

## Call for Letters of Inquiry Guinean Forests of West Africa Biodiversity Hotspot

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### LARGE GRANTS

<b>Eligible Countries:</b>	Cameroon, Côte D'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Ghana, Liberia, São Tomé and Príncipe
<b>Opening Date:</b>	Monday, 30 March 2026
<b>Closing Date:</b>	Monday, 11 May 2026
<b>Grant size:</b>	\$USD 50,000 to \$USD 250,000
<b>Eligible Activities:</b>	Investment Priorities 1.1, 3.1 and 3.2
<b>Eligible Languages:</b>	English, French, Portuguese, Spanish

CEPF, with A Rocha and AJESH as the Regional Implementation Team (RIT) for the hotspot, are inviting proposals in the form of letters of inquiry (LOIs) for large grants from nongovernmental organizations, community groups, private enterprises, universities and other civil society organizations (CSOs). Applicants are advised to read this call for Letters of Inquiry document in full before submitting an LOI under the scope of this call.

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

CEPF's strategy for the current investment is contained in the Guinean Forests of West Africa Biodiversity Hotspot Ecosystem Profile (in [English](#) and [French](#)). It comprises a series of strategic directions broken down into investment priorities outlining the types of activities that are eligible for CEPF funding. Additional information can be found on the CEPF website's [Guinean Forests of West Africa Hotspot page](#).

The scope of this call is limited to the types of activities described in Investment Priority (IP) 1.1, IP 3.1 and IP 3.2, which are as follows:

- **Strategic Direction 1:** Support local partnerships for conservation of globally important biodiversity in priority Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) and ecological corridors – see Table 1 for eligible sites

- **Investment Priority 1.1:** Advance the protection and conservation management of priority KBAs and the ecological corridors that connect them
- **Strategic Direction 3:** Mainstream biodiversity conservation into public policy and private sector practice
  - **Investment Priority 3.1:** Update the KBA analysis for the hotspot and strengthen national mechanisms for KBA recognition and promotion, including National Coordination Groups
  - **Investment Priority 3.2:** Compile data and communicate the need and opportunities for conservation of KBAs and threatened species to the public, policy-makers and private sector

Preference will be given to projects that address the following criteria: (i) are the closest fit to the investment priorities eligible for support under this call; (ii) have a high likelihood of achieving their stated objectives and contribute strongly to sustainable conservation outcomes; (iii) build upon past initiatives and complement ongoing initiatives; (iv) represent good value for money; and (v) demonstrate the institutional capacity and experience necessary to carry out the work. CEPF welcomes applications from current and past grantees, as well as organizations that have not previously received CEPF funding.

This is the first call for Letters of Inquiry under the CEPF Phase III investment in the Guinean Forest of West Africa Biodiversity Hotspot. Future calls for proposals both large (over \$50,000) and small (under \$50,000) for the other Strategic Directions, investment priorities, and countries will be issued at a later date. A call for small grants will be issued by June 2026 at the earliest.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to familiarize themselves with the CEPF website, particularly the sections [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 RIT ([cepf.gfwa.info@arocha.org](mailto:cepf.gfwa.info@arocha.org)).

## **ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS**

Non-governmental organizations, community groups, universities and small private enterprises may apply for funding. Individuals must work with civil society organizations to develop applications rather than apply directly. Organizations must have their own bank account and be authorized under relevant national laws to receive charitable contributions. Government-owned enterprises or institutions are eligible only if they can demonstrate that the enterprise or institution has:

- a legal personality independent of any government agency or actor;
- the authority to apply for and receive private funds; and
- may not assert a claim of sovereign immunity.

Applicants may submit their LOI as a consortium of partners. In this instance, one leading organization should be identified, and the roles and added contributions of the different partners should be detailed.

## **ELIGIBLE COUNTRIES, ACTIVITIES, AND SITES**

### **1. Eligible Countries**

For this call, only activities taking place in **Cameroon, Côte D'Ivoire, Equatorial**

**Guinea, Ghana, Liberia and São Tomé and Príncipe** will be considered. Applicants can submit a combined application covering several of these countries, demonstrating both the economy of scale and their presence and past experience in each of the respective countries. Further calls will be issued for projects in other countries in the hotspot at a later date.

