# Request for Proposal

**CONSULTANT FOR**
**SUSTAINABLE TOURISM MASTER PLAN**
**FOR POKHARA METROPOLITAN CITY,**

**FOR**

DIGO
DEVELOPING INCLUSIVE AND GREEN OPPORTUNITIES

**PROJECT**

**United Community Nepal (UniCoN)**
Pokhara-5, Kaski, Gandaki, Nepal
11 September 2026

**Request for Proposals (RFP)**

**Consultancy Services for the Preparation of the Sustainable Tourism Master Plan for Pokhara Metropolitan City**

Developing Inclusive and Green Opportunities (DIGO) project implemented by United Community Nepal (UniCoN) with support from Swisscontact in Nepal intends to commission a consultancy assignment to prepare the Sustainable Tourism Master Plan for Pokhara in partnership with Pokhara Metropolitan City (PMC).

The assignment aims to develop an evidence-based, demand-led, and implementable Sustainable Tourism Master Plan by consolidating existing tourism policies, plans, studies, and datasets; integrating the Strategic Visitor Flow (SVF) approach and visitor demand analysis; identifying critical gaps and emerging opportunities; and developing a prioritised implementation roadmap for sustainable tourism development across Pokhara.

To support this assignment, UniCoN is inviting proposals from qualified consulting firms or multidisciplinary consultant teams through this Request for Proposals (RFP).

UniCoN invites eligible consulting firms and consultant teams to submit both a Technical Proposal and a Financial Proposal for the consultancy services described in the Terms of Reference (ToR). The proposal preparation requirements, evaluation process, and submission templates are provided in the following ToR.

The proposals must be submitted electronically to rfp@unitedcommunitynepal.org with the subject line: Consultant Team for Sustainable Tourism Master Plan - Pokhara

Submission deadline: 27 September 2026

Late submissions will not be considered.

UniCoN reserves the right to accept or reject any or all proposals without assigning any reason or providing further notice to applicants.

For detailed information and Term of Reference, please visit link
https://unitedcommunitynepal.org/request-for-proposal/

# TERMS OF REFERENCE
# SUSTAINABLE TOURISM MASTER PLAN FOR POKHARA METROPOLITAN CITY

## 1. Background

### 1.1. Tourism Planning Context in Pokhara

Pokhara, Nepal's tourism capital, has grown into one of Nepal's most vibrant tourism destinations attracting diverse mix of domestic and international visitors for adventure, nature, culture, wellness, pilgrimage, and other experiences. Tourism is one of the city's most important economic sectors and a key contributor to employment and local revenue. As visitor numbers continue to grow and their preferences continue to evolve, Pokhara faces increasing opportunities alongside challenges related to visitor concentration, seasonality, infrastructure pressures, environmental sustainability, and the equitable distribution of tourism benefits across the municipality.

Over several decades, significant efforts have been made to guide tourism development in Pokhara. Pokhara Metropolitan City (PMC), federal and provincial government agencies, Nepal Tourism Board (NTB), tourism associations, development partners, universities, researchers, private sector actors, and other institutions have prepared policies, strategies, master plans, studies, assessments, feasibility studies, research papers, infrastructure proposals, environmental studies, and tourism development initiatives. Together, these represent a substantial investment of knowledge and resources that has shaped the city's tourism planning and development.

However, the documents were developed at different times and for different institutional, geographical, and thematic purposes. Their findings and recommendations remain dispersed, some overlap or have been superseded, and the extent to which previous recommendations have been implemented is not always clear. At the same time, Pokhara's tourism system has continued to evolve, with changing visitor markets and expectations, emerging tourism products and businesses, improved connectivity, the growing influence of digital platforms, and increasing environmental and urban pressures. These changes underscore the need for a consolidated and forward-looking **Sustainable Tourism Master Plan** that aligns existing policies and initiatives, establishes a shared long-term vision, identifies strategic priorities, and provides a practical implementation roadmap for sustainable tourism development in Pokhara.

This direction was further strengthened through a participatory planning process, jointly facilitated by PMC and DIGO using the Strategic Visitor Flow (SVF) tool. The process brought together government agencies, tourism associations, private sector representatives, conservation organisations, universities, and other tourism stakeholders to develop a shared understanding of visitor movement patterns, tourism demand, tourism related pressures, visitor experiences, and opportunities to diversify tourism beyond established hotspots.

