

Caribbean Islands Biodiversity Hotspot

Information for CEPF Applicants

Frequently Asked Questions

General Questions

- **What is CEPF?**

⇒ Established in 2000, the [Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund \(CEPF\)](#) is a joint initiative of l'Agence Française de Développement, Conservation International, the European Union, Fondation Hans Wilsdorf, the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the Government of Japan, and the World Bank. Following a first investment in the Caribbean Islands (2010-2016), CEPF returns to the region for a second investment through a five-year programme (2021-2026) of grant-making and capacity building. For more information, visit the [CEPF website](#).

- **What is the Regional Implementation Team (RIT)?**

⇒ The [Caribbean Natural Resources Institute \(CANARI\)](#) is the Regional Implementation Team (RIT) for the CEPF Caribbean investment. The RIT supports civil society organisations to design, implement and replicate successful conservation projects in line with CEPF's strategy for the region, as outlined in the CEPF Ecosystem Profile. The RIT also manages the CEPF small grant mechanism, monitors and evaluates all grants and supports the CEPF Secretariat in portfolio level monitoring and evaluation. Visit the [RIT project page](#) for more information.

- **What types of grants can I apply for?**

⇒ You can apply for two types of grants:

- *Large grants*: > US\$50,000
- *Small grants*: between US\$5,000 and US\$50,000

- **What are the eligible countries/geographies?**

⇒ The targeted countries under CEPF Caribbean Islands Phase II investment are Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. Eligible countries and geographies are different for each call for proposals. Review each call for proposals document to confirm the sites and conservation corridors eligible under the call. The full list of priority sites and conservation corridors targeted during the investment period is available [here](#).

- **Is my organisation eligible?**

⇒ CEPF was formed to champion biodiversity by delivering the financial resources of global donors to civil society groups, who then carry out the conservation work themselves. From

CEPF's perspective, civil society includes nongovernmental organisations, communities, Indigenous people's organisations, universities and small businesses, among others. To learn more about the eligibility criteria, visit the [CEPF website](#).

- **Can an organisation with headquarters outside of the eligible countries apply?**
 - ⇒ Yes, however, proposed activities must be carried out in the [priority sites and conservation corridors](#). Additionally, letters of support from local organisations will be required as part of the submission. As CEPF aims to build the capacity of local civil society, it pays particular attention to how groups based outside the hotspot will support this objective.
- **Can individuals apply?**
 - ⇒ No, CEPF only provides support to registered civil society organisations. Individuals must be affiliated with a registered organisation.
- **Can a single individual assist several organisations with preparing and submitting LOIs?**
 - ⇒ Yes, however, the applicant must be the organisation and not the individual who assisted.
- **Does CEPF fund research?**
 - ⇒ CEPF does not fund academic research, including PhD research. Research components of projects must be action-oriented and must feed into on-the-ground conservation action and management.
- **Does CEPF cover salary expenses?**
 - ⇒ Yes, CEPF grants will cover salary costs for positions necessary to fulfil project goals. The percentage of salary covered must be commensurate with the level of effort required to fulfil project goals.
- **Does CEPF cover capital works and infrastructure?**
 - ⇒ CEPF will not support project activities that include large-scale construction and infrastructural works. Small-scale construction, such as for gazebos, camp sites and building repairs or activities such as trail maintenance may be considered if they are directly related to the reduction of threats to biodiversity or other CEPF investment priorities. Please consult with a member of the RIT if your project will include construction.
- **Can grants for capacity building include the purchase of remote sensing equipment needed for monitoring, such as drones or camera traps?**
 - ⇒ Yes, however, equipment purchases must align with CEPF guidelines, requiring thorough justification to demonstrate their essential role in implementing the proposed project.
- **Can the same organisation apply for several grants/respond to several calls?**
 - ⇒ Yes. There is no limit on the number of proposals an organisation can submit; just be sure your organisation has the capacity to implement what it is proposing to do. If you submit more than one concurrent letter of inquiry (LOI), please ensure they are for separate projects and not several elements or components of the same project. Visit the [CEPF website](#) for future call for proposals announcements.

