

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Seeking a researcher to support the development of corporate performance measures to assess the impacts of land use on soil, water and biodiversity

BACKGROUND

Companies are coming under increased pressure both from customers and investors to demonstrate environmental performance. Today's consumers expect more tangible global impact from companies and can choose from a raft of sustainable, competitively priced, high quality products. Many companies are already making progress trying to reduce their impact on the natural world. Companies are supporting the adoption of good farming and conservation practices to protect and restore healthy ecosystems. However, leading companies still struggle to showcase their achievements in a manner that is consistent, academically robust, easy to understand and comparable.

The Natural Capital Impact Group (NCIG) is a global network of companies, working collaboratively, to determine how business can sustain the natural world and its resources through its strategies and operating practices. Members of the NCIG are working together to understand the impacts that their own operations and supply chains have on natural capital and to create substantive and measurable changes in their own strategies and operating practices.

Members of the NCIG have prioritised the development of a set performance measures, or metrics, to assess and address their impact and dependencies on natural capital. The NCIG is working with leading academics to develop a *Healthy Ecosystem Metric*. This metric has sub-components on *biodiversity*, *soil* and *water* that will highlight high risk locations for companies and measure their *direct* and *indirect* impacts. The Healthy Ecosystem Metric will help companies to: a) understand the impacts that their decisions have on natural capital, using the best available global data; and b) set targets to reduce their impact that are meaningful, scientifically rigorous and context based.

Metric development

After making substantive progress advancing a conceptual framework for measuring impacts on biodiversity, the Natural Capital Impact Group now seek to improve the integration of water and soil impacts into corporate decision making. Members want to identify what to measure, how to encourage uptake of the metrics and determine how to take these to scale.

Water Metric

Members have expressed a need to develop focused metrics for water that account for local contexts rather than a simple reduction in volumetric water consumption that is typically used to set targets. Companies have expressed the need to develop a water metric that accounts for regional differences in water availability, accounts for whether or not those water resources are accessible and where possible accounts for the fact that different countries, and regions within countries, use different amounts of water.

Soil Metric

The Natural Capital Impact Group seek to improve the integration of soil health into corporate decision making. The NCIG will identify and agree on the best approaches to measure soil health, including those that are appropriate at different scales, and arrive at a 'soil health metric'.

Position requirements

The Group seek to engage a researcher that will support the development of metrics for water and soil. S/he will conduct a review of existing corporate performance measures, tools and indicators and relevant global data sets to establish a baseline and conceptual framework for the metrics. The position requires a researcher with a strong academic grounding in the natural sciences and an understanding of the drivers of water scarcity and soil degradation in different parts of the world.

Details are outlined in the scope of work below.

SCOPE OF WORK

S/he will conduct a review of existing information on water and soil metrics to develop two concise synthesis reports.

1. Conduct a brief literature review on existing corporate approaches to water performance measurement and produce synthesis report on water including:
 - Different indicators used to provide a measure of water consumption, quality and stress
 - Water stewardship tools that are currently in use by companies
 - Global data sets on water that can inform the development of the metric
2. Conduct a brief literature review on existing corporate approaches to soil health performance measurement and produce a synthesis report including:
 - Different indicators used to provide a measure of soil health
 - Tools on soil health that are currently in use by companies
 - Global soil data sets that can inform the development of the metric

PERSON SPECIFICATIONS

- A PhD student or Post-Doctoral researcher with a degree in the natural sciences
- Experience writing concise research reports that are relevant and accessible to business
- A confident communicator that is able to make complex content accessible to a wide range of audiences
- Good analytical skills with high standard of attention to detail

EXPECTED NUMBER OF DAYS

8 days to complete both reports.

Please send a CV to Liam Walsh, Programme Manager (liam.walsh@cisl.cam.ac.uk)