



Call for Letters of Inquiry Mountains of Central Asia Biodiversity Hotspot

Large Grants

Eligible Countries:	Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan
Opening Date:	Monday, 4 October 2021
Closing Date:	Monday, 22 November 2021 10:00: Ashgabat, Dushanbe, Tashkent 11:00: Almaty, Bishkek
Grant Size:	US\$50,000 to US\$150,000

CEPF and WWF Russia, as regional implementation team for the hotspot, are accepting letters of inquiry from non-government organizations, community groups, Indigenous people's organizations, women's groups, private companies and other civil society organizations in relation to the eligible activities and geographies described below. This is the fourth of several large-grant calls for proposals that will be made public through 2024.

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 and the World Bank. A fundamental goal is to ensure civil society is engaged in biodiversity conservation.

The [Mountains of Central Asia Biodiversity Hotspot](#) covers varying proportions of Afghanistan, China, Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. CEPF's niche for investment in the region was formulated through a participatory process that engaged civil society as well as donor and government stakeholders throughout the region. The resulting investment strategy (2019-2024) is documented within the ecosystem profile, available in [English](#) (PDF – 5.5 MB) and [Russian](#) (PDF – 7 MB). This investment strategy is comprised of a series of "strategic directions," broken down into investment priorities outlining the types of activities that are eligible for CEPF funding.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to familiarize themselves with the [CEPF website](#), particularly the sections on [Eligibility](#), [Before You Apply](#) and [How to Apply](#). Potential applicants who are uncertain of the eligibility of their organization or project concept are encouraged to contact the Regional Implementation Team Leader Lizza Protas at lprotas@wwf.ru for clarification.

ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

The scope of this call is limited to the types of activities and locations described below. Letters of inquiry will only be accepted for the following strategic directions and countries:

- **Strategic Directions:** 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 (pages 124-138 of ecosystem profile)
- **Countries:** Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan

Competitive letters of inquiry will focus on any of the four themes highlighted below. However, applicants may propose any concept that aligns with strategic directions, investment priorities, priority species, priority Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) or priority corridors as named in the ecosystem profile. Note, though, that selection of proposals is based, in part, on filling gaps. The highlighted themes below represent the most urgent gaps.

1. Strengthening civil society (Strategic Direction 5) in Uzbekistan

In Uzbekistan, apart from its conservation goals, CEPF seeks to strengthen individual civil society organizations and the collective ability of civil society at large. Thus, applications might discuss:

- A lead applicant working with multiple named or unnamed sub-grantees or partners where goals include improved abilities in operations, finance, fund-raising, management, compliance with donor rules, project planning and technical topics in conservation.
- Strengthening engagement of communities around protected areas and supporting adoption of sustainable livelihoods.
- Raising awareness of the importance of species, protected areas and KBAs among the local population.
- Reducing pressures from over-grazing and illegal hunting through the creation of community associations and partnerships between government, hunting groups and communities.

CEPF groups its work by investment priorities. Applicants wishing to address any of the above bullets should frame their work per any of the following investment priorities:

- 3.3. Support civil society efforts to analyze development plans and programs; evaluate their impact on biodiversity, communities and livelihoods; and propose alternative scenarios and appropriate mitigation measures.

4.2. Promote mainstreaming of conservation into livestock and farm management practices.

5.1. Enable and enhance communication and collaboration between civil society and communities and government agencies responsible for implementing national biodiversity strategies.

5.2. Enhance civil society organizations' capacity for planning, implementation, outreach, sharing of best practice, fundraising and communication.

5.3. Catalyze networking and collaboration among civil society organizations and between them and public sector partners.

5.5. Support action-oriented environmental education.

When addressing any of the above, work should focus on any of the priority KBAs and corridors within Uzbekistan.

2. Sustainable management in large tracts of land (Strategic Direction 3)

Conservation corridors are large-scale spatial units necessary to maintain ecological and evolutionary processes. Corridors in the hotspot were identified with the view of meeting the area requirements of wide-ranging species; maintaining ecological connectivity among KBAs; ensuring the uninterrupted delivery of key ecosystem services; and enhancing resilience of ecosystems to climate change.

