

## Call for Expressions of Interest

### **Executing Entity to lead the “Ecosystem-based Approaches for transforming smallholder farming systems that are vulnerable to the impacts of climate change in South Africa” project**

#### **SUMMARY**

The South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI) is South Africa's National Implementing Entity of the Adaptation Fund, and a Direct Access Entity of the Green Climate Fund (GCF). In this capacity, SANBI is able to co-develop project proposals with stakeholders for submission to the Adaptation Fund and GCF.

One of the proposals that SANBI is currently developing with national and sub-national partners is for a project that will be submitted to the GCF, entitled the “Ecosystem-based Approaches for transforming smallholder farming systems that are vulnerable to the impacts of climate change in South Africa” project, or the “EbA-Farm” project. A USD25 million grant will be requested from the GCF to implement the project over an eight-year period.

SANBI is seeking Expressions of Interest from appropriately qualified and experienced institutions who would like to play the role of Executing Entity, should the proposal be approved by the GCF. The selected Executing Entity will partner with SANBI to finalise the development of the Funding Proposal, in consultation with national and sub-national partners and with the support of project development consultants. The selected Executing Entity will be named in the Funding Proposal that will be submitted to the GCF. Should this Funding Proposal be approved by the GCF, the selected Executing Entity will enter into a final contracting agreement with SANBI to lead the implementation of the EbA-Farm project.

#### **BACKGROUND**

The EbA-Farm project was initially submitted to the GCF as a Concept Note in December 2020, and was endorsed by the Fund for development into a Funding Proposal in October 2021. With this endorsement, SANBI was formally invited by the Fund to apply for Project Preparation Facility support in the form of project development consultants, to support this process. In May 2023 the GCF appointed Oxford Policy Management Limited (based in the United Kingdom), in partnership with local consultants One World Sustainable Investments, to support SANBI and national and sub-national partners to develop the Funding Proposal for the EbA-Farm project. The development of the Funding Proposal has been underway since July 2023.

A Project Reference Group, chaired by SANBI and including representatives from relevant national and provincial departments, universities in each of the target provinces and representatives of civil society, has met regularly to guide the development of the design of the Funding Proposal.

The Funding Proposal is being developed under the GCF's Simplified Approval Process (SAP) mechanism, as it upscales the successful elements of the uMngeni Resilience Project (URP, see Project Completion Summary here: [SANBI URP Project Completion Summary September 2024.pdf](#) ) that was funded by the Adaptation Fund, overseen by SANBI in its capacity as National Implementing Entity of the Adaptation Fund in South Africa, and implemented by the uMgungundlovu District Municipality and the University of KwaZulu-Natal between 2015 and 2024. The SAP mechanism requires less detailed project design documentation when compared to the GCF's standard project development process, and has streamlined GCF review and approval processes in place.

## PROJECT CONTEXT AND OVERVIEW

South African smallholder and household producers are particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change. Their farming practices are largely reliant on rainfall and are thus impacted by rainfall variability. These impacts are magnified by climate change, which has resulted in increased rainfall variability and rising temperatures, making it difficult for farmers to plan, while further exposing them to the risks of water scarcity and declining productivity. This is compounded by a lack of access to climate information and climate-risk-informed agricultural advisory services to enhance their adaptive capacity.

To design a project that responds to these and other non-climate related challenges, SANBI has worked with national and sub-national partners, and with the support of project development consultants has engaged widely with stakeholders in the project target areas to develop a suite of project design documents, including a draft Funding Proposal and set of supporting annexures. This has included numerous on-site meetings in each of the target areas to engage directly with smallholder and household producers, community members, community-based organisations, non-governmental organisations, and traditional and local authorities.

The Provincial Departments of Agriculture in each of the four provinces led the selection of the project target areas, which are:

- Eastern Cape: Joe Gqabi District, Elundini Local Municipality;
- KwaZulu-Natal: uThukela District, Okhahlamba Local Municipality;
- Limpopo Province: Mopani District, with a focus on the Greater Letaba Local Municipality; and
- Mpumalanga Province: Ehlanzeni District, Thaba Chweu and Bushbuckridge Local Municipalities.

