

Request for Proposals

Title: South Gujarat Water Resilience Lab – A Collective Platform for Water, Nature and Social Resilience

RFP No: 02 FY26-South Gujarat Water Resilience Lab

Date of Issuance: November 13, 2025

Invitation:

Conservation International Foundation (CI) and Kering, the initiating corporate partner, invite proposals from experienced organizations to support the establishment of Kering's Water Resilience Lab in South Gujarat. Through this tender, we are seeking innovative and impactful proposals to implement a holistic climate-water-land nexus approach that enhances watershed and overall ecological resilience in priority basins to the east of the Gulf of Khambhat, India (see Figure 1).

Submission:

Proposals must be submitted no later than December 12 2025, 5pm EST via email to ciprocurement@conservation.org. Late submissions will not be accepted. Submitting organizations should be prepared to start work no later than March 1 2026.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. About Conservation International	2
2. About Kering	2
3. Introduction	2
4. Objectives	3
A. Core Outcomes and Expectations	3
B. Deliverables	7
C. Timeline	7
5. Proposal Guidelines and Evaluation Process	7
A. Proposal Requirements	7
B. Evaluation Criteria.....	8
C. Submission Timeline.....	9
6. Confidentiality.....	9
7. Code of Ethics	9
8. Attachments	10

1. About Conservation International

Conservation International (CI) protects nature for the benefit of humanity. Through science, policy, fieldwork, and finance, we spotlight and secure the most important places in nature for the climate, biodiversity, and for people. Conservation International partners with governments, companies, civil society, Indigenous peoples, and local communities to help people and nature thrive together. More information on our website: www.conservation.org

2. About Kering

A global Luxury group, Kering manages the development of a series of renowned Houses in Fashion, Leather Goods and Jewelry: Gucci, Saint Laurent, Bottega Veneta, Balenciaga, Alexander McQueen, Brioni, Boucheron, Pomellato, DoDo, Qeelin and Ginori 1735, as well as Kering Eyewear and Kering Beauté. By placing creativity at the heart of its strategy, Kering enables its Houses to set new limits in terms of their creative expression while crafting tomorrow's Luxury in a sustainable and responsible way. We capture these beliefs in our signature: "Empowering Imagination". In 2023, Kering had 49,000 employees and revenue of €19.6 billion. More information on our website: www.kering.com

3. Introduction

According to IPBES's latest report, the underlying causes of biodiversity loss, water scarcity, food insecurity, health challenges, and climate change are each often addressed in isolation, leading to misalignment, unintended trade-offs, and unforeseen consequences. By recognizing the interconnections among these elements across spatial and temporal scales, holistic nexus approaches enable positive synergies which help improve the ensemble of ecosystems functions, foster collaborative opportunities, and improve resilience for all within the same landscape. For Kering, it is essential to work on regenerating ecosystems and replenishing water basins in collaboration with local stakeholders, adopting a nexus approach to achieve environmental, social, and economic resilience.

As part of its Water-Positive Strategy, Kering is embedding a climate-water-land nexus approach into its global water stewardship efforts. This strategy aims to strengthen resilience to water-related risks, restore ecological balance for water, land and biodiversity, and ensure sustainable production in key sourcing regions. Kering's ambition is to have a Net Water Positive Impact by 2050, with measured Net Positive Water Impacts in key areas of raw material production by 2035.

To support this strategy, Kering participated in the Science-Based Targets Network (SBTN) pilot to identify the 10 most critical water basins linked to its supply chain. South Gujarat, India emerged as a priority region, a vital region for Kering's cotton and precious stone sourcing (Figure 1: Focal region outlined in red).



Figure 1. Focal region for the Water Resilience Lab in Gujarat.

In Gujarat, water demand is outstripping supply. The region faces severe water stress from groundwater over-extraction, declining river flows, and increasing resource use between agriculture, industry, and urban growth. River pollution, depleting aquifers, and ecosystem degradation further threaten local livelihoods and agricultural productivity. These pressures, exacerbated by climate change, put both local communities and businesses operating in the region at risk. At the same time, water-related hazards such as flooding are becoming increasingly frequent and severe, highlighting the urgent need to regenerate degraded lands and river basins to restore natural water cycles, strengthen climate-change resilience, and regain adaptability across the landscape.

