

**Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund  
45th Meeting of the CEPF Donor Council  
Tuesday 25 November 2025  
8:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. Eastern Standard Time (EST)  
2:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. Brussels and Paris Time  
10:00 p.m. – 1:00 a.m. (+1 day) Tokyo Time**

**CEPF Strategic Communications**

**Recommended Action Items**

The Donor Council is asked to review CEPF's approach to strategic communications and provide comments.

**Background**

From its inception, the CEPF Secretariat has included a communications program to support engagement with donors and grantees and tell CEPF's story in a clear and compelling manner. In February 2016, Donor Council members approved via electronic review a [communications strategy for CEPF](#) that was developed over a period of months with the assistance of the communications and branding firm Big Duck.

| Objectives                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                           | Guiding Strategies                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                             |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that CEPF is recognized widely in the conservation community.</li> <li>• Deepen alignment between CEPF communications and priorities of key audiences.</li> <li>• Streamline communication practices and optimize based on data and best practices.</li> </ul> |                                                                                                                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Express a strong vision.</li> <li>• Demonstrate progress.</li> <li>• Show more heart.</li> <li>• Make content easy to digest.</li> <li>• Highlight people.</li> </ul> |                                                                                                                                                             |
| Brand Strategy                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | POSITIONING                                                                                                               | PERSONALITY                                                                                                                                                                                                    | ARCHETYPE                                                                                                                                                   |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | CEPF brings people and organizations together to protect the Earth's most biologically diverse yet threatened ecosystems. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaborative</li> <li>• Focused</li> <li>• Powerful</li> <li>• Hopeful</li> <li>• Protective</li> </ul>                                                              | <b>The Guardian</b> possesses a clear vision of collective empowerment and is motivated to directly nurture and protect aspects of humanity and the planet. |

Informed by interviews and input from donors and grantees, that strategy:

- Set objectives and guiding strategies for CEPF communications.
- Defined CEPF brand positioning and "personality."
- Detailed activities designed to maximize communications impact.
- Provided budget estimates for some key elements.

Key audiences per the strategy:

| Primary audience                                                             | What they feel stands out about CEPF                                                          | What they want from CEPF communications                                                                  | What CEPF wants them to do           |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Current donors                                                               | Size of the fund, voice given to donors, scale of access to civil society                     | Results, connection to civil society, accessible content, public awareness                               | Maintain and deepen support          |
| Current RITs*                                                                | Ease of communication, collaborative nature of relationship                                   | Clear information on grant administration                                                                | Maintain and deepen relationship     |
| Current grantees                                                             | Openness to grantee input, hands on nature, cross-sector connections (for-profit, government) | Access to and lessons learned from global peers, cross-sector connections, translation, less bureaucracy | Support work and deepen relationship |
| Donor communicators                                                          | Size of fund, prominence of donors                                                            | Results, high quality visual content, stories                                                            | Share CEPF messaging                 |
| Potential donors (Multilaterals, donor nations, foundations, private sector) | N/A                                                                                           | N/A                                                                                                      | Acquire support                      |

From the Strategy's "Communications activities at-a-glance":

- *Email: Two to four email updates a month*
- *Website: Complete a redesign by Q2 2017*
- *Blog: Four to six posts a month (once new blog platform is implemented)*
- *Media: Increase placements in major international media sources*
- *Events:*
  - *Attend, present at, or exhibit at two to four conferences a year*
  - *Increase number of community-building events hosted in the hotspots*
  - *Maximize opportunities for in-person donor meetings*

- *Printed materials and publications:*
  - *Keep number and length of printed materials low, opting for shorter online content and PowerPoint presentations when possible.*
  - *Publish one annual report, four quarterly reports, a general brochure (if not available), shortened ecosystem profile summaries and fact sheets, and Donor Council meeting documents as necessary. Depending on available resources, production of the above-mentioned shortened materials may need to be spread out over two to three years.*
  - *Produce three to four infographics in 2016 (including a template to be used for all ecosystem profile summaries), and two to four a year afterwards.*
- *Video:*
  - *Produce one video a year.*
  - *Further define a place for grantee video content.*
- *Social media:*
  - *Post to Facebook three to five times a week*
  - *Tweet three to four times a day*
  - *Hold off on diving into LinkedIn, Instagram, Periscope, and other channels until sufficient staff or consultant resources are provided*

