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4. REGIONAL COMPETITIVE BLOCK GRANTS TO REDUCE PLASTIC WASTE

4.1 Regional Competitive Block Grants Components.

Component 1. Supporting Competitive Block Grant Investments to Reduce Plastic Waste:

The objective of this component is to identify, verify and invest in circular plastic economy solutions and facilitate the exchange of knowledge and awareness of these solutions.

The rationale for this component is four-fold:

First, South Asian nations could benefit from knowing the range of existing and new solutions and innovative approaches being undertaken in their nations and across the region to assist transitions to a more circular plastic economy; Second, they could also benefit from witnessing how block grant investments to select organizations can help accelerate this transitions, opening up the possibility of these nations to assist a variety of organizations within their own countries beyond this initial pilot, in national transitions to a more circular plastic economy; Third, the RBG investment recipient themselves will not only be able to demonstrate impact in a short time, but also will serve as case studies and good practice examples of what could be further scaled and replicated across South Asian nations. The project will identify innovative and cutting edge, replicable solutions that could be adapted and serve as demonstrations. Fourth, the selection of country-level RBG recipients will be undertaken in consultation with national level authorities and prioritize those recipients that complement the World Bank's country-level (that is, national) engagements on reducing plastic pollution. The component will be supported through two subcomponents:

Subcomponent 1.1: Investing in Circular Solutions to Reduce Plastic Waste:

This subcomponent supports circular plastic economy solutions to reduce plastic waste by implementing a program of regional competitive block grant investments, providing Regional Competitive Block Grants ("RBGs") to eligible organizations in South Asia (see section 4.2 'Eligible RBG Beneficiaries'). The RBG competition has two windows. The first window, Window 1 (W1), provides direct financial support and will seek proposals up to US\$1.5 million from eligible, registered organizations in eligible SAR nations, see section 4.2, which may be private entities, social enterprises, nongovernmental organizations, community-based organizations, among others that can demonstrate that with the use of IDA grant proceeds the entity could accelerate toward a more circular plastic economy that would not be possible to do without IDA and other institutional arrangements detailed in the POM. W1 will support at least one eligible entity from each of the SACEP's eight member states,

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with Parley providing W1 parallel investment of up to US\$2 million to at least one entity in both Sri Lanka and India. It is estimated that W1 will award 20-30 entities with IDA grant proceeds in two separate calls for proposals with both calls occurring before the 3rd quarter of 2023. The RBG proposals for W1 will also have to lay out how women are currently involved in their entity and how, with IDA proceeds, they will directly and indirectly incrementally benefit. Each recipient will be technically audited for gender inclusion to verify the same. Moreover, at least five W1 proposals will support eligible female-led organizations and all recipients will have to demonstrate female participation of at least 30 percent by the end of project. The second window, Window 2, (W2), will seek innovative ideas and creative solutions from individuals and institutions on turning the tide on plastic pollution. W2 will provide technical assistance (TA) support for the most promising ideas and, similar to W1 recipients, an opportunity to showcase their ideas through the project's knowledge exchange platform (see Subcomponent 1.2) and in doing so, to other investors (foundations, donor partners, private investment houses, SAR governments, and so on). A total of 50 percent of those showcased under W2 and invited in knowledge exchanges will be women.

The RBGs supported through W1 will prioritize organizations that can demonstrate within **12-24** months, a meaningful and recurrent reduction in plastic waste that otherwise would have accumulated in South Asia's rivers and seas and that would not have been possible without support from the project. It would also prioritize organizations that with RBG support are able to establish meaningful business partnerships that enable 'end to end' solutions (up-stream, mid-stream, and down-stream), from improved product design, packaging and delivery systems, provision of material alternatives, interception, collection, sorting, baling, washing, flaking, pelletizing, yarn spinning and/or product development – and thus significant reductions of plastic pollution that would have ended up in South Asian seas – that would not have been possible without project support. This priority was established based on economic analysis undertaken to assess the cost/benefit of such plastic pollution mitigation schemes. For example, a plastic waste recycling company operating in an eligible country and specialized in washing, flaking, and pelletizing plastic waste could use the RGB to establish a formal multi-year contracted relationship with a CBO dedicated to organizing female waste pickers in river plastic interception, collection, sorting and baling and/or building this capability themselves to extend their line of sight over the value chain. On the flip side, this same recycling company could establish relationships and formalize contracts up the value chain with makers of products made from recycled content (i.e. plastic waste) or use the RGB to broaden their own business to do so. Other possible recipients of RBGs could be involved in (a) designing and creating alternatives to major single use plastic pollutants such as sachets, (b) education of fishers and enlisting them to intercept marine plastic pollution as an alternative or supplemental livelihood and selling that plastic waste to recyclers and up-cyclers for a guaranteed minimum price and until the market is better understood; (c) creating material innovations, including design of recyclable plastic resins that can replace non-recyclable resins in similar products, among a long positive list (and strict negative list – See Annexes) to encourage innovations of all types given the field is advancing quickly.

Subcomponent 1.2: Promoting Knowledge Exchange and Awareness

This subcomponent facilitates the exchange of circular plastic economy knowledge between Eligible RBG Beneficiaries and selected South Asian countries and promotes awareness raising activities. The project will facilitate knowledge exchange among recipients of project investments, between RBG recipients and participating South Asian countries, between grantees and potential investors and serve as a communications platform to prevent and implement solutions to plastic pollution. There are three avenues to promote knowledge and information sharing. First, an interactive ICT website will be developed to showcase the RBG W1 and W2 recipients, provide a platform for exchange of knowledge, learn from others, and potentially lead to acceleration of funding from different sources. The ICT website will also allow for online monitoring and tracking of expenditures and impact/results. Second, annual face-to-face convenings of W1 and W2 recipients will further foster dialogue, discussion, and knowledge and technology transfer, in addition to facilitating face-to-face interaction with representatives of member states, private foundations, and private investors. Third, the project will support raising the level of awareness across the region for solutions that mitigate plastic pollution flowing into the region’s rivers and seas.