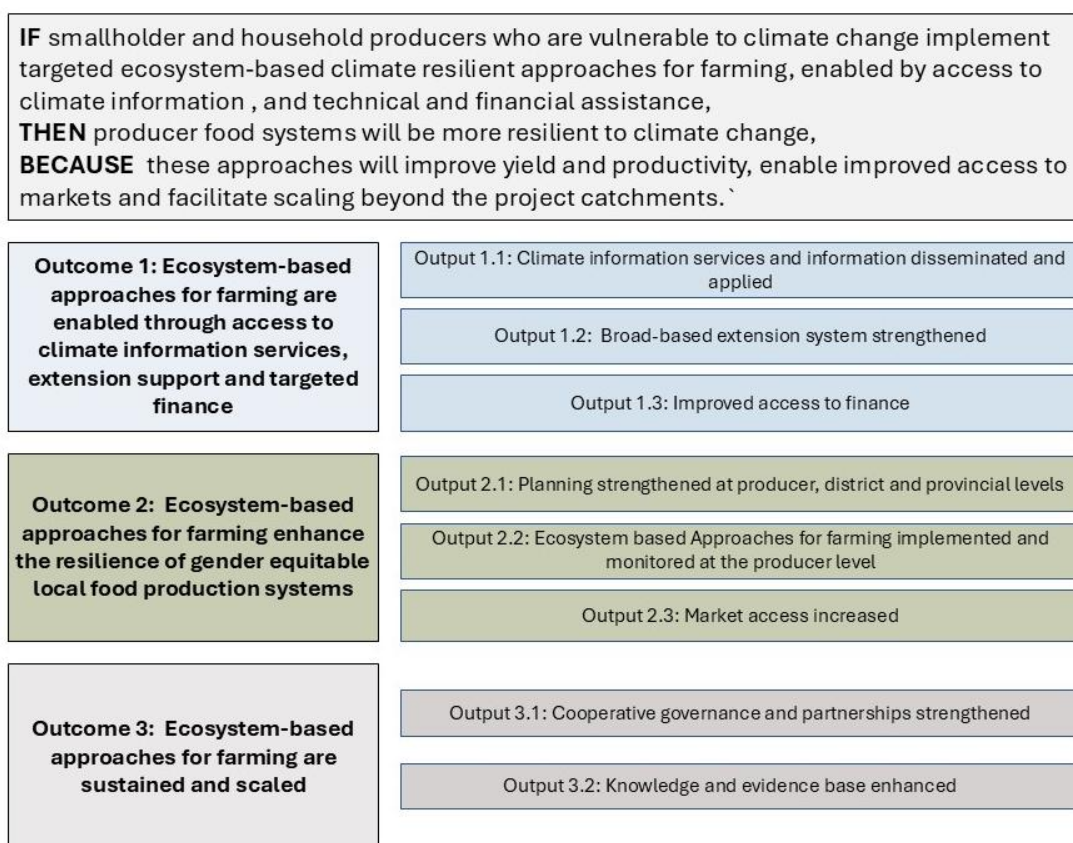
The design of the project includes three related outcomes:

The first outcome supports the establishment of an enabling environment for the uptake of ecosystem-based approaches for farming, through scaling up the packaging and dissemination of accessible climate information services, capacitating and broadening the extension support system available to support smallholder and household producers, and enhancing access to finance for a small, targeted group of market-oriented producers.

The second outcome focuses on enhancing the resilience of production systems by integrating ecosystem-based approaches into local food system plans, implementing and monitoring farming activities, and ensuring producers have increased market access. Strengthened production systems developed through this outcome will increase the resilience of producers through soil, ecological and water conservation, enhanced agro-biodiversity, and climate-smart practices. Interventions include improving soil health and biodiversity, integrated pest and disease management, and introducing locally adapted drought- and heat-tolerant varieties. Integrated multi-functional landscape plans for land, water, and energy, co-developed with stakeholders, will ensure sustainable, integrated solutions.

The third outcome promotes community and institutional ownership of the project to ensure national scalability. This will be achieved through the establishment of long-term, participatory decision-making and adaptive management mechanisms in each target area. Moreover, inclusive communications networks, the dissemination of knowledge, and the demonstration of business cases will help mainstream ecosystem-based approaches for farming into catchment and national-level planning.

