Forest Stewardship Council®

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS: INDIGENOUS CULTURAL LANDSCAPES CASE STUDY AND GUIDANCE FOR AUSTRALIA

About FSC

The Forest Stewardship Council® (FSC®) is an international non-profit organisation dedicated to promoting responsible management of the world's forests. Through its globally recognised certification system, FSC sets standards for environmentally appropriate, socially beneficial and economically viable forest management. These standards help ensure forests are managed in ways that protect biodiversity, support workers and local communities, and recognise and uphold the rights of First Nations Peoples.

FSC's Principles and Criteria (P&C) form the foundation of all FSC forest management standards globally. Designed to apply across diverse forest types and cultural, political and legal contexts, they underpin FSC's voluntary, independent, third-party certification system. The International Generic Indicators (IGIs) translate each Criterion into specific, measurable indicators. These generic indicators serve as the common starting point for the development and revision of national Forest Stewardship Standards across the FSC system. By demonstrating conformity with the social, environmental and economic requirements in the locally adapted versions of the IGIs, certified forest managers demonstrate that their operations support community wellbeing, economic viability and ecological integrity.

First Nations Peoples may themselves be certified to a national Forest Stewardship Standard, but these standards also provide explicit protections for the rights of First Nations Peoples affected by forestry. Forest management certificate holders, for example, must obtain the Free, Prior and Informed Consent of First Nations Peoples connected to the management unit prior to the commencement of management activities that affect their rights.

Integration of Indigenous Cultural Landscapes into FSC Standards

FSC's commitment to upholding the rights of First Nations Peoples is embedded in Principle 3 of the FSC Principles and Criteria and is considered fundamental to responsible forest management. Principle 3 continues to evolve through FSC's policy-setting processes, ensuring it reflects current best practice. A significant recent advancement is the inclusion of Indigenous Cultural Landscapes (ICLs) in the International Generic Indicators (IGIs) in 2023. The push to add ICL requirements into the IGIs began with the passing of Motion 65 at the 2014 FSC General Assembly in Seville, Spain. Motion 65 introduced strict protections for Intact Forest Landscapes (IFLs), excluding human activity and influence over large, currently intact landscapes. However, these same landscapes are often the traditional homelands of First Nations Peoples, supporting livelihoods and the continued existence of distinct First Nations cultures. The lives and identities of First Nations Peoples are deeply intertwined with these landscapes, creating a symbiotic relationship where the loss of one is detrimental to the well-being of the other.

Advocacy by First Nations members of FSC, supported by like-minded FSC members at the 2014 General Assembly, led to a significant amendment to Motion 65 to include a requirement to obtain the Free, Prior and Informed Consent of affected rights holders for the management of IFLs. The amended motion was subsequently passed by the FSC membership.

Following the 2014 General Assembly, concerns remained that Motion 65 did not adequately consider how the proposed protection measures could affect First Nations Peoples' ability to exercise their rights in accordance with the international human rights frameworks already adopted by FSC, namely the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP 2007) and the International Labor Organization (ILO) Convention 169 - Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention.

In a spirit of constructive engagement in the FSC system, First Nations members and like-minded members continued to argue for a normative response to the inadequacies identified in Motion 65. In response, the FSC membership passed Motion 71 ("FSC supports Indigenous Cultural Landscapes") at the 2017 General Assembly in Vancouver. The motion ultimately resulted in the incorporation of ICL requirements in FSC International Generic Indicators during the development of FSC-STD-60-004 V2-1 EN *International Generic Indicators* in 2023.

Development of Indigenous Cultural Landscape Guidance for Australia

The FSC Forest Stewardship Standard for Australia is currently being revised, which will see the ICL requirements in the IGIs become normative in Australia. To support the implementation and auditing of these requirements, FSC ANZ is commissioning the development of an ICL guidance document and an associated case study to demonstrate practical application of the requirements and support certificate holders in meeting these requirements. The guidance will be published alongside and work in tandem with a Free, Prior and Informed Consent guidance document that has already been drafted.

FSC Australia and New Zealand (FSC ANZ) is now seeking a consultant with relevant skills and experience to draft the ICL guidance and conduct the associated case study in collaboration with one or more interested First Nations communities.

Scope of works

Project phases and expected deliverables will be the following:

1. A literature review and an analysis report exploring how the ICL concept can be applied to forested (native and plantation) areas in Australia used for timber production and/or the collection of non-timber forest products
2. Case study: Fieldwork with a First Nations community identified by the consultant that identifies an ICL in or around a productive forest to demonstrate the implementation of the ICL requirements in the revised FSC Forest Stewardship Standard.
3. Based on the literature review and the case study, draft version 1 of a practical guidance document to aid Australian forest managers' implementation of the ICL requirements in the Australian Forest Stewardship Standard. This will include a comprehensive explanation of the ICL concept and its relevance in Australia and for forestry in Australia, including components and attributes (both tangible and intangible) such as:
    i. Symbolic cultural meanings of the heritage and places in the landscape and their relationships
    ii. Tangible relics, artefacts, camp sites, ceremonial sites
    iii. Cultural paths and routes
    iv. Landscape use and management practices; e.g. fire management, hunting, and harvesting

