Conserving biodiversity and enhancing ecosystem functions through a 'Ridge to Reef' approach in Cook Islands (Cook Islands R2R)

REQUEST FOR QUOTES (RFQ):

Marine Ecology Consultant (position #9)

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1. Introduction

1.1 Project description

The Cook Islands Ridge to Reef (R2R) project is funded by the UNDP Global Environment Facility (GEF) in partnership with the Cook Islands Government. The project aims to enhance the capacity of the Cook Islands to effectively manage its protected areas and sustainably manage its productive landscapes at local scales while considering food security and livelihoods. This includes the operationalisation of the Cook Island Marine Park (CIMP) (covering approximately 1.1 million km^2 of Cook Islands southern Exclusive Economic Zone - EEZ[1]) and the establishment and strengthening of various forms of protected and locally managed areas within the CIMP, including protected natural areas, community conservation areas, and ra'ui sites[2].

In so doing, the project will support the Cook Islands in maintaining traditional resource management and conservation systems and approaches, including a leading role for traditional and local leaders and the local communities that they represent in the declaration and management of protected areas, while also integrating these traditional systems into a formal legal and institutional system of protected areas.

The project will support the Government in tailoring policy, regulatory and institutional frameworks to suit the specific characteristics of the Cook Islands and of the new CIMP, recognising that protection and sustainable use will need to be zoned and planned carefully, and that tenure over most land areas is vested in local communities through a traditional tenure system.

The project has been designed to engineer a paradigm shift in the management of marine and terrestrial protected areas - from a site centric approach to a holistic 'ridge to reef' management approach, whereby tourism and agriculture activities in production landscapes adjacent to marine and terrestrial protected areas will be managed to reduce threats to biodiversity.

The project started in July 2015 (upon signature of the project document) and was originally intended to be completed and close in July 2019. However approval was provided in early 2019 for a no-cost project extension to 6 January 2021.

The Cook Islands National Environment Service (NES) is the lead executing agency for R2R, responsible for project management, coordination and collaboration with implementation partners.

The project has seven output areas as follows:

- Output 1.1: Strengthened legal / regulatory and policy frameworks for protected areas
- Output 1.2: Expanded and strengthened management systems for protected areas
- Output 1.3: Strengthened institutional coordination and capacities at the national and local levels for the participatory management of protected areas
- Output 1.4: Financial sustainability framework developed for system of protected areas
- Output 2.1: Ridge to Reef approaches integrated into land use and development planning
- Output 2.2: Biodiversity conservation mainstreamed into agriculture sector
- Output 2.3: Biodiversity conservation mainstreamed into tourism sector.

The Government of Cook Islands is recruiting a Marine Ecology Consultant under outputs 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3 of the Cook Islands Ridge to Reef Project.

1.2 Project design

The R2R project design includes a Strategic Results Framework (SRF) which forms the basis to project planning, and monitoring, evaluation and reporting (MER). The SRF defines the R2R objective as:

> *To build national and local capacities and actions to ensure effective conservation of biodiversity, food security and livelihoods and the enhancement of ecosystem functions within the Cook Islands Marine Park.*

[1] Since the R2R project was initially designed and commenced (in July 2015), the CIMP (renamed as Marae Moana) has been extended to cover the entire EEZ.
[2] Raui : traditional form of protected area as used in Cook Islands

There are two project 'components' (outcomes):

- Outcome 1: Strengthening protected areas management
- Outcome 2: Effective mainstreaming of biodiversity in key sectors to mitigate threats within production landscapes.

This consultancy falls within outcome 1.

The SRF has 34 key performance indicators (KPIs) with targets; these targets will be the basis upon which the performance of the project will be assessed during the R2R terminal evaluation (TE) (anticipated to be commissioned by UNDP in October 2020).

SRF indicators and targets directly related to this consultancy are:

SRF #	Description of Indicator	End of project target level
1	Overall framework in place for conservation in the Southern Group of the Cook Islands	1.1 million sq. km. of CIMP legally designated and actively managed, with dedicated staff implementing planning and coordination of the entire CIMP by end of year 2
2b	Area of inhabited Outer Islands in Southern Group managed for biodiversity conservation through traditional systems and island bylaws and supported through capacity development of traditional leaders and communities • Marine	By end of project: 6 islands totalling 16,174 ha.
4	Improved management effectiveness of Cook Islands Marine Park, as measured by GEF BD 1 Tracking Tool (METT)	METT score > 60 by end of project Score 46 at time of Capacity Needs Assessment Report 2019 (CNAR)
9b	% Area of Southern Group islands managed as Protected Areas (protected natural areas, community conservation areas, ra'ui sites): • Marine (to the outer reef)	12.3%

The adviser is expected to provide professional strategic and technical advice in support of the above outputs.

