



Call for Letters of Inquiry for Large Grants Tropical Andes Biodiversity Hotspot Ecuador

Eligible Country:	Ecuador (Refer to Table 2 for eligible geographies)
Opening Date:	Tuesday 15 November 2022 (9:00 a.m., Quito and Washington, D.C. time)
Closing Date:	Monday 19 December 2022 (11:59 pm. Quito and Washington, D.C. time)
Grant Amount:	Large grants greater than US\$50,000

[The Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund \(CEPF\)](#), the Ministry of the Environment, Water and Ecological Transition (MAATE) of Ecuador, and Fundacion Futuro Latinoamericano (FFLA), as the regional implementation team (RIT) for the Tropical Andes Hotspot in Ecuador, are inviting letters of inquiry (LOIs) from non-governmental organization, community groups, private enterprises, universities and other civil society organizations, that are duly accredited and active in the eligible areas based on the criteria in this call document.

BACKGROUND

CEPF is a joint initiative of l'Agence Française de Développement, Conservation International, the European Union, the Global Environment Facility, the Government of Japan and the World Bank. CEPF's program in Ecuador, including this call for proposals, is financed by the German Government through KfW. CEPF's goal is to ensure that civil society is engaged in conserving biological diversity.

CEPF, KfW and the Government of Ecuador have come together to support a grants program to engage civil society organizations in the conservation of biodiversity in the Ecuadorian portion of the Tropical Andes through CEPF. In October 2018, the Governments of Ecuador and the Federal Republic of Germany formally agreed to support this initiative, which included the MAATE's participation in its the design and implementation. In July 2020, CEPF, KfW, and the Government of Ecuador signed formal agreements related to the initiative's investment strategy and operations based on a consultation process within Ecuador that involved participation of 60 conservation leaders from civil society and government sectors. Development of the investment strategy was based on the conservation successes and lessons learned of CEPF's implementation experience in Ecuador since 2002, most recently though the implementation of the second phase of investments in the Tropical Andes Hotspot in Colombia, Ecuador, Perú and Bolivia. CEPF and KfW have signed an agreement to support the grant-making program from 2022 to 2027.

To implement this new third investment phase, CEPF has awarded the role of RIT to FFLA. The RIT's role is to support conservation initiatives in the key biodiversity areas (KBA) and its conservation corridors in Ecuador.

Tropical Andes Hotspot is the most biodiverse in the world. It covers 158.3 million hectares and is home to more than 35,000 plant and vertebrate species, ranking first in plant, bird, mammal, and amphibian diversity, and second in reptile diversity of the 36 hotspots identified to date. The hotspot provides essential ecosystem services particularly for water provisioning and carbon storage, for the planet, for South America, and for the approximate 59.7 million people living within the hotspot

Despite its importance, the hotspot is under severe threat from various pressures, including climate change, agricultural encroachment, deforestation, illegal land occupation, mining, hunting and wildlife trafficking, among others. Many of these threats have been exacerbated by increased pressure on natural resources due to the economic crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, which has dramatically affected the Tropical Andes hotspot.

In light of the urgent needs created and/or exacerbated by the crisis, the investment niche for Phase III in the Tropical Andes aims to support civil society organizations to foster the long-term sustainability and replication of the results obtained through CEPF’s previous investments. The Phase III investment strategy is structured into strategic directions which are supported by investment priorities, which are presented in Chapter 13 of the [Tropical Andes Biodiversity Hotspot Ecosystem Profile \(2022 - 2027\)](#) (PDF – 16.1 MB).

This call for proposals seeks to implement the Phase III investment strategy in Ecuador in 12 KBAs that received CEPF funding in previous implementation phases and in KBAs that are new to CEPF.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to familiarize themselves with the CEPF website, particularly the sections on [Eligibility, Before You Apply](#) and [How to Apply](#). Applicants who are uncertain of the eligibility of their organization or project concept are encouraged to contact the RIT, at rit-cepfecuador@ffla.net for clarification.

ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

Please refer to Table 1 on the strategic directions and investment priorities eligible for support under this call. The review of this table is not a substitute for a thorough review of the CEPF investment strategy and programmatic focus in Chapter 13 of the ecosystem profile, the logical framework for the Tropical Andes investment in Chapter 14, and relevant annexes. LOIs must directly contribute to the log frame targets listed below. Site or conservation corridor-based activities under Strategic Directions 1, 2, 3 and 4 must take place in eligible geographies.

Table 1. Strategic Directions and Investments Priorities Eligible Under This Call

Strategic Directions	Investment Priorities
1. Strengthen protection and management of 52 priority KBAs to foster participatory governance, green recovery from COVID-19, climate change resilience, species conservation, and financial sustainability.	1.1 Facilitate the establishment, upgrading, and/or expansion of public and private protected areas.
	1.2 Prepare and implement participatory management plans and other relevant KBA management instruments that support broad stakeholder collaboration.
	1.3 Strengthen land tenure, management, and governance of indigenous territories and campesino communities.
	1.4 Enable local communities to enter and remain in incentive programs that benefit biodiversity conservation.
	1.5 Promote and strengthen bio-enterprises that support biodiversity conservation and provide gender-equitable benefits to local communities.

<p>2. In the seven priority corridors, collaborate with public and private sector stakeholders to enable biodiversity conservation, a green recovery from COVID-19, and environmental, financial, and social sustainability, in benefit of the priority KBAs.</p>	<p>2.1 Support participatory land-use and development plans and governance frameworks to foster a shared vision of conservation and sustainable development to guide future investments.</p>
	<p>2.2 Support the preparation of policies, programs, and projects that foster biodiversity conservation, particularly at sub-national levels, and that leverage funding for their implementation.</p>
	<p>2.4 Establish and strengthen traditional and innovative financial mechanisms and leverage financing initiatives for conservation, including payments for ecosystem services, carbon credits and compensation mechanisms.</p>
	<p>2.5 Promote and scale up bio-enterprises to benefit communities, biodiversity, connectivity and ecosystem services.</p>
	<p>2.6 Promote private sector actors and their associations to integrate conservation into their business practices and to implement corporate social responsibility policies and voluntary conservation commitments.</p>
	<p>2.7 Integrate biodiversity conservation objectives into policies and programs related to mining and infrastructure and promote related demonstration projects.</p>
	<p>2.8 Strengthen local capacity, facilitate public consultation, and support partnerships to implement mitigation measures (assess, avoid, mitigate and monitor impacts) in projects that present a risk to priority KBAs, with a focus on mining and infrastructure.</p>
	<p>3. Safeguard priority globally threatened species.</p>
<p>4. Cultivate a well-trained, well-coordinated and resilient civil society sector at the local, corridor, and hotspot levels to achieve CEPF's conservation outcomes.</p>	<p>4.1 Strengthen the institutional capacities (administrative, financial, fundraising, communications, governance, and project management) of CEPF's strategic partners to implement biodiversity conservation programs.</p>
	<p>4.4 Strengthen the strategic communication capacity of the media and civil society networks to create conservation awareness among the public and decision makers.</p>
	<p>4.5 Strengthen the capacities and involvement of women in CEPF initiatives.</p>
	<p>4.6 Improve stakeholder cooperation and strengthen alliances, and foster information exchange and lessons learned.</p>

All projects in Ecuador must contribute to the achievement of at least one of the following portfolio targets:

- At least 10 protected areas experience, on average, a minimum 10-point improvement in their METT score.
- At least 50,000 hectares of productive landscapes are strengthened for biodiversity management.
- Conservation attention focused on at least 25 globally Endangered or Critically Endangered species or their genera to improve their threat status.
- At least 1,000,000 Euros leveraged by funded projects.
- 1,000,000 hectares in the priority KBAs are under improved management.

