

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Contract	IC/___/___
Expertise	Consultant for the independent evaluation of the GCF's Simplified Approval Process access modality
Source	Remote (International Recruitment)

Background:

Currently, the GCF has approved 47 projects through the SAP modality, 23 projects prior to the update to the SAP policy at B.32 and 24 projects afterwards. Of the 47 SAP projects, 26 are with International Accredited Entities, 5 with Regional Direct Access Entities and 16 with National Direct Access Entities. To date, SAP projects mainly focus on three results areas: Livelihoods of People and Communities as well as Health Wellbeing Food and Water on the adaptation side; Ecosystems and Ecosystem Services on the mitigation side.

GCF introduced the Simplified Approval Process (SAP) in decision B.18/06 with the intention of speeding up the preparation, review, approval and disbursement procedures for proposals under USD10 million with limited social and environmental risks.

At B. 24 the Board approved the IEU's workplan for 2020 including an independent assessment of the GCF's Simplified Approval Process and took note of the completed independent assessment in decision B.30/02. The GCF-IEU submitted a management action report (MAR) to the Board one year following the adoption of the decision (see document B.34/Inf. 10/Annex VIII). The MAR reviewed Secretariat progress made with the adoption of the 9 recommendations set out in the evaluation.

Following the completed independent assessment (decision B.30/02), the GCF Secretariat made a number of alterations to the SAP modality, most importantly through decision B.32/05.

In decision B.32/05 the Board approved the Update of the simplified approval process to improve the process and reduce the information required for the review of SAP proposals accounting for their smaller size and minimal or no adverse environmental/social risks and/or impacts, as described in the GCF Revised Environmental and Social Policy.

Importantly, decision B.32/05 confirmed total GCF contributions to SAP projects will be increased to USD 25 million per funding proposal maintaining the requirement for projects with no to minimal adverse environmental/social risks and/or impacts. Further, the Board requested the Secretariat to continue to identify areas for further simplifications within GCF processes, to inform the review of the simplified approval process and its implementation of strategic programming activities and the overall policy cycle for the next programming period.

Decision B.32/05 made a number of important changes to the SAP programme, many of which reflected IEU's recommendations and the IEU's management action report (see document B.34/Inf. 10/Annex VIII). These include embedding increasingly ambitious key performance indicators for the simplified approval process (including for the post-approval stage), the continued and enhanced provision of readiness support for simplified approval process funding proposal preparation and access as part of the RPSP.

Overall, decision 32/05 reaffirmed the Secretariat's commitment to simplify the documentation required for presenting SAP proposals, ensuring that SAP projects or programmes are expected to possess significant climate impact potential and are expected to be ready for scaling up with potential for transformation and promoting a paradigm shift to low-emission and climate-resilient development.

Decision 32/05 confirmed the development of a simplified review process, the development of SAP programming guidance, as well as guided templates to fast-track preparation and review of SAP proposals. Specific examples include the creation of SAP funding proposal guided templates in key GCF impact areas, such as templates on early warning systems and energy efficiency. Through the SAP Policy and Update, SAP intends to target DAEs and aims to reach, overtime, a portfolio where 50 per cent of the approved SAP proposals are from DAEs.

Subsequent to decision B.32/05, the policy and procedural landscape of GCF has evolved further, with implications for the continued importance and relevance of the SAP modality. Examples include how the RPSP work programme and budget for 2022/23 continued to support the development of concept notes for priority areas including SAP and the Project Specific Assessment Approach (PSAA). In addition, and in line with the Update, the Secretariat has started using capacity-building initiatives that particularly target DAEs, national designated authorities (NDAs) and private sector accredited entities (AEs) to facilitate their access to SAP.

More broadly, the GCF has recently proposed key changes to its operations and business model. These include the revised RPSP strategy 2024-2027, revised Accreditation Strategy (decision B.34/19), and revised Accreditation framework with implications for the SAP modality (at B.40). The revised RPSP strategy 2024-2027 provides up to USD 7 million per country to NDAs or focal points to support pipeline development, capacity building, policy development and strategic frameworks. Moreover, the RPSP strategy extends further support to DAEs, as well as LDCs and SIDS. The Secretariat aims for RPSP to complement PPF support. Decision B.37/22 Board endorsed the revised operating modalities for PPF, including an allocation of USD 90.3 million for the PPF with up to 2.5 per cent of the PPF resource allocation can be employed for partnership-building and knowledge-sharing activities for project preparation.