2. Background

The Marae Moana Policy 2016-2020[3] and *Marae Moana Act 2017*[4] provide the policy and legislative basis for Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) in the Marae Moana.

The Marae Moana Policy 2016-2020 includes policy objective #6 'To coordinate use of the Marae Moana through zoning and a management plan' and specifies that:

- A marine zoning and management plan will be developed for the Marae Moana;
- Research and monitoring data should be used in the development, implementation and evaluation of management decisions, resource management plans and a marine zoning and management plan; and
- Consider relevant internationally recognised research and processes including Ecologically and Biologically Significant Areas and Particularly Sensitive Sea Areas.

The R2R Project is supporting the Cook Islands Government with the development of MSPs for Marae Moana. Initial priorities are the development of the national MSP (covering the EEZ) and Suwarrow Island MSP.

[3] https://www.maraemoana.gov.ck/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/FINAL-Marae-Moana-Policy-2016-2020.pdf
[4] https://www.maraemoana.gov.ck/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Marae-Moana-Act-2017.pdf

The Marine Ecology Consultant will play a key role in the initial identification and description of Special and/or Unique Marine Areas (SUMAs) of the Marae Moana. Describing the nation's SUMAs will provide an important input to the development of MSPs for Marae Moana, a legislative requirement and policy commitment of the Cook Islands Government.

Once identified, information about SUMAs can also be used in government (and other) decision-making about how best to use the marine environment; for example licence and permitting decisions, Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs), and placement and management of different types of marine protected areas and locally managed marine areas.

The consultant will also play a key role in the finalisation of the draft marine bioregions for the Cook Islands. This will provide the basis for delivering a representative system of marine protected areas within the Marae Moana.

3. Key activities

This consultancy has two separate outputs:

- Output 1: Identify and describe draft SUMAs of the Cook Islands.
- Output 2: Review, refine and describe the marine bioregions of the Cook Islands based the Draft Marine Bioregions of the Southwest Pacific.

The full scope of activities is described below:

Output 1: Special and/or Unique Marine Areas (SUMAs)

The Consultant will:

1. Be guided and take account of established methodology for identification of Special and/or Unique Marine Area (SUMAs) as used by the MACBIO project (refer Step 5 of MACBIO toolkit[5]) and approach used for other Pacific Island countries[6].
2. Undertake a rapid assessment and review of available literature relevant to significant areas throughout Marae Moana (including draft Marae Moana Outlook Report, Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs), Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas (EBSAs), National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP), existing marine raui and reserves)[7].
3. Identify and describe marine areas that are biologically and/or physically special or unique.
4. Work with the R2R GIS team to define accurate site boundaries, develop maps and a corresponding Google Earth image of each site.
5. Work with the R2R and MMCO teams to consult with key stakeholders including government, non-government, and science community about initial draft sites and to identify and describe additional sites.
6. Using data from the literature review, stakeholder discussions and any traditional knowledge that can be sourced, provide a comprehensive description of each site as follows:
   a. Site name
   b. Geographic description of the site location and boundaries.
   c. Justification. This may include information as to whether the site supports, or is likely to support, rare, vulnerable or unusual habitats or species, threatened species, important life stages of key species, endemic species, physically or biologically outstanding attributes (e.g. unique geomorphology, high species diversity or high productivity).
   d. Sources. These could be peer reviewed scientific papers and reports, other reports, data or personal communications from stakeholders or other expert sources.
   e. Legal or other obligations to protect the site or species within the site.

[5] http://macbio-pacific.info/Resources/developing-a-marine-spatial-plan-a-toolkit-for-the-pacific/

[6] http://macbio-pacific.info/macbio-resources/

[7] R2R will provide access to the primary reports that are known to exist.

f. Using the MACBIO site criteria and rating methodology[8], systematically assess and rate each site.

g. Follow-up tasks required to finalise description of the site (if any).

7. Develop a draft report that encompasses the above elements and which uses professional citation of sources and a comprehensive reference list.

8. R2R and MMCO will distribute the draft report for review by stakeholders and may conduct a workshop to gain stakeholder inputs; opportunity for the consultant to remotely facilitate this workshop will be explored.

