GEF Small Grants Program — CSO Challenge Program

Concept Note Application Template

Version: July 28 2026

IUCN and the Global Environment Facility (GEF) welcome your interest to submit a proposal to the GEF Small Grants Program CSO Challenge Program. This is the submission form for the first stage of the selection process. Fields marked * are mandatory.

Note: This form is for preparation purposes only. All applications must be submitted through https://csochallenge.org. You will need to register and create an account first. Text fields scroll and accept unlimited text.

SECTION 1. APPLICANT INFORMATION

Applicant Organization Details *

Legal Name of Organization:

Acronym:

Address:

Telephone:

Website URL:

X / Twitter Account:

Facebook Page:

Lead Author of Proposal *

Full Name:

Job Title:

Telephone:

Email Address:

SECTION 2. ELIGIBILITY CHECKLIST

Type of Civil Society Organization (check all that apply): *

- A civil society organization with legal entity and a bank account
- A local civil society organization
- A regional civil society organization
- An international civil society organization
- A women's or women-led group and/or organization
- A youth or youth-led group and/or organization
- An indigenous peoples' group and/or organization

Thematic Alignment — project must work on at least one theme: *

- Community-based management of threatened ecosystems and species
- Sustainable agriculture and fisheries, and food security
- Low-carbon energy access and co-benefits
- Local to global coalitions for chemicals and waste management
- Catalyzing sustainable urban solutions

Eligible Activities and Expenditures: *

- I confirm that I have consulted the funding guidelines for eligible activities and expenditures
- I confirm that my project does not include activities referred to under the exclusion list in the funding guidelines

Commitment to Knowledge Sharing: *

- I commit to having the solutions developed or implemented by my project published on IUCN's PANORAMA platform and on other knowledge sharing mechanisms and knowledge products

SECTION 3. PROJECT OVERVIEW

Project Title *

Maximum 500 characters

Executive Summary *

Provide a concise description of the proposed project including the problem, objectives, approach, and anticipated impacts. Maximum 1000 characters.

Project Duration *

Must not exceed 24 months

Duration (months, max 24):

Start Date (MM/YYYY):

End Date (MM/YYYY):

Total project budget will be auto-calculated in the online portal once the Budget section is completed.

Total Project Budget USD (max $300,000):

Amount of Co-funding USD (not mandatory):

Project Location · Country(ies): *

Name of Site(s):

GPS Coordinates:

Attach a location map (Google Earth image with visible geo-coordinates and project intervention areas clearly demarcated) via https://csochallenge.org.

SECTION 4. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Project Overall Objective *

Describe in one sentence the overall objective of your project. Maximum 250 characters.

Theory of Change *

Describe a simple theory of change using the structure: "If (strategy), then (goal), because (assumption/reason)". Maximum 500 characters.

Project Rationale *

Describe the broad socio-economic context and the environmental problem your project addresses, including drivers and how it builds on existing work. Maximum 4000 characters.

Project Components, Approach and Activities *

Describe project components, activities and key outputs, and how they work together. Identify key activities for which you seek SGP CSO support and how they contribute to replication or scaling. Activities must be completed within 24 months. Maximum 6000 characters.

SECTION 4. PROJECT DESCRIPTION (continued)

Project Impact *

Describe anticipated changes to local, regional or global context including expected global environmental benefits and indirect impacts. Maximum 4000 characters.

Project Innovation(s) *

Describe innovative aspects including technological, finance, business model, policy or institutional innovations. Maximum 2000 characters.

Project Risks and Mitigation Measures *

Describe key risks (economic, environmental, social/political, organizational) and mitigation measures. Maximum 4000 characters.

Long-Term Sustainability and Replicability *

Describe the potential for replication, scaling, and measures to sustain or replicate results beyond project duration. Maximum 4000 characters.

SECTION 4. PROJECT DESCRIPTION (continued)

Expected Impact Measures *

Which of the following impact measures (if any) do you expect your project would contribute to? Select all that apply.

