

Village-based REDD-projects: developing a concept to increase participation in REDD and spread the potential benefits more widely and more equitably among forest dependent communities in Papua New Guinea

A proposal by The Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) PNG Programme

Summary

This project will develop a concept for Village-based REDD-projects (Village REDD) that increases community participation in REDD and spreads its potential benefits widely among forest dependent communities in PNG. This concept will assess the feasibility of replicating smaller projects at culturally appropriate scales and bundling the resultant emission reductions into economically and administratively viable units.

Concepts developed for REDD in other countries do not adequately inform work in PNG because of its clan-based customary land tenure and linguistically and culturally diversity. Almost all large-scale conservation and land-use projects in PNG have failed. The Village REDD concept is based on WCS's successful community-based approach to conservation projects that operates at a finer scale and results in reduced conflict, increased information exchange and benefits shared more equitably. WCS will draw on its long history in PNG, experience in community projects, strong relationship with local NGOs and government agencies and its international team of REDD experts to address a series of key question in developing the Village REDD concept.

1. Introduction

Background to REDD in PNG

The development of a global "Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation" (REDD) mechanism presents a significant new opportunity to satisfy the development aspirations of forest-dependent communities in PNG while also reducing carbon emissions and improving food security and biodiversity conservation. The opportunities and risks of this new mechanism are yet to be well understood, however, and project concepts to address these do not yet exist. There is no national policy framework for REDD in PNG and significant challenges to its development exist. At the provincial and local government level there is limited capacity for developing REDD-related policy, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, and the means to ensure the equitable sharing of REDD benefits.

Background to land-tenure and resource-use in PNG

It is difficult to apply the concepts developed for land-use planning in other countries to PNG because of the unique land tenure system where 97% of the land is under clan-based customary ownership that is linguistically and culturally diverse. About 85% of Papua New Guineans gain a significant portion of their nutrition from wildlife, and many livelihoods depend on forests, so the likelihood of success is low for large-scale Protected Area models, and a recent history of failures of such projects in PNG supports this.

Background to the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) and REDD

As a field-based organisation with long-term commitments to landscapes and sites, WCS is well placed to develop REDD initiatives within the framework of multiple-benefit projects that contribute to avoided emissions, carbon sequestration, community economic and social benefits and biodiversity conservation. WCS has a long-term approach to developing close working relationships with governments and local organisations and this allows WCS to develop innovative approaches to protecting forests.

For example, WCS worked with the Government of Madagascar to develop one of the first REDD projects for the voluntary market, the Makira Forest Project. Initiated in 2004 with government and local partners, this project was designed to achieve REDD that maximises outcomes for local communities and biodiversity. The Makira approach is now widely recognised as a model for a REDD programme based on sub-national activities. WCS has leveraged this experience to establish pilot REDD demonstration activities in the Seima Biodiversity Conservation Area in Cambodia and with the Takana indigenous territories in Bolivia. Through such experiences, WCS now has a team of REDD experts – ranging from staff dedicated to REDD financing instruments, policy and implementation – that are available to advise our country programs. WCS is also the lead agency on a USAID-funded TransLinks initiative that aims to develop, document and provide training on best-practice examples of 'payments for environmental services' that maximise benefits to local communities and biodiversity. (For more information see www.wcsip.org and Annex 4.)

In the 1970s WCS became the first international conservation NGO to work in PNG. Today it has forged very strong links with many of the over 300 graduates of the WCS post-graduate training programme who work in the government, NGO and private sector in PNG. In early 2009 the WCS team met with over 20 different governmental and non-governmental organisations in PNG in order to identify potential partners, to assess the state of REDD in PNG and to determine how WCS can contribute to an effective, equitable and efficient national REDD framework. The project concept presented here is one of the outcomes of these meetings. For the development of a concept for a REDD demonstration project, the organisations detailed in Annex 1 have expressed an interest in collaborating with WCS and fall into the following four groups:

National government agencies – These agencies are responsible for developing a national strategy for REDD and it is essential that any concept is integrated into this framework. The Office of Climate Change and Environmental Sustainability (OCC&ES), PNG Forest Research Institute (FRI) and PNG National Forest Authority (NFA) are emerging as the important national agencies in PNG and all have recently met with and expressed an interest in partnering with WCS.