4. Objectives

Recognizing these challenges, Kering aims to develop the Water Resilience Lab (“the Lab”), a multi-stakeholder platform that drives collective investment towards building environmental, social and business resilience through activities that restore the basin’s ecological balance, reduce water use and pollution, replenish green and blue water resources, promote regenerative and nature-positive solutions, and support biodiversity and climate mitigation.

The Lab represents a transformative new model – a pragmatic, innovative platform that builds on existing initiatives to deliver measurable water and ecosystem outcomes while advancing fair transitions for communities and opening pathways for innovative finance (e.g., blended finance, nature markets, water bonds, etc.).

The Lab’s long-term goal is to replenish priority water basins in South Gujarat (Figure 1), up into the cotton production zones and to achieve measurable water benefits by 2035. However, water is the entry point to a broader transformation: restoring the integrity of the entire system so that both people, nature and business can thrive. The Lab will achieve these goals through implementing projects and scaling existing efforts that amplify synergies across land, water, climate and biodiversity.

To reach these goals, Kering and Conservation International Foundation (CI) are seeking an experienced and visionary organization to co-design, launch and operationalize / deploy the Water Resilience Lab. The successful candidate will:

- Collaborate closely with Kering and CI to co-develop the Lab’s governance, financing and delivery model – an innovative model of resilience that can be replicated in other regions;
- Demonstrate visionary thinking and proven experience in developing, managing and fundraising for multi-stakeholder initiatives;
- Bring senior, politically and culturally adept leadership capable of navigating complex stakeholder landscapes and entrenched interests, while maintaining focus on transformation, regeneration and resilience
- Be adaptive and responsive, integrating learning and iteration throughout implementation to ensure the Lab continuously evolves as insights deepen and stakeholder priorities advance.

A. Core Outcomes and Expectations

Proposals will be evaluated on how well they deliver the following outcomes. Bidders may propose their own sequencing and methods, but must explain how these outcomes will be achieved and measured. Successful delivery will require an approach that integrates stakeholder engagement, diagnostics, project portfolio development, governance and finance strategies together so that each informs and refines the other in iterative cycles. Proposals should describe how they will

operationalize this integration and how their proposed staffing and communications will maintain momentum and adaptive learning.

Outcome A: Stakeholder Coalition & Commitments

A credible, cross-sector coalition of strategic public, private, financial and community partners who are engaged in the Lab's shared vision and support the Lab's success by committing to co-investment (which may include operational contributions and/or project financing).

Key Activities can include but are not limited to:

- Conducting a qualified stakeholder mapping exercise to identify key actors in the region and priority strategic partners.
- Conducting outreach and engagement to secure commitments from key stakeholders to co-finance the Lab's governance and/or project implementation costs.
- Developing business cases and other communication materials tailored to strategic stakeholders to build interest and secure commitments.

Outcome B: Governance and Financial Plan

A governance model and sustainable financing strategy that can support long-term operation (e.g., secretariat/hosting options, membership/contribution models, blended finance options).

As the initiative evolves, a fit-for-purpose governance structure is required to coordinate decision-making, manage financial and technical contributions, and ensure transparency, accountability, and long-term operations. This structure will provide the institutional foundation for effective collaboration and enable partners to align around a common vision, shared principles, and a clear operational pathway for achieving nature-positive outcomes. Additionally, a financing strategy that leverages various financial mechanisms is needed to support the Lab's long-term goals.

