



Call for Letters of Inquiry

Small Grants – restricted call*

Guinean Forests of West Africa Biodiversity Hotspot

- Eligible Countries:** Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Liberia, Sierra Leone
- Opening Date:** Friday 12 July 2024
- Closing Date:** Friday 2 August 2024, 23.59 GMT
- Project Budget:** Maximum USD 50,000 per grant
- Project Timeframe:** Projects can start from 1 October 2024, and must be completed by 30 September 2025 (so they should be no longer than 12 months)

CEPF and BirdLife International, serving as the Regional Implementation Team (RIT) for the hotspot, are inviting proposals in the form of letters of inquiry (LOIs) for small grants from civil society organizations in the Guinean Forests of West Africa biodiversity hotspot.

This funding is part of a bridging program between CEPF's previous, now-concluded investment in the region from July 2016 to August 2022 and a new program, currently in design and anticipated to begin in early 2025. CEPF refers to the new program as GFWA III.

When the previous program ended, stakeholders gathered as part of a final assessment process that identified, among other things, urgent needs for immediate funding. Now that CEPF has secured additional funding, it can use some of this to support these immediate needs. This call for LOIs is only the first of several anticipated over the coming years.

*** This call for proposals is restricted**

This call for LOIs is purposefully limited. Grants will only be made in Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Liberia, and Sierra Leone. Interested parties from other countries should note that there will be other opportunities beginning in 2025.

This call for LOIs is further limited only to recipients of CEPF grants under the previous phase of investment. The groups listed below are noted for their experience implementing grants per CEPF's standards and for being in a position to address immediate needs. Interested organizations from these four countries that are not listed below will be able to respond to other calls for LOIs beginning in 2025.

Under this restricted call for proposals, only the following organisations can apply:

- Centre d'Etudes, Formation, Conseils et Audits (Côte d'Ivoire)
- Conservation des Espèces Marines (Côte d'Ivoire)
- Nature Metrics (Côte d'Ivoire)

- SOS-Forêts (Côte d’Ivoire)
- A Rocha Ghana (Ghana)
- Ghana Wildlife Society (Ghana)
- Hen Mpoano (Ghana)
- Noé - Man&Nature (Ghana)
- Presbyterian University College Ghana (Ghana)
- ResourceTrust Network (Ghana)
- Society for the Conservation of Nature of Liberia (Liberia)
- Wild Chimpanzee Foundation (Liberia)
- Conservation Society of Sierra Leone (Sierra Leone)
- Muloma Women’s Development Association (Sierra Leone)
- FFI (only for Capacity Development projects under SD4 – see table 1)
- West Africa Civil Society Institute (only for Capacity Development projects under SD4 – see table 1)

Eligible applicants are advised to read this call for proposals document in full.

BACKGROUND

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

The Guinean Forests Biodiversity Hotspot covers 621,705 square kilometers and can be divided into two sub-regions: the Upper Guinean Forests—from Guinea in the west, through Sierra Leone, Liberia, Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana, Togo and, marginally, into Benin—and the Lower Guinean Forests—from much of southern Nigeria, into south-west Cameroon, and São Tomé & Príncipe and the offshore islands of Equatorial Guinea. The Guinean Forests support impressive levels of biodiversity, having high levels of species richness and endemism. It also faces many ongoing threats to biodiversity that have resulted in the loss of more than 85 percent of the native vegetation cover.

CEPF is currently engaged in a process to update the CEPF Ecosystem Profile, which will be the basis of a new 5-year investment in the Guinean Forests of West Africa (2025-2029). At the same time, CEPF wishes to kickstart its grant-making programme in the region, building on the results achieved by CEPF grantees during the previous investment phase (see also the performance report [2016-2022, PDF 20 MB](#)). For this current call for proposals, CEPF will still use the 2015 Ecosystem Profile ([in English PDF – 5.2 MB](#) and [in French PDF – 5.4 MB](#)).

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

This is a restricted call for proposals.

- Only those organisations that are listed above are eligible to apply.
- Each eligible organisation can only submit one (1) Letter of Inquiry under this call for proposals.

ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

The scope of this call is limited to the types of activities described below.