9. Assess and incorporate as appropriate comments from the review process.

10. Complete and submit the final report.

Output 2: Marine Bioregions

The consultant will:

1. Undertake a rapid assessment and review of the marine bioregions of the Cook Islands based on the Draft Marine Bioregions of the Southwest Pacific.
2. Expand on and describe the draft bioregions of the Cook Islands. This output should be similar in format to MACBIO reports already produced elsewhere in the Pacific (eg. Vanuatu - http://macbio-pacific.info/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/MACBIO-Bioreg-Vanuatu-high-res-1.pdf).
3. Work with the R2R GIS team to define accurate bioregion boundaries, develop maps and a corresponding Google Earth image of each zone.
4. Work with the R2R and MMCO teams to consult with key stakeholders including government, non-government, and science community regarding draft bioregions and their description.
5. R2R and MMCO will distribute the draft report for review by stakeholders and may conduct a workshop to gain stakeholder inputs; opportunity for the consultant to remotely facilitate this workshop will be explored.
6. Assess and incorporate as appropriate comments from the review process.
7. Complete and submit the final report

4. Approach

The consultant is expected to:

- Work closely with the MSP Team Leader and GIS Coordinator based in-country.
- Make effective use of virtual communication tools (email, Skype, Zoom, etc) to optimise stakeholder involvement in the SUMA and bioregional processes.
- Support good relationships with government agencies and other organisations and stakeholders with interests in marine spatial planning.
- Maintain close and regular contact with the MSP Team Leader and MSP Team, Chief Technical Adviser (CTA) and R2R Project Manager throughout the consultancy.

5. Inputs and working arrangements

This is a short-term assignment with inputs as follows:

- 30 working days over a three-month duration.

[8] For SUMAs defined using these multiple criteria in Fiji, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu refer http://macbio-pacific.info/categories/managing/

- Inputs will be conducted through home base work.
- Expected duration: 15 June – 15 September 2020.

Reports to:

- MSP Team Leader for all technical aspects and day-to-day accountability.
- R2R Project Manager for all logistics and administrative aspects.

6. Outputs and schedule of payments

This consultancy will use output-based payments as follows:

#	Outputs	% of payment total
1	Signing of contract and lodgement of invoice	10
2	Draft reports for Outputs 1 & 2	50
3	Final reports for Outputs 1 & 2	40
	Total	**100**

Notes:

- Payments subject to certification of satisfactory completion of output.
- Due dates of outputs will be included in the contract.

7. Key selection criteria

Key selection criteria for this consultancy are listed below. To be considered your proposal MUST include a response against each criteria (maximum four pages please). Relative importance of each criteria is shown by the weighting.

Criteria	Weighting
1. Tertiary qualifications in natural resources management, marine science, ecology, conservation, or related field, with a strong emphasis on protected areas; Masters-level degree preferred.	10
2. Demonstrated knowledge and experience in marine science, conservation, and/or marine resource management in the Pacific (Cook Islands experience will be viewed favourably).	40
3. Demonstrated experience and record of achievement in undertaking scientific literature reviews, stakeholder consultation, and development of technical reports of the type required by this RfQ (experience in marine biodiversity conservation will be viewed favourably).	25
4. Excellent written communication skills in English, including at least five years experience in the preparation of accessible, high-quality scientific products and reports suitable for lay audiences.	25
Total	**100**
Minimum technical score to proceed to stage 2	**70**

8. Evaluation process

In submitting a proposal, applicants should demonstrate a clear understanding of this RFQ and how your experience, skills and qualifications make you suitable for this consultancy.

A three-step procedure will be used in evaluating the proposals:

Step 1: Conformity

Proposals will be assessed and must comply with mandatory conditions of RFQ.

Proposals will then be assessed and evaluated as follows:

Step 2: Technical criteria (70% weighting)

The technical proposal is evaluated on the basis of responsiveness to the key selection criteria as weighted in Section 7, information provided in the tenderers CV, and other information submitted as part of the proposal. Proposals must receive a minimum technical score of 70 of the total obtainable score (100) to proceed to Stage 3.

Step 3: Financial proposal (30% weighting)

The financial proposal of those applicants who have attained a minimum score of 70 in the technical evaluation will be assessed and compared.

The contract will be awarded to the applicant offering the best value for money taking into account the qualitative and quantitative evaluation of technical and financial criteria.

The successful applicant will be required to sign a standard Cook Islands Government contract for the delivery of services.

