

**Request for Proposals**

**Title:** Blue carbon feasibility study – Spain

**RFP No:** 03032023

**Original Date of Issuance:** March 3, 2023

**Updated:** March 15, 2023

Application Deadline:	7 April 2023
Languages Required:	Written and spoken English
Proposed Starting Date:	21 April 2023
Proposed End Date:	30 June 2023
Location:	Blue Carbon feasibility assessment in Spain
Contract Manager:	Jennifer Howard (NCS)

**1. Background**

As a founding and coordinating member of the International Partnership for Blue Carbon (IPBC), the Blue Carbon Initiative, and the Global Mangrove Alliance, CI has been working to improve conservation and protection of vital blue carbon ecosystems around the world. These coastal habitats provide critically important ecosystem services for communities, including sequestering and storing large quantities of blue carbon, up to five times the carbon stored in terrestrial forests. When these ecosystems are lost or degraded, their carbon stores can be released, turning efficient carbon sinks into significant sources of greenhouse gases and accelerating climate change.

CI developed the first VCS-certified Blue Carbon conservation crediting project in Colombia. We are interested in partnering to expand this work globally and demonstrate how carbon finance can be used to conserve, protect, restore, and fund blue carbon ecosystems, while providing for livelihood and development opportunities for local people. Nearly all blue carbon projects developed to date have been for mangrove conservation or restoration. Other blue carbon ecosystems, including salt marshes, also have the potential for a significant climate change mitigation benefit.

CI and partners are piloting a saltmarsh agro-ecology project in Andalucía, Spain in which historically degraded wetlands are being restored in order to promote climate resilience and create local bio-economies. The project seeks to spearhead new and holistic approaches to wetland restoration that has little precedent globally yet is highly scalable across global geographies in which saltmarsh wetlands are found. The prevalence of degraded saltmarshes around the world, along with the need to transition salt-affected farmland towards regenerative approaches makes these set of solutions highly scalable. CI is investigating three restoration projects in the initial phase, totaling 400-700 hectares with a phase 2 that could expand the project to over 2,000 ha. Together with the re-wetting of former saltmarshes, regenerative saltmarsh agricultures and aquacultures will be established in nature-based designs that have been tested in a number of other countries over the last 25 years. The project is supported by the European Union, the Government of Andalucía, local landowners, and research institutions.

## 2. Project Overview

Conservation International (CI) is working with partners to assess the viability of a first-of-its-kind blue carbon crediting project for salt marsh restoration that is integrated into a landscape approach including agro-ecology in the Andalucía region of Spain. The objective of this consultancy is to produce a feasibility report assessing the technical considerations and enabling conditions of developing a blue carbon project for salt marsh conservation including carbon, policy, stakeholder, environmental, community, legal and financial characteristics. Specifically, the feasibility study will estimate baselines, threat assessments and mitigating activities, assess ownership issues, and develop financial models for resulting blue carbon projects within specific project areas.

## 3. Terms of Reference, Deliverables and Deliverables Schedule

See Attachment 2.

## 4. Submission Details

- a. **Deadline.** Proposals must be received no later than 7 April, 2023 at 5:00pm EST. Late submissions will not be accepted. Proposals must be submitted via email to **Alexa Mehos (amehos@conservation.org)**. All proposals are to be submitted following the guidelines listed in this RFP.
- b. **Validity of bid.** 120 days from the submission deadline
- c. **Clarifications.** Questions may be submitted to **Alexa Mehos (amehos@conservation.org)** by the specified date and time in the timeline below. The subject of the email must contain the RFP number and title of the RFP. CI will respond in writing to submitted clarifications by the date specified in the timeline below. Responses to questions that may be of common interest to all bidders will be posted to the CI website and/or communicated via email.
- d. **Amendments.** At any time prior to the deadline for submission of proposals, CI may, for any reason, modify the RFP documents by amendment which will be posted to the CI website and/or communicated via email.

