

Independent Evaluation of Lessons Learned to Inform Reinvestment in Hotspots Scope of Work and Selection Process

Background

As the number of eligible hotspots that have not been the focus of CEPF investment decreases, most future CEPF programs will be reinvestments in hotspots with an incumbent Regional Implementation Team (RIT). To inform potential future reinvestments, CEPF will commission an independent evaluation of the incumbent RIT towards the end of each investment phase. This will comprise a review of the performance of the incumbent RIT and challenges, opportunities and lessons learned associated with the RIT role. In combination with the Final Assessment of the results of the hotspot investment (conducted as a separate exercise), this evaluation will enable applicants for the RIT role to be better informed about the experience of the incumbent RIT and the results achieved, and create a more competitive environment for all applicants.

Process

The evaluation of the incumbent RIT will be undertaken by an independent consultant, selected through a competitive procurement process. A single consultancy firm will be selected to undertake all evaluations scheduled within a fixed time period (e.g., three years). This will allow for greater consistency of approach and comparability of results among hotspots. The consultant must demonstrate an ability to take due account of local circumstances in each hotspot. Selection of consultants will be overseen by the Monitoring, Evaluation and Outreach Unit within the CEPF Secretariat.

An evaluation will be undertaken for each hotspot where strategic leadership for the CEPF program was provided by an RIT (irrespective of whether a reinvestment is planned or not). The RIT model was adopted by CEPF in 2007. There are, therefore, some hotspots that were the focus of previous CEPF investment for which there was no RIT. An evaluation will not be undertaken for such hotspots, because the structures for coordinating CEPF investment were not directly comparable to RITs in form and function, and the length of time that has passed (at least 10 years) limits the relevance of past experience to future investments, especially given changes to CEPF over the intervening period.

Where possible, the evaluation of the incumbent RIT will be undertaken simultaneously with preparation of the ecosystem profile for the reinvestment phase, preferably during the final year of an investment phase (to enable the continuity of investment required to consolidate and amplify results

of CEPF investment). To this end, the consultant will be asked to prepare a lessons learned report that is suitable for inclusion as a chapter in the ecosystem profile. It should also be able to serve as a stand-alone document to inform investment decisions, including regarding selection of the RIT for the reinvestment phase.

In order to capture lessons learned from the start of the investment phase and preserve institutional memory in the event of turnover of key RIT and Secretariat staff, the Secretariat will facilitate a reflection exercise with the RIT at the end of each year of implementation, using a standard set of questions. This exercise will focus on what the RIT learned during the year (and other RITs could learn from), what worked well, and what could have done differently, as well as any challenges encountered with building the portfolio (e.g. persistent gaps, balance of local versus international grantees, etc.). The results will be documented in the relevant RIT supervision mission report, which can then be made available to the consultant working on the RIT evaluation.

Scope of Work

Evaluation of Lessons Learned to Inform Reinvestment in the [insert name] Hotspot

1) Background

The Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) is a joint initiative of l'Agence Française de Développement, Conservation International, the European Union, the Global Environment Facility, 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, Conservation International administers the global program through the CEPF Secretariat.

The [insert name] Biodiversity Hotspot is [insert brief description of the hotspot, including a link to the ecosystem profile].

CEPF's current investment in the [insert name] Hotspot, began in [insert date] and will continue until [insert date]. Results to date are summarized here [insert link to most recent Annual Portfolio Overview or assessment report].

In each of the biodiversity hotspots where it invests, CEPF selects a Regional Implementation Team (RIT) to provide strategic leadership for the program. Each RIT consists of one or more civil society organizations active in conservation in the hotspot. The objective of the RIT is to convert the plans in the ecosystem profile into a cohesive portfolio of grants that contributes to CEPF's long-term goals for the hotspot.

For the current phase of CEPF investment in the [insert name] Hotspot, the role of RIT is being performed by [insert name of organization / description of consortium].