Provincial governments – provincial governments play a pivotal role in developing the Village REDD concept, and would have a major role in implementing any resultant demonstration projects. WCS works close with the New Ireland Provincial Government - recently assisting it in drafting Local Level Government environmental laws - and with other civil society groups is currently negotiating an MOU for environmental work with the Manus Provincial Government (Annex 2).

National NGOs – In working closely with landowners and local level government, national NGOs are an important part of developing any REDD concept and its ultimate implementation and success. WCS helped establish the first and now largest PNG conservation NGO, the Research and Conservation Foundation (RCF), and has since 1986 worked in close partnership with it. Last year WCS helped establish the Institute for Biological Research, which is PNG's premier biological research and training NGO, staffed by eight ex-WCS staff members with overseas masters degrees. In addition, WCS has recently met with a number of local NGOs such as The Village Development Trust, Partners with Melanesians and The Bismarck Ramu Group, all of which are interested in working with WCS on REDD and community-focussed projects.

International NGOs – In February 2009, the Clinton Climate Initiative (CCI) approached WCS to partner in REDD demonstration activities in PNG. In cooperation with the WCS international expertise in REDD and PNG expertise in community-based projects, CCI will provide technical advice and assistance with national level negotiations in concept development. In Manus, WCS is partnering with other international (and local) NGOs to initiate a major collaboration with provincial and local level government (see MOU in Annex 2).

2. Concept Overview

The aim of this project is to develop a concept for Village-based REDD-projects (Village REDD) that increases community participation in REDD and spreads its potential benefits widely among forest dependent communities in PNG. This concept will assess the feasibility of replicating smaller projects at culturally appropriate scales, such as at the clan and village level, and bundling the resultant emission reductions into economically and administratively viable units.

Project outputs

The main output from this proposal will be a concept document for Village-based REDD-projects in PNG. This document will contain sections on: **Analysis and Lessons Learned** (analysis of data collected and partner discussions, a literature review of lessons learned from past land-use projects in PNG, a review of the current status of REDD policy in PNG and how the concept fits with this and can inform it); **Outline of a Demonstration Project** (a detailed process and description of the Village REDD concept and potential demonstration projects); **An implementation Plan** (detailing a Log-frame, roles of stakeholders and the strengthening they require, financial arrangements and risk assessment); **Recommendations** for REDD policy and how the Village REDD concept can inform it.

Project Activities

The funds sought in this proposal will be used to collect and analyse data, for discussions and facilitation among stakeholders and for input from local partners and international experts to develop a concept for Village REDD projects. WCS has chosen New Ireland and Manus Provinces as sites to develop the concept because they have suffered the highest rates of deforestation and degradation in PNG and due to pre-existing strong relationships between WCS and the provincial governments and local civil society groups. For example, in 2009 with our consultant environmental lawyer, Almah Tararia, WCS worked closely with the New Ireland Provincial Government to draft environmental law for Local Level Government. In Manus Province WCS is part of the collaboration of NGOs that offer technical support to the province (Annex 2).

Although the implementation of any projects that result from the model Village REDD concept in the short-term may require organisations with expertise like WCS, the concept will be developed for provinces to implement in partnership with landowners and local NGOs.

Key features of the concept include:

- The development of strong partnerships between REDD experienced organizations such as WCS, local and national governments and local NGO
- At the project level, identifying the most appropriate existing social institutions for Village REDD projects while determining where these need support and how best to strengthen them

- Determining the administrative capacity of provinces to implement and monitor Village REDD projects, the areas where their capacity needs to be strengthened, and what policy instruments are needed and how these can be linked to national strategy and policy
- Investigate the relative contributions of drivers of deforestation and degradation at the village level and what interventions will address these drivers and result in additionality and permanence
- Determine the potential areas of leakage in Village REDD projects at both the project and provincial scales and how these can be mitigated
- Establish how widely-held and variable attitudes are towards the potential costs/benefits of Village REDD projects within and among social groups
- Estimate the variability of standing stocks of carbon at project sites (to estimate sampling effort) while testing monitoring methods that are sensitive enough to measure meaningful changes
- Determine the support and strengthening needed at project and provincial level for robust and replicable monitoring and how this could be fed into a national monitoring database
- Estimate the existing benefits from forest resources (incl. food security, livelihood, ecosystem services and biodiversity conservation) and how Village REDD projects could impact on these
- Examine the existing customary land tenure structures and the social institutions and mechanisms used to settle disputes to best legitimize tenure to ensure permanence and reduce conflict
- Determine the level of understanding of Climate Change and REDD needed for the successful implementation of Village REDD projects, the level that currently exists and the best ways to address any lack of understanding
- Determine what form of benefits villagers and provincial governments expect from Village REDD projects and if these are realistic
- Examine how social cohesion/capital and information exchange among stakeholders at various social levels (District, ward, village clan) inform project interventions

