

Call for Letters of Inquiry Madagascar and the Indian Ocean Islands (MADIO) Biodiversity Hotspot

Large Grants

Eligible Countries:	Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius, Seychelles
Opening Date:	Tuesday, 6 June 2023
Closing Date:	Tuesday, 1 August 2023 – 11:59 pm Eastern Time
Grant Size:	More than US\$50,000

The [Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund](#) (CEPF) and its regional implementation team (RIT) for the hotspot, are accepting letters of inquiry (LOIs) from [civil society organizations](#) for projects that address the eligible activities and geographies of this call.

1. BACKGROUND

The CEPF is a joint initiative of l'Agence Française de Développement (AFD), Conservation International, the European Union, the Global Environment Facility, the Government of Japan and the World Bank. A fundamental goal is to ensure civil society is engaged in biodiversity conservation.

The Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius and the Seychelles are extremely vulnerable to climate change. People, agricultural land and infrastructure are concentrated in coastal areas, which are exposed to rising sea levels and increased frequency and severity of cyclones. Ecosystem-based adaptation (EbA) promotes the conservation, improved management and restoration of ecosystems to provide the essential services people need to adapt to climate change and variability. While there are a few pilot projects, EbA funding is currently insufficient and civil society organizations (CSOs) are not sufficiently engaged.

In response to the challenges of climate change in the Indian Ocean island countries, CEPF has prepared a new program titled Ecosystem-Based Adaptation in the Indian Ocean, financed by the Green Climate Fund (GCF), through AFD as the Accredited Entity. The new program provides targeted funding to mobilize CSOs in implementing EbA.

CEPF has enlisted a consortium of nongovernmental organizations to be its RIT in the

hotspot. Coordinated by IUCN NL and with SAF/FJKM as regional team lead, the RIT includes SAF/FJKM for Madagascar, ID-ONG for Comoros, FORENA for Mauritius and SeyCCAT for Seychelles. These organizations are working with CEPF to implement a five-year conservation strategy for the hotspot and build local civil society capacity.

Additional calls for Letters of Inquiry will be published in 2023 and during the rest of the CEPF investment. They will have different eligibility criteria in alignment with the evolution of the portfolio of projects.

2. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

In order to be eligible for this call for LOIs, applicants must meet the criteria as indicated below. LOIs not meeting these criteria will not be eligible for this call and therefore will not be reviewed.

- a. Applicant;
- b. Technical scope;
- c. Geographical area;
- d. Budget and timeframe;
- e. Date of submission;
- f. Language of LOI.

a. Eligible Applicants

Non-governmental organizations, community groups and associations, universities and research institutes, private enterprises and other civil society organizations may apply for funding.

Individuals are not eligible. Individuals should work with CSOs to develop applications rather than apply directly.

A government-owned enterprise or institution is eligible only if it can establish that it:

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

Applicants based outside the eligible geographic areas may submit an application as long as the project deliverables are focused on the conservation needs of this call within the eligible geographies.

Preference will be given to projects that (i) demonstrate a leading role for local organizations and/or an explicit focus on capacity building for local civil society, and (ii) show that they will coordinate with other organizations to prevent duplication of efforts, such as projects that work with partnerships and alliances. As such, joint projects with multiple organizations are eligible, as long as one lead organization submits the application and project partners have clear roles stated in the application.

Applying organizations must have their own bank accounts and be legally entitled to receive grants.

Applicants can already be funded by CEPF on another project.

Potential applicants who are uncertain of the eligibility of their organization are encouraged to contact the RIT at cepf.ritmadio2@saf-fjkm.org for clarification.

b. Eligible Technical Scopes

Applicants should ensure that the core content of their LOI refers to only one of the eligible strategic directions listed below and one or more of its investment priority/ies. Selecting a strategic direction but failing to propose activities aligned with its technical scope will result in the non-selection of the LOI.

Strategic Direction 3: Strengthen the capacity of local communities and civil society at regional and local levels to enhance adaptive capacity and reduce exposure to climate change risks.

Investment priority 3.1: Strengthen the technical, administrative and financial capacities of local CSOs with missions related to the environment and the fight against climate change.

