



**Request for Proposals:
Regional Implementation Team for the Caribbean Islands Biodiversity Hotspot**

**2 December 2009
Deadline for Proposals: 13 January 2010**

The Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) is a joint initiative of l'Agence Française de Développement, Conservation International (CI), the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the Government of Japan, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, and the World Bank designed to help safeguard the world's biodiversity hotspots. As one of the founding partners, CI administers the global program through a CEPF Secretariat.

Nongovernmental organizations are invited to apply for a five-year grant to become the Regional Implementation Team that will lead implementation of a \$6.5 million CEPF investment strategy for the Caribbean Islands Biodiversity Hotspot. The maximum funding available for this grant will be \$650,000.

The Caribbean Islands Hotspot is a complex and diverse region of thousands of islands, mainly in three large groups between North and South America: the Bahamas, the Lesser Antilles, and the Greater Antilles. Politically, it comprises 12 independent nations (Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Haiti, Jamaica, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines) and a number of British, Dutch, French and U.S. overseas territories or jurisdictions.

The CEPF investment strategy will focus on the highest priorities for conservation in the following countries currently eligible to receive CEPF funds as both signatories to the Convention on Biological Diversity and World Bank client countries: Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Haiti, Jamaica, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines. In addition, the Bahamas and Barbados will be priorities for CEPF investment because of their eligibility to receive GEF funds specifically. This will include support for targeted activities to conserve 45 key biodiversity areas and six biodiversity conservation corridors.

A final draft of the full CEPF ecosystem profile can be found on the CEPF Web site at www.cepf.net/news/top_stories/Pages/request_for_proposals_caribbean.aspx, including the five-year investment strategy and maps identifying priority sites for investment. This request for proposals is being issued simultaneously with submission of the draft profile to the CEPF Donor Council for review and approval at its meeting on 15 January 2010.

Organizations or consortia of organizations wishing to apply to become the Regional Implementation Team must first submit an e-mail to cepfgrants@conservation.org indicating interest in serving as the Regional Implementation Team in the Caribbean Islands Hotspot. Applicants will then receive full application instructions and an application kit.

To mitigate any conflict of interest, any organization(s) making up the Regional Implementation Team will be unable to receive additional CEPF funding in the hotspot. Affiliates that have an independent operating board of directors may apply for funding but subject to additional external review.

Applicants are encouraged to review closely the “CEPF Regional Implementation Team Terms of Reference and Selection Process” found in this request for proposals as well as the full draft ecosystem profile for this region prior to formally indicating interest to CEPF. Upon receipt of the letter, CEPF will send a full proposal package and instructions to the applicant. **The deadline for submitting the full proposal will be 6 p.m. Eastern Standard Time on 13 January 2010. Proposals submitted after this deadline will not be considered for funding.** The review and selection process for the Regional Implementation Team is expected to be completed within 3-4 months from the application period close date.

Potential applicants may submit questions related to this request for proposals to cepfgrants@conservation.org until 16 December 2009. CEPF will post all questions received and responses for public viewing on www.cepf.net by 23 December 2009.

THE APPLICATION: The application for the role as the Regional Implementation Team for the Caribbean Islands Hotspot comprises three parts:

- 1) A proposal completed using CEPF’s Grant Writer software. CEPF has developed an online application program that allows grant applicants to develop their full proposal, project components, budget and performance tracker for the period of the project. This proposal should encompass the major functions and activities detailed in the attached Terms of Reference. These can be expressed as the following components covering the core RIT activities:
 - Lead CEPF’s investment in the Caribbean Islands Hotspot, effectively coordinating and communicating the funding opportunity, results and lessons learned.
 - Issue calls for proposals for projects conforming to the strategy described in the ecosystem profile and establish an effective, transparent review process to evaluate these applications.
 - Monitor and evaluate individual projects and assist in monitoring portfolio performance overall.
 - Directly award and manage all small grants for civil society of up to \$20,000.

With respect to the budget section of the proposal in Grant Writer, a breakdown of the envisaged costs under each budget line should be detailed in full in the relevant comments box.