The draft project design is set out below in Figure 1. The draft Funding Proposal can be accessed here: [EbA-Farm Funding Proposal Draft October 2025.pdf](#).



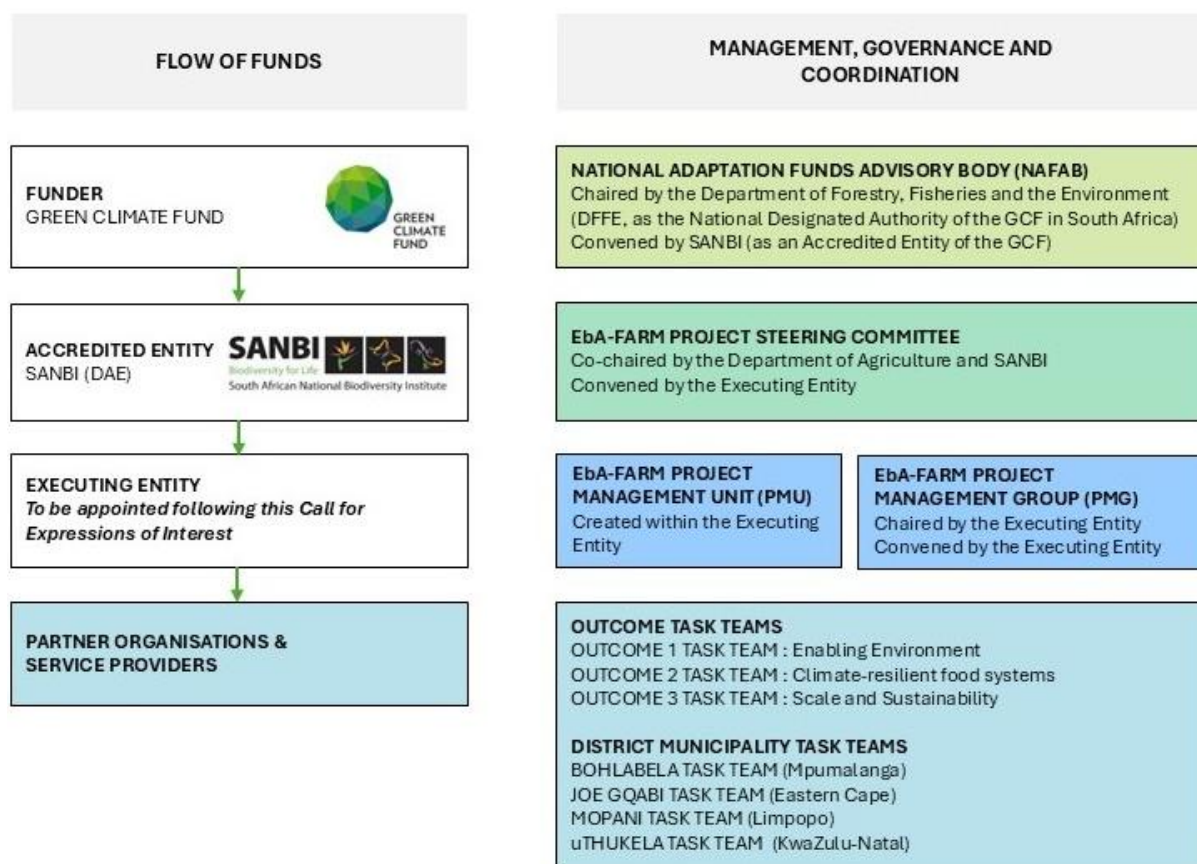
**Figure 1:** Project design of the “Ecosystem-based Approaches for transforming smallholder farming systems that are vulnerable to the impacts of climate change in South Africa” project.

## IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS AND SCOPE OF WORK

The project will be managed by an Executing Entity. Under the GCF project architecture, the Executing Entity is responsible for the day-to-day management and implementation of project activities, ensuring delivery of results in line with the approved Funding Proposal and in compliance with GCF policies and the guidance of the Accredited Entity. Should the Funding Proposal be approved by the GCF, the selected Executing Entity will be contracted by and report to SANBI, in its capacity as the Accredited Entity of the project. Project funds will flow from the GCF to SANBI and onwards to the Executing Entity. Some of the funding will be retained and used by the Executing Entity to fulfil its contractual obligations, and the balance will flow onwards to partner organisations and service providers, who will need to enter into contracts with the Executing Entity.