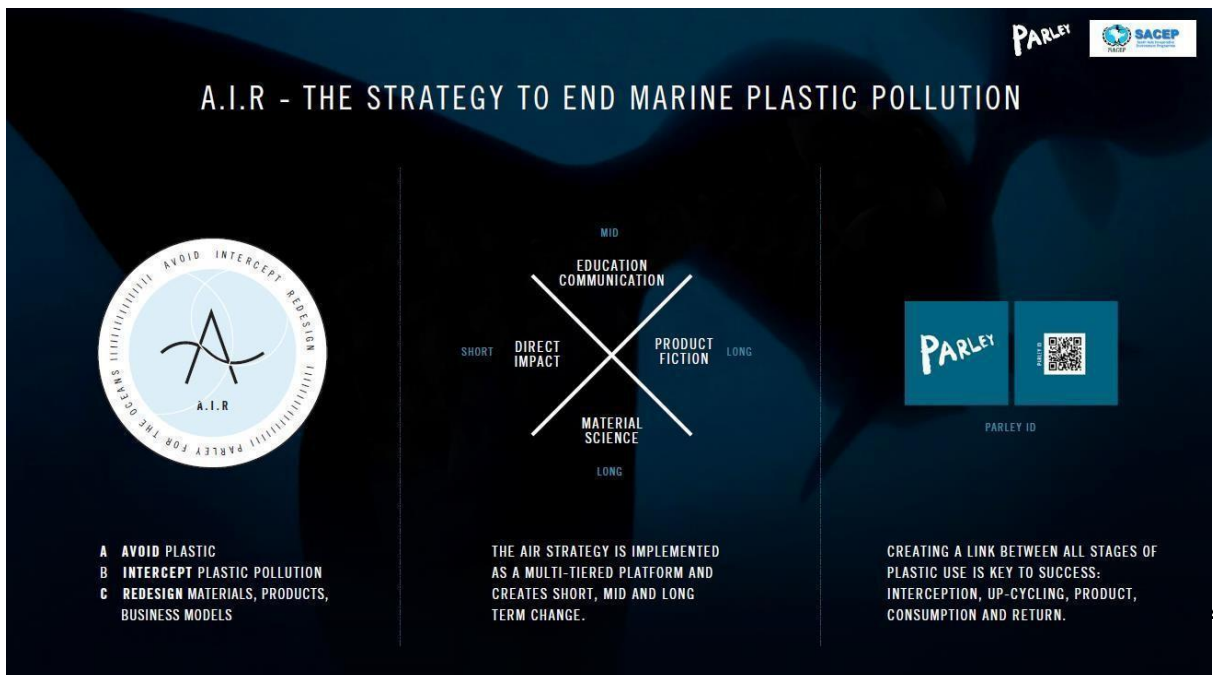
4.2 Regional Competitive Block Grants Funding Eligibility Requirements

4.2.1.1 Eligible Applicants

The objective of the PLEASE Project is to support the most innovative ideas in SAR that demonstrate capacity to have significant impact on the mitigation of pollution to SAR rivers and seas. Therefore, all entities that are duly registered in a SAR country are eligible to apply.

4.2.1.2 Eligible Projects

The project includes and moves beyond the 3Rs, toward the AIR Strategy pioneered in the Maldives through a dynamic public, private, civil society collaborative partnership.



An illustrative positive list and a strict negative list ensure alignment with the use of IDA grant proceeds and project development objectives, including compliance with The World Bank's Environment and Social Standards. W1 RBGs and W2 TA would target direct on the ground change and support for select innovative ideas, respectively at local, national and/or regional levels, while being rooted in one of the following Parley AIR thematic categories: Avoid (Reduce and Replace), Intercept (Retrieve and Recycle) and Redesign (Create New Materials; Create Smart Products; Develop New Industry Standards), which includes and innovates beyond the 3R's framework (Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle) of the past several decades.

Avoid (Reduce and Replace)

- Reducing the consumption of single use plastic products;
- Replacing current SUPs with local, viable and sustainable alternatives;
- Reducing, recycling, reusing, and/or upcycling existing accumulated plastic waste;
- Testing new designs for manufacturing, supply chain and other innovations that serve to reduce plastics utilization and/or enhance plastics recovery, recycling and reuse;

Intercept (Retrieve and Recycle)

- Introduction of plastics waste collection, recycling and upcycling innovations, including mechanisms for full cost recovery and further reuse of recycled/upcycled plastic material (i.e. similar to container deposit schemes);
- Cleanup, collection and removal of plastic waste from rivers and seas, including before it enters (or reenters) the sea (i.e. beach and river bank clean ups), among other things (i.e. could be linked to the region's blue flag program¹ initiated by SACEP and being rolled out by SACEP member-states;

Redesign (Create New Materials, Smart Products, Better Industry Standards/Policies; Awareness), Design and manufacturing of truly biodegradable substitutes for plastics, including SUP sachets;

- Introducing new materials fit for a circular economy or that offer sustainable alternatives to fossil fuel-based and non-recyclable plastics; Support for material innovations, including design of recyclable plastic resins that can replace non-recyclable resins in similar products;
- Innovations in financial, policy, regulatory or other incentives that minimize loss of fishing nets and optimize their recovery for re-use or recycling;
- Innovative economic, policy, regulatory and other measures/incentives to minimize or eliminate use of unnecessary single use plastic items and ensure better enforcement of such bans.

Special areas of emphasis of particular in alignment with the use of IDA grant proceeds (with dedicated support provided) include:

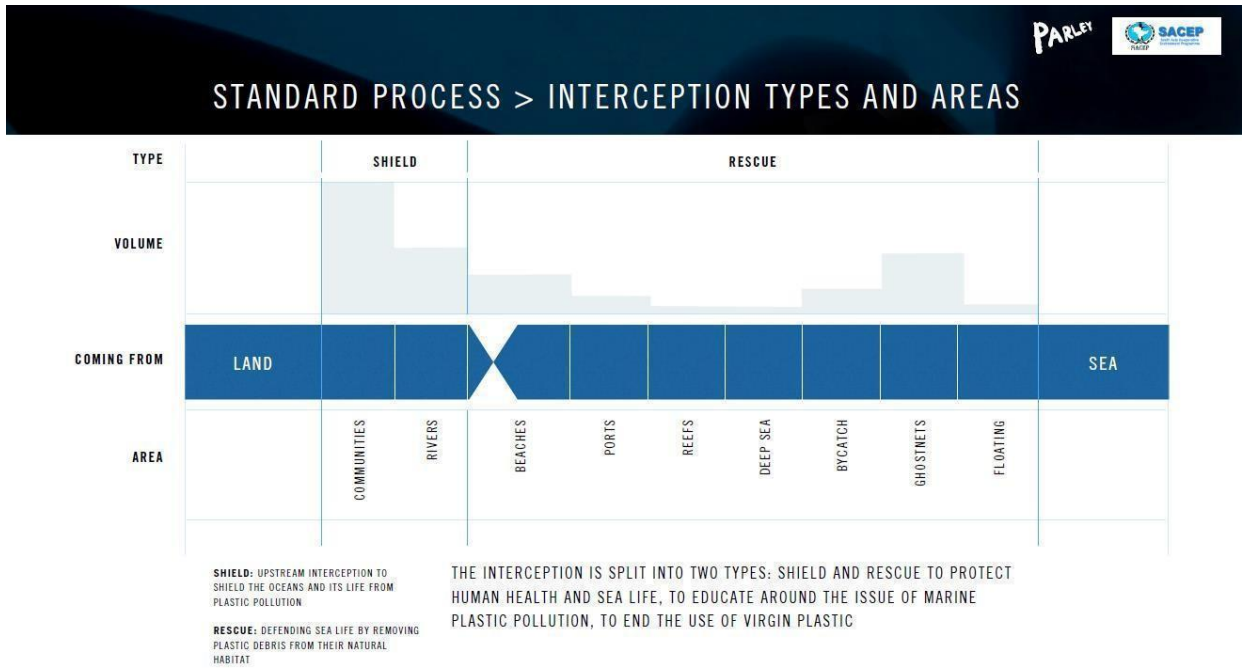
- Grant proposals that catalyze action along rivers (including transboundary hot spots) and hot spots at sea, including international waters;

¹ <https://www.blueflag.global>

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- Grant proposals that explicitly support female-led social enterprises; NGOs and CSOs that working with bottom of the pyramid female waste pickers who would directly benefit from grant proceeds;
- Grant proposals by regional organizations that could accelerate and/or deepen regional cooperation and/or integration.

