The Development of a Sustainable Tourism Cluster in Bocas del Toro

USAID Conservation of Central American Watersheds program (CCAW) project

Technical Proposal
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ACRONYMS

AMPYME Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises Authority,
DMO Destination Management Organization
NGS National Geographic Society
NGO Non Governmental Organizations
SAVE TOURISM Scientific, Academic, Volunteer and Educational
SMME Small, Micro and Medium sized enterprises
1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Contact for this Application

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Chris Seek</th>
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<tr>
<td>Company</td>
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1.2 Introduction to our Consortium

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Leader</th>
<th>Solimar International</th>
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<tr>
<td>Partner</td>
<td>Rainforest Alliance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Supporting Partner</td>
<td>APTSO (Sustainable Panamanian Tourism Association)</td>
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Solimar International is a Washington, DC based tourism development firm dedicated to promoting the goals of sustainable tourism by providing marketing, sales, and consulting services to tourism businesses, associations, development agencies, and national tourism authorities. Solimar uses a market-driven approach to ensure sustainable tourism development; provides proven business solutions and technical assistance to tourism enterprises and non-profit organizations, improve tourism industry cooperation by creating business linkages and improving destination marketing. Solimar International has a distinguished track record in successfully managing sustainable tourism cluster projects, and has worked in more than 20 countries for donor agencies such as EU, IDB,USAID, and the WB as well as private sector and NGO clients.

Rainforest Alliance is a New York-based Non-for Profit organization with offices in Costa Rica working to conserve biodiversity and ensure sustainable livelihoods by transforming land-use practices, business practices and consumer behavior. The RA Sustainable Tourism Program has been working since 2000 with tourism entrepreneurs and community-based businesses throughout Latin America, providing them with training and information on environmentally and socially sound management. Our Programs have successfully executed multiple projects with international organizations as IDB, USAID, UNEP among others.

APTSO (Sustainable Panamanian Tourism Association) is a non-profit association aiming to developing a more sustainable tourism development process in Panama. Created a couple of years ago, this association led by a group of private companies worked on developing marketing strategies for sustainable tourism products.
1.3 Consortium Expertise

Training: Solimar is skilled at providing technical assistance and training to tourism businesses, government agencies, and non-profit organizations to enhance their capacity and guide them in the most effective tourism strategies and techniques. Solimar started as a tourism marketing and travel company, working for businesses throughout Central and South America, and therefore has first-hand knowledge of tourism business operations. Solimar has conducted training throughout Central and South America in customer service, food handling, business operations, management, and market access. Recent implemented training programs include destination level associations in the Bahamas and Jamaica as well as business specific training in Mali. In addition, Solimar recently enhanced its training capabilities through an agreement with RARE to take over their award winning tourism training programs, strengthening Solimar’s ability to deliver effective product development and business training.

Destination Management Organization/Company: Solimar has worked with destinations throughout Central and South America and the Caribbean to help them improve their tourism management practices. In Panama, Solimar created a small business tourism coordination office that promotes a cluster of tourism suppliers in the Panama Canal Zone. This business model approach to tourism linked small and micro businesses, independent guides, indigenous tribes, and other tourism operators through a central reservation and branding office. These tourism products were promoted through key regional tourism hubs as well as to international tourism providers through the “Authentic Panama” branded program.

Investment Promotion: Solimar has extensive experience in tourism investment promotion. Solimar’s in-house investment promotion experts leverage years of experience to ensure success of projects for both entrepreneurs and investors. On the island of Inagua, Bahamas, Solimar provided technical assistance to local entrepreneurs to develop business plans and secure sources of funding for small-scale business development and a $2 million (debt/equity) joint venture for an ecolodge. Solimar is currently conducting similar investment promotion activities in Ecuador and Costa Rica, among other countries.

Community Participation: Solimar works closely with the National Geographic Society’s Center for Sustainable Destinations and has conducted numerous community tourism planning workshops around the world (including El Salvador, Panama, Grenada, Mexico, the Bahamas, and Bolivia) to develop pride in a community’s tourism assets and actions to protect their resources. Solimar has worked with the National Geographic Society (NGS) on catalytic community projects, such as the development of NGS branded maps and other promotional materials that are created through a participatory community process, providing local people with a medium to highlight their tourism assets while building awareness.

