CRITICAL ECOSYSTEM PARTNERSHIP FUND

Regional Implementation Team
Terms of Reference and Selection Process

Excerpted from Operational Manual 4.2 (Rev)

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 (or equivalent) to perform the roles of Team Leader and Small Grants Manager.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

The RIT will operate under standard Terms of Reference (TOR) approved by the CEPF Donor Council. These TOR have been refined several times since CEPF was established, and provide a comprehensive description of the duties to be performed by the RIT. There are eight components to the TOR, each with a set of functions. The RIT may place varying levels of emphasis to each function, according to the focus of the investment strategy and the local operating context.

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 with other donors investing in the hotspot and opportunities to leverage CEPF funds with local and international donors and governments investing in the hotspot.
4. Engage conservation and development stakeholders to ensure collaboration and coordination.
5. Build partnerships/networks among grantees in order to achieve the objectives of the ecosystem profile.
6. Respond to CEPF Secretariat requests for information, travel, hosting of donors and attendance at a range of events to promote CEPF.

Component 2. Support the integration 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. With the input of the CEPF Communications Team, develop a communications strategy for the investment.
2. Communicate regularly with CEPF and partners about the portfolio through face-to-face meetings, phone calls, digital communications (website,

electronic newsletter and/or social media) and reports to events, forums and panels in alignment with the communications strategy.
3. Support the CEPF Secretariat to obtain photographs and video for use in communications materials, and coordinate with the CEPF Communications Team to obtain associated legal documentation (such as use licenses). Aim to provide at least one good-quality image for each project.
4. Translate selected materials into hotspot languages.
5. Monitor media coverage and promptly inform and coordinate with the Grant Director and CEPF Communications Team in regard to any controversy related to CEPF projects, grantees or donors and any media coverage of the controversy.
6. Prepare a range of communications products to ensure that the key information provided in the ecosystem profiles is accessible to grant applicants and other stakeholders.
7. Disseminate portfolio results via multiple and appropriate media in alignment with the communications strategy.
8. Share story ideas and strong results, and provide information and/or assistance to the CEPF Communications Team as needed.
9. Conduct exchange visits with other RITs to share lessons and best practices, in consultation with the CEPF Secretariat.
10. In coordination with the CEPF Secretariat, ensure communication with local representatives of CEPF's donors.

Component 4. Build the capacity of civil society.

Functions

1. 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.
2. Build institutional capacity of grantees to ensure efficient and effective project implementation and financial management
3. Build capacity of grantees, on an as-needs basis, to comply with CEPF's environmental and social standards and gender policy.
4. Promote collaboration among civil society, government and private sector actors.

Component 5. Support the CEPF Secretariat process for solicitation and review of proposals for large grants (above a threshold amount of between US$20,000 and US$50,000).

Functions

1. Publicize the contents of the ecosystem profile and information about CEPF's online standardized large grant application process.
2. Promote availability of funds via public announcements, print and electronic media, and applicant outreach events to publicize individual calls for Letters of Inquiry beyond their posting on the CEPF website.

3. With the CEPF Secretariat, establish schedules for the release of solicitations and grant awards.
4. Evaluate Letters of Inquiry.
5. Facilitate technical review of applications, including external reviews (e.g., via panels of experts or professional peer relationships with individuals in relevant fields).
6. Assist the Grant Director to obtain external reviews of all applications over $250,000.
7. Communicate with applicants throughout the application process to ensure they are informed and fully understand the process.
8. Support the CEPF Secretariat in obtaining technical and financial documents necessary for award of a grant.
9. Mentor and guide applicants in project design (e.g., via remote electronic means, in person, via classroom-type workshops on proposal preparation).
10. Review proposal drafts prior to final grant award.
11. Following established procedures codified in the CEPF Operational Manual and reflected in the online application system (ConservationGrants), decide jointly with the CEPF Secretariat on the award of all large grant applications.

Component 6. Manage a program of small grants (up to a threshold amount of between US$20,000 and US$50,000), in compliance with CEPF’s operational manual.

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 applicant eligibility and capacity to comply with CEPF funding terms.
4. Convene a panel of experts to evaluate proposals.
5. Screen applications against CEPF’s environmental and social standards, and provide guidance to applicants on compliance with applicable standards.
6. Decide on the award of small grants and manage the contracting of these awards.
7. Manage disbursement of funds to grantees.
8. Ensure small-grant compliance with CEPF funding terms.
9. Develop a monitoring plan for the small grant portfolio to ensure outreach, verify compliance and support capacity building.
10. Monitor, track, and document small-grant technical and financial performance.
11. Maintain accurate and up-to-date records, including for CEPF monitoring tools, on all small grants awarded on the CEPF grants management database (ConservationGrants).
12. 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.

13. Ensure that grantees complete regular technical and financial progress reports.

Component 7. Monitor and evaluate the impact of 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 for CEPF's global monitoring indicators, making use of CEPF monitoring tools and ConservationGrants.
3. Ensure quality of performance data submitted by large and small grantees.
4. Verify completion of products, deliverables, and short-term impacts by grantees, as described in their proposals.
5. Support grantees to comply with requirements for completion of tracking tools, including the Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool, Civil Society Tracking Tool, and Gender Tracking Tool.
6. In coordination with the CEPF Secretariat, conduct a mid-term assessment and a final assessment of portfolio progress, and assist with report preparation.

Component 8. Support the CEPF Secretariat to monitor the large grants portfolio and ensure compliance with CEPF funding terms.

Functions

1. Support the CEPF Secretariat to ensure that large grantees comply with CEPF funding terms, including by visiting grantees on an as-needs basis to establish facts, follow-up on recommendations, and provide support and guidance with financial and programmatic management.
2. Provide support and guidance to grantees, on an as-needs basis, for the implementation of measures necessary to comply with CEPF's environmental and social standards.
3. Participate in at least two supervision missions each year, involving visits by the CEPF Secretariat to monitor financial and programmatic performance of the RIT and selected grants.

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 RIT[1]. RIT selection in hotspots where there is an

[1] 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").

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 a 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.

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.

<u>Process for hotspots with an incumbent RIT</u>
For hotspots where there was a previous investment by CEPF with a 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:

The independent evaluation concludes that the incumbent has performed well;
The incumbent is willing to continue in the role of RIT;
The review of the institutional landscape does not identify any potential competitor organizations that are interested in performing the RIT role; and
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.

<u>Annex 1</u> - 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	
2	**Organizational Experience: Management**	**Points:**
2.1	Does the organization demonstrate experience managing programs of similar size, scale, and complexity as that of the Regional Implementation	
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	
3	**Personnel**	**Points:**
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	
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	
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	
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:**
5.1	Does the applicant address all components of the RIT as described in the terms of	
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	

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:**
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	
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	
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	
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	
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	
	Total	**100**