- **Can an organisation that has already submitted a small grant proposal upgrade it to a large grant?**
 - ⇒ The application processes for large and small grants are different. If you have submitted a small grant letter of inquiry (LOI) to the RIT and want to upgrade it to a large grant submission, you can only change your small grant proposal to a large grant submission during an open call for proposals. You will have to create a profile in ConservationGrants and complete a LOI there. To create a profile in ConservationGrants, please click [here](#). If you find yourself thinking your project may be better suited as a large grant submission after you have completed and submitted a small grant LOI, please contact the RIT to discuss.
- **Can a small grant be a first step towards a large grant on the same conservation issue later on?**
 - ⇒ Yes, a small grant can pave the way for a future large grant on the same conservation issue. A small grant can be a starting point, allowing organisations to demonstrate proof of concept, success, efficiency, and credibility, which can strengthen future applications for larger funding opportunities.
- **Can government agencies be partners in CEPF-funded projects?**
 - ⇒ Yes, partnerships are encouraged. However, funds cannot be allocated to, or administered by, government agencies. Parastatal agencies, such as the National Trusts, are ALSO eligible for CEPF funding once they can receive funds directly and demonstrate that they have independent and exclusive control of their funds.
- **Are joint projects eligible?**
 - ⇒ Yes, partnerships and collaborative projects are eligible for support; however, one organisation must take the role of lead applicant.
- **Are there any ineligible activities?**
 - ⇒ Yes, please refer to the list of ineligible activities on the CEPF website: <https://www.cepf.net/grants/eligibility>.
- **Can the project respond to several Strategic Directions?**
 - ⇒ Projects must respond to one primary strategic direction out of the five identified for CEPF's second investment. However, implementation of your project can address other strategic directions, which may be listed after the identified primary strategic direction. Remember, each call for proposals document will specify which strategic directions are targeted under the call.
- **Can one organisation apply to work in two different countries under the same strategic direction?**
 - ⇒ Yes, such an approach can support implementation of a unified strategy that addresses common issues or threats in both countries. It can result in streamlined coordination, resource sharing or the leveraging of expertise across borders. However, it is important for multi-country projects to adapt the approach to suit the specific needs and contexts of each country, while maintaining a coherent overarching strategy.
- **Can a project be national in scope, or must it be restricted to the eligible KBAs?**
 - ⇒ National approaches can be considered when dealing with the enabling environment for biodiversity conservation (e.g., policy issues), however, direct conservation action must take place in the eligible KBAs. The benefits of national approaches to the CEPF's target KBAs must also be clear.

- **Are transnational projects between Haiti and the Dominican Republic allowed?**
 - ⇒ Transnational/regional projects are eligible for funding. However, please consult RIT for guidance before submitting an application for transnational work.
- **Can an organisation that has already submitted a proposal for a specific KBA, submit another proposal for the same KBA?**
 - ⇒ Yes, prospective applicants can submit as many proposals as they have the reasonable capacity to implement within any given KBA.
- **Can a species conservation project be multi-country and/or multi-priority site, particularly if focused on the same endangered species?**
 - ⇒ Yes, projects can focus on multiple countries and/or multiple sites if focused on the same Appendix 9 species. In projects such as this however, it is important to ensure there are strong in-country partnerships for local ownership and continuity.
- **Can funds be used for conserving a species away from the KBA?**
 - ⇒ *Ex situ* conservation may be supported if for a CEPF priority species (see Appendix 9 of the [Ecosystem Profile](#)) and is linked directly to an eligible KBA, for instance, captive breeding for reintroduction in the KBA.
- **Is co-funding from a donor cluster allowed?**
 - ⇒ Yes, co-funding is allowed and welcomed.
- **Are livelihood activities implemented in buffer zones eligible?**
 - ⇒ Yes. CEPF supports communities to develop sustainable livelihoods in and around priority sites and conservation corridors, as part of its strategy under Strategic Direction 2 for the Caribbean Islands (see the [Ecosystem Profile](#), Chapter 13). Livelihoods projects are expected to demonstrate direct tangible benefits for biodiversity and communities and support threat reduction.
- **What types of capacity building activities are supported/eligible for funding?**
 - ⇒ CEPF supports institutional and technical capacity building. Institutional capacity building should help organisations become stronger and more effective in their operations and management systems. Technical capacity building should help organisations mitigate the threats prioritised for intervention under the current CEPF investment. Areas of interest for technical capacity building include integrating climate change responses into conservation, ecosystem-based adaptation and planning, invasive species control and eradication. *For guidance on specific topics of interest during an open call, please refer to the call for proposals guidance document.*

CEPF is committed to supporting capacity building as an integral part of projects aligned with any of the Strategic Directions. Local (Caribbean) organisations are encouraged to request necessary capacity strengthening that complements their project objectives.

Academic degree or diploma programs are not eligible for support by CEPF.

