CREATIVE BRIEF

GSF Hub: Caribbean Gender-Smart Conservation Exchange

Digital Learning Platform Development

Implementing Organisation	Caribbean Biodiversity Fund (CBF)
Project	Caribbean Organisations for a Resilient Environment (CORE)
Funding Partner	Global Affairs Canada (GAC)
Platform Name	GSF Hub — Caribbean Gender-Smart Conservation Exchange
Submission Deadline	6 April 2026
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1. Introduction

The Caribbean Biodiversity Fund (CBF) is seeking a qualified web development firm to design and build the GSF Hub — the Caribbean Gender-Smart Conservation Exchange — a dedicated digital learning platform for gender-responsive conservation across the Caribbean region.

The GSF Hub is a core deliverable of the CORE (Caribbean Organisations for a Resilient Environment) project, a CAD $8 million climate resilience initiative funded by Global Affairs Canada and implemented by CBF across eight Caribbean territories. It will serve conservation practitioners, National Conservation Trust Funds (NCTFs), environmental women's rights organisations (EWROs), and regional partners as their primary resource for peer learning, capacity building, and gender monitoring in conservation.

This Creative Brief provides the design vision, brand direction, and user experience goals to guide the development team. It should be read alongside the accompanying Terms of Reference, which set out the full technical scope, deliverables, and contractual requirements.

2. Expected Bid Timelines

Milestone	Date
RFP Release	27 March 2026
Proposal Submission Deadline	6 April 2026
Selection & Contract Signing	24 April 2026
Project Start Date	27 April 2026
Expected Completion (Platform Launch)	17 July 2026

3. About the Platform

The GSF Hub will serve as the digital home of the Gender Smart Facility — CBF's USD $3 million grant-making mechanism that integrates gender-responsive approaches into biodiversity conservation and climate resilience across the Caribbean. Unlike a general conservation website, the GSF Hub is purpose-built as an active learning and exchange environment.

Its primary function is to shift how conservation practitioners in the Caribbean think about and integrate gender — not through mandate, but through accessible knowledge, peer connection, and practical tools. The platform must feel like a community resource: welcoming, practical, and rooted in Caribbean reality.

What the GSF Hub is	What the GSF Hub is not
- A learning and knowledge-sharing platform - A resource library for gender-responsive conservation - A peer network for NCTFs and practitioners - A regional gender data and monitoring centre - A showcase of GSF programme outcomes	- A general CBF organisational website - A static information repository - A donor reporting portal - A replacement for the CBF main website - A one-way broadcast communications channel

4. Branding

The GSF Hub has a dual branding identity that the design must navigate carefully and consistently throughout the platform.

CBF and CORE Branding

The platform is a CBF product delivered through the CORE project. CBF brand guidelines — including logos, typography, colour palette, and design principles — must be followed and will be provided to the selected firm. The platform should feel visually connected to CBF's broader institutional identity while having its own distinct character as a specialised platform.

GSF Hub Identity

The GSF Hub requires its own visual identity within the CBF brand family — a sub-brand that reflects its specific focus on gender, conservation, and the Caribbean. The development firm should work within CBF's established palette while introducing design elements that communicate:

- Inclusivity and gender equity — the platform must feel welcoming to women practitioners, community-based organisations, and non-technical users
- Caribbean identity — imagery, tone, and design cues should reflect the region, not generic international development aesthetics
- Professionalism and credibility — NCTFs and institutional partners must see the platform as authoritative and trustworthy

- Accessibility and warmth — the platform is a practical tool, not a publication; it should feel usable, not just beautiful

Global Affairs Canada Visibility Requirements

Compliance with GAC Visual Identity Guidelines for International Assistance Partners is mandatory on all platform pages and materials. GAC guidelines will be provided. Key requirements include:

- Canada Wordmark and "In partnership with Canada / En partenariat avec le Canada" bilingual credit line in the platform header or footer on all pages
- GAC-approved graphic elements (maple leaf motif, approved colour palette: Canada red #ED2327, black, grey, white) integrated into the design where applicable
- All templates — newsletters, webinar materials, downloadable resources, and case studies — must include GAC partnership recognition
- The Canada Wordmark must appear with adequate clear space and must not appear on visually conflicting backgrounds

Note: GAC visibility elements must complement, not compete with, CBF branding. The design team must demonstrate how co-branding will be handled elegantly across the platform.