By analysing tourism through the lens of actual visitor behaviour, the process generated evidence-based recommendations for PMC on sustainable tourism development, product diversification, visitor flow optimisation, and tourism investment priorities. More importantly, it helped elevate sustainability as a central consideration in tourism planning discussions, reinforcing the need to balance tourism growth with destination stewardship and long-term competitiveness. The recommendations were well received by municipal leadership and contributed to growing interest in developing a Sustainable Tourism Master

Plan that would consolidate and build upon existing tourism-related plans and strategies within PMC. In doing so, the SVF process demonstrated the value of participatory and demand-driven planning, grounded in stakeholder input and observed visitor behaviour rather than assumptions alone.

Recognising this need, the preparation of the Sustainable Tourism Master Plan is initiated by PMC with technical support from Swisscontact through the **Developing Inclusive and Green Opportunities (DIGO)** project. The assignment reflects a shared commitment by municipal leadership and tourism stakeholders to develop evidence-based roadmap to guide tourism planning, investment prioritisation, destination management, and long-term sustainable development across the municipality. The master plan will adopt a "whole-of-Pokhara" approach, recognising tourism as an integral component of the municipality's broader development agenda and linking visitor experiences with the wellbeing of local communities and the protection of natural, cultural, and environmental assets.

Rather than developing a new master plan from scratch, the assignment will systematically review, consolidate, and assess existing tourism policies, plans, studies, and initiatives; retain what remains relevant; update or integrate those that require revision; identify critical gaps and emerging priorities; and translate the resulting evidence into a coherent, practical, and implementable Sustainable Tourism Master Plan for Pokhara.

## 1.2. Institutional Context

**Pokhara Metropolitan City (PMC**) is the largest local government in Gandaki Province and is the administrative, economic, and tourism centre of the region. Covering 464.24 square kilometres and comprising 33 wards, PMC encompasses a diverse landscape extending from the urban and lakeside core to rural settlements, agricultural areas, forests, hills, rivers, and areas adjoining the Annapurna mountain landscape. With this diversity of geography, communities, natural and cultural assets, and economic activities, the municipality's role extends beyond managing the city's urban centre to shaping development across a large and varied metropolitan territory. Tourism is central to this role, and PMC has an important responsibility in ensuring that the sector contributes to local economic development while protecting the environmental and cultural resources that underpin Pokhara's identity and visitor appeal.

**Swisscontact**, established in 1959 in Switzerland, is a leading partner organisation for the implementation of international development projects. The organisation promotes inclusive economic, social, and ecological development to make an effective contribution towards sustainable and widespread prosperity in developing and emerging economies. It strengthens the competencies of people, improving their employability, increases the competitiveness of enterprises, growing their business, and fosters social and economic systems, promoting inclusive development. Swisscontact, registered as an International Non-Governmental Organisation in Nepal, has been operating in Nepal since 1991. Currently, Swisscontact in Nepal has six development programmes across all seven provinces.

**United Community Nepal (UniCoN)** is a Pokhara-based non-governmental, not-for-profit social organization founded by a group of young professionals during the covid-19 pandemic in 2020 as a response to the inadequate social protections for vulnerable population groups. UniCoN primarily serves economically, socially, politically and culturally marginalised communities by providing resources and opportunities to improve their quality of life. UniCoN is the implementing partner of Swisscontact in Nepal for the

DIGO project and is responsible for on-the-ground coordination, stakeholder engagement, and delivery of project activities.

**DIGO** (2025-2028) a development programme of Swisscontact in Nepal is co-financed by the Happel Foundation, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), Federal Department of Foreign Affairs FDFA. The project works in PMC and Madi Rural Municipality (Gandaki Province) -Nepal's designated "tourism capital" and an emerging tourism destination respectively.

The primary goal of the project is to create additional jobs and income in the tourism sector in Nepal while generating positive environmental impacts. The project intends to achieve this by enhancing the sustainable tourism offer of tourism destinations and enterprises in Gandaki Province by guiding their transition towards responsible and sustainable tourism practices. This will be achieved by strengthening destination governance and planning capacities, improving tourism business models and practices, and building human resource skills and capabilities of public and private stakeholders. Through this transformation, the destinations will cultivate and offer high-quality sustainable tourism experiences that boost competitiveness, generate inclusive economic opportunities, and support long-term stewardship of their natural and cultural assets.

DIGO project is supported by Swisscontact and implemented by United Community of Nepal (UniCoN).

## 2. Objective

The overall objective is to develop an evidence-based, demand-led, sustainable and implementable **Sustainable Tourism Master Plan for Pokhara** by consolidating and updating existing knowledge and planning, understanding tourism through visitor flows and experiences, identifying critical gaps and emerging opportunities, and translating these into prioritised actions for PMC and other tourism stakeholders.

