

Regional Implementation Team Terms of Reference and Selection Process

Nongovernmental organizations selected to function as Regional Implementation Teams (RITs) 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 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 throughout the implementation process, as well as complementing its structure overseeing implementation, such as through an inclusive advisory committee.

The objective of the RITs will be to convert the plans in the ecosystem profile into cohesive portfolios of grants, noting that these will contribute to CEPF's long-term goals for each hotspot (or sub-region). The ecosystem profiles will support the implementation of the long-term vision of the hotspot and the RIT and associated organizations will play a key role in becoming the stewards over the long-run of these long-term visions.

The teams will provide local knowledge and insights and will represent CEPF in each hotspot. They will have primary responsibility for building a broad constituency of civil society groups working across institutional and political boundaries toward achieving the objectives described in the ecosystem profiles and any regionally appropriate long-term conservation and development visions.

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.

STAFFING

Staffing configurations may vary considerably depending on the size and number of countries in each hotspot. At a minimum, it is expected that each RIT have two full time staff to perform the roles of Team Leader and Small Grants Manager.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Component 1. Coordinate CEPF investment in the hotspot

Functions

1. Serve as the field-based technical representative for CEPF in relation to civil society groups, grantees, international donors, host country governments and agencies, and other potential partners within the hotspot.
2. Ensure coordination and collaboration with CEPF's donors, in coordination with the CEPF Secretariat and as appropriate in the hotspot.
3. Promote collaboration and coordination, and opportunities to leverage CEPF funds with local and international donors and governments investing in the region, via donor roundtables, experiential opportunities or other activities.
4. Engage conservation and development stakeholders to ensure collaboration and coordination.
5. Attend relevant conferences/events in the hotspot to promote synergy and coordination with other initiatives.
6. Build partnerships/networks among grantees in order to achieve the objectives of the ecosystem profile.

Component 2. Support the mainstreaming of biodiversity into public policies and private sector business practices

Functions

1. Support civil society to engage with government and the private sector and share their results, recommendations, and best practice models.
2. Engage directly with private sector partners and government officials and ensure their participation in implementation of key strategies.

Component 3. Communicate the CEPF investment throughout the hotspot

Functions

1. Communicate regularly with CEPF and partners about the portfolio through face-to-face meetings, phone calls, the internet (website and electronic newsletter) and reports to forums and structures.
2. Prepare a range of communications products to ensure that ecosystem profiles are accessible to grant applicants and other stakeholders.
3. Disseminate results via multiple and appropriate media.
4. Provide lessons learned and other information to the Secretariat to be communicated via the CEPF website.
5. Conduct exchange visits with other RITs to share lessons learnt and best practices.
6. In coordination with the CEPF Secretariat, ensure communication with local representatives of CEPF's donors.

Component 4. Build the capacity of local civil society

Functions

1. Undertake a capacity needs assessment for local civil society.
2. Support implementation of a long-term strategic vision for the hotspot geared toward enabling civil society to “graduate” from CEPF support.
3. Assist civil society groups in designing projects that contribute to the achievement of objectives specified in the ecosystem profile and a coherent portfolio of mutually supportive grants.
4. Build institutional capacity of grantees to ensure efficient and effective project implementation.
5. Build capacity of civil society to engage with and influence government agencies.
6. Build capacity of civil society to engage with and influence the private sector.

Component 5. Establish and coordinate a process for large grant proposal solicitation and review

Functions

1. Establish and coordinate a process for solicitation of applications.
2. Announce the availability of CEPF grants.
3. Publicize the contents of the ecosystem profile and information about the application process.
4. With the CEPF Secretariat, establish schedules for the consideration of proposals at pre-determined intervals, including decision dates.
5. Establish and coordinate a process for evaluation of applications.
6. Evaluate all Letters of Inquiry.
7. Facilitate technical review of applications (including, where appropriate, convening a panel of experts).
8. Obtain external reviews of all applications over \$250,000.
9. Decide jointly with the CEPF Secretariat on the award of all grant applications.
10. Communicate with applicants throughout the application process to ensure applicants are informed and fully understand the process.