Table 1: Eligible Strategic Directions and Investment Priorities

Strategic Direction	Investment Priorities
1. Empower local communities to engage in sustainable management of 40 priority sites and consolidate ecological connectivity at the landscape scale	<p>1.1 Strengthen the elaboration and/or implementation of land-use planning, land tenure and forestry reforms to facilitate good governance in the management of community and private reserves and concessions.</p> <p>1.2 Promote preparation and implementation of participatory management plans that support stakeholder collaboration in protected area management.</p> <p>1.3 Demonstrate sustainable livelihood/job creation activities for local communities that will act as incentives for the conservation of priority sites (e.g. domestication of wildlife species, sustainable logging from locally controlled forests, harvesting of NTFPs, sustainable agriculture, etc.)</p>
2. Mainstream biodiversity conservation into public policy and private sector practice in the nine conservation corridors, at local, sub-national and national levels	<p>2.1 Conduct policy-relevant research, analysis and outreach that informs and influences the development of national government conservation policies, including on protected area management, payment for ecosystem services, REDD+ and ecosystem-based adaptation to climate change.</p> <p>2.2 Generate locally-relevant information on natural ecosystems (e.g., economic valuations of ecosystem services) to influence political and economic decision-making in favor of their conservation.</p> <p>2.3 Facilitate partnerships among local communities, private sector and government to demonstrate models for best practice mining, sustainable forestry and sustainable agriculture by private companies.</p>
4. Build the capacity of local civil society organizations, including Indigenous People's, women's and youth groups, to conserve and manage globally important biodiversity	<p>4.1 Strengthen the capacity of local civil society organizations in financial, institutional and project management, organizational governance, and fundraising.</p> <p>4.2 Establish and strengthen women-led conservation and development organizations, associations and networks to foster gender equality in natural resource management and benefit sharing.</p>

Specific guidance for this call for proposals:

- Proposed projects should focus on **tangible conservation action**, consolidating positive impacts on biodiversity. Applicants will need to make sure that their project activities will build on, and/or amplify, the conservation achievements that were made during their previously CEPF-funded grant in the Guinean Forests of West Africa hotspot.
- Each proposed project should include a component of **institutional capacity development**, based on the scores of the latest Civil Society Tracking Tool that was completed by the applicant organisation (where relevant). Examples could be: training in financial management, communications, legal affairs; production of an organisational strategic / fundraising plan; development of a policy for human resources and volunteers; development of a website... etc
- Each proposed project should include a direct reference to the 2022 Guinean Forests of West Africa **Long-Term Vision** ([PDF – 2.5 MB](#)) showing a clear link with relevant milestones and graduation targets listed in the document.

Grants cannot be used for:

- the purchase of land, involuntary resettlement of people, or activities that negatively affect physical cultural resources, including those important to local communities.
- activities adversely affecting Indigenous Peoples or where these communities have not provided their broad support to the project activities.
- removal or alteration of any physical cultural property (includes sites having archaeological, paleontological, historical, religious or unique natural values).

Proposed activities should observe all other relevant safeguard and social policies as set out on the [CEPF website](#).

APPLICATION PROCESS

Applications (LOIs) must be written in **English** or **French**. Please **download the LOI form** in [English](#), [French](#).

Applicants must submit their letter of inquiry by the deadline to CEPF-GFWA-RIT@birdlife.org. You will receive an acknowledgement from the RIT confirming your submission.

The LOI review will take approximately three weeks from the deadline date. The review committee will select the strongest LOIs which meet the eligibility criteria in the sections above. All applicants will receive a response from the RIT following the review of their project. Applications that have been accepted will be moved to the second stage and asked to elaborate their LOI with a more detailed budget and logframe. Final approved LOIs will be awarded a small grant, with an agreement made between BirdLife International, as the RIT for the Guinean Forests of West Africa Hotspot, and the applicant's institution (the "grantee"). Grants will be denominated in United States dollars and grant agreements will be in English.

MASTER CLASS

Shortlisted applicants will need to attend a CEPF Master Class training on **9-10-11 September 2024 in Ghana**. Each shortlisted applicant is expected to send both the proposed project manager and the proposed financial manager to this training.

This training is **mandatory**, so if you cannot commit to this training on the dates indicated above, you should not apply under this call for proposals.

REFERENCE MATERIALS

All applicants are advised to review the **CEPF Investment Strategy for the Guinean Forests of West Africa** in the **2015 Ecosystem Profile** ([in English PDF – 5.2 MB](#) and [in French PDF – 5.4 MB](#)), and the **2022 Guinean Forests of West Africa Long-Term Vision** ([PDF – 2.5 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.

Other helpful resources:

- [12 Tips for Getting Your Grant Idea Funded](#)
- [CEPF training videos](#)
- [CEPF Project Database](#)

CONTACT

If you have any questions about this call for proposals, please contact the interim Regional Implementation Team leader maaika.manten@birdlife.org. Questions will be accepted and responded to until **Friday 26 July 2024**.