



**CONSERVATION
LEADERSHIP
PROGRAMME**



**GUIDELINES
CONCEPT NOTE
FUTURE CONSERVATIONIST AWARD
2027**



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Conservation Leadership Programme

2027 Future Conservationist Award

Guidelines

About CLP

The Conservation Leadership Programme (CLP) is a world-renowned training and capacity building programme that targets individuals from biodiverse countries who are early in their conservation career and demonstrate leadership potential. As a partnership initiative between three of the world's leading biodiversity conservation organisations – BirdLife International, Fauna & Flora and the Wildlife Conservation Society – CLP provides financial support, ongoing mentorship, knowledge exchange and networking opportunities, and resources that enable awardees to acquire unique skills and advance their career within the conservation sector. This holistic approach contributes significantly to the programme's success in nurturing future conservation leaders worldwide who are conserving critical biodiversity.

Since 1985, CLP has supported and encouraged thousands of individuals who are early in their conservation career and are addressing global conservation priorities at a local level. CLP has and continues to be an important stepping stone for many individuals, and its impact has helped to facilitate the discovery of species new to science, the designation of new protected areas, knowledge sharing and collaboration, and the creation of mechanisms for long-term conservation, such as the establishment of local non-governmental organisations and creation of conservation policy and action plans.

Future Conservationist Award

CLP offers Future Conservationist Awards of up to US\$15,000 each to conduct scientific research, encourage and promote pro-conservation attitudes and deliver tangible results to better conserve and manage the natural world. These awards develop leadership capacity of early-career conservationists who want to make a positive difference on the ground. CLP supports teams of individuals with less than five years of paid conservation experience, who display a strong commitment to conservation and demonstrate leadership potential. All team members should have a desire to be impact multipliers across the conservation sector with the goal of mitigating threats to biological diversity and transfer capacities to local people in the field. CLP's unique approach consists of providing comprehensive training in the best and most effective tools, techniques, and strategies to lead and implement conservation action in their respective sites. Winners of these awards will develop key leadership skills through the management and

implementation of small-scale practical conservation projects which can become eligible for continued support through CLP's Continuation Awards and Alumni Network. CLP award winners also have long-term backing and advisory support from CLP staff and partner organisations as they develop in their careers.

How to Apply?

Starting with the 2027 awards, CLP's application process is divided into two stages: Stage 1 requires submitting a concept note and Stage 2 invites only the highest-scoring applicants to submit a full application.

Stage 1: Submission of a short Concept Note

All project teams are required to submit a completed concept note using the downloadable template from our website by the deadline **23:59 GMT Friday October 30th, 2026. No late submissions will be accepted, and concept notes must be completed in English.** Concept notes should be submitted to clp.applications@birdlife.org

Concept notes will be accepted from teams initiating projects that meet the eligibility criteria outlined below. These criteria are designed to ensure that the project builds the capacity of all team members involved, contributes to long-term sustainable conservation achievements, has clearly focused objectives and builds vital links between local communities, conservationists, NGOs, academic institutions and local governments. Concept notes will be assessed and scored by global experts on four main criteria: a) Feasibility b) Technical Capacity to Deliver the Objectives, c) Conservation Impact and d) Contribution to diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI).

Stage 2: Invitation to submit full application

The top scoring concept notes per region will be invited to submit a full application through our CLP online application portal.

1. Instructions for submitting concept notes:

1. Thoroughly read these **Guidelines** before completing and submitting your concept note.
2. Your concept note **must** be submitted via email to clp.applications@birdlife.org by the **deadline Friday October 30th, 2026 at 23:59 GMT.**
3. Incomplete concept notes will **not** be considered.
4. Applicants must meet each of the criteria outlined in these **Guidelines**.
5. Applicants must ensure that your country is eligible for the Award. See list of all ineligible countries under Section **"Country Eligibility"**. Countries **not listed** in this section are **eligible**.
6. The concept note template must be completed fully by the team and must be in **English**. It is recommended to have an advisor or an English-speaking person to review the concept note before submission.

