

Call for Letters of Inquiry Madagascar and the Indian Ocean Islands (MADIO) Biodiversity Hotspot

Large Grants

Eligible Countries:	Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius, Seychelles
Opening Date:	Friday, 8 March 2024
Closing Date:	Tuesday, 30 April 2024 – 11:59 pm Eastern Time (Washington D.C.)
Grant Size:	Above US\$50,000

The [Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund](#) (CEPF) and its regional implementation team (RIT) for the hotspot, are accepting letters of inquiry (LOIs) from [civil society organizations](#) (CSOs) for projects that address the eligible activities and geographies of this call.

1. BACKGROUND

The CEPF is a joint initiative of l'Agence Française de Développement (AFD), 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 Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius and the Seychelles are extremely vulnerable to climate change. People, agricultural land and infrastructure are concentrated in coastal areas, which are exposed to rising sea levels and increased frequency and severity of cyclones. Ecosystem-based adaptation (EbA) promotes the conservation, improved management and restoration of ecosystems to provide the essential services people need to adapt to climate change and variability. While there are a few pilot projects, EbA funding is currently insufficient and CSOs are not sufficiently engaged.

In response to the challenges of climate change in the Indian Ocean island countries, CEPF has prepared a program titled Ecosystem-Based Adaptation in the Indian Ocean, financed by the Green Climate Fund (GCF), through AFD as the Accredited Entity. The new program provides targeted funding to mobilize CSOs in implementing EbA.

CEPF has enlisted a consortium of nongovernmental organizations to be its RIT in the hotspot. Coordinated and led by IUCN NL, the RIT includes SAF/FJKM for Madagascar, ID-ONG for the Comoros, FORENA for Mauritius and SeyCCAT for Seychelles. These organizations are working with CEPF to implement a five-year investment strategy for the conservation of the hotspot and the local civil society capacity building.

Additional calls will be published this year. They will have different eligibility criteria in alignment with the evolution of the portfolio of projects and the investment strategy.

2. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

In order to be eligible for this call for LOIs, applicants must meet the criteria as indicated below. LOIs not meeting these criteria will not be eligible for this call and therefore will not be reviewed.

a. Eligible Applicants

Unless otherwise specified in section 2.c, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community groups and associations, universities and research institutes, small private enterprises and other civil society organizations may apply for funding.

Individuals are not eligible. Individuals should work with CSOs to develop applications rather than apply directly.

A government-owned enterprise or institution is eligible only if it can establish that it:

- Has a legal personality independent of any government agency or actor.
- Has the authority to request and receive private funds.
- May not assert a claim of sovereign immunity.

Applicants based outside the eligible geographic areas may submit an application as long as the project activities meet the conservation needs of this call within the eligible geographies.

Preference will be given to projects that demonstrate:

1. a leading role for local organizations and/or an explicit focus on capacity building for local civil society, and
2. a coordination with other organizations to prevent duplication of efforts. As such, joint projects with multiple organizations are eligible, as long as one lead organization submits the application and project partners have clear roles stated in the application.

Applying organizations must have their own bank accounts and be legally authorized to receive grants.

Applicants can already be funded by CEPF on another project.

Potential applicants who are uncertain of the eligibility of their organization are encouraged to contact the RIT at cepfproposals@iucn.nl for clarification.

b. Eligible Geographical Areas

Projects under Strategic Directions 2 and 4 are eligible for all four countries: Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius and Seychelles.

c. Eligible Technical Scopes

Eligible projects will be those falling within Strategic Direction 2 or Strategic Direction 4 of the CEPF investment strategy, as per the below details.

Applicants should ensure that the core content of their LOI refers to only one of the two eligible Strategic Directions and to one or more of the eligible Investment Priorities listed below. Selecting a Strategic Direction but failing to propose activities aligned with its technical scope will result in the non-selection of the LOI.

Strategic Direction 2: Support local communities and civil society to strengthen the integration of the EbA approach, ecosystem resilience and biodiversity conservation into political and economic decision-making processes and education.

For Strategic Direction 2, each selected project will need to fully or partially contribute to the following CEPF targets:

- 1- Six government, private sector and/or civil society actors formally adopt KBAs critically important for ecosystem services as priorities for EbA.
- 2- 12 communities, businesses and/or public sector institutions use EbA tools, techniques and/or instruments developed under CEPF grants.
- 3- Two strategies for engagement with private sector actors for mainstreaming EbA into business practices are prepared.
- 4- Three knowledge products (manuals, videos, etc.) on the theme of ecosystem services and/or EbA prepared and disseminated in the region.