Marketing: Solimar helps its clients develop result-driven and market-responsive approaches to connect with markets and understand customers’ needs and desires. In Panama, Solimar worked on two separate projects to develop two distinctive niche-branding campaigns (Authentic Panama and Panama La Verde), helping small/micro businesses and community tourism associations develop a market presence, create their selling proposition, and access the tourism markets. Solimar has conducted similar branding, marketing, and outreach projects in Costa
Rica, the Bahamas, and Jamaica. Solimar has also conducted regional projects through the Organization of America States to promote business linkages, collaboration, and sales using IT solutions in the Caribbean islands through the Caribbean Experiences program.

**Environmental Performance:** Rainforest Alliance (RA) assists small- and medium-sized tourism operations elevate their environmental sustainability by conducting diagnosis, environmental management training, and providing manuals on best practices for small and medium size hotels and lodges. RA has also developed a certification program with a comprehensive set of standards for environmental responsibility.

### 2. THE LOCAL CONTEXT

#### 2.1 Tourism in Panama

Panama is the fastest-growing tourism market in Latin America. For over a decade, tourist arrivals have increased at an average of 12.5% a year to reach 1,215,083 international arrivals in 2006. According to the World Economic Forum’s Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Report\(^1\), Panama ranked 50\(^{th}\) of 130 countries worldwide, and is one of the most competitive countries in Latin America and the Caribbean after Barbados, Costa Rica and Brazil. The Panamanian Tourism Authority predicts that by 2010 Panama will surpass Costa Rica in tourism arrivals, with more than 2 million tourists per year. With international tourism receipts exceeding $1 Billion per year, Panama’s economy is significantly and increasingly supported by the growing tourism sector. However, the lack of sufficient regulations and policies to mitigate negative impacts of tourism development activities are starting to have adverse effects and put the natural resources of some tourism destinations within the country under stress. Recognizing the need for better targeted investments that benefit local communities and ensure better conservation of the natural assets, the national authorities are seeking technical assistance to various donor agencies for implementing the new Tourism Law and the Sustainable Tourism Master Plan (STMP). The soon to be adopted Sustainable Tourism Master Plan has the goal to ensure that the sector will grow in a sustainable manner and contribute to poverty alleviation by increasing employment opportunities and social benefits.

#### 2.2 Tourism in Bocas del Toro

Located on the Caribbean coast of Panama, close to the border with Costa Rica, Bocas del Toro province is a popular tourism destination in Panama. Its archipelago of pristine islands as well as its laid back Caribbean culture has made Bocas del Toro very popular among travelers coming from Panama City or Costa Rica. Although there are no official tourism statistics, the number of visitors is growing and estimated to be around 100,000/year. The real estate market is booming and significant numbers of European and Americans are purchasing homes on the islands. However, with a population of about 10,000 people, the infrastructure and tourism services are

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not in place to effectively handle the numbers of tourists causing pressure on the regional environment.

In line with the Sustainable Tourism Master Plan 2007-2020, donor agencies are supporting national and local authorities in their objective to develop Bocas del Toro into an ecotourism destination and mitigate any negative impacts of tourism development. USAID’s Conservation of Central American Watersheds Program (CCAW) seeks to improve the management and conservation of watersheds in the region and implement a sustainable tourism cluster; IDB also has tourism activities in progress for the Sustainable Development of Bocas del Toro.

2.3 The Opportunity

Tourism has the potential to create profitable and sustainable business ventures in Bocas del Toro—specifically for micro-, small-, and medium-sized enterprises and generate employment opportunities for all, including women, the poor, and communities such as the Ngobe indigenous group. Tourism will also act as a driver for general economic development, improve the tax base, and support a variety of local businesses such as restaurants, hotels, water taxi providers, tour providers, handicraft shops, and community based organizations. Tourism will achieve these development objectives only when it is focused on the distinctiveness of the place, avoiding the destructive pitfalls of undifferentiated and unplanned global mass tourism.