The CEPF communications team has used the plan to guide its activities since approval by the Donor Council. CEPF redesigned its website, developed a new guide for the CEPF visual brand, developed standard brand "language" including a tagline ("Protecting biodiversity by supporting people") and key messages, and designed communications products using those elements, such as the Impact Report. CEPF has also provided more communications training/guidance to regional implementation teams (RITs), expanded efforts in social media and video, and held special campaigns/events such as the Hotspot Heroes events and the Mediterranean Basin Photo Exhibit in 2023. However, the plan is a bit dated, and the Secretariat has adapted it to current realities.

## **A Changing Communication Environment**

The communications field and CEPF itself have seen a lot of change since the plan was developed.

For CEPF:

- One fewer communications staff member at the Secretariat, making CEPF communications a two-person team augmented with contractors for graphic design, website technical support and special projects (such as events).
- New donors, both global and regional, with communications expectations.
- Gradual though modest growth of RIT communications capacity and activities.
- Increased inclusion of communications in grantee capacity-building via CEPF's portfolios.

For the communications field:

- The growth and constantly shifting landscape of social media.
- The decline in traditional media and fragmentation of audiences.
- The rise of the smart phone and other technology that makes quality photography, videography, audio capture and graphic design much more

- widely available and easy to use.
- Improved means for measuring some kinds of engagement, such as social media and website use.
- Artificial intelligence.

These changes have affected the implementation of the strategy.

## **CEPF's Current Approach**

### **The Secretariat**

With both the spirit of the strategy and available resources in mind, CEPF focuses on high-impact efforts while making sure to cover required activities.

At the Secretariat level, CEPF communications produces the Impact Report (which now includes the annual report) and other content—such as stories, presentations and videos—that feature conservation results and people, and support grantee success and fundraising efforts.

Products and channels that generate engagement are a priority, including the website, the bimonthly newsletter and social media (especially [Facebook](#) and [LinkedIn](#)). Engaging with donor representatives and communicators on social media helps us amplify these products. The Secretariat communications team also leads interactions with international media and gathers the photographic and video assets needed to tell the CEPF story.

While optimizing the website for storytelling and donor engagement, CEPF communications uses the site to provide the fundamental resources and guidance grantees need and materials that provide transparency, such as safeguard documents and project final reports. Also, the team works with Conservation International's IT team and a contractor to maintain the tech behind [cepf.net](#), collaborating to address problems and adjust to changes in technology and internet marketing.

### **RITs**

At the hotspot level, CEPF works with RITs to develop and implement communications plans that support the CEPF strategy in the hotspot. The communications role played by the RITs is vital, with three key audiences: grantees and potential grantees; donors/potential donors; and government and other decision-makers in the region who are or may become conservation partners.

The RITs connect CEPF to grantees and potential grantees in the region and inform them of opportunities, processes and requirements. They also support grantee communications activities and include communications in capacity-building efforts. They work with the CEPF Secretariat to engage donor representatives in the region and communicate with government officials to encourage collaboration and appreciation of conservation and the role of civil society. Moreover, they engage with news media in the region to inform the public about CEPF's activities.

### **Grantees**

CEPF encourages its grantees to communicate widely about their projects, reaching local communities, national media and sometimes international audiences. The

Secretariat and RITs collaborate with grantees to produce and/or share their stories. Some grantees come to CEPF with strong communications capacity. Others may need some support, which CEPF may provide in the form of workshops on photography, video, social media or storytelling, or via funding within their projects to hire communications professionals.

### **Donors**

CEPF's donors play a vital role in amplifying the grantees' stories, particularly among donor constituents and peers. Many of CEPF's donors have built large audiences. When donors share CEPF communications products, they elevate and expand the visibility of results achieved through the partnership.

### **In Summary**

Overall, the current approach promotes a focused, data-informed and audience-centered communications program that aligns with CEPF's mission and reflects current resources.