



# Terms of Reference (ToR)

## Enterprise Support Organization (ESO) – Implementation of Incubation and Acceleration Activities under ProCongo Component 1

### 1. Background

The ProCongo Programme, funded by CAFI and jointly implemented by UNEP and UNCDF, aims to catalyze private sector investment in nature-based solutions in the Congo Basin. Component 1, led by UNEP, focuses on developing a pipeline of commercially viable, environmentally sustainable ventures through a sequenced support model encompassing ideation, incubation, acceleration, and market/finance access.

To ensure localized delivery and contextual expertise, ProCongo will engage national Enterprise Support Organizations (ESOs) in Cameroon, DRC, Republic of Congo, and Gabon to implement activities under two sectoral tracks:

- **Track 1:** Sustainable Agriculture and Forestry
- **Track 2:** Wood Energy Alternatives, Ecotourism, and other eligible sectors

### 2. Objective of the Assignment

The selected ESO(s) will be responsible for delivering high-quality entrepreneurial support services across the incubation and acceleration streams of Component 1, including the administration of seed and preparation grants. This includes scouting, intake, bootcamp facilitation, tailored support implementation, and reporting.

### 3. Roles and Responsibilities

Each ESO will:



- Organize outreach campaigns and calls for applications
- Conduct maturity assessments of applicants
- Design and facilitate a bootcamp to screen and provide minimum capacitation to ventures
- Support elaboration and validation of business plan using insights from market research
- Support incubation of selected ventures over a 9-month period
  - Tailored action plan co-development
  - Milestone-based coaching
  - Peer learning facilitation
  - Compliance with CAFI environmental and social safeguards
- Manage disbursement of incubation grants and track progress
- Implement acceleration support for selected investment-ready ventures
  - Support development of market/finance mobilization plans
  - Organize access to sectoral and financial experts
  - Administer catalytic acceleration grants
- Report on outcomes, challenges, and learning to the ProCongo PMU
- Coordinate with UNEP's E&S and gender experts for safeguards integration
- Contribute to the organization of annual regional knowledge events

## 4. Expected Deliverables

- Outreach and selection reports
- Bootcamp delivery with participant diagnostic reports
- Individualized action plans for each selected venture
- Monthly progress reports on incubation and acceleration phases
- Grant disbursement tracking and milestone verification reports
- Summary evaluation reports at mid-point and conclusion of each cohort
- Inputs to regional knowledge event case studies
- Grant closure documentation and impact assessment

## 5. Implementation Timeline

The assignment covers **two annual cohorts (2025–2027)**, with specific phases as follows:

- **Cohort 1:** October 2025 – October 2026
- **Cohort 2:** January 2027 – December 2027



## 6. Selection Criteria for ESO Partners

Applicants must demonstrate:

- Proven track record in enterprise incubation and/or acceleration
- Operational presence and registration in the target country
- Sectoral expertise in agriculture, forestry, clean energy, ecotourism, or related sectors
- Ability to engage qualified coaches, mentors, and subject matter experts
- Experience managing performance-based grant programs
- Capacity to deliver programs in French (and local languages where applicable)
- Commitment to environmental and social safeguard integration

## 7. Budget and Compensation

Each ESO will be contracted under a performance-based agreement. The total budget envelope available for each track per country is approximately **USD 35,000 per year/cohort (USD 70,000 for two years)**, with a higher ceiling (**USD 40,000 per year/cohort**) for the designated **Lead ESO** in charge of regional coordination. This amount is expected to cover staff time, training and coaching delivery, monitoring and reporting, logistics for bootcamps and learning sessions, as well as coordination with the ProCongo PMU and sectoral experts.

In addition to the operational budget, each ESO will manage the administration and supervision of grants to participating ventures. These grants are budgeted and disbursed separately under the oversight of the PMU:

- **Incubation stream:** Each country-track cohort will support **8 to 10 early-stage ventures**, each receiving:
  - A base grant of **USD 750** (disbursed in two tranches)
  - A performance bonus of **USD 750** awarded to ~25% of the cohort
  - Total grant envelope per incubation cohort: **USD 18,750** (assuming 10 participants, including bonuses)
- **Acceleration stream:** Each cohort will include **up to 3 ventures** assessed as investment-ready, of which **a maximum of 2** may receive catalytic grants of up to **USD 5,000** each, based on submission and approval of a market/finance mobilization plan
  - Total grant envelope per acceleration cohort: **USD 10,000**



All grants are paid directly by the ESO, in line with disbursement procedures validated by the PMU.

## 8. Additional Responsibilities and Budget – Lead ESO (Regional Coordinator per Track)

**Designation:** One ESO per track (Track 1 or Track 2) will be selected to serve as the **Lead ESO**, with a regional coordination mandate across the four implementing countries.

### **Additional Responsibilities:**

- Coordinate learning and experience-sharing between national ESOs across the four countries.
- Consolidate lessons learned and report regional-level progress to the PMU.
- Support the organization and delivery of **two regional knowledge events** per cycle (one for incubation, one for acceleration).
- Facilitate alignment in curriculum design, cohort selection criteria, and safeguard integration across countries.
- Participate in strategic discussions with the PMU and provide recommendations for program adjustments.
- Provide technical backstopping to other ESOs where requested.

### **Annual Budget Envelope:**

- **USD 40,000 per year per track** (vs. USD 35,000 for non-lead ESOs).
- This amount includes:
  - All core ESO responsibilities (scouting, incubation, acceleration, grant administration) in their country of implementation.
  - **Regional coordination activities**, including participation in PMU coordination meetings and leading cross-country exchanges.

**Grant Management:** Same as all ESOs — manages grant disbursement for national cohorts only (not regional).