The Sustainable Tourism Master Plan 2007-2020 prioritized Bocas del Toro as an ecotourism destination. Bocas del Toro has tremendous product development potential—especially in the categories of natural, adventure, cultural, and community-based experiences and activities. However the competitive position of the destination needs to be improved by enhancing the overall suitability and business efficiency of tourism enterprises and organizations in the region.

Strengthening business linkages among the diverse stakeholder groups and creating innovative tourism packages is a way to achieve tourism success and environmental sustainability in Bocas del Toro. To achieve this, Solimar will strengthen the capacity of local tourism stakeholders by providing training and technical assistance to improve the quality of sustainable tourism products and services and build linkages to markets through an effective tourism cluster.
3. SOLIMAR APPROACH

1. Strategic analysis of local needs, issues, and opportunities

Output:
- a. Plan for most appropriate tourism cluster (DMO) model
- b. Identify best mix of training modules
- c. Collect marketing materials/info.
- d. List of initial workshop participants.

2. National Geographic Workshop to inform stakeholders about program & benefits of sustainability, initiate planning for tourism cluster, training, and marketing.

Output:
- e. Community buy in to process
- f. Stakeholder’s leave with better understanding of the benefits of sustainable tourism
- g. Feedback gathered on tourism cluster structure, members, etc.
- h. Information gathered for training and marketing/outreach materials

3. Tourism Cluster/Destination Management Organization (DMO) business and outreach plan developed. DMO soft launched.

Output:
- i. DMO business plan developed with heavy review and input from local stakeholders (future members)
- j. Outreach and marketing plan developed with stakeholder input.
- k. DMO soft launched and initial outreach started with existing products.

4. DMO and local business training conducted.

Output:
- l. DMO training conducted periodically over a 6-8 month period to train stakeholders in DMO operations, management, and marketing as well as help them with start up activities.
- m. Product development and operations training including, small business management, guide training, tour development, & hospitality management.
- n. Sales and marketing training
- o. Best management practices for SMME’s training and individual business assessments conducted by Rainforest Alliance.

5. Full launch of DMO and outreach program.
3.1 Proposed Activities

The following proposal describes the proposed technical approach and discrete activities that Solimar International will undertake with its partners and under the direction of Chemonics International to meet the objectives of the USAID Conservation of Central American Watersheds program (CCAW).

A. Strategic Analysis

Solimar proposes to work directly with local tourism stakeholders to strengthen ongoing tourism development in Bocas del Toro and build on the results of activities already achieved in the region. The Solimar team will start a strategic business planning process through an initial analysis of the Bocas del Toro’s tourism context. The project coordinator will meet with stakeholders listed in the Value Chain Analysis report as well as others as appropriate to inform them about the initiative, gather feedback on the needs, issues, and opportunities for creating a tourism cluster in the region and ensure their active participation throughout the process. The project coordinator will also work with tourism stakeholders to collect marketing and outreach information about tourism businesses, sites, and attractions in the area.

B. National Geographic Launch Workshop

The National Geographic Society Center for Sustainable Destinations has developed a methodology centered around ‘Geotourism,’ which is defined as:

‘Tourism that sustains or enhances the geographical character of a place—its environment, heritage, aesthetics, culture, and the well-being of its residents.’

Solimar has been appointed as a Geotourism Ambassador by National Geographic and favors this approach to tourism development as it has the potential to enhance the tourism product in Bocas del Toro by bringing diverse tourism stakeholders together to strengthen their business while also planning to protect the resources on which it depends. Solimar has worked with National Geographic to develop participatory consensus-building workshop curriculums that build on local pride for their tourism assets and help to plan for tourism in the region. The Geotourism approach will serve as a catalytic force to integrate program activities and local goals in a way that creates a nucleus of public and private stakeholder participation. Solimar will utilize the National Geographic methodology, materials, and curriculum to conduct a one-day consensus building and planning workshop in the area that will act as the launch of the tourism cluster initiative.

The National Geographic workshop’s objective is to inform stakeholders about the synergy between natural resource conservation and tourism success; to understand the breadth of tourism assets in the region; and to build on this knowledge to start planning, with guidance from the Solimar team, the establishment of a tourism cluster or Destination Management Organization (DMO) in the region. This will include review of potential DMO models, the pros and cons of
each, how they would work in the local context, and the next steps required to create such an entity.