Key Activities (can be completed based on your recommendations) include but are not limited to:

- Designing and establishing a participatory, transparent, and durable multi-stakeholder governance model that can guide collective action and investment across the Lab. The governance structure should be co-developed with Kering, CI and key stakeholders and reflect best practices regarding membership, structure, and decision making mechanisms.
- Developing a comprehensive financial framework that defines how partners will contribute funding and how funds will be managed. This may include recommending contribution models (e.g., membership fees, co-investment models), mechanisms for managing incoming funding (e.g., pooled fund, host institution, fiscal agent), and transparent processes for allocating, tracking and reporting on the use of funds.
- Developing a sustainability and financing strategy for the Lab, estimating the financial resources required for continued Lab operations and identifying / securing potential long-term funding sources to support governance and implementation (e.g., partner fees, grants, public-private finance, or blended finance mechanisms).

Outcome C: Conduct a Basin Diagnostic

A baseline assessment that builds on the CEO Water Mandate's Basin Diagnostic Template to assess water quantity, water quality, governance, land, biodiversity status, climate, and socio-

economic conditions for the priority basin and sub-basins in South Gujarat (see Figure 1). The diagnostic should support identifying shared water challenges and opportunities, and should enable prioritization of interventions. The final deliverable will build off of the Water Resources Coalition templates to be provided by CI.

Note: This deliverable does not need to be completed by the organization submitting the proposal. If the applicant does not have in-house technical expertise to complete a basin diagnostic, the proposal should include specify a technical lead to complete the diagnostic. Proposals that do not have in-house technical staff to complete a basin diagnostic will not be penalized in the evaluation. However, the two teams will be expected to work together and weave the two approaches (stakeholder engagement and ecosystemic ecological health) into a joint analysis of shared challenges, shared goals, and most agentic nature-based solutions to adopt and put in place.

Key activities can include but are not limited to:

- Developing a detailed overview of basin conditions and challenges, covering core components like water quantity, water quality, governance, water access, land, biodiversity, climate, and socio-economic conditions. The Diagnostic will be the technical foundation for setting basin-wide and sub-basin goals to address challenges around water, climate, wildlife and biodiversity, and local communities, ensuring that ecological and social needs are jointly considered.
- Providing recommendations for revising Basin Diagnostic indicator ratings and scoring, based on an assessment of data gaps, where applicable.
- Completing a future conditions assessment that incorporates projections for future conditions of each sub-basin according to locally-calibrated water stress models to determine the true size of the gap concerning quality, quantity, and access and any other issues within the defined scope that will need to be closed through interventions.
- Mapping corporate presence and identify relevant datasets, which may include publicly available data, to evaluate the magnitude of their impacts. Estimate the potential corporate contributions to shared water challenges for each priority sub-basin based on corporate footprints. Leverage this information in stakeholder engagement activities to identify stakeholders who are under-represented or not represented in outreach.

Outcome D: A Shared Vision, SMART Targets and Goals

Co-develop a common vision and basin-wide targets that address the shared challenges and opportunities. This process should evolve in parallel with stakeholder engagement activities and the development of the basin diagnostic, ensuring continuous alignment between technical findings and stakeholder priorities.

Key activities can include but are not limited to:

- Developing a Shared Vision that reflects public and private sector expectations and priorities through consistent engagement with key stakeholders.
- Developing Basin and Sub-Basin Goals and Targets that leverage basic diagnostic results and are responsive to stakeholder needs. Goals and Targets should be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) and should consider the climate-nature-water nexus, Kering's Water strategy and science-based commitments. Final goals and targets should include a justification and shall incorporate feedback from stakeholders. Social impact indicators should also be evaluated and selected to be integrated into the program.

- Organizing, facilitating and convening stakeholder workshops to seek input on the basin diagnostic and to develop a shared vision, goals and targets for the Lab. Depending on the stakeholder landscape, availability, and political sensitivities, there may be a need for multiple workshops – the exact format will be determined in coordination with Kering and CI as stakeholder engagement advances.
- Engaging stakeholders to secure formal endorsements of the shared vision, goals and targets.

Outcome E: A Portfolio of Interventions

A prioritized portfolio of projects (high potential nature based solutions and hybrid interventions) that achieve progress toward shared goals and system transformation towards regeneration and resilience. The project portfolio will quantify benefits from each project (volumetric water benefits, biodiversity, climate, social), detail costs and timelines for implementation, and lay out scaling pathways.

