



**CONSERVATION
LEADERSHIP
PROGRAMME**



GUIDELINES

FUTURE CONSERVATIONIST AWARD

2026



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Conservation Leadership Programme

2026 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 professional 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?

All project teams are required to submit a completed application using [the online application portal](#) by the deadline **Friday January 9th, 2026. No late applications will be accepted, and applications must be completed in English.** Download, read and review the "Step-By-Step" guidelines from the **CLP online portal** for assistance in writing your online application. Applications emailed to CLP will not be accepted.

Applications 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 research objectives and builds vital links between local communities, conservationists, NGOs, academic institutions and local governments. Applications are evaluated across three different stages by CLP staff and partners, by experts from other relevant organisations and by an Award Selection Panel. **CLP welcomes and encourages applications from people of all professional and cultural backgrounds and are committed to supporting groups and identities that have been underrepresented in the conservation sector.**

Instructions for Eligible Applicants:

1. Your application **must** be submitted via the [CLP online application portal](#) by the **deadline Friday 9th of January, 2026-at 11.59 pm GTM.** Applications emailed to CLP will **not** be accepted.
2. Incomplete applications will **not** be considered.
3. Thoroughly read these **Guidelines** before filling out the application form. Use the **checklist** document available on the CLP application portal to help you build your proposal.
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 below list of eligible and non-eligible countries under the **Country Eligibility Section**.
6. The application form 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 proposal before submission.
7. Decisions will be based on the information provided, so answer all questions completely.
8. If you would like feedback from a CLP alumnus on your application, consider contacting an Alumni Reviewer **between the 10th of November and until the 5th of December 2025 at the latest.** Instructions on how to contact CLP Alumni Reviewers are available on the [CLP Website](#).

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 specific cases one team member can be a non-national subject to clear justification of the expertise brought to the team.
- All team members must be **early-career** conservationists with **no more than five years of work experience in the conservation sector**. 'Work experience' does not include research for a university degree. Individuals who have more than five years of work experience in the conservation sector 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.**
- **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.
- At CLP we prioritise 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 countries to apply, and for equality and diversity to be considered when selecting team members.

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**. **High-income Caribbean and Pacific Island economies are eligible. A full list of ineligible countries and eligible high-income countries is available below.**
- The project duration must be at least three 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 for **globally important, at-risk species and habitats** through ecological research and conservation action in themes such as climate impact and adaptation, habitat restoration and/or management, social development and wellbeing, Indigenous community participation, and/or environmental policy. 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 conservation action is needed.
- For those projects focusing on **multiple species** and/or taxonomic groups, at least one species in each taxonomic group being studied must be at risk.
- The project must be for **new work** rather than the 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.
- 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

- When completing your online application within our CLP Portal, focus **70%** of your effort on the sections marked as '**Important for Proposal**' and only **30%** on those marked '**Background Information**'. This reflects the relative importance of these sections to the reviewer and should enable you to focus on the more important parts of the application form.
- Applicants must clearly communicate their ideas **in English** on the online application form. We encourage teams to seek out a native English speaker to review the proposal prior to submission.
- 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 well-defined Theory of Change- See CLP Website [Project Manuals](#) for guidelines on how to develop a theory of change in a conservation project.
- Projects must have a good balance of conservation research and action, for example, how data obtained from field work will be used to [engage 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.
- **CLP will allow a contribution to the team's time within the budget. We refer to this as a per diem.** A per diem includes a daily rate paid as a flat fee for work or services during the project. You can include up to US \$2,500 in the budget. This could be for a team member(s) or essential project support including rangers/local guides/fishers' or farmers' time for project support. It cannot be used for consultants.
- Training costs for the project team must be justified.
- Contingency budget lines must not exceed 5% of the overall budget and must be justified.
- If a CLP partner organisation or direct affiliate has an office in the applicant's home country, we strongly encourage the applicant to make contact for **advice and support**.

Additional Considerations

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 or captive breeding of animals **are not normally 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. High-income Caribbean and Pacific Island economies are eligible.** The project must take place in one of the eligible countries.

