Conservation Finance Alliance Incubator
First Call for Proposals - Closing Jan 31, 2020

Are you a conservation finance entrepreneur? Do you have an idea that can leverage the power of finance for conservation? The Conservation Finance Alliance (CFA) Incubator seeks to identify, support and promote innovative ideas and solutions to conservation finance challenges that have significant positive conservation impacts. This virtual incubator will identify and support five concurrent projects for incubation for 9 months. Support will be in the form of grants and mentorship by CFA members.

Target Incubation Projects
The Incubator will support a wide range of innovation in conservation finance, including conservation finance ventures that can generate a financial return and conservation finance concepts that lead to policy, regulatory, or non-profit finance solutions. All projects that enter the Incubator must be innovative and show clear potential for conservation impact to be considered for acceptance. Concepts can be from any sector (public, private, etc.) and can include ideas generated directly by CFA members, partner organizations, and independent organizations and entrepreneurs.

Conservation Finance Ventures
Conservation finance ventures accepted into the Incubator must be innovative ideas, create clear conservation outcomes, and may return a profit – either as an independent company or as a financial product. One major role of the CFA Incubator will be to demonstrate the economic viability and potential for success of such ventures and the resulting conservation outcomes. In addition, all Incubator entrepreneurs will be required to participate in various information sharing efforts to contribute to our understanding of the effectiveness of these various approaches. Profit-generating conservation finance ventures may provide many values for achieving conservation outcomes. Firstly, they may generate cashflow towards conservation activities by channeling profit towards certain conservation-positive activities. Secondly, positive conservation-based investments could result in substantial increased flows of capital towards conservation through providing double or triple bottom line returns. Thirdly, unlike most non-profit organizations that are dependent on raising grant money on a regular basis to implement conservation activities, profitable conservation businesses or investments should self-finance – allowing a level of financial sustainability that is extremely difficult for non-profits. This combination of factors allows private sector conservation finance businesses and investments models to be both scalable and replicable – critical characteristics that will enhance the likelihood of successful conservation outcomes.

The focus for incubation of these conservation finance ventures is “idea” and “early stage”. Strong candidates for these ventures are entrepreneurs willing to invest their time and their own money to
succeed. Desired outputs for these ventures might include the preparation of a business plan, an investors’ deck and/or financing from outside the Incubator.

Conservation Finance Concepts
Conservation finance concepts accepted into the Incubator will be innovative solutions to conservation challenges that use finance and economic tools to create conservation outcomes or sustained conservation financing while advancing conservation goals. These solutions may not seek to generate a private financial return on investment, yet they must show a significant financial or economic return on investment and target clear conservation outcomes. Innovative concepts that are sought here include policy or regulatory innovations that create enabling conditions for profitable conservation investments, including such ideas as new regulatory markets. Desired outcomes from the conservation finance concepts could include a completed feasibility study and an implementation guide to encourage pilots. Funding for pilots may also be included either through the Incubator or via partner organizations.

Process
Call for Proposals
This call for proposals will be open from December 11th 2019 to January 31st 2020 and reviews will be conducted at the completion of the call. Proposals received will be reviewed by a selection committee comprised by members of CFA’s Incubator Task Force. The Incubator will accept up to five (5) conservation finance proposals from this first call. The next call for proposals will be launched in the 4th quarter of 2020.

CFA Incubator Support
1) All entrepreneurs and innovators who submit a proposal will benefit from reviewers’ comments and feedback.
2) Cash grants of $25,000 will be awarded to up to five (5) accepted proposals based on specific negotiated outputs and milestones determined for each project.
3) Technical Support:
   a. Incubated entities will make an initial presentation to the Conservation Finance Alliance’s Innovation Working Group via a webinar and receive feedback on the concepts.
   b. Two CFA mentors will be provided to each team for the course of the virtual incubation period.
   c. The CFA ED will provide technical support and mentorship to all projects on a regular basis.
4) Promotion and communication:
   a. Presentation of final business plans or concepts will be conducted at CFA or partner events with opportunity for presentation to donors and potential investors.
   b. Write up and promotion of innovative solutions will occur via CFA communication channels and partners.

Application
To apply, please produce a proposal using a downloadable form or through the online application, both available at cfalliance.org/incubator. Address any questions and send the final proposal (except for web-based submissions) to incubator@cfalliance.org by January 31st 2020.