

Call for Letters of Inquiry Mediterranean Basin Biodiversity Hotspot

Large Grants

Eligible Countries:	Bosnia and Herzegovina, Jordan, Lebanon, Montenegro, Morocco, North Macedonia, Palestine, Tunisia
Opening Date:	Wednesday, 1 July 2026
Closing Date:	Friday, 18 September 2026, (midnight EDT, UTC-4), Washington, D.C. time
Budget:	US\$50,000 to US\$180,000
Project Timeframe:	Projects are expected to begin on 1 January 2027, at the earliest.

CEPF and BirdLife International, as 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 proposals document in full and submit LOIs 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 Franklinia, Fondation Hans Wilsdorf, the Global Environment Facility, the Government of Canada, the Government of Japan, Hempel Foundation, The Nature Conservancy and the World Bank. In the Mediterranean hotspot, additional funding is provided by Fondation Audemars-Watkins. A fundamental goal is to ensure civil society is engaged in biodiversity conservation.

The Mediterranean Basin Biodiversity Hotspot is the second largest hotspot in the world and the largest of the world's five Mediterranean-climate regions. CEPF's investment strategy was updated in 2024. The resulting investment strategy (2025-2030) is documented within the [ecosystem profile](#) (PDF – 7.85 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. Additional information, including a technical summary of the Profile, can be found on the CEPF website's [Mediterranean Basin Hotspot pages](#).

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.

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](#).

Applicants are allowed to propose more than one application, but they have to be in different strategic directions. CEPF will not grant more than one project per organization under this Call.

ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

Letters of inquiry will be accepted only for the strategic directions and countries described below.

More information is available in the Ecosystem Profile, chapters 12 and 13. Applicants are invited to also check the Results Framework in chapter 14 to ensure that their proposals contribute to CEPF's targets in the Mediterranean Basin.

Strategic Direction 3: Traditional Land-use Practices	
Investment Priority 3.1: Improve management practices	Bosnia and Herzegovina, Jordan, Lebanon, Montenegro, Morocco, North Macedonia, Palestine, Tunisia
Strategic Direction 4: Threatened Plants Conservation	
Investment Priority 4.1: Capacity of botanical community	Bosnia and Herzegovina, Jordan, Lebanon, Montenegro, Palestine
Investment Priority 4.2: Plant conservation in Protected Areas management	
Investment Priority 4.3: Innovative actions with landowners & resources users	

3) Strategic Direction 3: Promote **traditional land-use practices** that maintain biodiversity in priority corridors

- *Investment Priority 3.1 Support traditional resource managers to follow land management practices that maintain biodiversity in mountain landscapes*

Countries: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Jordan, Lebanon, Montenegro, Morocco, North Macedonia, Palestine, Tunisia

Traditional management practices in cultural landscapes survive throughout the region although in many rural areas, evolution of agriculture practices led to homogenization of habitats and species. CEPF will prioritize projects that have potential for making a difference to globally threatened biodiversity, and, therefore, favor projects centered on Key Biodiversity Areas within priority corridors, and with impacts on threatened species. Projects may extend beyond the strict boundaries of KBAs, to follow a landscape approach and take into account ecological connectivity.

The projects eligible under this Call for Proposal will have to take place in the following corridors:

- The Atlas Mountains (Morocco)
- The Rif Mountains (Morocco)
- The Eastern Adriatic (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro)
- The Southwest Balkans (Montenegro, North Macedonia)
- The Tellian Atlas Mountains (Tunisia)
- The Levantine Mountains (Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine)

Within these corridors, CEPF will prioritize mountainous KBAs (above 500 meters of elevation), as presented in Annex 2 of Ecosystem profile.

The core of this strategic direction is working with traditional resource managers to enable them to enhance their livelihoods through maintaining biodiversity-rich traditional practices, with specific **focus on grazing of livestock**. The intention is to ensure livestock levels and management practices are compatible with maintenance of the valuable habitats, in and around KBAs. As grazing management often goes along with other agricultural practices that are beneficial to the diversity of habitats and species, due to the mosaic features of the areas, projects may include activities to sustain and improve these agricultural practices. The key will be to enable resource users to increase their income, through improvements to processing and marketing of products, including through certification and labelling, as well as exploring opportunities such as payment for environmental services or access to government support. Use of innovative techniques and tools will be promoted, as long as they support the sustainability of traditional land-use practices.