Why a village or clan level approach to REDD is needed in PNG

Almost all large-scale conservation and land-use projects in PNG have failed to achieve their stated objectives, and this has been particularly true for those attempting to offer alternatives to industrial-scale logging, a situation that is likely in REDD projects. These projects fail because they operate in a complex socio-cultural environment with many small autonomous landowner (social) groups that do not work well together. In this context, links between conservation and economic development are difficult to demonstrate, project objectives have not reflected local concerns and the development aspirations of communities have not been met. By operating a finer scale than the whole-landscape approach that has been tried and has failed in PNG, conflict will be reduced, information will be exchanged more readily and benefits shared more equitably.

Lessons have been learned but concepts for REDD projects incorporating these do not exist

The success of land-use and conservation projects in PNG is inextricably linked to community empowerment and ownership. A key role of any project intervention is to help communities reach consensus, organize themselves, gain the knowledge and confidence to make their own decisions, and then implement and enforce those decisions. In PNG, this is almost impossible to achieve in large projects with many villages and more than one linguistic group. WCS has been successful in the marine realm in working at the village level to build clusters of protected areas in a matrix of sustainable harvests that uses traditional practice blended with WCS science. Replicating this demonstrably successful approach on land is most likely to produce successful REDD projects that are permanent, additional, and deliver genuine emissions reductions and co-benefits like biodiversity conservation and food security.

3. Specific areas of investigation

Governance and capacity limitations for Implementing Village REDD projects

Governance and capacity of social institutions in villages

Successful Village REDD projects will require effective social institutions at the project level. Using existing social institutions is the most parsimonious and ethical approach, but the long-term success of Village REDD projects is contingent on these institutions having the capacity and resilience to fulfil their roles. To investigate social institutions in villages WCS will address the following questions:

1. What are the most appropriate existing social institutions through which REDD projects could be initiated and managed at the village/clan level?
2. Do these institutions enable gender and social inclusion?
3. In which areas do these social institutions need support and how best can they be strengthened?

Limitations in provincial administrations

Given economies of scale will require multiple Village REDD projects at the provincial level, the capacity of administrations may be a limiting factor for implementation and monitoring of projects. In order to understand this we will address the following:

1. Do provinces contain the administrative capacity to implement and monitor multiple Village REDD projects?
2. Where they do not, in what areas and in which ways can this capacity be strengthened?
3. What provincial policy instruments are needed to enable Village REDD projects and how can this be linked to national strategy and policy?

Identifying the drivers of deforestation and degradation at the village level

Although recent research has identified the drivers of deforestation and degradation at the national and provincial levels in PNG, we still do not understand their relative contributions and interactions at the project scale. If village REDD project are to succeed we must answer the following questions:

1. What are the relative contributions and interactions of drivers of deforestation and degradation as the village/project level?
2. What interventions based on avoided deforestation and payments for carbon will best address these drivers and result in additionality?
3. What interventions (in addition to payments for carbon) will address these drivers and result in sustainable forest management and hence additionality (e.g. fuelwood plantings, changes in crop rotations, decreased burning frequency or intensity)?

Identifying and minimising potential leakage in Village REDD projects

At the village and provincial level a poor understanding of the concept of leakage offers a significant risk that projects will not result in net reductions in emissions. Leakage has been common in biodiversity conservation projects in PNG at both these scales (e.g. density of logging, gardening or hunting drops in conservation areas but increases in adjacent lands). To some extent a better understanding of the drivers of deforestation and degradation at these scales will help reduce leakage (see above), but a more detail analysis is required and will be gained by addressing the following question:

1. What are the potential areas of leakage in REDD projects at the village and provincial scales and how could these be best addressed and mitigated?