- 2) Supporting narrative in a separate document describing programmatic and institutional (*or operational or management*) capacity. The CEPF proposal should be supported by comprehensive text that details the applicant’s programmatic capacity to fulfill the role of the regional implementation team. As described in the Terms of Reference, this document should include an organogram outlining the organizational structure and *curricula vitae* of the staff who will occupy the key positions on the regional implementation team.
- 3) Supporting documentation describing financial capacity. The institution applying for the regional implementation team role also has to submit the documents and bank statements necessary to complete a financial risk assessment. The requirements for preparing for this

document are included in a Financial Questionnaire that is included in the application kit. Responses to the questionnaire should describe the operational policies and procedures of the organization's office where the regional implementation team will be located. If the regional implementation team will not be in the organization's headquarters, the Financial Questionnaire should be signed by the local senior financial officer and the senior financial officer from headquarters.

APPLICANT ELIGIBILITY: Nongovernmental organizations presenting substantial experience in biodiversity conservation in the region may apply. Applications for the role of the Regional Implementation Team may be submitted by one organization or by a consortium of several organizations. In the case of the latter, one of the consortium members must be identified as the lead organization. This organization would be responsible for the consolidated application and if successful, for leading implementation of the project, reporting to CEPF and receiving the financial disbursements.

PERIOD OF PERFORMANCE: The period of performance is five years from the date of award.

PLACE OF PERFORMANCE: The place of performance includes Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Haiti, Jamaica, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines

SEPARATE AWARD OF GRANTS: This Request for Proposals will result in two separate contractual agreements for the winning organization or consortium. The first will be a grant to serve as the Regional Implementation Team with the Terms of Reference provided below. The maximum value of this award will be \$650,000. The winning applicant will also receive a separate grant strictly for the award of grants of \$20,000 and less. The total amount to be awarded as these small grants will be determined as part of strategy implementation.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE PREPARATION OF PROPOSALS: As mentioned above, the application process for the regional implementation team involves completion of several separate elements, all of which must be in English. Taken together, these elements will demonstrate that the applicant has the best: (1) institutional experience to undertake the tasks in the Terms of Reference, (2) approach to implementing the Terms of Reference, (3) proposed management systems for implementing the Terms of Reference, (4) individual personnel, and (5) budget for efficient implementation.

Grant Writer Proposal

CEPF uses proprietary software called Grant Writer to manage grant applications and implementation. All organizations indicating an interest in applying to CEPF to become the Regional Implementation Team will receive detailed instructions on how to connect to this system.

The Grant Writer proposal form contains fields that are critical for CEPF management of the regional implementation team grant, including a logical framework and budget.

Grant Writer includes a budget worksheet. Each line in the worksheet allows for comments. Applicants should provide a detailed explanation of anticipated expenses in the comments field by including explicit calculations, breakdowns and assumptions for all costs of more than \$250. In the salaries/benefit section, note the title for each employee listed, as well as their key responsibilities and functions, and percent of time to be devoted to the Regional Implementation

Team. Note that the proposed budget should be only for the regional implementation team award and not the separate funds to be awarded as small grants but the budget should incorporate all costs associated with managing the small grants.

Note that if a consortium of organizations is applying, only the lead grantee will submit a Grant Writer application.

Supplementary documentation in Microsoft Word or PDF

In parallel to the Grant Writer proposal, applicants should provide separate file(s) demonstrating the following qualifications:

- **Institutional experience** related to the tasks described in the Terms of Reference and Ecosystem Profile, including demonstrated experience in the following areas:
 - i. playing a leadership role in biodiversity conservation in the Caribbean;
 - ii. working with diverse civil society organizations, including providing technical assistance for project proposal development and implementation;
 - iii. conducting performance, programmatic and financial management monitoring;
 - iv. working with donors, governments, communities, the private sector and other stakeholders on conservation and development issues, including building alliances and networks of stakeholder groups to achieve conservation goals; and
 - v. managing multi-faceted programs and grants of similar size, scope and complexity as the regional implementation team and small grants funding.

- **Project rationale and approach** demonstrating a clear understanding of the Ecosystem Profile, including the conservation issues in the hotspot, the strategic directions and investment priorities, and overall mission and strategic approach of CEPF; the role of civil society to achieve the investment strategy set out in the Profile; and the constraints and opportunities working in a diverse and broad political, socioeconomic and geographic environment. Applicants should demonstrate a clear approach to working with civil society and an understanding of the different contexts/and challenges facing civil society organizations in the hotspot.

Applicants should provide further explicit text on their approach to (i) working with grantees and other important stakeholder groups to build a grant portfolio that encourages collaboration and synergy to implement the CEPF investment strategy, and (ii) ensuring sustainability and replicability of their efforts.