Successful letters of inquiry should be based on biological considerations and economic and infrastructure development trends in the priority corridors, and engagement of civil society in landscape-scale conservation actions.

Applicants should frame their work per any of the following investment priorities:

3.1. Develop projects and protocols for ecological restoration to improve connectivity of KBAs.

3.2. Evaluate and integrate biodiversity and ecosystem service values into land-use and development planning.

3.3. Support civil society efforts to analyze development plans and programs; evaluate their impact on biodiversity, communities and livelihoods; and propose alternative scenarios and appropriate mitigating measures.

5.1. Enable and enhance communication and collaboration between civil society, communities and government agencies responsible for implementing national biodiversity strategies.

When addressing any of the above, work should focus on any of the corridors designated in the hotspot.

3. Improved management of KBAs and corridors that are not formally protected (Strategic Direction 4)

Applicants should frame their work per any of the following investment priorities:

4.1. Engage hunting associations, tourism operators and mining companies in conservation management and in establishing valuation mechanisms for biodiversity and ecosystem services.

4.2. Promote mainstreaming of conservation into livestock and farm management practices.

4.3. Promote sustainable forest certification and value chains for non-timber forest products.

4.4. Engage with the government and private sector to incorporate site safeguards into infrastructure development.

4.5. Engage the media as a tool to increase awareness about globally threatened species and KBAs and inform public debate of conservation issues.

4. Species-specific projects targeting one or more of the following species (Strategic Direction 1)

- Pike asp (*Aspiolucius esocinus*)
- Amudarya shovelnose sturgeon (*Pseudoscaphirhynchus kaufmanni*)
- Bukhara deer (*Cervus hanglu*), especially projects that have synergies with the recently revised Convention on Migratory Species/Central Asian Mammals Initiative (CMS/CAMI) Work Programme for the Bukhara deer (2021-2026)

Projects focusing on other priority species are also eligible, but we particularly welcome projects conserving the species named above.

Applicants wishing to address any of the above bullets should frame their work per any of the following investment priorities:

1.1. Improve enforcement and develop incentives and alternatives for nature users and collectors.

1.2. Promote improved regulation of collecting, hunting and fishing.

1.3. Support the development of species-specific reserves and conservation programs.

1.5. Maintain populations of priority species beyond those solely affected by collection, hunting, fishing, grazing and farming.

ELIGIBLE GEOGRAPHIC AREAS

CEPF focuses its work on conservation outcomes, seeking to protect species, sites and corridors. The core of this work is around KBAs, which are the refuges of globally threatened species and around which larger corridors are based. Chapter 4 of the ecosystem profile lists all species, KBAs and corridors in the region. Chapter 12 lists the priority species, KBAs and corridors. Unless otherwise noted, applicants should

focus on the KBAs and corridors identified in this announcement (above) and in Chapter 12 of the ecosystem profile.

This call for proposals is open only for projects working in Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. Table 12.2 of the ecosystem profile lists **priority KBAs**. Table 4.5 (Kazakhstan), Table 4.6 (Kyrgyzstan), Table 4.7 (Tajikistan), Table 4.8 (Turkmenistan) and Table 4.9 (Uzbekistan) of the ecosystem profile list all KBAs in each country, both priority and non-priority.

- Applicants that submit proposals for **priority KBAs, from the eligible countries**, and that also address the investment priorities named above, will receive the highest consideration from reviewers.
- Applicants that submit proposals for work in non-priority KBAs from the eligible countries must specifically address one of the **investment priorities** named above to receive any consideration from reviewers. (For example, we will consider work in non-priority locations if the work then addresses a priority species.)

The ecosystem profile lists all KBAs and corridors with specific names and identification/code numbers. **Applicants are advised to name specific KBAs and corridors by name and number in your letter of inquiry.**

We are willing to consider proposals addressing urgent conservation needs that take place in non-priority KBAs or non-priority corridors. However, such projects must still address the investment priorities named above.

BUDGET AND TIMEFRAME

Letters of inquiry must have a budget between US\$20,000 and US\$150,000 to be eligible for consideration.

Projects are expected to start approximately six to nine months from the release of this call for letters of inquiry. CEPF projects are typically 18 to 24 months in duration, but all work must be complete by June 2024.