### 2.1. Specific Objectives

The assignment shall pursue the following specific objectives:

a. **Review, consolidate, and assess the existing tourism plans and evidence** to establish a comprehensive planning baseline by identifying implemented actions, remaining gaps, overlapping recommendations, and emerging priorities for sustainable tourism development in Pokhara.
b. **Undertake a tourism market, performance, and destination competitiveness** analysis to assess the visitor demand, market trends, tourism products, infrastructure, services, accessibility, investment readiness, and Pokhara's overall competitiveness as a sustainable tourism destination.
c. **Integrate Strategic Visitor Flow (SVF) and visitor demand analysis into the master planning process** by incorporating visitor segments, movement patterns, expenditure, length of stay, gaps, and opportunities for destination diversification and value creation.
d. **Develop a prioritised Sustainable Tourism Master Plan and implementation roadmap** that defines the vision, strategic objectives, priority projects, institutional roles, investment priorities, financing pathways, and a monitoring, evaluation, and adaptive management framework for implementation.

## 3. Scope of Work

### 3.1. Inception, Evidence Review and Initial Stakeholder Consultation

The assignment shall begin with a rapid inception phase to agree on the detailed methodology, planning horizon, geographical scope, and work plan. Existing plans, policies, studies, research, datasets, and project documents shall be collected and reviewed before substantial new research is proposed.

An initial round of focused stakeholder consultations shall then be undertaken with key public, private, academic, and community stakeholders. These consultations shall validate the initial evidence review, identify missing documents or information, understand what has changed since previous plans were prepared, capture lessons on implementation, and identify emerging priorities. Existing consultation findings shall be reused wherever appropriate to avoid consultation fatigue.

### 3.2. Consolidation and Planning Audit

Major recommendations from existing plans and studies shall be consolidated into a common Planning Evidence Matrix. The purpose is not to summarise every document, but to establish what has already been proposed, what has happened, and what still requires attention.

- Retain: still relevant and appropriate.
- Update: relevant but requiring modification.
- Integrate: overlapping recommendations that should be consolidated.
- Complete: already initiated but requiring further implementation.
- Replace or Discontinue: superseded or no longer appropriate.
- New Priority: a material issue not adequately covered in previous planning.

### 3.3. Demand and Strategic Visitor Flow Analysis

Demand-side analysis shall be central to the assignment. Existing visitor surveys, tourism statistics, academic research, business information, digital visitor feedback and other available evidence shall be used first. Visitor segments should be understood primarily through motivation, behaviour and travel patterns rather than nationality alone.

The assignment shall use and build upon Strategic Visitor Flow (SVF) analysis conducted by DIGO. Priority visitor flows shall be examined to understand motivations, arrival and movement patterns, activities, expenditure, length of stay, experience gaps, service constraints, environmental or community pressures, and opportunities to increase visitor value while improving sustainability. DIGO will facilitate further SVF workshops, if needed, as part of this process, to update and build upon the existing analysis with stakeholders, and to validate findings as priority flows evolve.

Simplified visitor journey mapping may be used for selected flows to examine the journey from discovery and planning through booking, arrival, stay, experience, movement, departure and recommendation or return.

### 3.4. Targeted Gap Identification and Prioritisation

Once demand and visitor flows are understood, the assignment shall assess only those destination and supply-side issues that materially affect priority visitor experiences or sustainable tourism development. These may include tourism products, mobility, public spaces and amenities, service quality, skills, natural and cultural assets, waste and

resource management, accessibility, digital information, local economic linkages, investment and destination governance.

Existing spatial information and maps shall be used to identify tourism nodes, visitor concentration, movement corridors, pressure points and opportunities for visitor dispersal.

### 3.5. Sustainability and Feasibility Check

Priority issues and proposed interventions shall be assessed against economic, environmental, social and cultural sustainability considerations. The assessment shall also take into account relevant international sustainable destination principles, including the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) Destination Standard.

### 3.6. Prioritisation and Action Planning

Potential interventions shall be prioritised using a simple and transparent framework considering demonstrated or credible visitor demand, visitor experience, local economic value, sustainability, inclusion, strategic fit, feasibility, institutional ownership and indicative resource requirements.

Each priority action shall identify the issue or visitor flow it addresses, the rationale, the lead and supporting actors, the indicative timeframe, the approximate resource requirement or financing pathway, and the measurable result. Actions should be grouped into quick wins, short-term, medium-term and longer-term priorities.