C. Formalize a Sustainable Tourism Cluster through the development of a Destination Management Organization (DMO) and link it to tourism markets through packaging and promotion.

Solimar proposes the establishment of a Destination Management Organization for the Bocas del Toro destination whose leadership will guide the development and promotion of tourism in the region. The DMO will provide a forum for public and private collaboration on destination management, product development, and promotion activities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective Achieved</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#1) Formalize a sustainable tourism cluster in Bocas del Toro with key public and private sector groups</td>
<td>Bring private and public tourism stakeholders as well as the local communities together with the goal of facilitating and promoting sustainable tourism in the Bocas del Toro’s region.</td>
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<tr>
<td>#2) Develop and implement a business model for the tourism cluster</td>
<td>Identify the best business model for the Destination Management Organization according to local needs and circumstances and help local stakeholders develop and operator the organization.</td>
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<tr>
<td>#3) Develop and market a demand-driven tourism package for the sustainable tourism cluster.</td>
<td>Work with the private sector and APTSO (the Panamanian Sustainable Tourism Association) to strengthening linkages between the various groups of the tourism cluster, develop innovative pro-poor tourism packages and establish a branding and outreach campaign for Bocas del Toro, linking products to market.</td>
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**Bocas del Toro Destination Management Organization**

Solimar will lead a strategic business planning process in Bocas del Toro and build consensus and buy-in for the creation of a regional Destination Management Organization (DMO). The main objectives of this organization will be to:

- Strengthen linkages between public and private sector players
- Guide management of the destination
- Improve the tourism service provisions
- Promote the tourism products of the region

With the goal to maximize Bocas del Toro’s economic and environmental opportunities.
Solimar will work with local tourism stakeholders to identifying local needs, issues, and opportunities and develop a common vision and commitment to the creation of a DMO. Past experiences with establishing such entities, notably the Chamber of Tourism of Bocas del Toro, will be assessed and discussed with stakeholders to ensure the DMO model is developed in a way that addresses local requirements. There are various options for DMO governance and the specific model will be determined through the consultation process with local stakeholders.

It is anticipated that the DMO will operate in the following ways:

- **Provide a forum for increased communication and collaboration between tourism stakeholders in the region.** This forum will facilitate public and private dialogue on the tourism issues and challenges faced by the region and the need to ensure a more balanced relationship between natural resources management and sustainable tourism development.

- **Help local businesses and tourism stakeholders package tourism products.** These may include the promotion of ecotourism packages developed with the help of local NGOs and communities, ethnotourism packages developed between private tour operators and the Ngöbe indigenous tourism ventures, and other tourism packages. These packages will promote direct business linkages through the DMO to outside tourism markets.

- **Provide tourism businesses and local government with an organization that can centralize and standardize tourism promotion in the region.** The DMO will serve as the central point of coordination and facilitation for the distribution and promotional of tourism products in the region. The DMO will encourage partnerships between key tourism stakeholders in the region as well as facilitate linkages with outside markets such as other destinations in Panama, Costa Rica, and other countries through marketing materials and promotional activities.

- **Provide tourism businesses and local governments with an organization that can centralize and standardize tourism statistics in Bocas del Toro.** Through close collaboration with SMMEs, the DMO will be in a unique situation to collect tourism statistics at the enterprise level. The aggregated information will help to streamline marketing efforts through the DMO, while also providing information to its members about the tourism markets that travel to the region. These statistics will also be used to monitor programmatic success.

- **Facilitate tourism bookings within the region by providing a centralized sales office for all regional tourism businesses.** This will ensure that small-scale businesses with limited communication connectivity and access to markets achieve tourism success through the DMO sales office and its associated marketing programs. The DMOs will specifically market tourism products and packages that strengthen linkages between the various groups within the region and highlight the significant natural assets of the region.

- **Help to support conservation efforts that will mitigate adverse impacts of tourism, protect these valuable assets, and leverage funds for conservation.** The DMO will seek partnerships with local and international NGOs, research centers, universities, and others to develop specific tourism packages within fields such as marine conservation, biology, environmental
science, etc. and will specifically target S.A.V.E [Scientific, Academic, Volunteer, & Educational] markets to increase tourism while utilizing tourism to protect and study the regions natural resources. This is the model initially developed by Costa Rica in the development of its tourism product.