Additionally, selected projects under Strategic Direction 2 will have to focus on one or more of the below Investment Priorities and demonstrate an innovative approach to greening the business and political thinking.

Investment Priority 2.1: Develop engagement strategies with private sector actors for the integration of EbA into their activities, and also for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and renewable natural resources.

To be eligible, projects under Investment Priority 2.1 must imperatively focus on one or more of the below actions:

1. identify relevant solutions for engaging the private sector leading to the adoption of **sustainable EbA practices into corporate policy**, practices and reporting,

and/or

2. identify at least one successful approach to partnership between CSOs and the private sector on the implementation of an EbA action by the private sector and at least two actors that can participate in a new **CSO-private sector partnership** to replicate the EbA action through that partnership,

and/or

3. identify partnership models with **private sector finance to CSOs' EbA actions** and organize learning visits to the successful models with CSOs and private sector actors having an interest in building a similar partnership. The private sector finance could, for examples, be supporting sustainable agro-ecological value chains or regenerative agriculture practices.

Projects under Investment Priority 2.1 that would specifically be implemented in the Comoros or in Madagascar, should also take into account the following specificities:

For the Comoros, projects should:

- seek to target at least 5 Comorian companies which operate nationally, or smaller businesses established in KBAs;
- address awareness-raising needs of the private sector regarding EbA and overall Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) policies and practices, and/or seek to technically build the capacities of targeted companies to review their practices / their impact monitoring in light of EbA/CSR standards and build progressive development plans;
- encourage initiatives such as working-groups on EbA.

For Madagascar, priority will be given to projects that will:

- implement or scale-up relevant, innovative solutions for conservation in key sectors (especially in relation to mining);
- contribute to the internalization of policies demonstrating the commitments towards the conservation of ecosystems;
- include high quality exchange and dialogue on best practices involving major private sector and government actors.

Eligible applicants for Investment Priority 2.1 are all CSOs, but NGOs/ associations and private sector actors are encouraged to join their efforts to apply.

Investment Priority 2.2: Support civil society to disseminate information and influence political and economic decision-making processes in favor of biodiversity, conservation priorities, ecosystem services and EbA.

To be eligible, projects under Investment Priority 2.2 must imperatively focus on one the below actions, based on the country of implementation:

For Mauritius and Seychelles:

1. design and run **a course module** (of approximately 40 hours) for business schools / vocational training schools / universities aimed at creating a culture of awareness on the business case for EbA to mitigate or adapt to climate change versus the cost of taking no action.

A key aim of the course is to strengthen the integration of EbA approaches, ecosystem resilience and biodiversity conservation into decision-making processes and education.

The rationale is that sustainable development and environmental stewardship starts at school, vocational training and university curricula levels. Shaping the future starts with the proper integration of these concepts into economic thinking and thus into education. EbA will not become mainstream unless the business case can be proven.

The course should be geared at both students and professionals from NGOs/ associations, the private sector and current and future decision-makers. It should equip learners with:

- a. transferable and replicable skills in designing and implementing EbA initiatives by offering specific training on key principles, risks assessments, monitoring and evaluation, and cross-cutting concerns such as gender, biodiversity, and governance.
- b. knowledge to analyze key tactics used to promote various environmental causes, build relationships and coalitions, as well as integrate ethical concerns in advocacy.
- c. skills needed to influence political and economic decision-making processes, impact public opinion and promote public action in favor of biodiversity, conservation priorities, ecosystem services and EbA.

At the end of the course, applicants shall be able to showcase the learning curve and that learners have realized an EbA initiative together with the related advocacy plan.

Ideally this course would be a first step in moving towards a regional network of business/ vocational schools and/or universities, in collaboration with private sector practitioners / impact investors, all integrating the content of the course into their curriculum to last past the project end date. The course would have to be approved by the appropriate regulatory body and a school / university level certificate would be awarded to each participant after successful completion.

The project shall include the investment cost of developing the course, ensuring the balanced participation of the targeted audience. Currently CEPF can commit funding until December 2026 but ideally the course will run for batches of about 15 participants and about twice a year for at least two consecutive years.