- Urban solutions and outcomes
- Land and ecosystems under restoration
- Degraded agricultural lands under restoration
- Forest and forest land under restoration
- Natural grass and woodland under restoration
- Wetlands (including estuaries, mangroves) under restoration
- Landscapes under improved practices (excluding protected areas)
- Landscapes under improved management to benefit biodiversity
- Landscapes under third-party certification incorporating biodiversity considerations
- Landscapes under sustainable land management in production systems
- High Conservation Value or other forest loss avoided
- Marine habitat under improved practices to benefit biodiversity (excluding protected areas)
- Marine Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures (OECMs) supported
- Beneficiaries with diversified, strengthened livelihoods and/or sources of income
- Promoting youth participation and empowerment in environmental decision making and action
- Promoting gender equality and women's empowerment
- Promoting the participation and empowerment of Indigenous Peoples in environmental decision making and action

Location in or near a Key Biodiversity Area (KBA) *

To identify whether the project site is within or near a KBA, refer to IUCN's Global Standard for Identification of Key Biodiversity Areas.

Is the project site located within a Key Biodiversity Area (KBA)?

Yes ● No

Is the project site located within 15 km of a Key Biodiversity Area (KBA)?

Yes No

SECTION 5. PRELIMINARY STAKEHOLDER IDENTIFICATION

List main stakeholders, their role on the project, projected impacts that the project will have on them, engagement to date, and plan for continued engagement during project implementation. Depending on the project, comprehensive stakeholder engagement should include government agencies, private sector, local civil society, international development partners, academia, and Indigenous Peoples, Traditional Leaders, women, youth, and/or other vulnerable groups.

Government Agencies (at different levels)

Name	Role and Impact on Project	Engagement Summary and Plan

Research & Universities

Name	Role and Impact on Project	Engagement Summary and Plan

International Organizations

Name	Role and Impact on Project	Engagement Summary and Plan

Private Sector

Name	Role and Impact on Project	Engagement Summary and Plan

Civil Society Organizations

Name	Role and Impact on Project	Engagement Summary and Plan

Local Stakeholders

Name	Role and Impact on Project	Engagement Summary and Plan

Stakeholder · Potential Impact of the Project on Stakeholder · Importance (1-5)

SECTION 6. PROJECT BUDGET

Use the field below to detail the project budget by cost category, with a maximum request of $300,000. Please also include any co-funding. Note that a budget template will be provided with the full proposal.

Preliminary Budget Notes / Cost Category Summary:

SECTION 7. EXPERIENCE OF APPLICANT ORGANIZATION

Relevant Experience *

Describe why your organization is best suited to carry out this project. Provide brief descriptions of up to 3 past projects relevant to this application. Maximum 2000 characters.

Qualifications and Experience of Key Project Staff *

Upload CVs of key project staff via https://csochallenge.org.

Staff 1 — Full Name:

Position in Project:

Staff 2 — Full Name:

Position in Project:

Staff 3 — Full Name:

Position in Project:

Staff 4 — Full Name:

Position in Project:

SECTION 8. PRELIMINARY ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL RISK ASSESSMENT

Projects supported by IUCN are screened on environmental and social risks. Complete the ESMS Exclusion List and the Preliminary Environmental and Social Screening Questionnaire below.

SGP CSO Challenge ESMS Exclusion List

Review each item and indicate whether it applies to your proposed project (Y or N). A "Yes" means the activity CANNOT go ahead and must be redesigned.

#	Excluded Activity	Applicable? (Y/N)
1	Activities prohibited or deemed illegal under international conventions signed by the country in which the grantee operates, as well as under the laws of the country.	
2	Activities that infringe on human rights, including the rights of IPs and LCs, where their FPIC to activities affecting their lands, livelihoods, and cultural identity cannot be established.	
3	Activities that result in exploitation of or access to outsiders to the lands and territories of IPs living in voluntary isolation and in initial contact.	
4	Activities involving harmful or exploitative forms of forced labor or harmful child labor in line with ILO core labor standards.	
5	Activities that are arming rangers and security personnel or involving the direct employment of armed security personnel.	
6	Activities that would result in involuntary resettlement (physical displacement) or forced evictions of people from their homes or territories including customary and ancestral domains.	
7	Activities resulting in conversion or degradation of High Conservation Value areas, critical ecosystems, or that significantly alter potentially important biodiversity.	
8	Activities leading to large-scale or unsustainable harvesting of natural resources, including wildlife, plants, timber, and NTFPs; or involving wildlife or products regulated under CITES.	
9	Activities involving use, production, trade, or procurement of highly hazardous chemicals or pesticides (Stockholm Convention POPs; WHO Class IA, IB, or II products); or activities generating unacceptable environmental or human risks.	
10	Activities knowingly introducing alien invasive species into the project area or surrounding region, promoting their spread, or enhancing their competitiveness relative to native species.	