Note: Kering is committed to aligning with the CEO Water Mandate leadership's ambition of achieving Net Positive Water Impact (NPWI) and looks to leverage vetted quantification methodologies such as the Volumetric Water Benefit Accounting (VWBA) methodology.

Key activities can include but are not limited to:

- Conducting meetings, workshops and consultations with stakeholders to develop a prioritized portfolio of NBS and hybrid projects that are aligned with basin goals and build ecological, social and business resilience.
- Evaluating investment needs required for planning, implementation, monitoring and maintenance of priority projects. This includes estimating capital and operational costs for each NBS and developing investment packages by project.
- Providing recommendations and guidelines for developing a tracking and reporting system for key project outcomes, leveraging input and guidelines from the Water Resources Coalition and other best practice guidances.

Outcome F: Develop a Roadmap for Action

A practical roadmap that includes short-term actions that produce early demonstrable benefits and create momentum for scaling, as well as medium and long-term collective action strategies, priority interventions, and investment requirements for achieving the Lab's shared vision.

Key activities can include but are not limited to:

- Mapping existing and potential future activities in the basin to potential funding opportunities.
- Developing proposed quantifiable performance metrics to highlight the Water Resilience Lab's progression on water goals and other relevant goals
- Supporting Kering and CI in securing long-term financial support for the Resilience Lab, including leading fundraising that supports the Lab's operational needs and collective actions within the portfolio.
- Exploring financing opportunities, including co-financing, innovative finance and public-private partnerships to support project implementation and long-term sustainability of the Lab.

Outcome G: Communications Package

A communications strategy and package to enable ongoing stakeholder engagement, to support a public launch, and to ensure coordination and transparency with committed partners.

B. Deliverables

- Inception report (e.g., methodology, timeline, risk register, stakeholder engagement plan) delivered within 2-3 weeks of start date.
- Basin diagnostic (nexus baseline + forward looking scenarios) and hotspot spatial analysis.
- Stakeholder mapping, engagement and documented partner commitments.
- Draft and finalized SMART basin and sub-basin goals co-developed with stakeholders.
- Portfolio of prioritized NBS/hybrid interventions with benefit estimates, costs and scaling pathways.
- Governance and financing framework with suggested hosting and membership arrangements.
- Roadmap with short-term (0–12 months) actions to produce early wins, plus medium and long-term milestones.
- Monitoring & reporting approach with proposed metrics and baseline data.
- Communications and launch materials.

While this list outlines the primary deliverables expected, we expect additional details will be incorporated into the contract based on the proposal submitted.

C. Timeline

The project is set to begin in **March 2026** with a final roadmap for action expected before the end of 2026. The proposal must include a recommended timeline for the deliverables listed above and a proposed methodology to achieve the outcomes detailed.

The submitting organization will report to, liaise regularly with, and take technical guidance from Conservation International staff who will supervise the submitting organization's performance. The submitting organization will conduct its activities in close consultation with CI and Kering and is expected to meet weekly with Kering and CI. The submitting organization will be expected to host an in-person kickoff meeting within the first month of the project.

Payments for all deliverables are subject to approval by both CI and Kering.

5. Proposal Guidelines and Evaluation Process

A. Proposal Requirements

All proposals must be submitted in English and must include:

1. Cover Note

- a. Applicants should include a cover note to their proposal providing an overview of the organization's qualifications and approach. The cover note should include the name(s) of all parties whom CI should contact for clarifications and negotiations, as well as a complete mailing address, email address(es) and telephone number(s).

2. Technical Proposal

- a. The technical proposal should demonstrate a clear understanding of the work to be undertaken, the responsibilities of all parties involved, and a plan (max 10 pages) explaining how your methodology will deliver the outcomes above while keeping the work iterative and adaptive. This should include the following, at minimum:
 - i. A detailed work and delivery plan tied to outcomes above, with clear performance indicators.
 - ii. A proposal for how the team will manage iteration, learning and revision.
 - iii. A proposed approach for completing the basin diagnostic.
 - iv. A proposal for periodic meetings to ensure close communication with CI and Kering.