Due to the nature of this type of projects, universities or business schools or vocational schools based and/or operating in Mauritius and Seychelles are strongly encouraged to apply.

For Comoros:

2. develop and implement an initiative that is geared towards a concerted, regional and country-specific **EbA advocacy strategy**.

The advocacy strategy should be for change towards future proof landscapes and future proof economic developments in light of climate change.

In light of the various funding streams and country-wide projects currently implemented/foreseen in the country, actors already working in larger coalitions, especially coalitions of established actors (multi-disciplinarity strongly encouraged) working on a joint initiative geared towards a concerted,

evidence-based and country-responsive EbA advocacy strategy, are seen as preferred partners to reach impacts at scale.

Building on the coalition's experience, project should seek to address awareness-raising needs on identified EbA implementation gaps (whether geographically or technically), and seek to foster public sector dissemination and engagement. Links with the private sector can also be made, in a joint proposals tackling Investment Priority 2.1. Liaison with currently operating projects must be demonstrated.

For Madagascar:

3. develop and carry out **professional, courageous and effective citizen-led actions** to act against key threat drivers to ecosystem services and to foster the implementation of appropriate EbA measures and practices. The actions should be "professional" as being based on science to be credible; "courageous" as to tackle political and cultural contexts; and "effective" as to carry weight in public debates and lead to positive changes.

Projects should support and link up with conservation initiatives being implemented at KBA level, particularly those funded by CEPF, and promote the dynamics of coordination at local, in particular at KBAs and Protected Areas levels, and territorial level with decentralized authorities.

Supporting the creation or strengthening of networks or partnerships of sustainable, multi-stakeholder actors united around the themes of biodiversity conservation and the EbA approach, with a well-established action plan and vision, should be considered.

Priority will be given to application demonstrating:

- a. a strong expertise on advocacy (or partnership with strong organizations with that expertise),
- b. a solid experience in influencing political and/or economic decisions, and
- c. a good strategy to engage different actors in Eba.

Strategic Direction 4: Support research and ensure the dissemination of results for the promotion and improvement of knowledge on EbA actions and related good practices.

For Strategic Direction 4, each selected project will have to focus on Investment Priority 4.2. The CEPF target for Investment Priority 4.2 is to fund two research activities that will measure and verify the impact of the CEPF grant portfolio on ecosystem services.

Investment Priority 4.2: Support research activities that measure and verify the impact of the grant portfolio on ecosystem services

To be eligible, projects under Investment Priority 4.2 must imperatively:

1. improve **knowledge of the effectiveness of EbA actions** using part or all of the CEPF portfolio.

Limitation in knowledge makes it difficult to evaluate the impacts of EbA activities, both at the national and site levels. Among the identified priorities for research related to biodiversity and climate in the hotspot, stands the effectiveness of different methods for soil restoration (restoring the soil ecosystem and stopping erosion), watershed management and long-term habitat monitoring at sites targeted by EbA activities.

The establishment of a baseline situation is always essential for the implementation of EbA activities at the start of a project. This baseline information should encompass geographic, bioecological, biophysical including climate change, and socioeconomic contexts. Once the baseline situation has been established, the availability and quality of ecosystem services following CEPF investments should be monitored to measure and verify the impact of the grant portfolio.

As the natural ecosystems of the hotspot remain under extreme threat from human activities, with disturbances to biodiversity and ecosystem services exacerbated by climate change, the implementation of additional measures needed to achieve EbA activities, such as infrastructure, techniques, policies, and regulations, should be assessed while measuring the reduction in vulnerability of target populations.

Priority will be given to applied research that improves the efficiency and/or effectiveness of the grant portfolio of CEPF in achieving EbA.

Projects under this investment priority should:

- a. focus on several of the priority KBAs where the CEPF grant portfolio operates in one or more of the four countries; and
- b. concentrate on the indicators defined in the logical framework of the CEPF investment strategy in Chapter 15 of the ecosystem profile (see links in section 6 below), in particular at Objective and Outcome 1 levels; and
- c. evaluate the results achieved in terms of measures of efficiency and return on investment.

Prospective applicants under this Investment Priority should know that the CEPF grant portfolio is composed, at this stage, of 35 EbA projects spread across 30 KBAs in the four countries as follow:

- Madagascar: 15 KBAs
- Comoros: 4 KBAs
- Mauritius: 6 KBAs
- Seychelles: 5 KBAs

The location of the projects mentioned above can be seen by clicking [here](#).