Preliminary Environmental and Social Screening Questionnaire

A "Yes" answer will NOT exclude the project — it flags areas for further review.

Risk Area 1: Adverse Gender-Related Impacts (including GBV)

Guiding Question / Risk Area	Possible Risk Scenarios	Applicable? (Y/N)
Could project activities inadvertently create or exacerbate gender-related inequalities or have adverse impacts on women and girls?	*Women excluded from benefits or decision-making; traditional gender roles restrict access; exacerbation of gender inequalities.*	
Is there a risk that the project may aggravate risks of gender-based violence?	*Women face violent reprisals; interactions with outside contractors who commit GBV; failure to monitor codes of conduct.*	
Could activities affect or restrict women's ability to use, develop or protect natural resources?	*Differential access to environmental goods/services based on gender roles.*	
Could the project aggravate risks of gender-based violence including sexual harassment, exploitation or abuse?	*Persons employed by the project or third parties engage in GBV; prior incidents in the project context.*	

Risk Area 2: Risk of Affecting Vulnerable Groups

Guiding Question / Risk Area	Possible Risk Scenarios	Applicable? (Y/N)
Could planned activities exclude disadvantaged or vulnerable groups from decision-making or implementation?	*Exclusion based on gender, socio-economic status, ethnicity, nomadic lifestyle, disability; elite capture of benefits.*	

Risk Area 3: Risks of Undermining Human Rights

Guiding Question / Risk Area	Possible Risk Scenarios	Applicable? (Y/N)
Is there any history of conflict in the project area? Could the project perpetuate or aggravate such situations?	*Conflicts between communities; failure to assess underlying tensions; lack of inclusive consultation.*	
Could stakeholders who express concerns or seek information face intimidation, reprisals or retaliation?	*Vulnerable groups influenced by majority pressure; lack of confidential channels for complaints.*	
Could the project inadvertently lead to elite capture of project benefits?	*Project support disproportionately benefits local elites; non-transparent beneficiary selection criteria.*	

Risk Area 4: Community Health, Safety and Security

Guiding Question / Risk Area	Possible Risk Scenarios	Applicable? (Y/N)
Will the project support Protected Area co-management including law enforcement activities?	*History of conflict between PA management and local people; inappropriate enforcement practices; prior complaints or press reports.*	
Could the project cause or exacerbate community exposure to security risks or human rights violations due to law enforcement?	*Inappropriate enforcement; violence between communities and ecoguards; intimidation or arbitrary arrest.*	
Could project activities cause or exacerbate community exposure to health and safety risks?	*Vehicle/equipment accidents; hazardous substance exposure; water-borne diseases; air quality impacts; dangerous field conditions.*	

Risk Area 5: Labor and Working Conditions Affecting Project Workers

Guiding Question / Risk Area	Possible Risk Scenarios	Applicable? (Y/N)
Could project workers face working conditions that do not meet national labor laws or ILO standards?	*Child labor; exploitative contractor practices; unclear terms for community volunteers; harassment.*	
Could project workers be exposed to occupational health and safety (OHS) risks?	*Workplace accidents; gender-based violence; confrontations involving community patrollers and armed poachers.*	

Risk Area 6: Resource Efficiency, Pollution, Wastes, Chemicals and GHG Emissions

Guiding Question / Risk Area	Possible Risk Scenarios	Applicable? (Y/N)
Could project activities lead to releasing pollutants into the environment?	*Accidental chemical spills; release of pollutant gases or particulates; uncontrolled chemical runoff.*	
Could project activities cause significant amounts of hazardous or non-hazardous waste or wastewater?	*Generation of waste from construction or agricultural activities not disposed of in an environmentally sound manner.*	