Component 6. Manage a program of small grants of ≤\$20,000 (\$50,000 or less in select approved regions)

Functions

1. Establish and coordinate a process for solicitation of small grant applications.
2. Announce the availability of CEPF small grants.
3. Conduct due diligence to ensure sub-grantee applicant eligibility and capacity to comply with CEPF funding terms.
4. Convene a panel of experts to evaluate proposals.
5. Decide on the award of all grant applications of \$20,000 or less (\$50,000 or less in select approved regions).
6. Manage the contracting of these awards.
7. Manage disbursement of funds to grantees.
8. Ensure small grant compliance with CEPF funding terms.
9. Monitor, track, and document small grant technical and financial performance.
10. Assist the Secretariat in maintaining the accuracy of the CEPF grants management database.
11. Open a dedicated bank account in which the funding allocated by CEPF for small grants will be deposited, and report on the status of the account throughout the project.
12. Ensure that grantees complete regular (based on length of the project) technical and financial progress reports.
13. Prepare semi-annual summary report to the CEPF Secretariat with detailed information of the Small Grants Program, including names and contact information for all grantees, grant title or

summary of grant, time period of grants, award amounts, disbursed amounts, and disbursement schedules.

Component 7. Monitor and evaluate the impact of CEPF's large and small grants

Functions

1. Collect and report on data for portfolio-level indicators (from large and small grantees) annually as these relate to the logical framework in the ecosystem profile.
2. Collect and report on relevant data in relation to CEPF graduation criteria for the hotspot.
3. Collect and report on relevant data for CEPF's global monitoring indicators.
4. Ensure quality of performance data submitted by large and small grantees.
5. Verify completion of products, deliverables, and short-term impacts by grantees, as described in their proposals.
6. Support grantees to comply with requirements for completion of tracking tools, including the Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool.
7. In coordination with CEPF Secretariat, conduct a mid-term assessment and a final assessment of portfolio progress (covering large and small grants).
8. Conduct regular site visits to large and small grantees to monitor their progress and ensure outreach, verify compliance and support capacity building.
9. Provide guidance to grantees for the effective design and implementation of safeguard policies to ensure that these activities comply with the guidelines detailed in the CEPF Operations Manual and with the World Bank's environmental and social safeguard policies. Provide additional support and guidance during the implementation and evaluation cycles at regular field visits to projects.
10. In coordination with CEPF Secretariat, conduct a final assessment of portfolio progress and assist with preparation of report documentation.

Component 8. Lead the process to develop, over a three-month period, a long-term strategic vision for CEPF investment

Functions

1. Mobilize expertise and establish an advisory group to ensure that the long-term vision engages with appropriate stakeholders.
2. Undertake a review of relevant literature to ensure alignment of the long-term vision with other initiatives and avoid duplication of effort.
3. Consult with key stakeholders to solicit their input into the development of the long-term vision.
4. Synthesize the results of the literature review and stakeholder consultations into a long-term strategic vision document.
5. Present the draft long-term vision to key stakeholders and revise the document according to their comments.
6. Prepare a progress report for presentation to the CEPF donors' Working Group.

Component 9. Reporting

Functions

1. Participate in initial week of RIT training.
2. Participate in two “supervision missions” per year; each to include at least two days in the office and a visit to grantees in the field (approximately two weeks).
3. Prepare quarterly financial reports and six-monthly technical reports.
4. Respond to CEPF Secretariat requests for information, travel, hosting of donors and attendance at a range of events to promote CEPF.
5. Provide a detailed handover to the incoming RIT for the next investment phase.

SELECTION PROCESS

RITs are chosen on a transparent and competitive basis.

As the number of eligible hotspots that have not been the focus of CEPF investment decreases, an increasing number of CEPF programs will be reinvestments in hotspots with an incumbent RIT¹. RIT selection in hotspots where there is an incumbent RIT raises additional concerns about competitiveness and requires a different process to RIT selection in hotspots where there is no incumbent.

Process for hotspots where there is no incumbent RIT

For hotspots where there has been no previous investment by CEPF or where there was previous investment but without an RIT to provide strategic leadership, the following process will be used to select the RIT.

A call for expressions of interest is distributed widely by the CEPF Secretariat. This includes direct distribution to all stakeholders who participated in the ecosystem profiling process for the hotspot, publicizing the request for proposals on the CEPF global website and in the CEPF e-newsletter, and encouraging CEPF donor partners and well-known organizations both internationally and within the hotspot to distribute the announcement through their regional networks.