Solimar will build on its experience in DMO development in other destinations; working closely with the organization and its members to establish one or more of the following revenue generating business models for the organization.

- A membership system to collect fees from each tourism business (commensurate to their size) that will be used to sustain the organization and its marketing/outreach efforts.

- Establish relationships with hotels and travel companies in Panama, Costa Rica, and internationally to offer travel packages to the region (act as inbound operator for regional businesses). The DMO will receive a commission for organizing and selling these travel packages.

- Establish relationships with the national Panamanian Tourism Authority and seek grants for specific needs and explore joint marketing, networking, and training activities.

Through the strategic business planning process with local stakeholders, Solimar will assist the DMO to legally establish, define a business model that fits with the local context and needs as well as a marketing plan to ensure its financial sustainability well beyond Solimar’s involvement. Solimar will work closely with the DMO staff and members to train them in business planning, marketing, development of marketing materials (basic brochures, websites, etc.), statistic gathering and analysis, and other operational functions.

This process will also allow the DMO staff (once the program is established and running independently) to offer mentoring services and marketing material development for a fee to their clients and members, building the local capacity to grow the tourism product and businesses. In addition the DMO will work closely with national entities such as ANPYME, the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises Authority, and the Panamanian Tourism Authority’s regional offices to leverage and utilize their existing training and assistance programs for SMME’s development.

For budget purposes, Solimar will allocate funding to help with the start-up of the DMO in the first year of operations. Funding can help to legally establish the DMO; hire staff, rent office space and purchase a limited amount of office equipment. Once implementation begins, Solimar anticipates being able to leverage local stakeholders (members) to cover some and ultimately all of these costs.

**Tourism Package Development**

The private sector plays an integral and important role in the way Solimar approaches product development. Local private operators are familiar with the available products and the opportunities and challenges facing tourism development in Bocas del Toro. Solimar’s goal is to link this knowledge and opportunity with the tourism markets needs and interests. Before even
considering potential new product opportunities, Solimar will engage with both the Panamanian private sector, the newly formed APTSO (Panamanian Sustainable Tourism Association) whose mission is to help promote sustainable tourism activities, and international tour operators (both those already selling Panama and those that might be interested in selling the country) to understand the market needs and opportunities and then develop products that fit local offerings and market needs.

Building on information gathered at the National Geographic workshop and other direct communication with stakeholders, Solimar will work with DMO staff and members to create direct linkages within the cluster through the development of themed packages of the region. The package development process will include stakeholder identification of tourism products and relevant information about those products, analysis of existing routes and tourist/tour operator feedback on desired routes, development and testing of routes based on different tourism interests and time frames. Once developed, marketing materials (print and web) will be developed and outreach to markets initiated.

**Marketing Outreach Strategy**

The first step towards developing a marketing strategy is the formation of a regional marketing committee including representatives from the private sector, local governmental entities, local communities, and others. The committee will be an integral part of the DMO and will oversee and provide inputs, feedback, and consensus over the development and implementation of the respective marketing strategies for the DMO. The committee will ensure that marketing strategies are consistent with, and feed into, the national Panamanian Tourism Authority initiatives and the Sustainable Tourism Master Plan, taking advantage of the on-going governmental efforts to position Bocas del Toro as an ecotourism destination. Therefore, the emphasis will be on promoting ecotourism products, community-based, and niche market tourism experiences to foster a unified message of Bocas del Toro as an ecotourism destination across national and international markets.

Solimar will obtain consensus and buy-in for a comprehensive international marketing and branding strategy. Solimar’s marketing expert will conduct visioning exercises and activities to highlight new marketing methods and strategies, define past marketing problems, capture new ideas, and create action plans with participants. Inputs collected from the marketing committee will include identifying the target markets (with Solimar assistance), formulating a brand for the destination, how the target markets should be reached, what types of collateral materials to incorporate into the strategy (i.e. brochures, web-based content, etc), content collection needs, and the message to be incorporated into each marketing strategy (i.e. what makes that particular destination unique?). Once all inputs are collected and a draft marketing strategy is prepared, Solimar will share this with the committee and the DMO members in order to receive a final consensus for implementation. Decision will be made whether or not to develop a new website or upgrading current website promoting Bocas del Toro.