    The guidance document will also provide practical guidance on how forest growers, for example, can:
    i. Work with First Nations communities connected to the management unit to identify the tangible and intangible attributes (i.e. the factors, stories, places, etc.) that create the ICL
    ii. Identify which community representatives to engage to identify ICLs, and whether and how this varies across states and territories.
    iii. Identify the aspirations and goals of the affected First Nations communities for the identified ICLs
    iv. Obtain the Free, Prior and Informed Consent of affected First Nations communities for engagement strategies and actions developed by the grower to protect identified ICLs
    v. Protect ICLs in active management units, including ICLs communities do not wish to share the location of
    vi. Handle situations where the communities do not wish to engage or where communities believe ICLs can only be protected through the permanent cessation of harvesting activities

vii. Develop procedures to cease management activities where ICLs are identified and the measures required to be implemented before activities can recommence
viii. Meet the ICL requirements in situations where they manage only a small forested area that is part of a much larger ICL

4. Deliver an online workshop for interested current and prospective FSC forest management certificate holders to present the draft guidance and the case study and gather feedback. FSC ANZ will be responsible for the practical aspects of the workshop (meeting set-up, distributing invitations, etc.)
5. Organise an in-person workshop for FNC members to present the guidance and the case study and to gather feedback. FSC ANZ will be responsible for the practical aspects of the workshop, meals, transportation, etc.
6. Develop a second draft of the case study and guidance based on the feedback received and submit this for peer review.
7. Develop the final version of the case study and guidance document based on the peer review.

In undertaking the contract assignment, the consultant will work closely with FSC ANZ, adhering strictly to the work plan, agreed-upon time schedule, and budget, unless otherwise agreed with FSC ANZ.

The new intellectual property arising in the course of the contractor's engagement – that is, the guidance document and the case study – will belong to FSC ANZ. The consultant will be credited in these documents. FSC ANZ will be responsible for editing, graphics, and publishing of the document.

Selection criteria

Proposals will be assessed against the following criteria:

- **Expertise in Indigenous Cultural Landscapes and First Nations Rights:** Demonstrated understanding of ICLs, cultural heritage, FPIC, and relevant international frameworks, including UNDRIP and ILO 169.
- **Knowledge of Forest Management and Certification Systems:** Experience with Australian forest management practices and familiarity with FSC standards or comparable certification systems (preferable).
- **Research and Technical Writing Capability:** Proven ability to conduct literature reviews, analyse complex information, and produce clear, practical guidance.
- **Stakeholder Engagement and Facilitation Skills:** Experience engaging diverse stakeholders, including First Nations communities and forest managers.
- **Field Work Experience:** Ability to undertake site visits, document practical implementation processes, and experience working respectfully and collaboratively with First Nations communities and community members in Australia.
- **Project Management and Delivery:** Capacity to deliver multi-stage projects on time, coordinate workshops, and work to an agreed schedule.
- **Cultural Competence and Ethical Practice:** Commitment to culturally safe engagement, ethical practice, and appropriate handling of sensitive cultural information.
- **Value for Money:** Clear, transparent costing and alignment between budget, methodology, and deliverables.
- **Conflict of Interest Management:** Identification of any conflicts of interest and proposed mitigation strategies.

Timeline

You are expected to submit your preferred schedule for the delivery of the project based on the scope of works outlined above. The document will preferably be finalised in or before March 2027.

Proposals

If you or your organisation has the required qualifications and experience for this type of work, you are invited to submit a proposal to info@au.fsc.org by 21 October 2026.

Proposals shall include:

- A cover letter
- CVs of participating consultant/s, including a brief description of involvement in similar projects
- A cost breakdown in the provided Price Sheet Template, including costs associated with travel, accommodation, meals during travel, stipends for First Nations engagement (excluding the FNC workshop), catering, venue hiring and organising and holding workshops
- Ethical considerations: Which research ethics standards will be used to ensure that the project is completed with integrity, transparency and respect for all participants, and how will the intellectual property of the First Nations community that provides the knowledge required to develop the case study be handled
- A declaration of any conflicts of interest and how they will be managed
- An indication of your availability for an interview on the date proposed in Section F

How to submit

Please submit your proposal and all materials via email to info@au.fsc.org

Evaluation process for proposals

Following the deadline for submitting proposals, FSC ANZ's process for awarding the project will follow this timeline:

Date	Activity
23 September 2026	Request issued
21 October 2026	Closing date for proposal submission
28 October 2026	Proposal evaluation and shortlisting
4 November 2026	Individual interviews with shortlisted candidates (if deemed necessary)
11 November 2026	Negotiations with final candidates
12 November 2026	Notification of final selection
1 December 2026	Estimated contract and project commencement date
1 April 2027 (negotiable)	Estimated date for delivery of the final draft

Attachments

There are two attachments which can be found at the bottom of this page:

- The price sheet template, which must be completed and submitted with the proposals, and

- The second draft of the revised FSC Forest Stewardship Standard for Australia, where the new requirements for Indigenous Cultural Landscapes can be found.

Questions

Questions can be directed to FSC ANZ's Senior Policy Manager, Stefan Jensen, at s.jensen@au.fsc.org.