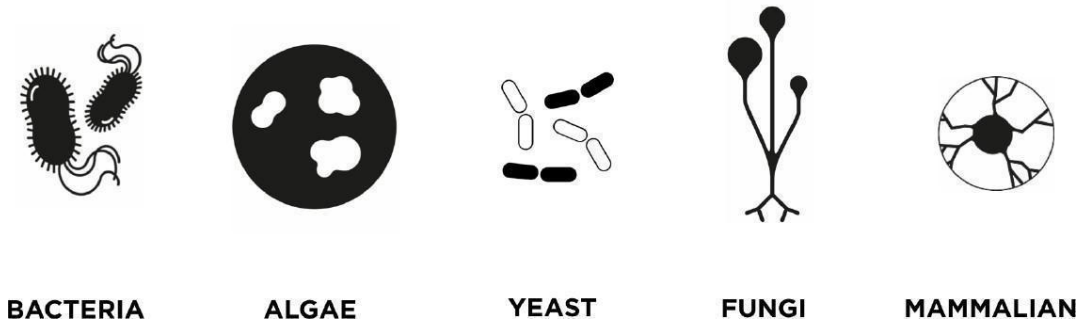
The conceptual framework for interception, which enables the removal of plastic pollution from the environment is laid out below.



The conceptual framework for redesign, enables the removal of virgin plastic as a viable material and replaces it with alternatives through a material revolution.



BIOFABRICATE



4.3. Grant Making Procedure and Grant Management

Plastic free Rivers and Seas for South Asia project's grant-making process under the Regional Competitive Block Grant is based in principle on an open call for proposals.

For **Window 1 Proposals**, SACEP welcomes applications from organizations registered in member-states. Selected organizations from all IDA countries (Afghanistan, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Maldives, Nepal, and Pakistan) are eligible for IDA support. Countries from IBRD countries (India and Sri Lanka) are eligible for support from Parley, the co-financing partner to The World Bank.

For **Window 2 Proposals**, SACEP welcomes applications from social innovators, entrepreneurs,

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students, designers, businesses, materials makers and change makers or collaboratives – any group of individuals or institutions that have innovative and creative ideas and/or solutions for turning the tide on plastic pollution from all SACEP member-states.

For each call, Secretaries of Ministries of Environment of each country (also SACEP’s National Focal Point), including: Director General of the National Environmental Protection Agency of Afghanistan; Secretary, Ministry of Environment, Forests, and Climate Change of Bangladesh; Secretary, National Environment Commission of Bhutan; Secretary, Ministry of Environment, Forests & Climate Change, India; Secretary, Ministry of Earth Sciences, India; Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Environment, Maldives; Secretary, Ministry of Forests and Environment, Nepal; Secretary, Ministry of Climate Change, Pakistan; and, Secretary, Ministry of Environment and Wildlife Resources, Sri Lanka will assist SACEP in broadcasting the competition announcement in their respective country and in national and sub-regional languages as well as sitting on the **RBG Selection Committee** for their respective country.

Table 7: SACEP’s National Focal Points (NFP)

Country	Ministry/Institution	Designation	Name of current Focal Person
Afghanistan	National Environmental Protection Agency	Director General	H. E. Mr. Schah Zaman Maiwandi
Bangladesh	Ministry of Environment, Forests, and Climate Change	Secretary	Mr. Ziaul Hasan
Bhutan	National Environment Commission	Secretary	Hon’ Dasho Sonam Wangdi
India	Ministry of Environment, Forests & Climate Change	Secretary	Mr. Chandra Kishore Mishra
	Ministry of Earth Sciences (for SASP only)	Secretary	Dr. Madhavan Nair Rajeevan
Maldives	Ministry of Environment	Permanent Secretary	Mr. Ajwad Musthafa
Nepal	Ministry of Forests and Environment	Secretary	Dr. Bishwa Nath Oli
Pakistan	Ministry of Climate Change	Secretary	Mr. Hasan Nasir Jamy
Sri Lanka	Ministry of Environment and Wildlife Resources	Secretary	Mr. A. H. S. Wijesinghe

4.3.1 Introduction to the SACEP Grant Management

4.3.1.1 Purpose of the Operational Guidelines

The purpose of the Grants Manual is to provide guidance for the operations of Grantees in the key processes that they are expected to undertake during selection and implementation, either directly or through the engagement of subcontractors. In case of inconsistency between the Project Operational Manual and the grant agreement with a Grantee, the terms of the grant agreement will prevail.

4.3.1.2. Amendments to the Operational Guidelines

To ensure they are up to date and relevant, the POM may be amended by SACEP from time to time. A configuration log will be maintained to document the changes in the document.

4.3.2 Code of Conduct and Dispute resolution

4.3.2.1 Code of Conduct

SACEP and the Grantees who accept funds from PLEASE Project under under Grant Agreements with SACEP, will adhere to the following code of conduct:

- Take appropriate measures to prevent irregularities, fraud, corruption or any other illegal activity. All suspected and actual cases of irregularity, fraud, and corruption related to the agreement must be reported without delay;
- Undertake activities engaged under grant agreements and during call for proposals without discrimination, direct or indirect, because of race, ethnicity, religion or creed, nationality or political belief, gender, sexual orientation, disability or any other circumstances;
- Take all necessary precautions to avoid conflicts of interest;
- Ensure that they do not engage in, nor condone behavior, which would constitute harassment, sexual harassment, or abuse of authority.

In addition, all individuals taking part in grant evaluation of the CFP/ Concept notes will sign a Confidentiality and No - conflict of interests (Affidavit). Individuals having a personal or financial interest in a potential applicant responding to a solicitation must declare such a position and will be prohibited from any involvement in the grant selection and approval process.

4.3.2.2 Dispute Resolution

SACEP and Grantees shall to the fullest extent possible strive to resolve promptly and amicably questions of interpretation of agreements and disbursement of funds and any dispute arising out of or in relation to disbursement agreements.

Disputes or claims by third parties engaged by the Grantees will be dealt with by the Grantee and under no circumstances will the SACEP be held liable.

4.3.3 Grant Selection and Approval

SACEP will aim to select its implementing partners through transparent and competitive processes using a two stage selection process composed of Call for Concept Notes and Call for Proposals.

