IUCN Urban Alliance

Development of the IUCN Urban Nature Index platform

TERMS OF REFERENCE December 2020

1. BACKGROUND

The IUCN Urban Alliance—a broad coalition of IUCN constituents concerned with urban dimensions of nature conservation—is developing a platform, labelled as an ‘Urban Nature Index’, to help cities understand their impacts on nature, set science-based targets for improvement, and monitor progress accordingly. By shining a spotlight on the ecological performance of cities, the index will serve to enhance environmental transparency and accountability, facilitate goal-setting and spur conservation action.

To develop the index, an IUCN Technical Expert Group was established comprising experts drawn from IUCN Members, Commissions and partners as well as representatives of a small number of pilot cities. At the group’s first meeting in Paris, June 2019, a decision was taken to subdivide the Urban Nature Index platform into three components addressing different spheres of ecological impact: urban, regional and global.

Moreover, the draft IUCN Programme “Nature 2030” includes a commitment to create a ‘Contributions Platform’ to allow IUCN Members, and other non-state actors, to provide documentation of their intended contributions towards the IUCN Programme and, by extension, their contributions towards the Global Biodiversity Framework and Sustainable Development Goals. The intent is that a cities-focused front-end to this will serve as the Urban Nature Index platform.

With a view to launching the Urban Nature Index platform at the IUCN World Conservation Congress in 2021 (dates to be announced), an initial set of indicators, metrics and methodologies are under development. The current draft of the Urban Nature Index platform comprises 81 indicators. However, further work is now required to ensure that the indicators are practical and feasible; resonate with intended user groups; speak to the aspirations of cities; add value to the work of cities; generate meaningful and scientifically defensible results; and align with relevant international policy frameworks. To this end, consultations, desktop research, and alpha-testing are in order. The Urban Nature Index could eventually be published as a peer-reviewed scientific report accompanied by a communications strategy for promoting its uptake.

IUCN is also tracking the efforts of the ‘Science-based Targets Network’ and specifically its ‘Cities Design Team’, and of the ‘Cities with Nature’ initiative, which are developing metrics and methodologies for cities to set science-based targets for nature, as well as a prototype and guidance note for cities that may offer synergies with the development of the Urban Nature Index. Cooperation mechanisms are currently being explored.
To bring the Urban Nature Index platform into fruition, the support of a Consultancy Company is required.

2. OBJECTIVES

The specific objectives for this consultancy are to:

- Identify and refine a set of indicators for measuring the relationship between cities and nature at three scales—urban, regional and global—building on the latest work of the IUCN Technical Expert Group, involving specialists where necessary, and aligning with relevant international standards, frameworks and protocols.

- Engage a diverse group of cities and relevant IUCN constituents in further developing the content of the Urban Nature Index platform and beta test in five pilot cities, ensuring flow of results to inform the development of the cities front-end of the IUCN ‘Contributions Platform’.

- Scope the value and niche of possible publications, and, based on this scoping present the updated Urban Nature Index in a report comprising clear indicator-selection rationale, calculation methodologies, suggested data sources, use-cases, and a brief strategy for achieving uptake and use.

3. EXPECTED ACTIVITIES AND DELIVERABLES

Expected activities to be undertaken in close collaboration with IUCN’s Head of Urban Alliance:

- Review the latest version of the Urban Nature Index platform (version 1.3) and the work of the ‘Science-Based Targets Network’ Cities Design Team. (c. 5%)

- Map the draft Urban Nature Index against the emerging Actions and Targets of the Global Biodiversity Framework, environmental Sustainable Development Goals and environmental commitments in the New Urban Agenda, and remedy any gaps or misalignment, involving IUCN experts where necessary (D1, c. 10%)

- Conduct desktop research to determine indicator calculation methodologies, popularity (extent of use), and any issues pertaining to data maintenance, access, quality and availability. (D2, c. 10%)

- Design and implement a consultation to collate information from intended user groups on such matters as perceived utility, ease of implementation and preferred prioritization of the indicators. Suitable representatives of at least 25 different cities from different parts of the world should be involved in the consultation. (D3, c. 15%)

- Develop and implement a set of scientifically defensible criteria to prioritize the indicators for dissemination through Application Programming Interface via the proposed IUCN platform, as either ‘core’ or ‘optional’. (D4, c. 5%)

- Test the Urban Nature Index platform in five pilot cities, as the cities front-end of the IUCN ‘Contributions Platform’, compiling use cases, and ensuring the flow of the results of this testing to guide final platform development. (D5, c. 40%)

- Scope the potential value and niche (with inputs from Technical Expert Group members as needed) of possible publications, and, based on this scoping, prepare a report to present the updated Urban Nature Index with clear indicator-selection rationale, calculation methodologies, suggested data sources, and use-cases. (D6, c. 10%)
Compose a brief communications and outreach strategy to promote the uptake of the Urban Nature Index dashboard across cities and other subnational governments, taking into account positioning relative to peer platforms for documentation of sustainability by cities across other organisations (e.g. Science-Based Targets Network and Cities With Nature). (D7, c. 5%)

Deliverables:
- D1: Analysis of alignment with international policy frameworks and recommendations for modification.
- D2: Analysis of indicators detailing calculation methodologies, extent of use, and data maintenance and quality issues.
- D3: Results of consultation with at least 25 cities.
- D4: Indicators prioritized for dissemination through Application Programming Interface via IUCN platform according to agreed criteria.
- D5: Results of testing including use-cases.
- D6: Scoping document on potential for publications and scientific report.
- D7: Communications and outreach strategy.

4. SUPERVISION AND COLLABORATION

The Consultancy Company will work under the supervision of IUCN’s Head of Urban Alliance in collaboration with the Science and Knowledge Unit and Technical Expert Group.

5. TIME SCHEDULE

The project shall be completed within a period of four to six months with an expected starting date in January on the basis of 40 working days.

6. SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE REQUIRED OF CONSULTANT

The Consultancy Company is expected to have the following skills and expertise:
- Background in environmental assessment, monitoring and evaluation;
- Proven international experience of working on sustainable urban development, including direct engagement with local governments;
- Familiarity with the Sustainable Development Goals, Convention on Biological Diversity, New Urban Agenda, and other international environmental frameworks;
- Affinity with the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of nature;
- Strong interpersonal skills, good organisation, analytical and reporting skills and the ability to present results to a wide range of diverse stakeholders; and
- Excellent written and spoken communication skills in English.

7. DOCUMENTS TO BE SUBMITTED

Those interested to apply are invited to send the following documents:
- A motivation letter;
- A CV showcasing relevant experience; and
• A short methodological note detailing the approach to be followed in carrying out the tasks and deliverables assigned and achieving the expected results of this consultation.

8. APPLICATIONS SUBMISSION

Applications containing the documents mentioned in paragraph 7 above should be sent by e-mail to russell.galt@iucn.org for the attention of Russell Galt. The e-mail should indicate in the subject line “UNI Development – Consultancy Company”. The deadline for sending applications is the 10 January 2021. For further information, please contact russell.galt@iucn.org.

9. EVALUATION OF APPLICATIONS

Applications will be evaluated on the basis of the following criteria: (i) profile and experience in relation to subject of the consultancy, (ii) the methodology proposed for the conduction of the mission, and (iii) the financial offer.