Ensuring permanence in Village REDD projects

Many land-use and conservation projects in PNG in the recent past have failed when significant opportunity costs and access restrictions have been incurred by local people; there is a reoccurring problem of permanence in land-use projects in PNG. In order to ensure that Village REDD projects do not suffer the same failures, the following questions must be answered:

1. What level of opportunity cost for what level of return is likely to be acceptable to local people in Village REDD projects?
2. How widely-held and variable are attitudes towards potential costs/benefits of Village REDD projects within and among social groups at projects scales (clans, villages, wards; i.e. attitudes either held by small but powerful minorities or highly variable increase risks to permanence)
3. How can alternative sustainable land-use generate an acceptable income to communities?

Means to ensure emissions reductions are genuine from Village REDD projects

The Village REDD projects envisaged in this proposal will be smaller (i.e. 1,000s-10,000s ha) than most projects being proposed internationally (i.e. 10,000s-100,000,000s ha). If economies of scale are to be reached to make the Village REDD approach economically and administratively feasible, robust, accurate and cost-effective methods for inventory and monitoring will be needed. We will investigate these methods by addressing the following questions:

1. How variable are standing stocks of carbon at project sites and therefore what sampling effort is required for precise and accurate estimates of baselines?
2. What methods and sampling effort are required for monitoring to be sensitive enough to measure meaningful changes in carbon stocks through time?
3. Who at the village and provincial level can effectively monitor standing stocks of carbon and how could this monitoring feed into a national monitoring database?
4. What support and strengthening is needed for village and provincial monitoring in order for it to be robust and replicable?

The potential for co-benefits of Village REDD projects

There are significant opportunities for co-benefits such as food security and biodiversity conservation from Village REDD projects. As with carbon stocks, data for baseline values of these co-benefits are required and predictions on how projects will impact on them are needed.

1. What are the existing benefits local people derive from forest resources, including food security and livelihoods, and how would a Village REDD project impact on these?

2. What biodiversity values can be potentially protected by Village REDD projects and how can these be assessed and monitored?

Land tenure and Village REDD projects

As with any land-use project, secure land tenure that minimises the likelihood of future disputes and robust mechanisms to settle disputes that arise are the foundation on which all Village REDD projects must be built. To achieve this requires understanding of the following:

1. What are the existing customary land tenure structures within the two pilot provinces?
2. What social institutions or mechanisms exist at project scale to settle disputes over land tenure and can these be used as a basis to address this issue in Village REDD projects?
3. By what mechanisms can customary land tenure best be legitimised to ensure permanence for investors and reduce the potential for conflict in Village REDD projects?

Risks to Village REDD projects

Lack of understanding of climate change and unrealistic expectations from Village REDD projects

A recent series of semi-directive interviews conducted by WCS with over 20 local NGOs, national government agencies and institutions, international NGOs and Provincial Administrations in PNG revealed a profound lack of understanding of Climate Change and REDD within these organisations. In addition, WCS information exchange in villages and monitoring of popular media in PNG reveals not only a similar lack of understanding but also unrealistic expectations of REDD and the benefits such projects will produce. These significant risks to Village REDD projects will be investigated by asking the following questions:

1. What level of understanding of Climate Change and REDD is needed by local people and provincial governments for the successful implementation of Village REDD projects?
2. What are the best ways to address any lack of understanding at the two scales?
3. What level of support and motivation exists among village people for Village REDD projects?

Inability to reduce poverty and unrealistic expectations from Village REDD projects

Conservation and land-use projects have failed in PNG in the past because they have not achieved the poverty reduction and development aspirations of local people. This risk to Village REDD projects will be investigated by the following:

1. What expectations of benefits from potential Village REDD projects exist among village people and provincial governments and are these realistic?
2. What form of benefits do village people want from potential Village REDD projects (e.g. infrastructure development, services, cash payments)?
3. How best can potential revenue from Village REDD projects be disbursed equitably?

Potential for conflict among local social groups and between provincial and local interests

Many failures of land-use and conservation projects in PNG can be attributed to conflict among social groups at project sites, and between local groups and project implementers. If such mistakes are to be avoided in REDD projects, not only do we need to understand the appropriate social scale for project interventions, but we must determine the best methods to identify these.