Investment Priority 3.2: Promote exchanges and partnerships (at the national and regional levels) among CSOs working in priority KBAs, to strengthen technical, organizational, management and fundraising capacities.

The targets of CEPF investment for these Investment Priorities can be found in chapter 15. LOGICAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE MADIO HOTSPOT of the Ecosystem Profile, and are:

1. Five thousand five hundred (5,500) women and five thousand five hundred (5,500) men from local CSOs have benefited from technical, administrative or financial capacity building.
2. Twelve (12) local CSOs with an institutional capacity score of 80 percent or higher on the CEPF Civil Society Tracking Tool.
3. Seven (7) exchange activities for CSOs were carried out at national or regional level.

Given these targets, CEPF will select very few organizations, using the criteria presented in the first paragraph of section 3 - Evaluation criteria. These few organizations, alone or in consortia, will be expected to offer to multiple local CSOs, through training courses or tailor-made activities, the following:

- 1- technical capacity-building on climate change and EbA (concrete actions).
- 2- operational capacity-building in project preparation, fundraising, programmatic and financial management, human resources, associative governance and the use of new technologies.

By local CSOs, CEPF means organizations headquartered in one of the four hotspot countries. These organizations do not necessarily need to work in priority KBAs, but must have missions related to the environment and/or the fight against climate change. Priority should be given to organizations working on the planning and implementation of EbA actions. These local organizations do not need to be specifically identified in the LOI, but in this case, the selection criteria and processes will need to be detailed in the LOI.

Applicants with projects under investment priority 3.1 will need to demonstrate that local CSOs will have, by the end of their projects:

- 1- improved their understanding of climate issues;
- 2- integrated EbA approaches;
- 3- obtained more diversified sources of funding;
- 4- achieved an institutional capacity score of 80% or more on the CEPF Civil Society Tracking Tool ([CSTI](#));
- 5- several staff members (not just one or two) with better technical, administrative and/or financial management capacities.

For projects under investment priority 3.2, eligible activities will be:

- 1- the promotion of exchanges and partnerships at national and regional level between CSOs working in priority KBAs: exchange, twinning and mentoring programs between CSOs in the hotspot;
- 2- the creation or reinforcement of regional platforms for technical and scientific collaboration on progress in the implementation of EbA actions;
- 3- the creation or reinforcement of networks based on concrete technical cooperation related to climate change and/or EbA.

All projects under this investment priority will also have to demonstrate that they are action-oriented (i.e. "doing together", not "discussing together"). Priority areas for such actions will be:

- 1- planning, implementing and monitoring EbA actions;
- 2- managing marine and coastal areas;
- 3- managing wetlands;
- 4- restoring island ecosystems;
- 5- combating invasive species;
- 6- conserving critically endangered species;
- 7- supporting local community participation and co-management.

Strategic Direction 4: Support research and ensure the dissemination of results for the promotion and improvement of knowledge on EbA actions and related good practices.

Investment Priority 4.1: Support applied research activities that improve understanding of the role of specific ecosystems and test the effectiveness of promising EbA techniques.

The targets of CEPF investment for this Investment Priority can be found in chapter 15. LOGICAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE MADIO HOTSPOT of the Ecosystem Profile and are:

1. Two (2) research activities conducted to better understand the role of ecosystems in climate change adaptation and to test the effectiveness of EbA actions.

Given this target, the selection of LOIs will be competitive. To this end, CEPF expects applicants to present research projects whose results will provide more in-depth knowledge on priority ecosystem services in each country, such as those used for KBA+ analyses (Chapter 6 of the Ecosystem Profile), and on the contribution that specific ecosystems make to climate adaptation. The activities proposed in the few LOIs that will be selected will:

- 1- consist in applied research;
- 2- improve the understanding of the role of ecosystem services in helping local communities adapt to climate change;
- 3- improve knowledge on the effectiveness of EbA actions;
- 4- document the information needed to assess the effectiveness of promising EbA techniques in the hotspot: (1) determine the geographical context and goals of EbA, (2) analyze vulnerability, (3) identify EbA options, (4) develop EbA strategy and adaptation measures, (5) monitor and evaluate for learning, (6) integrate EbA into policies and promote synergy with other approaches;

- 5- lead to the development of common methodologies that can be applied at regional level. For example, studies to assess the natural capital of marine and terrestrial ecosystems and ecosystem services could be undertaken by different actors in each country according to a common methodology agreed upon across the hotspot.
- 6- integrate the dissemination of results with the identification of key audiences and appropriate budgeting.

