

Access Criteria for an NPO and for a Nature Area.

Version 2, 2025

Introduction

The UON Foundation aims to unlock an additional long-term income stream for collaborating nature organizations in the UON Trust Framework, so that they can expand their protected nature areas and bring additional areas of nature under protection while sustaining their operations.

As part of the UON Trust Framework and Rulebook, we have defined Access Criteria for nature protection organizations that want to participate in the operating model as a Nature Protection Organization (NPO).

In addition, as part of the UON Trust Framework and Rulebook, we have defined Criteria for areas of nature protected by an NPO that can be onboarded in our operating model as a Nature Area.

The criteria defined are in line with IUCN's Protected Area Categories, recognized by international bodies such as the United Nations and by many national governments as the global criteria for defining and recording protected areas, and as such are increasingly being incorporated in legislation.

Definitions

- **Grid:** a planetary raster of square units of 3 x 3 meter as defined by What3Words Limited where each unit's location is defined by a unique geocode of three (3) words.
- **Nature Area:** a designated geographical area of Protected Nature that is the subject of our collaboration as per a Project Agreement and onboarded and in the Uon.Store;
- **NPO, Nature Protection Organization:** NPO is a role within the UON operating model for organizations that actively conserve, protect, or restore vast terrestrial or marine areas, entered by signing the UON Framework Agreement.
- **Permitted Use:** the ways to use a Nature Area as permitted by the Rulebook;
- **Protected Nature:** any area of nature to which you or any of your local partners have gained sufficient rights and/or permits (e.g. ownership, lease rights, easements, concessions, ancestral rights) to control the use of such area or for which you have binding legal options to gain such controlling rights with the aim to Sustainably Protect it;
- **Reserve:** the geographical perimeter(s) within a Nature Area that Uon are actively Issued upon in the Uon.Store;
- **Rulebook:** the latest version of the UON's self-imposed set of rules and regulations, the current version of which is available upon request;
- **Sustainably Protect:** to protect for an extensive period of time and without causing irreversible harm to the ecosystem whilst allowing for Permitted Use.
- **Trust Framework:** a collaborative business model governed by a Rulebook that describes the operating model and the roles and responsibilities, and rights and obligations for all participants.
- **Unit of Nature:** a square plot of Sustainably Protected natural Earth surface, either 1 m² of land or 9 m² of sea, within the Grid applied to a Nature Area.

- **Uon:** a unique digital proof of protection of a Unit of Nature registered in the Uon.Store, into which at least the name of the designer, the name of the responsible NPO, the name of the Nature Area, the name of the sponsor/donor, the location, a timestamp, and an image are immutably embedded, uniquely pertaining to the Unit of Nature, as defined by us in accordance with the Rulebook.
- **UON Foundation, UON, or Union of Nature:** Stichting Union of Nature Foundation, the not-for-profit foundation established in Amsterdam, NL, with Chamber of Commerce number 75829525, is a worldwide group of collaborating nature protection organizations
- **Uon.Store:** our system that we use to administer participating NPOs, their Nature Areas, the Units of nature therein, and to issue Uon, register Uon Issued and the holders thereof, all in accordance with the Rulebook, and make this information accessible to you;

Criteria for an NPO

An NPO's responsibility is to Sustainably Protect the Nature Area. The NPO must be able to scale to accelerate nature protection. 'Sustainably' meaning both 'for a long term' and 'without doing harm'.

1. Legal and Governance

An NPO must:

- 1.1 be registered as an independent not-for-profit organization (e.g. ANBI, 501(c)(3), or equivalent) and recognized as such by the local competent authority based on the location of the organization's headquarters;
- 1.2 have the protection and conservation of nature and biodiversity as its primary statutory purpose as evidenced in its founding documents (e.g., articles of incorporation, bylaws, or equivalent).
- 1.3 exist for at least 3 years with a proven track record in nature conservation, protection, restoration, or regeneration;
- 1.4 have an independent board;
- 1.5 submit reports on the organization's work and the Nature Area at least once a year.

2. Nature Conservation Capacity

An NPO must:

- 2.1 hold records of at least 2 years experience in protection, conservation, and/or regeneration fieldwork activities with more than 100 hectares of nature owned/stewarded by the NPO, its subsidiaries, or local partners;
- 2.2 have at least 2 reports available upon request from its past years and be capable of submitting quarterly reports in a timely and accurate manner upon request.