- **Management systems and/or approach**, including the items described in the Terms of Reference for administrative capacity, systems for monitoring grants and for managing small grants (including solicitation, award, monitoring and evaluation, and modification and/or resolution of non-performing grants). Furthermore, given the challenge of working in multiple countries and locales, applicants should be specific about their proposed placement of personnel; their ability to work in multiple languages (e.g. English, French and Spanish); and their understanding of constraints for implementing the CEPF strategy and managing small grants in multiple countries. Applicants should further describe their plan for engaging personnel and mobilizing the program.

Applicants should provide an organizational chart describing the lines of authority between individuals or organizational relationships between consortium members to achieve desired results.

If a consortium of organizations is applying, this section should explain the contractual arrangements that will be made between the lead organization and subordinate partners, where applicable.

- *Curricula vitae* of all principal technical personnel making up the regional implementation team should be provided.

Financial Questionnaire

All applicants must complete and submit the Financial Questionnaire that is included as part of the application kit. Note that the questionnaire also requests further documentation about the organization, including financial statements, audit reports and registration/incorporation certification.

Regional Implementation Team Terms of Reference and Selection Process

Nongovernmental organizations selected to function as Regional Implementation Teams for the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) beginning in 2007 will provide strategic leadership for the program in each of the biodiversity hotspots approved for investment.

Each Regional Implementation Team (RIT) will consist of one or more civil society organizations active in conservation in the region. For example, a team could be a partnership of civil society groups or could be a lead organization with a formal plan to engage others in overseeing implementation, such as through an inclusive advisory committee.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

The objective of the Regional Implementation Teams will be to convert the plans in the ecosystem profile into cohesive portfolios of grants that exceed in impact the sum of their parts.

The teams will provide local knowledge and insights and will represent CEPF in each hotspot region. They will have primary responsibility for building a broad constituency of civil society groups working across institutional and political boundaries toward achieving the shared conservation goals described in the ecosystem profiles.

The teams will operate in a transparent and open manner, consistent with the CEPF mission and all provisions of the CEPF Operational Manual.

Organizations that are members of the Regional Implementation Team will not be eligible to apply for other CEPF grants within the same hotspot. Applications from formal affiliates of those organizations that have an independent operating board of directors will be accepted, and subject to additional external review.

Major Functions:

- Act as an extension service to assist civil society groups in designing, implementing, and replicating successful conservation activities.
- Review all grant applications and manage external reviews with technical experts and advisory committees.
- Award grants up to \$20,000 and decide jointly with the CEPF Secretariat on all other applications.
- Lead the monitoring and evaluation of individual projects using standard tools, site visits, and meetings with grantees, and assist the CEPF Secretariat in portfolio-level monitoring and evaluation.
- Widely communicate CEPF objectives, opportunities to apply for grants, lessons learned, and results.
- Involve the existing regional program of the RIT, CEPF donor and implementing agency representatives, government officials, and other sectors within the hotspot in implementation.
- Ensure effective coordination with the CEPF Secretariat on all aspects of implementation.

Specific Activities:

- Announce the availability of CEPF grants; publicize the contents of the ecosystem profile and information about the application process; and with the CEPF Secretariat establish schedules for the consideration of proposals at pre-determined intervals, including decision dates.
- Assist civil society groups in designing proposals that contribute to the achievement of objectives specified in the ecosystem profile and a coherent portfolio of mutually supportive grants.
- Assist grantees as needed to build their institutional capacity in critical aspects of conservation action, with a focus on project design and management, monitoring, and financial management.
- Evaluate letters of inquiry for all sizes of grants using standard tools provided by CEPF.
- Award grants of up to \$20,000 that advance the objectives of the ecosystem profile and reinforce larger grant actions; handle contracting of these awards with grantees; provide documentation of these grants to the CEPF Secretariat; and monitor and document grantees' performance.
- Prepare project documentation for external review for grants of more than \$250,000.
- Collaborate with the CEPF Secretariat in maintaining accuracy of the CEPF grants management database; collect and report on data for portfolio and global indicators.
- Facilitate information exchange, establishment and/or strengthening of partnerships between CEPF grantees and key stakeholder groups, and replication of successful projects.
- Monitor the performance of grant recipients, including compliance with grant contracts and required reporting, using standard templates and other tools provided by CEPF.
- Conduct project site visits on a regular schedule as agreed with the CEPF Grant Director and prepare standard trip reports.
- Submit an annual report on the performance of the Regional Implemental Team against the objectives in the ecosystem profile and logical framework. Support the CEPF Secretariat in preparing annual portfolio-level performance evaluation reports.
- Support a mid-term and a final assessment of the portfolio and global program. Advise the CEPF Secretariat regarding adjustments to the ecosystem profile at the mid-point if necessary to respond to major changes in regional context.