Details on eligible actions are provided in descriptions of Investment Priority 3.1 in the [Ecosystem Profile](#).

To check the KBAs eligible under SD3, applicants are invited to refer to Annex 2 of the [Ecosystem Profile](#) (p. 287 and following).

4) Strategic Direction 4: Strengthen the engagement of civil society to support conservation of **threatened plants** and plant communities

- *Investment Priority 4.1. Build the capacity of the botanical community to increase knowledge and skills and engage in applied conservation of threatened plants*
- *Investment Priority 4.2. Secure better implementation of plant conservation in the management of protected areas*
- *Investment Priority 4.3. Take innovative actions for conservation of threatened plants, working with landowners and land users*

Countries: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Jordan, Lebanon, Montenegro, Palestine

Projects under this strategic direction should focus on sites comprising priority plant species, defined as:

- Plant species in threat categories Critically Endangered (CR), Endangered (EN) or Vulnerable (VU) on the [IUCN Global Red List](#)
- Plant species that have not yet been assessed on the Global Red List, but that are included on regional red lists or would qualify for global CR, EN or VU status according to the [IUCN Red List criteria](#).
- Site-restricted endemics (SRE), which include:
 - Taxa occurring in only one site (and nowhere else in the world) or
 - Extent of occurrence less than 100 km² or
 - Area of occupancy less than 10 km².

Priority will be given to projects that:

- Demonstrate that they are focused on one or several priority species or are addressing a priority need for the conservation of plants.
- Demonstrate that they will lead directly to action for the conservation of priority plant species as defined above.
- Include, where possible, a significant component on capacity building for plant conservation, for either the project implementers or their local partners (e.g., community resource users or protected areas managers).
- Complement other projects (funded by CEPF or not) working at site/landscape level, therefore creating synergies between plant conservation community and other conservation actors.
- Address the conservation of sites where there is a demonstrable need for funding and opportunity for success.
- Projects that have transboundary or regional cooperation elements

Details on eligible actions are provided in descriptions of Investment Priorities 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3 in the [Ecosystem Profile](#).

APPLICATION PROCESS

Applications (LOIs) can be submitted in **English or French**.

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 previously: 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.

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 Mediterranean Basin within the ecosystem profile. This provides more detail on the types of activities CEPF will fund under each investment priority:

- Ecosystem Profile:
 - [English](#) (PDF – 7.85 MB)
- Ecosystem Profile Technical Summary:
 - [English](#) (PDF – 1.44 MB)
 - [French](#) (PDF – 3.07 MB)
 - [Arabic](#) (PDF – 4.85 MB)

The interactive map of the Mediterranean Hotspot can be accessed [here](#); use the bottom righthand "layer list" icon to select the layer you would like to view.

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.

Helpful resources:

- [Eligibility and How to Apply](#)
- [Conservation Grants Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- [Safeguard Policies](#)
- [CEPF and Gender](#)
- [12 Tips for Getting Your Grant Idea Funded](#)
- [CEPF Project Database](#)

CONTACT

Before applying, applicants are encouraged to discuss proposal eligibility with the Program Officer for your region:

- Balkans Program Officer, Marijana Demajo: marijana.demajo@birdlife.org
- North Africa Program Officer, Awaterf Abiadh: awatef.abiadh@birdlife.org
- Middle East Program Officer, Ibrahim al Hasani: Ibrahim.Alhasani@birdlife.org

In case the Programme Officer is not available, applicants can contact:

- Mediterranean Basin Grant Director, Pierre Carret: pcarret@cepf.net
- Mediterranean Basin Regional Implementation Team Leader, Vedran Lucic: vedran.lucic@birdlife.org

Join us for an informational webinar to learn more about this call for proposals:

- [English webinar](#): **July 23, 2026, at 9:30 a.m. UTC+2**
- [French webinar](#): **July 28, 2026, at 11:00 a.m. UTC+2**

Questions received after 30 August 2026 will not be answered.