7. Decisions will be based on the information provided, so answer all questions completely and refer to the Assessment Criteria listed in Section “Assessment Criteria for Concept Notes”

If you have any questions or problems, contact CLP by emailing clp@birdlife.org

CLP Eligibility Criteria

To be eligible for a CLP Future Conservationist Award, the team and project must meet the following eligibility criteria.

Team:

- CLP Awards are for **team-based** conservation projects – each team must have at least **three people**.
- **All team members must be nationals of the country where the project is taking place.** In special cases, one team member can be a non-national subject to clear justification of the expertise brought to the team and should be a national of an eligible country.
- All team members must be **early-career** conservationists. CLP defines early-career conservationists as professionals in early stages of leading independent conservation work, with **no more than five years of paid conservation experience, regardless of their age.** ‘Paid conservation experience’ does not include research for a university degree, unpaid volunteering or internships. Paid experience in fields closely related to conservation (e.g. biodiversity research as a faculty member of a university, environmental education and outreach) count towards the five years. Individuals who have more than five years of paid conservation experience are not eligible for CLP support and **should not apply.**
- CLP is committed to supporting people regardless of their educational background. **There is no minimum education required to participate as a team leader or team member, we welcome individuals with any informal, formal or non-formal education. The level of education of any team member does not affect your eligibility. Please note that** undergraduate or master’s students are welcome to apply but applicants currently **enrolled in a PhD programme, are not eligible to apply.**
- **No** team member can be a part- or full-time paid employee or contractor with a CLP partner organisation, including BirdLife International, Fauna & Flora and the Wildlife Conservation Society, at any time from project development through to implementation.
- Any team member volunteering at a CLP partner organisation at the time of application and/or project implementation **MUST** be declared in the application. They also need to explain how the CLP proposal differs from the partner organisation’s work.
- Applicants can participate in only **one** CLP project at a time and in no more than three Future Conservationist Award projects in total, serving as team leader for no

more than one Future Conservationist project. If you or any of your team members are currently part of an active CLP Project, you are not eligible to apply.

- At CLP we prioritize diversity and inclusion. Supporting underrepresented groups and identities in society is critical in our goals for conservation. We therefore strongly encourage applicants from historically marginalised groups and underrepresented countries to apply, and for equality and diversity to be considered when selecting team members. An underrepresented group refers to a demographic or community within low-and middle-income countries (LMIC) that faces systemic barriers and holds disproportionately lower representation within the conservation sector. Eligible underrepresented groups include racial and ethnic minorities (e.g. Indigenous peoples, traditional landowners and marginalized ethnic communities), individuals from socio-economically disadvantaged regions or underfunded rural areas, applicants from remote, rural or climate-vulnerable areas, gender and sexual minorities (women, non-binary individuals and LGBTQ+ community members) and people with disabilities.

Project:

- The project must take place in one of the eligible low- and middle-income countries in Africa, Asia, the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, Eastern and South-eastern Europe and the Middle East. Some high-income Global-South countries are eligible. **A full list of ineligible countries is available below. If your country is not listed, you are welcome to apply.**
- The project duration must be at least six months and no more than one year.
- The total funding request from CLP must not exceed **US\$15,000** and CLP funding must cover **at least 50%** of the total project budget.
- Projects must deliver effective conservation interventions for **globally important, at-risk habitats and species** through ecological research and/or conservation action in the following themes: a) climate impact and adaptation, b) biodiversity conservation c) habitat restoration and/or management, d) social development and wellbeing, e) Indigenous community participation and/or community-led conservation, f) environmental policy g) human-wildlife conflict, or h) environmental education and citizen science. We consider a species to be 'at risk' if it is designated as globally threatened (CR, EN, VU) or data deficient (DD) by the IUCN Red List OR if there is information suggesting that urgent local conservation action is needed.
- The project must be new than a continuation of an ongoing, established project.
- Applicants must demonstrate that the proposed project goes **beyond academic research** being carried out for any team member's degree. Work done for an undergraduate or master's degree is eligible; but projects tied directly to a PhD degree or doctoral research work are ineligible.
- Projects that involve laboratory analyses must justify why this work **is critical and urgent** for conservation.
- The proposal must be **written by the applicants** themselves.