SELECTION PROCESS

The teams will be chosen on a transparent and competitive basis.

A request for proposals will be distributed widely by the CEPF Secretariat. This will include direct distribution to all stakeholders who participated in the ecosystem profiling process for the region, publicizing the request for proposals on the CEPF global Web site and in the CEPF e-newsletter, and encouraging CEPF donor partners and well-known organizations both internationally and within the region to distribute the announcement through their regional networks.

The call for proposals will detail the opportunity presented to lead implementation in the relevant hotspot, and will include the Terms of Reference, criteria for evaluation, and a closing date for the receipt of proposals by the CEPF Secretariat. It will also include the maximum budget amount allocated for the Regional Implementation Team in the region and a link to the ecosystem profile on the CEPF Web site, www.cepf.net.

Applicants will be required to submit a proposal in the approved CEPF application template, including detailed project objectives (goal, purpose, outputs), the organization's comparative advantage in carrying out the role as a Regional Implementation Team, and clear performance indicators. In addition, the proposal must include a detailed budget, logical framework and five-year work plan and identify a single regional coordinator who will be principally responsible for carrying out these plans.

The Secretariat will analyze and rank the applications using the criteria described below. To maintain an open and objective selection process, any potential advantage gained as a result of involvement in creating the CEPF ecosystem profile for the region will not be considered as part of the assessment.

The Secretariat will present the applications and its analysis to the CEPF Working Group, which will develop a recommendation for the CEPF Donor Council. The final selection will be approved by the Donor Council.

Criteria for Evaluating Applications

In assessing applications, the following capabilities will be considered:

1. Programmatic Capacity/Experience: Successful applicants will be nongovernmental organizations presenting substantial experience in biodiversity conservation in the region. Applicants should present a clear and compelling justification for their application. This should include how their institutional strategy would be advanced by the organization's stewardship of the CEPF strategy and would help to ensure sustainability of results beyond the CEPF implementation period. Other important indicators will include:

- A mission statement that is congruent with the objectives and priorities identified for the region in the ecosystem profile.
- Proposed key personnel, including their qualifications and proposed roles.
- An acknowledged position of leadership within the region's civil society sector.
- Demonstrated experience in working with partners (such as NGOs, community organizations, and the private sector) to improve the effectiveness of conservation programs.
- Demonstrated commitment to strengthening other less developed civil society organizations.
- Well-established professional relationships with national and local government agencies and other sectors in the region.
- Ability to represent and widely communicate the CEPF mission, objectives, and opportunities, as well as experiences, lessons learned, and results.
- A strong commitment to monitoring and evaluation as indicated by functioning systems to monitor and evaluate the applicant's own programs.
- An existing sustainable conservation program in the region, demonstrated by its duration and record of support by other donors.

2. Administrative Capacity/Experience: A sound and tested financial and administrative system will be a key area for assessment in each application. Applicants should describe in detail their existing administrative and financial structures and how these structures would support effective and efficient implementation work. Among the financial and administrative factors for consideration are:

- Demonstrated ability to track, record, and account for funds received and disbursed.
- Segregation of duties. (For example, the person who makes the grant cannot be the same person who approves the payments or authorizes disbursement).
- Defined administrative/financial roles and a chart indicating the leadership and employee structure of the organization.
- Regular completion of reconciliations of money received and disbursed, in comparison with bank statements.
- Internal controls and objective criteria that guide the review of payment requests and other invoices.
- Systematic record keeping.
- Fraud and embezzlement safeguards.
- Ability to carry out the CEPF mission using locally appropriate languages in work with applicants and government officials, and to use English for all evaluations of proposals and reporting on grantee performance.
- Certified audits conducted on an annual basis with no material findings. Two most recent audits should be provided as part of the proposal.

Applicants should detail how they would adapt or expand their own administrative systems to enable effective award, management, and monitoring of individual grants of up to \$20,000.