1. How much social cohesion/capital exists at local levels (District, ward, village and clan) and how do these inform the level at which project interventions should be targeted?
2. What methods can best identify the appropriate social scale for project interventions?
3. At what local levels do provinces operate most effectively with their constituents (District, ward, village and clan) and are these existing channels for information exchange sufficient for the implementation of Village REDD projects?
4. If existing channels and scales of information exchange between local people and provincial administrations are insufficient for implementation of Village REDD projects, how can these be strengthened?

4. Project implementation

Developing the Village REDD project concept will be undertaken by partnering with national institutions, local NGOs and provincial governments (listed in Annex 1). This will be achieved through a participatory and multi-stakeholder approach that uses a range of standard research techniques including: facilitated workshops; socio-economic surveys, focus groups and key informant interviews in villages; structured and semi-structured interviews; consultancies (PNG Environmental Lawyer Imah Tararia); biological field inventory; literature review; and WCS in-house peer and expert review.

5. Budget

Funds for this concept development are for the process of research, data analysis, discussion and facilitation. Principal costs relate to staff time, travel, meetings, field trips and some operational costs. A full budget is shown at Annex 3, including co-funding from WCS.

Contact: Ross Sinclair PhD, Director, Wildlife Conservation Society Papua New Guinea Programme
P: (675) 732-3494 F: (675) 732-3180 E: rsinclair@wcs.org

Annexes

- Annex 1: Organisations partnering with WCS and their roles in the concept development
- Annex 2: MOU between Manus Provincial Administration and the Civil Society Partnership Team
- Annex 3: Proposed Budget
- Annex 4: WCS Charter (Attached electronically)
- Annex 5: WCS Audited Financial Statement (Attached electronically)
- Annex 6: WCS Annual Report (Attached electronically)
- Annex 7: WCS Global Conservation Strategy 2007-2016 (Attached electronically)

Annex 1: Organisations that have expressed interest in partnering with WCS and their roles in the concept development

Partner organisation/authority	Role in REDD concept development
Office of Climate Change and Environmental Sustainability (OCC&ES)	National REDD framework development in cooperation with governmental departments, NGOs and other stakeholders that conduct REDD demonstration activities
Forest Research Institute (FRI)	National carbon modelling, accounting and monitoring framework in accordance with IPCC in cooperation with NGOs with technical expertise
National Forest Authority (NFA)	Development of a national REDD framework in cooperation with different stakeholders
Clinton Climate Initiative (CCI)	Facilitator and fundraiser of REDD demonstration activities Technical expertise in carbon modelling and accounting using Australia's National Carbon Accounting as a platform for the development of forest carbon monitoring systems
Research and Conservation Foundation (RCF)	Education and awareness of local population on climate change, REDD and environmental sustainability
Village Development Trust (VDT) Bismarck Ramu Group (BRG) Partners with Melanesians (PwM)	Promoting of self-reliance and empowerment in communities, alternative sustainable land-use (eco-forestry, integrated conservation), Training, education and advocacy
Provincial Administration (New Ireland and Manus)	Provincial and Local Level Government REDD framework development in cooperation with communities, local NGOs and other stakeholders Administer some REDD projects Local accounting and monitoring.
Manus Environment & Climate Change Committee	Determine key priorities for environmentally sustainable development Coordinate the effective delivery of Climate Change Mitigation initiatives Coordinate the development of conservation and managed areas

Annex 2: MOU between Manus Provincial Administration and The Civil Society Partnership Team

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A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Manus Provincial Administration (MPA) and 'The Civil Society Partnership Team' comprising The Nature Conservancy (TNC), World Wide Fund For Nature (WWF), Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), Locally Managed Marine Areas (LMMA), Manus Civil Society Forum (MCSF) on the implementation and effective delivery of disaster, ecological management and sustainable environment development plan for Manus Province, 2006 – 2015

[The following are extracts from the draft MOU relating to is Climate Change and REDD only]

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

This MOU is between Manus Provincial Administration and The combined Manus Civil Society Partnership Team. It is intended to provide a framework and sets out, in broad terms areas of cooperation and agreed mechanisms to facilitate the processes and activities pursuant to the development and implementation of the ecological management and environmental sustainability components of the Ten Year Provincial Development Plans for 2006 - 2015...