Further information on strategic directions and KBAs is available in Chapter 14 of the ecosystem profile. The link is available below under "Reference Material".

c. Eligible Geographical Areas

The activities under strategic directions 3 and 4 are eligible for all four countries (Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius and Seychelles).

CSO support and capacity building activities under investment priority 3.1 and 3.2 should include at least one such organization working in one of CEPF's priority KBAs. The list of priority KBAs can be found in chapter 14 of the ecosystem profile (see links in section 6 below).

d. Eligible Budget and Timeframe

The minimum amount for large grants is US\$50,000. Applications with a budget that is inferior to this amount will not be eligible for review.

Large grant projects under this call are expected to start in January 2024 and should not have a time span exceeding 31 December 2026. It is important to mention the duration of the project for which you seek CEPF funding and not the duration of the larger project/programme in which it falls, if applicable.

e. Submission Date

LOIs are due no later than Tuesday, 1 August 2023 – 11:59 pm Eastern Time (Washington D.C.). Applications submitted after the deadline will not be eligible.

f. Language Criteria

Large grants applications can be either in French or English. Other languages will not be considered for review.

3. EVALUATION CRITERIA

For applicants wishing to apply under the strategic direction 3, additional evaluation criteria will be considered. These are:

1. Demonstrated experience (minimum 5 years) as organizational development manager /capacity builder, in particular in:
 - organizational assessment,
 - strategic planning,
 - leadership development,
 - organizational change,
 - capacity building in project design,
 - fundraising,
 - reporting and financial management,
 - and/or multicultural organizational development.
2. Demonstrated successful previous coaching/mentoring approach to organizational development/capacity building of CSOs.
3. A local, established presence or strong regional engagement (of at least 2 years) in the country(ies) of proposed actions.
4. Knowledge of organizational development in non-profit/ biodiversity conservation/ climate change sectors.
5. Demonstrated ability to work at the intersections of gender in the context of organizational development and biodiversity conservation.
6. Demonstrated ability to work at individual, group and institutional levels to build capacity for social change.
7. Demonstrated capacities to organize the logistics related to exchange visits across borders (for investment priority 3.2).
8. Strong network of other providers and consultants.

Applicants' capabilities will need to be clearly established in the LOI on the basis of the above criteria.

The use of national expertise will be appreciated: in Madagascar, considerable experience in engaging local communities and joint management of protected areas; in Mauritius, experience in innovative ecosystem restoration techniques; in the Seychelles, extensive experience in eradicating invasive alien species and in terms of partnerships with the private sector; in the Comoros, a dynamic network of community organizations involving young people; in the French departments, high-level research centers and extensive experience in engaging with local governments.

Projects may support organizations from eligible countries to benefit from training or exchanges outside eligible hotspot countries.

Projects combining the two investment priorities (3.1 and 3.2) of strategic direction 3 will be preferred to those focusing on only one of them.

For all applicants, CEPF encourages applicants to develop joint project proposals with organizations from different sectors to respond to the need for a multi-sectoral and/or multi-regional approach where relevant. Applicants are also strongly encouraged to discuss their project ideas with relevant stakeholders in order to ensure complementarity.

Priority will be given to projects that:

- i. Demonstrate clear climate change risk and how the proposed EbA activity(ies) address(es) this vulnerability.
- ii. Adopt or promote the adoption of EbA approaches that increase the resilience of ecosystems and ecosystem services in priority KBAs.
- iii. Address priorities identified in the national climate change policy or strategy documents of the relevant implementing country(ies).
- iv. Demonstrate positive gender impacts.
- v. Demonstrate effective and efficient use of funds with a budget that is linked to results and planned activities.
- vi. Best match the investment strategy defined in the ecosystem profile.

