



Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities Working Group

Terms of Reference

Version	Date	Contact
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1 Background

Equitable Earth is a global standards body seeking to elevate the role of Indigenous Peoples (IPs) and Local Communities (LCs) in conservation and restoration in the voluntary carbon market.

As part of its three-pillar approach, the Equitable Earth Programme includes a dedicated Livelihoods Pillar that centres requirements for meaningful stakeholder participation, social safeguards, and benefit sharing, aiming to ensure that conservation and restoration efforts lead to fair, trusted, and long-term social, economic, and environmental outcomes.

2 Purpose

Equitable Earth is convening an IP & LC Working Group (“Working Group”) to support the evolution of the Equitable Earth Programme. The Working Group will provide expert advice and first-hand knowledge to strengthen the Equitable Earth Standard and guide its application in diverse local contexts.

The Equitable Earth Secretariat, with support from its Technical Advisory Board (TAB), will manage the Working Group.

Objectives

The overarching objectives of the Working Group include:

- Informing the continued development and improvement of the Equitable Earth Standard, with an emphasis on the Livelihoods Pillar.
- Providing guidance on topics including but not limited to co-design and Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) processes, stakeholder identification, project governance, benefit sharing, accessibility, technical capacity building, traditional and local knowledge integration, and biodiversity monitoring.
- Advising on project-specific scenarios, as needed, including projects entering or undergoing certification.
- Supporting ongoing dialogue and oversight to ensure the Equitable Earth Programme remains inclusive, culturally grounded, and responsive to project stakeholder needs and rights.



Working Group members may:

- Offer recommendations to improve clarity, practicality, and relevance of Equitable Earth Programme rules and requirements.
- Share insights on community engagement, participation, and empowerment in forest conservation, stewardship, and restoration contexts.
- Identify risks or challenges for IPs & LCs in restoration and/or conservation projects and propose solutions.
- Review and provide feedback on requirements, methodologies, procedures, and other supporting tools or documents.
- Support ongoing conformance with international best practices and norms.
- Support fostering of stronger partnerships between communities and developers or other market participants.

Outputs

Outputs of the Working Group may include:

- Feedback on draft methodologies or Standard revisions.
- Written recommendations and guidance notes.
- Advice on real project scenarios.
- Suggested indicators and approaches for livelihood and cultural outcomes.
- Proposals for training or capacity-building tools.

Equitable Earth will include summaries of Working Group outputs as part of its annual reporting.

3 Roles & Responsibilities

The Equitable Earth Secretariat, in partnership with the Technical Advisory Board, will:

- Facilitate communication, coordinate meetings, and share materials in advance.
- Ensure translation, interpretation, and other accessibility support, as needed.
- Support members' participation through compensation (see Section 4 below).



Working Group members will:

- Participate in quarterly virtual meetings and provide asynchronous written input through accessible and shared platforms.
- Review background papers, draft requirements, project-specific documents, tools, or case studies.
- Provide local and community perspectives and advise on culturally-appropriate practices.
- Maintain confidentiality on sensitive matters, and declare any potential conflicts of interest, especially if providing input on project-specific matters (see Section 6 below).

4 Working Group Composition

Equitable Earth seeks members with experience in:

- Conservation, restoration, land management, or other climate- and biodiversity-focused work.
- Social and/or community institutions and collective (forest) governance.
- Restoration and/or conservation projects.
- Standards, certification, and/or the voluntary carbon market (beneficial, but not required).

Equitable Earth seeks diverse representation on the Working Group, which includes:

- Geographic (ecosystems, regions, land tenure types) and cultural diversity.
- Gender balance.
- Land stewards and holders of traditional knowledge.

Equitable Earth staff (outside of the Secretariat team) and external experts may be invited to participate in Working Group meetings.

Observers, alternates, and/or translators are welcome to join to support members.



5 Working Modalities

Formats for Engagement

Equitable Earth plans to use various formats to engage with Working Group members and gather input. The main formats include:

- Quarterly virtual meetings using video conferencing tools (e.g., Google Meet)
 - Other virtual meeting platforms may be used, as necessary.
 - Meeting agendas and background materials will be shared at least one week in advance.
- Asynchronous engagement
 - Working Group members may communicate and provide input through email, shared documents via Google Docs, or messaging platforms, such as WhatsApp.

The first meeting will be held in Q1 2026. Members will commit to a two-year term, to balance new voices with continuity.

Equitable Earth is seeking diverse perspectives on a variety of topics, and does not expect full consensus or alignment. However, Equitable Earth seeks to foster consensus-oriented decision-making, where appropriate.

All questions, feedback, recommendations, and decisions will be clearly documented.

Accessibility

Equitable Earth intends to foster an inclusive environment representing diverse perspectives and aims to balance accessibility with practicality. As such, Equitable Earth encourages Working Group participation through several channels and commits to ensuring accessibility through various means, noting the following:

- Quarterly meetings will be held in English, but interpreters are welcome to join any meetings to support communication.¹

¹ Working Group members who require language interpretation may nominate an interpreter of their choice. Nominated interpreters will be vetted to ensure they have the appropriate skills to support the Working Group's discussions. Equitable Earth can also arrange and assign a qualified interpreter on a member's behalf. Equitable Earth will cover the costs of interpreters, which will be organised and negotiated on a case-by-case basis.



- Input may be submitted in a variety of formats (e.g., email, Google Docs, voice notes) and languages.

Equitable Earth staff speak English, French, Spanish, and Portuguese.

6 Confidentiality

All members of the Working Group, including Equitable Earth staff and Technical Advisory Board members, must:

- Respect and protect community rights, cultural protocols, and knowledge sharing boundaries.
- Treat all discussions as confidential unless explicitly stated and formally communicated by Equitable Earth otherwise.
- Follow principles of integrity, transparency, and accountability outlined in the Equitable Earth [Code of Ethics](#).
- Disclose any potential real or perceived conflict of interest (COI) that may arise, particularly in project-specific discussions, and comply with the procedures established in Equitable Earth [Anti-Fraud Policy](#).

7 Compensation

Working Group members' time and knowledge are valuable and integral to the process. In order to foster equitable participation, Equitable Earth will provide nominal compensation to cover members' time, preparation, and participation. Compensation specifics will be arranged with applicants once selected.

Equitable Earth will cover the cost of members' translators and interpreters, as needed.

8 Application Process

Expression of Interest

Individuals interested in participating in the Working Group may submit an Expression of Interest Form through the following options:

1. Submitting via the [Google Form](#).
2. Completing this [document](#) and submitting it to secretariat@eq-earth.com.



Equitable Earth will accept alternative submission formats, including voice notes or audio responses, video messages, or nomination by a community organisation, and can provide support for completion of the form by phone.

Form responses may be submitted in English, French, Portuguese, or Spanish. Equitable Earth will translate forms submitted in any other language.

The Expression of Interest Form requests the following information:

- Full name and contact details, including for any alternates or observers
- Location
- Community representation
- Language(s) spoken
- Summary of experience in:
 - Community governance and/or decision-making
 - Traditional knowledge and/or cultural practices
 - Restoration and/or conservation projects
 - Standards, certification, and/or the voluntary carbon market (beneficial, but not required)
- Short explanation of interest in the Working Group
- Availability and working format preferences
- Translation or technical support needs
- Permission to share information publicly, if selected as a member

All information submitted to Equitable Earth will remain confidential and private, unless otherwise indicated.

Interested stakeholders must submit forms to the Equitable Earth Secretariat on or before **Friday, January 30, 2026**.

Nomination

Stakeholders may nominate individuals to participate in the Working Group. Please send nominations to secretariat@eq-earth.com.



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