OBJECTIVES/ GOALS

The Manus Provincial Administration and The Manus Civil Society Partnership desire to work together to:

- ...
- Strengthen the Provincial Administration and relevant District and LLG Administrations where necessary, and as stated in this MOU, to fulfill their specific social, ecologically and environmental roles and responsibilities related to ecological and environmental sustainability of the provincial and LLG plans for 2006 - 2015
- Strengthen the relevant administration staff's capacity to fulfill their roles per the charter and TOR related to disaster, ecological management and environmental sustainability programs and projects
- Support the provincial and relevant district and LLG Administrations, to implement the Wards and LLG Development Plans, by incorporating ecologically, socially, economically and environmentally sustainable considerations as an integral part of their 5-years and 10 years development plans.
- Strengthen and facilitate the Manus Environment & Climate Change Committee (MECCC) in implementing its TOR related to Sustainable Development programs and projects of Manus Province.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PARTIES

...

The Civil Society Partnership Team's Responsibilities

Subject to available funding and resources, the Civil Society Partnership Team will:

1. Provide technical assistance and support to DA through MPA to effectively incorporate environmental and sustainability considerations including but not limited to;
 - a) Legal Frameworks
 - i. Provide guidance regarding the development of Provincial Laws to enable the effective protection and management of forests
 - ii. Provide guidance regarding the protection and management of community managed areas jointly with LLG's under the Organic Conservation Law (for both terrestrial and marine areas)
 - b) Training
 - i. Facilitate assessment of Institutional capacity needs (ISA) of parties to this MOU
 - ii. Community based Planning Process, Land Use Management Plans and Agreements, Marine Management Areas and Agreements
 - iii. Monitoring and Reporting (for both terrestrial and marine)
 - iv. Conservation Action Planning
 - v. Project Management
 - vi. Biological research
 - c) Manus Environment & Climate Change Committee (MECCC) - to help strengthen, coordinate, communicate and collaborate regarding disaster, environmental and ecological management considerations for the Province
 - i. Assist with the establishment and development of the MECCC
 - ii. Assist with supporting the Chairman of the MECCC
 - iii. Assist the MECCC steering committee with development of agendas, projects and work plans as required
 - iv. Provide comments and feedback on the conservation, environment, ecology and sustainable development initiatives and components of Manus Provincial Plan

- v. Assist the MECCC by providing advice on and interpretation of international and national treaties and policy regarding climate change and conservation of biodiversity
- d) Technical Support
 - i. Provide technical support with Geographical Information Systems, in particular data, analyses and mapping to help support and inform environmental and sustainability decisions
 - ii. Provide technical and GIS support for climate change adaptation and mitigation initiatives (eg REDD) and sea level rise
 - iii. Provide technical assistance and support on data collection, formulation and documentation in regard to monitoring and evaluation
 - iv. Provide technical support in research and biological monitoring to help support and inform environmental and sustainability decisions
- e) Other Support
 - i. Assist with the establishment of a CSO Forum to provide a voice for the people and better communication and consultation with Provincial and the twelve (12) LLGs Administration

Joint Responsibilities of the Parties

- a) Establish communication and coordination procedures, including but not limited to:
 - i. Undertake joint strategic planning and combine work plan related to the implementation of Provincial Sustainable Development Plan for 2006 – 2015 for Manus Province
 - ii. Document the formulation and development processes, activities and lessons learnt for the benefits of wards and LLGs for the Province
 - iii. Training of village recorders in relevant wards, LLG and district where necessary
 - iv. Support with the production of maps for strategic land use planning
 - v. Support with logistics (accommodation, transport, fuel food and allowance) when necessary with task related to the implementation of the Disaster, Ecology and Environmental Sustainable Development Plan for the Province.
 - vi. To Strengthen Partnership Capacity by providing advisory role and coordination to the Manus Environment & Climate Change Committee (MECCC).
 - vii. Provide an avenue of dissemination of information to other CSO partners, the twelve (12) LLGs, Partner Industries and Provincial Administration of Manus Province.
 - viii. The cost of support to the MECCC should be proportionally shared by all parties of this MOU

Annex 3: Proposed Budget