## 2. Eligible Activities

LOIs must propose projects that relate to the strategic directions and investment priorities outlined below, with further details provided in the Ecosystem Profile ([English](#) and [French](#)). Even if actions contribute to more than one strategic direction, applicants must identify the primary strategic direction and investment priority under which the project falls.

- **Strategic Direction 1, Investment Priority 1:** At the core of CEPF’s mission is funding of local CSOs to work with partners (including government, private sector, community/grassroots groups and other CSOs) to conserve sites of global importance for biodiversity (i.e., Key Biodiversity Areas (KBA). Projects may address the legal status of the site, planning and management policies, or direct action with resource users and other stakeholders on the ground. Project activities may take place within a priority KBA (listed in table 1), or they may be outside a priority KBA but necessary to achieve landscape and site conservation goals. These might include action to maintain or restore ecological connectivity between sites, and to ensure the maintenance of landscape level ecosystem services. Projects should take into account lessons from past work, including from past CEPF-funded projects.

As stated in Ecosystem Profile (page 191), eligible priority Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) have been identified for support under Strategic Direction 1. For the 6 eligible countries, the eligible KBAs are listed in Table 1 below:

**Table 1: List of eligible sites for SD 1:**

<b>KBA Code</b>	<b>KBA Name</b>	<b>Country</b>
CMR1	Bakossi mountains	Cameroon
CMR3	Bamboutos Mountains	Cameroon
CMR5	Korup National Park	Cameroon
CMR9	Mont Manengouba	Cameroon
CMR10	Mont Nganha	Cameroon
CMR12	Mount Cameroon and Mokoko-Onge	Cameroon
CMR13	Mount Lefo	Cameroon
CMR15	Mount Oku	Cameroon
CMR16	Mount Rata and Rumpi Hills Forest Reserve	Cameroon
CMR18	Tchabal-Mbabo	Cameroon
CMR19	Yabassi	Cameroon
CMR20	Eastern Bamenda highlands and associated hydrobasin	Cameroon
CMR11	Mont Nlonako	Cameroon

CIV11	Taï National Park and Nzo Faunal Reserve	Côte d'Ivoire
CIV8	Mount Nimba Strict Nature Reserve	Côte d'Ivoire
GHA2	Ankasa Resource Reserve – Nini-Sushien National Park	Ghana
GHA3	Atewa Range Forest Reserve	Ghana
GNQ1	Annobón	Equatorial Guinea
GNQ2	Luba Caldera Scientific Reserve	Equatorial Guinea
GNQ3	Basilé Peak National Park	Equatorial Guinea
LBR1	Cestos – Senkwen	Liberia
LBR2	Cestos Gbi	Liberia
LBR7	Grebo	Liberia
LBR14	Sapo	Liberia
fw12	Weeni creek and associated hydrobasin	Liberia
LBR11	Lofa-Gola-Mano Complex	Liberia
LBR12	Nimba mountains	Liberia
STP1	Parque Natural Obô de São Tomé e Zona Tampão	São Tomé and Príncipe
STP2	Príncipe forests	São Tomé and Príncipe

- **Strategic Direction 3:** CEPF recognizes that outcome of site-based conservation work is also impacted by national and subnational policies, programs, and financial decisions by both the public and private sector and highlights the importance of CSO engagement in National or regional policy efforts such as National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs), as well as the need for CSOs to build coalitions with other organizations to advocate for biodiversity conservation. Strategic Direction 3 is delivered through two investment priorities, which focus on the roles which are most likely to be the strengths of CSOs in policy advocacy: collection of data and evidence to support their arguments (IP3.1); and strategically targeted communications (IP3.2). It is expected that effective collaborative policy advocacy projects will combine elements of both.
  - Under **Investment Priority 3.1** CEPF will prioritize support to CSOs (including for example universities and research institutions) that have relevant expertise, mandate and capacity to carry out surveys. Grantees will be expected to work with other stakeholders to ensure that the results of surveys are understood and acted upon. Grants for capacity development – for example on planning KBA monitoring, or using the KBA database, will also be a priority.
  - Under **Investment Priority 3.2** on advocacy, CEPF will prioritize funding for collaborative action by coalitions of CSOs working towards clearly defined and achievable policy advocacy targets, which have a direct link to the achievement of conservation targets in a hotspot country (at national or sub-national level). This might include, for