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 lists 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 (i.e. Cuba, Iran). Others are "targeted" (i.e., 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:**

High-Income Economies	Japan	United Kingdom
Andorra	Korea, Rep.	United States
Australia	Kuwait	United Arab Emirates
Austria	Latvia	UK/US Sanctions Countries of note include:
Bahrain	Liechtenstein	Afghanistan
Bulgaria	Lithuania	Burma/Myanmar
Belgium	Luxembourg	Belarus
Canada	Macao SAR, China	Bosnia-Herzegovina
Channel Islands	Malta	Central African Republic
Croatia	Monaco	Cuba
Cyprus	Netherlands	Democratic Republic of Congo
Czech Republic	New Zealand	Ethiopia
Denmark	Norway	Guinea
Estonia	Oman	Guinea Bissau
Faeroe Islands	Poland	Haiti
Finland	Portugal	Iran
France	Qatar	Iraq
Germany	Romania	Lebanon
Gibraltar	San Marino	Libya

Greece	Saudi Arabia	Mali
Greenland	Singapore	Nicaragua
Hong Kong SAR, China	Slovak Republic	Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea)
Hungary	Slovenia	Russia
Iceland	Spain	Somalia
Ireland	Sweden	South Sudan
Isle of Man	Switzerland	Sudan
Israel	Taiwan	Syria
Italy	United Arab Emirates	Venezuela
		Yemen
		Zimbabwe
		Official links to review current sanctions can be checked here US Sanctions and UK Sanctions
		Nationals of the following countries please contact CLP prior to applying: The Balkans (only low- and middle-income nations), Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Haiti, Mali, Nicaragua, West Bank and Zimbabwe.

High-Income Countries that **ARE** Eligible:

Africa/Asia/Americas/Europe/Middle East	Caribbean Islands	Pacific Islands
Argentina	Anguilla	French Polynesia (France)
Chile	Antigua and Barbuda	Guam (USA)
Panama	Aruba (Netherlands)	New Caledonia (France)
Seychelles	Bahamas	Nauru

Uruguay	Barbados	Northern Mariana Islands (USA)
	Bermuda (UK)	Palau
	British Virgin Islands	
	Cayman Islands (UK)	
	Curacao (Netherlands)	
	Dominica	
	Dominican Republic	
	Grenada	
	Jamaica	
	Martinique	
	Puerto Rico (USA)	
	St. Maarten (Netherlands)	
	St. Lucia	
	St. Kitts and Nevis	
	St. Martin (France)	
	St. Vincent & the Grenadines	
	Trinidad and Tobago	
	Turks and Caicos Islands (UK)	
	Virgin Islands (USA)	

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

Judging Criteria

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

- a) Implement a focused, high-priority conservation project combining 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 project will be evaluated in two main areas: Team (Individuals) and Project (Delivery and outputs) against four 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 team must have the support of experienced advisors in line with the objectives of the project.
- 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 good 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 on-going 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 to Prepare and Support your application.

Video: Applicants are encouraged to watch the videos – [Applicant Eligibility Requirements](#) and [What CLP funds cannot be used for?](#) that can be found on the [CLP YouTube Channel](#). These videos can help establish if teams and projects fall within the eligibility criteria to apply for CLP awards and can help eligible teams write a successful CLP proposal. We will also have a live Q&A session on **November 26th** 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.

Step-by –Step Guidelines: These “**Step-By-Step**” guidelines will assist you in completing your **online application**. This document also includes **additional material** to assist applicants in selecting the most appropriate project development, theory of change, implementation and evaluation techniques for their project. It also includes examples of the most common proposal writing mistakes. **Carefully read and review these guidelines.**

CLP Alumni Reviewers: Applicants are strongly encouraged to contact an Alumni reviewer for advice or input on your proposal. CLP’s Alumni Reviewers can support interested applicants for a Future Conservationist Award. Members of the CLP Alumni Network have volunteered their time to be Reviewers and provide feedback to applicants prior to submitting to CLP. Reviewers will provide feedback in the following areas: project concept, English grammar, cohesion of proposal and research design, if this falls within their area of expertise. **This year, applicants should seek advice between the 10th of November and until the 5th of December at the latest.** To find an Alumni Reviewer, visit the [CLP Website](#) and read the guidelines on how to contact an alumnus directly. CLP alumni reviewers can be contacted only two times during the application process.

Proposal 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 can 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, applicants that are unsuccessful following the Stage 1 review will not be notified via email. Requests for feedback on your application should be sent to: clp@birdlife.org.

Those applicants that are unsuccessful in Stage 2 or 3 will be informed via email and feedback will be sent directly to them. Non selected applicants are more than welcome to revise their proposal based on the feedback and apply in the next call for CLP conservation team awards. All applicants should review the status of their application via the CLP Portal.