Once the marketing strategy has been developed and responsibilities have been assigned, Solimar will assist stakeholders to implement action plans—such as establishing marketing
materials, making contacts with inbound and outbound travel operators, and a branding strategy. The Solimar team will also recruit and assign an MBA volunteer skilled in market access strategies in Bocas del Toro for a six-to-eight month period starting in January 2009. The volunteer will assist individual organizations and the Solimar team in gathering information and digital content on the tourism products in the region and help implement a public awareness campaign to engage businesses within the tourism cluster in applying the brand chosen for Bocas del Toro.

D. Business development, entrepreneurship, service quality, and product development Training.

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<th>Objective Achieved</th>
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<td>#4 and #5 Expand the business development capacity, entrepreneurship opportunities, service quality and product development of various groups within the cluster group as well as support the organization of small and medium-sized enterprises within the value chain</td>
<td>Conduct an initial National Geographic workshops to assess training needs for each identified groups; Develop and deliver tourism service training workshops for Destination Management Organization staff, the Water Taxi Union, hotels, restaurants, Community-based organizations, and guides.</td>
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Solimar and RARE Conservation have recently established a new initiative ‘Community Tourism Ventures,’ combining the award winning RARE experience in community training and building on Solimar’s experience in tourism private sector and destination level training. Using this new initiative, Solimar will work with AMPYME-Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises Authority, the Panamanian Tourism Institute regional offices, and the DMO staff to determine the right curriculum mix for the region, identify local participants (during the initial National Geographic workshops), and implement the required training courses.

By training local guides, hotels and restaurant staff, representatives of community-based organizations, as well as DMO staff (product packaging) Solimar will help the DMO to holistically transform Bocas del Toro into a sustainable tourism destination. It is Solimar’s goal to provide the DMO as well as tourism providers with the skills to continue supporting and growing tourism in the region beyond the life of the project.

These practical workshops will be conducted at the community level, for business managers/staff and community-based organizations identified within the cluster to help each of these groups
with their specific training needs. Solimar training courses will likely include the following but may be modified and adapted according to the need identified in the initial workshop:

**a. Destination Management Organization**

Solimar will implement a curriculum to train the DMO staff and board in the establishment, structure, operations, and programmatic implementation of a destination management company. The curriculum will outline the process for developing a business plan for the DMO. Components will include business structure, defining tourism products/services to be promoted and sold by the DMO, articulating a market and competitive analysis, operating plans and procedures, specific staffing needs, training requirements, and financial projections. Following these trainings, Solimar anticipates that the MBA volunteer will work on a daily basis with the DMO to help the staff launch and develop their products and procedures for a period to be determined but not exceeding 8 months.

**b. Product Development and Operations**

The Product Development manual will include curriculum for small business management training, guide training, tour development, as well as a variety of other hospitality training modules such as food and safety. The Business Operations curriculum will guide small business managers in the day-to-day operations of a small enterprise. Topics will include reservation/payment systems, tour procedures, customer service, communications and conflict resolution, daily/monthly/annual financial procedures, profit sharing, and staffing/training strategies. The specific mix of training components and emphasis will be determined through consultation with local stakeholders.

**c. Sales and Marketing**

The Sales and Marketing curriculum will address some of the greatest challenges of establishing enterprises – linking products to markets. Topics will include descriptions of target market segments, distribution channels such as tour operators and hotel chains, key customer relationship management (CRM) for each distribution channel, promotional materials & mechanisms such as websites and print materials, public relations such as web-based and print travel guides, and merchandising. It is anticipated that this workshop will be provided to DMO staff and select members as relevant to their specific business needs.

**Improve the environmental performance of private sector groups within the sustainable tourism cluster.**

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<td>#6. Improve the environmental performance of private groups within the sustainable tourism cluster</td>
<td>Conduct an environmental management assessment among the SME of the tourism cluster</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Conduct Environmental Management Training among about 15 identified SMEs and introduction of “best management practices”</td>
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The Rainforest Alliance team will organize workshops with a selected 15 SMMEs to learn about best environmental management practices. Prior to the workshop, the team will conduct a sustainability diagnostics of the selected SMMEs to identify their strengths and weaknesses and adapt the curriculum mix to the local context.