## 5. Minimum Requirements

- a. Proven track record of performing blue carbon feasibility studies
- b. Proven track record of performing REDD+ feasibility studies and/or with REDD+ PD development under the VCS and CCB Standards
- c. Familiarity with the VCS tidal wetlands methodologies (VM0007 and VM0033) and the planned updates to VCS REDD+ methodologies
- d. Ability to proactively engage with a range of relevant stakeholders to ensure inclusion of all necessary partners
- e. Solid understanding and experience with salt marsh ecosystems
- f. Availability to meet deliverable due dates as stated in this RFP
- g. Fluency in English and Spanish

## 6. Proposal Documents to Include

- a. Signed cover page on bidder's letterhead with the bidder's contact information.
- b. Signed Representation of Transparency, Integrity, Environmental and Social Responsibility (Attachment 1)

- c. Technical Proposal.
  - i. Corporate Capabilities, Experience, Past Performance, and 3 client references. Please include descriptions of similar projects or assignments and at least three client references.
  - ii. Qualifications of Key Personnel. Please attach CVs that demonstrate how the team proposed meets the minimum requirements listed in section 5 (Minimum Requirements).
  - iii. Technical Approach, Methodology and Detailed Work Plan. The Technical Proposal should describe in detail how the bidder intends to carry out the requirements described in the Terms of Reference (see Attachment 2).
- d. Financial Proposal. Offerors shall use the cost proposal template (Attachment 3).

**7. Evaluation Criteria** In evaluating proposals, CI will seek the best value for money considering the merits of the technical and costs proposals. Proposals will be evaluated using the following criteria:

<b>Evaluation Criteria</b>	<b>Score (out of 100)</b>
Proposal and timeline: Is the proposed approach and sequence of activities appropriate to the assignment? Does the proposed timeline fit with the estimated for the completion of this work?	50 points
Prior experience: Does the bidder's past performance demonstrate recent proven experience doing similar work?	20 points
Expertise: Does the bidder and the proposed personnel have the specific technical expertise for the assignment?	20 points
Cost: Costs proposed are reasonable and realistic, reflect a solid understanding of the assignment.	10 points

**8. Proposal Timeline**

RFP Issued	03 March 2023
Clarifications submitted to CI	20 March 2023
Clarifications provided to known bidders	22 March 2023
Complete proposals due to CI	07 April 2023
Final selection	15 April 2023

**9. Resulting Award** CI anticipates entering into an agreement with the selected bidder by 21 April 2023 Any resulting agreement will be subject to the terms and conditions of CI's Services Agreement. A model form of agreement can be provided upon request.

This RFP does not obligate CI to execute a contract, nor does it commit CI to pay any costs incurred in the preparation or submission of the proposals. Furthermore, CI reserves the right to reject any and all offers, if such action is considered to be in the best interest of CI. CI will, in its sole discretion, select the winning proposal and is not obligated to share individual evaluation results.

**10. Confidentiality** All proprietary information provided by the bidder shall be treated as confidential and will not be shared with potential or actual applicants during the solicitation process. This includes but is not limited to price quotations, cost proposals and technical proposals. CI may, but is not obliged to, post procurement awards on its public website after the solicitation process has concluded, and the contract has been awarded. CI's evaluation results are confidential and applicant scoring will not be shared among bidders.

**11. Code of Ethics** All Offerors are expected to exercise the highest standards of conduct in preparing, submitting and if selected, eventually carrying out the specified work in accordance with CI's Code of Ethics. Conservation International's reputation derives from our commitment to our values: Integrity, Respect, Courage, Optimism, Passion and Teamwork. CI's Code of Ethics (the "Code") provides guidance to CI employees, service providers, experts, interns, and volunteers in living CI's core values, and outlines minimum standards for ethical conduct which all parties must adhere to. Any violation of the Code of Ethics, as well as concerns regarding the integrity of the procurement process and documents should be reported to CI via its Ethics Hotline at [www.ci.ethicspoint.com](http://www.ci.ethicspoint.com).