9. How to apply

ESSENTIAL: Applications **must** include:

1. Response against each of the key selection criteria (refer Section 7) (maximum four pages).
2. Curriculum vitae/resume including name and contact details (phone and email) of three referees.
3. Financial proposal using template provided (Annex 1)
    - All prices in the proposal must be presented in New Zealand Dollars (NZD).
    - Financial proposals must include professional fees and any other costs associated with the completion of this work.
    - Travel costs do not need to be included in the financial proposal.
    - Expenses will be reimbursed at actual cost and upon submission of an invoice with valid evidence of expenditure.
4. Conflict of Interest Declaration using template provided (Annex 2).

Applications that do not address all the requirements stated above will not be considered.

Proposals should be emailed with the subject line heading '#9: Marine Ecology Consultant' to:
Ms Hayley Weeks, R2R Project Manager Hayley.weeks@cookislands.gov.ck
with cc to keith.twyford@gmail.com

For further information about this position, please contact:

Mr Keith Twyford
R2R Chief Technical Adviser
keith.twyford@gmail.com

Closing date:**3.00pm 3 June 2020** Cook Islands local time (GMT-10 hours)

Late applications will not be considered.

10. Further reading

Available online and/or upon request:

Ceccarelli D., Davey, K. & Fernandes, L. (2018) Developing a Marine Spatial Plan: a toolkit for the Pacific. MACBIO (SPREP/IUCN/BMU): Suva http://macbio-pacific.info/Resources/developing-a-marine-spatial-plan-a-toolkit-for-the-pacific/

Cook Islands Government (2017) Cook Islands National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) 2017-2021 (draft).

Rongo, T., Rongo, T.T., & Rongo, J. (2020) Cook Islands Marae Moana: Marine Outlook Report 2020. Government of the Cook Islands. 123 pp.

Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (2014) Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas (EBSAs). Special places in the world's oceans. Volume 1: Western South Pacific Region. 104 pages. https://www.sprep.org/attachments/VirLib/Global/ecologically-biologically-significant-marine-areas-ebsa-cbd-2014.pdf

Te Ipukarea Society (TIS) (2011) Priority Sites for Conservation in the Cook Islands: Key Biodiversity Areas and Important Bird Areas. https://www.sprep.org/attachments/VirLib/CookIslands/te-ipukarea-kba.pdf

Wendt, H., Beger, M., Sullivan, J., LeGrand, J., Davey, K., Yakub, N., Kirmani, S., Grice, H., Mason, C., Raubani, J., Lewis, A., Jupiter, S., Hughes, A., & Fernandes, L. (2018) Draft marine bioregions in the Southwest Pacific. MACBIO (GIZ/IUCN/SPREP): Suva, Fiji. 84 pp. http://macbio-pacific.info/2018/04/marine-bioregions-southwest-pacific-drafted/

Wendt, H., Beger, M., Sullivan, J., LeGrand, J., Davey, K., Yakub, N., Kirmani, S., Grice, H., Mason, C., Raubani, J., Lewis, A., Jupiter, S., Molisa, V., Ceccarelli, D. & Fernandes (2018) Marine bioregions of Vanuatu. MACBIO (GIZ, IUCN, SPREP), Suva, Fiji. 60 pp http://macbio-pacific.info/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/MACBIO-Bioreg-Vanuatu-high-res-1.pdf

Annex 1. Financial proposal

Cook Islands Ridge to Reef (R2R): consultant title - Fee proposal			
Item	**Cost/unit (NZD)**	**No. units**	**Total NZD**
A. Personnel Services			
Daily fee rate			-
B. Out of pocket expenses: itemise so cost estimates are clear			
			-
			-
			-
			-
			-
			-
Sub-total			-
TOTAL (A+B)			-
Bidder notes (if any):			
Name			Date

This EXCEL file will be provided to all interested bidders.

Annex 2. Conflict of Interest Declaration

A conflict of interest arises if you or a close family member has an interest e.g. is a board or committee member or is employed in a senior position in the Government agency that wants to purchase the goods or services relating to this tender process.

In submitting this tender bid I declare:

- I understand that an actual, potential or perceived conflict of interest may arise in participating in this tender process and that I am obliged to declare any such conflict of interest.
- I confirm that in submitting this information that I have either declared any potential conflicts of interest or that I am not aware of any situation or issue that would conflict with the interest of the Principal.
- If a conflict of interest arises at any time before the selected supplier has been awarded, I will advise the Contact Officer or the Principal immediately.
- I have personally completed this declaration on behalf of the Supplier(s) and declare that the submitted tender bid provided are true and correct.

I declare that I have a potential conflict of interest as follows:

I will manage this conflict of interest by:

Declared by:

Signature *Date*

Full Name *Position (if Company)*