Through the workshop, participants will be introduced to the basics of independent, third-party certification, whereby complying with a comprehensive set of standards for environmental responsibility enables the business to better promote its product and position it within certain markets.

After the initial workshops, one site visit will be planned to help each of the tourism enterprises improve environmental practices, particularly with regard to biodiversity. The businesses will be provided with a report on their level of sustainability and practical steps to improve their overall environmental practices.

### 4. PROGRAM DELIVERABLES

The deliverables for this project will include:
(Please see annex 4.3 for more detailed deliverables and timeline)

1. Formalized sustainable tourism clusters (Destination Management Organization) with letters of commitment (members) from public and private sector groups in Bocas del Toro;
2. Business model for the DMO developed and implemented
3. Tourism packages developed (including print and web materials developed and used to access market).
4. Brand and marketing plan developed and implemented (including promotional materials)
5. Improved sustainable tourism products that respond to tourism demand
6. At least 10 private sector groups in Bocas del Toro with improved environmental performance.

### 5. CONCLUSION

Through this innovative initiative Solimar intends to work with local stakeholders to improve their connectivity within their destination as well as to outside markets, and through this process establish a forum for discussion and action on pertinent destination management issues.

Through targeted technical assistance, training, and utilizing Solimar’s experience in the tourism field and network in the tourism industry the program will help Bocas del Toro grow and market its tourism product while maintaining and enhancing the natural resource on which it is based.
6. SOLIMAR AND RAINFOREST ALLIANCE BIOS

Solimar will assign three tourism specialists over the course of this consultative process and one specialist from Rainforest Alliance. Additional local consultants and an MBA volunteer will also be utilized. (Please see Annex 4.2 for full CV’s)

Chris Seek, Program Manager and Tourism Marketing Specialist

Chris is a marketing consultant and international tourism development specialist with over nine years of experience. During the last 5 years of work in tourism development, Chris has provided marketing and consulting services to over 300 tourism MSMEs and tourism associations in over 17 countries. Chris has conducted numerous tourism assessments using the (TAP) methodology, specifically in Northern Morocco, a rural community in West Virginia, and an agriculture community in Romania. Chris holds an MBA in Marketing and Sustainable Tourism from American University and a BA in communications from Wake Forest University.

Chrystel Cancel, In-field Project Coordinator

Chrystel has over nine years of international experience in tourism and has worked in over 15 countries. As a result the consultant has built up a wide network of contacts within the travel and tourism industry and has extensive experience in program identification, design, administration and management as well as monitoring. Her expertise encompasses tourism product development, SME development, market access strategies, and investment promotion. She has acted as tourism advisor on a range of technical assistance assignments, including projects funded by the DFID, EU, UNDP, USAID, and the World Bank. She has an extensive working and living experience in Panama and worked on her last assignment with the World Bank on preparing an upcoming Sustainable Tourism Development project.

Lucia Printz, SME Training Specialist

Lucia Prinz is a business development and training specialist with over 9 years of experience. During the last 7 years, Lucia has provided SME training, operations management, and business development to multiple SMEs in Central and South America. Services included business planning, product development, operations management, training, marketing, and assessment. Lucia holds Licenciatura (MS Equivalent) in Ecotourism from Universidad del Valle in Guatemala.

Maria Damaris Chaves-Garita, Environmental Management Specialist

Damaris is a specialist in sustainable tourism with more than 10 years of experience. Most recently, she has been a Project Director at Rainforest Alliance’s Sustainable Tourism Program, and is responsible for the supervision and technical execution of projects throughout Latin America that implement best management practices and deliver trainings to help small, private or community-based tourism operators become sustainable and gain certification. Previously she was an international consultant on ecotourism, providing expertise to organizations and government agencies from around the world. Damaris has a degree in Business Administration from Universidad Hispanoamericana in San José, Costa Rica, and a Master of Science in Ecotourism from Universidad Latinoamericana de Ciencia y Tecnología. Additionally, she is an ISO Internal Auditor.