- At least 50,000 hectares in unprotected or partially protected KBAs are under new or expanded public or private protection.
- Ten protected areas experience at least a 15 percent improvement in their participatory management, based on performance on METT questions 22 to 25.
- At least 125 communities benefit from improved ecosystem services and other in-kind benefits.
- At least 20 communities receive cash benefits as a result of CEPF-funded projects.
- At least 15 planning tools and development projects incorporate biodiversity, ecosystem services, and nature-based climate solutions, with an emphasis on tourism, mining, unsustainable agriculture, and infrastructure development.
- At least 10 private sector initiatives support conservation and sustainable use of natural resources.
- At least 80 percent of local CSOs demonstrate improved capacity and performance, as demonstrated by at least 10 percent increase in their CSTT score.
- At least 80 percent of local CSOs demonstrate improved capacity and performance to incorporate gender into their operations, as demonstrated by at least a 10 percent increase in their GTT score.

The CEPF investment strategy includes five cross-cutting themes that are essential to achieve CEPF's overall conservation objectives in the hotspot. CEPF will seek proposals that clearly integrate one or more of the cross-cutting themes. CEPF recommends that applicants clearly identify which conservation targets and cross-cutting themes their projects will aim to contribute to. CEPF expects this cross-cutting theme to be integrated coherently into proposed activities, rather than be included as a standalone activity.

1. **Recovery of COVID-19 impacted KBAs, and their economies based on green objectives.** Conventional economic recovery strategies currently taking place in the hotspot are increasing pressures on the ecosystems of the Tropical Andes in Ecuador. CEPF seeks to support projects that will contribute to the design and implementation of ecosystem-based alternatives that favor the conservation of priority KBAs and the generation of income for communities that can provide economic incentives for biodiversity conservation.
2. **Mainstreaming of gender equality into conservation strategies and projects.** CEPF is committed to integrating gender equity into its projects. Applicants should integrate gender equity into their project design. The [Gender Tool Kit](#) provides useful guidance on how to integrate gender in your project.
3. **Strengthening of capacities of Indigenous peoples and local civil society.** Building the capacity of strategically positioned stakeholders is important to achieve CEPF's conservation outcomes. Projects may include capacity building to foster civil society leaders, strengthening of local organizations and Indigenous peoples, as well as for local governments. Applicants may consider including actions to strengthen their technical and institutional capacity needs as they develop their projects. Institutional capacity building will be assessed at the beginning and end of each grant through CEPF's [Civil Society Tracking Tool \(CSTT\)](#).
4. **Fostering long-term financial sustainability.** Long-term financial sustainability is a current concern for many Andean civil society organizations. CEPF aims to build civil society capacity, networks, and tools that can attract new funds and generate innovative financing mechanisms that contribute to biodiversity conservation and sustainability of CEPF partners. This process is expected to include the creation or strengthening of alliances between the public and private sectors and academia, locally and across the hotspot.
5. **Contributing to climate change adaptation and mitigation.** Building resilience to climate change is another important objective for CEPF. Applicants should identify how climate change is affecting or could affect their proposed activities and objectives and identify how they plan

to foster resiliency to climate change.

In addition, CEPF encourages LOIs to demonstrate the following characteristics as relevant:

- Co-funding or the capacity to leverage additional funds
- Coordination with other organizations to reduce duplication of efforts.
- Support from relevant stakeholder groups, including local authorities.
- Plans for sustainability and/or replication after initial CEPF funding.

To support CEPF's aim to safeguard threatened species and their ecosystems (See Appendix 13.3 and 13.4 of the Ecosystem Profile), proposals should describe how their project will contribute to conservation of trigger species of the KBAs they seek to conserve.

ELIGIBLE GEOGRAPHIC AREAS

Table 2 presents the corridor and KBAs eligible for CEPF funding under this call. Consult the [interactive map](#) of the Awá-Cotacachi-Illinizas corridor and priority KBAs to determine if your project is located in an eligible site.