The Board, in decision B.34/19, adopted the Accreditation Strategy which aims to enhance the efficiency, effectiveness and inclusiveness of the GCF. The Accreditation Strategy proposes the PSAA as a tool to strategically identify new partners, countries, and technologies that have been underserved by the GCF to date and contribute to the GCF programming goals. The PSAA pilot offers an alternative approach to access GCF resources and an alternative channel to institutional accreditation (see decision GCF/B.29/0.6 and decision B.31/06, paragraph h). This alternative approach could be seen to have some overlaps with the SAP modality.

Further, the accreditation framework was approved by the Board at B.40. The Secretariat is now mandated to undertake a review of related GCF policies, including the Updated simplified approval process (decision B.32/05) to ensure coherence with the new accreditation landscape. More widely, through 2024 the GCF Secretariat has embarked on a reform and efficiency process, including but not limited to re-examining internal project review and approval processes, streamlining internal processes and documentation through using revised, simpler, shorter templates, as well as reviewing the one-year pipeline priority list with a focus on country ownership and alignment.

Scope of Work:

The Consultant will play a pivotal role, alongside the IEU team, in delivering the independent evaluation of the GCF's Simplified Approval Process as outlined in the Board-approved workplan and budget for the IEU in 2025. The consultant will be considered a core member of the evaluation team and as such support the delivery of this evaluation.

The Consultant will be available to work starting on 06 January 2025 until 04 July 2025. The assignment may take up to 60 - 70 working days.

The selected consultant shall play a pivotal role in delivering the independent evaluation of the GCF's Simplified Approval Process through the use of the following evaluation criteria and questions.

Relevance: The degree to which the GCF's Simplified Approval Process is fit-for-purpose, sufficiently targeted and agile enough to meet the needs of the GCF, with an emphasis on the extent to which the objectives, design and operationalization of the Policy respond to and adapt to institutional needs.

Effectiveness: The degree to which the GCF's Simplified Approval Process successfully delivers on its mandate to streamline and speed up effective programming of climate projects, including explaining the factors driving or hindering successful implementation, and the extent to which the SAP achieves all its objectives and expected results.

Efficiency: The extent to which the SAP modality delivers results in an economic and timely way compared to feasible alternatives in the GCF context

Coherence: The degree to which the GCF's Simplified Approval Process operates together with other internal modalities and policies to achieve strategic goals and objectives (internal coherence) alongside the consistency, complementarity, harmonisation and co-ordination with other climate funds, ensuring SAP is adding value while avoiding duplication of effort.

Impact: The extent to which the GCF's Simplified Approval Process has generated significant positive or negative, intended or unintended, higher-level effects.

The consultant will cover the following three (3) areas:

(a) *GCF strategies, policies, standards, manuals and guidance documents:* The selected consultant shall support the review the GCF's suite of policies including relevant updates and associated decisions including but not limited to the Updated simplified approval process (decision B.32/05); Initial fiduciary principles and standards (decision B.07/02); Revised environmental and social policy (decision B.BM-2021/18); Indigenous peoples policy (decision B.19/11); Updated gender policy and gender action plan 2020–2023 (decision B.24/12); Integrated results management framework (decision B.29/01); Investment framework for 2024–2027 (decision B.37/20); Risk management framework (decision B.17/11); Investment risk policy (decision B.19/04); Policy on Co-financing (decision B.24/14); Project and programme activity cycle (decision B.17/09) and annex IV, "Updated project and programme cycle"; revised Accreditation Strategy (decision B.34/19), Updated Strategic Plan 2024-2027 (decision B.36/13) revised RPSP strategy 2024-2027 (GCF/B.37/17), and revised Accreditation framework (B.40).

(b) *GCF processes, operations and implementation:* The selected consultant shall support and review processes that underpin the operationalization of the simplified approval process, operational linkages

with PPF and RPSP as well as potential overlaps with these and wider modalities including PSAA, as well as implementation the simplified approval process guidance documents, templates, and manuals.

(c) *Results, outcomes and impacts of the SAP modality:* The selected consultant shall support and review the degree to which the simplified approval process is consistently achieving stated aims and objectives, and is generating significant positive or negative, intended or unintended, results, outcomes and impacts including higher-level effects.

