



Call for Letters of Inquiry Mountains of Central Asia Biodiversity Hotspot

Large Grants

Eligible Countries:	Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan
Opening Date:	Tuesday, 15 November 2022
Closing Date:	Tuesday, 10 January 2023 10:00 a.m.: Ashgabat, Dushanbe, Tashkent 11:00 a.m.: 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 consider that CEPF recently completed a mid-term assessment of its existing portfolio. Applicants should consider the results and recommendations of that assessment, including specifically:

1. Ensuring the results of any existing grants in the region, each of which is listed [here](#).
2. Biophysical monitoring of existing grants, including for example: (1) Are the trees planted by grantees surviving? (2) Are grazing plans being implemented, and if so, are they making a difference in water quality or native grass diversity?
3. Socio-economic monitoring of existing grants, including for example: (1) Are grants that promised improved livelihoods for stakeholders leading to such benefits, such as healthier livestock?
4. Institutionalization of grants that have worked to improve the management of key biodiversity areas. By example, several grants have tried to draft improved grazing plans, have tried to strengthen existing protected areas, or have tried to create new protected areas. Are these plans official? Approved by appropriate authorities? Agreed to by relevant stakeholders? Are the plans being implemented?
5. Institutionalization of grants that have worked to conserve species, including formalization of species action plans, implementation of those plans, and monitoring of those plans.
6. Any program that builds on geographic clusters – two or more grants with the same or different technical emphases but that are working on the same geographic area.
7. Any program that builds networks across grantees addressing similar topics in different locations, including, among others, livestock management, grazing, nurseries, particular species, or community conservation areas.

8. Formal designation of new state-managed protected areas, or expansion of existing state-managed protected areas, of at least 5,000 hectares in size.
9. Programs that work to conserve the Great bustard (*Otis tarda tarda*), Goitered gazelle (*Gazella subgutterosa*) provided the target populations are in the biodiversity hotspot.
10. Projects that address any of the following KBAs.
 - Tajik Babatag (TJK13) and its cross-border neighbor, Uzbek Babatag (UZB36).
 - Tajik KBAs on the border with Afghanistan, given the challenge of working in the latter country, such as Ayvaj (TJK16), Tgovaya Balka (TJK17), and Tajik Karatau (TJK18) beyond those named in the Ecosystem Profile.
 - Other KBAs in Tajikistan including the Turkestan Mountains (TJK4), Gazimalik (TK14), Sarsaryak (TJK15), and Tavildara (TJK26).
 - Sary-Djaz (KGZ30), on the Kyrgyz border of China.
 - Kyrgyzstan's neighboring Naryn State Reserve, Salkyn Tor National Park, and Karatal-Japyryk Nature Reserve, which are part of the Central Tien Shan corridor and meet various KBA criteria.
11. Within Strategic Direction 5 on capacity building, clearly support is needed in Uzbekistan, and to a lesser extent in Tajikistan, to develop the ability of partners to conceptualize projects per international standards, as well as addressing basic issues such as registration and permits to receive foreign funds.
12. Within SD 5, organizations in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan need to develop skills on conservation planning and methodologies (e.g., KBAs).
13. Grants in Turkmenistan that build partnerships between civil society and the government around natural resource management topics in CEPF-named KBAs, including studies of unique biomes like caves, animal tracking, tourism, sustainable grazing, where the primary goal is still capacity building of the CSO.
14. There are several networks that merit possible support, including those directly related to CEPF species and KBAs (e.g., on snow leopards, on tulips), those that work on parallel issues (e.g., EIAs, solid waste, toxic waste), and human rights and citizens groups that organize around sustainable land use.
15. There are multiple opportunities for raising public awareness and putting conservation issues into the public sphere, including in Uzbekistan about the fundamental reasons for conservation, and in all the hotspot countries that speak to socio-economic needs (e.g., how water security and disaster mitigation relate to improved KBA management).

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.

- 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\$50,000 and US\$150,000 to be eligible for consideration.

Projects are expected to start approximately 5-7 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 February 2025.

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	10 January 2023	00:00:00
GMT	10 January 2023	05:00
Ashgabat, Dushanbe, Tashkent	10 January 2023	10:00 (10 a.m., local time)
Almaty, Bishkek	10 January 2023	11:00 (11 a.m., local time)