### 3.7. Drafting and Validation

A draft Master Plan shall be prepared based on the consolidated evidence and prioritised actions. A multi-stakeholder validation workshop shall be organised in coordination with PMC to test the relevance, feasibility, prioritisation and institutional ownership of the proposed actions. Feedback shall be documented and incorporated where appropriate before finalisation.

## 4. Methodology

The assignment should apply a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative methods. Proposers are expected to detail their proposed study method and analytical framework, and to specify how the approach will remain compatible with, and build on, existing destination-level visitor flow data and monitoring work already under way in Pokhara, to avoid duplication and to strengthen data continuity.

## 5. Stakeholder Engagement

Stakeholder engagement shall be purposeful and proportionate to the assignment. Relevant stakeholders may include PMC, Gandaki Province and federal institutions, NTB, tourism associations, accommodation enterprises, travel and trekking operators, tourism service providers, communities, conservation and environmental institutions, academics and researchers, civil society and development partners.

Local PhD scholars, tourism academics and practitioners should be engaged as knowledge partners and technical contributors where relevant. The assignment should draw on their expertise for evidence interpretation, thematic analysis and quality review, while avoiding unnecessary large-scale consultation processes.

## 6. Deliverables and Timeline

| S.No. | Deliverable | Key Content | Indicative Stage |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Inception Report and Evidence Map | Final methodology, work plan, document inventory, initial stakeholder consultations, and clearly justified evidence gaps. | Inception |
| 2 | Consolidation and Demand Diagnostic | Planning audit, recommendation status matrix, visitor demand analysis, SVF findings, visitor experience gaps and priority issues. | Analysis |
| 3 | Strategic Framework and Action Portfolio | Vision, strategic directions, prioritised interventions, institutional roles, indicative resources and monitoring indicators. | Planning |
| 4 | Draft Master Plan and Validation Workshop | Complete draft presented for stakeholder review and validation. | Validation |
| 5 | Final Sustainable Tourism Master Plan | Final plan incorporating agreed feedback, with implementation and monitoring framework. | Final |
| 6 | Assignment Completion Report and Knowledge and Handover Package | Methodology and Planning Approach, key learnings<br>Organised source repository, evidence and action matrices, relevant datasets, maps, presentation and editable files. | Final |

## 7. Expected Structure of the Sustainable Tourism Master Plan

The final structure shall be agreed upon at inception and refined as the assignment progresses. The final Master Plan shall include, but not be limited to, the following key topics and sections:

- Executive Summary
- Introduction and Planning Context
- Tourism Demand, Visitor Segments, Global Tourism Trends, and Nepalese Market Trends
- Pokhara Tourism Profile and Situational analysis: Competitiveness of Pokhara tourism (enabling environment, price, infrastructure, services, connectivity, sustainability, environment, assets; HR Capacity), SWOT analysis
- Review and Consolidation of Existing Plans, Policies and Studies
- Strategic Visitor Flow (SVF) and Visitor Journey Analysis
- Visitor Experience, Supply and Service Gap Analysis
- Spatial Tourism Patterns, Hotspots and Visitor Dispersal
- Sustainability, Climate Resilience and Destination Impacts
- Tourism Economy, Local Benefits and Inclusion

- Destination Governance and Institutional Analysis
- Key Issues, Gaps and Emerging Opportunities
- Vision and Strategic Directions for Sustainable Tourism
- Priority Areas and Projects, Sub-Projects and Interventions
- Prioritised Action and Investment Plan
- Institutional and Implementation Framework
- Monitoring, Evaluation and Adaptive Management Framework
- Annexes and Knowledge Repository

## 8. Implementation Arrangement

The assignment is expected to be implemented through a locally anchored research and knowledge partnership, working closely with PMC, tourism academics, researchers, practitioners, private sector stakeholders, and other relevant institutions. The selected partner or team shall lead the research, coordination, analysis and preparation of the Master Plan, while DIGO will provide technical facilitation and relevant project-generated evidence, including existing SVF analysis.

A joint steering committee comprising Pokhara Metropolitan City, DIGO and the consultant team will meet to review progress and approve deliverables prior to publication. A single focal point from each institution should be designated for coordination and periodic progress update.

## 9. Duration

The duration of the consultancy will be for a period of 3 months.

