



Short Term Assignment

Cave Management Cultural Heritage Expert

BELIZE

2023-2024

Opportunity

The U.S. Department of the Interior's (DOI) International Technical Assistance Program (ITAP) is seeking expertise in the archeological and cultural heritage aspects of natural cavern systems in Belize.

Needed areas of expertise include:

- Collaborate with in-country counterparts on cave system management, cultural archaeology, and tourism.
- Advise experts in interpretive program planning, sign and display design, environmental education, and public outreach strategy development.
- Knowledge of Maya culture and history, and ability to gather and analyze information for cultural resource management and protection.
- Gather and analyze information pertinent to cultural resources and park planning from a wide variety of sources including published materials, interviews with field personnel and subject matter experts, field observations, and specific studies.
- Develop goals, objectives and plans to direct the long-range protection and management of cultural resources.
- Contribute to and review archeological reports.

BACKGROUND

DOI-ITAP collaborates with the governments, civil society and local communities in foreign countries on subjects of Departmental expertise on a reimbursable basis (i.e., without appropriated funds), operating across the globe in partnership primarily with the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the State Department. DOI-ITAP has managed multi-partner projects in over 50 countries since 1995.

The Selva Maya is a trinational forest located in Guatemala, Belize, and Mexico, and it is renowned

as the largest tropical forest north of the Amazon. This area boasts incredible biodiversity and is home to numerous ancient Maya sites. The Selva Maya Project aims to strike a balance between conservation efforts and providing sustainable livelihoods for the rural communities residing in the region. DOI-ITAP in collaboration with in-country implementing partners, is working to enhance protected area management, environmental governance, and community engagement across all three countries.

In Belize, the Selva Maya Project works in partnership with Friends for Conservation and Development (FCD) to protect the natural and cultural heritage of the region. The project focuses on cross-border species protection, community-led tourism, and economic alternatives. It facilitates the sharing of conservation practices to combat poaching, protect ecosystems from wildfires and incursions, reach indigenous and youth leaders on environmental conservation and sustainable use of natural resources, . Through these efforts, the Selva Maya Project contributes to preserving biodiversity, supporting local communities, and promoting sustainable tourism in Belize.

FCD, one of Belize's leading environmental non-governmental organizations, is dedicated to community outreach and environmental education, environmental protection, and biological research and monitoring. In 2007, FCD signed an agreement with Belize's Ministry of Forestry, Fisheries, Environment and Sustainable Development (MFFSD) to co-manage the Chiquibul National Park, a large wilderness area in western Belize.

Chiquibul National Park is located within the Maya Mountains and is surrounded by multiple forest and reserves, wildlife sanctuaries, archaeological monuments and other protected areas-

FCD also has a separate management agreement with Belize's Institute of Archaeology for administration of the Chiquibul Cave System in 2008. The Chiquibul Cave System is the longest and largest presently known cave system in the Central American Region. To date a total of 55 km of cave passages have been mapped. Most of the cave's network is found within the Chiquibul National Park in west central Belize and extends into eastern Guatemala. Findings in these caves have included the remains of an extinct bear, bat skeletons frozen in time and Maya relics such as ancient pots and modified platforms. The system also is known to comprise of over 60 sinkholes. In the last seven years, with technical assistance from DOI-ITAP, the FCD Karst Management Unit (KMU) has conducted inventories of the CCS region. Their findings demonstrate the richness of the Maya domain across the landscape; however, with the impending completion of road construction to Caracol, there is an urgent need to prepare for cave tourism as it is expected to surge in demand, highlighting the importance of proactive measures to ensure the sustainable management and preservation of these unique underground ecosystems.

ASSIGNMENT

To expand upon previous efforts, DOI-ITAP will engage with FCD to help plan, design and document the management of the Chiquibul Cave System, promote the conservation of cultural targets and artifacts, the development of ecotourism opportunities, and capacity building to FCD's KMU through mentoring and technical assistance.

To do so, DOI-ITAP will select and guide small DOI teams (1-3 person teams) of technical experts to travel and work in Belize, on a short-term basis, to continue building capacity within the KMU to help them plan and design the management of these specific resources. The teams will work side by side with FCD counterparts on the following areas within the CCS:

- Collate and review previous cavern work and studies.
- Cave management and tourism management practices and methodologies.
- Surveying and mapping techniques and resource inventorying.
- Analyze data gathering systems used and improve methodologies.
- World Heritage designation knowledge and guidance.
- Visitor carrying capacity that addresses vulnerable and sensitive areas.
- Visitor education and interpretation.
- Visitor infrastructure inside and outside the caverns.
- Cultural artifact/target identification and cataloging.
- Any other necessary data collection, validation, and analysis; and
- CCS Management Plan effectiveness review and updating.

These new efforts are intended to strengthen FCD's capacity to manage the CCS in areas of resource inventorying and tourism development within the Chiquibul areas.

SCHEDULE

Applications will be accepted immediately and on a rolling basis throughout the life of this project, from which teams will be assembled as needed.

Assignments are expected to include:

- Approximately 1 week of research time and team preparation up front, that can be flexibly scheduled around regular work duties.
- Approximately 1-2 weeks travel in country.
- Approximately 1 week of post trip time will be required to consolidate the information collected into a report.

Project implementation will start in early 2024 and expected to continue beyond 2025.

PRE- AND POST-TRIP DUTIES

All travel and in-country logistics will be handled by DOI-ITAP and/or our in-country counterpart. Background material and briefings will be provided to the selected individuals prior to departure. The selected individual(s) will be expected to work in collaboration with DOI-ITAP project managers, FCD, and U.S. Embassy staff on the preparation and follow-up over phone and email to discuss technical aspects of the project.