In both stages the Principle of Transparency will apply. All personnel involved in the grant selection process on behalf of SACEP will ensure that:

- During the pre-solicitation phase, that information is available to the community at large and that there is no specific or privileged information available to particular individuals or groups;
- During the solicitation phase, all potential applicants will receive identical information and any clarifications on solicitation documents will be provided at approximately the same time to all;
- Individuals having a personal or financial interest in a potential applicant responding to a solicitation must declare such a position and will be prohibited from any involvement in the grant selection and approval process

4.3.3.1 Preparation of Concept Notes

Concept Notes can be submitted until the deadline specified in the call document and provided the requirements set in this Manual as well as respective solicitation documents are met.

Based on the MOU between SACEP member-state Government of Maldives and Parley for the Oceans, SACEP has requested Parley to put together a project proposal for Maldives to be sent to SACEP with the Government of Maldives endorsement for further review and processing in order to accelerate implementation of the project.

4.3.3.2 Evaluation of Concept notes

Concept Notes and applicant organizations/individuals are evaluated by the Regional Block Grant Investment **Selection Committee (RBG-SC)** appointed by SACEP. The RBG-SC would include members of the PSC, in addition to the respective Country Focal Point (i.e. Secretary from the Ministry of Environment or designee –see Tier 2) for the applying organization with registration status in that country. Parley will be part of the Selection Committee except for RBG applications for projects in the Maldives. Projects proposed in the Concept Notes are screened for basic eligibility, and subsequently evaluated. The evaluation includes, among other things, the assessment of Theory of Change, underlying assumptions, the expected outcomes and the capacities of the proponents to deliver the project's results as well as suitability of proposed budget. Detailed evaluation criteria and ratings (i.e.; the 'evaluation matrix') will be released with each call for concept notes and call for proposals. Ultimately, the RBG-SC will prepare a shortlist of Concept Notes for approval by the PLEASE Steering

Committee, chaired by SACEP. Upon making a final decision on the shortlist, SACEP will inform all organizations of the results. The cost of preparing concept notes, including any related travel, is not reimbursable nor can it be included as a direct cost of the assignment.

4.3.3.3 Elaboration of Full Proposals

Proponents whose projects were shortlisted will be asked to elaborate Full Proposals. During the Elaboration process, proponents can submit questions, and the answers are sent to all parties invited to submit Full Proposals. Proponents have the opportunity to request a support of US\$ 5,000 to 10,000 depending on the size of project to support the elaboration of Full Proposals, e.g. to cover travel costs of smaller or local NGOs participating in preparation meetings or to commission studies to identify benchmarks. The Full Proposal must have the endorsement of the appropriate authority/authorized body of the country or region, with a signed letter of consent indicating such endorsement and with the agreed cooperation presented.

4.3.3.4 Evaluation of Proposals

The Full Proposals will be evaluated by the **Regional Block Grant Investment Selection Committee (RBG-SC)** appointed by SACEP. In addition, the World Bank Office in each country would be consulted with the **Bank providing its no-objection to proceed with final selection and contracting.**

The evaluation of the prospective recipient itself includes the enhanced assessment of the grantee and governance structure of the project, as well as the assessment of the project concept, the project Results Framework (see Annex), the mechanisms to reach the promised impacts, and the suitability of the proposed budget. The proposals will also be screened in accordance with the Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF) prepared for the Project and for any risks and adverse impacts on biodiversity. More detailed evaluation criteria will be provided in the solicitation documents of each call for proposals, to be verified with national government focal persons.

4.3.3.4 Final Selection and approval

The Regional Block Grant Investment Selection Committee (RBG-SC) will make recommendations on which project proposals are to be funded and present them to SACEP. Taking the RBG-SC's recommendations and World Bank country office's no-objection to proceed with final selection and contracting into account, the PLEASE Steering Committee, chaired by SACEP, will make the final funding decisions.

4.3.3.5 Grant Negotiation

Negotiations with the applicant may take place after the selection of the applicants and prior to signing the grant agreement. The purpose of negotiations will be to ensure clarity, consistency, and completeness of the technical and financial proposal, and to incorporate any changes specified SACEP

and recommendations on good practices from the PIU. Once the negotiations have come to a satisfactory result, the PIU will proceed to issue the grant agreement to the Grantee.

SACEP reserves the right to terminate the grant negotiations if a satisfactory result appears unachievable within a reasonable timeframe and no longer than 8 weeks.

4.3.3.6 Proposal. / Concept note Requirements

Registration of entities

It is the exclusive responsibility of the applying organization to ensure that it has appropriate authorizations/ registrations to participate in the call also in the event of subcontracting implementation to a third party. SACEP is not able to extend any assistance nor will it accept any responsibility for any such registration or authorization process.

Proposals and Concept Notes must be submitted in English

Conflict of interest

Any previous or ongoing litigation cases involving the applicant or potential conflict of interest must be declared and explanations provided. SACEP reserves the right to decline the submission of a proposal if the applicant maintains outstanding commitments related to SACEP supported activities.

Budgeting requirements

During the grant negotiations and subsequently in the grant agreement, the total budget amount for the grant is determined. The proposed budget must be in **United States Dollars (USD)**. It needs to contain and explain the various cost factors in sufficient detail, with the following main budget headings and subheadings as per the template provided in respective solicitation documents.

Budget headings examples:

Budget Headings	Budget Subheadings
Human resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Salaries international staff ● Salaries national staff ● Short term technical assistance
Operational Costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Office rental and running costs ● Equipment and supplies ● Travel / transportation costs
Programme costs per output	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Output 1 ● Output 2 ●
Indirect costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Up to 7%

Defining Direct and Indirect Costs

Direct costs can be identified specifically with particular cost objectives such as a grant, contract, project, function or activity. Direct costs generally include:

1. Salaries are wages (including vacations, holidays, sick leave, and other excused absences of employees working specifically on objectives of a grant or contract – i.e, direct labor costs).
2. Other employee fringe benefits allocable on direct labor employees.
3. Consultant services contracted to accomplish specific grant/contract objectives.
4. Travel of (direct labor) employees.
5. Materials, supplies and equipment purchased directly for use on a specific grant or contract.
6. Communication costs such as long distance telephone calls or telegrams identifiable with a specific award or activity.

Indirect costs represent the expenses of doing business that are not readily identified with a particular grant, contract, project function or activity, but are necessary for the general operation of the organization and the conduct of activities it performs. In theory, costs like heat, light, accounting and personnel might be charged directly if little meters could record minutes in a cross-cutting manner. Practical difficulties preclude such an approach. Therefore, cost allocation plans or indirect cost rates are used to distribute those costs to benefiting revenue sources. **Indirect costs are incurred costs that:**

1. May be overhead costs,
2. Do not require verifiable vouchers, and
3. Are calculated as a percentage against the total of incurred direct costs.

The maximum percentage for indirect costs cannot exceed 7% of the total direct costs. In partnerships and consortiums, the 7% indirect costs should normally be shared among implementing partner organizations, including local civil society organizations, proportionate to their implementation budget (7% of their total budget).