Table 2. Priority Corridor and Sites

Corridor Name	Key Biodiversity Areas (KBA)
Awá-Cotacachi-Illinizas	(ECU14) Bosque Protector Los Cedros
	(ECU28) Corredor Awacachi
	(ECU34) Intag-Toisán
	(ECU41) Los Bancos - Milpe
	(ECU43) Maquipucuna-Río Guayllabamba
	(ECU89) Mashpi-Pachijal
	(ECU44) Mindo y Estribaciones Occidentales del volcán Pichincha
	(ECU61) Parque Nacional Cotacachi-Cayapas
	(ECU42) Reserva Ecológica Los Illinizas y alrededores
	(ECU54) Río Caoní
	(ECU66) Río Toachi-Chiriboga
(ECU70) Territorio Étnico Awá y alrededores	

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Non-governmental organizations, community groups, universities and private enterprises may apply for funding. Individuals must work with civil society organizations to develop LOIs rather than apply directly.

To qualify for a CEPF grant, the applicant must not be a government agency or institution. Government-owned enterprises or institutions are eligible only if they can establish that they fulfil the following criteria:

- Have a legal personality independent of any government agency or actor.
- Have the authority to apply for and receive private funds.
- May not assert a claim of sovereign immunity.

Applicants based outside of the eligible countries may submit a LOI as long as the project deliverables are focused on the conservation priorities within this call.

Joint projects with other organizations are eligible, with one lead organization submitting the application and project partners with clear roles stated in the application.

BUDGET AND TIMEFRAME

This call covers funding for large grants that are defined as greater than US\$50,000. Please note that the average grant at CEPF is US\$140,000. CEPF decides on the final amount to be awarded based on the scope of the conservation results expected to be achieved. CEPF expects large grants under this call to be contracted and start implementation around June to September 2023.

HOW TO APPLY

All proposals for this call must be submitted through a LOI following the established procedures. Proposals can be sent in English or Spanish. Remember that the time and deadline for submitting your LOI is **11:59 p.m. on Monday, December 19, 2022 (Washington, DC and Quito time)**. Don't wait until the last minute to submit your LOI. LOIs sent after the deadline will not be considered.

Table 3 Step-by-step Instructions for Applying for Large Grants

Large Grants (>US\$ 50,000)	
1.	Read through all sections of this call to understand the strategic and geographic priorities. This call includes recommendations and links to additional information.
2.	LOIs for large grants must be prepared and submitted through the ConservationGrants electronic portal open for this call.
3.	Applicants must register in advance in ConservationGrants . We strongly recommend initiating your proposal well before the deadline to familiarize yourself with the system.
4.	Submit your LOI and supporting documentation by the deadline.
5.	You will receive an acknowledgement confirming that your submission through ConservationGrants has been accepted. CEPF will not accept LOIs submitted by post, email or any other mechanism.
6.	Questions about the application process should be sent by email to cepf@cepf.net . For technical issues in registering for the ConservationGrants portal, please contact conservationgrants@conservation.org .
7.	The CEPF Secretariat will inform you of the result of the evaluation of your LOI by email.
8.	If your application is successful, the CEPF Secretariat will invite you to prepare a full project proposal. Detailed instructions for preparing the project proposal will be provided in the invitation letter.

Informational Webinar

CEPF and the RIT will host an informational webinar for prospective applicants on a Zoom on

Monday, 21 November 2022 from 10:30 to 12:00
(Quito and Washington D.C. time).

[Click here to register for the webinar.](#)

SELECTION AND AWARD PROCESS

All applicants will receive notification following the review of their LOI.

Applicants whose LOIs receive a positive review will be invited to submit a full proposal through ConservationGrants. Full proposals that receive a positive review will lead to the award of a grant between Conservation International, as the host of the CEPF Secretariat, and the applicant organization (the "grantee"). Grants will be denominated in United States dollars.