NPS travelers must also submit this report to their Office of International Affairs. Overseas travel may be required for this assignment. All travel and in-country logistics will be handled by DOI-ITAP and/or our in-country counterpart. DOI-ITAP team members will be provided with background and orientation materials.

The selected individuals will be expected to work in collaboration with DOI-ITAP project managers on the preparation of materials and follow-up over phone and email to discuss technical aspects of the project. Work will be performed in virtual settings. Team members will use their own computers to generate documents, contribute material to a shared database, and perform other assignments, as requested.

Three weeks following any travel, the team will provide DOI-ITAP managers a brief report of trip events, evaluations made, and recommendations for future actions. NPS and USGS travelers will also submit this report to their respective Offices of International Affairs/Programs.

COSTS

DOI-ITAP will cover all travel costs associated with this assignment (round-trip airfare, lodging, meals, medical insurance, immunizations, per diem, etc.). The salaries of the team members, however, will be paid by their employing DOI agency for the duration of the international assignment, including pre- and post-trip obligation.

Stipends, or other forms of compensation, for retiree or non-current DOI candidates is very limited and possibly available, on a case-by-case basis. Please note that travel expenses will NOT count against Bureau travel ceilings.

APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

The purpose of this recruitment is to establish one or more specialists who will provide technical assistance for the management and protection of natural cavern systems.

Competitive applicants for this assignment will:

- Gather and analyze information pertinent to cultural resources and park planning from a wide variety of sources including published materials, interviews with field personnel and subject matter experts, field observations, and specific studies.
- Develop goals, objectives and plans to direct the long-range protection and management of cultural resources.
- Contribute to and review archeological reports.
- Knowledge of the Maya culture and history.
- Demonstrated experience in interpretive program planning and design, sign and display design, environmental education, and/or public outreach strategy development on cultural heritage within cave systems.
- Training experience in interpretation preferred.

- Ability to work effectively with professionals from diverse cultural backgrounds.
- Intermediate or greater proficiency in Spanish.
- Previous international experience with protected areas preferred.
- Skills in public engagement and outreach, interpretive planning, interpretive writing, and layout and design are desired.
- Demonstrate advanced technical expertise in one or more of the areas listed;
- Have demonstrated experience in project development with stakeholder input;
- Have experience collaborating with a multi-disciplinary team;
- Demonstrate some experience or knowledge of international conservation, preferably in the Latin America region;
- Preference given to current or retired employee of DOI. Employees and retirees of other agencies are also encouraged to apply;

Selected candidates may be required to provide a physician-signed letter indicating fitness for duty. If you are selected for this assignment, you will be responsible for obtaining your supervisor's approval to participate in this program, as well as additional approvals up your supervisory chain of command as necessary (see below).

HOW TO APPLY

If you are with FWS OLE, please do not respond directly to this recruitment. FWS OLE recruitment for this position is being handled through FWS OLE HQ

Persons interested in being considered for this international assignment must:

- Send a resume and cover letter summarizing direct, relevant work experience, related to the skills listed under application requirements. Please submit to Mariam Tahir (mariam_tahir@ios.doi.gov) and Cynthia Perera (cynthia_perera@ios.doi.gov) with the subject: "Cavern and Cultural Management – Belize"
 - Please send cover letter and resume as one PDF document with the file name "FULL NAME_BUREAU_JOB TITLE"
 - If your supervisor has already given approval, please indicate this in your cover letter.

Applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis; there is no deadline for applications.

Bureau	Contact	Email	Telephone
BIA	Joaquin Gallegos	joaquin_gallegos@ios.doi.gov	
BLM	David Howell	dohowell@blm.gov	503-884-6626
BOR	Omero Martinez	omartinez@usbr.gov	202-513-0557
BOR	Jeff Morris	jmorris@usbr.gov	303-445-3373
FWS	Lillian Moore	lillian_moore@fws.gov	703-358-2587
BSEE	Julie Fleming	julie.fleming@bsee.gov	202-208-3827
NPS	Rudy D'Alessandro	rudy_dalessandro@nps.gov	202-354-1805
BOEM	Emily Lindow	emily.lindow@boem.gov	202-513-0825
OSMRE	Sterling Rideout	srideout@osmre.gov	202-208-2868
USGS	Kevin Kunkel	kkunkel@usgs.gov	703-648-6206
ONRR	Chris Mentasti	chris.mentasti@onrr.gov	202-513-0614
OS	Tabitha Anderson	tabitha_anderson@ios.doi.gov	202-208-3624
OWF	Amy Krause	amy_krause@ios.doi.gov	202-570-2233
DOI Passports and Visas	Tiffany Cephas	passports@ios.doi.gov	202-208-5292
DOI Passports and Visas	Crystal Franklin	passports@ios.doi.gov	202-208-5292

Please note that ITAP travel does not require use of bureau charge cards and will not count towards bureau ‘travel caps’.

APPLICATION PROCESS

A short list of candidates will be interviewed via MS Teams. All candidates will be notified of the results of the selection process by email. **The position is open to all applicants that meet the stated requirements. If applicants do not receive an email acknowledgement of receipt of their application, please inquire with the Project Manager listed above.**

QUESTIONS: Please contact the Latin America and the Caribbean Program at DOI ITAP:

Project Manager, Mariam Tahir, mariam_tahir@ios.doi.gov

Team Lead, Cynthia Perera, cynthia_perera@ios.doi.gov