The CEPF grant portfolio is expected to keep growing with new EbA projects in late 2024. All current and future EbA projects under this portfolio are expected to end by December 2026 at the latest. Results from this research should be made available no later than end of February 2027.

Applicants wishing to apply under Investment Priority 4.2, should demonstrate:

- a. Research experience on biodiversity conservation and ecosystem services,
- b. Knowledge about the context of biodiversity and climate change in the four countries,
- c. Experience in evaluating the impacts and return on investment of projects.

Preference will be given to projects targeting multiple EbA approaches, in multiple KBAs, in the four countries and on multiple indicators of the CEPF investment strategy.

d. Eligible Budget and Timeframe

The minimum amount for large grants is US\$50,000. Applications with a budget that is inferior to this amount will not be eligible for review.

Projects under this call are expected to start in the last quarter of calendar year 2024 and should not have a time span exceeding 31 December 2026, except for projects under Investment Priority 4.2. It is important to mention the duration of the project for which you seek CEPF funding and not the duration of the larger project/program in which it falls, if applicable.

e. Submission Date

LOIs are due no later than Tuesday, 30 April 2024 – 11:59 pm Eastern Time (Washington D.C.). Applications submitted after the deadline will not be eligible.

f. Language Criteria

Applications can be either in French or English. Other languages will not be considered for review.

3. EVALUATION CRITERIA

There are no priority KBAs for projects under Strategic Direction 2, but projects that could have a short or long-term impact on one or more of the CEPF priority KBAs are encouraged. The list of priority KBAs can be found in Chapter 14 of the ecosystem profile (see links in section 6 below).

The main eligibility criteria are listed under section 2. The below table summarizes the eligible technical scopes per country and the preferred eligible type of applicants:

Investment Priorities	Eligible projects	Eligible countries	Preferred eligible applicants
<i>Investment Priority 2.1:</i>	1. sustainable EbA practices into corporate policy,	Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius	Consortium of NGOs/ associations and private sector actors

<p><i>Develop engagement strategies with private sector actors for the integration of EbA into their activities, and also for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and renewable natural resources</i></p>	<p>practices and reporting</p>	<p>and Seychelles</p>	
	<p>2. CSO-private sector partnership to replicate identified EbA actions</p>		
	<p>3. private sector finance to CSOs' EbA actions</p>		
<p><u>Investment Priority 2.2:</u></p> <p><i>Support civil society to disseminate information and influence political and economic decision-making processes in favor of biodiversity, conservation priorities, ecosystem services and EbA.</i></p>	<p>1. course module to creating a culture of awareness on the business case for EbA</p>	<p>Mauritius and Seychelles</p>	<p>Universities, vocational schools or business schools based and/or operating in Mauritius and Seychelles</p>
	<p>2. EbA advocacy strategy</p>	<p>Comoros</p>	<p>Coalitions of established and multidisciplinary actors working on a joint initiative geared towards a concerted, evidence-based and country-responsive EbA advocacy strategy</p>
	<p>3. professional, courageous and effective citizen-led actions for appropriate EbA measures and practices</p>	<p>Madagascar</p>	<p>Applicants demonstrating:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. a strong expertise on advocacy, b. a solid experience in influencing political and/or economic decisions, and c. a good strategy to engage different actors in EbA.
<p><u>Investment Priority 4.2:</u></p> <p><i>Support applied</i></p>	<p>1. knowledge on the effectiveness of EbA actions of</p>	<p>Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius and</p>	<p>Applicants demonstrating:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Research experience on

<i>research activities that improve understanding of the role of specific ecosystems and test the effectiveness of promising EbA techniques.</i>	the CEPF portfolio	Seychelles	biodiversity conservation and ecosystem services, b. Knowledge about the context of biodiversity and climate change in the four countries, c. Experience in evaluating the impacts and return on investment of projects.
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In addition to the eligibility criteria listed under section 2, the preferred projects will be those that will:

- i. Demonstrate clear climate change risk and how the project activity(ies) will address(es)/impact this vulnerability.
- ii. Adopt or promote the adoption of EbA approaches that increase different stakeholders engagement in the resilience of ecosystems and ecosystem services
- iii. Address priorities identified in the national climate change policy or strategy documents of the relevant implementing country(ies).
- iv. Demonstrate positive gender impacts (see further below).
- v. Demonstrate effective and efficient use of funds with a budget that is linked to results and planned activities.
- vi. Best match the investment strategy defined in the ecosystem profile.
- vii. Have clear plans to continue the project beyond the proposed end date of the project (and if applicable achieve financial sustainability).
- viii. Include approval from relevant government authorities, including through the relevant designated national authorities.

