

Synthesis Study Consultant: Independent synthesis of the GCF's accreditation process

International

I. Background

The Green Climate Fund (GCF) is a multilateral fund created to make significant and ambitious contributions to the global efforts to combat climate change. The GCF contributes to achieving the objectives of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Paris Agreement. In the context of sustainable development, the GCF aims to promote a paradigm shift towards low-emission and climate-resilient development pathways by providing support to developing countries to limit or reduce their greenhouse gas emissions and to adapt to climate change, while accounting for their needs and supporting particularly those that are vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change. The GCF is governed by a Board, composed of an equal number of members from developed and developing countries. It is operated by an independent Secretariat headed by an Executive Director.

The Independent Evaluation Office (IEU) of the GCF, is mandated by the GCF Board under paragraph 60 of its governing instrument inform its decision making. Specifically, the governing instrument states "... the Board will establish an operationally independent evaluation unit as part of the core structure of the Fund. The head of the unit will be selected by, and will report to, the Board. The frequency and types of evaluation to be conducted will be specified by the unit in agreement with the Board."

The IEU has several objectives:

- (a) Informing decision-making by the Board and identifying and disseminating lessons learned, contributing to guiding the GCF and stakeholders as a learning institution, providing strategic guidance;
- (b) Conducting periodic independent evaluations of GCF performance to objectively assess the results of the GCF and the effectiveness and efficiency of its activities;
- (c) Providing evaluation reports to the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Paris Agreement for purposes of periodic reviews of the Financial Mechanism.¹

The IEU has a mandate for both discharging an accountability function and supporting a learning function.² These are central to the GCF being a learning organization as laid out in its Governing Instrument and its initial strategic plan.³ The responsibilities of the IEU are as follows:

- (d) Evaluation: The IEU will undertake independent overall, portfolio, country, thematic, programme evaluations that inform GCF strategic result areas.⁴ The vision, criteria and guidelines for these will be laid out in the Independent evaluation policy.

¹ The Conference of Parties to the UNFCCC provides the following guidance on the function of the IEU: "The reports of the GCF should include any reports of the independent evaluation unit, including for the purposes of the periodic reviews of the financial mechanism of the Convention" (UNFCCC decision 5/CP19, annex, paragraph 20).

² Board document B.16/18

³ Annex I to decision B.12/20.

⁴ Annex I to decision GCF/B.05/03.

The IEU is also mandated to independently peer review and attest the quality of GCF self- evaluation;

- (e) Advisory and capacity support: The IEU is required to advise the Board by synthesizing findings and lessons learned from its evaluations. These findings and lessons learned are expected to also inform the Executive Director of the Secretariat and other GCF stakeholders. The IEU will engage closely with the independent evaluation units of intermediaries and implementing entities of the GCF, including national designated authorities (NDAs) and accredited entities (AEs). It will provide support to catalyse learning and build and strengthen NDA and AE evaluation capacity. It will also provide guidelines and support evaluation-related research that helps produce rigorous evidence in GCF result areas;
- (f) Learning: The IEU will support the GCF in its learning function by ensuring that recommendations from independent evaluations are incorporated into the Secretariat's functioning and processes. This includes recommending possible improvements to the GCF performance indicators and its initial results framework, after accounting for international experience and the results of evaluation;
- (g) Engagement: The IEU will actively participate in relevant evaluation networks to ensure that it is at the frontier of evaluation practice. The IEU will involve its own staff and staff from NDAs and AEs in evaluations wherever feasible and appropriate. In addition, the IEU will support knowledge hubs of low-emission and climate-resilient pathways.

II. Role

Accreditation is central to the mandate of the GCF. Paragraph 45 in the GCF's Governing Instrument provides that access to GCF's resources will be through national, regional and international implementing entities accredited by the Board. It also states that recipient countries will determine the mode of access, and both modalities may be used simultaneously. The Governing Instrument further provides for direct access in paragraph 47, and states that recipient countries will nominate competent subnational, national and regional implementing entities for accreditation. In the GCF Business Model, Accredited Entities (AEs) are responsible for the delivery of financing to developing countries, along with the design, delivery, management, implementation, supervision, and evaluation, while also meeting GCF standards and safeguards. Once accredited, the GCF relies on the due diligence and the risk assessment performed by AEs for its investments. The only means for a Funding Proposal to be considered by the GCF Board is through AEs.