The CEPF donors have selected the [insert name] Hotspot for a possible reinvestment. To this end, an ecosystem profile is currently being prepared, which presents an overview of the hotspot in terms of its biological importance, its socioeconomic, policy and civil society contexts, and the major direct threats to biodiversity and their root causes. This situational analysis is complemented by assessments of current conservation investment, and the implications of climate change for biodiversity conservation. Informed by these analyses, the ecosystem profile articulates an overarching strategy

for investing in conservation efforts led by civil society over a five-year period. It is anticipated that the ecosystem profile will be presented to the CEPF donors for their review in [insert date].

If the ecosystem profile is approved by the CEPF donors, a process to select the RIT for the next phase of investment will be initiated. This process will be informed by an evaluation of lessons learned in relation to the incumbent RIT for the hotspot. This evaluation will consider the performance of the incumbent RIT in relation to the geography of the hotspot, the capacity of civil society there, the budget allocated to the RIT, and its achievement of individual deliverables as defined in its grant agreement with CEPF. It is entirely distinct and separate from the formal “Final Assessment” of the portfolio, which is to be undertaken at the end of an investment phase to evaluate the overall impacts of CEPF investment in a hotspot.

2) Objective of the Evaluation

The objective of the evaluation is to inform investment decisions for the next phase of CEPF investment in the [insert name] Hotspot, in the following ways. First, the evaluation will inform decision making by the CEPF donors regarding selection of an RIT for the next phase of investment, by evaluating the performance of the incumbent RIT and reviewing the institutional landscape for potential competitors. Second, the evaluation will enable the design of RIT proposals that incorporate lessons learned regarding the programmatic and management approaches adopted by the incumbent RIT. Third, the evaluation will inform the preparation of the ecosystem profile for reinvestment in the hotspot by documenting challenges and opportunities encountered by the RIT while implementing a grants program to engage and strengthen civil society in conserving globally important biodiversity in the social, political and institutional context of the hotspot.

3) Criteria for Evaluation

The evaluation will look closely at the components and functions of the RIT, as set out in the Terms of Reference, and evaluate the RIT’s performance against the following criteria:

- i) Relevance**
Were the activities undertaken relevant to the RIT terms of reference, the geography of the hotspot, the capacity of civil society there, and the global results framework of CEPF?
- ii) Efficiency**
How efficiently was the budget allocated to the RIT converted into results?
- iii) Effectiveness**
What were the strengths and weaknesses of the RIT structure and capacities with regard to effective delivery of results?

In addition to directly evaluating the performance of the RIT, lessons learned from the CEPF grants portfolio with regard to the RIT role will be collated and evaluated against the following criteria:

iv) Coverage

To what extent does the portfolio of grants awarded to date cover the strategic directions and investment priorities set out in the investment strategy for the hotspot?

v) Impact

To what extent have the targets set in the ecosystem profile for impacts on biodiversity conservation, human wellbeing, civil society capacity and enabling conditions been met?

vi) Accessibility

Does the grants portfolio involve an appropriate balance of international and local grantees, taking into account the relative strengths of different organizations with regard to delivery of the investment strategy and considering the priority given by CEPF to building the capacity of local civil society?

vii) Adaptive management

In what ways has the development of the grants portfolio been constrained by risks (political/institutional/security) or taken advantage of unanticipated opportunities?

4) Components and Functions of the RIT Grant

[Note: table to be replaced with the specific components and functions for the RIT in question, given evolution of the TOR over time]

<p>Component 1. Coordinate CEPF investment in the hotspot.</p>	<p>Functions</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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.
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<p>Component 2. Support the mainstreaming of biodiversity into public policies and private sector business practices.</p>	<p>Functions</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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.
<p>Component 3. Communicate the CEPF investment throughout the hotspot.</p>	<p>Functions</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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.
<p>Component 4. Build the capacity of local civil society.</p>	<p>Functions</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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.