Considerations for Successful Proposals

- The proposal must make clear how each team member will **develop their capacity** through the project. This includes, for example, how team members' knowledge, skills and experience as conservation practitioners will improve.
- Projects should take into account integration of **gender considerations** in their project and the **diversity of team members**.
- The project must have **realistic objectives** with appropriate methods, activities, and budget to achieve the stated objectives.
- Projects must have **SMART** Goals (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Bound).
- Projects must have a good balance of conservation research and action. For example, how data obtained from field work will be used to [engage multiple stakeholders](#), and should describe how project outcomes will contribute to local, regional, and/or national **conservation priorities**. Implementation and conservation actions should be applied within the project timeframe.
- Projects proposed within **priority sites** for conservation will be looked on favourably. We consider 'priority sites' to be, for example, [Alliance for Zero Extinction](#) sites, [Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas](#), [Important Plant Areas](#), [Key Biodiversity Areas](#), [Ramsar](#) sites, [UNESCO World Heritage Sites](#), Marine Protected Areas and potential Marine Protected Areas. Project **work at 'priority sites' should be linked to the target species at risk i.e., CR, EN, VU or DD.**
- Applicants should **demonstrate** how the project results will be applied to conservation during and after the project ends to show sustainability of conservation actions.

Additional Considerations

Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

We want to understand how your project will address a key conservation challenge. We encourage applicants to submit concept notes written by you and your team rather than generated by AI. While AI can help with tasks such as translation or shortening text, your application should reflect your own experience, creativity, ideas and passion for conservation. Any use of AI remains your responsibility, and all information provided must be accurate, truthful, and represent realistic objectives and achievable outcomes.

CLP Does NOT Fund:

- Conference attendance, tuition fees for academic programs or scholarships
- The cost of consultants
- Projects initiated by a CLP partner organisation
- **Plagiarism or fraud** – this will result in a rejection of the proposal
- Gene storage, invasive methods or captive breeding of animals **are not funded**.
- Proposals with excessive AI generated answers are unlikely to be funded.

Country Eligibility

CLP offers support to early-career conservationists from **low- and middle-income countries in Africa, Asia, the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, Eastern and South-eastern Europe and the Middle East**. The project must take place in an eligible country.

High income countries and countries with whom trade or other dealings are prohibited under any sanctions or restricted party regime imposed by the UN, EU, UK and USA are **not eligible to apply**. In addition, CLP cannot support any individual who is the target of any UN, EU, UK or USA sanctions programme or regime. Please see the below list of ineligible countries and contact the team if you have any questions or need further clarification.

CLP complies with embargoes and sanctions established by the U.S. Department of Treasury Office of Foreign Asset Controls (OFAC) which impose significant restrictions on transactions with nationals of the following countries/self-declared republics. We review this annually in advance of our call for applications.

The Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) does not maintain a specific list of countries that U.S. persons cannot do business with. Here's why:

U.S. sanctions programs vary in scope. Some are broad-based and oriented geographically (e.g. Cuba, Iran). Others are "targeted" (e.g., counter-terrorism, counter-narcotics) and focus on specific individuals and entities. These programs may encompass broad prohibitions at the country level as well as targeted sanctions. Due to the diversity among sanctions, we advise visiting the "[Sanctions Programs and Country Information](#)" page for information on a specific program."

***Countries NOT eligible for CLP support:**

Andorra	Greece	New Zealand
Australia	Greenland	Norway
Austria	Hong Kong SAR, China	Oman
Bahrain	Hungary	Poland
Belgium	Iceland	Portugal
Bermuda	Ireland	Qatar
Brunei Darussalam	Isle of Man	Romania
Bulgaria	Israel	Russian Federation
Canada	Italy	San Marino
Channel Islands	Japan	Saudi Arabia
Croatia	Korea, Rep.	Singapore
Cyprus	Kuwait	Slovakia
Czechia	Latvia	Slovenia
Denmark	Liechtenstein	Spain
Estonia	Lithuania	Sweden
Faroe Islands	Luxembourg	Switzerland
Finland	Macao SAR, China	Taiwan, China
France	Malta	United Arab Emirates

Germany	Monaco	United Kingdom
Gibraltar	Netherlands	United States

Nationals of the following countries please contact CLP prior to applying: Afghanistan, The Balkans (only low- and middle-income nations), Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Haiti, Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, Mali, Myanmar, Nicaragua, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Venezuela, West Bank, Yemen, Zimbabwe.

