

Evaluation summary

Conservation Finance Alliance (CFA) Horizon 2026 : Amplifying sustainable funding for conservation

Country : **Multi-countries**

Thematic : **Biodiversity**

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Date of evaluation : **March – September 2023**

Key information

Project name : Conservation Finance Alliance (CFA)

Project number : CZZ2155

Amount of FFEM financing : 400 760 €

Project approved on : 04/07/2016

Project duration : 2017 - 2023

Context

Founded in 2002, the Conservation Finance Alliance is a unique collaborative and global network of conservation finance practitioners and experts whose mission is to “promote awareness, expertise, and innovation in conservation finance globally.” Facing challenges associated with the all-volunteer nature of the CFA and the ever-increasing demand for funding to conserve biodiversity globally, the CFA held a workshop in April of 2015, whereupon its Executive Committee and key partners confirmed the need for and continued relevance of the CFA. Financial resources were sought to revitalize the CFA and increase its contribution to conservation globally.

Stakeholders and operating mode

The CFA is the project owner and is the main beneficiary of the project. The Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) provided project management and has been hosting the CFA Secretariat. Key stakeholders included the CFA membership, partners, conservation trust funds and rest of the global conservation finance community of practice.



Objectives

The overall goal was to “build a CFA that is institutionally and financially sustainable”.

The project consisted of four components:

- 1) networking, information sharing, and capacity building for the benefit of members through a small Executive Secretariat for communications and support;
- 2) an incubator of ideas and new mechanisms for conservation finance;
- 3) developing and disseminating tools and guides for use by Conservation Trust Funds (CTFs) and conservation professionals; and
- 4) development and institutional strengthening of the CFA as a long-term stakeholder on conservation finance and a center of excellence on the topic.

Performance assessment

Relevance

Overall, the expectations of most of the 26 interviewed stakeholders were met. While virtually all were impressed with the quantity and quality of CFA outputs given its small staff, there were differing levels of satisfaction relative to expectations. Issues raised by stakeholders include concerns about governance, transparency, incubator program implementation, limited support for working groups, staff being stretched too thin, and limited communication in recent months. .

Coherence

At the highest level, this project has supported achieving the goals and targets of the Kunming – Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, which was adopted in December 2022 after four years of consultation and negotiation. Specifically, the project aligns with Goal D “The necessary financial resources are mobilized from all sources to implement” the framework “effectively” and Target 2, resource mobilization for conservation. For FFEM, this project fits within a portfolio of grants for biodiversity conservation finance both globally and regionally. Moreover, **the CFA forged alliances with multiple global and regional biodiversity conservation projects and programs.** As a network organization, such partnerships and collaborations are and have been a central purpose of the Alliance. Partners include CI, WWF, RedLAC, CAFÉ, TNC, UNDP, and BIOFIN.

Efficacy

Virtually all the objectives in project components 1-3 were realized. Those that were not achieved were of secondary importance or relate to how the CFA carried out its work, not what was accomplished. For component 4, the objective to formalize a new institutional structure has not been achieved and the CFA is not yet financially sustainable.

Efficiency

The project’s goals and objectives were ambitious from the outset and in hindsight can be seen as greater than the original budget could support. The absence of KfW funding forced the CFA staff to devote more time to fundraising than planned and to secure fee-based advisory services, diverting time and attention from serving members and focusing on achieving institutional and financial sustainability. WCS provided significant administrative and legal support for the CFA, but the relationship between the CFA and WCS provided challenging at times due in part to divergent interests and capabilities.

Impact

Many impacts are observable from the end of the project. These include the **recognition of the CFA at the global level for its knowledge, expertise and central role in the conservation funding ecosystem. The number of its members is increasing,** with an impact on the dissemination of product tools, innovations and best practices identified within the community. Finally, incubator projects have been funded and supported, although the long-term potential of most of these projects remains uncertain.

Sustainability

The FFEM-MAVA grant provided the resources to build a foundation to enable the CFA’s future sustainability. **However, CFA’s ongoing financial sustainability is not yet assured.**

Valeur ajoutée de l’appui FFEM

CFA has advanced innovation in conservation funding through the incubation program; developing and disseminating new methods and solutions developed by members and partners; producing tools and standards leading to widespread adoption of best practices; and providing expertise to pilot and launch new funding initiatives.

Recommendations & lessons learned

With the grant ending in June 2023, and with the accomplishments made possible by the grant resulting in an improved position in the field, the CFA must now focus on continuing the path towards achieving organizational and financial sustainability—while helping members and partners protect and restore the planets’ biodiversity through best practices and innovations in conservation finance.

Specifically in the near term, the CFA should:

- Accelerate resolution of the Alliances’ organizational affiliation and structure and implement a governance model based on best practices.
- Deploy available funding to retain a communications specialist to maintain the website, produce newsletters, and engage members. As a member organization, it will be important to communicate about CFA’s changing organizational status as well as seek input and support.
- Conduct a membership survey and determine a preferred membership model and member needs and services that could be provided by the CFA in the future.
- Formulate a concise, focused, strategic action plan to guide future actions; develop an associated finance strategy; and secure grant or philanthropic funding to implement the strategy.