4.3.3.7 Special Conditions

Parley will provide technical assistance and advisory support to all member-states and lead applicants. If applicants comply with all the Parley standards as determined by Parley, Parley will provide an off-take guarantee at a premium price for recyclable plastic materials. See figure below.

SACEP X PARLEY STANDARDS AND OFF-TAKE GUARANTEE

TO JOIN THE PARLEY INTERCEPTION NETWORK, PARTNERS NEED TO COMPLY WITH FOUR STANDARDS:

- FAIR LABOR STANDARDS** (Icon: Hard hat)
- TRACEABILITY STANDARDS** (Icon: Globe)
- TECHNOLOGY STANDARDS** (Icon: Robotic arm)
- PROCESS STANDARDS** (Icon: Document with checkmark)

PARLEY GIVES AN OFF-TAKE GUARANTEE FOR MATERIALS, COLLECTED AND PROCESSED IN COMPLIANCE WITH THE PARLEY STANDARDS. SUCH MATERIALS WILL PURCHASED FROM PROGRAM PARTNERS OF 'CLEAN RIVERS AND SEAS' FOR A PREMIUM PRICE.

In addition, Parley’s Code of Conduct concerning labor standards would need to be complied with (see Annexes).

Parley’s guarantee plus compliance with its Code of Conduct would ensure that selected lead organizations (applicants) are guaranteed direct and continual access to global markets.

For all RBG Investments supported by Parley, Parley traceability standards will be required and a unique ID introduced to ensure verification and authenticity of the material upcycled.

TRACEABILITY STANDARDS > PARLEY ID

[+] PARLEY ID DIGITAL INTAKE

T8 COLLECTORS → T7 COLLECTION CENTER

[+] PARLEY ID TRACER

T6 RECYCLER -BALES- → T5 RECYCLER -FLAKES- → T4 RECYCLER -PELLETS-

T3 YARN → T2 FABRIC

[+] PARLEY ID TAG

T1 PRODUCT ASSEMBLY → END OF USE

PRODUCTS RETURN TO THE PARLEY INTERCEPTION NETWORK

PARLEY ID DIGITAL INTAKE
SEAMLESS DOCUMENTATION AND TRACKING OF PLASTIC INTERCEPTION FROM COLLECTION (T8) TO FLAKING (T5)

PARLEY ID TRACER
IMPLEMENTATION OF UNIQUE NANO CERAMIC MARKERS INTO PLASTIC PELLETS (RECYCLED AND VIRGIN)

PARLEY ID TAG
ADDITIONAL UNIQUE ID FOR EACH PRODUCT VIA PHYSICAL LABEL (QR/NFC)

4.3.4 Grant Management

4.3.4.1 Grant agreements

SACEP will contract the grantee using a standard-format Grant Agreement. The Full Proposal will serve as an attachment to the Agreement. Subsequent significant changes altering the project proposal (e.g. due to changing circumstances after approval) need to be approved by SACEP, [please see more details](#) on the Amendment process below.

The grant agreement includes standard terms and conditions with the description of action, budget and log frame attached as annexure. The Grantee is responsible for the achievement of outputs and objectives as stated in the annexure within set financial limits and obligations.

Where the results and outputs of the contribution funds are co-financed, it is the responsibility of the Grantee to make this explicit prior to approval of the grant agreement. Use of funds, budgets from the different sources and reporting requirements will be clarified in the grant agreement.

Subject to completion of grant negotiations (if required), the grant agreement will be issued in two copies by the FM for signature by the Grantee. One signed copy must be returned to the FM within 30 days. The grant agreement will come into effect upon the date of signature by both parties, unless otherwise specified in the agreement.

SACEP will post information on the project and budget about awarded grants on the SACEP website.

4.3.4.2. Amendments of grant agreements

Grantees wishing to make an amendment to their agreement may submit a written request with sound justification to the SACEP, at any time up to two months before the end of the agreement. Amendments are required for any changes in the agreement, including but not limited to:

- i. Changes in the scope of the description of action, logframe, activity plan or work plan, including new or unplanned activities;
- ii. Any increase in the total budget;
- iii. Any variances at budget sub-heading level exceeding 10%;
- iv. Any changes in the duration of the agreement;
- v. Any changes in the terms or schedules of the grant agreement.

Requests for grant amendments will be assessed by the SACEP. SACEP may refuse or adjust requested amendments. If they involve an increase to the approved budget, the SC approval will be required. Authorization must be formalized through an official amendment to the grant agreement and its annexes and signature by both parties.

No-cost extensions are allowable but require a strong justification from the Grantee to explain the reasons for not having been able to spend the budget as planned and how the budget in the no-cost extension is reallocated to ensure best value for money. The Grantee is responsible for managing the

timely implementation of the project and its outputs. A no-cost extension will require a revised budget as supporting annex.

Budget Revisions:

Submissions for budget revisions may be provided to SACEP at least two months before the end of a Grant Agreement or the end of the budget period, unless otherwise agreed with the Grantee. In such cases the Grantee must submit a proposed budget revision including a detailed justification to SACEP. Budget revisions result in a grant amendment.

Budget/expenditure variations are allowed without a budget revision as specified:

- The expenditure on budget subheadings does not exceed 10% of the original budget sub-heading over the entire project duration.
- The variations are within the scope of the defined outputs and activities as specified in the logframe and the work plan, (i.e. not new or unplanned activities), and
- The total amount approved by the FM is not exceeded (i.e. there must be savings from another budget line item).

4.3.4.3 Completion or termination of Grants

The grant can only be closed once all required documents have been submitted and verified. Grantees are required to submit a final narrative and a final financial report at the end of their project. SACEP will verify that all deliverables have been completed and all progress, financial, and review reports have been reviewed and approved, and that the total grant amount has been reconciled. Reconciliation includes verification that all advances have been accounted for, the final payment has been issued, and any unspent funds have been returned and credited back to the portfolio for future grants. SACEP will notify the grantee without undue delay about the approval of all deliverables and completion of the grant. In case a grantee sees opportunities to scale up its work or achieve even more ambitious targets through follow up work, grantees are welcome to approach SACEP regarding possible follow up work. This should not happen before the mid-term review is finalized.

The operational closure of the grant agreement refers to the **last date of the agreement**, or upon early termination of the agreement by either the Grantee or SACEP as spelled out in the grant agreement to the other party. No activities or expenditures are to be incurred after this date. All funds which remain unutilized after completion of activities must be returned to SACEP.

For the financial closure, the Grantee will submit the final reports as per the obligations of the grant agreement upon termination or expiry of the agreement. SACEP will evaluate and approve the Grantee reports with emphasis on results and deliverables being in line with the obligations of the grant agreement. Unless otherwise defined in the grant agreement, the financial closing of the grant is tied to:

- i. Acceptance of the audit report of the final financial report by SACEP and Grantee (if audit required);

- ii. Acceptance of the final narrative report and M&E related data reporting, as well as the acceptance of any other pending reports as defined in the grant agreement;
- iii. Approval of the final evaluation report (if report is required);
- iv. Approved asset report (if required);
- v. Return (or deduction from final payment) of unspent funds and/or ineligible costs (if applicable);
- vi. All outstanding subcontracting issues have been settled;
- vii. There are no outstanding claims or investigations on the agreement;
- viii. Written agreement on the use of the investment capital (for investment capital projects).