As per GCF regulations, the Executing Entity fee can be a maximum of 5% of the project implementation cost. For the EbA-Farm project, the allocated amount equates to a maximum of USD1.19 million over the eight year project period, noting that the total project cost must not exceed USD25 million. This Executing Entity fee is for project management functions only, and it excludes any technical implementation functions provided by the Executing Entity, which should be accounted for in the project implementation costs. Such technical implementation functions and costs will be determined when finalising the Funding Proposal.

Project governance will comprise local level Task Teams for each project outcome and in each of the District Municipalities, a Project Management Group, a Project Steering Committee, and a high-level, existing, oversight structure (i.e. the National Adaptation Funds Advisory Body, NAFAB) that includes the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE) in its capacity as the National Designated Authority (NDA) for the Green Climate Fund in South Africa. This is illustrated in Figure 2.



**Figure 2:** Proposed flow of funds and governance arrangements for the “Ecosystem-based Approaches for transforming smallholder farming systems that are vulnerable to the impacts of climate change in South Africa” project.

The Executing Entity will be responsible for the following tasks, at a minimum:

- Overall responsibility for implementing the EbA-Farm project once approved by the GCF, including project monitoring, compliance, evaluation and reporting functions;
- Overall financial management of the project, including receiving and disbursing project funds, sub-contracting and managing the project’s partner organisations and service providers;
- Managing the project towards the results specified in the project document to the required quality standard and within the specified time and cost constraints;
- Coordinating and overseeing the implementation of all outputs and activities envisaged in the final, GCF approved Theory of Change and Logical Framework (LogFrame);
- Reporting on the implementation of all outputs and activities envisaged in the final, GCF approved Theory of Change and LogFrame;
- Conducting regular Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning activities in accordance with the LogFrame and the knowledge and learning outputs envisaged in the approved project LogFrame;
- Setting up and maintaining the project’s governance systems, both centrally and at the level of the District Municipalities;
- Managing communications and knowledge exchange;
- Unlocking complementary funding opportunities; and
- Coordinating interventions financed by GCF with other parallel interventions.

## CURRENT CALL

SANBI is seeking Expressions of Interest from appropriately qualified and experienced institutions who would like to partner with SANBI and national and sub-national partners to finalise the development of the Funding Proposal, and play the role of the project's Executing Entity should the proposal be supported by the Green Climate Fund. Involvement in the finalisation of the Funding Proposal will not be funded and will be at the selected institution's risk, while implementation, should the proposal be approved, will be supported with grant funding from the GCF (as outlined in the Implementation Arrangements and Scop of Work section above).

The Executing Entity must:

- Be legally registered and/or have an operational office with staff based in South Africa;
- Have a demonstrable track record in managing agriculture-related multi-lateral and/or foreign donor-funded projects at a scale that is similar to that envisaged for the EbA-Farm project;
- Have experience in working with the interface between agriculture and climate change adaptation, through ecosystem-based approaches, at the smallholder and household producer level; and
- Have a demonstrable track record in coordinating multi-stakeholder partnerships across government, the private sector and civil society.

As per the stipulations of the GCF, the selected Executing Entity will be subject to a legal due diligence, that will include a scoping (where relevant) of possible project related regulatory approvals, applicable taxes and foreign exchange regulations, project related insurance requirements, and confirmation of the existence of controls to address anti-money laundering and countering the financing of terrorism risks, in line with GCF requirements.

## APPLICATION PROCESS

Interested parties are invited to submit an Expression of Interest to SANBI. The Expression of Interest should include:

- A cover letter that sets out why the organisation is well placed to perform the role of Executing Entity for the "Ecosystem-based Approaches for transforming smallholder farming systems that are vulnerable to the impacts of climate change in South Africa" project, aligned to the evaluation criteria outlined below.
- Company or institutional profile, which includes a brief overview of the company/institution with an indication of experience relevant to the scope of work. This should include examples of relevant projects/ interventions that illustrate the required experience and competencies, aligned to the evaluation criteria outlined below.
- Reference letters from donors of project's managed by the organisation that are similar to what is envisaged for the EbA-Farm project, outlining at a minimum: the title of the project, when the project was implemented, value of the project, and whether the project was satisfactorily managed.