<p>Component 5. Establish and coordinate a process for large grant (>\$20,000) proposal solicitation and review.</p>	<p>Functions</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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 of more than \$20,000. 10. Communicate with applicants throughout the application process to ensure applicants are informed and fully understand the process.
<p>Component 6. Manage a program of small grants (\leq\$20,000).</p>	<p>Functions</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 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.

<p>Component 8. Lead the process to develop, over a three-month period, a long-term strategic vision for CEPF investment</p>	<p>Functions</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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.
<p>Component 9. Reporting.</p>	<p>Functions</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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) Duties

A consultancy firm (hereafter "the consultant") is required to undertake an evaluation of lessons learned in relation to the incumbent RIT for the [insert name] Hotspot, in the context of the abovementioned objective (Section 2). The consultant is required to field a team with experience of evaluating biodiversity conservation programs, and with adequate knowledge of the [insert name] Hotspot.

The evaluation will consider the performance of the incumbent RIT in relation to the geography of the hotspot, the capacity of civil society there, the budget allocated to the RIT, and the RIT's achievement of individual deliverables as defined in its grant agreement with CEPF. It will also consider the impacts of the investment to date (in terms of biodiversity, human wellbeing, civil society capacity and enabling conditions for conservation), based on the findings of the final assessment [where available, or, if not, the mid-term assessment], which was undertaken as a separate exercise.

Finally, the consultant will review the institutional landscape in the hotspot and identify potential competitor organizations that could perform the RIT role (either alone or as part of a consortium).

The following tasks are expected to form part of the evaluation.

The evaluation will begin with a desk review, based on the following documentation:

- The ecosystem profile for the hotspot.
- The final proposal for the RIT grant.
- Major negotiation items that led to the RIT grant agreement (if any).
- The RIT grant agreement plus any amendments.
- Semi-annual supervision mission reports prepared by the CEPF Secretariat.
- Semi-annual performance reports prepared by the RIT.
- Annual portfolio overviews prepared by the CEPF Secretariat.
- Mid-term assessment report prepared by the CEPF Secretariat.
- Final assessment report prepared by the CEPF Secretariat (where available).
- Reports of independent evaluations of CEPF implementation in the hotspot (where available).
- Summary data on the grant portfolio in the hotspot, exported from CEPF's grant management system.

The desk review will be complemented by interviews with relevant CEPF Secretariat staff, and a field visit to the hotspot. During the field visit, the consultant will have an opportunity to interview RIT staff, staff of the host organization(s), a selection of CEPF grantees and applicants, and other relevant stakeholders (e.g. representatives of other donors, government agencies, etc.). The consultant will be expected to make their own travel arrangements for the field visit, and to organize all necessary meetings with stakeholders.

6) Deliverables

There will be two main deliverables from the consultancy. The consultant will be responsible for preparing a chapter on lessons learned regarding the RIT role, suitable for inclusion in the ecosystem profile for the hotspot as a stand-alone annex. The consultant will also be responsible for preparing a confidential report on the programmatic and financial performance of the RIT, and the identification of potential competitor organizations. This confidential report will not be included in the ecosystem profile. The chapter and the accompanying confidential report will inform investment decisions by CEPF and its donors, particularly regarding selection of the RIT for the reinvestment phase.

7) Timeframe

The evaluation will be conducted during [insert dates]. Draft deliverables will be prepared by [insert date] and submitted to the CEPF Secretariat for review. Final deliverables, incorporating comments from the CEPF Secretariat will be completed by [insert date].

The consultant shall also provide the CEPF Secretariat with periodic verbal briefings and meet with Secretariat staff, as requested.

The total amount of time for the assignment is 25 days, comprising seven days for the literature review and interviews with CEPF Secretariat staff, eight days for the field visit, five days for preparation of the draft deliverables, one day to prepare and deliver a briefing for the CEPF Secretariat on the findings, and four days for incorporation of comments and finalization of deliverables.

8) Reporting

The consultant will work under the close supervision and direction of the Senior Director for Monitoring, Evaluation and Outreach, or such other individual that the CEPF Secretariat may designate.