5. Platform Design Brief

The GSF Hub must achieve the following design objectives:

- Welcoming and people-centred — lead with human stories, faces, and community imagery rather than landscapes or abstract graphics. Images must be representative of Caribbean diversity, with proper photo credits on all images throughout the platform.
- Intuitive navigation — users range from rural community practitioners with limited digital literacy to NCTF programme officers and international donors. Navigation must be simple, consistent, and immediately clear.
- Multilingual by design — English, Spanish, and French functionality must be built into the design from the outset, not retrofitted. Language switching must be prominent and seamless.
- Mobile-first — a significant proportion of Caribbean conservation practitioners access digital content primarily via mobile devices. The design must be fully functional and visually consistent on mobile.
- Accessible — WCAG 2.1 Level AA compliance is required. This includes contrast ratios, screen reader compatibility, adjustable text, and keyboard navigation.
- SEO-optimised — content structure, metadata, and URL architecture must support discoverability for Caribbean conservation audiences searching for gender and climate resources.

6. Key Design Challenges to Address

The design must specifically resolve the following challenges identified through stakeholder engagement and the CORE project experience:

Challenge	Design Response Required

Variable internet connectivity across Caribbean territories	Optimised loading times; offline resource packages; CDN implementation; lightweight design that functions on slower connections
Multilingual audience with EN/FR/ES speakers across different territories	Language switcher prominent on all pages; content parity across languages; no degraded experience in Spanish or French
Diverse user literacy levels from technical experts to community practitioners	Simple, jargon-free navigation; visual cues alongside text; consistent layout that builds familiarity across visits
Gender data collection across 8 NCTFs with different reporting systems	Standardised data submission templates; user-friendly upload interface; visual dashboard that makes regional data meaningful
Risk of low adoption if the platform feels imposed rather than useful	Community-owned aesthetic; NCTF content prominently featured; forum and peer exchange as primary real estate, not buried functionality
Dual branding (CBF + GAC) without visual clutter	Elegant co-branding approach in header/footer; GAC elements professional and prominent but not overwhelming, CBF or platform identity

7. Target Audiences and Their Needs

The platform serves four distinct primary audiences. The design must serve all of them — and proposals should demonstrate how the information architecture accommodates each without sacrificing simplicity.

Audience	Primary Need from the Platform	Design Implication
NCTF Programme Officers	Practical tools to integrate gender into existing conservation work; peer exchange with counterparts in other territories; ability to submit data	Easy access to resource library and forum from homepage; prominent data submission pathway; peer directory
Environmental Women's Rights Organisations (EWROs)	Visibility for their work; access to funding information; connection to regional peers	Content submission pathways; featured EWRO spotlight section; searchable directory of organisations
Conservation Practitioners and Community Leaders	Simple, usable learning modules; case studies from contexts similar to their own; offline-friendly resources	Mobile-optimised learning modules; downloadable resources with clear offline capability; Caribbean-specific imagery
Donors, GAC, and CBF Leadership	Evidence of programme impact, gender monitoring data, and	Clean data visualisation dashboard; impact stories prominently

demonstration of Canadian investment outcomes	featured; GAC visibility clearly present

8. Platform Activities and Scope

The design must accommodate the following functional areas. Proposals should demonstrate a clear approach to how these components are organised visually and navigated by different user types.