3. Experience and Expertise

- a. Experience and past performance managing complex, multi-stakeholder initiatives or other initiatives that drive systems change in natural resource management or sustainability-focused projects.
- b. Proven capacity to engage and work politically and technically across private, public and community actors to establish effective partnerships.
- c. Demonstrated success engaging stakeholders to promote alignment around shared challenges and solutions.
- d. Demonstrated experience developing and securing funding for innovative financial mechanisms that scale conservation initiatives beyond grant funding.
- e. Technical expertise to develop rigorous ecological baselines and metrics.
- f. Qualifications of key personnel including their position title, level of effort proposed (in days), clearly defined roles and responsibilities, and a summary of skills. The team should include senior, politically agile leadership with experience engaging high-level stakeholders and delivering systems level change. CVs for key personnel should be included as an annex.
- g. At least two client references.

4. Financial proposal

- a. A detailed budget including cost estimates in USD for each deliverable. Offerors shall use the cost proposal template found in (Attachment 2).

B. Evaluation Criteria

CI and Kering will consider all submitted responses and will make a best value determination of proposals in relation to proposed budgets. CI reserves the right to not make an appointment from this RFP. All applicants will be notified whether their application was accepted or not.

Proposals will be assessed based on several key factors. The structure and expertise of the team will be a primary consideration. The quality of the proposal itself will also play a crucial role in the evaluation process.

Furthermore, having an established network within the region, will be a significant advantage. The proposal should outline existing networks and relationships within the region. Successful applicants will be proactive, flexible, and able to respond effectively to changes in project scope, stakeholder input, or other evolving conditions, working collaboratively to ensure project goals are achieved.

Proposals will be evaluated based on:

Evaluation Criteria	Score (out of 100)
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Organizational Capabilities and Portfolio of Past Work	25
Personnel Qualifications	25
Feasibility and effectiveness of the proposed approach	25
Cost	25

C. Submission Timeline

The dates below may be modified at the sole discretion of CI.

Written Clarifications/questions submitted to CI	November 28 2025
Clarifications provided to known offerors	December 3 2025
Proposal Submission Deadline	December 12 2025
Final Selection and Notification	January 31 2026
Project Start:	March 01 2026

6. Confidentiality

All proprietary information provided by the bidder shall be treated as confidential and will not be shared with potential or actual applicants during the solicitation process. This includes but is not limited to price quotations, cost proposals and technical proposals. CI may, but is not obliged to, post procurement awards on its public website after the solicitation process has concluded, and the contract has been awarded. CI's evaluation results are confidential, and applicant scoring will not be shared among bidders.

7. Code of Ethics

All Offerors are expected to exercise the highest standards of conduct in preparing, submitting and if selected, eventually carrying out the specified work in accordance with CI's Code of Ethics and the Green Climate Fund's Policy on Prohibited Practices, available at <https://www.greenclimate.fund/document/policy-prohibited-practices>. Conservation International's reputation derives from our commitment to our values: integrity, respect, courage, optimism, passion, and teamwork. CI's Code of Ethics (the "Code") provides guidance to CI employees, service providers, experts, interns, and volunteers in living CI's core values, and outlines minimum standards for ethical conduct which all parties must adhere to. Any violation of the Code of Ethics, as well as concerns regarding the integrity of the procurement process and documents, should be reported to CI via its Ethics Hotline at www.ci.ethicspoint.com.

8. Attachments

Attachment 1: Representation of Transparency, Integrity, Environmental and Social Responsibility
Attachment 2: Cost Proposal Template

Attachment 1: Representation of Transparency, Integrity, Environmental and Social Responsibility

Offeror Representation of Transparency, Integrity, Environmental and Social Responsibility

All Offerors are expected to exercise the highest standards of conduct in preparing, submitting and if selected, eventually carrying out the specified work in accordance with CI's Code of Ethics. CI's Code of Ethics provides guidance to CI employees, service providers, experts, interns, and volunteers in living CI's core values, and outlines minimum standards for ethical conduct which all parties must adhere to. Any violations of the Code of Ethics should be reported to CI via its Ethics Hotline at www.ci.ethicspoint.com.