Could project activities involve significant consumption of raw materials, energy, or water?	*Sourcing construction materials; high energy/water use during operations; impact on vegetation cover.*	

Risk Area 7: Climate Change

Guiding Question / Risk Area	Possible Risk Scenarios	Applicable? (Y/N)
Are project outputs and outcomes sensitive or vulnerable to impacts of climate change or disasters?	*Project efficacy negatively affected by increased precipitation, drought, temperature changes, or extreme events.*	
Could the project increase community or environmental vulnerability to climate change or disaster risks?	*Project inadvertently reduces resilience of communities or ecosystems; exacerbates drivers of disaster risk.*	
Could the project involve or lead to increases in GHG emissions, black carbon, or other climate change drivers?	*Project activities involve significant energy use, transport, waste generation, land use change, or livestock development.*	

Standard 1: Involuntary Resettlement and Access Restrictions

Guiding Question / Risk Area	Possible Risk Scenarios	Applicable? (Y/N)
Does the project involve establishment, extension or management of a community PA or Marine Protected Area (MPA)?	*Settlements within PA/MPA boundaries at time of establishment; new settlements since creation.*	
Could the project involve or lead to temporary or permanent physical relocation of people?	*Relocation of people within community or co-managed PA/MPA; loss of residence or livelihood.*	
Could the project involve or lead to restrictions or loss of access to natural resources?	*Enforcement of restrictive access rules; loss of livelihood for local natural resource users; confiscation of assets.*	

Standard 2: Indigenous Peoples

Guiding Question / Risk Area	Possible Risk Scenarios	Applicable? (Y/N)
Does the project site overlap with lands or territories under customary use or claimed by Indigenous Peoples?	*Physical or economic displacement; commercialization of traditional knowledge without FPIC.*	
Have legitimate representatives of Indigenous groups been consulted to discuss the project?		

Standard 3: Cultural Heritage

Guiding Question / Risk Area	Possible Risk Scenarios	Applicable? (Y/N)
Is the project located in or near a designated cultural heritage site, sacred natural site, or archaeological site?	*Infrastructure development; excavation; flooding; adverse impacts to sites with historical, cultural or spiritual value.*	
Could the project restrict local users' access to sites with cultural, spiritual or symbolic significance?	*Tourism development at cultural sites; commercialization of traditional knowledge and crafts without equitable benefit-sharing.*	
Does the project intend to utilize tangible or intangible forms of Cultural Heritage for commercial purposes?	*Commercialization of traditional knowledge (recipes, medicinal plants, crafts); inequitable benefit-sharing.*	

Standard 4: Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use of Natural Resources

Guiding Question / Risk Area	Possible Risk Scenarios	Applicable? (Y/N)
Are any project activities proposed within or adjacent to areas of high biodiversity value or critical habitats?	*Increased human access; generation of waste; use of pesticides/fertilizers near sensitive habitats.*	
Is there a risk of significant adverse impacts on biodiversity outside areas of high biodiversity value?	*Conversion of natural habitats; significant agricultural production; soil erosion; habitat fragmentation.*	
Could the project introduce or use invasive or non-native invasive species, including accidentally?	*Introduction of invasive species by design; escape from aquaculture or horticulture into local ecosystems.*	
Does the project promote the use of genetic resources from natural habitats?	*Over-collection or unsustainable harvesting of natural resources; ecosystem degradation.*	
Is there a risk that the project negatively affects water dynamics, water flows, or water quality?	*Extraction, diversion or containment of surface or groundwater; contamination or increased salinity.*	

DECLARATION

I/We confirm that the information provided in this application is accurate and complete. I/We understand that knowingly providing false information may result in disqualification from the GEF SGP CSO Challenge Program.

Authorized Representative — Full Name:

Position / Title:

Signature:

Date (DD/MM/YYYY):

Submit via: https://csochallenge.org