For more information on CEPF's proposals development and policies, visit www.cepf.net. Large grants are awarded on a competitive basis. Eligible LOIs will be reviewed by the CEPF Secretariat, the RIT, a national advisory committee, and other external technical reviewers when necessary. The LOI's evaluation will be conducted according to the following criteria:

1. **Strategic importance for CEPF:** Will the results of the project contribute to the achievement of the priorities presented in the ecosystem profile and specifically to the CEPF strategic directions and investment priorities in the Tropical Andes Ecosystem Profile. How will the project contribute to a Strategic Directions and Investment Priority to meet the specific needs in the KBAs and cluster?
2. **Capacity of the project to achieve results:** Are the objectives, approach, strategies, and results well thought out and complete? Are gender considerations and objectives integrated into the proposal?
3. **Applicant Capacity:** Does the applicant have the capacity and comparative advantage (skills, knowledge, experience, relationships, and credibility with local stakeholders) to successfully implement the project? Is permission required to implement project? If so, is there risk that permission will not be granted?
4. **Capacity Development of Civil Society in the Tropical Andes:** Does the project contribute to CEPF's priority of empowering civil society in the Ecuador portion of the Tropical Andes Hotspot, particularly local community organizations and Indigenous groups?
5. **Participation:** Does the project engage stakeholders in design and encourage participation in implementation to build local ownership, buy-in, and capacity development? Were the main stakeholders, including government agencies and local communities, involved in the design of the project and will they be involved in the implementation of the project?
6. **Budget:** Is the funding request consistent and reasonable given the project's scale, objectives and activities? Is the funding request within CEPF's overall budget allocation for the strategic direction?

7. **Strategic Alliances and Partnerships:** Does the project have the potential to establish and/or maintain long-term relationships for collaboration in biodiversity conservation with relevant local, regional or national organizations? Does it ensure coordination and establish synergies with existing and future initiatives?
8. **Leverage of Financial Resources:** Does the project attract additional funding or any in-kind contributions that will directly increase the impact of CEPF and contribute to the sustainability of the project? Is the applicant receiving funding for this project?
9. **Ongoing projects:** Does the project complement and generate synergies with ongoing projects, such as with of CEPF, MAATE and other donors?

REFERENCE MATERIALS

All applicants are advised to carefully review the ecosystem profile for the Tropical Andes Biodiversity Hotspot, particularly Chapters 13 and 14, which provides more detail on the activities that CEPF will fund.

Ecosystem Profile

- [English](#)
- [Spanish](#)

Ecosystem Profile Summary

- [English](#)
- [Spanish](#)

Gender

CEPF is committed to integrating gender into its portfolio. Applicants should design projects and write proposals that consider gender issues in the achievement of their conservation impacts. CEPF has developed several resources that can help applicants design, implement and evaluate gender-aware projects ([CEPF Gender Toolkit](#), PDF – 351 KB) and understand what CEPF seeks in a proposal ([CEPF Gender Fact Sheet](#), PDF – 318 KB). Visit the [CEPF and Gender webpage](#) to learn more about how CEPF addresses gender in the projects it supports.

Additional Resources

- [Before You Apply](#)
- [12 Tips for Getting Your Grant Idea Funded](#)
- [Database of closed CEPF Projects](#)
- [Life Cycle of a Grant](#)
- [ConservationGrants Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- [Web Page of the Regional Tropical Andes RIT](#)
- [How to open an account in ConservationGrants for a large grant \(Video in English\)](#)

CONTACTS

Before applying, applicants are encouraged to discuss project ideas, eligibility, and alignment with the specific priorities for this call for proposals. Please contact the CEPF Tropical Andes Regional Implementation Team in Ecuador to clarify whatever questions and concerns that may arise by sending an email to rit-cepfecuador@ffla.net.