Grants may not be used for:

- o Use of child labor or forced labor.
- o Construction or rehabilitation of large or complex dams.
- o Payment of salaries or salary supplements to government personnel.
- o Purchase of firearms or other weapons.
- o Activities that promote the trade in or use of any substances listed under the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, or other

chemicals or hazardous materials subject to international bans, restrictions or phase outs due to high toxicity to living organisms, environmental persistence, potential for bioaccumulation, or potential depletion of the ozone layer.

- Purchase and use of pesticides that fall in the World Health Organization classes IA and IB, or in class II ([English](#) / [French](#)) if they are likely to be used by, or be accessible to, lay personnel, farmers or others without training, equipment and facilities to handle, store and apply these products properly.
- Physical resettlement of people (voluntary or involuntary).
- Purchase of land.
- Activities that have the potential to cause adverse impacts to critical habitat.
- Activities that introduce or use potentially invasive, non-indigenous species.
- Removal or alteration of any tangible cultural heritage.

Before awarding any grant, CEPF will screen all projects against [CEPF's safeguard policies](#) in order to prevent any potential negative impacts of the project on humans and the environment.

CEPF will also evaluate the projects based on their integration of gender. CEPF has developed several resources that can help applicants to design, implement and evaluate gender-aware projects ([CEPF Gender Toolkit](#)) and understand what CEPF seeks in a proposal ([CEPF Gender Fact Sheet](#)). Visit the [CEPF and Gender webpage](#) to learn more about how CEPF addresses gender in the projects it supports.

4. HOW TO APPLY

Large grants applicants must respond to the call via the [electronic portal, called ConservationGrants](#), in either French or English. An automated acknowledgement email will be sent by ConservationGrants confirming that the submission has been received.

CEPF will not accept LOIs via email or any other mechanism.

Existing ConservationGrants users must use their credential information to login. If you have not previously used ConservationGrants, you will need to [register for a new account](#) by clicking on the "New User?" or "First time user? Click here" on the main page. If you encounter any technical difficulties with ConservationGrants, please email conservationgrants@conservation.org.

Questions can be sent to the RIT at cepfproposals@iucn.nl, by specifying in the subject line the proposed country of implementation (or "multi-country" when relevant).

5. SELECTION AND AWARD PROCESS

An online information session will be held in French on Thursday, March 21st from 8:00 a.m. to 9:30 a.m. (Washington D.C. time zone) **and in English on Friday, March 22nd from 8:00 a.m. to 9:30 a.m.** (Washington D.C. time zone) to inform all potential candidates and give them the opportunity to ask questions. The sessions will be recorded.

- To register to the [French](#) session
- To register to the [English](#) session

On this [webpage](#), a section containing questions received by potential applicants and related answers given by the RIT will be provided regularly up until the application deadline.

The selection process of the LOIs will take approximately eight weeks from the submission deadline. All applicants will receive a notification following the review of their LOI.

Large grant applicants whose LOIs receive a positive review will be invited to attend a masterclass in the 1st half of September 2024 and then submit a full proposal by the end of September 2024, again through ConservationGrants. More information on the masterclass will be provided to each applicant having received a favorable review of their LOI.

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 institution (the "grantee"). Grants will be denominated in United States dollars and grant agreements will be in English.

6. REFERENCE MATERIALS

All candidates are invited to consult:

- Ecosystem Profile: [English - French](#)
- Ecosystem-based Adaptation in the Indian Ocean: [English - French](#)
- [Interactive map of eligible KBAs in target countries](#)

Additional resources:

- [Eligibility](#)
- [Before You Apply](#)
- [How to Apply](#)
- [12 Tips for Getting Your Grant Idea Funded](#)
- [CEPF Project Database](#)

- [Life Cycle of a Grant](#)
- [Conservation Grants Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- The WHO Recommended Classification of Pesticides by Hazard
[English](#) - [French](#)