Duties and Responsibilities

Under the guidance of the evaluation lead and Head of the IEU, the selected consultant will conduct a range of tasks including but not limited to:

- Reviewing GCF documentation including but not limited to the sources listed above
- Supporting the IEU in conducting interviews with GCF staff, personnel, external members on panels or groups established by the Board, accredited entities as well as wider persons or entities who contribute to, engages in, or is affected by or concerned with any Fund-related activity related to the simplified approval process
- Providing the timely assessment and review on specific issues assigned and based on specific terms of reference and assessment guidelines provided by the IEU, including assessing the coherence of the simplified approval process with related internal strategies, policies and frameworks
- Applying international best practices in the specified subject area
- Delivering a benchmarking exercise with at least 4 comparators in terms of relevant simplified approval procedures for projects developed and implemented by peer institutions and partners
- Working closely with the IEU and supporting data collection and analysis, to ensure quality of data and analyses. The consultant may be expected to attend and help facilitate interviews, perform consultations with key informants and groups of stakeholders, and analyse secondary datasets as well as data generated. The consultant is also expected to keep notes from all meetings and participate in weekly meetings with the IEU evaluation team based in Songdo.
- Ensure the systematic and traceable use of all relevant sources in a way that maximizes the triangulation of evidence and consequently the credibility of the evidence and recommendations.
- Integrating comments received by stakeholders into the factual draft alongside the IEU evaluation team.
- Working closely with the IEU to delineate the key findings and recommendations.
- Availability to travel to Songdo, South Korea, for data collection (5 days) and to finalize the factual draft of the evaluation report (two days) within the timeline below.
- Performing additional tasks as may be assigned or delegated by the evaluation lead or the Head of the IEU related to the assignment

- Uphold strict confidentiality regarding all information shared by employees and maintain the highest standards of privacy and professionalism.

Deliverables:

All data, analysis and reports will be IEU products. The IEU retain the ownership and intellectual property of all data and products. Alongside the IEU evaluation team, the Consultant is required to complete the following Deliverables:

1. **Deliver a detailed Approach Paper** (in line with the formatting guidelines provided by the IEU), that outlines among other things the main report and the annexes, and explains the methodology, the tools, instruments, the evaluation criteria and matrix, protocols, and the expected process that the evaluation shall have to follow within a detailed and time-intensive delivery timeline. It shall also contain a comprehensive list of all GCF Board documents and decisions to be included in the evaluation. The consultant may take part online engagement with stakeholders through webinars. This deliverable will not constitute more than 4-6 days of the contract total.
2. **Deliver a first complete factual draft of the report.** The aim is to submit the factual draft to key stakeholders, perhaps including engagement with stakeholders through webinars and presentations on emerging findings. This deliverable will not constitute more than 30-40 days of the contract total.
3. **Deliver a final report with key findings and actionable recommendations**, including those that reflect key strategic and policy lessons, including final communication products. This deliverable will not constitute more than 20-22 days of the contract total.

All data, notes and products will be handed over to the IEU alongside the delivery of communication products at the end of the assignment.

Required Experience and Qualifications

- The consultant shall have at least 15 years of experience of completing policy evaluations in relation to multilateral lending, including UN agencies, with demonstrable experience of providing strategic advice, implementing, conducting evaluations or reviews on programmes and projects, preferably within the climate change and climate finance areas.
- Essential qualifications include advanced degree in economics, public policy, international development, or related fields.
- Excellent knowledge of other multilateral climate institutions so benchmarking can be done rapidly.
- Outstanding writing skills including a strong track record of reports and/or publications in areas relevant to GCF. Direct expertise on the GCF is a distinct advantage.
- Excellent ability to critically appraise different layers of evidence including programmes/projects, frameworks, modalities, themes, processes and policies, and information from reviews to inform the assessment, and to extract and synthesize the key findings and lessons learned.

- Proven knowledge of mainstream evaluation and monitoring frameworks.
- Demonstrated ability to commit to produce a highly credible, very well written assessment report within the budget and period requested, and to take into consideration IEU feedback at multiple stages.
- Availability to travel to Songdo, South Korea, for data collection (5 days) and to finalize the factual draft of the evaluation report (two days) within the timeline of the evaluation.
- Ability to exercise good judgment, meet tight deadlines and maintain required productivity without compromising quality
- Ability to work independently and efficiently with limited guidance in a deadline-driven environment
- Fluency in English is essential; knowledge of another United Nations language is an advantage.

Minimum general experience	20	Years
Minimum specific experience (relevant to assignment)	15	Years
Regional/country experience	N/A	

Schedule and location of assignment*

<u>City and country</u>	<u>Working days</u>	<u>Est. start date</u>	<u>Est. end date</u>	<u>Other details</u>
Remote work				N/A
TOTAL	WD			

* Travel dates are as yet unknown. The consultant should be available to travel to Songdo, South Korea, for data collection (5 days) and to finalize the factual draft of the evaluation report (two days) within the timeline of the evaluation. Reimbursable travel costs fall outside the scope of the costs of this consultancy assignment.