## 10. Consultant Team Composition and Qualifications

The consulting firm/ team should demonstrate the following qualifications and capacities:

**A. Firm/Team Eligibility**

- **Legally registered and compliant in Nepal,** with valid business registration and renewal, PAN/VAT registration, and applicable tax clearance.
- **Established local presence in Pokhara,** with demonstrated familiarity with the municipality, its tourism system, local stakeholders, and development context.
- **Demonstrated capacity in** research and market analysis, stakeholder facilitation, public policy or local governance, and preparation of strategic or master plans.
- Expertise in environment and climate, economics and private sector development, spatial analysis, tourism products, social inclusion and data analysis.
- **Demonstrated capacity for participatory and multi-stakeholder processes**, including consultation, facilitation, workshops, stakeholder mapping, and consensus-building involving the government, private sector, communities, academia, and development partners.

**B. Multidisciplinary Technical Capacity**

Given the integrated nature of the assignment, the proposed team should collectively demonstrate expertise in the following areas:

- Sustainable tourism and destination planning;
- Tourism demand, visitor behaviour, and market analysis;
- Tourism product and experience development;

- Institutional analysis, governance, and public policy; and
- Quantitative and qualitative data analysis, monitoring, and evaluation.

**Team Leader** in the proposed team should have

- substantial professional experience in tourism planning, destination development, sustainable tourism, urban/local development, or a closely related field;
- demonstrated experience leading multidisciplinary teams and complex strategic planning assignments;
- strong analytical, strategic planning, writing, presentation, and stakeholder facilitation skills;
- experience working with government institutions, preferably municipalities or other public-sector clients;
- preferably, experience in preparing tourism master plans, destination strategies, or comparable long-term development frameworks.

## 11. Proposal Submission Requirements

Joint proposal from the consultant team should include:

a) a combined technical proposal addressing methodology, workplan and roles & responsibilities,
b) financial proposal,
c) CVs of proposed key personnel,
d) evidence of prior relevant experience on tourism

## 12. Evaluation Criteria

| Criterion | Weight |
|---|---|
| Technical proposal<br>(understanding of the assignment including methodological rigour and its compatibility with visitor flow work) | 30 |
| Team composition and relevant experience | 30 |
| Institutional capacity for stakeholder engagement | 20 |
| Workplan | 20 |

## 13. Evaluation Process

UniCoN will open and evaluate the technical proposals first. Financial proposals will be opened and evaluated only when the corresponding technical proposals get at least 60% of the total technical score.

The proposal received will be evaluated in three stages.

**Stage 1: Assessment of meeting of minimum eligibility requirements**

Only bidders that comply with all the requirements detailed in the ToR will proceed to the second stage of the technical evaluation.

**Stage 2: Evaluation of technical proposal**

The Technical Proposal will carry a weight of 70% of the total score and will be evaluated against, among other things, the following criteria:

- Technical proposal (30)
- Team Composition and relevant experience (30)
- Institutional capacity for stakeholder engagement (20)
- Workplan (20)

**Stage 3: Financial proposal evaluation**

Proposals who score at least 60% on technical evaluation will proceed to Stage 3 wherein the financial proposal shall be evaluated. The financial proposal weightage shall be 30% of the total score. The bidder with the lowest-priced financial proposal is awarded the full weighted score. The weighted scores of the other financial proposals are calculated as: 30% x Lowest-priced proposal value/Proposal value under consideration.

The firm achieving the highest combined technical and financial score will be invited for negotiations.

## 14. Submission of the Application

The Proposals must be delivered electronically to email rfp@unitedcommunitynepal.org with the **Subject: Consultant Team for Sustainable Tourism** Plan – Pokhara by 27 September 2026. No late proposal shall be accepted.

## 15. General Conditions/Disclaimer, Contract Negotiations and Award

UniCoN reserves the right to accept or reject any proposal without obligation to provide individual feedback to unsuccessful applicants.

Before awarding and signing the contract with the selected organisation, UniCoN will undertake an assessment of the organisation's financial and management capacity and the relevant practices, through one or more meetings and visits.

If necessary, UniCoN may ask the organisation to make changes in their proposed team or activities. UniCoN may also want to conduct additional meetings with the organisations and their proposed teams, before making the final decision. UniCoN can cancel an award if the proposed team is drastically changed by the organisation during the negotiation period and/or right after signing the contract.

UniCoN reserves the right to cancel the tender process if all proposals are found to be unsatisfactory.

## 16. Confidentiality

All information gained related to the assignment under this Terms of Reference shall be regarded as confidential and shall be made available to third parties only for the purpose of: a) regular reporting according to PMC, UniCoN and Swisscontact standards. b) information gained for the purpose of assignment, and c) other information in consultation with the PMC, UniCoN and Swisscontact.