3. Nature Conservation Scalability

To jumpstart the operating model, NPOs onboard existing protected areas of nature as a Nature Area and use the proceeds from the UON operating model to protect new areas of nature on a 1-on-1 basis.

An NPO must:



- 3.1 match every for every Uon Issued in your Reserve(s) with either 1 m² of new terrestrial Protected Nature or 9 m² of new marine Protected Nature on a 1-for-1 basis, at some time in the future, somewhere (**Matching Obligation**).

If fulfilling the Matching Obligation is not possible (e.g. no new nature area created) while the Units of Nature in your Reserve run out, yet the Reserve does not cover the entire Nature Area, then an NPO must enlarge their Reserve.

- 3.2 fulfill their Matching Obligation at any time simply by stating that *"UON contributed to X m² in our new protected nature area Y."*, *"X m² of our new protected nature area Y was contributed to by UON."*, or *"X m² of our new nature area Y were made possible by UON."* in their public communications about such nature area.

Fulfilling your Matching Obligation is also possible together with another NPO that has protected a new area of nature.

4. Communication Capacity

An NPO must:

- 4.1 manage a profile on Uon.Earth, uploading at least 2 content 'cards' per week of which at least 1 card in an area 'deck';
- 4.2 produce communications and marketing materials in line with UON Foundation and Uon.Earth in English;
- 4.3 have at least 1 full-time employee assigned to act as a (part-time) marketing and communications manager;
- 4.4 be willing to produce or source high-quality visual materials, when the situation requires, within a limited timeframe.

Criteria for a Nature Area

5. Location

A Nature Area must:

- 5.1 be located in a 'natural region'. Based on the general agreement on the definition of 'nature' and 'natural', UON defines 'nature' and 'natural region' as the places where the landscape has not been significantly altered by human intervention, or which persist despite human intervention. E.g. an urban green space, a zoo, or a tree farm are not eligible to become a Nature Area.

6. Size

A Reserve must:

- 6.1 span at least 1,000,000 Units of Nature.

7. Ownership & Duration

The NPO must:

- 7.1 present evidence that the organization or its subsidiaries are actively in hold of a certain type of



land/marine/coastal tenure that ensures governance and protection of the Nature Area for at least an estimated 20 years, preferably longer.

- 7.2 If in the Reserve restoration/regeneration/tree planting methods are applied, it must have been in the process of being regreened/restored/regenerated for at least 2 years, preferably longer.

8. Scalability

The NPO should:

- 8.1 have the potential to expand the agreed Reserve within the Nature Area upon request.

9. Conservation Value

The NPO must:

- 9.1 monitor and measure its impact within the Nature Area to prove that it positively contributes to the following:
- a) preserve, conserve, or restore biodiversity and ecosystem;
 - b) mitigate climate change by presenting a reliable estimate of the carbon storage and sequestration capacity;
 - c) experiment and showcase innovative protection and/or conservation methodologies.

10. Community Engagement

The NPO must:

- 10.1 show proof of engaging and supporting local partners or communities and/or Indigenous Peoples in its decision-making and operations.

11. Geo Referencing Capability

A Nature Area and Reserve must:

- 11.1 be defined by one (or more) geo-perimeter(s) defined using Geo Information System mapping and cadastration methodologies.

The NPO must:

- 11.2 provide the geo-perimeter(s) in advance, for testing and assuring the Reserve aligns with user experience requirements.

12. Stability

A Reserve must:

- 12.1 be located in a 'relatively stable' region to ensure the continuity of protection and the interests of the Uon holders. It will be identified as 'stable' when it is located in a region or nation state which:
- a) has been ranked up to place 160 in the past three years' Ease of Doing Business Index published by the World Bank;
 - b) has scored at least 30 on the past three years' Corruption Index published by Transparency International;
 - c) has not had an overall score above 3 ("very low") in the past three years' Global Peace Index (GPI) published by Vision of Humanity.



The NPO must:

12.2 report in a timely and reliable manner in case any part of the Nature area/Reserve faces a threat that may result in a violation of these Criteria.

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