Once the final payment is completed, SACEP archives the entire documentation of the project and declares it closed

4.3.5 Fund Management

The SACEP PIU is responsible for ensuring financial management systems are established and used to ensure that funds are held, disbursed and accounted for in a timely, transparent and efficient manner

4.3.5.1 Disbursements to Grantees

Grantees must open a separate bank account for the project or dispose of a sub-account, or a separate and internally tracked and traceable bookkeeping entry in the financial management system. This ensures transparency regarding financial transactions and renders financial reviews more efficient.

SACEP PIU is responsible for managing fund disbursements and monitoring expenditure of Grantees according to the grant agreements and subject to a review of ongoing performance against the agreement. Grantees are expected to submit Funding Advance Requests in relation to the upcoming work **every 6 months**. Such funding requests will include:

- budget and detailed activity plan for the upcoming work period;
- initial or updated project work plan; and,
- progress report for the previous work period that references the work plan, and the budget for the previous work period. The first progress report covers the inception phase (usually the first 6 months of the project).

The grant agreement will also include a schedule for disbursements for the duration of the grant.

The SACEP PIU may adjust or disapprove a disbursement request taking into account the achieved progress and results in outputs, the reported fund balance remaining from the previous disbursements and the proposed activity plan of the Grantee.

The SACEP PIU will ensure that all due reports have been received and approved before disbursements. When an inception phase is defined as part of the project, the first disbursement will provide for the activities in the inception phase and the requirements of implementation until the second disbursement is due. All disbursements to Grantees are subject to availability of funds.

4.3.5.2. Audits

Project expenditures are required to be externally audited or verified as appropriate on an annual basis. The IP audit reports will be submitted to SACEP with a management letter from the qualified auditors, addressing adequacies of the accounting and internal control systems. Adverse and disclaimer opinions from auditors will result in suspension of any further disbursement to the Grantee by SACEP until the Grantee satisfactorily demonstrates that issues identified have been resolved. SACEP PIU will follow up with Grantees on implementation of the audit management plan which is part of the annual financial report. The cost of audit can be included in the proposal.

4.3.5.3. Due Diligence/ Capacity Assessment of Grantees

With regards to W2 proposals, SACEP will implement a light due diligence process. Among W2 proposals, SACEP will ask proponents to submit completed and signed due diligence forms provided by SACEP with copies of IDs of the project leader or the leader of the grantee. SACEP will also request relevant documents concerning the organization (registration certificate, statutes) and financial documents.

For W1 proposals SACEP will conduct a financial capacity assessment (FCA) of each Grantee. The objective of the assessment is to evaluate the capacity of the IP's financial procedures and structures and define the level of risks for the SACEP. The assessment will be conducted prior to signing of the grant agreement or in the early stage of the project implementation and may be undertaken by PIU staff. Capacity will be assessed in relation to legal agreements, fund flow mechanisms, staffing, accounting policies and procedures, segregation of duties, management capacities, budgeting, payment procedures, asset management, audit mechanisms, reporting and monitoring, and ITC systems. Where a similar assessment has been conducted by another UN agency, the findings of this assessment may be reviewed, evaluated and appropriate action taken.

The FCA report will provide a detailed analysis of the risks in relation to the management capacity of the Grantee. Based on the findings, the report will propose an overall rating (e.g. high, significant, moderate, low) and will provide recommendations on how to address shortcomings and identified risks. The final report will be shared with the Grantee; recommendations will be binding to the Grantee and will be monitored by the SACEP PIU.

4.3.7 Monitoring and evaluation

Grantees have the main responsibility for monitoring at project-level. Monitoring, internal evaluation and reporting will mainly be done through the funding advance requests and annual reports. SACEP may conduct monitoring missions on-site and at grantees' offices. SACEP will get involvement of its

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NFPs in each country in this regard. The goal of the missions is to review project progress (similar to mid-term reviews) and to learn from project successes and challenges for SACEP’s own portfolio. In addition, each grant project requires a Mid-term Financial Review and Technical Review and a Final Financial Review and Final Technical Review, for which exact dates will be agreed. The Technical Review will be commissioned and funded by SACEP outside the grant budget.

Success of projects granted under the RGB will be measured using a project success criteria metric. The project success criteria will define whether the project will be deemed successful by its major stakeholders, upon its completion. In order to take the guesswork out of the equation, agreeing on the criteria by which the project will be measured is done at the beginning of the project. The metrics given below are subject to further review and amendment.

Project Success Criteria Metric

#	Success Criterion	Grade Criterion
1	Project is completed on time	On time 10, upto 2 weeks delay 9, 2 to 4 weeks delay 8, 4 week and up 6
2	Project is completed on budget	On budget 10, over budget up 5% 9, over budget from 5% to 10% 8, over budget from 15% to 20% 7, over budget 20% up 6
3	Project meets the appropriate quality targets	On target 10, 95% on target 8, 90% to 95% on target 6, 90% and below 4
4	Project delivered all items within the agreed scope	Yes 10, no 0-6
	Project deliverables are fit for purpose	Yes 10, no 0 -6
6	Project meets the functional requirements	Yes 10, no 0 -6
7	Project meets the non-functional requirements e.g. scalability, stability, availability, performance	Yes 10, no 0- 6
8	Project uses the approved technology	Yes 10, no 0 -6
9	Project meets regulatory and compliance targets e.g. health and safety, legislation, etc.	Yes 10, no 0 -6
10	Managing project risks efficiently	Yes 10, no 0 -6
11	Project meets other targets or benefits	Yes 10, no 0 -6
1	Submission of progress reports on time	Yes 10, no 0 - 6

2		
1 3	Sharing of lessons learned	Yes 10, no 0 -6

4.3.8 Reporting

SACEP will define detailed reporting requirements for the Grantee in the grant agreement. Reports submitted by Grantees will be verified and approved by the SACEP PIU. The PIU will consult with Grantees on the reporting formats to ensure there is a common understanding of the requirements. The PIU will coach Grantees on preliminary report submissions as required. The reporting templates will be uploaded onto the SACEP website.

All reports must be provided **in English**. All reports shall be submitted in PDF and word/excel soft versions for ease of verification.