All organizations that submit an expression of interest are invited to join a conference call, at which the CEPF Secretariat further explains the selection process, the role of the RIT, and the investment strategy for the hotspot. Subsequently, these organizations are sent a request for proposals, which details the opportunity presented to lead implementation in the relevant hotspot, and includes the Terms of Reference, instructions for preparation of a proposal, criteria for evaluation, and a closing date for receipt of proposals by the CEPF Secretariat. It also includes the maximum budget amount allocated for the RIT in the hotspot and a link to the ecosystem profile on the CEPF website www.cepf.net. In order to allow time for interested organizations to form consortia, applicants are given a minimum of 10 weeks to prepare proposals before the closing date.

Applicants are required to submit a proposal in the format defined in the request for proposals. Proposals should include a description of the lead and subordinate partners’ organizational capabilities, the technical approach to achieving the outputs required by the Terms of Reference, and the proposed management approach to conduct the work (i.e., deployment of personnel, partners, and financial resources), as well as curricula vitae of principal personnel. The request for proposals also requires submission of a detailed multi-year budget.

¹ For the purposes of this paper, the phrase “incumbent RIT” refers both to the current RIT in a hotspot with ongoing CEPF investments (i.e. an “active hotspot”) and the former RIT in a hotspot with previous CEPF investments (i.e., a “closed hotspot”).

The Secretariat analyzes and ranks the applications using a set of evaluation criteria included in the request for proposals (see Annex 1). One or more external reviewers may also be invited to provide input. 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 hotspot is not considered as part of the assessment.

The Secretariat presents the applications and its analysis to the CEPF Working Group, which then makes a recommendation to the CEPF Donor Council. The final selection is approved by the Donor Council.

Process for hotspots with an incumbent RIT

For hotspots where there was a previous investment by CEPF with an RIT in place, the following process will be used to select the RIT.

The Secretariat commissions an independent evaluation of lessons learned in relation to the incumbent RIT for the hotspot. This evaluation considers the performance of the incumbent RIT in relation to the geography of the hotspot, the capacity of civil society in the region, the budget allocated to it, and its achievement of individual deliverables as defined in its grant agreement with CEPF. It includes a review of the institutional landscape in the hotspot, including the identification of potential competitor organizations that could perform the RIT role.

The results of this evaluation are used to inform a decision on which selection modality to follow.

If the following cumulative conditions are met, the Secretariat recommends to the Working Group the award of a new RIT grant to the incumbent on a sole-source basis:

- 1) The independent evaluation concludes that the incumbent has performed well;
- 2) The incumbent is willing to continue in the role of RIT;
- 3) The review of the institutional landscape does not identify any potential competitor organizations that are interested in performing the RIT role; and
- 4) Continuing with the incumbent RIT is consistent with the long-term vision for the hotspot.

If any of these conditions are not met, the Secretariat recommends to the Working Group that the RIT be selected through open competition, following a similar process as for hotspots where there is no incumbent. The report on lessons learned, which forms part of the independent evaluation, is made available to organizations that express an interest in applying for the RIT grant. This will ensure that all applicant organizations benefit from a comparable level of information about the successes and challenges of the previous phase, and about lessons learned, thereby ensuring an open, transparent and competitive selection process.

Informed by the results of the evaluation, the Secretariat's recommendation will specify whether organizations that are members of the incumbent RIT will be eligible to apply for the new RIT grant, either alone or as part of a consortium.

The Secretariat submits its recommendation to the Working Group for approval on a time-bound, no-objection basis. The Secretariat's recommendation is supported by the outputs of the independent evaluation, as well as by the final assessment report on the previous investment, where available.