GENERAL GUIDANCE

Project proposals should be built on **biodiversity conservation as a fundamental component** and should demonstrate positive impacts on the conservation status of biodiversity.

Where relevant, applicants are encouraged to submit letters of inquiry that **harmonize with existing national or regional initiatives**. Synergies with other organizations are also eligible, with one lead organization submitting the application alongside sub-grantee project partners.

Applicants based outside of eligible countries may submit a letter of inquiry as long as the project deliverables are focused on the conservation need within an eligible country or countries.

International organizations are encouraged to involve local organizations or communities as project partners, or explain how local stakeholders will be engaged as part of project implementation.

Applicants are advised to read the **investment strategy chapter of the ecosystem profile** (Chapter 12) to ensure full understanding of the strategic directions and investment priorities.

HOW TO APPLY

Applicants must respond to the call via the [ConservationGrants](#) electronic portal. CEPF will not accept letters of inquiry via email or any other mechanism.

If you have not previously used ConservationGrants, you will need to [register for a new account](#). If you encounter any technical difficulties with ConservationGrants, please email conservationgrants@conservation.org.

SELECTION AND AWARD PROCESS

ConservationGrants will automatically confirm receipt of all letters of inquiry that are properly submitted within the system by the closing date.

The letter of inquiry review process will take approximately eight weeks from the closing date. All applicants will receive a response from CEPF following review of their submission. The review committee will select the strongest letters of inquiry that meet the eligibility criteria.

Applicants whose letter of inquiry receives a positive review will be invited to submit a full proposal, again through ConservationGrants. 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 organization (the "grantee"). Grants will be denominated in United States dollars and grant agreements will be in English.

REFERENCE MATERIALS

All applicants are advised to review the CEPF Investment Strategy for the Mountains of Central Asia within the ecosystem profile (Chapter 12). This provides more detail on the types of activities CEPF will fund under each investment priority:

- [Full Ecosystem Profile – English](#) (PDF - 5.5 MB)
- [Full Ecosystem Profile – Russian](#) (PDF - 7 MB)
- [Ecosystem Profile Technical Summary – English](#) (PDF - 2 MB)
- [Ecosystem Profile Technical Summary – Russian](#) (PDF - 1.5 MB)
- [Ecosystem Profile Visual Summary – English](#) (PDF - 22 MB)
- [Ecosystem Profile Visual Summary – Russian](#) (PDF - 21 MB)

CEPF is committed to integrating gender into its portfolio. Applicants should design projects and write proposals that consider gender issues in the achievement of their conservation impacts.

CEPF has developed several resources that can help applicants to design, implement and evaluate gender-aware projects ([CEPF Gender Toolkit](#), PDF – 359 KB) and understand what CEPF seeks in a proposal ([CEPF Gender Fact Sheet](#), PDF – 352 KB). Visit the [CEPF and Gender webpage](#) to learn more about how CEPF addresses gender in the projects it supports.

The integration of gender in your project will be a factor in evaluation.

Additional resources:

- [Before You Apply](#)
- [12 Tips for Getting Your Grant Idea Funded](#)
- [CEPF Project Database](#)
- [Life Cycle of a Grant](#)
- [ConservationGrants Frequently Asked Questions](#)

CONTACT

Before applying, applicants are encouraged to discuss project ideas and eligibility with the regional implementation team program officer in your country. Please initiate this discussion by contacting the team leader, Lizza Protas, at lprotas@wwf.ru. Please also see the regional implementation team website, www.mca.earth.

Technical questions regarding the ConservationGrants online system should be emailed to conservationgrants@conservation.org.

NOTE ON CLOSING DATE AND TIME

ConservationGrants is an online database that uses a strict electronic system for closing the period in which it will accept submissions. The ConservationGrants portal will become electronically closed to all submissions at the following time:

Washington, D.C., USA	22 November 2021	00:00:00
GMT	22 November 2021	05:00
Ashgabat, Dushanbe, Tashkent	22 November 2021	10:00 (10 a.m., local time)
Almaty, Bishkek	22 November 2021	11:00 (11 a.m., local time)