**12. Attachments:**

Attachment 1: Representation of Transparency, Integrity, Environmental and Social Responsibility

Attachment 2: Terms of Reference

Attachment 3: Cost Proposal Template

## Attachment 1: Representation of Transparency, Integrity, Environmental and Social Responsibility

RFP No. **03032023**

UEI Number (if applicable): [XXX-XXX-XXX](#)

All Offerors are expected to exercise the highest standards of conduct in preparing, submitting and if selected, eventually carrying out the specified work in accordance with CI's Code of Ethics. CI's Code of Ethics provides guidance to CI employees, service providers, experts, interns, and volunteers in living CI's core values, and outlines minimum standards for ethical conduct which all parties must adhere to. Any violations of the Code of Ethics should be reported to CI via its Ethics Hotline at [www.ci.ethicspoint.com](http://www.ci.ethicspoint.com).

CI relies on the personal integrity, good judgment and common sense of all third parties acting on behalf, or providing services to the organization, to deal with issues not expressly addressed by the Code or as noted below.

### **I. With respect to CI's Code of Ethics, we certify:**

- a. We understand and accept that CI, its contractual partners, grantees and other parties with whom we work are expected to commit to the highest standards of Transparency, Fairness, and Integrity in procurement.

### **II. With respect to social and environmental standards, we certify:**

- a. We are committed to high standards of ethics and integrity and compliance with all applicable laws across our operations, including prohibition of actions that facilitate trafficking in persons, child labor, forced labor, sexual abuse, exploitation or harassment. We respect internationally proclaimed human rights and take no action that contributes to the infringement of human rights. We protect those who are most vulnerable to infringements of their rights and the ecosystems that sustain them.
- b. We fully respect and enforce the environmental and social standards recognized by the international community, including the fundamental conventions of International Labour Organization (ILO) and international conventions for the protection of the environment, in line with the laws and regulations applicable to the country where the contract is to be performed.

### **III. With respect to our eligibility and professional conduct, we certify:**

- a. We are not and none of our affiliates [members, employees, contractors, subcontractors, and consultants] are in a state of bankruptcy, liquidation, legal settlement, termination of activity, or guilty of grave professional misconduct as determined by a regulatory body responsible for licensing and/or regulating the offeror's business
- b. We have not and will not engage in criminal or fraudulent acts. By a final judgment, we were not convicted in the last five years for offenses such as fraud or corruption, money laundering or professional misconduct.
- c. We are/were not involved in writing or recommending the terms of reference for this solicitation document.

- d. We have not engaged in any collusion or price fixing with other offerors.
- e. We have not made promises, offers, or grants, directly or indirectly to any CI employees involved in this procurement, or to any government official in relation to the contract to be performed, with the intention of unduly influencing a decision or receiving an improper advantage.
- f. We have taken no action nor will we take any action to limit or restrict access of other companies, organizations or individuals to participate in the competitive bidding process launched by CI.
- g. We have fulfilled our obligations relating to the payment of social security contributions or taxes in accordance with the legal provisions of the country where the contract is to be performed.
- h. We have not provided, and will take all reasonable steps to ensure that we do not and will not knowingly provide, material support or resources to any individual or entity that commits, attempts to commit, advocates, facilitates, or participates in terrorist acts, or has committed, attempted to commit, facilitate, or participated in terrorist acts, and we are compliant with all applicable Counter-Terrorist Financing and Anti-Money Laundering laws (including USA Patriot Act and U.S. Executive Order 13224).
- i. We certify that neither we nor our directors, officers, key employees or beneficial owners are included in any list of financial or economic sanctions, debarment or suspension adopted by the United States, United Nations, the European Union, the World Bank, or General Services Administration's List of Parties Excluded from Federal Procurement or Non-procurement programs in accordance with E.O.s 12549 and 12689, "Debarment and Suspension".

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

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

## Attachment 2: Terms of Reference

CI is proposing to contract with a suitably qualified and experienced consultant to provide technical support in producing a report assessing the blue carbon potential (emission reductions and removals) of ~2,000 ha of salt marsh restoration over three sites (Estero de Trebujena, Estero de Barbate, and Estero de Cadiz) in Andalucía, Spain including a desk-based analysis of the characteristics of potential sites and a field visit to refine the assumptions and allow for meetings with partners.