- Streamline navigation so that any user can reach their primary destination within two clicks of the homepage
- Design a resource library that is browsable and searchable without requiring user registration — lowering the barrier to access for first-time visitors
- Present interactive learning modules in a format that is engaging on mobile and functions as a structured pathway, not just a content list
- Design the case study database to foreground Caribbean stories and real-world outcomes over theoretical content
- Create a Gender Monitoring & Data Centre interface that is approachable for NCTF staff with varying data literacy
- Build newsletter and webinar integration that feels like a natural part of the platform, not an added-on communications function
- Design the expert directory to be immediately usable for NCTFs seeking connection with specialists

9. Technical Scope Summary

The full technical specifications are set out in the Terms of Reference. For design planning, the key scope parameters are:

Platform	Custom WordPress with modular, extensible architecture
Languages	English, Spanish, and French — full content parity across all three
Mobile	Mobile-first, fully responsive across all device types
Accessibility	WCAG 2.1 Level AA compliant
Integrations	Mailchimp (newsletter), Zoom or equivalent (webinars), Google Analytics, social media feeds
CMS	User-friendly back end enabling CBF staff to manage content independently post-launch
Security	SSL, two-factor authentication, role-based access, GDPR compliant
Hosting	Secure, Caribbean-accessible, minimum 99.9% uptime

10. Key Features and Functionality

- Simplified, intuitive navigation serving multiple audience types without separate portals
- Resource library: searchable, filterable repository with offline download capability
- Interactive learning modules with progress tracking and certificate generation
- Case study database with Caribbean-specific filtering by territory, conservation type, and thematic outcome
- Expert and organisation directory: searchable by expertise, territory, and language
- Peer learning forum: moderated discussion spaces organised by topic
- Gender Monitoring & Data Centre: NCTF data upload, regional dashboard, and report generation
- Newsletter archive and Mailchimp integration
- Webinar calendar, registration, and recording archive
- SEO-optimised structure and Google Analytics integration

11. Accessibility

- WCAG 2.1 Level AA compliance across all pages and components
- Mobile-friendly and fully responsive design
- Screen reader compatibility throughout
- Keyboard navigation support
- Alt text required on all images
- Adjustable text size and high contrast mode
- Offline resource packages for low-connectivity users

12. Analytics and Reporting

- Google Analytics setup and configuration
- Engagement tracking on key pages: resource library, learning modules, Gender Monitoring Centre
- Monthly traffic and performance reporting capability
- Download and resource access tracking
- User registration and returning visitor metrics

13. CMS Flexibility

- Intuitive content management enabling the CBF Communications Officer to publish and update content without developer support
- Role-based access control for CBF team, NCTF contributors, and platform administrators
- NCTF content submission workflow for case studies, resources, and forum contributions
- Template-based publishing to ensure visual consistency across contributor-submitted content

14. Project Stakeholders

CBF Communications Officer	Day-to-day project liaison; content direction; GAC compliance review; primary CMS user post-launch

CBF DEIJ Officer	Gender Monitoring Centre requirements: learning module quality assurance
CBF Project Lead	Strategic oversight; final approvals
CBF MEAL Officer	Analytics framework; data systems alignment
Web Development Consultant/Firm	Design, development, testing, and launch
CBF Leadership	Final platform launch approval

15. Maintenance and Support

- CBF's Communications Officer will manage day-to-day content and platform maintenance post-launch
- The development firm must provide a minimum 30-day post-launch support period for bug fixes and troubleshooting
- Developer must deliver comprehensive training (minimum 3 sessions) and documentation enabling CBF to manage the platform independently
- Proposals should include optional maintenance retainer pricing for ongoing technical support beyond the warranty period

16. Hosting

- CBF is open to new hosting providers if performance, security, or Caribbean accessibility can be improved
- Hosting must support a minimum 99.9% uptime, automated backups, and SSL certification
- CDN implementation is required to ensure reasonable loading times across Caribbean territories
- Proposals should include first-year hosting costs and ongoing annual hosting estimates

17. Inspiration and Reference Platforms

The following platforms are offered as reference points for UX, visual quality, and functionality — not to be replicated, but to inform the level of quality and approach expected:

Platform	Reference Point
The Nature Conservancy — nature.org	UX design, visual storytelling, structured navigation, and the balance between impactful communication and resource access
CGIAR Gender Programme — gender.cgiar.org	Learning platform structure, gender-focused knowledge hub organisation, and resource library design
IUCN Resources and Publications Portal	Resource filtering, document management, and multi-language functionality for a global conservation audience

Caribbean Biodiversity Fund — caribbeanbiodiversityfund.org	Existing CBF branding elements to be carried through; platform must feel connected to but distinct from the main CBF site

Primary Inspiration Sources

The following platforms serve as primary inspiration sources for the GSF Hub's design and functionality. Bidders should review these sites to understand the desired look, feel, and user experience.