Reporting Schedule for Grantees

The calendar year is used for the annual program and financial reporting. During the implementation of a grant, the following reports may be required depending on the duration and the type of the grant, and as specified in the grant agreement:

Type of report and period covered	Area of reporting	Content
Inception Report Inception Period Report is due one month after the end of Inception Phase	Finance	Financial Report for the inception phase
	Project	Inception Report may include: * Baseline survey, Report on the progress of activities: M&E plan including final LOGFRAME and results Framework, fund request for subsequent project period
Annual Report 1st January to 31st December Due by 28th February	Finance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Certified financial annual report ● List of assets ● Fund request for subsequent project period (if required)

	Project	Annual Narrative Progress Report with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Report against work plan ● M&E data ● Annual Work Plan and Budget for current year
Semi Annual Report 1st January to 31 June Due 31st July	Finance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Financial semi - annual report ● Fund request for subsequent project period (if required)
	Project	Semi -Annual Narrative Progress Report with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Report against work plan ● M&E data ● Annual Work Plan and Budget for current year
Final Report Entire duration of the grant agreement Due 3 months after the end of grant agreement	Finance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Certified Final Financial Report ● Asset list
	Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Final Narrative Report including final status of progress against outcomes and output targets ● Final Project Evaluation

4.3.8.3 Exceptions on reporting

Grantees may be eligible for an exemption on the reporting schedule outlined above. The general guideline for exemption on reports is that when reports are due with less than 10 weeks of elapsed implementation, SACEP may provide an exemption for submission of that report. This exception will be reflected either in the grant agreements, or in writing to the Grantee.

Additional reports can be requested by SACEP if there is a requirement for closer monitoring of implementation. This will be communicated in writing to the Grantee with adequate time provided to prepare the report.

4.3.8.4 Approval of Reports

The process of approval will include a review and validation of reports by SACEP. The PIU may request further information and clarification of the Grantee in the review process.

Payments to Grantee will not be made until the required reports have been approved by the SACEP as meeting minimum quality requirements.

4.3.8 5 Guidelines on Financial Reports

The Grantee is responsible for maintaining clear, accurate, and complete financial records in respect of the funds received under the agreement to ensure accuracy and reliability of the financial information and reporting. Books and records must be maintained in such a manner that the receipts and expenditures can be shown separately in an easily accessible and transparent form. Financial reporting must be prepared in **United States Dollars (USD) using a template provided by SACEP.**

Defining expenditures

Guidelines on expense reporting by budget lines headings are included in the reporting template available on SACEP website. Any change in the method of recognizing expenses on financial reports must be clearly documented with the financial report. No inflation, exchange rate differences, and depreciation expenses are to be assumed in reporting expenditures. **Only actual costs incurred may be reflected.**

Exchange Rate Definition

The agreed reporting currency is **United States Dollars (USD)**. The Grantee shall document the official exchange rates of either the central bank or the official UN exchange rates applicable for the day of purchase.

Income Earned

Any income earned from implementation of activities granted under the grant agreements shall be identified and accounted for in financial reports. Income earned includes interest earned on funds received by the Grantee. Funds should be held in interest bearing accounts.

Any income earned shall be returned to SACEP or **used for the purposes as set forth in the approved work plan where agreed in writing by the SACEP.**

4.3.9 Communication, Visibility

The grantees should acknowledge SACEP and the World Bank and Parley on all publications, reports, banners, press materials and all other products that the grants help produce (including its logo and full name). In addition, grantees need to ensure that easily legible signage displaying SACEP's and the World Bank's and Parley's logos and full name is erected on the project site.

4.4 Beneficiary Accountability

Grantees and all project staff and representatives must uphold the PLEASE project principles of accountability, as follows:

1. **Transparency:** Key information about SACEP/ PLEASE and the projects/ grants should be presented to stakeholders in languages, formats, and media that are accessible, comprehensible, and useful to them.
2. **Consent:** SACEP and Grantees should ensure that stakeholders consent to their participation in projects, and that they are satisfied with their representation in project design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation.
3. **Feedback/grievance:** All local stakeholders should be aware of their right to express feedback/grievance and of the channels for doing so, including direct access to the SACEP. Further guidance is available at the World Bank Group's website.²
4. **Competence:** SACEP representatives and Grantees who interact with stakeholders should always behave professionally, should be trained and skilled in participatory approaches

4.4.1 Fraud

The World Bank *Guidelines on Preventing and Combating Fraud and Corruption in Projects and Financing by IBRD and IDA Loans and Grants*³ shall apply to all grant agreement contracts.

All Grantees accepting funds/ grants from SACEP/ PLEASE Project are therefore required to familiarize themselves with the definition of Fraud spelled out in the Work Bank Guidelines and ensure that such prohibited practices are prevented and reported accordingly.

4.4.2 Procurement

Grantees need to ensure that they follow the UN 'public procurement principles'⁴ which are:

Best value for money

Application of the 'best value for money' principle in the procurement process, means selection of the offer which presents the optimum combination of factors such as appropriate quality, service, life-cycle costs, and other parameters to best meet the defined needs.

Fairness, integrity and transparency

The manner in which the procurement process is carried out must give all internal and external stakeholders of the organization the assurance that the process is fair, transparent, and conducted with integrity. The Grantee must undertake all necessary precautions to avoid conflicts of interests, favoritism,

² <https://www.worldbank.org/en/projects-operations/products-and-services/grievance-redress-service>

³ <https://ppfdocuments.azureedge.net/4039.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.un.org/Depts/ptd/sites/www.un.org.Depts.ptd/files/files/attachment/page/pdf/pm.pdf>

or corrupt practices in the execution of procurement. Segregation of duties is an important basic principle of internal control.

Effective competition

Effective competition is best explained as a situation in which at least three independent contractors acting on their own (not in collusion) effectively compete for the same business opportunity and submit a responsive bid. In the case of restricted sourcing of products or services, a Note to File should be prepared and signed by the approving authority of the IP. It will justify why a procurement process without a competitive process is required (for example, only a single source of livestock in township vicinity).

In the best interests of organizational objectives

The definition of this principle is derived from the ultimate objective of the procurement, which is to add value to SACEP and its partners in fulfilling their goals and objectives.

Sustainable procurement

Procurement is called sustainable when it integrates requirements, specifications, and criteria that are compatible and in favor of the protection of the environment, social progress, and economic development, namely by seeking resource efficiency, improving the quality of products and services, and ultimately optimizing costs. www.ungm.org/sustainableprocurement/

In the case of Grantees not yet having adequate systems and/or procedures in place to adhere to these principles, Grantees are advised to adopt UN Procurement Manual (2020)⁵ guidelines. Procurement actions need to be within budget.

Procurement Documentation

In line with the procurement principles of transparency and accountability, and in order to facilitate external audits, every step in the procurement process must be documented and kept on file via both physical and digital copies. Digital copies should be stored on a hard drive and backed up to a cloud server. A standard filing system, as well as a numbering system to enable tracking of files, should be established by every Grantee according to their own standards in order to create an audit trail and to facilitate the management of procurement activities. Procurement files are to be kept by the IP for five years after the close of the project.

4.4.3 Asset Management

Equipment purchased by Grantees under Grant Agreements remains under the ownership of Grantees.

Items acquired by beneficiaries under the grant-in-kind schemes are not regarded as assets as such. The Grantee must be able to show handover documents that provide proof that the item was received by the target household or group.

