

Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund

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) 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 approved ecosystem profile on the CEPF Web site.

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.

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.

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.