Annex 1 - Evaluation criteria currently used for RIT proposals

1	Organizational Experience: Technical	Points: 5
1.1	Is the organization's mission statement congruent with the objectives and priorities identified for the region in the ecosystem profile?	
1.2	Does the applicant present experience working with potential partner NGOs, academic institutions, local and national government agencies, and donors?	
1.3	Does the organization have an existing conservation or development program in the region, demonstrated by its duration and record of support by other donors?	
2	Organizational Experience: Management	Points: 15
2.1	Does the organization demonstrate experience managing programs of similar size, scale, and complexity as that of the Regional Implementation Team?	
2.2	Does the organization have a monitoring and evaluation system or methodology that it has used to manage its own or other programs?	
2.3	Does the applicant have proven financial and administrative system?	
2.4	Has the organization managed the both the technical and financial elements of a small grants program in the past, and was this program of a size (e.g., total amount of money, total number of grants) and complexity (e.g., technical components and recipients) that is comparable to what it will undertake with CEPF?	
3	Personnel	Points: 30
3.1	Does the applicant propose a clear and viable personnel plan, including names, resumes, position titles, job descriptions, level of effort, work location, and reporting lines of authority?	
3.2	Does the applicant submit the name and resume a single, dedicated team leader, and does this person have the appropriate technical skills/experience and appropriate managerial skills/experience?	
3.3	Does the applicant propose, by name and resume, personnel other than the team leader, and do these people have appropriate technical skills/experience and appropriate managerial skills/experience?	
3.4	Do the proposed team members have, individually or collectively, the language skills necessary to operate effectively in the hotspot?	
3.5	Does the applicant propose a plan for recruitment and/or mobilization of "to be determined" personnel, including job descriptions, job qualifications, and curricula vitae of personnel from the applicant's organization who will perform relevant duties while recruitment is pending?	
4	Understanding of the Ecosystem Profile	Points: 5
4.1	Does the applicant demonstrate its understanding of the strategic directions in the ecosystem profile and the associated investment priorities and outcomes, targets, and indicators (other than the RIT strategic direction)?	
4.2	Does the applicant discuss the differing challenges of conservation and engagement with civil society in the countries in the hotspot, demonstrating an anticipation of the types of grants to be funded, the viability of targets, and the capacity of potential grantees?	
4.3	Does the applicant describe how its own organizational strategy will be advanced by serving as the lead entity for CEPF in the region and how this will help to ensure sustainability of results beyond the CEPF implementation period?	

5	Proposed Technical Approach	Points: 15
5.1	Does the applicant address all components of the RIT as described in the terms of reference?	
5.2	Does the applicant demonstrate its plans to work with partners or with civil society organizations that have very different levels of capacity from one corridor or country to the next?	
5.3	Does the applicant propose a method to effectively communicate and coordinate the funding opportunity, results and lessons learned?	
5.4	Does the applicant propose a system for soliciting proposals for projects conforming to the strategy described in the ecosystem profile and establish an effective, transparent review process to evaluate these applications?	
5.5	Does the applicant propose a system to monitor and evaluate individual projects and assist in monitoring portfolio performance overall?	
5.6	Does the applicant propose a system to directly award and manage all small grants for civil society of up to \$20,000?	
6	Proposed Technical Approach	Points: 25
6.1	Does the applicant demonstrate its understanding of the legal requirements to make grants in the hotspot countries, employ people or engage organizations in these countries, and foreign exchange restrictions?	
6.2	Does the applicant have defined administrative/financial roles demonstrating a segregation of duties and a chart indicating the leadership and employee structure of the organization?	
6.3	Does the applicant propose a method to track, record, and account for funds received and disbursed, and does it propose a method for regular completion of reconciliations of money received and disbursed in comparison with bank statements?	
6.4	Does the applicant propose a system for internal controls and objective criteria that guide the review of payment requests and other invoices, systematic record keeping, and fraud and embezzlement safeguards?	
7	Proposed Technical Approach	Points: 5
7.1	Is the budget complete and within the allocated amount named in the request for proposals?	
7.2	Are all costs mathematically justified through the clear presentation of unit costs, total units, and total costs?	
7.3	Are all unit costs, total units, and total costs appropriate in relation to the proposed technical and managerial activities?	
7.4	Are proposed unit rates in accord with market rates in the region?	
7.5	If the applicant claims indirect costs, does it clearly show the base of application and is this distinct from any previously enumerated direct costs; does the applicant provide an explanation of how the indirect cost rate has been determined (e.g., historical averages, audited financial statements, precedent contracts); and does the applicant provide supporting documentation with its financial questionnaire?	
7.6	If the applicant proposes to work in only a subset of the eligible countries, is the total budget proportionately less than the maximum allowable amount and is this amount adequately justified?	
	Total	100 Points