⁵ <https://www.un.org/Depts/ptd/sites/www.un.org.Depts.ptd/files/files/attachment/page/pdf/pm.pdf>

The Grantees are required to maintain complete and accurate records of supplies, equipment, and other property purchased with SACEP funds. All equipment should be recorded on an asset register with a description of the item, relevant serial numbers, location, purchase price and date, and a unique identification number. All items should be labeled or tagged. The asset list format includes a 'suggested list' of categories under which to report asset items, which can be accessed in the template section SACEP/PLEASE website.

It is required that the Grantee carry out a physical asset inventory check. The purpose of the physical check is to confirm that all of the assets are in the location they were assigned and are in good working condition. Project audits will include audits of the asset management of the Grantee.

Asset Reporting

The Grantees will submit signed annual and final asset report. Asset verification may be included in audits. At the end of the grant agreement, the Grantee shall include in their final report:

- A list on any outstanding procurement actions which have been ordered but not yet delivered at the time of the completion of the project period or early termination;
- A letter proposing on how the undelivered items and any remaining inventories not accounted for will be used.

4.4.4 Record management

The proper management of records, paper or electronic, is important in supporting the transparency and accountability of the Project. Record management includes document retention, custody, archiving, and destruction of both paper and electronic records.

Document Retention by the Grantees:

- In addition to the documentation of financial, procurement, and inventories outlined in the POM,, the Grantee is required to maintain comprehensive files and records in respect of activities supported by SACEP, including, but not limited to:
- Initial proposal submitted by the Grantee, and any documentation relating to the process leading up to an amended and final proposal;
- final proposal and final budget;
- copy of the Grantee grant agreements, signed by both parties;
- any amendments to the Grantee grant agreement;
- any approved budget revisions; and
- copies of all reports submitted to SACEP

Based on requirements for transparency and accountability, the Grantee is required to maintain and ensure key documents are accessible for five years after closure of the project.

4.4.5 Environmental and Social Standards

Grantees are required to, following the guidance provided in the ESMF, to prepare, and implement the subprojects' ESMPs, IEEs and ESIA, as required, in a manner acceptable to SACEP and the World Bank. Subprojects that would be considered high risk will not be financed by this project in accordance with the Negative List (see Annexes).

The implementation of the material measures and actions and the timing of those actions, as set out in the Environment and Social Commitment Plan (ESCP, See Annexes) will be monitored and responded to by SACEP as stipulated by the ESCP and the conditions stated in the World Bank Legal Agreement. The World Bank will monitor and assess the progress and completion of the material measures and actions throughout the implementation of the project.

As agreed by the World Bank and SACEP, the ESCP may be revised from time to time during project implementation, to reflect adaptive management of project changes and unforeseen circumstances or in response to the assessment of project performance conducted under the ESCP itself. In such circumstances, SACEP will agree to all changes with the Bank and will update the ESCP to reflect such changes. Agreement on changes to the ESCP will be documented through an exchange of letters signed between the World Bank and SACEP and promptly disclosed by both entities.

Environment and Social Development Specialist on board, based on information provided by grantees according to ESMF requirements, will screen subprojects early in the identification stage of possible environmental and social risks and impacts that may be encountered. Potential environmental and social risks must be identified at the beginning to facilitate the proper selection of mitigating measures. The screening will ensure that the sub-project is aligned with the process undertaken by SACEP for its potential environmental and social impacts and to determine the nature and extent of the environmental and social due diligence that must be conducted before the approval of the sub-project.

The proposal will be screened against the negative/non-eligible subproject and/or activities (Refer to Annexes). An environmental and social due diligence (ESDD) may be conducted by the SACEP to the existing activities which will be considered as a subproject, if needed, to check its compliance with national regulations.

Once the screening and documentation requirements are completed, the grantee/partner will prepare the required site- and project-specific environmental and social assessment and management plan (ESMP) which will contain the impact or risk analysis and with the proposed mitigating measures based on the identified impacts. Sub-projects assessed to be low risk will not require any plan or assessment after screening. Moderate and substantial risk activities may be required to prepare an ESMP, an IEE or an ESIA depending on and proportional to the level of risks and impacts (Refer to SACEP's ESMF for details).

The safeguard documents (EIA, IEE, and/or ESMPs) will be subject to consultation and disclosure in an accessible place, in a timely manner, in a form and language understandable to key stakeholders,

prior to the finalization of the documents. Particular attention will be given to ensure project-affected persons, including vulnerable and disadvantaged groups and individuals have adequate time and ready access to draft documents before consultation takes place.

4.4.6 Labor and working conditions

Grantees are required to abide by at least the relevant principles of ESS2 stipulated in the Labor Management Procedures (LMP). Also required to implement occupational health and safety measures specified in the LMP.

4.4.7 Resource efficiency and pollution prevention and management

All proposed subprojects must consider the WB's ESS3: Resource Efficiency and Pollution Prevention and Management and refer to Good International Industry Practice and the WB Group's Environmental Health and Safety Guideline (EHSG).

4.4.8 Feedback and complaints

At project level, each grantee shall have a process for handling feedback and complaints, which will consist of effective, accessible and transparent procedures to receive and resolve complaints. Feedback/complaints shall be encouraged among all stakeholders throughout the project and resolved without undue delay. Any stakeholder of the project (project staff, beneficiaries, partners) can file a feedback or complaint. As a rule, the submitter needs to be directly concerned with the project, however, exceptionally he/she can also act as the representative of a concerned group if its members are not able to file the complaint on their own. Feedback should be reported on in progress reports to the SACEP. In addition, grantees are encouraged to provide constructive feedback and complaints to SACEP, which can be submitted at any time. Only if issues cannot be solved at project level do stakeholders have the opportunity to file a complaint to SACEP.

4.5 Institutional arrangement governing the grants

PIU: The total administration of Block Grants will be done by the PIU established in SACEP. The PIU will be headed by Project Director and other technical and support staff. A separate technical officer will be designated from the PIU to coordinate the Block Grants.

The PIU can be supported in its work by Technical Assistance organizations (i.e. UNOPS) in accordance with bilateral agreements.

Project Steering Committee (PSC): On top of PIU, there will be a project steering committee who will advise the PIU on administering and governing the Block Grant programme.

The Regional Block Grant (RBG) Investment Selection Committee (RBG-SC) will consist of members of the PSC, in addition to the respective Country Focal Point (i.e. Secretary from Ministry of Environment or designee – see Tier 2) for the applying organization with registration status in that country. The

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RBG-SC would meet on two occasions: First, to review the long-list of RBG applications (based on criteria outlined in the POM) and authorize a short-list of no more than 4 organizations per country that would be invited to prepare a long-form application; and, Second, to review the full application of approximately 4 shortlisted organizations and determine selection and award amounts. The NFPs or designees in the Ministries of Environment would work closely with the PIU to monitor the progress of RBG implementation.

Regional Block Grants administrative structure