Please submit the Expression of Interest to [climatefunds@sanbi.org.za](mailto:climatefunds@sanbi.org.za) by 17h00 on Friday 21 November 2025.

SANBI will convene two briefing sessions about this call, and interested parties are invited to attend. The briefing sessions will be online, at 14h00-16h00 on Monday 10 November 2025 and at 14h00-16h00 on Tuesday 11 November 2025.

If you would like to attend one or both of these briefing sessions, please register your interest via an email to [climatefunds@sanbi.org.za](mailto:climatefunds@sanbi.org.za), and a link to the call will be sent to you. Attendance at a briefing session is not compulsory.

## EVALUATION CRITERIA

Expressions of Interest will be assessed against the following criteria:

| Functionality criteria                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Weighting |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| Prior experience of organisation in managing agriculture-related projects at the smallholder and household producer level                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More than 9 years of experience in managing such projects (5)</li> <li>• 7 to 8 years of experience in managing such projects (4)</li> <li>• 5 to 6 years of experience in managing such projects (3)</li> <li>• 3 to 4 years of experience in managing such projects (2)</li> <li>• 1 to 2 years of experience in managing such projects (1)</li> <li>• 0 years of experience in managing such projects (0)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | 30        |
| Prior experience in an Executing Entity role, or equivalent, managing large multi-lateral and/or foreign donor-funded projects                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experience in an Executing Entity role, or equivalent, managing multi-lateral and/or foreign donor-funded projects with individual grant values in excess of USD15 million (5)</li> <li>• Experience in an Executing Entity role, or equivalent, managing multi-lateral and/or donor-funded projects with individual grant values of between USD12 and USD 15 million (4)</li> <li>• Experience in an Executing Entity role, or equivalent, managing multi-lateral and/or donor-funded projects with values of between USD9 and USD12 million (3)</li> <li>• Experience in an Executing Entity role, or equivalent, managing multi-lateral and/or donor-funded projects with individual grant values of between USD6 and USD9 million (2)</li> <li>• Experience in an Executing Entity role, or equivalent, managing multi-lateral and/or donor-funded projects with individual grant values of between USD3 and USD6 million (1)</li> <li>• No experience in an Executing Entity role, or equivalent, managing multi-lateral and/or donor-funded projects with individual grant values in excess of USD3 million (0)</li> </ul> | 40        |
| Prior experience of organisation in coordinating multi-stakeholder partnerships across government, the private sector and civil society          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More than 9 years of experience in coordinating multi-stakeholder partnerships (5)</li> <li>• 7 to 8 years of experience in coordinating multi-stakeholder partnerships (4)</li> <li>• 5 to 6 years of experience in coordinating multi-stakeholder partnerships (3)</li> <li>• 3 to 4 years of experience in coordinating multi-stakeholder partnerships (2)</li> <li>• 1 to 2 years of experience in coordinating multi-stakeholder partnerships (1)</li> <li>• 0 years of experience in coordinating multi-stakeholder partnerships (0)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | 20        |
| Reference letters from donors of project's managed by the organisation similar in nature and scale to what is envisaged for the EbA-Farm project | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 or more letters from projects similar in nature and scale to what is envisaged for the EbA-Farm project (5)</li> <li>• 2 letters from projects similar in nature and scale to what is envisaged for the EbA-Farm project (4)</li> <li>• 1 letter from projects similar in nature and scale to what is envisaged for the EbA-Farm project (3)</li> <li>• 2 to 3 letters from projects that are not similar in nature and scale to what is envisaged for the EbA-Farm project (2)</li> <li>• 1 letter from projects that are not similar in nature and scale to what is envisaged for the EbA-Farm project (1)</li> <li>• No letters submitted (0)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | 10        |

\*\* Expressions of Interest who fail to score a minimum of 70 points out of a possible 100 points on functionality criteria will not be eligible for further consideration.

Please note that:

- SANBI reserves the right to reject any or all Expressions of Interest.
- SANBI retains the right to not select an Expression of Interest even if all requirements are met.
- SANBI reserves the right to withdraw or revise the selection of the Executing Entity in the event of misrepresentation or non-performance.