Other considerations that will strengthen an application include:

- Clear plans to continue the project beyond the proposed end date of the project (and if applicable achieve financial sustainability).
- Support to indigenous and local communities in community-led or co-management activities for EbA and actions that improve land and resource use rights of local communities.
- A strong impact on local communities, thus strengthening their resilience and their ability to protect biodiversity.
- Approval from relevant government authorities through the relevant designated national authorities.

Grants may not be used for:

- Use of child labor or forced labor.
- Construction or rehabilitation of large or complex dams.
- Payment of salaries or salary supplements to government personnel.
- Purchase of firearms or other weapons.

- Activities that promote the trade in or use of any substances listed under the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, or other chemicals or hazardous materials subject to international bans, restrictions or phaseouts due to high toxicity to living organisms, environmental persistence, potential for bioaccumulation, or potential depletion of the ozone layer.
- Purchase and use of pesticides that fall in the World Health Organization classes IA and IB, or in class II ([English](#) / [French](#)) if they are likely to be used by, or be accessible to, lay personnel, farmers or others without training, equipment and facilities to handle, store and apply these products properly.
- Physical resettlement of people (voluntary or involuntary).
- Purchase of land.
- Activities that have the potential to cause adverse impacts to critical habitat.
- Activities that introduce or use potentially invasive, non-indigenous species.
- Removal or alteration of any tangible cultural heritage.

Before awarding any grant, CEPF will screen all projects against [CEPF's safeguard policies](#) in order to prevent any potential negative impacts of the project on humans and the environment.

CEPF will also evaluate the projects based on their integration of gender. CEPF has developed several resources that can help applicants to design, implement and evaluate gender-aware projects ([CEPF Gender Toolkit](#)) and understand what CEPF seeks in a proposal ([CEPF Gender Fact Sheet](#)). Visit the [CEPF and Gender webpage](#) to learn more about how CEPF addresses gender in the projects it supports.

4. HOW TO APPLY

Large grants applicants must respond to the call via the [ConservationGrants](#) electronic portal in either French or English. An automated acknowledgement email will be sent by ConservationGrants confirming that the submission has been received.

CEPF will not accept LOIs via email or any other mechanism.

Existing ConservationGrants users must use their credential information to login. If you have not previously used ConservationGrants, you will need to [register for a new account](#) by clicking on the "New User?" or "First time user? Click here" on the main page. If you encounter any technical difficulties with ConservationGrants, please email conservationgrants@conservation.org.

Questions can be sent to the RIT at cepf.ritmadio2@saf-fjkm.org, by specifying in the subject line the proposed country of implementation (or “multi-country” when relevant).

5. SELECTION AND AWARD PROCESS

The selection process of the LOIs will take approximately six to eight weeks from the submission deadline. LOIs will be evaluated according to the eligibilities of this call. All applicants will receive a notification following the review of their LOI.

Large grant applicants whose LOIs receive a positive review will be invited to attend a master class sometime around September/October 2023 and then submit a full proposal around October/November 2023, again through ConservationGrants. More information on the master class will be provided to each applicant having received a favorable review of their LOI.

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’s institution (the “grantee”). Grants will be denominated in United States dollars and grant agreements will be in English.

An online information session will be held in French on Wednesday, June 21 from 8:00 a.m. to 9:30 a.m. (Washington D.C. time zone) **and in English on Thursday, June 22 from 8:00 a.m. to 9:30 a.m.** (Washington D.C. time zone) to inform all potential candidates and give them the opportunity to ask questions. The sessions will be recorded.

- To register to the [French](#) session
- To register to the [English](#) session

On this [webpage](#), a section containing questions received by potential applicants and related answers given by the RIT will be provided regularly up until the application deadline.

6. REFERENCE MATERIALS

All candidates are invited to consult:

- Ecosystem Profile: [English - French](#)
- Ecosystem-based Adaptation in the Indian Ocean: [English - French](#)
- [Interactive map of eligible KBAs in target countries](#)

Additional resources:

- [Eligibility](#)
- [Before You Apply](#)
- [How to Apply](#)
- [12 Tips for Getting Your Grant Idea Funded](#)
- [CEPF Project Database](#)
- [Life Cycle of a Grant](#)
- [ConservationGrants Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- The WHO Recommended Classification of Pesticides by Hazard
[English](#) - [French](#)