example, work to ensure that KBAs, Indigenous People and Local Communities and civil society voices are represented in the revision of NBSAPs.

- Successful proposals should demonstrate:
  - A clear call for change to a specific plan, policy, or institution, with a justification of why the change proposed will benefit the conservation of sites and species in the country (and the hotspot).
  - An analysis of stakeholders who need to be influenced to achieve the change, along with the messages and media believed most effective to communicate with them.
  - Information on the CSOs collaborating on the initiative, with a description of how they will coordinate and divide roles

Grants cannot be used for: (i) purchase of land; (ii) removal or alteration of any physical cultural property (including those with archaeological, paleontological, historical, religious or unique natural values); (iii) relocation of people or any other form of involuntary resettlement; or (iv) capitalization of trust funds. All activities must comply with CEPF's social and environmental policies, which can be found [here](#). Please refer to CEPF's [safeguard video series](#) for further guidance.

#### **BUDGET AND TIMEFRAME:**

CEPF will entertain proposals between US \$50,000 and \$250,000. The earliest possible timeframe for award of grants is 1 September 2026. All grants must end by 31 August 2030.

#### **APPLICATION PROCESS**

Applications (LOIs) can be submitted in English, French, Spanish or Portuguese by 11:59 PM (GMT) on Monday 11 May 2026. All applications must be submitted through the ConservationGrants website [via this link](#). CEPF will not accept LOIs via email or any other mechanism. You will receive an acknowledgement from CEPF confirming that your submission through ConservationGrants has been received. CEPF partners who applied or were granted a project in previous phases (2016-2022/2024-2025): please make sure that you use your existing login and password, to prevent creation of new accounts on the ConservationGrants portal.

Questions regarding account creation or issues using ConservationGrants should be emailed to [conservationgrants@conservation.org](mailto:conservationgrants@conservation.org).

The LOI review process will take approximately eight weeks from the deadline date. The review committee will select the strongest LOIs which meet the eligibility criteria. All applicants will receive a response from CEPF following the review of their application. Applications which are invited to the second stage will be developed into a full proposal 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 institution (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 Guinean Forests of West Africa within the ecosystem profile (in [English](#) and [French](#)). This provides more detail on the types of activities CEPF will fund under each investment priority.

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. Visit the [CEPF Gender webpage](#) to learn more about how CEPF addresses gender in the projects it supports and to access resources that can help applicants to design, implement and evaluate gender-aware projects (CEPF Gender Toolkit, available in English, French, Portuguese and Spanish; CEPF Gender Fact Sheet available in English and Portuguese; and the Gender Toolkit). The integration of gender in your project will be a factor in evaluation.

Further, CEPF is guided by the belief that social sustainability, anchored in inclusive, equitable and locally grounded approaches, is essential to achieving CEPF's mission of long-term conservation impact and community ownership. Applicants should design projects that consider equity and inclusion in the achievement of their conservation impacts. Visit the CEPF [Social sustainability webpage](#) to learn more and access CEPF's [Social Sustainability Policy](#) and [Guidelines](#). Resources to support applicants to design projects that consider equity and inclusion will be made available on this webpage shortly.

### **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](#)

During March 2026, the RIT will be hosting online Information Sessions regarding this Call for Letters of Inquiry. The relevant details will be posted on the CEPF Webpage for this call.

Further information and assistance can be obtained from:  
CEPF Regional Implementation Team : [cepf.gfwa.info@arocha.org](mailto:cepf.gfwa.info@arocha.org)