- **Are capacity building projects benefitting staff from government organisations (e.g., park rangers) eligible for support?**
 - ⇒ CEPF is a fund for civil society and so primarily channels its funding towards civil society organisations (CSOs) as the main direct beneficiaries, including for capacity building initiatives. However, CEPF recognises that certain training provided to CSOs may also benefit government agency staff. In such cases, government personnel participation in CEPF-funded training is welcomed, provided they engage in training primarily benefiting civil society organisations and train alongside CSO representatives. While CEPF can cover associated training costs, it does not provide salaries or stipends for government agency personnel.
- **Do proposals to support capacity building and training have to be carried out in the priority sites or can they extend to a wider area/group of stakeholders?**
 - ⇒ Capacity building and training activities can involve a wider group of stakeholders, however, the main targets for such activities must be stakeholders from/working in the priority sites. Technical training must support a reduction of threats in the CEPF priority KBAs and organisational training must strengthen the operations and management of CSOs working in the CEPF priority KBAs.
- **Is there a recommended timeframe for the duration of the projects?**
 - ⇒ There is no prescribed timeframe for CEPF projects. Applicants should ensure their project timeframes are realistic for what they hope to accomplish and are neither artificially long nor short. The current CEPF investment in the Caribbean Islands will end in July 2026, therefore, all projects must be completed by March 2026, with final reports submitted by July.
- **Is there a character limit to the sections of the LOI forms?**
 - ⇒ No, you can write as much as you want but we encourage you to be precise, yet concise.
- **In what languages can proposals be submitted?**
 - ⇒ Proposals can be submitted in any of the three working languages of the Caribbean Islands Biodiversity Hotspot project – English, French and Spanish.
- **Do sections of the LOI forms need to be supported with references?**
 - ⇒ While not mandatory, where relevant this can be helpful. For example, the “Project Rationale” and “Project Approach” sections can sometimes be strengthened with references (e.g., scientific papers, white papers, grey papers). Any acceptable international referencing style e.g., Chicago Manual, APA, Harvard, etc., can be used.
- **What criteria are used to evaluate projects?**
 - ⇒ Proposals will be evaluated based on six criteria, for a total of 100 points.

Criteria	Scoring
Strategic importance: How well does the project contribute to achieving the priorities of the CEPF investment strategy of the ecosystem profile?	35 points
Project approach and methodology: Are the project approach and methodology likely to achieve the project’s stated objectives and (where applicable) contribute strongly to sustainable conservation outcomes?	20 points

Applicant capacity: Does the applicant have the capacity and experience to implement this project effectively and efficiently, given its scale and complexity?	15 points
Potential to strengthen Caribbean civil society capacity: Will the project help to strengthen Caribbean civil society organisations?	10 points
Sustainability: Will the project results be sustained beyond the phase of CEPF funding?	10 points
Budget: Is the proposed funding request commensurate and reasonable given the project's scale, objectives and likely cost of the work?	10 points

- **Who reviews the proposals?**

- ⇒ Large grants are reviewed by the CEPF Secretariat, the RIT and the Regional Advisory Committee¹ (RAC). Projects with a budget of US\$250,000 or more are subject to an additional external review. Small grants are reviewed by the RIT and the RAC.

- **How do I apply?**

- ⇒ There is a distinct application process and portal for each type of grant. All applications must be completed and submitted via the respective portals, the [RIT/CANARI Call for Proposals Page](#) for small grants and [ConservationGrants](#) for large grants. For more information, visit the [CEPF website](#).

- **When will I receive a decision on my submission?**

- ⇒ The review process is comprehensive and can take some time. Please allow for three to four months to hear back from CEPF and the RIT.

Large Grants (> US\$50,000)

- **Where do I apply?**

- ⇒ You must complete and submit your application on [ConservationGrants](#). For more information on the application process for large grants, visit the [CEPF website](#).

- **Is there a maximum budget that should not be exceeded?**

- ⇒ While there is no formal limit, we recommend that you ensure that the amount you are requesting matches with the proposed activities. Please note, however, that projects with budgets of US\$250,000 and above will undergo additional screening.

- **Are printable copies of the application form available to pre-fill before entering the information in ConservationGrants?**

- ⇒ The CEPF application process is fully electronic and you must complete and submit your application via [ConservationGrants](#). For information purposes, we have extracted the Letter of Inquiry (LOI) text from ConservationGrants, which you can download and review [here](#), prior to completing the form online.

¹ The RAC is composed of experts in biodiversity conservation, acting in an advisory capacity.

Small Grants (US\$5,000 and US\$50,000)

- **Where do I apply?**

⇒ You must complete and submit your application through an online form on the [RIT/CANARI Call for Proposals Page](#). To learn more about the process and submit your application, visit the [dedicated page](#).

- **Are printable copies of the application form available to pre-fill before entering the information online?**

⇒ You can download printable versions of the form in [English](#) and [Spanish](#). To download, click on “File”, then “Download” and select “Microsoft Word (.docx)”. **However, you must complete and submit your application on the [dedicated website](#).**

Other recommendations

- CEPF is keen to support projects that complement its existing portfolio of large and small grants and avoid duplication. For more information on the projects that have been approved so far, please consult the ‘CEPF Caribbean Islands Biodiversity Hotspot List of Grantees’, which is available on the [RIT project page](#), under the “Highlights” section.
- Each project idea is unique, and we highly recommend that you get in contact with the RIT before submitting your application, to ensure it aligns with CEPF’s strategic priorities.

We are here to help!

Contact the **CEPF Caribbean Islands RIT** at caribbeanrit@canari.org.

RIT Staff Languages: English, Spanish, French

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