### Specific objectives and outcomes of the feasibility study include:

- 1) To demonstrate whether potential project sites would meet the requirements under the VCS Program or another GHG program:
  - a) Describe and justify how the project is eligible under the scope of the GHG program
  - b) Selection of the most suitable methodology (e.g., VM0007 or VM0033 under the VCS Program)
  - c) Definition of project boundaries (project area, crediting period, etc.)
  - d) Additionality, permanence, and leakage requirements
- 2) To define project design
  - a) Description of project activities (wetland conservation, restoration, etc.), including a theory of change identifying threats/barriers and explaining why the proposed activities will mitigate/address them
  - b) Stakeholder analysis (partners and roles, project proponent)
  - c) Project risk registry and alignment with relevant non-permanence risk requirements (e.g., the VCS AFOLU Non-Permanence Risk Tool if using the VCS Program)
- 3) To confirm legal and policy alignment
  - a) Land tenure and carbon rights
  - b) Alignment with national policies such as NDCs
- 4) GHG estimations wetland conservation and restoration
  - a) Assess drivers and agents of salt marsh loss and degradation
  - b) Revise salt marsh low rates rates and classify areas according to land use change risks
  - c) Emission factors (needs for sampling)
  - d) Carbon credit estimation potential (emission reductions and removals)
- 5) Financial analysis
  - a) Develop a detailed budget for implementation of project activities over the 30-year lifetime of the project (include staff time and community engagement work)
  - b) Estimate carbon revenues based on expert opinion on carbon market prices
  - c) Identify any funding gaps and a strategy to fill those gaps
  - d) Assess large multinationals with operations in the region
  - e) Assess local economy/sectors impacted by the carbon project, including size, structure/concentration, stage of development and regulation
  - f) Assess the level of government debt and foreign investment frameworks

### Activities and deliverables include:

- 1) **Proposed approach:** inception report outlining the assessment design, methods and approach, a detailed work plan, and proposed schedule for completion of other deliverables
- 2) **Desk review of blue carbon potential:** preliminary report reviewing and prioritizing possible blue carbon project sites, key findings and any identified information gaps or challenges, including:
  - a) Legal and policy analysis
  - b) Draft of the blue carbon feasibility report following CI's project opportunity profile (POP) template

**3) Site visit and summary report:**

- a) Site visit to Spain to meet with partners, and assess potential blue carbon project sites on the ground
- b) Short summary of places visited, interviews held, key findings and any remaining information gaps or challenges identified during the site visit

**4) Final feasibility report:** final report containing desk-based and field-based findings, including recommendation and prioritization of sites for blue carbon project development, and proposed next steps for further development of blue carbon projects in the areas of interest in Spain.



**Attachment 3: Cost Proposal Template**

The cost proposal must be all-inclusive of profit, fees or taxes. Additional costs cannot be included after award, and revisions to proposed costs may not be made after submission unless expressly requested by CI should the offerors proposal be accepted. Nevertheless, for the purpose of the proposal, Offerors must provide a detailed budget showing major expense line items. Offers must show unit prices, quantities, and total price. All items, services, etc. must be clearly labeled and included in the total offered price. All cost information must be expressed in USD.

If selected, Offeror shall use its best efforts to minimize the financing of any taxes on goods and services, or the importation, manufacture, procurement or supply thereof. If Offeror is eligible to apply for refunds on taxes paid, Offeror shall do so. Any tax savings should be reflected in the total cost.

Cost Breakdown by Deliverable

<b>Deliverable</b>	<b>Price (Lump Sum, All Inclusive)</b>
Inception report	
Desk review and preliminary report	
Site visit and short summary report	
Final feasibility report	

Cost Breakdown by Cost Component (example only)

<b>Description</b>	<b>Unit of measure (day, month etc)</b>	<b>Total period of engagement</b>	<b>Unit cost/rate</b>	<b>Total Cost for the Period</b>
Consultant 1				
Consultant 2				
Sub-total Personnel				
Travel Costs (if applicable)				
Other related Costs (please specify)				
<b>Total Cost of Financial Proposal</b>				