The several GCF stakeholders and reports have discussed challenges with accreditation as a principle and process. Different parts of this process are examined in many reviews of the GCF Secretariat, as well as, IEU evaluations. For instance, the following documents have considered the accreditation process in varying degrees:

1. Accreditation Review (GCF/B.21/08)
2. Draft strategy on accreditation GCF/B.13/12
3. Forward-looking Performance Review of the GCF (GCF/B.23/20)
4. IEU's Independent RMF Review (GCF/B.22/07)
5. Independent Assessment of the GCF's Country Ownership (forthcoming)
6. Independent Assessment of the GCF's Environmental and Social Safeguards (forthcoming)
7. Independent Evaluation of the GCF'S Readiness and Preparatory Support Programme (GCF/B22/03)
8. PSAG recommendations on the development of a private sector outreach plan GCF/B.19/30/PSAG
9. Strategic Plan Report (GCF/B.22/INF.13)
10. Structure and Staffing of Secretariat (GCF/B.18/10 Annex III: Dalberg Report)
11. UNFCCC Standing Committee on Finance/ Technical paper on the sixth review of the Financial Mechanism
12. Work Programme 2019 (GCF/B.21/19)

While documents such as above consider different parts of accreditation, many concerns are putative and others need verification. The IEU is undertaking an independent synthesis of GCF's accreditation process. This study will closely examine the evidence on accreditation and will focus on synthesizing objectively the key findings and proposing recommendations for the GCF's accreditation strategy. It

will therefore a) collect documents produced by the GCF, IEU and external stakeholders (in addition to the documents above, others will be identified during the synthesis), b) review the literature through a framework developed during the study, c) undertake a critical appraisal of the evidence available thus far, considering evidence gaps, bias, coverage, knowledge and lessons learned, d) produce a synthesis of the evidence, and e) produce a report and communication products on the synthesis study. The study will further include interviews with members of the GCF Board and advisers, staff of the GCF Secretariat, IEU, AEs, as well as stakeholders.

III. Duties and responsibilities

Under the overall guidance of the Head of the IEU, and in close consultation with senior staff of the IEU (who will be co-authors on the report) the consultant will undertake the accreditation synthesis. S/he will be responsible for but not limited to:

- (a) Review and critically appraise existing documents and evidence gaps, bias, coverage, knowledge and lessons learned related to accreditation
- (b) Design the framework to be used to extract the findings and lessons learned, from a wide range of GCF and other materials and develop an evidence matrix outlining the inputs (data, sources, reports¹) needed to properly inform the study and accordingly agree on a final report outline;
- (c) Finalize, in close consultation with the IEU, an approach paper for the Accreditation Synthesis Study
- (d) Schedule and conduct on-/off-site interviews with relevant stakeholders both internal and external to the Fund, including very close consultation with the IEU team to inform the synthesis study;
- (e) Utilize Board and other GCF and IEU documents involving accreditation, and inform the study with data provided by IEU Datalab;
- (f) Consider evidence from the literature outside the GCF, including that from other multilateral organizations, think tanks, civil society, academia, and the grey literature;
- (g) Undertake the core tasks of the study, including review of documents, critical appraisal of evidence, synthesis of findings, among others
- (h) Draft a synthesis study report, to include lessons learnt with wider applicability
- (i) Support the development of communication products on the study

Drawing from the above, the following deliverables are expected, at the minimum:

- (a) Draft and final approach paper for the study, outlining the scope and methods
- (b) List of documents to be considered for the synthesis (to be developed with the IEU and also through consultations)
- (c) Close communication with the IEU (including weekly or fortnightly calls, increasing in frequency towards the end)
- (d) Presentation of emerging findings to the IEU
- (e) Draft report of the synthesis study
- (f) Presentation of final report
- (g) Final report of the synthesis study
- (h) Contribution to IEU communication products