CI relies on the personal integrity, good judgment and common sense of all third parties acting on behalf, or providing services to the organization, to deal with issues not expressly addressed by the Code or as noted below.

I. With respect to CI's Code of Ethics, we certify:

- a. We understand and accept that CI, its contractual partners, grantees and other parties with whom we work are expected to commit to the highest standards of Transparency, Fairness, and Integrity in procurement.

II. With respect to social and environmental standards, we certify:

- a. We are committed to high standards of ethics and integrity and compliance with all applicable laws across our operations, including prohibition of actions that facilitate trafficking in persons, child labor, forced labor, sexual abuse, exploitation or harassment. We respect internationally proclaimed human rights and take no action that contributes to the infringement of human rights. We protect those who are most vulnerable to infringements of their rights and the ecosystems that sustain them.
- b. We fully respect and enforce the environmental and social standards recognized by the international community, including the fundamental conventions of International Labour Organization (ILO) and international conventions for the protection of the environment, in line with the laws and regulations applicable to the country where the contract is to be performed.

III. With respect to our eligibility and professional conduct, we certify:

- a. We are not and none of our affiliates [members, employees, contractors, subcontractors, and consultants] are in a state of bankruptcy, liquidation, legal settlement, termination of activity, or guilty of grave professional misconduct as determined by a regulatory body responsible for licensing and/or regulating the offeror's business
- b. We have not and will not engage in criminal or fraudulent acts. By a final judgment, we were not convicted in the last five years for offenses such as fraud or corruption, money laundering or professional misconduct.
- c. We are/were not involved in writing or recommending the scope of work for this solicitation document.
- d. We have not engaged in any collusion or price fixing with other offerors.
- e. We have not made promises, offers, or grants, directly or indirectly to any CI employees involved in this procurement, or to any government official in relation to the contract to be performed, with the intention of unduly influencing a decision or receiving an improper advantage.

- f. We have taken no action, nor will we take any action to limit or restrict access of other companies, organizations or individuals to participate in the competitive bidding process launched by CI.
- g. We have fulfilled our obligations relating to the payment of social security contributions or taxes in accordance with the legal provisions of the country where the contract is to be performed.
- h. We have not provided, and will take all reasonable steps to ensure that we do not and will not knowingly provide, material support or resources to any individual or entity that commits, attempts to commit, advocates, facilitates, or participates in terrorist acts, or has committed, attempted to commit, facilitate, or participated in terrorist acts, and we are compliant with all applicable Counter-Terrorist Financing and Anti-Money Laundering laws (including USA Patriot Act and U.S. Executive Order 13224).
- i. We certify that neither we nor our directors, officers, key employees or beneficial owners are included in any list of financial or economic sanctions, debarment or suspension adopted by the United States, United Nations, the European Union, the World Bank, or General Services Administration's List of Parties Excluded from Federal Procurement or Non-procurement programs in accordance with E.O.s 12549 and 12689, "Debarment and Suspension".

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Title: _____

Date: _____

Attachment 2: Cost Proposal Template

The cost proposal must be all-inclusive of profit, fees or taxes. Additional costs cannot be included after award, and revisions to proposed costs may not be made after submission unless expressly requested by CI should the offerors proposal be accepted. Nevertheless, for the purpose of the proposal, Offerors must provide a detailed budget showing major expense line items. Offers must show unit prices, quantities, and total price. All items, services, etc. must be clearly labeled and included in the total offered price. All cost information must be expressed in USD.

Cost Breakdown by Deliverable

Deliverable 1	Price (Lump Sum, All Inclusive)
Deliverable 2	
Deliverable 3	
...	
...	

Cost Breakdown by Cost Component

Description	Unit of measure (hour)	Total period of engagement	Unit cost/rate	Total Cost for the Period
Staff 1				
Staff 2				
Sub-total Personnel				
Travel Costs (if applicable)				

Other related Costs (please specify)				
Total Cost of Financial Proposal				