If you have any questions on your country's eligibility, please contact eleonor.glass@fauna-flora.org

Assessment Criteria for Concept Notes

Successful applicants to the CLP awards must demonstrate through their concept note that they will:

- a) Implement a focused, high-priority conservation project combining a balance of research and conservation action.
- b) Contribute to the long-term success of local conservation efforts.
- c) Contribute to the inclusion, capacity building, and awareness of local stakeholders.
- d) Develop the knowledge, skills, and abilities of team members.
- e) Embrace inclusive and diverse stakeholder engagement, perspectives and approaches based on project objectives.

Your concept note will be evaluated in two main areas: Team (Individuals) and Project (Delivery and outputs) against five main criteria: a) Feasibility b) Technical Capacity to Deliver the Objective, c) Conservation Impact and d) Contribution to diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI).

Feasibility

- The project must be realistic in its aims, with the ability and experience of participants suited to the methods, objectives, budget, and time frame.
- The project must be cost effective and show good value for the money.
- The project must clearly deliver appropriate outputs – a research report, journal articles, education materials, contribute to a critical conservation need, etc.
- The project must demonstrate wide collaborative support from local communities, local or national institutions, such as NGOs or academic institutions, and relevant governmental organisations.

Technical Capacity to Deliver the Objectives

- The project must demonstrate that the team is using appropriate methods and ethical approaches.
- The applicants must clearly demonstrate how the skills and experience of each team member will help to implement the project.
- The team members must show potential for leadership as ambassadors for the work they are doing.
- Interdisciplinary teams displaying a variety of skills and experience will be looked upon favorably.

Conservation Impact

- The research must link with established conservation plans – for example, national biodiversity action plans.
- The project must demonstrate long-term benefits with outcomes that contribute to ongoing local conservation efforts.
- The project must offer measurable benefits to local stakeholders.
- The project must positively influence stakeholders' environmental knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours.

Contribution to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI)

- The project must embrace inclusive and diverse stakeholder engagement based on the project objectives.
- The project must include a variety of different perspectives, experiences, and approaches as part of the objectives and activities particularly from those considered underrepresented in conservation (e.g. women, youth, elders, local and indigenous communities).
- The project includes participatory approaches as part of the activities proposed (e.g. community workshops).
- The project provides equal opportunities for all team members to develop their skills and knowledge through the project activities.
- The project considers inclusive approaches when implementing activities (e.g. development of educational materials in local languages).

Useful Resources for Applicants.

Q&A Session for Applicants: We will have a live Q&A Session on **October 20th, 2026** to answer some questions you might have. Details of this session will be posted on our CLP website. If unable to attend this session will be recorded and available to watch through our social media channels.

Concept Note Preparation: CLP staff members can only help teams determine if their project fits within the specified criteria, offer advice on project activities and feasibility and, where possible, put teams in touch with local partner offices or other experts who can offer advice. This support will be offered until two weeks before the deadline. Requests for support should be sent to: clp@birdlife.org.

Website Resources: On the CLP website under the [Help and Resources](#) section, you can find useful project manuals and information about project planning and additional funding sources. The Conservation Project Manual, which can be downloaded in full, takes you through the process of planning small to medium-scale conservation projects. It is available in English, Chinese, Russian and Spanish. You can also use the Institutional Fundraising for Conservation Projects manual which is available in English, Spanish, Portuguese, French and Arabic.

Award winner Support: Winning teams will benefit from additional support once awards have been granted. CLP can provide guidance during the planning and implementation stages and help each team access expertise from within each of the partner organisations and from past winners. We will invite a representative from each team to attend an international training event organised by CLP to share ideas, develop skills and knowledge and network with other conservationists.

Non-Selected applications: Due to the high number of applicants we receive, only applicants selected for a full application will be contacted, by end of December 2026. Requests for feedback if your concept note is not selected should be sent to: clp@birdlife.org.