ToR FOR STUDENT RESEARCH GRANT PROPOSAL
DEVELOPMENT

1. INTRODUCTION

Asia’s Linear Infrastructure safeguarding Nature (ALIGN) is a United States Agency for International Development (USAID) funded regional project being implemented by WWF and the Center for Large Landscape Conservation to enhance the development and implementation of effective, high-quality Natural Resources safeguard measures to avoid, lessen and/or mitigate adverse impact from linear infrastructure development on people and natural resources. Natural Resources safeguards are the safeguards that are implemented to protect natural resources and ecosystem resilience from the harm that may arise in the development of linear infrastructure projects.

The main objective of the ALIGN Project Student Research Grant is to support the research work of master’s degree students from environment science, forestry, wildlife, biodiversity conservation and natural resource management disciplines currently in the research development and/or data collection phases of their studies in Nepal. WWF Nepal under the USAID funded ALIGN Project seeks well-designed research proposals that are relevant and will contribute to the work of the project as well as build the capacity of young student researchers.

2. GEOGRAPHIC AREA

The preferred geographic areas for field research encompass diverse regions throughout Nepal including protected areas, buffer zones, biological corridors, forests, watersheds, and water regimes having interface with existing, ongoing, and planned linear infrastructure (roads, railways, transmission lines, irrigation canals).

3. BROAD THEMES OF INTEREST

Research topics must fall under one of the following themes (priority areas of research for this year’s awards are listed below) and the applicants should clearly select only one of the relevant topics and mention it in their proposal.

- Positive and adverse impacts from linear infrastructure development on selected biodiversity hot spots (forest, wetland, wildlife species, water sources, etc.) and communities, and approaches to mitigate adverse impacts and enhance positive impacts.
- Opportunities and challenges for the implementation of climate resilience and natural resource safeguard policies, standards, and instruments in Nepal.
- Complementarity and gaps between international and national safeguard standards and possible ways to harmonize them.
- Assessing implementation effectiveness of existing wildlife friendly infrastructure development policies.
- Effectiveness of existing infrastructures such as underpasses for wildlife crossings.
- Research and studies on capacity of government agencies, national and international financial institutions, private companies (consulting and contractors), academia, training institutions and civil society organizations to contribute to better management of natural
resources by implementing high-quality natural resource safeguards for infrastructure development. Furthermore, the research endeavors to promote and facilitate the adoption of sustainable infrastructure development practices and the utilization of green financing options.

• Multistakeholder collaboration and coordination for promotion of Natural Resource safeguards in LI development.
• GESI issues in different phases of infrastructure development cycle and approaches to address them.
• Existing GESI policies and practices in infrastructure development.

4. ELIGIBILITY
To qualify for the Student Research Grant, applicants must be Nepalese citizens enrolled in master’s programs for environment science, forestry, wildlife, biodiversity conservation and natural resource management disciplines at universities or colleges in Nepal and having research as a requirement for partial fulfillment of their academic degrees. In addition to demonstrating a genuine financial need, applicants should provide the details of any other funding sources they have applied or secured for their research. Fifty percent of the research grants (in numbers) will be awarded to deserving female candidates.

5. APPLICATIONS PROCEDURE
Interested applicants are requested to submit the electronic copy of technical and financial proposal in the prescribed format (see Annex – I and with the prescribed number of pages to be considered for selection; failing this, proposals will not be short listed for selection.)

6. EVALUATION CRITERIA
Proposals will be evaluated competitively, based on:

• Background and rationale of the research.
• Clarity on research goals and objectives.
• Research methodologies (procedures and data analysis).
• Contribution to the goals and objectives and the above-specified research themes of the ALIGN project.
• Duration and Timeline.

7. PROPOSALS REVIEW AND DECISION MAKING
Proposals will be first screened by thematic experts from WWF Nepal and the ALIGN Project team. The team will shortlist the eligible proposals that meet all the criteria (relevant subject, budget ceiling, geographic area, proposal format etc). The screened proposals will be reviewed by the Student Research Grant Facilitation Committee for further process and decision making.
8. TIMELINE

The grant programs will support students in conducting research for their thesis work. The period of implementation of the research will be a maximum of one year. Within this period the entire research activity should be completed, and final reports should be submitted to the funding organization.

9. BUDGET

The maximum grant amount of the Student Research Grant will be up to NPR 100,000. The applicant should include a recommendation letter from their college/institution along with the research proposal. The research grant will not support salaries, research assistant cost and overhead costs. If funds are being sought from the ALIGN project for partial support, then the proposal budget should clearly state this. Co-funding will not have implications on decision making. Budget template for financial proposal is provided in Annex -II.

10. SUBMISSION FORMAT

Document: MS Word format; Font: Georgia; Font size: 10
Line spacing: 1.5 point; Page margins: 1" on all four sides.
Ensure spelling and grammar check.

Annex I: Proposal submission format

I. COVER PAGE- (1 page)

• Proposal Title:
• Theme (one of the five themes as specified in the Guideline):
• Academic level:
• Name and contact details of the applicant (e-mail, phone number):
• Proposed supervisor:
• Institution:
• Amount requested from WWF Nepal/ALIGN project:
• Other funding sources sought and/or secured:
• Research start and end date:

II. NARRATIVE SECTION: (Not exceeding 10 pages excluding References and supporting documents)

1. Introduction: - (3 pages)
   • Background: -
   • Objectives: -
   • Scope of the work: -
   • Rationale of the project: -
   • Study area: - (½ page-concise description of the project site)

2. Literature Review: - (3 1/2 pages)
3. Methodology: - (2 pages; Methodology framework, Research design, methods, and analysis)
4. Budget- ½ page (format to be strictly followed- Particulars, unit, number, rate, total and justification)
5. Proposed work plan- ½ page (detailed on a monthly basis).
6. References

III. Letter of institutional endorsement and recommendation from the research guide under whose supervision the research is proposed, on institutional letter head with institutional seal; or provide official statement from the academic institution stating that the research proposal is/will be approved by the faculty as a partial fulfillment for the completion of the academic degree. The letter of endorsement should also mention if the same grant proposal has been sent for funding to another agency. If partial funds are being sought from the ALIGN Project, then the proposal budget should clearly state this.

IV. Curriculum vitae of the researcher (not exceeding 2 pages along with signature of the applicant signifying the truth and correctness of the above information) and title and designation of the direct supervisor.

Note: Failure to submit any of the above-mentioned required documents at the time of the submission of the proposal will disqualify the application. A research permit from relevant authorities should be obtained by the applicant, if required.

Annex II: Budget template

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<th>Rate</th>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Travel</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Data Collection</td>
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<td><strong>Total Direct cost</strong></td>
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