Program (Programa Desarrollo Forestal Sustentable para el Bienestar) by CONAFOR are promoted, which takes place between **January and February each year**.

6.4 Key Public Awareness Messages in the US

From the literature reviewed and the information obtained from key informants, below are some key messages that can be used to promote responsible purchasing of wood products in the US. It is important to note that as illegal logging is not a relevant issue, most messages are intended to promote sustainable forest management:

- **“You can Help the Planet by Consuming Wood Products”**: This message intends to create awareness on the environmental benefits of wood products, especially in relation to mitigating climate change as wood products store carbon dioxide during their whole life cycle. Comparing wood to other products like plastic or concrete in terms of the resources needed to produce them and their contribution to greenhouse gas emissions can help consumers better understand the advantages of consuming wood products.
- **“In the US, We Plant more Trees than We Harvest”**: This message intends to work as an introduction to sustainable forest management. However, as this topic is too complex to communicate in a short message addressed to end consumers that might not know much about the forest sector, this idea can help people understand that deforestation is not an issue in the US. As such, they can buy US wood products with certainty that they are not contributing to forest exploitation. When possible, this message can be complemented with more specific information on forest management practices and their relation to water and biodiversity conservation.
- **“Are you Worried About Deforestation? Ask Where Your Wood Products Come From”**: This message can be used in two ways: first, to highlight that US wood products come from sustainably managed forests and that consumers can help maintaining many rural and Indigenous people's jobs by supporting the US forest industry with their purchase. Secondly, it allows us to talk about the benefits of the US legislation framework in preventing illegal and unsustainable wood products from entering the country. It can also be remarked that wood products coming from developing countries can be legal and sustainable, if they comply with the import regulations.
- **“Look at the Label to Protect Forests”**: This message encourages consumers to examine product labels for information about the origin and legality of wood products. Labels may include details such as country of origin, species, harvesting permits, or

verification codes. Promoting the habit of checking labels helps normalize consumer responsibility and supports transparency in the wood supply chain. This approach complements broader awareness campaigns that invite buyers to ask questions and demand legal timber, empowering them to make informed choices that support forest conservation.

In terms of the tools and strategies suggested by interviewees to send messages to end consumers, here are the main recommendations:

- Engage retailers in communicating messages such as the origin of the wood products they sell and the importance of SFM.
- Use technology such as apps or QR codes where customers can learn more about the forest where their products come from.
- Share stories of forest managers, letting consumers know who they are and what they do to protect forests.
- Use social media to share short messages on SFM. This is especially relevant to engaging young people.
- Organize conferences and workshops in schools and other educational spaces to educate students on SFM.
- Emphasize the benefits of consuming wood products, especially US hardwood, in terms of supporting the national forest industry, conserving forests through sustainable forest management, mitigating climate change and even reducing stress in offices and classrooms by using wood furniture.
- Highlight the relevance of the forest sector for the US economy and the good performance it has in terms of forest management practices and regulatory framework.

Workshop participants suggested that the best time for implementing awareness campaigns can be in September and October, in preparation for the National Forest Products Week, which is celebrated during the third week of October. During this week, there are announcements of new programs, grants and other news regarding SFM and responsible use of forest products.