BlueFin Hub

Learn from BlueFin Hub's:

- Role-based user management (Investor, Project Owner, Expert logins)
- "Submit Opportunity" functionality and workflows
- Expert Directory structure and search functionality
- Resource library organisation
- Clean, professional Caribbean-appropriate design aesthetic
- Light/Dark mode toggle
- Featured projects showcase with images
- Partner logos presentation
- Newsletter subscription integration
- Category organisation (Projects, Businesses, Concepts)

Ocean Conservancy

Draw inspiration from Ocean Conservancy's:

- Powerful visual storytelling with video backgrounds
- Prominent impact statistics display (53 years, 400M pounds, 19M volunteers)
- Featured content spotlight/carousel
- Strong calls-to-action throughout
- News/blog section layout with featured articles
- "Our Work" section organisation (Biodiversity, Climate, Plastics)
- Wildlife library concept
- "Get Involved" action centre
- Corporate partners showcase
- Clean, modern design with generous white space
- Mobile-optimised user experience
- Effective use of photography and media

Design Synthesis

The GSF Hub should combine BlueFin Hub's functional excellence and the Caribbean-appropriate design with Ocean Conservancy's visual impact and storytelling power, creating a platform that is:

- Functionally robust like BlueFin Hub
- Visually compelling like Ocean Conservancy
- Uniquely focused on gender-responsive conservation

- Caribbean in character and context
- Accessible and welcoming to diverse audiences
- Professional yet warm and empowering

18. Project Responsibilities

CBF Responsibilities

- Provide CBF brand guidelines, GAC Visual Identity Guidelines, and approved acknowledgement text in EN/FR/ES
- Supply initial content, images, and resources for migration and population of the platform
- Provide timely feedback on design mock-ups and development milestones
- Designate the Communications Officer as the single point of contact for the development team
- Arrange NCTF beta testers for user acceptance testing before launch
- Provide final approval at each milestone before proceeding to the next phase

Consultant/Firm Responsibilities

- Design and develop the platform to the specifications in this brief and the accompanying ToR
- Ensure GAC visibility compliance is built into all templates and platform pages from the design phase
- Conduct user testing with the CBF team and the NCTF beta group before launch
- Ensure accessibility, security, performance optimisation, and GDPR compliance
- Deliver a minimum of 3 training sessions and comprehensive documentation for the CBF team
- Provide 30-day post-launch support for bug fixes and troubleshooting

19. Measures of Success

The platform will be evaluated against the following key performance indicators at launch and at 6 months post-launch:

Indicator	Target at Launch	Target at 6 Months
Page load time (Caribbean access)	Under 3 seconds	**Under 3 seconds**
WCAG 2.1 AA compliance	Full compliance	**Full compliance**
Content migrated with no broken links	100% of prioritised content	**100% + new content added**
All 8 NCTFs are registered and active	The platform is live and accessible	**All 8 NCTFs are using the platform regularly**
Newsletter open rate	First edition distributed	**30% or above**
Webinar attendance	Launch webinar held	**30+ avg. participants per session**

NCTFs submitting gender data	The system is live and tested	**Minimum 6 of 8 NCTFs**

20. Legal and Technical Requirements

- GDPR compliance for all user data collection and management
- Secure data management with encryption for sensitive submissions
- Scalability to accommodate platform growth beyond the CORE project period
- All deliverables become the intellectual property of CBF upon final payment
- Non-disclosure agreement required from all team members with access to CBF project content