IV. Timeline

The synthesis study will involve in part a desk study, but also need close engagement and communication of the consultant with the IEU, and the GCF Secretariat. The estimated length of the work is spread over December 2019 to June 2020. The work needs to be completed latest by early May 2020, with follow up through June 2020. The timeline for this study is as expected to be as follows:

- December 16, 2019: Commencement of consultancy assignment and start of the review and synthesis work (the start date is subject to change due to procedural issues).
- January 15, 2020: Finalize draft of approach paper and propose plan for implementation; start of review and consultations.
- February 29, 2020: Presentation of draft results to IEU/GCF and receiving IEU comments.
- March 25, 2020: Zero draft paper finalized, sent to IEU/GCF for review and comments.
- April 10, 2020: Comments on the zero-draft received from the IEU.
- April 25, 2020: Accreditation Synthesis study report finalized and submitted to the IEU for initial use.

¹ After being identified, these will be provided to the consultant by the IEU, GCF, other Independent Units, and other partners. The consultant is also expected to procure literature available externally.

- May 31, 2020: feedback and comments received, validated, and report further reviewed
- June 2020: synthesis study is expected to be presented at 26th meeting of the Board of the GCF.

The above timeline is expected, and subject to change to accommodate procedural and emerging issues. The final timeline will be determined taking into account the confirmed date for the 26th meeting of the Board of the GCF. **The consultant will work closely with the IEU during final drafting stage, which is expected to be iterative.**

V. Required experience and qualifications

- Advanced degree in economics, public policy, international development, or related fields;
- Strong experience with implementing, conducting and synthesising evaluations or reviews on programmes and projects, most desirably within the climate change and climate finance areas;
- Outstanding writing skills including a strong track record of publications in areas relevant to GCF;
- Direct expertise on the GCF will be highly valuable; experience in multilateral contexts will be required;
- Excellent ability to critically appraise different layers of evidence including programmes/projects, frameworks, modalities, themes, processes and policies, and information from evidence reviews to inform the synthesis, and to design a framework to extract the key findings and lessons learned;
- Very familiar with synthesis studies, systematic reviews and meta-analyses approaches, including synthesis and meta-analyses, database searches mainly through use of qualitative review methods;
- Proven knowledge of mainstream evaluations and monitoring and evaluation frameworks;
- Able to commit to produce a highly credible, very well written synthesis report within the budget and period requested, and to take into consideration IEU feedback at multiple stages;
- Availability to travel to Songdo, Korea for up to 2 times (or another suitable location of mutual convenience) and at times of mutual convenience, but within the above timeline;
- Commitment to ensuring that weekly or fortnightly skype calls are undertaken to keep the IEU/GCF team up-to-date on progress and discuss advancement on the synthesis study.

In addition to the above qualities, the following will be desirable:

- Ability to exercise good judgment, meet tight deadlines and maintain required productivity without compromising quality;
- Should be passionate about delivery, results driven and should be able to trouble shoot;
- 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.

Applications from women and nationals of developing countries are strongly encouraged.

VI. How to apply

Interested candidates are required to provide the following:

- A statement of interest that highlights the experience and capacity to undertake the synthesis.
- CV highlighting experience or advanced understanding of evidence reviews, synthesis studies and meta-analysis.
- Max 1-page brief note clearly stating the key elements and approaches needed to design this synthesis study, the key considerations to be made, and the information required.
- Financial proposal and breakdown of costs. Any travel will be coordinated directly by the GCF.

Interested candidates are requested to send an e-mail attaching the above documents to:

roster@gcfund.org and ieu@gcfund.org

File name: “[last name], [first name]” (e.g. Olsson, Anna)

Subject line: “Accreditation Synthesis Study Consultant”

Closing date for applications is **30 November 2019, at 11:59 PM (KST)**. Applications submitted after the closing date may not be considered.